

Averting climate disaster depends on the climate movement becoming much more powerful and effective. We at The Climate Center believe this depends on climate leaders and advocates aligning and collaborating around an overarching strategy.

*Imagine* that we tackle the climate crisis in a way that actually turns things around fast.

For this reason, we appreciate you reviewing this proposed strategy, also called a theory of change, and giving us feedback. We'd also like to know which parts of this strategy you're already pursuing and what you've learned from your efforts to date.

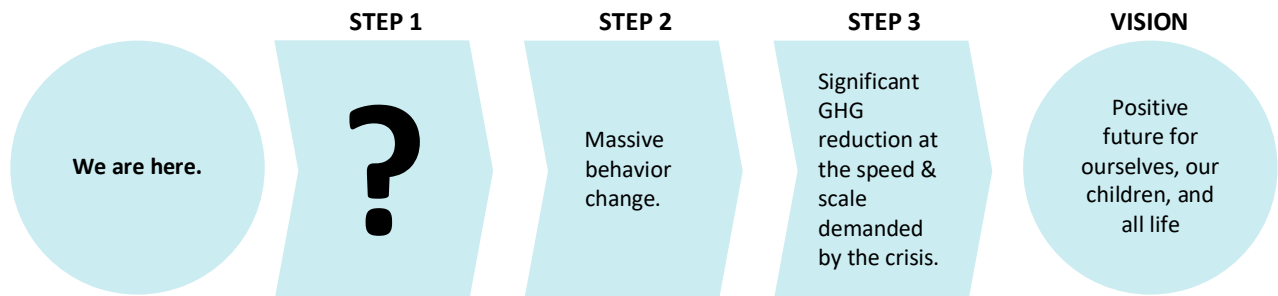
If you want to dive deeper, accompanying this letter is a companion document which exams four common climate strategies – education, individual action, research and development, and policy – and the relationships among them. The companion document concludes with acknowledgments and information about The Climate Center and the team working on this strategy.

As we developed this strategy, we looked for other similar theories of change, and were surprised by how few we found. Some explanations we heard are:

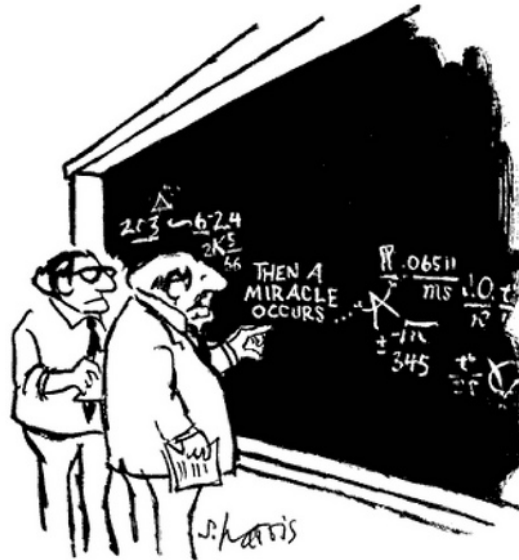
- The climate movement shouldn't have an overarching strategy. We need all-of-the-above solutions, like an ecosystem of activism, because we don't know what might work.
- The issue is too urgent to figure out an overarching strategy. Instead, we need action.
- Climate leaders including funders already have their own strategies, and aren't interested in an overarching strategy.
- Everyone already knows what's needed, so we don't need an explicit, overarching strategy.

These are true to varying degrees. We believe that taking a broader view enables us to see that the climate movement includes countless approaches, many of which will have little impact on the crisis anytime soon. With limited time, attention, and money, these mostly disconnected approaches may prevent any one of them from reaching the critical level that leads to massive impact. An all-of-the-above approach is unlikely to deliver the necessary speed and scale solutions.

The following is a frame for thinking about an overarching climate strategy. Through hundreds of conversations about this, we find that general consensus exists for Steps 2 and 3. To achieve our shared vision of a positive future for ourselves, our children, and all life, we must significantly and rapidly reduce GHG emissions, Step 3. This includes both significantly reducing emissions going into the atmosphere as well as removing significant emissions from the atmosphere. While this is not all that is needed to achieve a positive future, without it, a positive future is impossible. Significant GHG reduction depends on massive behavior change, Step 2.



But what happens in Step 1? A classic cartoon pokes fun at relying on faith rather than an explicit roadmap for Step 1.



"I think you should be more explicit here in step two."

*Reprinted with permission*

What strategy will optimize resources to produce speed and scale – fast and big – solutions?

When we looked for existing overarching strategies for the climate movement, the one that best fit the bill is in *Design to Win: Philanthropy's Role in the Fight Against Global Warming*, a report from 2007.<sup>1</sup> The report's guiding question frames the challenge, "Philanthropists...are inundated with a dizzying array of often contradictory options and opinions...Given the global scale of the predicament, where in the world should they allocate their precious resources?" The report concludes that investing in policy efforts would yield the biggest impact.

We also paid special attention to the U.S. Climate Action Network because, with its membership of 175+ organizations, it is the largest climate coalition in the nation. Its vision is "a powerful, inclusive, and trusting network of US organizations who worked together to meet the global goals in the Paris Climate Agreement and exceed the US targets outlined in that agreement." Its strategy is for the network to work together to successfully impact climate change.<sup>2</sup> USCAN appears to be focused on supporting its members more than advancing an overarching strategy for the climate movement.

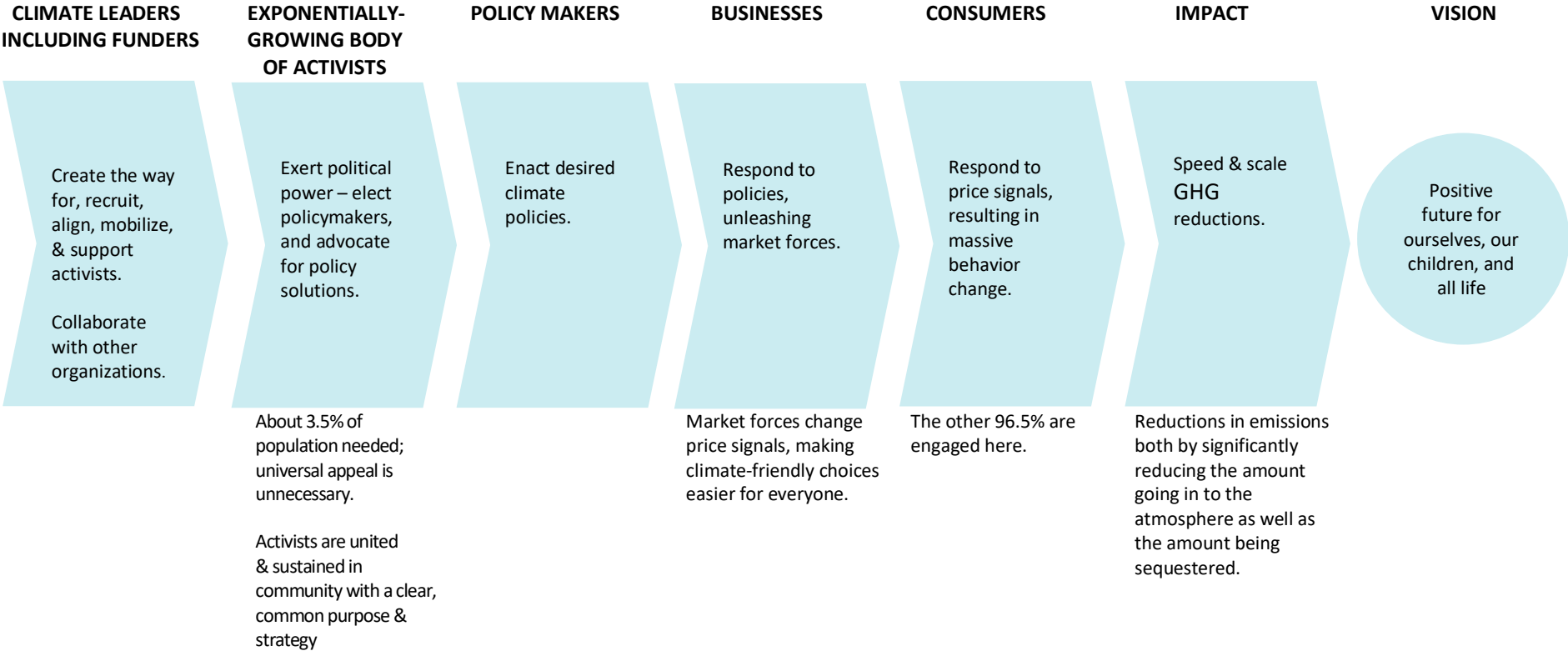
The overarching strategy developed by the Center for Climate Protection follows on the next page.

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<sup>1</sup> California Environmental Associates, "Design to Win: Philanthropy's Role in the Fight Against Global Climate Change," [climateworks.org](https://www.climateworks.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/design_to_win_final_8_31_07.pdf), August 2007. [https://www.climateworks.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/design\\_to\\_win\\_final\\_8\\_31\\_07.pdf](https://www.climateworks.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/design_to_win_final_8_31_07.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.usclimatenetwork.org/>

# PROPOSED OVERARCHING STRATEGY FOR THE CLIMATE MOVEMENT



**Caveats:**

- Change is non-linear. For example, positive feedback such as political wins can strengthen and increase the ranks of activists who then bring about more political wins.
- All models are wrong; some are useful. At some point, a system will behave differently from the model of the system.

To ensure the accountability and effectiveness of the implementation of this model, a tracking system assesses results to provide feedback and adjustments.

Like Design to Win, policy tops our list of strategies. Policy can alter rules that govern the economy, energy, business, infrastructure, and transportation. It can align profit and planet.

Briefly, here are the criteria we use to evaluate proposed climate solutions:

- Significant GHG emissions reductions aligned with the scientific imperative
- Cost effective - unleash market forces that make climate-friendly choices easier
- Technologically feasible - proven and scaled or close to scalable
- Politically feasible – in line with the science while being feasible for the policy to be enacted
- Movement-building - understandable, bold, exciting, compelling to activists

### **ACTIVISTS: THE PROPELLING FORCE**

The energy for policy change and for electing representatives who vote for the desired policies comes from activists, whether business people, scientists, academics, philanthropists, trade organizations, farmers, small or large groups of committed individuals, or coalitions.

Analysis of nonviolent social movements shows that campaigns that achieved the active and sustained participation of just 3.5 percent of the population succeeded in their goals.<sup>3</sup> A small, focused group can create the necessary conditions for change to occur in the larger group.

“Politics as usual is not working to address the climate emergency,” says Bill McKibben. Civil disobedience and protest can be part of building political pressure. The Sunrise Movement’s advocacy tactics for a “Green New Deal” is an example of how some are working against politics as usual. Through media-grabbing protests, such as sit-ins at Congress member Pelosi’s office, the movement garnered the support of at least forty-five House Representatives to reject financial support from the fossil fuel industry and revive climate-friendly structural reforms.<sup>4</sup>

### **WHERE THERE’S A WAY, THERE’S A WILL**

A persistent problem in the climate movement is that “no core constituency with a concentrated interest in policy change” exists.<sup>5</sup> Twenty-one percent of Americans are very worried about climate change, and 7 in 10 registered American voters support government action to address climate change.<sup>6,7</sup> Theoretically, then, a large latent force exists, ready to be tapped and engaged in pushing for climate policy.

However, this latent force lacks a clear path by which their actions will have an impact. More than “where there’s a will, there’s a way,” we assert “where there’s a way, there’s a will.”<sup>8</sup> Offering opportunities for engagement and clear policy items to support will attract and retain

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<sup>3</sup> Chenoweth, Erica, “My Talk at TEDxBoulder: Civil Resistance and the “3.5% Rule”. *Rational Insurgent*. November 4, 2013. <<https://rationalinsurgent.com/2013/11/04/my-talk-at-tedx-boulder-civil-resistance-and-the-3-5-rule/>>

<sup>4</sup> Williams, Tate, “Sunrise Movement is Shaking Up the Climate Debate. Will More Funders Pay Attention?” *Inside Philanthropy*, January 7, 2019.

<sup>5</sup> Egan, Patrick J., and Mullin, Megan, “Climate Change: US Public Opinion,” *Annual Review of Political Science*, Vol. 20:209-227, May 2017, <https://www.annualreviews.org/doi/pdf/10.1146/annurev-polisci-051215-022857>

<sup>6</sup> Leiserowitz, A., Maibach, E., Roser-Renouf, C., Rosenthal, S., Cutler, M., & Kotcher, J., “Climate Change in the American Mind”, *Yale Program on Climate Change Communication*, March 2018. <<http://climatecommunication.yale.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Climate-Change-American-Mind-March-2018.pdf>>

<sup>7</sup> Yale Program on Climate Change Communication <https://climatecommunication.yale.edu/news-events/poll-american-voters-support-climate-action/>

<sup>8</sup> Bruce Macpherson, Instructor (retired), Santa Rosa Junior College

the large numbers who care about this issue. The more we grow, focus, and mobilize the 3.5 percent, the more we create a virtuous cycle, and the more impact we have. Convincing non-believers is unnecessary because the critical mass of 3.5 percent can be gathered without them. The remaining 96.5 percent are included at a later point in our overarching strategy.

Another ingredient in the strategy was inspired by author and activist George Marshall in his book *Don't Even Think About It: Why Our Brains Are Wired to Ignore Climate Change*.<sup>9</sup> First Marshall debunks common climate action strategies, and explains why we have yet to build the force to protect the climate and probably won't if we continue using current strategies.

Then Marshall says we must apply lessons from organized religion. He observes that religion is not science-based and yet billions of people base their lives on it, while climate change is science-based but has not led to sufficient action. What lessons does religion offer? Through religious associations people are given a nurturing space for acknowledging their guilt, grief, and hardship, and transmuting it into redemption and forgiveness. People experience clarity and transformation in community with others. Solidarity forges powerful emotional bonds. A primal, deeply-wired human need is satisfied. People gain a sense of identity, belonging, hope, and resolve. These powerful feelings unite and sustain people for a common purpose over the long haul even when the challenge is daunting and distant.

#### **CLIMATE LEADERS: THE INITIATING, GUIDING, AND SUPPORTING FORCE**

The overarching strategy depends on climate leaders and advocate who hold the vision, and initiate, guide, and support implementation of the strategy. Together we can inspire, recruit, focus, train, and sustain an exponentially-growing body of climate activists who can advocate for evermore powerful solutions. We can identify the policymakers and the policies to support. We can track results, make adjustments, and hold people accountable. Climate leaders in turn require support from climate funders to fulfill their role. Therefore, climate funders are leaders, too, because of their power to guide and support decisions about climate strategy.

So...what do you think? I really look forward to connecting with you about this.

Cheers!

Ann Hancock, Co-founder and Chief Strategist

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<sup>9</sup> Marshall, George, *Don't Even Think About It: Why Our Brains Are Wired to Ignore Climate Change*, August 2015, Bloomsbury USA.