



Royal Roads
UNIVERSITY

CLIMATE ACTION PLAN

Annual Report
2023-2024



Land Acknowledgement

The campus is located on the traditional Lands of the Lekwungen-speaking Peoples, the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations. With gratitude, we live, work and learn here where the past, present and future of Indigenous and non-Indigenous students, faculty and staff come together.

This Land was, and continues to be, part of the fabric of life of Indigenous communities. The Esquimalt and Songhees families have lived, hunted and gathered on these Lands for thousands of years. Attitudes, practices and beliefs associated with colonization have dramatically altered Indigenous Peoples' relationships with the Land on which Royal Roads University is located. As immigrants, immigrant-descendants and visitors to these Lands, we have a responsibility to consider our individual and collective roles in addressing and redressing damaging impacts. Actions we commit to range from respecting the people of these Lands, increasing understanding of Indigenous ways of knowing and being, learning about the past and its impact on Indigenous Peoples and celebrating Indigenous cultures.

As we reflect on the importance of this place, and in the context of climate action, we are reminded to do this work in a way that establishes strong relationships built on reciprocity, respect and RRU's commitment to undo the legacies of colonialism, repair the effects of oppression, promote equity and to support the sovereignty of Indigenous Peoples.



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Introduction

This is the third annual report for Royal Roads University's [Climate Action Plan 2022-2027](#). In this report, we reflect on the successes and progress made over the last year (April 2023 to March 2024) to activating the Climate Action Plan goals. This report provides highlights, followed by an overview of progress, opportunities and next steps by each goal area. Key recommendations are identified on page 15, followed by an appendix of at-a-glance progress by action and accountability.

While this report was compiled by the Climate Action & Sustainability Team, it is reflective of a broader university-wide effort. The distributed nature of the plan – and the intention to build in climate action across the organization – is a key element of the university's climate action leadership approach.

RRU Climate Action Highlights of 2023/24

Increasing Education, Skills and Competencies for Canada's Climate Transition

New climate courses and programs

In addition to the large and continually expanding [suite of course and programs](#) focused on climate, sustainability and environment, RRU established several new training opportunities for climate professionals in 2023/24. New [climate-focused courses and micro-credentials offered through PCS](#) provide opportunities for rapid upskilling for working professionals. A new partnership with the [Climate Risk Institute \(CRI\)](#) – a non-profit organization that delivers services and training around climate risk assessment, adaptation planning and adaptation policy – enabled RRU to pair its expertise in online course delivery with CRI's network of adaptation, climate risk, and resilience experts. RRU's [Climate Adaptation Fundamentals Micro-credential](#), the [Infrastructure and Climate Resilience Planning Micro-credential Program](#), and the [Truth and Reconciliation at Work micro-credential](#) are leading examples of new programming available.

Climate Action Competency Framework (CACF V2)

Building on previous work this updated framework, is designed to support workforce upskilling for climate action. Produced and hosted by the [Resilience by Design Lab](#), the [CACF V2](#) includes adaptation and mitigation competencies and an interactive tool. This project was funded by Resilience by Design Lab and the Climate Action Secretariat, BC Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy (\$414,000). Moving forward, the Resilience by Design Lab is continuing to partner with CRI and national professional associations to produce profession-specific climate competencies (project valued at approximately \$400,000).

Canadian Climate Adaptation Digital Portal

Resilience by Design Lab is partnering with the Climate Risk Institute to develop [CanAdapt](#), an interactive portal that will provide a *one-stop-shop* approach to finding and understanding what climate action related educational and training opportunities are available across Canada. The project will start with a BC-focused prototype that will include RRU courses and courses from other BC post-secondary institutions – an extension of the partnerships and relationships developed with these institutions through the Resilience By Design's Adaptation Learning Network project (project valuation: \$1.3 million). CanAdapt will amplify and simplify public and private sector involvement in climate-informed workforce development, connects climate-action related education and training "suppliers" with the needs of consumers.

Upskilling for Canada's Climate Transition

A sustainable future needs a climate-ready workforce that can demonstrate leadership in relation to a broad range of complex climate issues. In 2023, the [Resilience by Design Lab](#) in collaboration with [Academy for Sustainable Innovation](#), released the [Upskilling for Canada's Climate Transition](#) report. Funded by Government of Canada's Future Skills Program, the report outlines findings and recommendations on how short-duration training can better upskill, reskill, and ultimately equip workers with the necessary competencies to lead Canada's transition to low-carbon, climate-resilient, and socially inclusive society. This year-long applied research project aligns with initiatives that have expanded RRU offerings, through new rapid upskilling climate-focused courses and micro-credentials (see above).

Engaging Youth in Climate Resilience

Youth programming for reconciliation and climate action

A partnership project between Royal Roads University and [Howl Experience](#) was established in 2023/24, thanks to \$1.5 million in funding from the Canada Service Corps service placement funding stream. The [Building Youth Resilience Through Community Connections](#) initiative enables more young people to have unique field-study experiences which combine natural sciences curriculum, Indigenous Knowledge, and on-the-land learning with opportunities for both community building and resume building. Howl offers experiential learning program that engages Indigenous and marginalized non-Indigenous youth. RRU's Resilience by Design Lab helped Howl expand their programming and formalize their curriculum. A *Land-based Community Leadership for ReconciliAction* micro credential was created that blended land-based learning with what it is to know a place according to the people of that place.

Youth Designing Climate Resilience

The [Youth Designing Climate Resilience \(YDCR\) project](#), funded by SSHRC, has been extended into 2024 in order to include a follow up project with School District 48 to work with students and educators from the Q'aLaTKu7em Community School in Fort Currie on a Phase 2 of their community climate resilience project. The YDCR project began in 2020 and was designed to involve researchers, students, and educators from BC and Puerto Rico in building climate resilience using design thinking to generate and implement student-led resilience projects. The reports on both projects will be posted on the Resilience by Design website in summer 2024 (\$347,052).

Community Engagement

Climate Week

In December 2023, RRU organized and hosted [Climate Week](#), an inaugural series of free conversations and events featuring inspiring thought-leaders, activists, artists and change agents to challenge society to look at climate solutions in a new way. Climate Week focused on amplifying diverse perspectives on topics such as decolonizing climate action, leadership, relational accountability, social movements, and art as inspiration for much-needed social change.

Four online speaker series events and three in-person engagement sessions made up the calendar of events. The week culminated in a community-based art project developed in partnership with the Township of Esquimalt and UVic's Department of Education. Attendees co-created a climate canvas mosaic which will ultimately be hung at RRU Campus. Two of the week's sessions included students in the MA in Climate Action Leadership program (a virtual poster presentation of their work and a two-day Climate Action Leadership Accelerator Workshop). Climate Week attracted more than 800 registrants and created inspiring week of connection-building, and a jumping off point to explore climate action as a cultural, relational and equity challenge.

Changemaker Speaker Series

RRU's [Changemaker Speaker Series](#) offers students, professionals, alumni and concerned citizens the opportunity to hear from thought leaders and inspired experts as they explore humanity's most complex and pressing challenges. The four public engagements this past year were well received, solution oriented and highly impactful. In May, Dr. Thomas Homer-Dixon gave us *Hope in the Polycrisis*; in September, The Honourable Jody Wilson-Raybould spoke to a packed audience about *True Reconciliation*; in November, Dr. Andrea Davis unpacked critical imperatives in her talk called, *To Be in Relation: Indigenous, Black and Other Solidarities*; and in April, John Vaillant addressed the interrelated issues of *Fire and Oil: Rising to the Challenge of a More Flammable World*.

The Farm at Royal Roads

This past year, [The Farm at Royal Roads](#) grew more than 3,000 lbs of produce (doubling its production). We also established a [Community Fridge on campus](#), welcomed more than 100 volunteers, hosted seven events, and planted the Market Garden and Indigenous Medicine Garden. Organizations involved with and benefitting from *The Farm* last year included [Our Place Society](#), [Iyé Creative](#), and [the Victoria Community Fridge](#). Additionally, the Toronto Dominion Bank donated \$196,000 to RRU's *A Vision in Bloom* program which works through *The Farm* to tackle food insecurity, preserve cultural heritage and improve biodiversity. It's been a big year of growth and learning. There are plans to expand the existing polyculture orchard and continue integrating Farm projects within RRU's Living Lab model, decolonizing curricula, practice and connecting more people to the land.

University Engagement

Campus Stewardship sessions

Since Earth Day in April, members of the Climate Action and Sustainability, Human Resources, and Grounds and Gardens teams have worked together to host a variety of campus stewardship sessions. RRU participants attended lunch-hour sessions to learn about native plants and ecosystems, remove invasive plants, (such as Scotch Broom and English Ivy), pick up trash at the Esquimalt Lagoon shore and volunteer at RRU's Giving Garden.

Resilience and Reconnection Circle

Recognizing the mental and emotional impacts that climate change, political polarization and biodiversity loss are having on the university community, Associate Professor Hilary Leighton and the Climate Action & Sustainability Team initiated a monthly *Resiliency & Reconnection Circle* for staff and faculty. These gatherings have been occurring monthly since October 2023. During these one-hour facilitated discussions, participants build connections with others as they acknowledge and process their emotions in ways that build courage, acceptance, and inner strength.

Events, Webinars and Informal Learning

A variety of events and activities have continued to foster a culture of engagement in climate and sustainability on campus. Events included the annual Go by Bike Week booth and challenge, Earth Week events such as an invasive plant removal session, a library display, a Giving Garden tour and a lagoon shore cleanup, the Career Learning Development's [Career Innovation Project](#) which is focused specifically on climate jobs, as well as knowledge-sharing webinars throughout the year showcasing faculty and researcher work and a new [Get involved in climate action and sustainability](#) webpage.

Greenhouse Gas Emission Reductions

Through the *Climate Action Plan* and the UN Race to Zero campaign pledge, RRU has committed to tracking and reducing emissions from both upstream and downstream of the organization’s core activities. RRU’s [climate leadership commitments](#) and targets include:

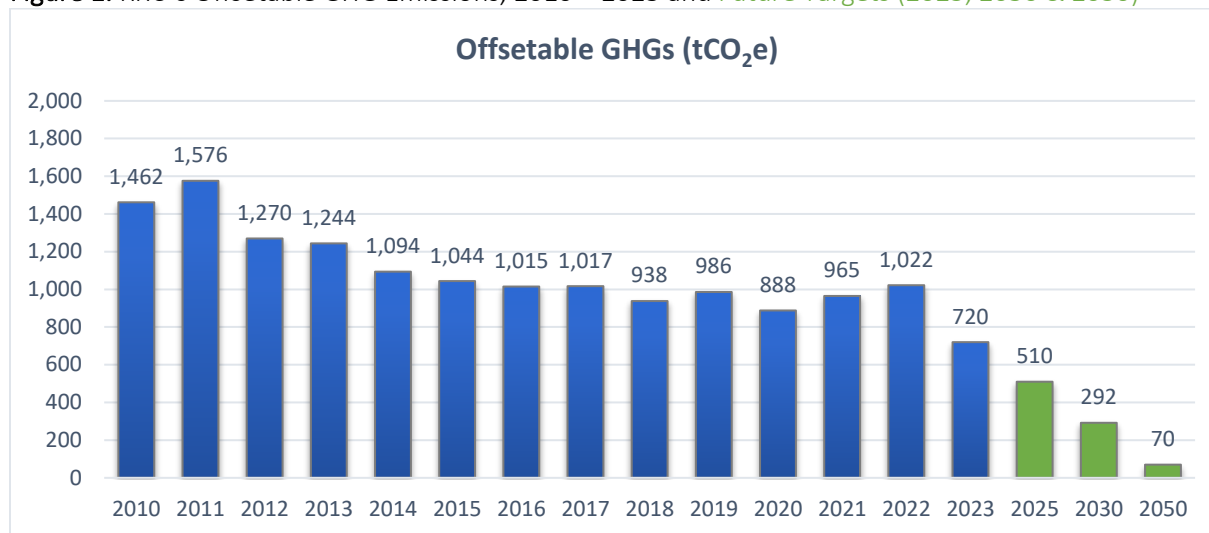
- Reducing emissions as quickly as possible – 65% by 2025, 80% by 2030, and net-zero by 2050.
- Ensuring future buildings no longer rely on fossil fuels as the primary energy source.
- Extending institutional responsibility and leadership to reduce scope 3 emissions¹ to 50% by 2030 (from 2019 levels), and to offset the remainder.
- Piloting innovative solutions for climate mitigation and adaptation.

In keeping with these commitments, RRU is also part of the UN [Race to Zero](#), a global initiative rallying non-state actors to halve global emissions by 2030. Targets must cover all GHG emissions including scope 3 where they are material to total emissions and where data availability allows them to be measured sufficiently.

Scope 1 and 2 emissions

In 2023, Royal Roads University’s offsetable GHG emissions totalled 720 tCO₂e, representing a 49% reduction from our 2010 baseline. This GHG reduction has been achieved mostly through RRU’s switching from conventional methane gas² to Renewable Natural Gas (known as RNG or biomethane). Through this program, the university designated 100 per cent of its fuel as RNG, thereby reducing offsetable GHG emissions associated with direct fuel consumption. RRU’s GHG trend is outlined in Figure 1³. In 2024, RRU expects to meet and exceed both its 2025 and its 2030 reduction targets through use of RNG. Royal Roads total GHG emissions for 2023 are 961 tCO₂e (which includes 240 tonnes of biogenic emissions (tBioCO₂e) plus 720 tCO₂e). This represents a 34 per cent reduction from RRU’s overall baseline of 1465 tCO₂e in 2010.

Figure 1. RRU’s Offsetable GHG Emissions, 2010 – 2023 and **Future Targets (2025, 2030 & 2050)**



¹ Scope 3 emissions are indirect emissions that are created as a consequence of an institution’s activities both up and downstream in its value chain. These include emissions related to commuting, business travel, waste, purchased goods and services, investments, etc.

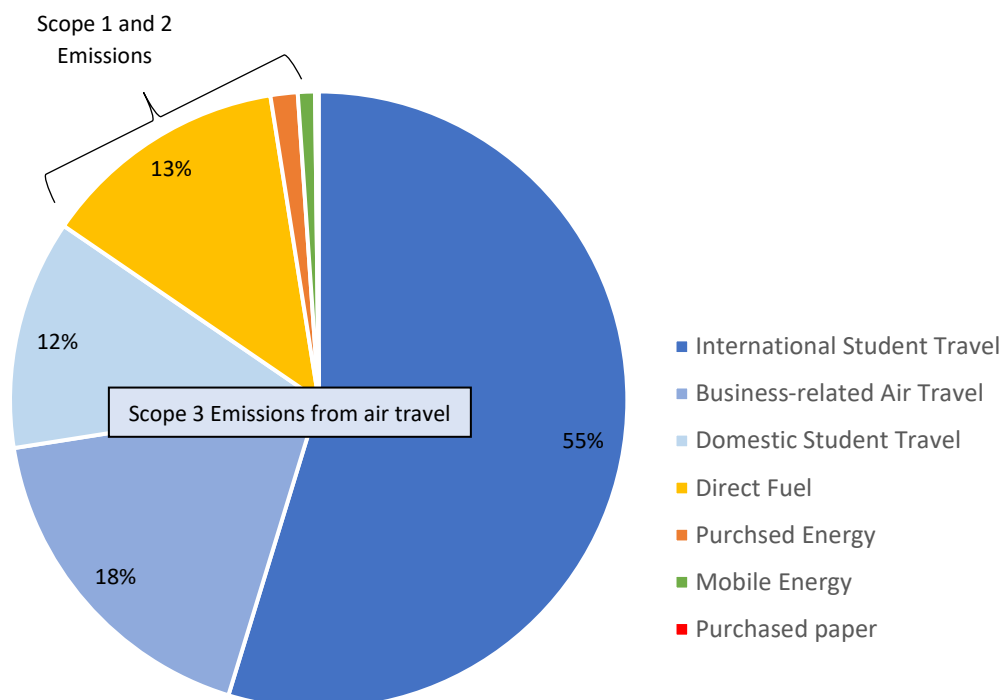
² Methane gas is also known as “natural gas.” RRU’s source for this fuel is FortisBC, which supplies gas that is 95% methane ([FortisBC](#)). Methane has a global warming potential 28 times stronger than CO₂ ([BC Ministry of Environment and Climate Change, 2023](#)). Studies have shown that using the terminology of “natural gas” implies a clean source of energy and an undeservedly positive public perception ([Yale, 2022](#)). In recognition of these factors, RRU has changed its terminology.

³ Note that annual totals have been updated as per 2023 province-wide emission factor adjustments.

Understanding Scope 3 emissions

In 2023, faculty members helped RRU develop preliminary baselines for most of RRU's material Scope 3 emissions (including business and student air travel, investments, waste and purchased goods and services). Some of this work is still in progress. Using 2019 baseline data, 85% of RRU's GHG emissions are attributable to air travel. Figure 2 shows the air travel for RRU business and domestic and international student travel compared to operational emissions for 2019. Note that this graph does not include the baseline totals for other scope 3 categories such as goods & services, waste, investments, and commuting.

Figure 2. RRU Emission (tCO₂e) for 2019: Business and student travel compared to operational emissions



Based on a survey of the RRU community and other post-secondary staff working on business air travel emission reductions, an air travel recommendations report was put forward and a draft decision-making tool was designed. Work to further the recommendations and implement a strategy will require academic and executive support. Some air travel tracking is now being logged through a booking service provider (Direct Travel) and will provide an initial data set for determining RRU's air travel footprint.

Next steps for scope 3 work, include establishing a baseline for commuting, developing processes for tracking the material emissions the university wants to reduce, and determining the practice and policy shifts that will contribute to a comprehensive decarbonization strategy.

Zero Carbon Design

Westshore campus - Zero Carbon Building Design Standard: Our new Westshore facility has a number of innovative elements to ensure sustainability and a lower environmental footprint. These features include carbon-capture concrete reducing carbon by over 40% compared to traditional concrete, the use of sustainable BC timber to reduce shipping costs, photovoltaic panels on the roof reducing external energy by up to 15%, low water devices, large windows to increase light and reduce heating (they are Low-e glass so help with cooling too).

The Rose Garden cottage renovation was completed in 2023. Providing a new home to RRU's [Cascade Institute](#), this is the first campus project to meet [Zero Carbon Building \(ZCB\) Design Standards™](#).

Improving Energy & Water Management on Campus

In 2023, RRU secured BC Hydro funding in support of the launch of an energy management program. Within this framework, development of a *Strategic Energy Management Plan* (SEMP) was prioritized as a first step. This plan will chart the course for energy considerations that will help RRU's meet its Net-Zero goals by 2050. With a focus on metering, monitoring and auditing, RRU will be in position to decrease energy consumption, increase electrification and transition to renewable energy sources. Improved energy management will put the university on track to decarbonization. Additionally, through this program, RRU will seek to improve water quality and quantity on campus by conducting a systematic review of both incoming water to the campus and water use on campus.

Fleet electrification

RRU has reduced fleet associated GHGs by 34% since 2010; and with the purchase of five hybrids so far, is on track to its goal of electrifying all regular-use vehicles by 2028. In 2023/24, RRU reached its goal of installing 24 electric vehicle charging ports by 2025. By providing [EV charging stations on campus](#), we're helping reduce GHG emissions and aligning with provincial, federal, and global initiatives, such as standards for [low-carbon fuel](#) (Province of BC) and [zero-emission vehicles](#) (federal government).

Climate Risk and Adaptation

Climate Risk Assessment

The impacts of climate change are already being experienced and will intensify over the coming decades. In 2023, RRU initiated its first Climate Risk Assessment (CRA) process. The assessment will consider how a diverse set of climate hazards could impact university on- and off-campus assets, services, people, and strategic objectives, and provide a prioritized list of risks to inform action planning. The CRA builds on existing data and frameworks within the region by considering climate impacts not only to the local campuses, but also offsite locations and the broader global context.

Supported by a team of experts, this one-year assessment process will be RRU's first formal step into assessing climate risks. Key deliverables include a gap analysis, tailored risk assessment framework, an engagement plan and report, a risk matrix and a resilience roadmap. The project team will seek to engage key interest holders, including the university community, Indigenous rights holders and local partners. Engagement during the CRA will also include learning and capacity building opportunities with students, faculty and staff.

Progress, Opportunities and Next Steps by Climate Action Goal and Priority Area

The following is an outline of RRU’s progress on the Climate Action Plan by goal and priority area during the 2023/24 reporting year. Each priority area section also outlines opportunities and next steps. This outline, alongside the Status Summary Report (Appendix 1) supports the university’s commitment to transparency and accountability for its climate action performance.

RRU Climate Action Plan – three goals and five strategic priority areas

Goal 1 - Lead and Enable	
Make urgent climate action core to the university’s purpose and business by establishing climate-driven governance, policies and competencies. Be a leading example of mitigation and resilience.	
Priority area 1	Governance and leadership
Priority area 2	Administration
Priority area 3	Campus operations
Goal 2 - Build Knowledge and Capacity	
Increase climate change awareness and action through education, research and engagement. Advance learning that is responsive to place, people and nature.	
Priority area 4	Education, knowledge generation, and research
Goal 3 - Collaborate for Solutions	
Co-create climate action solutions, leverage resources and amplify positive impact through relationships, partnerships and dialogue.	
Priority area 5	Collaboration, engagement and outreach

Goal 1 - Lead and Enable

PRIORITY AREA 1: GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP

Progress

- Distributed leadership:** The Climate Leadership Committee (CLC), and three Climate Advisory Working Groups continue to guide and support a distributed and shared leadership network across the university. The CLC’s quarterly meetings review progress and provide strategic advice related to climate action across the university. The working group for *Mitigation & Adaptation* met monthly while those for *Education & Research*, and for *Collaboration, Engagement & Outreach* met less often but are anticipated to pick back up again in the coming year.
- Multi-stakeholder initiatives:** In 2023, Ashoka U reaffirmed RRU's status as a Changemaker Campus, a distinction held since 2017. RRU is one of just seven institutions in Canada bearing this title.
- Climate Resilience:** RRU kicked off its first Climate Risk Assessment in January of 2024 (see pg. 7 for details). This project is an important step in a future adaptation and resilience plan for the university.

- **Transparency & accountability:** Alongside the *Climate Change Accountability Report*, this annual report supports the fulfilment of the transparency and accountability commitments the university established as part of its climate action leadership approach. The need to adjust key performance indicators for the *Climate Action Plan* was identified last year. To date, these adjustments have only been discussed with the Mitigation & Adaptation Advisory Working Group.

Opportunities and Next Steps

- **Integration:** Greater and continued integration of climate action into decision making through increased awareness and inclusion within policy and process updates.
- **Indigenous collaboration:** The Indigenous Engagement position (currently vacant) will be moving to the Indigenous Leadership team and hiring for this position will commence this fiscal.
- **Climate Action Hub:** In the coming year, it will be important to determine the feasibility and forward path for the proposed Climate Action Hub or if alternative frameworks should be established.

PRIORITY AREA 2: ADMINISTRATION

Progress

- **Delegation and resourcing:** Work is underway to incorporate climate action competencies into the employee competency framework underpinning all job profiles and recruitment materials (completion expected in late 2024).
- **Innovative funding:** RRU's Advancement Office and the Climate Action Office worked together to put forward funding requests. While ultimately unsuccessful, new opportunities will be pursued in the coming year.
- **Understanding scope 3 emissions:** Over 2023/24, RRU faculty established preliminary baselines for waste, business travel, domestic and international student travel (see p. 6 for more details)
- **Purchasing, procurement & investment:** A draft purchasing policy was completed and sent forward for review. Once approved, this policy will lay the foundation for being able to integrate climate and sustainability considerations into future purchasing decisions.
- **Decarbonization Pathways:** In 2023/24, RRU began development of its *Decarbonization Pathways* report to provide an overview and roadmap for decarbonization efforts across all scopes of emissions. It is anticipated that this document will be updated regularly as more detailed work is developed and implemented by respective leads within the university.
- **Paper Reductions:** Continued digitization for leave and attendance has contributed to RRU's continued and dramatic reduction of paper use since the pandemic.

Opportunities and Next Steps

- **Decision making and implementation:** Efforts to integrate climate action into decision making through policy, process updates and integration with other strategic plans will continue (e.g., consideration in all briefing notes, sustainable procurement policy and guidance, responsible investing, etc.).
- **Every job is a climate job:** The goal is to add climate action competencies into RRU's Professional Development Program for the 2025 cycle. In support of this, climate action is woven into HR's health and wellbeing strategy (including making tools and resources available to staff and leaders on climate action). Climate onboarding, education and training for employees is one facet of this that will require further development.
- **Scope 3 emissions management and reductions:** Scope 3 baseline development will be completed to round out a full picture of RRU's scope 3 emissions. Remaining categories include investments, purchased goods and services, and commuting.

PRIORITY AREA 3: CAMPUS OPERATIONS

Progress

- **Buildings and energy:** An energy management program and *Strategic Energy Management Plan* was initiated in 2023/24, building on previous energy audits. This work will be the precursor to a future Building Operations program. In the past year, RRU designated its direct fuel (methane gas from Fortis) as 100% “Renewable Natural Gas.” This interim step reduced RRU’s total GHG emissions (see p. 5 for more on this shift).
- **Fleet electrification and EV charging:** Fleet transition continued with the replacement of retired vehicles with hybrids and electrics. While the transition to a fully electric fleet is well underway, asset renewal will be paused in 2024/25 due to funding constraints (see p. 7 for more on EV charging).
- **Paper:** Since the pandemic, paper procurement consistently makes up less than one per cent of RRU’s GHG emissions. RRU’s standard procurement practice is to select low carbon sugar cane paper for all standard paper orders. This, coupled with a continued shift towards online course delivery and increased electronic processes in RRU’s finance, program and administrative areas, have resulted in significant paper savings.
- **Risk and Adaptation:** In addition to the Climate Risk Assessment, the university participated in a pilot test of the province’s Climate Readiness Tool. This tool helped RRU to self-assess, report and monitor progress on building climate adaptation capacity and to identify focus areas to enhance organizational maturity for climate readiness.

Opportunities and Next Steps

- **Energy management and continued decarbonization:** Continued cross-departmental efforts are needed to determine accountabilities and prioritize decarbonization across all scopes. Key for scope 1 and 2 emissions will be a focus on decreasing energy consumption, increasing electrification and exploring renewable energy. The Operations and Resilience team will continue to focus on lighting upgrades and energy efficiency improvements. Funding for future infrastructure upgrades is a constraint and discussions are planned with BC Hydro to identify grant opportunities.
- **Water Management:** A water audit and irrigation audit are being planned to inform and improve management.
- **Waste Management:** Ongoing optimization of waste and compost collection services to support a zero-waste campus while also maintaining “bear safe” practices.
- **Scope 3 Management:** Once scope 3 baselines are established, an ongoing tracking, management and reduction program will be established. Throughout this work, RRU will align our approaches with best practices within the higher education sector.

Goal 2 - Build Knowledge and Capacity

PRIORITY AREA 4: EDUCATION, KNOWLEDGE GENERATION, AND RESEARCH

Progress

Education

- **More climate and sustainability courses and programs:** In addition to increasing the number of [sustainability and climate-related courses and programs](#), Professional and Continuing Studies expanded the *Climate Action Micro-credential Program*, offered in partnership with Climate Risk Institute, and developed a new *Climate Resilience Planning Micro-credential Program*.
- **Inaugural successes:** Last year RRU celebrated the graduation of the first cohorts of the Graduate Diploma and Master of Arts in *Climate Action Leadership*, as well as the Certificate in *Indigenous Environmental Leadership* (delivered in partnership with ECO-Canada).
- **Climate action capacity building and upskilling:** Initiatives through the Resilience By Design Lab included the development of the *CanAdapt* portal, an interactive, one-stop-shop to climate action related educational and training opportunities across Canada. The project will start with a BC-focused prototype that will include RRU courses and courses from other BC post-secondary institutions. This \$1.3 million project is an extension of the partnerships and relationships developed through the Resilience By Design's Adaptation Learning Network project.
- **K-12 Connections:** Dr. Robin Cox provided a keynote to teachers focused on the importance of integrating climate change into curriculum and adopting a systems lens approach. This was followed up with a half day workshop with teachers from the Association of Independent School in BC focused on integrating a multi-solving lens into climate change and climate action focused projects.

Living Labs

- **The Farm at RRU:** This project is proceeding well with successful fundraising through the RRU Foundation, community partnerships, a variety of Living Lab projects and the planting of the Indigenous Medicine Garden with support of local Nations. Coordination with campus operations continues to be a priority to support drainage and irrigation.

Research

- **Active Research:** During 2023/24, RRU led 211 active, funded research projects under the research theme *Sustainable Communities, Livelihoods and the Environment*.
- **Canada Research Chairs (CRCs):** RRU's four CRCs are engaged in work that is interrelated with issues surrounding climate and the environment. These include Dr. Jaigris Hodson on Digital Communication for the Public Interest, Dr. Julie MacArthur on Reimagining Capitalism, Dr. Robert Newell on Climate Change, Biodiversity and Sustainability, and Dr. Tracy Smith-Carrier on Advancing the UN Sustainable Development Goals.
- **Cascade Institute:** The [Cascade Institute at RRU received \\$9.6 million for energy transition research](#). The joint initiative funded by the Canada First Research Excellence Fund (CFREF) will see significant investment into "Accelerating Community Energy Transformation (ACET)" research, helping to scale up energy system innovation to the national and global level.

Opportunities and Next Steps

- **Climate action capacity building and upskilling:** With approximately \$400,000 from Natural Resources Canada, the Resilience By Design Lab is partnering with the Climate Risk Institute to produce profession-

specific, climate-informed competency frameworks. National professional associations (Engineers, Accountants, Planners, Landscape Architects) will be engaged on this two-year project commencing April 2024.

- **Geothermal research program:** [Cascade Institute and Ultra-deep Geothermal](#) research will advance in the coming year thanks to donations totaling over \$3 million from three vital philanthropic funders—Grantham Foundation for the Protection of the Environment, Founders Pledge’s Climate Change Fund and Rethink Charity Foundation’s RC Forward Climate Change Fund donor. This first-of-its-kind-in-Canada ultradeep geothermal research program massively upscales development efforts in geothermal power and supports national commitments to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050.
- **MITACS project:** Dr. Robin Cox secured a new MITACS postdoctoral fellowship. Dr. Michelle Hamilton Page, a graduate of RRU, will work with Dr. Cox to explore intersectional and collaborative leadership approaches to climate action. In partnership with the Ontario College of Art and Design University, this project informs the design of an Augmented and Virtual reality system to increase engagement in climate action.
- **Climate, Complexity and Relational Accountability:** An upcoming learning opportunity taught and facilitated by Dr. Vanessa Andreotti, Dr. Sharon Stein, and Giovanna Andreotti will allow RRU staff and faculty to deepen their understanding of the historical and ongoing harms underlying the climate emergency while also increasing their resilience and accountability. Through a collaboration between the Office of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) and the Climate Action and Sustainability Team, RRU was able to secure this opportunity for a deeper dive in the spaces of climate complexity, EDI and decolonization.
- **Academic Integration:** as RRU moves forward with its academic re-organization, there will be more opportunities to integrate related commitments made within the Climate Action Plan.
 - Some initial work was completed to consider the design of the Climate Action Hub, however, this initiative stalled due to financial and capacity constraints.
 - Climate onboarding and training and the development of curricular integration opportunities is currently on hold pending the identification of a faculty lead and broader capacity.

Goal 3 - Collaborate for Solutions

PRIORITY AREA 5: COLLABORATION, ENGAGEMENT AND OUTREACH

Progress

Community Engagement

- Through collaborative efforts across the university, several campus engagement efforts took place in the past year including Earth Week 2023, Go by Bike Week, monthly stewardship sessions and Giving Garden Tours (find more detail about these in the related highlights above).
- In December 2023, RRU hosted [Climate Week](#). See more on this above on p. 3.
- RRU provides ongoing partnership support and engagement with the Esquimalt Lagoon Stewardship Initiative, a regional group focused on the health and future of the lagoon.
- RRU's engagement with broader sector initiatives (i.e., through Universities Canada Net Zero Initiative, the University Air Travel Community of Practice, the UN Race to Zero, the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education, and the BC Climate Risk Community of Practice) continue to be a focus of climate action and sustainability collaborations.
- The Farm at RRU boasted a successful year in terms of crops produced, funding procured, and partnerships established (see more on p. 4).

University Engagement

- Staff and faculty engagement with climate and sustainability is supported by a variety of volunteering and learning opportunities including campus stewardship sessions, helping at the farm, cleanups, and other related climate activities (more about engagement on p. 4).
- Human Resources offers all staff members two free courses annually (with six climate-related options currently available).
- Monthly Resilience and Reconnection Circles to process climate emotions and forge greater connections are organized by the Climate and Sustainability Office and facilitated by Dr. Hilary Leighton.
- [The Cascade Institute](#) at RRU hosted Lunch and Learn sessions to share more about the research they are working on (namely, the Polycrisis and Ultradeep Geothermal).
- Student culture: In addition to students being able to participate in a variety of climate and sustainability events and learning opportunities, Student Services offers regular climate grief counselling and eco-anxiety circles.

Communications & Marketing

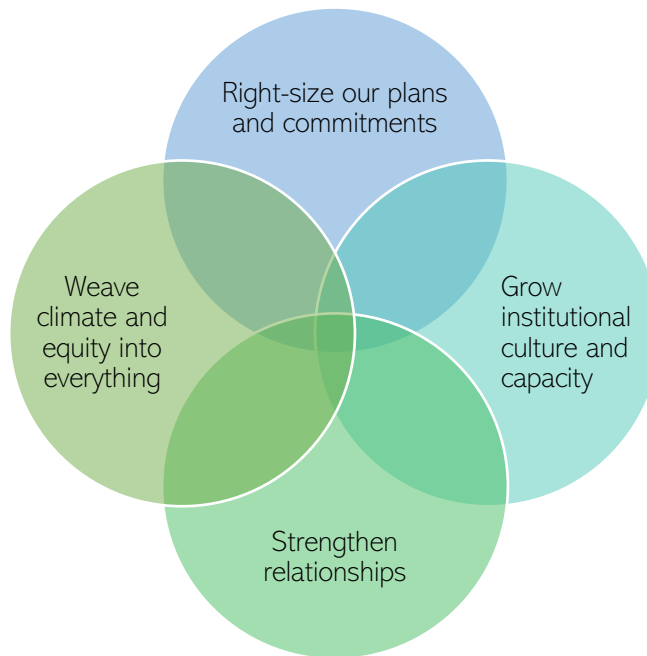
- Ongoing support of existing climate and sustainability webpages and help to develop a new webpage to promote and house Climate Week events, "Get Involved" and showcase stories.
- In 2023/24, RRU created about 200 climate-related social media posts which yielded approximately 200,000 impressions.
- Five climate-related videos were produced, including two with President Steenkamp.
- Thirty-one climate-related news stories were published; climate is a key theme in RRU storytelling and is one of RRU's five editorial pillars.
- Communications support was provided for a variety of climate and sustainability-related activities and events such as Climate Week, Earth Day/Week, and the Healthy Planet Club. *The Farm at RRU* and *The Cascade Institute* were supported through promotional events, announcements and stories about these key university initiatives with strong ties to broader climate resilience.
- RRU continues to focus on climate awareness and action when choosing speakers for its signature events such as the *Changemaker Speakers Series*. During the reporting year, talks by Dr. Thomas Homer-Dixon, The

Honourable Jody Wilson-Raybould, Dr. Andrea A. Davis, and John Valliant inspired both thought and action on critical issues of our time (see p. 4).

Opportunities and Next Steps

- **Internal engagement:** In addition to regularizing stewardship sessions through a Healthy Planet Club, the Climate Action and Sustainability team and Human Resources are in early talks about the feasibility of expanding engagement opportunities such as a volunteering program for employees and students (which is also being considered in conjunction with the Health and Wellness strategy).
- **Communications:** A three-year integrated communications and marketing plan has been developed and identifies five areas of focus for editorial content - one of which is climate action and the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. This will mean that a greater level of focus is placed on developing stories about learning, teaching, research on this topic. The coming year will see continued climate-related storytelling and communications with regular support from Communications team members.
- **Fundraising:** A multi-year fundraising campaign will be initiated by the Advancement team; climate action is identified as one of the key focus areas for this campaign. This will include the pursuit of funding to bring in more speakers and offer more engagement opportunities.
- **Partnerships:** Strategic climate-focused partnership engagement and development is a growth area of the university and something that dedicated leads in the university will help to foster.
- **Indigenous engagement:** Establishing models of collaboration is underway through engagement with Indigenous leaders and their communities; and a broader RRU Indigenous Engagement Plan is under development. Ways of working for potential climate action collaboration be arrived at in consultation with Indigenous leaders and communities. Specific conversations regarding climate action have not yet begun with Indigenous communities as conversations on the West Shore Campus continue.
- **External engagement:** Continued efforts will be made to establish/maintain connections and partnerships with community and other universities. Opportunities for collaboration and outreach exist within the context of the climate risk assessment, broader regional planning for climate mitigation and adaptation, and general events, engagements, and communities of practice.

Key Recommendations



Weave climate and equity into everything: RRU can foster an ongoing culture and practice to incorporate a climate and equity “lens” into decision making, institutional plans, policies, practices and academic work. Within this, it is not just *what* we do, but *how* we do it. Accepting that inherent inequities, colonial legacies and justice implications are at the root of the climate and nature emergency means that we cannot separate our climate efforts from our ongoing work and learning in support of human rights, EDI, and decolonization.

Strengthen relationships: As we navigate a complex, uncertain and challenging future, strong relationships and responsible decisions are paramount. Collaboration with Indigenous rightsholders, and community, sector and government partners is needed. Acknowledging truths, sharing knowledge and practices and ongoing dialogue will improve efficiency, build momentum, and accelerate change. Connections within RRU are critical as well. Continued work to strengthen our relationships will set us up for success in the times ahead.


Growing institutional capacity and culture: Despite resource and fiscal constraints, RRU can foster a culture of empowerment and teamwork on climate and other topics that are important to its people. This is a way to build social infrastructure and resilience to the challenges and unforeseen impacts ahead. Culture starts with students, staff and faculty but extends to ever-widening circles around us (alumni, local partners, Indigenous Nations, global connections etc.). Capacity-building can be supported by professional development opportunities, workshops, networks-building and other workshops. The new People and Culture department is a key partner in this work, alongside academic experts. Additionally, the Climate Risk Assessment will provide an opportunity to increase capacity and engagement in supporting an integrated, climate-ready organization.

Right-sizing our plans and commitments: As a small organization with strong values and big ambitions, RRU will need to identify key priorities for the next phase of the CAP, focusing on our strengths and directing our energy where it matters most. RRU is a university that consistently punches above its weight. We are a convenor, bridge-builder and catalyst for changemakers. In a time of immense change, we can elevate our role in challenging the status quo and creating opportunities to transform systems for a more livable future.











Appendix 1. Climate Action Plan Status Summary Report, Year Three (2023/24)

As a companion to the *Climate Action Plan Annual Report*, this summary provides an at-a-glance view of the status of each action (described in the [Climate Action Plan Goals, Outcomes & Actions](#) document).

Status Legend:

Completed 	Active/on track	Active, but needs help	At risk/off track or Delayed	Not started yet
Vice President Finance and Operations - VPFO Vice President Academic and Provost – VPA Vice President Communications and Advancement – VPCA Climate Action & Sustainability Team – CAST			Director – Dir. Information Technology team – IT <i>position is vacant – (v)</i> <i>not yet established – (n/est.)</i>	

Priority Area 1: Leadership & Governance

Action Overview	Accountability	Responsibility	Status
1. Commitment			
1.1 Climate Emergency Commitment - publicly declared	President	VPFO	
1.2 Multi-stakeholder Initiatives	President	VPFO, VPAP, Dir. Bus. Development <i>(v)</i>	
1.3 UN SDG Alignment	President	VPFO and Dir. Research & Innovation	
1.4 Indigenous Collaboration & paired governance	VPAP	Dir. Indigenous Engagement <i>(v)</i> , VPFO	
2. Decision Making			
2.1 Climate Awareness - Board, Executive and Senior Committees	President	VPA	
2.2 Climate Considerations - integrated into strategic-level plans, meetings, budgets, policies, and reports	President	VPFO, VPA, VPCA	
2.3 Delegation -of responsibility to align ops, admin, service delivery & LTRM with climate goals	President	VPFO, VPA, VPCA	
3. Resources			
3.1 Climate Leadership Committee - cross-disciplinary leadership structure for CAP oversight	President	VPFO	
4. Climate Action Hub (n/est.)			
4.1 Hub Resourced & Established	President	VPFO & VPA	
5. Resilience			
5.1 Assessment - climate risk and vulnerability assessment to determine priority risks and impacts	VPFO	CAST, Operations & Resilience	

5.2 Adaptation Plan - Develop and resource a Climate Adaptation Plan	VPFO	CAST, Operations & Resilience	
5.3 Integrate Disaster Risk Reduction - into university emergency plans with annual updates	VPFO	CAST, Operations & Resilience	
6. Transparency and Accountability			
6.1 Disclosures & Risks - annual reports 6.1.1 Mandatory disclosures 6.1.2 Voluntary disclosures Climate Action Plan 6.1.3 Material climate-related risks	President	VPFO, VPA, VPCA	
6.2 Progress Reporting - with the University community.	VPFO	VPFO, VPA, VPCA	
6.3 Board Updated - on progress toward climate action targets semi-annually.	President	VPFO	
7. Inclusive Governance			
7.1 Inclusive Processes - shape the development and implementation of climate initiatives & policies.	President	VPFO, VPA, VPCA	
7.2 Knowledge Systems Incorporated - with an emphasis on Indigenous knowledge.	VPCA	VPCA, VPA, Indigenous Engagement Dir. (v)	
7.3 Community-driven Participation	VPCA	VPFO, VPA, VPCA	

Priority Area 2: Administration

Action Overview	Accountability	Responsibility	Status
1. Delegation			
1.1 Delegation of Roles - authority delegated/ accountable for CAP implementation.	President	VPFO, VPA, VPCA	
1.2 Resourcing - Roles, work plans and performance reviews include CAP responsibilities	VPFO, VPA, VPCA	HR	
2. Decision Making & Implementation			
2.1 Climate Screening Tool - to assess every decision's contribution to addressing climate change and EDI	VPFO	VPFO, VPA, VPCA, CAST	
2.2 Purchasing, Procurement & Investment - Climate incorporated into each.	VPFO	Finance	
2.3 Climate Aligned Decisions - integrating climate and sustainability considerations into strategic decisions.	President	VPFO, VPA, VPCA	
2.4 Climate Leadership Committee - broad and inclusive representation/expertise targeting CAP priorities.	President	VPFO - Lead VPA, VPCA - active participants	✓
2.5 Innovative funding and tools - to support the plan's goals and targets.	VPFO	Climate Action Hub (n/est.)	
3. Planning and Policy Development			

3.1 Plan and Policy Development - Develop/refresh plans and policies to align with CAP.	President	Policy and Board	
4. Scope 3 Emissions Reductions			
4.1 Establish Scope 3 Baseline - Prioritize, measure and publicly report on a preliminary scope 3 categories.	VPFO	Finance, Ops & Resilience	
4.2 Scope 3 Business processes - Adjust business process and policy to reduce scope 3 emissions.	VPFO, VPA, VPCA	VPFO	
4.3 Transportation Demand Management & Commuting - to reduce commuting-related emissions	VPFO	VPFO	

Priority Area 3: Operations

Action Overview	Accountability	Responsibility	Status
1. GHG Reductions			
1.1. Buildings & Energy - energy audit to identify priorities for energy efficiency, emissions reductions and adaptation.	VPFO	Operations & Resilience	
1.2 Energy & Utilities Master Plan - roadmap to meet targets for energy, emission reductions and resilience.	VPFO	Operations & Resilience	
1.3 Building Operations Program - aligns with performance and sustainability standards.	VPFO	Operations & Resilience	
1.4 Building Optimization - to reduce emissions/costs, retire inefficient buildings and to adapt climate risks.	VPFO	Operations & Resilience	
1.5 Fleet - Transition RRU fleet to 100% Zero Emission Vehicles by 2030.	VPFO	Operations & Resilience	
1.5 (b) Fleet - Procurement workflow process improvements.	VPFO	Operations & Resilience	✓
1.6 Paper - Cap paper procurement at 2020 levels and shift all processes to electronic.	VPFO	CAST and IT	
2. Climate Risk, Resilience & Adaptation			
2.1 Manage for Risks - assess, monitor, report and manage institutional climate risks and develop responses.	VPFO	Operations & Resilience	
2.2 Infrastructure Readiness - determine an initial score for future climate readiness and/or climate risks.	VPFO	Operations & Resilience	
2.3 Water Management - Develop a water management plan, informed by audits, climate risks and regional factors.	VPFO	Operations & Resilience	
2.4 Applied Learning - Develop a roster of student research projects and volunteer opportunities.	VPFO	Operations & Resilience	

Priority Area 4: Education, Knowledge and Research

Action Overview	Accountability	Responsibility	Status
1. Climate Change Education			
1.1 Academic Direction - Clarify academic direction for climate education and curricula.	VPA	VPA	
1.2 Develop climate-related curricula, courses - such that all students are exposed to climate science/action.	VPA	VPA	
1.3 Climate Action Hub (n/est.) (n/est.) - Established with governance structure and mandate to advance CAP.	VPFO, VPA, VPCA	VPFO, VPA	
1.4 Climate onboarding module - module in staff, faculty, student onboarding.	VPA	Climate Action Hub <i>(n/est.)</i>	
1.5 Teacher connector Program - students with climate subject matter expertise act as resources to instructors.	VPA	Climate Action Hub <i>(n/est.)</i>	
1.6 Outreach & accessible courses - develop suite of accessible courses and educational outreach initiatives.	VPA	Climate Action Hub <i>(n/est.)</i>	
2. Living Labs			
2.1 Living Lab - provides nature-based education and research opportunities.	VPA	Climate Action Hub <i>(n/est.)</i>	
2.2 Interdisciplinary opportunities - for staff, faculty and students to learn, test, and apply knowledge.	VPA	Climate Action Hub <i>(n/est.)</i>	
2.3 Indigenous Land-based learning - collaborative, nature-responsive learning and research initiatives.	VPA	Indigenous Education Director	
2.4 Biodiversity Plan - as a Living Lab project.	VPFO	Climate Action Hub <i>(n/est.)</i>	
2.5 Kitchen Garden - Living Lab, building on partnerships, Indigenous and other knowledge systems.	VPCA	Kitchen Garden Guiding Committee	
3. Climate Research			
3.1 Research Grants - Fund internal research projects focused on climate change and climate action research.	VPA	VPFO	
3.2 Funding innovation - that support collaborative, transdisciplinary climate research.	VPA	Climate Action Hub <i>(n/est.)</i>	
3.3 Research-sharing Events - Sponsor/host climate knowledge-sharing, and empowerment events.	VPA	Climate Action Hub <i>(n/est.)</i>	
3.4 Research Repository - searchable database on climate-related research & case studies.	VPA	Climate Action Hub <i>(n/est.)</i>	

Priority Area 5: Collaboration, Engagement and Outreach

Action Overview	Accountability	Responsibility	Status
1. Indigenous Relationships			

1.1 Map relationships - to inform a strategic partnership framework based on common goals.	VPCA	Dir. Indigenous Engagement (v)	
1.2 Consultation - with Songhees, Esquimalt and other local Indigenous groups about climate priorities and partnership requirements.	VPCA	Dir. Indigenous Engagement (v)	
1.3 Collaboration model - between RRU, Songhees, and Esquimalt Rights holders in the local community.	President	VPFO, VPAP Dir. Indigenous Engagement (v)	
1.4 Enhance Reciprocal Knowledge Sharing - exchange resources related to climate action & knowledge	VPCA	Dir. Indigenous Engagement(v), Climate Action Hub (n/est.)	
2. Community Engagement			
2.1 Establish Baseline and Framework - for a strategic partnership framework with a climate action lens.	VPFO	Dir. Bus. Development (v), Climate Action Hub (n/est.)	
2.2 Develop Partnerships - with local communities for co-creation/implementation of climate research/action	VPFO	Dir. Bus. Development (v), VPFO & Climate Action Hub (n/est.)	
2.3 Post-Secondary Institutions Relationships - climate action focused relationships and partnerships	VPFO, VPA, VPCA	VPFO	
2.4 Engage & Connect - alumni and students, link with faculty to showcase projects, research and opportunities.	VPFO	Climate Action Hub (n/est.)	
2.5 Policy Support - Provide climate policy support, tools and advice to governments, businesses and partners	VPFO	Climate Action Hub (n/est.)	
3. University Engagement			
3.1 Establish Baseline - of existing initiatives, projects, plans and opportunities for campus engagement.	VPFO	Climate Action Hub (n/est.)	
3.2 Staff Culture - awareness, engagement through resources, courses, training and dialogue.	VPFO	Climate Action Hub (n/est.)	
3.3 Student Culture - engaging students as climate action leaders.	VPFO	Climate Action Hub (n/est.)	
3.4 Volunteering program for employees, faculty & students	VPFO	Climate Action Hub (n/est.)	
4. Communications & Marketing			
4.1 Communications & Marketing - promote outreach and events, motivate action on campus and beyond.	VPCA	Climate Action Hub (n/est.), Comms & Marketing	
4.2 Story-telling - promoting actions of staff, faculty, partners, and the Hub, and marketing opportunities.	VPCA	Climate Action Hub (n/est.), Comms & Marketing	
5. Events			
5.1 Events - Sponsor/host climate knowledge-sharing, collaboration and empowerment events.	VPCA	Climate Action Hub (n/est.), Comms & Marketing	