



## Lessons Learned from Community Engagement Presentation Instructions



### GOT GREEN MISSION & CAMPAIGNS

In 2008, Got Green was founded to fight global warming and poverty at the same time. Our mission is to organize for environmental, racial, and economic justice as a South Seattle-based grassroots organization led by people of color and young adults. We cultivate multi-generational community leaders to be central voices in ensuring that the benefits of the green economy (green jobs, healthy food, energy efficient & healthy homes, public transit) reach low income communities and communities of color.

In 2016, Got Green leaders held a year-long process of collaborative development of our 5-year strategic plan. We envisioned climate resilient and healthy communities around five goals that are pivotal to our mission. These goals include:

1. Local communities of color are more climate resilient and rooted in place.
2. The food security gap is reduced for people of color and low income families.
3. More people of color have access to Green Jobs and Green Job Pathways.
4. Communities of color, (*especially but not limited to young people, workers, women*) are leaders promoting climate justice
5. Our organizational stability and sustainability is increased

## 1. ROOTED IN COMMUNITY

To grow the collective power, we pursue strategies of grassroots community organizing and deep leadership development. Toward this end, we go to where people are and recruit them through door-to-door canvassing, site-based surveying, tabling, educational presentations at schools and community events, and hosting town-halls. We attract community members into Got Green through follow up phone calls, 1:1 relationship building, professional development opportunities, skills training, mentorship, strong presence on media, and winning policies that improve the environmental and economic conditions of our communities.

Got Green's constituents are low-income people and people of color in Seattle and King County. We recognize that many of our community have been pushed out of the city due to gentrification however hold deep roots to the community in South Seattle and are part of the "Seattle diaspora." For this reason, we extend our reach to surrounding King County neighborhoods, such as Skyway, White Center, Lake City, and Renton.

Our leadership consists of low income women, un/underemployed workers, and young adults. We have a base of 60 currently active volunteer leaders, 80% of whom are people of color, as well as over 100 community members who are consistently engaged in education and mobilization activities.

We believe that lifting up the opinions and the voices of disproportionately impacted groups will lead to real solutions for our community. We have 3 grassroots committees to shape and lead Got Green's work:

- The women-led Food Access Team's mission is to close the food security gap, which refers to those who earn too much to qualify for Food Stamps, yet don't make enough to afford healthy, fresh food.
- The Young Leaders in Green Movement committee is leading a campaign to demand that internships – especially in green fields – pay the new minimum wage. The lack of living wage paid internships was a major demand that emerged from their community research.
- The Climate Justice Committee have launched a campaign to fight displacement and make the connections between climate resilience and housing justice.

## 2. SOLUTIONS COME FROM THE COMMUNITY

Over the past decade, Got Green has been a small, but mighty organization with the courage to stand up and speak out and take action, even in the face of our community's most powerful and vested interests and institutions. And against all odds, we have realized many important victories. Our strength is rooted in South Seattle, our organizing home. We have deep and authentic relationships with hundreds of community residents for whom Got Green is a champion on the issues that have the greatest impact in their lives.

Got Green utilizes community-based participatory research, town halls, and door-to-door knocking to identify the priorities, concerns, and solutions coming from the community.

Early on, Got Green was a majority male organization due to the focus on green jobs and the construction industry. To address a gender imbalance and a lack of a gender analysis in the green movement, we launched the Women in the Green Economy Project in 2011, surveying 212 women in Southeast Seattle on their priorities in the Green Economy and hosting 3 roundtables and 1 reportback. The women identified access to healthy foods as their top issue, and the main barrier affordability. This led to the formation of the Food Access Team, a place for women of color to find their voice and influence public policy on issues of food security and affordability.

In 2013, the Young Worker in the Green Economy Project launched to survey young people (ages 18-34) about their priorities for and barriers to creating the futures they envision for themselves; and to center their leadership in shaping Got Green's future work. As a result, Got Green has become an organizing hub where young leaders of color can infuse their ideas and energy throughout the organization and the broader community.

In 2015, after a series of conversations with our leadership and the community, Got Green formed the Climate Justice steering committee to develop a community survey with Puget Sound Sage on the impacts of climate change on people of color in South Seattle. We interviewed 150 residents and 30 organizations. Over one third of survey participants identified displacement from their communities as the primary, external threat. And not just displacement of households, but erosion of cultural anchors like community centers, culturally relevant businesses, faith institutions, and service providers. We released the report of its findings and recommendations, [Our People Our Planet Our Power](#).

Our organizing is grounded in a racial equity-centered approach to climate resilience. The top three takeaways will be: methodology of community-driven research and strategy, the community's top concerns and priorities regarding climate change, and community's view of what resilience looks on the ground.

### 3. ADDRESSING SYSTEMIC HEALTH INEQUALITIES

**LOW INCOME FAMILIES CAN'T AFFORD HEALTHY FOOD:** Our Food Access Team won significant funds for the Fresh Bucks program in 2014 and the Sugary Drink tax in 2017, which will generate resources dedicated to closing the food security gap. The food security gap refers to those who earn too much to qualify for SNAP/Food Stamps, yet don't make enough to afford healthy, fresh food. The very people often left out of policy and systems change – people of color and low-income women -yet disproportionately impacted by food policy, are rising up and strategizing together on how to best address this food security gap.

**YOUNG ADULTS OF COLOR NEED A PATHWAY TO OPPORTUNITIES:** On the heels of a Targeted Local Hire victory, the Young Leaders in Green Movement committee launched a campaign to demand that internships – especially in green fields – pay the new minimum

wage. In 2013, young adult leaders surveyed their peers and learned that while the media paints a picture of a nation emerging from the Great Recession, young people of color in Seattle are not. Thirty-two percent of young people surveyed were unemployed and of those working, 75% earn less than the living wage for a single adult. The lack of living wage paid internships was a major demand that emerged.

**CLIMATE CHANGE DISPROPORTIONATELY IMPACTS PEOPLE OF COLOR:** Climate change is the worst threat to racial justice. Communities of color live in the most polluted and under-resourced neighborhoods, and face higher rates of health and economic disparities. We are already feeling the impacts of global warming, from flooding to heat waves, to displacement. In the coming years, we will see a rise of costs to energy, food, housing, and other basic needs. As cities prepare for climate change impacts, Got Green will work to ensure that the most marginalized communities are not left out but leading.

**HOW GOT GREEN BUILDS POWER:** 1) Identify issues emerging from our constituents' experiences; 2) Build constituent-led committees to lead the work; 3) Find coalition partners who add value; 4) Lead strategic campaigns to change public policies; 5) Show strength in numbers; 6) Build lasting organization with deep and broad leadership and strong infrastructure.

#### 4. HEALTHY WORK ENVIRONMENT HELD BY COMMUNITY

Got Green's organizational values are Leadership, Self-Determination, Community, and Transformation. We are building leaders from communities of color and those most impacted by environmental and economic injustice. The decisions and change must come from community; those most impacted by injustice are the experts in their experience. We are building community through healthy and sustainable relationships, and creating a fun and welcoming environment. Lastly, we are part of a larger intersectional movement to create a more equitable society. In order to fight climate change and poverty, we must undo racism and other systems of oppression.

Our majority POC staff and leadership serve as a powerful engine for advancing our social justice and environmental sustainability agenda. Got Green includes some of the most skilled and effective organizers in the region, as demonstrated by the important progress we have made across our spectrum of issues. For us, as an organization fighting for racial, gender, environmental, and economic justice, we have to walk our talk in our practices by offering flexible, living wage positions with benefits while creating a healthy work environment.

## 5. CHALLENGES

“With the money I make I can just afford to cover my basic needs. I can’t save to see my family who live back east, which means I haven’t seen them in 3 years, I have to take any job I can find, which has usually meant low-wage service jobs, and with skyrocketing rents I have had to stay in a living situation that if I had choice, I would not be in. Even with everything that’s going on with me, I want to do what’s right for the earth and my community.” Yolanda Matthews, Food Access Team and Got Green Board Member.

“If the solutions reflect only the privileged and don’t encompass everybody, there isn’t going to be progress made in environmentalism. Got Green provides the intersection of environmental justice, racial justice, and economic justice. You got to tackle all those things if you’re going to make substantial progress. Folks need to be pushing from the bottom up.” Inye Wokoma, former Board Chair

With rising costs to living in the city, an housing averaging at \$800,000 and heightened displacement of low-income communities of color, due to the rapid development of the city, we are losing both community and cultural cornerstones, neighborhoods, and spaces in Seattle. Meanwhile our young people are contributing significantly to household budgets while facing racialized policing in the school to prison pipeline. Especially as record tuition costs continue to be a barrier to college entry for low-income young people, access to jobs paying the living wage means not only economic vitality but is also a recognition of the contributions young people are making to their families.

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We are continually finding ways to support the wellbeing of our members. Got Green has increased our budget for healthy meals, transportation, and childcare to support member participation, as well as created opportunities for training that invests in their leadership and professional development. In times of crisis, Got Green has been able to provide a space of support and connect them to resources. Members stay involved, because the issues they are working on are relevant to them and they have a sense of community. Still, issues

of displacement and under-employment are taking apart our communities and we are struggling to keep folks engaged despite these challenges.

## 6. ANOTHER WORLD IS POSSIBLE

Got Green envisions healthy and resilient communities where all people are able to: (1) work meaningful jobs that nourish our earth, our communities, and our souls; (2) eat affordable, healthy food that is grown with dignity for workers and the environment; (3) live in safe and sustainable housing, rooted in climate resilient neighborhoods; (4) and care for our environment in our relationship to the land, the climate, and each other. It is this vision that guides the way that we organize and build up the community.