

Climate Communications

ORCCA Regional Climate Action Symposium

February 20, 2025



Local Governments
for Sustainability
Les gouvernements locaux
pour le développement durable
CANADA



ABOUT THIS SESSION

Run-of-show

Part 1

- Communications then and now
- Foundations of action-oriented communications
- Interactive poll

Part 2

- Motivating action every step of the way
- Message brainstorming activity

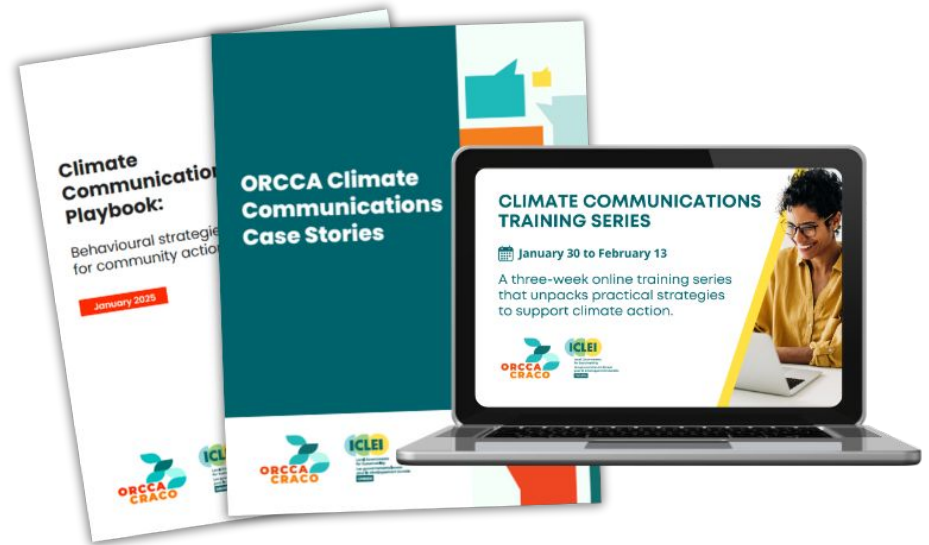
Part 3

- Working with the communication journey to optimize results
- Plan your own communication journey activity
- Final thoughts

ABOUT THIS SESSION

Climate Communications Toolkit

- It isn't enough for people to know about climate change—they need to be inspired and motivated to take action
- The Climate Communications Toolkit is designed to help you use communications to support the implementation of climate action and build better, more resilient communities



Communications Then and Now



COMMUNICATIONS THEN AND NOW

Traditional climate communications

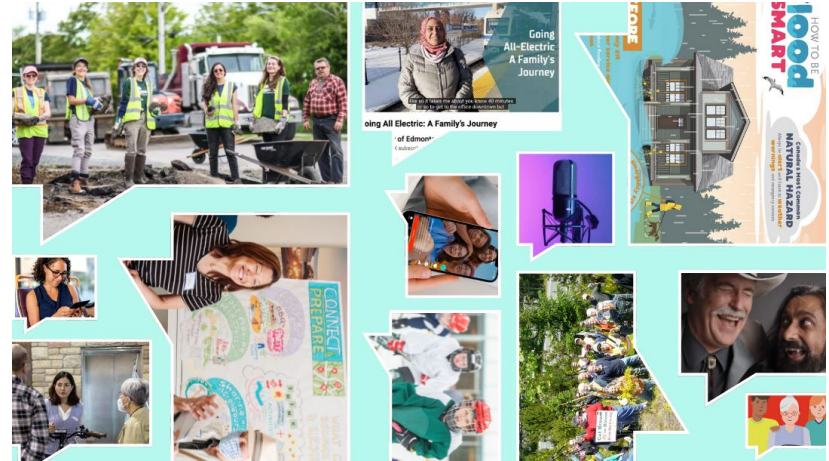
- Done through outreach and engagement
 - Public meetings
 - Online surveys
 - Coffee chats
- Focused on facts
 - Charts and graphs
 - Numbers and data
- Centred around convincing
 - General Public
 - Winning arguments
 - Targeting the “deniers”



COMMUNICATIONS THEN AND NOW

Trends in climate communications

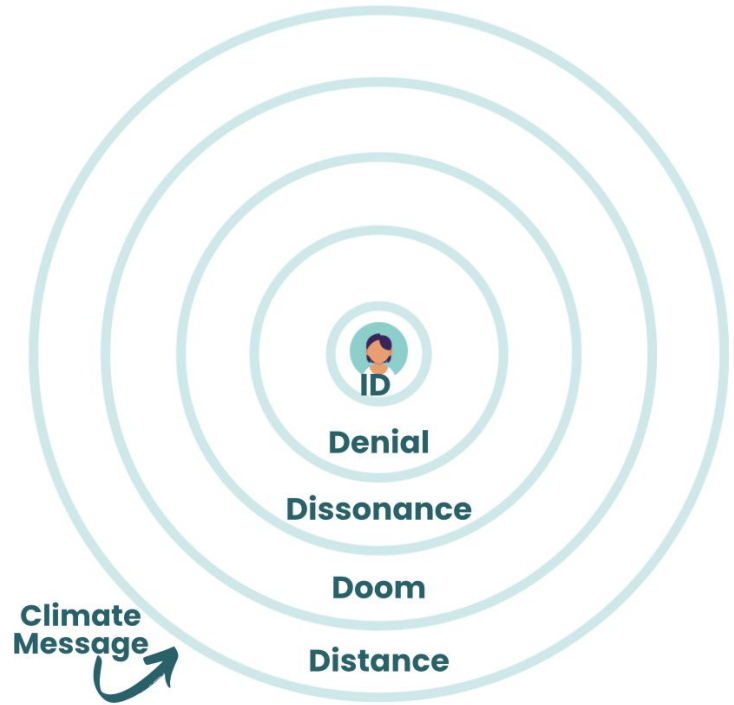
- Moving towards dialogue and listening
- Employing frames that are positive
- Story-based signals that create meaning
- Engaging with people who are movable



COMMUNICATIONS THEN AND NOW

How do we break through the barriers?

- Feelings and perception are stronger than logic and reason
- There are a complex series of barriers that a climate message must overcome
- Climate messaging also has to be accessible and inclusive



Adapted: Per Espen Stoknes, 2015

COMMUNICATIONS THEN AND NOW

Climate emotions

- Climate communications generate feelings and emotions
- These emotions play a central role in how people respond to messaging and whether someone will take action or not



Climate Emotions Wheel



Climate Emotions Wheel © 2024



ClimateMentalHealth.Net

Part 1

Foundations of action-oriented communications



FOUNDATIONS OF ACTION-ORIENTED COMMUNICATIONS

Action and outcome specific

- **Trunk:** Broad strategic goal
 - *E.g., Reduce basement flooding*
- **Branch:** An action that has a very specific outcome
 - *E.g., Increase uptake in backflow valve subsidy program*
- **Leaf:** An outcome that will be achieved by engaging a certain audience through climate communications
 - *E.g., Increase uptake in backflow valve subsidy program in the Hillside neighbourhood*



FOUNDATIONS OF ACTION-ORIENTED COMMUNICATIONS

Audience specific

Develop messaging based on your audience—their level of concern, priorities, values, and identities.

Examples of different audiences that typically require different messaging:



Elected officials



Municipal staff



Community residents



Businesses and industry



Academic institutions

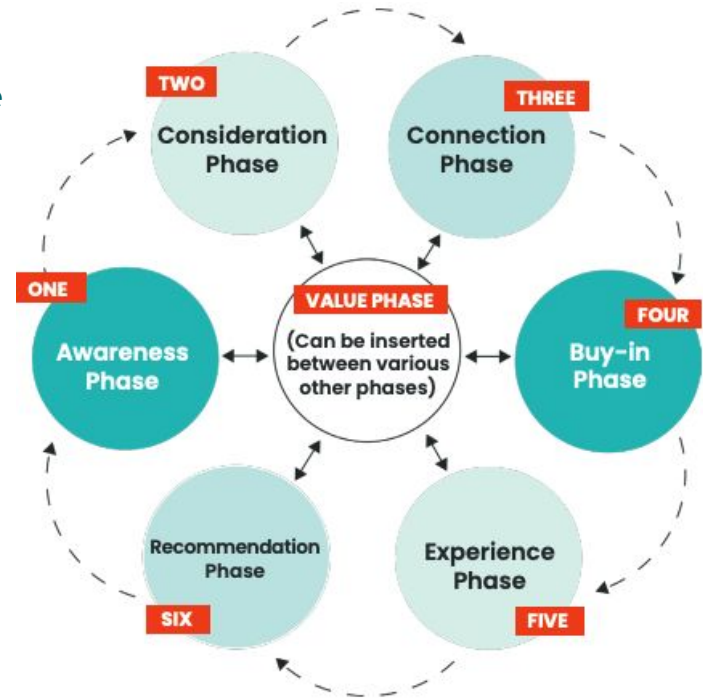


Community groups & NGOs

FOUNDATIONS OF ACTION-ORIENTED COMMUNICATIONS

Communications as a journey

- **Awareness phase (hey you!):** Your audience first learns about what you are trying to achieve
- **Consideration phase (research):** They assess whether they will take action
- **Connection phase (contact):** Initial engagement happens here
- **Buy-in phase (action):** They take action!
- **Value Phase:** Reinforces the action
- **Experience phase (engagement):** A chance to build a relationship and trust
- **Recommendation phase (advocacy):** Receive feedback and/or encourage advocacy

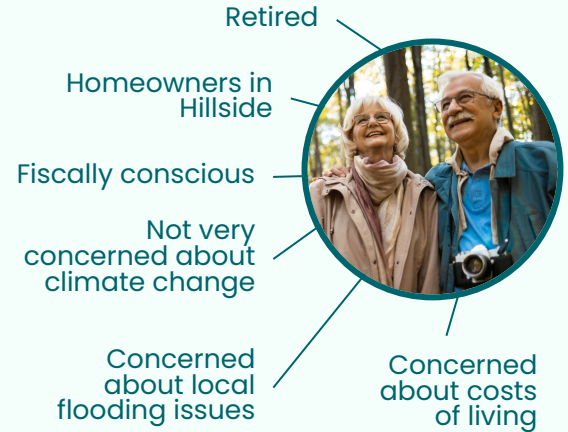


COMMUNICATION JOURNEY

Example

Action: Increase uptake in backflow valve subsidy program in the Hillside neighbourhood

Audience: Hillside neighbourhood homeowners



Describe the phases of this audience's journey:

- How will they go from awareness to the installation of a backflow valve and beyond?
- What calls-to-action will you use to nudge them along the way?
- What key performance indicators will you use to measure success?
- What platforms and channels will you use to reach your audience?

COMMUNICATION JOURNEY

Awareness phase example

People in your audience first learns about what you are trying to achieve.

Learn that some of their neighbours are installing backflow valves to protect their homes

Learn that the city offers a backflow valve subsidy program

Learn that backflow valves can prevent flooding

Learn that some of their neighbours are getting money back through the city's backflow valves subsidy program

COMMUNICATION JOURNEY

Consideration phase example

People in your audience assess whether they will take action based on their values, interests, or needs.

Download

FAQs document about the subsidy program

Read a local media story about someone whose home was protected thanks to their backflow valve

Talk to neighbours about their experience with the subsidy program

Visit the subsidy program website

Attend a community event

Watch an information video about the program

COMMUNICATION JOURNEY

Connection phase example

Initial engagement happens here at which point you can start building a relationship with people within your audience.

Join an email list to receive subsidy program tips and reminders

Submit eligibility self-assessment form

Submit an application to join the program

Complete eligibility self-assessment form

Email the subsidy program to ask a question

Send a message via an online form to ask a question

Sign up to participate in the program

COMMUNICATION JOURNEY

Buy-in phase example

People in your audience take action!

Install a
backflow
valve

Send in a
reimbursement form
once the work is
complete

Sign a
"contract" to
install a
backflow valve

COMMUNICATION JOURNEY

Value phase example

People in your audience receive value (e.g., resource, access to expertise, rebates, etc.), reinforcing their decision to take action.

Prevent
basement
flooding

Lower
insurance
costs

Protect your
home as a
long term
investment

Gain valuable
knowledge of
basement
flood risks and
costs

Get money
back

COMMUNICATION JOURNEY

Experience phase (engagement) example

Active engagement deepens your relationship with your audience, offering an opportunity to build trust.

Download
the subsidy
program
checklist

Read
tips and
reminders
throughout
the process

Contact
someone from
the program
with questions

COMMUNICATION JOURNEY

Recommendation phase example

People in your audience reflect on their experiences, share feedback, and/or encourage others to get involved.

Fill out the program's flood reduction assessment survey during the next flood season

Fill out the program's feedback survey

Volunteer to talk about your experience at a community event

Share a testimonial

Let people know you took part in the program

Part 2

**Motivating
action every step
of the way**



MOTIVATING ACTION EVERY STEP OF THE WAY

Different messages for different audiences

Examples of different audiences that typically require different messaging:



Elected officials



Municipal staff



Community residents



Businesses and industry



Academic institutions



Community groups & NGOs

MOTIVATING ACTION EVERY STEP OF THE WAY

Worldviews



**Progressive
activists**

15%



**Civic
nationals**

21%



**Centrist
liberals**

20%



**Disengaged
middle**

30%



**Fossil fuel
conservatives**

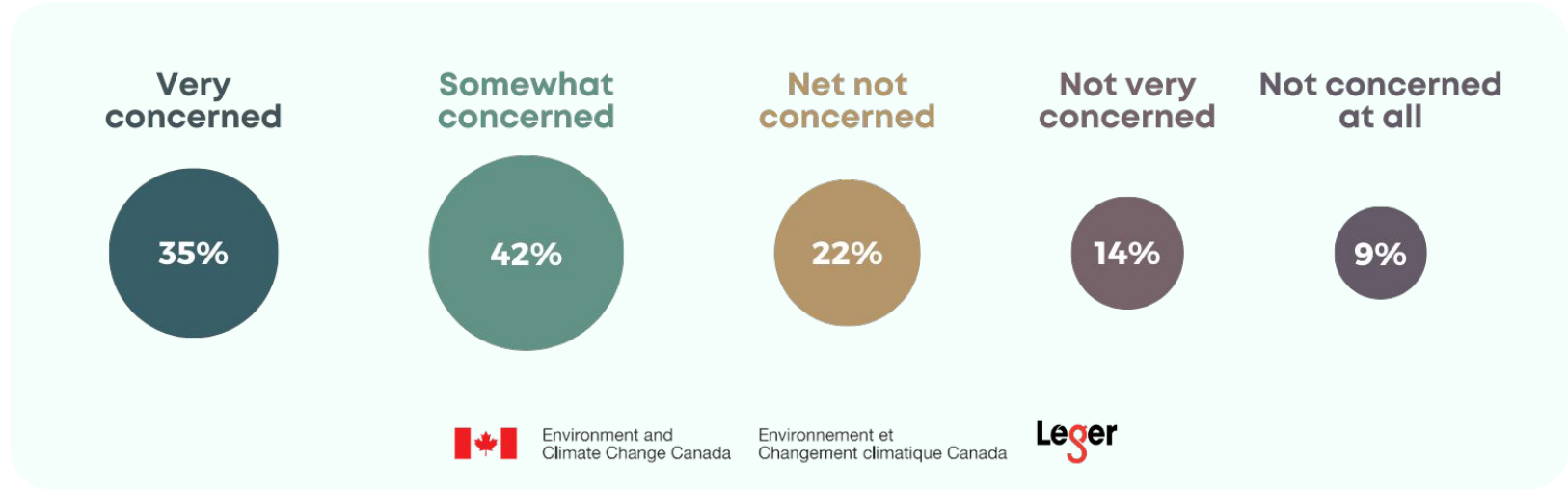
14%

Re.Climate © EcoAnalytics

Source: Lachapelle, E. & Comeau, L. (2024, October 15). Knowing Your Audience: Who Are the 5 Canadas? [Webinar]. Re.Climate. <https://reclimate.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/Re.Climate-Webinar-1-The-Five-Canadas-Slides-Oct-2024.pdf>

MOTIVATING ACTION EVERY STEP OF THE WAY

Level of climate concern



Source: Leger Marketing Inc. (2024). Public Opinion Research on the National Adaptation Strategy: Final Report, March 2024. Environment and Climate Change Canada. publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2024/eccc/en4/En4-531-2024-eng.pdf

MOTIVATING ACTION EVERY STEP OF THE WAY

Frame your messaging

Frame your messaging based on your audience's priorities and concerns.

- Agriculture
- Biodiversity
- Civil liberties
- Costs of living
- Economy
- Energy (e.g., energy security, energy poverty)
- Environment (e.g., waste, plastics)
- Family
- Food and food security
- Future generations
- Health
- Housing
- Lifestyle and culture (e.g., recreation, tradition)
- Local issues (e.g., safety, road, taxes)
- National security
- Reconciliation
- Risks and costs of extreme events
- Social justice and equity
- Technology
- Other

MOTIVATING ACTION EVERY STEP OF THE WAY

Use storytelling

Use storytelling to humanize your communications, evoke an emotional response, and inspire action.

Examples of different types of storytelling:



Personal stories



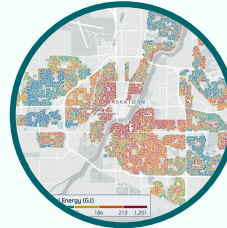
Local success stories



Future vision stories



Visual narratives



Data-driven narratives



Cultural narratives

MOTIVATING ACTION EVERY STEP OF THE WAY

Other behavioural strategies

- **Accessibility**
- Behavioural Contracts & Goal Setting
- Carrots & Sticks
- Cognitive Dissonance
- Feedback
- Gamification
- **Intrinsic Value Framing**
- Personalization
- **Positive Framing**
- Social Influence
- **Social Norms & Prompts**
- Timing & Tipping Point
- Visual Storytelling

MOTIVATING ACTION EVERY STEP OF THE WAY



Accessibility

Meet people where they are physically, digitally, and in terms of language and cultural references you use.

How to use this strategy in your climate communications:

- Develop communications for specific **audiences** (not “General Public”)
- Research where your audience **already spends time**
- Identify your audience’s preferences, worldviews, values, identities, and priorities and develop **messaging** that will resonate with them
- Identify potential **barriers** (e.g., language, transportation, childcare, cultural values, community identity) and ways to remove these
- Partner with **trusted messengers and allies**

MOTIVATING ACTION EVERY STEP OF THE WAY



Intrinsic Value Framing

Align climate actions with deeply held values for greater engagement.

How to use this strategy in your climate communications:

- Develop communications for specific **audiences** (not “General Public”)
- Align climate **messaging** with deeply held **personal values**, such as community well-being, family safety, and environmental stewardship
- Use your communications to evoke **positive emotions**

MOTIVATING ACTION EVERY STEP OF THE WAY

Positive Framing

Highlight the positive outcomes and benefits of taking action.

How to use this strategy in your climate communications:

- Focus on the beneficial outcomes of climate action, such as health improvements, financial savings, and the creation of a better community in your **messaging**
- Use your communications to evoke **positive emotions** (move beyond facts and information)
- Positive framing is an effective way to inspire **concerned but disengaged** to take action and address other common barriers
- It is also a great way to **bolster public support** and influence **social norms**

MOTIVATING ACTION EVERY STEP OF THE WAY



Social Norms & Prompts

Refer to social norms and/or use social prompts to encourage people to adjust their actions to align with those of their peers.

How to use this strategy in your climate communications:

- Identify the social norms within your **audience** and find ways to connect these to climate action
- Highlight certain **behaviours** as both common and expected
- Use **testimonials** and **real-world examples** from within your community
- Reinforce climate action as a community-wide **identity**
- Combine social norms with **positive emotions** and a sense of shared responsibility

EXAMPLE OF MOTIVATING ACTION

Frames, stories, and behavioural strategies

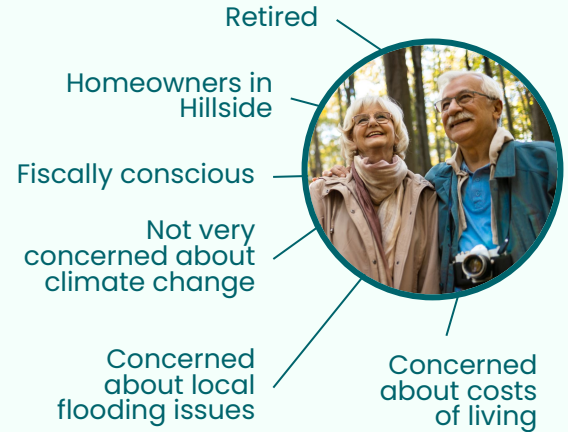
Action: Increase uptake in backflow valve subsidy program in the Hillside neighbourhood

Audience: Hillside neighbourhood homeowners

Frames: Protect your home, protect your investment, save money, be prepared for flooding

Stories: Personal stories from other homeowners with similar worldviews and values

Behavioural strategies: Carrots & Stick (save money), Intrinsic Value Framing and Cognitive Dissonance (flood protection is a smart investment), Positive Framing (protect your home), Social Norms & Prompts (others are doing it), Timing & Tipping Point (flood season is coming)

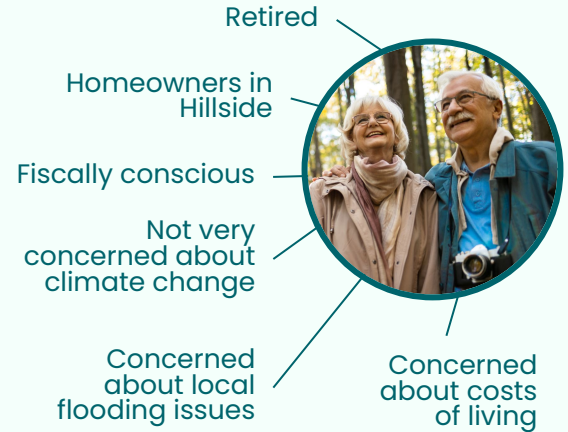


EXAMPLE OF MOTIVATING ACTION

Brainstorm messaging

Action: Increase uptake in backflow valve subsidy program in the Hillside neighbourhood

Audience: Hillside neighbourhood homeowners



- Are you prepared for flooding season?
- Do you want to protect your home from flooding?
- Backflow valves can protect your home from flooding.
- Get money to protect your home.
- You can get money back when you install a backflow valve.
- Backflow valves are a smart investment for your home.
- Install a backflow valve in your home.
- Learn more about backflow valves.

Part 3

Adding layers to the communication journey



ADDING LAYERS TO THE COMMUNICATION JOURNEY

Layers of a communication journey

- Calls-to-action (**CTAs**)
 - Nudge people one step at a time
- Key performance indicators (**KPIs**)
 - Based on the CTAs
- Choosing the right platform and **channels**
 - Work with partners and trusted messengers
- Integrate behavioural strategies into your journey
- Choose messages for every step of the way

ADDING LAYERS TO THE COMMUNICATION JOURNEY

Calls-to-action (CTAs)

Read FAQs

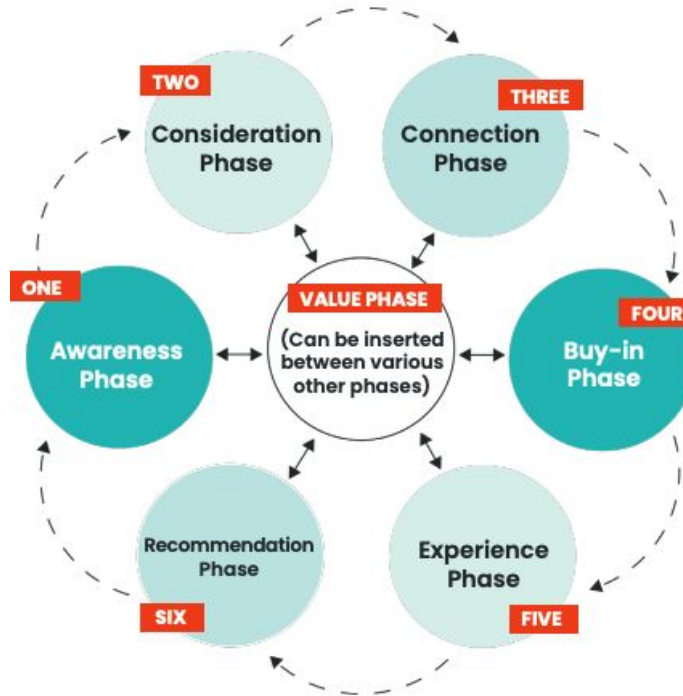
Contact us

Learn more

Submit your form

Take our survey

Download checklist



ADDING LAYERS TO THE COMMUNICATION JOURNEY

Key performance indicators (KPIs)

Read FAQs

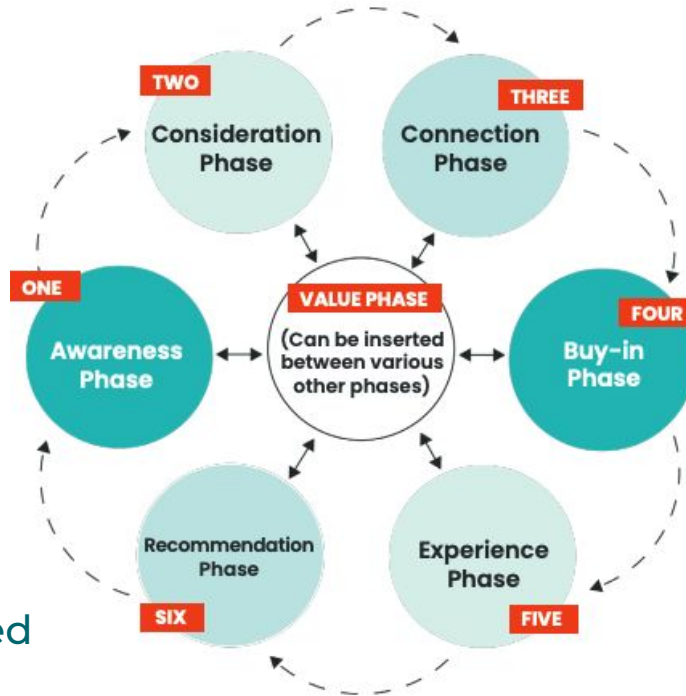
of web page visits
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Learn more

of video views
of post impressions

Take our survey

of surveys completed



Contact us

of inquiries

Submit your form

of forms submitted

Download checklist

of downloads

ADDING LAYERS TO THE COMMUNICATION JOURNEY

Platforms and channels

FAQ web page

Read FAQs

of web page visits

of downloads

Social media

Learn more

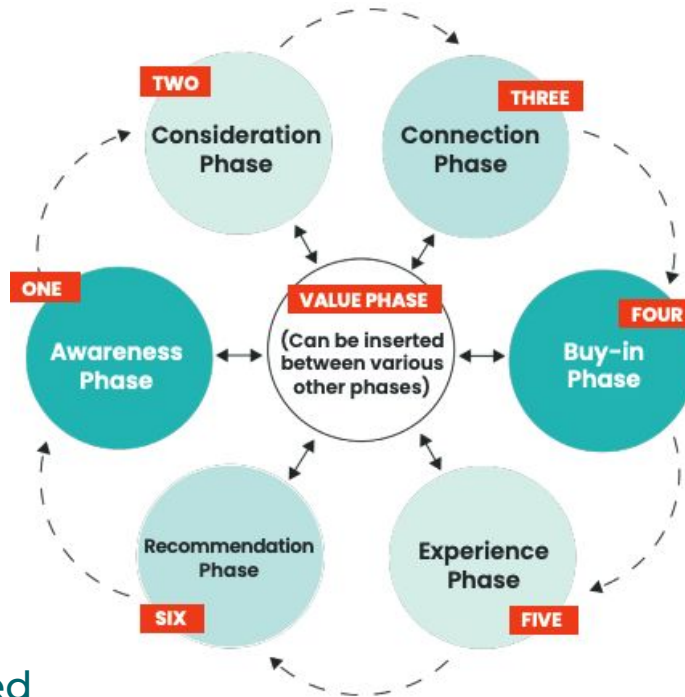
of video views

of post impressions

Program survey

Take our survey

of surveys completed



Email address

Contact us

of inquiries

Web form

Submit your form

of forms submitted

Checklist

Download checklist

of downloads

ADDING LAYERS TO THE COMMUNICATION JOURNEY

Behavioural strategies



FAQ web page

Read FAQs

of web page visits
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Social media

Learn more

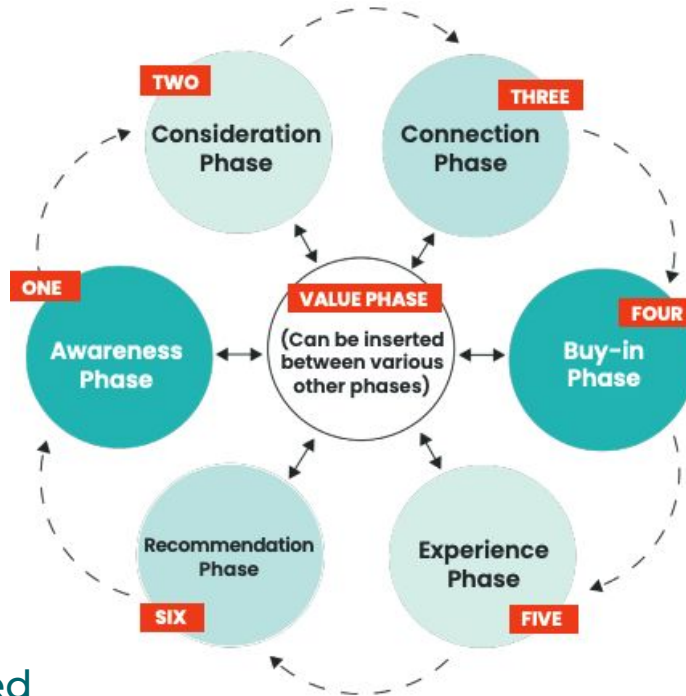
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Program survey

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Submit your form

of forms submitted



Checklist

Download checklist

of downloads



ADDING LAYERS TO THE COMMUNICATION JOURNEY

Repeat the process

- Change the components or “layers” of your communication journey
- Try different journeys
- Make changes to your communication journey for different audience segments
- Develop unique journeys for unique audiences
- Repeat with other actions



FINAL THOUGHTS

Stay curious and responsive

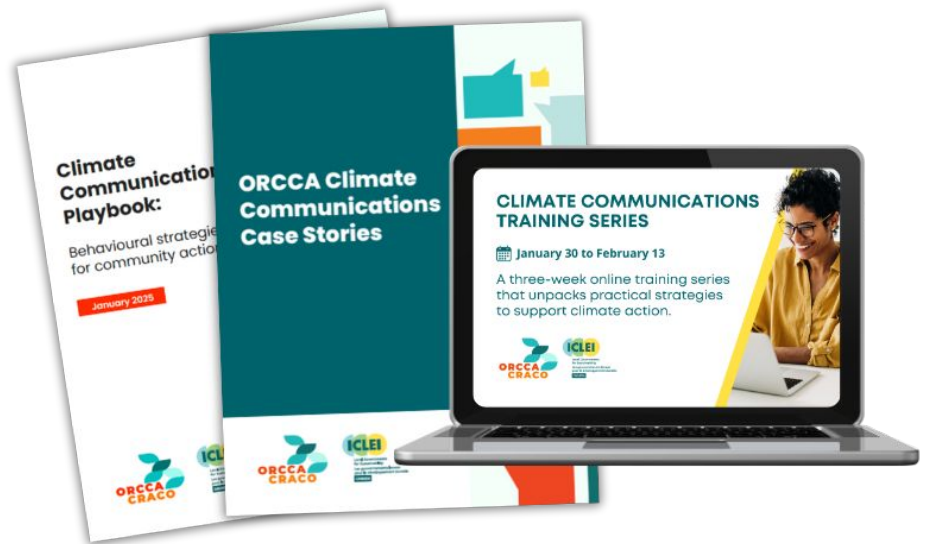
- What are your assumptions?
- How can you test them?
- What's working?
- What's not working?
- What is your audience telling you?
- What do they need?



FINAL THOUGHTS

It's a journey for you too...

- Read the playbook
- Explore our 30 case stories
- Watch the training series replay
- Practice approaching climate communication as a journey towards meaningful action



2025 Livable Cities Forum: Acting on Climate Together

October 6-8, 2025 | Halifax, NS

SAVE THE DATE

HALIFAX



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Thank you!



Visit icleicanada.org to learn more and access the full [Climate Communications Toolkit](#).

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Email us at iclei-canada@iclei.org



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