

Motivating environmental action checklist

What makes people more likely to act

Getting people to change behaviors is a hard process that happens slowly, which is why simply providing people information is not enough to motivate action.

People are more likely to act if they value the action, know enough about the issue and how it relates to them and what they care about, perceive that taking the action is socially accepted and normal, think their actions can have an impact, and believe the benefits outweigh the costs. People need to have the skills and capacity to feel confident in taking the action and not face other barriers that make it impossible.

Motivating action project planning steps

Take the following steps to plan a project to motivate people to take action to protect the environment.

Identify your topic

- Identify the broad environmental topic you are focusing on**, such as climate change, natural resource protection, recycling, or waste reduction.

Select the action(s) you are focusing on

Successful projects to motivate action focus on one or just a few actions within a topic. Actions should be:

- Specific:** You should be able to identify the specific steps people need to take. If your actions are too vague, you will struggle to identify barriers and motivations.
- Direct:** Be sure the actions you are focusing on have a direct impact on improving the environment.
- Impactful:** Good actions to focus on have high potential to improve the environment, are something your priority audience would be interested in doing, and are not something most of your priority audience is already doing.

Once you've selected actions to focus on, set a SMART goal for your actions.

- Set a goal that is Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Time-bound:** This goal will help guide the scope of your project and give you an evaluation measure.

Get to know your audience

To be successful in motivating action, you need to understand your audience's interests, values, barriers, and motivations. Barriers are what prevent your audience from taking action, while motivations are the reasons your audience would be interested in taking the actions.

- **Describe what you know about your priority audience(s):** Who are they? What do they value and care about? What are their interests and lifestyle? What do they think about your topic and actions? Who do they listen to and where do they go to get information?
- **Identify barriers and motivations for taking action:** Conduct research with your priority audience, which can range from casual conversations to formal studies. Some ways to do this:
 - Interviews or focus groups: Have conversations with members of your priority audience about the actions, finding out both what they find challenging and beneficial about those actions.
 - Surveys: These can be done in many ways, including verbal or written, in-person or online.
 - Observations: See how people are or are not currently taking the action.
 - Literature review: Find out what others have done by reviewing available research, case studies, articles, etc.

Develop strategies

Incorporate strategies into your project that help your audience overcome barriers. Consider where your audience is at on their journey to taking the actions you are focusing on, and customize the strategies to work for your audience's interests, values, culture, and lifestyle. Strategies include:

- **Build commitment:** We're more likely to act if we're being held accountable. Commitments could be written or verbal and made individually, in public, or as a group. Commitments are stronger if you have a plan to follow up, check in on how people are doing, and provide additional support or resources.
- **Foster social norms:** We're more likely to act if we think other people like us are doing it. Find ways to make actions visible, integrate the action into community events and conversations, share messages and stories that reinforce that taking the action is normal in the community, and provide recognition or praise when people go above and beyond the norm.
- **Get leaders and champions to encourage others:** We make decisions based on the recommendations of people we know and trusted sources. Train champions and leaders on your topic and actions, provide them with resources to motivate action, and get commitment from them to reach out to others.
- **Make it easy to act:** We're more likely to act if it's convenient. Provide the infrastructure and tools needed to take action and look for opportunities to make your focus action the default option.
- **Develop skills:** We're more likely to act if we feel competent. Provide a safe space for people to try an activity and ask questions.
- **Provide prompts:** We often operate on auto-pilot and forget to act. Find opportunities to remind people of the actions they intend to take as possible to where they'll take action.
- **Use opportunities and momentum:** Capitalize on trigger and major life events for individuals and your community. This could include Earth Day or major community events. Times when people are changing up their routines, such as moving, starting a new job, or having kids, is a good time to integrate new actions. Be sure to celebrate successes and milestones to build momentum for future success.
- **Create effective communication:** We're more likely to act when we know why it's important and what to do. Integrate community goals and impact, tell people what actions they can take and how to take those actions, help address barriers, and speak to your audience's motivations and values.

Additional project planning resources

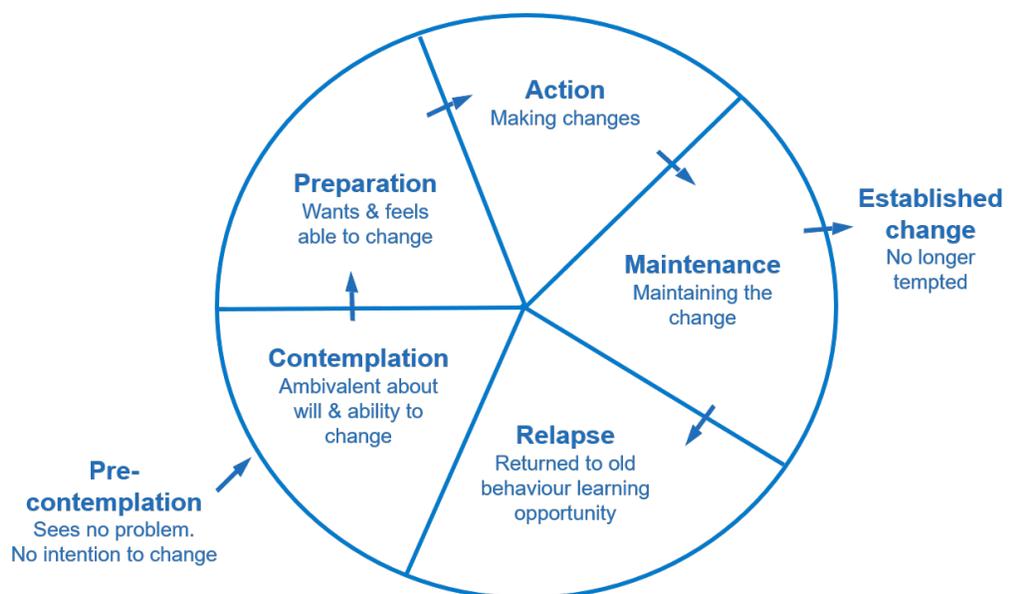
Choosing strategies to address barriers

The chart below helps you line up what you hear from your audience with effective strategies to use and why that is likely to be effective. Using this will help you plan strategies that address your audience's barriers.

What you might hear	Strategy	Why it works
"I've been meaning to do that." "That sounds interesting."	Build commitment	We want to be consistent Helps nudge people into action
"That sounds hard." "I'm not interested." "People like me don't do that."	Cultivate social norms Encourage social diffusion and modeling	We want to be socially accepted We make decisions based on the actions and recommendations of others Helps make your actions relevant
"I always forget to do that." "I can't remember how to take action."	Use prompts	Breaks our routines and helps us remember what we intend to do
"I'm afraid I'm going to do it wrong." "I don't know how to do that."	Develop skills	We're more likely to act if we feel competent and confident
"I can't take that action." "I don't have that service."	Make it easy to act with infrastructure, tools, supplies	We're more likely to act if it's easy and convenient
"I have this big change coming up (moving, new job, baby, etc.)." "I already do that, I'm ready to take the next step."	Celebrate successes Use momentum and disruption Associate actions	We're more ready to adopt new actions during big life changes We start to associate actions as part of our identity and are more likely to take further action

Stages of change

This model shows the steps a person typically goes through to take an action. It can be helpful to consider where your audience members are on their journey to taking the actions you are focusing on, considering what barriers and motivations they are facing at that step, and identifying what support you can offer them to move them to the next step in the journey.



Plan using the 4Ps

Thinking through the 4Ps outlined below will help you plan how to reach your priority audience to motivate them to take action.

<p>Product</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Core product: The benefit or motivation, what's in it for the priority audience• Actual product: A tangible good or service to offer to help your priority audience take action	<p>Price</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Find what matters to your audience• Monetary: Increase incentives or decrease costs for your focus actions• Nonmonetary incentives: Increase benefits and decrease barriers for your focus actions• It can also help to think of increasing the costs and barriers and decreasing the benefits and incentives for actions you don't want people to take
<p>Place</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Where and when your priority audience will perform the action, acquire goods, or receive services• Make access pleasant and convenient	<p>Promotion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• How you will get the word out to your priority audience• Use effective messages, messengers, and channels• Develop creative elements and promotional pieces