

# Climathon

POWERED BY:  ClimateKIC

## Climathon Training

Module 2: Creating Your Challenge

25/06/2025



# What is Climathon?

*“Tackling climate change from the ground up”*

Climathon events **bring citizens together to raise awareness and inspire local climate action.**

A Climathon event is **planned and coordinated by independent organisers.**

Climathon is an **in-person event** and it typically **lasts 12-48 hours.**

Climathon has been organised since 2015 with about **600 organisers**, **1,000 events** and over **30,000 participants** worldwide.



**Climathon**  
POWERED BY: ClimateKIC



## Training overview

### Module 1 Climate Crisis is Systemic

Understanding Systems approach

Understanding complexity

Start to identify the right vision for your Climathon

### Module 2 (June 25) Creating your challenge

Understanding Systems

Building the Climathon ecosystem

Creating challenge statements

### Module 3 (July 9) Hosting your Climathon

Understanding what kind of facilitation is needed

Choosing the right people to support you

Building the blocks of a systems informed Climathon

### Module 4 (July 16) Engaging Citizens

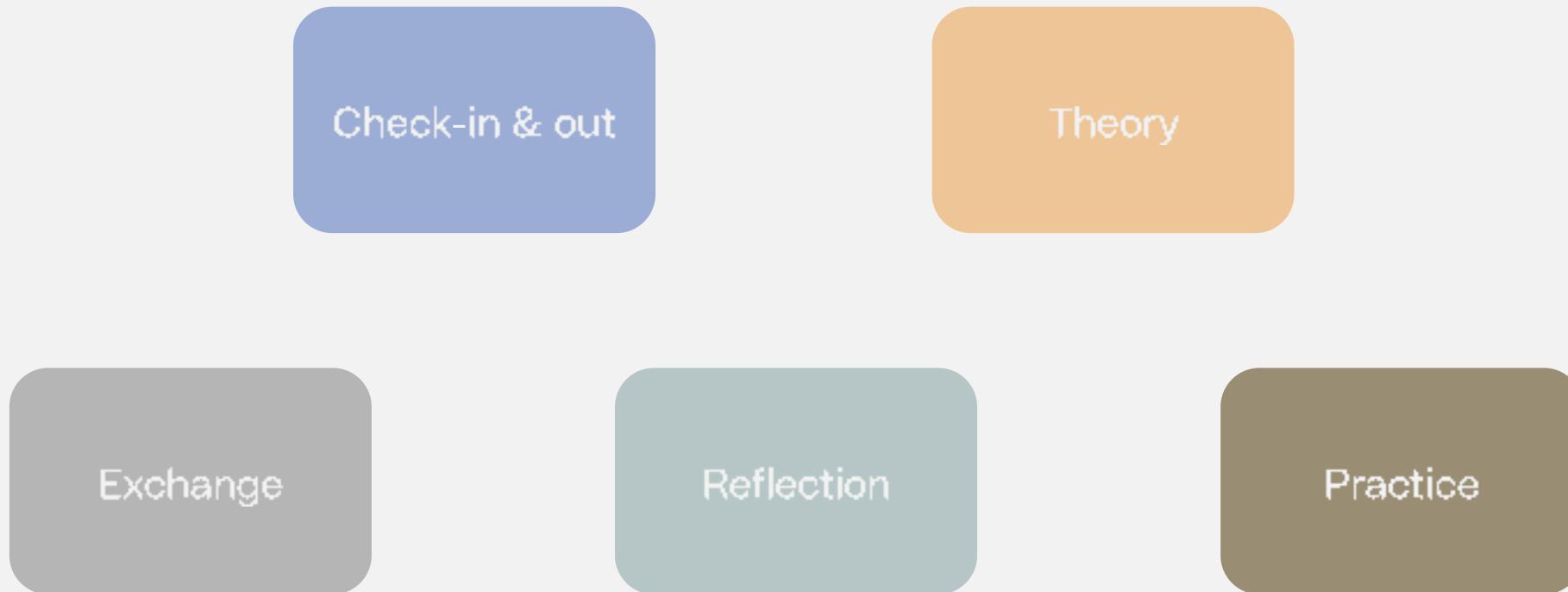
Understanding how best to promote your Climathon

Choosing the target group

Using the branding and brand guidelines



## Training methodology





# Check-in





# Introduction to your trainer

- Name: Bjarke Kovshøj
- Function/Role: Head of Citizen Engagement at Climate KIC
- Location/City: Copenhagen Denmark
- **What's one unique thing about the location you are in right now?**: You can swim in the harbour (in the middle of the city)
- **Why are you here?** Sharing my learnings and insights
- **What do you want to take away from today's session?** All your great questions
- **What is your relationship to Climathon?** I have been leading Climathon globally for more than 6 years





# Exchange





## Your current reality

Based on what you've learnt in the first module, **what focus will your Climathon have?**

What was the most significant learning that has stayed with you since the last session? What are you looking forward to from this session?



# Theory





What is a system?  
And what isn't?

### Bicycle example

If you deconstruct the parts of a bicycle, would you be able to achieve the goal of moving from A-B?



The whole is more than the sum of its parts

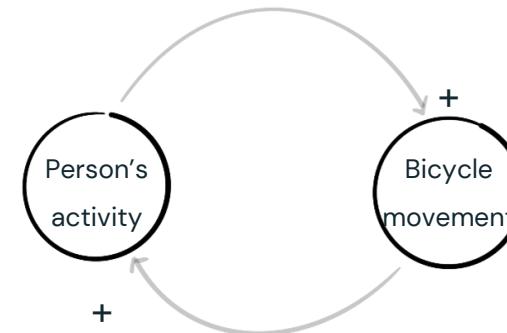


## What is a system?

Systems are systems because of the interactions between the parts.

Simple example:

The relationship between a bicycle and a person, when combined you can do things which neither you nor the bicycle can do separately.



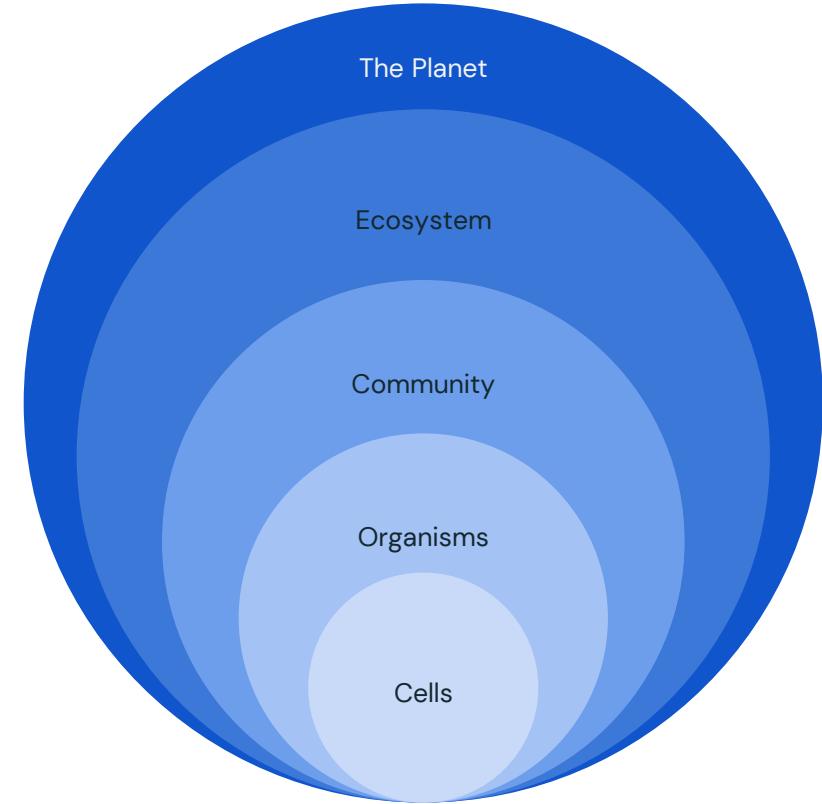
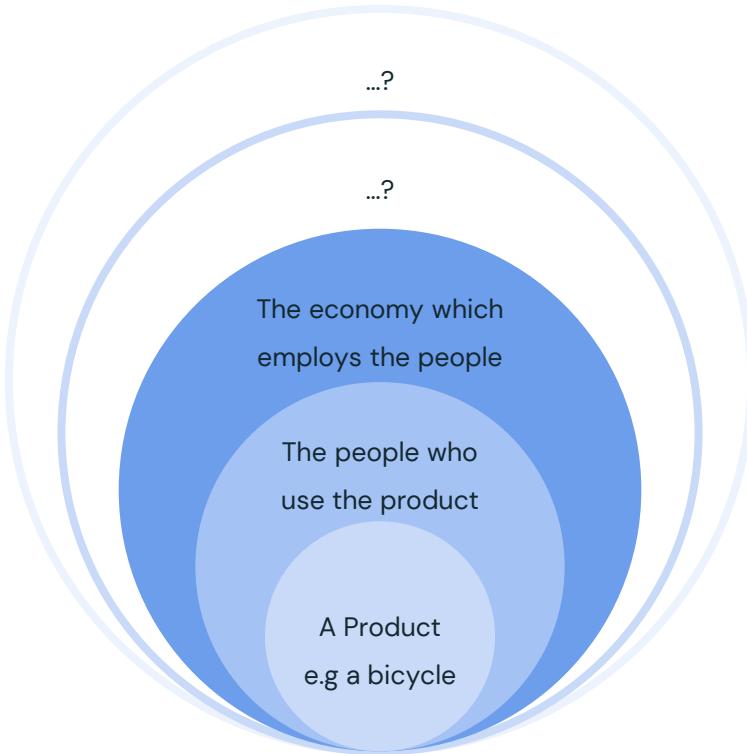


## What is a system? Nested systems

### THEORY

Systems are fractal,  
nested within each  
other.

Whole systems that  
perform a function, nest  
within another system  
that also performs a  
function



What is a system?  
Nested systems

Examples:



### Healthcare System

- Inside the System boundary: Hospitals, doctors, insurance providers, patients.
- Outside the system boundary: Social determinants of health, government policies, pandemics.



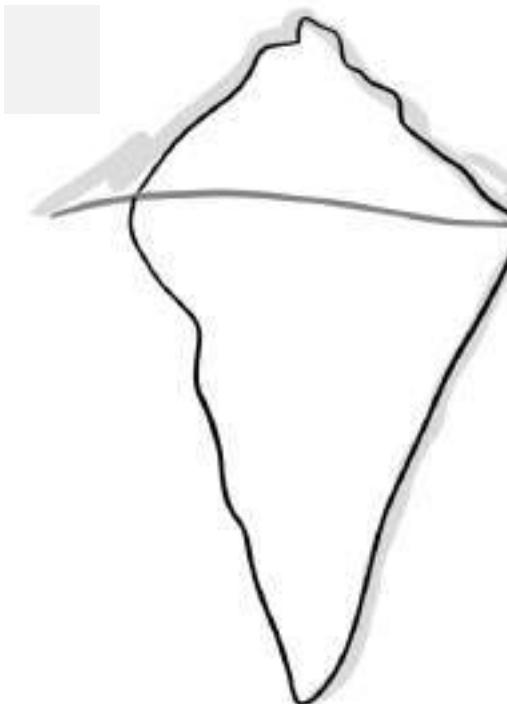
### Local food system

- Inside the System boundary: Local farms, farmers' markets, food cooperatives, restaurants, local grocery stores, transportation networks, consumers.
- Outside the system boundary: Climate change, national food regulations, large-scale agribusiness competition.



## What is a system? Mental models

### THEORY



	Events		
Patterns	High levels of air pollution and traffic congestion in major cities	Rising carbon emissions from fossil fuel-based power generation	Deforestation in the Amazon, Southeast Asia, and other forested regions.
Structures	Increased car dependency, urban sprawl, and slow adoption of public transit and electric vehicles.	Continued reliance on coal, oil, and gas despite the availability of renewable energy sources.	Continuous clearing of forests for agriculture (e.g., cattle ranching, palm oil plantations), logging, and urban expansion.
Assumptions, mental models, beliefs, values and worldviews	"Car ownership equals freedom and success," "Public transportation is for lower-income groups,"	"Fossil fuels are necessary for economic growth," "Renewables are unreliable,"	"Forests are an unlimited resource, the trees will grow back."

## What is a system? A city as a system

A city is a complex system. It has a boundary, which contains the attributes that make it unique.

- Nested Systems
  - Infrastructure System
  - Transportation System
  - Economic System
  - Healthcare System
  - Housing System
  - Environmental System
  - Education System
  - Governance and Policy System
- Mental models (cultural beliefs)
- Interconnected





# Reflection





Any new insights about how systems work?

Anything surprising?

## Climathon – A micro-ecosystem

Hosting a Climathon isn't just about creating the time and place for people to come together. It's also about creating the space for real change to happen.

To create long lasting change for your city, you need a variety of different collaborators to ensure it represents the whole picture.





## Who's your inner circle?

Find collaborators who understand and share the vision of the Climathon, can offer something unique that drives the mission forward (knowledge, money, expertise, agency).

Consider these questions:

- Who they are?
- What value do they bring?
- What roles they have?
- What is their perspective on climate action?





## Speaking the right language

### Start with shared purpose

"We are organising a climate action event to drive real systems change in urban sustainability. Your expertise in renewable energy can help shape solutions that work at a city-wide level."

### Emphasise mutual benefits

"By joining us, you can connect with policymakers, funders, and innovators driving climate action in this region."

### Speak their language

For businesses → "This event can showcase your leadership in green innovation."

For community leaders → "Your insights can ensure frontline communities are heard in climate planning."

### Foster an inclusive & collaborative mindset

"We want to co-design this event with partners like you to ensure it's impactful and inclusive."

### Make the first step easy

"Let's schedule a 20-minute call next week to explore how we can collaborate!"



Shared purpose: A directional goal

THEORY





# Exchange





Your future city

EXCHANGE

What does a thriving city look like that is home to thriving people, while respecting the wellbeing of all people and the health of the whole planet?

## The purpose of the challenge statement

To frame the creative direction of the Climathon, that other people get inspired by and that will allow you to engage the right partners.

The challenge statement is the guide rails that give the participants enough framing to walk their own road to climate action.





## What is a good challenge statement?

NO SOLUTION dictated in the statement, focus on what the challenge is

The challenge statement should allow for EXPLORATION of multiple responses

Problem

Solution

A question like this creates a very specific outcome:

**“How do we create a CO<sub>2</sub>-neutral start-up?”**

Problem

Possible Responses

But a question like this can provide the right boundaries for many potential solutions:

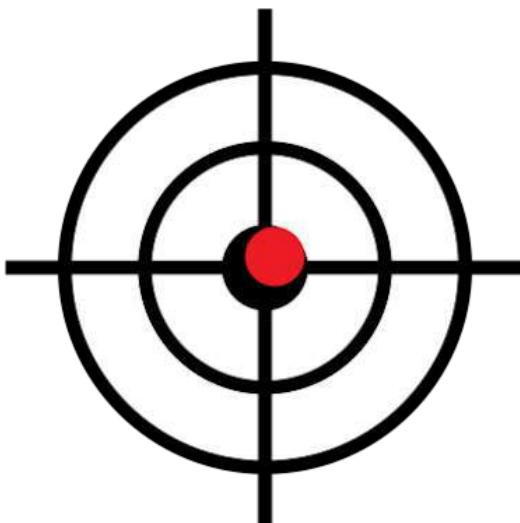
**“How do we create a city that regenerates with nature?”**

Space of Exploration

## What is a good challenge statement?

**Constrain the challenge space: Not too narrow not too broad**

Good challenge statements need a focus so the participants aren't trying to solve everything at once. (Not overwhelming but not too narrow)



Too broad

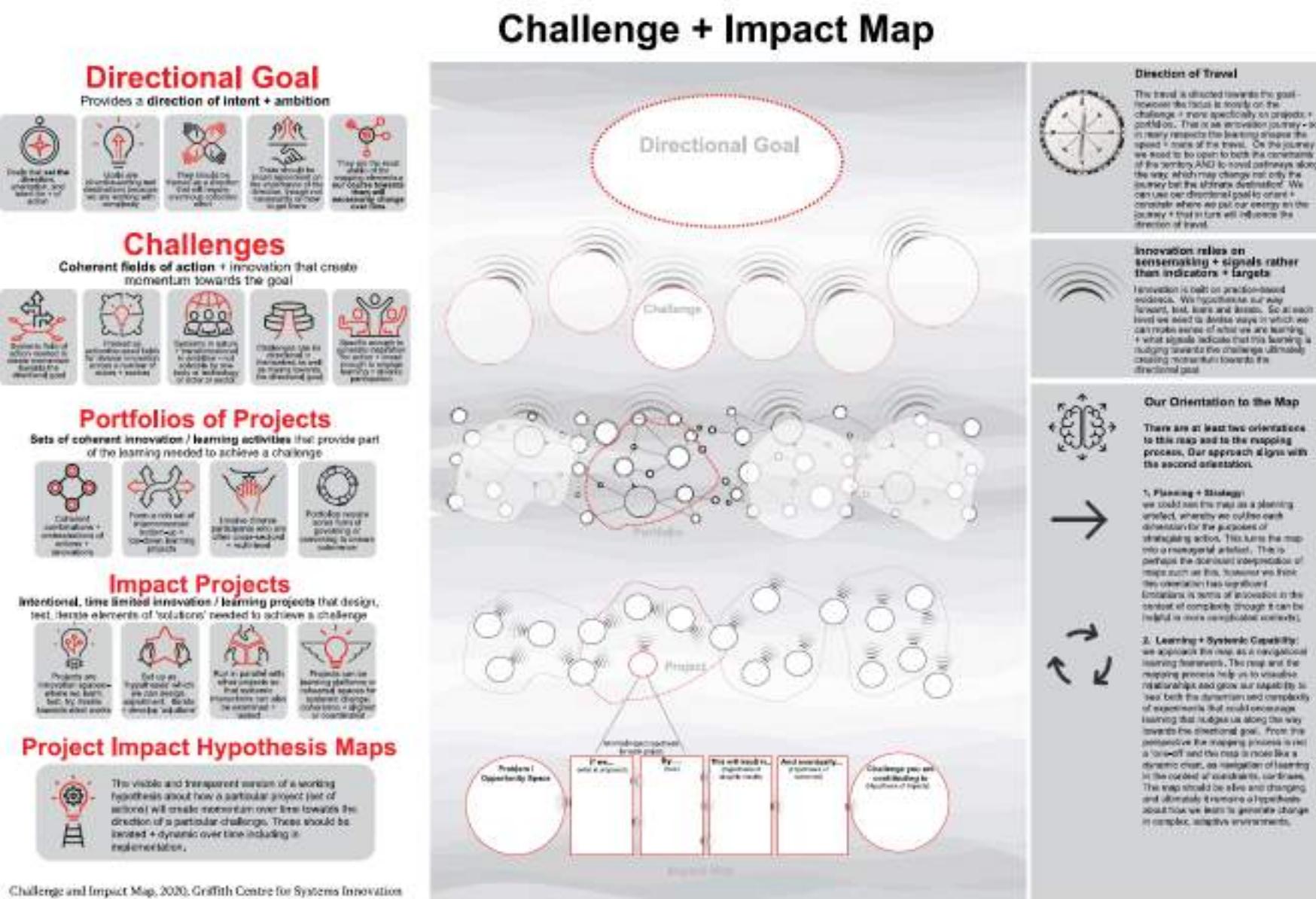
**“How might we take meaningful action toward climate resilient city?”**

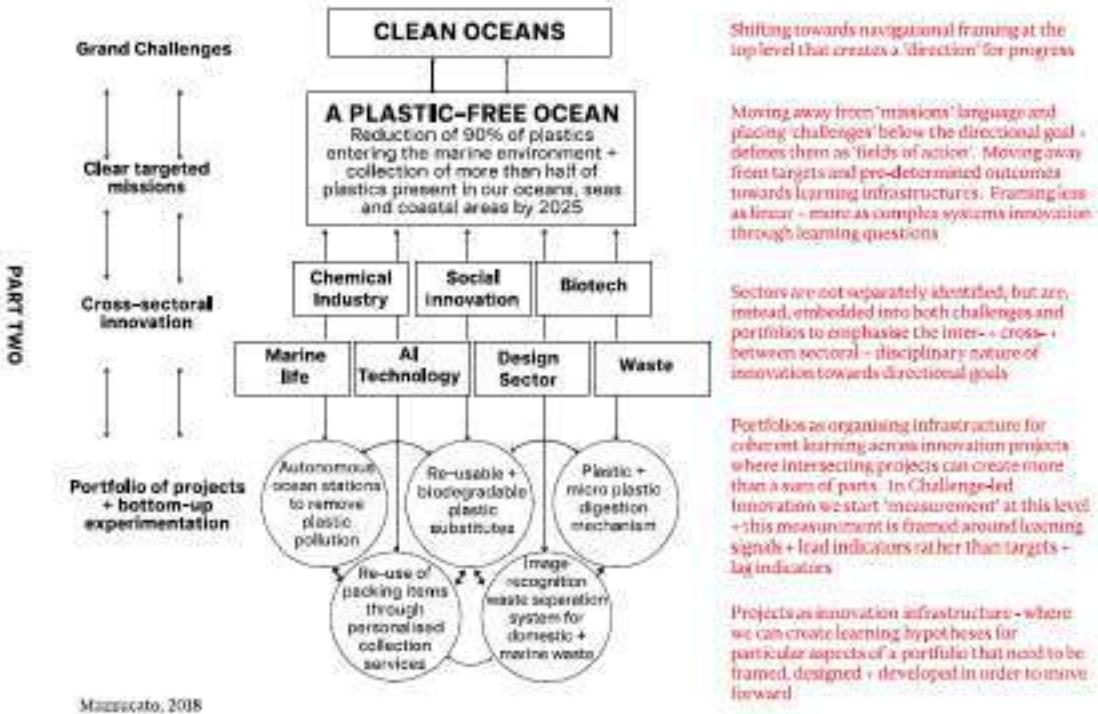
Too narrow

**“How might we make trash sorting easier?**

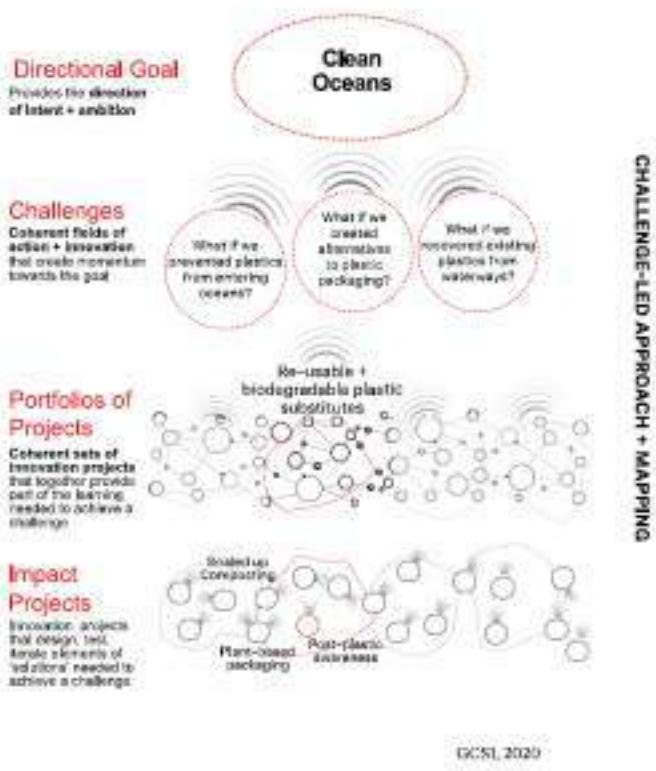
Not too broad, not too narrow

**“How might we empower citizens to take neighbourhood-based initiatives around waste?”**





## From Mission-Oriented to Challenge-Led





## Challenge Statement Scoping Conversations

### What is the challenge you are addressing?

When speaking with your challenge provider/partner, they will usually show up with a solution with which they would like your collaboration. For this step accept this solution but explore beneath to understand what the challenge is that they are trying to address. Explore:

#### 1-Underlying challenges

- What are the underlying challenges that were prompting the ideas/solutions the challenge provider were bringing? What isn't working well that is leading the partner to seek the solutions?
- What problem are they trying to solve?
- What undesirable outcomes does the current system produce?

#### 2-Context

- What is happening in the current situation?
- What are the important facts that are known, or insights already gained, that set context and explain the challenge at hand and why it matters?

#### 3-For whom

- For/with what group of people are you trying to address the challenge?
- Who are they working in service of?

#### 4-Goal: The Direction of the Future State

When you have achieved wild success in meeting the challenges we just talked about, what would be taking place?

- What new activities or behaviours would they be seeing?
- What values and norms would be present?
- What new relationships would be possible?
- What new ways of operating would be possible?

#### 5-The crux / The vital issue

- When it comes down to it, what are you trying to figure out? What is the key challenge that needs to be unlocked?

#### 6-Desirable Outcomes of the collaboration

- What will be looking to create together given the frame (resources/time) of the current initiative(Climathon)?



## Engaging your challenge provider

**A good challenge provider** is mission-driven, focused on solving the problem rather than simply promoting their existing solutions.

They are actively engaged in the problem space—it's a strategic priority for them. They have the agency, influence, and connections to drive change. In other words, the issue is *hot in their pan*, and they are committed to finding a solution.

Consider these key questions:

- Are they directly connected to the challenge or opportunity?
- Are they genuinely committed to addressing it?
- Are they dissatisfied with the current solutions and eager to explore new ones?
- Are they open to new perspectives, ideas, and methodologies?
- Do they have the time to invest in this collaboration—and are they willing to do so?



# Practice

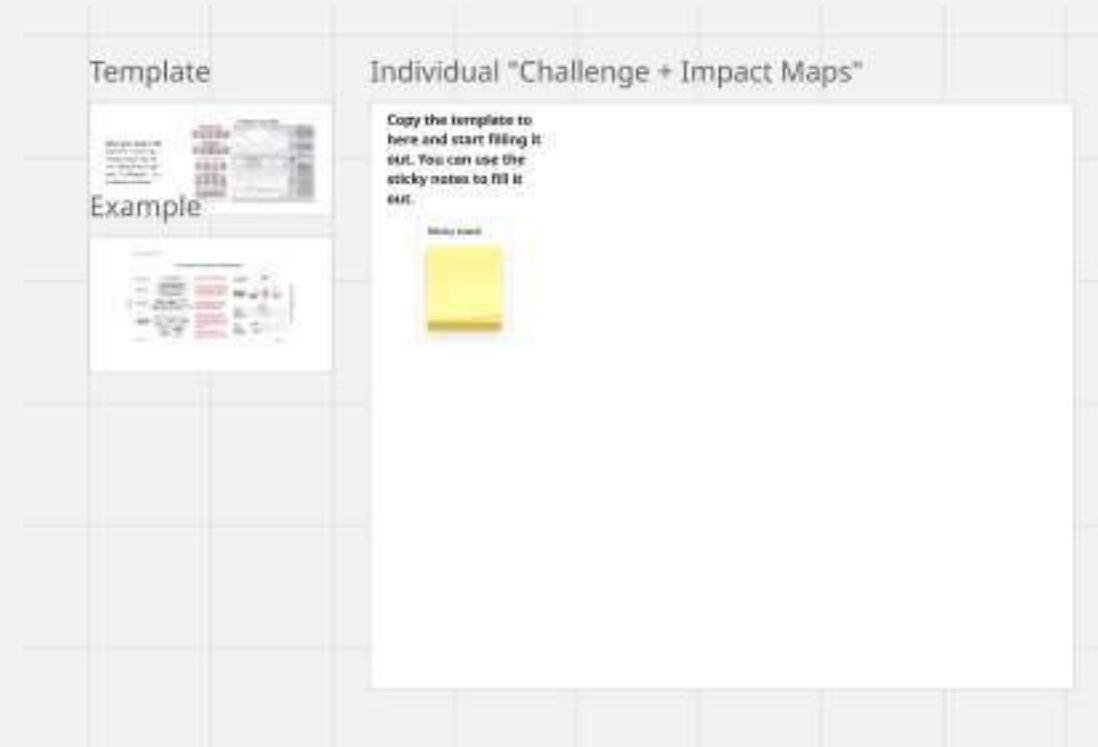




Your challenge statement

PRACTICE

**First draft of directional goal/challenge  
statement**



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# Exchange





Your future city

EXCHANGE

Share a few directional goals/challenge examples



# Check-out





Continue the work on the vision and challenge statement created for your city.

Rewrite the vision to align with your context, and along with your challenge provider, develop the challenge statement in line with the guidelines with your colleagues



# Thank you

## CONTACT

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