



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Equity strategy for municipal climate action planning

THE PROBLEM

Though the goals of municipal Climate Action Plans (CAPs) are positive, they can exacerbate existing social equity challenges. Disadvantaged communities are too often faced with the brunt of climate change impacts, such as the urban heat island effect, flooding, pollution and other environmental injustices. Additionally, benefits of climate action often do not reach the communities who need it most, due to social, political and financial barriers. From a climate justice perspective, Climate Action Plans have the potential to address multiple disparities and inequities within cities.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

A framework has been developed to address three dimensions of climate justice, including procedural, distributive and recognition equity. This will also include an equitable approach to public engagement with a strong focus on inclusion of marginalized communities. The framework, along with these key elements, will act as guiding principles for CAPs in cities.

Setting the foundation

Change management should be a top priority for municipalities, to set the foundation for incorporating equity in their climate actions. Every sector has climate actions related to equity and these connections need to be apparent, to align employees on these issues and why they matter.

CHALLENGES FOR INTEGRATING EQUITY IN CLIMATE ACTION





USING THE THREE PILLARS AS GUIDING PRINCIPLES WHEN PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTING CLIMATE ACTIONS

A. RECOGNITION EQUITY

Asks who should be included as a stakeholder in climate action decisions and whose needs should be prioritized, based on the identification of communities or groups who are most vulnerable or who have been historically ignored or underrepresented.

It is recommended that municipalities recognize the impacts of climate action by:

- **Identifying Indigenous histories:**
 - Their role as original inhabitants and stewards of the land where municipalities are located.
 - The systemic racism that has resulted in their marginalization and exclusion from decision-making.
- **Identifying systemic challenges, understanding biases and overcoming discomfort**
- **Identifying equity-deserving groups**

B. PROCEDURAL EQUITY

Considers the processes of how municipal decisions are made and who is involved in the decision making process. This type of equity ensures that the plans and actions within a municipality accurately reflect the needs and wants of the community.

Important themes to keep in mind throughout the municipalities' approach to procedural equity include:

- **Relationship building**
- **Collaborative decision-making**

C. DISTRIBUTIVE EQUITY

Consider the groups who are receiving the benefits of the climate action plan's actions and program activities, what is being distributed and how these decisions are made.

When planning and implementing climate actions, it will be important for municipalities to evaluate these initiatives and their impacts. It is recommended that municipalities do this by:

- **Determining which groups are disproportionately at risk of climate impacts, prioritizing front-line communities**
- **Conducting equity impact assessments**



OPERATIONALIZE

Identify a strategic approach:

1. Tackling all sectors simultaneously: The framework will be provided to every sectoral division and every respected sector will be responsible to integrate equity within the climate actions within that sector.
2. Phased approach: Climate teams will identify the sector(s) in their municipalities where equity issues are most prevalent and work closely with the sector(s) to integrate the framework as a pilot project before expanding to other sectors.
3. Grouping sectors together: Climate teams will identify sectoral climate actions that have cross-linkages across other sectors and group these identified sectors together to collaboratively tackle.

Phase 1: Outlines preliminary steps for identifying the sector to implement the pilot project. Within this phase, the necessary steps would be to establish a clear understanding of the climate justice framework, conduct an assessment of the city's social equity landscape as it relates to climate actions and determine the chosen climate action within a sector for the pilot.

Phase 2: Details how to set the foundation within the identified sector, which includes administering employee knowledge surveys, analyzing survey results and identifying change champions.

Phase 3: Entails development of the implementation plan between the climate team and identified sector leaders, implementation of climate actions using the climate justice framework, and monitoring and evaluating the strategy.

Phase 4: Use findings from the first three phases to inform future work, gain buy-in from other sectors, identify additional change champions and formalize an equity working group with leaders from across each sector.

The necessary resources for carrying out the implementation plan would vary depending on municipalities' capacity, however, financial, human, time, information, data and tool resources were considered.

To read an in-depth analysis of the equity strategy, please refer to the executive summary of the report.

This Equity Framework and full reports were created by Nya Lazarus-Munnick, Nicola Radatus-Smith, and Theresa Nguyen.