Second Nature's Climate Commitment

Background on ACUPCC

- 2006 – Second Nature launched American College and University Presidents' Climate Commitment
- 2008 – UIUC signed
- Basis for starting Office of Sustainability, Illinois Climate Action Plan
- Important both internally (to coalesce support for sustainability) and externally (reputation)

New Structure

- ACUPCC → “Carbon Commitment”
- New “Resilience Commitment”
- “Climate Commitment” = Carbon + Resilience

- Motivated by recognition that reducing GHG emissions is not enough, since climate is already changing

- Limited time opportunity to be a “charter signatory” of Climate Commitment, by January 4, 2016

What is Resilience?

- Resilience is the ability of a system or community to survive disruption and to anticipate, adapt, and flourish in the face of change.

- Second Nature's definition of resilience is built on a foundation of scholarly work and pragmatic considerations. It is increasingly essential that in addition to greenhouse gas reduction actions, signatories must also ensure that their decisions are smart in the face of expected and unexpected changes and extremes in environmental conditions. These decisions should not only reduce vulnerability, but also increase opportunity and value.

- The key concept in resilience is that in an era of change, it is critical to develop adaptive capacity for a positive future. The important components of resilience planning include:
  - incorporating short-term disruptions and long-term trends
  - understanding and anticipating challenges and opportunities
  - not only trying to survive and bouncing back, but thriving in the face of change

What would we be committing to?

Presidents and chancellors signing any one of the Climate Leadership Commitments are making an institutional commitment to climate leadership. Each Commitment has specific requirements but generally each signatory is responsible for:

1. Developing an institutional structure that will be responsible for implementing the commitment requirements
2. Completing greenhouse gas inventories (Carbon, Climate)
3. Developing joint campus-community taskforce (Climate, Resilience)
4. Completing a resilience and vulnerability assessment (Climate, Resilience)
5. Completing a Climate Action Plan that includes:
   - A target date for achieving carbon neutrality as soon as possible (Carbon, Climate)
   - A target date by which defined thresholds of resilience will be met (Climate, Resilience)
   - Interim target dates for meeting milestones that will lead to carbon neutrality and increasing resilience (Climate, Carbon, Resilience)
   - Mechanisms and indicators for tracking progress (Climate, Carbon, Resilience)
   - Actions to make carbon neutrality and resilience a part of the curriculum and other educational experiences for all student (Climate, Carbon, Resilience)
   - Actions to expand research in carbon neutrality and resilience (Climate, Carbon, Resilience)
6. Submitting an Annual Progress Evaluation on a yearly basis to Second Nature's public reporting system (Climate, Carbon, Resilience)

Resilience Indicators of Progress

- Because resilience does not have such an identifiable goal as carbon neutrality, 'measuring' progress must be done in a different way. The basic intent with reporting and assessment for resilience is the same: establish your baseline, set your goals, and define your interim targets and overall thresholds. One major difference with resilience, however, is that because each community and campus will have different priorities, characteristics, vulnerabilities, and weaknesses with respect to resilience, the indicators framework itself needs to be very flexible.

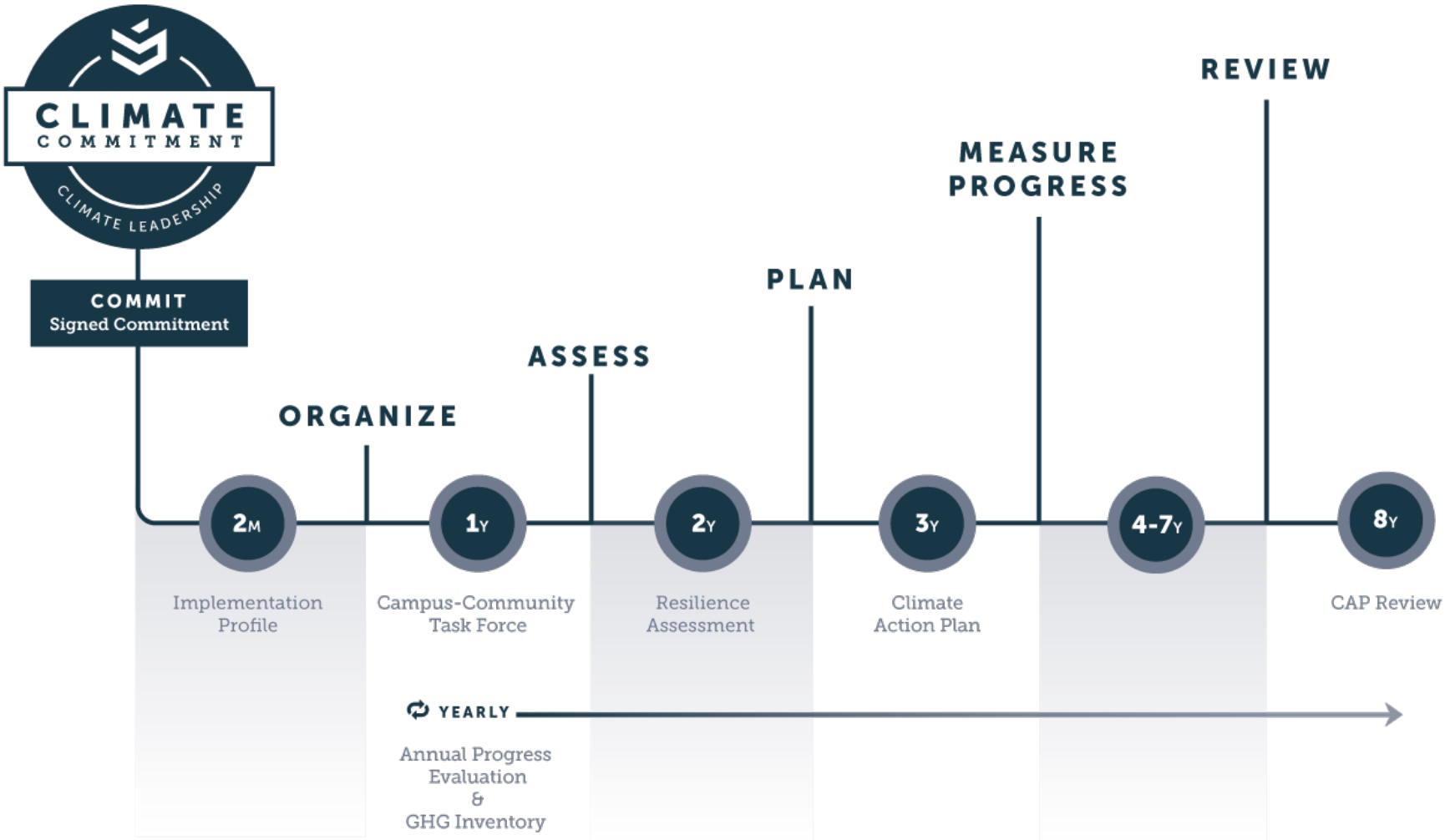
- Creating a GHG inventory uses a relatively standard set of metrics with the same six required GHGs (even though the ways you reduce emissions may be wildly creative and very different than other people). However, there is no 'standard' for resilience metrics. This is partly because it is an emergent area of climate planning and implementation, and partly because increasing resilience is very place-based.

- Second Nature has researched and reviewed a number of potential options and decided to support a framework that provides coherent categories of indicators that each campus can use, and then wide flexibility in how each campus creates the indicators themselves. This is an advantage in that you have a lot of free reign to create something that works for you, but a challenge initially in that there is no universal blueprint for how to measure success. Ultimately, however, the opportunity to inclusively create indicators that reflect your campus/community priorities can help to build resilience even as you go through the process, not just as an outcome of the process. There is much more about the overall framework of the resilience planning process in the climate resilience section of the Guide.

Baseline: Resilience Assessment

- Doing a GHG inventory is not only about seeing how much of your emissions you have reduced each year, but the first time you do it, it is about establishing a baseline of where you are starting from. Similarly with resilience, we ask signatories to conduct a 'resilience assessment'. This is about looking at components of resilience and developing indicators that tell you about the strengths and assets in your campus and community – assets you want to build on. Establishing these indicators is what we will focus on in this section, however, you should review the basic steps in resilience planning too, since there will be some iteration throughout the planning cycle to establish and amend indicators. For more on resilience planning and to see the full planning framework, see the climate resilience section of the Guide. Briefly, the basic steps of resilience planning include:
  - Completing an initial resilience assessment (establishing your baseline)
  - Developing a vision/scenarios of the future (setting direction)
  - Analyzing vulnerability against those scenarios (understanding risk)
  - Developing a plan to increase resilience
- In these planning steps above, your indicators may be amended as you better understand the vision, the risks and vulnerabilities associated with getting to that vision, and therefore the sort of resilience factors that you will need to build out.

What's the timeline?



Are others signing on?

- 58 colleges and universities have already "upgraded" to Climate Commitment
- Notables include:
  - Arizona State
  - University of Arizona
  - UCLA
  - UIC

Should we sign?

- Advantages:
  - Evaluate future scenarios and avoid long-term risks and “black swans”
  - Build awareness within campus community
  - Improve ties with our local communities
  - Expand our thinking about sustainability beyond quantitative metrics
  - Cement our national leadership in sustainability
- Disadvantages:
  - Additional work for iSEE, iWG, others (DURP)
  - Risk of diluting sustainability focus?
  - Risk of mixed messaging or confusion
  - Challenge of best approach (town-gown)