



Factsheet: Creating an Organizational Strategy for Climate Action

This factsheet gives you the next steps you can take as a community foundation to embed climate action in your organization. It outlines the levers you can use such as granting, investments and partnerships, and walks through the steps as you progress in your climate action journey. It also provides further resources to deepen your work.

The climate crisis is complex and multi-faceted. No single institution or sector can solve climate change. It requires that all sectors collaborate around the shared goal of halving greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 and reaching net zero by 2050 or sooner—while leaving no one behind. Putting climate equity at the heart of our work is essential. We also need to ensure equity-deserving populations do not bear the brunt of the repercussions and share in the benefits of a climate transition.

[The Institute for Sustainable Finance at Queen's University](#) estimates that reaching Canada's 2030 global climate commitment will require an average investment of \$12.8 billion annually between 2020 and 2030 – far more than is currently being invested.

Levers Available to Community Foundations

While financial resources may be the most obvious asset of foundations ([public foundations in Canada had \\$41.6 billion in assets and granted \\$5.1 billion in 2020](#)), there are several other equally key levers of change in the foundation toolbox. These include partnerships and convening; data, communications and knowledge sharing; influencing and advocacy; and operations.

Lever 1: Granting

Foundations might decide to apply a climate lens across their portfolio of grants or create a new granting stream focused on climate action by either adopting a broad focus or narrowing in on one or more climate focus areas. These could include climate justice, mitigation, adaptation/resilience, climate engagement and communications, partnerships, and innovation. Prioritizing solutions that shift systems and address the root causes of the climate crisis will be the most impactful. Look to support initiatives led by Indigenous and other equity-deserving organizations.



Lever 2: Impact Investing

There are several ways to align a community foundation's investment portfolios with a foundation's climate goals. These include divesting from activities that contribute to climate change (such as fossil fuel companies), using shareholder power to advocate for climate action, and seeking out impact investment opportunities with positive environmental outcomes.

Canada's market for impact investments (those made to generate a positive, measurable social and environmental impact alongside a financial return) was approximately [\\$20.3 billion in 2019](#). Meanwhile, responsible investments (much broader than impact investments and include other categories such as negative screening – the exclusion of certain companies or sectors) are estimated to be worth \$3 trillion, a [fivefold increase in the past six years](#).

Lever 3: Partnerships and Convening

Community foundations often have unique insight into local ecosystems and can help connect organizations and broker partnerships. For example, a foundation might host conversations with local actors (community organizations, municipal government, foundations and other funders, businesses, and residents) to identify a shared vision and common agenda for advancing a just and equitable climate transition in the community.

Lever 4: Data, Communications and Knowledge Sharing

[Vital Signs](#) is a powerful community-driven data program for tracking the vitality of a community and spurring action to improve quality of life. It is an initiative spearheaded by CFC and led by community foundations across Canada and globally. Producing Vital Signs reports and hosting “vital conversations” provide opportunities to uncover and share local knowledge, data and solutions around climate mitigation and resilience.

Lever 5: Influence and Advocacy

Community foundations can use their platform to amplify the voices of local climate leaders and grantees, donors and partners that are taking climate action, particularly those of youth, Indigenous, Black and other equity-deserving communities. Explore opportunities to contribute to advocacy efforts that shift policies and systems at the local/regional, provincial, and national levels.

Lever 6: Operations

Foundations can set an example by reducing the carbon footprint of their own operations, such as buildings, procurement and travel. However, while it is important to walk the talk, action cannot stop with greening operations alone.



Examples of community foundation climate leaders

The [Ottawa Community Foundation](#) (OCF) incubated the [Ottawa Climate Action Fund](#) (OCAF) in 2021 to catalyze and scale low-carbon solutions in Ottawa. OCF signed an MOU with the City of Ottawa to accelerate climate action through OCAF, which is a member of Low Carbon Cities Canada.

The [Community Foundation of Newfoundland and Labrador](#), in partnership with Memorial University's Leslie Harris Centre of Regional Policy and Development, made climate change and its impacts the focus of the [2022 edition of the Newfoundland and Labrador Vital Signs Report](#).

The [Foundation of Greater Montreal](#) (FGM) is also committed to leveraging its resources toward the climate crisis. FGM introduced a new investment policy to reduce its carbon footprint by 45% by 2030 and created a new granting program to support an ecological transition. They also partnered with Trottier Foundation, McConnell Foundation and the City of Montreal to establish Partenariat Climat Montréal, which brings together major institutions to cut Montreal's emissions by more than 55% by 2030.

Steps for beginning your journey

- **Learn:** Learn more about the present and future impact of climate change on your community, which specific groups and communities are at greatest risk, and the ecosystem of local actors taking climate action.
- **Engage:** Talk to your staff and board about what you are learning about climate change and its intersections with other issues such as poverty, inequality, health and community wellbeing.
- **Commit:** Consider signing the [Canadian Philanthropy Climate Commitment](#), a call on foundations and other funders to commit to act on climate change. Part of the global [#PhilanthropyforClimate](#) movement, the Canadian call to action was co-created by Community Foundations of Canada (CFC) and has been signed by CFC and nine community foundations.
- **Network:** Connect with other community foundations that are further ahead on their climate journey. Access tools, resources and examples of good practices through CFC. Consider joining [Environment Funders Canada](#), a network of funders working on climate and environmental issues. Share knowledge and learn together.
- **Listen:** Engage your community throughout your process. Speak to organizations on the ground that are doing climate work to understand community assets and strengths, gaps,



and opportunities. Seek out voices of equity-deserving groups and organizations disproportionately impacted by climate change or are working to advance climate equity.

- **Strategize:** Determine potential focus areas for your climate work and set initial goals and targets (e.g., allocating a % of grants and investments towards climate action by a specific date, achieving net zero emissions for internal operations within a given timeframe).

Resources

- [The Impact Investing Guide for Foundations:](#) Developed by Rally Assets and others (including CFC) in 2019, this is a helpful guide for foundations to learn about impact investing in theory and practice.
- Online course [Centering Equity in Climate Action:](#) A self-paced online course on climate equity developed by Apolitical with input from Tamarack Institute and others. While the target audience is policymakers at all levels of government, it is equally well suited to foundation leaders looking to learn about these issues.
- [Climate Transitions Cohort: Key Readings and Resources:](#) A curated list of readings prepared by Tamarack Institute on topics related to climate and equity, multi-solving, community engagement, collective impact and more.
- [Climate Atlas of Canada:](#) Combines climate science, mapping, and storytelling with Indigenous knowledge and community-based research, and video.
- [Canadian Philanthropy Climate Commitment:](#) Call for funders to commit to taking climate action that has been signed by over 40 foundations and funders thus far. The website includes an implementation guide and other resources.
- [Environment Funders Canada:](#) A network of over 75 foundations and other philanthropic organizations dedicated to increasing their funding impact, whether through sharing insights around strategies, collective problem solving or gaining critical new perspectives.

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