

Vision of Research and a Research Agenda for the Lab

The climate crisis has the potential to inflict incalculable suffering on every living thing and system we rely on to thrive. It is reversible, but it will require on advocates, lawmakers and experts working together to win. There is little time or money to waste. In order to win, it requires we be effective and efficient with movement resources. The Climate Advocacy Lab is one of a handful of organizations working to ensure every hour and dollar spent stopping the climate crisis is spent wisely. Tactics that fail, or worse, backfire set us all back. The Lab's research, experimentation, and partnerships program is carefully constructed to uncover, curate and transfer knowledge to the sector so we can win.

The Lab fosters research to directly enhance the success of public engagement work by climate and clean energy advocates in the US. Research is core to the Lab's mission and theory of change, as an ongoing means of generating and highlighting the evidence of what works (and does not) in climate advocacy that will enable an effective movement to build power and win on climate.

We seek to address the largest and most consequential issues facing the field by building theory-driven coordinated bodies of results; but also, quickly to answer specific novel or high-impact questions. Considerations of equity motivate the importance we place on investigating under-researched topics and constituencies, and principles of inclusion inform our approach to methodologies that include the voices and perspectives of those we engage. There is a need for primary field research (i.e., new studies)—qualitative and quantitative—, from randomized controlled trials to case studies and polling. There is also a need for high-value secondary research (such as literature reviews and meta-analysis of existing data).

We see our role in the research and development ecosystem as centered on applied research, facilitating the translation of existing theory (scholarly or otherwise) and formative academic or exploratory results into practice by advocates, employing field studies for replication, validation, and evaluation. Thus, we are less focused on research dedicated to theory building or testing per se, or studies conducted under laboratory conditions and not in the complexity of field settings.

We seek to address the needs of climate advocates, are informed by their feedback, and focused on questions of direct utility, where the answers provided by research will make a difference by offering guidance to inform and improve decisions and practices. In putting forward an agenda of research inspired by the community, we also hope such an agenda will in turn inspire the community and serve to initiate conversations and projects across the field. To that end, we also seek research that challenges assumptions, sparks new insights, and catalyzes conversation about the role evidence and research can play in climate advocacy.

The Lab fosters research in a variety of ways, from conducting and commissioning original studies ourselves, to facilitating and participating in partnerships with social and data scientists and advocates on the ground, providing financial, training, and consulting support to projects, and building pathways for funder investments in critical research. And we complete the research-to-practice loop by leveraging these research findings to power the Lab's best practice recommendations and training program.