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Climate Justice & Community Resilience Background Paper

Leaders: [Antonio Butts](#) (Walnut Way Conservation Corp.), [Deneine Powell](#) (City of Milwaukee's Environmental Collaboration Office)

Overview

Why this work is important, and who will be impacted?

The impacts of climate change and solutions to climate change are happening right now in the communities where people live, work, worship, and play. Yet societal, political, and cultural divides prevent us from working collectively on climate solutions. In this track we will break down barriers to collective action and allow individuals and organizations to visualize the community, government, and private sectors' connections in the fight against climate change. We will identify the top solutions that can lead to collective action and impact in our communities - recognizing that no one entity or organization is capable of solving climate problems without the input, assistance, and cooperation of others. Our work impacts everyone, and it impacts vulnerable communities more. Participants will leave with:

- In-depth knowledge of Wisconsin's climate challenges and the top recommended solutions.
- An understanding that we must collectively share responsibility for implementing climate solutions regionally, state-wide, and in our communities, and that as individuals, we must be willing to act.
- An action plan for their work on climate.

What other work has already been done?

- EJ Roundtables
- Governor's Task Force on Climate Change: One of the task force's goals was to incorporate citizen views, concerns, and ideas into climate recommendations. The task force was largely successful in doing so. More than 1,000 Wisconsinites participated in listening sessions, and individuals from all but three of the 72 counties in Wisconsin participated in some way. The task force also received over 500 written comments related to the climate crisis in Wisconsin.
- Community Climate Plans
- Clean Energy Coalition of Wisconsin
- Advocacy in communities



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Topics covered in the track

We will bring together community leaders to act together to adapt and mitigate climate change in Wisconsin. The main objectives of the Climate and Community track are to commit to

- Defining climate justice and equity in communities.
- Developing a framework to overcome the barriers to climate solutions.
- Learn about the top priorities in Wisconsin's communities.
- Your issue is a climate issue: Learning how to apply the framework to specific solutions in your community.
- Work towards collective impact by aligning your work with the top priorities for all communities in the state.

Links to background documents

[Wisconsin Governor's Task Force on Climate Change](#)

[Targeted Universalism](#)

[Climate Action Planning](#)

[Let's Talk: Communities and Climate](#)

[The Wisconsin Environmental Equity Tool](#)

[Path to Positive Communities National Climate Ambassador Program](#)

[Pew Charitable Trust - For Earth Day, key facts about Americans' views of climate change and renewable energy](#)

[Climate Justice Alliance: Just Transition](#)

[Wisconsinites for Environmental Justice](#)

Climate Justice & Community Resilience Goals and Strategies



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Goal 1: Create a Climate Coalition of Wisconsin

Current Status: Wisconsin is poised to embark on a new era for its people, its environment, and its economy with the help of new federal funding and state and local leadership. Several climate, energy, and conservation organizations, businesses, and allies have started forming a new coalition in Wisconsin. December 2022 will mark the actual launch of the coalition and its programs.

End status: The formation of a powerful coalition will successfully lead the change effort.

A statewide coalition that will host working groups on key policy pillars, provide access to shared resources, drive common campaigns, and convenes an annual ambition setting summit. Together, the coalition membership and its events will serve as a reliable, action-oriented platform for the work at hand, allowing Wisconsin communities to adopt the best possible climate and environmental policies.

Impact on climate change mitigation, adaptation, or resilience: the coalition can work on priority areas with the greatest potential for fast action to reduce climate change impacts.

Why this is a good approach for Wisconsin: Through collaboration between climate, energy, and conservation organizations, businesses, and allies, as well as community-based organizations and environmental justice advocates, climate policies can be designed to encompass equitable, economically sound solutions. The coalition can drive progress in all arenas where decisions affect the lives and livelihoods of residents and workers, the environment, and the planet.

Focal constituencies: Climate, energy and conservation organizations, businesses and allied groups

Potential key actions:

- Join or connect with a local coalition to get involved with the larger coalition.
- Sign-up for more information on the formation of the coalition in your area.
- Champion or support organizations that are in the coalition.



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Goal 2: Develop climate action plans in communities across the state.

Current status: A total of 41 Wisconsin communities (municipalities) have a climate or green infrastructure plan.

End status: Communities in all 72 counties of Wisconsin have developed or adopted climate change plans that are active or modeled after the plans of other communities in their region of the state.

Impact on climate change mitigation, adaptation, or resilience: In creating or adopting climate solutions, communities pave the way towards funding projects that will lead to greater community resilience.

Why this is a good approach for Wisconsin: providing ideas and resources for civic leaders in small or mid-size communities who want to lead on climate and sustainability

Focal constituencies: Nonprofit and community-based organizations, small to midsized municipalities that do not have sustainability offices or a climate plan.

Potential key actions and strategy:

- Work with elected officials to develop a community-based task force on climate change to develop climate solutions.
- Hold town halls or community meetings to discuss current plans or start the process of developing a community-driven climate change plan.
- Poll neighbors and community members to understand the climate focused needs of your community.
- Develop an online platform to share and collect information on climate action in your community.



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Goal 3: Ensure equity and just transition in climate solutions.

Current status: Green jobs, equity, and just transition are part of the Governors Taskforce on Climate Change, the Milwaukee Climate and Equity Plan, the Madison Climate Forward Agenda, and many other communities throughout the state.

End status: Increase the number of communities committed to equitable and just transitions as part of their climate change plans.

Impact on climate change mitigation, adaptation, or resilience: Communities that develop just transition plans and programming will see an increase in workers dedicated to climate change mitigation, adaptation, and resilience.

Why this is a good approach for Wisconsin: Climate change is a social and ethical issue. Climate change impacts, such as air and water pollution, flooding, and extreme weather disasters, are devastating for those who can least afford it – the underserved, communities of color, low-income communities, the elderly, the ill, workers, and our children. Economic practices that support worker security and livelihoods are necessary as the trend toward sustainable practices accelerates so that the benefits of sustainable economies are shared widely.

Focal constituencies: Technical schools, nonprofits, community-based organizations, elected officials

Potential key actions:

- Support apprenticeship and technical college programs in the establishment and funding of a clean energy training and reemployment program for affected workers, as well as workers new to the workforce with special attention to people and communities of color, Indigenous people and Native Nations, low-income people and communities, and formerly incarcerated people.
- Encourage elected officials to support a just and equitable transition.
- Advocate for nonprofits serving youth and young adult training programs in blue/green jobs.



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Goal 4: Create or establish local climate and environmental justice groups - connect with other groups to work towards collective impact.

Current status: There are many climate and environmental justice-focused nonprofits and community-based organizations and groups. However, many exist in a bubble and do not necessarily work with other local groups or government. That leaves a gap between information, the work done, and the needed action.

End status: To create climate and environmental justice groups statewide that share a set of principles, and a focus on and bias towards collective action.

Impact on climate change mitigation, adaptation, or resilience: Climate events disproportionately affect low-income communities and communities of color, reinforcing the need for equitable and proactive resilience planning and resource allocation. The establishment of local climate and environmental justice groups can ensure that opportunities, resources and information are shared with the community - helping communities ready for climate events and to cope with other climate impacts.

Why this is a good approach for Wisconsin: Climate justice shifts climate discourse from reducing emissions to focusing on human rights, so that the most vulnerable communities are centered in its solutions. Programs and initiatives that promote climate leadership, action, and solutions can be successfully implemented by local climate and environmental justice groups.

Focal constituencies: individuals, students, faith-based organizations, community based organizations, nonprofit organizations, small businesses, corporations.

Potential key actions:

- Use an online engagement platform, to share surveys and polls that will allow you to present proposed environmental policies, programs, and methods for emission reductions and give residents the opportunity to provide feedback.
- Zoom. Go online to share information about climate action and plans in your community. Through online workshops and proposal submissions, you can also provide a platform for your community to put their own recommendations and actions up for discussion.
- Focus on community outreach - create climate awareness events.
- Once your local group is established, join the state coalition on climate.
- Support elected officials who act on climate issues and support climate solutions.



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Goal 5: Increase community awareness of climate solutions.

Current status: Research shows that 79% of Americans are concerned about climate, with 48% being very concerned. Despite the high level of concern, only 59% of Americans believe others around them are concerned. Importantly, more than twice as many people are very concerned (48%) than they believe to be the case with others around them (23%)

What this means in practice is that most Americans feel alone in their concern about climate change. The gap in actual vs. perceived climate concern might be contributing to silence on the issue, and points to the increasingly urgent need for visible leadership and public discourse.

End status: People are more concerned about climate than you might think; and that fact should inspire us to continue to open dialogue and increase the number of Wisconsinites who are aware of the impact of climate change and the solutions available to us.

Impact on climate change mitigation, adaptation, or resilience: Increasing community awareness will ultimately lead to increased understanding of the cause of climate events, increased awareness of climate solutions, increased pressure on political leaders to solve the issues, which will lead to more funding for mitigation, adaptation and community resilience projects.

Why this is a good approach for Wisconsin: public support is needed to build the political will for collective action.

Focal constituencies: Nonprofit organizations, BIPOC-led organizations focusing on climate and social justice, neighborhood groups.

Potential key actions:

- Advocate. Train and become a Climate Ambassador.
- Get involved in Earth Day events organized by local community organizations. Organize a book club or local group to discuss climate solutions.
- Encourage elected officials to invest in renewable energy and clean water.
- Help frontline organizations like Walnut Way of Milwaukee, Black Leaders Organizing for Communities (BLOC) and Leaders of Kenosha advocate for racial justice, a critical component of addressing the climate crisis equitably, by giving, volunteering, and joining organizations led by Black, indigenous, and people of color.
- Use community engagement efforts as an educational opportunity to distribute factual information and encourage commitment to the cause of reducing greenhouse gas emissions.