



FCAC

FAIRBANKS CLIMATE ACTION COALITION

**PUSHING FOR ENERGY
JUSTICE:
COMMUNITY
ORGANIZING LESSONS
FROM ALASKA**

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FCAC'S STRUCTURE & REWG'S FOCUS

- Commitment to a Just Transition and Jemez Principles of organizing
- Community led & bottom up efforts through 5 working groups
- Decision making and strategic guidance through FCAC's Council
- The Renewable Energy Working Group (REWG) strives to advance energy justice and decarbonization in interior Alaska
 - Main focus = Golden Valley Electric Association (GVEA) campaign



COOPERATIVE MODEL OF GVEA

Cooperative Principles

Cooperatives around the world operate according to a core set of principles. These principles, along with the cooperative purpose of improving quality of life for their members, make electric cooperatives different from other electric utilities.

1

Voluntary & Open Membership

Cooperatives are voluntary organizations open to all persons able to use their services and willing to accept the responsibilities of membership, without gender, social, racial, political, or religious discrimination.

2

Democratic Member Control

Cooperatives are democratic organizations controlled by their members, who actively participate in setting policies and making decisions. The elected representatives are accountable to the membership. In primary cooperatives, members have equal voting rights (one member, one vote) and cooperatives at other levels are organized in a democratic manner.

3

Members' Economic Participation

Members contribute equitably to, and democratically control, the capital of their cooperative. At least part of that capital is usually the common property of the cooperative. Members usually receive limited compensation, if any, on capital subscribed as a condition of membership. Members allocate surpluses for any or all of the following purposes:

- Developing the cooperative, possibly by setting up reserves, part of which at least would be indivisible;
- Benefiting members in proportion to their transactions with the cooperative;
- And supporting other activities approved by the membership.

4

Autonomy & Independence

Cooperatives are autonomous, self-help organizations controlled by their members. If they enter into agreements with other organizations, including governments, or raise capital from external sources, they do so on terms that ensure democratic control by their members and maintain their cooperative autonomy.

5

Education, Training & Information

Cooperatives provide education and training for their members, elected representatives, managers, and employees so that they can contribute effectively to the development of their cooperatives. They inform the general public, particularly young people and opinion leaders, about the nature and benefits of cooperation.

6

Cooperation Among Cooperatives

Cooperatives serve their members most effectively and strengthen the cooperative movement by working together through local, national, regional, and international structures.

7

Concern for Community

While focusing on member needs, cooperatives work for the sustainable development of their communities through policies accepted by their members.

- Not-for-profit utility governed by a democratically elected Board of Directors
- Core values through the 7 Cooperative Principles
- Those who pay electric bills are not just customers but member-owners
- As a coop, GVEA has to listen to it's members and is a "strong and natural mechanism to create change out of community desire"
- The REWG saw GVEA's power and authority to shift to more renewable energy at a systems level or utility scale, not just one building at a time

MEMBER OWNER EDUCATION & EMPOWERMENT

- Tactics and best practices of REWG organizing
 - Relational organizing, inviting people/groups you know to get involved
 - List building & moving people up a ladder of engagement
 - Holding information sessions
 - Public comment training and sharing talking points
 - Phone banking and text banking to mobilize for big moments



MEMBER OWNER EDUCATION & EMPOWERMENT

- Why do people show up and engage with their utility coop?
 - Recognition of GVEA's impact on climate change through heavy reliance on fossil fuels
 - Understanding of GVEA's potential to cut emissions through more renewables
 - People speak up in times of crisis and big decision making moments
 - Encouraging to show up in support of something together
- What started as a single member-owner showing up to a GVEA meeting has grown to a steady public presence at every GVEA Board meeting!

BOARD OF DIRECTOR ELECTIONS

- Tactics and best practices of REWG's election work
 - Individual outreach to identify and support strong candidates
 - Candidate forums/questionnaires to learn and share values/views of all candidates
- Challenges of engaging with local utility elections
 - Lack of candidates for board seats in certain districts
 - Complicated relationships with candidates who don't want to be associated with FCAC
 - Public versus behind the scenes support
 - Organizing in a politically conservative town

OTHER ENERGY JUSTICE INITIATIVES & ORGANIZING WINS

- Adoption of a carbon reduction goal and Strategic Generation Plan
 - And we're still pushing for more!
- Solar demonstration project, on-bill financing, & community solar
- Tone shifts and transparency
- Collaboration with statewide and national organizations



ACTIONABLE INSIGHTS

- Foster the “we” because it’s not “us versus them”
- Encourage your coop to lean into their own principles
- Develop constructive relationships with utility Board and staff members
- Provide the public with tools to feel confident engaging & commenting
 - Lived experience is just as important as technical expertise
- Main focus should always be member owner education & empowerment into action
- Commit to deep community organizing



QUESTIONS?

BREAKOUT ACTIVITY

- Group 1 – Community organizing around utilities (Tristan)
 - Dive deeper into grassroots organizing best practices and tactics
- Group 2 – Cross organizational collaboration (Kenzley)
 - Learn more about statewide collaborations in Alaska and discuss how to collaborate more in your city/state/region
- Group 3 – Transparency and public accountability with utilities (Cathy)
 - Discuss barriers to transparency and brainstorm mechanisms to improve public accountability from (private or coop) utilities

BREAKOUT GROUP 1: COMMUNITY ORGANIZING AROUND UTILITIES

- How can grassroots, relational, community organizing affect change?
- How can you use organizing tactics for energy justice in your community?
- What best practices and tactics have allowed/will allow for wins in your community?

BREAKOUT GROUP 2: CROSS ORGANIZATIONAL COLLABORATION

- Best practices and challenges for statewide collaboration in energy justice work in Alaska
- What's happening to collaborate in your city/state/region?
- What are barriers inhibiting further collaboration in your city/state/region? What's needed to move past those challenges?

BREAKOUT GROUP 3: TRANSPARENCY & PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY

- What are the biggest barriers to transparency and public accountability from utilities?
- How can you hold your utility accountable to public concerns and values, whether a coop or private company?
- What examples have you worked on or seen in regards to increasing transparency for utilities coops/companies?