How to Crush Climate Change Communication

Paige Millham*, Program on the Environment, University of Washington
Host Organization: King County Emergency Management
Site Supervisor: Jared Schneider, EM Program Manager - Mitigation, King County
Faculty Advisor: Ann Bostrom, Evans School of Policy & Governance, University of Washington

Context & Background

- Failed climate change communication is an issue that has many detrimental effects on both people and the environment.
- King County’s project partners, the people who write the grant applications for and implement projects to better the wellbeing of the county, lack accessibility to the convincing climate related data relevant to their national grant applications.
- Making climate data available clearly and concisely for project partners is difficult due to the diversity of climate related issues and potential projects.
- Thus, my project aims to increase the likelihood King County is granted the funding by making local climate change data and background information accessible through an education plan.

Research Question

What are the best practices to integrate climate change information into education plans for project partners in King County?

Internship/Methods

Internship:
- Created a climate change education plan for King County’s project partners to make climate data more accessible
- Recorded a presentation of the education plan for future seminars & provided related resources

Research:
- Interviewed 5 climate change experts about the most effective climate communication methods
- Conducted a literary analysis on relevant climate change communication literature

Results

The expert interviews provided the most compelling results:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Themes Experts Emphasized Necessary</th>
<th># of Experts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clear visual aids</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Optimistic tone &amp; solutions</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Space for questions</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local, specific evidence</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repetition of key ideas</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appeal to your audience</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key Findings

- Clear Visual Aids
- Local, Specific Evidence
- Optimistic Tone & Solutions
- Repeat Key Ideas
- Space for Questions
- Appeal to Audience

These findings of the best practices of climate communication were used to develop the education plan presented to project partners.

Significance

The education plan includes all key findings from my research. The accessible climate data resource will be used in the future, which will continue to increase the likelihood of receive funding for projects that benefit the wellbeing of people and the planet. Looking forward, this project is a small steppingstone for the government to increase climate crisis education, specifically its risks and solutions. As climate change communication increases, monetary funding, community efforts, and policy changes will follow, helping to combat a multitude of global issues.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Jared Schneider, Ann Bostrom, POE faculty, my parents, my family, and my friends for all the support they have given me throughout my capstone and collegiate experience.