Equitable Climate Adaptation:

Considerations for Local Governments

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1.0 About This Resource

Introduction to ICLEI

ICLEI Canada is part of a global network working to achieve tangible sustainability results through cumulative local actions. We support local governments by providing them with expertise and resources to take action in their communities. To do this, we bring together a wide-variety of stakeholders across government, industry, academia and the NGO community to build more sustainable, low-carbon, biodiverse, and climate-ready communities.

PURPOSE OF THIS RESOURCE

This resource is intended to address the barriers preventing local governments from taking action to support climate change adaptation in a way that centers equity and community engagement. The resource will both create a case for this approach as well as offer a toolkit of tangible, actionable ideas and tools for partners in local government.

The three goals of this resource are to:

1. **Understand and address primary barriers** preventing municipalities from centering equity and engagement in climate change adaptation.

2. **Provide replicable and inspiring case studies** of local governments and partnerships that have had relevant success.

3. **Highlight tangible and applicable tools** for centering equity and engagement in adaptation efforts.

WHAT THIS RESOURCE IS NOT

This resource is intended to provide a high-level look at the ways in which it is essential for equity to be centred in climate adaptation, via examples and promising practices. This resource is not intended to be:

- A prescriptive guide for how to engage with individuals or communities on climate adaptation. Each person and community is different. While we can learn from examples, individual needs, historic and present barriers and inequities will look different across communities.
- All-encompassing in terms of who to engage with, and what climate adaptation projects should entail
- A comprehensive guide to equity-focused engagement practices. There are a wealth of resources with significant time invested in reviewing effective processes for engagement.

In recognizing that this resource just covers the tip of the iceberg on a range of important topics, additional resources have been included in **Section 4** to suggest next steps for further learning.

METHOD AND ATTRIBUTIONS

- Review of existing resources on equitable engagement and equitable climate adaptation
- Review of promising practices and projects employing them
- Conversations with stakeholders involved in promising practices
- Interviews with municipal staff who work on climate change initiatives and take part in ICLEI's Advancing Adaptation program
- Interviews with equity specialists, representatives of equity-focused advocacy groups, and/or individuals from equity-deserving and under-represented perspectives

How to use this resource

The resource includes four sections that provide different foundations for taking on equity-centred climate adaptation work. These sections include:

1 About this Resource

You are here! This section provides an overview of the framework that this resource is working within and highlights its limits. This section also provides information on how the resource was informed and built.

2 Foundations for Centring Equity

This section provides foundational information and tools that are worth considering across all types of projects. This includes:

- **History and context** about the systems we're working in
- Examples of **privilege and inequity**
- **Building the case for equity** in climate adaptation
- **Foundational considerations** for partnership and engagement

Throughout this resource, there are consideration checklists that offer reflections to spark changes in process by posing questions that may be forgotten in the typical project delivery.

3 Considerations by Project Type

This section addresses examples and considerations that are specific to different types of projects: infrastructure projects, plans and policies, and programs. Each section provides:

- A **description of the project type**
- **Examples** of climate adaptation projects
- An overview of **common project phases**
- A **considerations checklist** for each phase of the project
- **Spotlights** of projects that used promising practices to center equity in climate adaptation initiatives

The **consideration checklist** offers questions for each phase of the project. Considerations rather than prescriptive actions acknowledge that every project and every community is unique and that equity-focused actions are not one-size-fits-all.

The considerations were compiled based on interviews with individuals and groups that work with or are members of equity-deserving and under-represented groups, spotlights, and cited resources.

There are key foundational considerations to consider across all project types before a project is initiated. We would recommend referring to the Foundations for Centring Equity section before reviewing phase-specific considerations.

4 Additional Resources

There are links to other resources throughout this guide. This section holds all references and links to other resources in one place, grouped by subject.

Thank you to individuals who contributed to this guide through interviews including Julius Lindsay (Director, Sustainable Communities, David Suzuki Foundation and Co-Founder, Black Environmentalist Alliance), Hetxw'ms Gyetxw (Brett Huson) (Author & Knowledge Keeper), Heliya Babazadeh-Oleghi (City of Mississauga), Karina Richters (City of Windsor), Jennifer Babin-Fenske (City of Greater Sudbury), Andrea McDowell (City of Hamilton), and Caitlin Pierzchalski (Project Watershed). The resources that have informed this Guide have been referenced throughout.

This project was done in partnership with

URBAN SYSTEMS

2.0 Foundations for Centring Equity

The systems we are in

The Limitations and Continued History of Local Governments and Equity-Deserving Groups

Before taking action, it is essential to recognize and build an understanding of the history and continued role of local governments in denying equity.

Local governments, as well as the professions that support them, such as Planning, Architecture, and Engineering, have long denied the rights, needs, and experiences of equity-seeking groups. The removal of Black and racialized communities across Canada (for example, Africville in Halifax and Hogan's Alley in Vancouver) under the guise of "slum clearance" and "urban renewal" are examples of this approach.

The typical municipal engagement processes continue to centre the voices of individuals with privilege, including those with time, resources, and power. The history of planning practices have treated the public, especially equity-denied groups, as needing to be placated. These practices may have eroded trust in the local government, impacting the ability to conduct effective and genuine engagement. With an understanding of the harm inflicted by local governments, we can focus on the need for trust-building, harm reduction and a restorative-justice-focused approach to begin moving forward.

While it is important that local governments as a whole address their legacy, organizations are at different stages of acknowledgement and action. As an individual working in a local government, there are actions you can take to get started. For example:

- **Internal decolonizing** - Where local governments hold and see themselves as being in the power it is important to reflect on situations where they should be giving power back to the community. Examples of activities staff from local governments can explore include:
  - Internal trainings, workshops, and knowledge-building opportunities such as anti-oppression, anti-racism, cultural-safety and decolonization.
  - Reading the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada Calls to Action as well as other books and videos (Section 4 provides a jumping-off point).
  - Learning about the history of your region as it pertains to Indigenous peoples, Black and People of Colour, and other equity-deserving groups.
  - Understand how to properly acknowledge the lands that you are on. Band offices may be able to provide the wording and protocols with which to reference their ancestral lands.
  - Learn about the ecology of the lands you are on, that have been stewarded by Indigenous peoples.
- **Professional reform** - Staff from local governments can push for improved education (or may themselves, be instructors who can implement education) and professional standards relating to equity-deserving groups.

It is important to recognize that, for individuals who experience and benefit from privilege in different areas of their identity, the process of learning about and acknowledging personal and organizational privilege and harm is uncomfortable. The process may also evoke discomfort about not wanting to get it wrong as you move into putting learning into action. It is worth reflecting on whether discomfort and fear of making mistakes are preventing you from making any changes at all. This resource is intended as a support for this process.

Resource: USDN Guide to Equitable Community-Driven Climate Preparedness Planning Pg. 15: How structural and institutional racism is perpetuated through government processes

Tools:

Understanding Types of Equity Objectives within a System[1]

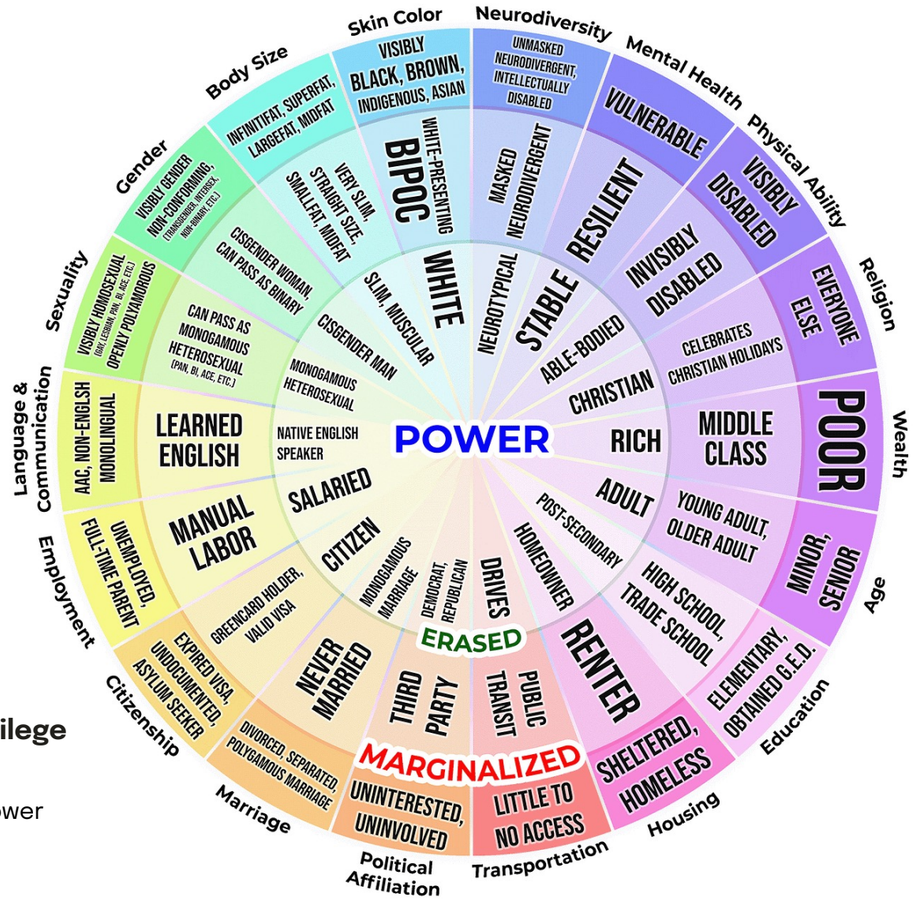
The USDN Guide to Equitable Community-Driven Climate Preparedness recognizes three primary equity objectives.

Recognizing which objectives your work has the power to address can help tailor the strategies used. It is important that each of the three objectives is part of building equity and creating systemic change.

This can be used as a tool to identify where you, your department, and your institution have the ability to influence equity objectives. As you embark on projects, try identifying where your projects fit within the equity objectives in terms of the project goal and your opportunities for change.

Procedural	• Creating fair, transparent, and inclusive processes for developing and implementing any program, plan, or policy • Ensure that people are being treated equitably • Increase engagement opportunities for communities disproportionately impacted by climate change
Distributional	• Equitably distribute resources, benefits, and burdens • Prioritize resources for communities experiencing the greatest impacts, inequities, and unmet needs
Structural	• Commit to correcting past harms and preventing future unintended consequences • Address underlying structural and institutional systems at the root of inequities

Resource: The USDN Guide to Equitable Community-Driven Climate Preparedness also includes a framework for institutionalization of racism, advancing racial equity through government operations, and more.



Examples of Privilege and Inequity

Figure 1: Wheel of Power and Privilege [2]

The Wheel of Power and Privilege is a tool to help identify how you and the people and communities that you work with experience different privileges and inequalities - including access to municipal services and impacts of climate change. This wheel can be used while considering the impact of climate change, to understand ways that inequities will compound the effects of climate change, putting certain groups at greater risk.

Specific examples of how equity-deserving groups experience disproportionate effects of climate change are included in the Building the Case for Centering Equity in Climate Adaptation section.

The privilege wheel shown provides examples of factors and identities that impact one's privilege and may impact their access to municipal services. It is not a complete or conclusive list, and it is important to reflect on the unique factors that exist in the communities that you live and work in.

Resource: Beyond Inclusion - Equity in Public Engagement (SFU Morris J. Wosk Centre for Dialogue + IAP2). Page 7 provides definitions to key terms including intersectionality.

Tools:

Building the Case for Centering Equity in Climate Change Adaption

PURPOSE OF BUILDING THE CASE:

This tool can be used to make the case for investing in and pursuing climate adaptation policy changes, programs, and infrastructure development that prioritizes equity. It provides examples of how climate change will disproportionally impact equity-denied groups and the necessity for local government to centre equity in climate adaptation. Opportunities for these conversations occur with elected officials, internal departments, funding partners and the public. The tool summarizes how a range of social issues which local governments may interact with, are connected to and impacted by climate change to help you develop effective messages for your audience.

Three Steps to Building the Case:

1 Identify your audience.

This may change throughout your project. For example, you may need to first build the case for other local government staff, followed by council and the public.

2 Identify their priorities and concerns.

Your audience will likely have other priority issues that you can relate to equity. Identify where connections between a social issue, equity, and climate adaptation can be made to address their priorities. For example, your audience could be:

- Financially motivated, in which case they need to understand the cost of inaction.
- Focused on a specific social issue (such as homelessness or food security) but have not yet made the connection to climate change adaptation.
- Focused on climate change but do not understand the connection to equity and social issues.

3 Identify facts and examples

To connect their priorities with equity and climate change adaptation. Use existing information and studies to develop relevant facts and examples. For example,

- People with low socioeconomic status, people of colour, (racialized) immigrants, people with disabilities, people experiencing homelessness, and other equity-deserving groups are more susceptible to climate change in Canada.[3]
- Mobility-related disabilities can endanger an individual during disasters wherein evacuation is necessary. A 2013 global survey by the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction found that only 21% of persons with disabilities believed they could evacuate without difficulty.[4]
- Climate-related disasters can place LGBTQ2+ people at greater risk of violence and discrimination.[5]

Resource Link: For more facts about how climate change disproportionately impacts equity-deserving groups, check out the International Institute for Sustainable Development's Deep Dive on Equity, diversity, and inclusion in Canada's National Adaptation Strategy: www.iisd.org/articles/social-inclusion-climate-adaptation

EXAMPLES OF CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACTS ON EQUITY ISSUES

Housing and Homelessness

Poor quality housing, housing insecurity and lower insurance coverage can increase individuals' vulnerability to the effects of climate change. Being homeless or precariously housed increases vulnerability to weather extremes, which climate change will put further strain on.

Flooding, extreme heat, and wildfires are examples of climate-related events that will increase housing insecurity.

Considerations:

- Are there statistics about the number of people who are experiencing housing insecurity, core housing need, and homelessness in your community? If so, use these to communicate this population's need for greater engagement and supports in adapting to climate change.
- What groups are present in your community that may experience intersecting barriers (such as race, Indigenous identity, LGBTQ+ identity) to housing and the effects of climate change? If so, use this to guide who your engagement program targets, and the supports you provide to make engagement both accessible and beneficial to the involved groups.
- Do studies of climate change impacts look at intersecting barriers experienced by equity-deserving communities? (I.e., flood plain mapping and income level). If they do, how can you communicate this information to prioritize support for equity-deserving communities. What communities do you require data from and what institutions could you partner with to build this information?

Energy Security

As climate change increases weather extremities, more energy will be required for warming and cooling. This presents an issue on energy supply and equitable access. Rising energy prices will put an even greater strain on households in low socioeconomic status, many of whom are women, visible minorities, racialized immigrants, seniors, and people with disabilities.

Extreme heat, extreme cold and severe weather such as winter storms are examples of climate-related events that will exacerbate energy insecurity.

Considerations:

- Does your community or region have data on energy security? If so, this information can be used to communicate the need for greater levels of engagement and supports in adapting

- to climate change to populations that are energy insecure.
- Are there examples from other communities taking action in addressing energy insecurity. If so, use these case studies as successful example to share with your audience.

Food Security

Climate change directly impacts agricultural production, processing, distribution, and consumption which affect human health. Climate change will increase the cost of food which will have significant effects on people as well as social stability.[6] Food security disproportionately impacts equity-deserving groups, including Indigenous and racialized people, and remote communities in Canada.

Food security is impacted by extreme heat, severe weather, and water quality and quantity exacerbated by climate change.

Considerations:

- Does your community or region have plans, policies, and programs that focus on food security? If so, these can help communicate the need to focus on food security from an equity lens.

Green Infrastructure and Public Space

Public spaces and green infrastructure have significant benefits to mental health and inclusion. Areas with a higher percentage of tree canopy cover provide a higher level of benefits from trees including stormwater management, pulling particulates from the air, improving human mental and physical health, storing greenhouse gases, and cooling their environments. Many equity-deserving communities live in areas with limited green infrastructure and access to public greenspace.

Individuals and communities without access to green space will experience greater risks associated with climate change-related events including poor air quality, extreme heat, and flooding.

Considerations:

Do public space and green infrastructure plans in your community look at intersecting barriers experienced by equity-deserving communities? (I.e., tree canopy cover and income). If they do, how can you communicate this information to prioritize support for equity-deserving communities? If you do not have this information, what communities could you draw data from to apply to your community and what institutions could you partner with to build this information?

PURPOSE OF ENGAGEMENT AND PARTNERSHIP

Collaborative problem-solving leads to improved outcomes. Local governments can begin or enhance community-engaged work on climate change adaptation as **effective partners in ways that involve equity-deserving groups** throughout a project. The considerations in this tool apply across all projects. There are additional checklists in **Section 3** with considerations that are unique to different types of projects. Many of the considerations draw heavily from the interviews with individuals and groups that work with or are members of equity-deserving and under-represented groups, spotlights, and cited resources.

Tools:

Foundational Considerations for Engagement and Partnership in Climate Adaptation Projects

The checklist offers **considerations rather than prescriptive actions** in acknowledgement that every project and every community is unique and that equity-focused actions are not one-size-fits-all. The considerations are intended to spark a change in process by posing questions that may be forgotten in the typical phases of project delivery.

There are existing guides on equitable and effective engagement that include in-depth concepts and considerations for engaging with communities. **This checklist is not a complete list** – it is important to learn from existing resources (which are referenced throughout and after the checklist) which focus entirely on equitable engagement.

BEFORE PROJECT INITIATION

Have you reflected on who is being heard by your local governments' current engagement processes?

Centring equity in climate change requires a shift in the engagement mechanisms currently relied on by local governments. The base-level required engagement is not effectively engaging equity-denied communities

Do you understand the degree that equity-deserving groups were engaged in and impacted by past programs from your local government?

It is important to understand the history of the community's engagement prior to starting the project, specifically the ways that past processes have exacerbated mistrust and further marginalized equity-deserving communities.

Have you built and maintained relationships with communities that will disproportionally face the effects of climate change *before* their formal engagement is needed on a project?

Building relationships and trust outside of essential work tasks can make engagement and partnerships possible and positive.

Who will be impacted and how? Have you identified how the climate change impacts related to the project may disproportionately impact different and intersecting identities and experiences? Have you identified gaps in your knowledge on the impacts to these individuals?

Lived experiences of equity-deserving individuals and projections of future conditions and impacts can help prioritize locations and project phases.

Before engaging, have you assessed whether the project and associated engagement have the potential to benefit equity-deserving communities?

Engagement can be approached as an attempt to gain a stamp of approval. This is specifically harmful to equity-deserving groups. Asking questions and attempting to engage, especially if there is no potential to benefit those individuals is detrimental to those individuals (i.e., requiring time and capacity, degrading trust.

Have you considered selecting or prioritizing your projects based on the objectives and priorities of equity-deserving communities?

Climate adaptation projects can have many co-benefits, and sometimes can be selected and prioritized starting with the other benefits rather than from a climate lens. Consider engaging equity-deserving communities to understand their priorities and then identifying or prioritizing climate resilience projects that contribute to achieving the community's priorities. For example, if a community's priority Is employment, identify projects that achieve employment while building climate resilience.

Have you helped prepare communities to be engaged? Have you identified who the best organization or group Is to do the engagement?

Planning to support individuals with greater barriers and lived experience in participating in a way where it provides benefits to them. It is important to consider that the local government may not have sufficient trust to conduct effective engagement with equity-deserving communities. In these cases, other intermediaries may be engaged to conduct the engagement. These could be non-profit groups, social purpose consultants, community leaders, religious groups, and more.

PROJECT INITIATION

Have you developed staff, community, and political readiness with an understanding of why the project must centre equity and climate adaptation?[8]

Developing staff, community, and political readiness through education can help to reduce negative feedback that could halt or de-rail the project and negatively impact the equity-deserving communities involved.

Based on who will be impacted, whose voice needs to be included?

Consider the climate change impact and the location to ensure that those experiencing or feeling the effects are heard from.

Are partners from equity-deserving groups brought into the project in a way where the relationships, power, and direction to follow and implement their direction are available?

Representation without relationships, power, and information is tokenism.

Have you identified leaders, grassroots organizations, and community hubs to partner with on the project in the communities you are targeting for involvement? Have you allocated and clearly defined funding to these partners?

By identifying leaders, grassroots organizations, and community hubs to partner with you can develop a full understanding of how climate change is impacting a community and what action is already being taken or could be taken.

PROJECT DELIVERY

Are you using methods to lower barriers to engagement?[9]

For example, you can lower barriers to engagement by paying people for their time and lived experiences, paying for childcare, transportation, and meals, and communicate using a language of choice.

Are you regularly reporting back to the communities you have engaged with?

By communicating project directions and reflections and sharing how results inform ongoing project development the community has the opportunity for continued engagement.

Are you regularly checking in with your partners to make sure the project has mutual or community-focused benefits?

For example, are you creating opportunities for the community to develop skills and capacities that they have identified as being useful?

Do you have a plan to investigate and report on failures?

If a project that centred equity failed, in-part or in totality, review the process and use it to learn and improve in the future. Projects could be written off due to their failed end results, when the issue was situational and solely related to the project implementation and/or delivery - the initiative may represent a promising practice that could be applied successfully in a different context.

Resource: Beyond Inclusion - Equity in Public Engagement (SFU Morris J. Wosk Centre for Dialogue + IAP2). Use this resource to inform your engagement methods in working with equity-deserving groups.

Consider using California Environmental Justice Alliance's five considerations to identify impacts:[7]

Identify Hazards

climate-related hazards in the frontline community under current and future conditions and how they might change over time

Identify Populations

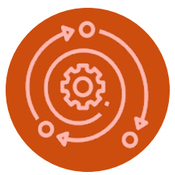
specific groups present in the frontline community that may experience additional effects of the hazards, i.e. consider age, physical and mental health, employment, citizenship status, and other socioeconomic factors.

Analyze Potential Impacts

using scientific research and insight from frontline community members, assess how severe each effect will be for different demographics of the population.

Evaluate Adaptive Capacity

the ability of the population to resist or recover from the effects of the hazards under current conditions. Can address state of critical infrastructure and see what needs to be strengthened, and added to enhance resilience.



Identify Vulnerabilities & Impacts

based on the gathered information. and how they might change over time

3.0 Considerations for Three Project Types

- Adaptation Infrastructure Projects
- Adaptation Plans and Policies
- Programming for Climate Adaptation

Centring Equity In Infrastructure Adaptation Projects

Infrastructure projects, such as new and upgraded municipal infrastructure, are an important part of climate adaptation.

These projects tend to be big financial investments, have long lifespans, and can have long lasting impacts on surrounding communities – both positive and negative. Including equity in these projects from the outset can help ensure that project benefits are maximized and the negative impacts that can't be eliminated are mitigated.

EXAMPLES OF INFRASTRUCTURE CLIMATE ADAPTATION PROJECTS

- Nature-based infrastructure, such as bioswales and green roofs that increase resilience to flooding and urban heat island effect
- Enhanced pumping, piping and storage infrastructure and drainage systems to protect from intense urban flooding
- Adjustments to transportation routes and construction
- Incorporating climate considerations into existing infrastructure upgrades
- Urban tree planting or creek restoration
- Purchasing or dedicating land for conservation purposes

INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECT PHASES

STEP 1

Project Identification

- Projects identified through infrastructure inspections, studies/plans, political priorities
- Project prioritization
- Funding dedication

STEP 2

Feasibility & Design

- Feasibility tender and study
- Design tender
- Concept design
- Preliminary design
- Detailed design
- Procurement

STEP 3

Construction & Commissioning

- Tender, addendums, and Award to General Contractor
- Regular construction meetings (community input shared)
- Deficiency identification and closeout

STEP 4

Ongoing Operations & Maintenance

- Warranty claims
- Site maintenance

PROJECT IDENTIFICATION

Tools:

Considerations for Infrastructure Projects

- **Have you allocated and clearly defined funding and decision-making power to your partners?**
- **Have you secured the necessary funding for effective and meaningful engagement in the remaining project phases?**
- **How will the funding mechanism of the project impact equity-deserving groups? For example, will local-area Improvement taxes be unaffordable to some? Will grant timelines impact the ability to effectively engage with equity-deserving groups? Are there ways to offset any negative impacts?**
- **How is equity considered in the project identification and prioritization phase? Do project cost-benefit analyses incorporate an understand of benefits (or potential negative impacts) to equity-deserving groups?**

FEASIBILITY AND DESIGN

- **Have you considered the social and political history of the site where your proposed initiative will take place?**[12]

  *Local governments have histories of locating large infrastructure projects in neighbourhoods where they displace and harm equity-deserving residents (review **Section 1** for examples and more information).*

- **Have you considered unintended consequences such as gentrification, displacement, and safety issues that may arise for individuals from equity-seeking groups as a result of your project?**[13]

- **Have you created a plan with the communities where the project is sited, specifically equity-deserving groups, to mitigate any temporary disturbances?**

  For example, relocating a bus stop closed due to construction impacts.

- **What procurement opportunities exist to benefit equity-seeking groups?**

- **How can you monitor impacts of the project during and following commissioning? Are these impacts the same or different from what was expected?**

CONSTRUCTION AND COMMISSIONING

- **Do you have effective communication channels with the equity-deserving groups whom this project will impact to address any new concerns or issues, and ensure their needs are being met?**

  For example, communicating ongoing construction impacts through multiple languages and formats to ensure the information is received by those who need it. Providing contact information for people to provide feedback or ask questions.

ONGOING OPERATIONS AND MAINTENANCE

- **Have you secured funding, support, and community buy-in to maintain the infrastructure?**

Spotlight

Project Watershed: Kus-Kus-Sum

Location: Courtenay, British Columbia

Partners: K'ómoks First Nation, Project Watershed, and the City of Courtenay

Climate Change Issues(s): Flooding and Stormwater Management

Description: The Kus-kus-sum project is a three-way partnership between Project Watershed, K'ómoks First Nation and the City of Courtenay which will create a vibrant and productive habitat along a major fish bearing stream and a connection to Hollyhock Flats, one of the most productive areas in the K'ómoks Estuary. The project will remove 8.3 acres of concrete, recontour and replant the area with native species, and eventually repatriate the lands to K'ómoks First Nation.

The partnership involved in the project is a unique one and has been essential in meeting the project's goals. Project Watershed has supported Kus-kus-sum's coordination, fundraising, and management of restoration efforts. Project Watershed also has long-standing involvement and connection to the community which has supported effective engagement. The City's involvement was able to support permitting, tax exemptions, financing and fundraising, project planning and providing regional context. The City of Courtenay and K'ómoks First Nation will co-manage the project after initial restoration is complete and before the land is fully restored to the Nation. K'ómoks First Nation also supported fundraising, culturally informed and advised on the project, and is actively involved in the plans, cultivation, restoration and monitoring, and ongoing management of the property. Coordinators note that the dedication of all partners to the project coming to fruition has been essential. The partners continue to come to the table; once per month elected officials and staff from across the partnership meet to discuss progress, challenges, and solutions.

In project delivery, Kus-kus-sum is utilizing the economic development opportunities created through the infrastructure development with purchasing and services focused locally, within the community and Nation.

Beyond the project structure, the process of engagement embodies the values of equity with regular, open and transparent engagement sessions and annual town halls that

focus on low-barrier engagement. The project team has also created a broad range of volunteer opportunities for everyone, beyond restoration work which has limited physical accessibility.

The name, Kus-kus-sum was dedicated to the project when K'ómoks First Nation was brought on to the partnership, and means "very very slippery", being the name of a past village site from across the river where the project takes place.

Key takeaways from the project:

- The Kus-kus-sum project has been ongoing for over a decade and has in some cases required deadlines to be extended. An innovative model can be one of many factors leading to the project going long. It is important for municipalities to commit to long-term projects and set expectations that they often will not happen quickly in order to be delivered effectively and allow necessary dialogue.
- Partnerships with non-profits and Indigenous communities can support more effective engagement.
- The involvement of non-profits can support significant focus on a project over shorter timespans as non-profits are often able to evolve their work focus more nimbly, in comparison to local governments.
- Infrastructure projects can create economic development opportunities focused in Indigenous communities through partnership with First Nations.
- Repatriating lands to Indigenous communities can be integrated into infrastructure projects.

Visit kuskussum.ca to learn more and stay updated on the Kus-kus-sum project.

Reflections: Gaps In Infrastructure Projects That Center Equity In Climate Adaptation.

In creating this guide, an important element was the inclusion of spotlights on equity-focused climate adaptation in practice. The focus was not on providing spotlights that were perfect, but rather, to spotlight projects that focused on equity as a core objective, employed innovative practices in local government settings, and had success in some project phases. The process of identifying infrastructure projects highlighted the lack of infrastructure project centring equity, to date, specifically in Canada. While the Kus-kus-sum project is not yet finished, it provides a hopeful example of promising practices being put into action. The lack of projects to date, speaks to the goal of this resource, to support staff in local governments to advance equity-focused climate adaptation infrastructure.

Centring Equity in Adaptation Plans and Policies

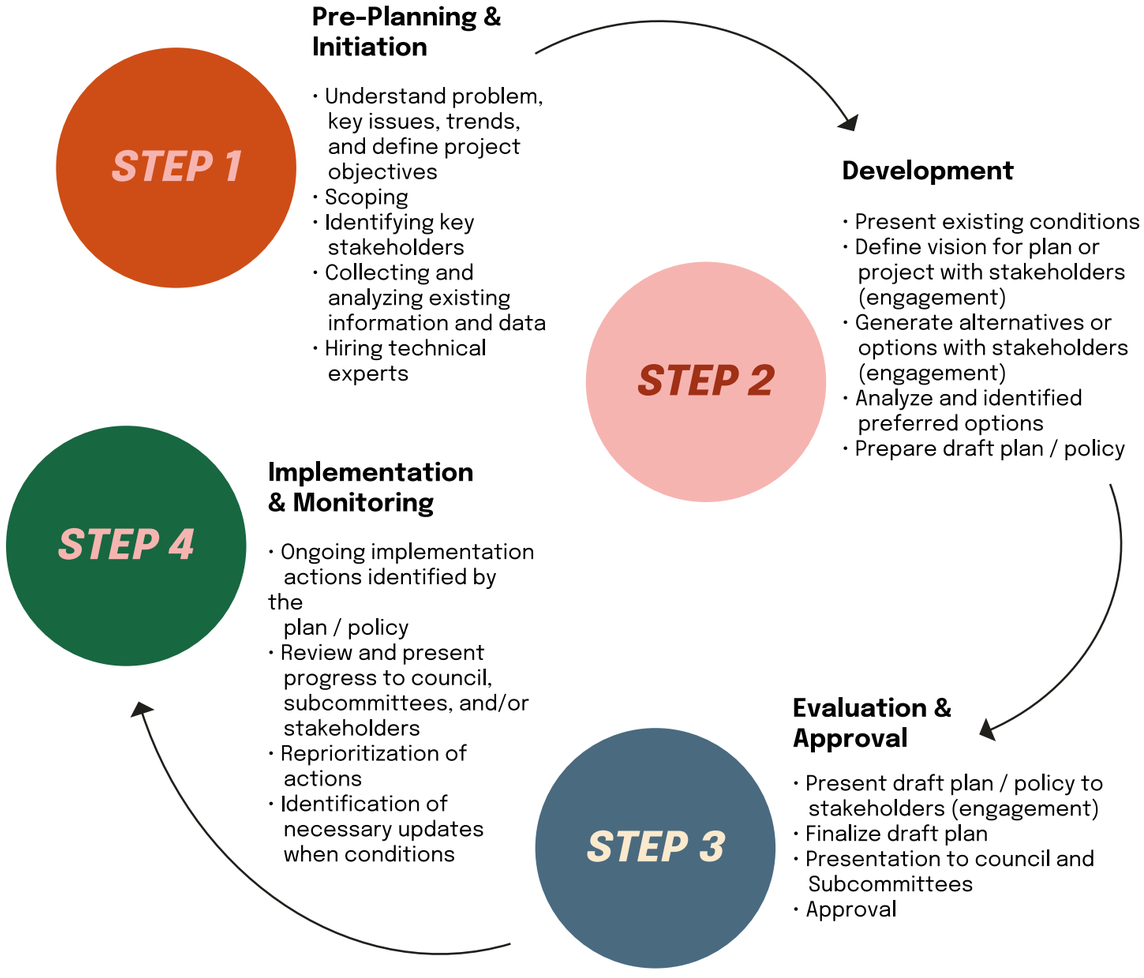
Plans and policies set direction for local governments. Local governments are increasingly developing climate change plans which chart the course of the government to contribute to mitigation and adapt to the effects of climate change. Such plans are important in laying the groundwork for action on climate change. However, they are not the only planning documents that must take climate change adaptation into account. There is a need to implement climate action into nearly all plans and policies (often called mainstreaming). In essence, all plans can address climate change. Knowing that climate change will disproportionally impact equity-deserving groups, it is essential that plans and policies also focus on equity from start to finish.

Examples of Plans and Policies

- Climate Action Policy and Plans (including mitigation and adaptation)
- Greenspace and Park Plans
- Neighbourhood/Community Plans and By-laws
- Emergency Evacuation Plans
- Asset Management Plans
- Official Plans and Land Use Policies
- Stormwater Management Plans
- Transportation Plans
- Zoning and By-law amendments that limit development in areas at risk of flooding
- Eliminating regulatory barriers, creating policy requirements or incentives to install living shorelines and naturalized watercourse buffers

PLAN AND POLICY PHASES

The following outlines a typical process for a mid to large-scale plan or policy development or update process. The process will vary between local governments.



PRE-PLANNING AND INITIATION

If you are building upon, updating or reviewing an existing plan or policy, have you assessed and understood the consequences of current plans / policies on individuals experiencing poverty / socio-economic barriers?

Poverty and socio-economic barriers are often intersectional issues.

Resource: *Intersectionality is a term coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw. "Intersectionality is an analytical lens that recognizes how power structures and individual lived experiences are influenced by multiple aspects of an individual's identity and social location, including their gender, race, socioeconomic background, age and disability. These intersecting factors may magnify experiences of discrimination and disadvantage, and create unique circumstances that impact accessibility, safety, inclusion and equity in public engagement processes."*

Resource: Beyond Inclusion – Equity in Public Engagement (SFU Morris J. Wosk Centre for Dialogue + IAP2). Page 7 provides definitions to key terms including intersectionality.

Considerations for Plans and Policies

DEVELOPMENT

Have you developed staff, community, and political readiness with an understanding of why the project must centre equity and climate adaptation?

The levels of engagement required by your local government's charter / formal requirements set out a minimum standard for engagement. These standards will rarely be sufficient for engagement, particularly with equity-deserving groups.

*This could include **empowering** (the part of the IAP2 spectrum that offers the public the highest level of impact) the impacted communities with the decision-making power over the site.*

Have you considered the social and political history of the [areas / communities] where your proposed initiative will take place?[14]

When reviewing options and drafting, have you ensured that the additional responsibilities or impacts of the plan / policy are placed on those with greater wealth and privilege?

Have you considered unintended consequences such as gentrification, displacement, and safety issues that may arise for individuals from equity-seeking groups as a result of your project?[15]

Are you taking steps to actively contribute to reconciliation with communities, specifically where involved sites have history of the local government inflicting harm on equity-deserving communities?

Will the plan or policy transfer problems from one location to another? Specifically, from areas with more equity-deserving communities?

EVALUATION AND APPROVAL

Have you developed staff, community, and political readiness with an understanding of why the project must centre equity and climate adaptation?

It is important to consider the point at which you are asking for engagement. Asking for engagement at this phase in the project if engagement has not yet been meaningful may cause further harm and degrade trust.

Have you accurately represented the degree that you have empowered, collaborated with, involved, and consulted equity-deserving groups when presenting the plan / policy?

Have you reported the outcome(s) back to the communities you have engaged with? Have you provided support and continued commitment if these decisions did not address concerns and issues faced by individuals engaged?

IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING

Have you reported outcomes back to the communities you have engaged to reflect engagement directions and share how results inform ongoing plan and policy development?

IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation: https://iap2canada.ca/foundations

Spotlight

Lived Experience of Extreme Heat in British Columbia

Location: Commissioned by the BC Climate Action Secretariat, Run by the Provincial Extreme Heat Response Framework Working Group

Partners: Developed by Shift to a Better World and URSUS – Resilient Strategies Inc.

Climate Change Issues(s): Extreme Heat

The program conducted a series of engagements with equity-deserving groups with experience of extreme heat events. The program was based on the knowledge that the effects of extreme heat are not experienced equally across populations, and that heatwaves will become increasingly common with climate change. The BC Climate Action Secretariat commissioned the project to inform future planning and policy development. The program centered lived experiences from priority populations and identified applicable recommendations. The program also utilized leading methods to center equity-denied groups in policy and planning exercises.

Key takeaways from the project:

The program was not run by a municipality but showcases a number of important techniques that can be applied to local governments:

- Centering individuals with lived experience in informing and identifying issues and potential actions
- Partnerships with organizations that are based in/knowledgeable about the community being served
- Prioritizing engagement before action to reduce harm

In Canada, the need to address re-occurring, longer-term extreme heat is a relatively new issue that will be exacerbated by additional climate change. Focusing the first step of this issue around understanding the need of equity-denied groups experiencing increased risk, is an important foundation, to be followed by policy, programs and infrastructure. This process could be applicable to local governments of all sizes.

Spotlight

Mississauga Climate Change Action Plan Engagement

Location: The City of Mississauga, Ontario

Partners: Escape from the 6, Many Feathers, Blackwood Gallery at University of Toronto.

Climate Change Issues(s): All / General Climate Mitigation and Adaptation

The City of Mississauga used unique engagement and outreach methods to inform and educate the community on the process to create the Climate Change Action Plan (CCAP).

The City's CCAP engagement included:

- The Imagine 2050 Escape Room – a non-traditional community engagement with an immersive, interactive climate change-themed escape room.
- The After Dark Earth Market – which brought thousands of residents together for a climate-themed market partnered with Many Feathers to engage residents on the topic of climate change and provide information on the City's Climate Change Project.
- Work of Wind: Air, Land, Sea – in partnership with the Blackwood Gallery at the University of Toronto, Mississauga held a ten-day climate change themed public art exhibit to share about climate change through art.
- An estimate of 90% of the people who took part in the escape room event would not have otherwise participated in the CCAP. A number of factors contribute to lack of engagement, particularly for equity-deserving communities – such as lack of historical support from local governments, lack of time and energy, lack of results from governments.

Key takeaways from the project:

- Consider who typical municipal engagement activities empower and work for
- Break norms of municipal engagement (e.g., public hearings) and go above and beyond the engagement that is required
- Go where people are rather than asking them to take the time to come to you
- Do what people want to do
- Create benefits for the communities you want to work with (these benefits can be offering fun activities)
- Ask questions your intended stakeholders are willing to answer
- In order to get people who wouldn't usually participate, you need to host something cool, something that people want to do

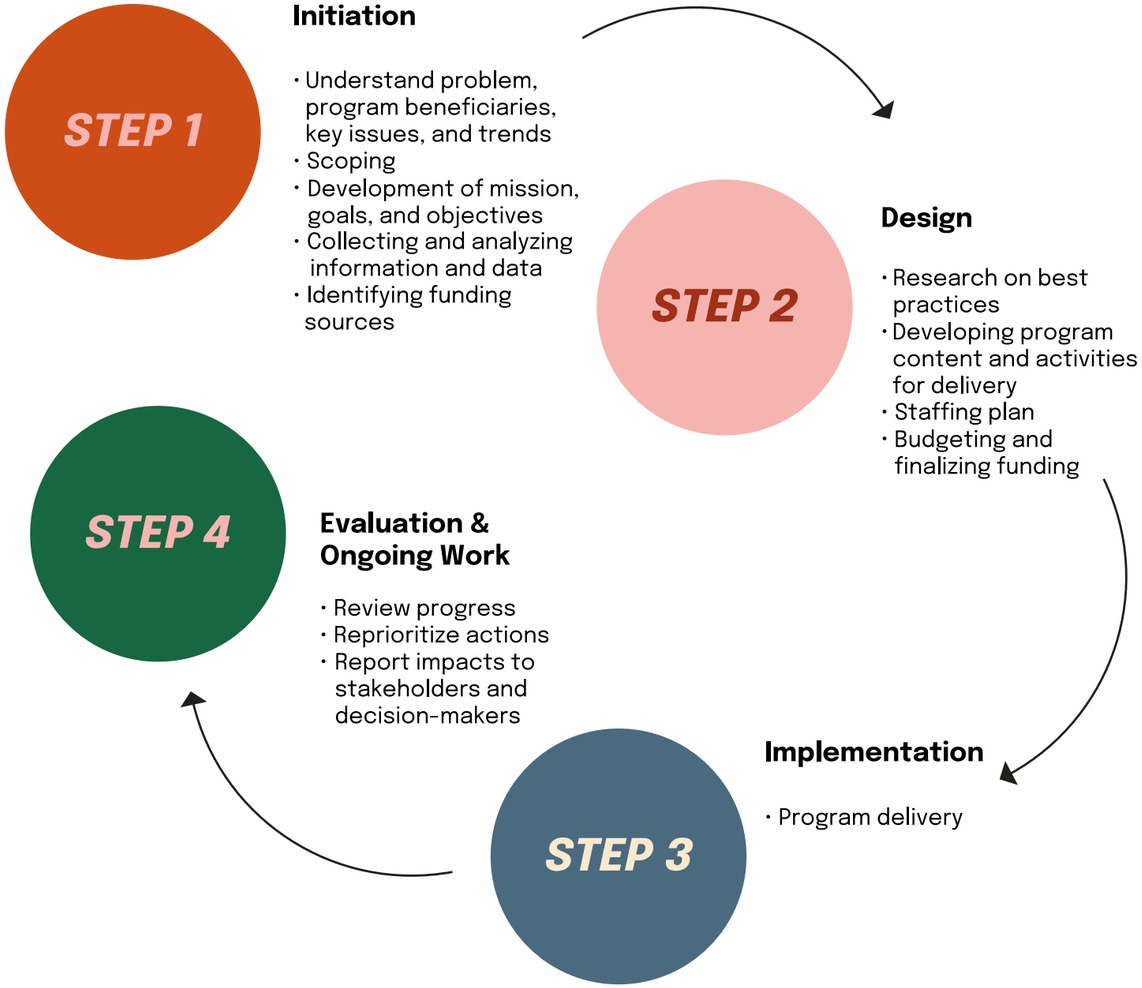
Centring Equity in Municipal Programming for Climate Adaptation

Programming is used by local governments to deliver services and implement priorities identified in plans and policies.

Examples of Municipal Programming to Advance Climate Adaptation Priorities

- Opening cooling / warming / clean air facilities in response to heat waves, wildfire, or intense storms
- Home retrofit programs
- Renewable energy installation and supplements
- Social connectedness programs (increased social connections can increase resilience)
- Emergency preparedness and evacuation trainings
- Educational programs run with schools
- Adapted infrastructure operations, such as additional gutter and culvert cleaning to reduce likelihood of flooding
- Incentive programs such as heat pump installation or urban tree preservation on private property

PROJECT PHASES



Considerations for Programs

INITIATION

Have you identified existing community-led/grassroots initiatives that overlap with or relate to your program?

If they exist, how can you work together and achieve mutual goals, and not re-create a new program or compete for resources.

Have you identified a need for the program with the potential program beneficiaries? Do you have the capacity to support their ongoing engagement in the program development process, and to use their guidance?

DESIGN

Have you ensured that incentives and benefits are accessible and usable to individuals in equity-deserving groups?

For example, does your program primarily target and benefit homeowners rather than renters?

Does project leadership / guidance / advisory reflect the community you are collaborating with and serving?[16] Does staffing reflect the community you are collaborating with and serving?

IMPLEMENTATION

Review Section 2 for engagement and partnership considerations that can be applied to this phase.

EVALUATION AND ONGOING WORK

Have you created program performance metrics that prioritize equity and social wellbeing?[17]

Spotlight

A Guide to Talking to People in Your Life About Climate Change

Link: https://pub-richmondhill.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=41009

Location: City of Richmond Hill, Ontario

Partners: The Public Studio + citizens

Climate Change Issues(s): All / General Climate Impacts and Communication

Program description from the toolkit: "In late 2020 and early 2021, the City partnered with The Public Studio and a group of citizens over a series of workshops. In our work together, we identified the need to bring more people into this work in ways that are inclusive and accessible; that speak to the specifics of Richmond Hill and meet our diverse communities where they're at. We are attempting to do this in ways that are simultaneously compassionate and data-driven; in ways that work towards uniting our municipality in engaging in climate action."with regular, open and transparent engagement sessions and annual town halls that

A representative involved with the municipality at the time the program was administered highlighted that in addition to the useful product created, **the project followed an important and unconventional process for working with equity-deserving individuals and the public: empowerment.** The guide was created by a group of community members who were empowered to create something - anything - that they thought would be useful. The representative highlighted this as an under-represented type of partnership: partnering from an equal or subservient relationship.

Resource: IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation: https://iap2canada.ca/foundationsIAP2). Empowering in part of the IAP2 spectrum that offers the public the highest level of impact by giving the impacted communities the decision-making power.

Key takeaways from the project:

- Create all documents at an accessible reading level and translate them into other languages based on who lives in your municipality
- Focus on climate actions that can uplift and reduce hardships on equity-deserving communities and consider those that may create further hardships and harm (e.g., promoting electric vehicles - which are more costly)
- Look for opportunities to empower stakeholder and partners from equity-deserving groups by supplying resources and decision-making power
- How can we shift more programs towards the far side of the IAP2 spectrum, in contrast to typical municipal actions which inform and consult?

4.0 Additional Resources

Additional Resources

Conducting Equitable and Inclusive Engagement

- Beyond Inclusion – Equity in Public Engagement (SFU Morris J. Wosk Centre for Dialogue + IAP2)
    - Definitions of common equity-related terms
- COO
    - Steps for internal preparation for local governments undertaking equity work (Pg. 10)

Understanding Equity & Climate Change

- Guide to Equitable Community-Driven Climate Preparedness Planning (Urban Sustainability Directors Network)
    - Diagram with Root Causes and Factors affecting Sensitivity to Climate Change (Pg. 12)
    - Equity objectives: procedural, distributional, and structural equity (Pg. 17)
- Resource: Integrating Equity, Diversity And Inclusion Into Municipal Climate Action (ICLEI - Local Governments for Sustainability and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities)

Taking Action on Climate Adaptation

- ASAP Living Guide to the Principles of Climate Change Adaptation
    - Principles for quality and effective climate adaptation work (Pg. 5)
    - Strategies for gaining traction and maximizing the effects of climate adaptation (Pg. 9)

Understanding Governments' Role in Equity

- Guide to Equitable Community-Driven Climate Preparedness Planning (Urban Sustainability Directors Network)
    - How structural and institutional racism is perpetuated through government processes (Pg. 15)

Cultivating Hope and Evoking Cultural Change Within Government Institutions

- Hope Matters by Dr. Elen Kelsey (Book)
- Braiding Sweetgrass and Gathering Moss by Robin Wall Kimmerer (Book)
- Commanding Hope: The Power We Have to Renew a World in Peril by Thomas Homer-Dixon (Book)

End Notes

[1] Adapted from the USDN Guide to Equitable Community-Driven Climate Preparedness.

[2] Graphic from Tessa Watkins (tessawatkins.com/wheel-of-privilege), adapted from Sylvia Duckworth, Canadian Council for Refugees, and Olena Hankivsky, PhD.

[3] https://www.researchgate.net/publication/275035333_Adapting_to_climate_change_an_introduction_for_Canadian_municipalities

[4] https://www.unisdr.org/2014/iddr/documents/2013DisabilitySurveryReport_030714.pdf

[5] https://www.iisd.org/articles/social-inclusion-climate-adaptation

[6] https://www.mdpi.com/1660-4601/16/14/2531

[7] Adapted from California Environmental Justice Alliance's SB 1000 Toolkit and Making Equity Real in Climate Adaptation and Community Resilience Policies and Programs: A Guidebook

[8] USDN Guide to Equitable Community-Driven Climate Preparedness

[9] Adapted from Beyond Inclusion – Equity in Public Engagement, SFU Morris J. Wosk Centre for Dialogue and IAP2

[10] Adapted from Beyond Inclusion – Equity in Public Engagement, SFU Morris J. Wosk Centre for Dialogue and IAP2

[11] Examples adapted from the American Society of Adaptation Professionals Living Guide to the Principles of Climate Adaptation

[12] HCI Equity Guidance, Jay Pitter Placemaking

[13] HCI Equity Guidance, Jay Pitter Placemaking

[14] HCI Equity Guidance, Jay Pitter Placemaking

[15] Consideration from Healthy Communities Initiative Equity Guidance, Jay Pitter Placemaking

[16] HCI Equity Guidance, Jay Pitter Placemaking

[17] HCI Equity Guidance, Jay Pitter Placemaking

Equitable Climate Adaptation:

Considerations for Local Governments

ICLEI
Local Governments for Sustainability

URBAN SYSTEMS