

## OL 241 Indigenous Assignment 1 Discussion Page

Online Learning: OL 241 Writing Your Indigenous Climate Action Plan: <https://csd-i.org/climate-change/indigenous-climate-action-plan/>

Center for Sustainable Development: <https://csd-i.org/>

### This week's resources:

Class Home Page 241 Tribal

Download Class Documents:

Assignment One Discussion

Assignment One Homework

Magee Example Project Assignment 1

Chapter One. Community Needs Assessments and Project Outline.

Field Guide 1: Participatory Community Needs Assessments, Workshop Lesson Plan & Illustrations

'A Field Guide to Community-Based Adaptation' by Tim Magee

**Getting Started.** You might be taking this course as a representative of any number of types of organizations or communities. You might be a:

- member of an indigenous community interested in learning how to write a climate action plan
- member of an indigenous nonprofit organization that specializes in climate action planning
- member of a tribal government
- an individual interested in training in climate action planning to improve your chances of getting a job

So, just to simplify my writing and your reading, I'm going to pretend that you work for an indigenous nonprofit that specializes in climate action. So don't get worried if you see me referring to "your nonprofit" or "your organization" in these discussions. I will know who you really are when I read your assignments and offer comments.

### Assignment 1. What's the real problem?

#### Developing a Climate Action Plan Based upon Participatory Needs Assessments

The goal of the first assignment is to experiment with ways of determining community need based upon the vantage of community members. Why is this important to do? As donors or nonprofits—and as human beings we are all guilty of assuming that we know what is best. But what is best for us may not be what is best for another person from another town, county, or state. We need to understand and acknowledge their perception of their needs and challenges.

#### What is a community?

A community is the group of people that you plan to work with. A community could be the members of a tribal nation, an association of cattle ranchers, or members of a tribal organization or government.

#### What is a project?

After your Climate Action Plan is written and finalized, when you launch it, it will become a project. A project is a group of solution-oriented activities that you have theorized will provide long-term, sustainable solutions to community identified need. Your organization might focus on one specialized type of activity – such as agriculture, the environment, or water related issues. Or your organization might combine clusters of activities into more complex, multifaceted projects.

#### Why Participatory Needs Assessments?

There are several very positive reasons for encouraging your community to participate in:

1. the process of defining their needs/problems
2. prioritizing their needs
3. choosing the solutions to be used in addressing their needs

#### Let's look at a few of the reasons why inclusion is important:

1. Community members may have a greater depth of knowledge about their problems than we do, and so will be better able to identify important and underlying causes for the challenges they face.
2. If they are engaged in the process of needs identification, and feel their voice has been heard, then they will have a sense of ownership for the process and the outcomes; this leads to long-term project sustainability. Ownership can be thought of as the community members' demand for and then the receipt of the products and services that your organization will provide.
3. Working with a community to address their needs will develop trust on their part in working with your organization on future projects or activities.

#### How to proceed

For the purposes of this course we are going to suggest a very simple Climate Action Plan concept. Once you learn the system you will be able to expand into more complex needs assessments and climate action plans.

In the Download Class Documents page you will see the Field Guide 1: Participatory Community Needs Assessments. This is a very simple, quick explanation of how to facilitate a participatory needs assessment. It also includes a workshop lesson plan to use to lead the assessment.

This technique is very straightforward. As you read through the needs assessment document you will discover several techniques that make it easy to facilitate.

**First, if you are not a member of the community you hope to work with, you will need to develop a relationship within the community.**

Let's say you are planning to work in a small indigenous community. The first step is to meet with community members, or civic or business leaders and discuss your idea for writing a plan. With their support, you will be able to meet community members interested in participating in your Climate Action Plan.

Communities are diverse and we need to be sure that we are working with a representative example of its members. Each subgroup of community members will have their own set of needs; some members may even be self-serving. Plus, there are many stakeholders in the planning process: your organization, your donor, the local government, business leaders and of course the community members. Each stakeholder has their own mission. You can begin to see that with all of the different stakeholders involved, it can be difficult to assess and prioritize real community need. You will need to choose which groups will be the most representational.

A good solution is to invite a couple of people from each stakeholder group so that you can benefit from their diverse perspectives. Be sure to include men and women, and young and old.

### **Getting started**

The assignment one homework will guide you through a simplified needs assessment process. Good luck!