

The Gigatonne Challenge FAQ



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1. What is it (overview/strategy)?

In one sentence: We train, support and fund teams around the world to reduce CO2e emissions at pace and at scale, while benefiting the most vulnerable in local communities, **using already-proven methods**, with a target of 1,000,000,000 tonnes (‘One Gigatonne’) of CO2e reduction annually.

Here’s how, in a few paragraphs:

The Gigatonne Challenge is a climate strategy with equity at the heart...

Tackling the climate crisis requires solving 3 problems:

- Abatement = rapid greenhouse gas emissions reduction
- Temporal = acting at pace dictated by the science
- Equity = benefiting the most vulnerable

Our goal is to train, support and fund teams around the world to reduce CO2e emissions at pace and at scale, while benefiting the most vulnerable in your community.

Teams begin at Level 1 - reducing 1 tonne of emissions in 2 weeks.

Teams progress from one level to the next by achieving these abatement, temporal and equity targets.

Level 1 and 2 are about “practice”. From Level 3 onwards it is about “performance” and teams with a proven track record can begin to be funded and resourced to work on this challenge and reach higher targets.

Read more about The Gigatonne Strategy and what happens after Level 1 via these links:

[Gigatonne Strategy White Paper.](#)

[Gigatonne Challenge Concept Note.](#)

<p>Level 2</p> <p> 10 tonnes</p> <p> 1 month</p>	<p>Level 3</p> <p> 10 tonnes/ month</p> <p> 100 beneficiaries</p>	<p>Level 4</p> <p> 100 tonnes/month</p> <p> 1K beneficiaries</p>
<p>Level 5</p> <p> 1000 t/month</p> <p> 10K beneficiaries</p>	<p>Level 6</p> <p> 10,000 t/month</p> <p> 100K beneficiaries</p>	<p>Level 7</p> <p> 100,000 t/month</p> <p> 1M beneficiaries</p>

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2. Why should I do it (I'm Green; it's too difficult; it's too easy)?

2.1 I'm already Green

“I'm already recycling/travelling by bike/campaigning for climate action - why should I do this?”

Those are all great individual actions to take.

The Gigatonne Challenge is not about the individual actions we take, it is about practicing in teams to achieve more together than we can achieve alone. A diverse team is best suited to tackling complex challenges, we simply cannot do it alone.

The Gigatonne Challenge also offers a professional path for teams to build capacity and a track record for delivering emissions abatement, so that we can take your story to funders and donors and you can start creating livelihoods for yourselves and others working on the climate crisis and benefiting the most vulnerable in your community.

Sound good? Join us!

2.2. It's too difficult

“It sounds hard to reduce one tonne of emissions in only two weeks - is it really possible?”

Yes! Several teams have even exceeded the target in two weeks! We now have teams operating at L3 who are achieving 10 tonnes a month of abatement, moving towards 100 tonnes a month early next year.

2.3 It's too easy/useless

“How will starting with one tonne of emissions abatement get us anywhere near reducing 1 billion tonnes a year?”

Level 1 sprints are the foothills of the mountain we have to climb. This is where we begin and where we practice to become better at the task.

As more teams progress through the levels we will get to a point of having 100s or 1000s of teams around the world abating hundreds or thousands of tonnes of CO₂e a month. That's when we start to approach gigatonne-scale impact.

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3. Who runs it?

The Gigatonne Challenge will be led by the Complexity University Faculty.

Complexity University is an initiative of [10in10](#), which is a new type of organisation; a cross between a foundation, a marketplace and a university. It has been designed on the basis of two decades of disciplined practice tackling complex challenges.

We see ourselves as a new breed of organisation. Rather than being daunted by complexity, we are at home in complex situations, seeing them as opportunities for changing systems no longer fit for purpose. Our mission is to tackle ten global challenges in ten years.

[Our team](#) has extensive experience across philanthropy, civil society, the private and public sectors. We are former CEOs, strategists, facilitators, researchers, project managers, and community organisers. We have managed multibillion-dollar foundations and agile start-ups. We have deep sectoral expertise and wide networks of relationships to draw on. Some of us are grizzled and others are young. We are always learners and sometimes teachers.

Collectively, we have already supported many thousands of people in tackling complex challenges. Complexity University allows us to distribute those skills and support with the speed and scale necessary to reinvent the future. All of us have a deep commitment to tackling complex challenges around the world. This is our work.

About Complexity University

We are not a conventional university. At the heart of everything we do is practice. Signing up to one of our courses is a little like joining a gym. You're going to have to actually exercise your muscles, not simply watch from a comfortable chair and take notes.

Tackling complex challenges is a collective effort. This means that we invite you to practice in teams. Working in teams is hard. It requires effort and practice. It requires emotional labour.

All our courses are live, which means no canned lectures and no passive learning. Our group sessions are participatory, with plenty of interaction and space for discussion.

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4. How much time & money do I need to commit?

4.1 The numbers: Schedule, Dates & Commitment

What's the time commitment?

We refer to each of our intensive course phases as a 'Sprint'. A Level 1 Gigatonne Sprint is run over 2 weeks with 5 x 90-minute sessions online per week.

In addition to that, there is a 90-minute orientation session before the course starts.

During the sprint, you can expect to work on your prototype individually outside of the scheduled meetings, subject to your availability.

Schedule, Dates & Commitment

This is an intensive engagement, but you should be able to complete it even if you're working full time (you might want to freeze some food and stock up on coffee as they say).

There are 16 hours of scheduled sessions over 2-weeks, Monday-Friday of each week. Additionally, participants can expect between 1-3 hours of work during the week as individuals.

What happens if I can't attend one of the meetings?

The plenary sessions are all live and interactive: there are group discussions in breakouts and lots of opportunities to ask and answer questions, so we strongly encourage in-person attendance of all sessions.

However, if you are unable to make one of the meetings, we record all sessions and post the recording on our community platform so that you can catch up with what you have missed.

4.2 Why pay?

"Why do I have to pay a registration fee?"

The Gigatonne Challenge offers an initial 2 week active learning training in tackling complex challenges based on [20+ years of experience in the field](#).

Level 1 and 2 are all about practice. It's like learning to play tennis at a tennis academy. You pay to train, and then once you are very good at it, you can go out and make a living playing tournaments around the world.

Teams will have 3 hours a week of taught and facilitated course time led by two faculty members, and we are also providing 2 CU coaches per team who will coach them through the process for 4.5 hours online per week. So that's 15 person-hours of coaching and support per week - 9 just for your team.



Once teams are "in the system" having tackled L1, you then have ongoing coaching and support from our core team and coaches to progress towards L3 (10 tonnes per month rolling abatement) where we will go and find sponsors to start funding you to do this work.

4.3 Are scholarships available?

“What happens if I can’t afford it?”

We offer scholarships for those who are unable to pay the full course fees. Please [contact us](#) to discuss.

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5. Who is it for, and what do I get out of it?

5.1 Who is it for?

The Gigatonne Challenge is for you if you are any of the following:

- Passionate about making a difference to the climate crisis
- Looking for a like-minded community to take on the challenge together
- Working - or intending to work - with others in your organisation, community or local area to tackle the climate crisis and wanting help to become more effective and take it to the next level of impact
- Keen to understand more about how to approach complex challenges effectively
- Looking for a hands-on, practice-based training in complexity leadership
- Interested in a career tackling the climate crisis
- Courageous, curious, creative and committed
- Willing to struggle with something new in order to grow and expand your capacity

Gigatonne Challenge Teams come from all over the world and from diverse backgrounds including:

- Social enterprises
- Waste management organisations
- Food and agriculture organisations
- Plastics clean up teams
- Environmental and conservation networks
- Youth leadership programmes
- Entrepreneurship training groups
- Graduates looking for an entry into climate work
- Community self-help or neighbourhood action groups
- Organizational teams
- Local government teams
- Sports teams
- Diverse groups of friends or neighbours from different backgrounds
- Parent groups
- University teams



5.2. What do I get out of it?

During the Gigatonne Challenge you will:

- Experience working in teams to identify real opportunities to reduce emissions.
- Practice prototyping - testing and adjusting live interventions to reduce CO₂e emissions
- Learn by doing with the support of Complexity University coaches and faculty.
- Achieve a direct, tangible impact on emissions
- Build leadership skills
- Practice strategies for tackling complex problems like climate change
- Become part of a global community of changemakers.
- Gain the opportunity to carve out a professional career in climate change mitigation
- Be invited to take your work to the next level impact and create benefits for your community while doing so

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6. Getting involved - signup, prep, teams

6.1 Signup and preparation

“How do I get involved?”

1. Register interest in forming a team for the Gigatonne Challenge via this form: <https://gtinterest.paperform.co/> (*paperform* is our trusted intermediary for interactive forms).
2. A CU rep will get in touch with you to answer your questions and support you with gathering and registering a team.

“Do I need to be part of a team to sign up or can I sign up by myself?”

If you don't yet have a team, but are interested in building one, we can support you with how to go about this, and there may be a possibility to join one of the sprints as an observer in the meantime (limited places).

This means you will attend the global plenary sessions with all the teams and get to know what the programme is about, and you may have a chance to visit with some of the teams in their coaching sessions.

“Do I need any prior experience?”

The invitation to join the Gigatonne Challenge extends to individuals and teams from across the globe to participate. You do not necessarily need to already be working in the climate space. Courage, curiosity, creativity and commitment are all you need!



“Do we have to have an idea of what we will do before we start?”

No. You can start this process when you meet with your coaches for your first team session. During the first plenary we will give you some ideas of the kinds of domains where you can achieve emissions reductions in the two week period, just to get you started.

However, if you have an idea in mind please bring it along and see if it fits the brief!

What happens at the orientation meeting?

You will get to meet members of other teams, introduce yourselves and do a bit of networking, as well as ask some questions about the challenge and meet the faculty.

How can we prepare for the sprint beforehand?

You can research the sources of emissions in your local area and find out where potential savings could be made.

Get onto Basecamp and introduce yourselves.

Read the orientation pack and the prototyping guide we send you and make sure you have all the sessions times, dates and links in your calendar.

6.2 Team formation and running

“Do I need to be part of a team to sign up or can I sign up by myself?”

If you don't yet have a team, but are interested in building one, we can support you with how to go about this, and there may be a possibility to join one of the sprints as an observer in the meantime (limited places).

This means you will attend the global plenary sessions with all the teams and get to know what the programme is about, and you may have a chance to visit with some of the teams in their coaching sessions.

“Do we need a team leader?”

You don't need to appoint a team leader. Each cohort will have two coaches. If you have a coach or two already signed up in your city cohort that's great, otherwise we will provide coaches to support you.

“How many do I need on my team?”

We have found 8-10 people to be the best number for a successful team.

We recommend no more than 15 in a team to begin with.



If your team drops below 5 members at any time you will have to resign from the sprint and join the next one, unless you are able to quickly replace members.

“Who should be on my team?”

Diversity is a strength in any team. Ideally, Gigatonne teams are diverse stakeholder groups.

However, at Level 1 the most important is that you have some commitment to each other and to staying the course, are available for all the sessions, and have a shared interest in doing the work.

“What makes for a successful team?”

We have found the following characteristics tend to apply to the most successful teams:

- Having some kind of shared interest/connection ALREADY
- Being geographically local to each other - at least from the same city
- Courageous - willing to try something new/challenging (and fail)
- Open to engaging with and trusting the process

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7. Doing it: The course/sessions/work

7.1 What happens on the course?

Our goal is to demonstrate how we can reduce global emissions by one gigatonne of CO₂e per year, while ensuring that we engage and benefit those most impacted by climate change. To do this, we have developed [The Gigatonne Strategy](#).

But steady on, if we want to climb Mount Everest we wouldn't just pack our bags and run at it. We would start training, get good at climbing some smaller mountains, work our muscles a bit.

During this immersive action-learning course you will be tasked with reducing CO₂e emissions in your city of choice by one tonne in two weeks..

This is not a drill: you will actually be doing it.

7.2 What happens in each session?

All sessions will take place online via Zoom.

Plenary Sessions

The plenary sessions take place each Monday and Friday with all participants. They will consist of a mix of teaching, framing of the process, and group work and discussion.



Agile Sessions

The GT Challenge will operate using Agile - This is a project management and task management approach suited for use in situations of complexity. These sessions will mostly take place in your cohort. Each Monday we will come together to plan out the workload for the week, and each Friday we will review what has been completed, and make any course adjustments for the following week.

Team Sessions

Team sessions take place every Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. These sessions are where you will do the work with your team to address the challenge that you have been set. Each team is supported by 2 coaches.

All sessions will be recorded so that they can be reviewed if you miss one. Please do try your best to make all the sessions!

On signup, you will receive an invitation to join the online platform that we are using to manage the course. This is a space where you can discuss with other participants, view schedules, files, tasks etc.

7.3 Whom do I contact for what kind of questions/problems during the sprint?

You will have two coaches who can help you with any questions you have about the work during the sprint, you will also be able to contact the course faculty and course coordinator directly via email or via Basecamp, and we will be happy to help you.

7.4 Measuring impact

“How will our impact be measured? How can we measure/calculate/verify our abatement?”

We will give you some pointers to get you started and then your team will need to do some research to verify and calculate the abatement achieved by your chosen approach. You can find all the information you need about different emissions sources and volumes on the internet. This comes down to fairly simple calculations based on the information available online e.g.

<https://toogoodtogo.org/en/movement/knowledge/the-carbon-footprint>

There are even emissions calculators online that you can use.

At this stage of the game, we are not getting into audits and data collection. You need to be able to explain how you have been effective in a way that stands up to some reasonable questioning. We aren't asking you for data at this point, just the story of how and where you have tangibly reduced emissions. If teams choose to progress through the Gigatonne Strategy to higher targets and pitch for funds to support their initiatives, there will be clear requirements put in place to verify effectiveness.

“Can we count carbon offsets? Is it like carbon credits? Can we plant trees?”

Nope. Sorry. Teams will need to actually prevent emissions at source.



The Gigatonne Challenge is focused on direct abatements. This means that the gases are prevented from being released, at source, during the two weeks.

Examples include stopping food from rotting in landfill by composting it, preventing oil/gas/wood from being burned as a fuel, and preventing a petrol vehicle from being used by offering or encouraging an alternative.

Indirect abatements are things like planting trees (emissions will be reduced some time in the future), buying recycled products (this may reduce production of new products on some vague future timeline), turning off the lights early (a power station does not modulate it's supply at these smaller levels of flux, so the same amount of fuel will still be burned at the source).

7.5 Tools and techniques

“What hardware/software do I need?”

You'll need a laptop or tablet plus an internet connection sufficient for handling Zoom video meetings, along with a webcam and (optionally) a microphone/headset combination. Primary tools, which run on all modern computers and tablets, are Zoom (for video group meetings and breakout sessions) and Basecamp (for storing documents and discussion 'threads', described further below).

“Is it a hackathon?”

No.

The Gigatonne Challenge is not simply about design, it is about action. You will prototype, implement, test and iterate an intervention for reducing 1 tonne of CO₂e emissions in your local area within the two week period.

It is also not a competition, but a collaborative challenge. Everyone learns together and shares ideas freely. Everybody learns. Everybody supports each other. Everybody wins :)

Even if you “fail” to reach the target you have successfully tested an approach and received valuable feedback and data to learn from, while also practicing the skill of prototyping as a team.

“What is a ‘prototype’?”

You and your team will spend a lot of time designing, building, re-designing, and re-building what we call ‘**prototypes**’, which are a core concept throughout our courses. [Check out this article](#) to learn more about prototyping as an approach to complexity.

“What is Basecamp for?”

Basecamp is an online platform we use to coordinate the course, for participants to meet and interact with each other, to access zoom links for all sessions, to access course materials, slides and session recordings, and to coordinate your work in teams during the sprint.



7.6 What happens at the end of the course?

Well, if you end your learning journey there, we intend that you will leave with a lived experience of how to be more effective at tackling complex challenges. You can go about your business and apply what you have learned as you wish.

If you choose to continue on to Levels 2, 3 and beyond of the Gigatonne Challenge, you will become even more effective, and develop even better prototypes and that's when things will get very interesting indeed!

Successful teams completing Level 1 of The Gigatonne Challenge during their two week sprint will have the option to sign up for Level 2 and beyond - participating in longer sprints, with higher emissions reduction targets, and we will start to bring in funding to support you and resource more ambitious interventions. You could get paid to work full-time on the climate crisis!

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