



PLANETWISE

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## Module 02: Climate Action and Community Self-Organization

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## Climate Action at the Community Level

Climate action becomes tangible and impactful when rooted in local contexts. Communities possess deep insights into their ecosystems, cultural practices, and vulnerabilities, making them ideal drivers of environmental initiatives. Empowering neighborhoods to co-create climate responses strengthens resilience, encourages ownership, and fosters long-term sustainability. From reforestation efforts to air-quality monitoring, community-based actions create ripple effects that reach far beyond their immediate environment, especially when supported by strategic planning and inclusive participation.

# Understanding Stakeholders in Climate Projects

Stakeholders are anyone affected by, or capable of affecting, a climate project. Properly identifying and engaging them ensures initiatives are inclusive and more likely to succeed. Stakeholders may include residents, local businesses, schools, NGOs, policymakers, and environmental agencies. Each has unique interests, resources, and influence. Building a map of these connections enables project teams to understand power dynamics, avoid conflict, and foster cooperation based on shared goals and values.



## Steps in Stakeholder Mapping

Mapping stakeholders helps clarify who needs to be consulted, informed, or partnered with throughout a project. The process involves:

- Identifying individuals, organizations, and institutions
- Categorizing their level of interest and influence
- Mapping relationships and dependencies
- Analyzing potential support or opposition
- Strategizing engagement tactics for each group

This tool is especially useful for climate action projects that rely on cross-sector collaboration and community buy-in.



## Prioritizing Stakeholder Needs

Understanding stakeholder priorities allows for more responsive project design. While one group may focus on biodiversity, another may care more about economic resilience. Engaging stakeholders in early discussions builds trust and reveals shared concerns. Tailoring communication and participation strategies to these needs such as offering translation services or child care at meetings helps reduce barriers and ensures marginalized voices are heard in shaping local climate strategies.

## ➤ Using Visual Stakeholder Maps

Creating visual stakeholder maps makes complex relationships easier to understand. These diagrams usually position the project at the center and connect it to stakeholders through lines showing influence, interest, or dependencies. Color codes or size indicators may reflect power levels or engagement frequency. Teams can use these visuals during planning to allocate responsibilities, detect potential conflicts, and ensure all key players are considered before moving into project development stages.



## Introduction to SMART Goals

Setting SMART goals ensures that climate projects are grounded, achievable, and impactful. SMART stands for Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound. This framework prevents vague ambitions and encourages accountability. For instance, rather than stating “improve air quality,” a SMART goal would be “plant 100 trees in 3 neighborhoods by December to increase local shade and reduce PM2.5 levels by 10%.” This clarity supports clearer planning and monitoring.

# SMART Goal Breakdown for Climate Projects

To apply SMART goals effectively in climate action, consider the following components:

- Specific – What exactly are you trying to accomplish?
- Measurable – Can you track progress and results?
- Achievable – Is the goal realistic given time and resources?
- Relevant – Does it address a local environmental or social issue?
- Time-bound – What's the deadline or timeframe for completion?

Using this approach makes environmental goals more structured and successful.





## ➤ Project Planning Phases

Effective climate projects follow clear planning phases. This structured approach helps teams stay organized, delegate tasks, and avoid last-minute obstacles. The key phases include:



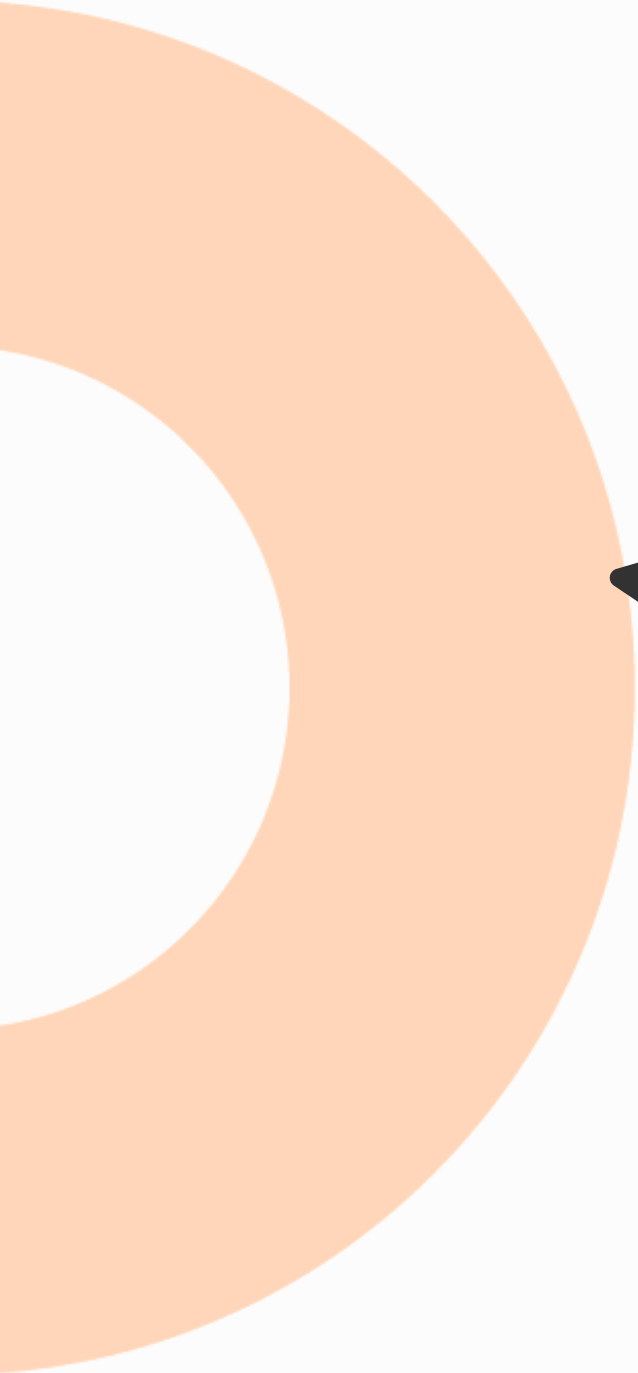
1. Problem identification
2. Stakeholder analysis
3. Goal setting and prioritization
4. Resource and timeline planning
5. Implementation and adjustment
6. Monitoring and evaluation

Planning isn't just about control—it's about aligning people and resources around a shared vision.





## Tools for Collaborative Planning



Community-based planning benefits from tools that increase transparency and participation. Online whiteboards, shared documents, and visual timelines can help diverse stakeholders contribute their insights. Tools like Gantt charts and logic models bring structure to goal setting. Using accessible platforms also helps bridge gaps in digital literacy, enabling more voices to shape how climate initiatives are designed, managed, and evaluated over time.

# Fundraising as a Catalyst for Climate Action

Even the most inspired climate projects need financial backing to succeed. Fundraising is not only about raising money but also building awareness and stakeholder ownership. Community-led fundraising can involve events, local business partnerships, or crowdfunding campaigns. The key is to clearly communicate the impact of each donation, how it supports tree planting, clean air efforts, or climate education. Transparency and storytelling increase donor trust and engagement.





## Basics of Community Fundraising

Grassroots fundraising leverages the power of the collective. Effective community fundraising might include:

- Bake sales, clean-up drives, or charity walks
- Sponsorships from eco-conscious businesses
- Online campaigns with visual impact goals
- Monthly donor programs for ongoing efforts
- Storytelling through newsletters or social media

These methods deepen community ties while generating vital resources.


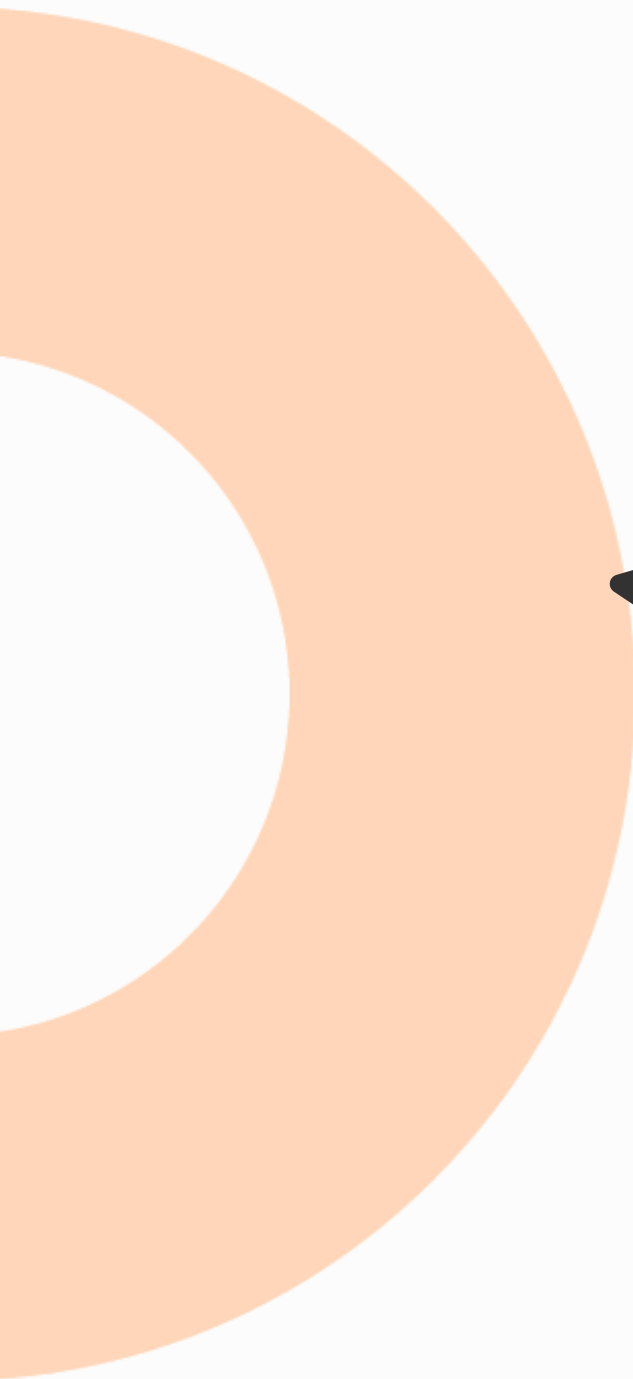


## Sponsorship Strategy for Environmental Projects


Sponsorship offers mutual benefits for organizations and supporters. To secure effective sponsorships, climate groups must align with businesses that share similar values. Pitching potential sponsors should highlight brand exposure opportunities, community goodwill, and measurable environmental impacts. Offering tiered sponsorship packages or naming rights—such as “Sponsor a Tree Grove”—can make giving more attractive. A well-managed sponsorship strategy creates long-term alliances that go beyond one-time funding.



## Budgeting Basics for Local Projects



A clear, realistic budget is essential for managing climate action projects. It helps teams plan ahead and remain accountable. Budgets should include line items for tools, transportation, marketing, volunteer supplies, and monitoring efforts. Unexpected costs should be anticipated with a contingency fund. Presenting a transparent, easy-to-understand budget is also key to winning the trust of donors, sponsors, and community partners.



# Transparency in Financial Reporting

Maintaining financial transparency builds trust with stakeholders and funders. Regular updates, receipts, and simple reports showing how funds were used can demonstrate integrity. Consider visual reports with infographics showing:

- Amount raised vs. amount spent
- Breakdown by category (e.g., tools, labor, plants)
- Environmental outcomes per dollar
- Testimonials from community members

Clear reporting can help ensure continued support and partnership.



# Implementation Sprint: Tree-Planting Overview

Tree-planting campaigns are a popular and highly visible form of local climate action. An “implementation sprint” condenses the planning, outreach, and execution into a short, focused period usually one to two weeks. Sprints encourage action through urgency and shared goals. They involve mobilizing volunteers, sourcing seedlings, selecting sites, and ensuring long-term care. When paired with education or art, tree-planting also builds community pride and environmental literacy.



## ➤ Planning a Tree-Planting Sprint

To run a successful sprint, careful coordination is required across several areas:

- Site selection based on community needs
- Tree species chosen for local climate and biodiversity
- Logistics for transportation and tools
- Volunteer recruitment and training
- Post-planting care commitments

With everyone aligned and energized, a single weekend can make a lasting environmental impact.



## Educational Add-ons for Tree Events

Tree-planting days are great opportunities to educate and inspire. Consider adding short talks, creative workshops, or youth competitions to the event. Activities like “name your tree,” soil testing stations, or guided biodiversity walks help people connect emotionally with the act of planting. These educational elements create stronger memories, improve turnout, and deepen the project’s social and environmental resonance.

# Engaging Youth in Climate Sprints

Youth are powerful agents of climate change. Including students and youth groups in tree-planting sprints ensures continuity and enthusiasm. Assigning them leadership roles—like managing social media, leading plant care teams, or storytelling builds skills and ownership. Gamification (e.g., tree points or eco-badges) adds fun and motivation. Long-term, youth engagement ensures the planted trees are protected and that new projects keep emerging organically.





## Measuring Impact Through Data

Measuring impact allows communities to see the results of their climate action. Data-driven storytelling shows donors, policymakers, and volunteers the difference they're making. For tree planting, this could include growth rates, survival rates, CO<sub>2</sub> absorption estimates, or increases in shade. Metrics give credibility to grassroots efforts and help secure future support. They also offer learning opportunities by identifying what worked and what needs improvement.



## Biodiversity as an Impact Metric

Beyond counting trees, it's critical to track how projects affect local biodiversity. Planting native trees, for example, can bring back pollinators, birds, and insects. Community groups can organize biodiversity walks to monitor new species using simple tools like:

- Field journals or mobile apps for ID
- Monthly species count competitions
- “Before and after” photo documentation
- Partnering with local biology teachers or scientists

This fosters a long-term connection to nature and makes ecological changes visible.



## Monitoring Air Quality Locally

Monitoring air quality allows communities to track pollution trends and understand the direct benefits of climate action efforts. Affordable sensors can measure pollutants like PM2.5, nitrogen dioxide, or ozone in real-time. Once data is collected, it can be shared through online dashboards or community notice boards. Local air quality monitoring increases public awareness, helps identify pollution sources, and justifies the need for continued green initiatives, such as planting more trees or reducing vehicular traffic.



## Tools for Measuring Air Quality

There are now low-cost tools available that enable non-experts to collect air quality data. These tools are:

- Portable sensors (like AirVisual or PurpleAir)
- DIY monitoring kits for classrooms or youth clubs
- Open-source software for visualization and mapping
- Government-run apps to compare local data
- Community science programs that aggregate citizen reports

Using these technologies, residents can take an active role in environmental stewardship and policy influence.



## Reporting and Sharing Impact

Once data is collected whether from air sensors or biodiversity counts it's important to share results with the broader community. Reports should be digestible, transparent, and motivating. Visual infographics, community meetings, or short videos can make technical results more accessible. Storytelling should focus not only on data but also on personal testimonies—how the cleaner air or greener surroundings have improved well-being or created jobs. This helps sustain momentum and attract more stakeholders.



## Building Long-Term Stewardship

Sustainable impact relies on long-term commitment. After a tree is planted or a project is launched, maintaining it over time requires community ownership. Establishing "tree guardians" or rotating stewardship teams builds routine and accountability. Youth clubs, school groups, or neighborhood associations can adopt green spaces, with seasonal check-ins to water, weed, or prune. This gradual shift from project to practice ensures climate action doesn't end after a single event but becomes embedded in daily life.



## Linking Projects to Policy



Small-scale climate projects can influence larger change when they're linked to local policy. By presenting results to city councils, attending public forums, or collaborating with environmental departments, communities can amplify their impact. For example, a successful community tree-planting effort may inspire the municipality to fund more green spaces. Framing projects as pilots or prototypes for broader policy helps grassroots groups transition into active civic partners shaping long-term environmental planning.



## Building Partnerships Across Sectors

Effective climate initiatives often succeed due to strong partnerships. Collaborations between schools, NGOs, local government, and businesses combine diverse resources and expertise. For example, a school may provide volunteers, an NGO offers training, the government donates land, and a business sponsors tools. These partnerships should be built on mutual benefit and shared values, ensuring that each contributor feels invested in the outcome and sees their contribution reflected in the results.



## Hosting a Community Climate Fair

One creative way to activate community involvement is by hosting a Climate Action Fair. This informal, festival-style event brings together local green projects, organizations, and residents to share knowledge, showcase initiatives, and inspire new ideas.

- Booths for local eco-projects
- Live demonstrations (e.g., composting, air monitoring)
- Children's activities (upcycling crafts, eco-games)
- Tree-planting sign-up stations
- Story circles for sharing local climate experiences

Fairs help spark new connections and seed new collaborations in a celebratory atmosphere.



## Conflict Resolution in Climate Work

Tensions may arise during community projects, especially when resources are scarce or views differ. It's important to address disagreements early using respectful dialogue. Holding inclusive listening sessions and ensuring all voices are heard—especially those historically excluded—is key. Facilitation skills, empathy, and cultural sensitivity all help in navigating disagreements and finding common ground. Successful climate action depends as much on people management as it does on technical knowledge.



## Activity Title: “Eco-Mission: Design Your Own Climate Campaign”

Type: Creative group challenge

Duration: 60–90 minutes

Ideal for: 4–6 people per group

Materials: Flip chart paper, markers, colored pens, sticky notes, recycled materials (optional for visuals), timer, small props or templates

### **Objective:**

**Teams will design and pitch a fictional but realistic climate action campaign based on a local issue. This helps participants practice stakeholder mapping, goal-setting, planning, and community engagement without the pressure of real-world implementation.**

# Activity Title: “Eco-Mission: Design Your Own Climate Campaign”

## Instructions:

1. Form small groups (4–6 participants each).
2. Each group randomly draws or chooses a local climate challenge, such as:
  - Air pollution from traffic
  - Tree loss in urban areas
  - Plastic waste in markets
  - Lack of green spaces in schools
  - Heat islands in neighborhoods
3. Teams have 45 minutes to create their campaign, including:
  - A catchy campaign name
  - The climate problem they’re addressing
  - Key stakeholders involved
  - SMART goals (just 1–2)
  - A creative fundraising or community engagement idea
  - How they’ll measure success
4. Encourage use of props, drawings, or role-play if desired.
5. Each group gets 3–5 minutes to “pitch” their campaign to the room.



# Thank You

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