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### Full Strategy Summit Details:

**When:** Tuesday, January 14th and Wednesday, January 15th from 11-2:30pm via Zoom.

**Full Agenda:** [At this link.](#)

#### Facilitation Notes:

It will take about five minutes to move people into breakout rooms. Please plan on about 50 minutes for content and discussion. Our current estimate is 15-45 people per breakout room, though it's impossible to guess. Facilitators will be automatically moved into breakout rooms when sessions begin.

[See all breakout session planning and agenda documents](#)

**Questions?:** Please reach out to Molly at [molly.updegrove@reimagineappalachia.org](mailto:molly.updegrove@reimagineappalachia.org)

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### Breakout Session Agenda and Details:

Please be in touch asap if you see errors, typos, or other suggested changes for this description.

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**This session will be: Wednesday, January 15th at 12:30 pm ET**

### Title: Session 2D: Communications in a Changing Policy Environment

#### Description:

Let's discuss what messaging is most impactful, and what shifts we might consider when communicating about the sustainable economic future we envision for Appalachia. How can we work together and deploy a collective voice to highlight our successes and defend our priorities at the regional and national level?

**Facilitator:** Annie Regan, Campaigns Director, PennFuture ([regan@pennfuture.org](mailto:regan@pennfuture.org))  
Donna Kohut, Policy Manager for Sustainable Economics, PennFuture  
([kohut@pennfuture.org](mailto:kohut@pennfuture.org))

**Notetaker:** Jenny Tompkins, PennFuture

#### Goals:

- Get a sense of shared messaging priorities from partners, share some best practices and learnings
- Discuss how there are different audiences we're reaching out to & different messages when talking to a general audience vs. talking to legislators

- Explore interest in future collaboration on messaging with participants
- Share useful tools and resources and/or ask people what tools/resources they need

### **Draft Agenda:**

### **Wednesday, January 15th at 12:30 pm ET**

**12:30 pm - 12:40 pm** - Folks moving into the room, introductions in the chat, maybe some polling to get the room started

### **12:40-1:00 pm -**

- 20 min presentation from Annie Regan and Donna Kohut. [Link to presentation](#)

### **1:00-1:20 pm -**

- Guided discussion / possibly polling - on what folks would prioritize looking forward to this work?

### **1:20-1:30 - Useful Resources & discussion in chat**

- Are there specific requests or needs from ReImagine Appalachia or other regional partners to help grow capacity/messaging around this?
- What kind of tools or support would be helpful?
- Relevant articles
  - [Georgia compare and contrast about how the Governor speaks about the IRA wins vs. the Senators talk about the IRA wins the state has had](#)
  - [How Republicans \(sometimes\) get on board with climate action](#)
- What groups exist to support each other in continuing this work and types of conversation
  - [We Make the Future, Race Class Narrative](#)
    - Mini-Grants, workshops, real examples
  - [Center for Story-based Strategy](#)
    - Workshops, live trainings, online resources
  - [Advocates for Conservation and the Environment](#)
    - PennFuture trains people to speak to their legislature
      - [Example of a one-pager talking points for volunteers & legislators](#)
      - [ACE Program Presentation](#)

## NOTES:

- [Link to presentation](#) / [Link to recording](#)
- Annie's Email: [regan@pennfuture.org](mailto:regan@pennfuture.org)
- Donna's Email: [kohut@pennfuture.org](mailto:kohut@pennfuture.org)
- More about PennFuture: [pennfuture.org](http://pennfuture.org)
- Session Goals:
  - *Priorities* – shared messaging priorities, best practices, & learning
  - *Audiences* – discuss different audiences & segmenting messaging based on those
  - *Collaboration* – explore interest in collaborating on messaging in the future
  - *Resources* – share tools & best practices across partners
- Mentimeter Question #1
  - ***What are some barriers to effectively communicate with your audience?***
    - [Mentimeter results PDF linked here](#)



## ***What are some barriers to effectively communicate with your audience?***

how to stand out among all the content and noise we are faced with everyday

Establishing trust and building relationships

Concerns about overwhelming audience

Compassion fatigue - folks tired of hearing about what's wrong

getting message to community in way they know about and are able to join

Advocating renewable energy for sustainable-community development, in a conservative context, means effective: communications, framing, treasured youth engagement, fiscal responsibility.

Consistency: relationships are built over time, but jobs come and go (employees too)

volunteers



## ***What are some barriers to effectively communicate with your audience?***

gaining access to them / competition for their attention span

understanding what jargon to avoid

Fear of disagreement

What we do is so niche. We operate across multiple pillars, with a variety of partners. It is hard succinctly saying what we do. Not everyone understands the jargon associated with us.

Trust.

Knowledge vs. emotion on issues.

difference between proclaimed important issues and actual important issues

Acronyms





## ***What are some barriers to effectively communicate with your audience?***

Different backgrounds

distance (rural life)

Lots of nonprofits mean well but use too much jargony language in their materials to share

Time of day to host community meetings

Policy wonk language vs. plain language

Fear of misunderstanding

Fear of Change

Technical Support



## **The Issue**

- Measuring success based on the outcomes of this past election
- Unsuccessful messaging in 2024
  - IRA investments
    - [Many adults remain unfamiliar with the IRA and its impacts \(AP Polling\)](#)
  - Traditional climate messaging
  - Renewable energy
  - Future threats to environmental policy
- Successful messaging in 2024
  - Cost of living (especially energy costs)
  - A sense of being left behind, forgotten, ignored
  - Government, including regulations, as an obstacle

## **What the pollings say**

- [Commonwealth Foundation Polling](#)

- Pennsylvania-specific poll
- Commonwealth Foundation is a conservative-learning organization
- Results
  - Rising energy costs is the dominant energy issue in PA (63%)
  - Grid reliability, environmental harms from energy exploration & production, and economic impact of government regulations (all around 25%)
  - A candidate's commitment to lowering energy costs is more important to voters than a commitment to protecting the environment.
- Takeaways
  - Language
    - Dominant energy issue – common phrase
    - Pay more for green energy – not popular
    - Energy efficient alternative – not popular
    - Prioritize sustainability – not popular
    - Rising energy costs – not popular
    - Restrict energy production – not popular
  - Voters priorities & concerns
    - High cost of energy
    - Regulation that limits energy production
  - Common Ground
    - Energy costs
    - Incentives for renewables
    - Grid reliability
    - Loss of energy sector jobs?
- [Environmental Protection Network Polling](#)

- There is overwhelming public support for EPA across all demographics, including Trump voters
  - Example
    - 76% of Trump voters & 86% of all voters oppose attempts to weaken EPA
- There is overwhelming public support for EPA across all demographics, including Trump voters
  - Examples
    - Young voters (91%)
    - Latino voters (90%)
- Even Trump voters have concerns about Trump's pick to head EPA

### **Considering Different Audiences**

- Specifically when talking about energy, consider that:
  - Residents want low energy prices to care for families and meet financial goals
  - Manufacturers want low energy prices to make profit, grow business, and meet demand
  - Legislators want to create new jobs, reduce costs for constituents, and grow the local economy
- Thought Experiment
  - How do we connect our work with the economic and environmental priorities of our audiences?

### **Effective Messaging Examples**

- [Architecture of a Winning Narrative](#)
  - 1. Open with shared values - name and/or show race and class
  - 2. Name villains who use racial scapegoating as a weapon that economically harms all of us. OR point out racial division as a tool of the opposition

- 3. Emphasize unity and collective action to solve the problem
- 4. Connect joining together to achieve the desired outcome.  
Name and/or show that Vision.
- 5. [Insert specific call to action]
- Examples: West Virginians for Energy Freedom
  - Mountaineers are always free – except when it comes to accessing affordable energy.
  - Website link: <https://www.energyfreedomwv.org/>

## **Leveraging Learnings: What changes do we need to make to meet the moment?**

- Abandon Assumptions
  - Expand your notion of environmental allies
    - Let go of party-line narratives & notions
  - Understand others' values & priorities
    - What does a clean energy environment mean to them?  
How does it connect to their values and priorities?
  - Be clear, concise, & accessible
    - Recognize that for some, environmentalism is a privilege and comes with opportunity costs.
    - Each moment spent volunteering with an environmental organization is time not able to be spent working, sleeping, and meeting other needs.
- Messaging Roadmap
  - Pause. There is time for the environmental movement to take a collective step back and reflect in order to build a strategic and effective pathway forward.
  - Roadmap Steps
    - Clarity of Vision



- Prioritize
  - Target Audience
  - Strategic Collaborations
  - Resource Sharing
  - Best Practices
- Step 1: Mentimeter Question #2: What is your organization's vision for a sustainable Appalachia?
  - [Responses: PDF](#)

## *What is your organization's vision for a sustainable Appalachia?*



Sharing/elevating success stories throughout Appalachia to inspire and inform other communities throughout the Midwest.

sense of community

Creating space to offer shelter from the storm.

Ask the community what their priorities are.

willing to sacrifice for future

hard work and its rewards



## *What is your organization's vision for a sustainable Appalachia?*



We need to understand that a number of technologies are coming, and we need to be at the table to advocate our "quality of life" needs and issues.

healthier air and water, safer community where families can live healthier

"Building a better tomorrow starts today."

conduit of community voices to agency project planning

Ordinary people benefit, health and safety for all, cleaner air, land water, focus on the common good

hope. renewal

increasing economic prosperity

pride



## *What is your organization's vision for a sustainable Appalachia?*



Community solar made legal

More REAP grants awarded in WV

Water and sewer capacity

More resilience hubs

Supporting resilient communities

locally controlled jobs building local wealth

Sustainability that centers the most vulnerable/affected.

flood control through nature-based systems



- Step 2: Understand your audience
  - General Public/Laypeople
    - What is your purpose? How can you connect to their values and lived experiences?
  - Volunteers
    - Be direct. Use active language. Energize and inspire.
  - Donors
    - Articulate vision clearly. Celebrate wins.
  - Lawmakers
    - Be solutions-oriented. Connect your purpose to the values, priorities, and needs of their constituents.
- Step 3: Be open to and prepare to collaborate
  - What resources, best practices, or collaborative opportunities can you share today?

- Resources shared in the chat:
  - We Make the Future, Race Class Narrative:
    - <https://www.wemakethefuture.us/>
      - Mini grants, workshops, real examples
  - New Sun Rising: Outreach & Engagement Community Toolkit:
    - <https://www.newsunrising.org/outreach-engagement-community-toolkit/>
  - Center for Story-Based Strategy:
    - <https://www.storybasedstrategy.org/>
  - PennFuture Advocates for Conservation and the Environment (training to speak with lawmakers):
    - <https://www.pennfuture.org/join-the-ace-program>
  - Downstream Strategies
  - Thriving Communities
  - The Frame Lab (<https://www.theframelab.org/>) – George Lakoff
    - Books: Moral Politics & Don't Think of an Elephant
    - The framing of issues is incredibly important to understand to appeal to folks' motivations, priorities, and interests.
    - [https://george-lakoff.com/about/the-all-new-dont-think-of-an-elephant\\_george-lakoff/](https://george-lakoff.com/about/the-all-new-dont-think-of-an-elephant_george-lakoff/)
  - Climate of Contempt: How to Rescue the US Energy Transition from Voter Partisanship – Dr. David B. Spence
  - Just Transition Fund (support for coal transition communities) – <https://justtransitionfund.org/>
- Step 4: Craft of identify best practices for messaging in this new policy environment
- What will you take away from this conversation?

- Questions
  - How do we work to break through a fractured media environment, including where there are media deserts?
- Comments
  - Pausing – Consider the day-to-day for people, Work toward trauma-informed framing for this work
    - Recognize the privilege of participation in advocacy
  - How to do advocacy work in a way that honors inspires hope, joy, and recognizes people for all of the identities they bring to our spaces
    - People in Appalachia are exhausted and have experienced trauma
  - Cultivating collaboration – we need to take advantage of moments to work together
- Ah-ha Moments
  - “Go slow to go fast”