



The drivers of community climate action

Guidance for communities



OLLSCOIL NA GAILLIMHE
UNIVERSITY OF GALWAY



Rialtas
na hÉireann
Government
of Ireland

Tionscadal Éireann
Project Ireland
2040

Introduction

Communities have an important role in meaningful climate action. Across towns, cities and rural areas, local groups are making efforts to reduce emissions, build resilience, and contribute to a sustainable future.

This guidance document explores the key and broad ranging drivers that encourage and enable communities to take climate action. Identifying what motivates and sustains action is crucial to understanding how to best support communities in their climate journey. This guide builds on the EPA research report "[Identifying, reviewing and testing the factors that drive the sustainable behaviour and transition of communities, groups and individuals](#)" and practical resources gathered through the [Climate Connected platform](#).

The purpose of this guide is to:

- Highlight some of the key drivers of community climate action.
- Help communities and other stakeholders understand how these drivers influence success in community climate action initiatives.
- Provide practical guidance and useful tools for communities to harness these drivers in their own context.

Whether embarking on a new climate initiative or seeking to scale up existing efforts, this document offers communities **practical insights**, **real-world examples** and **adaptable tools and resources** to empower communities to turn climate ambition into action.

Work Package 3: Dialogue and Engagement Tool	Output 1.4.
Date:	02/10/2025
Prepared by:	Orlaith McGinley (University of Galway)
Reviewed by:	Jamie Goggins (University of Galway)

This report was developed as part of the **Climate Connected project**.

Climate Connected Project Partners





OLLSCOIL NA GAILLIMHE
UNIVERSITY OF GALWAY



Driver for Community Climate Action

Participation, social capital and localism:

Participation, social capital and localism are key drivers of community climate action. **Collaborative and inclusive approaches build trust, ownership, and resilience**, empowering communities to act. Dissatisfaction with top-down decisions can spark initiatives rooted in local values. Direct involvement, for instance, through community energy or local planning, encourages **acceptance and commitment**. To sustain change, governments should support participatory processes that integrate local knowledge with institutional support.

Useful tools: The [RESCOOPS model](#) of energy democracy shows how communities can co-own energy projects. The TASC report “[The People’s Transition: Community-led development for Climate Justice](#)” also proposes a community-led model for climate justice that treats climate action as an opportunity for local development. It emphasises participation, ensuring communities co-design solutions through dialogue; social capital, building trust and collective capacity for change; and localism, grounding climate action in local assets, knowledge and priorities.

Guidance for communities

Key message: Begin with what matters locally.

Top tips:

1. **Ground climate projects in everyday community priorities** (e.g. sports clubs, parish groups, farming networks, men’s sheds).
2. **Frame climate initiatives around community pride and identity**, highlighting local traditions, history, or language as part of the climate story.
3. **Keep participation practical and visible:** Build momentum by showcasing local champions and use community events to involve people.
4. **Keep it social:** Pair climate goals with social activities (e.g. bike-to-school days, repair cafes, community garden BBQs)
5. **Share ownership, not outcomes:** Involve the community in decisions to boost feelings of shared responsibility for success.



OLLSCOIL NA GAILLIMHE
UNIVERSITY OF GALWAY



Driver for Community Climate Action

Population pressure and land demand:

Population growth and rising land demand drive sustainable behaviour by highlighting the limits of local resources, with pressures on land, ecosystems and food systems intensifying. **Scarcity and environmental impacts make sustainability challenges more visible**, motivating communities to adopt practices such as conservation, sustainable land use and sustainable forestry. This is especially the case where impacts are felt locally.

Guidance for communities

Key message: Create shared motivation by linking land and population pressures to climate action, local resource protection and securing future community needs.

Top tips:

1. **Acknowledge the pressure, create urgency and set common ground:** Talk about how these factors affect the community directly (e.g. housing shortages, farmland loss, rising costs).
2. **Protect what matters most:** Identify key resources at risk in the community (e.g. green spaces, farmland, water) and show climate projects as safeguards.
3. **Promote smarter land use:** E.g. encouraging energy-efficient housing or establishing shared infrastructure and highlight the impact on emissions.
4. **Highlight self-reliance:** Highlight local food, energy, and housing projects as ways to reduce outside dependency.
5. **Future-planning:** Involve young people and families in decision-making to align actions with long-term community needs.



OLLSCOIL NA GAILLIMHE
UNIVERSITY OF GALWAY



Driver for Community Climate Action

Environmental damage and global warming:

Environmental damage and climate change motivate sustainability when their impacts are **visible and local**, motivating communities to act to prevent local harm.

Useful tools: Tools like [Climate Conversations](#) can help communities explore shared values and identify local solutions.

Guidance for communities

Key message: Connect climate action to visible local impacts of environmental damage.

Top tips:

1. **Highlight what is already happening:** Use clear local examples. Share how neighbours, schools, farms, or local businesses have been affected.
2. **Teachable moments:** Use floods, storms, or heatwaves, as opportunities to bring the community together to discuss solutions.
3. **Frame action as protection:** Present projects as defences against local harm.
4. **Highlight the costs of not acting:** Compare costs of repair to the savings from prevention.

Mistrust and skepticism:

Mistrust and skepticism can drive community climate action by **prompting self-organisation** when institutions like governments or corporations are viewed as unreliable. However, while mistrust and skepticism can **motivate local action** and independent problem solving, both can also **hinder collaboration if not constructively directed**.

Useful tools: Trust mapping, citizen science and participatory monitoring, co-design workshops, community scorecards, story circles.

Key message: Turn skepticism into empowerment and constructive self-organisation. Remember to collaborate.

Top tips:

1. **Frame mistrust as autonomy:** Position community initiatives as taking control of a shared future, rather than rejecting outsiders.
2. **Document local knowledge and action:** Citizen science approaches, monitoring, and storytelling can strengthen legitimacy.

Seek selective partnerships: Collaborate with trusted intermediaries (e.g. NGOs, universities) to ensure communities can access funding, expertise, and policy influence.



OLLSCOIL NA GAILLIMHE
UNIVERSITY OF GALWAY



Driver for Community Climate Action

Public opinion and dialogue:

Public opinion and dialogue drive climate action by making it relevant, legitimate, and community owned. When people help shape solutions, they are more likely to support and sustain them. Diverse motivations within communities make dialogue-based approaches more effective. Trust and ownership grow when citizens are actively involved in decisions.

Useful tools: Guides, such as the [Cleveland Facilitator's Guide](#) and tools for citizen-led dialogue empower people to take ownership of solutions.

Social expectations and responsibilities:

Normative concerns drive climate action because people want to act consistently with the behaviour that is **normal and expected** in their community. Making sustainable actions **visible, measurable and socially reinforced**, strengthens their role as drivers.

Useful tools: The [Carbon Footprint app](#) enables communities to assess how their behaviours and choices impact the environment through carbon emissions, while the Community Level Carbon Footprint Map highlights the carbon emissions across Decarbonisation Zones across Ireland, to allow comparisons to the behaviours of others.

Guidance for communities

Key message: Create spaces for open, ongoing dialogue so climate action reflects community voices.

Top tips:

1. **Listen:** Have open conversations, conduct surveys, or host local forums.
2. **Link climate to everyday priorities:** Show how they solve immediate problems.
3. **Make voices count:** Show how feedback shapes real projects.
4. **Include everyone:** E.g. young people, older residents, farmers, businesses, under-represented groups.
5. **Keep dialogue ongoing:** Host regular community check-ins, workshops, or town hall updates.

Key message: Increase the visibility of sustainable behaviours, so that they are the expected thing to do.

Top tips:

1. **Set the norm:** Highlight what is already being done.
2. **Highlight local role models:** Share stories of locals that have acted.
3. **Celebrate effort:** Positive recognition builds peer pressure in a supportive way.
4. **Make it social:** Pair actions with group activities (community clean-ups, retrofit open homes, car-free day challenges).
5. **Embed it in community identity:** Frame messages on climate action around belonging and being in the community.



OLLSCOIL NA GAILLIMHE
UNIVERSITY OF GALWAY



Driver for Community Climate Action

Local circumstances:

Local circumstances drive climate action by linking solutions to everyday community challenges, whether that be economic, social or cultural. Climate action can start from non-environmental concerns that evolve into tailored solutions like transport, energy savings or community enterprises. Effective planning begins with local priorities.

Useful tools: This presentation on [Climate Action in Cleveland](#) offers an introduction to climate change science and its effects on Cleveland and Northeast Ohio, showing examples of how climate change specifically impacts the region. This is a useful tool for Irish audiences as an example of a well communicated Climate Action Plan for local circumstances.

Infrastructure and organizational systems:

Infrastructure enables norms and habits. Access to facilities such as **kerbside recycling, cycling lanes, or renewable energy systems** makes sustainable behaviour easier.

Useful tools: Useful videos on [Organisational Self Reflection](#) may help communities reflect upon their organisational systems and infrastructure.

Guidance for communities

Key message: Design climate action that solves local problems and uses local assets.

Top tips:

1. Identify **local pressures and opportunities**
2. **Frame climate action as a local solution**
3. **Leverage local assets:** Ask what the community already does well and ground sustainability in familiar skills or traditions.
4. **Tangible and visible:** Prioritise projects that have clear local benefits and quick wins.
5. **Local storytelling:** Encourage place-based messaging.

Key message: Build or adapt local infrastructure and systems so that the sustainable option is the most convenient, affordable, and visible one.

Top tips:

1. Identify the **everyday barriers to acting sustainably**
2. **Build enabling infrastructure or systems:** Provide necessary tools to make sustainable choices easier.
3. **Use systems to create habits**
4. **Keep management local:** Encourage development of cooperatives, community trusts or social enterprises to run sustainability projects, build trust, accountability, and resilience.
5. **Highlight success:** Showcase infrastructure as symbols of change (e.g. solar panels, EV chargers, new bike paths).



OLLSCOIL NA GAILLIMHE
UNIVERSITY OF GALWAY



Driver for Community Climate Action	Guidance for communities
Agency and capability: Agency and capability drive climate action by giving communities the confidence, skills, and means to act. People are more likely to engage when they believe their actions matter and have access to practical, affordable options. Experiential learning and community projects build empowerment through hands-on success and mutual support. Useful tools: The Climate Connected Dialogue and Engagement hub provides a useful set of resources to help communities build confidence and use their voices to shape climate action.	Key message: Build individuals' confidence and skills so they believe they can make change. Top tips: 1. Start with small, visible projects: Early success builds confidence. 2. Share knowledge and skills: Run workshops, peer-to-peer learnings, or citizen science projects, to provide practical tools for change. 3. Identify and highlight local expertise: Show how these skills can contribute to climate action. 4. Measure and highlight impacts: Track results, such as energy or money saved and emissions reduced, and share this publicly. 5. Scale together: Use the early wins to build momentum for larger projects, such as community energy projects.
Moral obligation: Moral obligation drives climate action when people feel a duty to protect their community, the planet, or future generations. It is often rooted in values like intergenerational justice, care for others, or faith-based ethics. While moral motivation can inspire action, it is most effective when supported by practical benefits, visible results and enabling conditions. Alone, it rarely sustains widespread change, but combined with other drivers, it can translate into lasting impact. Useful tools: The Cleveland Neighbourhood Climate Action Toolkit offers ways to bring values and ethics into local action planning.	Key message: Frame climate action as a shared responsibility and the right thing. Top tips: 1. Appeal to Shared Responsibility 2. Highlight the importance of climate action for protecting future generations 3. Show care for the vulnerable: Highlight that climate action helps those most at risk 4. Use trusted moral voices: Use respected individuals to communicate the duty to act 5. Celebrate moral leadership: Publicly recognise those who act out of principle

Driver for Community Climate Action

Emotive and affective:

Emotions drive climate action by making it personal and meaningful. Fear can trigger action, but **hope, pride and belonging are more effective for sustaining it**. People respond not just to data, but to experiences and feelings tied to place, identity and community. Effective climate efforts tap into emotional bonds through storytelling, symbols and shared experiences, rather than relying on fear or abstract facts alone.

Useful tools: The [Compile Stakeholder Engagement Guide](#) provides a useful guide on stakeholder engagement within energy communities.

Faith and spirituality:

Faith and spirituality can be meaningful, though sometimes direct, drivers of climate action. Many traditions promote **stewardship, fairness and care for creation**, providing a **moral foundation for sustainability**. Trusted leaders mobilise participation, while religious institutions offer networks and spaces that support local projects.

Guidance for communities

Key message: Harness positive emotions to inspire action and use negative emotions to spark urgency.

Top tips:

1. **Celebrate love of place:** Frame projects around pride in local landscapes, traditions and heritage
2. **Create hope:** Share positive images of sustainable futures
3. **Manage fear:** Provide achievable solutions.
4. **Use personal stories:** Emotion connects more than statistics
5. **Leverage the feel-good factor:** Pair climate projects with enjoyable community activities

Key message: Use the strengths of faith to motivate through moral duty, trusted leadership and collective belonging.

Top tips:

1. **Frame climate action using faith language**
2. **Empower trusted voices:** Encourage faith leaders to speak about climate
3. **Make faith spaces climate exemplars.**
4. **Link action into rituals:** Link climate messages with services, festivals and prayer groups
5. **Connect local efforts to global solidarity:** Frame local action as an expression of compassion and justice for the most vulnerable people



OLLSCOIL NA GAILLIMHE
UNIVERSITY OF GALWAY



Driver for Community Climate Action

Health:

Health is a powerful driver of climate action because it makes the **benefits immediate and personal**. Issues like air pollution, poor housing and fuel poverty, directly impact wellbeing, motivating communities to act. Climate measures improve health. Unlike abstract global risks, **health is felt daily**. Framing climate action as a way to protect personal and family health is more effective than relying on environmental arguments.

Useful tools: Guidance like the [Community Playbook for Closing the Nature Gap](#) | [CONNECTED](#) highlight co-benefits for health and inclusion.

Information:

Information supports climate action when it is **local, trusted, practical and linked to feedback**. However, it rarely works alone. People engage more when information is relevant to their lives, like energy bills, carbon footprints or health impacts. Tools like energy meters and carbon audits make impacts visible and foster responsibility. Trusted sources, like community groups or schools, are more effective than distant authorities. Participatory, hands-on approaches work better than one-way communication, helping people feel capable, not just informed.

Useful tools: [The Community Case Studies](#) of the Climate Connected project serve as a useful informational tool demonstrating how communities can take climate action in various ways.

Guidance for communities

Key message: Promote climate action as the key to healthier lives.

Top tips:

1. **Connect climate to everyday health:** Show how climate actions can impact health concerns, such as asthma, fuel poverty, stress among others.
2. **Use trusted messengers:** Health providers could be encouraged to promote health-climate links
3. **Emphasise vulnerable groups:** Show how climate action protects children, the elderly and those chronically ill.
4. **Emphasise prevention over cure:** Tackling emissions now avoids costly health crises.

Key message: Information should be clear, local and actionable.

Top tips:

1. **Localise the message:** Use local maps, photos, or stories.
2. **Keep it clear and simple:** Avoid jargon and long reports.
3. **Choose trusted messengers:** Share information through neighbours, schools, clubs, or respected community leaders.
4. **Pair facts with actions.**
5. **Repeat and reinforce:** Share the same clear messages across multiple channels.



OLLSCOIL NA GAILLIMHE
UNIVERSITY OF GALWAY



Driver for Community Climate Action

Participatory and Inclusive Local Governance:

Participatory and inclusive local governance drives community climate action by actively involving all members of the community in decision-making. This approach empowers communities, leverages local knowledge, promotes equity, strengthens social cohesion, and mobilizes resources for climate initiatives. To harness it, communities should create inclusive decision-making platforms, integrate local knowledge with expert input, maintain transparent communication, foster collaborative projects, and involve residents in monitoring and adapting strategies.

Useful tools: [The Guide for Inclusive Community Engagement in Local Planning and Decision Making](#) provides a comprehensive framework for inclusive community engagement in local planning and development.

Guidance for communities

Key message: Inclusive, participatory governance turns communities into active climate leaders, ensuring solutions are locally owned, equitable, and effective.

Top tips:

1. **Engage diverse voices:** Ensure that all community members, including marginalised individuals, are included in climate decision-making processes.
2. **Leverage local knowledge:** Utilise unique insights and experiences to inform relevant and effective climate actions.
3. **Foster collaboration:** Build partnerships with local organisations, authorities and residents to co-create and implement solutions.
4. **Secure funding and resources:** Apply for grants and support through programs (e.g. CCAP) to fund community-led climate initiatives.
5. **Monitor and adapt:** Regularly assess the impact and be open to change based on feedback and circumstances.



OLLSCOIL NA GAILLIMHE
UNIVERSITY OF GALWAY



Driver for Community Climate Action	Guidance for communities
Feedback: Feedback drives climate action by making impacts visible, measurable and personal. People are more likely to sustain behaviour when they see clear results, like lower energy use or bills. Progress tracking and peer comparisons reinforce habits through motivation and social norms. Effective climate programmes embed ongoing feedback to maintain engagement and momentum. Useful tools: Energy meters and smart monitors help households see consumption in real time. Carbon footprint calculators and ecological audits make emissions tangible. Try the Climate Connected Carbon Footprint App Community reporting and recognition (e.g., awards, results-sharing) provide collective feedback loops.	Key message: Feedback fuels momentum. Top tips: 1. Track what matters locally: Measure impacts such as energy bills, waste reduction, trees planted, flood risks reduced, using simple and relatable metrics. 2. Make results visible: Share progress on noticeboards, social media, parish newsletters, or local radio. 3. Celebrate achievements publicly: Combine feedback with pride. 4. Use real-time tools: Smart meters, online dashboards, or public counters help people see instant impact. 5. Always explain the real-world benefit of actions.
Commitment: Commitment helps turn climate intentions into sustained actions. People are more likely to follow through when they make public or formal commitments, due to a desire for consistency and social accountability. Group pledges foster shared identity and responsibility. Climate initiatives should actively invite clear, practical commitments. Useful tools: The History Map tool outlines the steps to undertake a History Mapping activity. The main purpose is to help groups think about what experiences they have shared with each other. This can help make progress visible and tangible, reinforce pride and long-term commitment, builds accountability and continuity and can strengthen credibility with funders and partners.	Key message: Climate commitments work best when they are public, visible and linked to community pride and identity. Top tips: 1. Invite public pledges: Create a community climate charter, pledge walls or online campaigns 2. Keep it small and doable: Start with easy wins. 3. Make commitments visible: Share names, photos, stories across newsletters and social media. 4. Link to community identity: Connect commitments to pride in place. 5. Celebrate & reward follow-through: Acknowledge those who keep their commitments with recognition events, certificates, or shout-outs.



OLLSCOIL NA GAILLIMHE
UNIVERSITY OF GALWAY



Driver for Community Climate Action

Indicators and measurement:

Indicators and measurement drive climate action by making progress **visible and tangible**. Tools like carbon footprints and energy audits can **translate abstract issues into concrete data**, fostering a sense of personal responsibility. **Ongoing feedback sustains motivation**, while comparisons encourage competition and collective pride. Clear, relatable metrics boost engagement and credibility with communities and policymakers, helping maintain momentum and demonstrate real results.

Useful tools: The **RICE scoring method** is a project prioritization framework used to evaluate and rank various initiatives or projects in terms of Reach, Impact, Confidence and Effort. This can help communities turn indicators and measurements into a practical decision-making tool.

Guidance for communities

Key message: Measure what matters locally, share often and celebrate progress.

Top tips:

1. **Use local and meaningful indicators:** Examples include energy bills, waste reduction, flood days, air quality, biodiversity counts
2. **Keep it simple & visual:** Use charts, posters and symbols and translate technical figures into everyday impacts
3. **Measure & report regularly**
4. **Make progress visible:** Display results on community noticeboards, websites, newsletters, public displays to build trust and pride.
5. **Celebrate achievements:** Mark milestones and celebrate through events, shout-outs, or small awards to reward collective efforts.



OLLSCOIL NA GAILLIMHE
UNIVERSITY OF GALWAY



Driver for Community Climate Action

Recognition and legitimization:

Recognition, visibility and legitimacy drive climate action by making sustainable behaviour **socially valued and a source of pride**. External awards and media boost morale, while visible actions like recycling bins and bike lanes establish social norms. Endorsement from trusted institutions reassures communities that their efforts matter. Programs like Tidy Towns show how recognition fosters local pride and sustained action.

Useful tools: Communities can use tools like **The Sketch Game** to make achievements visible and memorable through drawings, provide recognition by celebrating what people value, increases legitimacy by involving a diverse range of people, and creates materials for external recognition and communication.

Guidance for communities

Key message: When climate action is celebrated, it becomes normal, credible and contagious.

Top tips:

1. **Celebrate local achievements publicly:** Use local media, parish newsletters, social media, or events.
2. **Connect with wider networks:** Link to county, national or international programmes (for example, Sustainable Energy Communities, Tidy Towns, Transition Towns).
3. **Seek endorsements from trusted institutions:** Partner with schools, councils, NGOs, or faith groups, for example, to add credibility and open funding routes.
4. **Make action visible:** Physical markers (solar panels, community gardens, eco-signage) show progress every day.
5. **Use recognition as motivation:** Celebrate milestones with awards, certificates, or festivals.



OLLSCOIL NA GAILLIMHE
UNIVERSITY OF GALWAY



Driver for Community Climate Action

Exploring synergies:

Exploring synergies drives climate action by linking it to local priorities like jobs, housing, health and pride. Communities often address these everyday issues first and gain climate benefits alongside. **Successful projects connect with existing goals and involve partnerships across authorities, groups and businesses.** Framing climate action through practical benefits makes it more relevant, appealing and sustainable.

Useful tools: The [REScoop Guide for Stakeholder Management](#) provides a manual detailing the engagement and management of stakeholders within renewable energy cooperatives. Communities can use this guide to help map the beneficiaries from climate projects and where synergies exist.

Identification and removal of barriers:

Communities often want to act, but face practical barriers like costs, lack of information, infrastructure, or bureaucracy. Recognising and removing these obstacles turns intention into action. Effective climate strategies provide support that make participation easier and boost community agency.

Useful tools: [The 5 Why's Technique](#) is a useful tool for communities as it can help identify the root causes of barriers and build capacity for ongoing problem solving.

Guidance for communities

Key message: Frame climate action as a solution that solves multiple problems to broaden support.

Top tips:

1. **Map local priorities:** Identify what matters most in your community and look for overlaps with climate goals.
2. **Design multi-benefit projects:** Choose actions that deliver on more than one front.
3. **Engage diverse partners:** Bring in schools, farmers, clubs, businesses, and health services.
4. **Climate action as a win-win:** Communicate projects as solving several challenges at once.
5. **Leverage synergies for support:** Emphasise the multiple benefits when seeking funding, partnerships, or political backing.

Key message: Identify the barriers to climate action.

Top tips:

1. **Ask about barriers:** Use surveys, meetings, or informal chats to identify barriers
2. **Prioritise the key barriers** that affect most people.
3. **Provide practical solutions:** Offer supports such as grants, group purchasing, training or shared resources.
4. **Collaborate with partners:** Collaborate with councils, NGOs, credit unions, or co-ops who can help remove financial, technical, or legal hurdles.
5. **Show barrier removal in action:** Share success stories.



OLLSCOIL NA GAILLIMHE
UNIVERSITY OF GALWAY



Driver for Community Climate Action

Advocacy:

Advocacy drives climate action by **raising awareness, mobilizing communities, and linking local efforts to broader agendas**. Local champions promote climate as a priority, legitimise projects and attract support. Advocacy connects communities with policy makers and media, building coalitions and securing resources. Including **advocates' advocates'** voices in decision-making strengthens and sustains climate initiatives.

Community mapping:

Mapping the community can drive climate action by making personal and community impacts visible, fostering accountability and behaviour change. Tools like energy profiles or carbon footprints translate broad issues into specific, measurable data. They help tailor advice, highlight savings, and track progress over time. Profiling also raises awareness and encourages action.

Useful tools: **Stakeholder Mapping** is a useful tool for communities as they create a clear profile of the community landscape, uncover hidden actors and gaps, link motivations to drivers, identifies power dynamics, supports targeted communication, and strengthens planning and coordination.

Guidance for communities

Key message: Advocacy gives communities influence.

Top tips:

1. **Build a collective voice:** Form coalitions with local groups, schools, farmers, and businesses.
2. **Ground advocacy in local stories:** Share lived experiences to make the case personal and real.
3. **Be specific and practical:** Advocate for concrete, achievable asks, not just broad climate appeals.
4. **Engage with decision-makers regularly:** Build relationships with councillors, TDs, local authority staff. Attend consultations, invite them to community events, and show projects in action.
5. **Celebrate wins and keep momentum:** Publicise when advocacy leads to change.

Key message: Community mapping enables communities to act strategically, measure progress and inspire collective action.

Top tips:

1. **Do a community profile:** Run simple audits or surveys
2. **Make the data visual & simple:** Share results with maps, charts, or infographics.
3. **Identify priorities & big wins:** Use the profile to find where the most impact can be made (e.g. housing retrofits, solar potential, food waste).
4. **Turn insights into targets:** Set clear community goals based on the data.
5. **Share and update regularly:** Make results public.



OLLSCOIL NA GAILLIMHE
UNIVERSITY OF GALWAY



Driver for Community Climate Action

Technology:

Technology enables climate action by **making sustainable living easier, cheaper, and more rewarding, through tools like smart meters, renewables and energy efficient design.** It drives change when results are visible and embedded in daily life. Community projects showcase what is possible, but technology alone is not enough. Its impact depends on social drivers like participation, information and feedback. For technology to succeed, it must be accepted, supported, and paired with training and engagement as **part of a broader socio-technical approach.**

Useful tools: [Personal stories](#) show how technology and lived experience connect.

Guidance for communities

Key message: Technology is a driver when it is community-owned, affordable, visible and linked to local needs.

Top tips:

1. **Match technology to local needs:** Pick solutions that address real community issues.
2. **Make it affordable and shared:** Use grants, co-ops, or group-purchasing to cut costs. Explore community-owned models so benefits stay local.
3. **Provide training & support:** Run workshops or peer-learning sessions so people can confidently use and maintain new technologies.
4. **Showcase demonstrations:** Install visible examples in public places (school, hall, church, GAA club).
5. **Connect to feedback & impact:** Use data to show results.



OLLSCOIL NA GAILLIMHE
UNIVERSITY OF GALWAY



Driver for Community Climate Action

Technological or technical assistance:

Technical assistance drives climate action by turning available technology into practical, usable solutions. **Many households lack the expertise to adopt retrofits, renewables, or monitoring tools. Support from trusted local actors, through provision of advice, audits or training, can build confidence and the achievability of climate action.** Without it, technology may be underused. Climate programmes should always pair technology with expert guidance to ensure lasting impact.

Useful tools: SEAI Sustainable Energy Communities (SEC) Dashboard is a good example of a practical tool for communities that serves as a technological and technical enabler, by centralizing and simplifying complex energy data, supporting data driven and evidence based planning, facilitating collaboration across stakeholders, enhancing access to funding and incentives and supporting behavioural change through accessible insights.

Guidance for communities

Key message: Technical assistance turns ambition into action.

Top tips:

1. **Find trusted experts:** Connect with universities, NGOs, local authorities or co-operatives that can provide reliable technical advice.
2. **Keep guidance clear and simple:** Ask experts to use plain language with step-by-step options
3. **Pair advice with hands-on support:** Use workshops, site visits or demonstrations to show solutions in practice.
4. **Use assistance to overcome barriers:** Rely on technical help for funding applications, planning permissions, safety standards, or navigating regulations.
5. **Build local know-how:** Train community members as climate champions or volunteers to grow technical skills in the community.



OLLSCOIL NA GAILLIMHE
UNIVERSITY OF GALWAY



Driver for Community Climate Action

Product labelling:

Product labelling drives climate action **by turning complex sustainability data into clear, credible signals at the point of choice**. Labels, for instance, energy ratings, help consumers make low-carbon decisions without specialist knowledge. Trusted, well-designed labels guide behaviour and can shift markets when widely adopted. However, labels work best when combined with education, incentives and social norms.

Useful tools: The [Cleveland guide to a 'Climate Friendly' Diet](#) provides an example of a useful tool for communities in driving climate action, particularly through the lens of product labelling, by providing guidance and benchmarks that make sustainable food choices more visible and actionable.

Learning by doing:

Learning by doing is a powerful driver of climate action, **turning abstract ideas into practical experience**. Hands-on activities like composting, retrofitting or community gardening build skills, confidence and motivation. Group projects encourage peer learning and make sustainable practices visible and normalised. Climate initiatives should prioritise practical, participatory experiences over purely informational campaigns.

Useful tools: Resources such as the [Futures Exercise](#) support a Learning By Doing approach

Guidance for communities

Key message: Product labelling works best when it is visible, simple, and connected to real local benefits.

Top tips:

1. **Raise awareness of labels:** For example, run local information sessions, posters, or projects to explain energy ratings or eco-labels.
2. **Simplify the message:** Translate technical information into everyday guidance.
3. **Encourage local businesses:** Work with shops, cafés, and co-ops to highlight sustainable products with visible signage or shelf markers.
4. **Connect labels to benefits:** Emphasise the monetary savings, health benefits, fairness benefits and so on.
5. **Share community impact:** Collect and publicise results.

Key message: Learning by doing empowers communities, with hands-on success building the confidence and skills needed for bigger climate action.

Top tips:

1. Start small & practical: Launch simple, visible projects (e.g. community garden, bike repair day, energy audit workshop) that anyone can join.
2. Encourage experimentation: Allow trial and error.
3. Build confidence through practice: Focus on activities that give people tangible skills.
4. Promote peer-to-peer sharing.
5. Celebrate the journey: Highlight progress, lessons, and stories of growth.



OLLSCOIL NA GAILLIMHE
UNIVERSITY OF GALWAY



Driver for Community Climate Action

Compliance and incentives: Policy:

Compliance and incentives drive climate action by combining obligation with motivation. Regulations make sustainable behaviour standard, while incentives like grants and tax breaks make it attractive and rewarding. Compliance sets minimum standards, while incentives encourage communities to go beyond.

Useful tools: The **H2020 COMPILE Best Practice Guide** is a useful guidance on the development and management of energy communities. This guide can serve as a starting point for communities to understand the policies that they must comply with, alongside the incentives that they can access.

Guidance for communities

Key message: Policies and incentives should be framed as tools to unlock funding, fairness and futureproofing.

Top tips:

1. **Stay up to date on policies & supports:** Track local, national, and EU climate rules, grants, and incentives.
2. **Frame compliance positively:** Present rules as tools for protecting health, saving money, and building resilience.
3. **Leverage incentives for projects:** Use grants, subsidies, or tax breaks to make community projects affordable.
4. **Collaborate with local authorities:** Work with councils to ensure policies are applied fairly and practically.
5. **Turn policy into local opportunity:** Connect compliance to local pride and benefits.



OLLSCOIL NA GAILLIMHE
UNIVERSITY OF GALWAY



Driver for Community Climate Action

Legal and regulative: Policy:

Legislation and regulation set minimum environmental standards, making sustainable practices like recycling or energy ratings routine. They legitimize community efforts, ensure fairness, and prevent free riding. However, regulation is most effective when combined with incentives, participation and support.

Useful tools: The Guide for Inclusive Community Engagement in Local Planning and Decision Making provides strategic tool for communities to engage with legal and regulatory climate drivers by translating policy and legal obligations into practical, actionable community engagement strategies.

Guidance for communities

Key message: Legal and regulatory policies give communities authority and legitimacy to drive deeper climate action.

Top tips:

1. **Understand the rules clearly:** Stay informed on planning regulations, environmental protections, and building standards that apply locally.
2. **Use policy as leverage:** Communities can push for stronger enforcement of climate-friendly laws.
3. **Turn obligations into opportunities:** Position compliance as a chance to attract investment, improve housing quality, or future-proof local infrastructure.
4. **Collaborate with councils on implementation:** Partner with local authorities to shape how regulations are applied, making them community-friendly and beneficial.
5. **Advocate for better policies:** Use community voices to influence new or stronger regulations.



OLLSCOIL NA GAILLIMHE
UNIVERSITY OF GALWAY



Driver for Community Climate Action

Citizen-led approach:

Citizen-led projects foster ownership, trust and responsibility, especially where official efforts face skepticism. Rooted in local networks and values, they adapt quickly and offer creative solutions. Climate strategies should support these grassroots initiatives as core drivers of change, not side activities.

Useful tools: [The Energy Transition to Energy Democracy](#) document provides a historical overview of the role of citizens in the energy sector.

Discourse-based approaches: Reinterpretation:

Discourse-based reinterpretation drives climate action by reshaping how it is understood, framing it as desirable, meaningful and socially legitimate. By linking climate action to values like health, fairness, or community pride, it becomes more relatable and appealing. Reframing rules as opportunities helps shift perceptions. Climate strategies must consider not just policies and technology, but also the stories and language that shape local engagement.

Useful tools: [The Climate Connected Dialogue and Engagement hub](#) provides a useful set of resources to help communities use discourse based approaches.

Guidance for communities

Key message: Citizen approaches turn climate action into something people own, which sustains momentum.

Top tips:

1. **Put citizens in the lead:** Use participatory workshops, assemblies, or co-design sessions so residents shape the agenda.
2. **Recognise local knowledge.**
3. **Empower everyday leaders:** Encourage neighbours, teachers, youth, and volunteers to lead projects.
4. **Make engagement inclusive:** Actively involve youth, older people, and marginalised groups.
5. **Connect local action to wider impact:** Show how citizen voices feed into council decisions, national policy, or wider networks.

Key message: Reinterpretation works when communities rewrite the story of climate action in their own words.

Top tips:

1. **Reframe climate action in local terms:** Link it to things people already care about.
2. **Use familiar language and stories:** Avoid technical jargon.
3. Highlight co-benefits, not just carbon.
4. **Challenge negative frames:** Reinterpret climate action as opportunity for jobs, resilience, fairness, and community strength.
5. **Encourage community storytelling:** Invite residents to share their own narratives about local change

Driver for Community Climate Action

Distributional justice:

Distributional justice drives climate action by ensuring the costs and benefits are shared fairly. Communities engage more when they see that no group is unfairly burdened or excluded. Perceived fairness builds trust, legitimacy and participation, while injustice creates resistance. Climate strategies must consider both intra-community and intergenerational fairness to gain lasting support.

Useful tools: The [Energy Transition to Energy Democracy](#) serves as a useful tool for communities in its translation of the technical challenge of the energy transition into a socially just, actionable framework, enabling communities to align climate goals with equity, fairness and local empowerment.

Procedural justice:

Procedural justice, that is, **fair, transparent, and inclusive decision-making**, is a key driver for community climate action. When people feel heard and involved, they are more likely to support and sustain initiatives. Lack of consultation often breeds resistance, even if outcomes are positive. Effective climate action depends on inclusive governance that builds ownership and trust.

Guidance for communities

Key message: Distributional justice drives action when communities see climate projects as fair, inclusive, and beneficial for everyone.

Top tips:

1. **Emphasise fairness:** Be explicit that the goal is for everyone to share the benefit
2. **Support the most vulnerable:** Prioritise fuel-poor homes, flood-prone areas, or low-income households.
3. **Be transparent on costs:** Share how projects are funded.
4. **Show how climate action reduces inequality.**
5. **Celebrate collective wins:** Share stories and data showing how fairness strengthens the whole community

Key message: Procedural justice builds trust and legitimacy.

Top tips:

1. **Invite all voices:** Actively include youth, older people, renters, farmers, migrants, and minority groups in discussions.
2. **Be transparent** about decision-making processes, responsibilities and how input will be used.
3. **Keep engagement accessible:** Use plain language, hold meetings at convenient times, and provide support.
4. **Share real power:** Let community members co-design, prioritise, and where possible, make binding decisions.
5. **Close the feedback loop:** Show clearly how community input shaped outcomes.



OLLSCOIL NA GAILLIMHE
UNIVERSITY OF GALWAY



Driver for Community Climate Action

Interconnectedness and spillover:

Interconnectedness and spillover multiply climate impact by turning single actions into broader change. Adopting one sustainable behaviour often leads to others. Local projects inspire neighbouring communities, schools, and policies, spreading through social networks and peer influence. Effective climate strategies harness these spillovers by linking initiatives, sharing lessons and encouraging networks to amplify impact.

Useful tools: The Cleveland Neighbourhood Climate Action Toolkit

serves as a useful tool for communities in leveraging interconnectedness and spillover as drivers of climate action. It highlights the systemic interconnections across energy, transport, housing and health, and encourages multi-level and cross-sector collaboration.

Organisational management:

Organisational management drives climate action by providing structure, leadership and accountability, turning enthusiasm into sustained impact. Well-managed projects with clear governance are more resilient, strategic, and better at securing funding and partnerships. Building governance capacity is as crucial as funding, as it underpins long-term project sustainability and community trust.

Useful tools: The Climate Connected Build a Community Structure

guide serves as a useful tool for communities in terms of developing strong teams for community climate action initiatives.

Guidance for communities

Key message: Spillover happens when success breeds further success.

Top tips:

1. **Begin with quick wins:** Launch small, visible projects to build confidence (e.g. tree planting, repair café, bike-to-school week)
2. **Highlight connections between issues:** Show one action brings multiple benefits.
3. **Encourage step-by-step behaviour change:** Celebrate when households or groups expand from one green action to others and share their stories.
4. **Design projects that build capacity:** Ensure each initiative leaves behind skills, networks, or infrastructure that make future actions easier.
5. **Tell the growth story:** Frame local climate action as a journey.

Key message: Organisational management drives climate action by turning enthusiasm into sustained, effective and scalable projects.

Top tips:

1. **Define roles clearly:** Assign tasks so responsibility is shared.
2. **Set up simple systems:** Keep clear records of meetings, finances, and progress.
3. **Make a long-term plan:** Develop an action plan with milestones, timelines, and next steps.
4. **Balance structure with flexibility**
5. **Review and adapt regularly:** Hold regular check-ins to learn what is working and where changes are needed.



OLLSCOIL NA GAILLIMHE
UNIVERSITY OF GALWAY



Driver for Community Climate Action

Chronology and timing:

Chronology and timing drive climate action **by aligning efforts with moments of change, such as regeneration, new funding, or local crises.** Early, visible wins build trust and momentum, while poor timing can hinder engagement. Successful programmes match interventions to when communities are most open and ready to act.

Useful tools: The Climate Connected **Idea Evaluation and Selection** guide serves as a useful tool for communities in leveraging chronology and timing as a driver for climate action by helping communities prioritize projects.

Co-management and social learning:

Co-management and social learning drive climate action by **fostering shared responsibility and ongoing collaboration.** Learning together builds trust, social capital, and adaptable solutions. Partnerships among communities, NGOs, and authorities provide resources and support. Climate programmes should promote peer exchange, participatory governance, and cross-community learning to amplify impact.

Useful tools: The **RIPEET Transition Labs Handbook** enables communities harness co-management and social learning as drivers for climate action by offering practical tools to enable communities create ideas together in a team.

Guidance for communities

Key message: Timing is a driver when communities act at the right moment.

Top tips:

1. **Watch for policy & funding windows:** Launch projects when grants, targets, or policy changes create opportunities.
2. **Link to local events & seasons:** Align initiatives with festivals, school terms, or seasons.
3. **Act after local climate impacts:** Use moments (e.g. floods, storms, heatwaves) to build momentum.
4. **Sequence projects strategically:** Start with small, visible wins, then scale into bigger or more complex projects as capacity grows.
5. **Maximise visibility at key moments:** Time launches, milestones, and celebrations to attract attention from media, funders, and decision-makers.

Key message: Co-management and social learning make climate action stronger by pooling skills, building relationships and treating projects as shared journeys of discovery.

Top tips:

1. **Share the load:** Involve different groups in joint project management.
2. **Learn together.**
3. **Mix generations & perspectives.**
4. **Capture & share lessons:** Record successes and failures in simple formats.
5. **Adapt through reflection:** Review progress, adjust strategies and continually improve



OLLSCOIL NA GAILLIMHE
UNIVERSITY OF GALWAY



Driver for Community Climate Action

Effective communication:

Effective communication drives climate action by making sustainability clear, relevant and trusted. It connects climate issues to everyday concerns and is best delivered by local trusted voices. It involves dialogue, listening, and celebrating successes to motivate ongoing engagement. Climate strategies should focus on storytelling, local champions, and participatory communication, not just facts.

Useful tools: **The Cleveland Facilitator's Guide** serves as a useful tool for communities for effective communication by providing guidance on how complex climate data can be translated into clear and relatable messages, how storytelling can be used, and providing guidance on how to target communication to different audiences and use visual and participatory tools.

Guidance for communities

Key message: Effective communication builds understanding, trust and motivation.

Top tips:

1. **Keep it simple:** Use plain, everyday language – avoid jargon and technical terms.
2. **Match the message to the audience.**
3. **Tell stories & use visuals.**
4. **Show the everyday benefits:** Frame climate projects around savings, health, comfort, and pride — not just carbon savings.
5. **Make it a dialogue:** Create spaces for questions and feedback.



OLLSCOIL NA GAILLIMHE
UNIVERSITY OF GALWAY



Driver for Community Climate Action

Polycentric approach and combination:

The polycentric approach drives climate action through resilient, multi-level systems where local, regional and national actors reinforce each other. Combining technical solutions with social drivers creates stronger, lasting impact. This approach avoids reliance on any single actor, ensuring continuity and resilience. Climate policy should foster multi-level partnerships and integrated strategies for greater effectiveness.

Useful tools: Useful videos on [Organisational Self Reflection](#) may help communities interact more effectively with the multiple actors of polycentric approaches to bridge multiple drivers. It can enable communities strengthen procedural justice, supports Responsible Research and Innovation, can strengthen internal capacity of communities to enable engagement in multi-level partnerships and create space for dialogue building social capital.

Guidance for communities

Key message: A polycentric approach works best when communities combine local creativity with wider institutional support. Create a web of action that is stronger than one piece.

Top tips:

1. **Link local to wider levels:** Connect household actions (e.g. retrofits) with community projects (energy co-ops) and supportive local/regional policies.
2. **Build partnerships across sectors:** Work with councils, NGOs, schools, farmers, and businesses to share knowledge, funding, and resources.
3. **Blend bottom-up and top-down:** Combine citizen-led initiatives with advocacy for policies and incentives that enable broader change.
4. **Support a diversity of actions.**
5. **Coordinate for synergy:** Set up regular communication between groups and levels to avoid duplication and ensure efforts complement each other.