

An ACE National Strategic Planning Framework for the United States



Collaborative Contributions from the
Nation's Diverse ACE Community

Action for Climate Empowerment
November 30, 2020

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Executive Summary

Engaging, informing, and empowering the public to participate in solutions to the climate crisis is essential if humanity is to meet the urgency and scale of the challenge.

- A national strategic plan for public empowerment is needed to catalyze and accelerate a just transition to a low-carbon future. The Action for Climate Empowerment (ACE) agenda—as described by UNFCCC Article 6 and Article 12 of the Paris Agreement—enables all nations to inform, encourage, and empower their publics to design and implement their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) to global climate action.
- With the adoption and implementation of an ACE national strategic plan, the United States would become the first major emitting country to fulfill a commitment to ACE. Such actions would help our nation rebuild its international reputation and become a global leader for rapid, equitable, just, and effective society-wide climate action.
- Moreover, such actions are crucial to ensuring that a post-COVID recovery accelerates climate action and rebuilds the economy in just, equitable, and sustainable ways.

An ACE National Strategic Planning Framework for the United States is intended to guide the completion of a national strategic plan in time for delivery at the 26th UNFCCC Conference of the Parties in November 2021.

- This Strategic Framework was co-created by the U.S. ACE community through multi-decade efforts, which culminated in a series of participatory dialogues during August 2020 (see Appendix A and B). This document compiles the key principles, specific recommendations, and collective wisdom expressed by more than 150 participants who are affiliated with roughly 120 different organizations and networks. The participants represented a broad swath of the nation's ACE landscape and its tremendous diversity, experience, and geographic reach.
- While the ACE community's efforts have been invaluable to the nation, those efforts have been fragmented, and they have never been strategically aligned. An ACE national strategic plan that is co-created with diverse members of the ACE community will overcome a crucial barrier to meeting the climate crisis, namely, the low levels of public engagement and participation. A national strategy will, at last, align the ACE community's work and provide coherence and support to the nation's efforts to inform, encourage, and empower the public to make rapid progress on climate solutions.

THE U.S. ACE AGENDA:

- Acknowledges the deep history of learning and practice that has taken place in the ACE community.
- Weaves climate empowerment and public participation into every aspect of the nation's social, cultural, civic, and economic life.
- Is culturally relevant and highly salient to foster widespread commitments and support.
- Emphasizes local-level climate action and participation in decision-making.
- Recognizes and builds upon the diversity of knowledge, expertise, values, and ways of knowing and acting throughout society.
- Holds climate justice as inseparable from effective climate action. ACE calls for empowering Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC); members of low-income communities; and all those on the social, environmental, and economic front lines of climate impacts to participate and lead.

Meeting the climate challenge will require transformative, structural changes in order to foster inclusive public participation and decision-making processes.

AN U.S. ACE NATIONAL STRATEGY WOULD:

- Shift the focus of ACE activities from the actions of individuals to collective action.
- Shift decision-making processes from a model that seeks local input to a model that encompasses local participation, leadership, and consent.
- Create safe and meaningful pathways for BIPOC and low-income communities—which bear the greatest burdens of climate impacts—to participate and lead in decision-making.
- Reduce and remove barriers to effective action by community-scale actors and organizations. This includes reducing barriers to competition for adequate funding.
- Make financial investments through participatory processes that are guided by local concerns, research-based evidence, and the priorities of BIPOC and low-income communities.
- Design policies in ways that enable and encourage cross-sector collaboration and coordination for climate action.
- Integrate ACE—especially education and training—into government purchasing and contracting policies.

- Integrate ACE into the climate action plans of all government agencies and line-item budgets.
- Develop climate messaging that is highly salient, simple, and pervasive.
- Increase financial support and sustained commitments to ACE.
- Develop and implement tools to monitor and evaluate progress on public empowerment and participation.

SUGGESTED URGENT ACTIONS:

- Insert the following language, or its equivalent, into the 2020 NDC to the UNFCCC:

The United States commits to nominate a National Focal Point for Action for Climate Empowerment (ACE) and establish a diverse ACE Task Team that will utilize the community-developed *An ACE National Strategic Planning Framework for the United States* to create an ACE national strategy for delivery at COP26 and follow through on its implementation.

- Establish a federal office for ACE, nominate a National Focal Point (NFP) for ACE, establish the ACE Task Team and its collaboration structures, and provide the authorities and support required to co-create the U.S. ACE national strategic plan with diverse members of the U.S. ACE community.

This *Strategic Planning Framework* is a non-partisan document. It is, however, the product of those who participated in its creation. Future strategic planning will need to bring additional voices into the dialogue process as well. Support must be provided, for example, to members of conservative and rural communities who might find the language of climate change problematic, yet for whom stewardship of the land and the wellbeing of their communities are deeply held values. Further dialogue opportunities should also be extended to members of the business, health, science, social science, and other stakeholder communities. These additional steps will help ensure that the ACE national strategy encompasses the diverse concerns of the nation.

An ACE national strategy will greatly accelerate a just transition to a low-carbon future. Members of the ACE community are ready to assist and support the development and implementation of an ACE national strategic plan for the United States.