



TOWN OF NEW GLASGOW

Climate Population Health Equity

Decision Support Toolkit

A practical screening and assessment tool for municipal staff



**Climate
Resilience**



**Population
Health**



**Equity &
Vulnerability**

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Introduction

Application of equity in climate adaptation strategies is a growing movement in many communities in Canada. This is the direct result of a broader understanding that benefits of climate action are not shared equally and equity seeking populations are those who hold the greatest burden of hazards directly related to climate change. The Town of New Glasgow has embraced this shift because our community deserves leadership, who both recognize the impacts on the health of our citizens and are prepared to create effective and long-lasting change.

The development of this ***Climate-Population Health-Equity Decision Making Toolkit*** which directly correlates climate with population health strategies and equity considerations, demonstrates the Town of New Glasgow's commitment to fundamental institutional change. This Decision Support Toolkit supports implementation of the Town of New Glasgow's Corporate Climate Action Plan, Community Climate Action Plan, Equity and Anti-Racism Plan, and Accessibility Plan at all levels of decision making. Completing it is a practical way municipal staff, Senior Leadership and Council can demonstrate that these commitments are being applied to project, program and policy decisions and day-to-day operations. It provides a structured process to assist municipal staff identify potential climate, health, or equity implications when developing policies, programs, policy or capital projects. The goal is not to add additional administrative burden; instead, the intention is to ensure decisions are balanced with consideration that populations may be impacted differently, which may lead to different decisions, project changes or mitigations strategies to be considered at all levels of the decision-making process.

What makes this Toolkit unique is it provides the framework for Council and Senior Leadership to understand the impact of projects/programs and policy beyond their own lived experience and consider the broader implications to all community from both a climate and equity perspective. It forces those using the Toolkit to apply a justice lens to the work – considering not only who is more affected but more importantly are there elements which need change to ensure populations are not harmed or unequally impacted due to historical structural barriers. Used diligently and correctly, it has the ability to create real change and positively impact the trajectory of population health in our community.

Special acknowledgement to Hugh Atkinson a Public Health Officer Student with the Department of Community Health & Epidemiology, Dalhousie University for his work with the Town of New Glasgow which led to the development of this toolkit.

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How to Use This Tool

This tool is designed to be completed during the early planning stage of a project, program, or policy decision. It is not a formal approval process, instead it is a tool to ensure climate, health, and equity impacts are identified and assessed before decisions are finalized.

Who uses it:

- Municipal planners, engineers, and program staff.
- Decision-makers reviewing capital projects or service changes.
- Any staff member evaluating a project, program, policy or infrastructure initiative.
- Members of Council and Senior Leadership when making decisions.

When to use it:

- Early planning stage: when design or policy changes can still be made.
- Before finalizing project scope or submitting budget requests.
- When reviewing development proposals or service delivery changes.
- When making decisions on implementation.

How it works:

- Complete the five steps in order. Each step builds on the last.
- Use the decision trigger at the end of step 2-5 to track concern level:
( Low  Moderate  High).
- Complete the Documentation Template to record your findings and required actions.
- File the completed template with the project record.

Key questions to keep asking throughout:

- "Is there any information missing?"
- "What changes because of this analysis?"
- "Are there changes which need to be made before proceeding?"
- "How will these changes impact structurally marginalized communities?"
- "Who needs to be consulted before proceeding?"

Why This Work is Important

Municipal governments play a critical role in protecting community health and wellbeing. Decisions related to infrastructure, land use, housing, transportation, and emergency management can create risks that affect residents, especially those facing systemic inequalities. Climate hazards are also key considerations in reducing these risks.

The evidence is clear: climate hazards do not affect all residents equally. In New Glasgow and Pictou County, demographic and socioeconomic factors vary significantly between neighbourhoods and populations. Older adults, families/individuals living in poverty, renters, structurally marginalized populations and those with pre-existing health conditions face heightened vulnerability to climate-related health impacts.

New Glasgow/Pictou County at a Glance

Indicator	Value
1. Population & Demographics (2021 Census)	
Town of New Glasgow population	9,471 (Statistics Canada, 2022)(up 4.4% from 2016)
Census agglomeration (NG + Stellarton, Westville, Trenton)	~34,397
Pictou County population	43,657
Seniors (65+)	26% (Statistics Canada, 2022)(above Nova Scotia average)
Working-age adults	60% (declining faster than NS average)
2. Housing and Infrastructure (2021 Census)	
Dwellings needing major repair	10.7% (Statistics Canada, 2022)
Comparison	30% above the NS provincial rate (8.2%) and 75% above the national rate (6.1%).
Key implication	Older, under-maintained housing stock increases vulnerability to extreme heat, cold, and flooding.
3. Income and Economic Conditions (2021 Census)	
Median household income (2020)	\$64,000 (Statistics Canada, 2022)
Comparison	10.5% below the NS median (\$71,500) and 23% below the national median (\$84,000).

Key implication	Lower income directly limits adaptive capacity: ability to retrofit homes, purchase cooling equipment, or absorb recovery costs after a climate event. This compounded by a high unemployment rate
4. Well-being Indicators (Engage NS, 2020)	
Overall wellbeing score	4.46/7 (Engage Nova Scotia, 2020) (lowest in Nova Scotia, provincial average: 4.66)
Environmental wellbeing score	4.82/7 (lowest in Nova Scotia by a significant margin (next lowest: Cumberland at 5.12; provincial average: 5.33)
Physical health (very good/ excellent)	36.9% (lowest in Nova Scotia)
Air quality dissatisfaction	45.3% (compared to 10.0% province-wide)
Food insecurity	22.2% of population reports eating less due to insufficient food or money.
5. Climate Programs and Local Action	
Climate planning, emissions inventory and evidence base	New Glasgow has adopted both a Corporate Climate Action Plan and a Community Climate Action Plan. The Town has also completed a corporate and community emissions inventory in 2018. The Town has also undertaken studies on reducing its emissions profile such as the Technical Fleet Conversion Report or the GHG Reduction Pathway study for all Town owned buildings. The Town has also completed a Climate Risk & Vulnerability Assessment in 2024.
Climate Adaptation	The Town of New Glasgow is actively advancing work to integrate equitable climate adaptation into the next Corporate Climate Action Plan.
Municipal Buildings	The Town is advancing energy upgrades across eleven municipal facilities, supported by external funding and financing. This work includes building efficiency improvements, building automation, and renewable energy opportunities across municipal and water utility facilities. This work is being done to address Corporate emissions coming from Town owned buildings.
Residential Energy and Affordability measures to tackle energy poverty	Through Clean Energy Financing, New Glasgow has helped nearly 30 households access low-interest financing for home energy upgrades. The Town has also supported Toward Net Zero public housing retrofit work with Clean Foundation and Nova Scotia Provincial Housing Agency (NSPHA), including energy assessments and selected energy upgrades in the public housing stock of 71 homes in New Glasgow.

Emergency preparedness and household resiliency	The Town has adopted a Resiliency Hub Policy to support residents during extreme weather events, outages, and other emergencies. New Glasgow has also supported household-level flood resilience through the Resilient Home Retrofits pilot with Clean Foundation, which helped participating homes assess and reduce flood risk through practical mitigation upgrades.
Natural assets, urban forestry and biodiversity	New Glasgow is advancing urban forest and natural asset planning, including work related to tree canopy, green infrastructure, watershed health, biodiversity, heat reduction, stormwater management, and community resilience. The Town has completed a street tree inventory and completed an application to the Federation of Canadian Municipalities to develop an urban forest management plan.
Transportation and mobility	The Town has advanced several transportation-related climate actions, including active transportation planning, trail improvements, public transit owner & operator, fleet analysis, and EV infrastructure planning and implementation. The Town currently operates 6 EV charging ports in the downtown core.
Climate governance, accountability and partnerships	New Glasgow's climate work is supported by formal commitments, public reporting, and implementation tracking. This includes the Town's climate emergency declaration, participation in the Partners for Climate Protection program, involvement in Clean Foundation's Community Climate Capacity network, participation in the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate & Energy, annual climate disclosure through Carbon Disclosure Project, and internal tools such as the climate action tracker and climate change inventory to monitor progress across climate commitments.

Together, these initiatives demonstrate that New Glasgow's climate and equity work has moved beyond planning and development alone. The Town is translating climate commitments into municipal operations, public reporting, residential and public housing retrofits, emergency preparedness, natural asset planning, and equity-informed decision-making. This toolkit should therefore be positioned as one practical mechanism for helping staff apply climate, population health, equity, accessibility, and resilience considerations consistently in municipal decisions.

Climate, Population Health, and Equity: How They Interact

Climate change, population health outcomes, and social equity are closely interconnected. Climate hazards affect more than infrastructure: they affect housing comfort, respiratory and cardiovascular health, mental wellbeing, mobility, access to services, food security, and recovery after emergencies. These impacts are not distributed equally, meaning some populations are impacted differently and considerations are required.

For New Glasgow, the local climate profile points to hotter summers, warmer nights, heavier rainfall, longer fire seasons, drought and wildfire conditions, and changing snow and ice patterns. These trends intersect with local realities already identified in this toolkit, including an aging population, older housing stock, lower household incomes, transportation barriers, food insecurity, which equate to unequal access to support.

Municipal decisions in areas such as buildings, land use, infrastructure, transportation, natural assets, emergency preparedness, procurement, and service delivery can either reduce these risks or unintentionally increase them. Applying a climate-population health-equity lens helps staff and Council ask: who is most exposed or at risk, who has the least capacity to adapt or recover, and what should change before the decision is finalized?

Local climate risks for New Glasgow and Pictou County:

Climate Hazard	Local Relevance
Flooding, heavy rainfall and inland flooding	The East River / Amasipukwejk corridor is exposed to flood risk, and provincial coastal flood mapping shows risk along the river corridor. New Glasgow's climate profile also projects heavier rainfall, with maximum one-day precipitation increasing from 57 mm historically to 66 mm by mid-century, increasing pressure on stormwater systems, roads, homes, and businesses.
Extreme heat	New Glasgow is projected to experience more very hot days and warmer nights. Very hot days above 29°C increase from 6 historically to 19–26 by mid-century, and very warm nights above 18°C increase from 6 to 22–31. This increases health risk where older housing, limited cooling, low tree canopy, chronic illness, or social isolation overlap.
Severe storms and power outages	Post-tropical storms and high-wind events can disrupt power, transportation, communications, heating, cooling, food storage, medication storage, and access to essential services. Recovery barriers are greater for residents with limited income, mobility, transportation, or social support.
Drought, wildfire risk and smoke	New Glasgow's fire season is projected to lengthen from 206 days historically to 226–233 days by mid-century. Drought and wildfire conditions can affect watershed health, trees, parks, air quality, outdoor work, recreation, and residents with respiratory or cardiovascular conditions.
Infrastructure and service disruption	Climate events can interrupt access to healthcare, transportation, utilities, emergency services, communications, food, and community supports. This is where climate risk becomes an equity issue: some residents can adapt quickly, while others face multiple barriers to response and recovery.

New Glasgow Climate Profile: Key Projections

- Very hot days above 29°C are projected to increase from 6 per year historically to 19–26 by mid-century.
- Very warm nights above 18°C are projected to increase from 6 per year historically to 22–31 by mid-century.
- Maximum one-day precipitation is projected to increase from 57 mm historically to 66 mm by mid-century.
- The fire season is projected to increase from 206 days historically to 226–233 days by mid-century.
- Sea-level change is projected at 0.31 m by 2050 and 1.29 m by 2100, with implications for coastal and river-connected flood planning.

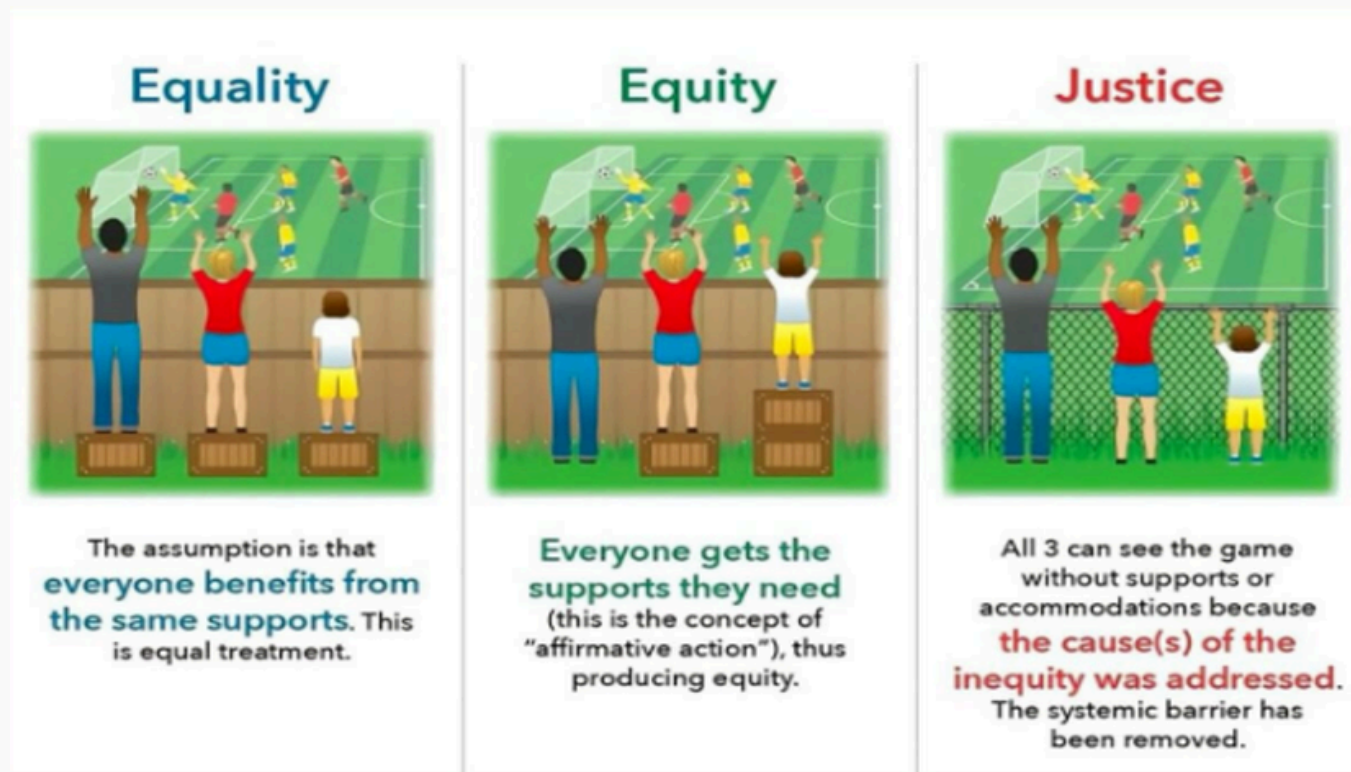
*Source: CLIMAtlantic, **Climate Profile: New Glasgow, Nova Scotia**, March 2026, using data from ClimateData.ca, Nova Scotia Open Data Portal, and Nova Scotia Coastal Hazard Map*

Equality, Equity, and Justice in Climate Action

How resources and investments are distributed matters as much as whether they are distributed at all.

Climate mitigation and adaptation strategies built on equality may fail the most vulnerable residents, while equity-based and justice-oriented approaches actively identify inequalities, highlight resource deficiencies and remove systemic barriers for resource allocation.

EQUALITY	EQUITY	JUSTICE
Same resources for everyone, regardless of need or vulnerability.	Different resources based on different levels of need, prioritizing where risk is highest.	Removing systemic barriers so all residents can access opportunity, not just distributing more resources.
Example: Placing cooling stations evenly across all neighbourhoods.	Example: Prioritizing cooling stations in areas with low tree canopy, high heat exposure, and consideration of social determinants of health which influence risk (race and racism, gender, income and social status, age, etc.)	Example: Ensuring cooling stations are accessible, trauma informed, supplies which create a welcoming environment, that consider literacy and language, are inclusive and are prepared to meet diversity of needs.



*A **justice-orientated lens** asks: not just 'who gets the resource?' but 'who has been historically excluded, and what systemic changes are required to ensure they are included in resource allocation?'*

Consideration needs to be given to residents who face barriers related to systemic discrimination, literacy, language, age, abilities, mobility and income. All factors which can prevent access to services and supports.

Any level of climate adaptation, project, program and policy development is better prepared to reduce impacts and health disparities when it combines equity-based targeting (directing resources where need is greatest) with justice-oriented implementation (removing the barriers that prevent people from accessing those resources). Access to resources are not equal among populations and communities in New Glasgow. This reality further supports the need for a justice-oriented climate- population health – equity lens to be placed on all decisions. In doing so, this both recognizes that inequalities do exist in our community and then prioritizes resources, actions and future planning in meeting the needs of all citizens.

When to Use This Tool

Apply this tool during the early planning or evaluation stage of any municipal initiative, before design or budget decisions are finalized and in reviewing current processes and budget allocations.

Capital Projects	Planning & Land Use	Programs & Services
Stormwater infrastructure	Green infrastructure planning	Active living programs
Road redesign or upgrades	Development approvals	Resiliency hubs
Park development or revitalization	Zoning amendments	Transportation initiatives
Active Transportation/Trail Development	Municipal Land Use By-laws	Policing and fire services
Public facility construction or retrofits	Floodplain development decisions	Procurement decisions
	Urban Forestry Management	Emergency response planning

This tool is most effective when applied early, when design adjustments and equity-focused approaches can still be incorporated. See Toolkit Implementation Examples on pages 28-31.

A decorative rainbow graphic with bands of blue, green, yellow, and red, curving across the top and bottom of the page. A large yellow rounded rectangle is positioned in the center, containing the title text.

Decision Support Steps 1-5 + Documentation Template

Toolkit Framework: The Five Steps

The tool kit uses a five-step screening and assessment process. Each step builds on the last.

The trigger system  Low  Medium  High guides what happens next.

Step	Focus	Key Question
Step 1: Initial Screening	Does this project/program/ policy warrant further analysis?	Could this project/program/policy increase exposure to climate hazards, increase vulnerabilities for structurally marginalized populations and/or affect the health or well-being of residents?
Step 2: Climate and Population Health Pathways Risk Considerations	What climate and health hazards are relevant to this project/program/policy?	How could this project increase or reduce exposure to climate risks and affect health outcomes?
Step 3: Equity Considerations	Who is adversely impacted by this project/program/policy? Who bears those risks identified in Step 2 and what design changes may be required	Which populations face disproportionate risks or reduced capacity to adapt?
Step 4: Social, Economic, and Physical Environments and Vulnerability	What underlying conditions shape who is most at risk?	How does this project affect the underlying factors that make people more or less resilient?
Step 5: Mitigation, Trade-offs, and Decision Implications	What changes because of this analysis?	What is the level of concern (low, medium, high), and what design changes/mitigation actions are recommended?

Step 1: Initial Screening

Does this project/program/policy warrant further analysis?

Answer the five questions below. If one or more responses are Yes or Unsure, proceed to Step 2.

	Screening Question	Yes	No	Unsure
1	Could this project/program/policy increase exposure to climate hazards (e.g., heat, flooding, air quality, severe storms)?	☐	☐	☐
2	Could this project/program/policy adversely affect the health or wellbeing of residents?	☐	☐	☐
3	Could this project/program/policy increase vulnerabilities for specific population groups? (Consider the following in answering this question: Does it adversely affect one area of the community more than others? Could it adversely affect structurally marginalized communities, seniors, residents with differing abilities, women etc?)	☐	☐	☐
4	Could this project/program/policy adversely impact climate resilience or environmental conditions?	☐	☐	☐
5	Could this project/policy/decision increase vulnerability for some residents?	☐	☐	☐

NOTE – Screening question #3 – Unless the individual/group conducting this screening are members of these specific population groups it is difficult to determine, without lived experience, if this project/program/policy could increase vulnerabilities. If you feel you cannot determine vulnerabilities it is best suited for the integrity of the exercise to choose “Unsure”.

How to read these results: This is not a pass/fail checklist. A project does not “fail” screening, the purpose is simply to determine whether further analysis will add value. If even one question is answered Yes or Unsure, proceed to Step 2. A project where all responses are No may be filed without further analysis, but the rationale requires documentation.

Most municipal projects/policies/decisions of any meaningful scope should proceed to the full assessment.

If No Concern: briefly explain why this project does not require further analysis. File and close.

If Yes or Unsure on any question (1-5) → proceed to Step 2

Step 2: Climate and Population Health Pathways Risk Considerations

Which climate hazards and health pathways are relevant, and could the initiative increase or reduce risk?

Municipal projects, programs, and policies may increase or reduce exposure to climate-related hazards - affecting health pathways for residents. This step identifies climate hazards and health pathways relevant to the Town of New Glasgow and asks whether the project may increase or reduce risk for residents, infrastructure, services, natural assets, or emergency response systems.

Climate Hazard	Health Pathways	New Glasgow Context	Increase Risk?	Reduce Risk?	No Risk?
Extreme heat	Heat stress, dehydration, cardiovascular strain, worsening of chronic illness; mental health impacts from prolonged discomfort	New Glasgow is projected to experience more very hot days and warmer nights. Risk is higher where older housing, limited cooling, low tree canopy, chronic illness, social isolation, or limited mobility overlap.	☐ Y	☐ Y	☐ Y
Flooding, heavy rainfall and inland flooding	Injury, displacement, mould and respiratory illness, mental health stress, loss of access to essential services	The East River/Amasipukwejk corridor is exposed to flood risk, and heavier rainfall is expected to increase pressure on stormwater systems, roads, homes, businesses, parks, and development areas.	☐ Y	☐ Y	☐ Y
Severe storms and power outages	Hypothermia, medication disruption, mental health impacts, social isolation; disproportionate for those dependent on electric medical equipment	Storms and outages can disrupt power, transportation, communications, heating, cooling, food storage, medication storage, and access to essential services.	☐ Y	☐ Y	☐ Y
Drought, wildfire risk and smoke	Respiratory illness, cardiovascular stress; greatest impact on older adults, children, and those with chronic illness	Drought and wildfire conditions can affect watershed health, trees, parks, air quality, outdoor work, recreation, and residents with respiratory or cardiovascular conditions.	☐ Y	☐ Y	☐ Y
Infrastructure and service disruption	Reduced access to healthcare, transportation, and utilities; isolation	Climate events can interrupt access to healthcare, transportation, utilities, emergency services, communications, food, and community support, during storms, outages, flooding, smoke, heat, and changing winter conditions.	☐ Y	☐ Y	☐ Y

Greenhouse Gas emissions and energy intensity	Alter ecosystems and trap heat, which severely strains the cardiovascular, respiratory, and renal systems while fueling the spread of infectious diseases	Projects may increase or reduce corporate or community emissions through energy use, fuel choice, fleet/equipment decisions, materials, operations, or long-term maintenance requirements.	☐ Y	☐ Y	☐ Y
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Which climate hazards are most relevant to this project, program, or policy?

Which health pathways are most relevant to this project and the populations identified in Step 3?

Are any health impacts likely to be more severe for specific groups (older adults, newcomers, people with chronic illness)?

What local information should be checked before proceeding, such as the CRVA, New Glasgow Climate Profile, flood mapping, tree canopy data, infrastructure condition, emergency management information, or neighbourhood-level vulnerability indicators?

Concern Level	When it applies	Response to Increase Risk Question
LOW CONCERN	No significant climate risks identified.	No selected for all "any increase risks for climate hazards?"
MODERATE CONCERN	Risks identified that can be addressed through design adjustments or targeted consultation.	Yes selected for 1-2 "any increase risks for climate hazards?"
HIGH CONCERN	Significant risks to climate hazards identified or detected.	Yes selected for 3 or more "any increase risks for climate hazards?"

Concern level selected: _____

Step 3: Equity Considerations

Who is adversely impacted by this project/program/policy?

This step focuses on the distribution of impacts: which populations or neighbourhoods face greater risks, and is adversely impacted by this project/program/policy? Who bears those risks identified in Step 2 and what design changes may be required.

This Section may require community engagement

Population Group	Potential Vulnerability in New Glasgow Context	Does this project/program/policy adversely impact this group?
Older adults (65+)	Older Adults make up 26% of Pictou County: higher than provincial average. Greater sensitivity to extreme heat, cold, and prolonged service disruptions. May have limited mobility or are affected by social isolation.	☐ Y ☐ N ☐ Unsure ☐ NA
Structurally Marginalized Communities	Communities who face historical and systematic racism and are more often excluded from social and economic opportunities and as a result are more impacted by decisions because of power imbalances and inequitable systems.	☐ Y ☐ N ☐ Unsure ☐ NA
Low-income households	Fixed incomes limit ability to adapt housing, purchase cooling equipment, or cover recovery costs after an extreme event. Meaning that even a single extreme weather event can push a household from financial instability into crisis.	☐ Y ☐ N ☐ Unsure ☐ NA
Renters	Renters traditionally have less control over housing conditions (insulation, cooling, flood proofing). This population is also at a higher vulnerability due to displacement.	☐ Y ☐ N ☐ Unsure ☐ NA
Newcomers and recent immigrants	This population may face language barriers, limited knowledge of local services, and lack of identification documents, all of which impeded access to emergency support.	☐ Y ☐ N ☐ Unsure ☐ NA
People who are differently abled	Barriers extend beyond mobility: cognitive, sensory, and literacy-related challenges affect access to emergency communications and recovery processes.	☐ Y ☐ N ☐ Unsure ☐ NA
Children	Children face greater sensitivity to heat, air quality, and mold exposure. Infants and children who are medically compromised are at greatest risk.	☐ Y ☐ N ☐ Unsure ☐ NA
Individuals with chronic illness	Chronic illness increases health risk during extreme heat, cold, and air quality events.	☐ Y ☐ N ☐ Unsure ☐ NA

Socially isolated residents	Socially isolated individuals typically have limited family and community networks, significantly reducing access to informal support during and after emergencies.	☐ Y ☐ N ☐ Unsure ☐ NA
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Worksheet: Equity Assessment

Which populations or neighbourhoods are most likely to be affected by this project?

Are some areas more exposed to climate hazards (heat, flooding)? Do those areas overlap with areas of social vulnerabilities?

Could this initiative benefit some residents while leaving others behind? How?

Step 3 Decision Trigger

Concern Level	When it applies	Required Action
LOW CONCERN	No significant climate, health, or equity risks identified.	No/NA selected for every population group.
MODERATE CONCERN	Risks or inequities identified that can be addressed through design adjustments or targeted consultation.	Yes selected for 1 - 2 population groups affected
HIGH CONCERN	Significant risks to vulnerable populations identified or major equity gap detected.	Yes selected for 3 or more population groups affected

Concern level selected: _____

Step 4: Social Economic and Physical Environments and Vulnerability

What underlying conditions shape who is most at risk?

While Step 3 identifies **who** may be affected, this step asks **why** some residents or neighbourhoods may be more vulnerable. Risk is shaped by social, economic, and physical conditions such as housing quality, income, transportation access, tree canopy, community conditions, language, health status, and access to services. These conditions affect whether residents can prepare for, respond to, and recover from climate events.

Social/ Economic/ Physical Environments	How It Shapes Climate Vulnerability — New Glasgow Context	Does this project/ program/policy have the potential to negatively impact these conditions?
Housing conditions	Older housing stock with poor insulation increases heat and cold exposure, flooding, mould, poor indoor air quality and power outage impacts vulnerability. Renters have limited ability to retrofit. Homes in poor condition (including those identified in New Glasgow's elevated major repair rate (10.7%) are at disproportionate risk of damage from storms, flooding, and extreme heat or cold. Flood-prone areas near East River elevate displacement risk.	☐ Y ☐ N ☐ Unsure ☐ N/A
Precarious housing and homelessness	Residents who are unhoused or at risk of losing their housing face the greatest exposure to hazards with the least capacity to respond. For precariously housed residents, a climate event does not just cause inconvenience: it can mean permanent displacement. This population requires proactive outreach rather than service-on-request approaches.	☐ Y ☐ N ☐ Unsure ☐ N/A
Transportation access	Although the Town of New Glasgow owns and operates a public transit system there remains a dependence on private vehicles for evacuation, accessing cooling centres, during emergencies or reaching healthcare. Particularly acute for seniors and newcomers.	☐ Y ☐ N ☐ Unsure ☐ N/A
Access to green space and tree canopy	Neighbourhoods with low tree canopy experience greater heat exposure. Inequitable distribution of parks and green space compounds heat vulnerability and reduce opportunities for active living and social connections.	☐ Y ☐ N ☐ Unsure ☐ N/A
Language and literacy	Residents where English is not their first language or have low literacy rates may not be able to easily navigate services or access written communications. This makes these populations particularly vulnerable during emergencies.	☐ Y ☐ N ☐ Unsure ☐ N/A
Healthcare access	Residents without a family doctor or with limited mobility face greater barriers to health support during climate events.	☐ Y ☐ N ☐ Unsure ☐ N/A

Worksheet: Equity Assessment

Which environments contribute more potential risks associated to this project/program/policy?

Does this project improve or worsen any of these conditions: intentionally or unintentionally?

Step 4 Decision Trigger

Concern Level	When it applies	Required Action
LOW CONCERN	No significant climate, health, or equity risks identified.	No/NA selected for at all Social/ Economic / Physical Environment affected condition.
MODERATE CONCERN	Risks or inequities identified that can be addressed through design adjustments or targeted consultation.	Yes/Unsure selected for at least 1-2 Social/ Economic / Physical Environment affected condition.
HIGH CONCERN	Significant risks to vulnerable populations identified or major equity gap detected.	Yes selected for at least 3 or more Social/ Economic / Physical Environment affected condition.

Concern level selected: _____

Step 5: Mitigation, Trade-offs, and Decision Implications

What changes because of this analysis?

This is the most important step. A completed analysis that does not change anything is not a decision tool; it is a filing exercise. Use this step to determine level of risk concerns which may lead to explicit decisions, design changes, and improve accountability.

Step	Concern Level Assigned	Design Changes/Mitigation Actions recommended
Step 2 - Climate and Health Pathways		☐ Y ☐ N
Step 3 – Equity Considerations		☐ Y ☐ N
Step 4 – Social/ Economic/ Physical Environments and Vulnerability		☐ Y ☐ N

Design Changes and Mitigation Actions

For each concern identified in Steps 2–4, record what design change, mitigation action, engagement step, or operational adjustment will be made. Consider whether the project should be modified to reduce exposure to climate risks (heat, flooding, storm impacts, smoke, service disruption, or recovery barrier), population health concerns or equity considerations. If no change is warranted, document the rationale.

Concern Identified	What Changes in the Design or Plan?	Responsible Lead	Timeline

5B. Who Is Prioritized?

Based on your equity analysis (Step 3 – Page 18-19), identify which populations or neighbourhoods are most affected by this project.

Populations prioritized: _____

Rationale: why these groups, why now?

Does the current design reflect an equality, equity, or justice approach? What would an equity-based approach look like here? Refer to Page 11.

How have affected populations been meaningfully engaged? (Check all that apply)

- ☐ Community organizations consulted during design
- ☐ Information provided in plain language (appropriate reading level)
- ☐ Materials available in multiple languages or formats (visual, verbal, multilingual)
- ☐ Engagement not yet planned — action required before proceeding

5C. Trade-offs Accepted

Real decisions involve trade-offs. Document them explicitly so the rationale is transparent and defensible.

Example: "Concentrating tree planting in one neighborhood reduces overall canopy gains in lower-risk areas. This trade-off is accepted in order to reduce heat inequity in high-vulnerability neighbourhoods."

Trade-off accepted (describe what is being prioritized and what is being deprioritized):

5D. Overall Decision Trigger

Based on the full assessment across all steps, select the overall concern level:

Concern Level	When it applies	Required Action
LOW CONCERN	No significant climate, health, or equity risks identified.	Proceed as planned. Document rationale below.
MODERATE CONCERN	Risks or inequities identified that can be addressed through design adjustments or targeted consultation.	Adjust plan before proceeding. Consult affected populations. Identify responsible lead.
HIGH CONCERN	Significant risks to vulnerable populations identified or major equity gap detected.	Redesign required. Escalate to department head or leadership before proceeding.

Overall concern level: _____

What drove this rating? (summarize key findings)

5E. Required Actions Before Proceeding

Action Required	By Whom	By When

Decision made by: _____

Documentation Template

Complete this template to record findings and file with the project record. This supports transparent, defensible decision-making and tracks accountability over time.

Project Information

Project Name	
Department / Team	
Project Stage:	☐ Planning ☐ Design ☐ Implementation
Location / Neighbourhood	
Date Completed	
Completed By	

Assessment Summary

Category	Key Findings
Climate Risks Identified	
Potential Health Impacts	
Populations Most Affected	
Equity Considerations	
Design Changes / Mitigation Actions	
Trade-offs Accepted	

Decision

Overall Concern Level:

Low Concern: Proceed as planned

Moderate Concern: Adjust design / consult affected populations

High Concern: Redesign required / escalate to leadership

Consultation required with: _____

Decision authorized by: _____

Documentation Template

Implementation and Next Steps

Next Step / Action	Responsible Lead	Target Date

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Toolkit Implementation Examples

1. Community Resiliency Hub Policy
2. Urban Forestry Management Plan
3. Emergency Preparedness and Response Plan

Toolkit Implementation Examples

The following examples show how the toolkit produces decisions, not just assessments. In each case, the analysis changed something. **Please note these examples are not true to the implementation but instead serve as simply examples of how this tool can lead to significant changes in project/program/policy development.**

Example 1: Community Resiliency Hub Policy

Project: Establish community resiliency hubs for use during extreme weather events and power outages.

Decision trigger result:  High Concern

Step	Key Finding
(Step 2) Climate and Health Pathways Risk Considerations	Based on Nova Scotia projections there is growing frequencies of climate related challenges including extreme heat, extreme cold, significant storms and prolonged power outages. This will result in heat stress, hypothermia, medication disruption, mental health impacts, and loss of access to essential services during prolonged outages.
(Step 3) Equity Considerations	Not all residents have the resources necessary to navigate and maintain self-sufficiency during and after these events. Identified populations at most risk included: low-income households, older adults, people with mobility challenges, socially isolated residents, and newcomers.
(Step 4) Social Economic and Physical Environments and Vulnerability	Low-income renters in older housing have no backup heat/cooling. Residents without private vehicles cannot reach distant warming/cooling centres. Newcomers face language and ID barriers to accessing emergency support services. Services need to be embedded into community where there is familiarity and comfort in seeking our resources and support. New Glasgow's three community centres have backup generators installed which were intentionally installed to ensure support could be targeted closer to community.
(Step 5) Mitigation, Trade-offs, and Decision Implications – What changed	The Town formalized a Resiliency Hub Policy. Hubs are to be located in community centers (one per Ward) which are resourced by functional generators. Free access to heating, cooling, device charging, water, and information was enshrined. Considerations given to resources which create welcoming environments including games for children, diapers and formula and considerations from a trauma-informed perspective which acknowledges diversity in community and populations which have been historically marginalized. Communication materials were prepared in multiple formats and languages. Community organizations were engaged in both the planning and activation phases.

Example 2: Urban Forestry Management Plan

Project: Develop the municipal urban forestry management plan and guide tree planting investments.

Decision trigger result:  Moderate Concern

Step	Key Finding
(Step 2) Climate and Health Pathways Risk Considerations	Based on climate predictions there will be a significant increase in number of hot days (>29°C) in New Glasgow by mid-century. Urban areas with low tree canopy are most exposed. There is also the growing risk of air quality impacts from heat and wildfire smoke. This will result in heat stress, dehydration, cardiovascular strain, reduced thermal comfort, air quality impacts, particularly for older adults and those with chronic illness.
(Step 3) Equity	There is a spatial overlap of high heat exposure and areas in New Glasgow of higher social vulnerability. Neighbourhoods with limited tree canopy and access to green space are disproportionately affected, and these tend to be the same neighbourhoods with more renters and older housing.
(Step 4) Social Economic and Physical Environments and Vulnerability	Access to tree canopy and green space directly shapes thermal comfort, mental health, and air quality. Inequitable distribution compounds existing disparities.
(Step 5) Mitigation, Trade-offs, and Decision Implications – What changed	An equity-based approach needs to be applied to urban forestry management and tree planting: priority is given to streets and neighbourhoods where high heat exposure overlaps with higher social vulnerability, even where this may reduce overall canopy gains in lower-risk areas. The Town of New Glasgow's Urban Forest Management Plan highlights meeting occupied plantable spots and neighborhood cover targets as a planning benchmark, with equity-adjusted priorities for high-vulnerability areas.

Example 3: Emergency Preparedness and Response Plan

Project: Update the municipal Emergency Preparedness and Response Plan to strengthen equitable preparedness, response, and recovery during extreme weather events and prolonged power outages.

Decision trigger result:  **High Concern - with specific gap in Recovery phase**

Step	Key Finding
(Step 2) Climate and Health Pathways Risk Considerations	Nova Scotia is projected to encounter more frequent large scale storms which will result in major infrastructure damage as was realized in the aftermath of Hurricane Fiona. This could cause significant power outages, medication disruption, mental health impacts, and loss of access to essential services during prolonged outages.
(Step 3) Equity Considerations	Not all residents have the resources necessary to navigate and maintain self-sufficiency during and after these events. Identified populations at most risk included: low-income households, older adults, people with mobility challenges, socially isolated residents, and newcomers.
(Step 4) Social Economic and Physical Environments and Vulnerability	Low-income renters in older housing have no backup heat/cooling. Residents without private vehicles cannot reach distant warming/cooling centres. Newcomers face language and ID barriers to accessing emergency support services. Services need to be embedded into community where there is familiarity and comfort in seeking our resources and support. New Glasgow's three community centres have backup generators installed which were intentionally installed to ensure support could be targeted closer to community.
(Step 5) Mitigation, Trade- offs, and Decision Implications – What changed	The Town of New Glasgow is working with other municipalities on emergency management under the guidance of the Department of Emergency Management. Resiliency Centers have been established and considerations of the needs of communities have been essential in the planning and deployment of these centers. Budget decisions on emergency management include equity considerations. Impacts are considered according to health pathways risks and working with historical and structurally marginalized populations. Specific developments in consideration of physical environments and those made more vulnerable by social isolation – specifically newcomers.

After Hurricane Fiona (2022), a critical gap was exposed: When emergency personnel depart after the acute response phase, vulnerable residents are often left managing recovery with limited institutional support. In New Glasgow, residents who lost power and needed Red Cross support were directed to another municipality — a barrier for those without transportation. Newcomers requiring photo ID to access \$500 in emergency funds faced a multi-step process: Access NS for ID, then back to Red Cross. Community-based organizations in New Glasgow had deep local knowledge of these gaps and expertise in working with vulnerable populations were not consulted nor integrated into the formal recovery structure.

Step 5 – lead to these changes

Phase	What the Analysis Found / What Changed
Mitigation	Flood-prone areas identified near East River. Capital projects now screened using this toolkit before approval.
Preparedness	Community organizations now included in emergency planning tables. Information materials redesigned in plain language and multiple formats.
Response	Resiliency Hubs activated using equity-based location criteria. Community organizations engaged as trusted intermediaries.
Recovery (critical gap)	Recovery plan updated to include: (1) mobile outreach by Red Cross and community organizations to high-vulnerability neighbourhoods; (2) simplified ID verification process in partnership with Access NS; (3) dedicated recovery liaison role within the Town; (4) funding commitment for community-based organizations to sustain recovery coordination for minimum 3 months post-event.

Recovery is often the most under-resourced phase of emergency planning.

Recovery planning prompt: What arrangements are in place to ensure vulnerable residents can access recovery support without having to navigate multiple agencies alone?

→ **Community Engagement: Equity Check for Emergency Management**

Have affected populations been meaningfully engaged, not just informed? Consider engagement across all phases:

Mitigation	Preparedness	Response	Recovery
☐ Engaged ☐ Planned ☐ Not yet	☐ Engaged ☐ Planned ☐ Not yet	☐ Engaged ☐ Planned ☐ Not yet	☐ Engaged ☐ Planned ☐ Not yet

→ **Accessibility and Communication Lens**

Information and services must reach residents in formats they can actually use. This is especially important during emergencies, when clear, accessible communication can save lives.

Accessibility Consideration	Questions to Ask
Written literacy	Is project information and any associated emergency communication available in plain language? At an appropriate reading level?
Language access	Are materials available in languages other than English for newcomer or multilingual communities?
Non-written formats	Are visual formats (symbols, images, pictograms), verbal formats (phone lines, community announcements), or video available?
Digital access	Do all residents have access to the digital channels being used (website, app, social media)?
Disability access	Are communications and physical spaces accessible to residents with sensory, mobility, cognitive, or other disabilities?

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Other Considerations

Implementation Considerations

- Land Use Planning and Urban Tree Canopy
- Alignment with Municipal and Regional
- Initiatives
- Procurement and Climate–Equity Considerations

Implementation Considerations

For this toolkit to function as a genuine decision tool rather than a bureaucratic exercise, it must be integrated into existing Program/Project/Policy development processes, not added as a separate approval step. This includes inclusion into Council recommendations which demonstrates that the development has been vetted through a climate - population health – equity lens to ensure unintentional consequences of community and populations.

Consideration	Guidance
When to apply	Early planning stage, before design or budget decisions are finalized. Not as a post-hoc documentation exercise.
Who applies it	The project lead or planner assigned to the initiative. Can be completed collaboratively with the project team.
How to integrate	Attach to capital project checklists, development approval processes, council recommendations, and program planning templates. Link to existing equity and sustainability reporting.
Piloting and improvement	Track which concern levels are most commonly triggered, and which sections generate the most useful findings. Revise annually based on staff feedback. Consider peer review for High Concern projects.
Community organization partnerships	Community-based organizations (CBOs) often have direct knowledge of vulnerable residents that municipal staff do not. Develop formal relationships with local CBOs to support engagement, accessibility, and recovery coordination.
Community Engagement	There are some decisions which have the potential to adversely impacting certain populations or communities. Engagement is key to ensure these populations are considered at the beginning of the policy/project/program development and are kept informed throughout the process.

Land Use Planning

Land use planning shapes how communities experience climate impacts and Municipal focus on this is key to facilitate local adaptation to climate change. The design of neighbourhoods, transportation networks, and green infrastructure influences exposure to heat, flooding, air pollution and other natural hazards due to climate change.

Land Use By-laws and Municipal Planning Strategies should consider the following:

Transportation	Creation of active transportation routes to encourage cycling and walking. to reduce GHG emissions and improving public health. Enhancing the role of public transit in strategic development of future planning.
Urban Tree Canopy	Urban tree canopy and green infrastructure provide multiple co-benefits: reducing urban heat through shading and evapotranspiration, improving air quality, reducing stormwater runoff and flood risk, and supporting mental health and community wellbeing.
Wetlands	Focus on conservation and restoring of historic wetlands which are considered natural climate solutions and maintain highly vulnerable ecosystems.
Development in Floodplain	Consideration of areas where floodplain mapping suggests climate change impacts will have a negative effect.

An equity-based application means applying a lens which highlights where these strategies are most impactful, most rigorously in neighbourhoods where social and economic vulnerability is highest, rather than spreading investments evenly across the municipality.

What are we doing now to prepare for future issues? A multi-disciplinary and multi-departmental approach to exploring alignment of Land Use Planning documents and regulatory tools to protect: Tree Cover, Wetlands, Watercourses and Riparian Areas to do to mitigate current and predicted impacts.

Alignment with Municipal and Regional Initiatives

The Climate–Health–Equity Toolkit aligns with and supports the following initiatives:

Initiative	Connection
Town of New Glasgow Corporate Climate Action Plan	This toolkit operationalizes equity-focused resilience measures called for in the plan. (Town of New Glasgow, 2022)
Climate Risk & Vulnerability Assessment	Provides the local risk baseline that should inform toolkit use, especially for flooding, heat, storms, infrastructure disruption, natural assets, and vulnerable populations.
Town of New Glasgow Equity and Anti-Racism Plan	This toolkit directly operationalizes the Plan's commitments by embedding equity analysis into routine municipal decision-making. The trigger system and population prioritization prompts in Steps 3 and 5B provide a practical mechanism for translating anti-racism and equity principles into infrastructure, service, and emergency planning decisions.
Town of New Glasgow Accessibility Plan	The toolkit's accessibility and communication lens (Step 4) and community engagement prompts (Steps 3 and 5B) support the Plan's goals by requiring staff to consider physical, cognitive, literacy, and language barriers when designing projects and communicating with residents — including during emergency preparedness and recovery.
Community Climate Capacity Program	New Glasgow is a participant. This toolkit directly supports the program's equity integration objectives.
NS Resilient Home Retrofit Pilot (2023)	The toolkit reinforces the program's focus on flood risk and equity: 12 NG homeowners selected based on income, flood history, and proximity to water.
Provincial Climate Change Plan: Our Climate, Our Future	Aligns with actions 5 and 8: helping homeowners respond to climate risks and increasing community adaptation capacity.
Halifax Regional Municipality (HalifACT)	Demonstrates that equity-integrated climate planning is achievable in Nova Scotia municipalities. NG can apply similar frameworks at smaller scale.

By adopting this structured decision-support approach, the Town of New Glasgow positions itself as a leader among small municipalities seeking to translate climate-population health and equity research into practical governance.

Procurement and Climate-Population Health-Equity Considerations

Municipal procurement decisions influence not only financial outcomes but also environmental sustainability and community wellbeing. The lowest-cost option may not provide the greatest long-term value when climate resilience, health impacts, and social equity are considered.

When developing Requests for Proposals (RFPs), municipalities can incorporate evaluation criteria that consider:

- Environmental sustainability and climate resilience
- Population health
- Equity and anti-racism
- Social and community benefits
- Accessibility and inclusion
- Local economic impact and fair labour practices
- Use these criteria in the development of a sustainable procurement policy with social development as a standard of measurement for selection purposes

Integrating these criteria into procurement processes allows the Town of New Glasgow to advance climate adaptation and health equity objectives while strengthening community resilience and the local economy.

Conclusion

This toolkit provides a practical, structured framework to ensure that climate resilience, population health, and equity are considered together in municipal decision-making. It is designed to be completed quickly, to generate concrete outputs, and to ensure that the most vulnerable residents are not left behind in how the Town of New Glasgow develops programs and policies.

Climate change presents immediate and long-term challenges for municipal governments. For a community like New Glasgow, with historically structurally marginalized communities, a significant senior population, older housing stock, limited public transit, and a growing newcomer community, the equity dimensions of climate risk are not abstract concerns. They are present now, and they will intensify.

By connecting local climate risk information with health, equity, accessibility, and implementation considerations, the toolkit helps support New Glasgow's commitments and strategic development of climate action, equity and anti-racism and accessibility from planning stages to everyday municipal decision-making processes.

The final measure of this toolkit's success is simple: Does completing it change how a project is designed, prioritized, or implemented? If yes, it is working.

Feedback and Improvement

This toolkit should be treated as a living document. Staff feedback worked examples from pilot projects, and updated local climate and demographic data should be incorporated on an annual basis.

Appendix A: Toolkit Review and Update Protocol

This toolkit draws on data and policy documents that will be updated on known schedules. To maintain its accuracy and credibility, the following review protocol should be followed.

Scheduled Review Triggers

Trigger Event	Sections Affected	Expected Timing
2026 Census data release	Page 6-8 (Local Context Table): population, income, housing, seniors' data	2027–2028 (phased release)
Engage NS annual survey update	Page 6-8 (wellbeing indicators, employment, food insecurity); Page 11-12 (equity framing data)	Annual (check each fall)
CCAP midpoint review (2026)	Page 9-10 (climate hazard table, GHG targets); Page 36 (alignment table)	2026 (per CCAP implementation schedule)
Town of New Glasgow Corporate Climate Action Plan Redevelopment	All sections	2026-2027
Equity and Anti-Racism Plan review cycle	Page 18-19 and 23 (equity population groups, engagement prompts); Page 36 (alignment)	2028 (plan end date, or earlier if revised)
Major climate event affecting New Glasgow or Pictou County	Worked examples Page 28-31; (hazard context and health pathways); emergency planning prompts Page 16-17 and 22-24	Within 6 months of event
Annual staff feedback cycle	All sections: prioritize based on which steps generated the most useful findings during pilot use	Annual (align with budget cycle)

Responsible Party

The Department of Community Development is responsible for monitoring trigger events and initiating the review process. Updates to the local context table and climate projections should be reviewed by the Director of Community Development before publication. Substantive changes to the five-step framework or decision triggers should be reviewed by Senior Leadership.

Appendix A: Toolkit Review and Update Protocol

Version Control

Version	Date	Changes	Author
1.0	March 2026	Initial draft	H. Atkinson
2.0	April 2026	Revised following input from M.Ward / R. Mishra; added in-text citations, update protocol, worked examples refined	H. Atkinson
3.0	April 2026	Finalized submitted version.	H. Atkinson
4.0	May 12, 2026	Edits based on site testing	M. Ward / R. Mishra
5.0	June 10, 2026	Peer Review	M. Ward

When updating, flag superseded data points in the local context table with the date of the source they are drawn from, so that staff can identify at a glance whether the data remains current. If a data source listed in this toolkit is discontinued or replaced, note the replacement in this appendix and update the relevant section accordingly.