



What challenge did the project address?

Vancouver's average temperatures are rising, and extreme heat events are becoming more frequent and more severe. Different populations face varying levels of risk and those with chronic health conditions and mobility challenges are among the most likely to be impacted by heat-related illnesses and even death.

Addressing extreme heat risk is a priority for Vancouver. The city's [Resilient Neighbourhoods Programme](#) aims to provide cooling support and services during extreme heat events, including the distribution of critical supplies such as Cool Kits – a set of items that can measure indoor temperatures more accurately and keep residents cool during hot weather. C4O's Inclusive Climate Action (ICA) Cities Fund supported Vancouver to expand this programme, partnering with disability-serving organisations to provide appropriate and accessible cooling support to people with disabilities.

What did the city achieve?

Through the ICA Fund, the city leveraged learnings from the [Praxis Spinal Cord Institute's Climate Futures project](#), which conducted comprehensive research and needs assessments on climate-friendly cooling devices for people with physical disabilities, particularly those with spinal cord injuries. The assessment included a review of over 40 available cooling technologies carried out by clinicians and individuals with physical disabilities, and shortlisted the three most effective cooling devices – which also demonstrated low environmental impact and greenhouse gas emissions due to their reusability. A pilot test was then rolled out to 140 people living with disabilities to assess the effectiveness of the selected devices.

The results from this research and testing offered the city critical insights that could inform its strategy to increase the accessibility and effectiveness of wearable cooling devices. During the summer of 2024, the Fund supported the city to partner with [Technology for Living](#) and procure cooling vests for 155 people with a variety of disabilities and chronic health conditions. Technology for Living used a peer-based approach to identify and work with recipients of the cooling vests. The vests were deeply valued by recipients as they not only helped with cooling at home but enabled users to go

outside during hot days to complete daily tasks such as visiting loved ones, picking up groceries, and attending medical appointments. At the core of this project was demonstrating that people with disabilities not only have a right to be cool in their homes, where extreme heat can be isolating, but also to access daily living in the context of climate change – as missing medical treatments or appointments due to high temperatures can cause cascading health complications. The project was founded on the principle that resilience is not just about survival and adaptation but about thriving despite challenges and changes in our world.

Based on the successful project implementation and positive reception of the cooling devices, the city has decided to re-allocate some of its limited operational budget to deliver a smaller number of tailored cooling devices to people with disabilities on an annual basis, in collaboration with Technology for Living. This work will continue, in recognition that people with disabilities deserve options and agency in accessing support for extreme heat and other climate-related emergencies.

How did the Fund advance inclusive climate action?

- The Fund provided the city with the necessary support to collaborate with community-based and disability-serving organisations. These actors play an essential role in delivering inclusive climate action, and offer huge benefits to the partnership in terms of community engagement and effective implementation.
- Direct engagement with people with relevant lived experience enabled the city to define a strategic approach and its priority focus on addressing chronic health conditions, while also finding the best technical solutions in terms of limiting greenhouse gas emissions.
- The Fund supported the city to address extreme heat vulnerability – a key climate hazard that is prioritised in the City of Vancouver Climate Adaptation Strategy; the Resilient Vancouver Strategy; and the city's Hazard, Risk, and Vulnerability Analysis.



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