

Proposal

Proposal: Website Overhaul for the Model Climate Laws Initiative

Mar 23, 2026

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the MCLI Website Overhaul RFP.

Option Zero exists for exactly this kind of work. We are a climate-only software consultancy. We don't build marketing sites or e-commerce platforms. Every client we've served works on climate, from clean energy startups to policy research organizations. Your mission is our mission.

To demonstrate our commitment and abilities, we have built a working prototype with your actual data:

- [Data migrated to Airtable](#)
- [Functional website prototype](#)

Please note that these prototypes are examples only and not intended to represent a final form. Our first step in working with you will be a deep dive to ensure we fully understand your requirements and feature prioritization.

Cheers,
Jaime & Jason Curtis
optionzero.co

Contents

Our proposal includes your seven required sections but not in exactly the order specified in the RFP. We present them as follows:

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Project approach and technical solution

The current site has strong data foundations: a well-structured content database, hierarchical taxonomies, support for multiple pathways and multiple jurisdictions per resource, and consistent metadata across all resources.

The current site falls short in the presentation layer:

→ Search is hard to use

The current search does have filters, but they're JavaScript-dependent and invisible to search engines. A search for "electric vehicle" returns hundreds of results without modern UI affordances. Match highlighting, facet filters, and improved search ranking will vastly improve the experience.

→ Resource content is invisible

Model laws have their full legislative text in PDF attachments or links. The current search only indexes titles and descriptions, not the PDFs themselves. A researcher searching for specific provisions or legal language will miss relevant results.

→ Performance limits discoverability

WordPress generates every page dynamically, resulting in a Time to First Byte (TTFB) of ~390ms. Static pages served from a CDN return in <100ms. Users subconsciously prefer sites that respond faster (the benchmark is <200ms). Additionally, faster pages rank higher in Google, meaning more researchers find MCLI's resources organically. For a resource that depends on discoverability, speed is a direct driver of impact.

→ The site doesn't feel authoritative

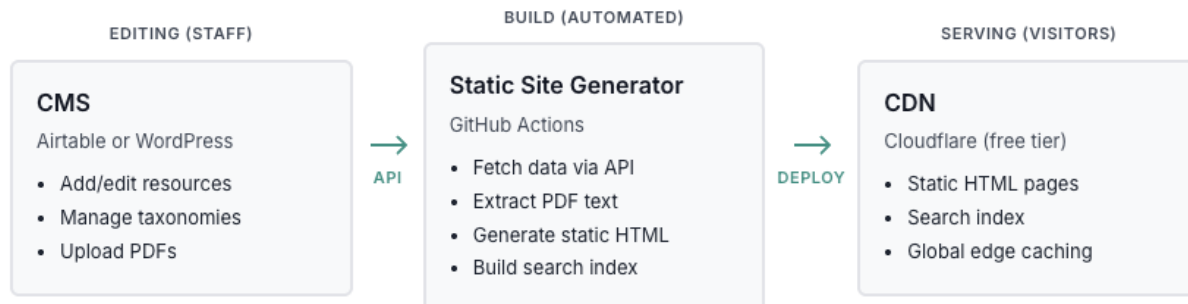
For a resource used by policy professionals and attorneys, the presentation should project credibility and rigor. A tailored interface with clear typography and selected use of color builds confidence in the underlying data while retaining your brand individuality.

Proposed solution

1. Migrate data to **Airtable** - a spreadsheet-like CMS that non-technical staff can manage without developer assistance
2. Generate a modern static site, with every page pre-built from your data and served instantly from a global CDN (**Cloudflare**). This website architecture is ideal for read-only applications such as yours, unlocking blazing fast loading, searching, and filtering.
3. Update website look & feel to match modern design patterns, inspiring user confidence and comfort

Technical Architecture

The static site architecture requires three components: a data store (your CMS), a static-site generator to re-build site pages when content changes, and a CDN to serve those pages.



CMS (Recommended: Airtable)

The RFP emphasizes that non-technical staff must be able to update the site easily. We recommend **Airtable** as the content management system.

Airtable provides a spreadsheet-like interface that non-technical staff can use immediately. Adding a resource means filling in a row. Bulk editing, filtering, and sorting work like a spreadsheet. No WordPress admin training needed.

Here is an example of an Airtable base populated with data we scraped from your existing website: [MCLI Airtable Prototype](#).

Headless Wordpress could be a viable alternative; if you choose to move forward with us we can evaluate Airtable vs Wordpress (or other alternatives) in Phase 1.

Cost

Airtable's Team plan is \$20/user/month (billed annually). With 2,578 resources exceeding the free tier's 1,000-record limit, a paid plan is required. For a small team of 2-3 editors, that's \$40-60/month.

Hosting (Recommended: Cloudflare CDN)

The current site runs on WordPress hosted on Nexcess, a managed WordPress provider (we identified this by examining the site's server headers and DNS configuration). Nexcess plans for WordPress range from \$21-43/month.

We recommend migrating to **Cloudflare Pages** for hosting the static site.

However, the static site architecture is hosting-agnostic. It produces plain HTML, CSS, and JavaScript files that can deploy to any static hosting provider — Nexcess, Cloudflare, AWS,

Netlify, or a university-hosted server. If MCLI prefers to remain with Nexcess, we can configure the build pipeline to deploy there instead. The architecture doesn't change; only the deployment target does.

Cost

The free tier supports up to 20,000 static assets and 100,000 requests per month. Your site size and usage is borderline - you might fit into the free tier or might need to upgrade to the paid tier for \$5/mo. We do not anticipate your site generating additional cost above the \$5/mo baseline.

Content update workflow

How updates work:

1. Staff edits content - add a resource, edit a description, upload a PDF, assign pathway and jurisdiction tags.
2. A webhook triggers an automated build - GitHub Actions pulls the latest data, extracts text from new PDFs, and rebuilds the static site.
3. The updated site deploys automatically - new pages appear on the CDN within minutes. No technical intervention required.

Interface Design: Proposed pages

Every feature below is live on the [prototype site](#). Read our descriptions below or just click around!

Homepage with search

A search-first homepage that immediately communicates what the site offers.

Full search page

Instant fuzzy search across all resources with results appearing as you type. Each result shows resource type, pathway, jurisdiction, and a description excerpt. Filters for policy area, jurisdiction, status, and year narrow results further.

Individual resource pages

Every resource gets its own page with breadcrumb navigation, description, document links, and a metadata sidebar showing jurisdiction, pathway, type, and last-updated date. Each page is a crawlable HTML document that Google can index independently - unlike the current JavaScript-dependent filtering, which search engines can't see.

Pathway browser

The full 3-level pathway hierarchy rendered as an expandable tree. Top-level pathways like "Electricity Decarbonization" expand to show sub-categories like "Renewable Portfolio Standards" and specific topics like "Community Solar." Each node shows its resource count and links to a detail page.

Jurisdiction browser

All 8 jurisdiction types with resource counts. Click any jurisdiction to see all resources categorized under that governing body type.

Interactive map

Clickable U.S. map showing resource counts by state. Clicking a state reveals the laws and policies associated with it. A navigation tool for geographic exploration of the database.

Search strategy

Search is the core of this project. Our suggested implementation would follow the prototype.

The screenshot shows a search interface titled "Search Resources" with a search bar containing "EV rebate". Below the search bar, there are several filter sections: "Type" (Example: 13, Resource: 6, Model Law: 3), "Status" (Enacted: 12, Unknown: 7, Proposed: 0, Model: 3), "Jurisdiction" (States and State Governments: 15, Local Governments: 3, Congress: 3, Executive Branch: 0, Public Utilities: 0, Private Entities: 0, Foreign: 1, US Ports: 0), "Category" (a list of categories with counts), and "Year" (a date range selector from 2020 to 2025). A large "PROTOTYPE" watermark is overlaid on the image. Below the filters, it says "22 results for 'EV rebate'". The first result is "Example Enacted EXPANDING VEHICLE CHARGING AND REFUELING INFRASTRUCTURE · STATES AND STATE GOVERNMENTS" dated Jun 2020. The snippet for this result is: "NY EV Charging Subsidies. New York offers several different programs subsidizing different entities to install EV charging infrastructure, including up to a \$5,000 tax credit for public and workplace chargers,".

Screenshot of prototype search UI

Features of note:

- **Interactive drilldown:** Facets by type, status, jurisdiction, category, and year, with matching resource counts and “faded” visual treatment of empty facets
- **Rapid scanning:** Matched search terms are highlighted in search results

- **Battle-tested library:** Search functionality is backed by [Pagefind](#), a high-performance, scalable, flexible search library with minimal operational cost. Its performance is especially good when combined with a CDN such as Cloudflare, and even better when used for faceted drilldown.
- **Search is quick** and facet filter interactions feel instant (typically sub 50ms).
- **Configurable Ranking:** we suggest a weighting that prioritizes title and description matches, followed by full-text matches. More customization is possible.
- **Multiple entry points:** Search bars on homepage, top bar, and on search page all lead to the same search interface
- **SEO-optimized:** our site naturally hosts each page as a fast, crawlable HTML page with structured metadata.
- **Clickthrough Highlighting:** When a user clicks through from a search page to a resource page, matching text is once again highlighted. Matching PDF content is also surfaced and highlighted. [Example:](#)

The screenshot shows the Model Climate Laws Initiative website. The top navigation bar includes a search bar, and links for Pathways, Jurisdictions, Map, Proposal, and About. The search results page for "decarbonization uk" shows a breadcrumb trail: Pathways > Energy Efficiency, Conservation, and Fuel Switching in Buildings and Industry > Industrial Sector > Reports on Industrial Efficiency Generally. A "RESOURCE" tag is present. The main title is "Report, Enabling Industrial Decarbonization". The description states: "In December 2022, the US Climate Alliance published Enabling Industrial Efficiency, a 116-page guidebook for state governments on strategies and pathways for policymakers to reduce GHG emissions from the industrial sector. Drawing from a landscape analysis of more than 100 state policies, the guidebook details the multiple policy levers states can utilize to enable and advance five decarbonization pillars of industrial decarbonization — efficiency; electrification; low-carbon fuels and feedstocks; carbon capture, utilization, and storage technologies; and procurement." A sidebar on the right shows facets for JURISDICTION (States and State Governments), DOCUMENT TYPE (Resource), and PATHWAY (Energy Efficiency, Conservation, and Fuel Switching in Buildings and Industry > Industrial Sector > Reports on Industrial Efficiency Generally). A "View on MCLI" button is at the bottom of the sidebar. Below the main text, there is a "Documents" section with a "Download" button and a list of related documents, including "UK's Industrial Decarbonization Strategy" and "EU's New Industrial Strategy".

clickthrough highlighting when navigating to a resource after a search for “decarbonization UK”

Accessibility

Accessibility is built into the prototype from the ground up, not deferred to a later phase:

- **Semantic HTML5:** nav, main, article, aside elements give screen readers a clear document structure

- **Keyboard navigation:** all interactive elements (search, filters, map, expandable trees) are accessible without a mouse
- **Color contrast:** text and interactive elements meet WCAG AA contrast ratios
- **Descriptive link text:** no "click here" links; every link describes its destination
- **Responsive design:** works across devices and zoom levels, though optimized desktop-first

All of this follows industry best-practices and ensures accessibility for screen readers and keyboard navigation.

If desired (as an add-on), we can run a formal WCAG AA compliance audit using automated tooling and manual review and remediate any gaps found.

Itemized budget

Fixed-price vs. hourly pricing

We tend to price projects with either fixed-price quotes based on fixed prioritized feature lists, or invoice for “time and materials” while working down a dynamically updated prioritized feature list. Please refer to our pricing doc for details: [☰ Option Zero MVP Pricing](#)

Your RFP has provided enough information that we can waive the design phase, though we do expect to need up to several hours of kickoff meeting time to make sure we understand your requirements and preferred solution before diving into software implementation.

Budget by phase

We’ve constructed a draft “Prioritized Feature List”:

[✚ Option Zero Model Climate Laws Prioritized Feature List](#) . The first step in working together would be to review this list and ensure we’re in agreement on the prioritization.

Note that we’ve included a [separate tab](#) listing the priorities from the RFP indicating which are already implemented in the prototype.

Note also that our phases are a little different than what you specified:

- We added a “Phase 0” to represent the functional prototype, which happens to include almost all of your “Phase 3” (Homepage redesign and modernization)
- Our “Phase 1” is the same, plus some explicit line-items relating to productionization
- Our “Phase 2” includes the map as well as other “a la carte” line items that you could include or not

Proposed timeline

We estimate less than 100 hours of work to implement P0 requirements within the \$20k budget.

For this project we can provide a maximum of 20-30 hours per week. We currently have availability to start immediately.

Our recommended timeline:

- A 1-2 hour kick-off meeting
- An initial tranche of development over 4-8 weeks
- A 1 hour regular weekly sync meeting
- Aim to work 10-20 hours/week between sync meetings

Note that if you choose the “time & materials” pricing option, we can contract with a monthly retainer and continue to work ad-hoc on add-on items.

Assumptions / risks

Prototype

For this RFP we’ve experimentally built a [fully working prototype](#). This is not our standard procedure. We have been dabbling at the bleeding edge of AI orchestration and used this RFP as an opportunity to explore how we can best take advantage of this high-leverage new resource.

We’re aiming to hit the sweet spot of AI-assisted software engineering. Ideally, the result is that we can provide ambitious and high-quality results in a fraction of the time previously required.

What we have found, as of March 2026: “vibe coding” can typically build you an application that feels like 80% of a finished product. Typically a quick vibe-coded product will come with two categories of failures:

1. **Product failures:** a failure to meet client needs due to a failure to properly understand user needs and find the best solutions.
2. **Engineering failures:** a peek under the hood of a vibe coded product will reveal major architectural liabilities which result in insidious and difficult-to-fix bugs.

With proper care, a skilled human team can fill in the requirements-gathering and architectural gaps. This is what Option Zero does.

In this particular case, one danger is that we’ve built what *looks* like a nearly-finished product without a single conversation with you, the client. Rest assured: we don’t plan to ship this as-is, and we anticipate the true finished product could look significantly different. However, we

believe that using this prototype as a starting point may allow us to meet both your requirements and your budget constraints.

Assumptions

In our quotes we assume that:

- Adequate search ranking can be achieved within Pagefind's abilities and does not require AI-assisted or semantic search
- Performance of a frontend-focused search engine (Pagefind) is sufficient. If not it could be possible to switch to a backend search engine

Prototype Limitations

- The prototype is not currently backed by the Airtable API (it's backed by a one-time data dump).
- The law *status* field is filled in using a LLM research enrichment pipeline, and may not be correct or polished
- Specific jurisdiction information is not included, as it was not surfaced on the current site
- Non-PDF resource links (including [perma.cc](#) links) have not been indexed for search
- Various items are incomplete as noted in our [MCLI Priorities List spreadsheet](#).

Our Team

Option Zero

[Option Zero](#) is a climate-only software consultancy founded in 2022 by us: Jaime & Jason Curtis.

Our tagline is "Modern software for climate tech." We don't take on clients outside the climate space - it's a non-negotiable principle.

This means our incentives are aligned with yours. We understand policy-adjacent work because we've done it. Our clients will tell you that we hit a communication and implementation sweet spot: we dig deep to make sure we are solving the right problems, we communicate and discuss our plans clearly, and we deliver high-quality work with minimal overhead.

"They delivered exactly what I wanted... required minimal oversight, operated as an independent unit."

– Nick Reavill, CTO at Commons

"They equipped us to thrive independently... a reliable, mission aligned, and adaptable technical partner."

– Shannon Bloemker, CEO at Energy Raven

"They jumped into our complex data challenges but did not make them complicated."

– Sam & Claire, Co-Founders at Carbon Yield

Team Structure & Experience

Option Zero is primarily a team of two. We do not anticipate bringing on subcontractors for this project. Our founding members are:

Jason Curtis: Primary Contact & Engineer

Jason ([LinkedIn](#)) is a full-stack software engineer with deep data engineering background. Previously at Meta and EnergySavvy/Uplight (energy efficiency), he is an open-source contributor to pandas and CPython, two projects which form the bedrock of scientific coding. Jason brings experience building large searchable databases, machine learning, data pipelines, and UI/UX design for data-oriented Web applications.

Jaime Curtis: Supporting Engineer & Project Management

Jaime ([LinkedIn](#)) is a full-stack software engineer specializing in project and team management. Previously at Microsoft, Convoy (logistics/sustainability), and EnergySavvy/Uplight, she will be a sounding board for this project and provide project management support.

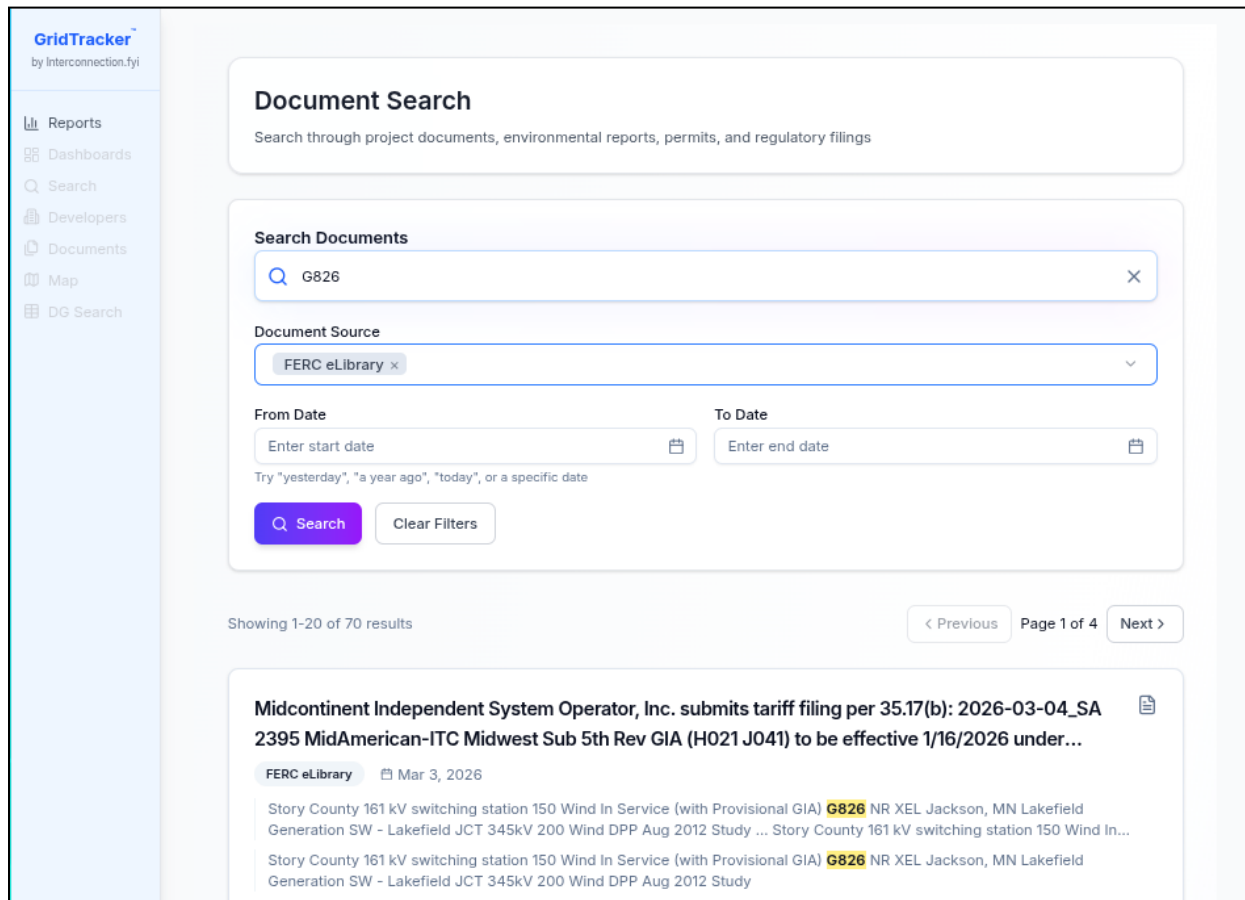
Relevant past projects

Our [substack](#) provides a collection of case studies in “Software x Climate” that dive deep into past client work. We also have a [portfolio](#) of past projects. Below are three projects particularly selected for relevance.

Interconnection.fyi / GridTracker: Search over 0.5 million regulatory PDFs

We expanded GridTracker’s data pipeline and expanded their search capabilities, increasing their searchable corpus of regulatory filing PDFs. As of March 25, this corpus consists of 601,140 searchable documents.

This work demonstrates our experience with legal and regulatory document search at scale.

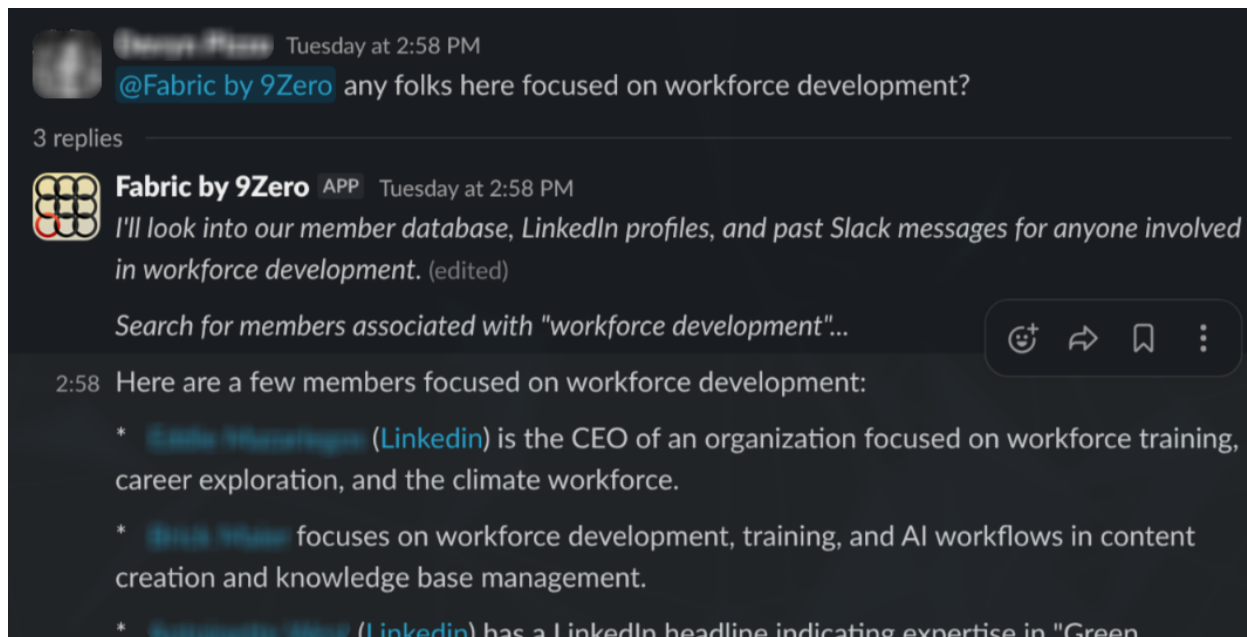


*Screenshot of Gridtracker search UI with modern filters and result highlighting.
Typical searches are for a queue ID, in this case G826.*

Links: [Interconnection.fyi](https://interconnection.fyi), [GridTracker](https://gridtracker.fyi)

9Zero Climate Fabric: AI assisted semantic search

9Zero Climate is a climate-focused coworking space and community. We built Fabric, an AI-powered member connections system using semantic/vector search across 16,000 data entries from a variety of sources. Demonstrates our capability for future enhanced search features when MCLI is ready - "find laws similar to this one."

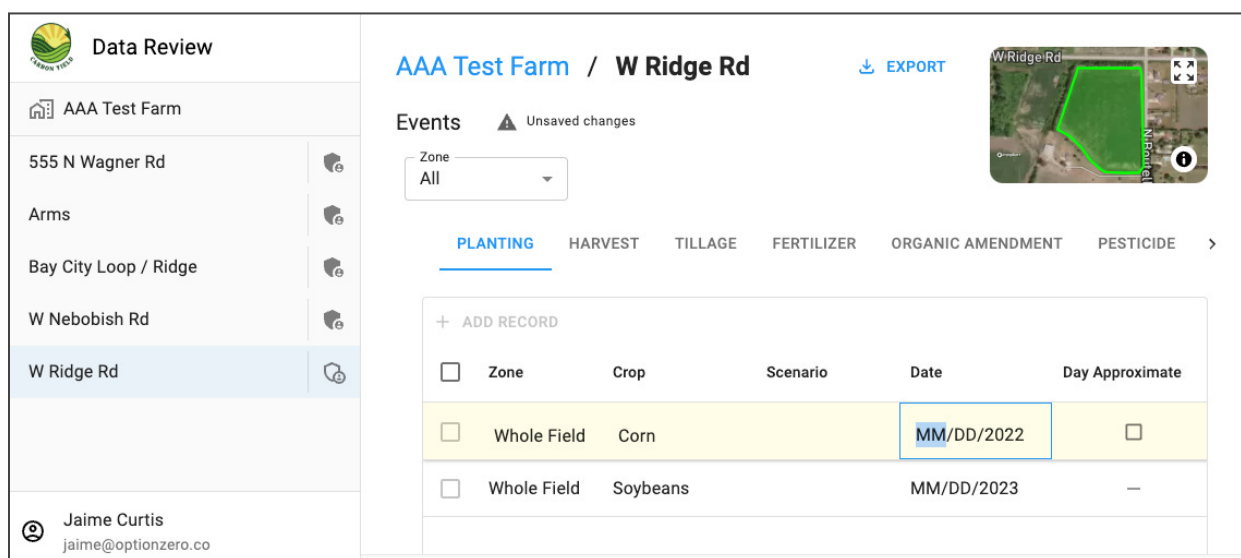


Screenshot: In a typical conversation, Fabric accesses and blends data from LinkedIn, Slack, and 9Zero's internal member database to make useful connections within the workspace.

Links: LinkedIn shoutouts from [9Zero Seattle General Manager](#) and [9Zero Co-founder](#)

Carbon Yield: Managed Transition to Airtable and Custom Web App

Carbon Yield is a regenerative agriculture data platform. We worked with them in phases: first we migrated them from Google Sheets to Airtable, then built a custom web app with a non-technical admin interface. Demonstrates phased, bootstrapped delivery matching budget constraints - mirroring MCLI's situation.



Screenshot of Carbon Yield farm management UI

Link: See this article for an in-depth look at our process in working with them: [Carbon Yield: Cultivating regenerative agriculture](#)

Conclusion

Thank you again for considering our proposal. Please reach out with followup questions to jason@optionzero.co, and feel free to schedule an in-person conversation at optionzero.co/book

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