# CREATING A CLIMATE ACTION PLAN

## Introduction

The key components of a Sustainability Plan should be supported with further detail outlining how and who will work to implement the identified strategies. An accompanying plan that focuses on the climate change aspect of sustainability will add accountability, transparency, and a clear path towards to the climate commitments identified in the Sustainability Plan. The document is typically called a Climate Action Plan (CAP), and though components may be written into the Sustainability Plan, a CAP provides information on specific actions, timelines, metrics, and responsible job roles that relate to greenhouse gas emissions reduction strategies.

This high-level document outlines and summarizes the recommended components of a CAP with brief explanations and examples. The document assumes limited or no experience in planning. Recommended components are based on a review of all Canadian post-secondary institutions with a published CAP as well as examples from other Sustainability Tracking, Assessment & Rating System (STARS) reporters. Components are not mandatory, but are meant to help guide the development of a CAP for those who have never completed a plan, are struggling to begin one, or who have lost momentum.

Institutions may find it beneficial to have two versions of their CAP, a comprehensive internal plan, as well as a shorter one for stakeholders.

This document also provides links to Canadian college and university CAP's that can be referenced for examples of recommended components.

## Recommended Sustainability Plan Components

| Component | Description | Example Information |
|---|---|---|
| Introduction | Provides report context and purpose. | • See CAP examples below.<br><br>• A CAP's purpose may include: to help focus and create a path to achieving climate commitments, provide climate accountability and improve transparency, a map for emissions reduction implementation, outline climate action finances, communicate with stakeholders, fulfill commitments made from pledges/statements and so on. |
| Presidents Statement | Endorses, acknowledges, and formalizes plan commitment while providing added credibility. | • See CAP examples below. |

| Greenhouse Gas Baseline Inventory and Reduction Target | Allows the reader to understand the current greenhouse gas emissions baseline and reduction target. | • Breakdown of emissions by, at minimum, scopes. Ideally, this information would be as granular as possible. See the document titled "Recommended Key Reporting Areas for a Post-Secondary Greenhouse Gas Inventory" for emitting activities to include in an inventory.<br>• Identify baseline year.<br>• Identify emission reduction target.<br>• Identify target period. |
|---|---|---|
| Emissions Forecast | Estimated emissions levels if the institution continues to emit without reduction measures (business as usual). | • See CAP examples below.<br>• This may include forecasted utility and other costs. |
| Emissions Reductions Strategies | Outlines how emissions reduction target will be achieved. | • See CAP examples below.<br>• Provide examples of key reduction strategies, such as renewable energy, building energy use, commuting, reporting, offsets and so forth. |
| Actions | A list of potential deliverables for each strategy in order to move toward the emissions reduction goal. These actions will most likely change year to year, but a high-level list can be created. | • See CAP examples below.<br>• Example information may include: annual emissions from the emitting activity, estimated cost to achieve strategy, annual savings from the action, and the estimated annual emissions reduced from the action. |
| Metrics/Indicators | Identifying how action progress towards the reduction target will be measured. | • This will most likely be in $CO_2e$ tonnes per year and can be more granular than that (for each scope or activity). Financials can also be included. |
| Timeframe | Outlines the time allotted to complete each action. | • See CAP examples below. Timeframes may include a breakdown such as 0-1 year, 1-3 years, 3-5, years, 5+ years, or ongoing. |
| Responsible Department and/or Position | Identify and write down the department and job role that is responsible for each strategy and action. Specific individuals are not necessary, as these may change, but identifying the responsible role provides accountability. | • See CAP examples below. |
| Monitoring and Reporting | Identify the department and job role that is responsible for monitoring each action, and the information that is required for monitoring. | • See CAP examples below.<br>• Refer to Milestone 6 supports for further information. |

## Potential Challenges

- Estimating emissions reductions from each action.

- Agreeing upon corresponding job roles for each action.

- Working to incorporate planning and implementation into daily workload and managing that transition.

## Conclusions

Building off the Sustainability Plan to create a CAP provides the needed information on accountability, metrics, and monitoring to increase climate action credibility. A well-developed CAP works to solidify actions and responsibility to fulfill climate goals and successfully implement climate strategies.

### Climate Action Plan Examples

Colorado State University

Queen's University

University of Saskatchewan

University of Victoria

University of Winnipeg

Université Laval