

Climate Equity Granting Program Application Guide

The Ottawa Climate Action Fund (OCAF) is excited to announce our Climate Equity Granting program, developed to further our commitment to equity and Reconciliation in climate action. The program builds on OCAF's existing [Ottawa Climate Equity Initiative](#) and is supported by a [McConnell Foundation grant to the LC3 network](#). OCAF understands that, to be effective, climate action projects must include inclusive engagement, this program is designed to ensure that climate action not only involves but is led by the communities it aims to serve, emphasizing our commitment towards communities that have historically been excluded from environmental dialogues.

By aligning equity and climate objectives, this approach ensures communities and groups most susceptible to economic, social and environmental climate impacts are central to both shaping and benefiting from innovative solutions. We are committed to widening the circle of collaboration and this program aims to deliver greater community and environmental benefit. A focus on climate equity is instrumental in propelling Ottawa towards an *equitable*, carbon-neutral future, which is central to OCAF's mission.

The program aims to prioritize historically-marginalized* communities by funding innovative projects that empower such communities to initiate or advance impactful and scalable environmental actions. We actively seek lead applicants that are representative of these communities, or for the lead applicant to be deeply engaged in meaningful relationships within the community.

* Historically-marginalized generally refers to Indigenous Peoples, Black, women, racialized people, economically-disadvantaged people, people with disabilities, people of a religious minority, and people who face barriers based on sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.

What is Climate Equity?

The [Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives' Implementing Equity Report](#) defines "climate equity" as:

The just distribution of the benefits of climate actions ([mitigation](#) and [adaptation](#)) and alleviating unequal burdens created or exacerbated by climate change.

This requires the meaningful participation of communities in identifying and addressing their needs, prioritizing resources to historically underserved communities, delivering meaningful and direct benefits to those communities and measuring and evaluating equity progress in partnership with participating communities.

Our goals & what problems we are looking to address

OCAF's goal: Historically-racialized and marginalized individuals and communities in Ottawa contribute to the development, and benefit from implementation, of low-carbon solutions.

We believe that every project should strive to promote healing, equity, and resilience within our communities. To this end, we emphasize two critical outcomes:

- **Lead to a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions:** Projects should aim to foster long-term societal shifts, such as policy changes, that contribute to reducing greenhouse gas emissions.
- **Enhanced Well-being for Equity-Deserving Communities:** Projects must prioritize the enhancement of social, economic, and environmental conditions for equity-deserving communities.

Questions to ask yourself as you develop your project:

- How can your project address climate challenges while advancing equity and reconciliation?
- Are there opportunities for climate solutions to address underlying equity issues within our communities?
- What potential harms might arise from climate solutions, and how can they be mitigated?
- What are the primary concerns of your community, and how do they intersect with climate change?

- In what ways can we center equity and Reconciliation in climate action to ensure that everyone benefits from the transition to net zero? How can we honour Prior Informed Consent of Indigenous People, as per the UNDRIP, in climate projects?
- How can we incorporate Indigenous Ways of Knowing into climate projects to foster holistic and sustainable solutions?

Exclusion of Certain Activities

While we recognize the value of these activities, it's essential to note that this grant program will not fund projects focused *solely* on:

- Education campaigns or materials (social media or other)
- Hard costs for retrofits (this is not an incentive program to purchase mechanical components)
- Convening events (a summit or conference)
- Advocacy

Application Process

The application process has two steps:

- 1) **Expression of Interest** (EOI): Submit a brief overview of your project demonstrating how it aligns with our eligibility requirements, grant parameters, and program goals. OCAF staff will review and provide feedback on the EOIs and may consult outside advisors with specific subject matter expertise.
- 2) **Full application**: If selected, you'll be invited to submit a comprehensive application. We acknowledge the effort involved in this process and offer a \$1,500 stipend to semi-finalists to support proposal development. OCAF staff will also be available for questions and consultation during the proposal development period.

Evaluation and Review

Full applications will be assessed by our Climate Equity Grant Review Committee using a standardized scoring methodology to ensure an equitable decision-making process and work to eliminate bias. We prioritize projects that demonstrate tangible benefits, scalability, and meaningful engagement with equity-deserving communities.

The Climate Equity Grant Review Committee consists of OCAF staff and Board, community representatives and representatives of the Ottawa Community Foundation. We'll contact both successful and unsuccessful applicants.

Funding Parameters

Grants ranging from \$25,000 to \$75,000 are available, provided there is a clear link between the budget and project goals. Additionally:

- OCAF and other federal funds cannot exceed 80% of the project budget.
- In-kind contributions including staff and volunteer time can contribute to the total budget, so long as those expenses can be audited.

Inclusive Climate Parameters

We recognize the importance of centering equity and inclusion in all climate and environmental endeavors. Projects supported by this program must adhere to the following:

- 1) **Community Benefit:** Projects must directly benefit **residents of Ottawa**, prioritizing historically-racialized and marginalized communities.
- 2) **Dual Outcomes:** Projects must demonstrate a commitment to achieving two key outcomes:
 - a) **Reduction in Greenhouse Gas Emissions:** Emphasizing the urgent need to mitigate climate change through tangible actions.
 - b) **Better conditions for Equity-Deserving communities:** Fostering improvements in social, economic, and environmental well-being for communities facing systemic barriers and injustices.
- 3) **Alignment with Priority Areas:** Proposals must align with at least one of **OCAF's priority areas**, including but not limited to:
 - a) Low-carbon buildings;
 - b) Sustainable transportation;
 - c) 15-minute communities/densification;
 - d) Related climate priorities such as renewable energy, electrification, and energy resilience.
- 4) **Focus on Tangible Outcomes:** This program aims to support initiatives that yield tangible results or advance preparation and planning for such outcomes. While certain activities, such as education, hard costs, convening, and advocacy, are essential components of a comprehensive project, they will not be funded as standalone efforts.

- 5) **Scalability and Community Engagement:** Project outcomes must be **scalable** within or across local organizations, ensuring broad and lasting impact. Preference will be given to projects that actively involve and are led by **equity-deserving communities**. Proponents must demonstrate **existing relationships** and a clear trajectory toward building trust and collaboration with these communities. This includes:
 - a) Establishing buy-in from relevant community stakeholders.
 - b) Demonstrating meaningful participation by the communities that will benefit from the project.
- 6) **Inclusive Planning and Timelines:** Proposals must include a detailed project timeline, reflecting a collaborative and inclusive planning process. While we expect project timelines to fall within the range of 6 to 12 months, we welcome applications with timelines that accommodate the unique needs and circumstances of the communities involved.

Eligibility

Applications not directly led by equity-deserving groups should at a minimum clearly articulate how their project will be collaboratively developed and delivered with these communities.

Organizations can participate in multiple EOI's.

The Climate Equity Grant Program is open to:

- [Qualified Canadian Donees](#)
- Non-profit organizations
- For-profit entities if they have partnered with a charitable and/or non-profit organization that acts as lead proponent for the project.

We do not provide funding for the following:

- Core operations
- Fundraising events or campaigns
- Partisan political or religious activities
- Individuals
- Sponsorships
- Deficit reduction
- Equipment purchases for administrative purposes

Examples of climate and equity co-benefits:

Projects funded by this initiative should aim to achieve both climate and equity co-benefits. Examples include:

- Greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reduction as a primary goal of the project. Other climate related co-benefits that a project could contribute to are (please note, this is not an exhaustive list):
 - Energy/thermal resilience
 - Climate adaptation
 - Flood resilience
 - Reduced urban heat island
- Enhanced affordability, air quality, health, safety, and access to jobs and services for communities
- Advancement of Indigenous Reconciliation efforts

Examples of potential climate equity initiatives

(The following table provides examples of potential climate equity initiatives, serving as inspiration for project ideas.)

Project Focus	Climate Benefits	Equity Benefits
Improving building efficiency for low-income households	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GHG reduction • Energy conservation • Less vulnerability to extreme heat and cold 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lower energy costs • Relief from energy poverty • Better comfort, air quality and quality of life
Promoting densification / 15-minute communities in historically-marginalized communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GHG reduction • Less vehicle travels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing affordability • Lower transportation costs • Better access to jobs and services • Community development, including more infrastructure, services and access to necessities
Promotion of active transportation in historically-marginalized communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainable transportation • GHG reduction by reducing vehicle use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lower transportation costs • Better community relationships • Affordable transportation option
Climate workforce development for equity-deserving communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GHG reduction by shifting from fossil fuels to electricity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job security • Training for well-paid jobs • Diversity of perspectives in climate solutions workforce

Electric vehicle car share or e-bike share at / near affordable / social housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sustainable transportation• GHG reduction by reducing need for personal vehicles	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Affordable access to sustainable transportation
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Learn more about OCAF's work:

- [Fill It First: Delivering More Affordable Housing, Faster Can Also Cut Emissions](#)
- [Engaging Ottawa renters in retrofits](#)
- [Ottawa Climate Equity Initiative Leaves Lasting Legacy of Trust](#)