



Climate Communications Opportunity Strategy: 2019-2022

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I. Memo Overview and Summary¹

The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation began making grants on climate change in 2008. These grants have supported policy research, scientific research, consensus building, technological research and development, and, to a much smaller extent, work to educate and engage the public, which we shorthand here as “communications” work. When the Hewlett board renewed its commitment to solving climate change and approved Hewlett’s single largest philanthropic commitment — \$600 million over 5 years — the strategy called for increased support for these public education and engagement, or communications, activities. In particular, in 2019 we reserved \$20 million “communications opportunity fund” to lend support to public interest and nonprofit organizations leading effective climate change communications efforts across the geographies as a part of our broader climate strategy, the United States, Europe, China, and India through 2022. This special communications opportunity fund is additional to the communications and public engagement work that we already fund specifically within the sectors and geographies that our core grantmaking focuses on (transport, power, electrification, industry, finance, and energy innovation and technology). This strategy paper explains the communications capacities, needs, and opportunities of the climate field and outlines and explains the rationale for our communications opportunity funding strategy for the next three years.

When coordinated climate philanthropy began, it might have been possible to reduce carbon emissions across sectors of the economy through strategies revolving around educating and influencing policy makers directly on the risks and range of technical solutions to climate change. Today, however, at least in the United States and increasingly in the regions in which we work (Europe, India, and even China),

¹ These materials were prepared as part of the Hewlett Foundation’s internal planning process and do not represent actions to be taken by Hewlett Foundation staff or by grantee staff at the Foundation’s direction. Although some of the implementation markers, for instance, may reflect the passage of legislation (based on inputs from grantees and experts in the field), the Hewlett Foundation does not lobby or earmark its funds for prohibited lobbying activities, as defined in the federal tax laws. The Foundation’s funding for policy work is limited to permissible forms of support only, such as general operating support grants that grantees can allocate at their discretion, and project support grants for non-lobbying activities (e.g., public education and nonpartisan research).



it is no longer possible to achieve policy changes on climate change without the broad public support of a wide range of diverse, engaged constituencies and actors.

This strategy paper gives an in-depth background explanation of the field's overall history and growth, and two major exogenous factors that shifted the ground below all our work: First, polarization changed the politics of the climate issue in some key geographies, and second, the media and information landscape has changed dramatically over the last two decades, changing everything about the way people consume and share information. Social media, the transition to mobile smartphones, and a tumultuous digital news landscape has changed the nature of politics, policymaking, and public opinion around the world.

This paper then details our climate communications funding strategy, which includes four main pillars: strategies to 1) invest in local, state, and regional hubs and regrantors that will support important communications efforts led by a diverse range of communities and constituencies on the ground; 2) develop digital and social media capacities with stronger links to localized efforts and communities; 3) manage and anticipate issues presented by climate opposition and detect and respond to digital disinformation; and 4) align funding, coordinate funders, and increase philanthropic investments in communications work. Within each pillar, the memo outlines ways to support connections in the field for greater alignment and sharing, addressing a critical gap in the field of climate communications.

This strategy draws upon an expansive body of qualitative and quantitative field research — original field research conducted by Camber Collective and commissioned by the Hewlett Foundation in 2018, including more than 60 issue-area expert interviews and the synthesis of more than 100 climate communications research studies and academic papers, public opinion polls, and field-level and grantee evaluations, reports, and strategy documents. This field-level assessment found many strengths in the climate communications field: extremely strong basis of audience insights, topical and issue knowledge, strong issues management work, extensive research capacities, strong application of research into traditional media strategies, proven abilities to earn traditional and print media coverage, excellent coordination and success in near-term accountability campaigns, and more.

The research also found a number of gaps and opportunities in the field of climate communications: Above all, communications activities and capacities are still vastly underfunded relative to other climate change activities and capacities; very little funding for communications capacity and activities has gone to the diverse range of communities and advocates on the ground who are capable of engaging much broader populations and shifting political will if they were resourced; all of the field-supporting communications groups need greater capacity for digital communications; and very few, if any, communications efforts are truly funded at scale. The assessment found the greatest needs in capacities to: set, organize, and measure collective strategies across the field and connect local and national groups for greater alignment; tell authentic, local stories about climate impacts and solutions; produce creative visual content and cultivate messengers and influencers from outside of the climate movement; leverage digital and social media strategies and use digital tools for real-time testing and feedback; and share long-term testing and findings, evaluations, best practices and knowledge across the field.

In addition to this evidence base, this paper also draws upon partnership over the last four years with each of the Hewlett climate program officers to identify and define the opportunity of communications in Hewlett’s climate sub-strategies (sectoral and geographic: transport, power, electrification, and finance; U.S., Europe, India, and China); feedback from a workshop of field-serving practitioners and climate funders that Hewlett hosted in early 2019; recommendations from a practitioner and funder working group process that Hewlett supported (four working groups who over two months); and ongoing strategy discussions with Hewlett’s many grantees and funding partners.

Appendix A is a summary of the key findings from the Hewlett-commissioned field assessment.

II. Climate Communications History and Growth

A. Background on the Climate Communications Landscape and Capabilities

1. Field and Funders (2008-2016)

The communications and policy landscape has changed dramatically since philanthropy began coordinating its funding to tackle climate change around the year 2008. When coordinated philanthropy initially invested in the field of climate change, its goals were near-term and incremental policies across a set of sectors — the “[sudoku](#)” of best practices and lowest-cost carbon reductions in key geographies that would add up to needed global climate goals for preventing widespread suffering. In the United States, that equated to organizations developing and working on a set of federal policy measures, including a federal climate bill that put a price on carbon, as well as a wide range of administrative federal policies including a clean power plan, a set of fuel economy standards, mercury and air toxics standards, methane limits for oil and gas drilling, and more. In Europe, China, India, Latin America, grantee strategy likewise relied on using technical expertise to achieve policy interventions. To the extent that the strategy included communications efforts, they were serving an elite² influencer theory of change: communications interventions were pointed at the policymakers themselves and their circles of policy-minded influencers; they did not center around the building of public will to support or sustain those policies through adversarial administrations and regimes, nor did they address combatting the intense politicization of the climate issue in the United States, a fulcrum point for the rest of the world in global negotiations.

Over the next several years, funders and the field realized the enormous challenge of the growing politicization of climate change, as well as the impacts of disinformation and deception campaigns to cover up or undermine climate science, such as “[ClimateGate](#)” in 2009. Funders and the field began to make greater investments in field-serving communications capacities that could defend against and correct misinformation on climate science, and capacities that could help build public support for the suite of targeted administrative actions and policies in

² “Elite” in this paper is defined as policy makers, their staffs, and their direct circles of advisors.

the U.S., Europe, and globally. These capacities were laser-focused on achieving these policy goals. In the U.S., they rallied public support to bolster the Obama White House's commitment and ambition on climate change via targeted traditional earned media and public engagement campaigns.

These communications-focused organizations and campaigns proved successful.

In the United States, targeted communications interventions — including public opinion polls, statements from elite opinion leaders and other powerful messengers, strategic earned media, and unprecedented levels of public engagement in public comment periods — demonstrated strong public support for a suite of administrative and regulatory actions. And a key set of elite policymakers, in turn bolstered by constituent demand in their districts, was motivated to reinforce and push the White House forward on its administrative climate actions.

Globally, local climate and energy policy organizations coordinated in their regions — including in Europe, India, China, Latin America — to support the national goals that collectively built toward the Paris Climate Agreement, adopted in December 2015. Policy advocates managed to secure some early wins in each region, driving greater ambition on climate at the national and international level. While the U.S. and China primarily shaped the agenda, the outcome of Paris resulted from actions and diplomacy by progressive developed and developing countries. Leading up to Paris, communications efforts amplified in-country progress to the global stage and successfully knitted together these disparate policies and actions into narratives, public mobilizations, and media coverage that captured and reflected the global consensus and momentum.

In Europe, advocates made significant progress under the tailwind of supportive governments in the European Union, and under the tailwind of "[Dieselgate](#)," which exposed bad-faith deception on the part of an automaker to evade vehicle emissions standards. They also created new opportunities by engaging and pressuring new players. One prime example was their work together for five years to help the European financial community and the public understand the notions of "stranded assets" and "climate resilient investment," landing the concepts in thousands of articles, op-eds, news pieces, speeches, social media memes and coverage of international markets in coal, oil gas, and into advocacy campaigns around the world's largest sovereign investors. This work helped inform and move Mark Carney, Governor of the Bank of England, in 2015 to push for policy on climate related financial disclosure, without which this issue would not now be on the agendas of major governments and financial institutions around the world.

In India and China, communications played a more minimal role, as grantees successfully advocated for some pivotal sector-based policies through technical expert input and implementation knowledge to government agencies. These policies helped lay the groundwork for bilateral agreements with the United States and cumulatively opened the door for the Paris Agreement. Examples in India include India's electric vehicle program (FAME), its fuel

efficiency standards, its industrial energy efficiency trading scheme PAT (Perform Achieve and Trade), its appliance efficiency standards, among many other national policies. In China, grantees played a role in helping the government develop increasingly stringent five-year plan goals on energy efficiency and carbon intensity; a first-ever cap on coal; a plan to eliminate coal-based heating in Beijing; a plan to reduce curtailments of renewable energy; plans to develop carbon caps and trading markets in several provinces; and more.

B. Major Exogenous Changes (2008-2016):

Between 2008 and 2016, two major factors substantially changed the global operating context: the politicization of the climate issue in the United States (and increasing global political polarization), and the media landscape globally.

1. Polarization in the US, political context in Europe

Polarization intensified in the U.S. Congress and politics, and over this time, the issue of climate change suffered intense politicization. The failure of the climate bill landed a blow to the effort, and the means of action on the issue — executive during a time of such intense political brinksmanship — reinforced those battle lines. The federally and nationally focused climate communicators and campaigns did everything in their power to mitigate that and break the partisan binary of the issue through engagement with and amplification of elite opinion leaders at the national level who could demonstrate bipartisan support of climate action, with limited success. The populist base of the Republican party was growing and putting less stock in elites and their influence; it would take a lot more investment to match that growing political force. The rise of the Tea Party in 2009, with funding from the Koch Brothers as a long-term movement-building strategy, led to the anti-climate-action GOP taking back the House in the 2010 mid-term elections. On the climate advocacy side, the communications capacities that were serving the climate field at the high level — the narrative issue-level — were built for generating targeted federal, congressional, and elite pressure, not mass issue-public engagement or mobilization, and also not localized or state-based pressure. Meanwhile, the “green groups” working directly on climate change were built for mobilizing their members, the already evangelized. This helped bolster champions in Congress and motivate and reinforce administrative action. But it did not solve the problem of polarization or engage the unengaged on climate.

In Europe, right-wing populists in Germany, France, the Netherlands and elsewhere began to grow in influence. In France, this was the revival of the Front National starting in 2011. In Germany, a powerful faction of right-wing populists emerged to threaten the country’s strong energy transition plan, the *energiewende*, and Chancellor Merkel’s positioning to lead on it. Russia’s aggression toward NATO was increasing (and engagement in propaganda operations to influence electoral outcomes in NATO countries), and populist sentiment in the United Kingdom was gaining root, building tension toward the turbulent Brexit vote in 2016.

It became clear to funders and advocates, and particularly communicators, that in these political contexts climate advocates could “no longer win just because policies made economic sense or because we are morally right,” said Tom Brookes of the European Climate Foundation. Our strategic weakness, he said, “was that our messages have proffered ‘jam tomorrow’ in terms of positive economic impacts, but glossed over the real social upheavals happening now.” In fact, the climate communications field wasn’t built for that challenge.

2. Media landscape in the US, and globally

The limitations of the field’s strategic bet on the inside elite-focused game were being tested, and meanwhile, the field’s methods for working the communications space were also becoming outdated and outmoded as the global media and information landscape was undergoing radical change.

Since the start of climate philanthropy, everything changed about the way people were consuming information and news. To wit, when climate philanthropy started coordinating its funding on climate change, Facebook was not yet public, and the first iPhone had just been released. Many climate communications capacities and shops were built before Twitter went public; many were also built when Facebook was nascent, less than half of the 1.74 billion *mobile* users it is today. Most media consumers globally were transitioning to mobile and digital, and likewise, the journalism world was completing its transition from analog to digital: from static, text-based reporting to interactive digital and visual-and-graphic-intensive journalism and heavy story sourcing and dissemination through social media.

The journalism industry lost its profit model as advertisers moved to digital and social media advertising at a fraction of the cost, causing a decade-long wave of newsroom shutdowns. Media was becoming hyper-fragmented across a mix of digital, mainstream, and broadcast channels, and social channels were serving as news aggregators and content providers. Newsroom jobs declined by a quarter in less than 10 years between 2008 and 2017 – the biggest casualty of which was borne by newspapers, particularly local newspapers, leaving local news deserts where reporting on local and regional climate impacts and solutions would have been critical. This reporting has been sorely missed. National reporting failed to carry the water on climate change, giving disproportionate weight to asymmetrical political battles and missing local impacts, further underscoring the limitations of a communications strategy so reliant on earning media coverage.

With the rise of social media also came a new feedback loop between mainstream media and social media: You couldn’t earn traditional media without a social media strategy anymore, and on the flip side, earning traditional media wasn’t enough — it had to be amplified and disseminated on social media.

Over this period of time, public trust in journalism declined, according to the Gallup/Knight Foundation annual Survey on Trust, Media and Democracy. Today, more Americans have a

negative view of the media than positive, and by a margin of 20 percentage points, the overwhelming majority of Americans say it is harder rather than easier to be informed due to the plethora of information and news sources available. This also corresponds to the dramatic rise in digital disinformation and fake news, some of which is part of concerted campaigns sponsored by pro-fossil fuels states and interests to undermine facts and grow climate opposition.

The climate communications field has tried to keep up with all of these changes, but funding resources and capacities have been woefully insufficient, and still heavily weighted toward policy analysis and development.

C. Present stage (2016-2019): Current Strategy, Field, and Driving Factors

In the US, since the 2016 election of an anti-climate-action White House, the overarching policy strategy has changed. The whole field of climate advocacy pivoted from advancing federal administrative climate actions to advancing climate actions in a set of key states, and defending the administrative wins at the federal level in a climate-hostile White House and Congress (both chambers until 2018, when the House flipped). At the national level, it became clear that public engagement and support of the issue needed to intensify, spread and diversify — climate change needed to matter to a much wider swath of the public, and it needed to matter *more* to those who already cared. The strategy could no longer ride on winning an influential set of elites and policymakers. It had to ride, instead, on winning hearts and minds of much wider segments of the public. And at the state level, it was clear that bipartisan support was critical, and this meant broadening the coalitions and the range of partners, messengers, constituencies, and policy solutions needed, all of which require a new communications strategy.

In Europe, the Brexit vote in 2016 sucked the air out of the room for much else policy-wise, and derailed any U.K. climate agenda. The election of the first ever climate sceptic party in Germany to the Berlin council chamber marked the beginning of fringe anti-climate-action politics even in a nation that has been at the forefront of climate leadership. The rise of the Front National in France gave way to the massive “Gilets Jaunes” (Yellow Vest) protests against a host of objections including high energy and living costs, and highlighted a ruinous tension between elite-driven strategies (including those on climate) and the populist movements of workers and communities feeling left behind in the transition.

India and China continued to provide hopeful ambition, however public education capacities in both nations were still fledgling and under-resourced. And where governments were already motivated to advance climate-friendly policies (e.g. China, India, parts of Europe), they also struggled with ways to effectively communicate the real economic, social, and public health benefits of those policies to the public broadly, and particularly to workers and communities who needed to see those benefits. Additionally, climate change was hastening globally, its impacts being seen, felt, and better measured around the world, and the window of time to avert the worst of scientific predictions was closing. On the positive side, the technology and economics of climate solutions had rapidly advanced. Clean and

renewable energy technology had advanced significantly, and their costs fell dramatically, thanks to the work of advocates, innovators, and policymakers who initially set out to advance climate solutions to the point of cost-competitiveness. By 2016, renewables were as cheap or cheaper than fossil fuels.

In China and India, severe air quality problems also drove public and political demand for climate and clean energy policies. Philanthropic investments in communications efforts to highlight risks, benefits, and solutions to the public, as well as investments in groups providing technical expertise to prove economic and regulatory feasibility of such policies to governments, became one of the most significant achievements of the past decade.

Another tremendously positive development of the past few years, thanks to the efforts of communications grantees and the field, has been the marked increase in public support for climate policy measures in the United States: an [8 percent increase](#) from 2018 to 2019, and a [15 percentage-point jump](#) from 2015 to 2018. Seventy-one percent of Americans now understand the climate is changing, and a majority now know that it's human-caused. Indeed, the dialogue in the U.S. has changed dramatically from a few years ago, and this is demonstrated by a range of new and diverse voices and constituencies for climate action and the [emergence of climate as a top issue for voters](#). This is the product of the leadership of diverse constituencies on climate, who have been incredibly effective even at very low funding levels. But while the funding for communications and constituency building efforts has paid off, public support is still not powerful enough to overcome political and partisan impasse, which is still blocking meaningful policy solutions. We must scale and deepen this work in order to translate this public support into bold policy action at every level.

III. Communications and Opportunity Fund Grantmaking Strategy

It is clear now that the next phase of the climate challenge is the most critical phase. Over the next decade, our collective work will determine whether humankind contains disastrous carbon emissions and averts widespread and severe human suffering, economic loss, and species collapse. This will require transformational change in order to scale the solutions and policies, and promote widespread industrial, business, consumer, and government adoption and uptake at the needed rates. All of this — transformational policy change, private sector change, and social change — requires a much higher level of public engagement and investment.

Communications has an ever-more important role to play in advancing the solutions. It is a critical ingredient that can help build public will for policies, it can positively influence consumer and corporate behaviors, and it can help solve even some of society's most seemingly intransigent problems. The central questions before us today are: How do you transition a field built for specific policy achievements to a field built for broad public engagement and culture change – the kind to support, demand, and reinforce sufficient and rapid climate progress at every level? What is possible at philanthropy's investment levels, and where are the highest-impact opportunities and needs over the next few years? And finally, what are the strengths and gaps of the field in its current state right now, and how can the field be strengthened to pursue these high-impact opportunities and needs?



To better understand the climate communications field in its current state, the Hewlett Foundation commissioned an intensive landscape and opportunity assessment, based on more than 60 interviews with field and grantee leaders and experts, a survey of 24 organizations in the field, four case studies of other movements who provide compelling examples of successful mass communications on complex issues, and a literature review of more than 100 grantee documents, white papers, and published peer-reviewed academic reports. The project gave us a landscape view of the climate field's infrastructure and shared capacities in climate communications, details about a host of key actors in the field, and some rich insights into gaps, opportunities for growth, strengthening the field, and future investment that can help us achieve our collective climate goals.

The assessment highlighted opportunities to grow and transition a communications field originally built and positioned for elite policy influence through traditional media to a field built for intensifying and expanding public support, building political will³ across key geographies, and advancing social and cultural change at the levels needed in order to make the energy transition over the next decade. To support an evolution of the climate communications field, philanthropy should support capacity development in several ways, outlined in this section. The assessment also highlighted the need to fund and more effectively engage influential messengers and other causes, communities, and constituencies beyond policy elites and the climate supporter base.

This is a moment for philanthropy to be innovative, take risks, and push beyond strategies serving up incremental change. The following is an outline for strengthening the Hewlett philanthropic climate communications portfolio.

IV. It should be noted that each geography in which we work calls for different approaches and investments. However, there are four main areas of capacities that must be built globally over the next five years – to lesser or greater extents in each geography, as described below. The four areas of capacity building are investing in strategies to: A) invest in local, state, and regional communications efforts on the ground; B) support the development of digital and social media capacities across the field; and C) increase opposition management and prevent the spread of disinformation on climate change; and D) align funding, coordinate funders, and increase philanthropic investments in communications and public engagement work.

³ There are many different definitions of “political will,” a broad phrase that has been used to mean many different concepts. In this memo, we define “political will” as broad public support so strongly held that it influences policy makers and decision makers. As journalist [David Roberts succinctly summarizes](#) the 2010 paper “[Defining Political Will](#),” political will exists when 1) a sufficient set of decision-makers 2) with a common understanding of a particular problem 3) is committed to supporting 4) a commonly perceived, potentially effective policy solution. *Lori Ann Post, Amber N. W. Raile, Eric D. Raile, “Defining Political Will,” Politics & Policy, 25 August 2010.*

A. Support work on the ground in key geographies, and enable better connections between advocates across issue areas and geographies.

Because the landscapes have shifted, we need much broader and deeper public engagement on climate change. This pillar expands the communications strategy beyond elite targets to networks of influence on the ground, strengthening the hard work on the ground in organizing and educating communities and constituencies, and supporting better connections between local and regional advocates and national communications efforts. Grassroots, equity-focused, and local and regional groups across the political spectrum are essential for building support with a wider range of populations. Their work links climate to other issues of political and social importance and attracts populations and key opinion leaders (influencers) who take intersectional, multi-issue approaches to problem solving, or who approach climate and energy from non-climate angles (jobs, agriculture, business responsibility, public health, faith, children's future or education, national security and defense, real estate, labor unions, etc.). Furthermore, climate policies can no longer move forward without the support of these groups and the increasingly powerful coalitions they form across the political spectrum. And these groups have within their ranks and networks some of the most powerful and resonant storytellers and cultural voices; the messenger is just as important as the message in today's media landscape, and ethical communications entails allowing people to tell their own stories. From a moral standpoint, finding ways to support these groups has always been paramount, and from a strategic standpoint, it is crucial right now for deepening public support, reaching new audiences, and building powerful coalitions of real constituents.

Since Hewlett does not have the funds nor the grantmaking capacity to support all of these groups, the key is identifying networks, hubs, and regrantors that can help redistribute and direct the investments in ways that yield the greatest impact and outcome for the climate cause.

This entails investments in a select set of local and regional hubs, regrantors, and networks that can connect to and support community-level work, cultivate influencers and storytellers, reach and engage important constituencies, and tell stories about local climate impacts and solutions. We must support high-impact groups most closely connected with and led and trusted by important constituencies, to tell compelling stories and expand public support, from grassroots and environmental justice groups to agricultural, rural, labor, faith, healthcare industry, and business groups.

In the U.S., these networks and regrantors are well-positioned to continue to lead, and they know the local and regional landscapes, needs, and gaps better than we can. Our goal should be to invest in their work to support local groups in building their own in-house capacity for communications, and to provide coordination infrastructure and skill-building trainings for groups on the ground.

In other countries, we should likewise support in-country leaders and experts who are building communications capacities on the ground, through trainings, services, and/or direct grantmaking. With our time and experience, we can support the growth of civil society in geographies such as India, and support the domestic philanthropies who are building infrastructure for civil society organizations to coordinate, learn from each other, and collaboratively develop strategy. This type of “beyond-the-grant-dollar” philanthropic investment is greatly needed, as is support for philanthropies to be better coordinated with each other in their giving.

B. Support the development of best-available technology in digital communications and mass media.

The digital and social media fields offer advocates direct access to citizens and ways to test content, target and engage new constituencies, and engage populations. Philanthropies, starting with Hewlett, must invest in expanding the social and digital media and analytics capacities and the associated creative content development, influencer engagement, and data science capabilities in the climate field.

Though social media is collectively ranked among the top three most valuable outputs of field supporting communications groups, less than 14 percent of field-serving resources are dedicated to social media. Most groups describe social media as an additional distribution channel, rather than a platform to better identify, understand, and engage with audiences; these functions require data science approaches, skill sets, and analytics tools which are still vastly under-resourced in the climate field. Even less of the field’s capacities and resources, only 10 percent, are dedicated to creative communications and/or creative content development – a fundamental ingredient of digital and social media. In the U.S., few organizations are working with older, center, and right-of-center influencers to reach a wider base, and scant communications resources go toward working with communities of color (e.g., African Americans, Latinx, Indigenous communities) to cultivate influencers who can speak to their concerns and the links to climate change. Further, capacity emphasis in communications shops and organizations is still heavily weighted toward earning traditional media as opposed to digital and social media, where the overall cost-per-engagement is much lower and offers the additional benefit of potentially influencing earned media. We need smart, sophisticated approaches across digital platforms. We have an opportunity now to support the expansion these capacities through additional philanthropic investment; the cost if we fail to act on this opportunity will be too high.

Climate philanthropists must make substantial new investments in a set of new shared field resources and capacities in social and digital media, creative content development, influencer engagement, and data science; and investments in a variety of new digital-first grantees who are already built and staffed to make use of best-available practices in all four areas.

The four Hewlett geographies demand variations in approach here. In all regions, effective digital strategy includes developing creative content, cultivating key opinion leaders and influencers to support ambitious climate action, building staff capacity to conduct real-time testing, analyzing data from digital channels, and using analytics to steer future strategy and tactics.

We will *not* aim to spread digital capacity evenly across the field or build it in a diffuse manner among all grantees; this cannot be an ad hoc approach in any geography. And we will *not* support digital capacity-building that is not networked within the field, or not structured to share its learnings and data with the broader field of practitioners and advocates. Finally, we will not support the building of these capacities to carry out sector-specific nor policy-specific communications — it is crucial that the digital capacity orient toward building public engagement at a narrative and societal level well above specific sectoral and policy interventions.

In the US and Europe, we must help build more digital capacity in several ways.

We must look to support shared digital infrastructure and field utilities: new digital training centers for practitioner skill-building and cohort development to sharpen skills in social, digital, and data science; network hubs and coalition centers for collaborative campaigning, data and learning sharing, and strategic thinking; and other such efforts to align and coordinate digital communications and public engagement across the field.

We should help key organizations catch up and build digital capacity in-house. This means supporting a diverse range of organizations, small and large, hire in-house digital staff, as well as to contract for sophisticated professional services and research from leading agencies.

We must support a new set of sophisticated digital-first grantees. All of this digital capacity-building should map to field-supporting groups and groups working with and in the key constituencies and regions outlined through a national/regional mapping process. This could also include projects that aim to enlist commercial data science, creative, marketing, and advertising talent to understand and engage with key segments of the public audience on digital channels; if proven successful, we must move collaboratively to scale this type of effort through joint funding.

In the U.S., we should explore supporting pop culture partnerships, influencer cultivation efforts, and mass audience outreach opportunities in TV, film, music, the arts, sports, and business communities.

In India, the impacts of climate are widespread. Digital communications can help the public understand how climate change ties into their lived experience, and how it connects to their other priorities including clean air, access to electricity, food security, and more. Creating educational content that links climate change with development goals and these other priorities

will be central to this approach. This will require intersectional awareness and skill. Further, 300 million of the country's 1.3 billion people use social media, a number that is rapidly rising, so it is essential to support organizations working to build elemental, basic digital capacities in the climate field. Over 50 percent of these 300 million active social media users are millennials; we should support organizations that are already aligning their digital strategies with this key demographic. Indian philanthropists and civil society organizations alike are already working with engaged sports and cinema icons to raise public attention to climate-related environmental issues and solutions; we can increase our support here, too.

To start, we should partner with India-based philanthropies to fund field-supporting communications groups to expand their digital consultative services, and to support to civil society organizations working on power, transportation, agriculture and land use, air pollution, and clean energy research and policy analysis to build their own in-house strategic communications capacities.

Additionally, we should join with Indian funding partners to support the field's efforts to expand Hindi-language and regional language communications capacities. We should also support training programs to help journalists learn about energy and environmental issues in key states – in English, Hindi, and regional languages when possible. These programs have equipped reporters with credible sources, data, and evidence, and they have been proven to increase the quality and volume of climate-related news coverage in India, which has had measurable effect on policy discourse and adoption. Later on, we can offer funding support that can help grantees in India connect with grantees in other regions of the world to share digital communications best practices, digital tool knowledge, and digital staff trainings; as well as support grantee efforts to work with pop culture influencers on public education campaigns on clean energy and climate issues.

In China, [over 1 billion people use social media](#), and the landscape is marked by rich diversity and ever-increasing innovation, ranging from the all-in-one app WeChat, booming video sharing platforms like Douyin, shopping communities like Xiaohongshu, and the UN award-winning Ant Forest that helps track consumers' carbon reduction and plants trees. It is safe to say that social and mobile media has largely shifted the way people learn, work, connect, buy and live. This offers tremendous opportunities to evolve public-facing climate communications and shift people's lifestyles. Philanthropy can support digital capacity in China in many ways. First, funders can provide resources for field-supporting organizations to build their capacity to provide better training, coordination, and on-the-ground skill-building to the field. This also includes supporting them to cultivate specialized digital services for the field. Second, we should support the field's efforts to generate and distribute an increasing amount of public-friendly education products. This is a key step to bringing climate and decarbonization closer to people, so that they can participate in accelerating climate progress. Third, taking advantage of social media's pervasiveness in the modern Chinese way of life, funders can support the field's efforts to shift people's lifestyle through innovative products (e.g. AI-facilitated carbon footprint calculators, personal carbon accounts) and organize corporate-consumer engagement

campaigns. And lastly, we should support efforts to engage pop culture influencers and key opinion leaders to bring climate change to much wider audiences.

C. Manage anti-climate action narratives and digital disinformation.

We must begin to anticipate the rise of digital disinformation on climate change and the ways technology will be manipulated by climate opponents to spread disinformation online, and invest in research and digital capacities to identify, reveal, and inoculate against such disinformation campaigns. If we fail to foresee this challenge and to properly resource our field to address it, it could overwhelm and negate much of the good communications and public education work we are supporting.

[Hewlett-commissioned research](#) reveals that effective disinformation response is all about speed and targeting. Challenges include 1) amplification of disinformation by mainstream media and 2) lack of local rebuttal, due to local news deserts. Given this, some solutions could involve funding data science and social listening tools to spot the digital disinformation, support for local journalism, which can correct disinformation and keep the public well-informed, and advocacy rapid response to rebut and debunk false information, as well as advance fact- and science-based information.

In the U.S., we hope to partner with Hewlett’s U.S. Democracy Program, which has a grantmaking strategy to support research on digital disinformation and ways to overcome it, to identify climate-specific funding opportunities.

In Europe, we can address the growing threat of digital disinformation by helping to expand grantees’ digital capacity and offering them resources with which to enlist help from social media platform experts. In India, while there is sustained support for climate action across all political parties, there have also been well-documented problems with digital disinformation unrelated to climate change that we and our partners should at least be aware of. China does not to date does not have a problem with disinformation on climate change.

D. Focus on coordinated funding.

Funders have an outsize role in setting direction in the field and will need to be coordinated if the objective is truly to achieve broader public support and political will, more democratic engagement (or public support in the case of China), and increased coordination among field actors and grantees – particularly over climate’s urgent timeline for transition.

Our communications assessment found **a major gap** in coordinated long-term funding on communications. There is currently no venue or structure within which funders are coordinating or planning their communications funding. In addition to having very little outside coordination, most funders also lack any in-house communications capacity to develop

foundation strategy in this area. And scant capacity exists within the climate funding community to measure and evaluate strategic communications opportunities.

Further, funders with competing and different priorities; short-term project funding as opposed to patient, flexible long-term funding; and funder-driven metrics and implementation markers as opposed to field-driven metrics and implementation markers all have contributed to a diffuse field with competing strategies and resources.

In all of the regions in which we make grants, we must increase our grantmaking collaboration with domestic philanthropies and philanthropists. Further, as an established foundation with a commitment to improving the philanthropic sector as a whole, there are ways that we can help new domestic philanthropies build their own capacity to fund, measure, and evaluate communications work.

This strategy requires investment in funder alignment and coordination, which can foster greater coordination and collaboration in the field and less competition. As a first step, Hewlett convened a Funder Working Group in spring 2019, in which more than 16 foundations participated to discuss each foundation's communications funding strategy, interests, and potential venues for better coordination among funders.

The Funder Working Group met three times and aligned around the following ideas:

- Public communications and education efforts, particularly those at the local and regional level, are greatly underfunded and need much higher levels of investment in order to build the public will for climate policies and social change.
- The status quo for funder coordination in communications is deeply insufficient; and there is a unanimous appetite for greater coordination and collaboration around communications funding opportunities. This will be especially critical if funding for these activities increases, to prevent redundancy, promote field collaboration, and maximize scarce resources.
- A venue for funder coordination is greatly needed, but for efficiency sake, it should build upon or fit within existing funder coordination because funder time to engage is extremely limited.

The working groups concluded, and Hewlett has committed to help carry forward and support philanthropic collaboration and coordination in the communications area. Therefore, this objective will be central in our funding decisions, and we will look for and create opportunities to coordinate our grantmaking with other philanthropies.

V. Questions, Risks, Markers



Increasing investment in the field's ability to do all of this work, and to test, measure, and monitor its communications impact, will be decisive in its success.

Strategic questions remain, such as how can we help build the most diverse and powerful coalitions, and what narratives are most representative of public views and preferences? The answers are dynamic, dependent on political context, current events, and a number of other contextual factors, and also the subject of robust debate in the climate field. Our goal should be to support advocates' capacity to make these decisions by weighing the strategic considerations, developing strategies in collaboration and coordination with a broader and more diverse array of partners, measuring and evaluating their progress, sharing what they learn with each other, and adapting their strategy and tactics when needed. We must support the field's capacity for collaboration and learning, and, to be clear, for us as funders, much of this is a learning-by-doing exercise, too, as with most of our grantmaking.

We also need to rethink our implementation markers (also known as key performance indicators). Working for broader and deeper public will and social change means disposing of some short-term measurements, vanity metrics or metrics that measure inaccurate proxies for actual impact and give us false positives and negatives, or metrics that fail to capture the state of the public dialogue and sentiment (e.g. traditional media coverage). It also means different ways of measuring our work: We should begin measuring *who* is talking in addition to *what* they are saying, what new partnerships are being forged, what new constituencies are taking up the cause and ways in which their leadership is being cultivated, and how capacities and coalitions are growing and connecting. These sorts of measurements will give us a greater sense of narrative change, power shifts, and new audience engagement. This change in measurement will likely also require special attention and investment by philanthropies, and some culture shift inside philanthropies as well. We should work with funding partners to foster this culture change, advance, and invest in new measurements and measurement research, and support the field in sharing its best practices.

APPENDIX A

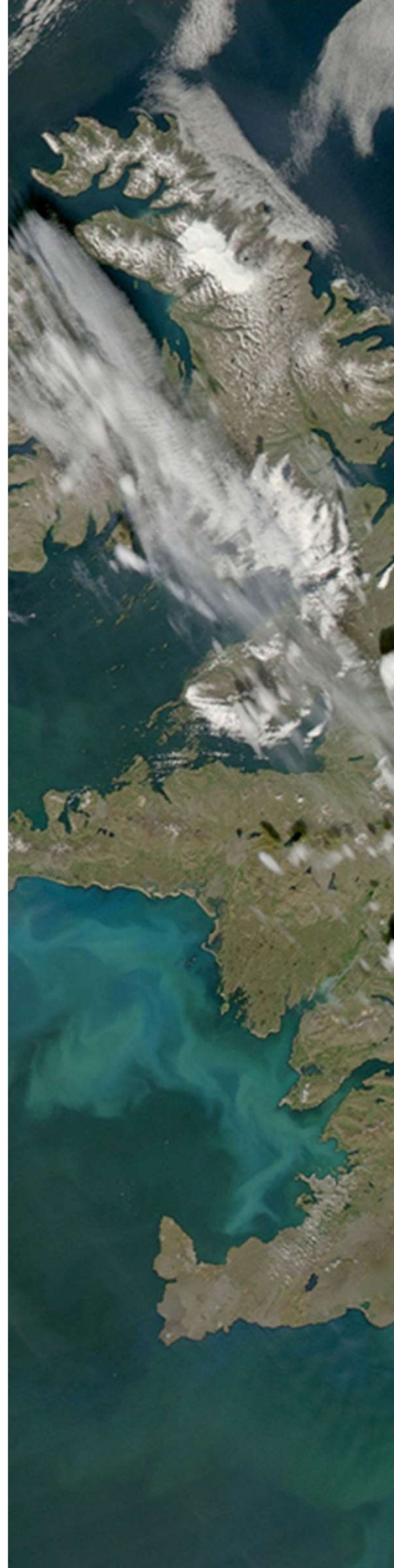
Key findings from the Hewlett/Camber field assessment



CLIMATE COMMUNICATIONS FIELD ASSESSMENT

SUMMARY FINDINGS

November 2019



CLIMATE COMMUNICATIONS FIELD ASSESSMENT OVERVIEW

BACKGROUND

As scientists confirm that we have little more than a decade to bring aggressive climate solutions to global economies, funders and practitioners alike must get clear and aligned on the opportunities for collaboration, field-building, and greater impact within the climate communications space.

OUR FOCUS

This assessment focuses **on national field supporting, communications organizations conducting broad issue-based communications activities and capacities**, as opposed to brand-focused, institution-focused, specific issue-campaigns, or localized groups and activities, in the United States. These broad issue-based capacities are the focus of this assessment because they:

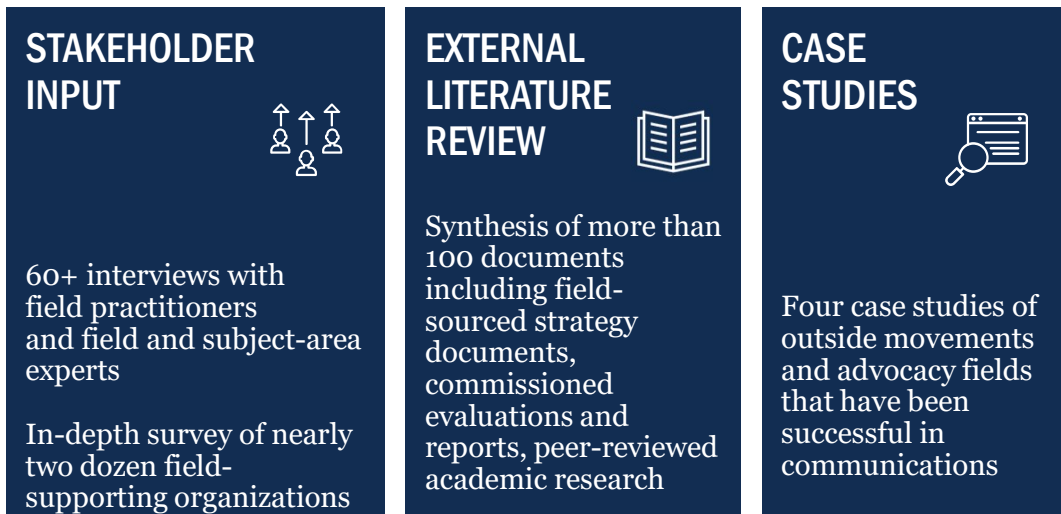
- a) provide issue and audience research to the field and a variety of specific efforts across the field, both national and local in nature,
- b) offer strategic support to brand-focused, institution-focused, specific-issue campaigns, and localized communications activities,
- c) increase the public profile of the climate change issue and general public awareness on climate change and its solutions,
- d) help networks and coalitions align around broader communications goals, strategies, and tactics.

OUR PURPOSE

- 1 Provide a view of the climate field's shared issue-based communications resources and capacities
- 2 Understand where gaps exist at this broad level of issue-based communications work
- 3 Identify opportunities for the field to grow and strengthen its field-supporting resources and capacities over the long-term

PROCESS FOR HOW THE FIELD ASSESSMENT WAS DEVELOPED

INPUTS

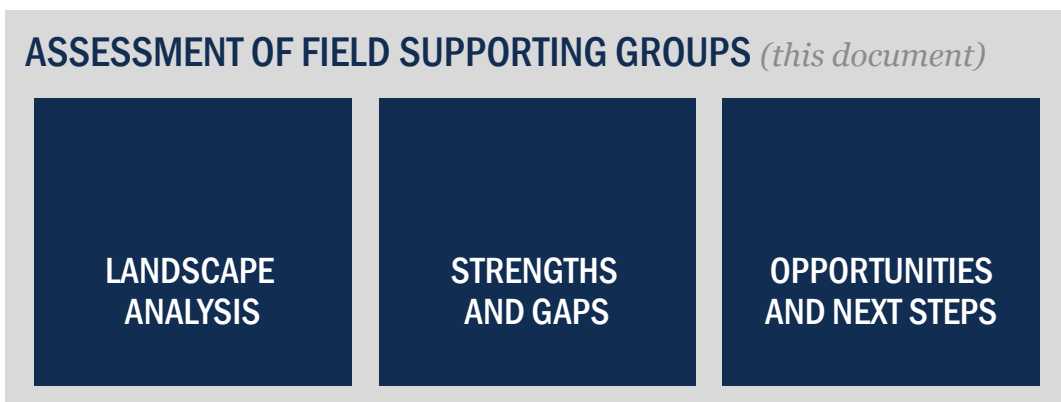


INTERVIEWS INCLUDED

People’s Climate Movement, RE-AMP Network, Southeast Climate & Energy Network, 100% Renewable Energy Network, PowerShift Network, US Climate Action Network (USCAN), Solutions Project, Center for Western Priorities, NRDC, Media Matters, Climate Advocacy Lab, Yale Center for Climate Communications, George Mason University Center for Climate Communications, Center for American Progress, Energy Foundation, Resource Media, Purpose Climate Lab, Spake Media, the Energy and Policy Institute, academic experts, foundation leaders, technology leaders at social media platforms, and more.



OUTPUTS



OVERVIEW OF THE LANDSCAPE

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS SUMMARY

SUBJECTS	National field-supporting communications organizations such as the Climate Action Campaign, Climate Advocacy Lab, Energy Media, Climate Nexus, Purpose Climate Lab, and more than a dozen other field-supporting national communications-focused capacities and groups were the focus of the assessment.
GOALS	Across national field-supporting capacities and organizations, policy change is the primary long-term goal, supported by building public support and engaging specific audiences.
AUDIENCES	Groups primarily focus communications toward policy makers and progressives , with very limited focus on a handful of specific constituencies including conservatives, business leaders, Latinos, communities of color, youth, public health communities, and military communities.
RESOURCES	Climate communications faces a massive funding asymmetry relative to the anti-climate action opposition and fossil fuels industry, who contribute at least 10x the resources. A majority of field-supporting resources are going towards long-term narrative building and near-term defense , particularly at the national level.
ACTIVITIES	Activities mainly focus on research, campaign strategy, and content development & distribution , much more than collective strategy. Most communications actors do not specialize in a narrow set of capabilities but operate across multiple communications functions and activities.
FRAMES	Environment, corruption and/or special interest-driven politics, health, and economics are the predominant issue frames employed, with less focus on morality or generational impacts.
CHANNELS	Earned media , particularly print, remains the primary distribution channel, with increasing efforts to use social media and key opinion leaders. There are no major owned media channels for distribution.
NETWORK	The field-supporting organizations are a close-knit community, built on strong personal connections at the leadership level.

STRENGTHS AND GAPS

STRENGTHS

Nimble and coordinated pivots in response to federal and state policy landscape changes

Well-coordinated core of field-supporting groups

Robust integration of climate **evidence and policy into message development**

Strong report writing credentials and **demonstrated success in earning print media**

Recent victories for climate progress and clean energy defense efforts

Highly-skilled practitioners with demonstrated success tailoring messages to different audiences

Strong messaging and narrative basis on and integration of **facts, evidence, and research** (“head” strong)

GAPS

Lack of field-level alignment and coordination between groups on a **high-level and long-term approach** and a corresponding **lack of coordinated funding**

Insufficient connections between national and **local/frontline organizations**, as well as other **allied fields and causes**

Aggregate work emphasizes message over messenger; opportunity to utilize **key opinion leaders or influencers**

Limited specialized digital and social media capacities due to resource constraints and staffing emphasis on earned media

Insufficient tools or resources for **measuring long-term communications impact**, with limited ability to **adapt longer-term strategies** based on results

Many, sometimes competing, tailored and individual narratives; lacking alignment around a few **strong umbrella narratives, particularly positive narratives on climate change**

Lack of **creative and graphic capacities**, including the **market-testing of creative material**, with an emphasis on facts and written content

KEY DETAILS AND TAKEAWAYS ON GAPS

NOTABLE INTERVIEW QUOTES

“ WE NEED TO HAVE A STRATEGY TO BUILD POWER. WHAT'S OUR 5-YEAR, 20-YEAR PLAN TO BUILD POWER TO WIN ON CLIMATE CHANGE? ”

“ THERE IS A DISCONNECT BETWEEN THE NATIONAL GROUPS AND THOSE ON THE FRONTLINES, WITH NO REAL INFRASTRUCTURE TO SHARE RESOURCES, ALIGN EFFORTS, ETC. ”

“ MOST GRASSROOTS AND LOCAL GROUPS DON'T HAVE ENOUGH FUNDING TO DO STRATEGIC COMMS; THIS IS THE FIRST NEED BECAUSE THE PUBLIC CONVERSATION IS REALLY HAPPENING AT THE COMMUNITY LEVEL. ”

“ THERE IS ALIGNMENT ON OUTCOMES; MEASUREMENT IS THE CHALLENGE. ”

“ RELATIVE TO OTHER FIELDS, CLIMATE HAS A CROWDED FIELD OF NARRATIVES, WHICH MAY BE COMPETING WITH ONE ANOTHER. ”

MORE DETAILS ON GAP AREAS

COLLECTIVE LONG-TERM STRATEGY

- Less than 15% of resources of surveyed groups are devoted toward coordinating long-term, field-level strategy among partners.
- There is limited knowledge of or alignment on field-wide goals and markers across organizations.
- Nearly all of the surveyed organizations depend on annual funding, which precludes long-term planning.
- Few organizations have the bandwidth or support to share failures with the field in transformative and useful ways.

BROADER COORDINATION

- While multiple venues exist for groups to coordinate campaign-specific communications activities, very few are available for groups to coordinate broad, field-level communications strategy.
- Much coordination among field supporting groups happens on an ad hoc or case-by-case basis and not through organized mechanisms, which could foster efficiency and better alignment.
- Many groups have or are building partnerships with local, grassroots, and frontlines groups, as well as other causes, however very few coordination resources and mechanisms are available.

MEASUREMENT, LEARNING, AND ADAPTATION

- Limited, short-term funding fosters competition and limits open sharing of outcomes. A majority of organizations have called for a culture change among funders that values experimentation and failure.
- The field largely lacks common metrics and measurement tools.
- While nearly all communications groups track outputs, one-third explicitly track public action or behavior change, and one-third of organizations are tracking changes in public attitudes following their efforts/interventions.

EFFECTIVE NARRATIVES

- Actors have excelled in crafting and delivering hosts of specific messages about policies and moments, but are lacking alignment around broad narratives and stories that can be told above specifics, appealing to wide audiences
- The resulting complex, sometimes dissonant message landscape may result in difficulty in moving audiences

KEY SUPPORTING DATA ON GAPS

NOTABLE INTERVIEW QUOTES

“SOCIAL MEDIA IS A MORE THAN A DISTRIBUTION CHANNEL; IT’S A WAY TO GATHER AUDIENCE INSIGHTS, IDENTIFY GROUPS, AND CULTIVATE DIALOGUES.”

“THE CLIMATE FIELD ON THE WHOLE IS DOING A GREAT JOB WITH WRITTEN CONTENT, BUT WE MISS THE CONTENT MOST PEOPLE CONSUME.”

“THERE IS A HUGE GAP IN MESSENGER DEVELOPMENT; THE FIELD NEEDS TO THINK ABOUT HOW IT’S BUILDING A NETWORK OF INDIVIDUALS WHO AREN’T TIED TO INSTITUTIONS.”

MORE DETAILS ON GAP AREAS

DIGITAL AND SOCIAL MEDIA

- Though social media is collectively ranked among the top three most valuable outputs, less than 1/6 of communications staff of surveyed organizations are dedicated to digital and social media
- Most groups describe social media as an additional distribution channel, rather than a platform to better identify, understand, and engage with audiences
- Social media platforms report that climate organizations do not approach them for help using their platforms effectively, despite having dedicated programs to supporting nonprofit advocacy efforts

VISUAL STORYTELLING

- Only 10% of climate communications staff of surveyed organizations are dedicated to creative communications and/or content development for digital and social media

INFLUENCERS

- Half of the groups surveyed work to cultivate trusted messengers and influential spokespeople outside of the field of climate change
- Few organizations are working with older, center, and right-of-center influencers to reach a wider political base
- Less than 20% of groups explicitly stated working with prominent communities of color (e.g., African Americans, Latinos) and/or vulnerable communities in supporting storytellers and influencers who can speak to their concerns and the links to climate change

MEASUREMENT IS FOCUSED ON OUTPUTS AND INTEREST, WITH LIMITED ABILITY TO DIRECTLY MEASURE OUTCOMES

MEASUREMENT APPROACH

MEASUREMENT & EVALUATION	EXAMPLES AND SUPPORTING METRICS	PERCENT OF FIELD-SUPPORTING ORGS USING EACH APPROACH
OUTPUTS	Number of publications, tweets, or other raw production volumes	100%
AUDIENCE INTEREST	Number of views, retweets, likes, and other indicators of actual penetration	88%
ATTITUDINAL CHANGE	Changes in opinion or belief in target audiences, e.g. through target polling	58%
ACTION OR BEHAVIOR CHANGE	Actual impact of efforts on driving intended actions (e.g. signatures, votes)	33%
POLICY CHANGE	Effect of specific comms efforts towards achieving target policy outcomes	Typically the result of many parallel comms, advocacy, and policy efforts and difficult to disentangle

KEY MEASUREMENT THEMES

FUNDERS SOMETIMES HAVE UNFOUNDED EXPECTATIONS FOR COMMS

With funder demands, the metrics aren't always useful or consistent

"WE DON'T HAVE THE BANDWIDTH OR SUPPORT FOR ROBUST MEASUREMENT"

There aren't sufficient resources for measurement and evaluation, and revealing failures isn't looked upon favorably

"WE'RE MISSING THE TO-WHAT-END AND WHY"

Despite the known gap between outputs and outcomes for comms, we're missing refined metrics for measurement of success/effectiveness

FIVE EMERGING OPPORTUNITY THEMES TO STRENGTHEN THE FIELD



1 Work to **coordinate around long-term goals and pathways to impact**, understanding and allowing for diversity in organizational strategies, tactics, and audiences



2 Focus on and collectively develop a subset of **compelling narratives**



3 Invest in **digital and social media** to better understand and effectively engage key audiences toward change



4 Cultivate and support a diverse range of **individual influencers and storytellers** who can seed institutions of power and serve as trusted messengers



5 Find ways to better **support and learn from frontline and grassroots groups**, and **strengthen connectivity** with these organizations and other allied fields and movements

FOUR CASE EXAMPLES FROM OTHER MOVEMENTS CAN INFORM CLIMATE COMMUNICATIONS

While there is no analog to climate change, several different movements provide compelling lessons for climate communications that can inform the opportunities the field chooses to pursue. Four are highlighted below.

MOVEMENT	SUMMARY	KEY TAKEAWAYS/ INSIGHTS
NEO-LIBERALISM	Long-term, power-building effort that displaced Keynesian paradigm through strategic unification of disparate groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long-term funding of multi-issue organizations and institutions alongside field power-building efforts enabled relatively under-funded efforts – such as the conservative legal movement – to succeed • Lead proponents understood the need to communicate – via influencers – a broader agenda and values-based narrative about equity, morality, and a better future for all rather than engage in disputes about facts and policy details
THE TEA-PARTY & NEO-POPULISM	Recent grassroots-led movement that employed new media and influencers across multiple issues to capture power	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The infrastructure – connected groups, leaders, tools, and networks – was in place that allowed the movement to seize on a series of ‘moments’ (financial crisis, Obamacare) that led to a groundswell of public support • By going beyond mere microtargeting and thoroughly understanding the existing online communities/discussions, actors could much more effectively recruit and mobilize new constituent groups
TOBACCO CONTROL	Science-based, health-framed effort that achieved policy wins by establishing trusted messengers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Science alone proved insufficient to motivate public behavior change or even policymaker action, absent the development of critical influencers throughout society. The cultivation of messengers/influencers turned the tide for the tobacco control movement. • Establishing secular morality was an effective means to build broad public and political will, in which figures and agencies who were ‘above reproach’ helped bypass political battles, personal beliefs, and the tobacco lobby’s outsized influence. • Accepting compromise and avoiding efforts to promote an outright tobacco ban, and, eventually, working with tobacco companies themselves to promote anti-smoking campaigns, was one decision that drastically advanced behavior change and public sentiment – despite sacrificing the chance of an outright tobacco ban.
MARRIAGE EQUALITY	Single-issue movement successfully redefined prevailing narrative following multiple defeats, and aligned around that narrative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Despite having developed a well-crafted, research-driven narrative, the movement went ‘back to the drawing board’ and to better understand the underlying views and frames of key demographics. • The movement embraced a low-cost “test and learn” digital and social approach that permitted rapid learning, deep understanding of why messages resonated or failed, and iteration of compelling creative content. • Strong coordination enabled a rapid and collective turn away from ineffective narrative, highlighted by joint use of research, content, and approaches to efficiently achieve victories nationwide.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FIELD TO ACT ON OPPORTUNITIES:



BUILD COLLECTIVE LONG-TERM STRATEGY

Determine where the greatest alignment exists around common goals, and find ways to unify around a longer-term, collective pathways to impact, accepting there will be different approaches and theories of change. Key questions to address include: a) Where is there the most agreement around final goals and outcomes, and what is needed to achieve them?; b) How can we ensure we accommodate different organizational strategies, audiences/constituencies, and tactics? And c) What corresponding planning and resource models are needed to foster collaboration, coordination, and resilience?



EFFECTIVE NARRATIVES

Assess the myriad major narratives the field currently supports and determine which narratives practitioners see and measurement and evidence supports as having the greatest potential. Work together to surface what opportunities exist for broader, overarching narratives and to understand how practitioners can link to and reinforce these overarching narratives in their daily work.



DIGITAL AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Reconsider digital: from a one-way audience-targeting tool to two-way audience engagement and learning platform. Direct focus and additional resources towards digital approaches that both deepen audience understanding and facilitate more intimate, targeted, and effective engagement. Establish learning and/or shared services that helps others learn and scale in digital.



INDIVIDUAL INFLUENCERS

Shift in approach from crafting the perfect message to activating the right voices. Identify and recruit messengers that effectively move target constituencies while simultaneously developing future influencers, building a national network of well-informed individuals in positions of power and influence. Direct resources and support organizations devoted to talent development and promotion.



BROADER CONNECTIVITY

Engage more consistently and strategically with frontline actors, specifically local & grassroots orgs, to provide comms support and resources in a way that effectively leverages their influence and reinforces their core narratives. Funders should direct support to build frontline groups' capacity for strategic communications and increase their direct access to resources, specialized staff, services, data, and digital tools. Field-supporting groups should work with frontline and ground groups to understand what support they need and lend it.

NEXT STEPS

EMERGING FIELD

ALIGNMENT ON HOW TO

MOVE FORWARD

EMERGING PATH FORWARD

In January 2019, Hewlett and Camber brought these national field-supporting climate communications groups and many of their philanthropic partners to discuss the findings of this assessment. Out of that convening, the groups aligned on four immediate priorities for action, and organized into four working groups over spring-summer 2019 to share lessons learned and ideas on:

- Expanding digital & social media, and their coordination around it
- Improving their service to grassroots and frontlines groups
- Researching and coordinating around effective narratives
- Increasing coordination and collaboration among funders (climate communications funders only)

COMMON THEMES

While each working group had a specific mandate, several common themes emerged:

- **Field-supporting groups feel the field needs more alignment on common end objectives.** Building broad public support for lasting climate action requires a different strategy than a near-term focus on specific policies or events.
- In order to succeed, communications field-strengthening efforts must be rooted in deep **understanding of the needs and values of a diverse range of key constituencies** across the political spectrum. The **groups on the ground** focusing on these communities and constituencies **need direct funding to build their own communications capacities** as well.
- There are inherent tradeoffs between developing an aligned strategy and narrative “at the top” versus **engaging key constituencies in a more democratic, two-way conversation.** For this reason, **coordination and collaboration should be the goal over alignment.**
- This multi-level coordination – between funders, organizations, and grassroots and localized constituencies across the political spectrum – is highly valued but **requires dedicated resources, cultural competency, trust, and time to achieve.** It is worth the effort and time because it **delivers transformative, durable step-change as opposed to incremental, reversible progress.**
- Funders have an outsized role in either creating competition, gaps, redundancies, and perpetuating weaknesses in the field or creating collaboration, coordination, and building field strengths. Funders will need to **adjust funding strategies, coordination, and metrics to enable the field to shift** to broader public support and political will, more democratic engagement, and increased coordination.
- **How to measure long-term impact of this shift remains an unsolved challenge** for both funders and communications partners, and is worthy of investment and knowledge sharing.

WORKING GROUP RECOMMENDATIONS AND FINDINGS

DIGITAL & SOCIAL MEDIA

This working group agreed to continue to coordinate efforts to develop content, share resources and insights, better serve frontline groups, and enhance polling and monitoring. Their recommendations include:

- Invest in increasing in-house digital, social media, and data capabilities
- Develop a shared real-time monitoring capability to capture and share standardized information on communications approaches and outcomes
- Provide a shared resource to support coordination of data collection, analysis and insights across organizations

ENHANCING COORDINATION WITH GRASSROOTS & FRONTLINES

The group committed to exploring ways to leverage each organization's strengths to listen to and co-create with frontlines and grassroots organizations to better meet their needs. Their recommendations include:

- Fund development of a network of “connector organizations” with trusted relationships across a wide group of frontlines and grassroots organizations
- Develop mechanisms to help link the frontlines with content, trainings, and communications capacity to meet their needs

EFFECTIVE NARRATIVES

In addition to continuing existing coordinated efforts to build capacity and share knowledge, content, and learnings about effective narratives, the group explored opportunities to test and evaluate narratives set around 1-2 moments or issues. To strengthen this effort, they recommend:

- Develop a narrative strategy “war room” to jointly roll-out a set of long-term narrative strategies and monitor what is working and what is not
- Increase capacity across the existing comms organizations to develop, apply, and amplify effective narratives

ALIGNING FUNDERS

The funders are exploring a coordination model to align their comms funding strategies to build broad public support and political will for climate action:

- Ground coordination in the understanding of each key geography and share and coordinate around global moments and multilateral efforts
- Invest in understanding the values and needs of key constituencies across political spectrum and how to engage them
- Strengthen comms field capacities to pivot to broader, more dynamic and democratic engagement: digital & social media, community mobilization, misinformation management, and narrative development

CONCLUSION, ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS, AND LEARN MORE

The final phase of this assessment concluded in late fall/early winter 2019 with the conclusions and recommendations of the funder and field-supporting working groups, but the learning continues. We at the Hewlett Foundation remain committed to learning, and to sharing what we have learned with the broader community.

We are grateful to all of the groups and individuals who shared ideas, input, and feedback throughout all phases of work in this assessment. We are humbled at the spirit with which our partners and colleagues have engaged in this assessment: eager to face and share challenges and gaps as a part of a larger effort to grow and improve the field, in service of advancing public understanding and support of climate change.

Special thanks go to the fantastic team at Camber Collective who worked on this assessment, helped facilitate the working groups, and shared and engaged with dozens of additional stakeholders in the rollout of the assessment and working group findings: Nick Bennette, Bethanie Thomas, Michaela Crunkleton Wilson, Tina Liang, Rebekah Kreckman, Hope Neighbor, and Brian Leslie.

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