

Transforming the Rural Narrative on Climate Solutions

With the
Rural Climate Partnership

Madeline McGill
Josh Ewing

10/31/23



**CLIMATE
ADVOCACY
LAB**

ClimateAdvocacyLab.org

© Climate Advocacy Lab

Feel free to share your info in the chat



Name

Pronouns

Location

Organization/affiliation

What's one reason you wanted to attend today's training?



Following "Hawaii 2012" The leading experts find every element

"We basically found our guts were worthless."

COMMUNITY AGREEMENTS

- REC. BY EACH OTHER
- LISTEN
- SPEAK DIRECTLY
- SUPPORT + CHALLENGE
- FEASIBILITY
- WHEEL LACK OF WHEELS



**CLIMATE
ADVOCACY
LAB**

About the Climate Advocacy Lab



The Lab equips the US climate movement with the evidence-based insights, skills, and connections needed to build durable power and win equitable solutions.

Evidence to support climate advocates



Public opinion research



Social science research



Data and analytics



Experimentation



Case studies



The Climate Advocacy Lab is here for you!



Community



Research



Insights



Trainings

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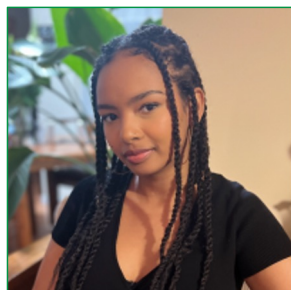




The Lab Team



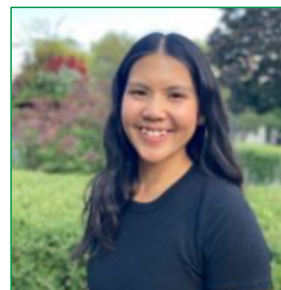
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Andrea Fortanel
Community Lead



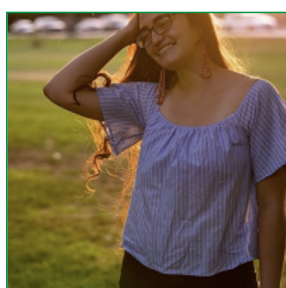
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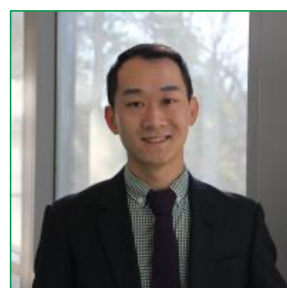
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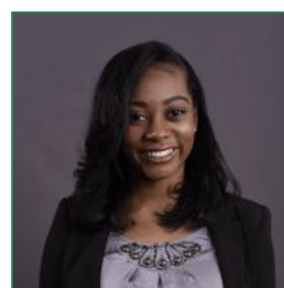
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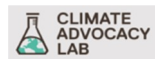


Apollo Gonzales
Co-Director



Ways to plug in

- Join the Climate Advocacy Lab →
- Join Slack community
 - Introduce yourself in the #Intros channel
 - Ask questions in the #Ask channel
- Reach out to us with questions, ideas, resources
 - *info@climateadvocacylab.org*



ClimateAdvocacyLab.org/become-a-member

Research on rural communities in the Lab's Resource Library


Rural Consciousness and Framing Environmental (In)Justice
Research & Articles 04-05-2023
Nicholas Theis and Adam Driscoll, University of Oregon and University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, Environmental Justice

DOWNLOAD FILE + MYLAB

RESEARCH & ARTICLES STRATEGY & MOVEMENTS RURAL ENVIRONMENTAL/CLIMATE JUSTICE CASE STUDIES

SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH

Rural communities that are predominantly white may frame their own resistance to environmental pollution as a defense of rural identity and place. Although communities of color and urban communities both tend to utilize the environmental justice frame to understand and represent their resistance to unwanted land uses, rural defense may sound different. This study shows that although both types of communities will often organize resistance to the siting of environmentally hazardous facilities within their region, the frames that the activists use may differ dramatically. This study examines a case study of environmental conflict over a proposed industrial hog farm in northern Wisconsin.

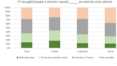


Survey Shows Pathway To Speeding Up EV Adoption in Rural Areas
Research & Articles 03-14-2023
Maria Cecilia Pinto de Moura, Union of Concerned Scientists

VIEW RESOURCE + MYLAB

RESEARCH & ARTICLES TRANSPORTATION MESSAGING PERSUASION RURAL POLLING & SURVEYS

There is plenty of interest in electric vehicles (EVs) in rural areas, but there is a huge knowledge gap about what it is like to own an EV. In a nationally representative 2020 survey, across urban, suburban and rural areas, 4% of the respondents with valid driver's licenses said they would definitely plan to get an EV for their next vehicle. In the latest survey, which was fielded in early 2022, this share has increased from 6% overall to 18% in rural areas and 18% in urban areas. An additional 18% of rural dwellers and 25% of urban dwellers would seriously consider buying or leasing an EV if they were to get a vehicle today. When considering respondents who would definitely plan and seriously consider (not including those who are open to getting one in the future), this adds up to 29% of rural drivers who would at least seriously consider buying or leasing an EV. Among rural dwellers, only 6% said they were very familiar with the fundamentals of buying and owning an EV, while 30% said they were somewhat familiar. One of the reasons for this lack of familiarity is that only 27% of rural dwellers have seen an EV in their neighborhood, compared to 50% of urban dwellers, and even fewer have a friend, neighbor or family member who has driven an EV, as rural dwellers have never been a passenger in an EV, as




Nebraska Rural Poll
Research & Articles 01-01-2023
University of Nebraska

VIEW RESOURCE + MYLAB

RESEARCH & ARTICLES MESSAGING PERSUASION RURAL POLLING & SURVEYS NEBRASKA

Rural Nebraskans are concerned about extreme weather and climate change but aren't convinced about proposed climate solutions. 59% of rural Nebraskans agree that we have a responsibility to future generations to reduce the effects of climate change. 55% of rural Nebraskans are concerned about severe droughts. 52% of rural Nebraskans recognize that human activity is contributing to climate change.



Resource Library

Resources

Search below for resources covering the intersection of climate engagement, social science and data analytics.

your search term here!

To select or de-select topics, press CTRL when making selection on PC, Command when making selection on Mac.

ENERGY

COAL EFFICIENCY

CONSTITUENCIES

PUBLIC HEALTH COMMUNITY

RURAL



RURAL CLIMATE
PARTNERSHIP

Transforming the Rural Narrative on Climate Solutions

Leveraging a benefits-forward strategy to
connect with hardworking rural Americans



The Road to Climate Progress Runs Straight Through Rural America

Our Goal: Ensure rural communities aren't left out and don't opt out of the benefits flowing from climate solutions.

A photograph showing the interior of a truck from the driver's perspective. Two men are in the front seats. The driver on the left is wearing a green baseball cap and glasses. The passenger on the right is wearing glasses. The truck is driving on a paved road through a rural landscape with green fields and trees under a clear sky. The dashboard and steering wheel are visible in the foreground.

Companies' Climate Promises Face a Wild Card: Farmers

Some of the largest companies in the U.S. have pledged to adopt climate-friendly agricultural techniques. But some farmers say they haven't provided enough incentive.

Our agenda today is simple:

1. Defining our audience
2. Prioritizing a narrative order of operations
3. Applying the 5 keys of a transformative narrative for hardworking rural people
4. Demonstrating rural credibility
5. Pivoting to policy or practice

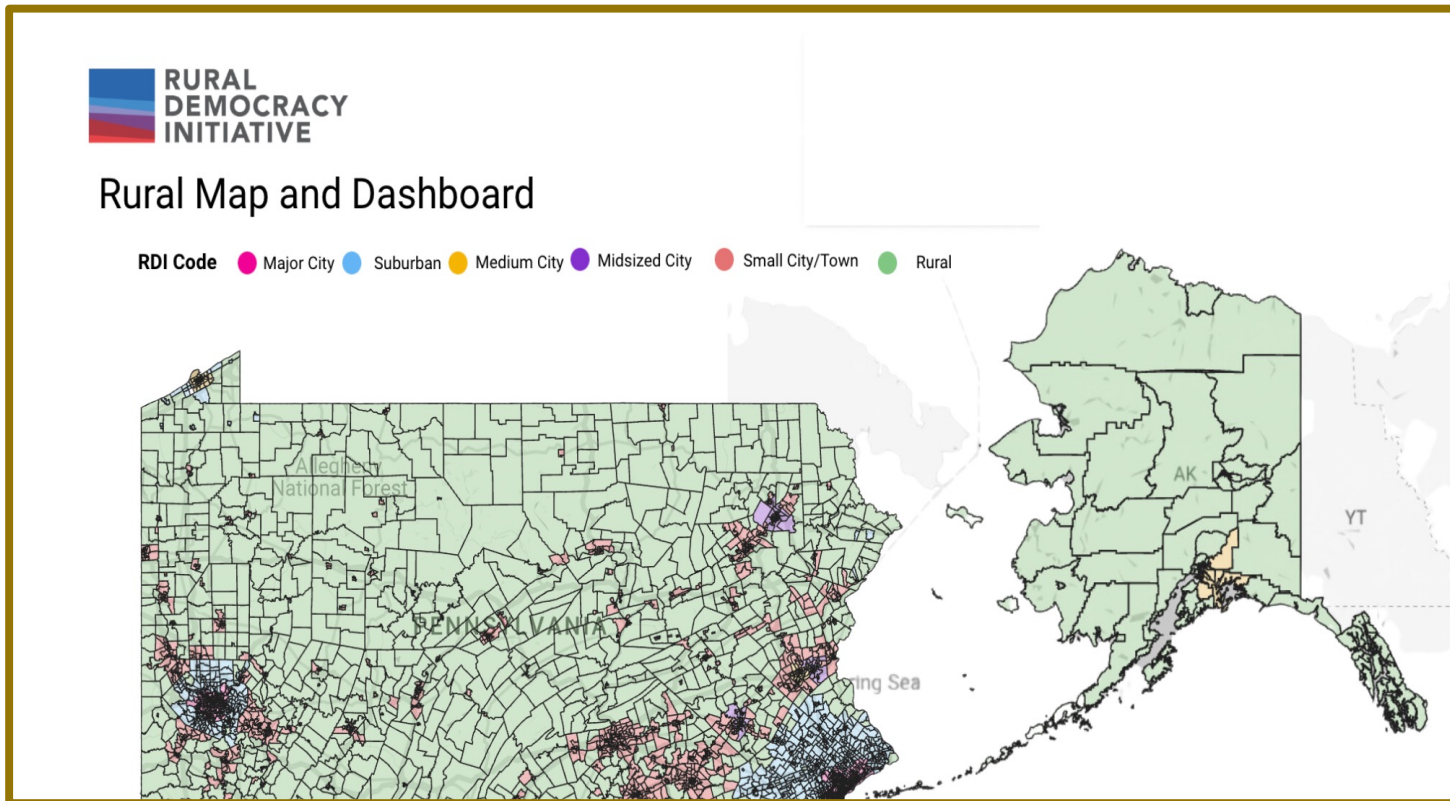


A blue-tinted photograph of a farm. In the foreground, there are two large cylindrical silos with ladders leading to their tops. To the right is a long, low barn with a gabled roof. In the background, several wind turbines are visible against a sky filled with large, white clouds. The entire image has a monochromatic blue color scheme.

Defining Our Audience

Who are they? What are their emotions,
their values, and lived experiences?

What do we mean by rural?

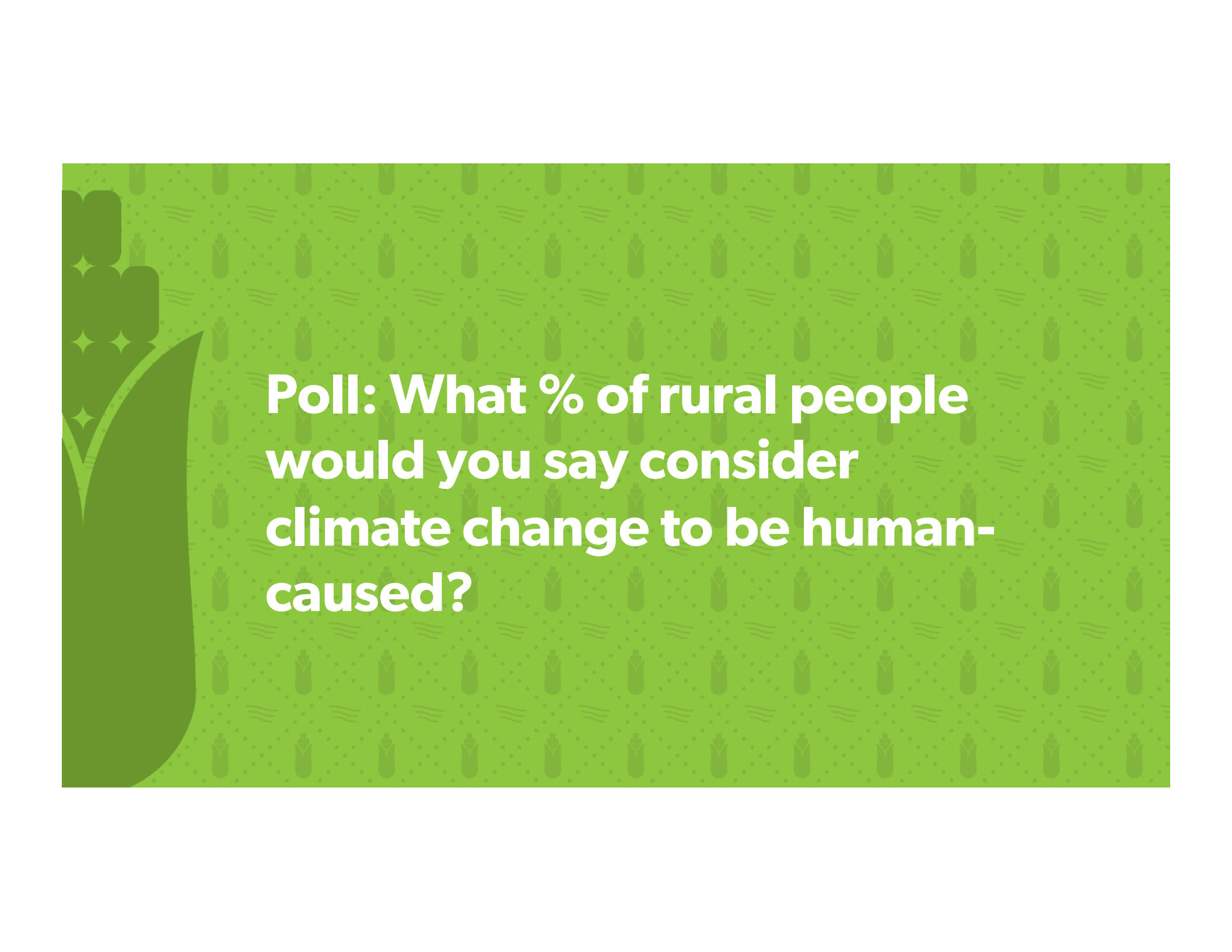


How do we communicate differently to these audiences?

	Funders	Climate Champions	Everyone Else
What do we talk about with them?			
How do we earn their support?			

How do we communicate differently to these audiences?

	Funders	Climate Champions	Everyone Else
What do we talk about with them?	How their donation can fight climate change!	How their actions can reduce climate impacts and reach new audiences.	How changes can save them money and give them the tools and opportunities to build a good life.



**Poll: What % of rural people
would you say consider
climate change to be human-
caused?**

The Reality of our Landscape:

Growing concern about extreme weather does not equate to motivation for climate action.

Less than 50% of rural folks believe climate change is human-caused.

Even fewer rural residents think their actions can have a meaningful impact on changing the trajectory of global warming.





DON'T

Lead with climate catastrophe

DO

Employ a place-based, rural-led,
economic forward strategy

Local vs. national narratives

Local and regional narrative work leverages storytelling to build buy-in for climate solutions in target communities.

National narrative efforts target national press, decision-makers, and stakeholders to change policy or provide resources.

Today, we're working here!





Our Narrative Order of Operations

How we win from leading with values and
people — before we pivot to policy.

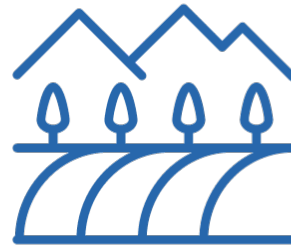
Order of Operations



**Meet on
Shared
Values**



**Center
Working
People**



**Demonstrate
Rural
Credibility**



**Pivot to
Policy/
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We are united by our shared values

Understanding our audience means understanding our shared values as hardworking rural Americans — and meeting each other there.



Source: EcoWomanist Institute

Rural identity and values are salient across geographies



Five common rural values:

1. Connectedness to nature
2. Disconnectedness/Resentment
3. Rootedness
4. Self-reliance
5. Hardworking*

Values 1-4 adopted from "Understanding Rural Identities and Environmental Policy Attitudes in America," Emily Diamond, University of Rhode Island, 2021

*Value of hard work is shared across race and place per research by the Winning Jobs Narrative Project.



Connectedness to nature:

The environment and working lands play a larger role in rural people's lives...

... But that doesn't mean we like being told what to do by outsiders.



Kera Carrion / KERA News

Disconnectedness/Resentment:

Rural people can feel left out or cut out from major governance and decision-making processes..



... But often those processes are not designed with us in mind .

Rootedness:

Rural people have a deep connection to land and communities. We share a strong sense of place.

Supporting each other = A sense of shared stewardship of land and resources.



Soul Fire Farm

Self-Reliance:

Rural people have a sense of independence and pride in our ability to fend for ourselves.



Farmers support Right to Repair

95%

of respondents agree that manufacturers should provide farmers and independent mechanics with access to necessary repair parts, tools, software, and information at a fair and reasonable price.

Source: PIRG



Hardworking:

Is an identity that we all proudly claim — across race and place.



Big Dream Farm (Jared Davis)

A farmer's daughter: the value of hard work

Carol Spaeth-Bauer Associate editor

Published 10:04 p.m. CT Nov. 7, 2017 | Updated 3:11 p.m. CT March 1, 2018



As a toddler, our daughter Stephanie, helped feed calves on my parents' dairy farm in Washington County. Submitted

What do we mean when we say 'working people?'



Image: Anthony Bolante | PSBJ

ST Fabrication President and CEO Jesse Cherian is pictured at his company's massive manufacturing facility in Orting, Washington. Two welders work on big metal projects on the production floor.

ANTHONY BOLANTE | PSBJ

**Fun fact: 95% of
you identified as
hardworking on
your registration
survey for this
training!**





Applying the 5 Keys of a Transformative Narrative for Rural Americans

The 5 Key Elements in Action

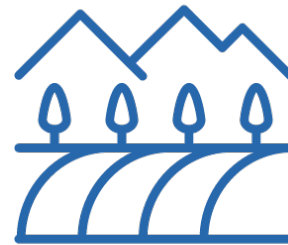
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Before we start: What does this narrative framework give us?

- Research-tested message framework that can bolster our existing strategy
- A framework for engaging our audiences around shared values, with an emphasis on working families and the economy
- Tangible messaging that resonates across constituencies

How were these keys developed?

- An intensive review of existing research from state and national partners
- Six-month qualitative research phase with over 3,000 conversations in 17 states
- 2,500 canvass conversations in 5 states
- 150 field interviews with communities in 4 states

... Followed with a massive quantitative phase of over 110,000 survey interviews.



1. Centering working people as heroes

Frame policies in ways that show how they will impact and empower working people. Make working people and their concerns the subject and focus of messaging.

Working people are the heroes

Working people see hardworking families, small businesses, and family farmers as the backbone of the economy.



Naming working people expressly



Laura Wilbur (Swinomish), whose grandfather helped build the salmon-processing facility where the Swinomish Shellfish Company is located, now works for the company.

Killii Yuyan/High Country News





Wayne County Rental Services

Yesterday at 2:55am · 🌐

As small business owners, our ability to pay our employees is important.

That's why we're going all electric, it'll reduce our costs, make us more profitable in the long-term, and it's where the economy's going — it's good for all of us.



👍 John Frank and 100 Others

54 Comments

Naming
working
people.

Naming our concerns
(e.g., lowering costs)

Image Source: Rural Action



2. Support and value the importance of work

Acknowledge and appreciate hard-working people...
and what they should expect in return.

People claim “hardworking” as an identity

It’s an identity and an attribute that most Americans across race, class, and geography proudly claim.

LOCAL NEWS

Hardworking people the backbone of Montclair Village Farmers’ Market

Pandemic, labor issues all part of struggle to keep bringing fresh produce to Oakland district every Sunday

Source: East Bay Times



Hard work is about contribution

It's not about glorifying work, it's about having a good life and contributing to our community.



Gwendale Wool

Today at 6:00am · 🌐

Some days ranching is ridiculous. It takes so much of our days, but I wouldn't trade it for the world. Every day is worth it to take care of our girls, our farm, and our family.



Do

Use the term **respecting** working people

Don't

Use the term **rewarding** working people



Don't

Lead with climate disasters or greenhouse gas emissions

Do

Lead with making people's lives better and improving economies

Kit Carson Electric to cut consumer costs

Taos Mesa solar project to go online June 1

by Geoffrey Plant Apr 7, 2022 Updated Apr 7, 2022  0

Source: Taos News



3. Situating working people as engines of the economy

When people have what they need, it is inherently an economic good.




Worker



Business



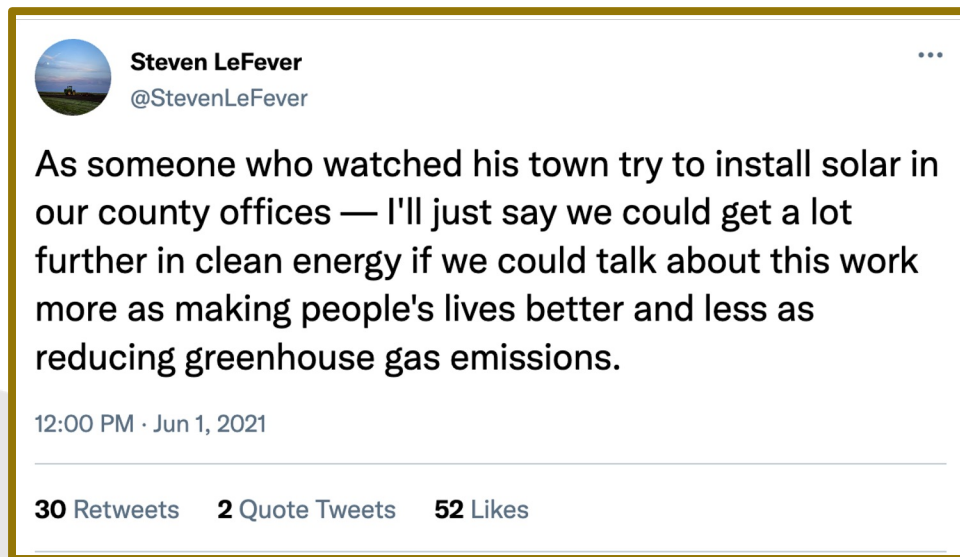
Economy

A photograph of a man and a woman crouching in a field, examining plants. The man is on the left, wearing a white t-shirt, khaki shorts, a green cap, and glasses. The woman is on the right, wearing a grey t-shirt, khaki pants, and glasses. They are both looking down at the plants. A large white speech bubble is positioned above them, containing text. The background is a bright blue sky with a pattern of small white dots.

As a small farmer, I wish that more people understood that healthy farmers means a stronger economy for all of us.

“The economy” also means identity, values, and culture

People fundamentally “get” the economy, how it works, and that it’s something that’s created.





4. Positioning Government and Corporations in a Supporting Role

People want a hand-up, not a hand-out.

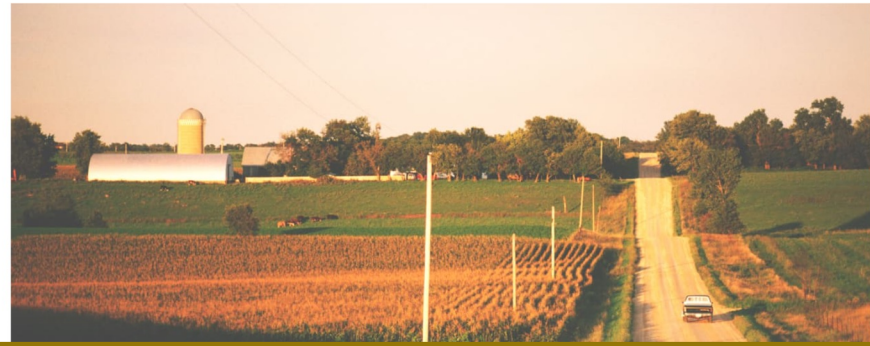
It's not about doing something for people, it's about equipping people.

Government isn't the hero, working people are.

People aren't inherently opposed to an active role for government relating to jobs and the economy. But there can be push-back about what government can actually accomplish.

POV: How two recent laws are opening the door to bring EVs to rural America

With the Inflation Reduction Act and Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, the barriers to entry for green energy and EV deployment have been lowered for rural communities.



Source: Fast Company



Government pulled us
out of this pandemic!

No, workers pulled us out
of this pandemic.

Now, we need our leaders
to focus on policies that
work for us.



Responsible actors or villains?

Villains are villains because of what they do, not who they are.



Clean Power Iowa
@CleanPowerIowa



If we ever want to support our rural electric cooperatives and local clean energy providers, we need to stop handing out tax breaks and corporate welfare to oil and gas CEOs who outsource jobs. Instead, we should incentivize folks who are doing right by their communities.

Corporations aren't automatically villains in the eyes of working people

Most people recognize that corporations are important employers and a key part of our economy — and they believe corporations have responsibilities beyond their bottom line to their employees, customers, and communities.

Is this headline for national readers, or Missouri farmers?



MISSOURI INDEPENDENT

CIVIL RIGHTS CRIMINAL JUSTICE ENERGY + ENVIRONMENT ELECTIONS HEALTH CARE EDUCATION

COMMENTARY

Big Ag has misled the public when it comes to fighting climate change

DAVE DICKEY

OCTOBER 21, 2022 5:55 AM

Twitter LinkedIn Facebook Email Print





5. Relate the economy to communities and families

Relate your message to the broader economic impact and community:

Use “Makes economic sense” and “is good for everyone”

Working-class voters prefer a focus on kitchen-table economic issues, framed in universal terms.

What's good for one is good for all

Supporting the needs of the particular, while reminding us that we're all a part of the same social fabric.



Jessica Pomello

@ThatJessicaFromTN



My fellow farmers — as you make your plans for next Spring, don't forget our individual impact on our local water supplies. We must reduce agrochemical runoff to protect our communities. By reducing inputs and spending less on fertilizer, we save money AND reduce water pollution. Clean water = a stronger community and landscape for all of us.

12:00 PM · Jun 1, 2021

Cultivating the next generation of college-educated rural Americans is important for our economy.

These educational loan reforms ensure that new farmers, electricians, and workers can access agricultural programs and trade schools so they're ready to secure our national food and trade systems and build a good life.



Key takeaways:

It's not about climate.

It's about working people, their pocketbooks, and their families.

Messengers are crucial.

Our job: Find ways to resonate with people on the shared value of hard work and demonstrate climate solutions as good for our rural economies.

THE HILL News Policy Opinion Events Jobs Newsletters

Why the Inflation Reduction Act is an economic winner for rural America

BY JOSH EWING, OPINION CONTRIBUTOR - 08/09/22 1:30 PM ET

SHARE TWET



iStock

Last week, my family's ranch — which we have owned for five generations — and the home my grandfather built were utterly destroyed in a wildfire that claimed two other homes and more than 15,000 acres of rangeland. Fueled by climate-change-induced drought, heat and wind, the blaze spread fast and hot. It was just like the fires in California you see on the news, but in the

A blue-tinted photograph of a rural landscape. In the foreground, there is a large, long barn with solar panels on its roof. To the left of the barn are two large, cylindrical silos. In the background, three wind turbines are visible against a sky with scattered clouds. The entire image has a monochromatic blue color scheme.

Demonstrating Rural Credibility

How can we work with trusted
messengers and effective messages?

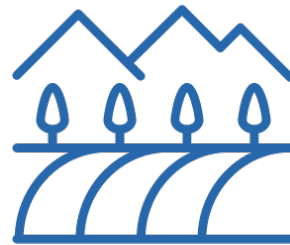
Order of Operations



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Policy /
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**Poll: What % of our narrative
is defined by our messenger?**

25%? 50%? 100%?



Rural narrative is 75% messenger and 25% message

The New York Times

Opinion

OP-ED CONTRIBUTORS

Keep Farmland for Farmers

By Lindsey Lusher Shute and Benjamin Shute

Sept. 30, 2013

From farmers: What's good for us is good for everyone.



**You know
who might
be a better
voice to
make this
point?**

OPINION
PAUL KRUGMAN

Can Anything Be Done to Assuage Rural Rage?

Jan. 26, 2023



These folks:

Rural
People's
Voice

Firelands

AKPIRG

RECONSTRUYAMOS NUESTRO PUEBLO
REBUILD TIMBER COUNTRY

OUR
FUTURE
OUR
VOICE
#SpillSecretsNotOil

KEEP
it in the
GROUND

SOMETHING
MATTERS

SI SE
PUEDE



#FIRELANDS

#REBUILD

#TIMBER

#COUNTRY

#ACT

#UP

#FOR

#OUR

#FUTURE

#AND

#OUR

#VOICE

#IS

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A blue-tinted photograph of a farm. In the foreground, there are two large cylindrical silos with ladders leading to their tops. Behind the silos, three wind turbines are visible against a cloudy sky. To the right, there is a long, low barn with a gabled roof. The entire scene is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter.

Moving to Policy and Practice

Using our framework to move
people to action

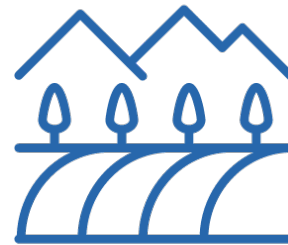
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A man with short brown hair, wearing a brown quilted jacket, is shown from the side, looking down at a tablet computer. He is holding a clipboard with a pen and a smartphone. The background is a solid yellow color with a repeating pattern of small, stylized leaf or wheat motifs.

This is where your knowledge shines

Your work focuses on policies that will benefit working families.

Don't forget to frame those policies in an economic light, with working people at the center.



What did we learn?

- Center and lead with **working people** – the heroes.
- Value and support work to connect on **shared values**.
- Situate working people as the **engines of our economy**.
- Position **government in a supporting role**, so we respect and center personal agency.
- Relate climate solutions to the broader economy and shared benefits, creating **shared prosperity**.

What did we learn?

Narrative Dos	Narrative Don'ts
Benefits-forward framing	Climate alarmism
Center working people	Lead with villains or center government as a fix all
Focus on opportunities and tools	Make people feel they're being offered a handout
Respect	Preach

Does this headline apply the narrative keys?



Breaking the Grip of the Fossil Fuel Economy: If It Can Happen in Appalachia, It Can Happen Anywhere



Remember the Tools and Opportunities:

As much as we can, we should be focused on ensuring that people have the opportunity and tools to build a good life.





We would love to be a narrative resource to you:

Our help line is open at
narrative@ruralclimate.org