

# EVERYONE, EVERYWHERE, ALL AT ONCE:

## Activating individuals to initiate and sustain climate action

### The Challenge: empowering individuals to influence systems

The causes of the climate emergency are fundamentally intertwined with social, political, and economic systems, meaning radical transformation is needed. Doing so requires systemic change, driven from multiple angles simultaneously. And to change everything, we need everyone.

While much has been written about what need to happen, existing work tends to focus on the role of business, philanthropy, government, and cross-sector partnerships between them. Yet systems are changed not through these sectors alone. They are changed by the hands of millions of individuals working within and outside of these organizations. It's time to move beyond the false dichotomy of individual versus systemic change, and to adopt approaches that treat individuals as contributors to, and influencers of, systems.

But doing so won't be easy. Even when people want to take action on the climate crisis, they face multiple barriers, and the status quo has powerful inertia: the complexity of climate change can be daunting, people often don't know how to have a meaningful impact, and the consequences of inaction can trigger despair. We need people to recognise their ability to take action and see how their contribution can influence systemic change

### From creating opportunities to building agency

To address these challenges, we studied the work of hundreds of Ashoka Fellows through three inter-related research projects. Two approaches emerged from our research:

- 1) Creating opportunities for climate action
- 2) Creating the conditions for people to initiate and sustain climate action themselves.

While both are valuable, the first approach is insufficient on its own to create change at the speed or scale required to tackle the climate crisis. We need a massive increase in the number of people actively initiating and sustaining climate action across all parts of society. We need more climate changemakers. Therefore, the second approach is vital. How can leaders across sectors adopt this second approach and create the conditions for people to drive climate action themselves? Our research surfaces three key strategies for building individuals' capacity to initiative and sustain action.

### Three strategies for unleashing climate changemakers

#### 1. Making it personal:

Communicating the complexities of climate change in a way that resonates with individuals specific situations helps build a sense of agency. This in turn motivates people to initiate action.

**2. Curating support:** A network of relational support offers energy, expertise, and community. Individuals can draw on to overcome the inevitable stumbling blocks that arise.

#### 3. Realigning incentives:

Existing structures and systems create constraints that limit individuals' ability to contribute effectively. Realigning incentives empowers more individuals to contribute to climate action and fosters a just transition.

*"In short, our world needs climate action on all fronts - everything, everywhere, all at once"*  
UN Secretary General António Guterres

### From insights to action

Whether leaders are addressing the climate crisis from within business, government, or the social sector, these strategies can unleash climate changemakers. Deploying the strategies effectively require tailoring them to the local context and the need of the individual within it. The questions below offer an indicative guide to help leaders put the strategies into action.

#### Diagnosing the context

- What barriers stop people from taking action in your context? Are they internal (psychological) or external (structural, systemic)?
- What accelerants enable people to take action in your context? What support already exists that you can amplify or extend?
- What strategies are deployed by other organizations or individuals in your context? Are there any that are missing entirely?

#### Understanding the individual

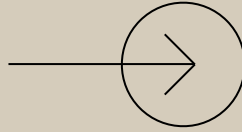
- Have you built trust with the individuals with whom you work? How well do you understand their needs and interests?
- What types of actions are individuals already taking? What is missing?
- What relationships or existing groups could reinforce the actions you're trying to embed?
- What unique knowledge and experience do the individuals you work with have?

# CLIMATE STRATEGIES FOR ALL

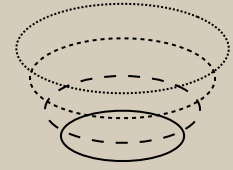
## 1. Making it personal



**Building Understanding:**  
communicating complex science, data and / or systems theory surrounding climate change in an accessible way, tailored to the specific audience and context.

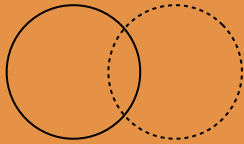


**Making progress visible:**  
identifying tangible metrics that help people understand how their contribution is part of a bigger whole.

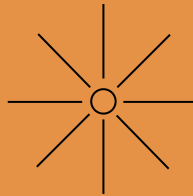


**Imagining new possibilities:**  
leading group processes to help people see the possibilities and consequences of acting; innovating new products, business models, or ways of organizing.

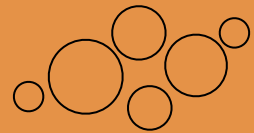
## 2. Curating support



**Walking alongside individuals:**  
offering one-on-one coaching, mentoring and troubleshooting; providing sustained energy to shift the inertia of the system.

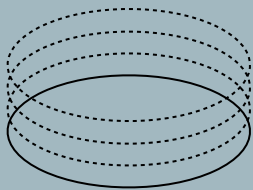


**Helping them make the case:**  
helping people to show the business case for emission reduction, find profitable products, innovating new business models.

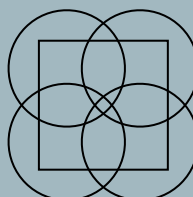


**Creating a community:**  
bringing together peers to share learnings, reinforce behaviours, and develop positive social norms; hosting gatherings where people see their work as part of a bigger whole.

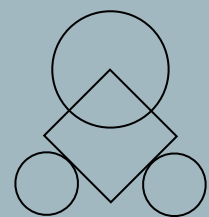
## 3. Realigning systems



**Addressing competing demands:**  
helping people meet other needs and priorities to give them the capacity to attend to climate action.



**Creating accountability mechanisms:**  
developing climate pledges and other means of holding individuals, organizations, and collectives accountable.



**Building enabling structures:**  
using contracts, financial mechanisms, and other tools to facilitate and encourage action.

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