52 Ways to Climate-Proof Your Finances

30-minute Lesson Plan

A Cooperative Extension Workgroup

Lesson Goal:

The goal of this lesson is to equip learners with the knowledge and tools to understand the financial impacts of climate change on individuals and households, take proactive steps to climate-proof their finances, and develop a personalized action plan to ensure financial resilience.

Lesson Objectives:

As a result of this lesson, the participant will be able to…

- Understand how climate change can affect personal finances.
- Identify action steps to climate proof financial affairs.
- Create a personal action plan that outlines action steps, encourages prioritization, and documents completion of specific tasks.

Time:

60 minutes

Teaching Materials:

- PowerPoint to support the lesson
- Laptop computer, LCD projector and screen
- "52 Ways to Climate Proof Your Finances" tool; 1 copy for each participant

Lesson Plan:

1. **Welcome participants and review the learning objectives for the session (2 minutes)**

2. **Review the literature on Climate Change (5 minutes)**, which is also referenced in the "52 Ways to Climate Proof Your Finances" handout. Talking points include:

- The consequences of climate change are substantial and escalating due to the increased frequency and severity of weather events, rising sea levels, and higher temperatures (U.S. Department of the Treasury, 2023).
- The Fifth National Climate Assessment (USGCRP, 2023) reports an increase in the severity, extent, and frequency of multiple types of extreme events including heat waves, droughts, large rainfalls causing flood risks, hurricanes, and wildfires.
- American families are increasingly vulnerable to climate-related risks, which have cascading effects on household finances. Without significant intervention, these hazards are likely to impose compounded financial hardships for families, especially for disadvantaged households with limited resources and the ability to cope with and rebound from such shocks (U.S. Department of the Treasury, 2023).

3. **Brainstorm with participants the following two questions as a large group (5 minutes).**

- What examples of climate related events have occurred in your community?
- How have/could these climate events affect your personal financial situation or the financial situations of those in your community?
- What are some actions that you could take to protect your finances if a similar climate event were to occur again in the future?

4. **Introduce the "52 Ways to Climate-Proof Your Finances" Tool to participants. (5 minutes).** Review each of the nine topical areas as a group. Use the tool as a guide to lead this discussion. Share that while this tool is not an exhaustive list, it does provide various steps each participant (and their respective household) can take.

Inform them that it is not expected that they will complete all the tasks or that they will do them all at the same time. Inform participants that some actions are one-time tasks, such as updating energy-efficient appliances, while some actions are recurring, such as preparing a grocery shopping list. In addition, share with participants that some tasks lend themselves to being done seasonally.

Inform participants that when they are ready to act, encourage them to use the middle column to identify which actions they plan to work on, what time of the year they will complete the task and encourage them to track their progress as they complete each step. Inform them that once they have started a habit or completed a task to place a checkmark and date in the final column. This will show completion of the action step.

5. **Describe how to create a personal action plan (10 minutes):** Encourage participants to review the list on their own time and share and discuss the strategies with others in their

home. As a household, ask each person to identify which tasks make the most sense and ask them to prioritize the most important and when they might want to complete the steps. Inform them that it is not expected that they will complete all the tasks or that they will do them all at the same time. Inform participants that some actions are one-time tasks, such as updating energy-efficient appliances, while some actions are recurring, such as preparing a grocery shopping list. In addition, share with participants that some tasks lend themselves to being done seasonally.

Inform participants that when they are ready to act, encourage participants to use the middle column to identify which actions they plan to work on, what time of the year they will complete the task and to track their progress as they complete each step. Inform them that once they have started a habit or completed a task to place a checkmark and date in the final column. This will show completion of the action step.

Encourage participants to celebrate their success throughout this process! Ask them to look at the actions and habits they checked off on the list and take a moment to celebrate all that they have done. Planning for and dealing with the risks posed by climate change will need commitments from everyone and remind them that the steps they're taking are making a difference for their family and community.

8. **Evaluation** (3 minutes): Ask participants to complete the evaluation.

If you or your participants want to learn more, additional resources are below. The same resources are also included in the tool on page 3.

Resources:

Abel, J., Tobe, E., Gruder, S., Ruemenapp, M. (2023). How the Inflation Reduction Act Can Save You Money on Home Energy Costs. https://finances.extension.wisc.edu/files/2023/10/Inflation-Reduction-Act-Fact-sheet-1.pdf
Roop, Heidi A. (2023). The Climate Action Handbook: A visual guide to 100 climate solutions for everyone. Sasquatch Books.
Stookey, David W. (2016). Climate Proof Your Personal Finances: How (and where) to safeguard your family budget and lifestyle. Savvy Families Institute, Newport, RI.
U.S. Department of Treasury. (2023). The Impact of Climate Change on American Household Finances. https://home.treasury.gov/system/files/136/Climate_Change_Household_Finances.pdf

References:

U.S. Department of the Treasury. (2023). The Impact of Climate Change on American Household Finances. https://home.treasury.gov/system/files/136/Climate_Change_Household_Finances.pdf

U.S. Global Change Research Program (USGCRP). (2023). Fifth National Climate Assessment. Crimmins, A.R., C.W. Avery, D.R. Easterling, K.E. Kunkel, B.C. Stewart, and T.K. Maycock, Eds. U.S. Global Change Research Program, Washington, DC, USA. https://doi.org/10.7930/NCA5.2023

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