

Transforming Carbon Dioxide Research into Impact



[The Aspen Institute's Policy Academy](#) turns professionals into policy advocates. We offer innovative training programs to equip leaders across sectors – from tech to climate, science to social impact – with the practical policy skills to craft solutions for society's most pressing challenges. Based in the Bay Area, the Policy Academy is the first comprehensive nonpartisan and non-university training program in the United States offering a step-by-step process to learn practical strategies for policymaking. The Academy's predecessor, the Aspen Tech Policy Hub, has helped more than 500 alumni and staff gain government experience and seek policy impact.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Climate Cohort alumni [Emma Crow-Willard](#) convinced the [Livermore Lab Foundation](#), with support from the Department of Energy (DOE), to fund a \$750,000 engagement strategy for disseminating findings on a major report about regional carbon dioxide removal (CDR) options. The Lawrence Livermore National Lab was leading a comprehensive study funded by the DOE that looked at 4 different methods for CDR at a county level. Using her Academy training, Emma wrote a convincing memo to the Foundation and the DOE recommending that instead of simply publishing a report, they should fund a broader engagement campaign. Emma then led the development of a website, roads2removal.org, that allows communities to understand potential CDR options in their region via interactive maps, explainers, and videos. Emma credits the Academy with giving her the skills to successfully advocate for this innovative approach.

BACKGROUND

In 2023, the Lawrence Livermore National Lab, with DOE funding, was set to release [a comprehensive report](#) outlining options for carbon dioxide removal across the United States. This study was the culmination of years of work by 60+ scientists, and provided a range of localized options for how the US could accomplish the carbon drawdown needed to reach its net-zero goals by 2050.

Even though this study was the first to provide a high-resolution assessment of CDR approaches in the US, the DOE and the Foundation did not have a plan for releasing its results beyond publishing a long report. In part due to Academy trainings that emphasized the importance of stakeholder engagement, Emma realized there was a missed opportunity for the Foundation and the DOE to directly engage with community members who may not have heard of CDR projects. Emma wanted to convince the DOE and the Livermore Foundation to fund a broader engagement campaign for this report.

“I had all this training fresh in my mind on how to advocate for policy impact and write an effective policy memo that I used to convince DOE.”

Emma Crow-Willard

IMPACT

From her experience as an Academy fellow, Emma knew that one of the most effective ways to advocate for policy change within the DOE was to write a compelling memo. Using skills honed during Academy trainings, she crafted a memo arguing for the DOE to fund an engagement campaign and pitched it herself.

DOE officials were impressed by this memo and supportive of the dissemination strategy. Though the DOE did not have the funds to support the engagement campaign itself, their strong support allowed the Livermore Lab Foundation to fundraise \$750,000 in philanthropic dollars for this work.

Emma then took the lead in managing the engagement campaign. She oversaw design and development of a website — road2removal.org — that included interactive maps for communities to learn of CDR options in their region, wrote fact sheets, created [a podcast episode](#), and produced short explainer videos with lead researchers. She also orchestrated in-person events with community members in key regions, allowing residents to directly learn from researchers. Almost 100,000 individuals have since visited the site and downloaded its materials.

Emma is now working on a separate engagement campaign with the DOE to disseminate information about carbon capture and storage projects funded by the Inflation Reduction Act and Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, including direct air capture and hydrogen hubs. She hopes to dispel mistrust of these technologies and help communities better understand them by providing clear, accessible, and accurate information.