

Climate Action Discernment Process

A tool for established groups or communities

FAITHFUL CLIMATE CONVERSATIONS



FOR THE **LOVE**
OF **CREATION**

This guide is intended for use with people who are already connected to each other in an ongoing way, with a goal of moving towards immediate, concrete action while building a foundation for future greater action. This process is designed to follow after engaging in one of the first three [Faithful Climate Conversations](https://fortheloveofcreation.ca) (<https://fortheloveofcreation.ca>).

The Climate Action Discernment Process was first prepared for the work of the [Mennonite Church Manitoba Climate Action Working Group](#) in 2022.

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Please use, copy, revise and share as needed.



Introduction

This is a tool for discerning climate action in established groups or communities. It is about working together so the best practice is to use this guide with people who are already connected to each other in an ongoing way.

The goal of the ***Climate Action Discernment Process*** is to help your group move towards concrete action while at the same time building a foundation from which future action can emerge. This process is designed to follow after engaging in one of the first three [*Faithful Climate Conversations*](#).

The Faithful Climate Conversations provide time for your group to sit together to express concerns, personal experiences of climate change and to establish a mutual sense of why it's important to take action beginning with prayerful reflection. This is critically important foundational work for any group that wishes to participate in sustained and effective action in community.

Appendix A offers an invitation to share. Appendix B: Finding Joy in Climate Action (Venn diagram) and Appendix C: Caring for Creation: Naming our Gifts (list) provide two possible pre-assignments for participants. Please consider sharing these with your group in advance of this workshop.

In this two-hour workshop, your group will move from areas of concern to a specific action plan. The Climate Action Discernment Process will help you choose actions based on:

- the priorities of your group
- how the action matches your group's gifts and skills
- the sphere of influence that your group perceives itself to have.

These filters will help the group choose actions that are doable, measurable, and have a reasonably good chance of gaining traction.

The *Discernment Process* is designed to walk your group through a series of steps that can be used in a cyclical way, returning to step 1 or 2 when you've reached Step 5.



The Action Cycle



Step 1: Share Ideas and Priorities

Step 2: Discern Direction

Step 3: Plan Action

Step 4: Implement

Step 5: Gather to Review: Evaluate, Celebrate, Health Check, Ongoing Learning
(This step allows space for new learning to be immediately shared and applied.)

Step 1: Review your group's ideas and priorities as needed

Step 2: Discern next direction

Step 3: Plan next Action

This workshop is designed to take your group through **Steps 1-3** of the Action Cycle. The guide does not provide details for Steps 4 and 5 - though they are clearly important

The actions planned in this session could be short and simple, quickly accomplished and evaluated, (*like holding an information session, offering support to an existing climate action group or planning a spring clean-up.*) They could be longer term actions (*like implementing a book study, initiating a letter writing/advocacy campaign or developing a community food forest.*)

For the Love of Creation wishes your group energy and strength on the journey!

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Climate Action Discernment Process

Gathering

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Offer a land acknowledgement appropriate for your area, researching local treaties, people groups, watersheds and landmarks as necessary. This is an opportunity to acknowledge displaced Black, People of Colour and immigrant communities as well as Indigenous peoples. If you are new to the practice of land acknowledgements, start here for a description: <https://www.kairosCanada.org/territorial-acknowledgment>

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Thank the participants for attending.

Introduce the facilitators: Who you are and why you are helping lead this workshop?

Participants introduce themselves by name and answer the question: Why are you here? What do you hope will be the outcome of this meeting?

GUIDELINES FOR DISCUSSION

It may be helpful to set the tone for conversation by recalling that:

- *Sometimes emotional topics come up when we talk about climate. That's okay.*
- *We have the opportunity here to build a healthy environment for listening and sharing, being mindful to share the time equally.*
- *This is a chance to open the discussion for wide idea generation, and also a time to refine and sift for immediate action discernment. Ideas not selected for immediate implementation will be held with care in the group's archives. Hold your ideas loosely and share them freely!*

OVERVIEW OF THE AGENDA

Refer to Appendix D: Participant Agenda. Give a brief description of the discernment process.

SCRIPTURE READING AND PRAYER

Take this opportunity to ground the discernment process in faith. Share a prayer and a reading from Scripture that help situate your work as integral to your shared faith. Refer to Appendix E for suggestions.

SHARING INSPIRING STORIES OF COLLECTIVE ACTION

Share this comic. There is a larger version in Appendix F. Credit: Brenna Quinlan

<https://www.patreon.com/brennaquinlan>



Invite the group to consider that people around the world are taking action in response to the climate crisis. There are endless ways to do so and these actions can be life-giving, energizing, healing, and can help reconnect people to the natural world and to each other. Here are just a few examples which can remind us that we are part of a broader movement that's gaining momentum and increasing in impact every day.

Share 4 or 5 quick stories of collective actions that the group may resonate with. These may be stories from your local region, or examples that fit with the particular interests of the group.



Share Ideas and Priorities: Part 1 of Action Cycle

(30 minutes)

WRITTEN REFLECTIONS:

Take 2 minutes for participants to consider the following question and write their answers on sticky notes:

What climate issue/s compel/s you? What is the work that you feel urgently needs to be moved forward?
What breaks your heart?

SHARING:

Invite participants to share their concerns with the group. Compile the answers where everyone can see them. This list can be the foundation for future action of this group. Photograph or record the list you've created for future reference.

ACTIVITY: RECOGNIZING INTERRELATIONS

As a group, identify how these areas of concern may be grouped together. As you identify connections, reorganize the sticky notes or draw lines to reflect these relationships. You may invite participants to get up and move the sticky notes around. Participants may have different ideas for how these areas of concern are related, and may adjust and re-adjust each other's work. That's okay. The intent of this activity is to help participants see climate concerns as interrelated. This helps us understand that any action we take has an impact in many areas of concern.

Once groupings have started to form, begin to name the categories that emerge. Some common groupings that might emerge:

land use/food production – emissions – energy
production – energy use – transportation – consumerism/
waste – vulnerable people – impacts of dangerous
weather events – solidarity with Indigenous people –
water and land protection

FROM CONCERN TO ACTION

Now you've got lists of concerns before you.

To shift these concerns to action, discuss and add an appropriate verb for each concern:

For example, "Vulnerable People" might become "Protecting Vulnerable People." "Emissions" might become "Lowering Emissions." "Consumerism and Waste" might become "Revealing Consumerism and Reducing Waste."

Verbs like "improving," "shifting," "reconnecting," "learning about" and "addressing" can be useful in shifting our mindset to creative action.

Discern Direction: Part 2 of the Action Cycle

(15 minutes)

PRIORITIZING 1-3 CATEGORIES

The rest of your work is to discern direction in some specific areas. Identify which of these action areas the group wants to focus on for the remainder of the session. Narrow your selection to 1-3 categories, depending how many specific actions the group wishes to work on today. You may want to remind the group to consider your group's sphere of influence and strengths as you choose together where to begin. Emphasize to the group that the remaining action areas will be ready when the group moves through the action cycle the next time.

BRAINSTORMING CONCRETE ACTIONS FOR THE CHOSEN CATEGORIES

For each of the chosen categories, brainstorm concrete ideas for action that narrow down the overarching concern to specific actions. Remember the big picture as you choose actions. Consider various angles which might strengthen or broaden your action.

If your group has chosen more than one Category for Next Action, you might break into focus groups for this step, or work at all the categories together.

Keep a record of this brainstormed list for future use. The next time the group moves through the action cycle, you can refer back to this list of action ideas.



CHOOSING A SPECIFIC FIRST/NEXT ACTION

Choose which action you will develop an action plan for in the remaining part of this session. Keep the following questions in mind:

- What is the group's sphere of influence?
- Can the brainstormed ideas be put in a sequence to help you think about where to begin? (Don't be afraid to begin with learning and listening.)
- Which potential actions have the greatest impact in the chosen area of concern?
- What are the gifts and skills needed for this work and are they available within the group?
- What can your group get excited about?

If the group has decided to work at more than one action, divide into the appropriate number of groups for this work.

PLAN ACTION: Part 3 of the Action Cycle

(30 minutes)

COMPLETE THE LEADING CHANGE WORKSHEET

As a group, work through the **Leading Change** worksheet from Appendix G, using the questions listed on the handout to guide the discussion.

This activity is the work of the group, and not the facilitator. Invite the group to select a leader from amongst themselves to guide the conversation. Encourage the group to take notes on the worksheet. Facilitators can circulate and provide support as needed.

Closing

REGROUP AND SHARE

What action category did you choose?
What are your short-term steps? Long term steps?
How did this process feel?

NEXT STEPS

Invite the group to decide how they will reconnect as a whole group and when they will do that. Encourage them to name a certain period of time and assign responsibility for this check in to someone in the group. Perhaps this means an email in a month, or another meeting in two weeks.

Remind the group of the next steps in the cycle:

Step 4: Implement

Step 5: Gather to Review: Evaluate, Celebrate, Health Check, Ongoing Learning (This step allows space for new learning to be immediately shared and applied.)

And then back to **Steps 1 and 2** to Discern next steps.

Implementation of the action and movement through the action cycle are the work of the group. However, facilitators can offer to support the group in ways that the group would find helpful.

WIDER CONVERSATION

Let the group know that feedback is welcome, and stories too. Please share feedback and stories at <https://tinyurl.com/ClimateActionDiscernment>.

PRAYER

Dedicate these action plans with prayer and hope!

GRATITUDE AND FAREWELL

Thank participants for engaging in this process and wish them well in moving forward with action!



Appendix A: Invitation to the Climate Action Discernment Process

The goal of this **Climate Action Discernment Process** is to help your group move towards concrete action while at the same time building a foundation from which future action can emerge. This process is designed to follow after engaging in a *Faithful Climate Conversation*. That *Conversation* provided a time for your group to sit together to express concerns, personal experiences of climate change and to establish a mutual sense of why it's important to take action.

The steps in this **Discernment Process** are designed to walk your group through a process that can be **used and reused as an ongoing template** for how to keep taking steps together.

In this two-hour workshop, your group will move from a longer list of potential actions and areas of concern to a specific action plan. The **Process** will help you choose actions based on:

- the priority level for your group
- how the action matches your group's gifts and skills
- the sphere of influence that your group perceives itself to have.

These filters will help the group choose actions that are doable, measurable, and have a reasonably good chance of gaining traction.

THE ACTION CYCLE:

In this session we'll work through **the first three steps** of the Action Cycle.



The actions planned in this session could be short and simple, quickly accomplished and evaluated, (*like holding an information session, offering support to an existing climate action group or planning a spring clean up*) or they could be longer term actions (*like implementing a book study, initiating a letter writing/advocacy campaign or developing a community food forest*).

The *Gather to Review* stage allows space for new learning to be immediately shared and applied.

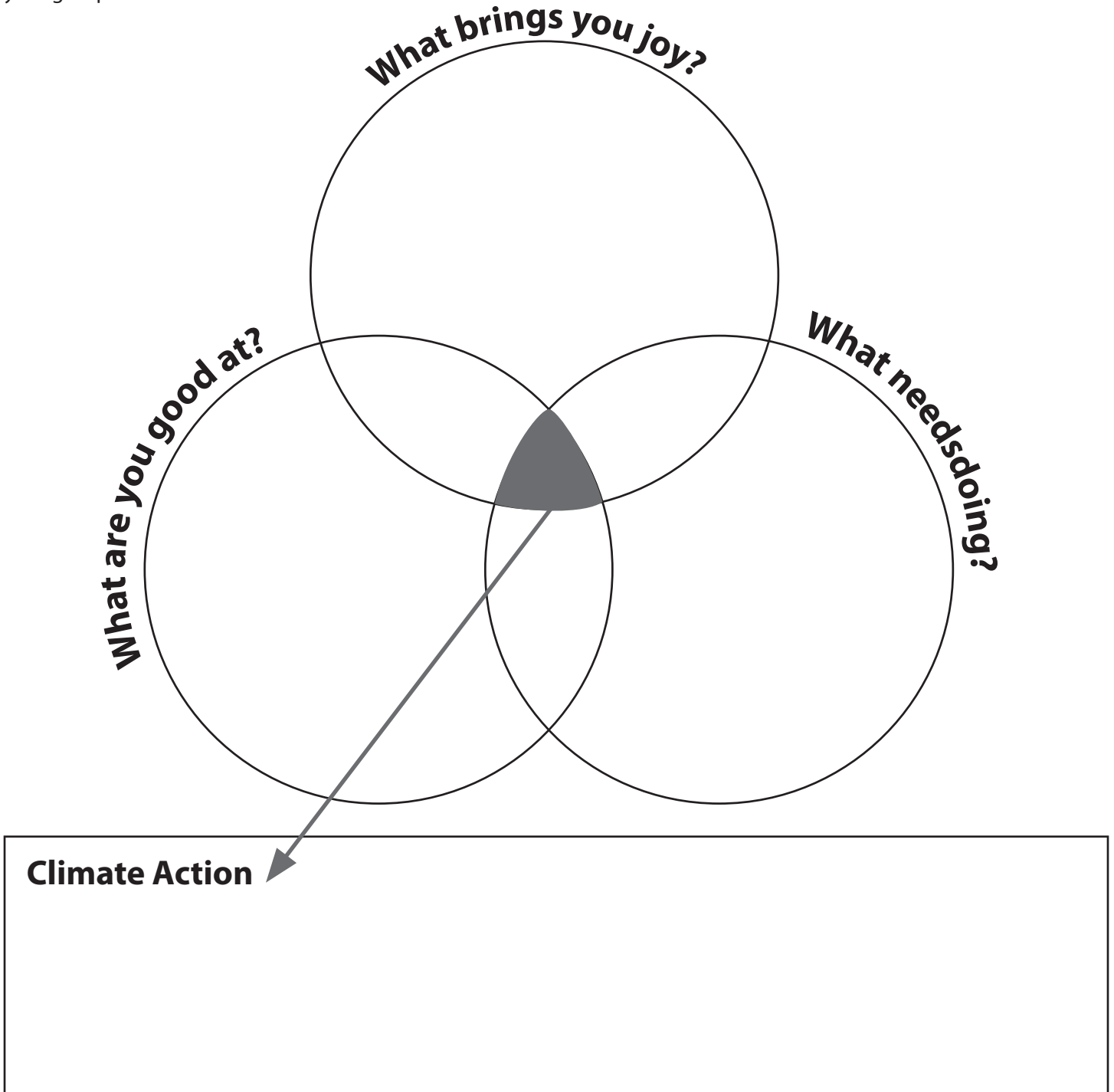
Wishing your group energy and strength on the journey!



Appendix B: Finding Joy in Climate Action

Check out this [Venn Diagram](#) exercise or watch [Dr. Ayana Elizabeth Johnson's Ted Talk](#).

In advance of the Climate Action Discernment Process with your group, make your own Venn Diagram and fill in the circles for yourself. This will help you begin thinking about what you can bring to the climate action discernment of your group.





Appendix C: Caring for Creation: Naming our Gifts (MCCN)

Everybody has something to contribute in responding to the climate crisis. This list is a gift from [Mennonite Creation Care Network](#) and can help participants imagine themselves in the work.

WHAT ROLE DO YOU PLAY IN CARING FOR THE EARTH? IN SEEKING JUSTICE FOR CLIMATE VULNERABLE PEOPLE?

- Faith Anchor
 - Activist
 - Eco Donor
 - Witness
 - Watershed Disciple
 - Environmental Professional
 - Triple Bottom Line Champion
 - Gardener
 - Foodie
 - Simple Living Steward
 - Building Geek
 - Naturalist
 - **Other - name your own role:**
-



Appendix D: Participant Agenda

GATHERING

- Land Acknowledgement
- Welcome and Introductions
- Guidelines for Discussion
- Overview of Agenda
- Scripture Reading and Prayer
- Sharing Inspiring Stories of Collective Action

SHARE IDEAS AND PRIORITIES:

PART 1 OF ACTION CYCLE

- Written Reflections
- Sharing
- Activity: Recognizing Interrelations
- From Concern to Action

DISCERN DIRECTION:

PART 2 OF THE ACTION CYCLE

- Prioritizing 1-3 Categories
- Brainstorming Concrete Actions for the chosen categories
- Choosing a Specific First/Next Action

PLAN ACTION:

PART 3 OF THE ACTION CYCLE

- Complete the Leading Change worksheet

CLOSING

- Regroup and share
- Next Steps
- Wider Conversation
- Prayer
- Gratitude and Farewell



Appendix E: Scripture and Prayer¹

Scriptures

O Lord, how manifold are your works! In wisdom you have made them all; the earth is full of your creatures.

(Psalm 104: 24 NRSV, see also Ps 104: 1-30)

By awesome deeds you answer us with deliverance,
O God of our salvation; you are the hope of all the
ends of the earth and the farthest seas.

(Psalm 65: 5 NRSV, see also Ps 65: 5-13)

The earth is the Lord's and everything in it.

(1 Cor 10:26 NIV)

The Earth is my mother and I am her child!

(Atharva Veda 12.1.12)

So long as the earth is able to maintain mountains,
forests and trees

Until then the human race and its progeny will
be able to survive

(Durga Saptashati 54)

Truly, God will not change the condition of a people
until they change what is in themselves.

(The Holy Qur'an, Surah Ar-Ra'd 13:11)

Prayers

A PRAYER FOR OUR EARTH, LAUDATO SI, POPE FRANCIS

All-powerful God, you are present in the whole universe and in the smallest of your creatures. You embrace with your tenderness all that exists. Pour out upon us the power of your love, that we may protect life and beauty. Fill us with peace, that we may live as brothers and sisters, harming no one. O God of the poor, help us to rescue the abandoned and forgotten of this earth, so precious in your eyes. Bring healing to our lives, that we may protect the world and not prey on it, that we may sow beauty, not pollution and destruction. Touch the hearts of those

who look only for gain at the expense of the poor and the earth. Teach us to discover the worth of each thing, to be filled with awe and contemplation, to recognize that we are profoundly united with every creature as we journey towards your infinite light. We thank you for being with us each day. Encourage us, we pray, in our struggle for justice, love and peace.

A HINDU PRAYER

May peace radiate in the whole sky and in
the vast ethereal space,

May peace reign all over this earth, in water,
in all herbs, and the forests,

May peace flow over the whole universe,

May peace be in the Supreme Being,

May peace exist in all creation, and peace alone,

May peace flow into us.

Aum - peace, peace and peace!

(Yajur Veda Samhita 36:17)

SEASON OF CREATION PRAYER 2020

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1RANyrrjoHYzNzFL5N1fg5H8Y4RvglUbe/view>

A PRAYER FOR CREATION BY RABBI DAVID MEVORACH SEIDENBERG

<https://www.ritualwell.org/ritual/prayer-creation>

SIKH PRAYER ON CLIMATE CHANGE AT ECOSIKH INTERFAITH EVENT-2015

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=36&v=cxNfF3MGZc&feature=emb_logo

ISLAMIC PRAYER BY AUSTRALIAN RELIGIOUS RESPONSE TO CLIMATE CHANGE

<https://www.arrcc.org.au/reflect-prayers-islamic>

¹ This appendix is repeated from the earlier [Faith Climate Conversation resources](#). Some scriptures and the Hindu Prayer were sourced through the [greenfaith.org](#) website in 2020 and are no longer available there.



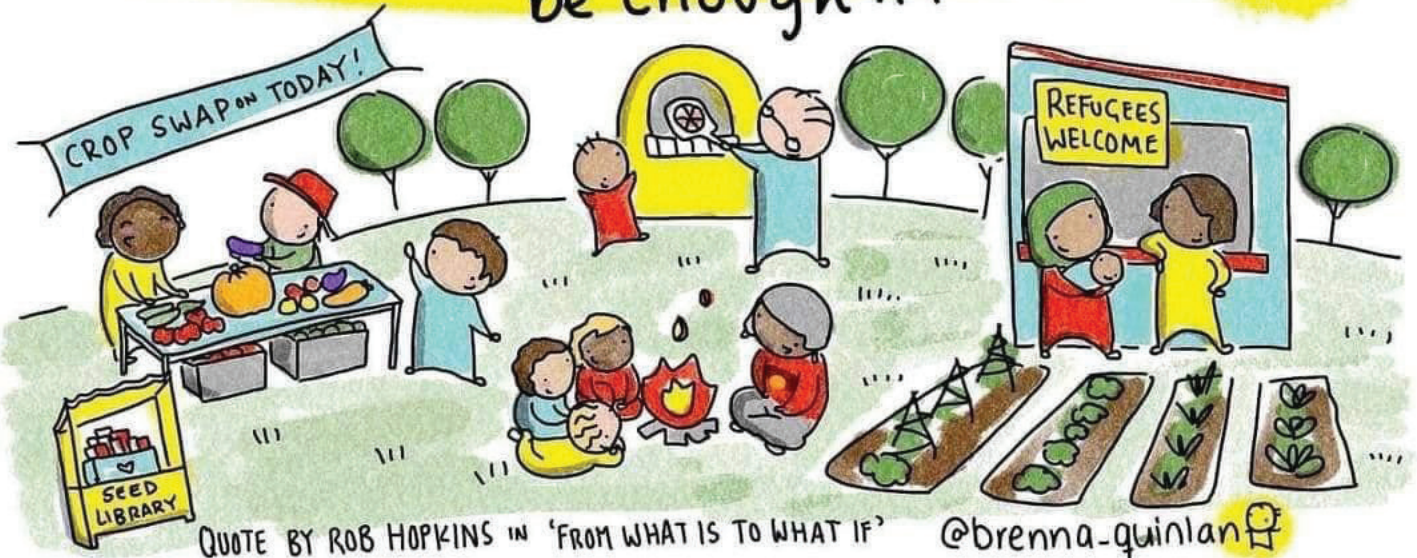
Appendix F: Comic to Share

if we wait for the government
it will be too late...

...if we act as individuals
it will be too little...



...if we act as communities
it might just be enough...



QUOTE BY ROB HOPKINS IN 'FROM WHAT IS TO WHAT IF' @brenna-quinlan

Credit: Brenna Quinlan <https://www.patreon.com/brennaquinlan> Used with permission.



Appendix G: Leading Change!

<p>Identify Short Term Actions/Priorities</p>	<p>Identify Long Term Actions/ Priorities</p>
<p>What gifts and skills do we have that will help with this?</p>	<p>What groups could we work with? How might we collaborate on this with others?</p>
<p>What, if any, are the challenges we might face in this action?</p>	<p>Aside from Climate, what benefits might this have?</p>
<p>What are some specific next steps?</p>	<p>Who is responsible for moving this forward?</p>