

Submission: T-2020-210-45

Title Why and How to Engage Communities in Climate Action Planning

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Theme -Theme 2: Observing in Support of Adaptation and Mitigation

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Poster title (brief) Engaging Communities in Climate Action Planning

Abstract - text box

Planning for and observing climatic changes requires rigorous scientific inquiry by disciplinary experts, but the implementation of a successful climate action plan often faces political, economic, and cultural challenges. Enlisting community input and feedback throughout the planning process results in a plan that reflects citizen observations, values, promotes trust, and increases the likelihood of community buy-in from diverse stakeholder groups. To address this issue, The Municipality of Anchorage collaborated with the University of Alaska to develop an equity-based, community-engaged Climate Action Plan. To do this, students from the Department of Geography and Environmental Studies capstone course worked in teams to develop strategies for recruiting and engaging the diversity of community stakeholder groups. Anchorage is home to the most diverse census tracts in the U.S. and has some of the highest crime rates in the U.S., resulting in profound examples of inequity and environmental injustices. To address this, we employed engagement strategies using an equity lens to ensure the range of Anchorage's diverse voices and needs are revealed and considered prior to the implementation of a climate action plan. We explored equity framing within the context of other existing climate action plans and developed a methodology that considers Anchorage's unique demographic and geographic factors. This presentation focuses on how a project like this can 1) leverage resources across institutions to address real-world problems; 2) build high-functioning collaborations between universities, communities, and local government agencies; and 3) provide an adaptable framework that ensures the range of diverse stakeholder voices and observations are represented in climate action planning processes.