

Project Title:

Low Carbon Economy Michigan

Project Description:

Put a focus on the Danish Example, how to reduce carbon and create green jobs, in the State of Michigan

Learning Point:

Collaboration with decision makers and influencers on several levels and with different interests can take your message further than if only communicating with the ones who agree with you or those in the highest level.

Organisation:

Danish Foreign Ministry

Case study

Approaches:

Listening
Facilitation
Exchange

Themes:

Sustainability

Scenario:

Denmark is hosting the UN Climate Change Conference in December 2009. In this context the Danish Embassy has undertaken several PD activities to support the goal of the conference – to get a new global agreement to replace the Kyoto protocol.

In Denmark, the oil crisis in the 1970s led to alternative ways of thinking sources of energy.

The Danish Example tells the story of how Denmark has managed to keep national energy consumption at 1970s level, expand export economy by a factor of three, achieved 2.2% unemployment and maintained one of the highest standards of living in the world.

Michigan is a carbon producing state and the state's primary industry is the car industry. As a consequence of the economic recession, the unemployment level in Michigan has increased.

The state needs to re-invent its economy to reduce unemployment, and unless a focus on climate can have a positive impact on job creation, it can be difficult to convince the state to set climate on the agenda and work on carbon-reduction.

Within the issue of climate, Michigan can be considered a 'swing state'. If the state

can be convinced to “go green”, the rest of the US will most likely come along.

Introducing the Danish Example to Michigan and let them know that creating green jobs as well as invest in alternative energy sources is not equal to loss of profitability or lower standards of living, is therefore important in order to get the US’ commitment to reach a new global agreement at COP15.

Program Activity:

The Danish Embassy worked together with the non-profit organization The Climate Group and Michigan state Governor Jennifer M. Granholm to host the summit “Switching Gears: The Future of Low Carbon Manufacturing in the Midwest” at University of Michigan.



Invited to the summit were senior-level climate, energy and environment representatives from Michigan companies, non-profit organizations, academics, and federal congressional staff.

The purpose of the summit was to find business potentials within climate-friendly production (especially within the car- and manufacturing industries), which could create new markets and opportunities for companies located in Michigan.

The program included two panel discussions. The first discussion treated manufacturing opportunities associated with the shift towards an energy-efficient, low-carbon economy and provided insight and examples from prominent Midwest and Danish CEOs.

The second panel discussion concerned manufacturing opportunities associated with worldwide growth in electric vehicles and examples from global leaders in electric vehicles and battery systems was presented.

The Danish Embassy and Danish Ministry of Climate and Energy provided the

example of Denmark's successful transition to a low-carbon economy and offered their perspective on COP15.

The Danish Minister and Michigan's Governor signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) as a sign on commitment to working with the region. The MoU included agreeing to high-level dialogue, fact-finding missions and sharing of information and technology to work with Michigan and other Midwestern states in their transition to a new energy economy.



Analysis:

By working with local actors the agenda of a foreign country can reach a large and relevant audience.

Endorsed by the Climate Group and Michigan governor, the message of the Danish Example has gained a larger degree of credibility among local American stakeholders.

Supporters and sceptics of a green economy have received the message, and by letting them interact with each other through dialogue and knowledge sharing, the understanding and willingness to cooperate has increased.

The summit is only one initiative in reaching the goal of COP15, but having the support of Michigan, home of the car industry, is an important step when reaching the rest of the US.

Sources and Links:

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<http://www.ambwashington.um.dk/en/menu/TheEmbassy/News/DanishMinisterForClimateAndEnergySignsMemorandumOfUnderstandingWithMichigansGovernor.htm>

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