

# CWRU Climate and Health Education Collaborative

2021- April 2025 Comprehensive Progress Report



# Overview

## Background

Founded in 2021, the CWRU Climate and Health Education Collaborative was established to address the evolving need for education on critical health effects caused by climate change. The creation of the Collaborative was intended to allow members of the CWRU community to work with local health systems and community stakeholders to promote awareness and action on climate change and health. Drawing on the educational expertise of the founding members, a primary focus is integrating climate and health education into professional program curriculums in order to prepare future generations of health care providers to care for patients and communities. Creation of the Collaborative stemmed from the recognition that climate change is both an environmental and public health challenge that disproportionately affects vulnerable populations. The Collaborative has prioritized creating and delivering educational content that benefits current and future health professionals as well as community members. Through partnerships with local organizations, healthcare providers, higher education institutions, and community groups, the Collaborative has created a holistic approach to climate and health education.

## Statement of Purpose

- The CWRU Climate and Health Education Collaborative of Northeast Ohio will create and disseminate educational programs and curricula about the health effects of climate change in order to improve health, empower communities, and train future health leaders.

The Collaborative formulated a list of guiding principles rooted in fostering open networks, facilitating inclusive participation, and supplying materials for collective learning.

## Guiding Principles

- Foster open networks and partnerships.
- Include a diversity of organizations, groups, and individuals as members.
- Address the existing social structures that have led to inequities, with the most vulnerable bearing the greatest burden of climate change impacts.
- Design and implement programming based upon the best scientific evidence.
- Integrate research on the effectiveness of Collaborative interventions and disseminate findings in educational programs and peer-reviewed publications.
- Make decisions in a non-hierarchical manner, as peers.
- Be accessible and transparent in terms of structure, and in the creation and sharing of information and resources.
- Learn within and outside of formalized educational spaces, including practical training and advocacy.
- Leverage best practices and implement short- and long-term solutions, at the intersection of community health and climate change.

### **A Model Focused on Education**

Climate change and health is a vast topic, and the Collaborative has, from its inception, focused on education. In our model, education is central to our specific goals in the areas of Health Impact, Resiliency, Mitigation, Research, Equity, and Advocacy.



Goals for each category include the following:

#### **Education**

- Create climate change and health competency.
- Create a framework for understanding the health impacts of climate change.
- Engage health professionals, social workers, and other students whose professions and disciplines impact the health and well-being of individuals, communities, and populations.
- Involve existing health, social work, education, and other professionals whose work impacts the health and well-being of individuals, communities, and populations.
- Develop health leaders with expertise in the health impacts of climate change in clinical, public health, administrative, education, and other relevant professions and disciplines.
- Foster relationships and gather knowledge and perspective from other sources, particularly non-traditional sources.
- Engage communities, including minority and indigenous peoples.

#### **Health Impact**

- Improve health outcomes related to climate change.
- Reduce inequities of health outcomes across all demographics and communities related to climate change.
- Increase the propensity of health professionals intentionally connecting their patients' health and climate change.

## **Mitigation**

- Change and improve the climate impacts of the operations of healthcare delivery.
- Engage existing professionals and students in health, social work, education and other pertinent disciplines in mitigation, adaptation, and solution strategies.
- Increase the implementation of mitigation planning at healthcare institutions.

## **Resilience**

- Build community resiliency related to climate change.
- Increase community understanding and ability to critically evaluate climate, health, and justice.
- Align climate-related initiatives with existing community values.
- Foster structural and cultural competency.

## **Advocacy**

- Advocate mitigation of the upstream drivers of climate change.
- Advocate for change at the institutional and regional levels on behalf of constituent health.
- Align institutional spending and action with climate collaborative principles.

## **Our Audience**

Although rooted in large healthcare organizations and higher education institutions, the Collaborative's target audience spans both current and future healthcare professionals in addition to our local communities. By integrating climate and health into higher education curricula, current students (and future healthcare professionals), are exposed to the critical intersections between environmental change and public health. Climate change affects virtually all aspects of human health, varying in the degree of effect depending on location, patient, and community-specific factors. All health care professionals, regardless of specialty, will have patients and communities affected by climate change and therefore need training. Additionally, the Collaborative seeks to equip the public with practical knowledge on the health risks associated with climate change. By offering educational content, resources, and strategies for mitigating these risks, the Collaborative is empowering individuals to make informed decisions on their health. Through community-focused programs and initiatives, vulnerable populations can be educated and protected from the inevitable harm of the changing environments in which they live. Overall, by disseminating and delivering information on climate-related health issues, the Collaborative is advocating for better health outcomes for all.

## **Membership**

- **Organizational Participants:** Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland Clinic, Metro Health, University Hospitals, Veteran Affairs Hospital of Cleveland
- **Organizational and Sustainability Support:** Blue CSR Strategies

## **Original Action Groups & Accomplishments**

- **Asset Mapping:** The Asset Mapping Group worked to identify all potential collaborators within Northeast Ohio, including interdisciplinary departments and programs, nonprofit organizations, and community organizations.
  - In 2022, the Asset Mapping Group conducted a screen of organizations in the Northeast Ohio region and identified activities that they were engaged in that were addressing climate change and health to seek out opportunities to collaborate, inform, and engage with them on climate change and health.
- **Climate Health Literacy:** The Climate Health Literacy Group created and shared climate health information for trainings, outreach materials, and resources for the website.
  - In 2022, the Climate Health Literacy Action Group developed materials specifically about increased high heat days and their connection to health impacts to share with community stakeholders and patients for addressing this acute health impact due to climate change.
- **Community:** The Community Group provided outreach to communities, presentations to groups, trainings to organizations, and educational resources.
  - In 2022, the Community Action Group identified and participated in planned community activities previously organized by collaborative organizational members, including tree planting and climate change impact meetings.
- **Oversight Group:** The Oversight Group shared information between the action groups and coordinated efforts of the collaborative.
  - The Oversight Group and the Action Groups met regularly throughout 2022 with the Oversight Group meeting monthly which garnered some significant accomplishments in the year.

## **Activities/Action Highlights (or Key Engagements/Initiatives)**

### **2021 / 2022 Highlights**

- The Climate Crisis: Addressing Impacts on Clinical Practice in the Great Lakes Wednesday, March 10th, 2021.
- Region Formation of Purpose, Guiding Principles, Mission, and Goals.
- Convening of the Collaborative at the CWRU Farm to strengthen and accelerate momentum.
- Formation and convening of Action Groups.
- Further embedding CWRU with the Collaborative Practice 1 interprofessional education course and continued student participation.
- Participation in community events including tree planting.
- Participation in the CWRU Climate Health Week.
- Formation of the Climate & Health Pathway.
- Greater connection and alignment with other collaboratives and organizations engaged.

# Current Landscape

## Action Groups

To sufficiently address the various aspects of climate and health education, members of the Collaborative were divided into actions groups to better utilize individual skills and resources across the various entities. By having each group focus on a certain topic, developed strategies and plans for implementation were realized. Keeping in mind the Collaborative members' backgrounds and institutional resources, tasks have been managed more efficiently, community engagement has increased, and resource development has been streamlined. In 2024, the Climate Health Literacy Action Group was dismantled into the Climate and Health Education Content and Delivery action groups. This step was taken as it became clear that both development and delivery/execution of content are critical for furthering the Collaborative's mission. The Community group has both an internal and external focus.

## Current Action Groups & Accomplishments

- **Climate and Health Education Content:** The Climate and Health Education Content Group creates and shares climate health information for trainings, outreach materials, and resources for the website.
  - The Climate and Health Education Content Group is curating content that is uploaded to a publicly accessible document library. The content in the library has been tailored to include materials suited for a range of knowledge bases – from children to students and current healthcare professionals.
- **Climate and Health Education Delivery:** The Climate and Health Education Delivery Group works to coordinate climate and health education activities for undergraduate medical education (UME), graduate medical education (GME), staff, and the community.
  - The Climate and Health Education Delivery Group continues to stay versed in both educational and community programs that could benefit from content created by the Collaborative. The Group examines many curriculums to see how climate and health can be integrated into future educational programs for both UME and GME programs.
- **Research:** The Research Group identifies research projects related to sustainability and climate health.
  - In 2024, the Research Group reviewed NIH funding opportunities related to climate-related health impacts and attracted students that would like to contribute to the research function of the Collaborative in future years. Though many of these opportunities have not been able to be realized, the group continues to review materials and research papers that can further illustrate the connection between health and climate change impacts.

- **Community/Regional Partnerships:** The Community/Regional Partnerships Group provides outreach to communities, presentations to groups, trainings to organizations, and educational resources. This action group consists of both internal and external community components.
  - The Internal Community Group conducted a Lunch and Learn event at Case Western Reserve University during Climate Action Month (October). The group also works with the Climate Action Network (CAN) at CWRU to identify opportunities to include the topic of human health impacts at events throughout the academic year.
  - The External Community Group met with members of the Cleveland Tree Coalition and Western Reserve Land Conservancy to see how the organizations can support one another. The Community Group also coordinated events for the Collaborative to be engaged on throughout April 2025 to highlight health and climate change impacts. A significant accomplishment of elevating this topic within the communities is the proclamation from Cuyahoga County declaring April as Climate and Health month. Furthermore, there has been recognition by area institutions and the Cleveland Foundation to consider this coming decade as a decade of climate and health, providing further focus and attention on this important topic.
- **The Administrative Group:** The Administrative Group shares information between the action groups and coordinates the efforts of the collaborative.
  - The Administrative Group meets every other week to coordinate activities, plan, and schedule collaborative meetings / retreats, and generally looks to improve the health of the collaborative. This group consists of members from the Cleveland Clinic, CWRU, and MetroHealth and is facilitated by Blue CSR Strategies.

**Activities/Action Highlights (or Key Engagements/Initiatives)**

In recent years, the Collaborative has garnered support and increased the number of events to engage outside parties in the realm of climate and health. Key events of note include the following:

**2023 / 2024 Highlights**

- Increased participation of students, additional faculty, and health professionals.
- Organized and facilitated a Climate and Health Education Summit in March 2024.
- Organized four retreats of the Collaborative.
- Organized monthly Collaborative virtual meetings.
- Initiated collaboration with the Western Reserve Land Conservancy (WRLC) and the Cleveland Tree Coalition (CTC).
- Assessed various methods for the creation of content for the Health Education Collaborative Content Library.
- Climate week lunch and learn in the Health Education Campus (HEC).

## **Key Events in 2024**

### **Climate and Health Education Summit**

In March 2024, the Collaborative hosted a 2-day Health Education Summit with over 85 participants at the Cleveland Clinic Health Education Campus. The summit included plenary and break-out sessions.

**Summit Description:** The Summit will assemble current and future health education leaders, to develop strategies and actions to incorporate climate health impacts into both health education and health delivery systems. These strategies will help improve care of patients and address the fact that a disproportionate share of impacts of climate change impact underserved individuals and communities. At the summit we will educate, share best practices, and inform opportunities to improve climate health education in our academic health centers and health delivery systems. Attendees will leave inspired and empowered to integrate climate health education into their health practices, patient interactions and community systems to create healthier individuals, communities, and bioregions.

### **Summit Objectives**

- Discuss the latest science and learnings on the health impacts of climate change.
- Develop strategies to integrate health impacts of climate change into the education of health professional students at academic health centers and the communities they serve.
- Identify actions for integrating the health impacts of climate change into health delivery to improve patient care and address health disparities.
- Expand the CWRU Climate and Health Education Collaborative to include regional academic centers to extend the reach and impact of the Collaborative.

### **Summit Themes (tracks)**

- **Education** – Curating curriculum to educate and empower current and future health professionals to make a positive impact on the health of the people and the communities we serve.
- **Advocacy** – How can health professionals and the institutions they are associated with advocate for policies and programs that address the health impacts impacting patient populations and the communities where our patients live.
- **Community** – Inform and share what health professionals can do to educate and inform community members, leaders, and partner organizations of the importance of addressing the health impacts of climate change.

### **Summit Core Principles**

- Equity and acknowledgement use education as a hub and spoke.
- Research and science-based approach.
- Intergenerational relationship building and bringing together professionals and students.

- Regional impacts and regional solutions.
- Interdisciplinary or even transdisciplinary (looking between disciplines).
- Interprofessional (multifaceted views with diverse perspectives and solutions).

### **Key Takeaways from the Summit**

- Participants enjoyed the interprofessional aspects of the summit and want to see more of it, suggesting the creation of an Action Group focused on interprofessional collaboration.
- Emphasized aligning organizational goals and values with climate action.
- Interest in horizontal integration between organizations and departments within organizations to promote inclusivity.
- Examples shared include a nurse anesthesiologist's interest in addressing environmental impacts in their field and the need for better education and communication.
- The importance of incorporating climate education into various curricula, including medical schools, and considering the impact on patient care.
- Discussion on measuring the impact of climate action and determining appropriate metrics.
- Recognition of the responsibility of faculty and healthcare professionals to address climate issues.
- Emphasis on the intersectionality of climate, health, economics, justice, and equity.
- Positive feedback on the multidisciplinary nature of the summit and its educational value.
- Inspiration drawn from the presence of students and the potential to integrate climate topics into educational curricula.
- Calls for continued collaboration, mentorship programs, and regular meetings to sustain momentum.
- Acknowledgment of the importance of healthcare professionals in advocating for climate action.
- Appreciation for the opportunity to learn from diverse perspectives, including climate scientists.
- The desire to continue such discussions in person despite virtual alternatives.
- Recognition of the need for debriefing and planning next steps, including the possibility of organizing similar events elsewhere.

**Expanding Partnerships**

In 2024, members of the Cleveland Tree Coalition (CTC) and the Western Reserve Land Conservancy (WRLC) presented to current members of the Collaborative and future partnerships were discussed. Alignment of the missions of these organizations with the focus of the Climate and Health Education Collaborative showed a strong interest in partnering on initiatives.



In addition to the CTC and WRLC, the Collaborative connected with and supported initiatives by the Cuyahoga County Board of Health’s efforts to elevate climate change within public health discussions. The opportunity to improve collaboration and partnerships between our regional public health agencies and the academic and healthcare institutions in the region will further advance efforts to integrate the impacts on human health with the impacts of climate change. These connections can also improve health outcomes by further educating and informing health professionals about the public health impact and therefore the health impact on their patients. The Collaborative has also connected with the Cleveland Department of Public Health to better learn about the best interventions for meeting community members regarding the public health impacts of climate change.



### **Spring 2024 Retreat at the Health Education Campus**

The spring retreat provided the opportunity to debrief from the summit and develop next steps. At this meeting, the Collaborative determined that it would engage again with summit participants and survey participants on what efforts they might want to continue moving forward with. The Collaborative also committed to meeting again in the summer to update the Collaborative's strategic priorities based on the summit survey results.

### **2024 Summer Strategy Meeting**

The Climate and Health Education Collaborate met in July to review survey results provided to the summit participants, to identify priorities, and focus its attention on activities that are advancing the goal of improving awareness of the connection between climate change and health for current and future health professionals and the patients and communities they serve.

### **October Climate Action Month Events**

- **Climate Action Network events**
- **Lunch and Learn at CWRU campus**

### **Fall 2024 Retreat at the Health Education Campus**



# Early 2025 and the Future Focus

## **Early 2025**

In October 2024 and at the fall Collaborative retreat, we determined that we would leverage the events around Earth Day in April 2025 as an opportunity to bring focus to the connection between climate change and human health. The Collaborative laid the groundwork for a series of events to bring light to this important topic both at CWRU and Learner College and Medicine as well as in the community.

During our February 2025 in-person meeting at the Health Education Campus, we learned that the focus on climate change as part of campus-wide efforts was shifting to a broader environmental theme as part of Earth Month campus activities at CWRU. The Collaborate pursued keeping climate and health at the heart of focus for a variety of events planned for April 2025 and was successful in maintaining this topic as a central theme.

Specific attention to both climate and health as a center of focus resulted in Cuyahoga County issuing a proclamation stating that April 2025 would formally be known as Climate and Health Month. This proclamation helps to emphasize the importance of making an intentional connection between climate change and human health impacts.

As the Collaborative gains even more traction by partnering with local groups in the Cleveland community and seeks to align with events related to climate change and that highlight the critical connection between climate change and health, it continues to expand its efforts. This includes facilitating and participating in events around Climate Action Month at CWRU in October.

## **February In-Person Meeting**



## **Looking Ahead**

As we look to the future of the Collaborative and the work that the Collaborative seeks to do, we continue to seek out partnerships, supporters, and funders to help to accelerate the efforts of the Collaborative and its individual member organizations to further integrate health into the discussion of addressing climate impacts. The Collaborative is hosting a retreat in August of 2025 and is also seeking to develop activities during Climate Month in October of this year. It will continue to advance the efforts of the action groups and identify a handful of key projects that Collaborative members can work collectively on to support. These partnerships and projects further connect the institutional partners through shared learning, resources, and successes.

## **Budget / Funding**

The Collaborative is supported by The Cleveland Clinic Learner College of Medicine funds and in-kind support from Case Western Reserve University, including web hosting of the Collaborative’s website. The Cleveland Clinic has also supported contracting Blue CSR Strategies for organizational support and subject matter expertise. The Collaborative continues to seek additional financial support for its efforts to accelerate its work and continues to bring together both the individuals and institutional partners to bring focus to this important effort.

## **Approximate Budget**

<b>Funding Type</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>	<b>2025 (to date)</b>
<b>Cash</b>	\$23,500	\$31,000	\$43,000	\$12,500
<b>In-kind</b>	\$1,500	\$2,000	\$6,500	\$3,500

## **Contact**

We welcome your engagement and participation with the Collaborative. We welcome anyone who is interested in this topic and in particular if you are a current or future health professional, or administrator at an academic or healthcare institution.

To learn more about the Climate and Health Education Collaborative or to get involved, please contact the Collaborative.

**Email us at:** [Climate\\_Health@ccf.org](mailto:Climate_Health@ccf.org)