

Climate Catalysts Mentorship Programme 3.0

PROJECT DESIGN BOOTCAMP DIGEST



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E DELLA SICUREZZA ENERGETICA

Workshop 1 : Project Design 101

What is Project Design?

Project design is **the process of turning climate ideas into structured practical projects** through **clear problem identification, strategic planning, user-centered design, implementation, and budgeting**. Strong project design connects ambition to action by defining clear objectives, delivery pathways, and measurable outcomes. It ensures that climate solutions are not only innovative, but realistic, credible, and capable of creating lasting impact.

Key Insights:

- **Use a full lifecycle approach**

Ensures projects are implementable, measurable, and scalable—from problem identification to solution design, implementation, and evaluation.

- **Define problems as specific, targeted, and measurable**

Ensures focus on concrete challenges that can realistically be addressed, rather than broad issues that are too vague for practical intervention.

- **Structure projects through clear objectives, activities, outputs, and outcomes**

Ensures project actions are directly linked to measurable results and long-term change.

- **Treat budgeting as a core design tool or feasibility, resource allocation, and implementation credibility**

Ensures projects are realistic, well-planned, and capable of delivering intended outcomes.

What is a Project Lifecycle?

“Most climate startups don't fail because of bad ideas; they fail because they don't structure execution properly.”

Strong climate projects follow a **structured lifecycle** rather than jumping directly from idea to implementation. By connecting each stage logically, projects become stronger, more credible, and better positioned for implementation and scale.

Problem -> Solution Design -> Execution -> Impact & Scale

- **Problem:** Identify a specific, targeted challenge that is concrete and solvable
- **Solution:** Develop a practical response that addresses the defined problem clearly and effectively
- **Design:** Structure objectives, activities, resources, and implementation pathways
- **Execution:** Deliver the project through coordinated action, management, and resource allocation
- **Impact & Scale:** Measure results, evaluate effectiveness, and identify opportunities for growth or replication
- **Key takeaway:** Strong ideas create potential, but structured execution is what turns projects into credible and scalable impact.

What is Design Thinking?

A human-centered approach to problem-solving focused on understanding user needs before designing solutions. Design thinking begins with understanding people, not assumptions or pre-designed solutions. Human-centered design helps ensure that projects are relevant, practical, and responsive to real-world contexts.

5 steps of design thinking: Empathize → Define → Ideate → Prototype → Test

The design thinking process encourages project teams to understand lived experiences and barriers, clearly define the challenge from the user perspective, explore multiple possible solutions, test ideas early, and refine them based on feedback. Rather than investing heavily in untested concepts, design thinking strengthens projects through learning and iteration.

Key takeaway: Effective climate solutions are built around real people and real needs —not assumptions.

How to Structure a Project?

A compelling idea becomes actionable when it is supported by **clear structure, with defined objectives, activities, outputs, and outcomes**. Strong project structuring creates a logical pathway that connects ambition to measurable results. By organizing projects through clear stages, implementation becomes more strategic, coordinated, and capable of contributing to long-term impact.

This framework supports project teams in translating ideas into organized action by clarifying:

- **Objectives:** What change is the project trying to achieve?
- **Activities:** What actions will be implemented?
- **Outputs:** What immediate deliverables will result?
- **Outcomes:** What measurable changes will these outputs create?

By clearly linking each stage, projects become easier to implement, communicate, and evaluate. This structure also strengthens credibility with funders, partners, and stakeholders by demonstrating how planned actions will realistically lead to results.

Key takeaway: Strong structure transforms good ideas into practical, credible, and impact-driven projects.

Why Does Project Budget Matter?

Budgeting is not just an administrative exercise, rather **a strategic tool that demonstrates project feasibility**. Budgets should clearly show how resources connect to objectives, outputs, and implementation needs. A realistic budget shows that a project is not only ambitious, but practical.

“ A budget is not just financial planning, it is part of project design. ”

Strong budgets help:

- Justify resource allocation
- Prioritize essential spending
- Demonstrate feasibility
- Strengthen credibility with funders and partners



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Workshop 2 : Business Readiness 101

What is Business Readiness?

Business readiness is the foundational framework for transforming climate projects into fundable, investable, and growth-ready initiatives. It requires operational preparedness, a clear value proposition, strategic positioning, and systems that support implementation beyond initial funding or early delivery. Strong business readiness ensures that promising ideas are not only impactful, but practical, credible, and equipped to grow. Business readiness is not one single benchmark, but a combination of strategic clarity, market understanding, operational systems, and financial credibility.

Key Insights:

- **Business readiness is essential for turning projects into operational, growth-ready initiatives:** Business readiness determines whether a project is prepared to operate effectively, grow strategically, and deliver real-world impact beyond simply securing funding.
- **Strong initiatives depend on clearly understanding the problem, target users, and distinct value created:** Projects become more credible and effective when they are designed around specific needs, clear beneficiaries, and well-defined value propositions.
- **Sustained impact requires projects to evolve beyond short-term delivery:** Strategic partnerships, operational systems, and long-term planning strengthen a project's ability to endure, expand, and remain effective over time.
- **Scaling strengthens impact by expanding projects beyond their initial scope:** Through scaling out, scaling up, and scaling deep, projects can replicate success, influence systems, and drive deeper cultural or behavioral change.

Business Readiness Checklist

- ❑ **Company Purpose:** Can the initiative be clearly defined in one strong statement?
- ❑ **Problem Solved:** What specific pain point is being addressed?
- ❑ **Solution Provided:** How does the initiative improve the customer or beneficiary's situation, and what practical value does it create?
- ❑ **Why Now:** Why is this the right moment for the solution?
- ❑ **Market Size:** How large is the opportunity?
- ❑ **Competition:** What makes the solution unique?
- ❑ **Product:** What are the core features, functionality, and development roadmap?
- ❑ **Business Model:** How will the initiative generate value through revenue, pricing, sales, or delivery strategy?
- ❑ **Governance and Team:** Are systems, leadership, and operational structures in place for growth?
- ❑ **Financials:** Is the initiative financially realistic, credible, and scalable?

What is Value Proposition?

A value proposition describes **the benefits customers, beneficiaries, community, or donors can expect** from your products, services, programmes, or interventions. Effective value propositions go beyond broad mission statements. They should be specific, audience-centered, and tailored to different stakeholders.

Why Value Proposition Matters?

- **Minimize risk:** By helping you avoid wasting time on ideas that won't work.
- **Gain clarity:** Understand the patterns of value creation easily by giving tools to organize information and communicating it to the different stakeholders.
- **Create alignment:** Creates a shared language around products, services, programmes and interventions in the design process.



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Core Value Proposition Formula:

Our [product/service/programme/intervention] **helps** [target group] **who want to** [specific need] **by** [relieving pains] **and** [creating gains].

For example: Our smart water level management system **helps** communities addressing water quality and flood management issues **who want to** restore natural water filtration systems **by** automating water level control without constant manual adjustment and offering complete wetland health mapping showing biodiversity **and** water quality metrics.

How to Scale?

Scaling requires moving **beyond growth in numbers or visibility alone**. Effective scaling is not simply about “getting bigger”, but about **increasing meaningful, lasting impact** through deeper reach, stronger systems influence, and sustained change.

From project to initiative:

The real challenge is not starting but sustaining and scaling impact

Many climate projects struggle not because their ideas are weak, but because they are not designed for **continuity, partnerships, or systems change**.

Project: Time-bound, grant-dependent, output-focused
v/s

Initiative: Long-term, adaptive, system-embedded, impact-focused

Three Dimensions of Scaling

- **Scaling Out** → **Replication across locations**

Expanding successful models to new geographies or audiences

- **Scaling Up** → **Systems and policy influence**

Embedding solutions into governance, institutions, or broader systems

- **Scaling Deep** → **Cultural and behavioral transformation**

Shifting mindsets, norms, and long-term practices

- **Key takeaway:** Most effective climate initiatives often combine all three.



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Workshop 3 : Policy Readiness 101

What is Policy Readiness?

Policy Readiness is the process of **strengthening climate initiatives by aligning innovation and local action with the policy frameworks** that shape national priorities, implementation pathways, and systems change.

It is the ability of an initiative to understand where it fits within climate policy priorities and how it can contribute to their implementation. Strong policy readiness connects youth-led climate action to national and global agendas through understanding key mechanisms such as Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and National Adaptation Plans (NAPs), aligning with biodiversity and nature frameworks, and translating advocacy into meaningful engagement with real-world policy processes.

Key Insights

- **Policy readiness is essential for connecting youth-led climate action to national priorities and implementation systems:**

Policy readiness enables projects to move beyond local action by aligning initiatives with broader policy frameworks, governance structures, and institutional pathways that shape climate implementation.

- **Effective climate innovation depends on clear policy alignment**

Projects become more credible and strategically positioned when they connect solutions to existing commitments such as NDCs, NAPs, and broader sustainable development priorities.

- **Meaningful youth engagement requires influence beyond participation**

Strong policy engagement depends not only on youth presence in climate spaces, but on inclusion in decision-making, implementation processes, and accountability pathways.

- **Systems impact depends on aligning climate action with broader governance frameworks**

Long-term impact is strengthened when climate initiatives connect policy understanding to biodiversity, nature, and governance systems while translating alignment into practical engagement.

Why Does Policy Alignment Matter?

Policy alignment is a **strategic tool that helps youth-led climate initiatives move from isolated local action to broader systems relevance**. By connecting projects to national priorities, policy frameworks, and implementation agendas, alignment strengthens not only visibility, but also legitimacy and long-term influence.

Policy alignment increases:

- **Credibility and relevance:** Aligning projects with existing frameworks such as NDCs, NAPs, and national development priorities demonstrates that an initiative contributes to recognized policy goals rather than operating in isolation. This strengthens strategic positioning and makes projects more relevant to institutional stakeholders.
- **Access to partnerships, funding, and implementation opportunities:** Policy-aligned initiatives are better positioned to engage governments, institutional partners, funders, and implementing organizations because they can clearly demonstrate how their work supports existing commitments and policy priorities.
- **Opportunities for scaling and systems impact:** When projects connect to policy priorities, they are more likely to move beyond short-term interventions and contribute to broader implementation, replication, and structural change through governance systems.

Why Does Aligning with NDCs & NAPs Matter?

Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) are key national climate planning instruments that define mitigation and adaptation priorities and guide implementation. They provide entry points for projects to align with national goals and contribute to long-term climate action. Together, these frameworks help translate global commitments into country-level action. Understanding policy architecture allows youth initiatives to move from external advocacy to strategic engagement.

NDCs: National climate commitments outlining mitigation and adaptation priorities under the Paris Agreement

NAPs: Long-term planning tools focused on adaptation systems, resilience, and implementation



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How to Align Your Project with Policy Frameworks

Step 1: Identify what your initiative concretely delivers

Define the tangible outcome of your initiative rather than only its long-term ambition. This could include a service, product, training programme, platform, or community process. Clear definition strengthens project positioning and policy relevance.

Step 2: Define the gap it addresses

Identify who is underserved, excluded, or exposed to a specific challenge that the initiative responds to. Clearly defining the gap helps connect the project to existing national or global priorities.

Step 3: Find the relevant policy anchor

Connect the initiative to existing frameworks such as NDCs, NAPs, SDGs, biodiversity strategies, or national development plans. Policy anchors help position projects within recognized commitments and implementation agendas.

Step 4: Explicitly state the policy connection

Clearly reference policy alignment in proposals, pitches, and concept notes. Explicitly showing how the initiative contributes to specific policy commitments strengthens credibility, strategic positioning, and funding relevance.

How to Move from Policy Alignment to Real-World Engagement?

Getting involved in climate policy does not require understanding every process at once. Start small, focus on one issue area, and build engagement step by step over time.

Think of “UNFCCC”

- **Understand one thing:** pick one topic and learn the basics from a youth-friendly source, not everything at once.
- **Narrow your focus:** ask “what is one small part of this big issue that I can realistically work on first?”
- **Find your people:** join one youth climate space so you’re not acting alone.
- **Connect to a process:** link your interest to one real process: a local consultation, a national plan, a global campaign, or a UNFCCC track you can follow.
- **Contribute something small:** first contribution, not first masterpiece: a short testimony, a survey, a blog post, a social media explainer, live notes from a meeting.
- **Continue with one thread:** stick with one issue or process for at least a year so you build credibility and relationships instead of jumping from topic to topic.

- [Climate-ambition-accelerator](#)
- [SDG-innovation-accelerator](#)
- [On Equal Terms: A Checklist for Decision Makers and Practitioners on a Youth-Inclusive NDC Process](#)
- [Aiming Higher: Elevating Meaningful Youth Engagement for Climate Action](#)
- [Beyond vulnerability: A guidance note on youth, climate, peace and security](#)
- [The NDC \(YOU\)TH REVIEW](#)
- [From margins to the main pages: How youth became central to Bangladesh's climate goals](#)
- [Home - NBSAP Accelerator Partnership](#)
- [Effectively Delivering on Climate and Nature: A checklist for national policymakers](#)
[Effectively_Delivering_Climate_Nature_Country_cases.pdf](#)
- [Building Synergies Between Biodiversity and Climate](#)
[giz-en-insights-NBSAP-NDC-synergies.pdf](#)
- [Climate Talk](#)