Climate Action Guide

A publication of the Canadian Federation of Library Associations

Introduction

This guide is written to support any library practitioner (public, academic, or special) in creating lasting community relationships in the face of the climate crisis. It presents principles of sustained collaboration that will be useful in a broad variety of contexts and highly relevant to all climate action and climate mitigation efforts.

It will guide your library through longer-term community-led engagement efforts and building sustained, reciprocal partnerships with community partners which are so essential to this kind of work. These relationships will push you forward, motivate you, and buoy creative thinking; they create a stronger community network for citizens and contribute to greater community resilience. They are as important as the first initiative you might lead together.

Outcomes from these relationships can take many forms, so you know best what works for your organization. For the sake of simplicity, we imagine an example outcome as a panel discussion event. We are confident that if you don't know where to begin, planning a panel is a great beginning, because panels and speakers are a broadly applicable way of connecting climate experts or resources with your community. However, you can take each of these steps and apply them to many different types of outcomes: community events, shared space agreements, resources promotion, and regularized dialogues and cross-promotional meetings are all possible outcomes. Feel free to adjust beyond the panel event, but still follow along with the universal best practices.

Building Partnerships

The most productive partnerships are sustained, ongoing relationships that strengthen the community network. Ideally, these long-term partnerships you build will continue supporting the community into the future with collaborative programming and resource-sharing.

Strong partnerships can help libraries advance both broad institutional goals and specific climate action ones.

Institutional goals

- Increase access to library resources for clients served by partner organizations
- Foster stronger community connections
- Facilitate community-led approaches to service planning
- Reduce social isolation and barriers to access by expanding reach beyond library walls

Climate action goals

- Improve community resilience through strong cross-organizational networks
- Promote impactful change through grassroots, community-led interventions
- Improve climate literacy by sharing expertise, knowledge, and information between organizations and with community members

Once you have established which of your objectives overlap between your local context and the global context, you can start to iterate next steps based upon these shared principles.

Principles of Community Best Practice

Community-led approaches

Community-led approaches centre community voices and ensure that community members are empowered to lead change.[1] Approaching partnerships through this lens recognizes and supports the strength and leadership that already exist in the community.

Community mapping can be an effective way to start identifying existing strengths and finding out how your library can help build capacity so that change is led by the community itself.[2] Forming collaborative partnerships with local organizations that are already working to address the community's needs can help mobilize this leadership.

The community mapping process can also clarify what particular challenges your community experiences due to climate change that might be addressed through cross-organizational partnerships.

Reciprocity

A strong network of reciprocal partnerships can strengthen community resilience. A truly reciprocal partnership that is mutually beneficial for each organization will best benefit the entire community, so it is important to remember that the other party has specific goals beyond your organization's. It is also important not to approach potential partners with any expectations that they will respond in a certain way or be immediately receptive to your ideas. Let it grow over several meetings to show that you are prioritizing their needs while also looking out for your own.

Understanding protocols

Some organizations and agencies have specific protocols that require significant time and many levels of approval before they can agree to partnerships. Approaching organizations equipped with the understanding that the process will be guided by their needs and protocols will go a long way.

Consulting with the Indigenous nation(s) on whose territory your library is located is an important consideration, particularly given the connections between colonialism, resource extraction, and climate change. While it is imperative not to approach Indigenous communities and organizations with expectations, it is equally important to involve Indigenous perspectives in discussions about climate change and action.

Engagement and consultation with Indigenous communities and governments requires adhering to specific guidelines and protocols, and these might require significant amounts of time to properly and respectfully carry out. Consult with your municipality first to determine what guidelines are already in place; this will ensure you are fully prepared before reaching out.

Building trust

Community partnerships may be informal and unstructured, or may involve more formal agreements. Formalized partnerships can help build trust and credibility that the library is committed to long-term relationships and can establish continuity that is less susceptible to staff turnover.[3] A *Memorandum of Understanding* can be a useful tool to formalize a partnership and define the nature of each organization's participation. It will outline goals, responsibilities, methodologies, and other guiding principles for the partnership.

1. Attygale, 4
2. University of Kansas
3. Working Together Project, 76
4. (following page) These are discussed in detail in the Working Together Project's Community Led Libraries Toolkit 77–79

Initiating Partnerships

With these principles in mind, it's time to start thinking about initiating community partnerships. The following are some best practices to help guide you through this process.[4]

Determine purpose of partnerships

Partnerships with long-term objectives are more effective than those created for a one-time purpose.

LONG-TERM OBJECTIVES SHOW COMMITMENT AND BUILD TRUST WITH PARTNERS

Identify potential partners

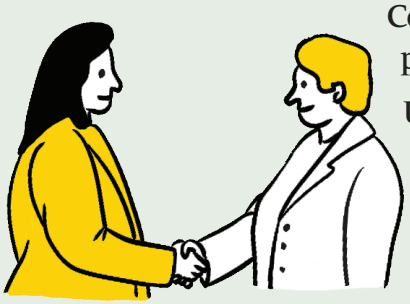
Learn about the existing resources in the community, unmet needs, and service gaps.

Map your community. Walk around and take note of organizations and non-profits that have a sustainability, climate action, or disaster mitigation focus, and local businesses who might have an interest in climate action.

Talk to local scholars, authors, activists, or your city's sustainability office.

COMMUNITY MAPPING IS A GREAT WAY TO GET TO KNOW YOUR COMMUNITY AND START BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

Approach partners



Contact potential partners to explore possibilities.Map your community.

Understand the appropriate protocols for approaching certain organizations and communities.

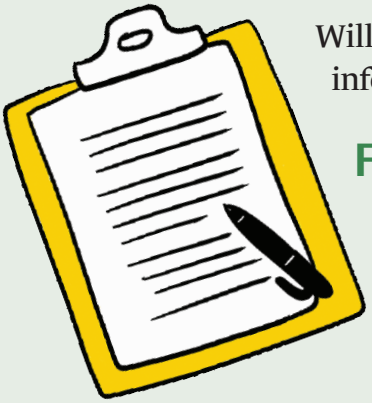
Building relationships of trust requires time and consistency to demonstrate commitment.

APPROACH PARTNERSHIPS WITH RECIPROCITY AND PROPER PROTOCOL

Determine nature of partnership

Partners should lead discussions about how the partnership takes form

Will the partnership be formal or informal?



Finalize your partnership agreement

Draft an MOU if both organizations have determined it is the best option.

Continue ongoing partnership

Engage in regular meetings to discuss how you can continue to collaborate in a sustained way.

Check in to ensure your library is still meeting the partner organization’s needs and the expectations of your agreement.

SUSTAINED AND INTENTIONAL ENGAGEMENT NOT ONLY BUILDS TRUST WITH COMMUNITY PARTNERS, BUT CONTRIBUTES TO OVERALL COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

Keystone Program

One way to mark the beginning of your new collaborative partnership is a panel event. This is also an excellent forum for engaging communities in meaningful discussions about the climate crisis.

Through your preliminary community consultations and engagement, you may find that a panel event does not adequately meet the needs or goals of your community. Building relationships with community partners will be critical for finding out what an appropriate and productive collaboration for your community will look like.

Other collaborative initiatives might include:

- Developing offsite, partnered collections with shared resources
- Shared space agreements with partners
- Regular meetings and dialogues with partners and those using their services

SHARING LIBRARY RESOURCES LIKE STAFF, MARKETING BUDGETS, AND PHYSICAL SPACE IS ONE OF THE PRIMARY BENEFITS OF COLLABORATION FOR COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Program logistics

In collaboration with your community partner(s), finalize logistical details and timelines:

- Prepare program budget
- Select moderator
- Choose location, date, and time
- Prepare marketing plan
- Create marketing materials
- Publicize event
- Open registration (optional)
- Organize staffing
- Order refreshments

Budget

- Moderator
- Staffing
- Location
- Refreshments
- Marketing

Program format

The following outline is a possible format for your panel discussion. The time ranges allow for a program time or either 60 or 90 minutes, which may depend on the nature and expected size of your audience.

INTRODUCTION/ OPENING REMARKS

5–10 MIN

Moderator introduces the event and its broad themes, introduces the panelists, outlines the program schedule

PANEL DISCUSSION

20–30MIN

GROUP CONVERSATION

30–40 MIN

CLOSING REMARKS

5–10 MIN

Program evaluation

As with any library program, attendance numbers and feedback forms offer valuable metrics for measuring the reach and impact of your program. But it is also important to consider how you will evaluate longer-term outcomes for community members and partner relationships. In addition to using more traditional program evaluation tactics, you might consider more qualitative and/or longer-term questions, such as:

- Did attendees come away with new or expanded ideas or understandings of climate change/action/justice?
- Do partners have feedback about ways in which the event did or did not meet their expectations?
- Are the partnerships you've initiated still sustainable and reciprocal?
- Based on feedback from your first event, how do you and your partner organizations want to move forward?

Importantly, share any findings with community partners and stakeholders.

> SIMPLE AND CLEAR METRICS HELP KEEP YOU ACCOUNTABLE AND ALSO ENCOURAGE YOU IN YOUR LONG-TERM CLIMATE ACTION GOALS. IT IS EXCITING TO SEE MEASURABLE RESULTS EACH YEAR.

A panel event is one way to bring your partners and community members together for climate action, but there are countless other possibilities. Whatever you decide, implementing these principles and practices for community-led engagement and relationship-building will contribute to a stronger network for citizens and to greater community resilience to climate change.

> NOW IS THE TIME TO EVALUATE WITH YOUR COMMUNITY PARTNER WHAT WORKED (OR DIDN'T) AND DISCUSS NEXT STEPS.

We hope that this document will help you in your work. Never forget that there are many communities of practice, associations, and committees in the library ecosystem that are working on climate action topics. Take a look for these organizations at the local, provincial, and national level so that you can build further partnerships and always feel welcome to reach out to the CFLA-FCAB

Further Reading

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