THE PREPARATION FRAME

A Guide to Building Understanding of Climate Impacts and Engagement in Solutions

ClimateAccess

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INTRODUCTION

After years of debating the science of climate disruption, a new public conversation is emerging about our changing climate. This one is focused on superstorms and shifts in the growing season, protecting ourselves from harm and preparing for what is to come. It's being had by neighbors, health providers, urban planners and local leaders, even the president of the United States, among many others. It's a conversation about 'how' instead of 'whether' and it is being driven by the rise of extreme weather events; the recognition that it's simply prudent to take precautions against floods, fires and other climate impacts; and a growing acceptance that preparing for climate change is as important as trying to stop it.

While this nascent conversation is still gaining ground, it offers important clues on how to overcome much of the political polarization that still exists around climate disruption and the enduring sense that it's a "not here, not now, not me" issue for many Americans. By focusing on the changes that are already underway, what can be expected on the horizon and the benefits of preparing for current and future impacts, this conversation moves around disagreement over science to put people, prosperity and security at the heart of the discussion.

Climate practitioners can strategically develop and nurture these conversations by using what we're calling "the preparation frame" – a narrative structure built around the fundamental challenges, choices and opportunities we face in confronting climate impacts. Supported by public opinion trends and social science findings, the preparation frame has been researched for several years and is oriented around solutions-based messaging. The Climate Access team first tested the use of a climate preparation frame in 2008 and published the results (under the name of the Social Capital Project) in *Climate Crossroads: A Research-Based Framing Guide for Practitioners*. We have been exploring, using and educating about this approach to communications ever since and have now translated this work into a guide to help practitioners from nonprofit, government and community organizations understand why communicating about climate impacts and preparation is important and how to incorporate it into their work.

Built around **eight guiding principles**, the preparation frame:

1. Focuses on local, observable impacts that are relevant to people's daily lives and frames the stakes in terms of community, economic and individual well-being, not just data.

2. Begins with what audiences (or stakeholders) care about and answers the question of "what does this mean for me." For community leaders or members, the top concern might be reducing the harmful impacts of more extreme and frequent flooding events. For farmers, water availability might be key.

3. Builds on non-partisan values like protection, responsibility, ingenuity, stewardship and fairness.

4. Taps uncertainty as a reason to act and emphasizes the benefits of being prudent. Insurance is sold not based on an exact probability of a risk, but on the understanding that even if there is a small chance of a devastating event and you can take steps to prevent or prepare for it, why not do so?

5. Emphasizes the human and financial cost of inaction. Given the trend lines, the challenges posed by climate impacts will only become more difficult and costly if we wait.

6. Promotes practical solutions that make economic, social and political sense, regardless of climate disruption, and offer multiple benefits at various scales.

7. Articulates what will get better if action is taken. Highlights the benefits of solutions that have already been implemented and links to a realistic yet hopeful vision of what else can be done.

8. Promotes emissions reductions (mitigation) as a preparation strategy. It is simply the most effective step we can take to reduce risk, not just respond to it.

Despite the seeming simplicity of some of these principles, serious consideration is needed when using the preparation frame to engage audiences and stakeholders. People assess risk based on their values, worldviews and identities; facts are filtered through these pre-existing beliefs and ideas. Bringing climate impacts and the associated risks more clearly into focus can also be overwhelming for people as they realize the extent of the challenge, particularly vulnerable communities facing considerable threats. Americans already feel fatalistic when it comes to believing we have the political, economic and cultural will needed to move away from fossil fuels to low-carbon, resilient communities. All of these factors influence how people understand and respond to messages about the impacts of a changing climate.

This means that in addition to adopting effective message frames, practitioners must incorporate more peer-to-peer, dialogue-based strategies into their efforts that take into consideration what is known from risk communications, psychology and other fields. Issues related to inclusion and equity in decision making are central to the way we engage, given some communities are in a better position than others to prepare for the risks associated with climate impacts. Uncertainties in how climate change will impact our communities must be explored and this can be supported by the use of visualization and scenario tools that promote the exchange of ideas with a range of audiences.

This guide offers insights on how to convey climate impacts and the need to plan for and reduce the associated threats. It highlights trends in public opinion, relevant findings from risk communication and other fields, and provides a scan of best practices and tools being used by leaders to engage the public around these issues. In addition to being a useful tool for those directly involved in climate preparation and adaptation efforts, the insights are ideally relevant for any practitioner looking to build public support for climate policies by focusing on impacts and solutions.

METHODOLOGY

In order to gain a thorough perspective on the theoretical underpinnings of climate preparation communication and public engagement, the Climate Access team conducted a review of related academic literature from the fields of behavioral science, communications, development studies, behavioral economics, environmental studies, political science and psychology. The scope of the scan was defined by the following taxonomy that is commonly used to describe the way individuals communicate about the issue, in order to capture the breadth of the subject matter: global warming, climate change, climate disruption, adaptation, preparedness, preparation, impacts, risk management, extreme weather and resilience. These search terms were utilized in a review of the literature using a range of databases including LexisNexis, Academic Search Premier, Science Direct, Google Scholar, and Climate Access' own Resource Hub.

The review includes 101 social science articles and 21 polls and surveys from 2005 to 2014 and draws from a wide range of journals including: *Nature Climate Change*, *Ecology and Society*, *Global Environmental Change* and *Environmental Health*. The review includes a number of articles from nonprofit organizations, academic institutions, and government sources such as Breakthrough Strategies & Solutions, Climate Nexus, George Mason University's Center for Climate Change Communication, Yale Project on Climate Change Communication, Stanford University's Woods Institute for the Environment, The Resource Innovation Group, National Academy of Sciences, and NOAA Coastal Services Center. The Climate Access team also reviewed dozens of examples of campaigns, tools, and on-the-ground projects related to climate preparation communication and outreach in the United States and beyond.

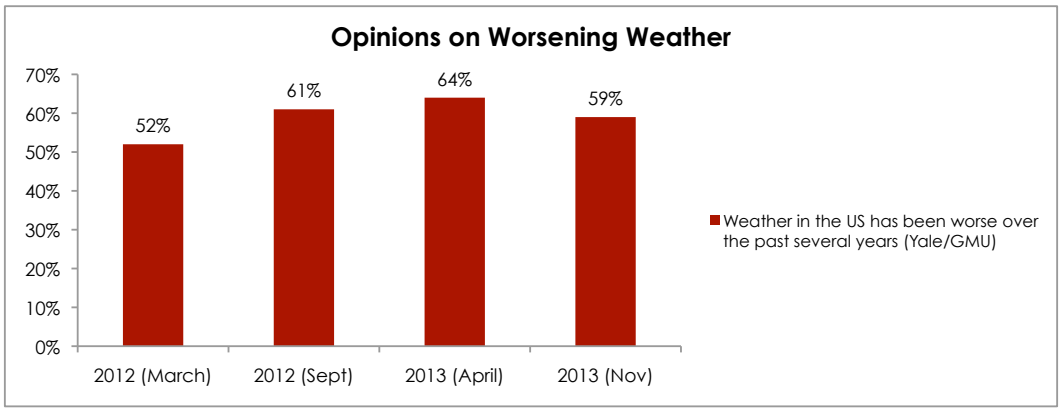
Recommendations in this guide are based on findings from the review of polling and social science literature, polling data, and scan of the field, and are informed by the authors' experience in the area of climate communications and public engagement. It is important to note that some of the findings in the guide are still nascent and that additional research is needed to fully understand the public's understanding of climate impacts, adaptation, mitigation and preparation, as well as public perceptions of the connections and relationship between these concepts. While the research and recommendations are focused on a U.S. context, we believe the guide is relevant for a range of practitioners.

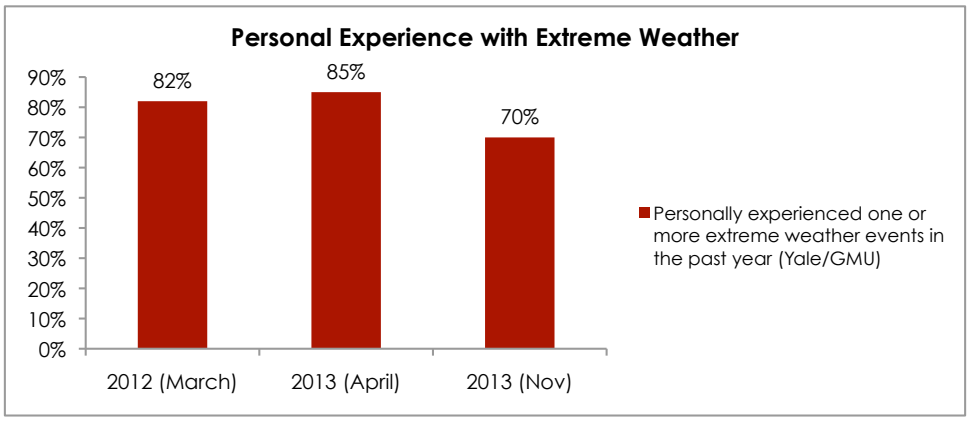
SECTION ONE:
American Attitudes Towards Climate Impacts

From extreme drought conditions in California to destructive flooding in Colorado, climate change is manifesting itself in catastrophic forms across the United States and people from coast to coast are taking note. As a growing number of Americans experience these weather events first-hand and recognize them as warning signs of an unstable climate, public understanding and acceptance of the issue is changing, creating new opportunities for climate communicators.

Public Opinion and Extreme Weather

More than half of the American public believes weather in the United States has gotten worse over the past several years. In 2013, 70% of people in the U.S. reported experiencing extreme weather in the past year, about a third of whom suffered harm as a result. On average, about half of Americans also think it's likely extreme weather will cause a natural disaster in their community in the next year.[1]

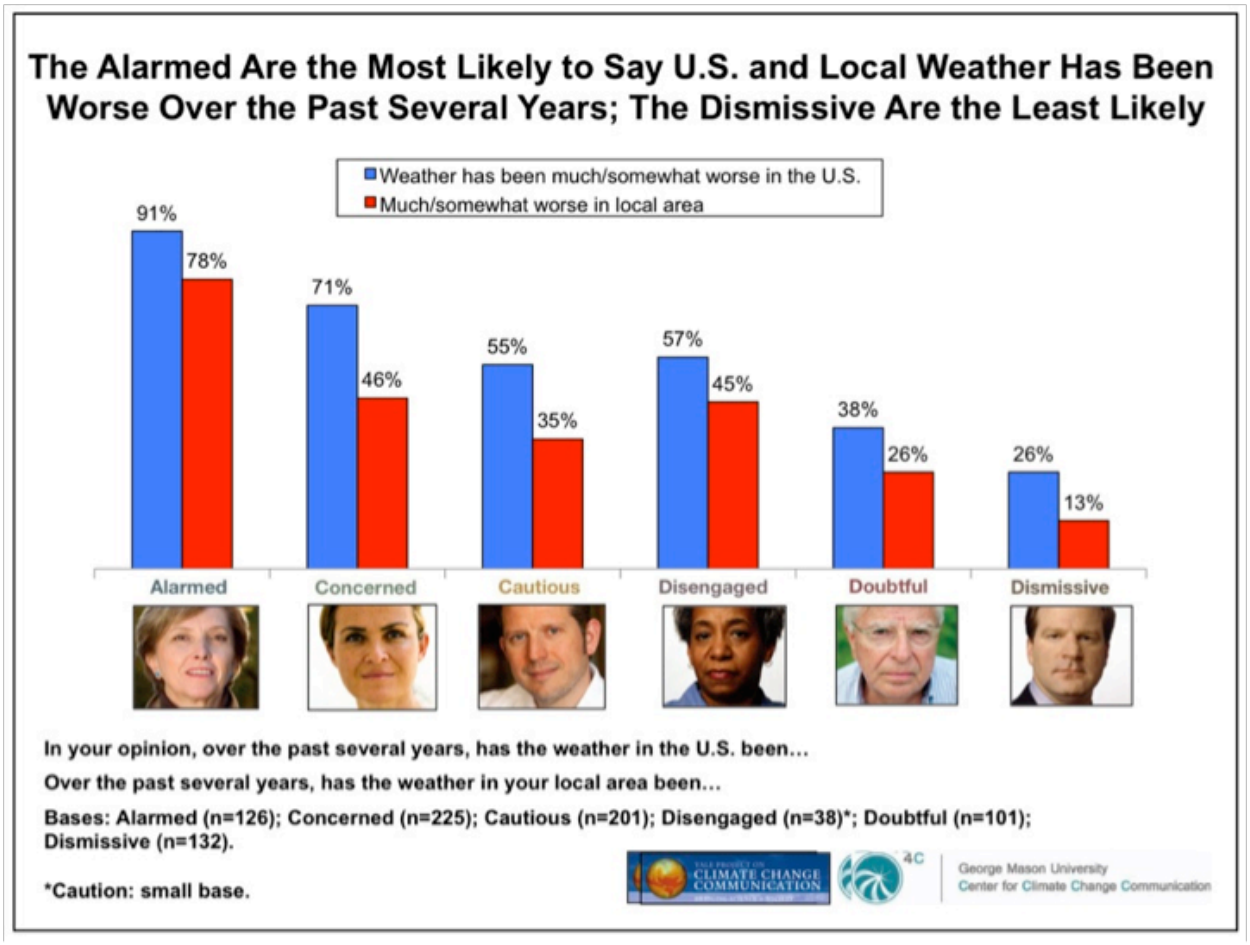




Not surprisingly, those who already agree that global warming is a problem are more likely to notice extreme weather and connect it to climate change. For those who are "Alarmed" about climate change (according to Yale and George Mason University's Six Americas study), these events reinforce existing beliefs and concerns about the state of the planet. Meanwhile those who are dismissive of climate change are less likely to acknowledge climate impacts like warmer-than-normal summers.[6] There is still a significant group of people who are unclear on the connection between climate disruption and extreme weather – for example, when asked if global warming is affecting weather in the United States, one in four didn't know or didn't answer.[7]

ATTITUDES TO SPECIFIC IMPACTS

- 40% of Americans say they experienced extreme high winds in 2012-13.[2]
- 28% say that they personally experienced an extreme rainstorm in 2012-13.[3]
- 32% of Americans say they personally experienced extreme heat in the past year.[4]
- 68% of Americans said that the 2012 mild winter had a (very or somewhat) large effect on their view that global warming is occurring. Survey respondents also made personal observations that "the seasons are abnormal with no snow and cold" and that the "garden was already growing in March."[5]



Political polarization continues to be a factor influencing whether people agree that seasonal weather patterns are changing due to human actions.[8] Democrats are more likely than Republicans by about a 20-point gap to report being affected by extreme weather like severe droughts, and to connect these events to climate change.[9] Meanwhile, there is increasing evidence that communities of color have stronger concerns than their white counterparts that climate change is a problem affecting their daily life.[10,11,12] More than 75% say they have become increasingly interested in climate change over the past couple of years.[13]

More subtle impacts like seasonal shifts are also providing cues to a growing number of Americans that things are not business as usual – and may provide good opportunities for climate communicators to begin conversations with those who are making observations but aren't yet sure what is happening. Early evidence indicates that the changing onset and length of the growing season is one of the most frequently expressed personal experiences of global warming.[14] In the spring of 2012, 68% of Americans said that the mild winter had a (very or somewhat) large effect on their view that global warming is occurring. Survey respondents also made personal observations that "the seasons are abnormal with no snow and cold" and that the "garden was already growing in March."[15]

Learn more:
Extreme Weather and Climate Change in the American Mind
The American Public's Preference for Preparation for the Possible Effects of Global Warming

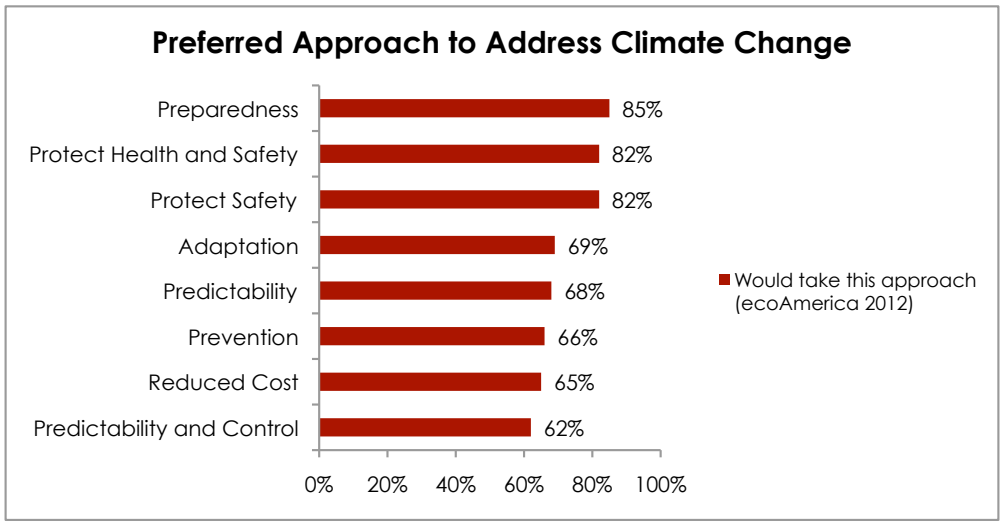
Talking About Impacts: Being Prepared

Most Americans agree that when it comes to extreme weather – regardless of what is causing it – it's better to be safe than sorry. Large majorities of Americans support taking action to prepare for impacts and reduce damage from extreme weather events.[16,17,18] Consider the results of a national survey conducted by Stanford University, where 74% of respondents preferred preparing now, before the possible consequences of climate change occur, over waiting until impacts were felt. Those most supportive of preparing ahead of time were those who heard this question:

> ***Many scientists who study the world's climate believe that the earth has been warming over the past 100 years and will continue to do so in the future. These scientists believe that past and future warming will have effects on people and the environment and will change how people live their lives.***
>
> ***One option people and organizations have is to wait for these changes to happen and then respond to them. However, people and organizations could instead do things soon to try to plan for these changes before they happen to reduce risk for people and property. If you had to choose, which would you prefer that people and organizations do?***

The concept of taking steps to protect against a range of potential impacts is a value that has been shown to extend across political identity and received widespread bi-partisan support.[19]

People not only support the idea of preparedness, they are willing to take action to defend themselves and their communities. More than 70% of voters would prepare their homes or take other personal steps, and more than half would take some form of political action such as signing a petition.[20] Majorities of Americans feel that their local and state governments should make it a medium or high priority to protect public water supplies, the electrical system, agriculture, people's health and transportation, roads and bridges from extreme weather over the next 10 years.[21]



None, however, expect these efforts to be easy. While most voters favor preparedness as the preferred approach to addressing climate impacts[22] and more than half of Americans think preparing for climate change will create more U.S. jobs, 94% of Americans still think preparation will be difficult.[23] This is consistent with the concern many people have that there is no easy or even adequate response to climate change, and underscores the importance of using language that emphasizes not only the immediacy of the problem but also viable options for addressing it.

Learn more:
Climate Impacts: Take Care and Prepare
Polling Analysis and Talking Points

The Importance of Language

When it comes to word choice, the terms "preparedness" and "preparation" have been shown to be among the most resonant when talking about taking steps to protect against potential impacts.[24] "Increase readiness" is also favored across the political spectrum, eliciting widespread bi-partisan support when used to describe the same concept.[25]

Both preparation and readiness are preferred over the language of "adapting" or "adjusting" to climate impacts, which can sound like a gradual or inevitable process. Adaptation is a term traditionally used by technical experts and international policymakers and is politically charged

in the United States.[26] Talking about "preparedness" was also found to be more motivating than "resilience,"[27] which can sound to some like a return to what was in place before, even if the status quo was unjust and unsustainable, rather than an effort to address the underlying causes.

It's worth noting, however, that the aforementioned study by researchers at Stanford University showed most respondents preferred taking a preparation (risk reduction) approach over waiting for impacts to occur regardless of how the question was phrased, leading researchers to conclude that precise wording is less important for building support than effectively communicating the actual concept of preparation. Other experts agree that while some single terms may resonate more than others with audiences, concrete explanations of what is meant by "preparation" and "adaptation" often lead to the same level of support for those actions – including community, economic and political change.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR CLIMATE COMMUNICATORS

These insights into public opinion present a window of opportunity in the ongoing struggle to build support for climate action in the United States. There is a growing consensus across regions and ideologies that extreme weather is threatening American lives, economies and ecosystems. People feel its prudent and are willing to take action to respond to and prepare for impacts, even as they may be unsure about how these impacts are connected to climate change. It's clear that a powerful majority of Americans are concerned about extreme weather, gravitate to the idea of preparedness and are willing to take action to ready themselves for these impacts.

For those who are on the fence about their climate concerns, experiencing extreme weather events can help build awareness and a sense of priority. This means there is an opportunity for climate communicators to not only activate the alarmed but also target engagement efforts at those who are experiencing and asking questions about impacts – either storms or more subtle changes in growing seasons – but may find the current climate conversation too polarizing.

Communicators must also think strategically about how to frame conversations in ways that overcome the perception that global warming is a 'not me, not here, not now' issue. Despite a majority of Americans who say that climate change will cause them personal harm and that preparing for extreme weather events could even save one's life, most people lack a sense of urgency around the issue and continue to think of climate change as a vague and distant threat. Americans continue to be more likely to say that global warming will affect future generations, plants and animals and people in developing countries than their own communities or themselves personally.[28] This underscores the need to use extreme weather events to build awareness of the local and immediate threats posed by climate change, as well as highlight solutions that are already underway.

SECTION TWO:
How we understand climate risk

Public opinion data offers valuable insights into American views on extreme weather and climate disruption, but often doesn't reveal the cognitive and emotional factors that influence these perspectives. Information about global warming and how it affects our lives triggers a range of subconscious and conscious responses related to values, feelings, sense of place and psychology – all of which play an important role in determining how we view the issue, calculate the related risks and choose to respond. These factors are compounded by each individual's unique history and personal experiences. Moving audiences from awareness to agreement to action requires more than simply increasing the public's level of scientific understanding; communicators must consider how the following influences and barriers can prevent or promote support for climate progress.

Values and Worldview

While many communicators operate as though information (or lack of) has the greatest influence on a person's choices, research is clear that people accept, reject and interpret facts in ways that confirm or fortify their pre-existing beliefs and worldviews. In other words, what people already think and feel has a strong influence over their perception of new information. Dan Kahan's research shows how protective cognition can cause those with individualistic values to dismiss certain environmental risks, often due to concerns about how the proposed solutions will restrict one's current way of life or threaten basic American freedoms. It's argued that this kind of values-based (motivated) reasoning plays a larger role in determining environmental views and risk perception than socio-demographic factors like political ideology, gender, race or income level. Tools like Six Americas and the Ecological Roadmap, which segments the public into 10 distinct groups based on how they rank more than 130 social values, help climate communicators understand how to more effectively segment and communicate with their audiences based on values.

Learn more:
RE:GREEN - The Ecological Roadmap
Fixing the Communications Failure

Emotions

Once dismissed as secondary responses, emotions and feelings are now believed to play a fundamental role in informing how people process information and determine risk.

Research shows that for many people, ideas or experiences trigger immediate conscious and subconscious feelings that lead them to either open up further to the experience or close down. For example when it comes to climate change, emotional responses like fear or guilt that are triggered by information about the problem can cause people to shut down to the idea before they have a chance to process it rationally or cognitively. According to a summary of several pieces of research on the subject, experiential understanding, or knowledge that comes from feelings and emotions, has a greater influence on behavior than abstract or technical knowledge.

Learn more:
Climate Change Risk Perception and Policy Preferences: The Role of Affect, Imagery, and Values

A Sense of Place

Our connection to place also influences the way we understand and respond to climate risk. Powerful experiences and relationships – both with other people and the natural environment – are formed in places of meaning such as our homes or the areas we use for recreation. These experiences play an important role in shaping our sense of self and values; in many ways, we end up creating relationships not just in a place but with the place itself. Our investment in these places we know and love can manifest as feelings of ownership and responsibility. When climate change threatens them, powerful emotions can be triggered including grief, defensiveness, resistance and fear. These negative responses can fuel disagreement and further polarize debates about climate change; however, appealing to place attachment can also motivate action, particularly in favor of taking steps that protect a beloved area.

Learn more:
Communicating Adaptation to Climate Change: The Art and Science of Public Engagement When Climate Change Comes Homes

Efficacy

A sense of efficacy comes from our belief that we have the ability to take action that will impact the outcome of a situation. And it is one of the biggest barriers to individual action on climate change. While many Americans believe climate change is a problem and may even desire to take steps to solve it, research shows that even the most alarmed members of the public question our individual and collective ability to successfully address global warming. This efficacy gap, which we also refer to as climate fatalism, could be because people don't believe they are personally capable of a particular action, that individual action will actually resolve the situation or that we have the economic, political, and cultural will to address the challenge. In other words, the solutions emerging don't yet seem to be commensurate with the problem. This fundamental sense of doubt can result in disengagement when individuals are confronted with the overwhelming nature of climate impacts.

Learn more:
Tip Sheet: Communicating Climate Risk

Risk Response

Climate change and its related impacts pose one of the most complex technical and social challenges humans have ever faced, in both the immediate and long term. The unprecedented scale of the problem and the myriad ways it will manifest in our lives makes it difficult, even impossible in many cases, for people to evaluate and respond appropriately. In the face of this, it's not uncommon for individuals to resort to several conscious and subconscious mechanisms as a way of downplaying or avoiding the true risk of climate impacts.

- ***Psychological distancing:*** Problems as vast and complex as climate change can lead people to "numb out" so as to avoid feelings of being overwhelmed and depressed by what we're facing – particularly when the explanation of the problem is not balanced with a clear articulation of the possible solutions. When people's fears about climate change are raised without a simple and clear path of action, the common response is to ignore or refute the problem.

- ***Discounting the future:*** When faced with a risk, people search their memories for vivid examples of similar past events and experiences to guide them in assessing the severity and need to respond. Relying on the past to assess risk, while discounting the future, helps explain why people are willing to buy homes in areas vulnerable to flooding or ignore evacuation notices. The more readily those examples can be drawn, the more individuals accept the likelihood of the current risk.

- ***Displacing risk:*** People can only fret over so many things and therefore weigh the risk of climate impacts against other concerns they're facing (also known as a "finite pool of worry"). Risks that seem less probable or distant, such as the impact of sea-level rise on America's coastal communities, are underweighted even if the anticipated consequences are imminent or severe.

- ***Optimism bias:*** People see themselves as facing less risk than others, particularly if past events didn't generate impacts that were predicted or if no personal harm was experienced. This is a relevant challenge considering the number of Americans polled who say they have experienced extreme weather but didn't suffer significant negative consequences.

- ***Personal vs. societal threat:*** Protection motivation theory shows that people must feel a certain personal level of threat before they can start contemplating behavior changes. Thus, if people don't see how climate disruption will personally affect them, they aren't likely to do anything about it. At the same time, political science research shows that people must feel there is a societal threat to justify policy change. The challenge is that both policy change and behavior change are needed to address climate disruption.

- ***Illusion of control:*** In part due to the history of humans developing innovative solutions to past problems, there is a sense among the public that technologies will help solve the problems we're facing. This results in "motivated inattention," where people will acknowledge a risk but don't deem it important or urgent since they believe that scientists (or others) will solve it.

- ***Valuing certainty:*** People prefer to reduce a small risk to zero than a large risk incrementally. Even though climate science is increasingly clear that rising carbon in the atmosphere (as a result of human emissions) is causing more intense and frequent extreme weather events, many people prefer to focus on the uncertain aspects of our changing climate as a means of avoiding what is known and real about the risks.

Learn more:
Roundtable Recording: Unprecedented Risk

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR CLIMATE COMMUNICATORS

Far from being an impersonal scientific issue, climate change plays deeply into peoples' existing beliefs about themselves and the world. Dispassionate consideration is made equally difficult given the growing immediacy of extreme weather impacts, the severity of the risks they pose to people and the places we value, and the sense among many Americans that global warming is an unstoppable force. The challenge climate communicators face is not only whether people agree that climate change and its related impacts are a problem, but also if they believe solutions are aligned with their values and within reach.

SECTION THREE:
Using a Preparation Frame

Well-designed communications frames help audiences understand how an issue is relevant to their existing belief systems, rank a problem from a personal and societal perspective, connect the dots across information and events and determine a solution and the action they're willing to take to achieve it. For a climate frame to be effective, it must balance a clear articulation of the problem with solutions that lead to a desirable future.

Research and practice is revealing many benefits of using a preparation frame to advance climate debates. Rather than arguing about the certainty of the science, a preparation frame focuses on local and current climate impacts and what can be done to reduce the risk to communities, businesses, homes, natural systems and future generations. It jumps over the debate of "should we act" by emphasizing the benefits of taking steps now to prepare for impacts such as an increase in extreme weather events, instead of waiting until it is more costly, or even too late, to act.

Research has also shown preparing for and responding to the impacts of climate change – whether they're happening now or expected in the future – builds support for action across the socio-political spectrum. Where scientific debates about the existence or cause of climate change cause polarization, conversations about solutions that help us prepare for impacts and offer economic benefits are bridging the divide with moderate independents and liberal Republicans. Meanwhile, vulnerable communities that have typically been excluded from global warming discourse are generating innovative responses to climate-fuelled extreme weather events, expanding the way we think about solutions and the typical cast of players advocating for them.

KEY PRINCIPLES

- Focus on local, observable impacts that are relevant to people's daily lives.
- Don't lead with climate change if it will alienate your audience. Start with what they care about and link to climate disruption over time.
- Tap uncertainty as a reason to act, promoting practical strategies that reduce risk and offer multiple benefits to people and communities including cost savings, greater security, etc.
- Promote emission reductions (mitigation) as a preparation strategy.
- Emphasize the human and financial cost of inaction.
- Build on non-partisan values such as protection, responsibility and ingenuity.

A preparation frame supports mitigation efforts by promoting emission reductions both as an adaptation strategy and a goal on its own. However, a preparation frame is not dependent on emphasizing climate change as a starting point for action, as communities may be more motivated to address drought concerns or wildfire risk; climate disruption can be connected to these concerns over time. Finally, a climate preparation frame goes beyond facts by tapping core American values around the importance of being prepared for unexpected situations and risks, illustrating ingenuity and leadership in the face of adversity, and leaving the world a better place for the next generation. To follow is an outline of how to construct a climate preparation frame and examples of language that can be used in outreach.

Tapping Preparation Values

> *"Prevention and protection are values-driven and help buttress preparedness by tying concrete steps to outcomes and impacts. They are practical values that are easily adoptable for Americans who are not yet completely sure on the changes, causes, and scope of the climate problem."*
>
> - ecoAmerica, "New Facts, Old Myths: Environmental Polling Trends

From anti-tobacco to state-based marriage equality, campaigns that frame around values recognize the core ideas, concerns and aspirations that resonate with an intended audience and name those values both explicitly and descriptively throughout their outreach. Effective framing can help bring people into a conversation about an issue that was previously alienating because it is based around beliefs that weren't familiar or that opposed their worldviews.

A preparation frame taps core, non-partisan values around the importance of being ready for unexpected situations and risks, ingenuity and leadership in the face of adversity and leaving the world a better place for the next generation. It draws on these principles and commonly held values to build support for the idea that taking steps now to manage and prevent harm is better than paying a higher price later.

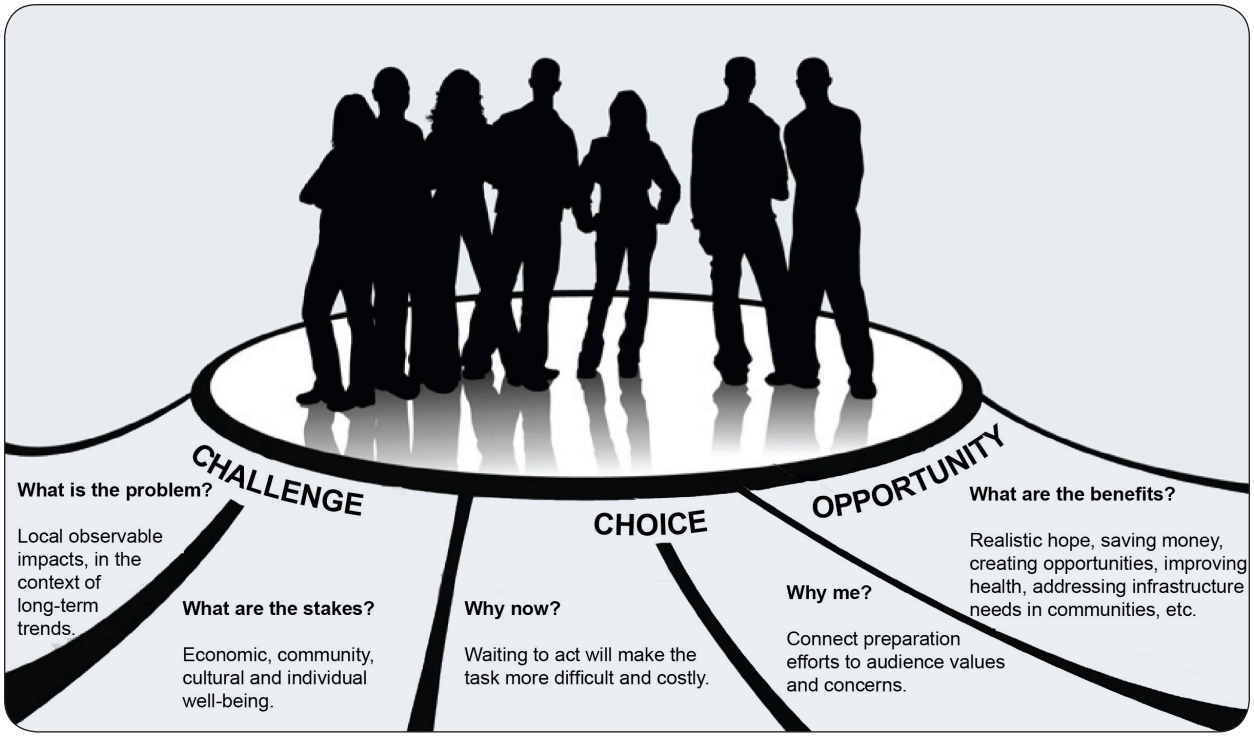
KEY VALUES

- Better to be prepared
- Protection and safety
- Prevention
- Responsibility
- Precaution
- Foresight
- Ingenuity
- Stewardship
- Fairness

Delivering the Frame

Stories are one of the most effective tools for establishing a frame around an issue. Good stories, or narrative, knit together facts, feelings and context, so that values can be expressed not as abstract principles but lived experiences that inform and motivate others. Drawing from the principles of effective storytelling and the work of Marshall Ganz, a strong story is built around three key moments: **challenge, choice and opportunity**. When described properly, these moments help build tension, create a sense of efficacy and clearly establish the benefits of action for their intended audience. Research by Bob Doppelt of The Resource Innovation Group has clearly shown that it is this blend of tension, efficacy and benefits[29] that moves audiences beyond basic awareness and concern about global warming to changing their behavior and supporting effective climate policies.

The power of an effective messaging framework is that it allows communicators to use a common sequence for telling different stories about how climate change is impacting communities. The outcome is a diverse but cohesive narrative that features many examples of the challenge, choice and opportunity society is facing.



Below is practical guidance for creating a preparation frame that clearly articulates the challenge, the choice and the opportunity, as well as examples of messages that help convey and reinforce preparation values.

CHALLENGE:
What is the problem and what is at stake if we don't resolve it?

In a context where more and more Americans are taking notice of extreme weather events, climate leaders have an opportunity to communicate climate impacts in ways that are locally relevant, pose clear risks to things people value and are rooted in broader trends. To motivate change, people must feel a tension between their values and the situation at hand. Many are waking to the reality of extreme weather events and are starting to wonder what is behind the change and what risks they face. This provides an opportunity to build understanding of the key trends.

tip

1. Emphasize current and local impacts : Americans still see climate disruption as an issue more likely to impact plants and animals, people in developing countries and even other communities in the United States rather than themselves. Break through this 'not me, not here, not now' challenge by emphasizing climate impacts that are recent, local, observable and threaten things of significance, for example, the risk to homeowners of increased flooding.

TALKING POINT: *"Climate change isn't just about warming. Communities across the northeast are getting hammered by heavier rainfall and snowstorms, like that February when Washington, Detroit, Boston, Chicago, New York and St Louis all recorded two to three times more snow than normal. These cities suffered massive power outages causing 20 people to lose their lives. Work days were cut short and thousand of flights got cancelled."*

TALKING ABOUT SPECIFIC IMPACTS

Each season and region has a unique set of climate impacts that affect people in different ways. It's important to get clear on the hallmark impacts for your audience's area and the time of year you're communicating, the ways people are struggling to manage them, and the specific solutions that are available and in play. All of this should then be connected back to the broader weather trend that is being driven by climate change. It's important to not only describe the impacts being experienced, but also what they mean for people and communities – today and down the road, if they continue to go unmanaged. For example, the key to bringing sea-level rise and other coastal climate impacts into focus is by illustrating how the timeline for addressing them is urgent, not off into the future, and that there are steps that can be taken now to address it.

Learn more:

Tip Sheet: How to Talk About Seasonal Impacts

Right Here, Right Now: A Communications Guide to Climate Impacts

2. Explore trends, don't argue science

Starting a conversation about climate impacts with an argument about science can often backfire, given the influence political and ideological leanings have on this debate. In fact, it may not make sense to immediately connect extreme weather or other impacts to climate disruption, particularly where global warming is a highly charged issue. Research and practice show an alternative is to open climate conversations by focusing on noticeable trends and changes in what is being experienced at the community level. This can be done formally, by conveying a range of climate impact scenarios and what they mean for a community or sector, or more informally in peer-to-peer conversations. In either case, consider different ways to visualize trends instead of just reciting numbers and data and be sure to explain impact trends in terms of what they mean for people, particularly if impacts worsen or are left unmanaged.

TALKING POINT: *"Did you notice how early the apple trees blossomed this year but then were damaged by frost when it got cold again? I heard the farmers are worried the crops won't survive if we keep getting these unstable weather patterns."*

3. Address uncertainty and name the risk

While uncertainty has traditionally been used to fuel arguments against taking action on climate change, a preparation frame flips that idea on its head by pointing to uncertainty as a reason why immediate measures need to be taken. Given the range of possible impacts and how they worsen over time if left unchecked, it is wise to act now in case the trends are correct and before it becomes too difficult and costly to do so. Providing examples of how climate change is already impacting or expected to affect different communities, sectors, or individuals, can help make the risk relevant and timely.

TALKING POINT: *"Extreme weather is nothing new in the United States. The problem is that climate change is turning these events into disasters. Heat waves are getting hotter, droughts are lasting longer and storms are happening more often. How many more devastating records will these disasters break if we don't take steps to stop them?*

PERCEIVED SUSCEPTIBILITY

Evidence from the field of public health suggests that as people learn more about potential consequences, concern increases alongside the desire to protect oneself from harm.[30] Focus group research has found the phrases "secure your home and community from extreme weather" and "being prepared for extreme weather" to produce the most enthusiasm for taking action.[31] When people feel more personally at risk, they may feel an increased motivation to act.

Learn more:

Preparing for Climate Impacts Focus Group Findings

CHOICE:
What action must be taken and why now? Why me?

Conveying the ways climate impacts threaten our lives is important but often not enough to motivate a response. These challenges need to also be framed in terms of what can be done to prepare for, and reduce the risk associated with them so the threat of climate disruption doesn't overwhelm people and contribute to the sense most Americans have that we may not be up for the task of addressing it. To avoid paralyzing people with descriptions of the problem, communicators must quickly pivot to describing real-world examples of actions and policies that can reduce the risk of climate impacts – in other words, stories that build a sense of efficacy. These examples should illustrate how individuals and society as a whole have the capacity to manage the challenge posed by climate change (and reduce the tension). People should have a clear sense of how their unique actions can make a difference and are in line with their existing values. Clearly and accurately describe the costs and benefits associated with different choices, offering a range of possible solutions as a way of helping people consider which is most resonant or agreeable.

tip

1. Focus on preparation

Given the choice, most people would like to prevent a problem before it starts or gets worse and is more difficult to address. Although climate impacts are already being experienced across the U.S., many things can be done to guard against them and minimize losses. A clear articulation of this opportunity jumps over the debate of "should we act" by emphasizing the benefits of taking steps now rather than waiting until it is more costly, or even too late to act. Help make the case for preparation by pointing to previous experiences or actions taken elsewhere as examples of the kind of choice that is being recommended, for example, steps being taken across the U.S. to phase out coal and reduce carbon emissions. Advocating for carbon reduction is an instrumental part of a preparedness strategy, helping connect efforts to adapt to and mitigate climate change.

TALKING POINT: *"The headlines are clear that the United States is facing more extreme weather than ever. Many communities are still recovering from events like Superstorm Sandy, which left tens of thousands of people homeless for over a year. There are things we can do now to prepare for these events and save money and lives before it's too late. For example, every $1 spent on preparing saves at least $4 down the road if disaster hits again. It's only going to get more difficult and expensive to clean up the mess if we wait until after the storms happen to take action."*

tip

2. Tie choices to audience concerns & location

The choice of action being presented should connect to the unique impacts experienced by specific audiences, as well as the challenges they are facing as a result. For example, when engaging constituencies vulnerable to heat waves and drought, hone in on what can be done to prepare communities, businesses and homes for the effects of heat on health, food and water supplies, etc. Consider whether the solutions you're advocating for are appropriate for the audience and something they can get behind. Otherwise, you may do more harm to their overall willingness to take climate impacts seriously.

TALKING POINT: *"Droughts are turning prime agricultural land into disaster areas as temperatures continue to rise, threatening the livelihoods of farmers and ranchers throughout rural America. These communities can take steps now to protect themselves by exploring how to use water more efficiently and experimenting with drought-tolerant crops."*

tip

3. Give people a role

It's true that how companies operate and policy decisions made by governments play some of the most important roles in combatting climate disruption. Community-level solutions, however, are vital to building resilience to impacts and creating the political will that bring these solutions up to scale. Action choices should offer a clear role for people – whether it's reducing energy consumption or helping their community develop emergency response plans – that still creates space for them to define their own solutions. Emphasize the need for cooperation and collective action, and show how efforts by various players (individuals, corporations and government, etc.) are a natural extension of their existing responsibilities and influence.

TALKING POINT: *"Neighbors play an important role in protecting each other during extreme weather events. In Baltimore, community members are being encouraged to use window signs to let one another know whether they're safe or in need of help in the midst of a heat wave or major storm. The Help/Safe Card is an easy way to prepare for extreme weather and help build the city's collective ability to respond to climate change."*

CONNECTING IMPACTS TO OTHER ISSUES

Tying conversations about preparation to other important public issues such as health, national security, social justice or economic development can connect climate change to things people care about and are willing to taking action on. For example, talking about how extreme heat waves put additional pressure on an already overburdened health system (and vulnerable populations like seniors) can make climate change a more relevant and tangible issue to broader audiences. Bridging to other issues also offers an opportunity to bring new players into the conversation about climate impacts, including municipalities and regional governments, industries whose business is being impacted by climate change such as agriculture and insurance, sectors that are responding to impacts such as the insurance industry and many others.

Learn more:

Roundtable Recording: Using a Public Health Frame

Climate Change as a U.S. National Security Issue: It's all about Risk Management

OPPORTUNITY:
What are the benefits of action?

This is the point in the framing where it is important to bridge to the benefits that result from taking steps to prepare for and reduce climate risk. Typically, there needs to be a sense that the benefits outweigh the costs of action, and are connected to tanglible things people value. This means going beyond describing reducing negative impacts, like making droughts less severe, and talking about secure homes; improving health; acccess to good affordable food; rewarding, stable jobs, etc.

tip

1. Show AND tell
Fatalism, or the belief that it's too late to do anything about climate change, is a significant barrier to climate action. One way to combat this sense of resignation is to profile the people and places benefitting from change. Describe how positive action has manifested as clear extrinsic and intrinsic benefits for people, including job creation, cost savings or improved health and well-being, and use specific examples that avoid idealistic or rhetorical promises of the benefits of action.

TALKING POINT: *"Storm water pollution is a major challenge for municipal water systems, made worse by extreme rainfall and snowmelts brought on by climate change. Homeowners are helping solve the problem by building rain gardens that filter rain from roofs, driveways and sidewalks before it enters a storm drain. These people are playing a key role in keeping chemicals out of their local water supply and helping prevent localized flooding, as well as beautifying neighborhoods by adding green space."*

2. Connect benefits to shared values and goals

Most people share the same desires for security, good health, happiness, economic prosperity and collective well-being – for today's and future generations. Focusing on these shared goals can help unite people and interests that have typically held opposing positions on climate change, giving more people a clear and desired role in the change process. Often pro-environmental actions and benefits are seen as serving only specific segments of society, such as urban elites or eco-activists. This makes climate action feel like a special interest or effort that requires the sacrifice of many for the benefit of a few. Connecting the benefits of taking action to values that are shared broadly across society, communicators can help break down these silos. Climate leaders may find that underlying beliefs are less divergent than talking about the challenge and choice related to impacts.

TALKING POINT: *"Taking steps to reduce the impacts of climate change is predicted to improve the health of nearly every American. It's within our power to protect people from the waterborne diseases that come with flooding or the damage to hospitals and other health services inflicted by major storms. Reducing carbon emissions and preparing for climate impacts can help safeguard the most vulnerable among us, including seniors, young ones and the chronically ill, and save lives."*

3. Promote local empowerment through energy choices

Conscious choices about energy use – including developing renewable sources, improving transit and reducing consumption – play an important role in the effort to address climate impacts as well as create stronger communities. When communicating about the benefits of taking action, climate leaders should emphasize the opportunity for communities to reclaim control over their energy resources in ways that increase their resiliency and overall well being. For example, investing in wind turbines or building rapid transit not only addresses climate change but also supports the local economy by creating short and long-term jobs. Emphasizing local empowerment as a co-benefit of preparing for impacts is a double-win in the face of serious and growing climate risks.

TALKING POINT: *"Investing in clean energy like solar can help us reduce the emissions that are contributing to extended heat waves and drought, reduce our electricity costs and create new jobs in our community. We have the ability now to move away from the dirty, expensive, carbon-based energy sources of the past to efficient clean options."*

MESSENGERS

Who and where people get their information play an important role in how they interpret and either accept or reject what is being communicated. Polling shows that government officials and university researchers are trusted preparation messengers; however it's important to select messengers based on their relevance and credibility around the issues being discussed. Business leaders delivering a preparation message are likely to be influential within their own sector, as religious leaders would be effective for reaching those within the faith community. Research shows that people are most trusting of experts or spokespeople they believe share their values. They also have greater confidence in an issue when its story is told multiple times by those who are experiencing and working on it locally, or when it is validated by a diverse set of messengers. It is also important to reach out to messengers who may not otherwise be heard, such as vulnerable populations who are most at risk.

It is useful to consider the sequence of voices heard, for example, preparation messages should first focus on telling stories of those who are experiencing local impacts and that help establish the context. Scientific experts can then be effective in connecting local events to larger trends and explaining potential future consequences, as well as actions that can reduce this risk.

WINNING OVER OPPOSITION

Political ideology is the leading factor when it comes to attitudes towards climate change, however, this partisan divide is softening. A look at media headlines and recent public opinion research shows moderate Republican leaders and supporters are increasingly supportive of some measures to address climate change – including regulating carbon, limiting emissions from coal-fired power plants and rewarding those who purchase energy efficient vehicles. Using a preparation frame can help bolster this support by promoting other ideas and actions that are in line with moderate Conservative sensibilities. For example, Americans across political affiliations largely support the idea that increasing efficiency and moving to renewables can save money, create jobs, generate economic opportunity, as well as deliver other benefits such as self-reliance, and access to clean energy for homes and businesses. It's a good reminder that focusing on solutions and the cost-savings or other benefits they offer (as opposed to spending all of our time debating about the problem) can help build bipartisan support for climate solutions – even in the absence of consensus on global warming.

Learn more:

Developing the Climate Solutions Conversation

Collection: Conservative Climate and Energy Attitudes

SECTION FOUR:
Public Engagement Approaches

Reframing climate conversations is key to overcoming the manufactured debate over global warming and building a sense of tension, efficacy and opportunity around addressing climate impacts. Yet helping people move from understanding to action requires more than a good set of messages.

Public engagement strategies that allow people to meaningfully engage in the conversation and co-create solutions are critical tools for climate leaders. The approach you choose will depend on who needs to be engaged and their level of readiness to address climate impacts. Many Americans agree that climate change presents a real threat but are not necessarily decided on how to address it. By taking time to understand your audience and the mechanisms that can guide them through the various stages of change, climate leaders can more effectively design outreach and engagement efforts. What's common between approaches, however, is that each strategy allows constituencies to explore and acknowledge their climate risk, learn what can be done and help develop a response that is right for them.

This next section introduces climate leaders to a behavior change framework that can be used to guide their outreach efforts, as well as the engagement principles behind them and leading examples of these strategies in play.

Meeting Audiences Where They Are

The first step in choosing a public engagement approach is getting clear on your audience's understanding of the issue and ability to respond. Are you in the early stages of building awareness around extreme weather events and their connection to global warming? Or are people already bought in and looking for ideas on how to confront the challenge? The level of engagement or behavior change you should expect from people will depend on their stage of change.

The 5D Staged Approach to Change, developed by The Resource Innovation Group's Bob Doppelt, is a concise framework that allows climate and sustainability leaders to assess where audiences are at in the process of shifting their mindset and behavior, and tailor engagement strategies accordingly. The five stages of change include: **Disinterest, deliberation, design, doing and defending**. Within them are a number of public engagement approaches that support moving people from one stage to the next. While these stages often follow one another, it's also not uncommon for people to hop over one or slip backwards in the process of changing their behavior.

STAGE ONE:
DISINTEREST – "Not ready to change"

During the first stage of change, individuals are unaware of or haven't yet accepted global warming. The best way to break through this disinterest is through a disturbance that creates tension and highlights the gap between what a person values and the thing that threatens it. Disturbances like a major storm help create tension by putting our homes, health and communities at risk. For them to be effective in raising awareness and moving audiences to the next stage, these disturbances must engage the emotional, experiential and cognitive aspects of a person's perception, illustrating how the current way of thinking (i.e. disinterest) is not beneficial.

- **Use Impacts to Begin Conversations About Climate Change**

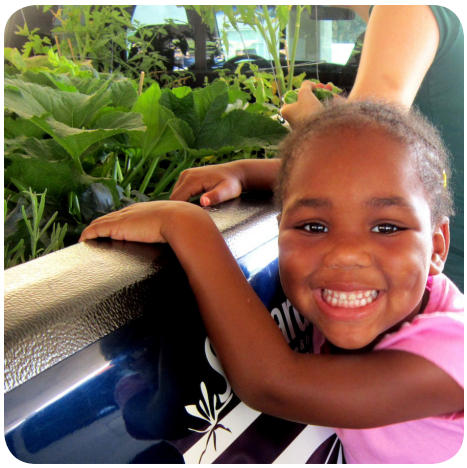
  Research and practice show that natural disasters don't just make powerful headlines; they also provide opportunities to begin climate conversations with those affected. Climate leaders supporting those impacted by extreme weather or other impacts can connect the dots between these local, discernible events and larger trends as part of their outreach. Impacts don't have to be limited to major storms – less severe events also provide important connection points, for example, changes in the growing season or increasing temperatures provide opportunities to start conversations with people who are unclear about what is happening and why.

SPOTLIGHT

Protect Our Winters was founded by pro-snowboarder Jeremy Jones to engage the winter sports community in protecting mountain regions from the effects of climate change. Jones was motivated to take action after seeing beloved snowboarding areas become unusable and resorts close down in the absence of snow, and the success of his organization rests on the convictions of others who are watching things they care about disappear before their eyes as a result of global warming.

Other examples:
As part of 350.org's Climate Impacts Day campaign (2012), thousands of people attended rallies and shared personal photos in an effort to show the connection between extreme weather and climate disruption.

Climate Access' resource collection on how to communicate extreme weather events and effectively to connect the dots to climate change.



- **Use Compelling Visuals**

The old saying that "a picture is worth a thousand words" remains true when it comes to communicating climate impacts. Powerful images help humanize statistics and trends, telling the stories of those affected in unequivocal terms. These stories evoke strong emotions that play an important role in disturbing our existing worldviews and opening our minds to new information and ideas. As people spend more time online, effective infographics can communicate pages of data in a single snapshot, simplifying complex information into a clear message or takeaway. Visual communications are interpreted differently by each person and can appeal to audiences across values sets or worldviews, which presents an opportunity to reach many but also a potential pitfall if your audiences don't react the way you intended them to.

SPOTLIGHT

"In the future, the places I love will become Florida" was how the *New York Times* described Climate Central's 1001 Blistering Future Summers interactive tool. The project took summer high temperature data for 1,001 cities across the U.S. and developed a simple but powerful online map that shows what a 'normal' summer will feel like in each of these places by the end of the century.

Other resources:
Resource Media provides research and tools on best practices of visual storytelling in their guide, Seeing is Believing.

Climate Access' collection of climate and energy infographics, including guidelines for creating your own.

- **Cultural Interventions**

Cultural mediums like music, dance and visual art play a unique role in raising awareness and expressing perspectives about climate change in ways that extend beyond the prevailing debate over science, which does not resonate for many audiences. Artistic and cultural works can make the issue more compelling to the average person because these expressions are emotional and imaginative and do not rely on a technical understanding of climate change. By getting involved in the process of creating art or other cultural mediums, individuals and communities can process their emotional reactions to climate change in literal and abstract ways that help them better understand the issue, how it is personally relevant and the available solutions.

SPOTLIGHT The HighWaterLine project organizes communities in the U.S. and UK to use public art as a way of raising awareness and encouraging preparedness around climate risks. Those involved select the climate impact and artistic medium they want to use to visualize it, which has included drawing chalk lines around coastal cities to illustrate where sea levels are expected to rise to and how neighborhoods will be affected.

Other resources:
Anthropologist Dr. Jennifer Hirsch worked with vegan soul food chef Tsadakeeyah in Chicago to introduce residents to sustainability through community and food.

A dance tour makes the risk of sea-level rise real across the U.S.

- **Experiential Learning**

Hands-on learning activities create opportunities for people to explore what climate change means to their daily lives or the tangible ways it impacts things they care about. These experiences allow people in the early stages of behavior change to engage with climate change by watching and doing. Sometimes experiential learning activities are explicitly about global warming, such as simulation-style "problem solving" games; other times, learning about climate impacts is an extension of another activity that bridges the public's existing interests, such as zoo education programs. By connecting climate change to things that are familiar, current and local, experiential education helps overcome the prevailing notion that global warming is a 'not me, not here, not now' problem.

SPOTLIGHT University of Hawaii has helped raise awareness about climate change using the Kukui Cup, a residence hall energy competition for 1,000 first-year students. The competition uses "gamification" techniques where students learned how to change their own behavior and gain access to tools for pursuing energy solutions within the community. The Kukui Cup game included online "workshops" and excursions to engage with community organizations about Hawaii's energy challenges, and offered prizes for meeting conservation goals.

Other resources:
The U.S. National Park Service reviews place-based climate change education strategies in America's National Parks and wildlife refuges, and offers recommendations for future practice.

The Chicago Zoological Society explains how zoo and aquarium visitors understand and learn about climate change.

MAKING CLIMATE ENGAGEMENT MORE EQUITABLE

Not all communities are equal when it comes to the effects of climate change. Countless statistics point to the fact that marginalized and low-income communities and communities of color are more vulnerable to impacts because of a number of systemic factors. As described in the NAACP's Climate Justice Initiative Toolkit, "changes in frequency and intensity of extreme weather events particularly affect communities of color because our communities are often already vulnerable due to economic insecurity, substandard housing stock, etc." The outcome? Food insecurity, illness, displacement and even death for those on the frontlines of climate change.

To make things more difficult, these frontline communities have traditionally been left out of conversations about climate solutions – many of which are aimed at protecting those most vulnerable. (This is despite the fact that public opinion polling suggests people of color are more convinced climate change is happening, impacting their daily lives and needs to be addressed.) To help close this gap, a growing number of local organizations are taking the lead on climate outreach in their communities, building resilience through knowledge sharing, planning and partnerships. One of these organizations is UPROSE, Brooklyn's oldest Latino community-based organization. In response to Superstorm Sandy and the community's desire to take steps to prepare for similar disasters in the future, UPROSE launched the Sunset Park Climate Justice and Community Resiliency Center. The center provides a space for community members to share ideas and resources and is helping build the capacity of Sunset Park's indigenous leaders and local businesses to prepare for and respond to extreme weather events, including through relationship-building, asset mapping and bottom-up planning.

Climate leaders working outside of vulnerable communities can support resiliency efforts and help foster a more inclusive approach to engagement in several key ways:

- Take time to understand the systemic issues and underlying inequities that make some communities more vulnerable to climate impacts than others (and influence their ability to prepare for or respond to extreme weather events), and consider what you can do to address these issues.
- Be an ally to individuals and organizations already working in vulnerable communities by asking what you can do to support existing local efforts. This could be by connecting them to resources, sharing tools or helping broaden their network.
- Build authentic relationships over time by listening to the needs and interests of people living in vulnerable communities. Consider what you can learn from those who are already being forced to adapt to a changing climate.

Resources:
Roundtable Recording: Equitable Community Engagement
Climate Justice resource collection
Where We Live: The Changing Face of Climate Activism

STAGE TWO:
DELIBERATION – "I might change"

Here, individuals are beginning to consider the issue of climate disruption and what it could mean to them personally, for example, they could be starting to realize how worsening forest fires are a threat to their home and safety. This doesn't mean they're ready to commit to making a change yet, and in fact, they could slip backwards to a state of disinterest. It's important in this stage that the benefits of preparing for climate impacts (i.e. protecting their home, preventing evacuation) are clear and greater than the costs, and that individuals believe they have the ability and resources to make a change. The engagement approaches of Stage One are still applicable here, as well as others that enable individuals to gather information and discuss how the issue is relevant to their lives.

- **Use Scenarios to Illustrate Trends**

  People process risk more effectively when they actively explore the uncertainties and participate in solution-based strategies, rather than having risk and actions prescribed to them. Offering audiences a range of scenarios that outline how global warming is and will impact a community (for instance, the way it will influence water resources) and what the potential responses might be allows for this type hands-on learning. These scenarios simplify complex climate change science for lay audiences and provide an opportunity to address uncertainties in the scientific projections, particularly when considering local impacts. Scenarios can also be created for resource managers and professionals that allow them to see the issues they are concerned about through a climate impacts lens.

SPOTLIGHT

How can researchers empower managers and planners with new information on climate change impacts that helps inform how natural spaces are managed? Jarod Blades and the team working on the research-in-action project *Multi-scale Climate Change Research and Communication in the U.S. Northern Rockies* have found that the use of visualizations and interactive workshops have changed participants' opinions about the utility and credibility of climate change science, potentially influencing how climate data is used in land management decisions.

Other resources:
Beginning in coastal California, Owlized and Climate Access are developing an online visualization tool that allows people to witness sea-level rise scenarios for the exact location they are standing in.

- **Deep Listening and Traditional Knowledge**

  Insights into how climate change is impacting ecosystems and communities around the globe don't just come from technical experts. A number of initiatives are spotlighting the way communities – including traditional or indigenous societies – are witnessing and experiencing the effects of global warming in their region. Often these projects involve media productions such as films or photo exhibits that bring community stories to distant audiences, building interest and concern about climate impacts by putting a human face on the issue. These productions help build common understandings of climate impacts across languages, geographies and knowledge systems. Equally important is the role this unique and often times historical knowledge can play in expanding what is technically known about how the earth and humans are responding to climate change.

SPOTLIGHT *Qapirangajuq: Inuit Knowledge and Climate Change* is the first Inuktitut-language documentary showing how climate change is being experienced by those living in Canada's Arctic. Shown around the world including at the United Nations, the film has done more than raise awareness of and support for climate action; the Inuits' observations of how the sun, moon and stars were shifting – described by elders across Nunavut – have also helped scientists better understand the range of unique and dramatic impacts that are taking place.

Other resources:
Conversations with the Earth multimedia project

STAGE THREE:
DESIGN – "I will change"

An individual in the third stage of change has come to the realization that the benefits of preparing for climate impacts outweigh the costs and they begin to design a plan for taking action. This may involve telling peers about this intention and can also include a period of oscillating between wanting to change and second-guessing their decision, again causing some people to slip backwards after making this initial commitment.

- **Community conversations & peer-based outreach**

  In a world where views on climate change have become shorthand for political ideology, people are more likely to accept information from trusted messengers such as peers and

family members. Community conversations create a space for people to come together for a facilitated, relationship-based dialogue about climate impacts. Conversation campaigns and peer-based outreach can be effective at the earlier stages of change but are extremely critical when people are deciding how an issue impacts them and what they can do about it. These approaches offer individuals an opportunity to connect with those they can trust in order to work through the barriers that keep them from moving to the next stage of change. This kind of outreach is not only about sharing information but also listening to those who have been affected – particularly low-income and disadvantaged communities – in order to begin moving towards long-term preparedness and explore the underlying and systemic issues surrounding their vulnerability. The goal is to create a space for people to listen to one another's ideas and experiences in order to identify areas of common concern and opportunities for collaboration.

SPOTLIGHT The City of Baltimore's "Make a Plan. Build a Kit. Help Each Other." campaign is encouraging residents to engage in conversations about preparing for climate impacts with a specific focus on vulnerable neighborhoods. Community events give residents a chance to work with one another and with local experts to ultimately increase their level of readiness for climate-related natural disasters and extreme weather events.

Other resources:
Minnesota Interfaith Power and Light, inspired by the success of the Freedom to Marry conversation campaign, has been training dozens of volunteers from the faith community to convene and facilitate dozens of conversations about climate change with their peers.

Diverse groups of citizens in Virginia and Florida used dialogue sessions (organized by Viewpoint Learning and the Union of Concerned Scientists) to explore the issues and tradeoffs involved in addressing climate change, with a particular focus on sea-level rise.

- **Stakeholder Engagement**

Stakeholder engagement is an important tool for involving diverse groups of people in the design and implementation of decisions that affect them. In the field of climate planning, it's being used by organizations, corporations and governments to build common understanding, and break down the silos between interests and generate support for climate action. Effective stakeholder engagement improves the quality of policy and planning outcomes by bringing a range of people and perspectives to the table and incorporating local and indigenous knowledge; it increases the legitimacy of decision makers and leaders working to address climate disruption when the process is considered fair and competent; and expands capacity at the community level by fostering two-way exchanges, regional coordination, etc.

SPOTLIGHT

To support its climate planning efforts and help increase the resiliency of its residents to climate impacts, the City of Boston worked with international sustainability firm Meister Consultants Group to design and implement the Greenovate Boston Community Climate Summit, a stakeholder engagement event that moved beyond the usual suspects to engage Bostonians from all walks of life in reducing the city's greenhouse gas emissions.

Other resources:
When the City of Vancouver began its journey to become the world's greenest city by 2020, it had to redefine what citizen engagement meant in this Canadian city.

QUICK TIPS: Best Practices for Effective Stakeholder Engagement

- Be expansive when considering who has a stake in the issue
- Engage stakeholders early and often, including at the beginning of a planning effort and before decisions have been made
- Explore multiple approaches or activities that address barriers to participation
- Identify risks and opportunities associated with the issue at hand, pivoting quickly to solutions to overcome the sense that nothing can be done
- Be transparent about how the input from stakeholders will be used and their role in implementing solutions

Tip Sheet: Stakeholder Engagement Best Practices

STAGE FOUR:
DOING – "I am changing"

The fourth stage of change occurs when an individual is taking action and shifting their behavior. Here, people are making tangible efforts to prepare themselves or their communities for climate impacts – including by working to reduce carbon emissions. This stage requires a renewed commitment on the part of the individual in order to guard against external pressure to revert to old behaviors. People who are in this stage can be supported through rewards and reinforcements that show how their action is making a positive difference.

- **Activate and Aggregate**

The effect of one individual taking action becomes exponential in the context of similar efforts being made by others. This simple principle guides a number of campaigns focused on activating groups of voters, consumers or donors in support of climate action. Thanks to the rise of digital communications, these base-building efforts can reach large numbers of people and aggregate their actions in highly visual and accessible ways. They also offer an entry point to people who are concerned and ready to take action about global warming, and who may be interested in deeper engagement like community leadership or organizing down the road. This type of public engagement also creates opportunities for diverse organizations and interests – including health, social justice, indigenous and minority rights, corporate accountability and more – to create broad coalitions connected through shared values and goals, such as with the People's Climate March and related events.

SPOTLIGHT Based in New York City, In Our Backyards (IOBY) helps make neighborhoods more sustainable by providing a platform for people to donate time or dollars to local projects that improve and strengthen their community. By helping citizens organize and fund local projects, IOBY is fostering community buy-in for solutions and a network of long-term stewards, as well as informal crisis-response teams, like in the wake of Hurricane Sandy when IOBY participants helped organize neighborhood response efforts by using the lists of project volunteers in their area and IOBY neighborhood gardens to gather and coordinate.

Other resources:
Organized by a coalition of groups representing a wide-range of interests, the People's Climate March attracted thousands of people whose participation sent a clear message that the movement is gaining momentum.

Erica Flock from Citizen's Climate Lobby on building the "climate cavalry"

- **Promoting and Rewarding Leadership**

Individuals and organizations that are already taking critical steps to reduce carbon emissions stand as important models for others. Climate communicators can help amplify this work through awards programs, "race to the top" competitions and projects that reward leadership with public exposure and other incentives. This recognition helps increase impact by shining a light on projects that can be scaled or replicated and motivating organizations, businesses and governments to take action and become leaders, too.

SPOTLIGHT

Every March, millions of people turn off their lights off for an hour to raise awareness about climate change as part of the World Wildlife Fund's Earth Hour. The organization has taken the concept a step further by creating the Earth Hour City Challenge, an effort to address the 70% of global CO2 emissions that are created by cities. Designed to promote renewable energy and climate preparedness, the challenge profiles and rewards dozens of municipalities competing in a climate action 'race to the top'.

Other resources:
The United Nation's Momentum for Change project highlights the most inspiring and transformational mitigation and adaptation efforts around the world, known as 'Lighthouse Activities'.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency runs a handful of high-profile awards programs that recognize excellence and leadership in climate-related areas like green power, clean air and smart growth.

STAGE FIVE:
DEFEND – "I have changed"

In the fifth stage of change, an individual has incorporated new thinking and behaviors into their routine (usually six months to a year after the first changes were made) and may be looking for new ways to apply their approach. The challenge now is making sure that these changes stay in place for the long-term. Maintaining new behaviors in this final stage involve the ability to defend one's choices in the face of resistance and setbacks, and connecting with likeminded peers.

- **Amplification Networks**

  Individual climate organizations have quickly learned the limits of their reach when it comes to building widespread support for climate action. Broad and diverse engagement requires advocates from a range of sectors and communities to activate their own constituencies. These advocates are the "hubs" of the climate movement, helping amplify information and solutions across many segments or "spokes" of society. Organizations seeking to catalyze exponential change, including Climate Access, help cultivate amplification networks by organizing and training climate leaders to become effective communicators and network influencers. This approach makes it possible for climate leaders to reach a diverse array of stakeholders and increase the scale of their collective impact.

SPOTLIGHT

Working to promote the U.S. National Climate Assessment, NCAnet is a "network of networks" made up of non-profit organizations, academic institutions, and government partners that translate and share the climate assessment's extensive findings with their respective constituents. Using outreach tools like videos, conference presentations, listening sessions and town halls, NCAnet members facilitate an ongoing interactive discourse among stakeholders on impact trends and their relevance for decision makers across sectors and communities.

Other resources:

The Urban Sustainability Directors Network is a peer-to-peer network of local government professionals from cities across the United States and Canada who use the network to support knowledge sharing and identify collaboration opportunities between experts in sustainability.

LEARN MORE: Segmentation Tools for Understanding Audiences

- RE:GREEN - The Ecological Roadmap
- Global Warming's Six Americas
- American Climate Values 2014

DEALING WITH PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACTS

How do people deal with the fear, anger, hope or despair triggered by global warming and the imminent loss of things we cherish? The need for "emotional resilience", as described by psychosocial researcher Renee Lertzman, in the face of threats posed by climate change is as critical to our survival as resilient infrastructure, economies or communities – especially for vulnerable communities. Too often, however, the anxiety and stress that many people experience as a result of climate impacts are overlooked in the push for policy or behavior change that addresses the problem. In fact, most messaging that disproportionately focuses on the challenges posed by climate change without identifying solutions is actually contributing to our mental unease. Those seeking to engage audiences on climate issues have an important role to play in acknowledging the range of psychological responses that come up for individuals – and in seeking out the right resources for addressing them.

Developed by British psychotherapist Rosemary Randall, the Carbon Conversations project convenes small groups of people to explore what steps they can take as individuals to reduce their emissions and the personal barriers to action they're facing. The facilitated conversations are built off a longstanding model in health and social work of 'using groups to help people'. In addition to providing a non-judgmental space and relevant information to support participants in the change process, the conversations allow people to work through some of the points of psychological and social tension that come with exploring an issue as serious and polarizing as climate change. In this work, achieving change is as much about helping people understand and overcome their obstacles to action as it is finding new technologies and solutions.

Rosemary Randall: Carbon Conversations
Loss and Climate Change: The Cost of Parallel Narratives

The Resource Innovation Group has launched a series of workshops to help individuals enhance their ability to cope with acute trauma and toxic stress associated with climate change and foster resilience. Learn more about Bob Doppelt's Transformational Resilience program.

Resources:
Dealing with the Psychological Impacts of Climate Change
The Psychology of Overwhelm
Ecopsychology and Climate resource collection
Getting real about it: Navigating the psychological & social demands of a world in distress

CONCLUSION

Communicating about climate impacts is not a choice but a necessity given the rise of extreme weather events and other impacts, the threats they pose to all facets of society and the likelihood that these impacts will worsen. The opportunity for climate leaders is to strategically frame these conversations to help audiences – whether they're already concerned or still on the fence – connect the dots between extreme weather and climate change, identify viable solutions and recognize their role in moving those solutions forward.

A preparation frame is most effective when it complements deeper engagement strategies. Efforts that identify those most vulnerable to the effects of climate change and enable dialogue about risks and solutions are key to helping people process the disturbing reality bearing down on them and overcome the fatalism many feel in response to such a complex problem. Communication and engagement efforts must continue to amplify solutions, particularly those rising up from communities and regions on the frontlines that could be scaled or modeled by others.

While a growing body of research and practice support the use of a preparation frame by climate leaders at all levels – in government, academia, non-profit organizations or the private sector – there is also much left to learn. Researchers still do not know the lasting impact of extreme weather events on climate attitudes and there is more work to be done to fill in awareness of how the public responds to different climate impacts such as drought versus sea level rise. Perhaps most importantly, we need to better understand how to connect the threat of climate impacts with the solutions that are available now, and steps that communities, business, and individuals can take to adopt them.

APPENDIX 1: ENDNOTES

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APPENDIX 3: IMAGE CREDITS

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