



AMERICAN CLIMATE
LEADERSHIP AWARDS

Mothers Out Front

mothersoutfront.org/

This guide offers a successful and stepwise model for you to replicate in your community. It is part of a series featuring the award-winning programs from the finalists of the American Climate Leadership Awards 2021 by ecoAmerica.

PURPOSE

We build the power of mothers as an organized constituency to advance sweeping policy-change. Our movement is built from the bottom-up, by starting teams locally and growing our collective power at the state and regional levels. We believe we can win because replicability is built into our organizing model: recruiting and mobilizing mothers through deep organizing community by community, with the knowledge that moms everywhere will stop at nothing to protect their children's future.

DESCRIPTION

Mothers Out Front is founded on the conviction that there is no more powerful force for change than women mobilizing to protect their children. As a uniquely powerful and persuasive constituency, mothers make up a key voting block and often hold the family purse strings: when mothers organize, decision-makers listen.

TARGET AUDIENCE

We focus on raising the voices of mothers across race and class, but our work movement includes grandmothers, caretakers, and other allies who care deeply about the future of all children. Our model works for anyone who wants to build a just and livable future for generations to come.

GOALS

- Continue our progress to build a true cross-race and cross-class movement: We will deepen national and local partnerships within the environmental justice community and will expand our organizing in frontline communities, building an inclusive member leadership structure.
- Build our statewide power and continue to be rooted in local organizing and local campaign work: We will continue to develop local campaigns that will grow their base and engage new mothers across race and class. We will also continue to encourage union allyship on the local/ state level with the hope of expanding it nationally in the future.



- Expand our national and regional work to connect our existing state and local teams together and provide opportunities for mothers outside our staffed states: We will develop gas infrastructure organizing as a distributed organizing campaign and participate in the Green New Deal Table and other efforts to implement comprehensive climate legislation.

PRIMARY COMPONENTS OR ACTIVITIES

Organizing: We take proven community organizing techniques and adapt them to organizing mothers in the 21st century, amplifying (and during a pandemic – adapting) relationship-based, face-to-face organizing with technology-enhanced organizing. Using a deep community organizing approach, we empower mothers to step into leadership roles within community-based teams, providing the training, and tools needed to develop and win campaigns.

Current campaigns include:

- A swift, just transition to renewable energy: We coordinate local efforts across state lines to halt gas infrastructure development and drive messaging to shift the public narrative around gas. Examples include our work, in coalition with others, to successfully cancel the Atlantic Coast Pipeline (VA) and our ongoing campaign to block construction of the Weymouth Compressor Station (MA).
- Electric School Buses: We are growing a cohort of local Electric School Bus campaigns in communities across the country, winning commitments in school districts from California to Massachusetts to transition diesel school buses to electric. These campaigns resonate locally, offer immediate health improvements and important carbon reduction impacts, while building leadership and organizational capacity for further engagement.

IMPACT & OUTCOMES

- Growing our movement: We are now 36,000 strong, including more than 3,100 engaged leaders across a dozen states, with on-the-ground organizers in five states.
- Protecting children’s health: We won fights around the country for cleaner air for our children. For example, in Colorado, we helped secure 2,000-foot setbacks between oil and gas drilling sites and homes and schools, and co-authored a major new study linking gas stoves to poor indoor air quality.
- Fighting for environmental justice: Across the country, our teams won concrete victories for environmental justice. For example, in San Diego, we got the county to commit to hiring environmental justice staff. Our advocacy also helped San José make history, becoming the nation’s largest city to ban fossil gas infrastructure in virtually all new buildings.
- Reaching more moms in new ways: We have amped up our digital organizing to facilitate on-line connection, and expanded opportunities for moms around the country to connect with us via social-media, webinars, and customizable tools for local action. In 2020 we hosted 174 webinars and in Massachusetts alone, 200+ moms participated in our digital trainings.



STEP-BY-STEP
GUIDE

- 1. Ground truthing:** Identify the problems that moms are facing in the local community alongside their general priorities in terms of their children's future (i.e. education, health etc.). Additionally, conduct background research that provides a comprehensive overview of the social, economic, and political dynamics in the community, including race/ethnic demographics, socio-economic makeup, vulnerability to climate impact, and more.
- 2. Story:** Identify the moms in your community/state who are most inclined to become involved. Find out their story along with the narrative and messaging they most identify with. Develop moms' ability to tell their own story and how it intersects with the climate crisis.
- 3. Relationships:** Build on the existing social network of local moms in the climate movement or your own local network of people with shared values. Start with initial engagement via a virtual (or post-pandemic) in-person house party, providing a warm and informal atmosphere in which mothers can embrace their identities as parents, and connect with others. Use your research from steps 1 and 2 to frame the priorities and structure of your discussion.
- 4. Strategy:** Utilize this engagement and any additional relationship-building to identify:
 - Approach: What is the change moms want to create in the world? Who has the power to make this happen? How can this constituency mobilize to create the change they want?
 - Structure: What leadership roles will the moms take on to turn their plan into reality?
 - Action: What are the actions your moms are taking to achieve their goal?
- 5. Community Teams:** After making connections in the community, identify key volunteer leaders and bring them together to launch a 'Community Team'. These teams are responsible for the work in their communities, making their presence known to local politicians, businesses, and other leaders. The Community Teams also manage a larger group of volunteers in their communities, with the goal of providing opportunities for mothers to get involved, no matter how much — or little — time they have.

