**The Mission, Vision, Goals, and Principles of Climate Steps**

*Guidance for Our Management and for Partnering with Funders.*

**Climate Steps Vision:** To achieve a global grassroots movement that yields a decisive number of individuals acting on the climate crisis in ways that go beyond  protests and voting – instead, people measurably reduce anthropogenic carbon emissions, their own and with others; promote a cultural shift in humans’ attitude and approach towards the planet and its resources; and begin restoring a healthy planet for existing species.

**Climate Steps Mission:** To provide the knowledge, multiple means, and mentoring to any and all individuals, across the U.S. and even globally, who seek to take steps towards fighting the climate crisis.

**Climate Steps Primary Goals:**

1. To guide individuals new to climate action into taking their first climate step(s) by providing information, resources, tools, opportunities, and mentoring.
2. To help people grow into further actions suitable to their personal goals and situation.
3. To help people learn about and trust the science behind the information.
4. To connect individuals into an idea-sharing, action-supporting community.

**Definitions of a Climate Step. A Climate Step…**

1. is a rational, practical action an average human can take to mitigate the harm we have done and to provide hope for those who come next.
2. primarily works to reduce or reverse the substantial damage from atmospheric pollution we have ready done and are about to do towards our climate, but it also includes efforts to reduce or reverse habitat destruction, watershed contamination, the plastics in our oceans, the pesticides in our fields, etc. – as these also can cause substantial carbon equivalent emissions and strongly affect the ability of ecosystems to function.
3. is one way we show our respect for the sufferings of others in the Arctic, Bangladesh, the Marshall Islands, Sri Lanka, and additional places that risk destruction due to our past and present actions.
4. helps ensure life will continue on this planet, including the multiple endangered species.

**The Types of Climate Actions and Climate Steps’ Emphases**

1. **Individual versus Collective Action.** Climate Steps fills a much-needed niche for climate action, with our mission focusing on providing individuals the diverse knowledge, means, and mentoring to take climate action steps, i.e., it focuses on **individual action**. A large number of climate organizations and media articles have been emphasizing instead the need for **collective** (joint) actions, such as by governments or industry or via individuals joining protests or organizations so as to get governments or corporations to act. Although collective action is necessary to achieve the action needed at the large scale, many regular people of all walks of life want to know how to take climate steps – and some may not want to join or donate to a formal organization due to personal, health, cost, or other reasons. We let them know that there is a broad range of climate steps that individuals can take, including joining collective actions, but many others more personal or community-based, even political, that are highly impactful and that they can do as individuals. Both individual and collective actions are needed to create a rapid, cultural shift in carbon emissions.

Climate Steps highlights the diverse ways that individuals have to take a climate step(s), including:

* joining a collective action,
* personal actions, i.e., changing one’s own behavior,
* direct political actions,
* social or community actions, and
* industry-related actions,

where the last three include many actions that do not require formal organization/collective action.

For example, an individual can boycott or write a letter to an industry’s sustainability manager requesting a change in processing of a product, or even ask for a meeting. Individual political actions can be putting signs in one’s yard or hosting a meet-and-greet-a-candidate party; one critical one is to formally comment on public regulations. Community actions can include starting a tool library, for instance, which builds community resilience.

**Individual action**, by our definition, is an individual choosing one or more potential climate steps from a range of impactful ideas and acting on it. Climate Steps is here to help.

1. **Individual action versus Personal behavior.** There is much confusion in the media where articles equate **“individuals taking action”** on climate change with their **“personal** **behavior**,” often dismissing individual action as not achieving the scale needed for a serious change in carbon emissions because the authors are thinking of the individuals’ behavior at home, such as switching to a plant-based diet or insulating their house.

First, Climate Steps distinguishes between these two types of action: individual action is much broader, as defined in #1 above, and includes personal behavior change but other actions as well. Second, personal behavior can be quite impactful, from small to very large scales, depending on the type of action. Climate Steps is working to highlight the most impactful personal behaviors, and then, more broadly, the most impactful individual actions.

**Climate Steps Guiding Principles:**

1. Climate Steps **promotes individual actions of almost all types**, noting that **individuals can have a significant impact on climate change**. Based on repeated studies, individuals can have a measurable impact when (1) their efforts add up in terms of total actual emissions; (2) they shift human culture towards environmental protection and restoration; (3) they create infrastructural change that yields ripple effects; (4) they create governmental regulation/legislation change; (5) they create/join a community or collective action; and more.
2. **Individual, community, *and* large-scale collective actions are needed to succeed**. Climate Steps highlights a variety of impactful actions for individuals to take under all approaches.
3. We **support easy personal actions**, as they may change a local community and help shift the culture within a household, but they also count in motivating people towards further action.
4. Many types of climate actions exist; we are building tools to help people tailor actions to their particular situations as they learn about potential actions. **We understand that people may only able to carry out select actions at times depending on their personal situation,** such as health, employment, and more. We support all actions at any level, and then encourage further actions of any variety but that may expand a person’s impact.
5. Climate Steps does not subscribe to the philosophy that only one action will yield the majority of climate emission reduction or cultural impact at the scale needed. For instance, a rapid reduction of the human population size or the promotion of nuclear power will not be enough by themselves to turn the tide. **The combination of a variety of actions is possible and needed and includes the action levels possible for an individual**.
6. We respect and understand that **more than one political party in any particular nation can present a climate change solution (s).** **Climate Steps is nonpartisan** and does not engage in any lobbying activity.
7. **We do not encourage illegal civil disobedience**.
8. Due to the rapid onset of climate change, we should not only talk and promote action towards mitigating carbon emissions, but **also discuss** **community adaptation** to the climate crisis.
9. There is no completely knowing the answer(s) to solving carbon emissions.  Research is still ongoing, and we **must grow** **and evolve** within the role of managing actions and expectations as we receive new data. Some things we propose now may later be found to have an inappropriate side cost. Climate Steps **will follow the science**, including the understanding of behavior science to help achieve success.

In addition, we follow Washington, DC’s chapter of the Council of Nonprofits’ Principles and Practices for the state of DC, focusing on management, communication, diversity and inclusion, finances, donor rights, partnerships, operations, evaluation, and more. https://www.nonprofitadvancement.org/tools-resources/standards-of-excellence/. As a new organization, we seek to complete the related checklist within this site, https://www.nonprofitadvancement.org/files/2018/05/02-Self-Assessment-Checklist-11032015-002.pdf, which follows the parallel standards set by the Standards for Excellence Institute, https://standardsforexcellence.org/home-2/code/.

Some highlights and modifications of these standards specific to Climate Steps are below:

Transparency, Archival, and Accountability

1. In all public materials and nonpublic solicitation materials, Climate Steps will fairly represent its mission, vision, goals, and principles, as well as governance structure.
2. All goals, program activities and outcomes, annual financial reports, and our plans for the use of finances will be open and transparent to donors/funders, collaborators, and users on a clear, timely, and proactive basis.
3. Climate Steps has set a document retention policy that is available upon request via climatesteps@gmail.com.
4. Climate Steps will respond promptly to complaints and has a whistleblower policy available upon request.

Funding, i.e., this section regards both our principles for collecting and using funds and how we work with collaborators.

1. Climate Steps will raise funds and seek other resources from donors/funders who already reflect our mission in their support, or who clearly and accurately seek, on paper, to evolve towards supporting our mission.
2. We recognize the dignity of programs and funders and respect their rights following standards such as “A Donor Bill of Rights.” (https://afpglobal.org/donor-bill-rights).
3. The Board will not work with donors or other collaborators that are known to be funding industry, organizations, or other mechanisms in a way that results in a rapid, large quantity of carbon emissions being produced at a scale equivalent to at least 10x larger than any funds given in total to Climate Steps *and* other carbon emission reduction initiatives.
4. At no point shall the principles of Climate Steps pre-determine and exclude donors and organizations from being interviewed for funding, or collaborations; we consider it a climate step to share climate change data and solutions – and that includes during interviews. However, Climate Steps principles will be used for discussion during interviews.
5. Donors/funders or requested collaborators who have a publicly apparent, strong philosophical conflict-of-interest (COI) with Climate Steps’ principles, especially those that might engender public distrust in the mission, goals, objectives, and content of Climate Steps or in the impartial judgement in the business of Climate Steps, may be ruled out during interviews and then by discussion by the Board.
6. We will ensure that the large majority of any funds provided are used for purposes consistent with a donor’s intent, as stated by the donor in a solicitation or as otherwise directed before and during an application process.

Engagement and Communication

1. Our relationship-building with users will be focused on providing services to any and all individuals, while creating tools to help users personalize their actions, and to do so, the lines of communication will be established and built on trust, respect, and integrity.
2. We consider our engagement with our users a partnership, and we will seek feedback from them on ideas and existing features, as well as through supporting those interested in testing mobile app and website features.
3. Climate Steps will be open to review and criticism and will be publicly transparent regarding our decisions and actions.
4. Climate Steps believes that personal information of users is private, such as diet or housing arrangements, and that any such information uploaded for the purpose of action-planning shall not be retained. Further details can be found under Disclaimers and Terms of Use (<https://climatesteps.org/about/disclaimers-and-terms-of-use/>.)
5. Climate Steps is against spam – considering it basically a form of pollution (electronic mail storage uses a significant amount of energy). But we do occasionally need money, and we do have updates and events to give news about. We will combine and minimize our emails to the necessary, interesting news.

Onboarding Volunteers, Employees, Board members, Officers, Advisors, and Collaborators

1. Climate Steps seeks to be diverse and inclusive, as all peoples are affected by Climate Change and can bring different needs, viewpoints, and use cases to the forefront of action.
2. At no point shall the principles regarding Climate Steps’ actions listed within this document pre-determine and exclude prior to interviews resource donors or Board, Officer, Advisor, Employee, or Volunteer candidates, but they will be used for discussion during interviews.
3. Candidates who have a publicly apparent, strong philosophical COI with Climate Steps’ principles as given above, especially those might engender public distrust in the mission, goals, objectives, and content of Climate Steps, or impartial judgement in the business of Climate Steps, may be ruled out upon interviews and then discussion by the Board.
4. Climate Steps respects the privacy of all community members onboarded regarding any personal decisions on how they themselves implement climate action, discussed or otherwise.

Employee Dignity, Respect, and Collaboration

 We’ll be expanding these once we actually have employees, but the Board supports a critical decision by the Founder and President: All employees are supported for a four-day, 32-hr work week, which has been shown to be more productive, with a salary competitive to a five-day work week.

Posting, and Revision

1. The Board shall publicly make available on the Climate Steps’ website our principles regarding climate action, monetary or other resource acceptance, and others deemed appropriate.
2. The publicly available examples of Climate Steps’ principles do not rule out other potential principles that may be held by the current Board.
3. Climate Steps further has a set of financial and scientific COI policies that is available by email at climatesteps@gmail.com; these policies will be utilized for all Board, Advisory Committee, and other decision-making.
4. Utilizing the advice of the Advisory Committee, the Board may revisit and rewrite the language of Climate Steps principles every two years to allow for the latest in scientific research.

This is a small sampling of the ethics and standards based on the Council of Nonprofits Standards of Excellence code that we seek to achieve. You may contact the Board of Climate Steps at any time with questions on our standards, via board@climatesteps.org.