WORKSHOP · TUE, OCT 13 · 1:15-2:15 PM

Narrow-casting & Green-hushing: the Story of Climate Engagement in Small-Town Idaho

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McCall, Idaho built an award-winning climate action plan in a town where many people would rather not say "climate," but care deeply about wildfire, insurance, lake water quality, traffic and snowpack. City staff and consultant Lotus shared how tailored messages and softer language got broad participation and an adopted plan.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. **Talk about symptoms people already feel.** Residents who tune out "climate" care about wildfire driving up insurance, algal blooms in their drinking water lake, energy savings and traffic.
2. **Start inside city hall.** Interviews with public works, parks, council and others revealed what staff already do, where money goes, and the "hard nos" to keep off the plan.
3. **Fill the steering committee with willing messengers.** McCall chose people ready to take the social risk, including the Nez Perce Tribe, health, law, nonprofit and youth voices.
4. **Short surveys beat long ones.** Splitting a long survey into bite-sized topic surveys sent by text, online and newsletter drew more than 2,000 responses versus an expected 200 or fewer.
5. **Swap the words, not the work.** Changing language does not mean compromising on action. The plan began as Rooted in Resilience and was adopted as Rooted in Resilience, a climate action plan.

WHAT LOCAL OFFICIALS CAN DO

- ☐ **Map stakeholder archetypes.** For each group (realtor, snowmobiler, builder) list values, deal-breakers and where they get information.
- ☐ **Break climate into everyday topics.** McCall used transportation, health and resilience, and destination management.
- ☐ **Use language swaps.** Try "responsible management" for sustainability, "fairness" for equity, "solutions" for crisis, and a "heat-trapping blanket of pollution" for GHG emissions.
- ☐ **Show up where people already are.** McCall held an EV demo day, tabled at Arbor Day and the fall festival, and ran focus groups with the tribe.
- ☐ **Lend out "meetings in a box."** Photo voice, comic books for kids and peer case studies, each with a worksheet to capture results.
- ☐ **Turn your regulars into recruiters.** Monthly newsletters kept frequent participants engaged and sharing surveys with friends.
- ☐ **Brief council before budget season.** McCall checks in two or three times a year so climate projects show up in department budget pitches.

BY THE NUMBERS

2,000+
Responses to bite-sized rapid surveys

18 months
From start to adopted climate action plan

<4,000
McCall population

2
Engagement awards for the plan, one state, one national

WATCH OUT FOR

! Staff can be the first barrier. Learn their objections and hard limits before going public, or the plan won't get implemented.

RESOURCES

McCall Rooted in Resilience plan
mccall.id.us (Plans, Documents and Applications)

Lotus Engineering & Sustainability
lotussustainability.com

Screening tools used
Social Vulnerability Index and CEJST, to spot vulnerable groups

McCall Outdoor Science School
University of Idaho program that ran workshops and youth outreach

Watch this and every SV26 session recording
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Summarized from the session recording and presenter slides. Figures are as presented; confirm with presenters before citing.

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