

Alberta Climate Leaders Staff Peer Network – Terms of Reference

Last Updated: November 2024

Background

The Alberta Municipal Climate Staff Peer Network is facilitated by the Municipal Climate Change Action (MCCAC) and the Community Energy Association (CEA), as part of the Alberta Climate Leaders Program. Alberta Climate Leaders is a comprehensive suite of initiatives developed for municipal elected officials and local government staff in Alberta, with the common goal of accelerating the implementation of climate solutions in Albertan communities.

The Community Energy Association accelerates bold action by local governments and Indigenous communities related to climate and energy. CEA grew from a committee established by the Government of BC and the Union of BC Municipalities in the 1990s and was incorporated as a non-profit in 2003. Today, CEA's members and staff live in communities large and small and bring their collective expertise, experiences, commitment to Truth and Reconciliation, and passion to help lower local emissions and build healthy, resilient communities.

The Municipal Climate Change Action Centre was founded in 2009 as a collaborative initiative of Alberta Municipalities, Rural Municipalities of Alberta and the Government of Alberta. The Municipal Climate Change Action Centre delivers funding, technical assistance, and education to help Alberta municipalities and community related organizations advance actions that lower energy costs, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and improve climate resilience.

Alberta Climate Leaders project is funded in part by Alberta Ecotrust Foundation, the Trottier Family Foundation, and the Government of Alberta. Additional in-kind financial support from the Community Energy Association.

Overview

Communities are the cornerstone of local climate action. Their leadership on climate drives action among residents and businesses and can contribute to transformative regional change.

Peer Networks are groups that are brought together by a common concern or passion, and through meeting regularly, members learn how to take action, share best practices, and build their capacity. Peer network members openly share experiences and knowledge with their peers to generate new approaches to shared challenges.

Municipal and Indigenous community staff in Alberta can benefit from subject-specific and implementation-focused support to build their knowledge of climate change, understand high impact action areas that target both adaptation and mitigation, and identify cost and resource savings through streamlining or partnership opportunities. The Alberta Climate Leaders Staff Peer Network responds to this need, by supporting community-to-community learning on local climate action and emission reductions at the staff level.

Membership to the Staff Peer Network is open to both staff working in municipalities and Indigenous communities (see [Eligibility](#)). The Staff Peer Network will enable staff to hear directly from peers implementing specific climate actions, learn from their experiences, and understand how to adapt solutions to their context.

Members will also gain the skills and knowledge necessary to build coalitions and partnerships with other stakeholders in their communities - including businesses, non-profit organizations, and community groups - and ultimately, contribute to the creation of a culture of integrated climate action within their organization and community. By coming together with their peers, network members can find ways to advance their priorities by replicating what has already been done, adapt solutions for their context and collaborate for amplified impact.

Network Goals

The Staff Peer Network has two core and high-level goals that work towards advancing action on climate challenges in Alberta:

- Strengthen community leadership and capacity to drive climate action.
- Accelerate the implementation of collaborative and impactful climate solutions and opportunities in Alberta.

Measured Outcomes

The Staff Peer Network activities will be designed to achieve following outcomes, which will help make progress towards the two core goals:

- Accelerate staff's understanding of climate action strategies and their co-benefits.
- Prepare staff for the successful implementation of the Alberta Playbook Big Move recommendations.
- Build professional connections and relationships while providing a supportive and positive climate community.
- Increased collaboration and information sharing between member communities to foster replication and adapt high-impact actions to their context.
- Member communities have the tools and knowledge needed to cut through the noise and implement regionally specific pathways for effective climate action.

Content

The content of Staff Peer Network meetings will bring together climate adaptation and mitigation, with a focus on action areas that enable rural, urban, and Indigenous communities in Alberta to understand and manage risks of a changing climate, as well as take steps to reduce emissions, build resilience, and improve efficiency. The member-driven nature of the Network ensures that content will evolve to address members' priorities and respond to the current context of climate action in Alberta.

A focus will be placed on areas that pose the greatest challenges, and also represent the greatest opportunities for learning and capacity building, to progressing on local climate action. These *Power Skills* include:

- Capacity (Time and Money)
- Internal education & communications
- External education & communications
- Advocacy
- Collaboration

These skills will act as a lens through which to consider local climate actions, based on the Big Moves from the [Alberta Climate Leaders Playbook](#). These are specific areas where local governments have an opportunity to make a difference on climate, including:

- Low Carbon Resilience
- Renewable Energy
- Energy Efficiency
- Decarbonizing Buildings
- Sustainable Transportation
- Waste Management
- Land Use Planning
- Climate Adaptation Strategies

With each session, members will benefit from foundational climate education, understand the high impact action opportunities to advance climate adaptation and mitigation, and connect with their peers to pool resources and knowledge to solve shared challenges.

We aim to include practical tools for applying climate action in Alberta, and interpersonal skills to communicate and build relationships with residents and stakeholders in the context of local climate action.

Members are encouraged to share knowledge, best practices, lessons learned, opportunities, and celebrate success together.

Priority setting

The Network aims to be peer-led, and members will shape the direction and priorities of the Network to maintain its peer-driven nature. Network meeting content will be determined through:

- Direct input from Network members through surveys and polls
- The experience and knowledge of the Network co-chairs and facilitators
- Environmental, social, economic, and political factors connected to local climate action in Alberta

Membership Guidelines

Eligibility

Eligible participants in the Staff Peer Network include staff from municipalities and Indigenous communities located within the province of Alberta.

A municipality as defined by Section 1(s) of the Municipal Government Act:

- i. a city, town, village, summer village, municipal district or specialized Municipality
- ii. repealed 1995 c24 s2
- iii. a town under the *Parks Towns Act*
- iv. a Municipality formed by a special Act
- v. or, if the context requires, the geographical area within the boundaries of a Municipality described in sub-clauses (i) to (iii).

Indigenous community staff may include staff from the following entities:

- First Nations outlined in Treaty 8, Treaty 7, Treaty 6 located within the Province of Alberta.
- Aseniwuche Winewak Nation.
- Tribal Councils, Regional Councils, Confederacies, or Treaty Organizations representing affiliations of First Nations as outlined in Treaty 8, Treaty 7, or Treaty 6 located within the province of Alberta.
- Métis Settlements as established by the Metis Settlements Act located within the Province of Alberta.
- Métis Settlements General Council, representing an affiliation of Métis Settlements of Alberta.
- Otipemisiwak Métis Government (Métis Nation of Alberta), including the five Territories of the Métis Nation within Alberta and the associated Districts.
- Self-governing Métis Nations / Communities.
- Non-Status Indigenous Nations / Communities.

Representation

The number of network members from one community is not prescribed by the network facilitators. In enabling multiple attendees from one organization, the Staff Network can promote both inter-organization connections, as well as intra-organization opportunities for colleagues to collaborate and develop internal alignment.

We do encourage each member to follow any internal policies, rules, or best practices from their organizations on participation in networking groups, to prevent overrepresentation and promote equitable participation.

Participants are not considered official representatives of their communities, and opinions expressed are to be considered personal views only and not those of their administration or leadership unless expressly stated otherwise.

Network Participation

Participation in the Staff Peer Network is voluntary and unpaid. Members may use their best judgement to determine their level of involvement. There are two categories of participation:

- **Co-Chairs** – To maintain the peer-led nature of the Network, co-chairs will be appointed to advise on the direction of the Network, support with session planning, and chair quarterly sessions. All staff will be invited to consider the co-chair opportunity. Any members interested in a co-chair role should contact the network facilitators. The estimated time commitment for co-chairs is 15 hours per year.
- **Members** – Members of the Network are staff from municipalities and Indigenous communities located within the province of Alberta.

If you no longer want to participate in Staff Peer Network Activities, please contact the network facilitators:

Andrea Miller at andrea@abmunis.ca

Ronak Patel at ronak@abmunis.ca

Carly Johansson at cjohansson@communityenergy.ca

Sam Sedlowsky at ssedlowsky@communityenergy.ca

Roles and Responsibilities

Network Members:

Network members commit to:

- Recognizing that local climate solutions are needed to mitigate and adapt to climate change.
- Attending and actively participating in Network activities, including engaging in learning, collaborating, and communicating with other members.
- Openly sharing experiences and knowledge, so others may learn from and replicate actions.
- Contributing to setting the priorities for the Network through timely participation in surveys and polls and bringing forward recommendations for guest speakers and topics.
- Championing the Staff Peer Network outside of Network meetings.
- Where appropriate, sharing resources and learnings from the Network with colleagues and other internal team members involved in local climate action.
- Fostering a safe and inclusive environment for exploring challenges and advancing leading edge and collaborative solutions.
- Notifying the network facilitators as soon as practical, if any matter arises which may be deemed to affect the positive progression of the Network.

Network Co-Chairs:

The Network has up to 5 co-chairs, who voluntarily commit to the terms and responsibilities of this position. Co-chairs can be any eligible network member. Any staff interested in being a co-chair should reach out to the network facilitators. The expectation is that co-chairs will fulfill the responsibilities best aligned with their strengths. Co-chair responsibilities include:

- Providing strategic support to ensure that the network aligns with staff objectives
- Working with the network facilitators to develop an annual workplan.
- Acting as a liaison between network members and facilitators.
- Attending co-chair planning meetings with the network facilitators to set meeting agenda.
- Support outreach to potential speakers and identify potential meeting topics.
- Chairing quarterly meetings with support from network facilitators.

Network Facilitators:

The Network is facilitated by the Municipal Climate Change Action (MCCAC) and the Community Energy Association (CEA). The facilitators will provide strategic direction, administrative and facilitation support, and act as the secretariat. The role of the network facilitator includes:

- Member recruitment, orientation, and management.
- Working with the co-chairs to schedule meetings, set agendas, and confirm speakers.
- Distributing communications about network meetings.
- Distributing Network meeting materials, including presentation slides and relevant resources.
- Distributing evaluation tools (surveys, polls) to support ongoing assessment of the Network.
- Providing support to network members by connecting them with other network contacts.
- Reporting annually to funders and the network.

Meeting Format

Staff Peer Network meetings are an informal gathering for information sharing on relevant topics and networking between members. Meetings are non-committal and confidential in nature.

The Network meets virtually for two-hour quarterly meetings. This schedule may be adjusted to best meet the needs and expectations of members.

Peer Network meetings will include topic-specific presentations, guest speakers, peer presentations, facilitated discussion and activities, and updates and news from the local climate action space. This format may be adjusted to offer additional supports and services in the future to continue meeting members' needs.

Conduct and Community Guidelines

The Staff Peer Network is a respectful environment for mutual learning and information sharing around shared goals of local government action on climate change. Meetings of the Staff Peer Network will adhere to the following community guidelines:



- Be as present as possible: turn on video for interactive portions, put away phone, set other work aside, close/mute tabs.
- Lead with kindness: challenge ideas, not people.
- Step up and step back: practice active listening and participation, make space for everyone to contribute to the conversation.
- Maintain confidentiality: outside of this space, you may share the message but not the identity of the messenger.
- Maintain trust and respect: We encourage and celebrate participation from everyone in the Network, irrespective of age, gender, ethnicity, race, religion, disability, and sexual orientation. There will be zero tolerance for abuse or discrimination and anyone who incites harm or harassment towards other members (through chat, video, audio or otherwise) will be removed at the discretion of our team.

Evaluation

The impact and success of the Peer Network Activities will be determined with ongoing evaluation through:

- Feedback polls at the end of each meeting
- Onboarding and annual surveys
- Recording the total number of meeting participants and active communities involved
- Member feedback will be incorporated into the ongoing impact measurement of the Network and inform the design of new supports and services and the scope of meeting activities.

Agreement

All Staff Peer Network members, including Network Co-Chairs are asked to review this Terms of Reference document. By participation in the activities of the Staff Peer Network, it is automatically assumed that members agree with the Terms of Reference.

Questions and concerns about the Terms of Reference can be discussed with the network facilitators.

Members that do not agree to the Terms of Reference are selecting to opt-out of the Staff Peer Network.

Violators of these Terms of Reference will be removed from participation in the Staff Peer Network. The Municipal Climate Change Action Centre and the Community Energy Association will have sole responsibility and discretion in this matter.

Review

These Terms of Reference are intended to be a living document and will be reviewed annually to ensure they remain relevant and effective in achieving the Staff Peer Network's purpose and objectives.