

## STEP ONE: Communicate, Connect, And Build Capacity



After becoming familiar with climate and health issues, it's time to start building your capacity to plan and prepare for impacts in your community. Before launching into the work, it's helpful to spend some time framing the issues and learning how to communicate the complex topic.

It's also important to reach out to internal and external partners to get an understanding of what is currently being done in your jurisdiction and explore how you might add value to existing planning or preparedness work already underway.

In most cases, local health jurisdictions do not have the capacity to take on separate climate and health projects. Finding opportunities to integrate actions into existing work or leveraging the work of existing partners is a great way to begin. You can also start exploring new funding opportunities or other support available to your department for capacity building. The following resources have been compiled to help you COMMUNICATE, CONNECT, and BUILD CAPACITY:

### COMMUNICATE

\_\_ Review [OHA's Climate and Health messages](#). This two-pager was developed as the executive summary to the Oregon Climate and Health Profile and serves as a guide for climate and health messaging in Oregon. These messages are based in the latest climate science and have been reviewed by Oregon's Public Health Division leadership and communications team.

\_\_ Take a look at national climate change communication resources:

- [ClimateAccess.org](#) especially: [The Preparation Frame](#)
- [ClimateCommunication.org](#)
- [ClimateHealthConnect.org](#)
- [George Mason's Center for Climate Change Communications](#)
- [Yale Project on Climate Change Communication](#) and the [climate opinion maps](#)

\_\_ Do a little homework to [assess your community's readiness](#) for engaging in this work. Making these initial assessments can help to frame messages and develop actions that are appropriate and effective in your community.

\_\_ Consider these [Tips for Difficult Conversations](#) developed in response to challenges identified in early climate and health planning in Oregon.

\_\_ Consider drafting a statement that draws from the resources above and describes your intentions. This statement can be used to communicate with others and may change as you learn more. If you wish, you can use this [template](#)  Statement of Intent.

## CONNECT

\_\_ Review your own department's strategic plan and community health improvement plan. Identify potential places of alignment. Are there goals or actions that have the potential to build [community resilience](#) or achieve [climate co-benefits](#)? Keep a running list of opportunities for potential collaboration, even if you don't yet have the capacity to engage.

\_\_ Review other plans in your jurisdiction. Is there a climate action plan? What's in your jurisdiction's comprehensive plan and hazard mitigation plan? Identify any potential opportunities to collaborate across sectors, such as with partners working in [transportation](#) or [housing](#).

\_\_ Create a list of potential stakeholders. You can use this [template](#)  [Stakeholder List](#) and adapt it to your needs. Identify existing partners that you could engage, as well as areas where you could develop new partnerships.

\_\_ Consider joining a community of practice:

- [US Climate and Health Alliance](#)
- [NACCHO Climate Change Workgroup](#)
- [Collaborative on Health and Environment's Climate Change Working Group](#)
- *Coming Soon: The Oregon Climate and Health Network*  
(Contact the [Climate and Health Program Staff](#) for more information)

## BUILD CAPACITY

— [Assess your organizational capacity.](#)

— Develop and propose a project framework that can evolve over time depending on your capacity and stakeholder engagement. Consider using this  [Project Plan Template](#) as a starting place.

— Research funding opportunities. Here is a [Funding Resource list](#) that can serve as a good start for exploring current funding opportunities.

— Consider hiring an [AmeriCorps VISTA](#) through OHA's program. In our experience, there is high interest among recent college graduates and an increasing number of applicants interested in engaging in this work. If you are interested in hiring an AmeriCorps VISTA to implement actions in this toolkit, please get in touch with our [Climate and Health program staff](#).