Broad Renewable Energy Messaging Themes

Who is my audience? What values do they bring to decision-making? What messaging reaffirms their values and addresses their concerns?

- Ideologically conservative?
- From Greater Minnesota?
- Engaged in conventional agriculture?
- Part of a church women’s organization?
- Concerned with hunger & poverty?
- Justice oriented?
- A person of faith?
- Various of these?

Which of the following messages works with my audience?

Don’t go overboard trying to say everything to everyone! *Note:* “Clean Energy” terminology usually refers to both energy efficiency and renewable energy.

Economics/Business
- Bipartisan state policy in Minnesota has enabled the fast growth in wind and solar jobs
- Two Minnesota companies in the last decade installed 70% of all solar and wind projects in North America
- Biggest companies in MN are urging their power companies to provide them with more renewable energy or 100% renewable energy
- Target has goal to run their entire US operations on clean energy; Starting by putting solar on the roofs of 500 Target stores.
- Walmart (nationwide) has become a major solar energy user (Claim they are recognized as one of the largest on-site renewable energy users in America by Solar Energy Industry Association)
  - “[U]sing the power of the sun and installing solar panels lowers our energy costs and is clearly good for the environment, but another benefit is that it keeps prices low for our customers.” (Walmart website)

Faith
- God calls us to be good stewards of creation
- When God calls us to be “in right relationship” with others, it means our human and non-human neighbors. We should be in right relationship with all that God has created
- God calls us to love. That extends to the entire creation.

Jobs (extension of economic theme)
- Minnesota has grown almost 60,000 clean energy jobs (renewable & efficiency)
  - 30% of them in rural Minnesota
  - Pay 42% higher than the state average wage
- Clean energy jobs grew 4-7 times faster than the MN economy as a whole over last 10 years
- Local folks around MN are starting to ask how they can maximize the clean energy sector as an important part of their community
- [Do you know stories of young adults/young families from small towns who now work in their home communities and are raising their kids in those hometowns? Tell their story. Lutheran Advocacy-MN will be creating a resource with some of the stories]

Markets (needs further development)
- Choice, Competition, Markets, Power are key words
- “Energy is about markets, competition and choice and freeing up customers from an outdated system that’s been here for 60+ years.”
- Energy is an input – constantly looking for system efficiencies & if renewable energy is cost competitive, it’s worth using

Continued on backside
Health
- Power plants (nationwide) emit more than two billion tons of carbon dioxide and other toxic pollutants into our air each year
- Air and water pollution caused by coal plant emissions and natural gas extraction is linked to breathing problems, neurological damage, heart attacks, and cancer
- [Do you, or a friend, suffer from asthma that is triggered by pollutants in the air? Tell your own story]

Cost-Saving/Money Generating
- Energy conservation and efficiency are the crucial bedrock for keeping energy prices low and making renewable energy possible
- Tax benefits from windfarms are benefitting rural communities & county governments allowing better responsiveness to local needs
- Utility company executives are reporting publicly that building wind farms is cheaper than just buying the fuel for their lowest-cost coal plant
- Minnesota’s power sector kept prices affordable over last 10 years while getting us to 18% renewable energy in 2017 (And higher percentage of clean energy when energy efficiency included)
- Xcel Energy (Minnesota’s biggest utility) intends to reach 60% renewable by 2030 because it is the most cost effective thing to do

World Changing & Changing Quickly
- The clean energy revolution is under way driven by rapidly declining costs
- Experiencing benefits of the 4th and 5th generation of wind and solar technologies
- Storage technologies have improved dramatically in last two years
  - Other countries are installing massive storage (batteries, other)
- Solar economics have improved to the point that, in most cases now in MN, solar is cheaper than natural gas
- Building wind farms in Minnesota is cheaper than just the fuel for the state’s cheapest coal plants
- The United Kingdom, France, and China will not be allowing sale of new fossil-fuel powered vehicles within next 3-8 years (India on track to make same decision)

Environment
- Transitioning from fossil fuel burning will help preserve Minnesota’s lakes, rivers, streams, and drinking water from mercury and other water pollution
- [This messaging is easy to find from many environmental groups]

2007 Renewable Energy Standard
- MN state GDP grew 27% since 2007 Renewable Energy Standard (better than other states)
- We grew the economy while growing renewable energy and getting the clean air and clean water benefits
- Xcel Energy (Minnesota’s biggest utility) will get to 35 percent renewable energy by 2022 (8 years early)
- Xcel Energy (Minnesota’s biggest utility) intends to reach 60% renewables by 2030 because it is the most cost effective thing to do
- The first Renewable Energy Standard was very broadly bipartisan & was supported by Gov. Pawlenty (Similarly, the current RES legislation is bipartisan)

Other Messages
- As the power sector gets cleaner and cleaner, we can modernize other sectors of the economy by electrifying them: electric cars, electric school buses, and efficient heat pumps to heat our water (all work well in Minnesota) - That creates even more jobs
- Solar panels produce electricity more efficiently at cold temperatures
- Community solar gardens allow many more Minnesotans to be part of the clean energy economy
- Wind and solar energy don’t compete for water with agriculture, drinking water, or other needs
- Renewable energy keeps rates stable (fossil fuel commodities have broad swings up and down in costs, impacting utilities and rates they must charge)

Wording that Sometimes Backfires
- Global Warming (even Climate Change)
- ‘Big Oil’, Evil/Bad Fossil Fuels or Fossil Fuel Industries

Final Message: State policy (Renewable Energy Standard) brought us these benefits. Now, we have the opportunity to generate even more benefits across MN by adopting stronger standards.