

Toward Equity & Accessibility in Municipal Climate Action

- Details for Prospective Municipal Case Study Participants -

The *Toward Equity & Accessibility in Municipal Climate Action* project is focused on enabling municipalities to overcome systemic barriers that limit the equitability and accessibility of climate action. It is recognized that issues of inequity and accessibility cannot be resolved inside of a climate action planning and implementation process alone; nor can a complex, systemic issue like climate change be effectively addressed within a planning process that occurs on the periphery, separate of core strategy. To shift mindsets and enable the transformation necessary to overcome these complex challenges, a comprehensive suite of leading systemic innovations will be curated, co-creatively developed and tested across multiple municipal case study engagements. Municipalities will have the opportunity to engage in applying systemic innovations to enhance and build new capabilities related to strategy development, performance management and stakeholder engagement. The project is being led by a strong, international collective of academics, municipal actors, equity-seeking groups, and social innovators convened by the Viessmann Centre for Engagement & Research in Sustainability at Wilfrid Laurier University. Our team is currently seeking 4-6 municipalities committed to participating in a multi-year applied co-learning program. To support this project, we are planning to apply for a five-year, ~\$2.5 million grant from the Social Sciences and Research Council (SSHRC) in February, 2022.

The Challenge: As settlers on Indigenous land, municipalities and other local authorities play a critical role in addressing the climate crisis. Many have already developed comprehensive corporate and/or community climate action plans (CAP) that lay out specific actions for reducing Greenhouse Gases (GHG). There is a growing recognition that the climate action being taken is not enabling the kind of progress necessary to achieve long-term climate action goals. Further, in some cases climate action is creating unintended social consequences, most often affecting those who are already marginalized.

Key Barriers: Through an extensive project development process conducted through the second half of 2020, a variety of key barriers were identified that limit the equitability and accessibility of climate action, including:

- A lack of holistic and integrated approaches to facilitating planning and engagement
- Limited participation and meaningful engagement of equity-seeking groups
- A focus on incremental, short-term, opportunities and technological solutions
- Confining provincial/federal policies and funding programs

Project Objectives: The world is changing at an accelerating rate and the complexity of the conditions municipalities face is dramatically increasing. We believe there is a significant risk in continuing to rely on conventional management methods and tools to engage with the complexity of the challenges emerging. To effectively lead into the future, municipalities are in need of new and more systemically-oriented innovations. With this gap and the barriers described above in mind, the project has defined the following objectives:

- Work with municipalities to identify and adopt systemic innovations designed to support more holistic and integrated management practices
- Co-design and evaluate effective, equitable, and accessible processes, structures, and tools to support meaningful engagement of equity-seeking groups
- Develop best practices for enabling deep and difficult conversations among diverse stakeholders
- Mobilize knowledge and networks to affect municipal practice, government policy, and funding mandates internationally

Municipal Programming: Enterprise Evolution is an organizational development program designed to enable senior leadership teams to transform strategic management practices. By supporting the adoption and operationalization of systemic management methods and tools the program helps enterprises to better respond to the complex challenges emerging and become more adaptive, efficient, equitable, and resilient. It sets an encompassing and flexible strategic management frame that is not designed to prescriptively promote the adoption of specific solutions. Municipal leadership teams will adopt a combination of systemic management methods and tools that match their unique profile, challenges, needs, and priorities. The program employs a highly collaborative, hands-on approach that ensures leadership teams are supported through the process of applying new tools and methods in practice. This contributes to leaders learning experientially and developing the capabilities and confidence needed to continue applying innovations alone.

Participation: The project presents a unique opportunity for municipalities to leverage a rich pool of expertise, resources, and funding. The Enterprise Evolution Program will be delivered to guide participating municipalities over a period of 2-4 years. In addition, it can be expected that:

- The experience will be tailored to each participant's unique situation
- Circumstances, existing plans, constraints, etc. will inform which opportunities each participant pursues
- Each municipality will define their own unique scope of work, level of ambition, and pace

Requirements: Municipalities interested in becoming a case study participant should be prepared to:

- Engage a diversity of local actors (NGOs, seeking groups, academic institutions, etc.) in the process
- Involve senior leaders in exploring and applying systemic innovations to enhance management practices
- Invest the financial and human resources necessary to support an intensive change program
- Participate in peer learning and research activities (e.g. interviews, surveys, document reviews, etc.)

Benefits: As an outcome of participating, municipalities can expect to reap the following benefits:

- The guidance and support of a leading network of academics and experts
- Engagement in a peer group of ambitious municipalities committed to learning cooperatively
- Access to a curated suite of leading-edge innovations (approaches, methods, tools, etc.) and network of experts with the potential to significantly propel the organization ahead
- Being recognized by thousands of professionals globally with whom the project results will be mobilized

* The financial benefits of participating in the project are significant and complex. A more detailed explanation is available at the conclusion of this document.

Process & Timelines: The following is a basic outline of key project milestones and dates:

1. Set up opportunities to discuss participating with municipal leadership teams: March – August, 2022
 - To confidently decide whether or not to participate, we believe municipalities will need to engage in a series of 2-3 experiential workshops described in more detail here.
2. Confirm cohort of municipal case study participants: September – October 2022
3. Recipient of SSHRC Partnership Grants are announced: March 2023
4. Begin research engagements with Municipalities: mid-to-late 2023

APPENDIX: The Financial Benefits of Participating

1) From the Project

- **Subsidization:** The project is prepared to subsidize the cost of engaging leadership teams in the Enterprise Evolution Introductory Workshop Series we believe will be necessary for any municipality to confidently commit to participating in the project.
- **Delivery of Innovation Support & Advisory Services:** If/when the project begins in mid-to-late 2023, the project will provide (and finance) an expert who will support each municipality:
 - In exploring internal development opportunities and setting priorities
 - By identifying and introducing useful systemic innovations
 - By helping with the task of defining the scope of the program to be executed
- **Delivery of Community Engagement Support:** Concerning community engagement, especially with equity-seeking groups, the project will deliver best practices, expertise and directly facilitate the engagement of the key stakeholder groups of relevance to each municipality. This will include:
 - Developing a deep and unbiased understanding of the perspectives and needs of each group
 - Supporting the design and delivery of collective approaches to developing plans and solutions
- **Connection to Experts:** The project team will curate and help engage leading experts/consultants needed to support the unique ambitions of each municipality.
- **Applied Research:** Through the funded-research we plan to conduct, our team will be able to develop and share insight into how the organization is engaging in the design and implementation of deep change. This will support identifying underlying issues/barriers, smartly adjusting course on the fly and making accommodations that will improve the outcomes achieved. Participating municipalities will also benefit of well-designed peer learning activities that our research team will be facilitating.

2) From Experts/Consultants/Solutions Providers

- **Discounted Delivery:** Our applied research activities are expected to produce credible evidence and compelling case studies that leading experts and the systemic innovations they deliver are presently lacking. In addition the profile of the project and its reach will provide a tremendous opportunity for creating exposure and interest. As such, it can be expected that the experts and consultants our team will help municipal participants to engage, will be offering significantly discounted services.

3) From External Funders

- **Project Fundraising:** The project has already been meaningfully engaged with prospective funders (e.g. Federation of Canadian Municipalities, Trottier Foundation, McConnell Foundations, Trans-Atlantic Platform, etc.) and discussing the possibility of making financial resources available to subsidize the committed participation of municipalities and their pursuit of a higher level of ambition.
- **Joint Fundraising:** The project will partner with each municipality to pursue funding opportunities, leveraging its stature to increase the benefits to the funder, and the potential for success.