

Maine Climate Table



Creating a state-based model for climate initiatives that increases broad civic engagement and leads to climate action.



Communications 101
Developing Persuasive Communications
About Climate Change In Maine

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INTRODUCTION

Advancing positive and lasting social change in a world that grows more complex each day is hard work. The proliferation of ways we communicate with each other has made this work easier...and at the same time harder. While it's easier than ever to reach people, it's now often harder to truly connect with them. Understanding how we break through to our most critical audiences – and developing messages that respectfully and authentically connect with their lived experiences – has become essential to inspiring people to come together to create this change.

The good news is that rapidly evolving behavioral and brain sciences give us a better understanding of how we relate to and interact with each other and how we process information and emotion. This understanding has been paramount in the development of new research tools and communication strategies to reach and persuade key audiences to support a wide range of issues, including taking action to address climate change.

This guide is designed to be a concise and accessible tool for communicating effectively about climate change in Maine, one that can be used by professional communications experts as well as policy experts and others working in the climate change space. Importantly, the ideas and recommendations here owe their origins to two detailed documents which, taken together, offer a fully comprehensive perspective on social change and climate change communications:

- *Understanding Your Audience: Research Insights to Communicate Effectively about Climate Change in Maine*
- *Heartwired: Human behavior, strategic opinion research and the audacious pursuit of social change. A strategy guide for change-makers*

To learn more about communication with Mainers about climate change, visit maineclimatetable.org. To learn more about social change communications, including opportunities to read about real-life success stories and view examples, visit heartwiredforchange.com.

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THEORY OF CHANGE

Define Your Change Goals

Communicating effectively starts with understanding exactly what you want to accomplish. Begin by taking the time to clarify the change you want to create in the world and then develop initial hypotheses about the strategy required to create that change. These change hypotheses should be explored, tested and refined each step of the way. In some cases, your experiences—gained through opinion research and/or field testing—will lead you to revise your change objectives significantly or embark on a different (but often related) pathway.

Diffusion of Innovation

A key element of this process is identifying your initial audience or audiences. A theory first developed by communication theorist and sociologist Everett M. Rogers explains how ideas gain momentum and spread over time through a specific population or social system.

This theory suggests that the adoption of new ideas or attitudes does not happen simultaneously in a social system. Instead, ideas spread along a continuum with one audience segment influencing the next, beginning first with “innovators” and “early adopters” who accept the new idea and build support among the “early majority.” For every issue, these audience segments will be comprised of different types of people. As such, it will be important to understand the characteristics and attitudes of the innovators and early adopters who comprise your base, as well as the early majority. This will allow you to develop an audience segmentation strategy that leads to a tipping point of change on your issue.

The Adjacent Possible

Many climate advocates argue that real solutions address systemic, big-picture issues like reducing carbon emissions from coal-fired power plants or significantly expanding public transportation. However, you may have to begin by engaging your audience in stepping-stone conversations about topics that are more relatable, like conducting home energy audits or buying local foods. Once they’re engaged in initial conversations about these “gateway actions,” new conversations become possible.

This step-by-step approach leverages what author and media theorist Steven Johnson calls the adjacent possible, and represents a helpful way to consider and explore the pathways forward and the steps needed to get there. Johnson states that “we have a natural tendency to romanticize breakthrough innovations. [However, ideas] are, almost inevitably, networks of other ideas” that evolve gradually, with each new innovation or insight opening up new possibilities that did not exist before. The same principle applies to efforts to change attitudes, policies and behavior.

On a related note, it is important to keep in mind that these communication strategies are about persuasion. As such, they are designed to meet the needs of your target audiences, not your needs as advocates. Nor are these communications designed to meet the needs of policymakers or scientists. To effectively navigate these waters, it is often helpful to remind scientists, policy makers and your fellow advocates about the adjacent possible and diffusion of innovation theory, and the realization that bringing along our audiences often requires that we go step-by-step.

Reflection Questions:

What is the change you seek to create in the world? What strategy is required to create this change? Remember that this hypothesis will be explored, tested and refined.

Who is your audience? What are their characteristics, values and attitudes?

How can your communications meet the needs of your audience? Are these needs different than your needs as an advocate? What do you notice/how does your strategy change when focusing on audience needs?

What are some “gateway actions” that your audience can take towards creating the change you seek?

CONNECTING WITH YOUR AUDIENCE

Make an Emotional Connection

One of the most important learnings from recent brain science is that our emotions typically drive our behavior. Our emotions work to prioritize different concerns than our reasoning mind – especially when we feel threatened and need to make a split-second decision (Stay and fight the big bear? Or run like crazy?!). When we have more time to consider different priorities, our rational brain has the capacity to guide our emotions.

Effective communication begins by connecting with audiences emotionally, and only then can we seek to engage in rational thought via facts and statistics. This is not to say that facts and statistics are unimportant. Audiences (especially male audiences) frequently reject appeals based solely on emotion. The key is to create messages that connect to the audience emotionally, yet provide a sufficient number of “hard facts” to give audiences permission to engage with the materials on an emotional level.

Meet Your Audiences Where They Are

Communications that fail to acknowledge and understand audiences’ core identity, economic anxiety and other related factors will seem disconnected. In the current Maine context, for example, communicators must acknowledge frustration about the economy and politics and channel that in ways that are helpful. In addition, it is important to tap into pre-existing beliefs and Mainers’ core values, such as being independent, frugal, careful, willing to help neighbors in a pinch, and using their “can-do spirit” and “Yankee ingenuity” to solve problems. Lastly, connect with the personal lived awareness about climate change impacts they are already experiencing in Maine, such as more unpredictable weather and an increase in ticks and other pests.

Use Different Strategies Than You Would for Your Base

Consider shifting frames from those that resonate with the base (e.g., environmental protection and climate change) to frames that resonate with persuasion audiences (e.g., independence, frugality, and a can-do spirit). In addition, recognize that for most lay people, they have difficulty connecting the dots on climate change—e.g., “If it’s supposed to be getting warmer, why all the severe snowstorms and cold in Maine?” Therefore, construct causal stories or “reasoning chains”—especially ones that emphasize everyday local impacts—to help audiences understand how climate change works.

Take care not to overwhelm folks with details and terminology that they don’t understand. Use small numbers that don’t seem hyperbolic but are still perceived as significant in a global climate context – e.g., “a 1.6 degree increase in global temperatures.” In addition, some climate change timeframes are perceived as arbitrary (e.g., “warmest temperatures in 118 years”). In these cases, briefly explain the reason for that timeframe—for example, “in the 118 years since they started keeping these records,” or if possible provide timeframes that are more relatable (e.g., “since 1970”).

Deploy a Mix of Messengers

Messengers matter, especially when it comes to explaining complex scientific causal relationships (e.g., ocean acidification). Communications are more effective when delivered by a mix of credible messengers, including both scientists and everyday Mainers who are relatable.

One messaging piece that resonated strongly with audiences, for example, was a video depicting lobstermen and fishermen talking about climate change impacts on coastal waters and potential solutions. The audience saw climate change as hurting “regular people” and felt that “regular people” support these types of solutions. Integrating scientific expert Robert Steneck from the University of Maine into the video helped to further validate these points from an academic and empirical perspective. If you can provide more than one climate scientist all the better, as it helps reinforce the broad consensus among scientists about climate change.



Portland

Leading with Solutions—and the Power of Redemption

Learning about climate change impacts often makes people anxious. In particular, when they hear that the impact will be catastrophic, it makes many of them push back because that scenario is just too scary. In addition, references to human causation can make people feel guilty which can make them both defensive and less motivated to take action.

This heightened anxiety motivates some to want to act to “fix” the problem or to feel it should be fixed, yet many do not think they can personally do anything about it. They perceive the issues and the forces involved as so much bigger than one person. These results reflect why promoting self-efficacy and concrete actions are central to effective communication.

Climate change communications should lead with (or at least include) proven solutions and specific, innovative ideas for taking action. People need to see that positive change is possible, even when things have gone wrong in the past. This “Redemption Frame” is especially powerful, showing that humans have the ability to undo past mistakes, in part by adopting legislation such as the Clean Water Act. For example, referencing acid rain not only taps Mainer’s existing template of how human activities impact weather, it also illustrates an environmental problem that was overcome through a combination of effective policies and technology in the face of considerable resistance from industry and oppositional policymakers. In addition to systemic actions, include actions that individuals can take as an important tool to help people manage their own anxiety about the potential dire impacts of climate change. Even small actions such as recycling can serve as a “gateway” to greater engagement, and should not be discounted or dismissed.

Deploy Persuasion Stories Wherever Possible

Stories are uniquely human and extremely powerful at shaping attitudes and influencing behaviors on tough social issues. In addition, facts embedded in stories are far more likely to stick than stated facts alone. Even “micro-stories” – short character-based narratives—can be extremely effective. Developing the right storytelling strategy is one of the most important tools in your overall communications strategy.

Extensive research has shown that target audiences are most likely to be persuaded by the right story – a heartwired story. Heartwired stories feature familiar and relatable characters and create a shared sense of identity, lived experiences, values and beliefs. Developing stories that are most effective as persuasion tools requires first understanding the identity, lived experiences, values and beliefs of your target audience.

In addition, it is critical to remember that persuasion stories are not about the story teller, or about a story teller’s (understandable) desire to share an authentic story of his or her self. It is about meeting the needs of your target audience. If the purpose is to create social change, these two needs may feel in conflict at times, so this conflict should be acknowledged and resolved before moving forward.

Beware the “Curse of Knowledge”

As advocates, you inevitably know far more about your policy priorities than your target audience does. We call this the “Curse of Knowledge” and everyone suffers from it when it comes to their own personal areas of expertise. The result is that many advocacy communications are laced with jargon, acronyms and unexplained concepts. It is critical that you test your communications—even informally—to ensure that the Curse has not infected your choice of words and phrases.

For example, based on our research in the climate change arena, we recommend using the term “carbon pollution” rather than “carbon emissions,” “greenhouse gasses,” or “CO2,” because “pollution” is broadly understood to be bad, human-caused, and something that can, and should, be cleaned up or otherwise addressed through the actions of individuals, corporations, and public policy.

Below are some other examples of insider terminology. While we are not recommending you abandon these terms altogether, each likely requires additional context or explanation in order to prevent more general audiences from becoming confused or drawing conclusions that are counterproductive.

- Carbon neutral
- Environmental sustainability
- Energy transition
- Energy future
- Green infrastructure
- Green economy
- Green businesses
- Ocean acidification
- Food security

Reflection Questions

- How will your communications connect with the lived experience of your audience?
- Are you incorporating frames that resonate with persuasion audiences (e.g., independence, frugality, and a can-do spirit)?
- Who are your messengers? Remember to seek out a mix of credible (scientists, other experts) and relatable (everyday Mainers).
- How are you incorporating proven solutions and specific, innovative ideas for taking action? Remember: **Change is possible!**
- Are you including heartwired stories that feature familiar and relatable characters and create a shared sense of identity, lived experiences, values and beliefs?
- Have you checked for the use of “insider terminology”? See the list above.

EXAMPLES OF EFFECTIVE MESSAGING

The examples below show how this messaging guidance can be put into action, as well as the underlying reasons that language or specific techniques are used.

Establishes Maine identity and a relatable occupation.

Messaging Example: HOMEOWNER

I'm Emily Vail and I live in Brunswick, Maine. I am a school teacher at Mt. Ararat High School in Topsham, across the river.

I decided to pursue energy efficiency and seek out those home improvements shortly after I became a homeowner.

Fishermen are seen as very knowledgeable about ocean changes, and are more relatable for lay audiences than are climate change experts.

Messaging Example: GULF OF MAINE

Fisherman 1: Well the water is warming for sure. The catch in the last 10 years has gone through the roof.

Fisherman 2: I am worried that the population we have isn't sustainable, **not from my doing, but from outside factors.**

Fisherman 3: I mean you see pictures of oyster spat that are dying in the lab because the acid level is so high in the water. What are we doing to ourselves?

Rob Snyder of the Island Institute: Along the coast of Maine, the communities here are really concerned about the effects that climate change is having, particularly in those communities that are dependent upon fisheries.

Fishermen are the first to introduce the idea that "outside factors" are affecting the Gulf. The first mention of ocean acidification also comes from fishermen.

Identify a problem affecting many people, then offer a surprisingly low-cost solution.

Messaging Example: HELPING NEIGHBORS STAY WARM

Some homes in Maine lose about 20-30 percent of their heat through leaky window frames. Replacing old and inefficient windows is not only too expensive for most Mainers, it is also not necessary. Most old window frames can be easily sealed to dramatically reduce heat loss through cracks in and around the frame and glazing.

Emphasize "neighbors" coming together to leverage bulk discounts.

Messaging Example: COLLECTIVE PURCHASE

Dana Fischer: "Collective purchase" is **neighbors coming together** to bulk buy energy services and equipment from local contractors at a discount.

Highlight specific community examples to show this is a proven, effective program.

Provide specifics about what can be accomplished.

Some Maine communities sponsor a "Weatherization Week" where residents can get energy efficiency services at reduced costs by bundling multiple homes. Discount examples include: energy assessment, air leak sealing, insulation and LED bulbs. Using this model, Maine island communities have weatherized over 350 homes in the last 4 years.

People like to know where they can go for more information.

Get a collective purchase group started in your area. All the information you need is in a handy toolkit on our website at efficiency-maine.com. Or call our friendly center at 1-866-ES-MAINE.



Dover-Foxcroft

CHECKLIST

Any time you are writing or developing persuasion communications, be sure to ask yourself - and answer - the following questions:

- Who is my audience?
- What am I trying to persuade them to do or think differently?
- What shared values am I evoking?
- What lived experiences of my audience am I incorporating?
- What facets of my audience's identity am I including so they can identify with my values and/or messengers?

Messaging Points

The following talking points, which are based on the Maine Climate Table research findings, can be used as a launching point or content for op-eds, press releases, presentations, and social media posts. They include general messaging points, and messaging points specific to the five priority areas tested by the Climate Table: energy efficiency, clean energy, farming and food systems, marine and coastal resources, and investing in Maine's future.

They can be re-ordered, added to or edited. Users can insert specific policy changes that they are promoting.

- While we may not agree on or understand the causes, Mainers are seeing the impacts of a changing climate in their everyday lives.
- People are experiencing and talking about unpredictable weather patterns, extreme weather events, and warming air, ocean and river temperatures.
- Mainers are making the connection between how changes in our climate are affecting things at work, in their communities and at home.
- Maine is experiencing record heat in the summer and ice-out, the thawing of ice on lakes and ponds, is happening earlier, affecting ice fishing.
- Our fishermen and University of Maine scientists agree that warming waters are causing changes in our oceans and rivers that are bad for fishermen and for our populations of fish and shellfish.
- While overall lobster catches have been high, lobster landings are moving north. Northern shrimp numbers are at an historic low, and the fishery has been closed since 2013 and will be closed at least until 2021.
- They include general messaging points, and messaging points specific to the five priority areas tested by the Climate Table: energy efficiency, clean energy, farming and food systems, marine and coastal resources, and investing in Maine's future.
- Maine has been a leader for centuries in manufacturing and natural resource-based industries.
- Hardworking Mainers supplied ships, forest products, and textiles for the rest of the world.
- There are proven solutions and innovative ideas to mitigate and adapt to the negative impacts of climate change. Maine can support and invest in them to help create good jobs, keep young people in Maine, and create a viable path for a resilient, long-term economy.

Energy Efficiency

- Most Mainers support making homes, businesses, and other buildings more energy efficient, reducing our dependence and money spent (\$5 billion a year!) on fossil fuels from out of state.
- Communities are working together with help from Efficiency Maine to make municipal buildings such as community centers, libraries, and schools more energy efficient and comfortable, with the added bonus of cost savings too.
- Switching to LED street lighting systems can save costs and take advantage of new, innovative technology.

Messaging Points, cont.

Clean Energy

- Maine can adopt more clean energy sources and at the same time create new, innovative jobs that can help younger Mainers stay in state.
- Clean energy reduces Maine's dependence on imported energy sources.
- We already have a foothold in clean energy, with communities like South Portland, Tremont, and
- Freeport benefiting from new large scale municipal solar installations.

Farming and Food Systems

- In a rural state like Maine, people are closely connected to the land.
- Many of us have farmed or have purchased food from local farmers.
- Iconic blueberry, potato, and grain crops are part of the Maine brand.
- Farming is on the rise, with recent increases in young people moving to Maine to farm. However, many farmers struggle to make ends meet.
- Increases in agricultural pests, unpredictable weather patterns, and extreme weather events create extra challenges for farmers working with slim profit margins.
- Protecting Maine's farmland, and helping farmers adapt to change is important for Maine's economy and self-reliance.
- Access to healthy and nutritious food that is grown in Maine is good for everyone - from consumers to hospitals and schools.



Fort Kent

COMMUNICATIONS 101: RESEARCH INTO PRACTICE

Marine and Coastal Resources

- Fishermen are on the front lines in seeing how changing weather and warming waters are affecting working waterfront communities.
- University of Maine scientists agree that the warming ocean is also more acidic, which can hurt the shells of lobsters, oysters, and other shellfish.
- Our coastal resources are at risk from storm surges and sea level rise.
- Protecting vulnerable working waterfront infrastructure such as wharves and storage and processing facilities helps coastal communities and fishing families.
- Shellfish and seaweed aquaculture holds promise for creating new jobs and providing fishermen with a strategy to bring in an income during the off season while helping to clean and reduce acidification in our oceans.
- Aquaculture ecosystems are proving promising in creating ocean environments that attract other species back to overfished areas.



Harpwell

Investing in Maine's Future

- Private investment alone is insufficient to pay for the regional and local projects that will help pave the way for Maine to be more resilient and independent.
- We will need to train and hire people, especially young people, to help implement promising strategies.
- Maine can support University of Maine scientists in their research into how weather changes are affecting Maine's agriculture and fisheries industries.
- Maine can make low interest loans available for more efficient community facilities, clean energy production, and transportation and manufacturing using clean energy.
- Investment now will pay for the changes we want to see in the future, including keeping more young people in Maine.

Press Releases

To build support for pragmatic climate solutions statewide, celebrate successes by announcing them to the media. Start with the news you wish to share, identify your target audience(s), and what you want them to do with this information (see page 9). Use the talking points in the previous pages to form the basis of a release. Add quotes from key messengers and use the guiding principles from the research findings.

EXAMPLE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Date
Contact: name and email

[Community or organization or partnership] Announces XXX

[City, State], Date–Today, [community, organization or partnership accomplished what? Highlight news you wish to share. Include background on how it came about, who was involved, and the impact, particularly impact that benefits the broader community. In the opening paragraph, briefly address “who,” “what,” “why,” “where,” and “how.”]

< Insert quote from Key Messenger >

Include talking points that present a clear reasoning chain about the problem your accomplishment is aiming to solve, how the solution was identified, what steps were taken to engage the community or stakeholders, and more on what the solution will do or contribute in terms of supporting Mainers, creating jobs, providing a community asset, and benefiting real people, particularly older and younger Mainers.

< Insert quote from second key messenger, perhaps a supportive community member, a young person, a farmer/fisherman, someone who your audience can relate to >

Add talking points that provide a broader context for this solution. Are there ways that you wish your audience would get involved? What do you want to invite them to do?

End with contact information so that your audience knows where to turn for additional information. Add boilerplate language about your organization or group.

Presentations

Most presenters include too much written information on PowerPoint slides. Slides should cue audiences on what you are talking about and should not serve as your presentation notes. A good rule of thumb is no more than four or five lines of text, with approximately four or five words per line. Audience members take in information in different ways so be sure to include numbers, text, and imagery in your presentation.

The talking points included in this document can be used to support your presentation. For example, you might open your remarks by acknowledging that “Mainers are seeing the impacts of a changing climate in their everyday lives.” You could include a photo and explain what is happening in the photo.

Present a clear reasoning chain without jargon. Use examples that Mainers can relate to, to help communicate your experience, share your knowledge, and explain the solution you’re promoting.

Op-Eds & Letters to the Editor

As with a press release, start with clarity on who you are trying to reach and what you want them to do. Op-eds and letters to the editor should include a call to action. Most media outlets will provide direction on how many words they will accept.

Consider telling a story that is general enough for people to relate to that incorporates guiding principles from the research. Here is an example from a credible messenger that incorporates a personal story, persuasive argument, and call to action:

Maine lobstermen see the fragility of our environment. We know the need for clean air, water.

George Danby | BDN | November 16, 2017

Driving down around the point, I stopped where I could look out from my truck's window and take in the lower end of Friendship Harbor. There my old F/V Pescadero now tugged on someone else's mooring painter and still a little upon my soul seeing her there. Now retired, I recall the many lobsters that have passed over the Pescadero's washboards.

I think as well about the future of lobster fishing in Maine and how warming and acidifying waters might affect the industry. Will other fishermen have to share this experience of looking out over their harbors feeling the loss of being idled before their time?

I have often felt like a triple poster boy for clean air and water: My concerns for the health and well-being of the lobster industry, the overriding health of the ocean itself, and my daily battle with chronic-obstructive pulmonary disease all have converged to make me acutely aware that they share a single foe in the burning of fossil fuels and the polluting of our atmosphere.

Maine's lobster industry, realizing we are dependent on a healthy ocean as well as an abundance of lobsters, has a long established heritage of conservation and has made choices over time that helped create a fishery that is flourishing while others are not. Our good management decisions could well be an example to decision-makers who mistakenly believe that momentary gain from relaxation of environmental regulations somehow benefits us in the long run. Working in the natural world, fishermen realize that a healthy environment and its resources feed our economy.

As fishermen we've seen how lobster change in their molts and life cycles, as well as in their migrations and abundance. We've seen economically important species disappear and the anomalous or the invasive species show up. We've seen the toxic algal blooms, fish die-offs and fishery closures. We've fished through the warming and the increases in severe weather.

But fishermen are not the only ones witnessing changes. Anyone spending time outside, be they hunters, gardeners or the linemen who helped restore our electricity after the recent windstorm, know of and could speak to changes they've seen. Nor are lobsters the only species with special iconic connections to Maine that might be in jeopardy. From moose to puffins, there is a long list of species whose habitat are already at the lower portion of their range and hang in the balance. We who have spent time in their environment intuitively sense the fragility of their existence, and it serves to kick-in that heritage of conservation within us.

We find ourselves facing environmental challenges beyond our localized control and more complex than our management systems can affect. We must now reach out to those responsible for bringing about the carbon policies that will enable us to maintain healthy oceans, forests and resources on which we depend. We need to choose a direction on environmental issues that will lead us forward and not have us stumbling back into the past.

The present administration has chosen to take us backward. The Environmental Protection Agency's draft strategic plan navigates an extremely dangerous course, refusing to recognize the threats of climate change and all it entails. The administration appears bent on reversing our progress on clean water and air, as well as gains not yet realized, trying to halt vehicle emissions standards from which we've all benefited and eliminating the Clean Power Plan, an EPA program that would reduce power plant emissions by 32 percent over 2005 levels. On top of this, the administration has announced plans to expand offshore oil drilling in U.S. waters, including the Atlantic coast.

One can only stop and ask why? What we need is a government that looks to our environmental, economic and physical well-being. What we don't need is to accelerate conditions that might make Maine hard for us all to recognize.

Images

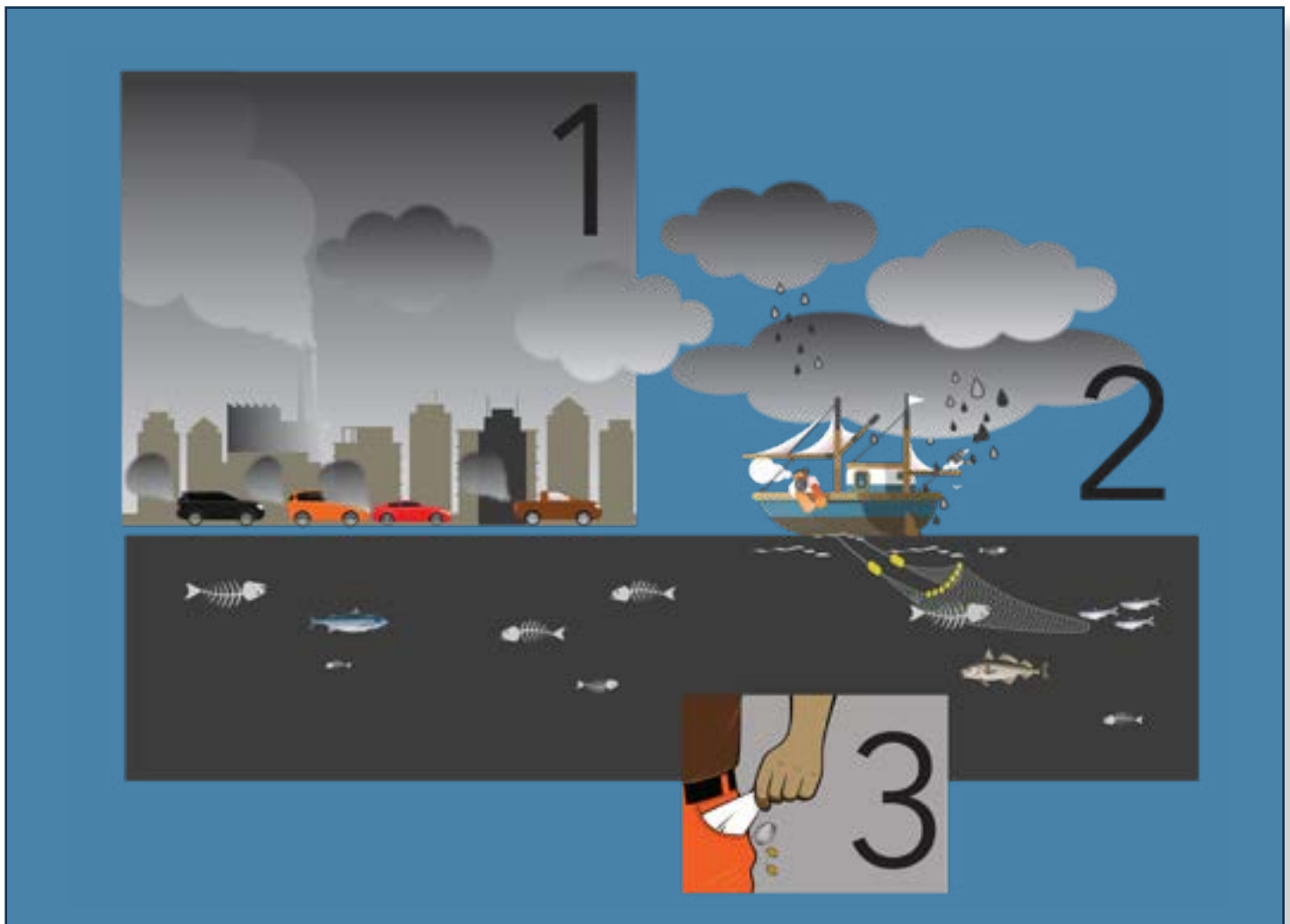
Photos, pictures and graphics used in climate-related communications should be relatable, include regular-looking people (e.g. not models), and incorporate some or all of the following elements: natural resources (water, trees, land, sun), local food, and people engaged in real work in local settings. Ideally, imagery demonstrates community, and not individual benefits of climate related action.



Infographics

Reasoning Chain: How Ocean Acidification Hurts Fishing Communities

1. Increasing carbon pollution in the atmosphere, caused primarily by human beings burning fossil fuels such as oil, coal and natural gas, are making the ocean water more acidic.
2. More acidic seawater can kill certain shellfish that are integral to the food chain, leading to fewer fish, overall.
3. Rising acidity threatens the entire fishing industry, which is no small matter. For people living along the coast, the fishing industry is an economic lifeblood.

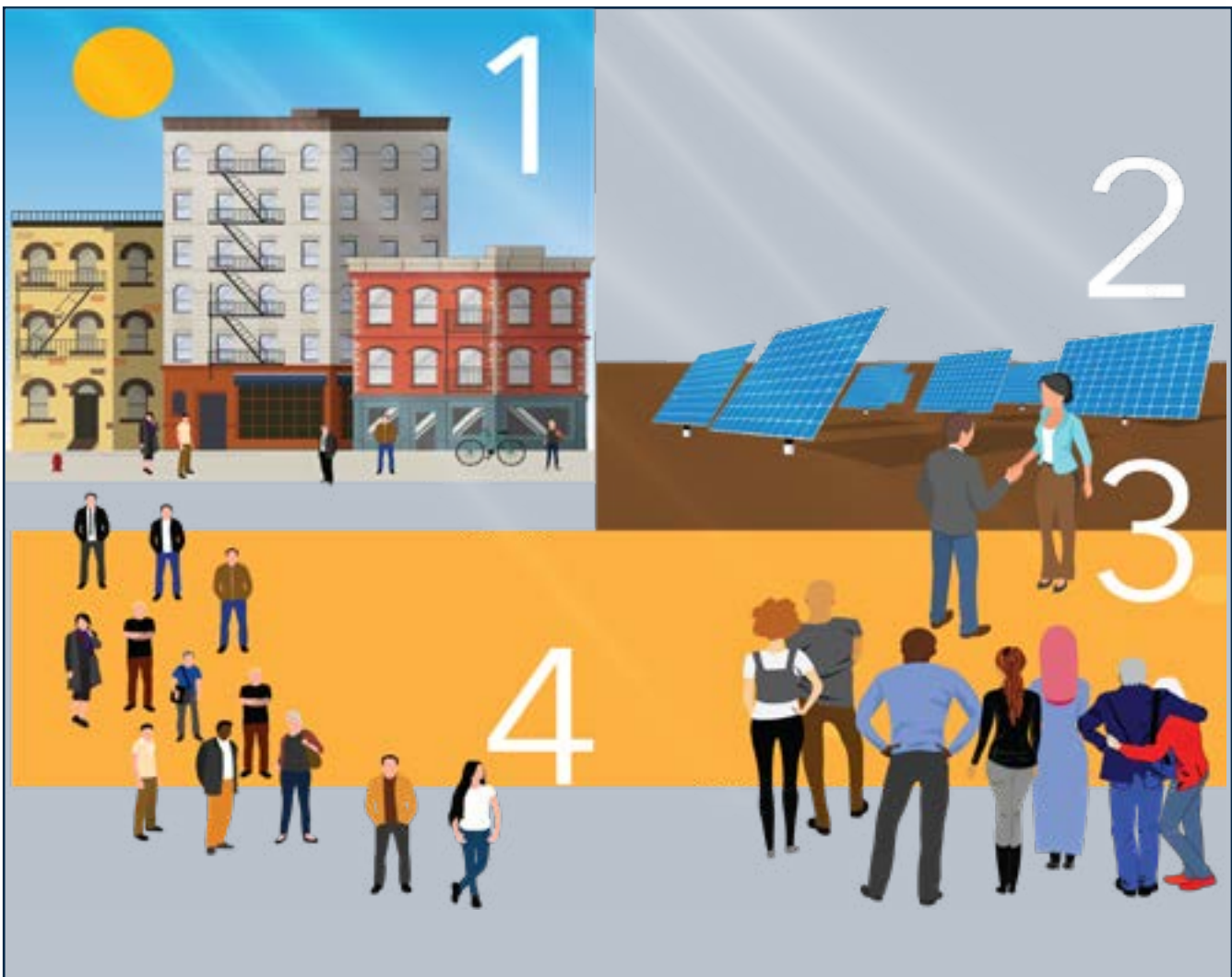


"Some of the hardest hit are these tiny sea snails called sea butterflies. No one's ever heard of them, but salmon love them. Just a small increase in acid dissolves their shells. And when sea butterflies die, salmon start to die off as well."

Rick Feely, senior researcher, Hatfield Marine Science Center in Newport, OR

Reasoning Chain: Community Solar

1. Many people want to “go solar”—to save money or to help the environment or both—but can’t do so because their roof doesn’t get enough sun or because they rent.
2. Community solar farms make going solar possible by allowing these people to benefit from a single large solar array. The solar array is located on an underutilized piece of land—typically an open field, business park, or brownfield.
3. Interested participants are paired with a person or business who owns the land, and invest together (at different share amounts) to build the array. Upon completion, 100% of the solar generation is sent to the grid and automatically credited to each shareholder based on their stake in the solar farm.
4. Maine already has several community solar farms, but growth has been limited. Policy changes are needed to enable more people, communities and businesses to benefit from solar energy.



Research Findings Review:

Guiding principles to incorporate in communications strategies

- Clear reasoning chain—connect to people’s lived experience
- Identifiable messengers and approaches
- Not requiring people to “believe” in climate change
- Explain patterns that people see
- Show what people can and are doing
- Reduce anxiety—no guilt or fear mongering
- Make the motivations of messengers clear
- Promote self-efficacy, concrete actions—things people can do to take action
- Acknowledge frustrations about politics and the economy
- Share proven solutions and specific ideas
- Emphasize job creation
- Show collaboration
- Acknowledge that climate change can be confusing and hard to understand
- Convey urgency without fear
- Demonstrate collective impacts of problem and solutions
- Recognize Maine’s history of leadership
- Incorporate Mainers’ core identity qualities
- Channel anger for action

Communicating with Mainers on Climate Change: *Getting Started Worksheet on Goals, Audience Identification & Connection*

Use this worksheet to develop your initial plan for persuasive communication. Using your answers below, craft your communications piece to best connect with and persuade your audience.

Consult *Research Insights: Understanding Your Audience to Communicate Effectively about Climate Change in Maine* for additional subject matter specific tips as well as written examples. Feel free to reach out to the Climate Table for assistance. And be sure to share your final product with the Maine Climate Table!

1. What is the change you seek to create in the world? What strategy is required to create this change? (Remember that this hypothesis will be explored, tested and refined.)

2. Who is your audience?

3. What are their characteristics, values and attitudes?

4. How will you meet the audience where they are and/or acknowledge that climate change can be confusing and hard to understand?

5. How will your communications meet the needs of your audience? Remember, these needs may be different than your needs as an advocate.

6. What are the “gateway actions” your audience can take towards creating the change you seek?

7. What are some lived experiences of your audience that may help illustrate your point?

8. What frames will you use that resonate with your audience (e.g., independence, frugality, and a can-do spirit)?

9. Who are your messengers? How will you incorporate their voices and perspectives? Remember, seek out a mix of credible (scientists, other experts) and relatable (everyday Mainers) as your messengers.

10. What proven solutions and specific, innovative ideas are you providing for your audience? What is your ask of them or your call to action? Remember: Change is possible!

11. What ‘heartwired’ stories will you utilize that feature familiar and relatable characters and create a shared sense of identity, lived experiences, values and beliefs?

12. Double check that you haven’t used “insider terminology” or jargon! See page 7.

WHAT IS THE MAINE CLIMATE TABLE?

Founded in 2013, the Climate Table is a broad, non-partisan partnership that includes participation from individuals and organizations from the business, nonprofit, philanthropic, and government sectors in Maine. The Climate Table's vision is to create a state-based model for climate initiatives that increases broad civic engagement and leads to climate action.

WHAT IS OUR GOAL?

Our primary goal is to engage more people in community-based climate action that will collectively help to reduce climate changing pollution, support adaptation to the changing conditions around us and promote measures that will increase the resiliency of Maine's communities and small businesses.

WHO CAN JOIN?

Participation in the Climate Table is open to any organization or individual that is interested in collaborating with us and supporting our efforts. Visit maineclimatetable.org to learn more.



maineclimatetable.org

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