
Linking Individual Behavior and Systems Change: Recommendations

Define Sustainable Living

Grantees agree that there is a fairly shallow understanding, both within the general public and sometimes within the climate community, of what behavior change means. In addition to the need to communicate how sustainable behavior and lifestyle choices are inherently linked with systemic and political change, there is a need to define the behaviors and the impact of scale. Areas that were repeatedly discussed including: behavior change is not limited to consumer choices; behavior change is a necessary component for reaching 1.5 degrees; there is a need to be more visionary in the role of behavior change; and we must move away from the “sacrifice” or “cute” framing often associated with individual behavior change. In addition, there is a need to develop a deeper understanding of the perspectives from developing and emerging countries.

Engage in the Conversation

While grantees understand of the integral role that behavior change plays in addressing climate change many still find it difficult to discuss this dimension both internally within their organization and externally with the greater climate community, including funders. Here the recommendation is to find more opportunities to engage in conversations with internal and external stakeholders. Potential opportunities include panels and presentations, internal trainings, research publications and op-eds, inclusion of internal and external organizational changes in grant proposals, and strategic conversations with leaders and strategic thinkers in the field. It was suggested that this separation between support for behavior change and the support for climate policy is possibly the result of distress within the climate community. Therefore, an approach that seeks out deeper conversations and allows for a process of reflection within the climate movement and our own organizations can be a useful approach to bridging the gap.

Create and Share Stories

Storytelling is a timeless practice that empowers individuals and transforms dry policy into real conversations. Messages are powerful when they can combine both theory and change. KR grantees expressed a strong desire to create and share stories. Our recommendation is for grantees to work to collect stories from within their own community and to share these stories with others. Grantees expressed an interest specifically in stories of scale, stories of individual impact, and stories from other sectors (e.g. health).

Walk the Talk

Following the simple motto of “practice what you preach” goes a long way in building credibility and effectiveness with both internal and external stakeholders, along with critics of the climate community. Hence, we highly recommend KR Foundation and its grantees review the social science literature that confirms and reinforces the importance of developing these practices in our lives and our organizations. Work also needs to be done to foster the conditions that support transformation within our own organizations.

Additional Resources

[Climate and Rapid Behavior Change: What do we know so far?](#) report
[How did we do that: Possibility of Rapid Transition](#) report
[Transition Network stories](#)
[Build Real Democracy stories](#)
[Walk Out Walk On stories](#)
[Dear Tomorrow Archive](#)
[Storytelling and Social Change](#) report
[Story of self, us, and now](#) Marshall Ganz’s Public Narrative

[Strategies for Scaling Social Innovation for Greater Impact](#) report
[Towards a culture of low-carbon research for the 21st Century](#) report
[A Practical Guide for a Nearly Carbon-Neutral Conference Model](#)
[Academy of Change](#) website and resources
[Diving Into Scaling](#) website
[Environmental Melancholia](#) book
[Joanna Macy’s](#) website