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## **A GUIDE FOR STARTING YOUR LOCAL CLIMATE ACTION TEAM**

By Glen Brand, Sierra Club Maine Chapter Director

Mainers are demanding action to protect our climate and to move as quickly as possible to 100% clean energy. We simply can't wait for the next election to begin making progress on this goal. That's why we launched our Maine Climate Action Team program.

Local Climate Action Teams (or CATs) are organizing now throughout Maine to implement climate solutions including community solar projects, solar panels on school or town buildings, developing a town energy efficiency plan, advocating for public transportation, launching a local recycling/compost program, opposing dirty energy projects and much more. These ideas were explored at our [Maine Grassroots Climate Action Conference](#) which took place in December 2014 at Bowdoin College. (See link for more information on the conference, including Powerpoint presentations from the breakout sessions.)

The purpose of this Guide is to help citizen climate activists to start a local CAT and effectively organize to accomplish your Team's goals. Sierra Club staff and volunteer leaders are available to support your efforts in any way we can. To contact us about the ideas and resources mentioned in this document, please contact [maine.chapter@sierraclub.org](mailto:maine.chapter@sierraclub.org) or call [207-761-5616](tel:207-761-5616).

### **STEP ONE: GETTING YOUR LOCAL CAT STARTED**

- Contact [maine.chapter@sierraclub.org](mailto:maine.chapter@sierraclub.org) to let us know that you are interested in organizing a local CAT. (If there is an existing CAT in your town, we'll connect you to the organizers so you can get involved.)
- Arrange a first meeting in a suitable location like the library, church, home, café, etc...) 7pm, Monday-Thursday is usually the best time for people to meet (for 90 minutes max).
- Let us know the date/time/location, and if you would like, we can invite Sierra Club members and supporters in your town.
- Invite your neighbors and others in your network to attend this first meeting.

### **STEP TWO: RUNNING AN EFFECTIVE FIRST MEETING (90 minutes max)**

- Review the community organizing powerpoint (avail at [www.sierraclub.org/maine/maine-climate-action-conference](http://www.sierraclub.org/maine/maine-climate-action-conference)) to get a good idea of our organizing approach.
- Before the meeting, bring a sign in sheet, a marker, and butcher block paper for writing brainstorming notes, and name labels if easily available. (If appropriate to the space, coffee/tea, snacks are nice!)
- Have people sign-in with full contact information and fill out name labels.
- Ask someone to take meeting notes.
- Go around the room for very brief introductions (no more than one minute each). A good prompt is: tell us your name, where you live, and why you are here.

- Announce (and write down on the butcher block paper) that the primary goal of the first meeting should be to brainstorm and try to settle on one specific local goal to organize around in 2015.
- To give people a better idea of a CAT goal, inform them that the goals of other local CATs include: community solar project; solar installation on a public building; energy efficiency programs; recycling/compost program; community garden; and plastic bag ban/fee program.
- You may want to then have people brainstorm on the criteria for choosing a goal. For example, the Portland CAT came up with the following criteria: compelling, ambitious, realistic, clear climate benefits/carbon reduction, “scalable”, measurable, time-constrained, visible.
- As people brainstorm, have someone write down the ideas on your butcher block paper.
- With the criteria in mind, then brainstorm on goals.
- Discuss the goals and see if the group can narrow down to one or two.
- If needed, brainstorm about what information is needed for the group to make a final decision by the next meeting.
- Discuss next steps, including "who is doing what when", decide a date/time/location for your next meeting (we suggest no later than two weeks).
- Tell everyone that the meeting notes will be emailed out soon.

### **STEP THREE (2<sup>ND</sup> MEETING): FINALIZING CAT GOAL/ DEVELOP YOUR ORGANIZING PLAN**

- The goal of this meeting is to finalize your CAT goal, and to develop your organizing plan to accomplish this goal.
- Depending on how much time it takes to settle on your CAT goal, your group should begin filling out the basic planning form below:
  - **CAT GOAL**  
What is the specific, quantifiable goal that your team’s campaign will work to accomplish this year?  
[Example: install solar panels on the town hall building]
  - **STRATEGY**  
In one sentence or two, please explain the campaign strategy  
[Example: Apply public pressure on the Board of Selectman to install solar panels on the town hall building]
  - **TARGETING**  
Who is the primary target - who has the power to deliver your CAT goal?  
[Example: Members of the Board of Selectman or one or two swing votes]
  - **MESSAGING**  
In one or two sentences, what is the campaign’s message (“elevator speech”)?  
[Example: Installing solar panels on the Town Hall is a smart investment in clean, renewable energy. The solar panels will reduce energy costs, air and global warming pollution, and inspire residents to consider going solar for their homes and businesses].

- TACTICS

Please list the most important tactics that your Team will use to achieve your goal.

[Examples:

- Send letter to Board of Selectmen (BOS) asking for solar panels installation
- Develop and circulate fact sheet
- Start Facebook page for campaign
- Give presentation to BOS
- Circulate email asking people to contact the BOS
- Submit four letters to the editor per month for three months
- Sponsor a public forum at the library about the solar project
- Organize numerous speakers to testify at BOS public hearing

- RESOURCES

What resources does your CAT have and what resources do you need?

[Example: CAT has: 10 core activists; SC members/supporters email supporter list of 300; CAT needs: 10 more core activists and 100 more emails; \$200 for printing and library space rental for forum]

- CAT ORGANIZATIONAL GOALS

What are the Team's quantifiable goals to build the strength and power of your CAT this year?

[Example: 20 new Team members; 80 Participant Activists (sign a petition, come to an event, testify at hearing, etc...); two community groups as supporters

- Discuss next steps, including "who is doing what when", decide a date/time/location for your next meeting (we suggest no later than two weeks).
- Tell everyone that the meeting notes will be emailed out soon.

### **THIRD MEETING: FINALIZING ORGANIZING PLAN AND MOVING FORWARD**

- Finish your organizing plan if necessary.
- Discuss next steps, especially TACTICS, and include "who is doing what when".
- Decide a date/time/location for your next meeting (we suggest no later than two weeks).
- Tell everyone that the meeting notes will be emailed out soon.
- Email [maine.chapter@sierraclub.org](mailto:maine.chapter@sierraclub.org) with your organizing plan, and we'll be in touch to ask how we can help. Thanks!

### **ONGOING SUPPORT:**

Sierra Club Maine is committed to supporting your CAT with information, resources, strategic planning, and more. Please contact us at [maine.chapter@sierraclub](mailto:maine.chapter@sierraclub.org) or call **207-761-5616**. Thank you for all that you're doing to address climate disruption and promote clean energy in Maine!