

Connecting Climate Research to Local Decision Making



UT-City Climate CoLab



For more information, visit
utcitycolab.org

Creating a Climate CoLab

How-to Guide

The time is now

Escalating Climate Impacts

Localized Solutions for Specific Challenges

Enhanced Resilience Through Data-Driven Decisions

Access to Cutting-Edge Adaptation Techniques

Equity-Focused Adaptation

Building Community Trust and Engagement

Scalability and Shared Learning

Avoidance of Costly and Irreversible Damage

Climate Goals and Policy Alignment



Introduction

Climate change presents complex challenges that demand collaboration across disciplines, sectors, and communities.

A Climate CoLab is a partnership model that brings together universities, municipal staff, and community groups to co-create specific climate information, data products, tools, and assessments.

This guide outlines the steps to establish a Climate CoLab, highlighting key strategies for fostering innovation in research, policy, governance, funding, and education.



What is a Climate CoLab?



A local Climate Colab connects **faculty, municipal staff** and **community groups** to create **specific climate information, data products, tools**, and **assessments** to drive innovation in research, policy and governance, funding, and education.



How to use this booklet

- 1 Read through the presentation and think about who, in your community, is working on climate change
- 2 How would they participate in the effort?
- 3 Does this process fit with your stakeholders? Are there other organizational structures that might fit better with your community?
- 4 Who is not at the table? Who is impacted by this work and needs to participate?



Overview of Steps

1 Form Collaborative Partnerships

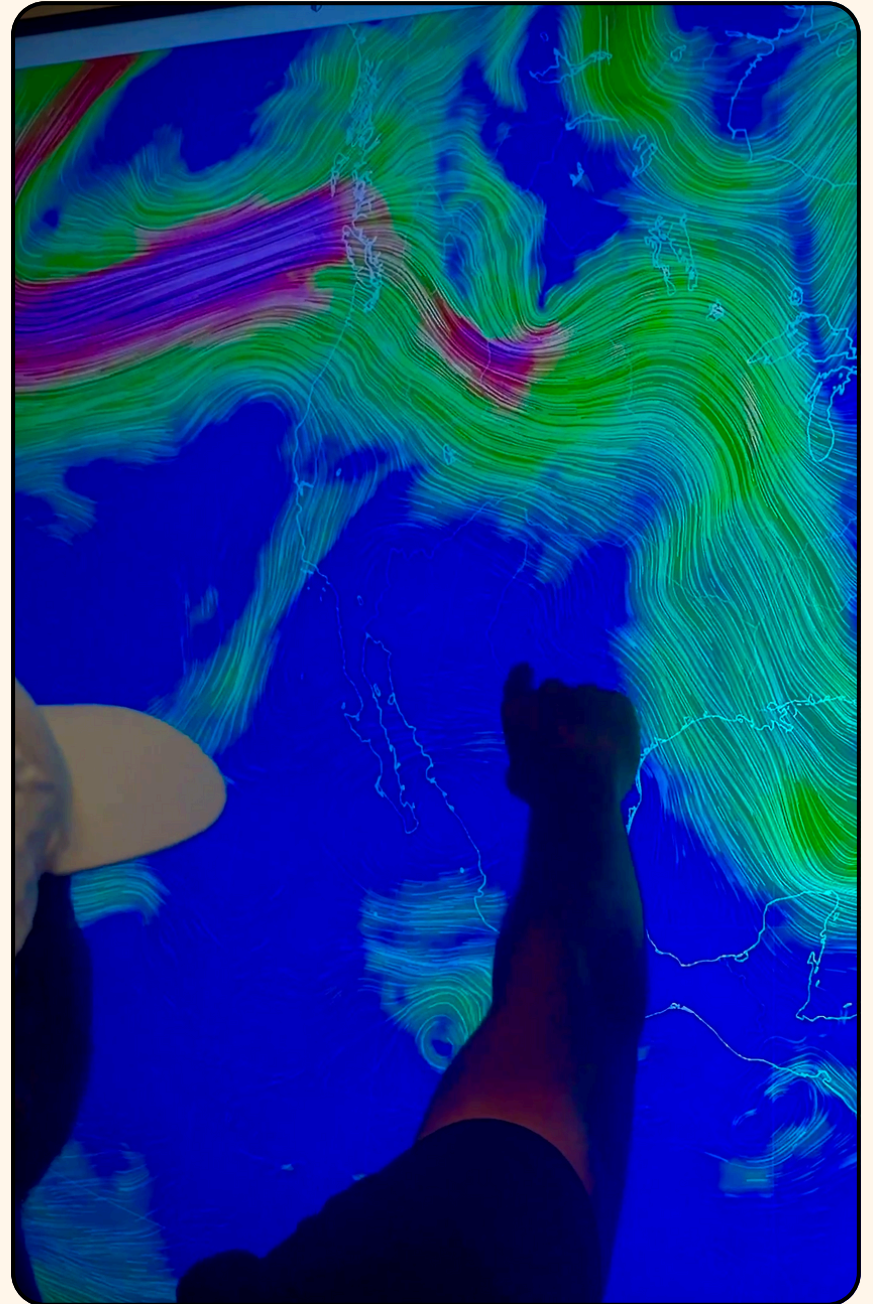
2 Define the Vision and Goals

3 Develop Core Infrastructure

4 Co-Create Climate Products and Tools

5 Foster Innovation and Learning

6 Monitor Progress and Evaluate Impact



Step 1

Form Collaborative Partnerships

Objective: Build a coalition of stakeholders.

- **Engage Academic Institutions:** Partner with universities to leverage expertise in climate science, urban planning, and data analysis.
- **Recruit Municipal Partners:** Work with city departments involved in sustainability, public health, and urban planning.
- **Include Community Groups:** Collaborate with local organizations to ensure community perspectives shape the CoLab's work.
- **Establish a Steering Committee:** Form a diverse leadership team to oversee governance and decision-making.

Step 2

Define Vision & Goals

Objective: Establish a shared purpose to guide the Climate CoLab.

- **Identify Focus Areas:** Determine local climate challenges, such as heat resilience, flood mitigation, or carbon neutrality.
- **Set Clear Goals:** Develop specific, measurable objectives. Examples include producing actionable climate assessments or integrating equity into adaptation strategies.
- **Engage Stakeholders:** Involve diverse voices, including community leaders, researchers, and city officials, to ensure the vision aligns with local needs.

Step 3

Develop Core Infrastructure

Objective: Create a functional framework for the CoLab.

- **Physical or Virtual Hub:** Establish a central space for collaboration, whether online or in person.
- **Shared Tools and Platforms:** Use digital tools to facilitate data sharing, communication, and project management.
- **Secure Funding:** Identify funding sources, including grants, philanthropic support, and municipal budgets.

Step 4

Co-Create Climate Products & Tools

Objective: Generate actionable outputs to address climate challenges.

- **Data Collection and Analysis:** Develop localized datasets, maps, and models tailored to community needs.
- **Custom Tools:** Create user-friendly platforms for scenario planning, risk assessment, or policy simulation.
- **Community Assessments:** Collaborate with residents to identify vulnerabilities and opportunities for intervention.

Step 5

Foster Innovation & Learning

Objective: Cultivate a culture of continuous improvement.

- **Workshops, Trainings and Hackathons:** Host events to explore innovative solutions and engage diverse participants.
- **Education and Training:** Develop curricula for students, professionals, and community members to build climate literacy.
- **Knowledge Sharing:** Publish findings, host webinars, and participate in regional or national conferences

Step 6

Monitor Progress & Evaluate Impact

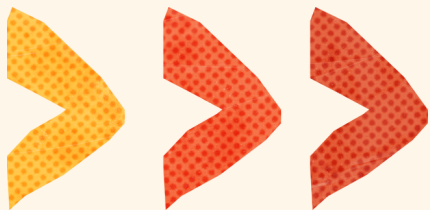
Objective: Assess the CoLab's effectiveness and adapt as needed.

- **Key Performance Indicators (KPIs):** Track metrics such as community engagement levels, tool usage, or policy changes influenced by CoLab outputs.
- **Regular Reporting:** Publish annual reports to share progress and insights.
- **Adaptive Management:** Use evaluation findings to refine goals, methods, and partnerships.

Let's dig in...

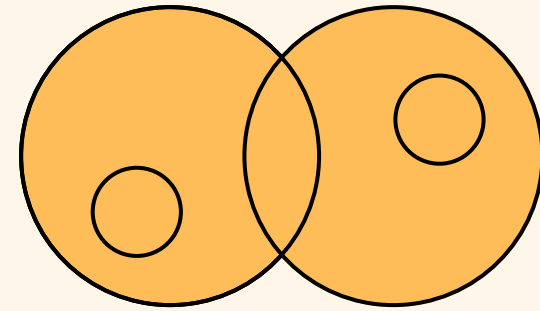
Your geographies & governments are unique.

Which one best fits
your community?

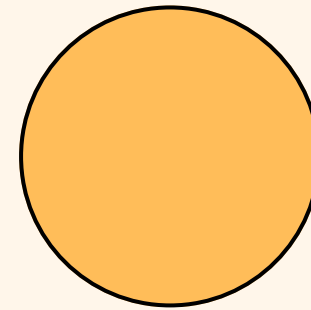


In your region, you may have...

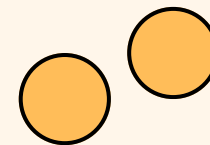
Is your community reflected here? Which one?



Multiple Large Universities/Colleges

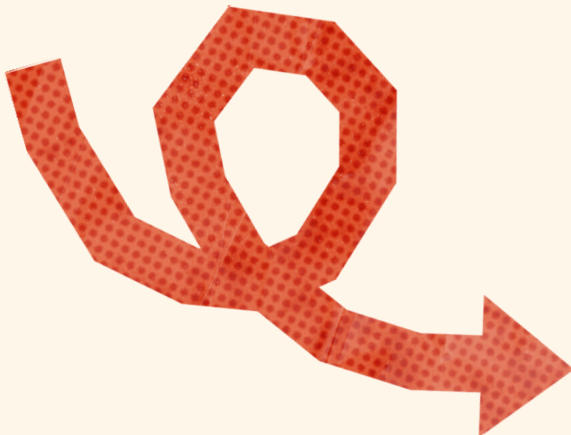


One Large University

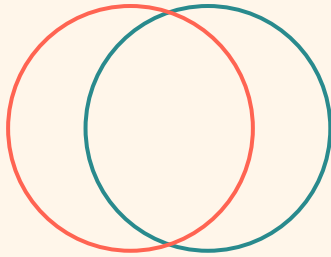


Small College(s)

No higher education

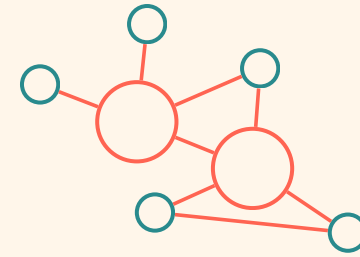


Different Configurment



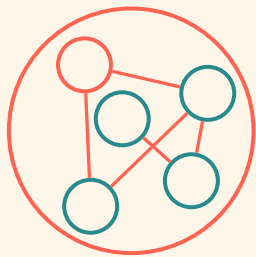
One large university + Large government

Create a strong partnership with one contract



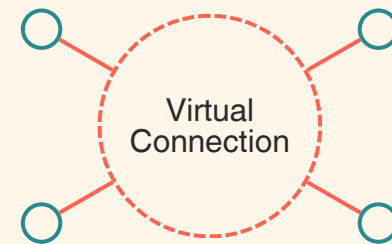
Small college(s) + many small governments

Create a consortium of organizations with rotating leadership



Multiple large universities / colleges + small regional governments

Create a strong partnership with one contract

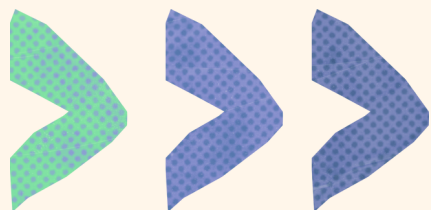


No local higher education + many small governments

Small governments can work virtually with a college/ university in another country/area

Different levels of resources within each org...

	Government staff	Research staff	Activities
Few Resources: \$	Part-time government employee	Part-time researcher(s)	Few meetings, 1 annual project
Some Resources: \$\$	Several dedicated part-time employees	Several part-time researchers + students	Monthly meetings, 6+ annual projects
Full Program: \$\$\$	Several full-time employees plus dedicated departments	Several full-time employees plus dedicated research departments	Multiple monthly meetings, 12+ annual projects



If successful, this will hopefully grow over time.

Immediate Next Steps

1 Identify local government + research champions

2 Identify resource / get leadership buy-in

3 Identify stakeholders / partners

- Impacted communities + groups
- Government
- University/College
- Philanthropy - if available

4 Co-Create Climate Products and Tools

5 Foster Innovation and Learning



Considerations

1 Coordination is messy

2 City timeline doesn't always align with research timeline (i.e. semester)

3 Students are not consultants



Best Practices

1 Understand Capacity

2 Setting Expectations

3 Prioritizing is key

4 Co-creating selection criteria

5 Share the great news!

Example Project: Student Engagement

UT Austin + City of Austin Heat Research

Students to work directly with City Departments, managing tasks such as conducting literature reviews, direct research, community engagement activities and other topics related to climate.

Example project is the Cool Pavement Pilot in Southeast Austin that includes:

- 1 Installing sensors
- 2 How would they participate in the effort?
- 3 Collecting data from walking on regular and cool pavements
- 4 Compiling and analyze data
- 5 Reporting on findings
- 6 Publishing articles



For more information,
please visit the UT-City
Climate CoLab website
at utcitycolab.org

