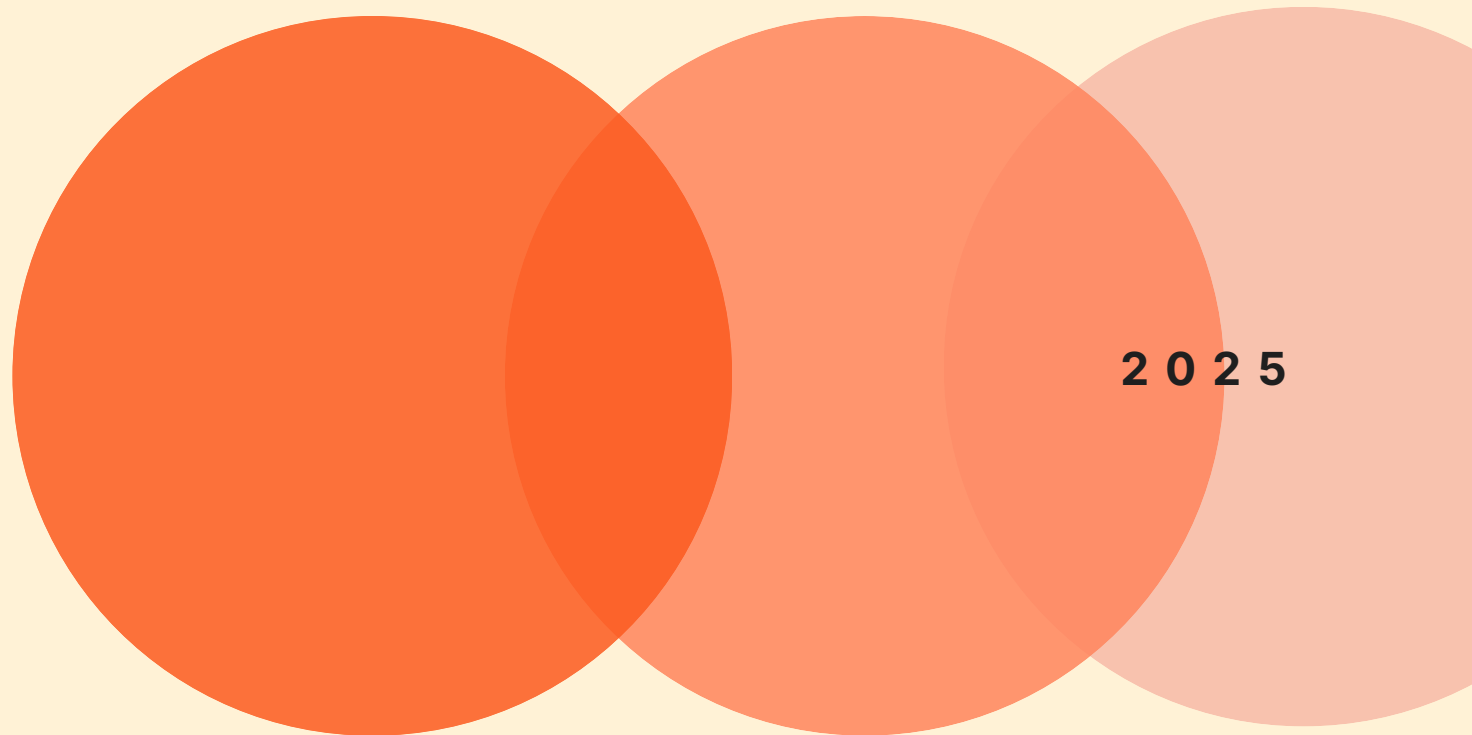


CLIMATE RESILIENCE FOR NON-PROFITS

ROADMAP AT-A-GLANCE



2025

INTRODUCTION

Despite having substantial research on its impacts, years of intentional inaction have led to climate change being one of society's biggest challenges. Vancouver's DTES is among the city's most climate-vulnerable neighbourhoods. Residents face disproportionate risks from extreme heat, poor air quality from wildfire smoke, and intense rainfall and flooding. These environmental hazards compound existing social challenges such as chronic housing instability, poverty, and high rates of mental health and substance use issues.

The tragic events of the Summer 2021 heat dome is a devastating example. According to the 2022 Report to the Chief Coroner of British Columbia, 619 people died in BC - 91% of those who died were registered with a chronic disease, 67% were aged 70 or older, and a disproportionate number of fatalities were among residents of materially or socially deprived areas. Systemic inequities and historical marginalization deepen these risks, leaving many residents with a limited capacity to adapt.

Non-profit organizations – already operating with constrained resources – form the backbone of the DTES social safety net. A recent study showed that non-profits in BC are significantly strained for financial resources and capacity while trying to meet the demands from their growing clientele. As climate hazards intensify, these frontline groups are facing, and will increasingly face, even greater pressure to provide vital services, safeguard health and safety, and respond swiftly to crises. Strengthening their capacity is urgent and essential.

The **DTES Climate Resilience Roadmap for the Social Service Sector Organizations** is a collaboration between Vancity Community Foundation, SFU's Community-Engaged Research Initiative (CERi), and ACT - Action on Climate Team, that responds directly to this challenge. Grounded in community-engaged research, the project convened frontline social sector organizations—including Hogan's Alley Society, PHS Community Services Society, First United Church Community Ministry Society, and Lookout Housing and Health Society—to co-develop practical, context-specific strategies for building resilience from strengths and gaps within the community. It examined how climate change is affecting the Downtown Eastside (DTES), to collectively anticipate how climate hazards may intensify in the future and impact the work of frontline organizations.

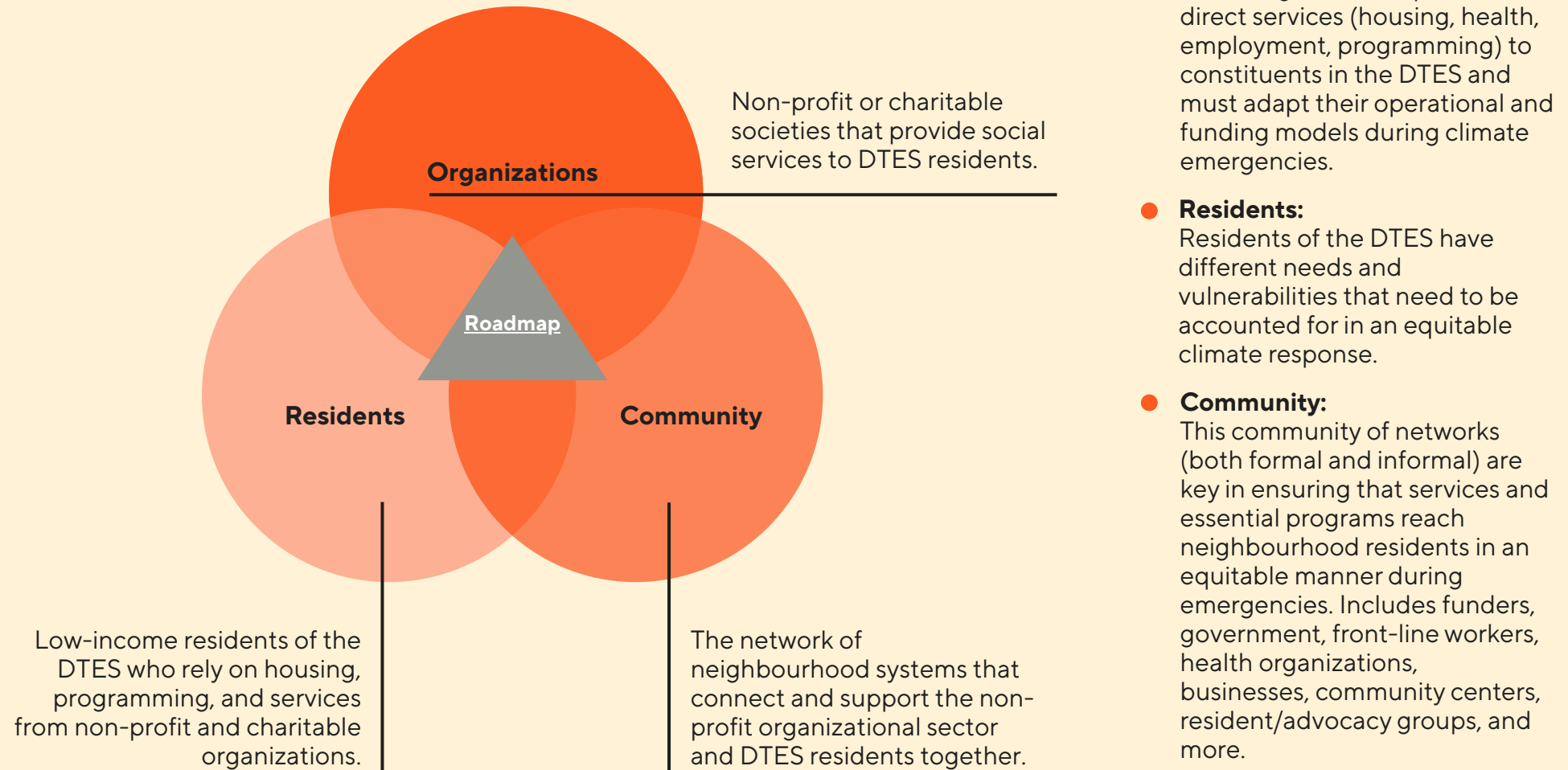
This **At-a-Glance** summary offers a concise overview of short- and long-term actions for implementation. The accompanying **Technical Report** provides detailed context, data, and policy analysis informing these strategies, while the **Climate Resilience Roadmap** outlines in more detail strategies that support these organizations' ability to adapt, both now and over the longer term.

³ Vantage Point. (2025). *Stretched Thin: 2025 State of BC's Non-Profit Sector*.

CLIMATE RESILIENCE ROADMAP FOR NON-PROFITS

Key Priorities

Building climate resilience in the DTES requires strengthening and advancing three interconnected areas:



SHORT-TERM STRATEGIES & ACTIONS (NEXT 12–18 MONTHS)

Strategies	Actions	Category	Key activities
Advocacy and fundraising for climate action	Create an open-source central platform for identifying accessible climate-related funding	Organizational	- Identify the existing databases that provide details on funders for climate action - Compile grants and funding streams that non-profits can access for climate adaptation actions - Create a communication channel for timely alerts on grant deadlines - Provide assistance in applying for grants and funding opportunities
Proactive budgeting for climate	Develop a shared budgeting template that makes visible the climate-related costs organizations are already carrying so funders can clearly see what is currently hidden inside program budgets.	Organizational	- Advocate for funders to add climate line items to core funding - Create a shared channel for climate-budget templates and examples - Build peer support processes to align climate budgeting and advocacy - Position advocacy as an essential, not optional, budget category
Advance existing networks and relationships	Embed climate resilience into peer-to-peer training and coordination circles	Organizational	- Document existing practices for climate resilience within partner organizations that are not codified - Establish a virtual climate hub for compiling and sharing resources, protocols and best practices for non-profit organizations - Share protocols and best practices from partner organizations - Create training manuals and workshops for staff to prepare for climate emergencies - Hire a Climate Resilience Coordinator to work with partner organizations to assess capacity constraints and customize resources - Ensure coordinator attends meetings with organizations and find cross-organizational synergies
			Present the roadmap to community networks and governmental partners

SHORT-TERM STRATEGIES & ACTIONS (NEXT 12–18 MONTHS)

Strategies	Actions	Category	Key activities
Joint procurement and storage of materials	Invest in joint procurement and storage of environmentally friendly and cost-effective emergency materials	Organizational	- Identify and partner with social enterprises providing eco-friendly alternatives for response materials and disposal - Draft a policy for collectively procuring emergency response materials among social service nonprofit organizations - Map existing storage facilities and practices in the DTES that can be used as shared space for storing supplies. This would include existing storage facilities of the partner organizations, as well as informal or makeshift storage areas in the neighbourhood that can be utilised
Hire a Climate Resilience Coordinator	Hire a climate resilience coordinator to organize climate strategies across different organizations	Community	- Create a job description and workplan for the role - Source matching funds and grants for hiring
Neighbourhood level emergency protocols	Develop protocols for collective and coordinated neighbourhood responses during climate emergencies	Community	- Share protocols for extreme weather response across organizations and look for opportunities to align protocols - Conduct regular calls among organizations before and during heat and smoke seasons to check-in on the needs and challenges faced by community

SHORT-TERM STRATEGIES & ACTIONS (NEXT 12–18 MONTHS)

Strategies	Actions	Category	Key activities
Educational and outreach materials	Coordinate seasonal campaigns on smoke, heat, and emergency resilience	Residents	- Contextualize alerts and preparedness guides from the City and province to the needs of the DTES community. This would involve distributing information in multiple languages and physical formats, with an emphasis on the impacts on specific vulnerable groups - Explore how capacities in existing campaigns and programs can be utilised to include seasonal resilience
Leadership training for community members	Design and implement programs to empower community members in climate response roles	Residents	- Develop training and paid leadership roles within organizations for residents to step into during crises - Advocate for low-barrier jobs/roles for community members - Connect with pre-existing community leadership and advocacy projects - Collaborate with social service non-profit organizations about how to best empower their community members

LONG-TERM STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS (2–5 YEARS)

Strategies	Actions	Category	Key activities
Climate response teams	Build internal teams in organizations dedicated to responding to climate needs	Organizational	• Create a list of capacities and resources required for setting up response teams within organizations. This involves listing existing capacities and staffing that can be integrated • Support mandatory emergency preparedness onboarding training for staff • Institute regular drills for staff to prepare for emergencies • Support peer-leadership training, mentorship, stipends, and skill-building for community members so they can be part of the response teams
Establish a climate hub	Establish a DTES climate response and resilience hub for sharing resources and information, coordinating response and providing services in safety for community members	Community	• Conduct a feasibility study for the potential locations for the climate hub • Map out existing physical and natural assets that community members and organizations can access for climate support • Map potential hub partners and spaces • Advocate to all levels of government for capital and operational investments • Provide training for residents to be community response personnel
Green spaces and urban cooling infrastructure	Invest in park development, greenspace, and natural shading	Community	• Advocate for developing existing parks and open spaces that can be used within the community • Design and implement contextual nature-based shading solutions in the neighbourhood • Engage community members in an ongoing participatory mapping to crowdsource community/informal spaces which can be used for activation in response and resiliency efforts

LONG-TERM STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS (2–5 YEARS)

Strategies	Actions	Category	Key activities
Advocacy for retrofit and design climate ready buildings	Join the existing efforts in retrofits to implement mandatory requirements for climate responsive building design and HVAC in new social and supportive housing	Community	• Incentivise contractors and landlords to do collective retrofits to older DTES social and supportive housing • Access subsidized cooling programs to respond to the needs of older buildings and SROs • Advocate to the government to fund retrofits in older buildings • Update emergency systems in older buildings • Develop detailed templates from preexisting projects that have built climate response design and resident well-being into their buildings
Community-led voice	Develop resident-led research to take leadership roles on climate resilience	Residents	• Develop a ground-up strategy for amplifying DTES voices in policy advocacy