



Wisconsin Climate Action Navigators (WI CAN) Developmental Evaluation

For the Wisconsin Office of Sustainability and Clean Energy

Interim Report

June 2026



Center for Community
and Nonprofit Studies
SCHOOL OF HUMAN ECOLOGY
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

Introduction

The Wisconsin Climate Action Navigators (WI CAN) initiative is a collective impact effort supported by the State of Wisconsin's Office of Sustainability and Clean Energy (OSCE) through the Climate Pollution Reduction Grant (CPRG) program. The CPRG program is a \$5 billion federal investment over four years to provide states, local governments, Tribal Nations, and territories with funding to develop and implement plans for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and other harmful air pollution. In Summer 2024, Governor Evers designated OSCE as the lead organization for the CPRG program. OSCE received \$3 million from the CPRG program to develop a Priority Climate Action Plan by March 2024, a Comprehensive Climate Action Plan by March 2025, and a Status Report by Spring 2027. What began as a one-time community engagement requirement of the CPRG has grown into a multi-year initiative with a membership of over 300 organizations and individuals from across the state. Members, also called navigators, include representatives from local and regional environmental organizations, educational institutions, local government, Wisconsin Tribes, state agencies and many others.

WI CAN aspires to be an impactful, equitable, and inclusive climate coalition that is accelerating progress toward a net zero Wisconsin by 2050. The coalition is supported by OCSE, who serves as the backbone organization, i.e. a team dedicated to aligning and coordinating the work of the group. OCSE offers support by providing capacity and technical assistance, convening and supporting community events, providing opportunities for organizations to work toward climate goals, sharing information about funding opportunities, and fostering peer learning. Having a supportive backbone organization is one core aspect of [collective impact](#), a structured model that brings people together to achieve social change. The collective impact process includes:

- A common agenda
- Shared measurement
- Mutually reinforcing activities
- Continuous communications
- A strong backbone

Throughout the years, WI CAN has embodied the collective impact model, using its structure to facilitate meeting statewide and regional climate action goals.

[The Center for Community & Nonprofit Studies \(the CommNS\)](#) at the University of Wisconsin-Madison is a hub for faculty, students, and community partners to collaborate on research, practice, and learning that examines the well-being of communities and the roles of civil society, the nonprofit sector, and other purpose-driven efforts. The CommNS Co-Create team provides applied research, evaluation services, and technical assistance for partners that inform and advance their goals and is the lead evaluator team for WI CAN.

Given the goals of WI CAN to develop an innovative, systems-focused, collective impact effort, this evaluation takes a developmental focus, prioritizing process questions and answers that support

continuous learning and informed adaptation of the effort. In this interim report we will also look at outcomes by examining community projects that OSCE has supported through their 2024 Incubator grant program. Based on these results, this report will include considerations for the initiative going forward.

What We Did

As an innovative community-engaged effort using the collective impact model, we are evaluating WI CAN through an approach that will support continuous learning, informed adaptation, and broad communication. This mixed-methods evaluation includes a number of data collection activities that we detail below. The evaluation is further supported by regular check-in meetings with OSCE partners. In meetings, we share progress on the evaluation work to-date and engage partners in refining the evaluation design, working on the development of a logic model, shaping data collection methods, reviewing analyzed data, and interpreting results.

Evaluation Questions

For the WI CAN evaluation we specified six evaluation questions:

1. Who is involved in WI CAN, including individuals and organizations?
 - a. How do navigators reflect the diversity of the state?
 - b. How are navigators who are disproportionately impacted by climate change involved in WI CAN?
2. How are participating navigators engaged in and how do they experience the process of designing the WI CAN initiative?
3. How are multi-sector relationships, trust, and alignment developed and/or strengthened through WI CAN?
4. How are existing efforts identified, utilized, and supported through WI CAN?
5. How are navigators engaged throughout WI CAN, how often and in what kinds of activities?
6. What community projects are developed and implemented by navigators?

Data Sources

To address these evaluation questions we drew upon multiple data sources. These included meeting materials shared by our OSCE partners:

- Slide decks from in-person and virtual WI CAN membership meetings
- Summaries of in-person and virtual meetings
- Meeting polls
- Results of post-meeting evaluation surveys sent by OSCE
- Infographics and diagrams explaining WI CAN's framework
- Documents describing the Climate Pollution Reduction Grant, WI CAN's purpose and role
- A draft purpose statement in development by WI CAN members

- WI CAN membership lists
- Meeting participation lists

To collect complementary data, Co-Create team members attended four in-person and four virtual meetings to gain additional insights and understanding of the network. At these meetings we were able to speak with WI CAN members, participate in activities, and learn from presenters and facilitators. To complement these insights, we developed a network-wide survey that was distributed in January and February of 2026. The survey included questions about members' climate action work, their participation in WI CAN, their potential partnerships with other WI CAN members, and how valuable they found their WI CAN experience. The survey was sent directly to 295 WI CAN members' email addresses, distributed through the WI CAN listserve, and advertised during a virtual meeting and at the in-person Milwaukee meeting in January 2026. Thirty-eight network members completed the survey. (See Appendix A for the survey questions.)

Finally, we collected interview and observational data that informed four case studies of WI CAN-funded Incubator projects. For each case study, we conducted one-hour interviews with one or more Incubator project partners. We gained additional insights through partner presentations, slide decks, website review, or other additional information. (See Appendix B for the case study interview questions.)

What We Learned

Here we revisit each of the evaluation questions and present results from the data collection and analysis completed to date.

1. Who is involved in WI CAN, including individuals and organizations?

From the most recent WI CAN membership list to-date (4/20/2026) we identified 385 members, not including OSCE staff and UW-Madison evaluation partners. This full list includes members who have not been to an in-person or online meeting but have opted in to the WI CAN email mailing list. Chart 1 shows numbers and percentages of members representing various types of organizations. (To see how we defined these categories, see the table in Appendix C.)

Full WI CAN Membership (individuals representing organizations)

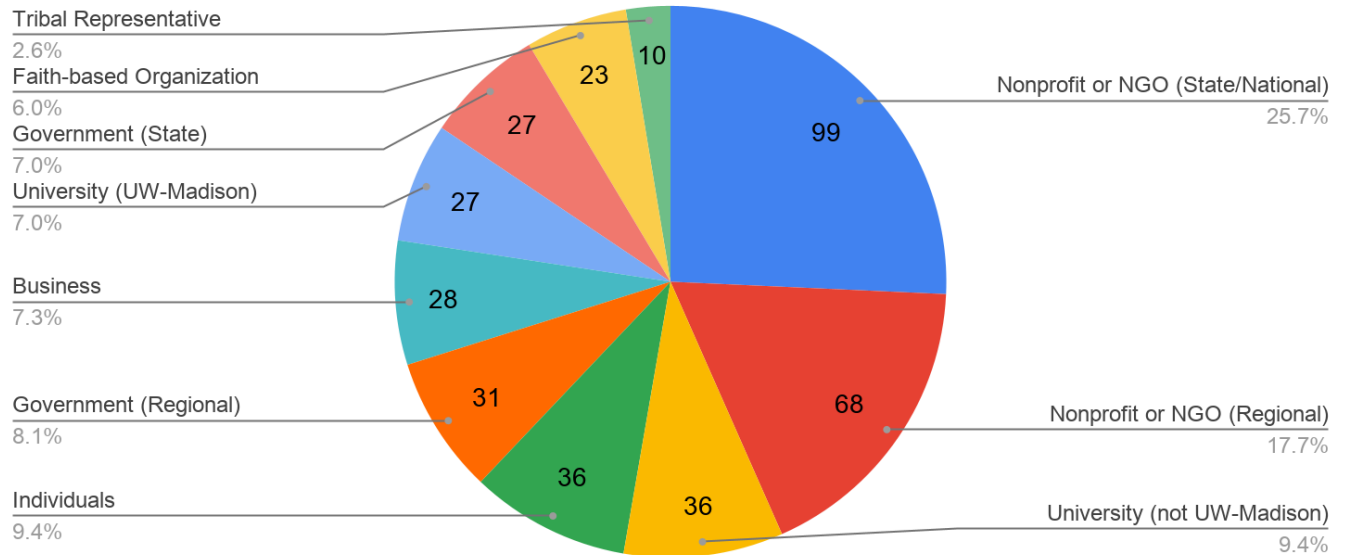


Chart 1. Full WI CAN membership, with members representing Wisconsin climate action organizations.

We define active members of WI CAN as those who have been to at least one online or in-person meeting throughout the time that WI CAN has been active to-date (December 2024 through May 2026). As of the May 5, 2026 online meeting, there have been 277 active participants, representing 72% of the full membership list. Chart 2 shows the numbers and percentages of active members representing organizations over the course of the initiative.

Individuals attending at least one WI CAN meeting (December 2024 - May 2026)

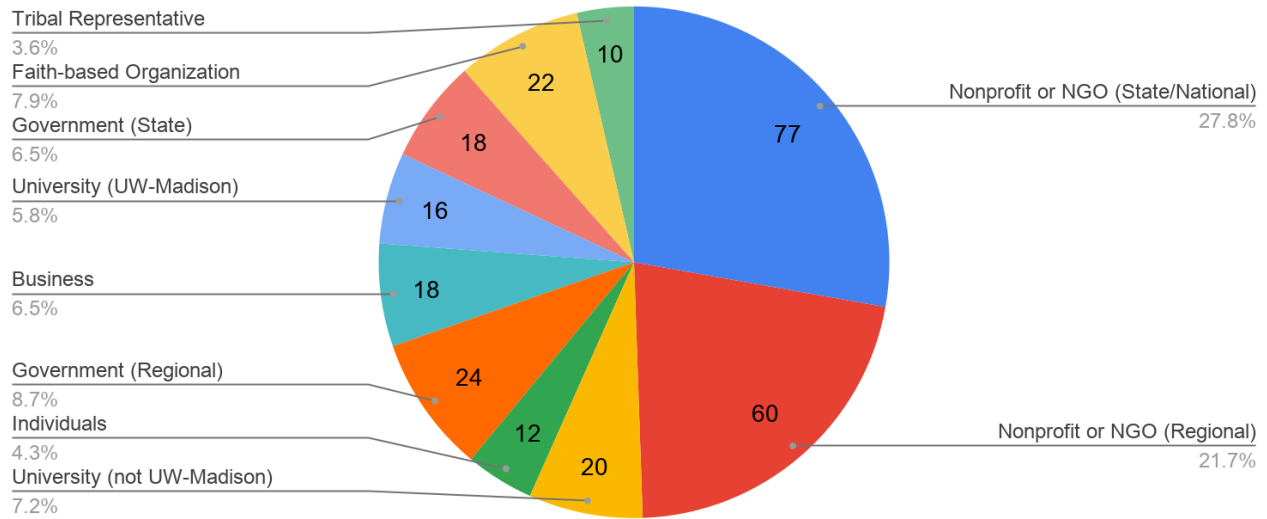


Chart 2. WI CAN members attending at least one meeting (December 2024 - May 2026).

A number of individuals attended a meeting at the beginning of the WI CAN initiative in 2024 but have since been inactive. Compared to 277 overall, 211 individuals participated in virtual or in-person meetings in 2025 and the first half of 2026, shown in Chart 3 below.

Individuals attending at least one WI CAN meeting (January 2025 - May 2026)

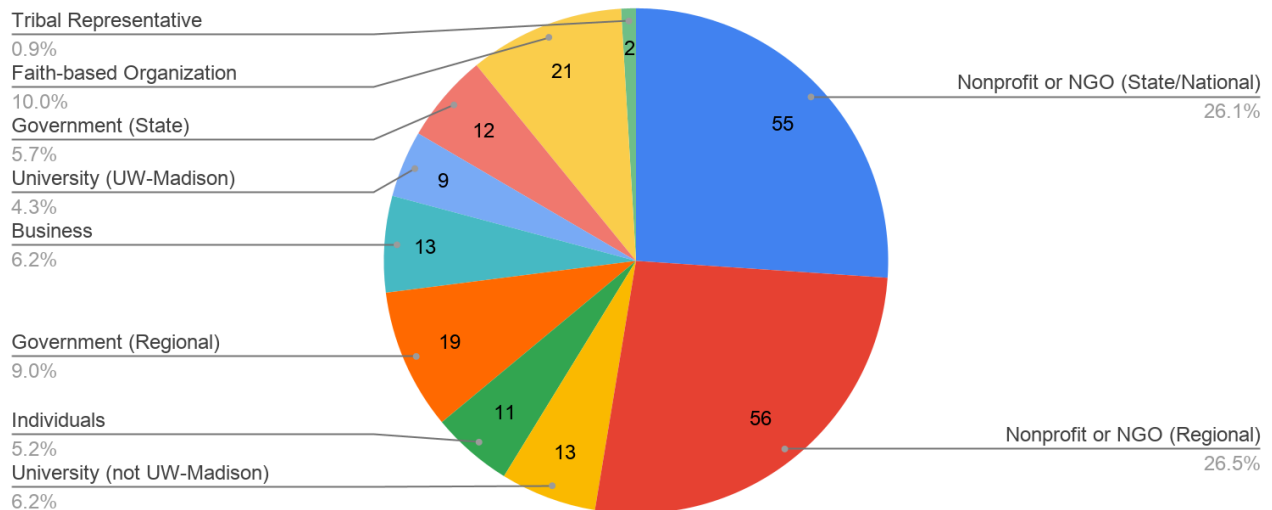


Chart 3. WI CAN members attending at least one meeting (January 2025 - May 2026).

Based on the membership data, we note the following:

- Close to 30 percent of members on the mailing list have not attended meetings.

- Of active members, about half represent nonprofit or other non-governmental organizations (e.g. foundations, business councils, economic development corporations, advocacy groups).
- Of these, over half represent state-level organizations.
- Representatives of regional nonprofit organizations are a relatively larger percentage in 2025-2026, which may stem from new recruitment at the two regional meetings in La Crosse and Milwaukee.
- While representatives of a number of Wisconsin First Nations were at the first 2024 meetings, their participation has dropped significantly since then.
- A number of members are identified as “individuals” because they didn’t include an affiliation when attending meetings. Some of these may also represent organizations, but aren’t included in those totals.

To further understand the work of WI CAN members, we asked participants in our network-wide survey which climate action sectors they worked in. Chart 4 shows the range of responses. Note that participants were able to choose more than one sector, so the number of responses is higher than the number of participants.

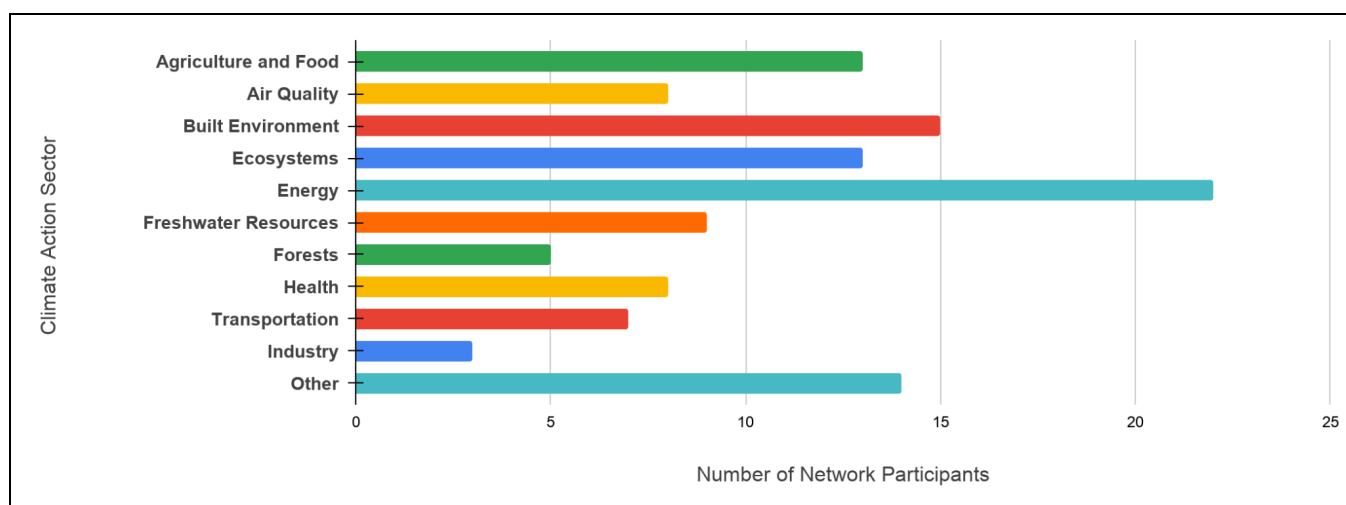


Chart 4. The number of survey participants working in each climate action sector. Sectors are ordered alphabetically.

Those who answered “other” gave a diversity of responses, including:

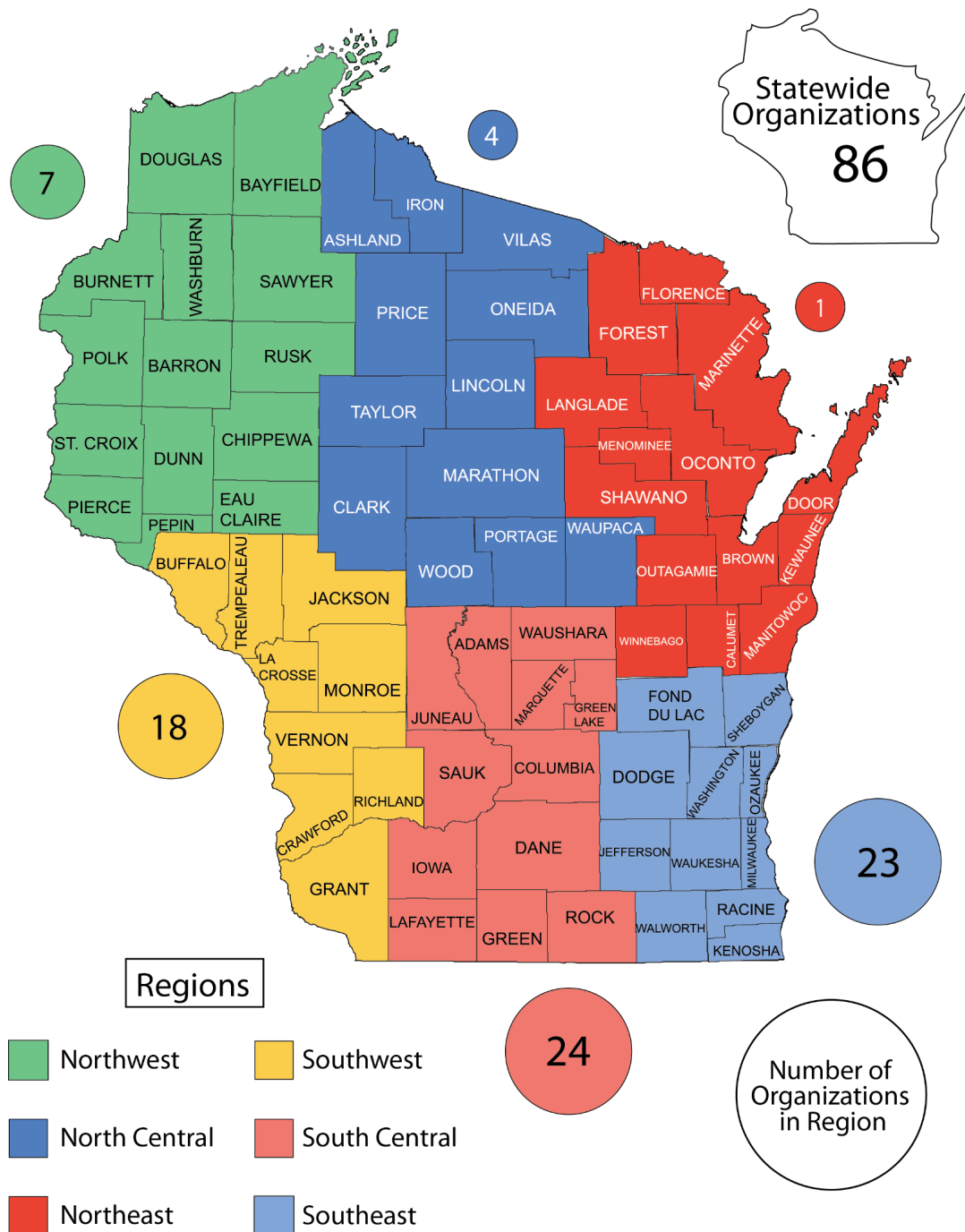
- Environmental justice or resilience
- Communications
- Community or public engagement
- Education
- Political education
- Housing justice and community-owned infrastructure

- Climate equity
- Workforce development
- Energy affordability
- Organizational networking
- Traditional Ecological Knowledge
- Spirituality
- “Holistic approach”

a. How do navigators reflect the diversity of the state?

In addition to looking at organizational diversity, we also approximated geographic diversity by categorizing participating organizations based on where they worked in the state. If we were unable to identify the region an organization worked in, then we used the location of their headquarters as a proxy. State-level organizations were given their own category. The map¹ below shows the number of WI CAN organizations in each region of the state. (For the categorization of each region by county, see Appendix D.) Note that the number of organizations is much fewer than the number of WI CAN members. Some organizations are represented by multiple members; additionally some members didn’t affiliate with an organization and haven’t been included.

¹ Map data provided by the Wisconsin [State Cartographer's Office](#).



We make the following observations:

- Statewide climate action organizations make up the largest category (at about 50%), most of whom are housed in Madison.
- The South Central and Southeast make up the next largest, underscoring the high number of regional organizations in Dane County and Milwaukee.

- The Southwest is the third largest, partly due to the number of organizations recruited in 2026 through the La Crosse regional meeting.
- The lowest numbers of organizations are in the northern areas of the state. This area has a relatively smaller population than the lower part of the state, which may account for the lower number of organizations. However, it's also possible that the network hasn't yet reached existing organizations doing climate action work in these regions. This may be especially true in the Northeast region, which contains Brown County and the urban area of Green Bay. This will likely change as more regional meetings happen.

In the network-wide survey, we also asked members in which areas of Wisconsin they primarily do climate action work. Of the 38 who responded:

- 53% of respondents said they work statewide
- 21% of respondents said Milwaukee County
- 18% said Dane County

Other geographic regions included northern, central, and southwest Wisconsin. In addition, 8% said they worked in Tribal Nations and communities.

b. How are navigators who are disproportionately impacted by climate change involved in WI CAN?

Under the Biden administration in 2021, the US Environmental Protection Agency released a comprehensive report detailing the impacts of climate change on vulnerable populations in the United States². The report emphasizes these impacts as the disproportionate and unequal risks that climate change is projected to have on communities that are least able to anticipate, cope with, and recover from adverse impacts. They defined socially vulnerable groups as those who are low income, identifying as particular racial and ethnic groups (Black or African American; American Indian or Alaska Native; Asian; Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander; and/or Hispanic or Latino), have no high school diploma, and/or are ages 65 or older. To address this evaluation question, we asked members in our network-wide survey the following two open-ended questions:

- *Does your climate action work focus on any particular demographic groups or populations?*
- *Do you feel that any of the communities or populations you focus on have been disproportionately impacted by climate change? If so, how?*

For the first question, “does your climate action work focus on any particular demographic groups or populations”, respondents were mostly like to mention:

- Communities of color
- Low-income, underserved/marginalized

² EPA. 2021. Climate Change and Social Vulnerability in the United States: A Focus on Six Impacts. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, EPA 430-R-21-003.
https://www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2021-09/climate-vulnerability_september-2021_508.pdf

- Urban, rural
- “Frontline” (highest energy burdens, exposure to industrial pollution, substandard housing)
- Tribal communities

For the second question, *“do you feel that any of the communities or populations you focus on have been disproportionately impacted by climate change? If so, how?”* almost all respondents answered “yes.” Examples of “how” included:

- Impacts on Tribal traditional lifeways
- Higher environmental impacts on particular communities (e.g. heat, air quality, flooding)
- Lack of community resources to address climate change impacts
- Structural racism
- The targeting of particular communities for new polluting infrastructure (e.g. gas plants, data centers)

Given the above definition, and keeping in mind that the survey includes only a subset of the overall WI CAN membership, we found that members who responded to these questions primarily worked on climate action initiatives that focused on communities or populations that have been disproportionately impacted by climate change.

2. How are participating navigators engaged in and how do they experience the process of designing the WI CAN initiative?

Since WI CAN’s formation in late 2023, OSCE has sought to include members in designing and defining the network’s priorities so that it can fully support climate action work being done by organizations across the state. During the first year, meetings included activities that asked members to help define WI CAN’s role as a network. Presentations by the WI CAN facilitator included background information on community engagement along with foundational concepts and definitions to help ground members in collective action. OSCE defined their role as a backbone organization and also provided a trust declaration to members. In addition, OSCE worked to gain WI CAN member input on the creation and deployment of the CPRG Priority Climate Action Plan and the CPRG Comprehensive Climate Action Plan. Members also participated in facilitated Open Space conversations, which are meetings where participants choose the topics they want to discuss as well as which discussions they want to participate in. During the first in-person meeting in January 2024, members were polled on how well they felt they understood WI CAN, with 85% responding that they at least “somewhat understood” the network’s purpose.

In the following 2024 meetings, members continued to work on the CPRG Climate Action Plans, including brainstorming indicators of a successful plan, strategies for success, and how to engage the community in its creation. They also gave input on the CPRG Implementation Grant application. By mid-2024, when asked how well they understood what WI CAN is, that number had increased, with 95% responding that they understood at least “somewhat” what the network was, and most responding that they understood “well” or “very well.” 2024 also saw the establishment

of Innovation Incubator Project awards (Incubator), which were grants to member organizations doing innovative collaborative climate action work. The Incubator grants were unique in that WI CAN members “pitched” their projects during meetings and gained feedback from other members, leading to the final selection of grant recipients, which were announced early 2025.

OSCE hired a new facilitation consultant and a new outreach and engagement specialist in mid-2025 and they continued WI CAN’s process of member engagement in designing and developing the network. During in-person and online meetings, members were encouraged to contribute to the creation of a draft mission statement, along with metrics and strategies to accelerate climate action work by WI CAN organizations. This draft purpose statement went through two rounds of feedback, the first happening during a virtual meeting in November of 2025 and the second occurring more recently in May 2026.

In order to further understand how members see themselves guiding the network, we asked the following question in the network-wide survey: *How much do you feel you’ve been able to influence the design and direction of the WI CAN network?* Chart 5 summarizes the answers of the 38 respondents, with the largest proportion reporting that they were able to “somewhat” influence WI CAN’s design and direction.

How much do you feel you’ve been able to influence the design and direction of the WI CAN network?

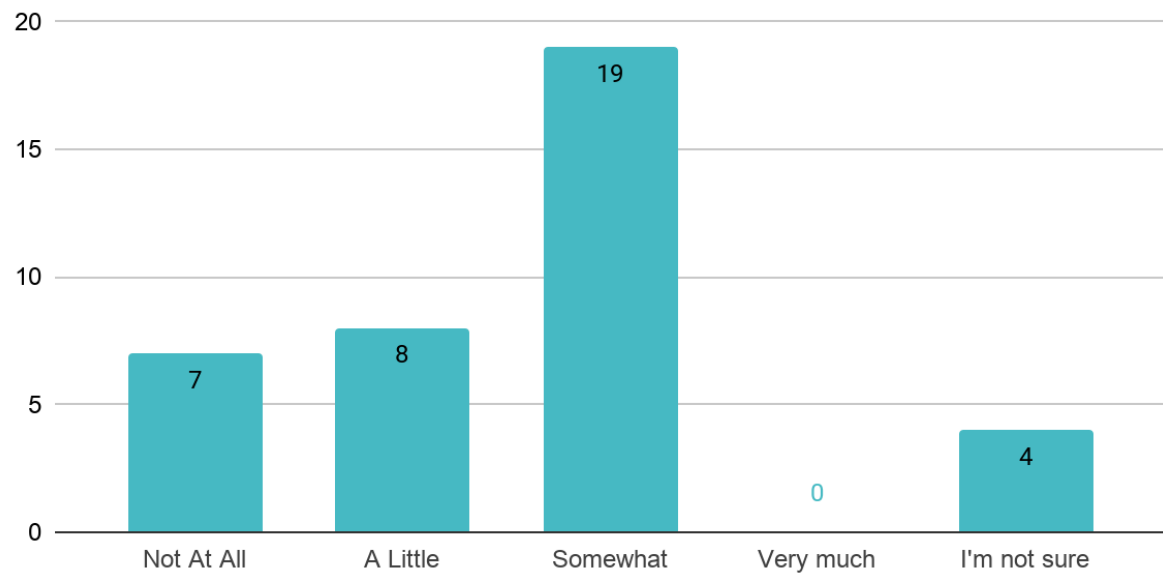


Chart 5. How much do you feel you’ve been able to influence the design and direction of the WI CAN network?

- 3. *How are multi-sector relationships, trust, and alignment developed and/or strengthened through WI CAN?*

Starting with the earliest WI CAN meetings, OSCE and WI CAN facilitators have worked deliberately to build relationships, trust, and alignment between members. Activities related to these concepts have included:

- Open Space meetings and working groups, which encouraged members to create their own meeting topics and to meet with others who have the same interests.
- Incubator project funding, which encouraged WI CAN members to work collaboratively.
- Large and small group exercises related to alignment, vision, and purpose statement drafting.
- Small group exercises such as success stories “newspaper articles” where participants can envision a positive future together.
- In-person activities facilitated by WI CAN partners (e.g. tours, receptions, video interviews, storytelling).
- Opportunities for member connections, including “micro-connections” (small-group conversations in virtual meetings), “speed-dating” at in-person meetings, and sharing reflections in small groups.
- Sharing meals and social activities together.

Awareness is an important first step toward alignment between organizations and between the individuals who represent them. The network-wide survey asked two questions that focused on awareness:

- *How much has WI CAN made you aware of other climate action work happening in WI?*
- *How much has WI CAN made you aware of other climate action gatherings or conferences happening in WI?*

The following charts illustrate the responses. In general, respondents felt that WI CAN made them “somewhat to very much aware” of other work, gatherings, or conferences happening in WI in the climate action space. In particular, respondents felt that being part of WI CAN made them aware of other climate action work.

How much has WI CAN made you aware of other climate action work happening in WI?

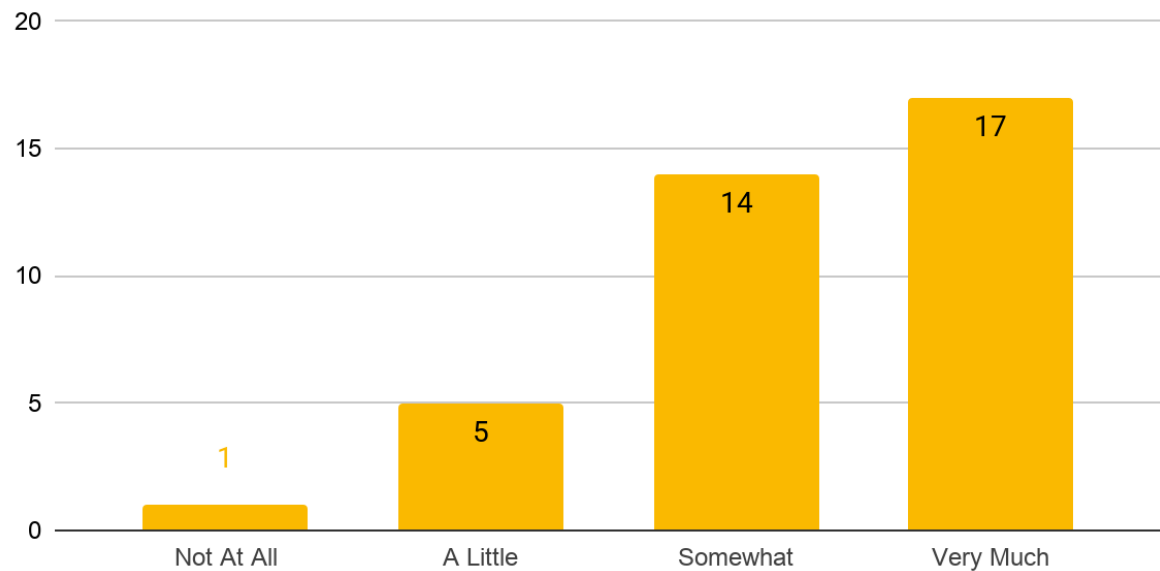


Chart 6. How much has WI CAN made you aware of other climate action work?

How much has WI CAN made you aware of other climate action gatherings or conferences happening in WI?

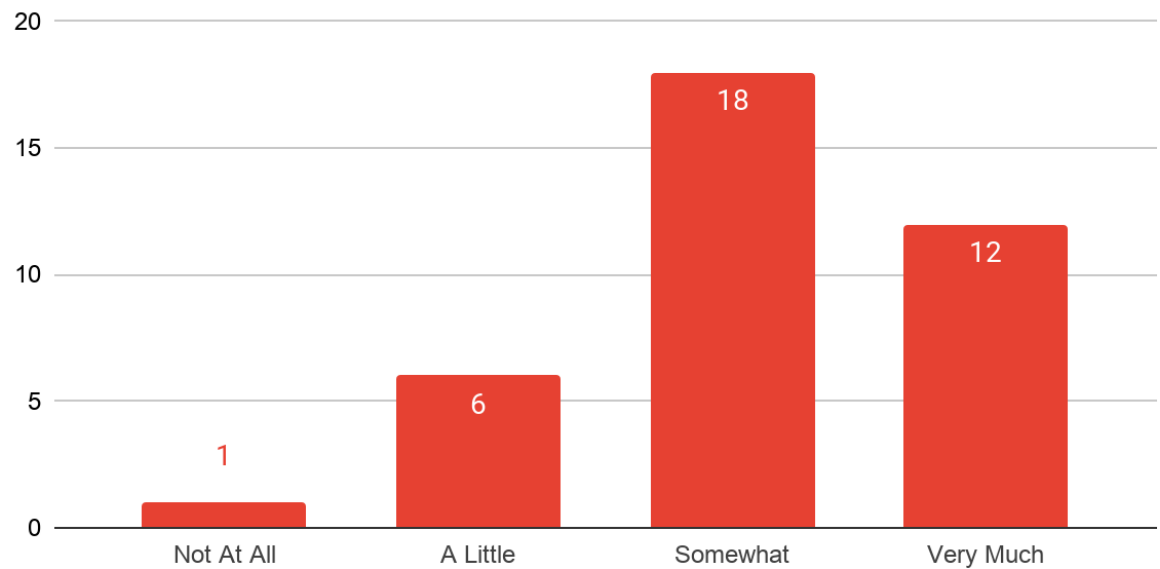


Chart 7. How much has WI CAN made you aware of other climate action gatherings or conferences?

The survey also asked: *Has your participation in WI CAN led you to develop or deepen relationships with other WI CAN members?* More than two-thirds of respondents felt that this was true. For some, this was through their Incubator projects, but for others, it was unrelated to those projects.

Has your participation in WI CAN led you to develop or deepen relationships with other WI CAN members?

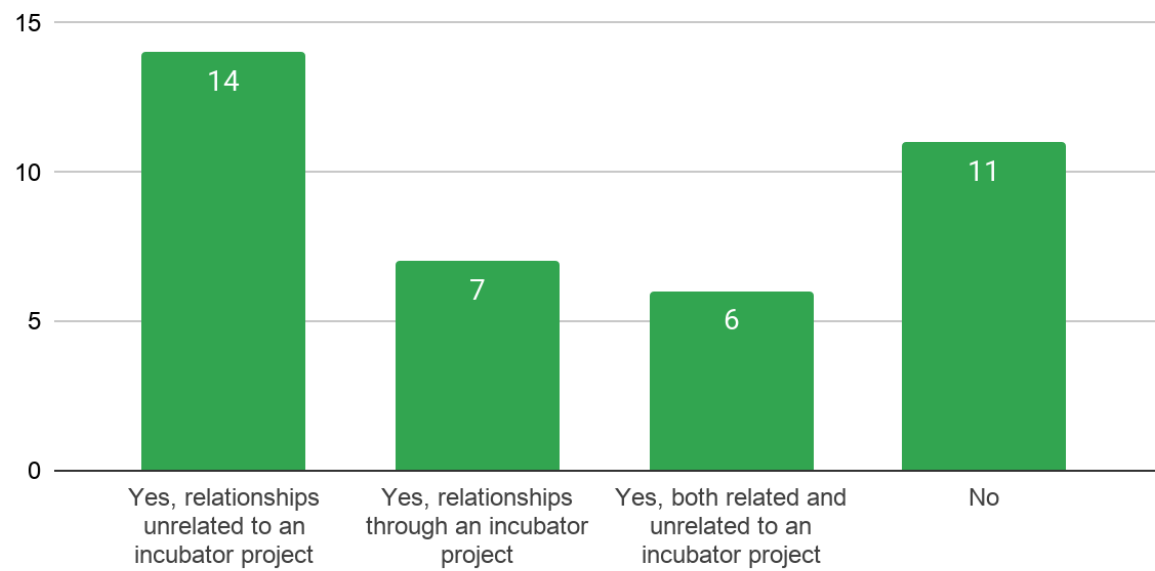


Chart 8. Has your participation in WI CAN led you to develop or deepen relationships with other WI CAN members?

4. *How are existing efforts identified, utilized, and supported through WI CAN?*

A primary way that WI CAN has identified and supported climate action efforts is through their grant programs, which are specifically for WI CAN members. In 2024, OSCE gave out 17 Innovation Incubator Project awards to member organizations doing innovative climate action work. Another round of awards through OSCE’s Community Climate Action Support Fund was given out in 2026. These awards aim to support community-driven climate and clean energy projects in Wisconsin with the goal of building capacity within WI CAN partner organizations to accelerate their progress.

Another way that WI CAN has supported and utilized climate action efforts is through direct partnerships with members. To foster connections and information sharing, WI CAN members have access to the Climate Action Mapping Project (CAMP), a free volunteer-run platform that provides a virtual space to connect, coordinate, and collaborate on local climate initiatives. WI CAN members are encouraged to become members of CAMP and use the platform to forge connections, coordinate, and collaborate with other Wisconsin organizations and individuals. The

Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters has also partnered with WI CAN for several projects, including the 2024 Climate Fast Forward conference and *Finding Home*, a special series of stories about sustainability and community resilience. For the *Finding Home* series, the Academy organized activities at several in-person meetings to gather climate action success stories from members around the state. Both CAMP and the *Finding Home* series have been financially supported through WI CAN's Incubator project funding.

A further way WI CAN has identified and supported existing efforts is through their state and regional meetings. These in-person meetings are hosted by member organizations who also invite new local organizations and individuals to participate. The meetings offer space for the hosting organizations, along with others, to showcase their current climate action projects, invite local participants to go deeper in their work, and allow partners visiting from other parts of the state to better understand their regional context. To date there have been regional meetings in La Crosse and Milwaukee, with a third happening in Ashland in July 2026.

As the backbone organization, OSCE has also supported existing efforts indirectly through communication channels that amplify and share information from member organizations. Through the WI CAN email list, organizations can pass along information about climate action events, surveys, and other activities to all WI CAN members. The virtual WI CAN meetings also hold space for organizations wanting to share news or information about events and projects.

5. *How are navigators engaged throughout WI CAN, how often and in what kinds of activities?*

As mentioned above, WI CAN members have engaged in in-person and virtual meetings throughout each year of the network. In addition to the relationship, trust, and alignment activities mentioned under evaluation question 3, other activities have included:

- Presentations by OSCE staff on the CPRG and other aspects of WI CAN.
- Presentations by WI CAN members on their activities, programs, and initiatives, as well as "lightning updates" or other brief updates on partner activities.
- Multiple opportunities for questions and comments from members.

To better understand how members feel about their engagement, the network-wide survey asked *Overall, how valuable has your experience been with WI CAN?* The majority of respondents (32 out of 38) found that their experience was "somewhat" to "very valuable", with almost half finding it "very valuable".

Overall, how valuable has your experience been with WI CAN?

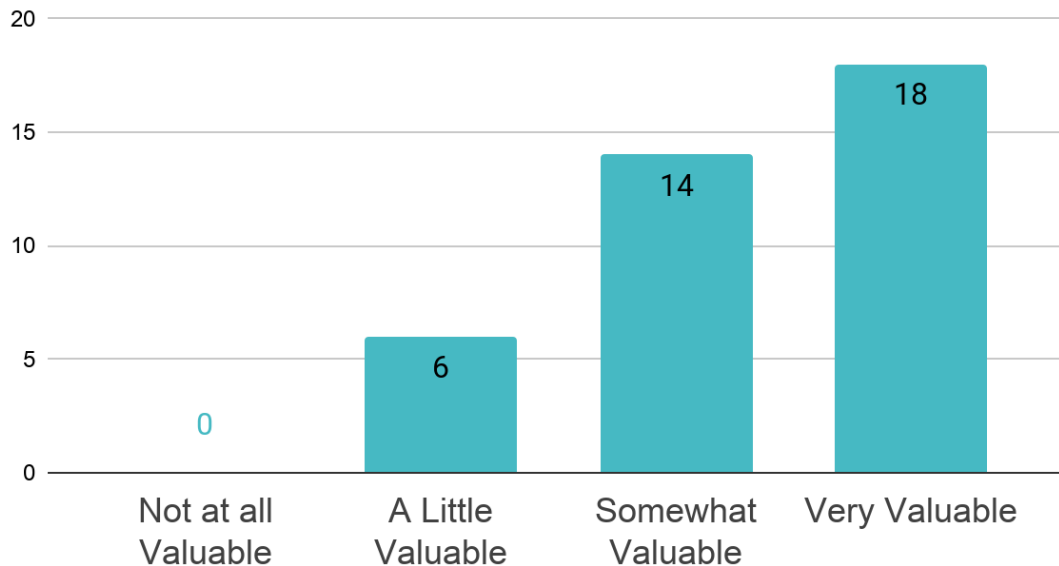


Chart 9. Overall, how valuable has your experience been with WI CAN?

6. *What community projects are developed and implemented by navigators?*

WI CAN membership is large and numerous organizations have developed and implemented climate action projects during the time they have been WI CAN members. The WI CAN network-wide survey asked members *“Not including Incubator projects, have you or your organization developed any new climate action initiatives since becoming a member of WI CAN?”* 17 of the 38 respondents, or 45%, said “yes.” Of those, 15 out of 17 said that being part of WI CAN influenced the development of these initiatives. Eight participants said that their initiatives involved collaborating directly or indirectly with other WI CAN members. Participants mentioned the following as influencing their development:

- Making key connections with other members
- Listening to other members’ needs
- Enhancing partnerships through WI CAN meetings
- Building relationships over time
- Learning from other organizations’ experiences
- Getting feedback

The Incubator-funded climate action projects are examples of the type of work that members are accomplishing. Seventeen Incubator projects were ultimately funded by OSCE in 2024. (See Appendix E for the full list and description of each project.) To better understand how members are doing climate action work, we conducted brief case studies of four Incubator-funded efforts.

The projects varied from short-duration programs to large-scale initiatives. For each case study, we interviewed leaders of the initiative including Executive Directors, program leads, and founding members. We asked questions related to how the effort was developed, strengths and challenges, collaboration, impacts, recommendations, and how WI CAN influenced the project. (See Appendix B for the interview questions. Appendix F contains the case study briefs.)

The table below summarizes the four Incubator-funded case studies.

Organization	2024 Incubator-Funded Project	Project Description
Wisconsin EcoLatinos	Green and Sustainable Businesses	Wisconsin EcoLatinos works with small Latino businesses to assess and reduce their environmental impact by creating a sustainability plan and earning a Sustainable Business Certificate.
Habitat for Humanity - La Crosse	ReNew the Block	ReNew the Block is transforming a 2-block area outside of Logan Middle School in La Crosse, WI. Funding will go toward adding an edible landscape to the school yard and supporting community engagement through volunteer planting days.
1000 Friends of Wisconsin (fiscal sponsor), volunteer-run	Climate Action Mapping Project (CAMP)	CAMP enables opportunities for connection and collaboration between organizations taking action, volunteers looking for action items, and data. They work to reduce negative impacts on the planet by engaging with grassroots efforts, providing an open-source digital platform for continuous conversations, and brainstorming and synergizing action.
350 Wisconsin	Breaking Down Barriers to Increase Energy Engagement	This project improves opportunities for, reduces barriers to, and enhances the impact of community participation in Public Service Commission of Wisconsin (PSC) proceedings and programs to facilitate the achievement of climate and clean energy goals identified in Wisconsin's Clean Energy Plan (CEP).

Several themes arose across the case studies. First, implementing successful climate action projects requires strong relationships, along with a substantial outlay of time for development. We note the following examples:

- In the case of ReNew the Block, the project had many moving parts, and relationships needed to be built that involved homeowners, residents, schools, local governments,

businesses, funders, and volunteers. Success was only possible by building partnerships over a number of years and engaging residents in a way that brought them in as active participants.

- For CAMP, it was important to be part of a larger community working towards similar goals. Concerns about competition and overlapping efforts were addressed through relationship-building and emphasizing collaboration over ownership.
- When looking to address gaps in public participation with the Wisconsin Public Service Commission (PSC), 350 WI team members understood that it was critical to build a strong, positive relationship with the PSC, as well as with local organizations in regions around the state, if they wanted to translate community input into actionable recommendations for improving public engagement.
- For WI EcoLatinos' Green and Sustainable Businesses project, the team needed to build trusting relationships with businesses to help them understand the benefits of environmentally sustainable practices, and doing so takes time.

A second major theme was the need for adaptability in the face of constantly changing circumstances. We note the following:

- For ReNew the Block, the team adapted to budget obstacles by scaling the project, pursuing diverse funding sources, and remaining flexible as opportunities arose. When faced with challenges, the team found new partners, reallocated responsibilities, and adapted the budget.
- For the Green and Sustainable Businesses project, the team adapted their toolkit and sustainability skill-building to match the understanding and needs of community small businesses who were sometimes unfamiliar with what sustainability might mean for their own work.
- In the case of CAMP, the volunteer-led nature of the initiative made finding web developers willing to build and maintain a unique platform more difficult. The team responded with flexibility by working incrementally with available partners and volunteers and simplifying their priorities.
- For 350 WI's effort, The PSC did not initially have the data needed to assess participation patterns. However, the team was able to work with PSC staff and their IT department to obtain and analyze additional information they had available.

What It Means

To date, results of the WI CAN evaluation indicate that after successfully launching in 2024, the WI CAN network continues to develop and grow across the state. State-level organizations comprise about half of all organizations in the network, and representatives of nonprofit organizations, whether regional or statewide, form about half of all individuals active in WI CAN in 2025-2026. Additionally, many organizations are focusing on Wisconsin communities or populations that are disproportionately impacted by climate change.

Results also show that members are increasingly aware of the work of other climate action organizations across the state, and have been actively building alignment, trust, and relationships. They've done this through multiple activities at in-person and online meetings. Furthermore, members have launched diverse new initiatives since WI CAN's inception, as highlighted by the OSCE-funded 2024 Incubator projects and the new projects being funded by OSCE's Community Climate Action Support Fund in 2026.

These results suggest some key drivers of impact for the WI CAN network. These include:

- *The support of a backbone organization.* OSCE's work to facilitate all aspects of WI CAN has been integral to the success of the initiative. OSCE's contributions include network-wide communication channels, logistical support for meetings (e.g. virtual meeting platforms, in-person set-up, facilitation), and financial support (e.g. grants, hotel reimbursement for in-person meetings).
- *Strong network-wide communication.* Having a communication platform that allows members to share program and event information, ask for feedback, and connect with other organizations increases awareness, supports alignment, and helps members feel connected.
- *In-person meetings.* Meeting together in-person fosters greater alignment of members both across the state and within regions. OSCE's financial and logistical support for in-person meetings makes it more likely that members will connect, develop relationships, and work toward shared goals.
- *A focus on Wisconsin regions.* Prioritizing regions by co-hosting meetings with organizations in different areas of the state increases membership, strengthens ties, and makes inroads into regions that might not otherwise have representation in the network.
- *Funding for climate action projects.* OSCE has supported multiple member organizations through their grant programs, which have had a focus on climate action initiatives in underrepresented communities.

Given these drivers, the WI CAN network may be further strengthened by attention to:

1. Exploring further Wisconsin regions as areas for in-person convenings. Regional meetings bring in new members and strengthen local relationships. The Northeast and Northwest sections of the state (see map in What We Learned section) would particularly benefit from additional investigation.
2. Re-engaging inactive members of the network. Given that about 30% of WI CAN members currently don't participate in meetings or other WI CAN activities, there is opportunity for inviting members to start or re-start participation.
3. Looking for additional ways to engage Wisconsin Tribes and Tribal organizations that are engaging in climate action work. A number of Tribal representatives were initially interested in learning more about the network, but that number dropped after the early meetings. It may be worth exploring why participation rates dropped. It's likely that time

and effort will need to be put into developing those relationships if they are to feel that the network is of value to them.

4. Identifying opportunities for organizations to support WI CAN's backbone efforts. This might include finding organizations willing to assist with communication or offer logistical support for meetings. Broadening the group of organizations assisting with WI CAN functions can make the network stronger and allow it to continue if OSCE loses the capacity to fully support the network.

What's Next

Our evaluation of WI CAN will continue through June 2027 and will continue to focus on the growth and direction of the network throughout the state. We will also examine the projects funded by the Community Climate Action Support Fund to better understand WI CAN outcomes and will launch a second network-wide survey. After these evaluation activities, we will summarize our end results in a final report.

Appendix A: 2026 Network-Wide Survey Questions

1. Which organization or community group are you affiliated with? (If you are participating in WI CAN as an individual, include that here.)
2. Which climate action sectors do you work in?
3. In which areas of Wisconsin do you primarily do climate action work? For example, it could be in particular neighborhoods, cities, counties, regions, or statewide.
4. Does your climate action work focus on any particular demographic groups or populations? You might think about race or ethnicity, Tribal affiliations, urban, rural, low-income, marginalized groups, or other populations.
5. Do you feel that any of the communities or populations you focus on have been disproportionately impacted by climate change? If so, how?
6. Overall, how valuable has your experience been with WI CAN?
7. How much has WI CAN made you aware of other climate action work happening in WI?
8. How much has WI CAN made you aware of other climate action gatherings or conferences happening in WI?
9. How much do you feel you've been able to influence the design and direction of the WI CAN network?
10. Has your participation in WI CAN led you to develop or deepen relationships with other WI CAN members?
11. Not including Incubator projects, have you or your organization developed any new climate action initiatives since becoming a member of WI CAN?
12. How much has being part of WI CAN influenced the development of these climate action initiatives? (You can think about partnerships, financial support, connecting with other organizations, feeling that you are part of a larger movement.)
13. How has WI CAN influenced their development?
14. Did any of these initiatives involve collaboration with other WI CAN members?

Appendix B: 2026 Case Study Interview Questions

Introduction

1. Can you introduce yourselves, describe [the effort] and why it was first started? What were the reasons and opportunities that led to it?
2. What do you feel are the most important activities or features of [your effort]?
3. How do people participate in or experience [the effort]?
4. These next questions are about how [the effort] was developed.
 - a. Who was involved in developing this effort?
 - b. How did you build this approach? Were there key ideas or a model that guided the work?
 - c. In addition to WI CAN's Incubator award, how else have you funded this effort?

WI CAN Network

5. What led you to become involved in WI CAN?
6. Beyond funding, how is WI CAN involved in your project? Did WI CAN influence your project's development in any way?

Collaboration

7. Are you collaborating with other partners on this project?
 - a. Are they also members of WI CAN?
 - i. [If yes] How did that collaboration begin?
8. What has been challenging about collaborating?
9. What benefits have you experienced?

Strengths and Challenges

10. What do you feel are the overall strengths of [your effort]?
11. [In addition to collaboration], what challenges have you experienced in [the effort]?
 - a. How have you been able to respond to these challenges?

- b. What additional challenges or limitations are you still seeing?

Impacts

- 12. What impacts are you seeing from your effort?
 - a. What data or information do you draw on to help you understand the impacts you're seeing?
- 13. Are there aspects of your effort that you feel are innovative?

Recommendations

- 14. What would you recommend to others who are wanting to do this kind of work in their community?
- 15. If you had the opportunity or resources to make changes to [your effort], what's something you would do?

Is there anything else you would like to add or comment on?

Appendix C: Categories of WI CAN Organizations

Category	Description
Nonprofit or NGO (State/National)	Nonprofit or other non-governmental organization (NGO) that operates across the state or nation rather than being confined to a specific local region. Others in this category include foundations, business councils, advocacy groups, and others.
Nonprofit or NGO (Regional)	Nonprofit or other non-governmental organization that operates in a specific local region. Others in this category include foundations, business councils, advocacy groups, and others.
University (UW-Madison)	University of Wisconsin-Madison. As UW-Madison was over-represented, we included this as its own category to better understand representation of other colleges and universities across the state.
University (not UW-Madison)	Non-UW-Madison college or university.
Government (State)	State government representative, office or agency.
Government (Regional)	Regional government representative, office or agency.
Business	For-profit organization.
Faith-based Organization	Nonprofit, charity, or community group whose mission and values are driven by religious or spiritual beliefs.
Tribal Representative	An individual who identified themselves as from a specific Tribal nation or Tribal government when asked for an organizational affiliation at a WI CAN meeting.
Individual	An individual who did not identify any affiliation.

Appendix D: Geographic Regions By County

Northwest: Douglas, Bayfield, Burnett, Washburn, Sawyer, Polk, Barron, Rusk, St. Croix, Dunn, Chippewa, Pierce, Pepin, Eau Claire

North Central: Ashland, Iron, Vilas, Price, Oneida, Taylor, Lincoln, Clark, Marathon, Wood, Portage, Waupaca

Northeast: Florence, Forest, Marinette, Langlade, Menominee, Oconto, Shawano, Outagamie, Brown, Kewaunee, Door, Winnebago, Calumet, Manitowoc

Southwest: Buffalo, Trempealeau, Jackson, La Crosse, Monroe, Vernon, Crawford, Richland, Grant

South Central: Juneau, Adams, Waushara, Marquette, Green Lake, Sauk, Columbia, Iowa, Dane, Lafayette, Green, Rock

Southeast: Fond du Lac, Sheboygan, Dodge, Washington, Ozaukee, Jefferson, Waukesha, Milwaukee, Walworth, Racine, Kenosha

Appendix E: 2024 OSCE-Funded Incubator Projects

Organization	2024 Incubator-Funded Project	Project Goals
Wisconsin's Green Fire	Climate Resilient Communities Through Regional Workshops on Nature-based Solutions	Wisconsin's Green Fire will work with a broad group of organizations to develop a nature-based solutions guide for local governments & host regional nature-based solutions workshops that explain the benefits of nature-based solutions and how they increase community resilience and improve quality of life.
Wisconsin EcoLatinos	Green and Sustainable Businesses*	Wisconsin EcoLatinos will work with Latino small businesses in assessing their environmental impact and setting goals to reduce this impact through a sustainability plan and earning a Sustainable Business Certificate.
Habitat for Humanity - La Crosse	ReNew the Block*	This is part of a larger project called ReNew the Block, which is transforming a 2-block area outside of Logan Middle School in La Crosse, WI. Funding will go toward adding an edible landscape to the school yard and supporting community engagement through volunteer planting days.
Environmental Equity Solutions Consulting	Building a Cooler, Greener Milwaukee Together	Environmental Equity Solutions Consulting will work to bring more trees to Milwaukee communities. Summer is hot, and made hotter without trees. Some neighborhoods experience a 10 degree difference. In areas that already struggle with high energy costs, more trees will reduce the temperature and lower those bills.
Walnut Way Conservation Corp	Environmental Justice and Innovative Implementation Initiative (EJII)	The EJII Initiative will advance equitable climate action in Milwaukee's Lindsay Heights neighborhood, a historically disadvantaged community. They hope to create opportunities for frontline voices to influence policy development,

		cultivate broad grassroots collaboration and build resilient communities.
Couillard Solar Foundation, 1000 Friends of Wisconsin	Climate Action Mapping Project (CAMP)*	CAMP will enable more opportunities for connection and collaboration between organizations taking action, volunteers looking for action items, and data ready to be used in meaningful ways. By engaging with grassroots efforts, providing an open-source digital platform for continuous conversations and brainstorming, and synergizing action, we can reduce our negative impacts on the planet faster.
Peoples Science Network	Home Energy Network and Game	The Home Energy Network (HEN) and Game is a two-part project aimed at educating communities about opportunities to save energy and upgrade their homes. The HEN brings organizations together for mutual-education and coordination of webinars and virtual Q&As for residents.
Capital City Muskies Inc.	Muskies in Hot Water	The project intends to reach people in the fishery industries as well as anglers through a presentation on the ways climate change impacts the muskie fishery in Wisconsin. Capital City Muskies board members will follow up with participants to consult on ways to take action on climate change.
Wisconsin Climate Table	Stories of Energy Burden and Climate Change	This project features individuals and neighborhoods on the front lines of climate change in Wisconsin. It includes first-person narratives from people whose marginalization due to factors such as race, income, gender, and/or disability are directly related to the impacts of climate change and/or energy burden they are experiencing.
Center for Community Stewardship	Let's Talk Climate	Let's Talk Climate encourages the formation of small gatherings of people to participate in facilitated conversations around the topic of climate change, as it is not a topic most people discuss. It includes a guide to help with the formation of gatherings as well as the facilitation of groups.

Meet the Need Ministries	ROOT	ROOT is a three phase project aimed at improving the quality of life for residents in the Milwaukee zip codes 53205, 53206 and 53209. These groups are often left out of development decisions, so the project aims to empower them to make decisions about their own communities and environment.
350 Wisconsin	Breaking Down Barriers to Increase Energy Engagement*	This project improves opportunities for, reduces barriers to, and enhances the impact of community participation in Public Service Commission of Wisconsin (PSCW) proceedings and programs to facilitate the achievement of climate and clean energy goals identified in Wisconsin's Clean Energy Plan (CEP).
Midwest Renewable Energy Association (MREA)	Energy Coaching Program	MREA will empower homeowners to make their own energy choices via an Energy Coaching Program which will train and certify local experts to give guidance that helps homeowners work toward energy savings, electrification, and decarbonization.
Beecham Community Center	Faith-based and Community Collaboration	The project brings together church leaders and members, community residents, small businesses, and organizations to collaborate on education and training in environmental justice projects. The project will lower high energy cost burdens, educate people about safe and healthy solutions and result in tangible improvements in quality of life and environment for their communities.
EcoShift Solutions LLC	Climate Ready Homes Together Ambassador Program	EcoShift Solutions plans to create a collaborative community enterprise that will make all homes and apartments climate-ready by 2050 for low- and moderate-income households. The project will empower homeowners to take control of their energy consumption and catalyze resident engagement by making their house/apartment energy efficient to minimize energy burden.
Our Future Milwaukee	Ensuring the Effectiveness of Local	Our Future Milwaukee will help governments address the challenges in

	Climate Action	effectively implementing the over 140 climate action plans adopted by communities across the state of Wisconsin. They will identify and develop resources to help municipalities 1) plan local climate action that embeds assessment, 2) report and monitor the effectiveness of their plans, and 3) assess results.
Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters	Finding Home	The Wisconsin Academy is exploring how to best bring together diverse sectors, geographies, and perspectives to address one of Wisconsin's most pressing challenges: ensuring access to safe, affordable, accessible, and sustainable housing. This project supports the development of programming for the Academy's Finding Home series—an initiative that blends the Academy's climate, science, and humanities work.

*Case studies

Appendix F: Incubator Project Case Studies

See PDF documents provided separately.