

'22 Birds Eye View Inter-Coalition Climate Summit Report



Table of Contents

[Table of Contents](#)

[Summary](#)

[Attendees:](#)

[Details from Breakout Groups](#)

[Logistics Topic A - Democratizing Data about Legislators and Coalitions](#)

[Logistics Topic B - EJ Centering & Information Flow](#)

[Logistics Topic C - Aligning specialist/technical experts & Grassroots](#)

[Campaign Topic A - Weaving in the theme of Transparency & Good Governance](#)

[Campaign Topic B - Funding \(Evan\)](#)

[Campaign Topic C - Balancing State Legislature & Other Targets \(Mireille\)](#)

[Housing & Retrofits Whole Group Discussion](#)

Summary

On 9/10/22, 20 climate organizers representing over 8 coalitions and tables across MA gathered on Nipmuc land, a.k.a Acton, MA for a “Bird’s Eye View” Climate Organizer Summit hosted by

Our Climate. **We sought to keep disrupting the siloing patterns in the movement, develop clearer lines of communication, discuss and reduce redundancy and conflict, and strengthen the ability of specialist/technical/lobbying experts to support our grassroots intersectional vision.** (For more on what we set out to do, check out the [agenda](#) from the event.)

We opened the day by considering the beautiful [multi-coalition map](#) that MYCC has been making with OpenThink to visualize our interconnections. Orgs or coalitions invested in growing this map please reach out to OpenThink's Nathan Kessel (nkessel@umass.edu). We also reviewed our participant's [HW summaries](#) of each coalition's strengths, weaknesses and opportunities.

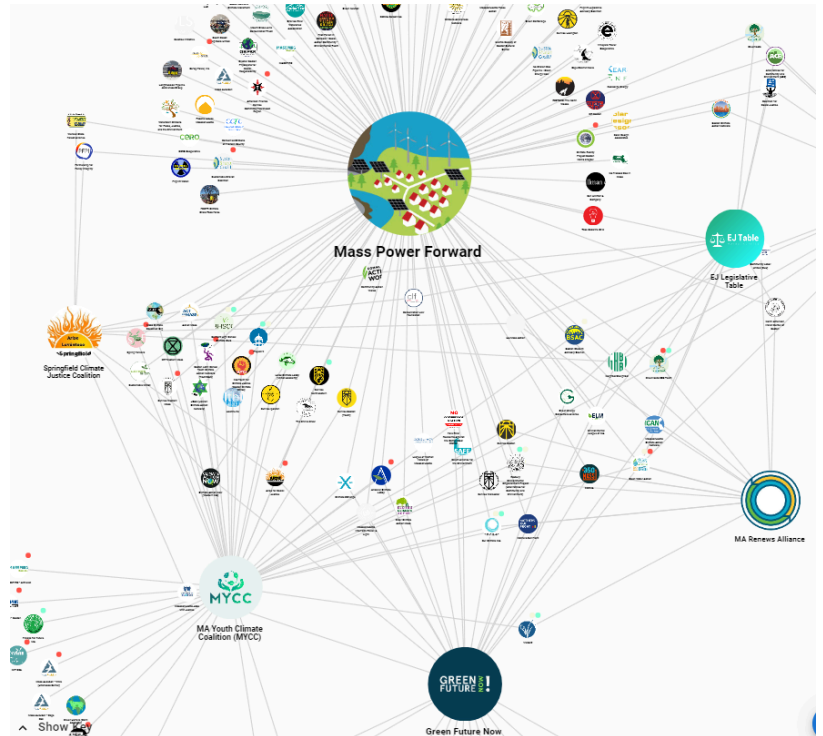
Then we visualized several aspects of our work to tease out our relative grassrootsiness, tech/specialistness and lobbyistness 😊. A few striking moments:

- Members of most coalitions present had some but not A LOT of individuals in them from EJ communities. Coalitions with the highest examples of that included the EJ Table, Green Justice Coalition, and MA Renewals.
- There was a very diverse and passionate set of opinions on the usefulness of “a sense of urgency” in the climate movement. Some spoke to an intense desire to “secure the future for those that haven’t arrived yet,” while others argued that urgency is often the way that people with privilege coopt movements in ways that leave marginalized voices and current impacts ignored.
- There is a very wide spread in the ratio of paid staff in all coalitions. MYCC very clearly has the least paid capacity of any coalition.

We then broke up into groups to address and develop ideas on 6 topics which are explored in more depth [later in the report](#).

Logistics Topic A - Democratizing Data: *Legislator Database and other ways to create a culture of sharing intel.*

Logistics Topic B - EJ Centering & Information Flow: *Strengthening our movement's alignment with the EJ table and other frontline groups and improving the flow of*



information from those groups across the movement.

Logistics Topic C - Aligning specialist/technical experts & Grassroots: *Aligning technical experts and grassroots efforts starts with a shared belief that both are needed to achieve the objective.*

Campaign Topic A - Weaving in the theme of Transparency & Good Governance: *How to continue reforming the anti-democratic Statehouse power structure.*

Campaign Topic B - Funding: *Where can and should funding for climate solutions come from.*

Campaign Topic C - Balancing State Legislature & Other Targets: *New governor, Fix the grid, etc.*

To close the event, we met as a whole group to name and dig into some of the big tensions and conflicts in the movement.

For instance, we identified this moment in neoliberal politics as peak incrementalism, in which decision-makers are constantly asking organizers and movement builders to “pick one thing to work on” and then only executing on part of it. We do recognize the power of focusing on one topic, especially in some of our own meetings with each other and with legislators. However, having a single meeting or even a single coalition with a focus DOES NOT MEAN the movement should have a single focus. We should continue to ask for what we need collectively.

So we continue holding the question: **How can we keep growing an ecosystem of solutions and with the interwoven diversity and alignment to push forward work on multiple fronts?**

One best practice: distinguishing **priorities** and **endorsements**. Priorities—a.k.a. solutions, that orgs/coalitions spend the majority of their capacity on—can be a smaller narrower list that allows people to specialize. But we should all save some capacity for studying and where possible endorsing or engaging in creative conflict on other coalition’s priorities. Endorsing here means putting the policy or campaign on a secondary list that individual members can learn more about, sign on to letters and offer logos in support of wherever possible. It means that whenever we talk to decision-makers we give a nod to the people whose work we endorse and explicitly name them as part of the same movement ecosystem. If we are not able to endorse something from another group or coalition we lean in to creative conflict, tell them why explicitly, and see if they are willing to cocreate more alignment.

Lastly we identified **housing and retrofits** as a specifically powerful intersection of climate and other justice issues where it would be powerful for multiple coalitions to push at once. See full details later in the report.

Attendees:

Coalitions represented:

MYCC = MA Youth Climate Coalition - [self-description HW](#)

MPF = Mass Power Forward - [self-description HW](#)

MA Renews = MARA - [self description HW](#)

Green Justice Coalition - [self-description HW](#)

GFN = Green Future Now - [self-description HW](#)

Fix the Grid = [self description HW](#)

EJ Table = Environmental Justice Table

OSW = Offshore Wind coalition

ZCRF = Zero Carbon Renovation Fund

Individuals:

- [Eben Bein](#) | [Our Climate](#) | **MYCC**, MPF, MARA, GFN
- [Karl Muller](#) | [Unitarian Universalist, Mass Action](#) | **MPF**, MYCC, People's House, MARA, Fix the Grid, EJ Table, Indigenous Legislative Agenda
- [Evan Bell](#) | [350 Mass, Better Future Project](#) | MPF, MYCC, People's House, MARA, EJ Table, Indigenous Legislative Agenda
- [Logan Malik](#) | [MA Climate Action Network](#) | MPF, MYCC, MARA, GFN, Fix the Grid, EJ Table, Indigenous Legislative Agenda, ZCRF
- [Mireille Beljjani](#) | [Slingshot](#) | MPF, Springfield Climate Justice Coalition, Fix the Grid, EJ Table, Indigenous Legislative Agenda
- [Andra Rose](#) | [Mothers Out Front](#) | MPF, MYCC, MARA, GFN, Gas Leaks Allies, EJ Table, Indigenous Legislative Agenda
- [Cindy Luppi](#) | [Clean Water Action](#) | MPF, MYCC, MARA, GFN, Springfield Climate Justice Coalition, Fix the Grid, Indigenous Legislative Agenda
- [Dan McCarthy](#) | [Sierra Club](#) | MPF, MYCC, People's House, EJ Table
- [Frank Zhou](#) | [Our Climate](#) | MPF, MYCC
- [Isabela Chachapoyas](#) | [Mass Audubon](#) | MPF, MYCC, EJ Table
- [Kevin O'Reily](#) | [Green Money, 350 MA](#) | GFN
- [Lana Taffel](#) | [Our Climate](#) | MPF, MYCC, People's House, EJ Table
- [Marissa Zampino](#) | [Mystic River Watershed Association](#) | People's House
- [Nick Oviedo-Torres](#) | [MA Renews](#) | MPF, MARA, EJ Table, Indigenous Legislative Agenda
- [Sara Ross](#) | [UndauntedK12](#) | MYCC, ZCRF
- [Sara Karp](#) | [Our Climate](#) | MYCC, EJ Table
- [Zeynab Magavi](#) | [Home Energy Efficiency Team](#) | Gas Leaks Allies
- [Jon Grossman](#) | [Service Employees International Union](#) | MPF, MARA

Details from Breakout Groups

Logistics Topic A - Democratizing Data about Legislators and Coalitions

Eben, Hannah, Nick, Evan, Andra, Dan

Legislator Database ([2021-2022 version](#), [2023-2024 draft](#))

Our Climate remains committed to creating a new version of the legislative database and. We very much hope to build adult buy-in to use it. So far the coalition/org leaders who use it the most consistently are as follows, in order of their consistency:

1. Our Climate - creates and updates
2. MYCC organizations who participate in OC's lobby days - add meeting notes
3. MPF in patches:
 - a. Larry and Jess helping with some of the cosponsorship tracking
 - b. Tali getting notes from meetings into communication logs
 - c. Mothers Out Front (esp Sue Swanson & Andra Rose) getting notes into logs
4. GFN - some notes from legislator meetings, especially when they meet with youth

Adult groups continue to be concerned about who might access the information and we brainstormed the idea to have logs for bills, not just legislators which tends to be more touchy.

Lastly, Our Climate remains committed to and hopes adults will join us in building the [OpenThink Movement Map](#) to keep visualizing the whole.

Logistics Topic B - EJ Centering & Information Flow

Karl, Isabela, Marissa, Mireille, Lana, Jon

Guiding questions:

- Whose lead should we be following to ensure that our movement is justice aligned?
- Who is active in the EJ Table, MARA Steering, GJC, Indigenous Legislative Agenda? Others?
- Who is/can help (Karl lol) to hold these relationships and liaise with EJ groups?
- What is the best way to ensure that that information flows to all movement members?

There are several big barriers to centering environmental justice in our work:

- How are we defining frontline communities? That's an important piece to make sure folks are somewhat on the same page on, or at least know where others are coming from.
- How are we defining the root cause? Are we all on the same page that racial capitalism is at the center of it?
- A lot of our organizations are mostly white and class privileged, so it takes work to shift the momentum in a different direction
- Language barriers are very prevalent, especially with a rather segregated state.

- Frontline communities are very well organized through mutual aid networks and other close relationships, and that type of organization is different from what is considered political power or advocacy organization. And they're dealing with the reality of surviving racial capitalism on a daily basis, without the added work of needing to dismantle these systems

How can we overcome these barriers?

- Continually use acknowledgements – of land, of labor, of who is excluded or missing in a space – to remind ourselves of what needs to be done and remain aware of our history and perspective (or lack thereof)
- Have strong and consistent messaging that the transition will bring justice, and the communities most impacted won't be the ones footing the bill - rather, the billionaires will
- Use weighted decision-making to center the voices of EJ communities in coalition and campaign spaces
- Prioritize accessibility early in campaign processes - always have language interpretation, always consider transportation and child care needs, etc. Don't wait for the need to emerge to address it
- Have our work extend beyond the state house, which is a very particular ecosystem that doesn't necessarily favor the type of power EJ communities have. Invest in campaign work locally, around municipal decision makers, and focused on targets who aren't legislators
- Pay for EJ groups time and labor in spaces

Logistics Topic C - Aligning specialist/technical experts & Grassroots

Cindy, Zeyneb, Sara K, Sara R, Logan, Kevin, Lee, Frank, Swapnil

Aligning technical experts and grassroots efforts starts with a shared belief that both are needed to achieve the objective. Even with that shared belief, partnerships between technical and grassroots can be undermined by outside perspectives which tend to overvalue technical expertise (e.g. in the form of higher financial support, more influence with / access to decision-makers).

The "how-to's" included: 1) early and explicit discussions about roles and values, and 2) formalized partnerships that could then be funded by philanthropic partners who understand the superpowers that emerge when technical experts and grassroots efforts forge partnerships of equals.

Moment of successful alignment: PFPI and MPF's co-held support of the Biomass provisions across the finish line (though there were lots of other reasons it succeeded including the simplicity of the demand and the long history of the campaign).

Moments of challenge: There process around writing the Build Jobs with Justice Bill did not successfully allow for democratic input and a sense of shared ownership in the bill. Other smaller bills, like the Green Buildings Bill moved instead, with very little grassroots involvement.

Campaign Topic A - Weaving in the theme of Transparency & Good Governance

Eben, Karl, Andra, Frank, Sara R, Lee

There is a clear need to continue addressing the anti-democratic power structure in the Statehouse. Youth remain committed to developing that campaign, particularly around committee votes. All participants mentioned that they might want to be even more ambitious in their asks, e.g. a bill to reinstate a newly updated open meeting law, democratically elected chairs, and term limits.

There is almost no disagreement about the central problems the campaign identifies, e.g.:

- We have a one party statehouse, with some of the least competitive elections in the country
- Democratic leadership has huge amounts of party power that supports incumbents and more conservative candidates. No term limits on anyone?
- Speaker calls the shots and does so by handing tasks to committee chairs rather than ideas being able to bubble up from the grassroots.
- Committee process is opaque and most bills we work on die there along with the relationships we worked so carefully to build up until that point.
- Decisions are left to the last moment including bills released with too little time to respond thoughtfully

There is still tension around Act On Mass's and Peoples House's tactics and resulting reputation with the legislature, though some of these impressions are out of date due to a lack of coordination and relationships:

- Progressive Reps felt targeted and put on blast; many adult-led orgs still wary of that
- There is a lack of deep partnership and alignment of this work with frontline groups that are most present in Climate Justice spaces, e.g. members of GJC, EJ Table, etc.

A counterpoint to that in the People's House/MYCC/MPF relationship was when Our Climate and Act on Mass presented together about Governance issues to MPF leadership. 😊

The concept of working on good governance and power holds a very wide appeal, with some leaders, notably Andra from Mothers Out Front and Karl Muller from UU Mass Action expressing appetite for perhaps even more radical asks. Examples:

- Advocating for reinstating a revised version of Open Record Law for the legislature similar to what Erika Uytterhoeven and Jamie Eldridge submitted last session.
- Changing MA to a 1 year session
- Term limits for ALL elected positions including the Speaker
- Democratic elections of committee chairs and other members of leadership

Our Climate is currently trying to design this campaign and bring it to MPF and would love to have capacity support. OC thinks it is very powerful for us to weave transparency asks in with our regular lobby meetings for climate bills and wants to add that to lobby trainings in the coming session.

It's important to note that AOM's representative was not able to be at the summit because of COVID and Erin (AOM's ED) and Eben are trying to connect the dots but struggling because of capacity limitations.

Campaign Topic B - Funding

Funding - **Evan**, Kevin, Cindy, Logan, Lana, Dan, Isabela, Jon, Sara R.

- Are there any funding projects that we might be able to align on supporting across coalitions, particularly to guarantee high percentages to projects located in EJ neighborhoods?
- Green Banks - how do we influence their founding such that the mission is clear and values aligned?
- Any plans we need to make to catching Federal Funding like ARPA, IRA?
- How can we influence the Fair Share Amendment Campaign both to win it and to ensure that the funding is spent with a climate justice lens?
- Thoughts on a bill that takes just the spending pie chart from the Green Future Act and detach it from the pricing mechanism and fight for it together? (If the percentages are too ambitious, maybe we can go for alignment with the Justice40 Platform “at least 40% of funding goes to EJ projects.”)

Massachusetts has several current and potential funding streams for essential climate justice projects.

Some large but unsustainable funding sources right now are: the current **Massachusetts state surplus**, and the money from the **American Rescue Plan** (ARPA). This money needs to be addressed NOW because it is not guaranteed, but collectively the surplus and these national programs amount to billions of accessible dollars for essential projects.

In addition to those current sources of funding, the **Inflation Reduction Act** has created some sizable funding opportunities across the whole gamut of climate solutions that the movement should look to tap immediately and over the next decade. One example is the newly expanded Investment Tax Credit (ITC) which provides non-taxable entities like non-profits and municipalities with cash payment of 30% of the cost of ground-source heat pumps and solar projects. Projects using American-made material, project that serve low-income or Tribal communities and projects that are located on brownfields or in “[energy communities](#)” may qualify for significant additional support.

Our group also latched on to the theme, “**old money, new way**,” as we discussed sustainable funding streams that are not currently prioritizing climate mitigation and adaptation projects, but could, like **Massachusetts sales tax** which goes to funding public schools. Schools are a climate frontline, and money already going to schools can and should pay for climate justice initiatives. States have sustainable (if insufficient) revenue streams via our current tax system, and we are in a position to advocate that a portion of that money go to climate justice projects.

Potential funding sources: There are several potential sources of new funding, for instance, the **Fair Share Amendment**, if passed via a referendum vote in November, would amend Massachusetts’ State Constitution to include a progressive tax—an additional 4% on income after the first million dollars—the revenue from which will fund public education and transportation projects. This money should go, in part, to funding clean, renewable, climate ready transportation and education infrastructure. **Carbon Pricing** is another potential sustainable source (until we’ve dismantled the fossil fuel industry), though movement energy is diverting from this strategy. We also discussed a [Clean Heat Standard](#), which would require providers of heating energy (think: sellers of home heating oil or methane gas) to provide some

percentage as clean heat. The concept mirrors the Solar Renewable Energy Credit (SREC) market which requires power producers to procure a certain rising % of energy from clean energy sources through time. In order to comply, these providers of heating energy would need to purchase clean heat certificates (again, like an SREC) thereby creating a revenue stream for building owners wanting to invest in clean heat.

We did not discuss this in our meeting, but many states are joining the **Polluters Pay** legislative campaign, which, like the clean heat standard, would penalize dirty energy/fuel companies and funnel money to EJ communities and climate justice projects. This campaign has the potential to establish a sort of climate reparations law.

A final funding mechanism that our allies in the labor movement are spearheading is **Bargaining for Climate Solutions**, which would incorporate environmental items into union contracts—the working environment is part of the environment! Like gym memberships for public health, union contracts can include incentives for climate justice like public transportation stipends, EV accessibility, etc. This is an important opportunity to collaborate with organized labor!

Campaign Topic C - Balancing State Legislature & Other Targets

Balancing State Legislature & Other Targets - **Mireille**, Nick, Sara K, Swapnil, Zeyneb, Marissa

Key Points:

- Legislative campaigns are often prioritized as being more “worthy” of time and energy, however campaigns with other targets can be just as effective.
- Examples of other campaigns and their targets:
 - Energy (think fix the grid, beyond gas) - ISO New England
 - Regulation and permitting enforcement - state agencies (DEP, DPU, DOER, EFSB, etc)
 - Local town, city, and school policy changes (think a town climate action plan) – town government, city council, superintendent, school committee
 - Funder’s: trying to convince them that this work is necessary and important.
- Many of the above are local community campaigns. We identified the following benefits and drawbacks of non state legislative campaigns.
 - Benefits: Community-focused organizing is likely to bring more intersectionality into statewide legislative work. If you’re going to be a truly intersectional movement, you need to take into account the perspectives of local work and local movements. Local/ municipal work is often where movement newbies start!
 - Drawbacks: It can be harder to connect non-legislative campaigns to the larger movement. Many coalition spaces are centered around legislative priorities.
- Ideas for action steps to connect non-legislative campaigns, and make them more effective in the larger movement:
 - Creating a map (google or GIS) of campaigns across the state – allows us to see common threads and overlaps. Could promote information sharing
 - Democratizing information, build relationships to make sharing easier
 - Build awareness around what campaigns are catching fire across the state. Turn them into state level policy!

- Remember that there are other types of organizing that aren't centered around Beacon Hill! Dismantle narratives that organizing is white-led and leads to legislative progress.
- [Notes from breakout group for reference](#)

Housing & Retrofits Whole Group Discussion

Some critical conclusions include:

- Labor is not going to support a bill they don't help to write
- Building a relationship with [CHAPA](#) would help us create the link with the affordable housing movement
- It's a heavier lift to retrofit old buildings than require standards for new buildings. Unfortunately, people live in old, moldy buildings. So for justice reasons, it's important to lean into the heavy lift. MA Renews Building Jobs with Justice bill was trying to do this.
- The Zero Carbon Renovation Fund is a space that MCAN is holding to help get left over ARPA money to go toward retrofits. It might be a model for how to do this with incoming IRA money. It starts with retrofits in EJ communities, e.g. BIPOC owned businesses, EJ schools
- There is some potential for Future of Heat/Gas Transition Allies to combine and collaborate in new ways with MCAN and MPFs work through this buildings focus.
- Mini-story arc for the 10 town gas ban
 - Brookline motivated to ban gas, worked with MOF and MCAN on it
 - Did not have just transition elements so labor partners, especially gas workers take this as "the privileged climate activists" don't care about real people
 - Became the 10 town gas ban which whizzed into the law, evidence of the power of those with privilege
 - There is some potential to expand the ban to other towns, but MPF would like instead to push for BOTH/AND state ban AND just transition trainings for workers across the state to avoid the small isolated gas worker communities that could be abandoned by this patchwork approach
 - The mantra "no [gas bans](#) without gas transition plans" was offered.