

The Rural-Urban Divide:

a report on what we are learning



By the RE-AMP Network Organizing Hub

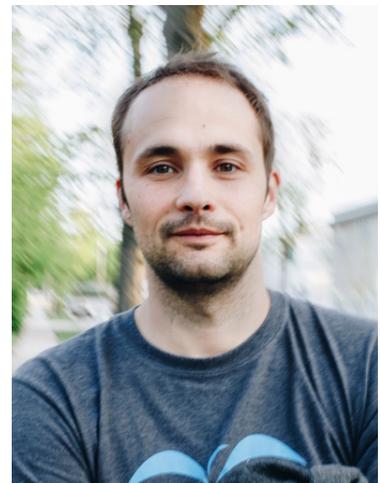
JUNE 2018

www.reamp.org

WHAT'S INSIDE

Acknowledgments	>> page 2
About RE-AMP	>> page 3
How we created this report	>> page 3
Why this topic	>> page 4
Developing stronger campaign plans	>> page 5
Strategy	>> page 6
Tactics	>> page 7
Developing messages	>> page 11
Partnership building	>> page 13

Report Author:
Sean Carroll
RE-AMP Organizing Hub Director



THE FOLLOWING PEOPLE ARE AMONGST THE COUPLE DOZEN LEADERS IN THE CLIMATE MOVEMENT WHOSE INSIGHTS CONTRIBUTED TO THIS REPORT:

Huda Alkaff, Founder and Director, Wisconsin Green Muslims

**Holli Arp, Leadership & Civic Engagement Program Leader,
University of Minnesota Extension**

Kari Carney, Executive Director, 1000 Friends of Iowa

**Marcus Franklin, Research and Systems Manager,
NAACP Environmental and Climate Justice Program**

Carol Hays, Executive Director, Prairie Rivers Network

Jane Leonard, President, Growth & Justice

Liz Loos, Field Organizer, Dakota Resource Council

**Lu Nelsen, Policy Program Associate, The Center for Rural Affairs;
Co-facilitator of the RE-AMP Organizing Hub Rural-Urban Divide Peer
Learning Circle**

Pamela Richart, Co-Founder and Co-Director, Eco-Justice Collaborative

**Tara Ritter, Senior Program Associate for Climate and Rural Communities,
Institute for Agriculture & Trade Policy**

Timothy Schaefer, State Director, Environment Minnesota

**Brian D. Smith II, Community Engagement, The Center for Urban Responses
to Environmental Stressors (CURES)**

**Elizabeth Ward, Conservation Programs Coordinator,
Sierra Club - John Muir Chapter**

ABOUT RE-AMP AND THIS GUIDE

In this report we are exploring what we call the “the rural-urban divide” and we use this term because that language is out there in our culture. But it’s important to say that what we are looking to do is fundamentally about creating unity. While there are different lived experiences for rural and urban communities, and it is easy enough to point out those differences, we are working to create a shared vision across many communities, to work in solidarity, and reframe what’s been presented as division between rural and urban people. We need to do this because we know it will take all of us to solve climate change in way that fulfills a vision we believe in.

ABOUT THE RE-AMP NETWORK

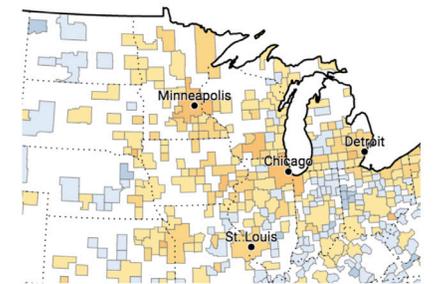
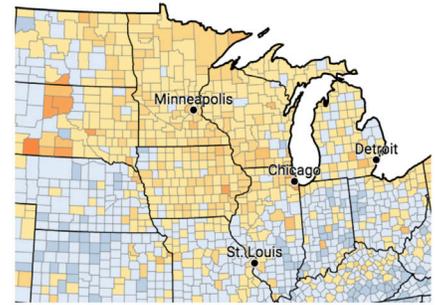
The RE-AMP Network is a network of 130+ nonprofits and foundations across eight Midwestern states whose mission is to set collective strategy and enable collaboration on climate solutions in the Midwest. Our North Star goal is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions 80 percent from the electrical sector by 2030 and 80 percent economy-wide by 2050 in the Midwest.

We envision a Midwest in which we all have access to the energy we need to live, move, work and play; we produce and use it in an equitable and just way that protects our health, wellbeing and environment. Those who are most impacted from its production and consumption are centered in those decisions and we generate climate solutions rooted in our collective values that spread across our country and the world.

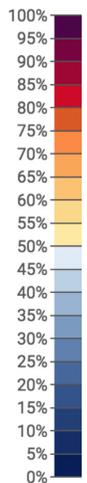
The RE-AMP Network Organizing Hub provides aims to boost campaign excellence, through includes campaign planning, skills trainings, and hosting conversations on strategy. The Organizing Hub’s theme for 2018 is building stronger relationships in the climate movement.

HOW WE CREATED THIS GUIDE

After the 2016 Presidential election, a major storyline in the media was the divide between rural and urban America, and in response, the RE-AMP Network Organizing Hub hosted “The Great Rural-Urban Divide” webinar in June of 2017. Out of that webinar, a number RE-AMP members wanted to continue the conversation, and so three months later, the Organizing Hub launched a Peer Learning Circle, where nine RE-AMP members from six states formed a cohort to share their expertise on the topic over six months. In May of 2018, the Organizing Hub hosted an in-person, day-long strategy session focused on partnership-building across ru-



The Yale Climate Opinion Maps create statistical models to project public opinion at the county-level, here showing responses to the question: “are you worried about global warming?” with the full region on the top and metro areas on bottom.



To interact with more climate data, visit <http://climatecommunication.yale.edu/about/projects/yale-climate-opinion-maps/>

WHY THIS TOPIC

ral and urban communities with Peer Learning Circle participants and an additional ten advocates and organizers from across the region.

This report seeks to share some of the insights that took place in several RE-AMP Network convenings over the last year and a half. This is not a comprehensive look at the entire topic; it's more of a reflection based on the learning, takeaways, and perspectives of a couple dozen leaders in the climate movement.

These convenings included leaders who live in rural and urban communities, and who brought to the table experience which included: developing social media messages unique to smaller rural communities, hosting dialogues with Trump voters on climate change, creating toolkits for community engagement, developing media strategies and opinion pieces, and building coalitions at the state and local levels.

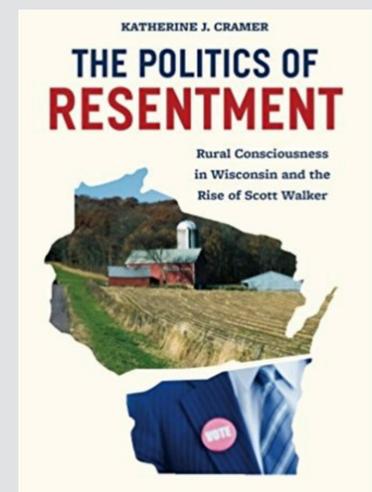
WHY THIS TOPIC

Where do we see the rural-urban divide in our climate work? How does it affect policy-makers? How do policy-makers affect it? How does it affect our opponents?

Our opponents benefit from division and drive this divide. This includes special interests who profit from climate change pollution and policy-makers who ally themselves with polluters for political power. For example, they use messages like “Minneapolis values are not our values” when talking to rural Minnesotans. This increases feelings of being unheard in the legislature (and there are times when people aren't heard) and drives distrust in government in rural communities, which makes it more difficult to build the political will for policy solutions.

If we as advocates and organizers aren't in these rural communities, that distrust gets worse. Building (or rebuilding) that trust takes time. If there aren't venues for rural residents to speak up for themselves, then policy-makers are only hearing from the special interests who claim they represent rural communities. And if money from foundations is directed mostly to urban-based organizations to do urban-based work, then resources are not being invested in rural organizing. Advocates and organizations can play a role connecting policy-makers directly to community members.

While it's true that many organizations doing climate change advocacy need to be working to build their base in rural communities, while that happens we need to also be deepening our support in urban communities at the same time, remembering that there are still people there who also aren't being heard. Overcoming the rural-urban divide means developing strategies that can lift up each.



“

Place matters because it functions as a lens through which people interpret politics [...] Instead of partisan identities, many of the people I spent time with in rural areas used identities rooted in place and class.

”

Katherine Cramer
The Politics of Resentment: Rural Consciousness in Wisconsin and the Rise of Scott Walker



DEVELOPING STRONGER CAMPAIGN PLANS

STRONGER CAMPAIGN PLANS

How do we develop campaign plans for organizing and advocacy in both rural and urban communities? What steps can we take to understand how people in both rural and urban communities are affected by these issues?

There are a number of resources around campaign planning available at www.reamp.org/resources/organizinghub, including RE-AMP's "The Art of Campaign Planning," which outlines how to write a campaign plan from start to finish.

When it comes to working across divides, we know that building relationships is key. A campaign plan that centers relationship-building needs to be iterative and on-going. There needs to be space in the goals, strategy, tactics and message to include the views of the community you're working with.

The logic model on pg. 6 describes a campaign planning process that focuses on building relationships, looking at three steps: how we understand the issue, how we create a vision and how we work in shared leadership.

Our understanding of the issue influences how we create a shared vision with the community, which influences the people who we work with in shared leadership -- and each step in this process informs and builds upon the other. Within each of these steps, we learn too: we start with our own vision, then talk with frontline communities about their vision -- that informs who else we need to meet with, and who else we meet with informs our own vision.

The top section of this model is on understanding the issue. For example, let's say you know that jobs installing solar can be spurred through policy. You look at who's impacted by that, which would include people in a community who could work in those jobs. So then you meet with an organization connected to those community members, maybe a local workforce development agency. That workforce center would then be able to tell you more about the issue than you already knew: let's say, for example, that people in

the community are very concerned with young people moving out of the area to look for jobs and what that will mean for the town long-term. Now your understanding of the issue for this community deepens, as well as what you know about who's impacted, as well as what other organizations you might want to engage -- in this example, it might lead you to a community college in the area to see what can be done to train people on jobs that would be located locally. The overall point is that to create a campaign plan centered around relationship-building with communities, you want a planning process that creates these feedback loops, so you are engaging the people who are impacted to find the solutions.

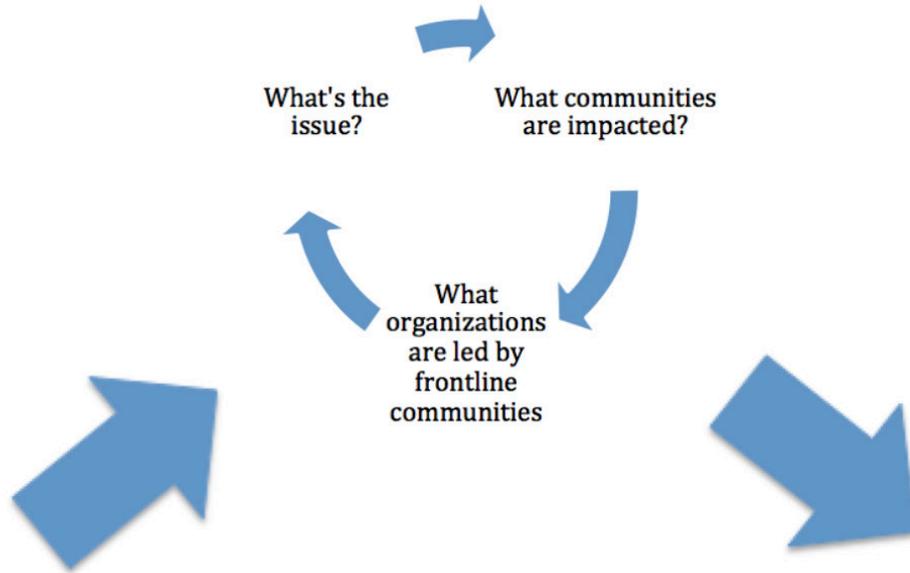
Creating a shared vision with the community can also involve iterative steps. You have a vision, but what's the vision of people who live in that city or town for their community -- how can that deepen your vision? To continue the example above, after connecting with a workforce development center, the vision you're working towards might include a sense of pride in one's town. The important step in this part of campaign planning is asking people the questions that get at what their vision is and listening.

When you're thinking about how to work in partnership with the community to execute a vision, this is where shared leadership comes in. What are we asking of policy-makers? To continue the example above, perhaps it is to invest in solar job training programs at a local trade school or community college. As you think about that, it leads to asking who else needs to be a part of the discussion -- in this example that might be school administrators, student organizations, unions, etc. As those people get involved, it is an opportunity to deepen your understanding of the issue by asking how this impacts them and the vision they have for the community.

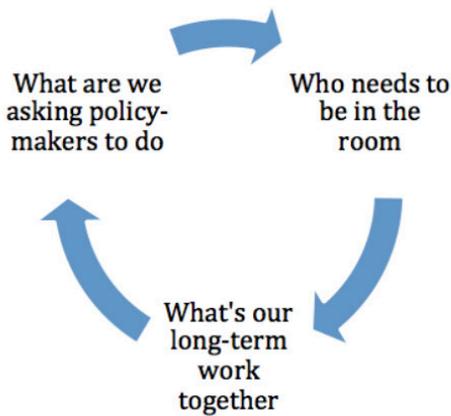
This report gets into more detail on how to go about creating a shared vision and shared leadership in the section on building partnerships (pg. 13).

DEVELOPING STRONGER CAMPAIGN PLANS continued

Understanding the Issue



Creating Shared Leadership



Creating a Shared Vision



figure:
**A LOGIC MODEL FOR
CAMPAIGN PLANNING
AND BUILDING
RELATIONSHIPS**

The way to use this model is on the frontend of your planning to make sure you are creating opportunities for relationship-building, and then regularly checking in on your plan to look for how it can evolve.

STRATEGY

STRATEGY

What's a strategy we can use to be successful in overcoming divides between rural and urban communities?

What's our theory of how we can achieve our goals in both rural and urban communities?

RE-AMP members participating in the Organizing Hub's Peer Learning Circle offered these thoughts around what a strategy could include:

>> We need to build relationships and build trust by working with people from the community, by listening and by seeking to understand where people are at.

>> We need to connect what's happening in people's lives to a bigger picture of what's going on.

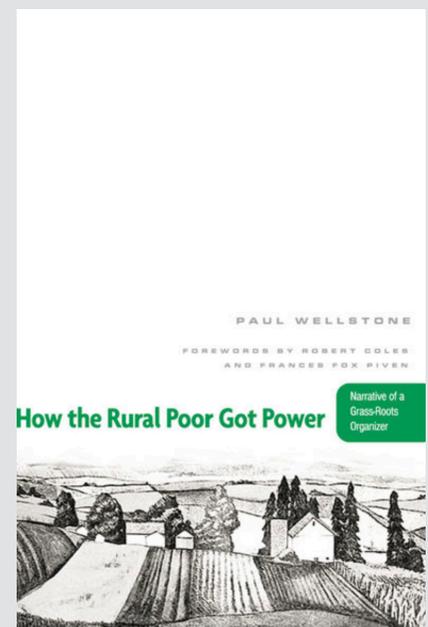
>> We need to find the people who are with us, who can tell their own stories and get those voices to policy-makers.

>> We need to invest in these communities and bring resources to them.

PAUL WELLSTONE, FROM *HOW THE RURAL POOR GOT POWER*

"In rural communities, the political systems and power constraints are different [...] The rural poor are not heirs of a tradition of political activism and attempted organization, as are many urban communities. Organizing is difficult where there is no expectation of social change and where the assertion of dignity often leads to retaliation. Low-income residents are isolated from one another. [...]"

Prior to a 'reordering of priorities in America, there must be a reordering of power [...] It remains empty rhetoric unless strong and durable citizen organizations are developed to turn this appeal into specific programs backed by political clout."



TACTICS

This section looks at a set of tactics that flow from our strategy (pg. 7) and provides a how-to for executing them in rural and urban communities.

We look at a set of tactics through the lens of our strategy, asking: what are we doing to build trust and build relationships? How will we work with local people and make their stories heard? How do we draw connections to bigger picture issues? Is there an opportunity to bring resources to people?

One-on-One Meetings

One-on-one meetings can be a way to connect with people around a sense of community. Building relationships requires building trust and talking with people face-to-face can be one of the most effective ways. They are opportunities to listen to how issues are affecting people and what solutions they want to see. A simple, direct question that can lead to a lot is asking people what their vision is for their community: what do they want to see happen? These meetings can be your way of building your network, by asking who else you should be meeting with. This also gives you a sense of who knows each other and how people are connected to each other in a community. Communities may have “thought-leaders” -- the people who “know everyone” and everyone cares what they think -- these can be unofficial leaders without any titles who are well-connected and well-respected.

Meeting with Organizations

Meeting with organizations who are led by and have networks rooted in frontline communities can connect you to people impacted by the issues you are working on. These organizations can speak to the issues that are important in a community, whether it is climate change or another issue. This could include cultural groups, faith institutions, labor unions, community centers, local businesses, citizen groups like rotary clubs, or groups advocating on issues aside from climate change such food justice or educational issues. Your understanding of who the frontline communities are in a place will take talking with people and building relationships will take looking for where you have shared goals (pg. 6 on iterative campaign planning).

MORE TACTICS?

The RE-AMP Network Organizing Hub’s “Grassroots Tactics Planning Guide” is an additional resource that goes into more depth in explaining and planning a wide range of tactics, and is available for RE-AMP members at:

www.reamp.org/resources/organizing-hub

TACTICS continued

Voter Lists

Voter lists from the VAN (Voter Activation Network) can be used to build a targeted set of people to reach out to. If your organization has access to the VAN, you can create a list of people in a community based on categories from how often a person votes to algorithms estimating a person's support for environmental issues. In urban areas, apartments or student neighborhoods can mean frequent turnover and often inaccurate lists.

Town Hall Meetings

Town hall meetings and other public convenings give community members a space to voice their concerns, to hear from other people in their own neighborhood, and give organizers an opportunity to hear what's important to people and what they want done. These can be an opportunity to draw connections to larger issues including policy or political systems. The Citizen's Jury model is one model of this that starts six months out with a mailing, then one-on-one meetings, then bringing the community together to ask "how does this issue impact you?"

Canvassing & Phonebanking

Door-to-door canvassing or phonebanking are some of the most impactful ways to move people to take action*, but can also be some of the most resource intensive. The bidirectional communication allows organizers to get information not just pass it out: What else do the people you're talking to care about? What's motivating people to get involved? What impacts exist that you didn't know about? Who's involved in this locally already? Maybe you think your plan and your message are pretty good -- this tests it. In rural communities that are more spread out, canvassing might mean driving between houses. In urban communities canvassing might mean figuring out if you can access apartments with locked front doors, or it might mean you are using lists of people with higher rates of inaccuracies because people often move.

*Green, D. and Gerber A (2000), "The Effects of Canvassing, Telephone Calls, and Direct Mail on Voter Turnout: A Field Experiment," *American Political Science Review*, Yale University.

TACTICS IN ACTION



We are hosting a major gathering in Granite Falls (small town way out on the prairie in western Minnesota), where up to 200 urban and rural community folks will convene and help us establish a One Minnesota Policy Framework. This grand plan will emphasize equity and inclusive growth for Greater MN, metro-rural interdependence and commonality, combining new public investments in human capital and physical infrastructure, with climate action near the center of this reinvestment plan.

Jane Leonard
Growth & Justice



TACTICS continued

Philanthropic Outreach

Reaching out to philanthropic organizations might give you an understanding of where work needs to be done. They may be able to put you in touch with people on the ground doing the work.

Earned Media

Opinion editorials, commentaries and letters-to-editor can be used by people to tell their own story and draw a connection to a bigger message. This takes finding the right author who can lift up the stories that need to be heard. In some rural communities, local papers have a large influence, including letters-to-the-editor, and if people are spending a long time driving throughout their day, local radio stations can be big sources of news. In smaller media markets, outlets might be looking for more content. Local groups, like rotary clubs, are often covered. Some advocates have used weekly shoppers as good sources. In larger media markets, it can be that much more important to build a relationship with reporters, and understand what angle they are looking to cover. Reading local media outlets and meeting with local reporters can give you a sense of what's on people's minds.

Social Media

To engage people over social media, think local. Does the news come from a local source or does it look like it's from somewhere else? In rural communities, is the news talking about the impact in rural communities? Also, can you create a dialogue with people, and not just tell people "here's what to think." Are you asking people what they think?

Challenges

Some of the challenges we identified include:

>> **The grassroots work can be the most important for building relationships, but requires the most resources and time.**

>> **Language matters: If you don't know the language of a community, and don't speak the language, it can be hard to build trust.**

>> **If you, yourself are an outsider to a community how do you get started? It might take time.**

TACTICS IN ACTION



I am exploring writing an opinion editorial/ commentary to spread the message about the unifying power of solar with its social educational, financial and spiritual aspects. Also, we are leading the Wisconsin Faith Communities for Equitable Solar Initiative, and holding listening sessions and conversations around the state with diverse constituents, educating about solar, forming peer learning circles, providing solar assessments, and building relationships and shared partnerships, while generating Wisconsin's Just Solar guiding principles rooted in our collective values of justice, equity and inclusion.



Huda Alkaff
Wisconsin Green Muslims

DEVELOPING MESSAGES

Messaging

Just like there is no one rural community, there's not one message for rural communities. The overall strategic approach proposed here is that people need to tell their own stories (pg. 12) and so the next section on this report around partnership-building (pg. 13) is a critical step in developing messages. Here, we share insights from RE-AMP members around parts of the process for developing messages: What are some of the ways people are thinking about climate change? How do we think about what stories we need to be telling?

Starting in 2009, the Yale Program on Climate Change Communication began publishing a series of studies on "Global Warming's Six Americas" detailing the "six unique audiences within the American public that each respond to the issue in their own distinct way."

The percentages on pg. 12 show how many people fall into each category as of May 2017, based on a large nationally representative survey.

“

It's good for us to be a bridge, but the ultimate goal is to lift up the voices of rural communities and residents themselves

”

Tara Ritter
Institute for Agriculture
& Trade Policy

MESSAGE FRAMES

A frame is a term for a way people think about an issue. A frame is something that already exists in the world, and the message is what we choose to fit into different frames.

Frame Example:

Issue: health care

Frame: health care is a human right

Message: "Every person deserves access to quality health care that they can afford."

Frame: health care is an economic issue

Message: "Right now the U.S. spends more on health care than any other country, and millions of people still can't afford quality coverage."

In these two examples, the language in each message has some similarities, but is different enough to communicate to people within a different frame.

Some of the frames that exist around global warming:

- >> Economic
- >> Ecological
- >> National security
- >> Public health
- >> Equity and Justice
- >> View of government
- >> Legacy, future generations

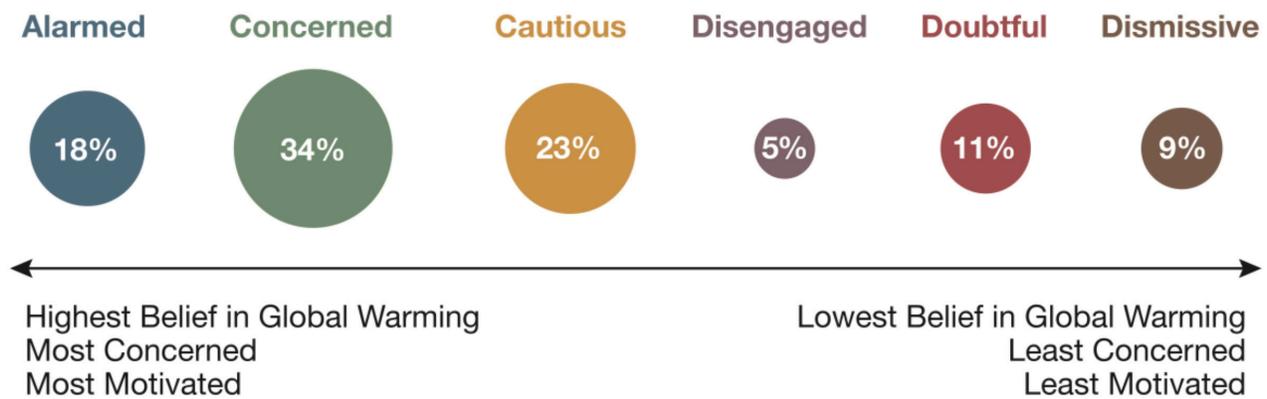
What frames do you see in the community you're working with? Which frames do you want to operate in and what messages fit within those frames?

DEVELOPING MESSAGES continued

figure and excerpt from Global Warming's Six Americans

“The Alarmed are fully convinced of the reality and seriousness of climate change and are already taking individual, consumer, and political action to address it. The Concerned are also convinced that global warming is happening and a serious problem, but have not yet engaged the issue personally. Three other Americas –

the Cautious, the Disengaged, and the Doubtful – represent different stages of understanding and acceptance of the problem, and none are actively involved. The final America – the Dismissive are very sure it is not happening and are actively involved as opponents of a national effort to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.”



Storytelling

Personal stories around who we are, stories around the history of a community, and stories around why an issue matters to us are all parts of building stronger relationships, and a key component in the strategy laid out in this guide (pg. 7). This starts with understanding who's impacted by the issues, how they're impacted, and what vision you're moving towards. The tactics section (pg. 8) of this report looks at different vehicles to tell stories including media coverage, one-on-one meetings, engaging people on social media, and public convenings. Here's some questions to ask when thinking about what stories we need to be telling:

What type of change are we trying to make? What stories need to be told?

Who are the messengers who can tell those stories? How can we get those stories to policy-makers?

How do these stories connect to a long-term vision?

PARTNERSHIP BUILDING

The depth and quality of our partnership-building is critical to how successful we are in overcoming divides between rural and urban communities. This section is at the end of the report, but it may be the first step in your planning. If it's not the first step, it should lead you to reevaluate any of the steps before this, as part of a planning process that is iterative, rather than linear (pg. 6 of this guide). Your goals and strategy can frame who you build partnerships with; and building partnerships can frame your goals and strategy.

Over the last year and a half, RE-AMP members have strategized together on a few aspects of building partnerships that we will share here: how do we identify partners, how do we create a shared vision, and how do we create shared leadership?

IDENTIFYING PARTNERS

Identifying who to build partnerships with takes understanding the landscape: who's in the community and what are the issues? This is a process. It changes over time. Here are some questions to ask when thinking about how to create this process:

- >> **What's already happening with the issue we care about?**
- >> **Who shares the same goals as us? Who is opposed?**
- >> **Who has the power to make decisions and make policy?**
- >> **Who are we trying to engage? Who can help us engage them?**

Identifying who to build partnerships with means thinking about power, and building power to achieve change you can't achieve on your own. Here's a few questions to guide how to think about that:

- >> **Who's impacted by what you're talking about?**
- >> **What's your vision and what needs to change in the world to make that happen?**

CREATING A SHARED VISION

Here's some of the steps and considerations that go into creating a shared vision with the people you are building a partnership with:

- >> **Share the story of why you're here: be open, be honest.**
- >> **What brings us together?**
- >> **Look at the supply chain of the problem: who's impacted along each step of the way? For example, there are people whose health is impacted by air pollution from a power plant, but there's also people who work at the power plant who are impacted by the working conditions, and there are people who are impacted throughout the decision-making process of the policy-makers who allow the plant to exist there and pollute.**
- >> **Working on a tactic together can give you an opportunity to craft a shared vision. For example, planning a town hall forum together can be an opportunity for multiple organizations to talk about which community members need to be a part of the discussion and how to get them involved. Crafting an opinion editorial/commentary together can be an opportunity for groups to talk through how one policy ask can build towards something longer-term.**
- >> **Understand differences: there might be issues we don't agree on and places we won't work together. You might want to acknowledge and negotiate those upfront, or you might just want to be aware them yourself for when they could come up.**

PARTNERSHIP BUILDING continued

CREATING SHARED LEADERSHIP

Part of this is about figuring out how to work together and part of this involves leaving space in your plan for others to lead. Here are some questions and considerations for how you can create shared leadership with partners:

- >> What parts of your goal, strategy and tactics are you willing to share decision-making on?
- >> How is money distributed and resources allocated?
- >> How do you decide who gets credit for what?
- >> What's the self-interest of the partners you're working with?
- >> What are your ground rules for working together? Have you figured out both a process and a pace of working together? Sometimes this needs to evolve.
- >> Organizations may have very different timelines for when change happens and what scale of change is valuable. Are we on the same page?
- >> What's our process for staying in communication with each other?
- >> What power dynamics could be at play between your groups that could influence shared leadership?
- >> How do our own cultures and identities relate to how we work together? How can we deepen our awareness around this?
- >> How do we create a process for working together that's based on principles?
- >> It takes resources and privilege to be able to participate. What barriers exist towards people fully participating and sharing leadership?
- >> What can you offer that meets what your partners want?
- >> Who benefits from the victory?

If you don't know the answers to some of the questions put forward in this section on partnership-building, figuring them out will help you build stronger relationships. These questions can also help you check in on current work you're doing and take a fresh look at where you're at.

For more information on RE-AMP, visit www.reamp.org

Graphic Design & Headshot:
Sarah Carroll

Image Citations:

<https://faculty.polisci.wisc.edu/kwalsh2/>

<http://www.press.uchicago.edu/dam/ucp/books/jacket>

https://www.upress.umn.edu/book-division/books/how-the-rural-poor-got-pow-er/image_mini

<http://climatecommunication.yale.edu/about/projects/yale-climate-opinion-maps/>