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## **Small Business Clean Energy Program**

### **Strategic Case:**

Small business is a critical voice in key policy debates from health care to environmental protection to taxes. Small businesses can serve as powerful messengers with decision-makers, the media and the public, but for decades the claim to representing small businesses has been monopolized by narrow corporate interests. National business lobby groups like the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and National Federation of Independent Business organize around a strictly anti-tax and anti-regulation agenda, portraying small businesses as uniformly rejecting shared responsibility and a role for government in promoting a healthy economy and healthy communities.

Many small business owners, however, don't feel that these groups represent their values. Small business owners tend to care much more about the wellbeing of their employees and of the communities they serve rather than corporate CEOs or distant shareholders. This disconnect creates a strategic opening for organizing with small business owners around a more inclusive set of small business values – values like trust, inclusion, sustainability and giving back to the community.

### **Goals and Objectives:**

This pilot program will establish small businesses as supportive of clean energy and green jobs initiatives. The Iowa Main Street Alliance will produce fact sheets and information specific to the interests of small businesses, and organize small businesses to speak out in favor of clean energy and green jobs legislation in Iowa and Washington DC.

### **Conduct outreach and participatory research to build the small business case for Clean Energy and Green Jobs Legislation.**

- Conduct surveys of small business owners in 7 Iowa communities to determine interest in and knowledge of impacts clean energy legislation on small business owners.
- Produce research reports and other products (fact sheets, successful case studies, presentations) that articulate the MSA's values-based perspectives on Clean Energy and Green Jobs.

### **Expand Main Street Alliance's Base and Develop New Leadership.**

- Develop model small business outreach materials on federal energy legislation;
- Recruit 200 new small business supporters for federal energy legislation and develop current supporters into spokespeople and leaders.
- Conduct business to business outreach, including neighborhood walks and group presentations where small business leaders engage and educate their peers on this issue.
- Provide media and message training for a team of 8-12 small business spokespeople on energy legislation.
- Strengthen the Iowa Main Street Alliance's steering committee;

### **Educate and Mobilize Small Business Owners, Decision-Makers and the Public on Federal Energy Legislation.**

- Organize visibility events to announce and articulate the small business case for federal climate change/energy legislation.
- Hold meetings and roundtables with targeted decision-makers and their representatives to advance and make the case for action on federal energy legislation.
- Organize call-in days, letter-writing campaigns and other activities that give small business owners opportunities to go on record with their views and values.
- Work with small business owners to engage, educate and win support from local community leaders whose participation will help advance our priorities.
- Organize creative visibility campaigns in high traffic areas (such as window signs or stamps on coffee shops' disposable coffee cups) to demonstrate broad small business support for federal climate change/energy legislation.
- Highlight small business voices in the public debate by setting up spokespeople to participate in public events organized by state and national coalition partners.

### **Amplify Small Business Voices in the Media**

- Establish Iowa Main Street Alliance as a go-to resource for policy-makers and media looking for small business perspectives on a broad range of policy issues including federal energy legislation.
- Position our small business spokespeople to project their voices and values into the media narrative on our issues.
- Pitch stories highlighting how coalition small business owners are impacted by federal energy legislation to targeted state and national reporters.
- Develop lists of spokespeople and respond to reporters' requests by connecting them directly to small business owners for interviews and quotes.
- Work with small business owners to produce and submit op-eds and letters to the editor conveying small business views on federal energy legislation.
- Distribute regular press statements with quotes from small business owners commenting on issue developments to keep the coalition and our spokespeople in the mix of voices weighing in on current issues.