

FRAMING CLIMATE SOLUTIONS AS ECONOMIC & SOCIAL OPPORTUNITIES MODULE

Strategies for Community-Centric Planning

PURPOSE

This module equips community leaders, Extension professionals, and partners to **frame climate action as an opportunity for economic growth, job creation, and improved community well-being**.

Core Principle: Climate solutions gain broader support when they are connected to tangible benefits people care about—jobs, health, cost savings, and local prosperity.

Outcome: Participants will be able to reframe climate initiatives in ways that resonate with diverse audiences and build broader community and stakeholder support.

WHY FRAMING MATTERS

Climate change is often perceived as: - Abstract - Distant - Costly

But when framed effectively, climate action becomes: - A driver of local economic development - A pathway to job creation - A way to improve health and quality of life

KEY BENEFIT AREAS

1. Economic Development

- Growth in clean energy and green infrastructure
- Support for local businesses and innovation
- Attraction of funding and investment

2. Job Creation

- Renewable energy jobs
- Resilient infrastructure and construction
- Conservation and land management roles

3. Public Health

- Improved air and water quality
- Reduced heat-related illness

- Safer and more livable communities

4. Cost Savings

- Energy efficiency reduces utility bills
 - Disaster preparedness reduces recovery costs
-

SECTION 1: REFRAMING CLIMATE CONVERSATIONS

FACILITATED ACTIVITY (30 minutes)

Facilitator Instructions: Ask participants to take a climate issue and reframe it in terms of economic and social benefits.

Prompt Questions:

- How does this issue affect jobs or local businesses?
 - What are the health impacts?
 - What financial benefits could come from action?
-

WORKSHEET 1: REFRAMING PRACTICE

Climate Issue	Traditional Framing	Opportunity-Based Framing

SECTION 2: IDENTIFYING LOCAL OPPORTUNITIES

WORKSHEET 2: COMMUNITY OPPORTUNITY MAPPING

<u>Opportunity Area</u>	Potential Benefit	Who Benefits	Example Project
Jobs			
Health			
Economy			

SECTION 3: CONNECTING TO COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

STRATEGIES

- Align climate solutions with existing community goals
 - Use language that reflects local values (jobs, safety, cost savings)
 - Highlight immediate, visible benefits
-

WORKSHEET 3: ALIGNMENT WITH LOCAL PRIORITIES

Community Priority	Climate Connection	Messaging Approach

SECTION 4: COMMUNICATING EFFECTIVELY

WHAT WORKS:

- Use real-world examples and stories
- Focus on benefits, not just risks
- Use simple, relatable language
- Highlight local success stories

WHAT TO AVOID:

- Overly technical language
 - Fear-based messaging
 - Abstract or global-only framing
-

SECTION 5: FACILITATED ACTIVITY – MESSAGE DEVELOPMENT

Activity (30–45 minutes)

Facilitator Instructions: Have participants develop a short message or pitch about a climate initiative focused on benefits.

WORKSHEET 4: MESSAGE BUILDER

Audience	Key Concern	Benefit Message	Supporting Example

SECTION 6: FACILITATOR GUIDANCE – WHAT ACTUALLY WORKS

Do This:

- Lead with benefits people care about
- Connect climate action to everyday life
- Tailor messages to different audiences
- Reinforce positive outcomes

Avoid This:

- Assuming climate urgency alone motivates action
 - Using one message for all audiences
 - Ignoring economic realities of the community
-

SECTION 7: REFLECTION

Reflection Questions

- Are we communicating benefits clearly?
 - Do our messages resonate with local priorities?
 - Are we reaching diverse audiences effectively?
-

ACTION COMMITMENT

Within the next 30 days, we will:

SECTION 8: ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Economic & Climate Connections

- U.S. Climate Resilience Toolkit <https://toolkit.climate.gov> *Case studies linking climate action to economic and community benefits*
 - NOAA Climate.gov <https://www.climate.gov> *Resources on climate impacts and opportunities*
-

Economic Development & Jobs

- U.S. Department of Energy – Clean Energy Jobs <https://www.energy.gov> *Information on workforce development and clean energy jobs*
 - Brookings Institution – Climate & Economy <https://www.brookings.edu> *Research on economic impacts of climate policy and investment*
-

Public Health & Climate

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Climate & Health <https://www.cdc.gov/climateandhealth> *Health impacts and benefits of climate action*
 - American Public Health Association <https://www.apha.org> *Resources linking climate and public health outcomes*
-

Communication & Messaging

- Yale Program on Climate Change Communication <https://climatecommunication.yale.edu> *Research-based strategies for effective climate messaging*
-

FINAL NOTE

Climate action is not just about preventing harm—it is about creating opportunity.

When communities see the economic and social benefits, engagement grows and solutions gain momentum.

Your role is to **connect climate action to what matters most in people's daily lives.**

(End of Module)