

Lesson 2: Municipalities

GUIDING QUESTIONS

- How do municipalities influence their communities?
- What actions can be taken to improve my community?
- Why is it important for people to be involved in their community?

OVERVIEW

Municipalities provide essential local services and are responsible for the planning, growth and well-being of their community through the adoption of by-laws and policies.

In this lesson, students begin with an evaluation of their community. After learning about municipalities, students complete an online scavenger hunt to learn about their own municipality. Next, students work in groups to develop a detailed action plan to improve an issue in their community or alternatively, analyze a recent by-law. In the *Consolidation* activity, students reflect on why they should care about their community and work with others to create positive change.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of the lesson, students can:

- analyze their community's strengths and weaknesses;
- explain the structure and function of municipalities;
- propose and analyze different actions that could be taken to address an issue and improve their community; and
- evaluate the importance of being an active and engaged community member.

STARTER

1. Ask students to evaluate their community by responding to the statements on Activity 3.1. Alternatively, the data could be collected through an online survey. A template in Google Forms and MS Forms is available on the project website. You can 'create a copy' for your class.

2. Divide students into small groups and have them discuss their community's strengths and weaknesses and the reasons behind their choices.

3. Analyze the community evaluation scores as a whole class. Questions to prompt discussion:

- What was the overall evaluation of our community?
- Was there consensus about our community's main strengths and weaknesses? Why or why not?
- How did your discussion with classmates influence your views about our community? Invite students to share viewpoints from their classmates that they thought were valuable or interesting. (Sample prompt: "I liked hearing _____'s perspective about why _____. It was something that I didn't know about or haven't considered before.)

ESSENTIAL LEARNING

1. **Instruction:** Watch the '[Municipalities in Ontario](#)' (2:46 min) video and/or review Slide Deck 3 as a class.

Key questions covered:

- What are the features and responsibilities of municipalities?
- How do municipal councils function?
- How do municipalities influence their communities?

2. **Activity:** Ask students to complete an online scavenger hunt about their municipality (Activity 3.2). Give students time to complete it independently or in pairs and then share their responses in small groups, allowing students to add to or update their own work.

- Year of incorporation
- Population and census data (Statistics Canada, Census Profile, 2021)
- Geographic boundaries and two major landforms or waterways within it
- Composition of the local council (numbers of positions and titles)
- Description of four services provided to the community
- Summary of three recent announcements or new programs offered and who is impacted in the community
- Additional: Photo evidence of neighbourhood attractions, cultural institutions and activities (four pieces)

3. **Discussion:** Divide students into pairs or small groups and have them discuss their views about the most important needs and opportunities in their community. Students should reflect on the findings in the *Starter* activity and from their research about their municipality. Questions to prompt student thinking:

- What do you think are the most pressing needs in our community?
- Do you see any opportunities for improvement or innovation?
- How could the health of our community be improved?

4. **Group Work:** Ask each group to reach a consensus about one issue they want to address through a detailed plan of action. Using Activity 3.3 as a guide, each group should conduct research, design their plan and analyze the possible outcomes. Students should use primary and secondary resources, such as the municipality's website, research studies and media sources.

5. **Group Presentations:** Allow each group to present its plan to the rest of the class.

Consolidation

Using a 'Think-Pair-Share' protocol, have students respond to one or more of the following questions:

- Why is it important for people to get involved in their community?
- Why is it important to collaborate with others when addressing community needs?
- Why is it important to have diversity in government and within groups tackling change in our communities?



This pilot program was developed through a partnership between CIVIX and the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO). The mandate of AMO is to support and enhance strong and effective municipal government in Ontario. It promotes the value of the municipal government as a vital and essential component of Ontario and Canada's political system. Through AMO, Ontario's 444 municipalities work together to achieve shared goals and meet common challenges.

As this is a pilot program, if you have feedback on how CIVIX and AMO could improve these resources, please contact: hello@civix.ca