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

- 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
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!
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 accountably 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?