

GREEN MINDSETS

PILOT study

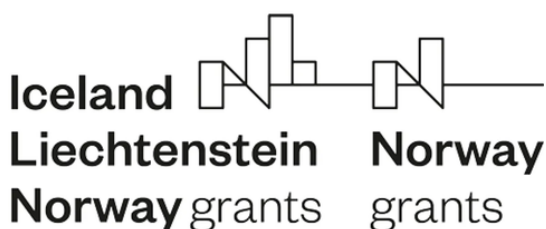


Pilot Study

Green Mindsets: A Methodology for Human Development in Net Zero Teams

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TESTING THE GREEN MINDSETS METHODOLOGY FOR NET ZERO TRANSITIONS: A PILOT STUDY WITH URBANIZEHUB ROMANIA

Abstract

In the context of Europe's climate-neutral ambitions, the capacity of Net Zero teams to integrate sustainability goals into their human systems is a critical success factor. This pilot study tests the Green Mindsets Methodology, an interdisciplinary approach to team development that blends systems thinking, climate literacy, and organizational psychology to support Net Zero transformation. Conducted in April 2025 within UrbanizeHub Romania—a multidisciplinary Net Zero team engaged in urban sustainability innovation—the study involved 17 professionals who completed a full battery of psychometric and cognitive assessments, including the OCEAN personality framework, Enneagram typology, decision-making style diagnostics, and climate literacy tests. The results revealed a team with strong executional capacity, analytical rigor, and operational reliability, but also identified key gaps in the levels of creativity and adaptability a Net Zero team requires. These findings validate the Green Mindsets framework as a powerful diagnostic and development tool for climate-aligned teams. The study offers evidence that intentional investment in human capital is essential for enabling complex, systems-level climate goals, and recommends broader, longitudinal application across sectors.

Keywords

Net Zero teams; climate literacy; human capital development; methodology; organizational transformation; sustainability leadership; systems thinking; climate-neutral transition.

1. INTRODUCTION

The accelerating pace of climate change and the European Union's commitment to achieving climate neutrality by 2050 have made the Net Zero transition not only a technological and regulatory challenge but an organizational and human one. While investments in clean technologies, energy systems, and digital infrastructure have dominated public discourse, research increasingly highlights that systemic transformation requires equally robust investments in human systems—teams, culture, leadership, and psychological readiness (Senge, 2006; Robèrt et al., 2000).

The concept of the "Net Zero team" has emerged as a strategic response to this complex challenge. Net Zero teams are multidisciplinary, purpose-aligned units capable of integrating sustainability principles into decision-making, innovation processes, and operational workflows (UrbanizeHub, 2025). These teams are not only expected to execute sustainability targets but also to act as adaptive learning ecosystems capable of navigating uncertainty, stakeholder complexity, and continuous change. Yet, empirical data and organizational practice reveal a significant gap between sustainability ambition and internal capacity to deliver (Crook et al., 2011; World Economic Forum, 2023).

Several studies have shown that one of the key barriers to successful sustainability transformation is the limited alignment between technical systems and human behaviors (Wilson, 2021; Yin, 2023). Despite progress in environmental reporting standards such as the CSRD and ESG frameworks, many organizations struggle with the behavioral and cultural dimensions of sustainability—such as leadership mindsets, team dynamics, and employee engagement. The literature on organizational psychology underscores the importance of psychological safety, trust, and emotional intelligence as determinants of long-term change adoption (Edmondson, 2019; Frazier et al., 2017).

Against this backdrop, the Green Mindsets Methodology offers a novel framework that aims to bridge these gaps by integrating principles from behavioral science, psychometrics, and systems thinking into the Net Zero transition. Developed through a cross-sectoral European initiative, the methodology is built on the premise that climate-neutral goals can only be sustainably achieved if human capital is positioned not as a support function but as a strategic asset. It applies validated psychological instruments—such as the Big Five (OCEAN), Enneagram typology, and decision-style diagnostics—to assess and develop team readiness for climate action (UrbanizeHub, 2025).

This study presents the results of a pilot application of the Green Mindsets methodology within UrbanizeHub Romania, a civic innovation platform supporting smart, climate-resilient cities. The study focuses on a multidisciplinary team involved in EU-level Net Zero strategies and assesses their psychological and organizational readiness using the full Green Mindsets toolkit.

By testing the methodology in a real-world context, the study aims to answer the following research questions:

- **Q1** *To what extent does the Green Mindsets methodology accurately diagnose the developmental needs of Net Zero teams?*
- **Q2** *What psychometric and cognitive profiles dominate within a high-functioning sustainability team?*
- **Q3** *How can behavioral and psychological insights inform strategic team development for climate transformation?*

The significance of this research lies in its contribution to an emerging but underdeveloped domain: the psychology of sustainability transformation. By positioning human capital as both subject and object of change, this paper advances the argument that effective climate action must begin with how organizations learn, lead, and relate. In doing so, it responds to recent calls in the literature for more human-centric, evidence-based methodologies that can be operationalized within diverse sectors—from local governments to startups and NGOs—working toward climate-neutral futures (Gallo & Christensen, 2021; European Commission, 2022).

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Research Design

This study employed an exploratory, mixed-methods pilot design to evaluate the feasibility, diagnostic capacity, and developmental impact of the Green Mindsets Methodology in a real-world Net Zero team. The research was conducted in April 2025 within UrbanizeHub Romania, a civic innovation platform engaged in climate-resilient urban development and aligned with the EU's Mission 100 Climate-Neutral Cities initiative.

Given the novelty of the Green Mindsets framework and its interdisciplinary nature, the exploratory design was chosen to assess both quantitative psychometric indicators and qualitative patterns of organizational behavior and readiness. The pilot study functions as a proof of concept, examining whether the methodology can produce actionable insights into the psychological, cognitive, and cultural dimensions of a Net Zero team. This approach is consistent with best practices in early-stage implementation science and organizational development research, where mixed methods provide a comprehensive view of how interventions function in dynamic systems (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017; Edmondson & Harvey, 2018). It also aligns with calls for participatory, system-oriented approaches in climate leadership and sustainability education (Scharmer, 2016; Wiek et al., 2011).

2.2 Objectives of the Study

The research aimed to:

- **01.** Apply and test the Green Mindsets diagnostic toolkit in a Net Zero organizational context.
- **02.** Identify the dominant personality, motivational, and cognitive patterns of the UrbanizeHub team.
- **03.** Assess gaps between climate literacy, team dynamics, and role-based capabilities.
- **04.** Provide strategic recommendations for aligning team development with long-term sustainability goals.

2.3 Study Context: UrbanizeHub Romania

UrbanizeHub is a Romanian-based think tank and project platform focused on sustainable urban development, citizen participation, and policy innovation.

2. OCEAN (Big Five) Personality Inventory

Adapted from McCrae and Costa's Five-Factor Model (1999), this tool assesses:

- Openness
- Conscientiousness
- Extraversion
- Agreeableness
- Neuroticism
- Each trait comprises 12 items scored on a 10-point scale. It allows the identification of dominant psychological patterns and potential blind spots in team interaction, decision-making, and adaptability to change (John & Srivastava, 1999).

3. Enneagram Typology Diagnostic

The Enneagram tool identifies motivational archetypes across nine personality types (e.g., The Achiever, The Loyalist, The Peacemaker). Each participant responds to 36 items designed to reveal inner drivers, stress behaviors, and interpersonal tendencies under pressure—factors crucial in sustainability work, which often involves high ambiguity and mission-driven stress (Riso & Hudson, 1996).

4. Decision-Making and Cognitive Style Diagnostic

This 25-item tool maps how individuals process information, make judgments, and handle uncertainty. It includes subdomains for:

- Analytical rigor
- Intuitive insight
- Adaptability quotient
- Feedback responsiveness

- Risk handling
- High scorers in flexibility and pattern recognition are typically associated with effective leadership in complex systems (Kahneman, 2011; Snowden & Boone, 2007).

5. Team Dynamics Assessment

Using the aggregated Enneagram results and a custom psychological safety and collaboration index, this tool analyzes how team members interact, trust one another, and make collective decisions. It is grounded in the literature on psychological safety (Edmondson, 2019) and team maturity models (Lencioni, 2002).

6. Personalized Capability Mapping

Based on the outputs of all previous tools, individual “capability maps” were generated to highlight:

- Current strengths
- Net Zero skill gaps
- Personalized learning recommendations
- These maps served as the foundation for team development planning and organizational intervention design.

2.5 Participants and Sampling

The study involved a purposive sample of 17 participants, all members of UrbanizeHub Romania, selected based on their active involvement in sustainability-related projects, climate policy innovation, and urban development. As a single-case, pilot implementation, the study did not seek generalizability but focused on depth, diagnostic insight, and methodological validation in a real-world organizational setting (Flyvbjerg, 2006).

Participant Profile

- **Size of team:** 17 individuals
- **Fields of expertise:** Urban planning, urbanism/architecture, public administration workers, communications, urban development, media, sustainability, civic & urban innovation.
- **Organizational level:** Entry to mid-level professionals involved in both strategy and project execution
- **Gender balance:** Approximately equal distribution (data anonymized for privacy)
- **Involvement:** All participants were actively engaged in UrbanizeHub's Net Zero activities between 2024 and 2025, specifically in local and European implementation of EU-funded climate resilience programs

This selection provided a representative microsystem of the type of interdisciplinary teams envisioned in European Net Zero strategies—those that must bridge policy, community, technology, and behavior.

Inclusion Criteria

Participants were included based on:

- Active participation in at least one Net Zero-related project or initiative
- Willingness to engage in a self-assessment and feedback-driven learning process
- Consent to anonymous data use for research purposes

No individuals were excluded. However, caution was taken to ensure that participants understood the developmental (not evaluative) purpose of the psychometric tools, to reduce potential resistance or bias in responses (Podsakoff et al., 2003).

Ethical Considerations

The study followed ethical guidelines for organizational research, ensuring:

- Informed consent prior to participation
- Data anonymization and storage in encrypted formats
- Voluntary participation and the right to withdraw at any point
- Use of tools validated in prior psychological and organizational development studies

The project did not involve vulnerable populations and was not subject to institutional review board approval due to its developmental, non-clinical nature, but adhered to the European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity (ALLEA, 2017).

2.6 Procedure

The pilot implementation of the Green Mindsets Methodology followed a structured four-phase approach, adapted from the methodology's official implementation manual (UrbanizeHub, 2025). The process was designed to enable both quantitative diagnostics and qualitative reflection, supporting a systems-level understanding of team readiness for climate-aligned transformation.

Phase I: Diagnostic Assessment

This phase aimed to establish a comprehensive baseline of individual and collective capabilities across psychological, cognitive, and climate knowledge domains.

- Timeframe: April 1–7, 2025

- Instruments administered:
 - Climate Literacy and Net Zero Skills Test (12 items)
 - OCEAN (Big Five) Personality Inventory (60 items)
 - Enneagram Typology Test (36 items)
 - Decision-Making and Cognitive Style Diagnostic (25 items)
 - Psychological Safety & Trust Pulse Survey (8 items)
- Mode of delivery: Digital self-assessments via a GDPR-compliant survey platform
- Data type: Quantitative (Likert-scale responses); categorical (Enneagram types)

Each participant completed the assessments independently, and all tools were pre-tested internally to ensure clarity and consistency. An external facilitator ensured neutrality in instruction and support.

Phase II: Co-Design Workshop

- Timeframe: April 8–10, 2025
- Purpose: To collaboratively interpret diagnostic results and design personalized learning pathways and team interventions
- Structure:
 - Session 1: Group feedback on team-level results
 - Session 2: Mapping team roles and personality clusters using Enneagram overlays
 - Session 3: Prioritization of capability gaps using a facilitated Team Mapping Canvas
- Tools used:
 - Heatmaps (Enneagram + OCEAN overlays)
 - Capability Delta Graphs
 - Values-to-Behaviors Worksheets

This phase emphasized participatory analysis, allowing team members to make sense of data and identify tensions or synergies between personal traits and team climate goals.

Phase III: Strategic Development Mapping

- Timeframe: April 11–13, 2025
- Outputs:
 - 17 individual Capability Maps
 - 1 Organizational Feedback Report
 - 3 Development Priorities (Team Learning, Strategic Leadership, Community Engagement)

These outputs were synthesized into an internal roadmap aligning human capital development with Net Zero delivery priorities. Personalized learning interventions were matched to role functions (e.g., team leads received leadership training modules; analysts received systems thinking coaching options).

Phase IV: Reflection and Feedback Loop

- Timeframe: April 14–15, 2025
- Methods:
 - Focus group (n=8)
 - Anonymous post-assessment survey (n=17)
 - Reflective journaling (optional, submitted by 9 members)

This final phase was crucial for evaluating the perceived value, usability, and emotional responses to the methodology. It also generated qualitative feedback used to refine facilitation strategies.

Data Collection and Analysis

Quantitative Data

- Collected via: Typeform (encrypted export)
- Analyzed in: Microsoft Excel 365 and SPSS 28.0
- Analytical methods:
 - Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation)
 - Frequency distributions (e.g., Enneagram type prevalence)
 - Correlation matrices between climate literacy scores and OCEAN traits
 - Radar chart visualizations for team capability deltas

Qualitative Data

- Sources: Workshop transcriptions, focus group recordings, journal excerpts
- Analyzed using: NVivo 12
- Coding method: Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006)
- Emergent themes:
 - “Misalignment between intent and capacity”
 - “Invisible drivers of resistance”
 - “Growth through self-awareness”

Triangulation was used to cross-validate findings between quantitative psychometric profiles and qualitative feedback themes, enhancing the interpretative rigor of the pilot.

3. RESULTS

This section presents the key findings of the Green Mindsets pilot implementation at UrbanizeHub Romania, drawing from both quantitative and qualitative datasets. The results are organized around the main diagnostic categories: personality profiles, climate literacy, cognitive styles, team dynamics, and overall capability gaps. Descriptive statistics, typological distributions, and selected participant insights are included to illustrate critical patterns and implications (Appendix 1).

3.1 Personality and Motivation Profiles (OCEAN & Enneagram)

Big Five (OCEAN) Results

Across the 17 participants, the personality traits of Conscientiousness and Openness to Experience were the most dominant, with mean scores of 8.2 and 7.9 respectively (scale 1–10). These traits are consistent with project-focused, knowledge-driven environments. However, Agreeableness (6.1) and Emotional Stability (inverse of Neuroticism, 5.4) were lower, suggesting limited interpersonal empathy and moderate emotional resilience under stress.

- **Openness:** Mean = 7.9 (SD = 0.6)
- **Conscientiousness:** Mean = 8.2 (SD = 0.4)
- **Extraversion:** Mean = 6.7 (SD = 1.1)
- **Agreeableness:** Mean = 6.1 (SD = 1.3)
- **Neuroticism:** Mean = 4.6 (SD = 1.4)

Enneagram Typology Distribution

The Enneagram profile reinforced the OCEAN findings, showing a high clustering of task-focused, logic-oriented archetypes:

- **Type 3** (The Achiever): 8 participants – performance-driven, efficiency-focused
- **Type 6** (The Loyalist): 7 participants – risk-averse, community-oriented
- **Type 5** (The Investigator): 7 participants – analytical, detached
- **Types 2, 4, 7, 9** (empathetic, creative, optimistic, or harmonizing): underrepresented (2–4 members each)

The dominance of Types 3, 5, and 6 implies a team with strong delivery capacity but potential deficits in emotional support, divergent thinking, and creative experimentation – traits essential for adaptive climate action.

3.2 Climate Literacy and Role Alignment

Participants scored an average of 76.3/120 on the **Climate Literacy and Net Zero Capability test**.

- **Section A** (General Climate Knowledge): 84% scored $\geq 7/10$ across all items
- **Section B** (Sustainability Framework Awareness): Mixed results; only 47% were familiar with CSRD, SFDR, or Green Deal mechanisms
- **Section C** (Role-based Application): Weakest area; only 29% knew how to measure or reduce emissions in their functional roles

This indicates a foundational understanding of climate issues but limited integration into day-to-day responsibilities – a critical gap for Net Zero strategy implementation.

3.3 Cognitive and Decision-Making Patterns

The cognitive diagnostics revealed dominant analytical and structured thinking styles:

- **Analytical Rigor Index:** 86% of participants scored ≥ 8 on questions related to data reliance and linear problem solving
- **Adaptability Quotient:** 34% scored ≤ 6 on items assessing comfort with ambiguity and rapid change
- **Collaborative Decision Strength:** 71% favored group consensus over individual autonomy

These findings suggest a preference for order, rationality, and deliberation – strengths in stability but potential bottlenecks in rapidly evolving or uncertain policy contexts.

3.4 Team Dynamics and Psychological Safety

Data from the psychological safety survey and workshop transcripts indicate:

- Moderate trust levels: 58% felt comfortable expressing disagreement in group settings
- Limited feedback loops: Only 3 team members reported receiving regular constructive feedback
- Over-reliance on central leadership: Hierarchical dynamics noted by 6 participants during focus groups

This signals a need for greater horizontal collaboration, vulnerability in leadership, and distributed authority – all essential for the iterative learning required in sustainability work (Edmondson, 2019).

3.5 Capability Gaps and Strategic Implications

Based on the personalized capability maps, three major gaps were identified:

- **Strategic Leadership Development**
- Many participants demonstrated strong task execution but lacked **system-level strategic thinking required for leading cross-sectoral change**.
- **Creative and Social Engagement** (all stakeholders). The team had few members with high scores in traits related to storytelling, facilitation, or emotional resonance – capabilities needed for community partnerships and co-creation efforts.
- **Reflective Learning Infrastructure**
- Organizational rituals for feedback, peer learning, or **adaptive experimentation** were present but informal.

These gaps were prioritized in the post-diagnostic development roadmap and informed the co-design of learning and coaching interventions.

4. DISCUSSION

The pilot implementation of the Green Mindsets Methodology at UrbanizeHub Romania provided valuable insight into the psychological, cognitive, and structural readiness of a Net Zero team. The results confirm several key assumptions underpinning the methodology and simultaneously raise important considerations for its broader application in organizational contexts committed to sustainability transformation.

4.1 Validation of Methodological Assumptions

At its core, the Green Mindsets framework posits that sustainability transformation is as much a human challenge as a technical or regulatory one. The pilot results reinforce this perspective: while the UrbanizeHub team exhibited strong climate awareness and delivery competence, significant misalignments were found in the areas of motivation, adaptability, and systemic integration.

The dominance of high-achieving, analytical personality profiles (Enneagram Types 3, 5, and 6) is typical of professional teams engaged in complex project work. However, the underrepresentation of empathetic, creative, or intuitive roles (Types 2, 4, 7) suggests a narrow cognitive diversity – a known limitation in teams operating in rapidly changing, stakeholder-rich environments (Page, 2007; Surowiecki, 2004).

This finding supports literature arguing that cognitive and emotional diversity is crucial to climate innovation, particularly where solutions must be co-created with communities, negotiated across political lines, or adapted in response to emergent conditions (Wiek et al., 2011; Moser & Dilling, 2007).

4.2 The Challenge of Role-Based Application

One of the most revealing outcomes was the discrepancy between climate knowledge and role-based application. Although participants scored relatively well on general climate awareness, few demonstrated an ability to directly connect sustainability principles to their functional responsibilities – such as procurement, budgeting, or communications.

This reflects a broader challenge observed across both private and public sectors: sustainability knowledge is often siloed in dedicated departments or policy units, rather than embedded in everyday workflows (Eccles et al., 2014). It also suggests a need for integrated training programs that help individuals translate abstract climate concepts into context-specific actions and KPIs relevant to their roles.

4.3 Behavioral Bottlenecks and Learning Culture

The study further highlights behavioral bottlenecks in terms of adaptability, psychological safety, and feedback culture. The preference for structured, data-driven decision-making observed in the team correlates with lower openness to ambiguity and experimentation – both of which are essential traits for leading sustainability initiatives under uncertainty (Snowden & Boone, 2007).

These traits may be strengths in execution-heavy phases, but could inhibit strategic pivoting and rapid iteration. Moreover, the limited presence of feedback mechanisms or peer learning structures suggests that the organization may struggle to internalize lessons or adjust course when challenges arise.

These findings are consistent with Edmondson's (2019) theory of psychological safety, which posits that teams unable to speak candidly or learn from failure are less likely to innovate. In a Net Zero context, where many strategies are emergent and context-sensitive, the ability to pause, reflect, and recalibrate is a non-negotiable capability.

4.4 Implications for the Green Mindsets Framework

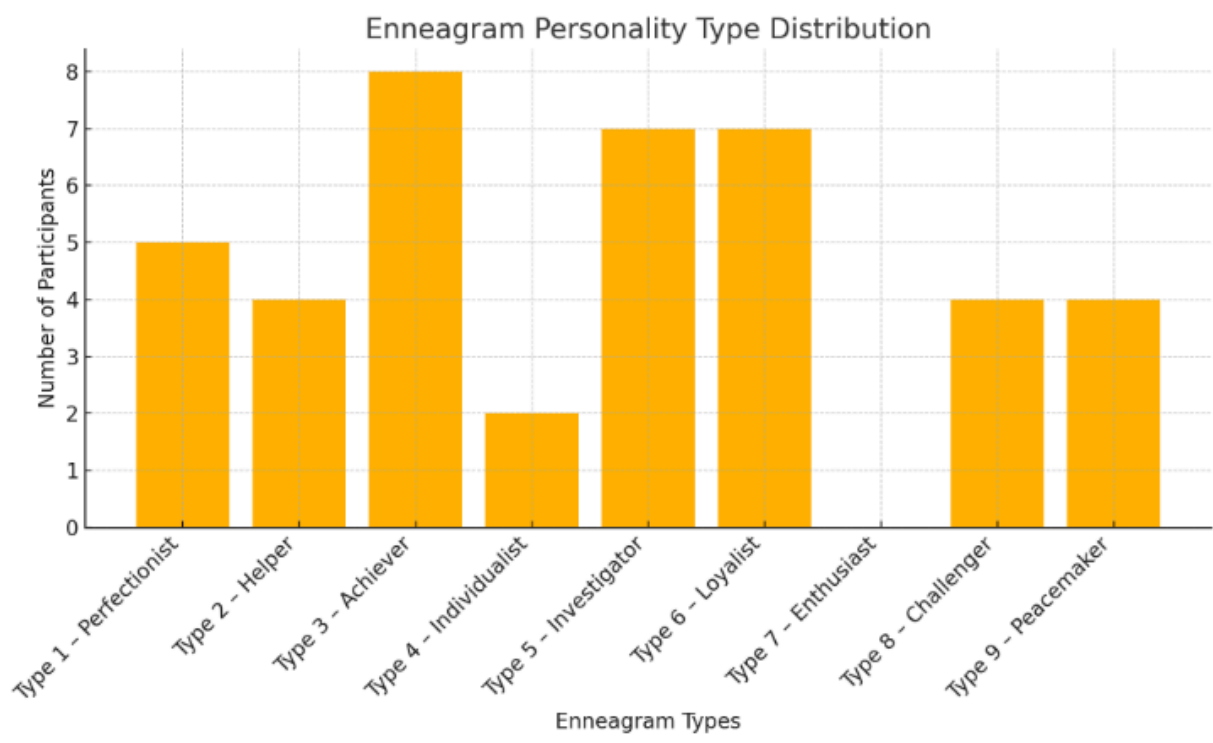
From a methodological perspective, this pilot confirms that the Green Mindsets instruments are capable of capturing multi-layered, human-centered insights that go beyond surface-level sustainability metrics. The combined use of psychometric, cognitive, and literacy tools allowed for a richer picture of organizational readiness than would be achievable using conventional performance assessments.

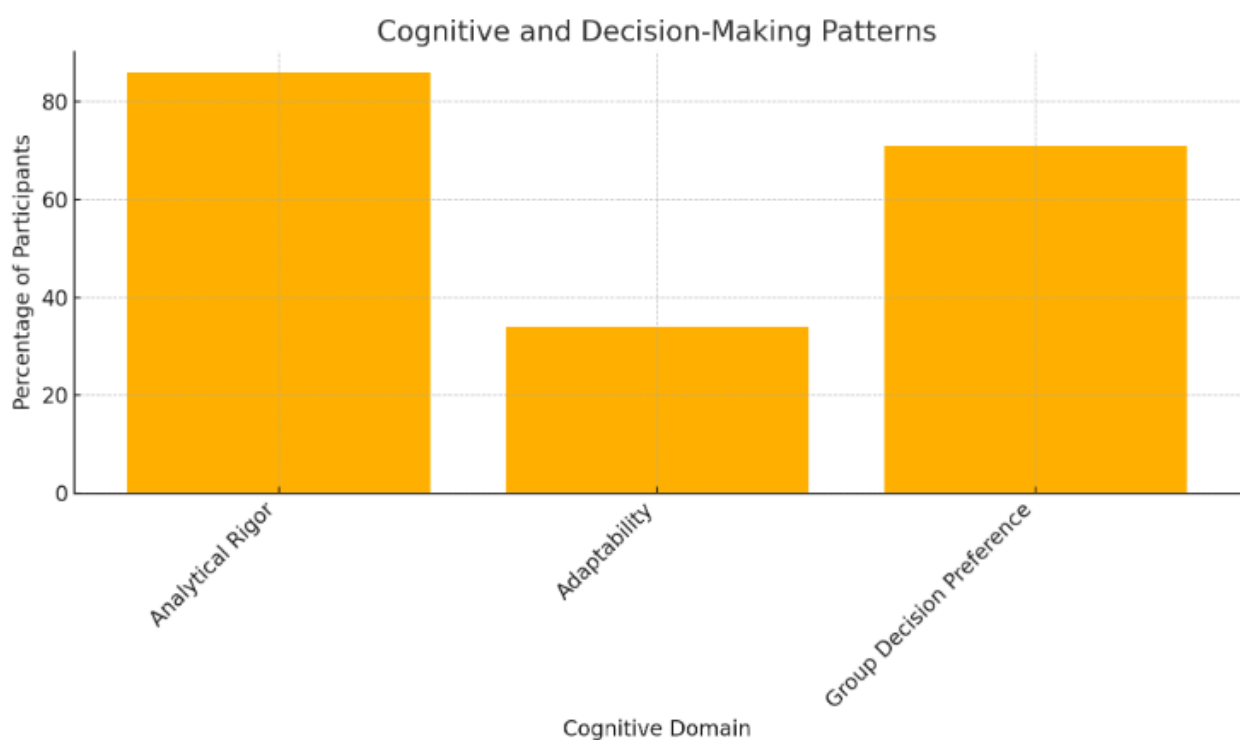
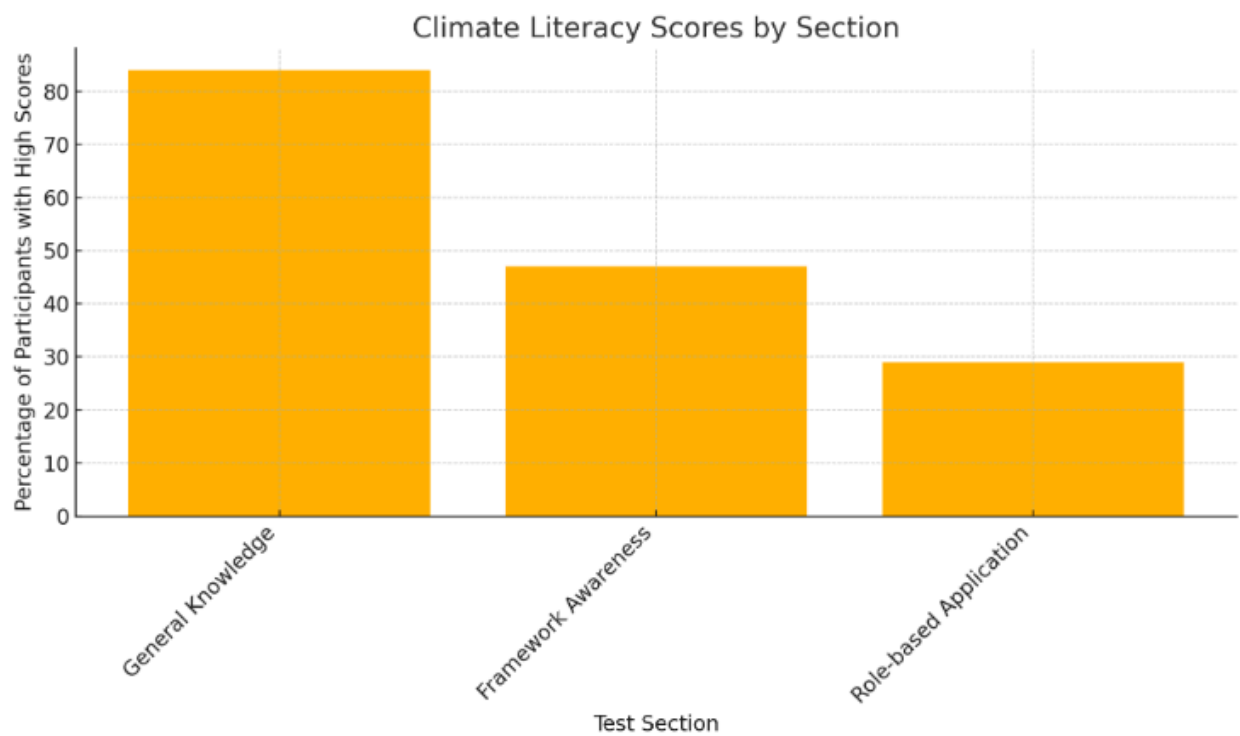
However, the pilot also suggests that these tools must be complemented by a robust facilitation process, particularly in phases of co-design and interpretation. Data alone is insufficient; meaning-making must be collaboratively supported to ensure psychological insight translates into developmental action (Kegan & Lahey, 2009).

Finally, the success of the methodology depends on leadership commitment to embed human capital development into the organization's sustainability strategy – not as an HR sideline but as a core-implementation-related strategic pillar.

APPENDIX 1

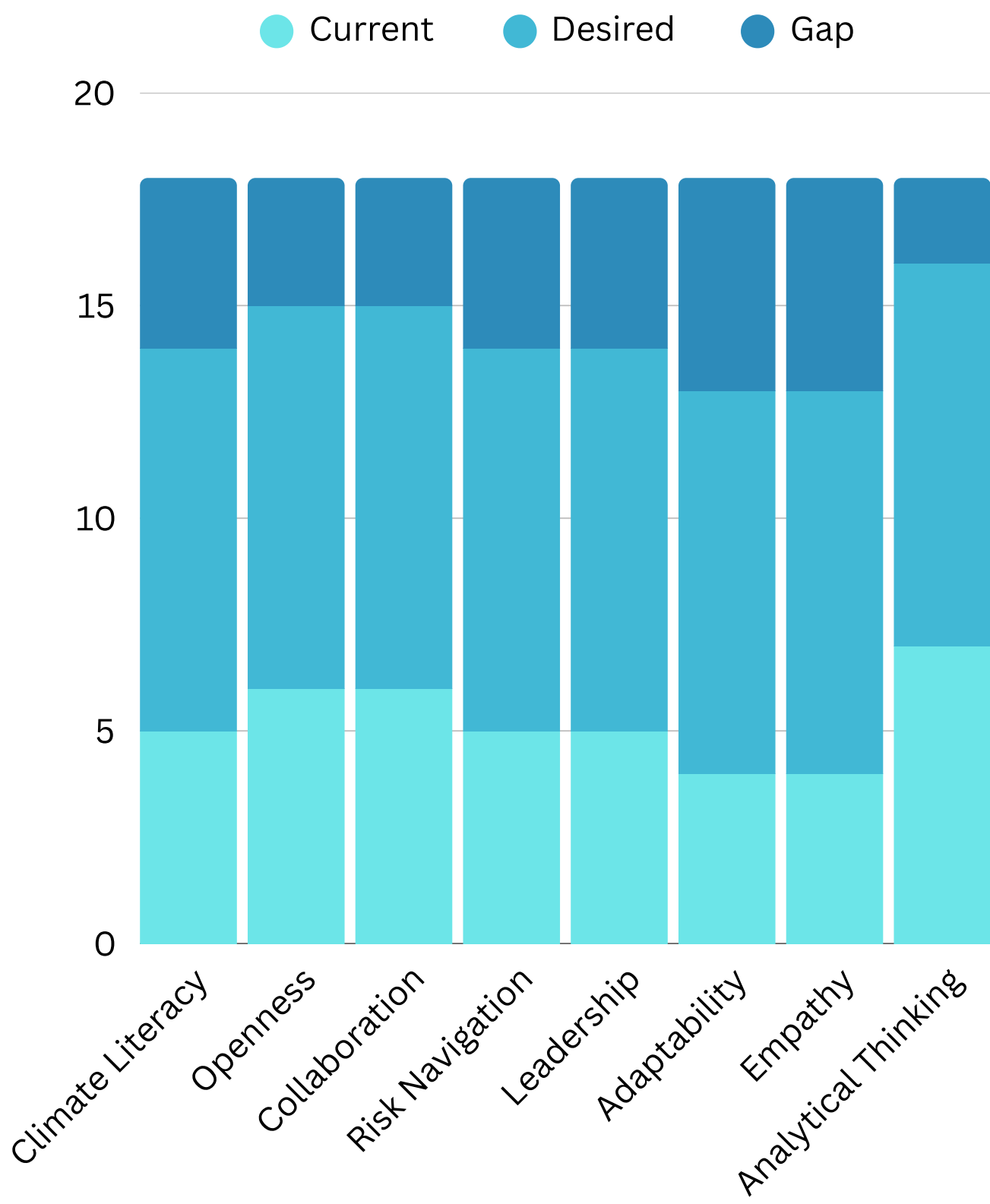
PHASE 1 - ASSESSEMENT RESULTS





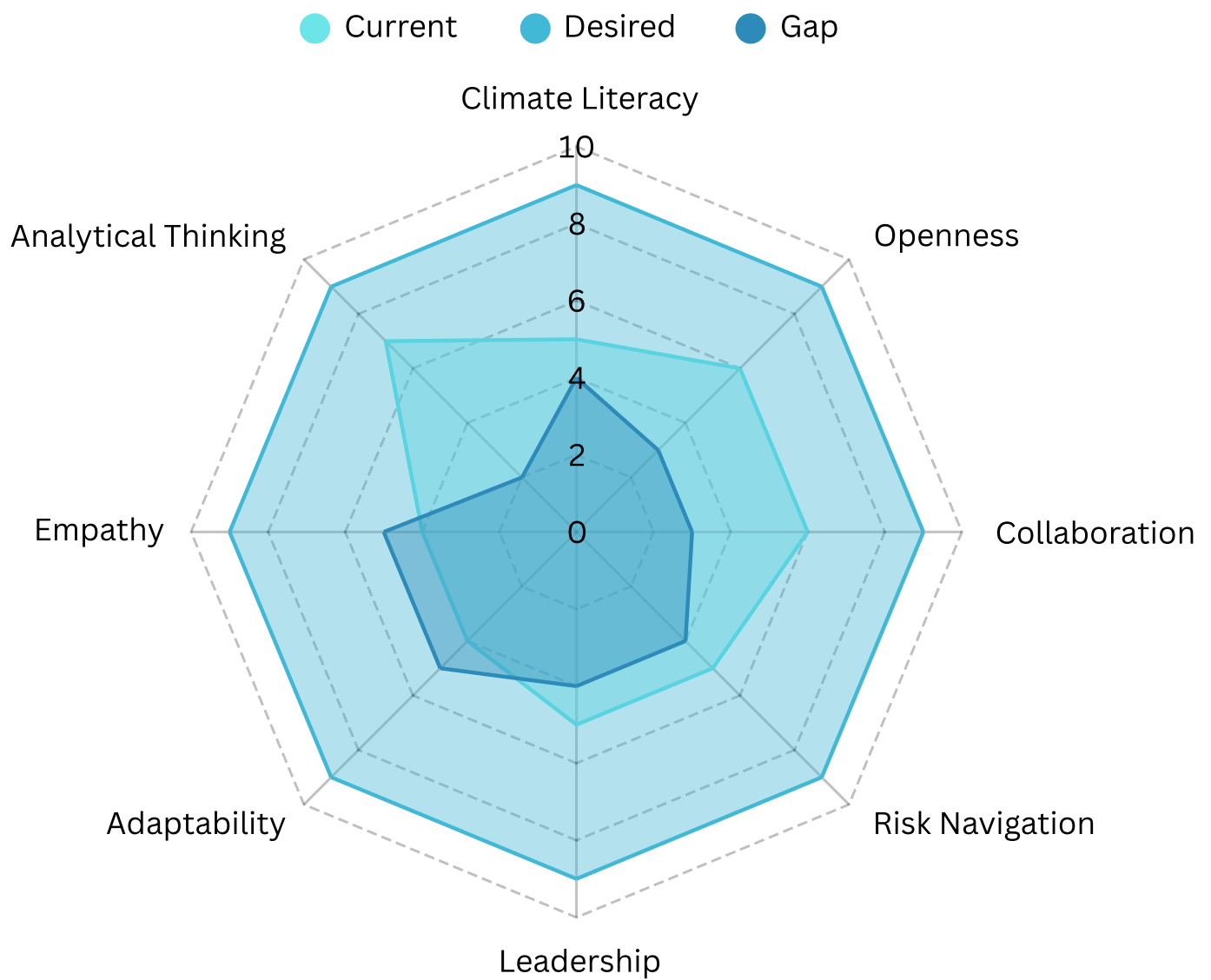
APPENDIX 1

PHASE 2 - CO-DESIGN



APPENDIX 1

PHASE 2 - CO-DESIGN



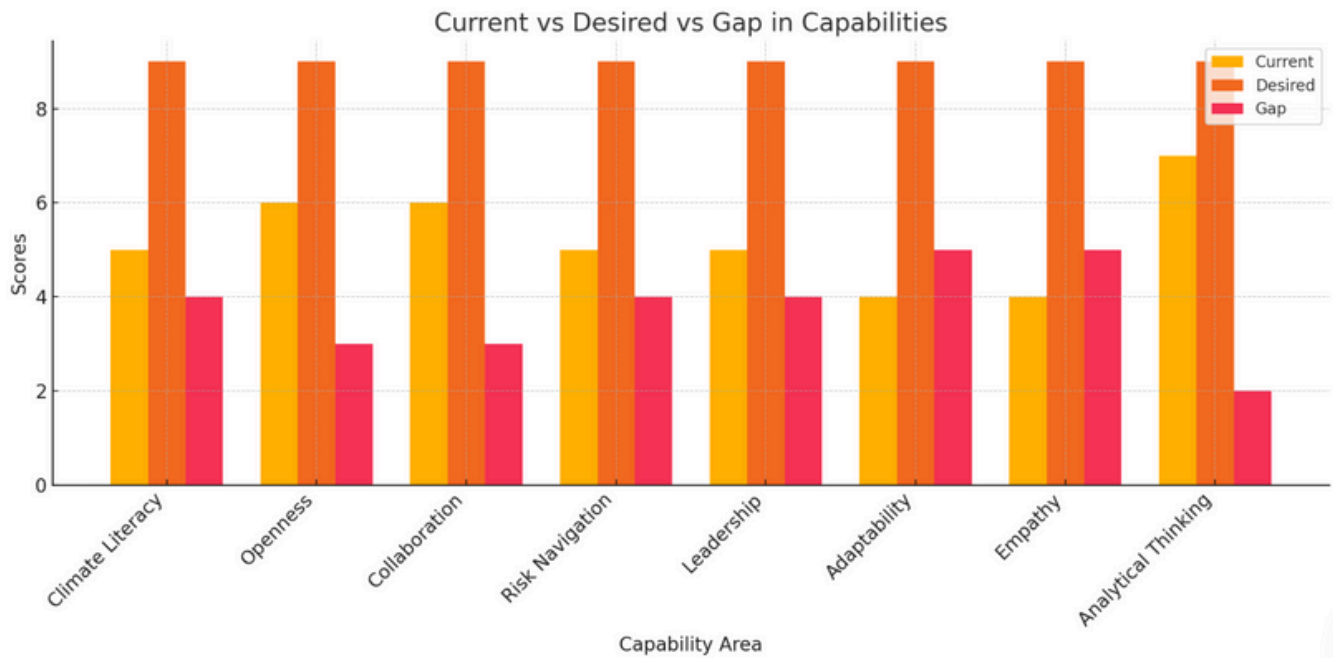
APPENDIX 1

PHASE 3 & 4 - STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT MAPPING

Capability Area	Current	Desired	Gap	Development Suggestions
Climate Literacy	5	9	4	Enroll in targeted climate strategy training such as carbon budgeting and EU Green Deal implementation courses.
Openness	6	9	3	Facilitate regular cross-disciplinary ideation workshops and explore innovative methodologies monthly.
Collaboration	6	9	3	Introduce collaborative tools like Miro and Notion, and organize team-building sessions to enhance synergy.
Risk Navigation	5	9	4	Conduct risk scenario workshops and establish rotating roles for risk evaluation and mitigation.
Leadership	5	9	4	Provide systems leadership training and create a rotation system for team members to lead projects.
Adaptability	4	9	5	Implement Agile workflows and rotate team members through unfamiliar tasks to build resilience and flexibility.
Empathy	4	9	5	Organize empathy-driven design sessions and integrate reflective journaling to enhance emotional intelligence.
Analytical Thinking	7	9	2	Host strategic foresight simulations and encourage synthesis across datasets and future scenario planning.

APPENDIX 1

PHASE 3 & 4 - STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT MAPPING



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