# WINONA COUNTY ENERGY DIALOGUE

**JUNE 2018** 



Rural communities play a key role in our energy, climate, and agricultural future. However, they are often overlooked when it comes to policy solutions and civic engagement. The Rural Dialogues, launched by the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy and the Jefferson Center in 2013, seek to change that.

The Rural Dialogues develop community-specific, citizen-driven policy recommendations at the local level to ensure rural voices are heard at the statehouse and beyond. The events focus on the topics of climate change, extreme weather events, and community resiliency.

Our approach is based on the notion that unleashing the diversity of a community is the best way to solve tough problems. In the Dialogues, we gather a small but representative group of a community to act on behalf of their friends and neighbors over multiple days of learning and discussion, through a process called the Citizens Jury. Participants in the Citizens Jury filter critical information to share with the rest of the community and develop recommendations to address top challenges and realize key opportunities. We also create opportunities for the rest of the community to learn from their peers, weigh in on recommendations, and take action themselves.

### The Winona County Energy Dialogue was the last of three community events in the Rural Energy Dialogues program, which seeks to drive the development of energy policy that works for everyone.

Through in-depth democratic deliberation, this project is intended to offer new opportunities for communities in Greater Minnesota to consider the future of local energy and offer informed input to shape energy policy and action across the state.

The Jefferson Center and the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, along with local partners and leaders, will work to identify resources and other forms of assistance to move the following community energy recommendations forward.

The Rural Dialogues help overcome the misperception that all rural communities feel the same way about action on energy policy. Instead, rural Minnesota communities have the opportunity to tell a different story—one in which rural residents are powerful leaders in an energy future representing their needs and priorities.

The project is a collaboration between the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy and the Jefferson Center. The effort is sponsored by the McKnight Foundation, the Bush Foundation, and the Carolyn Foundation.



# **DIALOGUE PROCESS OVERVIEW**

The 2-day Winona County Climate Dialogue engaged a group of 19 community members selected to represent the demographics of Winona County. 13 participants were randomly selected from a pool of Winona County residents to reflect the demographic makeup of the county in terms of age, gender, education, political affiliation, and more. 6 participants were chosen to represent public officials and others involved in Winona County energy issues.

Over the two days, participants studied the energy system in detail, assessed criteria for evaluating the energy system, identified challenges and opportunities related to the energy system in Winona County, and created action plans to help address challenges and realize opportunities. The report below is written by participants themselves, outlining the information they studied and the recommendations they made. For more detail, including the information considered and the material generated by participants, please visit:

www.bit.ly/WinonaDialogueResources and ruraldialogues.org/Winona-county

#### DAY 1

- » Panelists meet one another and discuss goals and expectations for the 2 days
- » Panelists evaluate criteria of a productive energy system and their reasons why those criteria may be important to Winona County
- » Presentation by Lissa Pawlisch (University of Minnesota Extension) reviewing energy basics and trends in Minnesota
- » Presentation by Eli Massey (MISO) on energy sources
- » Panel discussion including Nathan Franklin (Dairyland Power Cooperative), Kyle Karger (City of Saint Charles), and Ross Lexvold (Xcel Energy) exploring local utilities and decision-making.

#### DAY 2

- » Presentation by Ben Bratrud (Citizens Utility Board of Minnesota) on the impacts of the energy system on household energy consumers
- » Presentation by Jim Goblirsch (Winona State University) on the impacts of the energy system on business/industry energy consumers
- » Panelists identify and select top challenges
- » Panelists identify and select top opportunities
- » Panelists identify next steps for community action
- » Panelists write final statement to their neighbors



# STATEMENT FOR OUR NEIGHBORS

The Winona County Energy Dialogue featured a wide collection of opinions, perspectives, and great ideas from people from all walks of life and across the county. It was a productive conversation that helped bring shape to the major themes and concerns for Winona County's present and future energy situation. We reviewed a lot of technical details and other information about our energy system in order to highlight the key information and recommendations in the report below.

To start, the energy system is changing, and there's much Winona County can do to help shape our energy system. But that change will take time and investment. We need to continually educate ourselves on energy and related issues. We also need to actively educate our neighbors, children, and officials to make a positive impact in our community and beyond.

We can do more to conserve energy and use energy efficiently. We can research what's trending our way, like new technology and renewable energy. And government is not the only solution to energy issues. All of us, as citizens or the private sector, can be involved.

While we didn't agree on every topic or issue, there was more consensus than we expected. We hope you find this report informative and useful. Give it a chance!

#### KEY ENERGY INFORMATION

- » Minnesota utilities have met the Renewable Energy Standard goal of providing at least 25% of electricity generation from renewable sources 8 years early
- » Residential electricity prices have increased by 85% since 2001
- » Increasing energy efficiency results in less energy use overall. Energy efficiency should come before energy conservation, and there are incentives for both in Minnesota.
- » Minnesota doesn't produce any oil or natural gas. We currently get 70% of energy from fossil fuels we don't produce in-state, although we are starting to shift towards renewables.
- » Solar, wind and other renewable options are rising in popularity and availability.



# CRITERIA FOR OUR ENERGY SYSTEM



The following are the four criteria of a productive energy system considered by participants, with their reasons why those criteria may be important to Winona County.

## RELIABILITY: THE ENERGY SYSTEM CAN MEET THE ENERGY DEMANDS OF CONSUMERS CONSISTENTLY, INCLUDING DURING EXTREME EVENTS.

Reliability is important because:

- » Additional costs- weaken pipes
  - » Equipment damages
  - » Lost time
- » Safety and health issues- emergency room nights
  - » Fatalities
  - » All the alarms won't work, equipment malfunctions
- » If not reliable you are going to look elsewhere
- » To count on energy so, its gives you a sense of security, feel stable and move forward

## AFFORDABILITY: CONSUMERS CAN AFFORD ENOUGH ENERGY TO MEET THEIR ENERGY NEEDS.

Affordability is important because:

- » Energy use is important to meet basic needs
- » Energy should be available to all regardless of income
- » Energy is important to all our lives, and requires careful use to consume responsibly
- » Consumers don't have much control over energy costs, unlike other budget items
- » Manageable energy costs allow for families to improve their lives and invest in the economy
- » Lack of affordability can limit growth. If a person or company cannot afford the energy to produce a product then work or product will not be available

### MINIMIZING POLLUTION AND/OR CLIMATE CHANGE: THE ENERGY SYSTEM ACCOUNTS FOR THE IMPACTS OF POLLUTION AND/OR CLIMATE CHANGE.

Minimizing pollution and/or climate change is important because:

- » Pollution and climate is a community issue that requires community action to solve
- » Pollution and climate situation currently impacts future generations  $\rightarrow$  ("We're at a tipping point")
- » There needs to be balance between current energy affordability and future negative consequences of pollution and climate extremes
- » Pollution and climate have significant impact on health, economy, resources for our community

#### SUPPORTS LOCAL JOBS AND LOCAL INVESTMENT: THE ENERGY SYSTEM SUPPORTS LOCAL ECONOMIC ACTIVITY, INCLUDING THROUGH JOBS OR OTHER ECONOMIC INVESTMENTS LOCALLY.

Supporting local jobs and local investment is important because:

- » Teamwork cycles resources locally
- » Keeps us able to support our individuals and cycle resources back in locally
- » Local incomes keeps us happy
- » Local incomes keeps us close and caring
- » Supports our local infrastructure which has great qualities

# **TOP CHALLENGES**



The following top challenges for Winona County's energy system are ranked by priority. Participants assigned their highest priority challenge with 3 points, their second-highest priority challenge with 2 points, and their third-highest priority challenge with 1 point.

- 1. It's a challenge to improve existing infrastructure while taking advantage of current technologies and preparing for security and distribution issues because it takes considerable time and resources, and risks and responses vary across different-sized utilities. (30 points)
- 2. Providing the necessary service at a reasonable cost makes it challenging to comply with emissions standards because sometimes regulations and demands on utilities and providers can increase costs. (19 points) tied
- 3. Education, about energy topics generally and awareness of energy initiatives specifically, is a challenge and needs to include the pros, cons, and implications in at least the following the areas: consumers regarding information on their bill; school-age regarding systems, creative approaches; energy efficiency programs have reached the point of diminishing returns; education and development around new building standards. (19 points) tied
- Finding adequate, cost-effective storage, lowering regulations, and maintaining efficiency, cost effectiveness and stability in the energy delivery system is a challenge because this takes cooperation and investment from a wide range of organizations, policymakers, and individuals. (12 points)
- 5. It's a challenge to improve efficiency at power plant generation, transmission, and storage levels to accommodate renewable resources because not every provider has the same capacity and not all consumers are prepared to use these resources. (9 points)

- Energy resources coming from out-of-state present a challenge because it changes the economic, regulatory, and delivery system, which can increase costs and reduce efficiency. (7 points) – tied
- Making cost-effective investments in energy systems that will have long-term benefits is a challenge because we have limited funds and there are diminishing returns for savings. (7 points) – tied
- 8. The cost to research, build, and maintain energy systems needs to be distributed equitably not all on consumers and not all on taxes/incentives, etc. (5 points)
- 9. Research is a challenge because policy makers and the public need to evaluate and analyze the options, which relates to the need for education. Public buildings could be involved in providing models for research. (4 points)
- 10. Improvements to historical buildings are a challenge because of legacy costs and aging equipment stock. (3 points)
- 11. Purposeful and effective planning of new developments to allow for renewable energy usage is a challenge because there is uncertainty regarding costs and future needs. (2 points)
- Settling the economics of who pays is a challenge when considering increasing electric vehicle (EV) use and the availability and economics of EV infrastructure because the changes will be significant and not all people/areas will be prepared to adapt to changes or invest equally. (0 points)

# **TOP OPPORTUNITIES**



The following top opportunities for Winona County's energy system are ranked by priority. Participants assigned their highest priority opportunity with 3 points, their second-highest priority opportunity with 2 points, and their third-highest priority opportunity with 1 point.

- 1. Offering education and involving residents, especially children, and policymakers to make informed decisions and to change habits of energy consumption and understanding where energy is generated to realize the pros and cons of various methods is an opportunity because more people being aware of how they can support affordable, reliable energy throughout their life can have a large impact on usage and costs. (31 points)
- 2. Encouraging local options, including having conventional and renewable energy generated locally, with generation and infrastructure built and maintained by local workers, trained locally, is an opportunity because this could help support local investment and jobs by reducing overall costs for local residents and businesses. (21 points)
- 3. We need to develop and implement new advances in technology and the many proven services in use, including potentially bioenergy, renewable energy, or other technologies, when possible, because these will help diversify our energy options and could help make energy more affordable to produce and deliver. (17 points)
- 4. New technology and programs, such as savings programs, can increase information sharing between utilities and customers and customer participation in programs, which can increase efficiency, reduce confusion during outages, lower rates for consumers, and help utilities manage demand. (12 points)
- 5. Reducing costs by using incentives, research and development in things such as energy storage, and reducing transmission costs by installing more distributed generation, which is

usually closer to point of use, is an opportunity because this can help provide more stable, lower cost energy delivery to consumers. (8 points)

- 6. Increased efficiencies through technology has the potential for increased production growth of low-cost sustainable energy options because the more efficiently it can be developed and delivered the lower the cost to consumers. (7 points)
- 7. The opportunity is that we have a lot of options to consider because there are new advances in technology and there are many proven services in use. (3 points) tied
- 8. Improving transportation infrastructure is an opportunity because it will lead to: efficient energy production (easier to adapt power plants for efficient production than individual cars); promote savings in energy efficiency reflected in EV use- buses, trolleys, individual drivers and carpool options. (3 points) tied
- 9. Designing and constructing residential and commercial buildings to make better use of efficiency and renewables is an opportunity because significant energy savings can be designed into new construction. (2 points) tied
- 10. Incentives are an opportunity because they provide a means to inspire positive action. (2 points)
  tied

# **DRAFT ACTION PLANS**



#### CHALLENGE #1: IMPROVING EXISTING INFRASTRUCTURE

It's a challenge to improve existing infrastructure while taking advantage of current technologies and preparing for security and distribution issues because it takes considerable time and resources, and risks and responses vary across different-sized utilities.

#### As individuals, Winona County residents could...

- » Keep learning about energy issues and advances in tech
- » Support policies that fund infrastructure investment
- » Personal home improvements with Energy Audits from Semcac\*
- » Note the positives and negatives of current structure

#### As a community, we could...

- » Build awareness of options for infrastructure investment
  - » Such as town hall or community discussion
- » Community organizational outreach (ex. Lions Club)
- » Conduct Energy Audits with SEMCAC

#### If we were to implement this Action Plan, we should think about/be aware of...

- » Need cohesive messaging
- » Need money for mailings and ads

<sup>\*</sup> SEMCAC is a community action agency that operates in Winona County

- » Need volunteers and thought leaders
- » All of these require human effort, the time to reach people, leadership, and a communication plan

#### How could we communicate this information to our community?

- » Mailings, flyers, and posters (low difficulty / low impact)
- » Email / Facebook (low difficulty / low impact)
- » Word of mouth / door-to-door (med difficulty / high impact)

#### What might we, as participants in the Dialogue, do to help realize this opportunity?

- » Share information with friends, family, coworkers, neighbors
- » Provide report developed today and resource (contact info, statistics, etc.)

### Who else could be involved in the next steps (individuals, organizations, government agencies, elected officials, etc.,)? What might they do?

- » Local civic action groups
- » Local business partners (med difficulty / high impact)
- » Local service and community groups (Eagles, Lions, etc.) (low difficulty / med impact)
- » Local government and schools (city council, mayor, public works (med difficulty / high impact)
- » Share information with their members
- » Donate and / or volunteer
- » Apply for grants

#### CHALLENGE #2: PROVIDING AFFORDABLE SERVICES

Providing the necessary service at a reasonable cost makes it challenging to comply with emissions standards because sometimes regulations and demands on utilities and providers can increase costs.

#### As individuals, Winona County residents could...

- » Participate in programs (Energy Efficiency, Community Solar Gardens, Ethanol Production)
- » Attend Utility Board meetings

#### As a community, we could...

- » Review or loosen regulations
- » Construct Behind the Meter\* solar and wind
- » Research

#### If we were to implement this Action Plan, we should think about/be aware of...

- » Costs (\$)
- » Willingness to participate
- » Recruiting
- » Time

#### How could we communicate this information to our community?

- » Utility bill flyer
- » Focused website
- » Forums
- » Mail
- » Door hangers
- » Regular news media
- » Reach out to public officials

#### What might we, as participants in the Dialogue, do to help realize this opportunity?

- » Share individually to our neighbors, rotary, public officials
- » Function as a committee

### Who else could be involved in the next steps (individuals, organizations, government agencies, elected officials, etc.,)? What might they do?

- » News media/Public TV
- » Schools
- » Senior Friendship center
- » Help educate general public

<sup>\*.</sup> Behind the meter generation refers to an energy generating facility, such as solar PV, that produces power on site

#### CHALLENGE #3: EDUCATING THE PUBLIC

Education, about energy topics generally and awareness of energy initiatives specifically, is a challenge and needs to include the pros, cons, and implications in at least the following the areas: consumers regarding information on their bill; school-age regarding systems, creative approaches; energy efficiency programs have reached the point of diminishing returns; education and development around new building standards.

#### As individuals, Winona County residents could...

- » Self Learn- Be given web links and names of books etc., search online, ask energy provider to explain bill
- » View energy bill and watch explanation video from energy companies-bring awareness of what is in their bill, where their information is coming from, and lifestyle practices that can change to create benefits.
- » Find your own individual sources of information
- » Ask for information from power companies
- » Tell people of things we could do to save energy and do a web page search for information in order to do energy savings together.
- » Pay attention to your energy bill. Notice trends and research where to conserve energy and become more efficient.
- » Energy Provider provides points for educating yourself.
- » Online Games

#### As a community, we could...

- » Implement a school curriculum (state generated)
- » Start young in classrooms with educational literature and presentations. Find people that are passionate and encourage energy saving habits.
- » Central Hub-- a website with links to other resources and relevant information. Games for kids.
- » Invest in local generation and involve the local community in generation decisions.
- » We can have public hearing from qualified people to speak to the topic.
- » Send literature home with kids for parents to review on how to become efficient.
- » Offer community education classes free to families so that kids can have consistency from school to home when it comes to becoming efficient.
- » Create "lottery program" from those who complete training classes.
- » Establish Energy Advocate team in community.
- » Energy presentations at schools
- » Establish "Education Credit" that discounts energy bill if the user completes an educational course. Example: driver's education.
- » Develop school age curriculum.
- » Fair Booths.

#### If we were to implement this Action Plan, we should think about/be aware of...

- » Schools' willingness to get on board with providing time to promote education on energy conservation and efficiency.
- » Department of Education would need to create a curriculum standard to match energy conservation, renewables, etc.
- » State of Minnesota fund the curriculum and teacher trainings.

#### How could we communicate this information to our community?

- » Get more utility involvement have a contest and reward the winner
- » Have an "information nugget" printed on energy bills
- » Websites, newspaper, seminars, literature, and actual examples
- » Videotape "energy saving" speaker and put it on the city's website (on the page where people log into their account to pay their bill)

#### What might we, as participants in the Dialogue, do to help realize this opportunity?

- » We could contact our power company
- » We could contact the Public Utility Commission
- » We could serve on an energy dialogue
- » We could talk to our friends and neighbors
- » We could use our personal connections bring awareness, be an example, share stories
- » Present to the city council, and televise the presentation

### Who else could be involved in the next steps (individuals, organizations, government agencies, elected officials, etc.,)? What might they do?

- » Habitat for Humanity ReStore<sup>\*</sup> could teach energy saving home improvements
- » Power companies
- » Local government
- » Public utility



\* Habitat for Humanity Restores are nonprofit home improvement stores and donation centers.

#### OPPORTUNITY #1: EDUCATING AND INVOLVING THE COMMUNITY

Offering education and involving residents, especially children, and policymakers to make informed decisions and to change habits of energy consumption and understanding where energy is generated to realize the pros and cons of various methods is an opportunity because more people being aware of how they can support affordable, reliable energy throughout their life can have a large impact on usage and costs.

#### As individuals, Winona County residents could...

- » Bring to public
- » Email / letter to school
- » Interact with utility company

#### As a community, we could...

- » Network with local events
- » Civic action groups
- » Community groups (ex. PTA groups, church)

#### If we were to implement this Action Plan, we should think about/be aware of...

- » Effective data tools (brochure?)
- » Reach out to circle of influencers
- » Social media

#### How could we communicate this information to our community?

» Through personal group networking

#### What might we, as participants in the Dialogue, do to help realize this opportunity?

- » Contacts personal and community contacts
- » Library
- » City Council and government
- » Schools
- » Churches

### Who else could be involved in the next steps (individuals, organizations, government agencies, elected officials, etc.,)? What might they do?

- » Boy and Girl Scouts
- » Interfaith Power and Light\*
- » 4-H Club
- » MN University Extension Services
- » Future Farmers of America
- » Project FINE\*\*
- » Branching to groups to reach available funding

<sup>\*.</sup> Interfaith Power and Light is a network working on a faith-based response to climate change.

<sup>\*\*.</sup> Project FINE provides support services to refugees and immigrants in Winona County.

#### OPPORTUNITY #2: BUILDING LOCAL ENERGY INFRASTRUCTURE

Encouraging local options, including having conventional and renewable energy generated locally, with generation and infrastructure built and maintained by local workers, trained locally, is an opportunity because this could help support local investment and jobs by reducing overall costs for local residents and businesses.

#### As individuals, Winona County residents could...

- » Make investments into local energy producers.
- » Bring topics to local officials.
- » Support building local infrastructure
- » Start a local co-op.
- » Buy solar/wind/geothermal for your own home.
- » Look into local contractors/ manufacturers first

#### As a community, we could...

- » Develop path to navigate regulation for companies that want to build new generation.
- » Community college programs to educate local people for energy career skills.
- » Debt forgiveness programs for locally trained people that commit to staying local for a period of time.
- » Create attractive business regulations/incentives.

#### If we were to implement this Action Plan, we should think about/be aware of...

- » Funding (public or private)
- » Community Commitment (buy-in)
- » Potential for higher cost in locally produced products
- » Have to create need first (chicken/egg)
- » Communicate with public

#### How could we communicate this information to our community?

- » Communicate with high school students
  - » Career day booth
- » Communicate with investors and businesses
- » Communicate policy support
- » Communicate resources, how to get involved with general public

#### What might we, as participants in the Dialogue, do to help realize this opportunity?

- » Talk to others; advocate
- » Advocate to city council/government
- » Provide feedback to utility companies

Who else could be involved in the next steps (individuals, organizations, government agencies, elected officials, etc.,)? What might they do?

- » City council
- » Local businesses
- » Investors
- » General public
- » Utility companies



#### **OPPORTUNITY #3: EMBRACING NEW TECHNOLOGY**

We need to develop and implement new advances in technology and the many proven services in use, including potentially bioenergy, renewable energy, or other technologies, when possible, because these will help diversify our energy options and could help make energy more affordable to produce and deliver.

#### As individuals, Winona County residents could...

- » Self-learn
- » Measure individual efficiency
- » Individual generations at our houses of wind, solar

#### As a community, we could...

- » Website with formula: BTU/square foot (customer enters these)/ degree day (website factors in)
- » Group buys
- » Community solar, solar gardens
- » Biomass, geothermal, methane capture etc

#### If we were to implement this Action Plan, we should think about/be aware of...

- » Money
- » Sites
- » Permits
- » Chain of command
- » Developing software (measuring efficiency)
- » Maintenance overseer
- » System improvements (upgrades)

#### How could we communicate this information to our community?

- » Social media
- » Marketing
- » County/city website information

#### What might we, as participants in the Dialogue, do to help realize this opportunity?

- » Support communication
- » Initiate conversations

### Who else could be involved in the next steps (individuals, organizations, government agencies, elected officials, etc.,)? What might they do?

» Investors: consider addressing industry's participation and research options

# PANELIST DEMOGRAPHICS

Invitations to participate in the Winona County Energy Dialogue were sent to 15,000 randomly selected households in Winona County. Interested citizens completed a questionnaire with demographic information and were then added to a pool of potential panelists. 13 participants were randomly selected to reflect the demographics of Itasca County. 6 participants were selected for their role in the local energy system.

<b>DEMOGRAPHIC</b> All statistics compiled from American Community Survey results unless otherwise noted	WINONA COUNTY PERCENTAGE	IDEAL # OF PARTICIPANTS	CONFIRMED # OF PARTICIPANTS	ACTUAL # OF PARTICIPANTS
GENDER				
Female	51%	8	7	5
Male	49%	7	8	8
RACE/ETHNICITY				
White/European-American	94%	14	12	12
Persons of Color/Multiracial	6%	1	3	1
PARTY AFFILIATION Extrapolated from recent election results				
Democrat	38%	5	5	5
Independent	28%	5	5	5
Republican	34%	5	5	3
AGE				
18-39	44%	6	5	4
40-64	38%	6	6	4
65 & over	18%	3	4	5
LOCATION				
City of Winona	53%	8	7	7
Greater Winona County	47%	7	8	6
EDUCATION				
Less than High School	8%	1	1	0
High School or GED	27%	4	4	4
Some college	31%	5	7	5
Bachelor's degree or higher	34%	5	3	4
TOTAL NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	100%	15	15	13

#### The 6 stakeholder participants were:

- » George Borzykowski City of Winona
- » Tim Gulden Winona Renewable Energy, LLC.
- » Steve Jacob Winona County

- » Randy Rollie SEMCAC
- » Paul Schollmeier City of Winona
- » Marie Kovecsi Winona County

# PANELIST PERSPECTIVES

"This was my first introduction into civicminded affairs-the entire seminar was run so well. A fantastic group of individuals for the entire 2 days-I've learned so much and met such wonderful people. Thank you for choosing me, and I hope I have helped in some way to make a difference."





"Thank you for your diligent preparations and guidance so that we could have honest, and while not always comfortable, still productive conversations. This topic is complex and so important, not only to us, but also to future generations."

"It was very interesting to see people from different backgrounds and experiences expressing similar ideas, often easily coming to a consensus about the issues."

#### INTERESTED IN YOUR OWN DIALOGUE?

The Jefferson Center and the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy are in the process of identifying communities across for future Rural Dialogues. If you are interested in hosting a Dialogue in your community, or would like to receive additional information, please contact:

Andrew Rockway at arockway@jefferson-center.org / 651-209-7672 Tara Ritter at tritter@iatp.org / 218-831-0763

Hosting a Dialogue requires significant engagement with community members months prior to the event in order to identify issues of principal concern, engage local and regional experts, work with community institutions to develop information sources, and determine community receptivity among policymakers and the general public to incorporate Dialogue findings into community planning efforts.



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The Jefferson Center is a nonpartisan organization committed to strengthening democracy by advancing informed, citizen-led solutions to challenging public issues through deliberation and community action. We're collaborating with governments, nonprofits, and others to unleash the power of citizens and solve today's toughest challenges. We focus on building powerful coalitions, creating meaningful opportunities for education and public deliberation, and empowering citizen-led action.



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The Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy is a Minnesota-based nonprofit working locally and globally at the intersection of policy and practice to ensure fair and sustainable food, farm and trade systems and to foster vibrant, prosperous rural communities. We support rural communities through research, market development, and policy advocacy to address local challenges, including issues associated with extreme weather and a changing climate.