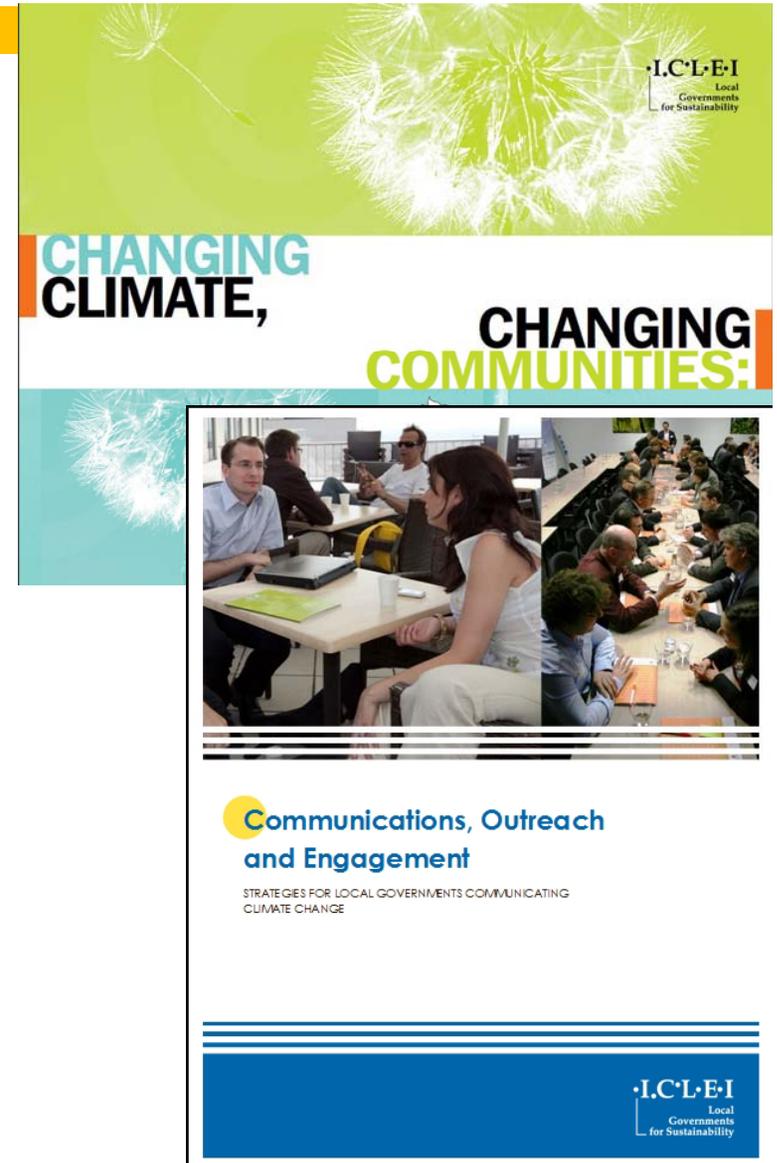




TRANSLATING CLIMATE SCIENCE:  
COMMUNICATING CLIMATE  
CHANGE TO MUNICIPALITIES

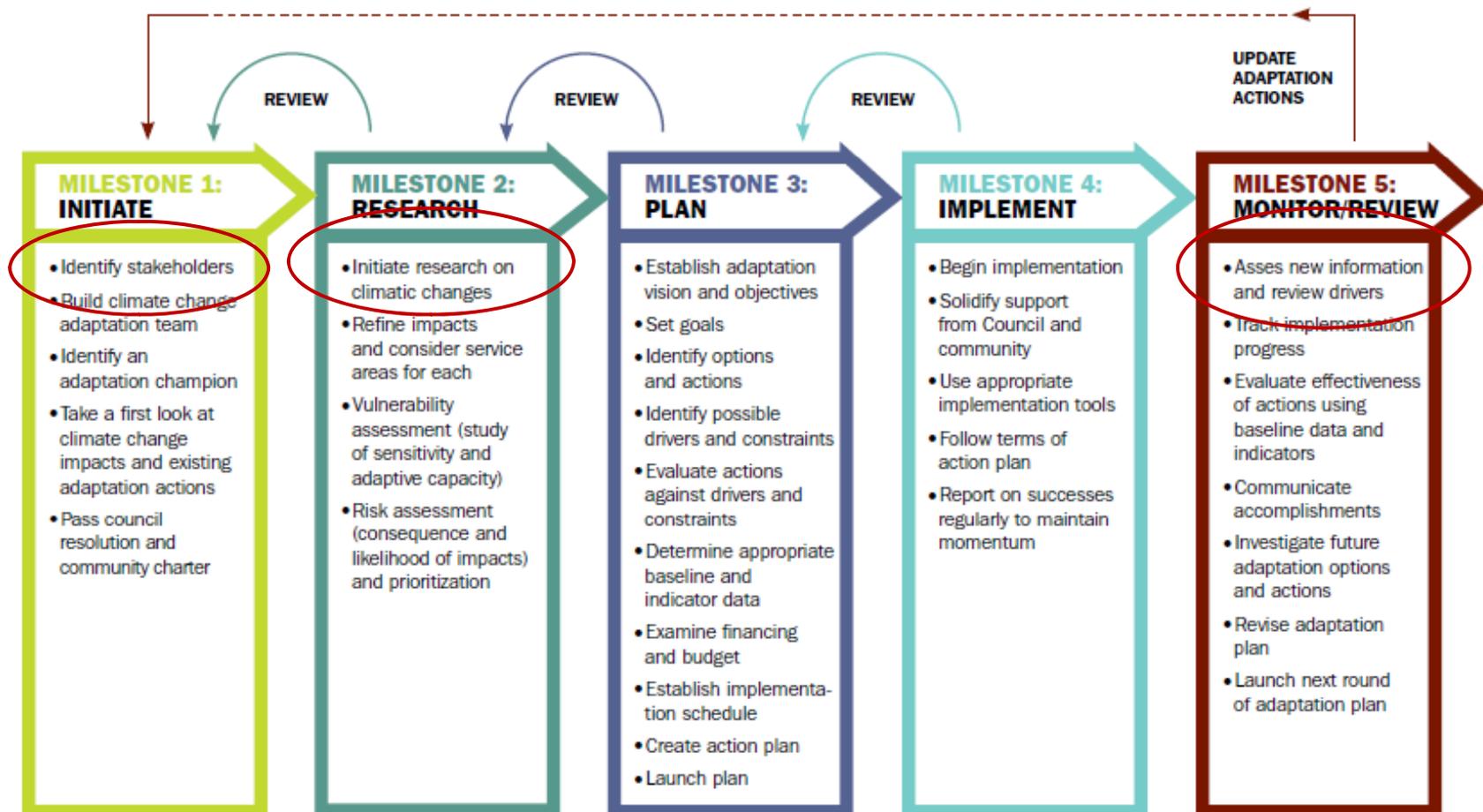
# About ICLEI

- Membership association of 1,225 local governments worldwide
- Program work in climate change response, urban biodiversity, water, sustainability management, and stakeholder engagement
- Adaptation Initiative – 20 communities from across Canada
- Decision support tools and resources: Adaptation planning guide, training resources, communications resources, and database of adaptation measures



# Providers – Extension Agents - Users

What are the points of communication between the above groups?



# Two thoughts on climate communication

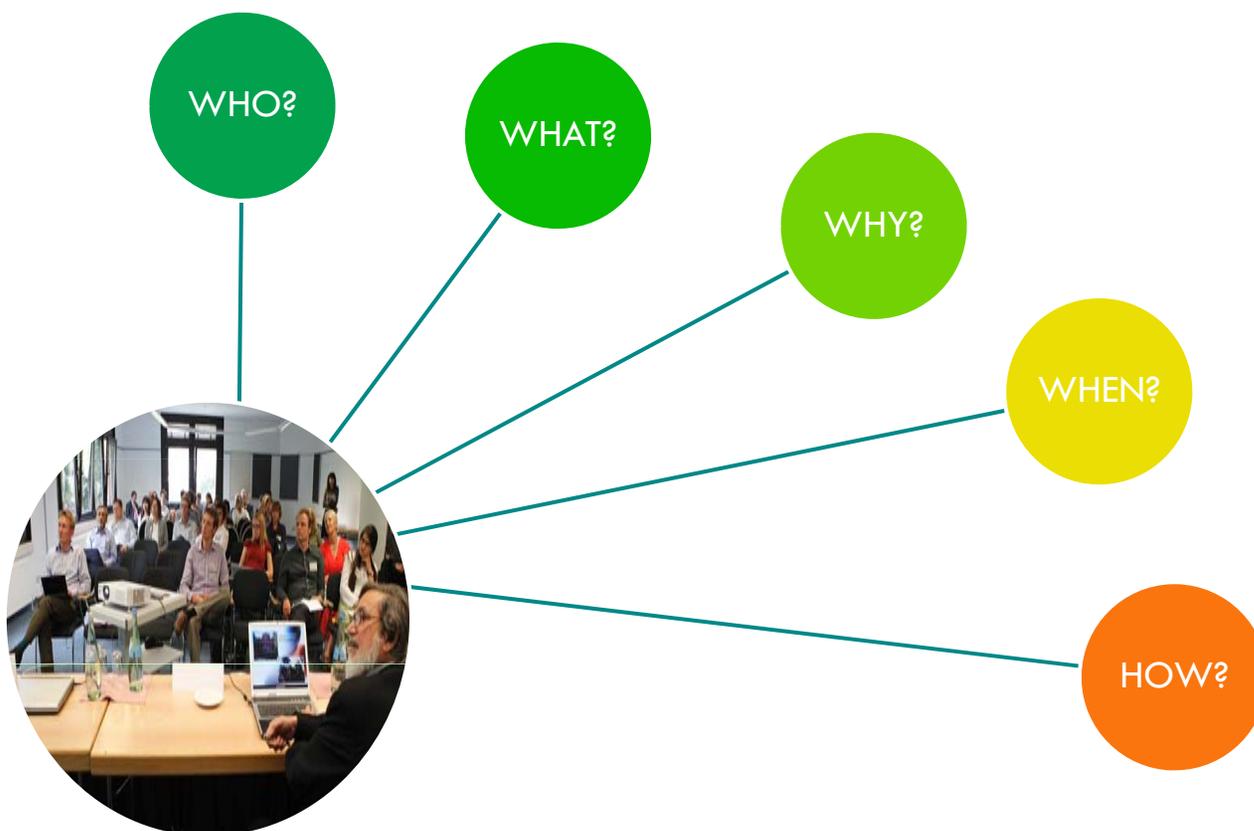
Climate communication is not about winning debates, but building relationships.

People are not motivated by a global, abstract, intellectual issue, but they are motivated by issues that resonate emotionally.



# Communications Primer

Perhaps an easier way to think about it is to follow the same as the basic rules of journalism or marketing – need to answer the “the big five”.



# Three Cities – Three Different Messages

## The naysayers

- Do not acknowledge climate change as an area of concern
- Environmental action seen as unnecessary spending and not prioritized, at times funding cut
- Actions to prepare for climate change not on the agenda

## The opportunists

- Acknowledge that climate change is an area of concern
- Environmental action prioritized when associated opportunities presented
- Actions to prepare for climate change on agenda when they are “win-win”

## The early adopters

- Climate change is a priority and local action is necessary
- Environmental action made a priority and funds allocated accordingly
- Actions to prepare for climate change are included and part of broad policy

# WHO?

- Know you`re audience and make sure you are speaking their language
- Find credible messengers, who speak the language of your audience and share their values

## The naysayers

- Audience not receptive to “climate change” discourse
- Bring onside partners (risk managers, economists, insurers)
- Utilize unconventional partners and allies

## The opportunists

- Audience (and Council) that need to know the numbers
- Work with groups that can present the opportunities with climate change action (BIAs, commerce, key dept. heads)

## The early adopters

- Audience who are keen to act and see the importance
- Bring onside experts that can present the latest information and forecasts directly (PCIC, UBC CALP, etc.)

# WHAT?

- Choose the most effective frames to talk about climate change action:
  - Community resilience
  - Public health / quality of life
  - Economic prosperity
  - Sustainability / Triple bottom line
  - Stewardship
  - Innovation

## The naysayers

- Risk aversion
- Emergency preparedness

## The opportunists

- Job creation
- Energy savings

## The early adopters

- Climate change protection
- Stewardship of the land

## WHY?

- Be clear as to why you are engaging people.
- What is your communications goal.
  - To gather feedback?
  - To increase awareness of an issue?
  - To mobilize action or participation in a program?
- Be clear about what you're asking of people before you engage them.

### The naysayers

- Council to put climate preparedness on the agenda (without necessarily labelling it as climate change)

### The opportunists

- Get buy-in to implement specific projects and actions

### The early adopters

- Assign dollars and identify timelines
- Enable Mayor and Council to become climate champions

## WHEN?

- Choose the opportunities for communication that fit your audience
- Use weather events as opportunities to communicate
- Be aware of how various communication arenas can be used to help strengthen your message

### The naysayers

- Use recent weather events as catalysts for action
- Mutli-actor workshops / PPPs

### The opportunists

- Annual budget and workplan cycles to integrate climate action with other work streams
- Interdepartmental working groups

### The early adopters

- Use consensus in city to branch out into the community
- Citizen advisory committees / focus groups

## HOW?

- To be successful be careful of not making climate change a politically one-sided issue
- Compelling evidence of existing local climate impacts
- **Use language that will resonate with your audience** (language which may or may not directly refer to the term “climate change”)

### The naysayers

- Avoid the “doom and gloom”
- Give examples that work
- Disaster risk reduction

### The opportunists

- Use triple bottom line approach
- Highlight low-cost, low-risk actions and the benefits they bring
- Resilience

### The early adopters

- Continue presenting new information and solutions
- Climate change adaptation
- Visualization\*\*

# Five basic guidelines for translating climate information for municipalities

- Guideline #1: Know your audience so that you can target your messages to them
- Guideline #2: Be aware of how peoples' values shape their beliefs on climate change
- Guideline #3: To capture your audience's attention talk about climate impacts in local, immediate terms
- Guideline #4: Emphasize the power and practicality of local climate solutions, especially community preparedness
- Guideline #5: Address climate science in a simple, compelling way, and stress the certainties of what we know



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for Sustainability

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