CLIMATE

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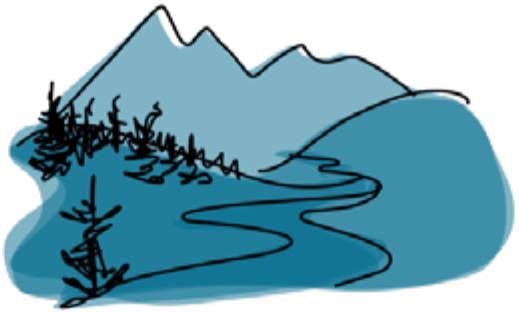


LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We, the Cook Inletkeeper staff and volunteers who made this Actionkit, live on the ancestral territories of the Dena'ina and Sugpiaq people.

Alaska is as beautiful and abundant as it is because indigenous people have been here for thousands of years taking care of the land. We acknowledge and honor local tribes for their past and present stewardship of Cook Inlet, called Tikahtnu, "big water river" in Dena'ina. As we seek to create change in our communities it is important to understand Alaska's long history, so we can move forward together, caring for the land and each other.

Learn more about land acknowledgements, the Dena'ina language, and the local indigenous peoples' territory you reside on

WELCOME!

We want this ActionKit to change the way you think about climate and your community's power to affect it. Local and region-scale action, driven by volunteer leaders, is not only practical but essential for confronting the climate challenge with justice and efficacy, and for creating a better world on the other side of it.

The most impactful solutions for reversing climate change already exist. What's needed is not new technology but social action to equitably scale sustainable technologies and practices we already have.

This ActionKit is a model for starting the change where you are, with resources your community already has, in a way that includes anyone with the will to participate. It is a guide to igniting a climate project that:

1. ***Is achievable by volunteer effort***
2. ***Can reach significant milestones within one year***
3. ***Will reduce your community's greenhouse gas emissions***
4. ***Fits local ecological, political, and economic realities***

Based on the experience of climate activists who successfully piloted this model in small towns on Alaska's Kenai Peninsula, this ActionKit will help you do four things...

REFRAME Your Thinking

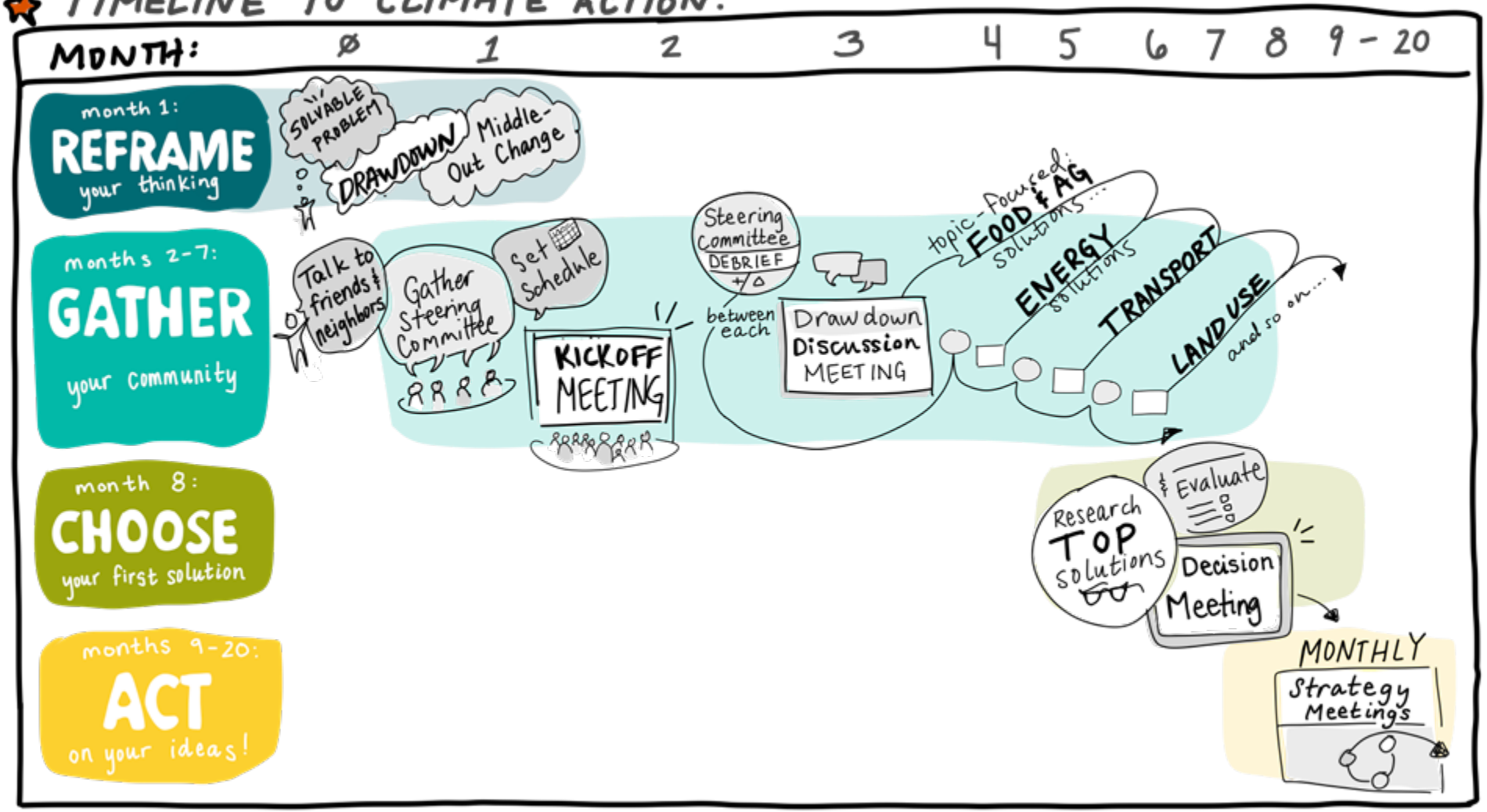
GATHER Your Community

CHOOSE Your Solution

ACT on Your Ideas

With the Drawdown book and website as a key tool, we outline the process for launching a project within eight months and reaching significant milestones within a year. The process looks something like this...

TIMELINE TO CLIMATE ACTION:



Two Paths to Action: Online and In-person

The organizers who first used these methods held a series of face-to-face community workshops over the course of 2019 in Soldotna, Alaska. A second group in nearby Homer, Alaska began similar workshops at the start of 2020 and were quickly forced by the coronavirus pandemic to move entirely online. The two groups reached their goal of community action through different paths, and we offer insights from both in this ActionKit.

Our meeting walk-throughs are oriented towards in-person meetings, but also include best online practices. See page 14 for online recommendations. Whether you're dealing with a pandemic or not, there are benefits and drawbacks to each format. If your group is geographically dispersed, an online meeting can be much more efficient and inclusive.

RE-FRAME Your Thinking

How to completely change the way you and your community see (and act on) climate change

Two things helped us see that our small Alaskan towns can meet the looming problem of climate change with local volunteer action. The first was the book ***Drawdown:*** *The Most Comprehensive Plan Ever Proposed to Reverse Global Warming*, edited by Paul Hawken. The second was the concept of **middle-out change**, influenced by the thinking of climate activist Will Grant of the Pachemama Alliance and the economist and psychologist Per Espen Stoknes[1].

[1] *Stoknes observed that "five D's" in climate discussion create obstacles to action: Distance, Doom, Dissonance, Denial, and iDentity. He advocates circumventing these obstacles with discussions that feel personal, avoid cultural polarization, and respond to social needs.*

Drawdown

In the early 2010s, author and environmentalist Paul Hawken convened scientists and policy experts to model, analyze, and rank the 100 most effective solutions for reducing atmospheric greenhouse gases. He called it Project "Drawdown" because its goal wasn't only to cut greenhouse gas emissions, but to draw greenhouse gases down from the atmosphere, reversing rather than merely stopping climate change. In 2017, the project published their findings in a detailed book and online at www.drawdown.org.

Drawdown's most important innovation was to treat climate change less as an existential catastrophe and more like a problem solvable with practices that are emerging or already here.

Its hundred solutions have many benefits in addition to reducing emissions. They "create security, facilitate mobility, eliminate hunger, prevent pollution, restore soil, clean rivers, and more," as Hawken writes in the book's introduction. We want to do them regardless of their impact on climate.

Drawdown's accessible presentation of these solutions lets nonspecialists like us think more rigorously about climate action. Knowing that solutions to the climate challenge already exist means that responsibility isn't in the technological sphere but the social, where communities can be moved to action by volunteers on the local level – another conceptual shift we've called middle-out change.

Middle-Out Change

"Bottom-up change" describes individual and household behavior changes – things like replacing home lightbulbs with LEDs or biking instead of driving. At the other end of the spectrum, law or policy changes like carbon taxes or mandates for renewable energy are "top-down."

Both these scopes of action are important, but we believe too many climate activists limit themselves by getting stuck in these terms. Making "bottom-up" lifestyle changes or pressuring for "top-down" transformation of national institutions does not cover all possible responses to climate change – indeed, it only covers a few.

We hope this ActionKit will get you thinking about the wide range of possibilities between, where we believe the most fruitful climate actions can occur: the "middle out space" of projects that are neither about large-scale policy nor personal habits, but can touch both by focusing on community action and local or regional institutions.

Middle-out change is larger than what an individual could achieve in the scope of their household, but within reach of volunteers working with entities such as small businesses, churches, schools, town and borough or county governments, and rural electric co-ops.

Don't stop signing petitions and don't stop biking to work, but think more about the opportunities closer to home, yet outside it.

The first step is gathering your community to think about your local situation in the context of the global climate.

We created a video series to help others understand the power of mi ddle-out change and how to use it in their communities

Head to www.inletkeeper.org/actionkitvideos to watch and learn more!

GATHER Your Community

How to bring together a diverse group for a discussion with local researchers and decision-makers

We gathered our community through a series of public workshops we called "Book-to-Action" Discussions. We began with a group read of *Drawdown*, added local knowledge to situate its solutions in our region, then collectively brainstormed an action we could take. The process will guide community members through the best available climate information and end with choosing a one-year climate action project.

Assemble a steering committee

The first step is to assemble people who will put this discussion series together. This steering committee will meet initially to plan out the discussion series, then monthly a week or two before every public discussion to plan. Their activities include:

- Scheduling monthly discussion sessions.
- Setting agendas for discussion sessions.
- Finding space for the discussions.
- Recruiting expert panelists for discussions.
- Advertising the meetings.

During each meeting, steering committee members help by:

- Moderating panel discussions.
- Managing notes during brainstorm sessions.
- Tracking the meeting time.

Who is the steering committee?

Six people formed the steering committee of the first Book-to-Action discussion series, held in Soldotna in 2019. They included people who already had well-established connections to local activist circles (3 professional conservation organizers), people with less formal connections to a wide variety of community institutions (a former local news reporter) and people with informal social connections that ran wide and deep (a long-time bookstore owner and the head cook of a senior center). A diversity of experience and community connections is invaluable in your steering committee members.

Aside from community connections, an interest in *Drawdown*, and the idea of middle-out change, steering committee members should share an ability to make realistic commitments and see them through.

One of the strengths of this model is that it allows people to achieve a concrete solution without necessarily holding a shared worldview or politics. Although your steering committee members and participants don't need common values on everything, recognize that every model of change has its own values embedded within it, and that it's important to talk about the values you want to manifest in your discussion. The Jemez Principles of Democratic Organizing and the First Alaskans Institute Dialogue Agreements can be guides to begin this thinking.

Visit our website for additional resources that may be helpful during the GATHER process

Kickoff Meeting Preparation

Before launching the discussion series with with a kick-off meeting, steering committee members should do these preparation tasks:

Set Schedule

Decide the dates and themes of your discussion sessions. We held our discussions monthly, with each focusing on a different chapter of *Drawdown*. A schedule of discussion themes could look like this:

Month 1: Energy
Month 2: Transportation
Month 3: Food and Agricult ure
Month 4: Built Environment (incorporating *Drawdown* chapters on Buildings and Materials)
Month 5: Land Use
Month 6: Women and Girls
Month 7: Choosing a project (described in Section III, "CHOOSE.")

Send invitations

Bring elected officials and public staff to the discussion by personally inviting them via email or phone call. Consider inviting:

- City council members and commissioners
- Tribal leaders & Elders
- City managers and planners
- Electric cooperative board members
- Administrators of your solid waste department
- Nonprofit and business leaders

Research past solutions

Create a timeline of local efforts related to the *Drawdown* chapters you'll be discussing. Prepare to present the timeline at the kickoff meeting.

A realistic consideration of local solutions is rooted in local history. Many ideas you'll be discussing have likely been proposed by your neighbors before, whether framed as climate responses or not.

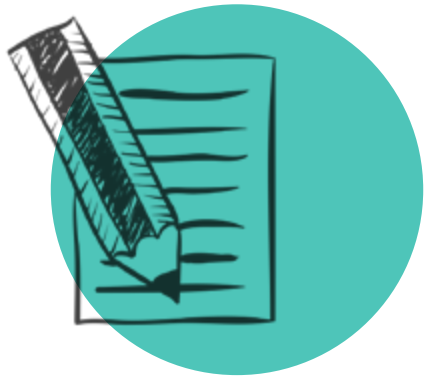
Begin your solution-seeking by understanding past projects, the obstacles they faced, and the opportunities that aided them.

Advertise

- Share the event on social media
- Post flyers on community bulletin boards
- Put announcements in the community calendars of local newspapers and radio stations

Create a sign-in sheet

A sign-in sheet with a space for email addresses and phone numbers is essential for future communication with participants. Create one to place near the meeting space entrance.



Kickoff Meeting Walkthrough

The discussion series kickoff meeting explains your goals, the structure of the discussion series, and how you'll be using Drawdown.

1. Personal Introductions

2 minutes, plus 30 seconds per person

i. Steering committee members welcome participants and introduce themselves.

ii. Acknowledge the indigenous people whose land you are on. See page 2 for a good way of doing this.

iii. Remind everyone of the sign-in sheet.

iv. Lay discussion ground rules. Consider using the First Alaskans Institute's Dialogue Agreements.

v. Invite participants to share why they are concerned about climate change, and what they could contribute to local solutions.

First Alaskans Institute's Dialogue Agreements Summary HERE

2. Introduce Middle-Out Change

3 minutes

i. Define your discussion goal by introducing the concept of middle-out change.

ii. We showed our attendees the video "Four Levels of Action" by Will Grant. We've also produced the video "Where Does Change Start?" for the same purpose. Watch "Four Levels of Action" or "Where Does Change Start?"

iii. After using Grant's video in our Kickoff, we reinforced the idea by starting every meeting with it.

3. Community History of Climate Action

25 minutes for panel, 10 minutes for Q&A

i. Present the results of your research into previous solutions your community has tried. Consider presenting this as an illustrated timeline, such as the one our Soldotna group made.

4. Introduce Drawdown

2 minutes

i. Explain what Drawdown is and how its chapters correspond to your discussion themes. Present a calendar of meeting dates and their themes, along with the Drawdown chapters participants should read beforehand. Keep the calendar up throughout the series for reference, and email it to those on your sign-up sheet.

ii. Tell participants what local libraries or bookstores have copies of Drawdown. Most of its content is available for free on www.drawdown.org, so participants can follow the monthly reading without the book.

iii. Ask those willing to share copies of Drawdown to raise their hands. Those without the book who want to do full readings can make sharing arrangements with them.

Schedule the entire series of discussions, complete with subjects and reading assignments, before the first meeting so participants know what they're getting into

Themed Discussions Preparation

The steering committee prepares for each discussion at least two weeks prior. In addition to securing space, setting an agenda, and advertising the meeting, their tasks include:

Assemble the panel

- List community members who work with, study, or are otherwise familiar with the month's theme. Choose the three who can best speak about it to your group.
- Choose four alternate panelists from your list as well. Even if they don't end up as panelists, invite them to your discussion as "front row" guests to share their knowledge, and to question panelists during the Q&A.
- Assign members of the steering committee to contact first the panelist candidates, then the alternates if necessary. Take advantage of any personal connections committee members have.
- Get in touch with panelists at least two weeks before the meeting, so they have time to prepare if they accept your invitation, and you have time to contact alternates if they don't.

Our website's "Resources" page can help you connect with good sources for local climate information, including local panelists

Be sure panelists understand:

- How you are using *Drawdown*. Give them links to the relevant sections of Drawdown's website or loan them a copy of the book. Tell them your discussion will be about localizing this information.
- Your goal of a middle out change. Ask them to focus on community action rather than individual behavior change or policy advocacy.

Choose a panel moderator

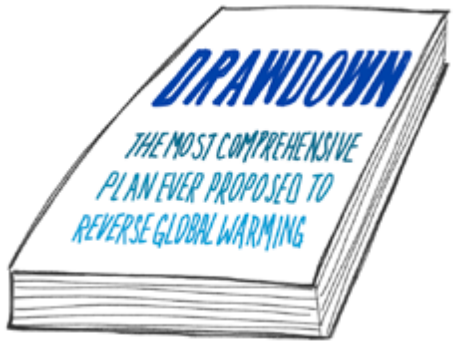
- Ask a group member with experience in the field being discussed to moderate the panel.
- Write questions for panelists
- When a panelist accepts your invitation, email them your questions so they can begin preparing. Inform them that responses will be kept to 7 minutes, so they can practice concise answers.

All panelists should be asked:

1. What middle-out solutions in your field have you seen attempted or enacted in our community?
a. What has worked and why?
b. What hasn't worked and why?

2. What can a group of concerned citizens do to support or elevate these efforts?

3. What else haven't we asked that you would like to share?



After these, ask topic-specific questions. Remember to keep the focus local. Our "Resources" page can help you research good questions on local issues with energy, agriculture, land use, et cetera.

Themed Discussion Meeting Walkthrough

1. Introduction

i. Moderators introduce themselves. Go around the room if you see a lot of new faces.

ii. Review discussion ground rules, such as First Alaskans Dialogue Agreements

iii. Land acknowledgement.

iv. Reinforce the idea of middle-out change with our video or Will Grant's "Four Levels of Action"

4 minutes

2. Panel Discussions

i. The panel moderator allows the panelists two minutes each to introduce themselves and their work, and to make opening statements. Then proceed to questions. Keep the discussion brisk. If you can, have a timekeeper as well as a moderator.

ii. End the panel discussion with audience questions and answers.

25 minutes for panel,
10 minutes for Q&A

3. Small Group Brainstorm

i. Break the audience into groups of 4-5. Encourage partnering with strangers. Invite the expert panelists to join a group.

ii. Give groups an assignment: combine Drawdown's analysis with what you have learned from the panel to generate ideas for local, volunteer-driven projects related to that theme.

4 minutes

4. Present Ideas

i. Groups choose their three best ideas and a speaker to present them to the larger group.

ii. Speakers come forward with three post-its. As they present each idea, stick that post-it on a sheet of butcher paper. A moderator curates this growing collection of ideas — moving post-its around to cluster similar ideas and eliminating redundant ones. Meanwhile, another moderator distributes three dot stickers to each person, for voting.

10 minutes

5. Dot Voting

See page 13 for more

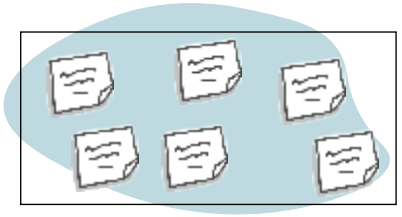
i. After every speaker has presented, the moderator instructs participants to put their stickers on or near the post-its with the three ideas they consider strongest.

ii. A moderator counts up the stickers to see which ideas ranked highest. The meeting concludes with moderators announcing the ideas that have emerged as the most popular.

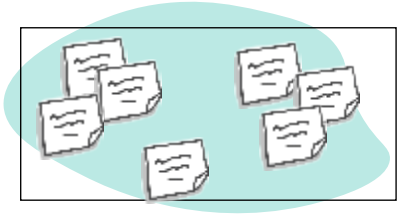
iii. The sheets covered with post-it notes and clusters of stickers are a visual record of the group's thinking. Save them in a safe place — later, they will be important in picking top project ideas to research further.

For more information on facilitating efficient meetings and ensuring all participants have a chance to share their ideas, visit our website www.inletkeeper.org/actionkit

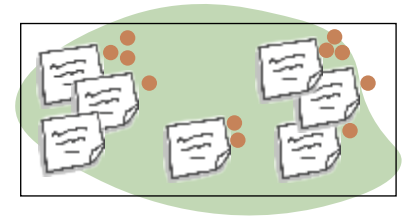
Find the Best Solutions for Your Community with DOT VOTING

1. 

Brainstorming
Participants brainstorm ideas
Write ideas on sticky notes - 1 idea per sticky
Place sticky notes on butcher paper

2. 

Grouping
Moderators group ideas by theme on the butcher paper

3. 

Dot Voting
Moderators pass out 3 dot stickers to each participant
Participants place dot stickers to cast votes for the three ideas they consider the strongest

Online Dot-Voting

There are many online services that can be useful for adapting dot-voting to online meetings.

i. Google's Jamboard feature, which simulates post-it notes and a whiteboard, can be a fast and efficient way to nominate ideas and record the group's thoughts.

ii. Google forms can be used for voting. Create the form ahead of time with blank idea spaces so a moderator can write in ideas as speakers give them. Send a link to the form to participants via Zoom chat when it's time to vote. Save the form to archive your top ideas.

Visit the resources section of our website for additional tips & best practices that may be useful during the facilitation process

Online Best Practices

These are some of the best practices that we utilized during our process. We found these practices and tools helpful for holding productive and efficient virtual meetings while making sure participants have an opportunity to engage and ask questions. You can find additional resources and links to tools on our website.

- Don't forget to record the meeting to share later.
- In lieu of a sign-in sheet, send a link to a registration form when you announce meeting information.
- Make all steering committee members co-hosts so each can quickly mute attendees who've forgotten to mute themselves.
- Start the meeting 10 or 15 minutes early to give time for neighborly conversation.
- Ask participants to introduce themselves in chat, to get them comfortable with the feature. Chat is useful for asking questions and holding side conversations without derailing the meeting.
- Use chat to take questions in the panel Q&A, with the moderator reading each question aloud. Remind participants that open discussion will occur in break out rooms.
- Plan a 5 minute break post-panel, before brainstorming discussion. This is also a chance for those who'd like to continue conversation with the panel to do so.
- Use 'breakout rooms' for group brainstorming.

Tips: For keeping participants active and engaged

The below are a round up of our top tips for facilitating meetings. Head to our website for additional resources.

Space. If your area has living examples of possible climate solutions, consider them as meeting locations or field trip destinations. Our "Built Environment" discussion, for instance, was held in a straw and clay barn constructed by a local intentional community dedicated to sustainable living.

Background activities. Look for opportunities for participants to experience what they're discussing, such as a local food potluck for your Local Food meeting.

Childcare. If many participants bring children along, consider organizing volunteers or hiring babysitters to watch them, perhaps providing climate-themed childrens' activities.

Aligning with community events. Think of opportunities to align discussion themes with community events, such as holding your Renewable Energy discussion during your electric co-op's board election and inviting candidates to speak.

Mailing list. Create a mailing list of past attendees using the email addresses from your discussion meeting sign-in sheets. Google Groups offers an easy way to send mass emails to this list to announce meetings and other local climate events.

Coffee and Climate. Between meetings, invite people to unstructured "Coffee and Climate" chats to discuss climate without a set agenda. These complement the monthly focused discussion with informal networking.

CHOOSE Your Solution

How to choose an action and win a broad base of support for it

After your Book-To-Action discussions take you through the chapters of Drawdown, your group will shift from "book" to "action." Your brainstorming sessions have created stacks of butcher paper, post-it notes, or online documents containing your community's best ideas for climate action. Now it's time to evaluate those ideas and choose one as a project.

Assemble the Champions

Because the selection process is so important, you should solicit participation beyond the usual steering committee. At your final Drawdown discussion, announce that next month's meeting will be dedicated to choosing a year-long project by voting on the ideas you've brainstormed. Invite anyone interested in helping prepare for the decision to a special steering committee meeting, where you'll be narrowing all the brainstormed ideas into ten project candidates. This will be a chance for any group member to champion their favorite idea with research and persuasion.

When you've gathered everyone interested, schedule a time a week or two before the Decision Meeting for the champions to meet.

Reaching A Top Ten

With the champions assembled, their first task is choosing the ten ideas most worthy of being considered as projects.

Go through the brainstorming documents from each discussion meeting and choose the three most popular ideas from each, as indicated by dot-voting results.

Remove solutions that aren't achievable in a year, as well as those happening already without your group's involvement. Ask: *"If we don't make this change, is it likely to happen anyway?"* If so, another project is a better use of volunteer energy.

Whittle the remaining ideas down to a top ten by scoring them in a rubric with criteria weighted by importance.

Here's the rubric we used:

Criteria	Score	Weight	Total
The solution is politically feasible to implement		x2	
The solution will help start conversations in the wider community about enacting local solutions (even amongst those not concerned about climate change).		x2	
The solution is self-sustaining, long-lasting, immune to political shifts.		x2	
The solution will excite volunteers.		x2	
The solution is visible, and will raise awareness in the community about climate action.			
The solution will measurably reduce greenhouse gas emissions.			
There are ample roles for many people to engage in enacting the solution.			
TOTAL (55 possible)			

Designing the rubric may be a contentious process. This one was controversial among our steering committee because it does not include an explicit criteria for the carbon emissions averted or sequestered, and the weights tilt more toward political feasibility and community engagement than carbon reduction. Many people have suggested alternate criteria or weighting; one proposed making carbon reductions a total score multiplier rather than another additive criteria.

Tensions inherent in the idea of community-led climate action come to the surface here – the projects with the most potential to inspire, motivate, and engage aren't necessarily those that reduce the most carbon. For some, the overriding goal is motivating a community to confront climate problems. For others, actual carbon reductions are top priority. Whatever your group wants out of a project, design a rubric that reflects it.

Assignments for the Champions

Assign each of the top ten ideas to a champion who will do further research and present it at the Decision Meeting. Any idea popular enough to make it into the top ten probably has at least one enthusiast who wants to make it the group project – more likely it has its own little booster club. It's unlikely that you'll have trouble finding a volunteer to champion any of your top ten ideas, but if so, assign the ideas in the fairest way possible, such as drawing straws.

The champions have two assignments to prepare for the decision meeting. The first is to write a one-page project description that will go out to the larger group a few days before the meeting. The other is a five-minute pitch for why the group should vote for their project, to be given at the meeting.

The project description should include:

- A one-paragraph overview of the project
- Decision makers involved
- Cost
- Cost savings
- Carbon reductions (Without the data or technical expertise to calculate this important number, we used Drawdown's worldwide measurement as a proxy)
- Timeframe to implement
- Previous local attempts
- Potential partners, resources, funding, allies and opposition
- Volunteer roles (see "Define Leadership Roles" on page 22 for ideas)
- Examples of the project elsewhere

You can see the project descriptions our Soldotna & Homer champions created here.

Give the champions a due date for project descriptions so you can distribute them to participants in advance of the meeting. Your participants will want a chance to digest this material and do some research of their own before attending.

Decision Meeting Walkthrough

1. Introductions

4 minutes

i. Welcome attendees and explain the meeting format: first, champions will give five-minute presentations on each of the top 10 ideas, then everyone will vote for the project they want to undertake for the next 12 months.

2. Champions Pitch Projects

5 minutes, total

i. Each champion has five minutes to present their research and argue for their project. Slideshows, handouts, or other material are optional.

ii. After each champion finishes their pitch, allow time for audience questions.

3. Group Discussion

20 minutes

i. The audience discusses project options. You can either break into small groups for this (using break-out rooms is a good idea in Zoom) or have a large group discussion. This will be a chance for any group member who wants to argue for their favorite project.

4. Vote

10 minutes

i. Use a ranked choice vote to choose the project. Consider using a phone-voting app such as Poll Everywhere. It may require more than one round of voting.

ii. Announce the winning idea that will become your project.

ACT on Your Idea

How to translate your community conversations to local action

Your champion's presentation defined the project well enough for your group to understand and vote for it, but before you can act in a coordinated and meaningful way, your idea of what the project is will probably need refining. Before getting to work, clarify your goals. Consider:

A project is not a program. A project has a mission to accomplish, while a program is an open-ended commitment requiring continual input. Volunteer efforts are poorly suited to feeding and maintaining a perpetual program. After a suitable time, your project must either become self-sustaining or reach a good end. Think of this end at the beginning to set the conditions for your success.

An idea is not a project. Your group has voted for an idea, something along the lines of "Conserve carbon sinks" or "Educate the public on the value of composting." Make these general ideas into projects by deciding what specific changes your idea will make in the world after one year.

To see whether your project is sufficiently defined, test it against the SMARTIE standard. This acronym says a project should be:

Specific
Measurable
Achievable
Realistic
Timebound
Inclusive
Equitable

The Book-to-Action discussions are meant to make your ideas achievable and realistic. Making them specific, measurable and timely is just as important.

Specific: Turning An Idea Into A Project

Productivity guru David Allen defines a project as "any desired result that can be accomplished in a year that requires more than one action step." Knowing your desired result in detail is important, because as Allen says, "you can't actually do a project; you can only do action steps related to it. When enough of the right action steps have been taken, some situation will have been created that matches your initial picture of the outcome closely enough that you can call it done."[2]

2 These quotes are from Allen's book *Getting Things Done*.

With this in mind, clarify that situation which will allow you to call the project done. Our compost project, for example, began with the general idea of diverting organic waste from the landfill. In the project description that our participants voted for in the Decision Meeting, it was refined to the goal of doubling the amount of organic waste delivered to a local farmer's compost site. Later, we specified it further into "Diverting 2,000 pounds of organic waste from the landfill between Oct. 31, 2019 and Oct. 31, 2020."

Measurable: Setting Metrics

Metrics demonstrate the benefit of your project and allow you to chart its progress. If you want the project to influence policy, they are vital. The metrics you use will depend on the project, but these are generally important:

Averted greenhouse emissions. The U.S Environmental Protection Agency's Greenhouse Gas Equivalencies Calculator can help you estimate this. See our online Resources page for other useful tools

Number of participants. Demonstrate that your project is used by and useful for the public.

Dollars spent and saved. Find metrics that can demonstrate efficiency or savings compared to current practices—for instance, the long-term costs of composting versus landfilling organic waste.

This is an important metric if you want to influence local governments.

Achievable: Clear-Eyed Ambition

The rubric you used earlier in your decision process should have filtered out project ideas that aren't achievable, but don't forget this standard when planning a timeline and setting smaller goals. Be clear-eyed about what you can actually achieve, but don't limit yourself unnecessarily. In some formulations of the SMARTIE acronym, A stands for ambitious rather than achievable. Let our A remind you of both: within the scope of what's achievable, be as ambitious as possible.

Realistic: Opportunity Within Reach

"To see what is in front of one's nose needs a constant struggle," said George Orwell. In our hyper-connected age, local problems and opportunities may be harder to learn of and think about than global ones. A well-informed climate activist may know a lot about carbon flux, ocean acidification, and other planet-level problems that draw attention from major media and science organizations, while knowing far less about the conversations their local energy co-op is having about renewables or the carbon trapping potential of the ecosystems around them. A realistic climate project works with the opportunities within your reach.

Metrics give leverage to policy change

Our Solarize project metric of contracted solar capacity helped us advocate for raising the amount of distributed renewables, such as home solar, that our local electric cooperative allows on their grid. When utility board members debated raising this limit – known as the net metering cap – we gave them comparisons between our capacity and their cap. If we contracted more capacity than the cap would allow, it could result in upset co-op members unable to install solar. We can't say whether our metric influenced their eventual decision to raise the cap, but certainly our communications would not have been as effective without it.

As you plan for action, continue thinking as you did during your discussions and brainstorms: with a focus on regional issues and opportunities. The local experts who spoke on your panels can continue helping with this as potential partners and advisors.

Timebound: One Year Timeline

Setting milestones you can reach in one-year phases is essential for refining your idea into a project.

This is not to say that the only viable projects are those you can cram into a year, or that after a year you must abandon the project and choose a new one, whether its goals have been met or not. Rather, your project needs a timeline, and a year is a good unit to build it with. If the project still has momentum and a purpose after a year, redefine it by setting new one-year milestones. If not, revisit your list of project ideas, reflect on lessons learned, and pick another project via a second decision meeting as described in "CHOOSE."

Inclusive: Roles for All

When designing roles for volunteers, think of what people of different ages, abilities, knowledge, time constraints, and physical health can contribute. Those who can't dig in the dirt could gather and analyze data; those who can't devote hours to organizing could make smaller but still meaningful contributions. Be aware of what roles might require specialized equipment, knowledge, or great time commitments, and balance these with some that don't. Your project might naturally require many kinds of work, but in any case, make it a deliberate priority to find potential roles for everyone. Perhaps not everyone can do every job, but anyone should be able to find some job they can do. In addition to building community, your project will likely be stronger for it.

"Real change occurs from the bottom-up; it occurs person to person, and it almost always occurs in small groups and locales and then bubbles up and aggregates to larger vectors of change."

—Paul Hawken

Equitable: Benefit for Everyone

Think about who your project will affect, and whether all those affected have the chance to help steer it. Think also about who will benefit. If your project reduces carbon emissions it will be good for everyone in the long run, but whose benefit is greatest and most immediate? Does your project benefit all your community equally? Does it deprive anyone of benefit?

When launching our cooperative solar buying project, we were aware that its first beneficiaries would be middle and upper class home and business owners, and that those without extra income to invest in solar power or property to install it on would not get immediate value from it. Indeed, under some utility policies there's the potential for members without solar to indirectly subsidize power delivery to those who can afford solar. Be aware of whether the potential for such inequitable outcomes exists with your project, and whether anyone is left out in the short term — projects involving electric vehicles, for instance, will limit their immediate benefit to those who can afford electric vehicles.

Starting the Project: Tips for Success

In addition to defining the project to the SMARTIE standard, here are some other up-front tasks that could create better conditions for success if tackled early.

TIP 1: Define leadership roles. The steering committee that organized your Book-to-Action discussions may no longer be adequate to a larger project with many demands. Consider designating more formal leadership roles for volunteers to fill.

If it's possible, contracting with a part-time coordinator could give a significant boost to an especially ambitious project. The Homer Drawdown project hired a coordinator through a partner nonprofit, turning a little funding into a strong support for other volunteers.

Let your team be as big and formal, or as small and loose, as the project needs it to be. See our graphic on the next page for a few possible leadership roles to consider.

TIP 2: Establish formal communications. At this point a regular newsletter might help volunteers keep in touch and up-to-date on the project. It could include:

- Meeting dates
- Discussion topics
- Action proposals
- Project progress
- Opportunities to contribute

Reach a consensus among participants on what communication mediums they could best use — email, Slack, a Facebook group, or something else? Be sure none of your participants are left out of your communications.

Another communications task will be writing press releases for local media about important project events. Be sure to include interview contacts from organizers and quotes from volunteers.

TIP 3: Consult potential advisors and partners. It will be important, especially as your project is beginning, to seek out anyone from your community who could be a partner or advisor. Our first compost meetings brought in officials from our borough solid waste department and local farmers, one of whom became an essential partner. Find knowledgeable folks and invite them to speak to your group. Make sure you give your guests a good background on the project, goals, and questions you have for them.

SELF DEFINED, GROUP SUPPORTED

LEADERSHIP ROLES

CAN HELP WITH SUCCESSFUL PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

Logistics/Site Coordinator
- Get stuff done!
- Lead hands-on workdays

Grant Getter(s)
- Write budget
- Find local funding

Meeting Facilitator
- Set group agreements
- Make agendas
- Schedule & run meetings

What are your skills & interests?

HOT TIP: Having small teams of two to three instead of just one person in each role can ease workload, add accountability, and be more fun!

Volunteer Coordinator
- Check in one-on-one w/ volunteers
- Send group meeting reminders

Outreach
- to businesses
- to residents
- to institutions/ organizations

Data Managers
- Collect
- Track
- Analyze
- Report

OUR TEAM

a name and shared mission can help focus your group

Communications
- Social media
- Press releases
- Advertising

Creative(s)
- Take photos
- Make explainer videos
- Use art installation to get media coverage

Local Gov. Liason(s)
- Work w/ city & borough staff
- attend & present at local government public meetings
- invite elected officials to specific discussion meetings

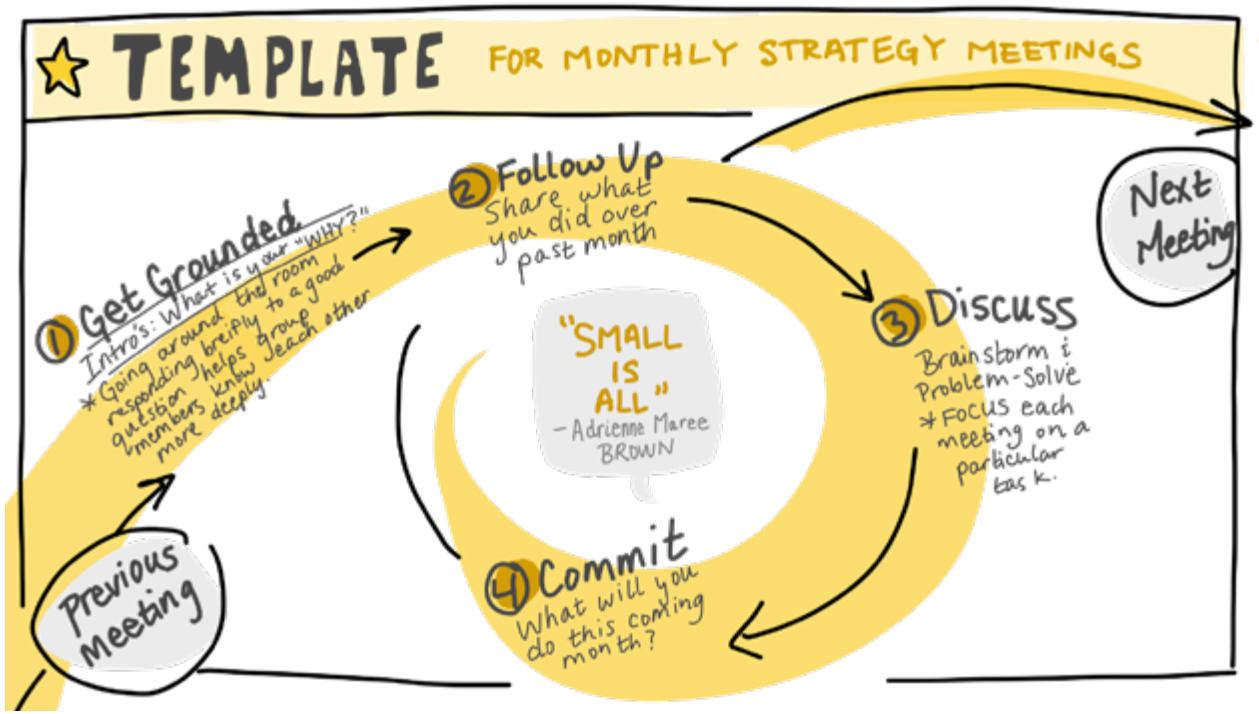
Solution Strategy Meetings

Consider making your strategy sessions into potluck meetings. We held ours on the last Sunday of the month and called them "Sunday Solution Suppers." Food helps create a cohesive community around the project.

The tips above are addressed to "you," but a single person won't be making these decisions unilaterally. Your steering committee and volunteer group will decide them, through conversation and consensus at regular strategy meetings..

With a project chosen, your monthly Book-to-Action discussions become monthly strategy sessions where volunteers plan, share, and coordinate their thinking and doing. For consistency, try to carry on with the same schedule you used for discussions.

Though the contents of your strategy meetings will depend on what you're doing, this section outlines a useful structure for any project driven by volunteer actions. Once you've defined your idea into an actionable project, each meeting will look something like this:



The session will begin with volunteers speaking about how they've followed up on commitments they made in the previous session. The outcomes of their actions drive discussion of the project's direction and future priorities, which leads to new ideas for action that volunteers commit to at the meeting's end. Here's how it works in detail.

Write an agenda: Collect questions, discussion points, and announcements from volunteers and assemble them into a loose agenda. Post the agenda in a shareable format such as a Google doc and invite the whole group to comment or edit. If you've designated a meeting facilitator, this is a good job for them.

Invite potential advisers and partners: Find knowledgeable folks, especially any who may become project partners, and invite them to speak to your group.

Solution Strategy Meeting Walkthrough

1. Introductions

i. Open with around-the-room updates or introductions for first-time attendees.

ii. As always, include a land acknowledgement and a recommitment to your shared discussion principals, such as the First Alaskans Institute's dialogue agreements.

2. Follow-Up on Previous Commitments

i. Follow-up on commitments volunteers have made at the previous meeting (see #5 below). A moderator asks each person named on the board what came from their action and initiates discussion about the outcome. This is an easy, low-key way to track volunteer commitments and follow-through.

ii. A whiteboard in your meeting space is useful as a public record of the actions volunteers have committed to, such as:

Researching ideas
Approaching partners
Doing outreach
Investigating grants
Preparing events
Building or moving things

If you're meeting online, Google's Jamboard could be a good tool to use for this.

3. Guest Speakers

i. If you've invited experts or other guests, introduce them and give them a chance to speak and receive questions from the group.

4. Discuss Progress

i. Discuss the questions and other items on your agenda in light of information brought by volunteers and guests. The goal is to generate improvements and new ideas while thinking aloud about what participants have been doing and new opportunities they've found.

ii. The outcome of this discussion should be a consensus on what needs to happen to move the project forward. The next question: Who will do it?

5. Individual Statements of New Commitments

i. Conclude by asking each participant what they can commit to do for the project before the next meeting.

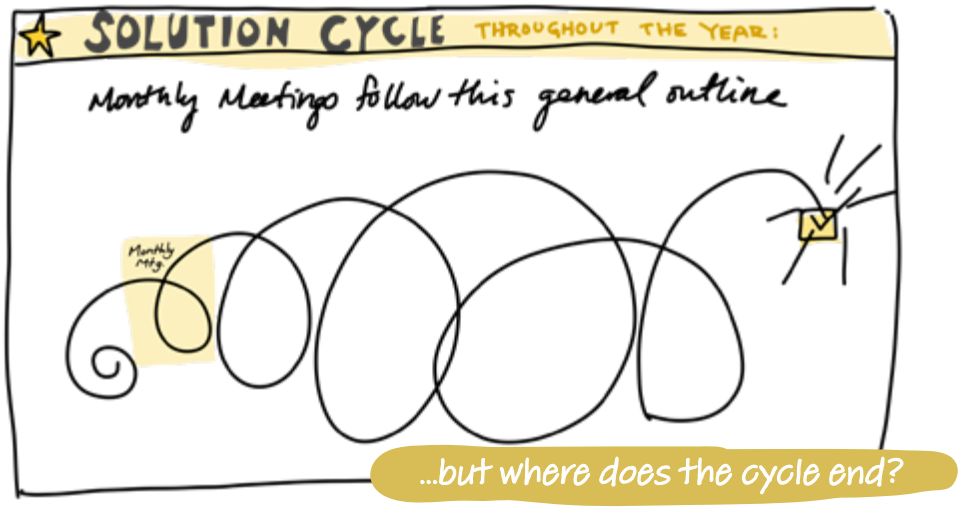
ii. As participants speak, a moderator records commitments on the whiteboard. These will be the commitments you follow up on at the next meeting in step 2.

iii. Ask volunteers to pair up as "accountability buddies" who will gently remind each other via email, text, phone call, or personal contact of the commitments they've made in the coming month.

6. Closing Announcements

i. Leave a few minutes at the end of the meeting for people to share other local climate-related news and events.

In this structure, one meeting feeds into the next – the actions that volunteers commit to at the session's end are followed up on at the next session's start. The structure creates accountability and helps things get done without hard rewards and penalties that a volunteer project can't provide. Ideally, it becomes a growing and self-perpetuating cycle of commitment, follow-through, discussion, and new commitment. We like to imagine it as a spiral, propelling your idea toward its one-year milestones...



Mission Accomplished?

Meeting the climate challenge is work that will last all of our lifetimes, and likely for generations ahead of us. What, then, is a good end for the contribution your community has undertaken?

The incentive structure of volunteering is better suited to building than maintaining – it motivates people to strive for concrete goals rather than sustain tasks that never end. As mentioned above, this Action Kit is meant to create finite projects with definite goals, not programs that grow and provide services indefinitely. If your project fits this description perfectly – putting solar panels on a school or LEDs in your town's streetlamps, for example – you'll have an easy time knowing when your mission is accomplished.

Otherwise, you'll have to think about whether your project should continue beyond your direct involvement, and if so, how.

We think limiting a project's scope in time and space is more of a strength than a weakness. It gets things done, then pushes people on to the next problem. A group of volunteers working in year-long phases can quickly gobble up the low-hanging climate action fruit.

If you want to climb higher up the tree, to solutions that require more than a focused burst of energy over a year or two, you'll have to think about how to sustain action and change over longer timescales. Here are some possibilities.

Handing the project off. If your project aligns with the mission of a local nonprofit, government entity, or business, see if they will be interested in carrying it on. Use any connections your volunteers may have to begin this conversation.

Grant funding. Look for grant funding that would enable you to professionalize the work your volunteers are doing, so you don't have to worry about endless commitments leading to volunteer burnout.

Influencing policy. Designing your project to influence the policies of local governments, energy co-ops, or businesses can make its impact last long after your active involvement.

Decentralization. The Internet offers many opportunities for connecting people without centralized coordination. Our composting project took this approach to sustainability by integrating our volunteer network into the web/mobile app sharewaste.com.

Sustainability is not a checklist that can be completed once and for all, but a continual process of adaptation. Undertake this process with your community not only to act on the world's most urgent problem, but also because leading change with your neighbors is worthwhile in itself. Together you might learn, as Paul Hawken said, to "see global warming not as an inevitability but as an invitation to build, innovate, and affect change, a pathway that awakens creativity, compassion, and genius."

Thank you for engaging with our Climate ActionKit.

Let us know how this work has informed your local organizing, and how it could be better, by emailing our team.

To learn more about the ActionKit and to find resources for using it, visit

www.inletkeeper.org/actionkit


Thanks for reading our actionkit!
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