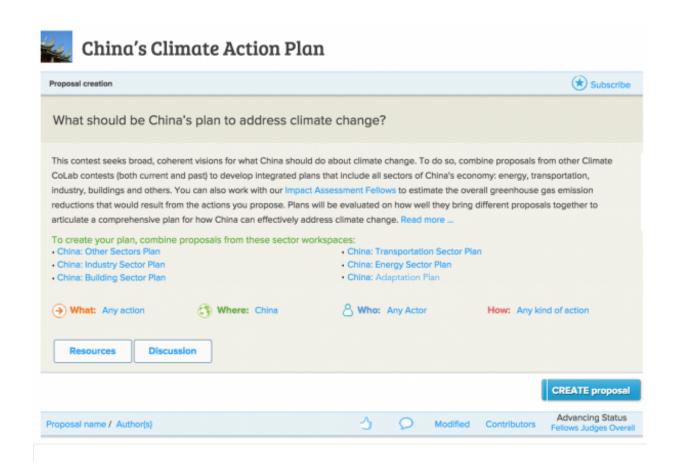# Crowdsourcing climate strategy

May 21 2015

New contests from the MIT Climate CoLab ask participants to combine individual actions to form regional plans, such as this one for China. Credit: MIT Climate CoLab

As world climate leaders prepare for the international climate talks in Paris later this year, the MIT Center for Collective Intelligence's Climate

CoLab has launched a new set of contests that give citizens a chance to create their own regional climate action plans and evaluate their effectiveness.

The plans will be judged by world-renowned experts from leading universities such as MIT and Stanford University, government agencies such as the U.S. Department of Energy and State Department, and global organizations such as the World Bank, the United Nations Environment Programme and the Clinton Foundation. Winners will present their plans at a high-level gathering of influencers during MIT's Solve conference this fall, and split a $10,000 prize that will be announced in December.

The MIT Climate CoLab gives citizens a chance to think like climate change negotiators, and create their own regional and global climate action plans, as well as evaluate their plans' effectiveness.

"This is not just a job for a few experts and politicians, " says Professor Thomas Malone, director of the MIT Center for Collective Intelligence and principal investigator for the Climate CoLab project.

"Our goal is to open up the elite conference rooms and meeting halls where climate strategies are developed today and bring that discussion out into the world so that anyone with a good idea can contribute. We want to help businesses, non-profits, local governments, and citizens around the world test the impact of their ideas and show how they could fit into a global plan for what to do about climate change."

The structure of the Climate CoLab contests mirrors the way the world, and each individual country, is confronting climate change today: by breaking down the larger goal of cutting global emissions into actionable plans, often sector-by-sector and region-by-region, then combining the plans to form a global climate agenda. The contests also provide the "virtual Paris" that U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry recently called for

in an interview with The Washington Post as he continues his push for local communities, schools, and others around the world to play a greater role.

"There are many examples of massive numbers of people sucessfully working together online on very complicated projects. Take Wikipedia and Linux, for example," says Laur Fisher, the project manager for the Climate CoLab. "We're applying this crowdsourcing approach to one of the most complex problems of our time: climate change. So far, thousands of creative people from all around the world have come to the Climate CoLab to contribute their ideas and votes of support, and we want many, many more to participate."

The new contests ask participants to take different actions and combine them to form regional plans, such as the one for China pictured above.

The Climate CoLab has been running similar contests for the past three years—building a community of over 30,000 members from almost every country in the world. But unlike past contests that targeted specific sub-problems that contribute to climate change (such as emissions from the energy supply, transportation, waste management, land use, etc.), the Climate CoLab's new initiative asks participants to take different actions and combine them to form regional plans—such as for the U.S. or China—and then to combine regional plans to form a global strategy. The regional and global stages are separated into their own contests with separate judging periods and winners.

An important addition to this new round of contests is a tool that allows users to evaluate the impact their plan will have on greenhouse gas emissions. A specialized team of emission modelers will help them use the tool and interpret their results.

"For the first time in history, there is now a highly-accessible,

democratic, solutions-based platform that allows people across the globe to combine their best ideas and unique expertise to develop solutions for climate change," Malone says. "By bringing these people together, and connecting them with a broad range of scientists, policy makers, business people, and investors who can evaluate and help implement the ideas, we're opening up the possibility that effective solutions to climate change can come—not just from experts and politicians—but from people all over the world."

  More information: http://climatecolab.org/community/-/blogs/now-open-build-a-regional-climate-action-plan?utm_source=mitnews&utm_medium=website&utm_campaign=PressReleaseRegional2015

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