

THE SPARK OF CONNECTION

A GUIDE TO FACILITATING SOCIAL MOBILIZATION FOR CLIMATE ACTION

ANDREA HEDLEY

A person is seen from the back, wearing a white t-shirt. The t-shirt features a large black rectangular graphic containing the text 'ZERO FÓSSEIS BRASIL'. 'ZERO' and 'FÓSSEIS' are in black, while 'BRASIL' is in orange. Below the graphic, the text 'WWW.350.ORG/PT', 'WWW.NAOFRACTINGBRASIL.COM.BR', and '#FOSSILFREE' is printed in black. The background is a blurred night scene with warm, bokeh lights.

ZERO
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#FOSSILFREE

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FOREWORD

Social mobilization is the Holy Grail of environmental advocacy. When do concerned citizens choose to organize around a common goal? How do they effectively communicate their concerns? How do they translate their concerns into a coherent advocacy strategy? Climate change is particularly challenging because the long-term consequences are not always tangible. However, in the last few years, the manifestations of climate change are becoming clear to dozens of cities and communities around the world. In North America, we've experienced unprecedented wildfires, devastating hurricanes, and the first signs of sea-level rise. Moreover, the 2017 Global Report on Internal Displacement concludes that 70% of global displacements (people who are forced to flee their homes) are the result of weather catastrophes.

How then do we mobilize, both locally and globally, those concerned citizens who understand the necessity of climate action? *Spark of Connection: A Guide to Facilitating Social Mobilization for Climate Action* draws upon interviews with leaders of successful social mobilization programs to understand the best practices that emerge from their efforts. This guide presents an outstanding portrait of community leaders, their best advice regarding social mobilization, and the challenges they endured. It's crucial to recognize that the climate issue will be with us for decades. We must view social mobilization both in terms of its everyday urgency and also as an inter-generational challenge. These leaders understand that they simultaneously must mobilize for immediate policy changes while preparing educational and political strategies for an entire century.

The last section of this guide contains a checklist of actions that provides valuable guidance for any organization and is particularly useful for grassroots action. Ultimately, social mobilization is about people who care about the future of their community and who take action for the common good. This guide is not only useful for climate-related issues, but for any environmental concern at multiple scales. I hope you find it as useful as I do. If so, please distribute it widely. We are all social mobilizers now!

Dr. Mitchell Thomashow

Educator, environmentalist, and author of

Ecological Identity: Becoming a Reflective Environmentalist

and *Bringing the Biosphere Home: Learning to Perceive Global Environmental Change*.

INTRODUCTION

SOCIAL MOBILIZATION FOR CLIMATE ACTION

We know that climate change threatens life on the planet.¹ It's often referred to as a “super wicked problem,” one that presents a sticky mess of challenges on all sorts of social, political and economic levels.² The potential impacts of climate change on human societies are bone-chilling and brain-rattling, and scientists have been sharing these projections with the public, governments, and the private sector for decades.³ Their warnings, at first tentative and cautious of political ramifications, are getting louder; in 2017, over 15,000 scientists issued a “warning to humanity.”⁴

So why haven't we—the collective “we”—been doing enough? Why aren't more of us marching in the streets and devoting our days to shaping a powerful response to climate change? How can environmental professionals (i.e., city planners, educators, scientists, artists and policy-makers) inspire, invite, and encourage people to act on climate solutions? This guide explores how we can collectively mobilize ourselves and others to make progress on climate solutions.

Because climate change challenges us on so many levels, researchers, policy-makers and leaders struggle with how to summon the *multi-level* response needed from governments and institutions, the private sector, and the general public. The staggering scale of the challenge is clear: addressing climate change will require deep transformations in our communities, involving extensive participation by a wide variety of contributors including politicians, industry leaders, and everyday citizens from all walks of life.

Accordingly, the UN Paris Agreement highlights the central role of *collaboration*, asserting that responding to climate change requires the “widest possible cooperation by all countries, and their participation in an effective and appropriate international response.” The sheer complexity of society engaging in a coordinated response to climate change compels us to search for innovative approaches to participation and collaboration.

An emerging body of research uses the term *social mobilization* to describe a wide-spread and coordinated response to climate action. The Pacific Institute of Climate Solutions (PICS) connects a network of researchers who are exploring effective approaches to climate mitigation and

1 United Nations, Framework Convention on Climate Change, *Adoption of the Paris Agreement* (Paris: 21st Conference of the Parties, United Nations, 2015).

2 K. Levin et al., “Overcoming the tragedy of super wicked problems,” *Policy Sciences* 45, No. 2, (2012): 123.

3 Archer & Pierrehumbert, *The warming papers: The scientific foundation for the climate change forecast* (Hoboken, NY: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011).

4 Ripple et al., “World scientists' warning to humanity: A second notice,” *BioScience* 67, No. 12, (2017): 1026.

SOCIAL MOBILIZATION FOR CLIMATE ACTION

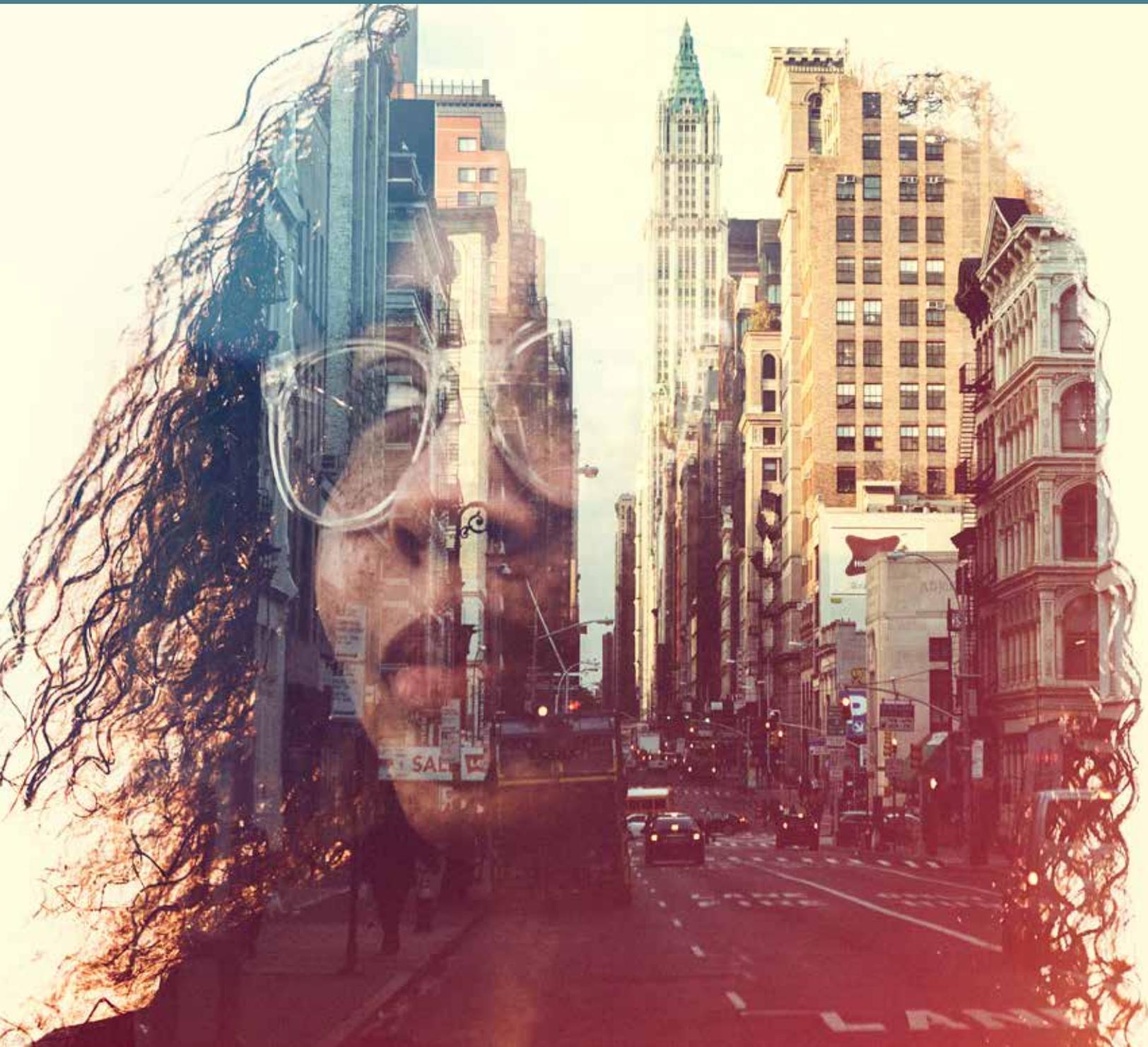
adaptation. PICS describes social mobilization for climate action as “engagement and motivation of the public and multiple stakeholders to implement climate solutions, through social learning, social movements, behaviour change, community action, and policy change.”⁵ Social mobilization is an apt description for an urgent need—how to develop collective responses to climate change.

To understand how we can collectively mobilize ourselves and others to make progress on climate solutions, this guidebook features the work of climate leaders and volunteers, dedicated citizens motivated to respond to the threat of climate change. These leaders are actively reaching out to others, teaching them how to participate in civic engagement to bring about political change, telling compelling stories to usher more people into the movement, and building trusting relationships before even saying the words “climate change.”

This guide shares the insights and approaches of four organizations that are actively and consistently bringing citizens into their work on climate action. These leaders—best described as climate mobilizers—were asked to share their thoughts on the most effective ways to build community support for climate action and on the reasons their projects were successful in mobilizing people to participate. Their answers resounded with a humanistic tone: making connections, listening, and empowering others. This guide shares their stories and the strategies they use to mobilize action on climate goals.

5 Stephen Sheppard, et al., *Special report – A synthesis of PICS-funded social mobilization research* (Victoria, BC: University of Victoria, 2015).

CLIMATE MOBILIZERS



CLIMATE MOBILIZERS

CASE STUDIES

Climate mobilizers are dynamic leaders in organizations inspiring citizens to take part in climate action. The four organizations highlighted here are diverse: a global, grassroots climate activist network; a citizens' lobbyist group; an educational non-profit; and a community volunteer-run group. Their common link is in finding ways of bringing people into the climate movement, whether on a neighbourhood sidewalk or inside government chamber walls. Although each organization has a different approach—e.g., pressuring governments to reduce fossil fuel investment, educating new graduates on civic participation, or forging close relationships with local government staff—they all share common principles that invite their audiences to respond to climate change.

CASE STUDY 1: **350.ORG**

CASE STUDY 2: **CITIZENS' CLIMATE LOBBY**

CASE STUDY 3: **CIVICSPARK**

CASE STUDY 4: **COVALLIS SUSTAINABILITY COALITION**



Photo credit: 350.org

350.ORG

COORDINATING CLIMATE ACTION ON A GLOBAL SCALE

350.org is an international network mobilizing a global response to climate change. They use grassroots organizing, online campaigns, and mass public actions to encourage leadership and participation in climate action around the world.

350.org groups share a common set of principles: belief in climate justice, strength through collaboration, and the power of mass mobilizations to make change. Through networking, savvy storytelling, and climate leadership training, their members have built an inclusive global coalition for climate action.

CASE STUDY 1

350.ORG

In 2009, a grassroots collective achieved one of the largest days of climate action in history. The International Day of Climate Action mobilized citizens around the world to participate in climate events in 181 countries. Only two years after 350.org formed at Middlebury College in Vermont, the group achieved social mobilization on a massive scale. Author and co-founder of 350.org Bill McKibben recalls, “On the first big day of action, I had no idea how well it would go and how many people would participate, but we asked everybody to send in pictures as our events were underway. There were 5,200 events happening around the world. For a good 24 to 36 hours, there were two, three, four pictures a minute flooding into our Flickr account—it was extremely moving.”

Since then, 350.org has established itself as an incubator of global climate mobilization. The organization has mastered powerful methods to engage citizens: building relationships that are connected by a global network, capturing attention with visually compelling stories, and empowering others by sharing ideas and resources. 350.org was imagined as a coalition, something that people all around the world, in all walks of life, could rally around—and they have. At the International Day of Climate Action event, McKibben declared to the crowd, “When you look at those pictures, you will see there are no movie stars, there are no rock stars, there are no charismatic politicians. These are people in every country gathering around a scientific data point, around the most important number in the world: 350.”⁶ The number 350 represents the science behind a stable climate on earth; scientists have linked atmospheric concentrations of carbon dioxide in excess of 350 parts per million (ppm) to climate change. Carbon dioxide in the atmosphere has now exceeded 350 ppm—in October 2018, the Mauna Loa Observatory in Hawaii registered 406 ppm atmospheric CO₂.

350.org empowers everyday citizens to become climate activists through freely sharing authority, resources and knowledge. McKibben refers to it as one of the first examples of “open-source organizing” for climate activism. Local climate groups have sprung up all over the world in response to this type of decentralized movement-building, each group with its own approach, yet still in support of 350.org’s basic goals and principles. “I think the things that work for us have been a deep emphasis from the beginning on not wanting to build a big institution or organization, but instead empowering people everywhere,” McKibben explained, adding that, “The key to getting lots and lots of people in far flung places to volunteer and do this kind of work is to give them real control over it. We’ve never worried about intellectual property, we just told everybody, ‘take the logo, take the idea, take the grant, do with it what you can,’ and people have done remarkable things all over the place.”

6 Ecohope Blog, “Bill McKibben makes 350 statement in Times Square,” October 2009, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r50RLiHrwjQ>

CASE STUDY 1

350.ORG

350.org attracts participants by telling compelling stories, particularly through using creative and influential visual statements that educate citizens on civic participation and climate change simultaneously. 350.org reaches out to the everyday person, then provides training on how to be an activist, and encourages them to take ownership of their stories. One of these climate activists is Mary DeMocker, an author, artist and co-founder of 350Eugene, who along with her neighbours, ran a 300-foot black tube across their front lawns to represent a proposed pipeline through southern Oregon. Set in an otherwise typical suburban neighbourhood, the installation created a visual spectacle, which invited curious onlookers to learn about the proposed pipeline and take political action right there on the spot. Artistic storytelling inspires participation in the climate movement. “We are telling a story and trying to engage people’s emotions. We are making it visually enticing for photographers who are always looking for a fresh perspective and creating something that people are inspired by,” said DeMocker.

One of 350.org’s most notable achievements is their work at the forefront of the fossil fuel divestment movement. Their Fossil Free divestment campaign has targeted cities, pension funds, religious institutions, museums and universities, demanding that they withdraw funding from fossil fuel investments and promoting the narrative that it’s morally wrong to profit from an industry that pollutes the atmosphere. Divestment announcements by large institutions like the World Bank, New York City, and the Republic of Ireland signal the significance of the economic shift away from fossil fuels. In 2018, only six years after the movement started, divestment commitments reached an astounding \$7.17 trillion.

350.org continues to reach out to connect and mobilize citizens around the world who are concerned about climate change. Their leaders provide ways for people to make a tangible impact on climate change mitigation. Although 350.org’s network is fueled by digital technology that connects a worldwide coalition, it’s rooted in on-the-ground action, deeply tapped into the roots of community relationships and networks. “It’s really important for people to get out from behind the keyboard...and take political action,” said McKibben.⁷

7 Grist, “Bill McKibben on International Climate Action Day,” October 2009, <https://youtu.be/p7v7HW-f6cs>



Photo credit: Citizens' Climate Lobby Canada

CITIZENS' CLIMATE LOBBY

DRIVING ACTION ON CLIMATE POLICY THROUGH INCLUSIVE CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Citizens' Climate Lobby (CCL) is a citizen-led lobbying group. Founded in the US, it has chapters in Canada and over 40 other countries around the world. CCL works to increase political participation in climate action, training citizen volunteers to lobby politicians for carbon pricing, specifically for a carbon fee and dividend policy. CCL points out that this a non-partisan policy in that citizens, rather than an elected party, receive the end-profits of the fee. CCL maintains that returning carbon pricing revenue to households will help citizens afford the costs of energy in the transition to clean fuels, as well as encourage industry to invest in low emission technology. CCL strives to make climate progress by seeking shared values and empowering citizens to engage in the political process.

CASE STUDY 2

CITIZENS' CLIMATE LOBBY

Citizens' Climate Lobby transforms community members into climate lobbyists by training citizens on civic engagement and building trusting relationships. Cathy Orlando is the International Outreach Manager and Co-founder of CCL Canada. In 2007, while working as the Science Outreach Manager at Laurentian University in Sudbury, Ontario, and pregnant with her third child, she heard an update on the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report. "I can remember it like it was yesterday, even though it was a decade ago. I got so scared," Orlando recalls. She stepped into the climate movement and was selected as one of the first 250 Canadians to receive training as a climate leader with Al Gore's initiative, The Climate Project. "I turned to my family and I said, 'You know, there's no going back. I'm not giving up until this is done or undone,'" described Orlando. In 2010, Orlando travelled to Nashville, Tennessee for a training session. She joined a breakout group with six other participants—one of whom was Marshall Saunders, founder of the Citizens' Climate Lobby. Saunders founded CCL in the US after realizing that individual behaviour changes weren't adequate to address the climate problem, rather, strong political leadership would be necessary. "I realized that ordinary people like me would have to organize, educate ourselves, give up our hopelessness and powerlessness, and gain the skills to be effective with our government."⁸

The meeting between Marshall and Orlando sparked a potent outcome: the creation of CCL Canada. Orlando tapped into her existing network of relationships to launch the group in Canada: "I'd already started aligning myself with a lot of people who were concerned about the climate issue, and that core group of people helped me get CCL Canada off the ground." After a period of deep reflection, Orlando decided to quit her job to run CCL Canada full-time. She uses her role to inspire and teach citizens how to take political action on climate change. "We are about empowering people to do things—that is central to all that we do. We are trying to empower people to do the right thing, including politicians," said Orlando.

The organization fosters civic engagement for climate action through a robust training program and establishing relationships with politicians. CCL provides an easy-to-tap-into structure of a few volunteer hours per month, turning everyday citizens into climate lobbyists. In the training program, volunteers learn how to approach their provincial and federal government representatives with a specific request: adopt a carbon fee and dividend.

8 Citizens' Climate Lobby, "Citizen's Climate Lobby Founder: Marshall Saunders," <https://citizensclimate.org/about-ccl/citizens-climate-lobbys-founder/> (accessed September 2017).

CASE STUDY 2

CITIZENS' CLIMATE LOBBY

CCL's approach is based on respect, valuing the role of individuals in public office and nurturing an open dialogue with politicians from all parties. Their positive approach to political engagement appealed to Marlo Firme, head of the Vancouver, BC chapter. Firme was attracted to the chance to lobby for climate policy solutions, as an alternative to direct action and confrontation. "CCL has a different approach to activism than what I typically see, like raising signs and going against something," said Firme, "we always like to start our meetings by thanking the politicians about something and approaching them with a sense of respect and appreciation for what they do." Orlando and Firme stress the value of building authentic, respectful connections. "You have to communicate, listen, and build relationships with your members of parliament. Really listen to them and show that you care," said Orlando, "Political parties are run by people and they need our help."

Since CCL Canada formed, Orlando and her team have helped citizens all over Canada make hundreds of connections with MPs, through letters, phone calls and face-to-face meetings. CCL Canada's role in influencing political will toward adopting a carbon fee and dividend model—as announced by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau in 2018—can't be understated.



Photo credit: CivicSpark

CIVICSPARK

BLENDING EDUCATION AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT CAPACITY-BUILDING TO ACCELERATE CLIMATE SOLUTIONS

CivicSpark is a non-profit program that increases the capacity of local governments in the State of California to address climate and water conservation goals. It's managed by California's Local Government Commission and the Governor's Office of Planning and Research, and is funded through AmeriCorps.

The organization offers fellowships to new graduates of environmental degree programs, pairing them with local governments and public agencies in need of additional capacity to meet climate goals. Once assigned to a local government, CivicSpark fellows work on a climate service project that integrates training, research, community engagement, and policy implementation.

CASE STUDY 3

CIVICSPARK

From her office in Sacramento, program manager Kristen Wraith described how the idea for CivicSpark arose from climate discussions between California's Local Government Commission (LGC) and the Governor's Office. "We started asking, 'What are the biggest barriers to climate action at the local level?'" In a series of workshops, they posed the question to partners and stakeholders throughout California. "Across the board, one of the themes that emerged was that capacity was a major, major issue," said Wraith. They found that local governments often don't have adequate budgets and staff to meet ambitious climate targets.

This insight led to the idea for CivicSpark, a program that partners young professionals with local governments to help them meet climate goals. Every year, CivicSpark offers fellowships to dozens of new graduates in climate change and water management, giving them a unique opportunity to gain hands-on experience. Each fellow is assigned to a capacity-building initiative—over 100 projects on climate mitigation and adaptation are underway throughout the State of California. Depending on their interest, fellows might work with community members on a climate action plan, develop a GHG emissions inventory or set up a pilot program for free energy audits. Regional coordinators—sourced from CivicSpark's robust network of connections—serve as professional mentors, helping fellows to develop relationships with local leaders. "Our guiding principles are connecting leaders and advancing policies, so we have a wide network that we tapped into. Through our partnerships, we were able to identify a partner in each one of our regions, and they serve as the hub for local government projects in that region," explained Wraith.

CivicSpark projects strive to understand and engage the local community—they're laser focused on ensuring that each project arises from specific local conditions. "The process starts by working with local communities to identify their needs. I think one of the biggest shortcomings of a lot of climate work is that you have somebody who comes in, doesn't have connections to the community, prescribes a solution and then works to implement it with a limited touch for community engagement," said Wraith.

CivicSpark's education on climate action is based on experiential, reciprocal learning. Fellows receive extensive training throughout their service year, and in turn, they share knowledge and resources with government staff and community members—knowledge and resources flow back and forth between the fellows, community members, and staff at the local and state level. "As a Governor's Initiative program, we have a direct connection to the state government. They give us

CASE STUDY 3

CIVICSPARK

great resources, they train our fellows. And it's a great opportunity for the governor's office to learn about the local efforts that are going on around the state through the program," said Wraith, "We're seeing that these really small rural governments, who are in most ways cut off the big policy making, are actually learning from the best practices of big cities that also are hosting fellows. Being able to bridge that urban rural divide has been really successful at the local level."

In the first three years of the CivicSpark program, fellows contributed 230,000 hours of service to communities in over 300 projects. They've completed 18 climate action plans, 56 GHG inventories, 155 energy assessment reports, and have engaged 15,500 community members. CivicSpark generates capacity for climate action over the long-term by building a network of climate expertise, acquiring a deep understanding of local communities, and educating participants at all levels.



Photo credit: Kate Hickok Feldman

CORVALLIS SUSTAINABILITY COALITION

LOCAL LEADERS BUILDING A COALITION FOR COMMUNITY SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE ACTION

The Corvallis Sustainability Coalition (CSC) is a community-led network of dedicated volunteers working to increase the sustainability of their community, Corvallis, Oregon. The CSC is run by an executive committee and 12 action teams, which coordinate community sustainability projects on topics like transportation, energy and food. With the support of several hundred volunteers and over 300 partner organizations and donors, the CSC rallies businesses, non-profits, faith organizations, universities, and citizens to implement the Corvallis Community Sustainability Action Plan and the Corvallis Climate Action Plan.

CASE STUDY 4

CORVALLIS SUSTAINABILITY COALITION

Corvallis, Oregon has something special going on. Community members are involved in an ongoing, city-wide sustainability project built on inclusive engagement, trusting relationships and partnerships with local government. The Corvallis Sustainability Coalition is network of organizations and individuals working hard to improve the sustainability of their region. It's a commendable example of mobilizing citizens on climate action and other sustainability targets, as they've rallied hundreds of volunteers and an extensive cross-section of community groups over several years. In Corvallis, it's hard not to bump into someone connected to the coalition.

Annette Mills and her husband David Eckert moved to Corvallis in 2006, attracted by the community's sustainability features like its local food supply, active community, and compact downtown. Mills and Eckert found a community rich with civic leaders inviting citizens to participate in climate action and environmental protection. "They had done a lot of work, years worth of work, laying the groundwork here in Corvallis to get sustainability on people's radar screen," described Mills.

The coalition was born when these community leaders realized that they could gain more traction by joining forces. When they decided to meet, more than 40 people from 25 different organizations showed up. By the end of the meeting, they'd hatched a plan to coordinate their efforts, setting up action groups on sustainability topics. Mills assumed a leadership role in the CSC, yet she's quick to give credit to the many others who are central to the group's success.

Brandon Trelstad has served as vice-facilitator since the coalition's inception. As the sustainability officer for Oregon State University and a member of the City's Climate Action Task Force, it's an understatement to say that he knows a lot about the nuts and bolts of sustainability. I asked Trelstad about why the coalition has been so successful in mobilizing community participation. He responded, "Annette Mills—that's the number one answer." I pressed him for more detail, "What's her secret? Is there something special about the way she engages people?" Trelstad responded, "Annette's an excellent listener. She has a deeper understanding than most about what motivates people and how to appeal to that. She really takes the time to listen."

Mills approaches civic engagement through her relationships with community members. Her sincere interest in people helps them feel understood and included. Within the coalition, building trusting and respectful relationships is a central hub around which their network of volunteers rotate. Mills shared her thoughts on what she views as important factors for social

CASE STUDY 4

CORVALLIS SUSTAINABILITY COALITION

mobilization: “I think it’s really important to be out in the community a lot, helping people connect with each other and genuinely taking an interest in people.” Mills’ ability to draw people into the climate movement evokes the concept of ‘old fashioned values,’ of treating others in the way you’d like to be treated. This seemingly simple way of interacting may have more power to mobilize than we give it credit for.

The CSC strives for their community engagement to be inclusive, understanding that it’s important to make it easy for people to engage and offer a variety of ways for them to get involved. The coalition doesn’t charge a membership fee; they allow people to contribute as much—or as little—time and resources as they can. “It’s important that people feel like there’s a role for them, and it can be something extremely simple if they don’t have time to commit,” Mills explains. This approach gives people a sense of acceptance regardless of their level of contribution to climate action. Mills sees it as a continuum: “I want everybody who is the least bit interested in sustainability to feel like they’re part of this, because that’s how you help people move along that continuum, is by engaging them. Helping people feel accepted, and having that view that we’re all on a continuum and none of us is there, conveying that sense of acceptance to people about where they are at is really important.”

The coalition’s work highlights the value of shared ownership, sometimes referred to as co-production. Co-production illustrates that when civic groups and governments share involvement in community plans and services, it results in more legitimacy and distributed responsibility for implementation. When the City of Corvallis indicated that they didn’t have the staff resources to create a city-wide sustainability plan, the CSC offered to take on a large part of the planning process. The City accepted the offer and a partnership was born. The CSC trained 50 facilitators and gathered input from hundreds of community members to create the Community Sustainability Action Plan. Thus, the plan benefited from substantive citizen input—the community co-owns the plan, in a sense. It’s a living document focused on implementation, periodically revised by community members to make sure that the actions are relevant and achievable. In Corvallis, climate goals aren’t stagnant words in a document, they’re a constantly evolving and growing part of community life.

PRACTICES TO SUPPORT SOCIAL MOBILIZATION FOR CLIMATE ACTION

What type of engagement and communication practices can communities use to facilitate social mobilization for climate action?

Five core engagement methods are common to organizations leading the way on social mobilization for climate action. These key practice areas emerged through conversations with climate leaders in each organization, as they shared the key themes, processes and strategies used to bring people into their climate action initiatives. These practices are intended to provide a set of methods for increasing civic participation in climate initiatives.



PRACTICES TO SUPPORT SOCIAL MOBILIZATION FOR CLIMATE ACTION

1	Connections & Relationships	REACH OUT: network, connect with key actors, and build relationships
2	Inclusive Civic Engagement	ENGAGE: teach participants how to take action and engage in the political process
3	Storytelling & Education	SHOW: tell compelling stories and offer immersive educational experiences for participants
4	Shared Ownership & Local Focus	SHARE: empower others through sharing responsibility, starting from the ground up in local communities
5	Support & Capacity	SUPPORT: build organizational capacity, support team members, and recognize achievements

CONNECTIONS & RELATIONSHIPS

PRACTICE 1

Climate mobilizers do something simple yet powerful—they reach out to others to make new connections and deepen existing relationships. In my conversations with climate leaders, actions such as networking, connecting with civic leaders, and building trusting relationships emerged as pillars of social mobilization for climate action.

1.1 MAKING CONNECTIONS

1.1.1 EXPAND NETWORKS

Meaningful and consistent networking shows up as a core activity in organizations mobilizing for climate action. Through networking, organizations can expand their reach, negotiate, bargain, gain financing, and bring new groups into their climate action programs.

1.1.2 BUILD COALITIONS

Climate mobilizers benefit from focusing their networking activities on building coalitions: organizing and uniting several leaders or groups around a central vision. The scale of a coalition can be local or global. For example, the Corvallis Sustainability Coalition formed a strong alliance of local sustainability leaders, while 350.org coordinated a worldwide coalition of climate activists.

1.2 BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

1.2.1 CULTIVATE TRUSTING RELATIONSHIPS

When asked about the most important factors for inspiring citizens to join in climate action, climate mobilizers talk about the potency of close relationships. Building trusting relationships starts with unassuming, but significant actions, such as ensuring that participants feel respected and included. The simple act of treating people with kindness and respect may be underestimated, yet it leads to closer relationships that activate networks of social capital and form a platform for collective action.

We want to build a movement and that starts with relationships. A lot of our strongest connections in the climate movement grow from strong personal relationships.

~ Mary DeMocker, 350Eugene

We agreed that we needed to have a network or coalition, so that we could communicate with each other more effectively and seek out opportunities for collaboration more easily.

*~ Annette Mills,
Corvallis Sustainability Coalition*

You have to communicate, listen, and build relationships with your members of parliament; really listen to them and show that you care.

*~ Cathy Orlando,
Citizens' Climate Lobby*

CONNECTIONS & RELATIONSHIPS

PRACTICE 1

1.2.2 INTERACT FACE-TO-FACE

Climate mobilizers highlight face-to-face interaction as a key factor in genuine relationship building, and note that deep listening, in particular, increases understanding and trust. Face-to-face interactions nurture more empathetic connections, which can be hard to realize in digital networks. In-person exchanges are more likely to meaningfully engage participants.

1.3 KEY ACTORS

1.3.1 CONNECT WITH KEY ACTORS

Organizations that successfully mobilize for climate action reveal the presence and influence of key actors,⁹ civic leaders activating social change. Focusing on connections with key actors from groups inside and outside of climate action networks helps organizations gain access to potential partners, mobilize existing stocks of social capital, and engage new members.

1.3.2 DEVELOP PERSONAL CAPACITY

It's important to remember that we all have the ability to be key actors in the climate movement. Research shows that key actors draw upon internal capacity (e.g., their skills, mindset) and external capacity (e.g., their connections) to make change in their communities.¹⁰ Climate leaders self-identify a variety of factors that contribute to their capacity to take action, including hard work, inspiration, enjoyment, and a spiritual or moral incentive.

We need to be engaging face-to-face more. I think that's part of the solution, to really hear what people are saying. There's a certain accountability in our face-to-face exchanges that's lost in the internet.

~ Brandon Trelstad,
Sustainability Officer,
Oregon State University

If a group loses its connectors, it loses its bridges into the wider community and thus loses agency.

~ Lenore Newman, UFV
and Ann Dale, RRU

Individuals who have developed the capacity and ability to build networks mobilize the requisite social capital that increases the probability of social change.

~ Chris Ling, RRU and Ann Dale, RRU

9 Ann Dale and Jennie Sparkes, "Protecting ecosystems: network structure and social capital mobilization," *Community Development Journal* 43, no.2 (2008):143.

10 Chris Ling and Ann Dale, "Agency and social capital: characteristics and dynamics," *Community Development Journal* 49, no. 1 (2014): 4.

INCLUSIVE CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

PRACTICE 2

In an era of reduced political participation, low voter turnout, and meagre involvement in community organizations, there's a need to find ways to advance inclusive civic engagement. Climate mobilizers recognize the importance of asking people to participate in the political process; they offer inviting and easy ways for citizens to participate in moving policy toward climate solutions. On the spectrum of civic engagement, some organizations approach the political arena through partnership and support, others with confrontation and pressure. Regardless of approach, successful climate mobilizers make it easy for people to engage in the political process, offer education on how to go about it, and maintain a focus on action and implementation.

2.1 EASE OF ENGAGEMENT

2.1.1 BE INCLUSIVE

Climate leaders make it easy for people to engage in their programs. They point out that civic engagement should be inclusive, and they reduce barriers for citizens to get involved. For example, the Corvallis Sustainability Coalition embraces all citizen and partner contributions, even those who can only contribute as little as a few dollars per month. There's no membership fee—if people can't make a financial donation, they can work at events, join actions teams, or give input on community plans.

2.1.2 MAXIMIZE OPPORTUNITIES FOR INVOLVEMENT

Climate mobilizers provide multiple avenues for people to participate. Citizens fall in different places along a spectrum of engagement—while some people are comfortable sending a letter, others want to make a significant personal contribution. Recognizing this spectrum of engagement highlights that it's essential to provide multiple types of opportunities for involvement.

We empower individuals to have breakthroughs exercising their personal or political power through lobbying, as opposed to being protesters. We are lobbyists, nothing against protestors. We totally need them.

*~ Cathy Orlando,
Citizens' Climate Lobby*

It's important for people to feel included and to have easy ways of being included.

*~ Annette Mills,
Corvallis Sustainability Coalition*

We try to come up with very clear ways that folks can get engaged. So, whether it's something like signing a petition or sending a tweet, to hosting a house party at a community meeting, to joining an action in your community and calling your senators, there is a really wide array and wide range of levels of engagement that we present.

~ Lindsay Meiman, 350.org

INCLUSIVE CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

PRACTICE 2

2.2 POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

It's possible to make progress on climate goals through a variety of political approaches—lobbying, partnering and supporting, or pressuring and confronting—but the common thread in each approach is political education for citizens.

2.2.1 CONFRONT AND PRESSURE

Climate activism focuses on confronting and pressuring governments and the private sector to take bold action on climate mitigation. One of 350.org's primary goals is to pressure governments and institutions into eliminating the use of fossil fuels. They train citizens to become climate activists that carry out civil disobedience campaigns around the world.

2.2.2 LOBBY

Some citizens are more attracted to lobbying and shaping policy solutions than to direct action and confrontation. For example, Citizens' Climate Lobby views lobbying as a compelling form of political engagement, giving participants an opportunity to directly influence politicians on climate policy.

2.2.3. SUPPORT AND PARTNER

Supporting and partnering with government bodies to work collectively toward climate solutions is a powerful way to engage citizens on climate action. Governments often have a longer wish list of climate goals than resources to accomplish them. That's where organizations like CivicSpark are vital, as their civic engagement model funnels education and support to local governments, training a new generation of climate leaders in the process.

2.3 FOCUS ON ACTION AND IMPLEMENTATION

Climate mobilizers focus on action and implementation as a key way to engage citizens and partners. They move quickly from educating participants on climate solutions to inviting them to take concrete action. They understand that action is energizing. People are drawn to engage with an organization that offers participation in climate solutions that are impactful and make a real difference on the ground.

[Re: the Keystone Pipeline] It was the first time in the climate movement when we had asked people to engage in civil disobedience. My instinct, which proved to be correct, was that in many ways it's easier to ask people to do hard things than easy ones.

~ Bill McKibben, 350.org

Listening is the most important thing about being a lobbyist—listening to what the politicians need us to do in order for them to get the job done.

~ Cathy Orlando,
Citizens' Climate Lobby

A lot of our success comes from our fellows that are the boots on the ground. Cities come to us with long lists of projects, but no staff to complete them. We now have many successes, finished projects that never would have happened if it weren't for a CivicSpark fellow coming in.

~ Kristen Wraith, CivicSpark

STORYTELLING & EDUCATION

PRACTICE 3

Storytelling and education are at the heart of effective mobilization for climate action. Storytelling can help participants see a role for themselves within the overwhelming complexity of the systems that drive climate change. Climate mobilizers use inventive storytelling techniques that layer several elements—education, heroism, inequity, moral imperatives, and spectacle. Their stories grab attention, inspire and invite citizens to step into a role. Once participants become engaged with an organization, a variety of educational processes can supply them with the tools they need to act on climate solutions. Climate mobilizers educate their participants through revealing connections between issues, robust training programs (both on-line and in-person), and creating networks of reciprocal (or two-way) learning.

3.1 TELLING COMPELLING STORIES

3.1.1 USE ARTISTIC, VISUAL STORYTELLING

As part of climate action initiatives, it's valuable to produce artistic, highly visual stories that draw attention, educate audiences, and spark participation. This practice is central for groups like 350.org; they train citizens on how to construct their own powerful visual statements demanding climate action, sharing this effective method with communities all over the world.

3.1.2. UNDERSTAND MOTIVATIONS AND TARGET AUDIENCE

Climate mobilizers craft stories based on an understanding of their audience's motivations. Often the narrative—and a prompt for action—will target a specific audience or politician. Clarity about who your targets are can heighten the impact of your message and provide a focal point for action.

There's a lot of investment in storytelling that needs to happen, so rather than just telling folks a story, also bringing them along for them to feel invested in it.

~ Lindsay Meiman, 350.org

When my kids and I are inspired, we put up an art installation on our front lawn. Our neighbourhood gets a lot of foot traffic, so it's an easy and fun way to invite people to think about issues differently and to help them think about their own ways of interrupting the conversation in a creative way.

~ Mary DeMocker, 350Eugene

Climate action is embedded in all sorts of issues. So there are a lot of issues that you can tap into and leverage in terms of your messaging to mobilize people.

~ Michelle De Leon,
Climate Fellow, CivicSpark

STORYTELLING & EDUCATION

PRACTICE 3

3.2. EDUCATING PARTICIPANTS

3.2.1 REVEAL CONNECTIONS AND INEQUITY

Educating citizens on the connections between issues—particularly by revealing the inequity and injustice connected to climate change impacts—can be a catalyst to mobilize participation in climate action. And it's essential to give influential roles in climate action programs to individuals and groups that are disproportionately affected by climate impacts.

3.2.2 PROVIDE TRAINING

Thoughtfully-crafted training programs give participants the skills and tools they need to make a genuine contribution to the climate movement. For example, 350.org shares an extensive network of educational materials with participants, as seen in their online training portal. They provide all the information a budding climate activist needs to build a network of social mobilization. CivicSpark takes a different approach, providing in-depth, hands-on professional development training. Develop a training program that best fits program goals and participant interests.

3.2.3. ENCOURAGE RECIPROCAL LEARNING

When developing a social mobilization strategy, consider building in loops of reciprocal (or two-way) learning: knowledge that cycles back and forth between educators, agency staff, leaders, and community members. Reciprocal learning can become an upward spiral of mobilizing climate action through education.

Something 350 does really well is telling a clear story of who is responsible for the climate crisis, what people can do, and debunking the misinformation that it's up to the individual, instead showing that it's a systemic problem. This tells a very compelling story, and there's an undeniable bond with getting folks involved and feeling like there's something that they can do about it.

~ Lindsay Meiman, 350.org

Every month, volunteers get a couple of actions to complete and they rehearse one talking point that we want them to focus on. It is a very regimented schedule...we provide a very solid framework.

*~ Cathy Orlando,
Citizens' Climate Lobby*

Our fellows serve as a huge conduit for information, which our partners really appreciate. When CivicSpark shares opportunities, fellows pass it on to their partners, giving them information on grant opportunities and trainings that they wouldn't have heard about otherwise.

~ Kristen Wraith, CivicSpark

SHARED OWNERSHIP & LOCAL FOCUS

PRACTICE 4

Climate mobilizers take a shared, or decentralized, approach to participation. They maintain that to engage people on climate solutions is to empower them, to freely share authority and resources, and to strive for solutions rooted in local understanding.

Focusing on community-level participation is a key method for mobilizing citizens on climate action, even for organizations with a global scope. Climate mobilizers realize that the places closest to us—our homes, cities and towns—are where climate change impacts will land, and also where political and practical solutions can begin. From that local point of engagement, they link participants to national or global initiatives.

4.1 SHARED OWNERSHIP

4.1.1 DISTRIBUTE RESPONSIBILITY

Groups can ignite deeper participation in climate action by sharing authority and responsibility with others. In this approach, authority and influence over a project are distributed among many people or groups, rather than controlled by a central agency.

4.1.2 EMPOWER OTHERS

Climate mobilizers share influence over projects with their participants. Providing roles with greater responsibility inspires more enthusiastic participation. Opportunities for participants to take part in leadership roles and contribute to projects in a meaningful way are energizing.

The key to getting lots and lots of people in far flung places to volunteer and do this kind of work is to give them real control over it. We've never worried about intellectual property, we just told everybody, "take the logo, take the idea, take the grant, do with it what you can," and people have done remarkable things all over the place.

~ Bill McKibben, 350.org

One thing to know about CivicSpark is that it definitely doesn't have a top-down approach. The fellows have such input into their projects. It's really incredible how you can shape the overall direction of your project....CivicSpark has activated a lot of young people who are now speaking and engaged in local politics.

~ Michelle De Leon,
Climate Fellow, CivicSpark

SHARED OWNERSHIP & LOCAL FOCUS

PRACTICE 4

4.2 LOCAL COMMUNITY FOCUS

4.2.1 UNDERSTAND LOCAL COMMUNITIES

A meaningful understanding of local communities is a first step to inviting citizens to participate in climate projects. Mobilization rests on understanding worldviews and on-the-ground climate impacts in communities—when citizens are aware of these impacts, they're more likely to act. Climate mobilizers approach partners with an aim to understand their specific local viewpoints, needs, and challenges.

4.2.2. INITIATE IN-DEPTH LOCAL ENGAGEMENT

In-depth local engagement builds networks that carry climate action into long-term implementation. Climate mobilizers point to direct community engagement as one of the most important aspects of successful climate action work. Even a global network like 350.org is based on a foundation of strong local groups in communities around the world.

It all goes back to knowing the community that you're working with, having close ties to that community, engaging the community, and then also empowering the community to feel like they can continue this work.

~ Kristen Wraith, CivicSpark

350 provides the network, resources, tools, and training for folks to really build hyper-local power

~ Lindsay Meiman, 350.org

SUPPORT & CAPACITY

PRACTICE 5

Climate mobilizers build a robust framework of internal support within their organizations, which increases their ability to bring others into their programs. They take the time to build the capacity of their organization through supporting team members, sharing resources, sourcing outside support, recognizing achievements and building leadership skills. Layers of supportive actions in organizations sustain group members and increase their ability to engage those around them.

5.1 PROVIDING SUPPORT AND BUILDING CAPACITY

5.1.1 SUPPORT TEAM MEMBERS

Climate mobilizers make it a regular practice to check in and support team members and volunteers. Connecting on a personal level helps team members guard against burnout and provides a boost of motivation, when needed. They also help each other and their partner organizations through avid sharing of valuable resources and best practices.

5.1.2 BUILD LEADERSHIP CAPACITY

Climate mobilizers build the leadership capacity of their members, inviting them into active leadership roles. They champion others, encouraging them to develop their sense of personal efficacy and take on more responsibility.

5.1.3 RECOGNIZE ACHIEVEMENTS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

Climate mobilizers celebrate the achievements and raise the profile of their partners and supporters. Celebrating success both inside an organization and in the surrounding community generates a supportive atmosphere and inspires deeper participation. For example, the Corvallis Sustainability Coalition publicly celebrates the clean energy achievements of their partner businesses and organizations. Once businesses realize the opportunity to show off their environmental initiatives, they often move up the ladder of engagement and become more involved with the coalition.

Connecting with people one-on-one is important. I call my national manager every week or so to talk about how we're doing, to listen and connect with each other. In my experience, so much is about relationship building.

~ Marlo Firme,
Citizens' Climate Lobby

The thing that warms my heart the most is how the Fossil Free campaign has ignited a generation of activists and has grown incredible leaders who are now leading the movement and training other people to be leaders.

~ Lindsay Meiman, 350.org

It's important to recognize people's contributions.

~ Annette Mills,
Corvallis Sustainability Coalition

CONCLUSION

SOCIAL MOBILIZATION FOR CLIMATE ACTION

Climate mobilizers show us that there are meaningful ways to improve social mobilization for climate action: making connections and building relationships, offering inclusive civic engagement, telling compelling stories, providing education, sharing ownership, focusing on local engagement, and increasing support and capacity.

These practices are often interwoven and simultaneous, leading to multiple benefits. When a group is connecting, engaging, sharing, educating, and supporting in unison, significant patterns of social mobilization for climate action can occur. It's important for those adopting these methods to recognize that they're most effective when layered and integrated, leading to a holistic approach to social mobilization. That said, climate mobilizers repeatedly and enthusiastically highlight the importance of relationship-building to their successes. They ascribe much of their ability to mobilize to the amount of attention they give to making new connections, building networks, and forming deeper, more trusting relationships. Building rich relationships lays the groundwork for coordinated action on climate change.

The central role of relationship-building in facilitating social mobilization for climate action highlights the need for more meaningful connections in all levels of society. Social science is essential for finding ways to address climate change, to better understand the processes and systems behind the social transformations required to respond to environmental change in the coming decades. The World Science Report 2013 called for researchers and practitioners in different disciplines to harmonize their actions: "social scientists [should] work closely not only with each other, but also with colleagues from the natural, physical, engineering, health and human sciences on accelerating the delivery of credible and legitimate knowledge for real-world problem solving."¹ No other human emergency has so keenly called for collaboration than climate change. Social mobilization is, in essence, people working together at as many levels as possible on climate mitigation and adaptation. Finding the optimal methods for working together—carrying out highly-coordinated and widespread actions that bridge political and social divides—are more important than ever.

1 ISSC/UNESCO, *World Social Science Report 2013: Changing Global Environments*, (Paris: OECD, 2013).

CHECKLIST

PRACTICES TO SUPPORT SOCIAL MOBILIZATION FOR CLIMATE ACTION

1 Connections & Relationships	1.1 Making Connections	1.1.1 Expand networks	
		1.1.2 Build coalitions	
	1.2 Building Relationships	1.2.1 Cultivate trusting relationships	
		1.2.2 Interact face-to-face	
	1.3 Key Actors	1.3.1 Connect with key actors	
		1.3.2 Develop personal capacity	
2 Inclusive Civic Engagement	2.1 Ease of Engagement	2.1.1 Be inclusive	
		2.1.2 Maximize opportunities for involvement	
	2.2 Political Participation	2.2.1 Confront & pressure	
		2.2.2 Lobby	
		2.2.3 Support & partner	
	2.3 Focus on Action	2.3.1 Focus on action & implementation	
3 Storytelling & Education	3.1 Telling Compelling Stories	3.1.1 Use artistic, visual storytelling	
		3.1.2 Understand motivations & target audience	
	3.2 Educating Participants	3.2.1 Reveal connections & inequity	
		3.2.2 Provide training	
		3.2.3 Encourage reciprocal learning	
	4 Shared Ownership & Local Focus	4.1 Shared Ownership	4.1.1 Distribute responsibility
4.1.2 Empower others			
4.2 Local Community Focus		4.2.1 Understand local communities	
		4.2.2 Initiate in-depth local engagement	
5 Support & Capacity	5.1 Providing Support & Building Capacity	5.1.1 Support team members	
		5.1.2 Build leadership capacity	
		5.1.3 Recognize achievements & contributions	



Photo credit: 350 Pacific

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