

Listening Session Appendix

Background

At COP28, *America Is All In* announced that it would host a robust, whole-of-society consultation process to inform the 2035 NDC. As one of more than seventy national members of the Coalition for High Ambition Multilevel Partnerships for Climate Action (CHAMP), the United States commits to enhancing collaboration and cooperation with subnational governments in the implementation of the Paris Agreement. In conjunction with this commitment, the Center for Global Sustainability (CGS) at the University of Maryland partnered with *America Is All In* to facilitate an extensive subnational stakeholder engagement strategy throughout 2024 to gather feedback on how the United States can best achieve equitable and ambitious climate targets for 2035.

Over the course of March through July 2024, CGS and *America Is All In* held 12 stakeholder listening sessions across multiple sectors, convening representatives from various sectors of the economy including transportation, commercial and residential buildings, power and energy, and industry to discuss each sector's contributions and barriers to reaching 2035 climate targets. During these sessions, CGS presented preliminary models from the coalition's 2035 NDC analysis with current and enhanced ambition scenarios. Participants then shared feedback reflecting their subject matter expertise and firsthand experience through verbal comments, written brainstorming activities, and small-group discussions. The feedback was then integrated throughout CGS's new report on how to achieve an ambitious NDC to help inform the feasibility of its assumptions and results and to provide additional context around the opportunities and challenges associated with ambitious climate actions across different sectors.

Across the twelve listening sessions, 214 individual stakeholders participated, representing 140 organizations from nonprofit, corporate, and federal, state, and local government entities; several membership-based organizations participated in the listening sessions, covering all 53 states and territories, more than 350 cities, 400 higher education institutions, and 250,000 individuals. The listening sessions also featured high-level participation from key actors in the national climate conversation, including John Podesta (Senior Advisor to the President for Clean Energy Innovation and Implementation), Mayor Vi Lyles (Charlotte, NC), Mayor Satya Rhodes-Conway (Madison, WI), Gina McCarthy (America is All In Managing Co-Chair and former White House National Climate Advisor), and Ann Shikany (Deputy Assistant Secretary for Transportation Policy at the U.S. Department of Transportation).

12

Listening Sessions

5 in-person
7 virtual

214

Attendees

including John Podesta,
Mayor Lyles, Mayor Rhodes-
Conway, and Gina McCarthy

140

Organizations

40% corporate
48% nonprofit
12% government

Takeaways and Common Themes

Participants shared sector-specific insights on additional or enhanced local, state, and federal policies and programs that could support decarbonization, potential barriers to achieving ambitious climate targets and established or emerging technologies that can support accelerated decarbonization. Attendees, who ranged from technical experts to C-Suite level executives, elected officials, and community leaders, identified common themes in their conversations about subnational engagement in meeting future climate targets.

- **Workforce development:** Across sectors, the workforce needs comprehensive education, resources, and investment to prepare for a clean energy future.
- **Public education and messaging:** Keeping the public well-informed and motivated to participate in meeting climate targets will require disseminating accurate and digestible information with tailored messaging to the community.

- **Tax incentives and rebates:** While the clean energy tax incentives included in the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) represent a significant opportunity to galvanize investment in clean energy projects and technology, listening session participants reported concern about the uptake of these incentives and the need for further education and technical and capacity support.
- **Need for streamlined processes:** Participants pointed to bureaucratic permitting and siting processes as barriers to large-scale projects, particularly in regards to transmission buildout. Residents and stakeholders are also growing frustrated with continued disruption from infrastructure buildout. These stakeholders become more inclined to push back against project development, making it necessary to expedite permitting, siting, and construction processes as much as possible.
- **Regional collaboration:** Grid upgrades and transportation redesign projects greatly benefit from collaboration and communication between cities and counties in a given region. Additionally, collaboration between states and local jurisdictions is necessary to efficiently utilize federal resources for climate investments.
- **Cross-sectoral collaboration:** Building codes and standards, tax credits, energy efficiency resource standards, and industrial decarbonization incentives offer opportunities for partnership between the power industry, state, and local governments to deliver on climate goals.
- **Community design:** Participants expressed keen interest in vehicle miles traveled (VMT) reductions as a promising near-term emissions reduction strategy and a potential area for federal, state, and local collaboration. Many existing communities will need to reimagine design and planning decisions in order to decrease dependence on personal vehicles.
- **Local participation:** Alongside states, cities maintain a unique and crucial local perspective on issues that affect climate targets and emissions reduction. As much as possible, conversations about climate targets must include participation at the local level.
- **Freedom of choice:** Maintaining individuals' ability to choose between transportation and energy options will be key in how decarbonization methods are introduced and marketed.
- **Extreme weather:** Communities across the country already face disruptions to daily life caused by extreme weather. Future decarbonization project planning must take into account the already-realized impacts of climate change.

Types of Participating Organizations

