How to become a Climate Entrepreneur

From wildfire prediction technologies, to biodegradable single-use diapers, climate entrepreneurs are increasingly holding the answers to our collective climate challenges. What could you contribute?

Temps de lecture : minute

13 June 2024

Time is running out, as they say. It's no secret that the window to meet climate goals is *"rapidly closing",* and yet the changes being made are not drastic enough. International efforts like the Paris Agreement are notoriously *slow to take off* and the big corporations are not heeding *scientists' calls* to stop producing so unsustainably.

Living in this reality can not only be frustrating, it can be downright depressing. You wouldn't be blamed for turning to look the other way, and focusing instead on things that feel easier to control.

But as entrepreneurs, there is something that we can do. While marching on the streets, volunteering and donating are still important, channelling our climate passion, energy, technical knowledge and creativity into developing innovative climate solutions is also a very valid climate action. Climate entrepreneurship is about rolling up our sleeves and creating practical, scalable solutions that make a real difference.

Today, climate tech is (encouragingly) one of the *fastest growing sectors* in entrepreneurship. Founders in this space have the potential to make a huge impact, and are rightly so attracting the keen eyes of investors. It's particularly motivating to discover that climate tech is one of the few

sectors to have *escaped declining capital* since the start of the pandemic.

What's even more encouraging is that you don't need an expert-level academic or professional background to be a climate entrepreneur. What you do need is passion, a problem to solve, and the dedication to bring it to market. Take as an inspiring example The Earth Prize, the world's largest environmental sustainability competition for teens aged 13-19 years; these young people began their journeys with just an idea and the wisdom of only a handful of academic subjects. Yet, the outputs are nothing short of awe inspiring: a pioneering *flood prediction* technology, the *'Agripod' device* to reduce fertiliser misapplication, a unique *washing machine device* that recycles 90% of wastewater, among many many others.

Sounds interesting? Then diving into this mini 3-step starter guide could set you on the right track.

Step 1: (Climate) educate yourself

First things first — get educated about climate issues and find your focus area. Don't stress if you're not a climate scientist, you just need to pick a few key resources and start absorbing knowledge from there. Try the *UN CC:Learn* platform to access their mini courses catalogue for professionals, jumping into topics until you find something that sparks your interest. Another method would be to simply visit the *UN Sustainable Development Goals* website to browse the 17 SDGs and find a topic to research further.

Alternatively, if turning your attention to the neverending list of global issues is overwhelming, start by thinking local. What's happening in your local community, region or state? Are there annual floods, droughts, or problems with local crops? The issues that affect your local region may also affect global communities, meaning that your concept could be

scaled for a wider impact.

The goal here is to both raise your awareness of multiple issues, and also find a topic that you are passionate about. As *Runner-up* team Ceres from The Earth Prize 2024 said: *“Work on something you are truly interested in. If you're passionate about finding a solution, your project and team will thrive.”*

Questions to answer: What issues affect your local or regional environment? What’s the prognosis for these challenges over the next 10-20 years, and beyond? What is currently being done to combat them?

Step 2: Innovate, innovate, innovate

Climate tech is an incredibly broad industry, covering everything from agricultural mobile apps, to physical water filters. Innovative solutions can come in all shapes and sizes, from software, to hardware, to services, to products. Even within the realm of one environmental challenge, you could create any one of these, or combine multiple solutions together.

To spark your imagination and get those cogs turning, take these two very different solutions invented by the teens taking part in The Earth Prize:

- Pebble: UK-based duo, Orlando and Koza, put their knowledge of computer science, mathematics and physics into their creation: Pebble. When looking into software solutions, they realised that pooling computers together to reduce energy consumption has the potential to reduce carbon emissions and rare metal consumption, as well as save billions of kWh annually. The result is a software-based solution, a tech product, that has great potential scalability.
- MycoFlo: British team MycoFlo are focusing on the issue of polluted water sources around the Niger River Basin in Kenya, where they aim

to improve the living conditions for one million citizens. Their name, Mycoflo, reflects both the fungi-based material ‘mycelium’ and the ‘flow’ of rivers. The first element of their unique prototype is a smart sensor, called a MycoBot, which is placed in river water to detect concentrations of certain substances, measuring them against a data set online. If unhealthy levels are detected, the second step is to bring in a mycelium-based sack to filter the water.

These two examples showcase both physical products and softwares, but they are by no means the limit of what can be achieved. Today’s trending sectors for innovative growth include electric vehicles (think scaling EVs worldwide with easy-to-install chargers, batteries, etc.), carbon accounting software (think millions of global companies wanting to measure and reduce their emissions), and carbon capture software (think carbon transportation, or systems to track captured carbon). These ideas are just the beginning - the world is your oyster!

Step 3: Find your mentor match

Finding a mentor is a key part of success. Life as a climate entrepreneur is hard, and you'll be grateful for that extra paddle when you're lost in a storm. Mentors are well-known for providing feedback, contacts and a boost of confidence, but one overlooked benefit can also be the unexpected questions they ask, which might take your thought process down a different road entirely.

Here are 4 tips for finding for a mentor:

1. Identify your niche sector.
2. Post on LinkedIn to openly ask your network for connections. Be specific and offer a cup of coffee in return for an introduction.
3. Search online for your sector's most relevant associations or networks. Join as a member, and attend online/offline events to grow your network.
4. Talk about it! Tell colleagues, friends, family. The more people you mention it to, the greater the chance of finding your mentor match.

Stepping into climate entrepreneurship is an exciting journey that promises more fulfilment than the typical tech founder path. Becoming a climate entrepreneur is an exciting journey filled with learning, growth, and impactful action. By educating yourself on climate issues, seeking mentorship, and turning your solutions into viable businesses, you can help address some of the most pressing challenges of our time. The world needs the creativity and energy that only entrepreneurs can offer — go out there and make a difference!

If you know a young person aged 13-19 years and think this career path

could be for them, encourage them to apply for *The Earth Prize 2025*!

Charlotte Tucker is a media specialist working with *The Earth Foundation*.

Article by Charlotte Tucker