
FIND YOUR SOLUTION

Project Ideas for Community Action Teams

Powerful change starts with the grassroots. By engaging with your community, you have the power to change your town or city and inspire others to join your movement. Grassroots organizing allows you to speak to what you know best - your community. It allows you to directly share your stories and needs with decision makers and create change that works for the people in your community, not corporations or people in power. Grassroots efforts have the **power** and advantage of knowing the **people, culture, and environment** in their area to create change that will lead to a better future for all!

Use this guide to explore potential projects for your community! We've broken this guide down into four sections: 1) Energy Efficiency, Weatherization and Renewable Energy, 2) Sustainable Foods, 3) Transportation, and 4) Sustainable Purchases. If you have ideas to add to this guide, please email maine.chapter@sierraclub.org. Happy organizing!

1. Energy Efficiency, Weatherization, and Renewable Energy

Buildings are responsible for [about 30%](#) of Maine's emissions. Heating fuels are expensive, energy intensive, and harm our environment. Energy efficiency, weatherization, and renewable energy projects are a great way to save your community money and energy.

What your community can do: when plans are being suggested for new community buildings, suggest more sustainable options, such as LED lights, energy-efficient insulation, or solar panels.

Resources:

- Efficiency Maine has great [home energy saving tips and incentives](#) and special programs to [help with home efficiency and energy upgrades](#). To learn more about renewable energy in Maine, visit this [renewable energy page](#) or [vendor locator](#). Efficiency Maine also has a community [collective purchasing](#) program to help communities bring clean energy to their homes at a lower cost. This is an option that CATs have explored in the past.
- Check out A Climate to Thrive's resources for more information on community solar, and reaching energy independence: <https://www.aclimatetothrive.org/>
- Learn more about high school solar projects in Maine here: <https://solarhighschool.com/>
- Learn how to run an energy specific campaign with Ready for 100's organizing toolkit: <https://www.sierraclub.org/ready-for-100-toolkit/campaign-roadmap>

2. Sustainable Foods

Local Food and Food Sovereignty

Our food is often transported for thousands of miles to reach our grocery stores. Produce is often grown to store well rather than taste good. And who's to tell whether it is genetically modified, grown using toxic chemicals, monocultures, or near a source of pollution? One-third of the world's food is thrown away; most of this waste comes from consumers in industrialized societies. We at the Sierra Club think there are better ways to use this energy. Eating more plants and sustainable foods is a great way to mitigate the harms of climate change, have less of an environmental footprint, and eat healthier!

What your community can do: make a community garden. Purchase community foods and goods from farmers' markets and local sources, and learn what food sovereignty looks like in your community! Start a community composting program, serve smaller portions at meals, use food that will go bad sooner, buy fresh local produce and buy with meals in mind. Have community dinners that feature sustainable foods, eat more sustainably when eating out. When purchasing food, check what environmental impact it has online.

Resources:

- Steps to organize a community garden:
 - from the UMaine Extension: <https://extension.umaine.edu/publications/4300e/>
 - Maine School and Garden Network: <http://msgn.org>
- Finding a farmer's market: <http://www.mainefarmersmarkets.org/shoppers/market-finder/>
- Reducing food waste at home: <https://www.epa.gov/recycle/reducing-wasted-food-home>
- And at restaurants: <https://www.marketman.com/blog/how-to-reduce-food-waste/>
- Municipal composting programs:
<https://www.ecomaine.org/what-can-be-recycled/food-waste-and-composting>
- Home Composting: <https://extension.umaine.edu/publications/1143e/>
- Composting in the Back Yard or on a Small Farm by Eric Sideman, PhD
<https://www.mofga.org/resources/composting/composting-in-the-back-yard-or-on-a-small-farm>
- Composting from MOFGA's Organic Crop Specialist:
<http://www.mofga.org/Portals/2/Fact%20Sheets/FS%2005%20Composting%20web.pdf>
- Community composting: <https://ilsr.org/composting/community-compostors>
- Maine Recycles: <http://www.maine.gov/dep/waste/recycle/>
- A list of sustainable foods:
<https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2021/jun/29/eat-this-to-save-the-world-the-most-sustainable-foods-from-seaweed-to-venison>
- Information about plant-based diets:
 - <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/21/opinion/coronavirus-meat-vegetarianism.html>
 - <https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2016/03/the-economic-case-for-worldwide->

[vegetarianism/475524/](#)

- Good films to show: *Forks over Knives*, *Racing Extinction*
- Maine Food Convergence: <https://www.mainefoodconvergence.org/>

3. Transportation

Our world relies on fossil fuel intensive transportation; communities can work to change this.

- **Bikes** don't use fossil fuels and more people would use them to get around if there were [safe bike lanes around town](#). Added bonus: exercise in the fresh air.
- **Electric cars**. Zero emissions and more choices all the time, but they need support. Convince local businesses and governments to [install high-speed charging stations](#).
- **Public Transport**. Buses and trains still often use fossil fuels, but per-person they are much better than personal automobiles (unless they are electric).
- **Start a No Idling Campaign**. Each day, Americans waste approximately [3.8 million gallons of gasoline](#) by idling their cars. Idling not only wastes gas (and gas money!), it also contributes needlessly to air pollution. An idling vehicle releases as much pollution as a car that is driving, and the pollution from vehicle exhaust has been linked to asthma and other respiratory diseases, allergies, heart disease, increased risk of infections and cancer and other health problems. [Communities can act to change this](#).
- **Fly less**. Air travel produces [massive amounts of greenhouse gases](#). Instead of flying—whether it be with family, friends, or co-workers—consider taking a train, bus, or traveling closer to home.

Good Films to Show: Surviving Progress

4. Sustainable Purchases

The purchases we make have significant environmental impacts; changing them to be more environmentally friendly can do much to address environmental problems.

What your community can do: make [more sustainable purchases](#) by buying locally, using recycled and sustainable materials, and purchasing used goods. Consider going to yard sales, consignment stores, local stores, or others with friends instead of conventional stores. Purchasing used goods will also save money.

A good article in closing:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/01/10/opinion/sunday/how-to-help-climate-change.html>