

## **DRAFT** Climate Subcabinet Engagement Concepts

October 21, 2020

*These draft concepts are for discussion and do not reflect commitments, a work plan, or a timeline.*

### **Background**

- This document contains draft concepts for public engagement that could support the transformational change needed to address climate change concerns in Minnesota, including the related issues of equity and economic health.
- A more complete theory of change and plans for operationalizing the concepts will be included in the final engagement framework.
- The final framework is intended to guide state agency priorities and work planning, as well as communicate with the public and potential partners about state goals and opportunities for collaboration to achieve shared goals.
- The draft ideas include short-term activities and a longer-term, aspirational vision.
- There is limited existing funding for climate engagement. Additional resources are needed to advance and deepen the state's climate engagement. Funding, partnerships, and leadership beyond the state are essential for implementing broad climate engagement in Minnesota.

### **Executive Directive to Engage Minnesotans**

Executive Order 19-37 identifies public engagement as a primary duty of the Climate Change Subcabinet and directs the Subcabinet to “develop and implement a public engagement framework to ensure meaningful public engagement is conducted by the Subcabinet’s agencies and boards.” EO 19-37 notes that “successful policy and strategy development requires that those impacted, including frontline communities, indigenous peoples, industry, and workers, among others, have a voice and the opportunity to participate in the process.”

The order cautions that climate strategies that do not take equity into account have the potential to exacerbate disparities and that climate policy must reflect the ideals of [One Minnesota](#) to realize our state’s potential for health and resiliency for all Minnesotans.

## Purpose of an Engagement Framework

According to EO 19-37, the purpose of the public engagement framework is to:

- Build partnerships and shared understanding across Tribal Nations; local communities; and sectors including, but not limited to, agriculture, transportation, business, and conservation and environmental interests.
- Provide a platform for dialogue about the strengths and challenges of climate change mitigation and resilience solutions, including policies and voluntary actions, and how these solutions will impact the lives of Minnesotans, including those who have been traditionally underrepresented in policy discussions, are disproportionately impacted by climate change, and are impacted by the transition to a clean energy economy.
- Highlight regional differences across Minnesota regarding the effects of climate change and locally relevant solutions.
- Share and gather ideas for how Minnesotans can get involved with, and stay informed about, climate change issues that matter to them.

Transformational change requires a vision. This framework is that vision. This draft framework document includes a vision for an ambitious, transformational engagement model and essential, near-term engagement activities. The framework outlines how state government can coordinate internally and meaningfully engage with the public to improve decision-making and outcomes.

The framework document, once fully developed, will serve as a common touchpoint among subcabinet agencies, partners, and the public. It will be living document that helps us understand how we are working together to engage Minnesotans toward a common purpose of addressing climate change. The framework will be updated as needed to reflect lessons learned, emerging issues, and new developments in public engagement theory and practice.

This draft framework is not meant to replace or impeded any ongoing climate engagement efforts, but rather would supplement existing efforts to build upon and connect activities into a holistic, coordinated engagement approach.

## Guiding Principles

In order to successfully engage Minnesotans and build trust, the Subcabinet and agency staff will the do the following:

- Communicate with Minnesotans early and often
- Make sustained, meaningful efforts to reach communities traditionally underrepresented in dialogue and decision-making
- Provide multiple avenues for the public participation
- Listen and remain open to changing our perspectives and ideas
- Reflect back to the public what we are hearing and how it is informing our processes
- Incorporate the public's input and perspective into decision-making

- Be authentic and transparent about what we know, what we don't know, what we learned, and what we hope to learn
- Continuously retool our approaches as we learn from our engagement efforts

## Theory of Change

Why is public engagement important for addressing climate change and how will it make a difference? A theory of change articulates a pathway from a problem to the desired change. Table 1 (social barriers) outlines key barriers to effective climate action while Figure 1 (engagement model) maps out the pathway to the desired change.

### Problems

Minnesota has an ambitious goal to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 80% or more by 2050. The state already experiences climate change impacts including higher temperatures, more extreme weather, and milder winters. Meeting our emission goals and making our state more resilient to climate change is not an easy task. We will not get there by business-as-usual approaches. It will take creativity, innovation, and bold action. It will take transformational approaches that require new partnerships and approaches to public engagement.

Moving from standard ways of doing things to new systems and approaches is difficult. Humans are hard-wired to seek stability and challenge information that contradicts our core beliefs. As Minnesotans work to address climate change, we face some core social barriers that stand in our way (Table 1). Meaningful public engagement can help address all of these problems, allowing us to move forward on climate action.

Table 1. Select social barriers to addressing climate change

Social barriers	Benefits of public engagement
<p><b>Divergent viewpoints:</b> Minnesotans don't all hold same views about whether climate change is happening and whether it is a concern. We also don't hold the same views about how we should address climate change, and where we should best use our limited resources. It is a strength that we don't all think alike, but highly divergent viewpoints can also lead to impasses and stalemates that are hard to get through. The ideological sorting of Americans and subsequent political polarization exacerbate divergent thinking and impasse on climate. We can spend a lot of time in disagreement, without moving forward.</p>	<p>Public engagement gives people an opportunity to be in dialogue in ways that helps them get past perceived "positions" and <b>build shared understanding</b> around underlying values and concerns.</p>
<p><b>Lack of urgency:</b> Even for those who view climate change as an important issue, it is sometimes hard to prioritize climate change work. Minnesotans have many important needs: health care, education, jobs, and more. Many Minnesotans are struggling to meet basic needs and others are overwhelmed by demands of attending to family, job, and community. This can mean that slow-moving problems like climate change are left unattended, with catastrophic results down the road.</p>	<p>Public engagement can <b>keep climate change top of mind</b> and help people <b>understand their local community's vulnerability</b>, as well as connections to other issues like poverty and inequality.</p>

Social barriers	Benefits of public engagement
<p><b>Narrow thinking:</b> Not one person or group has all the answers to a complex issue like climate change. Indeed, climate change will stretch the limits our imagination and will require thinking in whole new ways. It is not always human nature to step outside our ingrained ways of thinking and doing business. Research has shown many types of cognitive biases that cause us to hold on to deeply rooted mindsets.</p>	<p>Public engagement <b>brings diverse viewpoints and expertise into contact</b>, creating opportunities for exchange of ideas. This <b>leads creative and innovative solutions</b>.</p>
<p><b>Technical complexity:</b> The science behind climate change—how it happens and its effects—is complex and updated frequently as research evolves. Many of the climate change adaptation solutions are also complex and involve complicated policy and insider knowledge of specific sectors and industries. This can make it challenging for non-specialists to get involved and advocate for solutions.</p>	<p>Public engagement gives an opportunity for the public to <b>learn about and understand the science and policy</b> involved, which <b>builds capacity to act</b> and influence outcomes.</p>
<p><b>Sense of Overwhelm:</b> Climate change is an existential threat. Extreme weather, increasing pandemics, and reports of nearing an irreversible feedback loop have become part of daily life for many people. These terrifying realities combined with the social barrier of the technical nature of the problem and solutions leads individuals to use denial, distraction, depression and other psychological strategies to protect their mental health.</p>	<p>Public engagement gives the public the opportunity to learn manageable ways to get involved in climate change work which leads to a sense of hope and efficacy, creating a virtuous cycle of decreasing overwhelm and increased action.</p>
<p><b>Inequality and exclusion:</b> Not everyone in Minnesota has equal access to information, expertise, and decision making related to climate change. Some voices are left out due to a variety of barriers including socio-economic, racial, cultural, and geographic. Solutions to climate change are less likely to succeed if the people most impacted are left out of the process. Additionally, addressing climate change requires an understanding of how interrelated problems such as racism and poverty overlap with climate change.</p>	<p>Public engagement can be a way to bring new voices to the table, especially those who lack access to decision making. It can help build the capacity for action among groups or individuals who might be new to the discussion. It can also be an avenue for identifying and addressing systemic barriers that leave people behind in climate change work.</p>

# Engagement Model

This model is intended to provide an overarching framework for structuring engagement at different levels in society: individual, community, sector, and state. It is also intended to highlight the need for partnerships, collaboration, and cooperation with regional, national, and international efforts. This draft framework model is composed of five components to augment, enhance, and extend the State’s existing climate engagement work.

Figure 1. Engagement Model



The components have the following key features in common:

- Address one or more of the social barriers
- Offer “on-ramps” for participation at the individual, community, sector, state levels, and beyond
- Build on one another to facilitate information-sharing and relationship-building between Minnesotans “on the ground” and in state government.

Many possible approaches to climate engagement can fit within this overarching model. A team of interagency of engagement specialists developed preliminary program ideas for robust engagement within each of the model layers. These ideas are outlined in Figure 2 below and described in more detail in Table 2 and in the Appendix.

Figure 2. Draft proposed programs



<b>Multilevel</b>	• Minnesota Climate Coalition
<b>State</b>	• Participatory State Climate Planning
<b>Sector</b>	• Resilient Economy Incubators
<b>Community</b>	• Climate Changing Communities
<b>Individual</b>	• Climate Connectors

The ideas are for discussion purposes only and do not represent commitments, a work plan, or a timeline. The proposed programs described in Figure 2 are aspirational and would require additional funding and staff resources at the state level, as well as robust partnerships across beyond the state. Many of these efforts could be scaled and prioritized based on feedback from Subcabinet members and the public.

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Table 2. The table below summarizes possible programs within each of five engagement model components. The ideas presented in this table are for discussion purposes only and do not represent commitments, a work plan, or a timeline. The Engagement Model Components are described in more detail in the Appendix.

	Possible Engagement Model Component	Objectives	Awareness	Access to info	Education	Training	Participation	Cooperation	Equity & inclusion
Individual	<b>Climate Connectors:</b> Trained volunteers and paid partners who convene conversations with individuals and networks, with a focus on conversations led by youth and communities most impacted by climate change.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Raise the profile of climate change as an issue</li> <li>• Learn about local concerns and activities and provide a connection to State climate efforts</li> <li>• Develop informed, trusted local contacts in communities</li> </ul>	x	X	x	x			Include paid individuals to ensure we are reaching different demographics
Community	<b>Climate Changing Communities:</b> A locally hosted community engagement and capacity building program that strengthens networks for climate adaptation and resiliency and connects them to State programs for training, support, funding, and local action.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build local capacity for climate engagement, emergency preparedness, planning, and implementation</li> <li>• Increase understanding of local climate impacts and solutions, and connect action to values and concerns</li> </ul>	x	X	x	x	x	x	Build local capacity for inclusive engagement and implement in partnership with an equity-based organization
Sector	<b>Resilient Economy Incubators:</b> Green industry, academic, technology, state agencies, and other stakeholders collaboratively explore ways to overcome technological, social, and financial barriers to climate solutions which foster economic growth/resiliency, especially where early investment can prevent larger future costs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Generate and test innovative ideas for a resilient economy (e.g., energy efficiency, resilient infrastructure, and innovative funding mechanisms)</li> <li>• Accelerate mitigation and resiliency strategies</li> <li>• Protect economy from avoidable climate-related shocks</li> </ul>					x	x	Use equity policy tool and engage with impacted communities
State	<b>State Climate Planning:</b> Subcabinet develops robust and inclusive processes for the development of State climate priorities, policies, and plans, informed by climate and social science and local knowledge and values; and leading to just and equitable implementation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase public buy-in and support for State climate priorities, plans, and policies</li> <li>• Increase public participation in climate planning</li> <li>• Generate climate strategies using information from local, sector, and multilevel engagement components</li> </ul>	x	x			x	x	Incorporate Advisory Council, equity councils, environmental justice groups, and others into processes; build staff capacity
Multilevel	<b>Minnesota Climate Coalition:</b> A statewide, public-private partnership composed of state agencies and external organizations and individuals committed to meeting Minnesota’s climate goals that collaboratively produces 2-year plans and leverages financial and human resources to implement strategies across the state.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Secure meaningful climate commitments from organizations and agencies</li> <li>• Provide transparency on climate progress, including open climate data, progress tracking, reporting results</li> <li>• Connect public and private sector thought leaders from all levels to create informed, just climate solutions</li> </ul>	x	x			x	x	Develop participation mechanisms that elevate the voices of youth and other historically underrepresented populations

## Appendix 1: Proposed program details

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# Individual

## Component goal: Raise the commitment and capacity to act on climate change

*Proposed program: Climate Connectors*

### Summary

Climate Connectors are a trained corps of community members who start climate conversations in their communities to better understand each other's values, interests, ideas, and concerns in relation to climate change. Members bring climate information to their networks, share ways to get involved in local and state climate initiatives, and collect important information about local interests and ideas into the wider climate effort. This information feeds into problem-solving, policy development, and decision-making. Climate Communicators expand the network of community members involved by initiating interpersonal conversations, sharing information locally, and hosting workshops with groups in their communities. Climate communicators may be volunteers or paid liaisons to underrepresented populations. Through a partner organization, the State will provide training, opportunities for mutual learning, and other development opportunities for Climate Connectors. A Climate Connectors website will provide additional tools including a place to track conversations and information gained from conversations.

### Program goals:

- Raise the profile of climate change in public discourse as an issue in Minnesota
- Increase communication about climate change. While many are concerned, few talk about the issue with friends, family, and associates.
- Increase individuals' knowledge about climate science, current and expected impacts in Minnesota, and opportunities
- Build people's sense of identity as someone who cares about climate change, knows about it, and can do something

### Social barriers addressed by this component:

- Divergent viewpoints
- Lack of urgency
- Narrow thinking
- Technical complexity
- Sense of overwhelm
- Inequality and exclusion

### Program models and resources to draw from:

- [Living Room Conversations](#)
- [Braver Angels](#)
- [Bridge Alliance](#)
- [Voices for Rural Resilience](#) climate dialogues

- One Small Step
- Accountability Lab – [Civic Action Teams](#), Community Frontline Associates
- Climate Generation – [Climate Convenings Toolkit](#), Climate Storytelling
- The Future Earth by Eric Holthaus – visioning conversations model
- [Master Water Stewards](#)

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# Community

## Component goal: Build networks and local capacity for climate mitigation and resiliency

*Proposed program: Climate Changing Communities*

### Summary:

An effort to strengthen networks within communities – community organizations, businesses, faith-based organizations, local leaders – around building resiliency and connect them with state staff and other resources to advance community climate work such as community adaptation plans and vulnerability assessments. This will facilitate the sharing of local concerns, ideas, priorities, and needs to other levels of climate work in the state.

Climate Changing Communities is a locally-hosted community engagement and capacity building program. Host communities learn from and with state agencies and an equity-oriented nonprofit over the course of a year, to create lasting changes in the way that Minnesotans work together to address climate change impacts and solutions.

Each year, six host organizations (Tribal governments, local governments, school districts, libraries, or nonprofits) will build partnerships and plan public programming in their communities. They will practice community engagement techniques and leverage state resources to bring their communities together around climate issues. Each community will identify a local climate issue and work to address it.

### Program goals:

Host organizations and their local partners will

- Increase capacity to meaningfully engage with residents around climate issues
- Strengthen networks for climate emergency preparedness and resiliency
- Share local and personal experiences about climate change impacts and solutions
- Participate in state programs for training, support, funding and action at the local level

Minnesotans from these communities will

- Increase understanding of climate impacts and solutions
- Participate in volunteerism, public participation, or behavior change in support of reducing climate change
- Share their climate-related experiences, challenges, needs, and solutions with each other and the State of Minnesota.
- Develop solutions to local climate issues

### Social barriers addressed by this component:

- Divergent viewpoints
- Lack of urgency

- Narrow thinking
- Technical complexity
- Sense of Overwhelm
- Inequality and exclusion

**Program models and resources to draw from:**

- We Are Water
- University of Minnesota – Resilient Communities
- Institute on the Environment – Climate Smart Municipalities
- GreenStep Cities
- One Watershed One Plan
- Metropolitan Council – data and comprehensive planning assistance
- Eco Experience partnerships and educational content
- The Adaptation Coalition Toolkit: Building Community Resilience to Climate Change. World Bank, 2011.

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## Sector

### Component goal: Convene expert teams to generate and test innovative climate solutions

*Proposed program: Resilient Economy Incubators*

#### Summary:

Resilient Economy Incubators is a targeted public-private engagement approach to generating and implementing innovative ideas for a resilient economy. Incubators bring together green industry, technology, state agencies, and other stakeholders to explore ways to overcome technological, social, and financial barriers to climate change mitigation and adaptation in Minnesota, particularly where early investment can prevent larger future costs. Cost savings can be reinvested to fund Incubator team pilot projects.

Within and across sectors, these teams solicit innovative ideas for forwarding climate goals and work together with key players to generate and test specific solutions. Incubator teams use equity policy review tools and engage with impacted communities along the way to ensure equitable results. Incubator teams have funding available to pilot ideas, and are recognized for their successes.

#### Program goals:

- Serve as an incubator for generating ideas for a resilient economy – strategies for supporting green industry, energy efficiency, resilient infrastructure, and innovative funding mechanisms to support equitable climate action
- Seek ways to overcome barriers to implementing projects, processes, and policies that will prevent larger future costs, decarbonize, and promote climate justice
- Priorities informed by scale of climate impact, priorities expressed by local communities, and equity concerns

#### Social barriers addressed by this component:

- Narrow thinking
- Technical complexity

#### Program models and resources to draw from:

- [Climate Solutions and Economic Opportunities](#), Environmental Quality Board

# State

## Component goal: Expand opportunities for democratic engagement in climate policy

*Proposed program: Participatory State Climate Planning*

### Summary:

The Subcabinet will create and implement robust and inclusive processes for the development of State climate priorities, policies, and plans, informed by climate science and local knowledge and values; and leading to just and equitable implementation. This engagement must happen at the beginning and throughout the process of developing new policies, programs, rulemakings, etc. and not be tacked on at the end or after decisions have been made. Climate solutions championed by the Subcabinet must come from community priorities. The following section outlines these basic operational engagement processes.

The operational engagement of the Subcabinet is organized loosely in three parts: Centralized engagement, Action Team engagement, and Agency engagement. To be done right, this work will also need to be supported with internal training and capacity building in agencies. More information is provided in table below.

### Program goals:

- Increase public buy-in and support for State climate priorities, plans, and policies
- Increase public participation in climate planning
- Generate climate strategies using information from local, sector, and multilevel engagement components

### Social barriers addressed by this component:

- Divergent viewpoints
- Narrow thinking
- Technical complexity
- Inequality and exclusion

### Program models and resources to draw from:

- [Actions for Climate Empowerment Guidelines](#), United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

## Multilevel

### Component goal: Grow partnerships to secure commitments and resources for climate action

*Proposed program: Minnesota Climate Coalition*

#### Summary:

A statewide, public-private collaborative composed of state agencies and external organizations and individuals committed to meeting Minnesota's climate change mitigation and adaptation goals. The coalition collaboratively produces 2-year plans, and leverages financial and human resources to implement strategies across the state, and provides a platform to elevate the voices of youth and other historically underrepresented populations in dialogue and decision-making. The coalition is also informed from the other interrelated climate engagement efforts, including information collected by Climate Communicators, Climate Changing Communities, and Resilient Economy Incubators; individuals involved in these efforts may also join the coalition. The coalition is membership-based, with wide eligibility for Minnesotans and Minnesota-based organizations, in addition, those based outside Minnesota's boundaries may join as partners.

#### Program goals:

- Connect public and private sector thought leaders and organizations to work together toward common strategic climate goals, which are set based on climate science and climate justice principles.
- Leverage ideas, funding, skill sets, and other resources for climate action
- Provide on-ramp for state-level participation in climate work
- Offer grants to pilot ideas
- Provide transparency on climate progress, including open climate data, progress tracking, reporting results
- Ensure traditionally underrepresented populations have a voice in the process, by creating mechanisms for diverse participation and privileging ideas and concerns in broader dialogues (ex. seeking input from environmental justice communities, forming work groups for women, youth, etc.)

#### Social barriers addressed by this component:

- Divergent viewpoints
- Lack of urgency
- Narrow thinking
- Technical complexity
- Sense of overwhelm
- Inequality and exclusion

#### Program models and resources/sources of inspiration

- MN Sustainable Growth Coalition, Environmental Initiative
- The Adaptation Coalition Toolkit: Building Community Resilience to Climate Change. World Bank, 2011.

- Open Government Partnership [Multistakeholder Forum model](#)
- Partnership for a Connected Minnesota – Saint Paul and Minnesota Foundation
- [Iowa Monarch Conservation Consortium](#)

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## Sample state climate planning concepts

The following is a sample list of potential state planning engagement activities. It does not contain all existing or planned state climate engagement activities.

Table 3. Sample state climate planning concepts

	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Goal</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>How is equity centered?</b>
1	Advisory Council	Seek input, involve, possibilities for collaboration	Identify opportunities and barriers to implementation of strategies and policies. Advise on equity and just transition. Meets up 4 times per year	Members were selected to represent a wide variety of Minnesotans, especially those historically left out of the conversation
2	Government-to-government Tribal collaboration	Build relationships, consult, involve	Tribal leaders meet with Subcabinet quarterly, regular coordination takes place between subcabinet agency staff and the Minnesota Tribal Environmental Committee	Elevating Native voices. Hearing from Tribal partners early and often.
3	Youth Leadership	Seek input, build relationships	Identify policy and program priorities from youth. Support youth who are interested in going into environmental careers.	Prioritize participation by youth who are Black, Indigenous, and People of Color, as well as youth from a variety of communities around the state.
4	Equity working group	Inform, seek input, build relationships,	Open to anyone interested in participating. Regular meetings where the group can bring up their policy and program ideas and where state staff can bring ideas. Regular meetings allow participants to learn from each other over time, understand processes, and collaborate with the state on an ongoing basis.	Provide a venue for collaborative learning and hearing from community members early and often.
5	Environmental justice community conversations	Inform, Seek input, involve, build relationships	Partner with equity-oriented community organization(s) to host meetings or other ways of gathering input. Develop a series of	Rely on equity-oriented community organization(s) to lead the conversation. State staff listen, but do not lead.

	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Goal</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>How is equity centered?</b>
			virtual events to surface ideas about what communities want from climate action: opportunities and challenges.	
6	Rural community conversations	Inform, Seek input, involve, build relationships	Similar to equity engagement process, partner with community organization(s) in Greater Minnesota to host meetings or other ways of gathering input. green economy in climate work	Rural communities are often left out of policy conversations. State staff listen, but do not lead.
7	Climate webpage and communications	Inform	Provide basic, initial means for the public to participate in our process and provide input.	-GovDelivery list and plan for content -Single email inbox -Engagement survey and distribution plan -Engage with us webpage
8	Our Minnesota Climate Forum Series	Build relationships Seek input	Have a regular opportunity to check-in, collaborate, and build ideas together with advocates and the community.	Panels are reflective of Minnesota's diversity Equity is a topic in all conversations Some forum events are equity-focused
9	Action team-led general public engagement	Inform, seek input, build relationships	Action Teams hold basic webinars to ask for sector-specific policy and program ideas	Action Teams will actively incorporate questions about equity into their conversations
10	Availability for others' meetings	Inform, seek input, build relationships	A corps of state staff are available to attend the meetings of other groups to provide info on the work of the Subcabinet and seek input	Staff will actively reach out to community groups in areas historically under-served to offer to meet.
11	Action team stakeholder engagement	Inform, seek input, build relationships	Action Teams hold meetings with stakeholders to share information and hear their ideas.	Action Teams will intentionally ask equity questions in meetings and evaluate policy ideas with an equity tool. Action Teams will reach out to stakeholders representing historically underserved communities.
12	Agency engagement processes	Seek input	As agencies develop new policies/program, they will need to engage with the public through their processes.	Policies should be developed that center equity

	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Goal</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>How is equity centered?</b>
13	Partnership forums	Collaboration	Begin to build partnerships to work together	<p>Online forums for specific sectors (local governments, NGOs (environmental, equity, etc.), businesses, philanthropy, farmers, etc.) to discuss opportunities, challenges, and ideas for partnering.</p> <p>-Include one specifically targeted at groups that are non-traditional climate advocates (ag groups, evangelicals, rural local governments, hunting/fishing, etc.)</p>

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