

An Introduction

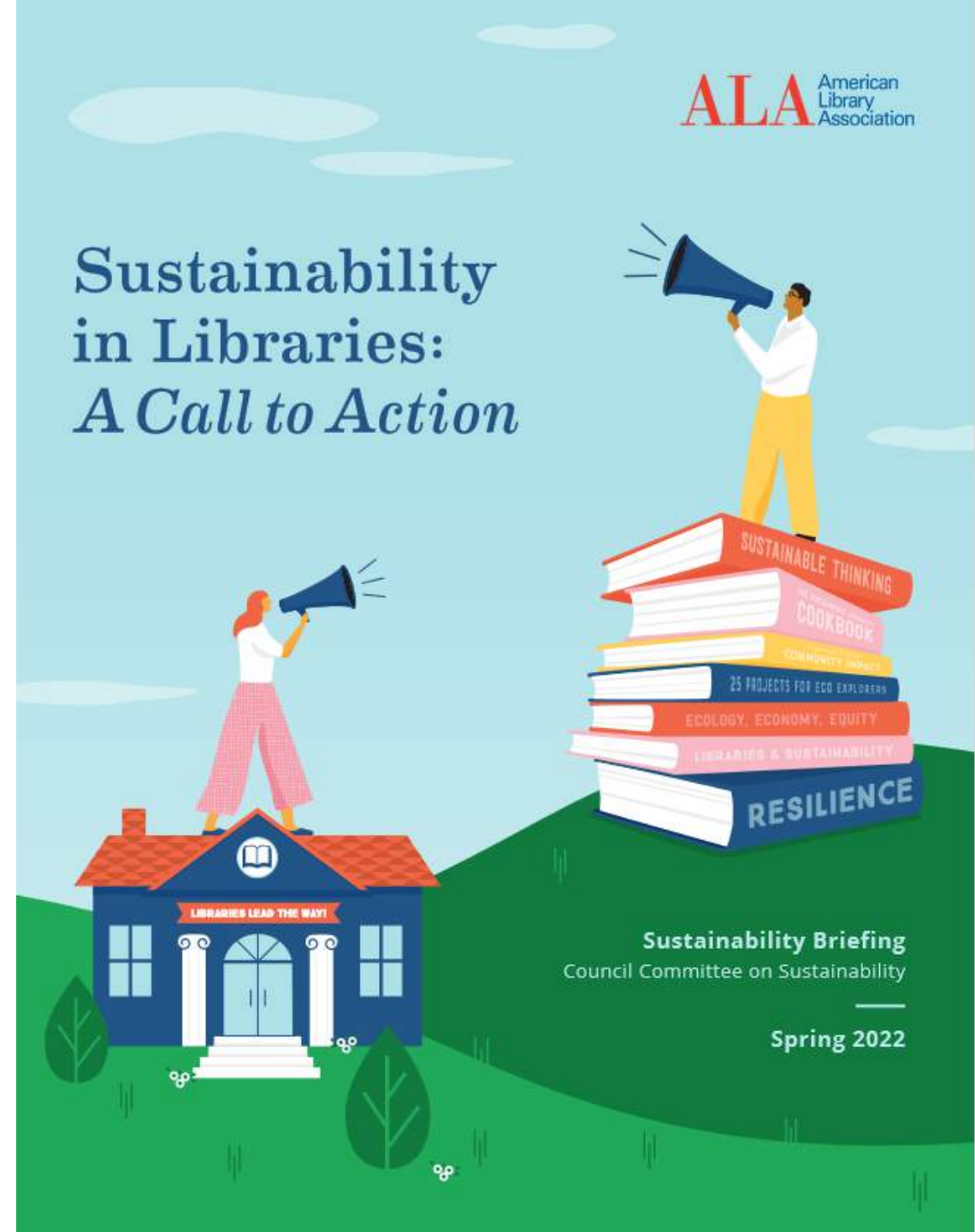
National Climate Action Strategy for Libraries





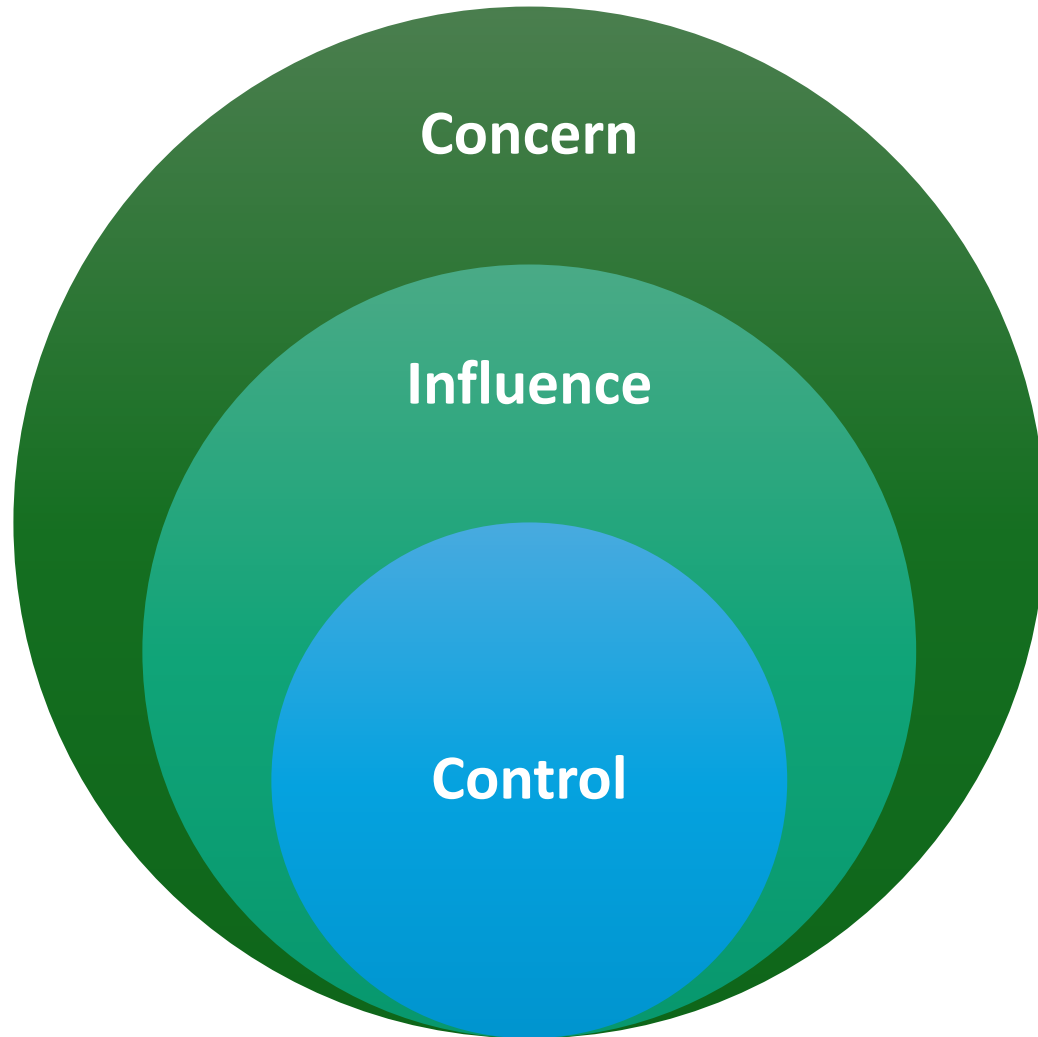
Image Source: National Centers for Environmental Information, NOAA

“**Climate change** is the single greatest threat to global health, a “**code red for humanity**,” and is this generation’s **grandest challenge**.”





You may be **concerned**, but what can you **influence** and **control**?



You Influence:

- Those around you
- Your homelife
- Your workplace
- Your community
- Your elected officials

You Control:

- Yourself
- Your actions
- Your decisions
- Your behaviors
- Your words

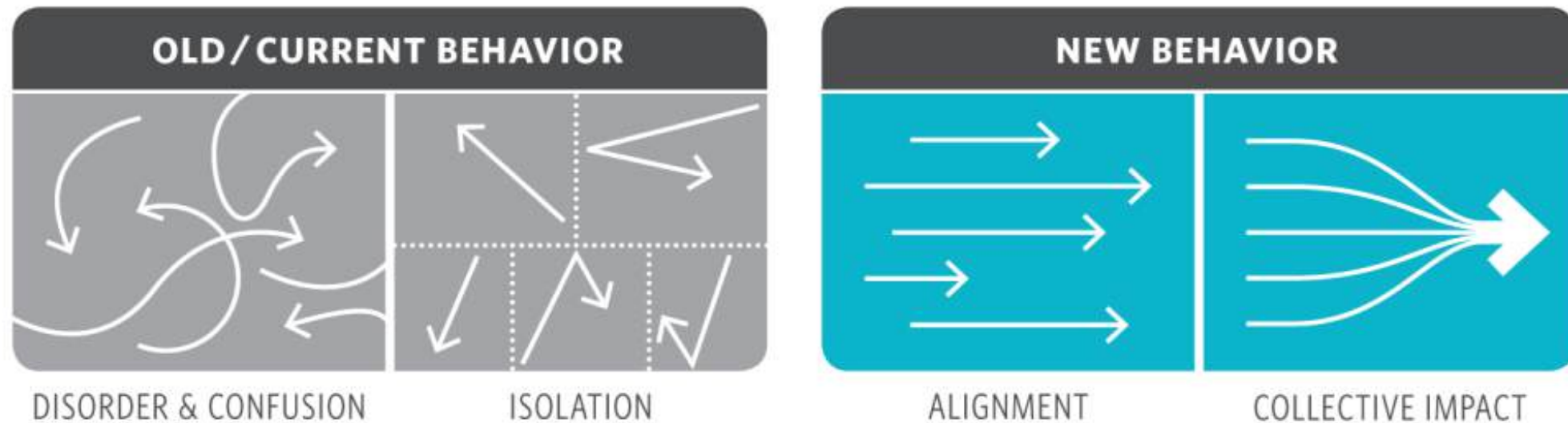
Sustainable Libraries Initiative



**Sustainable
Libraries
Initiative**

Launched in 2015 as a community of practice for library leaders interested in addressing issues related to **climate change, community resilience and securing a vital, vibrant, and visible place** in the community for their library.

Collective Impact



Graphic: AllHandsRaised.org

Fifth National Climate Assessment



2023

How the United States Is Addressing Climate Change

- Future climate change impacts depend on choices made today
- US emissions have decreased, while the economy and population have grown
- Accelerating advances in adaptation can help reduce rising climate risks
- Climate action has increased in every region of the US
- Meeting US mitigation targets means reaching net-zero emissions.....

How the United States Is Experiencing Climate Change.....

- Current climate changes are unprecedented over thousands of years
- Risks from extreme events are increasing
- Cascading and compounding impacts increase risks.....
- Climate change exacerbates inequities
- Harmful impacts will increase in the near term

Current and Future Climate Risks to the United States

- Safe, reliable water supplies are threatened by flooding, drought, and sea level rise
- Disruptions to food systems are expected to increase
- Homes and property are at risk from sea level rise and more intense extreme events
- Infrastructure and services are increasingly damaged and disrupted by extreme weather and sea level rise
- Climate change exacerbates existing health challenges and creates new ones
- Ecosystems are undergoing transformational changes.....
- Climate change slows economic growth, while climate action presents opportunities
- Many regional economies and livelihoods are threatened by damages to natural resources and intensifying extremes
- Job opportunities are shifting due to climate change and climate action.....
- Climate change is disrupting cultures, heritages, and traditions

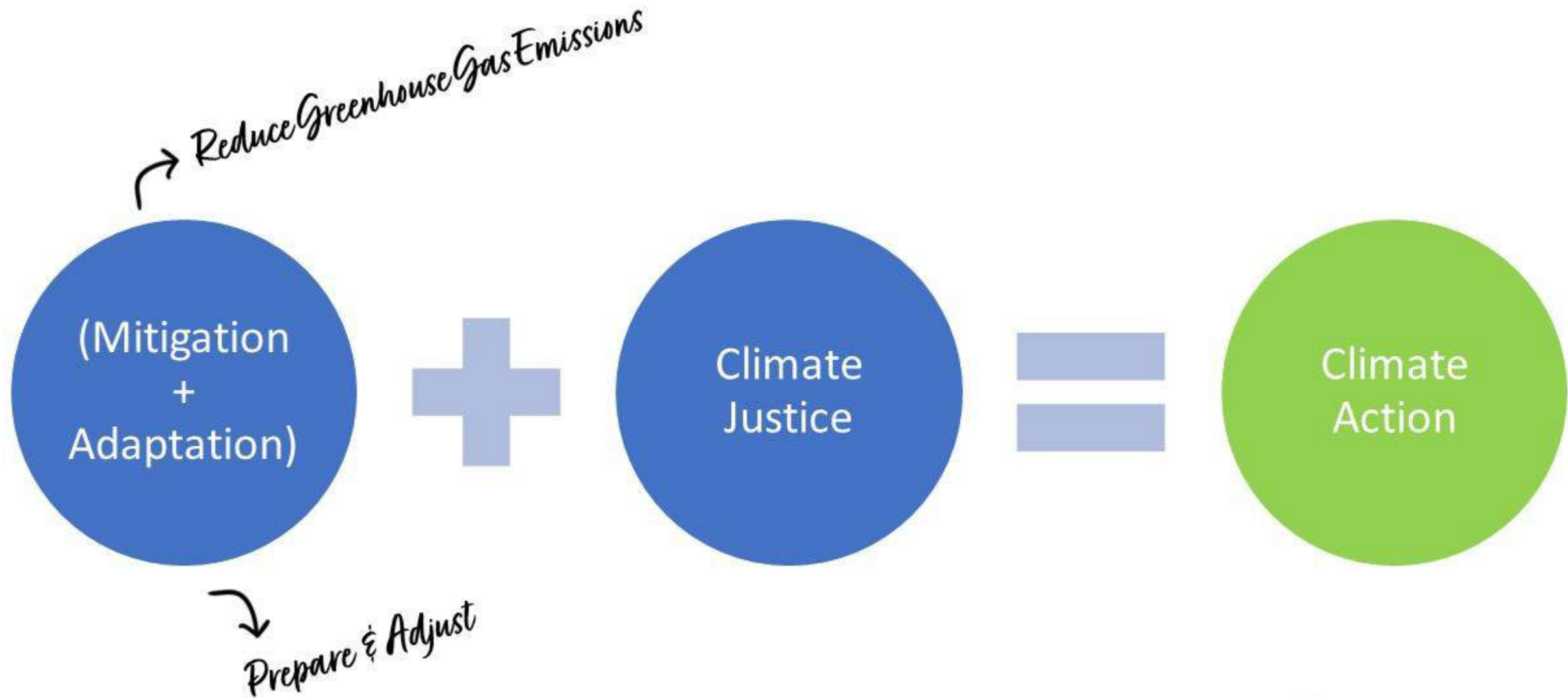


**Sustainable
Libraries
Initiative**

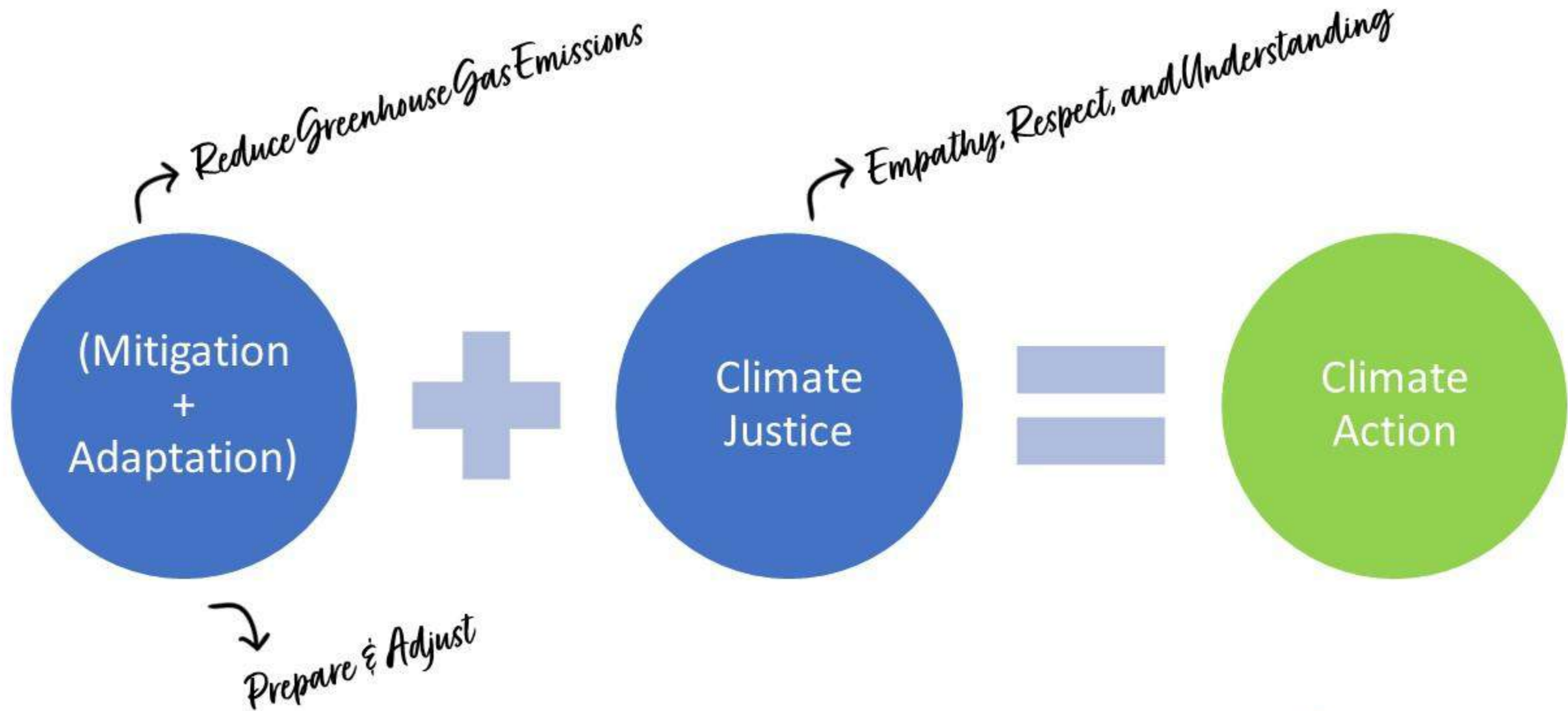
→ Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions



**Sustainable
Libraries
Initiative**



**Sustainable
Libraries
Initiative**



**Sustainable
Libraries
Initiative**

The Strategy



**Sustainable
Libraries
Initiative**

An Introduction

The Strategy

● Climate Change Mitigation

Libraries align greenhouse gas emission reduction goals with those that international climate scientists and policy makers have indicated are necessary to prevent catastrophic cascading effects. This strategy recommends a goal for all libraries to reduce their institution's greenhouse gas emissions by 43%, from 2015 levels, by 2030 and to achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050¹.

● Climate Change Adaptation & Contributions Community Resilience

Libraries adopt both internal disaster preparedness plans and strategic goals that speak to the most likely climate hazards facing their area to contribute to their community's resilience.

● Climate Justice Work

Libraries harness the transformative power of education for climate justice and develop relationships with local community organizations working on climate justice to embed a deeper awareness of the intersection of human and civil rights with climate stewardship than is presently found².

ALA
American
Library
Association

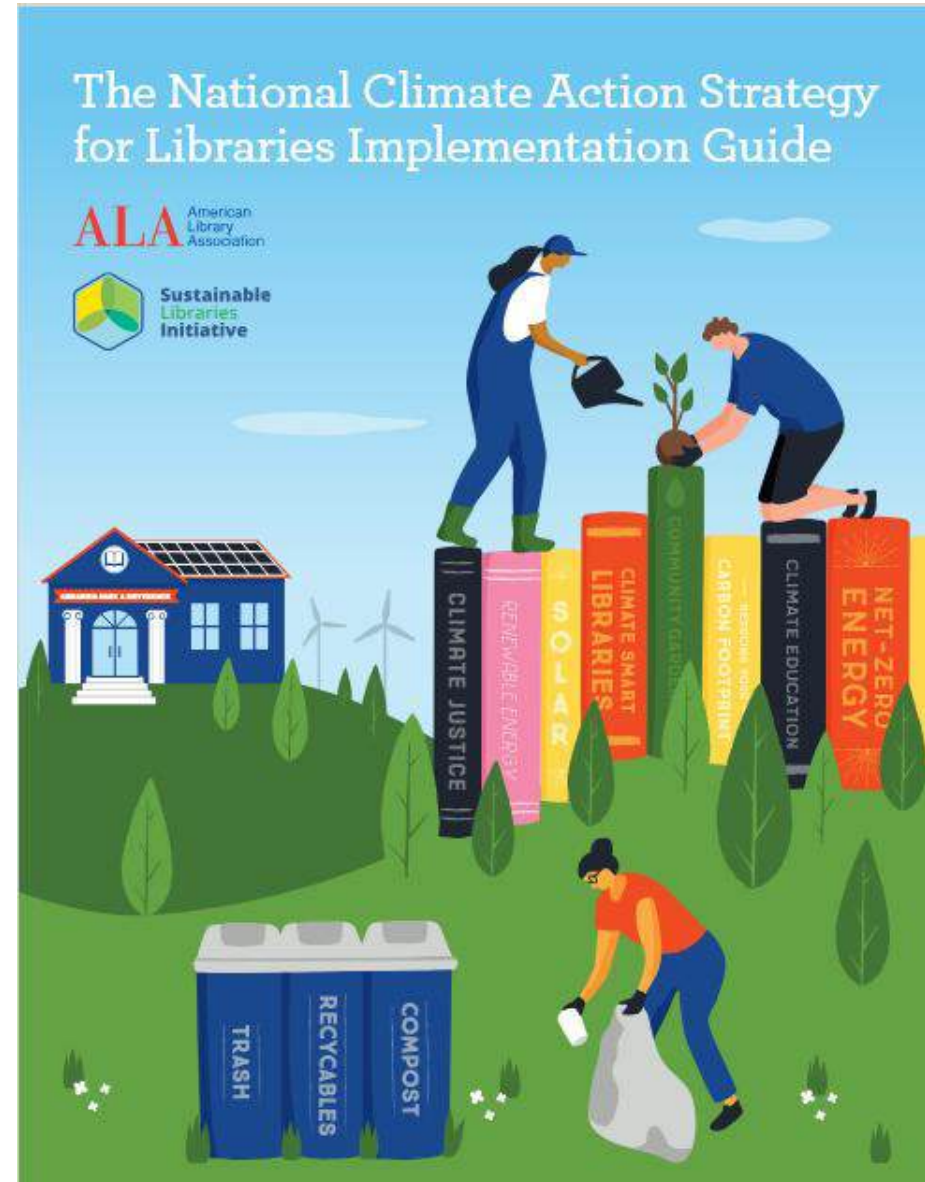


LIBRARIES HAVE A DIFFERENCE



Climate Change Mitigation

The Strategy: Simplified



Example Actions



- Energy Audit
- Staff Education
- Energy Conservation through Building Envelope Assets
- Switch to Renewable Energy
- Planting Trees for Shade
- Plant Native Species
- Support Public Transportation
- Electric Vehicles (EV)
- EV Charging Infrastructure
- Ethical Carbon Offsets for Conference Travel
- Prioritize Purchasing From Local Businesses
- Buy/Throw Away Less Stuff

For a deeper dive: [WebJunction-SLI: Resources and Webinars for Climate Action Series](#)

Scale Up

Lead “from the inside out”

Library → Patrons → Community

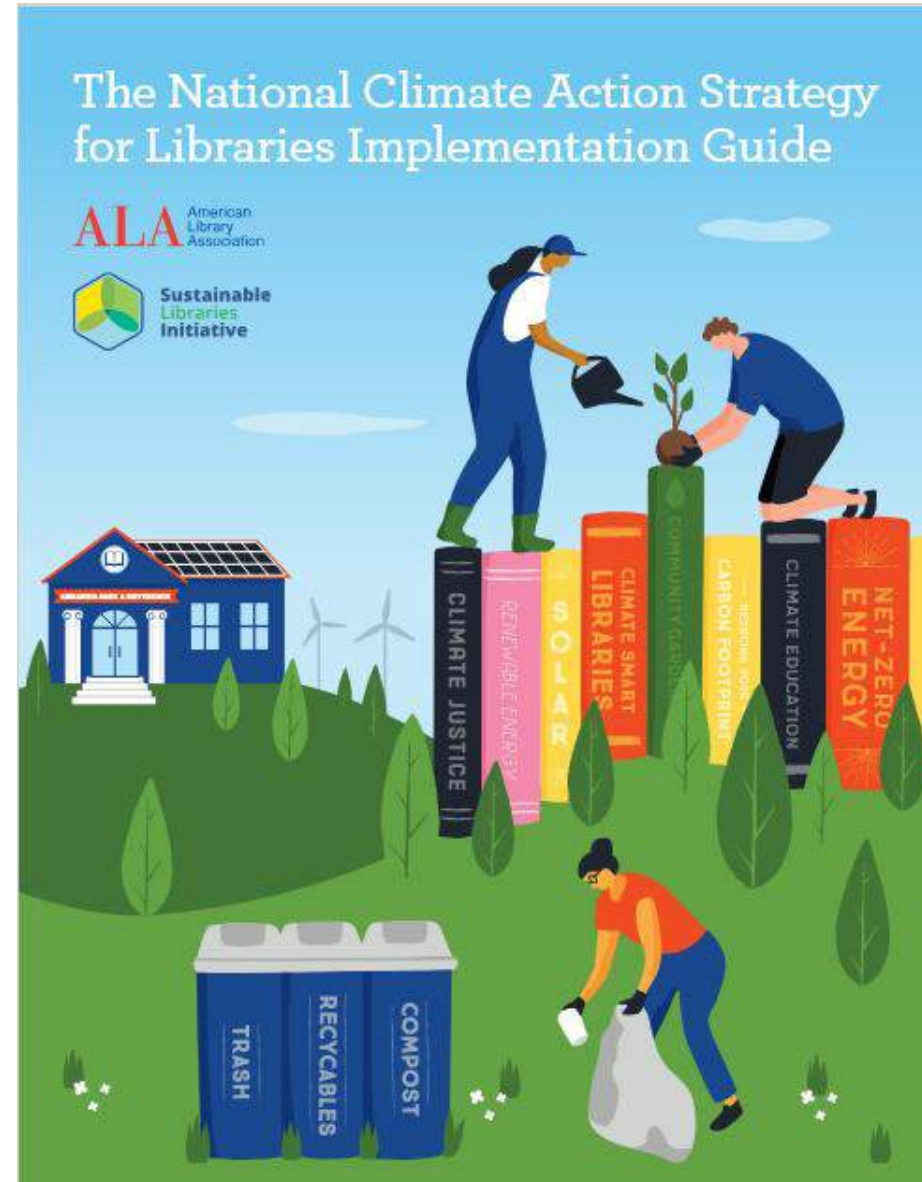


**Sustainable
Libraries
Initiative**



Adaptation & Community Resilience

The Strategy: Simplified

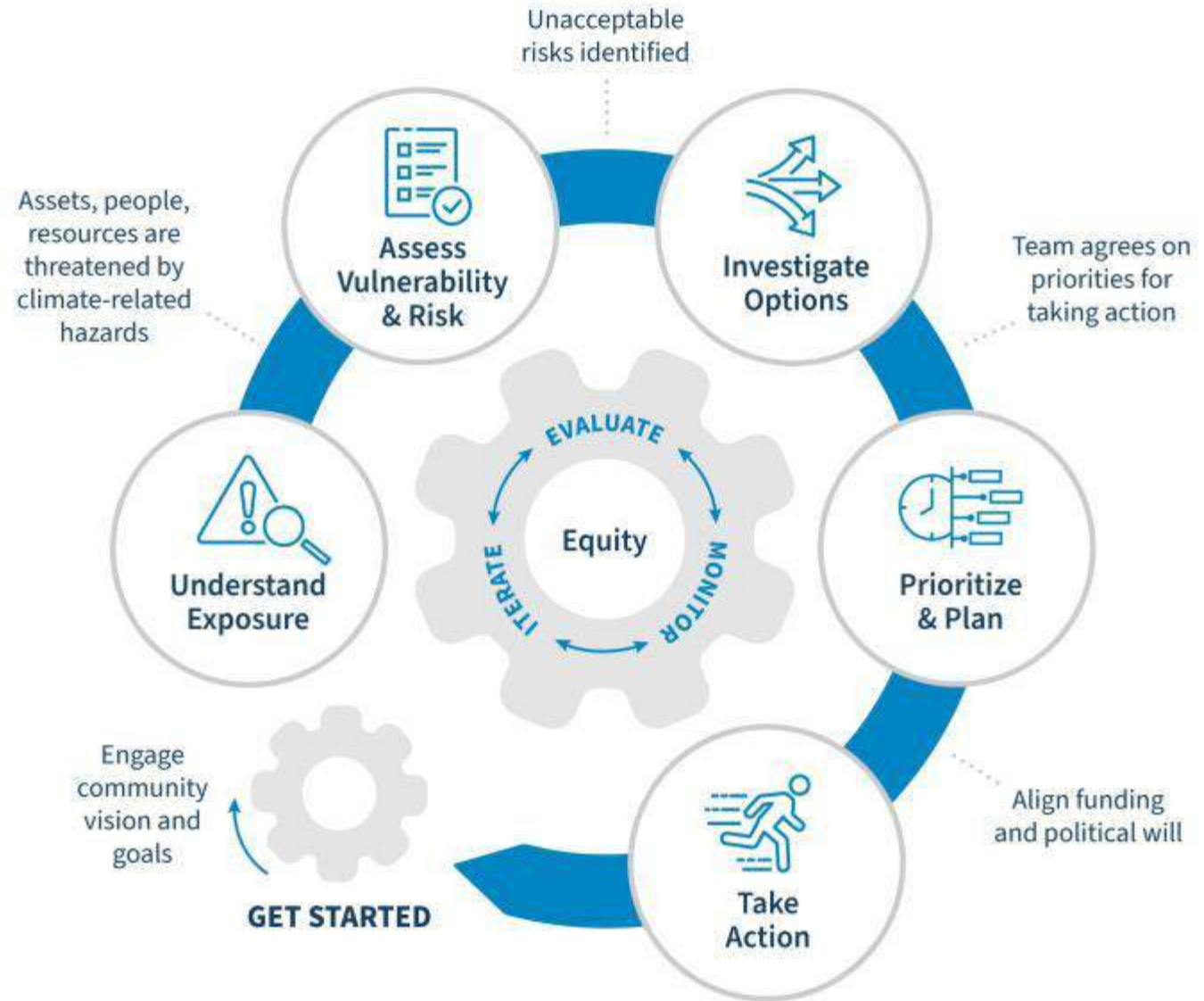




U.S. Climate Resilience Toolkit

<https://toolkit.climate.gov/>

The Steps to Resilience



Example: Extreme Heat

- Raising Awareness
- Green Infrastructure to Reduce Urban Heat Island Hot-Spots
- Retrofitting Public Buildings
- Establishment of Cooling Centers
- Air Quality Warning System



Hurley Library Purple Air Install



Kingston Public Library Purple Air Install

Bard College

CENTER FOR
ENVIRONMENTAL
SCIENCES AND
HUMANITIES



15 public libraries
in the Hudson Valley, NY

Example Actions

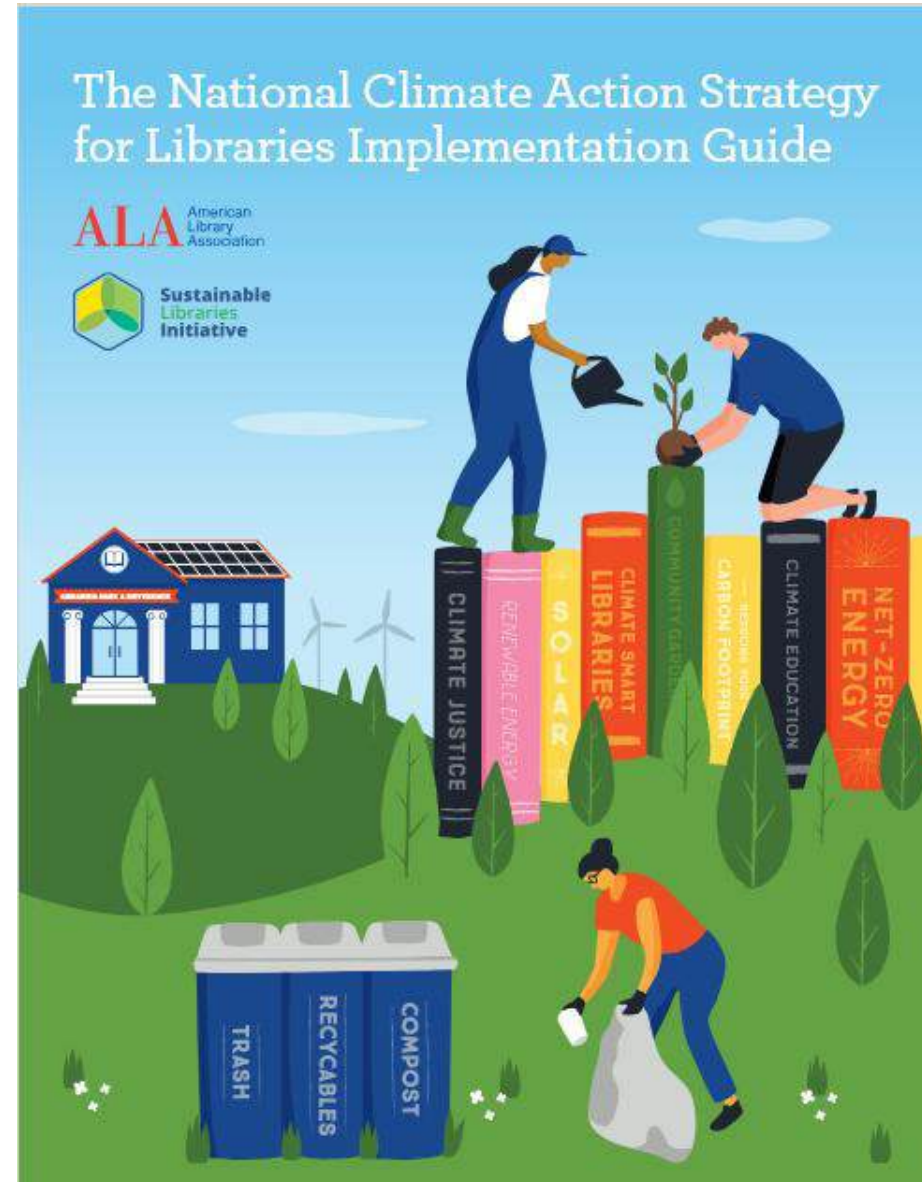


- Disaster Preparedness Plan for the Library
- Continuity of Operations Plan for the Library
- Preparedness Training for Staff to Use at Home
- Participation in / hosting of community-based preparedness training
- Enhance air filtration in the facility
- Participate in air quality monitoring
- Installation of a whole-building generator
- Install solar with battery backup
- Host a community garden
- Participation in National Preparedness Month (September)
- Become Designated as a Climate Resilience Hub [https://www.climatecrew.org]
- Add items to the Library of Things to aid in the aftermath of a disaster

For a deeper dive: [WebJunction-SLI: Resources and Webinars for Climate Action Series](#)

Climate Justice

The Strategy: Simplified



Climate Justice Defined

What is it?

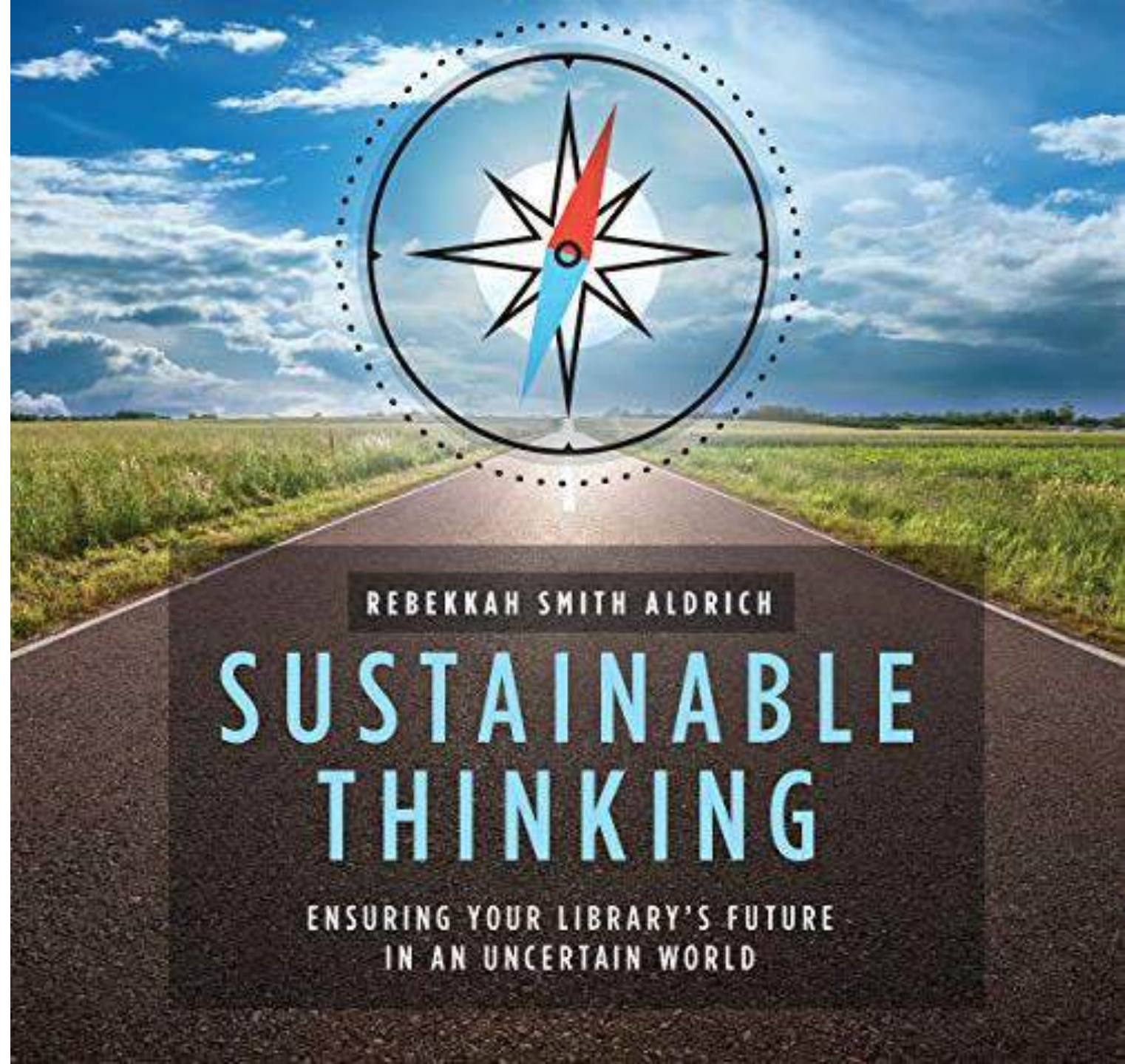
Climate justice occurs when resources are deployed to address the climate crisis in a way that **protects vulnerable communities.**

How libraries help:

- Live Our Values Out Loud
- Inclusive Education
- Promote Individual Efforts
Toward Sustainability
- Be “at the table” to help
represent the underrepresented

Libraries as Catalysts

- Local Supports Local
- Working Together
- Focus on Diversity
- Help All Be Heard



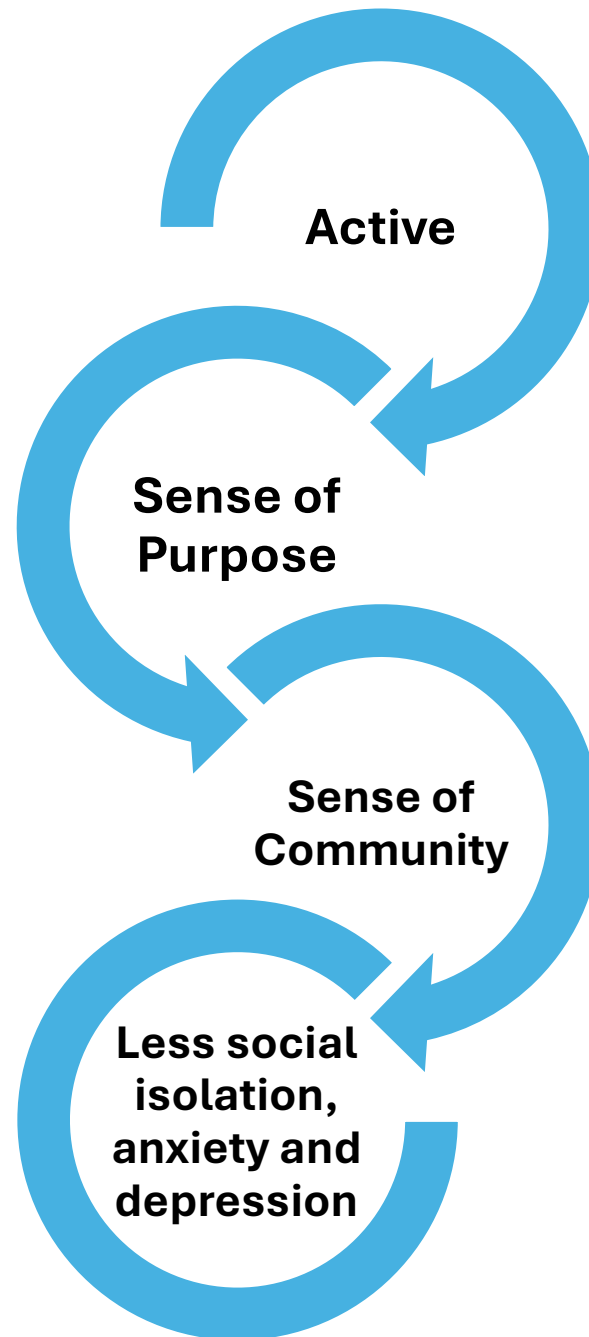
Social Cohesion & Civic Participation

Social Cohesion:

Respect, Empathy, and Understanding
Strength of Relationships
Sense of Solidarity
Social Capital through Social Networks

Civic Participation:

Voting
Volunteering
Participating in Group Activities
Community Gardening

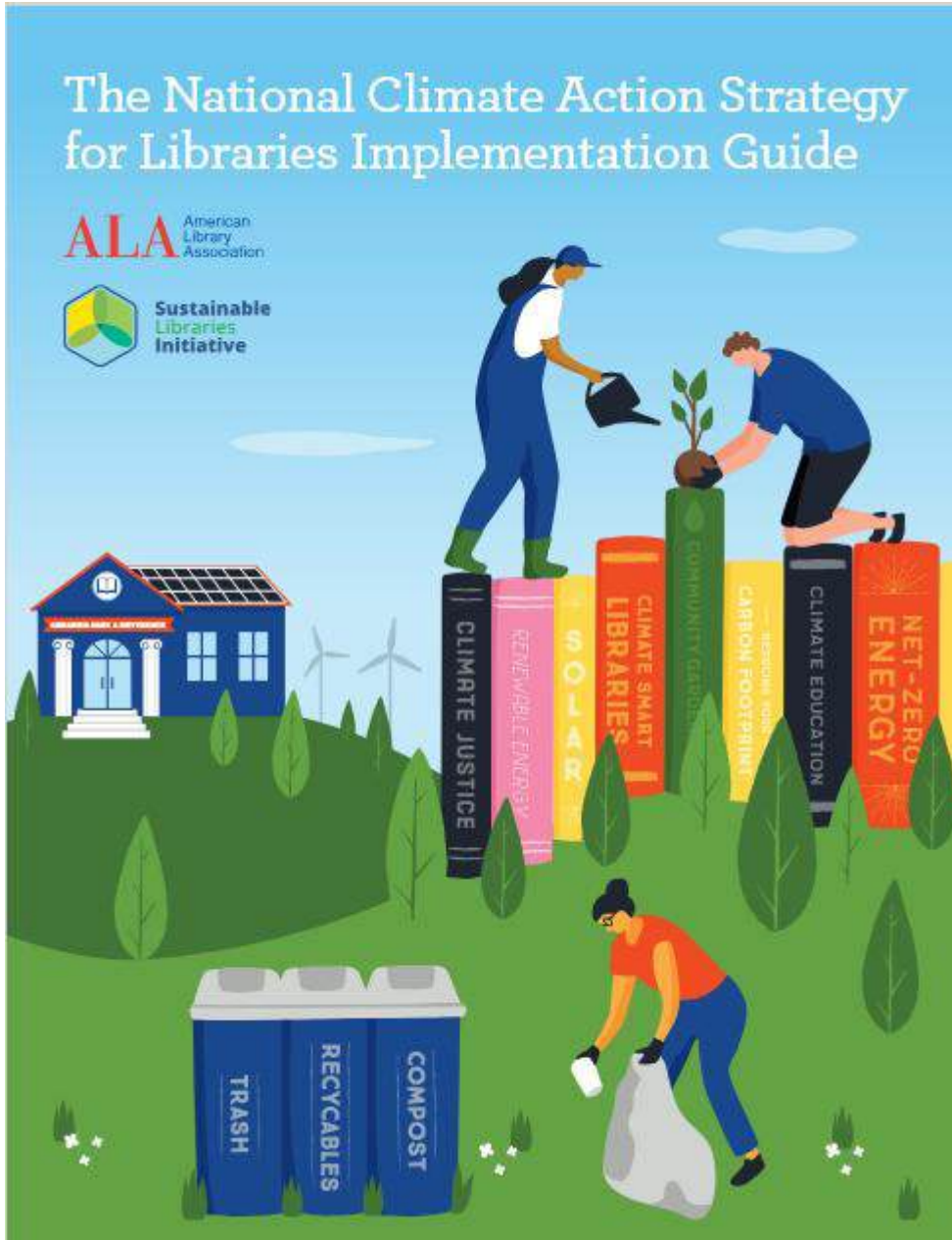


Example Actions



- Participatory/Citizen Science Programs
- Partnerships with local farmers, businesses, restaurants, artists, and nonprofits
- Programs highlighting topics related to local ecological issues
- Food Security programs/services
- Community service activities
- Programs highlighting local indigenous knowledge as it applies to climate action
- Prioritize Open Access to Scientific Research
- Voter Registration Drives
- Eliminate the Digital Divide
- Repair Café events

For a deeper dive: [WebJunction-SLI: Resources and Webinars for Climate Action Series](#)

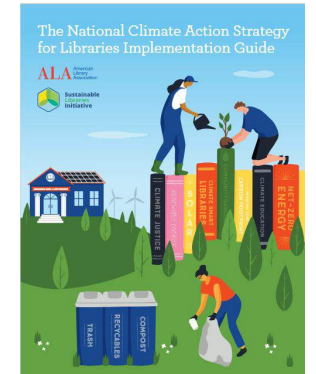


Simple Ways to Get Started

- Talking about Climate Smart Libraries
- What is your Library Already Doing?
- Look Around Before You Act
- Be Deliberate in Future Goal Setting

Talking Points

- Libraries are **non-partisan**. Libraries are for everyone.
- Everyone wants a **better future for the children** of our community and right now, climate change is predicted to harm the health of every child alive today.
- Everyone deserves a **healthy place to live** that is free from air pollution, provides access to clean water, and healthy foods.
- We all want to help **keep our families and neighbors safe** in the face of severe weather.
- It is to everyone's benefit to **support local businesses** to ensure strong economic opportunities at home.





**Building
Resilient
Communities**



Exploring how libraries and community-based organizations can work together to mitigate environmental and health-related concerns due to climate change

How A Health Narrative Can Enhance Communication Of Six Key Truths About Climate Change With Diverse Audiences

John E. Kotcher, PhD
Center for Climate Change Communication
George Mason University

Abstract

Climate change and the burning of fossil fuels represent a tremendous risk to public health. Effective communication is key to helping our society respond to this risk and protect our communities. This report addresses three key components of effective climate change communication: 1) It reviews six evidence-based messages about climate change that research shows can improve public engagement in a variety of ways; 2) It discusses the value of audience segmentation for targeting those messages to different parts of the population and selecting appropriate messengers; 3) It describes how framing these messages in terms of their relevance

-
- **It's Real**
 - **It's Us**
 - **Experts Agree**
 - **It's Bad**
 - **Others Care**
 - **There's Hope**

Rebekkah Smith Aldrich, MLS, LEED AP, cSBA

rsmith@midhudson.org | @Rebekkah  

Executive Director, **Mid-Hudson Library System** (NY)

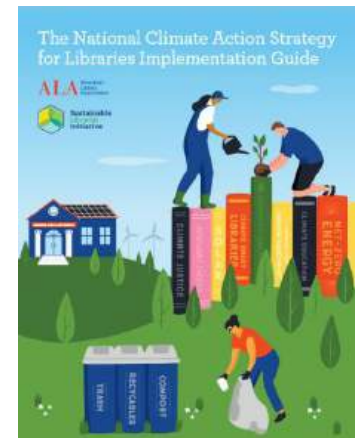
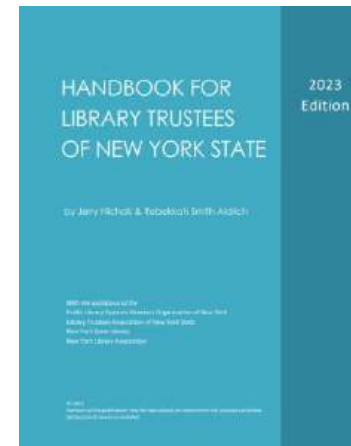
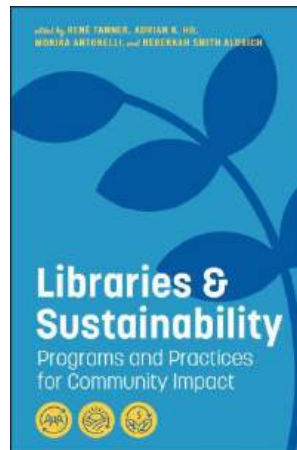
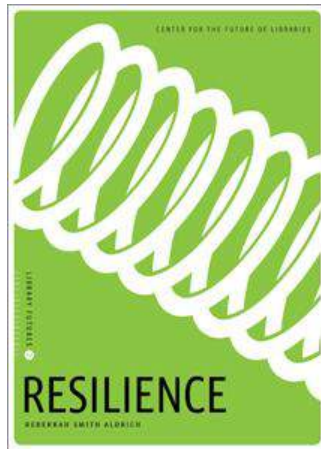
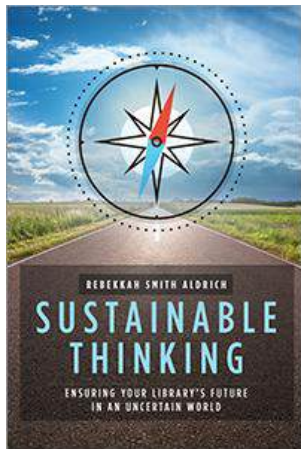
Co-Founder & Board President, **Sustainable Libraries Initiative**

Principal Author, **National Climate Action Strategy for Libraries**

Sustainability Columnist, **Library Journal**

Thank You

Author:



The National Climate Action Strategy for Libraries Implementation Guide



**Sustainable
Libraries
Initiative**





Executive Summary	1
The Strategy	2
Simple Ways to Get Started	6
Introduction	6
Talking about Climate Smart Libraries	6
What is Your Library Already Doing?	7
Look Around Before You Act	8
Be Deliberate in Future Goal Setting	8
Conclusion	12
Appendices	13
Core Concepts	13
Resources	16
References	17
Acknowledgements	18

“Every job is a climate job...”

JAMIE BECK ALEXANDER

Founding Director, Drawdown Labs

The Sustainable Libraries Initiative (SLI) and the American Library Association (ALA) have teamed up to develop a National Climate Action Strategy for Libraries (NCASL).

The NCASL builds on the work of both organizations, which, in 2019, resulted in Sustainability being adopted as a Core Value of the Profession in response to the undeniable impacts of climate change on our world. “Every job is a climate job,” a phrase coined by [Drawdown Labs](#) Director, Jamie Beck Alexander, asks us to recognize our influence in our role, industry, or the level we serve at in an allied organization. We believe that all library workers, trustees, Friends groups, and support organizations are library leaders, and have a sphere of influence over their workplace or through their service to libraries. The choices we make must be

leveraged to not only ensure that our libraries are thriving into the future but are also contributing to co-creating communities that are sustainable, resilient, and regenerative. To this end, the NCASL provides clear direction on where emphasis is necessary to move beyond good intentions to meaningful impacts, focusing on three areas: climate mitigation (reduction of greenhouse gas emissions); climate adaptation (helping people, institutions, and communities thrive in the face of climate change); and an overarching dedication to climate justice (increasing the empathy, respect, and understanding we have of all community members). This document outlines the strategy, followed by advice and resources, to aid libraries of all types - public, academic, school, consortia, and special libraries - in their tactical implementation of this strategy.

The Strategy

● Climate Change Mitigation

Libraries align greenhouse gas emission reduction goals with those that international climate scientists and policy makers have indicated are necessary to prevent catastrophic cascading effects. This strategy recommends a goal for all libraries to reduce their institution's greenhouse gas emissions by 43%, from 2015 levels, by 2030 and to achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050¹.

● Climate Change Adaptation & Contributions Community Resilience

Libraries adopt both internal disaster preparedness plans and strategic goals that speak to the most likely climate hazards facing their area to contribute to their community's resilience.

● Climate Justice Work

Libraries harness the transformative power of education for climate justice and develop relationships with local community organizations working on climate justice to embed a deeper awareness of the intersection of human and civil rights with climate stewardship than is presently found².

¹ Paris Agreement, United Nations, https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/english_paris_agreement.pdf

² Principles of Climate Justice, Mary Robinson Foundation, <https://www.mrfcj.org/principles-of-climate-justice/harness-the-transformative-power-of-education-for-climate-stewardship/>



**Sustainable
Libraries
Initiative**



As we think about the future of our libraries and how we, as library leaders, help to make a difference in the lives of our neighbors, we must confront the realities of climate change.

No corner of the world will be left untouched by climate change. In an editorial published by more than 200 medical journals worldwide in 2021, the authors declared that “the science is unequivocal” that climate change - unchecked - is “the greatest threat to global public health.”³ Pre-dating this call to action, the [2019 report of the Lancet Countdown](#), a widely respected medical publication, noted that “The life of every child born today will be profoundly affected by climate change. Without accelerated intervention, this new era will come to define the health of people at every stage of their lives.”

Also in 2019, the American Library Association (ALA) named [sustainability a core value of the profession](#).⁴ As a core value, sustainability joins the ranks of access, equity, intellectual freedom and privacy, and the public good as key values to focus on as we do our work.⁵ This step was taken to acknowledge that societal efforts to respond to climate change have yet to expand in the manner needed to avoid substantial damage to human health, the environment, and the economy over the coming decades. The organization also acknowledged more than 6,000 scientific studies that found that the immediate consequences of climate change are far more dire than originally predicted, calling for the transformation of the world economy at a speed and scale that has “no documented historic precedent.”

The science persists despite politics.

In the United States, there has been a long history of denial and politicizing global warming and climate change. However, research shows we have reached a tipping point, with a super-majority of Americans believing in climate change and the need to act to mitigate climate change.⁶

While in the past, we had watched the policy-makers of the world struggle to reach consensus on what action to take due to the politicization of this topic, the science does not lie, and global consensus has been reached. Urgent, rapid action is called for and everyone must help. Lives are at stake and those lives are some of the most vulnerable in our communities.

In the face of such serious predictions, we are all called upon to do what we can from our personal and professional sphere of influence, and to act with urgency.

There is hope.

The Fifth [National Climate Assessment](#) (2023), the major cross-agency report periodically issued by the United States federal government, indicates there is hope, albeit uneven, to be found in recent

³ [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(21\)01915-2/fulltext#%20](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(21)01915-2/fulltext#%20)

⁴ <https://www.ala.org/news/2012/01/ala-adding-sustainability-core-value-librarianship>

⁵ <https://www.ala.org/advocacy/advocacy/intfreedom/corevalues>

⁶ <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2023/08/09/what-the-data-says-about-americans-views-of-climate-change/>

actions. Carbon emissions have slowed in some sectors but have grown in others, indicating that change is possible. The Assessment synthesizes the need to mitigate carbon emissions and adapt in the face of climate change simultaneously, noting that harmful impacts from more frequent and severe extremes are increasing across the country—including “increases in heat-related illnesses and death, costlier storm damages, longer droughts that reduce agricultural productivity and strain water systems, and larger, more severe wildfires that threaten homes and degrade air quality.” This most recent Assessment makes it clear that urgent action is still necessary and a refreshed call to action to mobilize ourselves with intentional focus has never been more critical.

Why Libraries?

Our mission as educators and community connectors calls upon us to create physical and online spaces to enable our patrons to access the information, technology, and human connection necessary to understand the world around them.

We serve as catalysts and conveners, connecting our patrons with the resources they need - through curating collections, programs, and experiences to help our patrons make sense of what they are confronted with in life and empower them to work together to make the world a better place. Sometimes at the micro level - a student's success in the classroom; sometimes on a larger scale - partnering with faculty to broaden the research on an area of the human existence to accelerate understanding; and sometimes on a macro level - working with others across a community, campus or school to ensure strategic priorities to address community aspirations are achieved.

Now we need to work collectively at a global level. To take responsibility as global citizens,



Yocum Primary School Library,
Arkansas



from our professional standpoint, to participate in addressing the grandest challenge of our generation, to join forces with our colleagues and neighbors both local and global, to forge a path forward that respects each other and our planet's ability to support human life.

This is nothing new - from a long history of literacy services and academic support for folks of all ages, to modern efforts to defend the right of every person to access the information, education, and technology necessary to be civically and culturally engaged - libraries provide a gateway to the wider world.

Libraries can make a difference

There has been a growing awareness in the library community of the need to think differently about the role libraries can play in the face of the present and predicted impacts of climate change.

An increasing number of libraries are prioritizing the role of “second responders,” serving as cooling centers in times of extreme heat and providing crucial and lifesaving information for shelter and

other recovery resources for the community in the aftermath of severe weather events. Libraries are taking a more active role in sharing information about disaster preparedness and how to help our neighbors in the aftermath of severe weather events. Libraries are scaling up their core service model to share resources responsibly beyond traditional formats, expanding to seed libraries, The Library of Things, transportation solutions, and open access delivery models.

In addition, we can see the increased dedication to living our values out loud. More and more library facilities are prioritizing energy efficiency, renewable energy, green cleaning, recycling, indoor air quality, and green spaces. More libraries are addressing fair compensation for library workers, ensuring their health and well-being, and expanding policies to recognize the diversity of their lived experiences.

Libraries are located in nearly every town, K-12 school, and higher education campus across the county. The sheer number of institutions, library workers, library trustees, and support organizations devoted to the mission of libraries makes us a force for good. Our goal is to harness our powerful footprint in this country to not just further the

The time has come to greatly accelerate our efforts with deliberate and focused action to truly make the difference we need to see in the world at this moment.

educational goals of our patrons but to be full community partners in addressing the grandest challenge of our times: climate change. For without healthy places for folks to live, love, and learn, the thriving communities we all count on will erode.

But the time has come to greatly accelerate our efforts with deliberate and focused action to truly make the difference we need to see in the world at this moment. To this end, libraries will need to join the world in focusing on the three key areas of work outlined in this strategy.



Grand County Public Library, Utah



Disaster Preparedness Program



Haverstraw King's Daughters Public Library, New York



The Haverstraw Library received the National Disability Employment Awareness Award of Recognition for inclusive hiring practices and for developing a diverse workplace in Rockland County.

Simple Ways to Get Started

Introduction

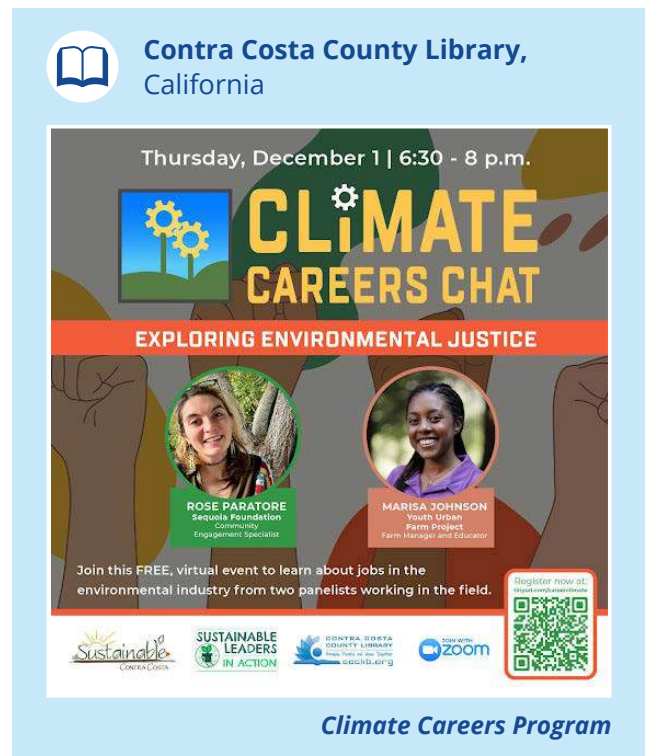
Turning this strategy into practical actions a library can take will require collaboration, planning, research, goal-setting, implementation, evaluation, and iteration.

Libraries of all types and sizes are already doing work that aligns with this strategy, therefore moving forward will not be from a “cold start,” but will take shape by building on the good work already in motion within their library and in their community with intense strategic focus, transparency, and a keen eye towards partnerships that will supercharge collective impact.

This is also an exercise in public relations. Libraries should integrate public talking points related to this strategic focus routinely, speaking loudly and proudly about their efforts. By our very nature we exemplify a sharing economy and serve as catalysts for good work in our communities. By speaking about our work in the context of climate smart libraries we will aid in positioning libraries as aware leaders as well as catalysts for climate mitigation, adaptation, and justice work. This can result in attracting new funds, identifying partners, and attracting good will from the various stakeholders who also care about the future of their community.

1 Talking About Climate Smart Libraries

In a national study conducted by the National Climate Action Strategy Working Group, a partnership between the Sustainable Libraries Initiative and the American Library Association, there were a notable number of respondents who expressed concern that working on “climate action” was too political for their libraries and could jeopardize their standing in the community if the library is perceived as being partisan.



Here are some important key talking points to help your library move forward with confidence in this work:

- Libraries are non-partisan. Full stop. Our mission is to help all in our communities, in our schools, and on our campuses, regardless of political affiliation. Libraries are for everyone.
- Everyone wants a better future for the children of your community and right now, climate change is predicted to harm the health of every child alive today.
- Everyone deserves a healthy place to live that is free from air pollution, provides access to clean water, and healthy foods.
- We all want to help keep our families and neighbors safe in the face of severe weather.
- It is to everyone's benefit to support local businesses to ensure strong economic opportunities at home.

- No one government agency or nonprofit can address these issues alone; we must join forces to address the scale and scope of what is happening.

Everyone benefits when we reduce air pollution, ensure access to clean drinking water and healthy foods. As of 2023, Americans who think global warming is happening outnumber those who think it is not happening by a ratio of nearly 5 to 1 (72% versus 15%). Sixty-three percent (63%) of Americans say they feel a personal sense of responsibility to help reduce global warming.⁷ A super majority of registered voters, across political party affiliations, support public policy that will help address the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.



Hunterdon County Library System, New Jersey



HCLS used a grant to build out the library's Wi-Fi park and extend it to multiple locations; created a solar-powered device charging canopy; conduct regular community resilience programming; and are focused on staff preparedness in the face of a disaster.

- 85% support federal funding to help farmers improve practices to protect and restore the soil so it absorbs and stores more carbon.
- 72% support tax rebates to people who purchase energy-efficient vehicles or solar panels.
- 71% support tax credits or rebates to encourage people to buy electric appliances, such as heat pumps and induction stoves, that run on electricity instead of oil or gas.⁸

We recognize there are libraries in areas of the United States that are contending with elected officials who are in denial about the need to act. This cannot be ignored. A strong focus on the economic return on investment of choices that are good for the planet and good for people is a strong tactic in these situations. Most elected officials would be in favor of operational choices that control costs - the shift to renewable energy can greatly reduce the cost of electricity and heating/cooling a facility. Responsible use of resources such as office supplies and upcycling program supplies can reduce annual costs. Healthy indoor air quality of facilities has been shown to reduce absenteeism for workers and increase student performance.^{9 10}

As with all advocacy work, framing our messaging to our audience is key.

2 What Is Your Library Already Doing?

Chances are, your library is not starting from scratch. Take some time to acknowledge the good work already happening in the three areas of this strategy.

• How has your library already worked to reduce its carbon footprint?

For example, has your library worked to reduce energy consumption through an energy audit,

⁷ <https://climatecommunication.yale.edu/publications/climate-change-in-the-american-mind-beliefs-attitudes-fall-2023/toc/2/>

⁸ <https://climatecommunication.yale.edu/publications/climate-change-in-the-american-mind-politics-policy-fall-2023/toc/3/>

⁹ <https://www.epa.gov/iaq-schools/indoor-air-quality-high-performance-schools#how>

¹⁰ <https://www.epa.gov/iaq-schools/evidence-scientific-literature-about-improved-academic-performance>

tightening up the building envelope, or switching to renewable energy? If your library doesn't control its own space, has your library worked to reduce the amount of "stuff" it purchases (i.e. office supplies, program materials) or made operational choices to decrease transportation costs for people and things to the library?

- **How has your library prepared for your community's most likely climate hazards?**

For example, does your library have a [disaster preparedness plan](#)? A [Continuity of Operations Plan](#)? Has your library hosted events related to National Preparedness Month for your staff and patrons?

- **How has your library contributed to increasing neighbors' empathy, respect, and understanding of one another?**

For example, has your library participated in National Kindness Day? Celebrated the cultural holidays of a minority group in your community? Hosted community service projects that help neighbors work together on a common project to make their community a better place?



Valencia College Libraries,
Florida



Community Engagement

The library buildings, across all campuses, are a collection point for VCentials, the campus food bank.

Libraries can utilize the three-part strategy to design strategic goals and annual action plans:

Climate Change Mitigation, Climate Change Adaptation, Climate Justice Work.

3 Look Around Before You Act

It will save time and energy to first see what work has already been done on this topic in a community, on a campus, or in a school district. Obtaining regional/local climate action/adaptation or sustainability plans can help accelerate the work. Identifying who is doing what in the community, through a community asset mapping exercise, can also accelerate work by aligning with partners who may have already started down a needed path or who want to work together for collective impact.

Your library is not the only institution thinking about this issue.

4 Be Deliberate in Future Goal Setting

Libraries can utilize the three-part strategy to design strategic goals and annual action plans:

- **Climate Change Mitigation**
- **Climate Change Adaptation**
- **Climate Justice Work**

Climate Change Mitigation

- Learn more about how you can impact your library's carbon footprint through the Environmental Protection Agency's "Scope 1 and Scope 2 Inventory Guidance": <https://www.epa.gov/climateleadership/scope-1-and-scope-2-inventory-guidance>
- Benchmark current greenhouse gas emissions and identify reduction opportunities within the sphere of influence of the library's administration and governance body. Benchmarking can be conducted using tools such as The Sustainable Libraries Initiative's CO2 Emissions Calculator, the Corporate GHG Inventorying and Target Setting Self-Assessment and Portfolio Manager from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.
- Once you have itemized your library's current emissions, you can set your goal and determine what solutions may help your library achieve a goal of net-zero greenhouse gas emissions. Solutions to reach net-zero greenhouse gas emission likely requires work in three primary areas that most library leaders can influence:



Lincoln Heritage Public Library,
Chrisney Branch, Indiana



The Chrisney Branch Library of the Lincoln Heritage Public Library was the first net-zero energy public library in Indiana, producing all electricity needed on site by combining a building envelope designed to conserve energy with renewable energy sources: solar and geothermal. The building is co-located with the elementary school's outdoor nature lab.

Transportation is the largest source of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in the U.S.¹¹

1. Energy used in facilities

- Conservation: how can you minimize the need for energy in the facility? Simple things such as optimizing technology energy settings, shutting off lights when not needed, and mandating the purchase of ENERGY STAR® rated products help achieve reductions. Larger ticket items can include designing spaces to maximize the use of daylighting and implementing passive design to minimize the need for mechanical heating/cooling of library spaces.
- Source: where does the energy come from to electrify, heat, and cool your facility? What are your options for switching to renewable energy sources to decarbonize the energy source? How are the data centers that provide your online services powered? Prioritize working with companies working to offset their carbon emissions to deliver online library services.

2. Transportation is the largest source of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in the U.S.¹¹

- Consider your library's spheres of influence over the following categories of transportation:
 - Employee commuting
 - Delivery of goods and services
 - Conference/off site meetings travel
- Easy wins: Promote opportunities for the use of public transportation; install a bike rack and lend bike locks; order in bulk or combine

¹¹ <https://www.epa.gov/greenvehicles/why-we-need-decarbonize-transportation>

orders to cut down on transportation of goods and supplies; work with local businesses; and consider if travel has to occur or if online meetings can get the job done.

3. Waste Streams

- The manufacture, distribution, and use of products – as well as management of the resulting waste – all result in emission of greenhouse gasses.
- Measure your library's contributions to the waste stream by conducting a waste audit ([Library Waste Audit](#) on the Sustainable Libraries Initiative [website](#))
- Train staff using The Zero Waste Hierarchy 8.0 to reduce a library's contributions to the waste stream.
- Easy wins: double sided printing; digitization of forms; reusable hospitality items (e.g. cups, plates, utensils); compost food waste to use on site or share with a garden club; check out the ALA Sustainability Round Table's [Sustainable Swag Rubric](#).



Winthrop Public Library,
Washington



The Winthrop Public Library prioritized being a place of refuge from wildfire smoke when designing its new facility. The HVAC system is a split heat pump for conditioning and an energy recovery ventilator (ERV) with a MERV filter for balanced ventilation. The ERV balances fresh air intake with stale air exhaust; it also maintains a humidity level in the building, for occupant comfort. The building employs destratification fans to keep hot air from pooling up high at the ridge.

Climate Change Adaptation

- Learn more about the most likely climate hazards for your region through the [U.S. Climate Resilience Toolkit](#) and their [Climate Mapping for Resilience & Adaptation](#) tool.
- Understand exposure: Identify assets, people, and resources threatened by climate-related hazards.
- Assess vulnerability and risk: Not all hazards are equally likely. Check your library's and community's adaptive capacity and estimate the probability of a hazard. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)'s [National Risk Index](#) is a dataset and online tool to help illustrate the United States communities most at risk for [18 natural hazards](#).

“Disasters begin
and end in the
neighborhood and
building resilience
starts there
with community
empowerment...”

MICHELE STRICKER

Deputy State Librarian, New Jersey State Library

- Investigate options: Has this happened before in the community? Have other communities dealt with something similar? If money were no object, what would you do? What steps could improve resilience without spending any money? Is there a partial solution that you could

implement now and complement with further action at a later time? Explore case studies to see how people are building community resilience through the U.S. Climate Resilience Toolkit's [Case Study collection](#).

- **Prioritize and plan:** What are the top three things that would increase the resilience of your library in the face of identified climate hazards? What are the top three things that your library can influence that would increase your community's resilience in the face of identified climate hazards? What can you implement with existing resources? Who is working on similar things in the community already? Can you partner with them?

- Join your local [Voluntary Organization Active in Disaster \(VOAD\)](#) chapter.

- **Take Action:** Implement. Monitor. Iterate.
Share your story!

Climate Justice Work

Climate change has a multiplier effect on societal, environmental, and economic injustices. It amplifies the long-standing marginalization of various segments of our society and disproportionately impacts those who have the least to do with causing climate change. Climate Justice acknowledges disadvantaged communities that have experienced the most damage from climate change, and addresses their particular needs.

Climate justice is an enormously complicated topic that touches on all aspects of our lives, in particular the disproportionate effect of economic transition and severe weather on marginalized communities. Many frameworks have been created to help us wrap our minds around the holistic nature of climate justice and how to approach making inroads to a more just situation. While this is a broad and, at times, complex aspect of being a climate-smart library, at its core, it is very simple: increasing the empathy, respect, and understanding we have for one another to better work together

Prioritize cultivating empathy, respect, and understanding within your community as a strategic goal.

and ensure all in our communities are considered as solutions and plans are developed.

To get started

- Learn more about Climate Justice by reviewing the University of California's [Center for Climate Justice's](#) "six pillars" for understanding climate justice:

- Just Transition
- Social, Racial, and Environmental Justice
- Indigenous Climate Action
- Community Resilience and Adaptation
- Natural Climate Solutions
- Climate Education and Engagement

- Assess who is most vulnerable to the climate hazards in your service area and ensure the library's climate adaptation planning considers them.

- Prioritize cultivating empathy, respect, and understanding within your community as a strategic goal.

- Host or participate in community service projects that help generate a sense of purpose and community for volunteers.

- If your facility is open to the public, ensure it is listed as a cooling and heating shelter.

- Participate in addressing food insecurity in your community.

- Become a Climate Resilience Hub to help educate community-members about severe weather preparedness and how they can empower themselves by connecting with material assistance: https://www.climatecrew.org/resilience_hubs

“Start where you are.
Use what you have.
Do what you can.”

ARTHUR ASHE

(and George Washington Carver and Teddy Roosevelt...)



Core Concepts

Sustainability

Climate change is not just an environmental issue. It is closely tied to our economic choices and has deep roots in equity, diversity, inclusion, and justice issues. It is a systemic problem that requires solutions that considers the intersection of our everyday decisions.

To this end, the American Library Association and the Sustainable Libraries Initiative have adopted the “triple bottom line” framework to clarify the desired outcome for a word commonly used in many instances. This framework seeks balance at the nexus of environmental stewardship, social equity, and economic feasibility. The framework can be scaled for decisions large and small in library settings, large and small, and for defining the sustainability of an organization, product, or community.



Image source: Sustainable Libraries Initiative

This framework seeks to create a lens through which decisions and evaluation can assist leaders in finding balance among complex issues. For example, leaders face daily challenges in deciding how to responsibly allocate local funds within a global financial system that may not prioritize the environmental well-being of humans and nature.

In addition, the triple bottom line approach encourages library leaders to ensure that a truly sustainable future involves meaningful participation of all community members. Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC), and low-socioeconomic status communities are disproportionately impacted by climate change and environmental harm. However, due to systemic injustices, these communities are less likely to be in positions of power to create structural change or advocate for themselves.¹²

Library leaders can make better decisions today than yesterday, by seeking balance among the issues of environmental stewardship, social equity, and economic feasibility.

● [Read more about the definition of sustainability here.](#)

Climate Action

The combination of both climate change **mitigation** (reduction of greenhouse gas emissions) and climate change **adaptation** (helping people, institutions and communities thrive in the face of climate change) with an overarching dedication to climate **justice** (increasing our empathy, respect, and understanding we have of **all** community members) creates a holistic approach to climate action.



The reality of climate change is that it is already here; we are experiencing the impacts NOW. At the same time, we are being called upon to act NOW to lessen the increasingly dire predicted outcomes of climate change in the future. Unfortunately, we can relate to these dire predictions of future

¹² <https://www.sustain.ucla.edu/equity-diversity-and-inclusion-in-sustainability/>

climate change now because of the inaction of past generations to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Therefore, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, work on disaster preparedness for institutions, and our contributions to community resilience efforts, need to happen on parallel paths with equal urgency.

- [Read more about Disaster Preparedness and Community Resilience here.](#)

While everyone is affected by climate change, its impacts are not evenly distributed. Climate change has a multiplier effect on societal, environmental, and economic injustices.

Climate justice must be present in all thinking related to climate change mitigation and adaptation. While everyone is affected by climate change, its impacts are not evenly distributed. Climate change has a multiplier effect on societal, environmental, and economic injustices. It amplifies the long-standing marginalization of various segments of our society and disproportionately impacts those who had the least to do with causing climate change.

Taking actions that may focus primarily on environmental gains to mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change without understanding the systemic impact on human health, livelihoods,

and marginalized communities can add us to the list of leaders acting without the best interest of people at the heart of our decisions.

- [Read more about Climate Justice here.](#)

Climate Action Framework

The Climate Action Planning Framework developed to support cities in developing climate action plans aligned with the Paris Agreement's objectives, can easily be translated into use by libraries. The framework has three phases:

1. Commitment & Collaboration

The need for community engagement and communication throughout development and implementation

2. Challenges & Opportunities

Considers the evidence, existing conditions, baseline emissions, emissions trajectory for 2050, and socioeconomic priorities

3. Acceleration & Implementation

Defines the transformational action and implementation plan; identifies processes of monitoring, evaluating, reporting and revising.

Adapting the eight steps within the three [C40](#) phases for libraries can look like this:

- Leadership Buy-In
- Stakeholder and Community Engagement
- Strategy Identification
- Plan Compilation
- Governance (i.e. policy, governance structure, enabling conditions)
- Evidence of Positive Change (i.e. measurement)
- Action Prioritization and Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Justice (EDIJ) Considerations
- Monitoring, Evaluation, and Reporting

Net Zero

As defined by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Net Zero means consuming only as much energy as produced, achieving a sustainable balance between water availability and demand, and eliminating solid waste sent to landfills.

Sustainable Libraries

The Sustainable Libraries Initiative has identified four attributes of “sustainable libraries”:

- **Strong and authentic institutions living their values out loud**

This means a library needs to be sustainable “from the inside out.” Libraries are advised to review their policy, operational, budgetary, personnel, program, service, and partnership design choices using the triple bottom line framework. By building authenticity in our own internal choices, we can be stronger, more reliable allies with like-minded people, agencies, and organizations in our communities.

**Libraries must take
responsibility
for reducing their
carbon footprint
and lead by example
in our communities.**

- **Catalysts for civic participation and social cohesion in communities**

Libraries must make deliberate choices to assume a nonpartisan role in our communities that encourages a participatory democracy and knits a stronger social fabric. Libraries are encouraged to embrace the opportunity to actively educate their constituents about how they can be involved in decision-making matters on a local, national, and global scale, while applying the principles of equity, diversity, and inclusion to ensure justice is

at the heart of decisions made about the future of our communities.

- **Working on climate mitigation (reducing greenhouse gas emissions)**

Libraries must take responsibility for reducing their carbon footprint and lead by example in our communities. Libraries can access various tools to help set carbon reduction goals and deploy strategies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, such as those caused by library facilities, transportation choices, IT infrastructure, and cloud computing. The Strategy Implementation portion of this document contains a selection of resources related to climate change mitigation.

- **Active participants in climate adaptation (strengthening community resilience)**

Libraries can provide valuable assets that help to build community resilience in the face of disruptive events amplified by climate change. Libraries are encouraged to focus not only on disaster preparedness—for example, strategies to help the library resume operations after a severe weather event, an extended power outage, or a disruption such as a cyberattack—but also to contribute to building up a community’s resilience before disruptive events occur. Community resilience work takes many forms, including strengthening the food supply chain, creating redundancies in communication systems, building relationships with local emergency management officials, allowing for library infrastructure to become part of emergency management solutions in the form of heating/cooling stations, and serving as resource drop-off/pick-up points.

Resources

- [Action for Climate Empowerment Policy Brief](#), International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA)
- [Action for Climate Empowerment: A Guide for Galleries, Libraries, Archives and Museums](#), Curating Tomorrow
- [Climate Action Plan Template \(download\)](#), Sustainable Libraries Initiative (SLI)
- [Disaster Relief Fund](#), American Library Association
- [Empathy Circle](#)
- [Essential Climate Justice Responsibilities in the Library Sector](#), British Columbia Library Association
- [Four Key Takeaways from Mutual Aid Organizing During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#), Beeck Center, Georgetown University
- [A Green New Deal for Archives](#), Eira Tansey
- [Individual and Community Preparedness Activities](#), Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)
- [Inner Development Goals](#), IDG Foundation
- [The Librarian's Disaster Planning and Community Resiliency Workbook](#), New Jersey State Library
- [Libraries and Sustainability: Programs and Practices for Community Impact](#), Rene Tanner, Adrian K. Ho, Monika Antonelli, Rebekkah Smith Aldrich, ALA Editions, 2021
- [Library Sustainable Swag Self-Evaluation](#), Sustainability Round Table (SustainRT)
- [The Long-Term Strategy of the United State: Pathways to Net-Zero Greenhouse Gas Emissions by 2050](#), November 2021
- [Making Caring Common Project](#), Harvard Graduate School of Education
- [National Preparedness Month](#), Ready.gov
- [National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster](#) (VOAD)
- [Resilience](#) (Library Futures Series, Book 2), American Library Association
- [Resilient Communities: Libraries Respond to Climate Change](#), American Library Association
- [Sustainability: A Call to Action](#), OCLC Distinguished Seminar Series, 2023 and Viewing Guide
- [Sustainability in Libraries: A Call to Action](#), American Library Association, April 2022
- [Sustainable Libraries: Resources and Webinars for Climate Action](#), WebJunction & the Sustainable Libraries Initiative
- [The Sustainable Libraries Initiative](#)
 - CO2 Calculator
 - [Presentations of Certified Libraries](#)
 - [Reading List](#)
- [Sustainable Thinking: Ensuring Your Library's Future in an Uncertain World](#), ALA Editions
- [SustainRT Zotero Library](#)
- [Sustainability Column](#), Library Journal
- [Sustainability in Libraries](#), American Libraries
- [Task Force on United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development Goals](#), ALA
- [What Do Public Libraries Have to Do with Climate Justice?](#), Alison Stine, Nonprofit Quarterly, 2023

References

- [Call for emergency action to limit global temperature increases, restore biodiversity, and protect health](#), Lukoye Atwoli, Abdullah H. Baqui, Thomas Benfield, Raffaella Bosurgi, Fiona Godlee, Stephen Hancocks, et. al, The Lancet, September 2021
- [ALA adding sustainability as a core value of librarianship](#), American Library Association, 2019
- [Core Values of Librarianship](#), American Library Association
- [What the data says about Americans' views of climate change](#), Pew Research Center, 2023
- [The Fifth National Climate Assessment](#), 2023
- [Paris Agreement](#), United Nations, 2015
- [Principles of Climate Justice](#), Mary Robinson Foundation
- [Climate Change in the American Mind: Beliefs & Attitudes](#), Fall 2023, Yale Program on Climate Change Communication
- [Climate Change in the American Mind: Politics & Policy](#), Fall 2023, Yale Program on Climate Change Communication
- [How Does Indoor Air Quality Impact Student Health and Academic Performance?](#), U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
- [Evidence from Scientific Literature about Improved Academic Performance](#), Indoor Air Quality in Schools, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
- [Scope 1 and Scope 2 Inventory Guidance](#), EPA Center for Corporate Climate Leadership, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
- [Why We Need to Decarbonize Transportation](#), Green Vehicle Guide, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
- [Library Waste Audit](#), Sustainable Libraries Initiative
- [Zero Waste Hierarchy](#), Zero Waste International Alliance
- [Understand Exposure](#), U.S. Climate Resilience Toolkit
- [National Risk Index](#), Federal Emergency Management Agency
- [Natural Hazards](#), National Risk Index, Federal Emergency Management Agency
- [Case Studies](#), National Risk Index, Federal Emergency Management Agency
- [The Six Pillars of Climate Justice](#), Center for Climate Justice, University of California
- [Climate Resilience Hubs](#), Communities Responding to Extreme Weather

PRINCIPAL AUTHOR

Rebekkah Smith Aldrich

*Executive Director
Mid-Hudson Library System,
Co-Founder/President of the Sustainable
Libraries Initiative (SLI)*

PRINCIPAL ADVISORS, SLI ADVISORY BOARD

Matthew Bollerman

*SLI Co-Founder & CEO,
Hauppauge Public Library*

Dr. Jen Cannell

*School Library System Director,
Southern Westchester BOCES;
Instructor, Syracuse University
& St. John Fisher University*

Jennifer Ferriss

*Assistant Director,
Saratoga Springs Public Library (NY)*

Lisa Kropp

*Director,
Lindenhurst Memorial Library (NY)*

PRINCIPAL ADVISORS, ALA EXECUTIVE BOARD

Sara Dallas

*Director,
Southern Adirondack Library System,
ALA Executive Board Member*

Lessa Kanani'opua Pelayo-Lozada

*Immediate ALA Past President & City of Glendale,
Assistant Director of Library, Arts & Culture,
Southern California*

Christina Rodriques

*Senior Program Manager
for Member Relations at OCLC,
ALA Executive Board Member*

NATIONAL CLIMATE ACTION WORKING GROUP MEMBERS

Jensen Adams

*Sustainability Manager, City of Kansas City;
Chair, ALA Council Committee on Sustainability*

Stacey Aldrich

*State Librarian of Hawaii
Chair, ALA Center for the Future of Libraries*

Tina Chan

*Reference Services Program Manager
& Humanities Librarian, MIT Libraries;
Immediate Past Coordinator,
ALA Sustainability Round Table*

Beth Filar Williams

*User Experience Research Librarian,
Oregon State University Libraries & Press;
Founding Member, ALA Sustainability Round Table*

Mandi Goodsett

*Performing Arts & Humanities Librarian & OER;
Copyright Advisor, Cleveland State University;
Coordinator, ALA Sustainability Round Table*

Susan Hempstead

*Assistant Director, Strategic Relations
Sno-Isle Libraries, Washington State*

Katina Jones

*Program Manager
Evaluation & Assessment,
Public Library Association*

Veronda J. Pitchford

Assistant Director, Califa Group

Mary Sauer-Games

*Vice President of Global Product
Management for OCLC*

Colleen Seisser

*YALSA 2023-24 President, Assistant Director,
Westmont Public Library, Westmont, Illinois*

Michele Stricker

Deputy State Librarian, New Jersey

Eira Tansey

Memory Rising



**Sustainable
Libraries
Initiative**

627 North Sunrise Service Road, Bellport, NY 11713

ALA American
Library
Association

225 N Michigan Ave, Suite 1300 Chicago, IL 60601 | ala.org