



Education to Support Informed Decision Making by Key Influential Community Leaders

Climate Education Partners

Climate Education Partners is a member of the Climate Change Education Program Alliance, a group of climate education projects that were formed 8 years ago to develop new resources and new ways to inspire diverse audiences to make informed decisions regarding climate change. Climate Education Partners (CEP) is composed of an interdisciplinary team of experts that have worked together integrating climate science, science education, behavioral psychology, strategic communication and real-world experiences to develop of suite of resources and processes to support informed decision making by key influential community leaders. The National Science Foundation supported Climate Education Partners by providing \$6 million dollars across 8 years to develop a strategic plan for comprehensive education of community leaders and implement a suite of activities to engage the influential decision makers in the San Diego region.

CEP has been working to share science about the changing climate with Key Influentials (KIs)—leaders in the community who include elected officials, tribal leaders, academics, and representatives from local businesses, nonprofits, ethnic and cultural communities, faith-based groups, and special interest groups. The project seeks to provide solid scientific information that enables KIs to make informed decisions on how best to protect the spectacular natural beauty, economic vibrancy and preserve the quality of life in San Diego, not just for today, but for all

future generations. Though the CEP materials are targeted specifically at San Diego’s leaders, the model was built from the start to be replicated in cities across the country.

“Climate Education Partners is an example of a collaboration that is happening in the San Diego region that can really teach some lessons to other places around the country.”

Scott Peters, US House of Representatives, CA-52



Overview

Taking care of our environment is not just good for our health and quality of life; it also strengthens our economy. Together we are working with leaders throughout the region who understand the importance of investing in more energy-efficient technology to create high-quality jobs and expand business opportunities in San Diego County. We can put people to work while having a clean and healthy environment.



Kevin Falconer, Mayor, City of San Diego and Todd Gloria Assemblymember of the 78th California Assembly District

At the core of our project was a partnership with Key Influentials - the decision makers and community leaders in San Diego County. CEP conducted nearly 100 interviews with Key Influentials in the San Diego area which informed the framing, content, and goals of the [2050 Report](#). The report describes the driving climate factors and five major impacts to the San Diego region and highlights the community of concerned leaders that currently exists. Easy to understand graphics, quotes from key leaders in the area, and a nod to the importance of doing

this for the next generation provide important climate information in a way that is easy to digest and share. By relying on the direction of the KIs themselves, the guide reaches both the climate conscious and the more skeptical. The report was used in tandem with other educational resources and outreach activities, which included presentations at board meetings, city council meetings, government working groups, academic and technical conferences, corporate lunch-and-learn events, and more, to reach a wide variety of KIs and hammer home the importance of climate action. It is available in English and in Spanish as a way to engage the key audiences in San Diego County.

In addition, KIs attended local tours that provide place-based learning and offered KI “ambassador” opportunities designed to encourage the KIs to bring the message of climate action to their home communities and organizations. As part of CEP’s replication efforts, an online community toolbox resource, "[Your Community Toolbox for Leading in a Changing Climate](#)" was released early in 2017 and updated several times to include new case studies, reports on lessons learned and new material. The CEP team also presented on the toolbox at several different venues and to different audience showing the power and versatility of this comprehensive resource.



Regional Impact

Many organizations adopted CEP methods and materials broadly within their structure once a KI was introduced to CEP. For example, the San Diego Airport Authority requested access to the *2050 Report* content, quotes, and information to be used to inform interested supporters of their Good Traveler campaign. The Union of Concerned Scientists and the Public Health Alliance of Southern California requested permission to use CEP’s infographics. The City of San Diego is partnering with CEP to train a marine science graduate student to develop skills in the policy arena and support their climate action plan. Other partners such as SDG&E became a key collaborator and host for both a Lunch & Learn event for their own employees (including many in upper management) and for CEP’s tours on wildfires and drought. We also partnered with a group helping businesses develop sustainability plans including potential future impacts of climate change.



Actions we take now to reduce emissions of heat-trapping gases can slow warming in 2050 and beyond. In fact, what leaders at all levels decide to do in coming years will determine the climate and quality of life that our children and grandchildren will inherit.

Dr. Margaret Leinen, Director of Scripps Institution of Oceanography UC San Diego

National/International Potential

Furthering the work of Climate Education Partners' (CEP) signature report, "*San Diego, 2050 Is Calling. HOW WILL WE ANSWER?*" – a first-ever collaboration among community leaders and world-renowned scientists – CEP has launched its new website, "[Your Community Toolbox for Leading in a Changing Climate](#)," which provides a comprehensive and multimedia resource for other cities and regions looking to incorporate climate change education and leader engagement into their climate action planning efforts. The Toolbox walks you through the processes needed to put together a team dedicated to climate change education and resilience planning as well as providing a template to develop the resources that could reach a key audience in another city, region, or country.

View the [resource website](#) or download the [PDF text-only script](#) of this entire resource.

Lessons Learned

CEP's client-led approach to outreach and education ensures that their materials reach KIs in the most efficient and useful way possible. CEP's enthusiastic reception by large organizations like the San Diego Airport Authority, the Union of Concerned Scientists, and tribes is a testament to the effectiveness of this approach. The following are some key takeaways from CEP's success:

Widen and deepen the "Community of Leaders" by being organized

Critical to being able to respond to KIs' needs is having a database that enables contact information to be sorted



and organized by categories so that engagement with each group is more deliberate and aligned with project goals and the needs of the KIs. A talented support staff dedicated to this and other logistic support is critical to the success of these types of ambitious programs.

Capitalize on opportunities to engage more deeply with partners

Several of the outreach activities have resulted in new opportunities for engagement with the same partners. As an example of adaptability of our resources and the reach of our program, CEP was invited to help tribes develop a greenhouse gas inventory and to participate in their major Earth Day community event. This also led to a more engaged participation in the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Tribal Conference held in San Diego last year.

This shows how CEP has chosen to respond to the needs of KIs, as opposed to dictating their needs.

Building capacity to support communities climate action teams

CEP has been able to build capacity at multiple levels to connect to the needs of local communities, businesses, NGOs or universities. Throughout the course of the project, we have provided employment and internship opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students engaging them in multiple facets of our project from logistics, to data analysis, to presentations, and even to opportunities for post-graduate experiences. We have created opportunities to work with our local partners and prepare for more projects in the future like the Climate Collaborative and the Environment and Social Justice Leadership Hub. Finally, the Toolbox will allow for other communities across the nation and beyond to educate their decision makers and to prepare for the impacts of climate change.

For any similar program to succeed in the long-term, an organization must: (1) build a connection to a University which provides institutional support, connections to students, and a stable organization for long-term planning; and (2) establish an interdisciplinary team with a broad and complementary set of skills including organizational skills, communication skills and interpersonal skills.

Respond to demand for educational resources

Several groups reached out to CEP to utilize CEP's resources. CEP has made infographics, educational videos, and all reports available to KIs and their staff to use as needed to further KI climate education efforts on their website. Being responsive to the needs of KIs and community partners is a high priority.

Use an action research model to test theoretical models and evaluate activities

CEP collects and stores data gathered through surveying, polling, and other evaluation tools. Communication and social science theories have been used to help diagnose barriers and opportunities. After taking action, data helps the CEP team identify effective practices and test theoretical educational models. This action research process helps CEP to iteratively refine its outreach, resources, and activity engagement.

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Partners

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[California State University San Marcos](#)

[University of California San Francisco](#)

[The San Diego Foundation](#)

[The Steve Alexander Group](#)

Resources/Website

[Climate Education Partners](#)

[San Diego 2050](#)

[Your Community Toolbox for Leading in a Changing Climate](#)