



AMERICAN CLIMATE
LEADERSHIP AWARDS

Amazon Employees for Climate Justice

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This guide offers a successful stepwise model for you to replicate in your community. It is part of a series featuring the finalists of ecoAmerica's 2023 American Climate Leadership Awards.

OVERVIEW

The urgency of the climate crisis asks all of us to move beyond business-as-usual thinking and find creative ways to bring about change. Fortunately, you have more power than you think, and it can start right at your workplace. Amazon Employees for Climate Justice has shown how workers can unite around a shared concern for the climate and — using strategic, relational organizing — shift corporate priorities and narrative to win climate victories with a worldwide impact.

STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

- 1. Find like-minded folks.** Begin by having lots of “one-on-ones.” A one-on-one is simply a coffee, video call, or walk with someone you think might be concerned about the climate. Listen deeply as you get to know them and learn how and why they might want to get involved. Sharing your own feelings and story encourages reciprocal vulnerability. Ask supportive folks to connect you with others. You might initially spend a few weeks/months doing this.
- 2. Form your team.** As you continue outreach to co-workers, those who are ready to engage can form an Organizing Committee: a core group who is organizing and guiding campaign strategy. When forming your Organizing Committee, focus on relationship-building, take the time to be intentional about how you'll make decisions and work together, and seek out learning on how to organize without replicating racism, sexism, and other oppressions that are the default in most workplaces.
- 3. Do your research and decide on your initial demands.** Knowing your context is invaluable: What climate policies does your workplace have now? Others in your industry? How is your workplace enabling the fossil fuel industry (e.g. providing specialized goods/services)? Talk to co-workers to find out what's motivating. Reach out to folks running similar campaigns for advice. When choosing issues for a first campaign, think about balancing winnable, shorter-term demands with longer-term visionary demands.



- 4. Develop your story.** Once you have some unity on where your company is now and where you're trying to move it to, you should think carefully about the story you're putting out to the world. What will resonate? Stake your ground apart from your employer's business-as-usual story, which likely involves leaving real climate action to the government and consumers. How can you tell a new story, one about concerned workers demanding bold climate leadership?
- 5. Design your first move.** A sign-on letter can be a great first action: it lets you test your campaign's viability with supportive co-workers before going public, and builds pressure by showing the increasing numbers of people who are with you. Consider balancing an analysis of your company's climate record with an inspirational vision. Decide beforehand if you'll make the letter and/or signatures public, and be upfront about this when asking people to sign.
- 6. Plan your rollout and pre-seed with support.** Consult with trusted co-workers about your letter to test messaging and viability. Find out how many signatures would be needed for people to feel safe signing on. Decide where you'll publish the letter and at what number of signatures. Get your closest supporters to sign first, then have them ask friends individually. In this way you can build momentum — and safety in numbers — before broadcasting the letter broadly.
- 7. Launch internally.** Once you've pre-seeded a set of signatures, broadcast the letter more widely within your company with a coordinated plan. Consider company channels like email discussion lists, Slack, or internal message boards. Ask folks who've already signed on to share the letter in channels where they're active and coordinate for everyone to share on the same day. Tailor each ask to your target group and keep encouraging supporters to reach out individually to friends.
- 8. Launch externally.** Publish or deliver the letter according to your initial plan. Use platforms like Twitter and Medium to publicize the action. Find common ground in your team about messaging and tone. Reach out to journalists with press releases and pitch calls. Assume that any communication with journalists is on the record, and make sure to agree in advance — before speaking — whether someone will be interviewed, and whether they will be anonymous or publicly named.
- 9. Debrief and consider next steps.** Keep building support for your initial action and use that energy to escalate to a new action. Maybe the sign-on letter demonstrated enough support to plan a public event like a rally or walkout? Filing an employee shareholder resolution could be another possibility. Continue to escalate and build momentum for your demands. Even if you don't immediately win changes, you're building support and also contributing to a broader narrative shift.



- 10. Claim your wins and keep your team strong.** It's important to build into your team culture time to appreciate one another and all that you've accomplished. Take time to reflect, debrief, show appreciation for your Organizing Committee, and perhaps throw a happy hour or gathering with a broader group of supporters to connect. Continue to hold one-on-ones throughout the campaign cycle to build relationships for the long-term, and start planning your next move!

Amazon Employees for Climate Justice is an ACLA 2023 Finalist. For more information and replication guides, go to ecoAmerica.org

ecoAmerica's American Climate Leadership Awards (ACLA) recognizes, rewards, and shares best practices on climate change advocacy and action nationwide. ACLA provides \$175,000 annually in recognition of real climate leadership. Individuals and organizations selected as finalists have achieved demonstrated success in engaging a broader diversity of Americans for climate action at local, regional, and national levels, in ways that are replicable, while prioritizing diversity, inclusion, and justice.

