

Applying An Equity and Climate Lens in Dufferin County Webinar Summary

February 27, 2025

[Webinar Recording](#)

As municipalities recognize the need for sustainable and inclusive growth, integrating climate and equity lenses is becoming essential. In this webinar, Sara MacRae, Manager of Climate & Energy at Dufferin County, shared how the County is applying an Equity and Climate Lens to shape its operations and decision-making processes.

Presenters

- Sara MacRae, Manager of Climate and Energy, Dufferin County

Key Findings

- The application of the Climate and Equity Lenses together is intended to disrupt the cycle in which climate risks exacerbate existing inequities, which in turn, then have a greater exposure of vulnerability to climate change.
- The tool should be used as much as possible at the beginning of planning and decision making and continue through the development and implementation. In practice, processes are not linear, so Dufferin County encourages staff to revisit the tool overtime to identify areas for improvement.
- Engagement and training among staff has included: A SharePoint site, e-module, and staff tutorials lead by the Climate and Energy division to provide practical examples of application. Additionally, a course is being developed and drop in sessions will be available for staff.
- Dufferin County has hosted extensive equity workshops. At the manager level, staff were required to do about 40 hours worth of training.

Presentation Overview

- The 2023 Corporate Strategic Plan made a commitment to adopt equity and climate across all County operations. This tool will demonstrate accountability every time it is applied, and support staff in thinking about equity and climate in the decision-making process.
- The Equity Lens is a process for analyzing and diagnosing the impact of design and implementation across policies and programs on underserved individuals and groups that experience marginalization to identify and mitigate systemic barriers.
- The Equity Lens is explicit in drawing attention to the inclusion of marginalized populations, typically racialized communities, indigenous people, 2SLGBTQI+ communities, persons with disabilities etc.

- An Equity Audit and Supplemental Review indicated that there are disparities in the experiences of staff belonging to groups that are marginalized within the organization. Using an equity lens challenges the idea that policies, procedures, practices, organizational culture, and even projects are neutral. The tool questions and examines power and privilege and helps to centre the needs, impacts, and outcomes of individuals experiencing marginalization.
- The Climate Lens is a mechanism to systematically analyze the relationship between a municipal decision and climate change. This lens considers whether policies, plans, and projects will either affect the climate through the production of greenhouse gas emissions, or be affected by the climate through variables, such as temperature or precipitation.
- Considering climate change in the decision-making processes aids in identifying opportunities to reduce emissions.
- The tool was tested through an internal working group on a variety of projects, which provided insight on how this tool could be applied across the organization.
- To develop the Climate Lens, Dufferin County referred to Clean Air Partnership's Municipal Climate Lens tool, City of London, and City of Ottawa.
- The first step in applying the lens is to complete the assessment at the earliest stage in a project, which takes staff through a series of questions. Cross-departmental collaboration among those involved in the project is encouraged at this stage to enable a more in-depth analysis.
- Project sponsors should go through the assessment as well to incorporate their revisions and improvements.
- To implement a proposed measure as a result of the tool, lack of time, funds, and data, and limited staff resources and expertise, can be barriers to implementation. For example, conducting engagement takes time. It is important to name these barriers to think about what may be needed in future projects.
- Funding can be a major barrier, not only in terms of what is available, but in terms of deadlines. When funding requires timelines and regular reporting, it may not be possible to conduct a prolonged engagement process.
- One intention is to normalize considering equity and climate and build a culture of regularly considering these questions throughout a project, in the same way one would finances.
- This Climate Lens does not quantify greenhouse gas emissions. This was intentional to make it more approachable for staff.

Community Resilience Hub

- The Community Resilience Hub is a collaborative project between Dufferin County and The Ontario Resource Centre for Climate Adaptation (ORCCA).
- The project aims to design and install an outdoor structure where the neighborhood can gather, and will provide everyday needs (i.e., drinking water, shade) as well as emergency preparedness services (i.e., food distribution).

- The Equity and Climate Lenses were applied to project design to assess who would be impacted and who needed to be involved, resulting in a Community Advisory Group.
- The Community Advisory Table consists of representatives from diverse communities and organizations. They meet outside of normal working hours, so they are compensated for their time, as per the Committee Remuneration Policy at Dufferin County.
- The Public Service Review Table consist of stakeholders from organizations with a professional stake in the project (Community paramedics, public health, the OPP, Conservation Authority). Their role is to provide functional and safety oversight for the project, and they take their lead from the community advisory table.
- Separating the tables in this way fosters open and meaningful dialogue.
- The Resilience Hub location was selected with safety, accessibility, and proximity to social infrastructure in mind.
- Engagement has been conducted with several committees with regular communication to demonstrate that feedback is being heard and integrated. Valuable feedback related to inclusive design was collected this way, including accessibility concerns surrounding hand railings.

Additional Resources

- [Corporate Strategic Plan – Dufferin County](#)
- [Climate and Energy – Dufferin County](#)
- [Municipal Climate Lens Tool – Clean Air Partnership](#)
- [Climate Lens Development Webinar – City of London](#)

Contact Information

Please reach out to us at any time with questions, input, or for additional information.

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You can view our upcoming events [here](#).