



# EQUITY AND CLIMATE LENSES

## A GUIDE TO APPLICATION



## INTRODUCTION

Dufferin County's 2023-2026 Corporate Strategic Plan reflects the County's shared vision, mission, and values and outlines our key priority areas, goals and initiatives for the next four years and beyond. As part of this plan, for the first time, we are adopting Equity and Climate lenses that will be applied across the entire County administration through our day-to-day operations, decision making processes and policy design. These lenses will help us understand and evaluate the impacts of new or changing County policies, programs and services, ensuring that we are making decisions with social and environmental considerations foregrounded and in alignment with our long-term objectives.

This foundational resource will provide greater understanding into the interconnectedness of climate and equity and will position employees from all departments to make decisions that result in transformational change and outcomes. Further, through the process of applying equity and climate lenses, the County will be able to identify and plan for additional required human, financial, and physical resources.

Both the climate crisis and inequities experienced by people globally is a result of intersecting forms of oppression derived from white supremacy, capitalism, and patriarchy. Through the use of various modalities, including the application of equity and climate lenses, we seek to break down silos and transform institutional culture through transformational, anti-racist and anti-oppressive experiences, policy processes, learning communities, and innovative ways of thinking and doing that center the needs of people experiencing marginalization.

Appendix A. provides a summary of key terms and concepts to support you in the application of equity and climate lenses.

## WHAT IS AN EQUITY LENS?



**An equity lens is a process for analyzing or diagnosing the impact of the design and implementation of policies and programs on under-served individuals and groups that experience marginalization, and to identify, mitigate and potentially eliminate systemic barriers.**

It is explicit in drawing attention to the inclusion of marginalized populations, typically racialized communities, Indigenous peoples, 2SLGBTQ+ communities, persons with disabilities etc., and can be adapted to focus on other communities. The results of the [Equity Audit](#) and [Supplemental Review](#) indicate that there are disparities in how staff belonging to groups that are marginalized are experiencing the organization. Using an equity lens helps to disrupt and challenge the idea that policies, procedures, practices and organizational culture are neutral. It forces us to ask critical questions that examine power and privilege, and requires that we center the needs, impact and outcomes on individuals experiencing marginalization so that disparities are not further perpetuated.

## WHAT IS A CLIMATE LENS?



**A climate lens is a mechanism to systematically analyze the relationship between a municipal decision and climate change.**

This lens prompts us to consider whether our policies, plans, and projects will affect the climate, through the production of greenhouse gas emissions, or be affected by climate, through variables such as temperature or precipitation. By considering climate change in our decision-making processes, we can identify opportunities to reduce emissions (mitigation), enhance climate resilience (adaptation), and contribute to a more sustainable future in alignment with the [County's Climate Emergency Declaration](#), the [Dufferin Climate Action Plan](#), and the [Dufferin Climate Adaptation Strategy](#). The simultaneous application of a climate and equity lens enables us to disrupt a cycle in which climate risks exacerbate existing inequities which, in turn, result in greater exposure and vulnerability to climate change.

We understand that the application of these lenses will require staff to think about and approach their work differently. To help with these changes, additional resources and training will be provided to support staff engage in conversations about and apply both lenses with confidence.

## WHEN SHOULD I APPLY EQUITY AND CLIMATE LENSES?

County staff at all levels and departments are required to routinely apply equity and climate lenses as it applies to their sphere of work. This includes but is not limited to policy development and implementation, budget proposals, program operations and service delivery. It should be applied at the earliest stages of all planning and decision-making processes and throughout the development and implementation process. Recognizing that processes are not always linear, staff are encouraged to apply the lens continuously and iteratively as their work evolves and reflect back on outcomes to identify opportunities for future growth.

Equity and climate lenses can and should be customized based on department specific decisions. However, the general questions in the worksheets below are examples to get you thinking about equity and climate from the start of a planning or decision-making process that will result in outputs and outcomes that are more equitable and climate robust than they would have been otherwise.

### MANDATORY APPLICATION OF LENSES

To advance and deliver upon our organization's equity and climate commitments, the formal submission of an Equity and Climate Lens Assessment will be required for projects and initiatives that fall under one or more of the following categories:

- Projects identified in the Corporate Strategic Plan
- Project or initiative that is community facing and impacts residents
- Corporate wide initiative
- Project expenditure over \$50,000

## HOW TO APPLY EQUITY AND CLIMATE LENSES?

Applying equity and climate lenses to the County's day to day operations and services will be easier at times than others. Barriers such as budget constraints and/or provincial and federal legislation may inhibit progress towards advancing equity and climate considerations in project outcomes. And while we may not be able to overcome these barriers, it's important that staff still use the Climate and Equity Lens Tool iteratively throughout the project lifecycle as doing so enables a post-project analysis of lessons learned and individual skill development by shifting the way staff make decisions and think about their work.

The submission of an Equity and Climate Lens Assessment will ensure potential climate and equity considerations and integrated into decision-making processes. The following steps provide an overview of the assessment process.

### SUPPORT

For questions about the equity lens, please contact [Kareema Sookdeo](#) or [Rohan Thompson](#).

For questions about the climate lens, please contact [Sara MacRae](#).

## PHASE 1

### Step 1: Complete Phase 1 the Equity and Climate Lens Assessment

Complete the questions listed under Phase 1 of the attached Equity and Climate Lens Assessment in the earliest stages of project planning. Collaborate with relevant teams and stakeholders as necessary to provide an in-depth analysis of the initiative's climate and equity implications.

### Step 2: Project Sponsor Review

Share the draft assessment with the Project Sponsor. Gather their feedback and incorporate any necessary revisions or improvements to strengthen the assessment. Once refined, the Project Sponsor will approve and sign-off on the assessment.

## WHAT IS A PROJECT SPONSOR?

A project sponsor is accountable for project progress and outcomes. This individual provides guidance and resources to the project team and manager.

## PHASE 2

### Step 1: Implementation and Monitoring

Use the assessment findings to inform decision-making and project planning. Regularly reflect on the Equity and Climate Lens Assessment to monitor the project's progress and reassess to ensure continued alignment with equity and climate commitments.

### Step 2: Complete Phase 2 of the Equity and Climate Assessment

Complete the questions listed under Phase 2 of the attached Equity and Climate Lens Assessment in the reporting stages of a project. Collaborate with relevant teams and stakeholders as necessary to cultivate a deep understanding of opportunities for future improvements.

### Step 3: Project Sponsor Approval

Share the completed Equity and Climate Lens Assessment with the Project Sponsor to review, sign, and provide additional comments if needed.

### Step 4: Submit Equity and Climate Lens Assessment

Provide a copy of the signed and completed Equity and Climate Lens Assessment to **[CONTACT]**. Assessments will be filed and used to inform the development of future training and resources. The outcomes of the application of the Equity and Climate Lens Assessment will be communicated through **[REPORTING MECHANISM]**.

## EQUITY LENS ASSESSMENT: PHASE 1

Project Name:

Project Manager:

Project Sponsor:

Start Date:

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1. What is the policy, program or decision under review?

2. What group(s) experience disparities related to this policy, program or decision? Are they at the table? (If not, why?)

3. How might the policy, program or decision affect the negatively impacted group(s) identified in question 2? How might it be perceived by the group(s)?

4. Does the policy, program or decision improve, worsen, or make no change to existing disparities?

5. Does the change result in systemic change that addresses systemic discrimination?

6. Does the policy, program, or decision produce any intentional benefits or unintended consequences for the negatively impacted group(s)?

7. Who or what groups benefit the most from the current practice?

8. Have you conducted an environmental scan to see what promising equity practices or case studies exist related to this project/policy/program? If so, please include website links, and/or key points below. If not, why?

9. Based on the above responses, what are the possible revisions to the policy, program, or decision under review or being developed?

10. What additional resources are required to implement the proposed revisions?

11. If present, what systemic barriers may limit the application of the proposed revisions?

12. What revisions will you move forward with and why? What revisions will you not move forward with and why?

**PHASE 1 | PROJECT SPONSOR SIGN-OFF**

Phase 1 assessment is approved

Phase 1 assessment is approved, pending revisions noted (below)

Phase 1 assessment is not approved, for reasons noted (below)

Comments:

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Project Sponsor Name

Project Sponsor Signature

Date

**EQUITY LENS ASSESSMENT: PHASE 2**

1. How did the equity lens shape the project's final decisions and outcomes?

2. Were there any challenges or limitations encountered? If so, how were they overcome or how did they impact project outcomes?

3. What lessons can be learned for future applications of an equity lens?

**PHASE 2 | PROJECT SPONSOR SIGN-OFF**

Phase 2 assessment is approved

Phase 2 assessment is approved, pending revisions noted (below)

Phase 2 assessment is not approved, for reasons noted (below)

Comments:

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Project Sponsor Name

Project Sponsor Signature

Date

## CLIMATE LENS ASSESSMENT: PHASE 1

Project Name:

Project Manager:

Project Sponsor:

Start Date:

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1. What is the policy, program or decision under review?

2. Does the policy, program, or decision result in the production of greenhouse gas emissions? If yes, can the measure be adjusted to reduce greenhouse gas emissions?

3. Are there opportunities to influence greenhouse gas reductions indirectly through the measure (e.g. development standards, encouraging active transportation, enhancement of natural assets, e.t.c.)?

4. What climate impact(s) is the policy, program, or decision vulnerable to (e.g., temperature, precipitation, or extreme weather)? Explore the [Dufferin Climate Adaptation Strategy](#) for local climate projections.

5. Does the measure inadvertently increase the vulnerability of human, built, or natural systems to climate change? (e.g. fragmentation of ecological corridor, increase exposure to extreme heat, or flood hazards)

6. How can the measure be modified to better address the risks posed by climate change?

7. Have you conducted an environmental scan to see what promising practices or case studies exist related to this project/policy/program? If so, please include website links, and/or key points below. If not, why?

8. Does the policy, program or decision improve, worsen, or make no change to climate inequities? How might the measure be modified to advance environmental and climate justice?

9. Based on the above responses, what are the possible revisions to the policy, program, or decision under review or being developed?

10. What additional resources are required to implement the proposed revisions?

11. If present, what systemic barriers may limit the application of the proposed revisions?

12. What revisions will you move forward with and why? What revisions will you not move forward with and why?

**PHASE 1 | PROJECT SPONSOR SIGN-OFF**

Phase 1 assessment is approved

Phase 1 assessment is approved, pending revisions noted (below)

Phase 1 assessment is not approved, for reasons noted (below)

Comments:

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Project Sponsor Name

Project Sponsor Signature

Date

**CLIMATE LENS ASSESSMENT: PHASE 2**

1. How did the climate lens shape the project's final decisions and outcomes?

2. Were there any challenges or limitations encountered? If so, how were they overcome or how did they impact project outcomes?

3. What lessons can be learned for future applications of a climate lens?

**PHASE 2 | PROJECT SPONSOR SIGN-OFF**

Phase 2 assessment is approved

Phase 2 assessment is approved, pending revisions noted (below)

Phase 2 assessment is not approved, for reasons noted (below)

Comments:

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Project Sponsor Name

Project Sponsor Signature

Date

## APPENDIX A. KEY CONCEPTS

### Anti-oppression

Strategies, theories, and actions that challenge social and historical inequalities/injustices that have become part of our systems and institutions and allow certain groups to dominate over others ([Canadian Race Relations Foundation](#)).

### Anti-racism

A process, a systematic method of analysis, and a proactive course of action rooted in the recognition of the existence of racism, including systemic racism. Anti-racism actively seeks to identify, remove, prevent, and mitigate racially inequitable outcomes and power imbalances between groups and change the structures that sustain inequities ([Government of Ontario](#)).

### Equity

Equity aims to give everyone what they need to be successful, unlike equality which treats everyone the same. Equity recognizes that everyone is different and has unique needs that must be met so they are able to meaningfully participate and achieve their full potential ([Findings Report, 40: Supplemental Report, 106](#)).

### Patriarchy

The norms, values, beliefs, structures, and systems that grant power, privilege, and superiority to men, and thereby marginalize and subordinate women. While patriarchy does privilege men, this privilege does not automatically extend to all men—i.e. men of colour, Indigenous men, gay/bisexual men, men living in poverty, or differently abled men—given the intersecting operation of racism, heterosexism, classism, and ableism ([Government of Canada, Department of Defence](#)).

### Power

All power is relational, and the different relationships either reinforce or disrupt one another. The importance of the concept of power to anti-racism is clear: racism cannot be understood without understanding that power is not only an individual relationship but a cultural one, and that power relationships are shifting constantly. Power can be used malignantly and intentionally, but need not be, and individuals within a culture may benefit from power that they are unaware of ([Alberta Civil Liberties Research Centre](#)).

### Privilege

Unearned power, benefits, advantages, access, and/or opportunities based on membership or perceived membership in a dominant group ([Government of Canada, Department of Defence](#)).

### Systemic Discrimination

Consists of patterns of behaviour, policies, or practices that are part of the social or administrative structures of an organization, and which create or perpetuate a position of relative disadvantage for racialized persons. These appear neutral on the surface but have an exclusionary impact on racialized persons ([Government of Canada, Department of National Defence](#)).

### White Supremacy

The idea that white people and the ideas, thoughts, beliefs, and actions of white people are superior to people of colour and their ideas, thoughts, beliefs, and actions. White supremacy expresses itself interpersonally as well as structurally (through our governments, education systems, food systems, etc.) ([Government of Canada, Department of National Defence](#)).

### Adaptation

Includes any initiatives or actions in response to actual or projected climate change impacts and which reduce the effects of climate change on built, natural and social systems.

### Climate Change

Climate change refers to changes in long-term weather patterns caused by natural phenomena and human activities that alter the chemical composition of the atmosphere through the build-up of greenhouse gases which trap heat and reflect it back to the earth's surface.

### Climate Impact

The effects of existing or forecast changes in climate on built, natural, and human systems. One can distinguish between potential impacts (impacts that may occur given a projected change in climate, without considering adaptation) and residual impacts (impacts of climate change that would occur after adaptation).

### Environmental Justice

Environmental justice is the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income, with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies ([United States Environmental Protection Agency](#)). Born from the concept of environmental justice, climate justice means creating solutions to the climate crisis that are fair for everyone by considering climate change through political, social, cultural, racial, environmental, and economic lenses.

### Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Greenhouse gases are those gaseous constituents of the atmosphere, both natural and anthropogenic, that absorb and emit radiation at specific wavelengths within the spectrum of thermal infrared radiation, emitted by the Earth's surface, the atmosphere itself, and by clouds. Human activities such as the use of fossil fuels or land-use change increases the concentration of greenhouse gas emissions in the atmosphere and contribute to climate change.

### Mitigation

The promotion of policy, regulatory and project-based measures that contribute to the stabilization or reduction of greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere. Renewable energy programs, energy efficiency frameworks and substitution of fossil fuels are examples of climate change mitigation measures.

### Resilience

The capacity of a system, community or society exposed to hazards to adapt, by resisting or changing in order to reach and maintain an acceptable level of functioning and structure. Resilience is not simply the ability to bounce back, but rather refers to bouncing forward – to transform and enhance the capacities of the community to prepare and respond to future climate impacts.

### Vulnerability

The sensitivity or predisposition to be adversely affected by climate change. Vulnerability encompasses a variety of concepts and elements including sensitivity or susceptibility to harm and lack of capacity to cope and adapt.