



# Looking Back on Changes in 2020 and Ahead to Opportunities in 2021

If the first 12 months are indicative of how the current decade will unfold, we're in for a period of tremendous change. Globally, we've experienced the combined effects of a health pandemic, climate emergency, and calls for racial equality-- all in the midst of an economic downturn.

According to Carbon Brief's [State of the Climate](#), 2020 is shaping up to be another record setting year for climate change in which "Human emissions of greenhouse gases have increased atmospheric conditions of CO2, methane and nitrous oxide to their highest levels in at least a few million years- if not longer." Eric Roston, a climate change journalist who writes for Bloomberg Green, noted that "biodiversity loss is both a symptom and a cause of climate change and pandemics."

On a more encouraging note, Bloomberg Green also reported an [8% drop in energy emissions from 2019](#), which may enable us to get past peak emissions. Also, nine of the world's top ten economies are embracing the transition to net-zero leading up to COP26.

In 2020 we've also seen **steps being taken by financial system actors to address climate change**-- from the announcement of [net-zero targets by major banks](#) to the release of the [PCAF Standard](#), development of a framework for financial institutions to [set science-based targets for lending and investment activities](#), and [Race-to-Zero November Dialogues](#) as a few notable examples. We welcome these efforts while also recognizing the urgent need for bold action to transition to a net-zero economy within a timeframe that avoids the worst impacts of climate change.

This has also been a change-filled year for Climate Safe Lending as we've worked to accelerate the alignment of bank lending with the Paris Agreement. In the spring we welcomed **James Vaccaro as Director of the Climate Safe Lending Network**. In July we published [Taking the Carbon Out of Credit](#), the Network's guide for decarbonizing bank lending. In October we held our second **Climate Safe Learning Lab** session for banking professionals who are advancing the climate agenda within their organizations. And in November, we co-hosted events with the **San Francisco and New York Federal Reserve Banks** on climate policy.

Read on to learn more about what we accomplished in 2020 and get a preview of our plans for 2021!

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## Taking the Carbon Out of Credit

A guide for financial institutions setting out on the path towards climate safety, [Taking the Carbon Out of Credit](#) describes an integrated approach for removing emissions from lending.

Over 300 people registered to attend a live presentation of this report when it was published on July 2, 2020. [Read the Report](#) and [Watch the Webinar Recording](#)

In recent months we have seen growth in sustainability-linked loans, development of financing mechanisms for innovation, and the rollout of tools to help clients understand their climate impact and make reductions-- all within the context of dealing with a global health pandemic.

We're keen to hear from banks what they have achieved and learned, so far, and what challenges they plan to address next.

Contact us at [connect@climatesafelending.org](mailto:connect@climatesafelending.org) to share your thoughts.

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## Climate Safe Learning Lab: Insights from the Front Lines of Bank Climate Action

In October we held our second Climate Safe Learning Lab session for banking professionals who are advancing the climate agenda within their organizations.

This half-day session revealed **four key areas where banking professionals face challenges and are converting them into catalysts for change**:

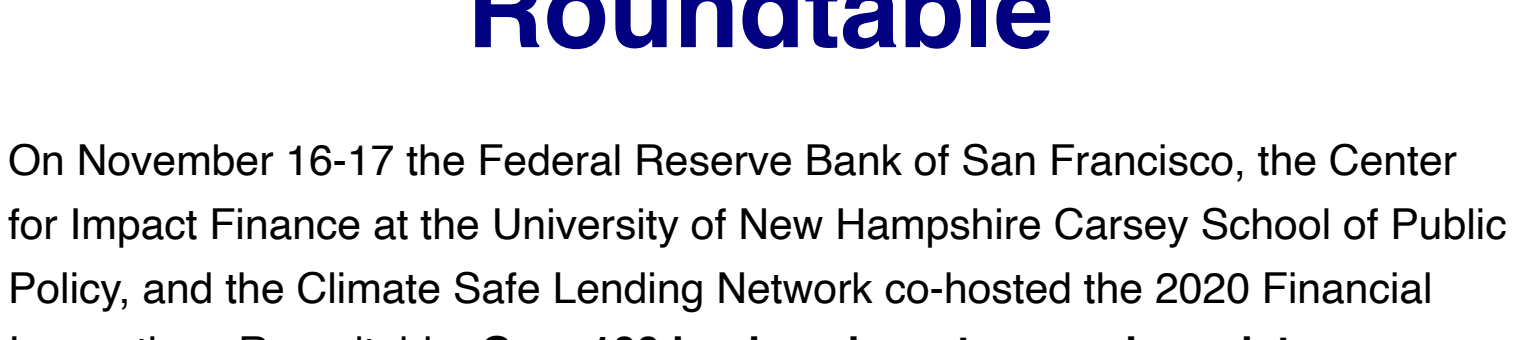
1. Personal leadership
2. Shifting mindsets and building buy-in
3. Influencing relationships and navigating power dynamics
4. Creating enabling organizational structures

[Read the Insights Report](#) to learn more about how banking professionals and bank influencers can help advance the climate action agenda.

In 2021 the Climate Safe Learning Lab will continue to foster our community of climate-focused bank insiders through connections, insights, and convenings. We will also offer a six-month Fellowship program for a select cohort of community members.

Find out more and join the Climate Safe Learning Lab community [here](#).

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## Financial Innovations Roundtable

On November 16-17 the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco, the Center for Impact Finance at the University of New Hampshire Carsey School of Public Policy, and the Climate Safe Lending Network co-hosted the 2020 Financial Innovations Roundtable. **Over 100 lenders, investors, and regulators attended this two-day event to discuss opportunities for increasing low-income communities' access to capital and financial services.**

This year's Roundtable featured panel discussions with climate finance experts, including our Director, **James Vaccaro**, and Climate Safe Lending Network Design Team members, **Fran Boait** and **Ivan Frishberg**, on decarbonizing investments, financing low-carbon technology and infrastructure, and policy and industry pathways to climate safe lending.

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## Reducing Climate Risk for Low-Income Communities

On November 19 the Federal Reserve Bank of New York and Climate Safe Lending Network co-hosted an engaging discussion on **opportunities for lending institutions to invest in strengthening the climate resilience of low-income communities**.

This webinar featured opening remarks from **Kevin Stiroh**, Executive Vice President, Federal Reserve Bank of New York, **Claire Kramer Mills**, Assistant Vice President and Director of Community Development Analysis at the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, expertly moderated a panel discussion featuring **Audrey Choi**, Chief Marketing Officer and Chief Sustainability Officer at Morgan Stanley, **Mijin Cha**, Assistant Professor, Urban and Environmental Policy at Occidental College, and **James Vaccaro**, Director of the Climate Safe Lending Network. **David Erickson**, Senior Vice President and Head of Outreach & Education at the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, provided concluding remarks on this event.

[Watch the Webinar Recording](#)

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## Preview of Climate Safe Lending in 2021

We've enjoyed connecting with so many of you and listening to your current plans, challenges, and questions. We're working on how we can most effectively convene dialogues that could lead to real break throughs for climate safe lending by bringing together the whole diversity of stakeholders from across the system, provoking new thinking with stimulating ideas, and encouraging transformative change through more participative and active dialogue.

In January we'll share insights from these conversations and announcements about our 2021 series of events. Please send your ideas, insights, and suggestions for topics that can be collectively explored by the network to [connect@climatesafelending.org](mailto:connect@climatesafelending.org).

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As 2020 draws to a close, we give thanks to the people and organizations that made our work possible this year:

Our financial supporters, [William & Flora Hewlett Foundation](#) and [Partners for a New Economy](#), for enabling us to set out a bold agenda in 2021 in the lead up to COP26.

Our [Design Team](#) members, [Fran Boait](#), [Lauren Compere](#), [Ivan Frishberg](#), [Jesse Griffiths](#), [Leslie Harroun](#), and [Tjeerd Krumpelman](#) for demonstrating climate safe leadership that fosters the acceleration of systems change.

Our [Climate Safe Learning Lab](#) Co-Leads, [Lydia Hascott](#) and [Becca Bartholomew](#), for their expert facilitation in creating a safe and supportive peer learning environment for bankers.

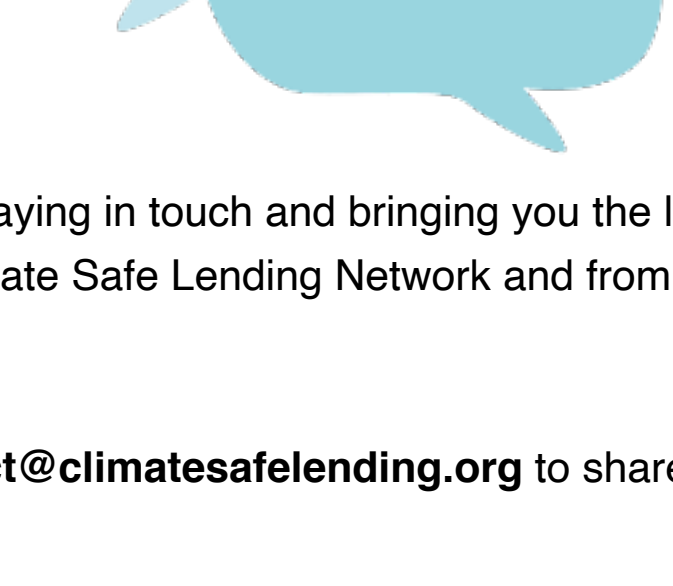
Our [Policy Initiative](#) Co Leads, [Fran Boait](#) and [Michael Swack](#), for supporting our engagement with the regulatory community.

Our [Core Team](#), [James Vaccaro](#), [Kimberley Jutze](#), and [Lizzie Flower](#), for organizing and coordinating the work of the network to keep it moving forward.

The [Center for Sustainability Solutions](#) and the [Green America Team](#) for hosting the [Climate Safe Lending Network](#) and for providing operational support.

Special thanks to [Alisa Gravitz](#), Green America's CEO, for her steadfast leadership and for generously contributing her insights and experience related to Innovation Networks.

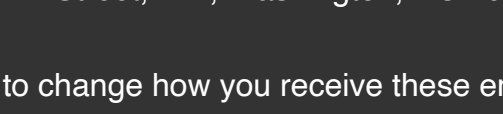
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We look forward to staying in touch and bringing you the latest news and insights from the Climate Safe Lending Network and from the world of climate finance.

Contact us at [connect@climatesafelending.org](mailto:connect@climatesafelending.org) to share your comments.

[Forward to a Friend!](#)



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