*(Section note: we hope that people reading this section are inspired to build relationships in their own community, to understand who and what is most vulnerable to health and climate impacts, and to engage with community leaders to develop goals and actions to improve community and individual health, given the impacts of climate change. We assume there will be a “box” that briefly describes Missoula’s Climate Ready Communities process as an example of what a community can do - if not true, this may need to shift.)*

Section 6: Community Action Recommendations

Montana communities are diverse in their abilities to develop climate resiliency solutions. However, no matter what level of resources a community has, it is always possible to make progress and implement adaptation strategies in ways that best “fit” their residents, businesses, and leaders. Before launching specific strategies or actions related to health and climate, we recommend community leaders carefully consider the level of acceptance of these sometimes controversial issues and identify the trusted leaders worth involving from the start. For a complete outline on developing a climate adaptation strategies, we recommend reviewing the Climate Ready Communities guidebook (free, download here: <https://climatereadycommunities.org/>).

The impacts of climate change on health will not be equal among community members [CITE]. Careful consideration in identifying vulnerable populations will be key to developing action plans that are equitable and tailored to the demographics of the community. It is important to keep in mind that vulnerability is a combination of *exposure*, *sensitivity*, and *risk*. *Exposure* is the climate component of the vulnerability equation (e.g. land surface temperatures), *sensitivity* is the socio-economic component (e.g. age or income), and *risk* is the likelihood that the exposure event will occur. It is important to consider each of these components and how they interact within each community when developing action plans.

In brief we suggest engaging with health professionals and other local leaders or experts to understand and determine:

* What is your capacity to develop a health and climate assessment or action plan, and what process is best suited for your community?
* How best can you include key stakeholders?
* Are there funding sources available for this process?
* What kind of outreach will you need to do before, during and after?
* What are the major climate and health related risks your community will likely experience in the coming decades?
* Who and what is most vulnerable to health impacts in your town or region?
* Are their targeted strategies you could or should initiate before conducting a full climate and health assessment or plan? Getting started is one way to build support for further action and can help develop climate and health literacy.

The following are suggested climate health risks and possible adaptation actions to build community or region-wide resiliency. Community leaders are encouraged to fully articulate guiding principles, goals and possible strategies at the outset.

## Heat

We’ve identified two overarching strategies to deal with heat related impacts to health: (1) Consider ways to educate and help community members find ways to stay healthy in extreme heat. (2) Consider ways to equitably cool the air, indoors and outside. Here are some examples to accommodate these two strategies:

* Focus on education (hydrate, rest, shade) for specific populations: outdoor workers, youth sports or summer camps
* Ensure vulnerable populations (i.e. elderly and pregnant moms or young babies) understand heat related health issues.
* Create incentives and programs to decrease urban heat island effect for example through building siting, shade, and vegetation.
* Build educational campaign and develop or enhance programs to plant and care for trees, guided by social equity considerations.
* Incentivize or encourage more sustainable building practices, including cool roofs.
* Develop programs to ensure vulnerable individuals/populations have access to cool community spaces or residences have window fans or air conditioners (where necessary), and know effective ways to use them.

## Wildfire and Smoke

While it is possible to mitigate some of the effects of wildfire and smoke through forest management practices, these are generally not local nor community efforts. For this reason, our recommendations are focused primarily on adaptation as it is something every Montana community can and should consider in their climate action plan. The main adaptation strategy for dealing with wildfire is to improve air quality indoors and outside. Some examples include:

* Educate homeowners about options to create safe indoor air (HEPA portable air cleaners, MERV 13 air filters or HVAC systems)
* Develop program to make HEPA portable air cleaners more accessible.
* Develop programs to encourage safe indoor air in public buildings, schools, and businesses.
* Promote indoor clean air exercise spaces that are accessible to all income levels.
* Ensure evacuation shelters provide clean, cool air.
* Work with youth and recreational programs to find safe indoor spaces
* Encourage employers to change workplace environment to reduce smoke and heat exposure.
* Develop or enhance prevention efforts (buildings and safe space) and emergency response plans for wildfires (forest and grassland).

## Mental Health

Extreme weather/climate events, prolonged heat and smoke, and environmental and societal change can all affect residents’ mental health. Building capacity for increases in mental health issues and developing an education and outreach plan are key strategies to tackling this issue. Some action examples include:

* Plan for increased mental health needs. Work with local hospitals, clinics, health departments to increase capacity and connect efforts across jurisdictions.

# Educate the public and healthcare providers about the mental health impacts of smoke.

* Build in-school capacity to address child mental health issues.

## Food Scarcity

Drought and extreme weather events (e.g. hail) can impact local food security. And while many Montanans get their food locally, most of us also rely on interstate and international imports. This means that climate change in other parts of the world can impact us indirectly through the agricultural industry. We encourage community members to incorporate these complexities in their action plans. A few examples of community actions are listed below:

* Encourage urban gardens and small-scale agriculture to diversify the ability to grow food.
* Improve education via County Extension office to understand irrigation efficiencies, pest control, appropriate crops to hedge bets and plan for future climatic conditions.
* Enhance/incentivize more effective, multi-stakeholder approach to drought response planning.
* Diversify food sources and crop types.

## Flooding

Flooding can impact Montanan’s health in a number of ways [NEED TO SEE WHAT OTHER CHAPTERS SAY HERE]. Enhancing community safety during these extreme events is the number one action any community should take. Also, the need to consider increased vector-borne diseases during these events should also be included. Some action examples include:

* Prevent or restrict new development in flood-prone areas.
* Assess infrastructure needs and vulnerabilities to inform infrastructure strategic plan (protect, enhance, develop redundancies).
* Ensure all Emergency Service Providers have the necessary tools to provide care, outreach and/or referrals.
* Enhance emergency communication capabilities and evacuation strategies, routes, and safety zones.
* Ensure sufficient emergency response personnel within rural areas.
* Implement low-impact development standards to encourage fewer impervious surfaces and green infrastructure.

*NOTE - if we don’t have great ideas for flooding or other risks (and if it’s getting long) We could end with something like (and please edit..):*

Other risks include new or expanded vector-borne diseases from prolonged flooding and/or higher temperatures. Flooding, fires or other extreme conditions could increase threats of injury or even mortality, suggesting emergency response planning should be assessed given climate change. Each community should assess these current or future risks and plan accordingly….

We can also discuss best practices in terms of how municipal governments initiated the planning process and implementation of their resiliency plans. What steps required differnce resources in terms of staff and citizen time and $$.

Let’s include a list of resources expanding on <https://climatereadycommunities.org/> .

<https://toolkit.climate.gov/>

<https://www.nlc.org/topics/environment-sustainability/climate>

https://www.nlc.org/resource/moving-forward-a-guide-to-building-momentum-on-climate-solutions-in-your-community

ETC.