

BLOG Published April 28, 2025 • 5 minute read

Community Engagement: 5 Questions Carbon Removal Developers Should Be Prepared to Answer



Nicholas Yoon, Policy Advisor for Carbon Management, Sufia Alam, Senior Communications Advisor

Research shows that community engagement is one of the most effective ways for developers to foster local buy-in for new clean energy infrastructure projects, reduce delays caused by community opposition, and boost overall project success. If developers want their community engagement to lead to project success, then they need to make sure they are doing their homework. Part of this process includes understanding and preparing for the types of questions that communities may have about clean infrastructure projects, such as carbon dioxide removal (CDR) projects.

Questions from Community

The questions below are informed by the findings from our [Carbon Removal Field Trip to Canada](#), in which Third Way led an intergenerational group of fourteen Black American women from influential stakeholder organizations to meet CDR developers in Canada in May of 2024. These questions address the most common themes brought up by participants, many of whom are leaders and representatives of communities that could potentially host CDR projects in the future.

Question #1: How will your carbon removal project bring prosperity to our community?

People want to know: who will be making money from these CDR projects and how can communities benefit from a project's cash flow? Some participants wanted projects to provide direct financial benefits to communities through revenue-sharing or community ownership models. Others wanted projects to at least re-invest part of their profits back into the community.

Jobs are great, but wealth-building opportunities are even better.

Transparency is key. If the goal is to both remove carbon emissions and make money, then developers need to be honest about it and create a pathway for local communities to also prosper from the project. As one survey participant put it, *“Okay, you want to make money. Cool, I want to make money, too. Let’s make money together.”*

Question #2: Will the jobs created by your carbon removal project actually go to members of our community?

Participants were enthusiastic about the [significant job creation potential](#) of CDR projects, but communities need assurances that these jobs will not all go to outside residents with advanced degrees. The technical nature of the jobs associated with the early-stage versions of these projects led many to believe that, even in the future, these jobs would only be accessible to those with advanced degrees or specialized training. As one participant put it, *“A lot of those people are not afforded master’s degrees, civil engineering degrees, and mechanical engineering degrees. How exactly are they going to reach out and incorporate these communities?”*

Think long-term career development, not just short-term job creation. What are the education requirements? How are you investing in local workforce training? Are you creating career paths beyond short-term construction contracts? Several of our participants who lead workforce development programs expressed strong interest in partnering with developers to codesign these career-building pathways. Developers should actively seek out partnerships with local workforce leaders to meet immediate and long-term labor needs by investing in local talent. Job creation isn't just about employment—it's about building a pipeline for long-term economic success.

Question #3: How does your carbon removal project address local pollution?

Reducing global carbon emissions is important, but for many communities, it's not the top concern. They want to know how CDR projects will improve public health in their immediate environment. As one of our participants said, *"Those sorts of global benefits are hard to explain to folks who don't necessarily feel like they are experiencing a day-to-day impact."*

Show how projects provide tangible benefits. Whether it's removing harmful pollutants from the air, land or local water resource or improving public health, it's important to communicate these benefits to communities. Additionally, to help avoid community pushback and speed project completion, developers need to be transparent about the logistical details and be ready to address them head-on. This means having a plan for construction impacts, including traffic, noise, and other disruptions.

Question #4: How does your carbon removal project physically fit into our community?

Many participants were concerned about the physical footprint of commercial-scale CDR projects and their potential to displace people or important spaces in their communities. As one participant stated, *"Build some type of community asset so that it's not just this massive, ugly thing that people think is polluting the character and the vision of the community, but it's something that actually reflects the aesthetic and identity of the community."*

Prioritize integration in project deployment. Work with local stakeholders to ensure that projects complement the surrounding landscape, respect existing infrastructure, and preserve legacy communities. Developers should come prepared with schematics of projects that communicate the size, shape, and land-use needs of their facilities.

Question #5: Why did you select our community to host your carbon removal project?

Communities want to understand “why are you here?” or “what is your purpose for engaging with this community?” While this may come off as a pointed question that developers may not be willing to answer, it is one that they should anticipate and prepare for.

Address skepticism through continuous engagement and education. More often than not, people will be skeptical when someone from outside their community wants to build something in their neighborhood. Skepticism can also be driven by historical harm, past false promises, etc. The onus is on developers to identify the root of the skepticism, validate it early, and address it often throughout the project development process. A key part of engagement is education, especially since a lot of carbon removal projects enact complex scientific processes. Explaining to communities how these projects work in an accessible way can help to overcome skepticism and ultimately build community acceptance.

Bottom Line

Strong community engagement isn’t just a box to check, it’s the foundation for successful CDR deployment. When developers meaningfully engage with community, they face less local opposition, which reduces unexpected costs and keeps projects on track. Industry leaders who prioritize transparency, local benefits, and real economic opportunity will set their projects on a path that maximizes their chance of success.