

Purpose and Scope

The purpose of this policy and action plan is to confirm our organisational commitment to addressing climate change. It will outline our ambitions in relation to reducing environmental impacts, inspiring change and engaging all stakeholders.

This policy applies to all employees, Board members, volunteers, independent contractors, suppliers and participants of programmes delivered by Age & Opportunity.

Policy Statement

Age & Opportunity recognises the critical importance of addressing climate change and sustainability challenges. Our commitment is to play a key role in fostering environmental stewardship while promoting healthy, active, and sustainable lifestyles.

This Climate Action Plan outlines our goals, strategies, and actions to create a sustainable future for our communities.

Introduction

Age & Opportunity has developed a climate action policy and plan which is based on the government's national Climate Action Plan 2024. This plan builds on the introduction of carbon budgets and sectoral emissions ceilings in Climate Action Plan 2023 and sets a course for Ireland's targets to halve emissions by 2030 and reach net-zero no later than 2050. These national targets align with Ireland's obligations under EU and international treaties, most notably the Paris Agreement (2015) and the European Green Deal (2020).

The 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the world's plan of action to achieving sustainability and resilience for people and planet, are closely linked with climate, in particular Goal 13 – Climate Action.

The public sector is demonstrating leadership on climate action through efforts to decarbonize public sector buildings, transport fleets, and by improving energy efficiency. The Public Sector Climate Action Mandate requires public bodies to achieve a 51% reduction in carbon emissions and a 50% improvement in energy efficiency by 2030.

Age & Opportunity is directly funded by Public Sector bodies such as the HSE, Sport Ireland and the Arts Council. As an organisation we are committed to this Climate policy and action plan in order to make sure that we play our part in ensuring a sustainable future for all.

The situation in 2025

Hybrid model of work

Age & Opportunity operates a hybrid working policy, which supports the reduction of carbon emissions in relation to commuting. A 2021 report by Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment stated that the most impactful change that remote working may have is in relation to reduced travel emissions. The report also noted that remote working was a significant contributory factor in the decline in carbon emissions from transport measured in 2020. Age & Opportunity will continue to operate some form of hybrid system which will benefit both employees, the employer and will ultimately benefit the environment.

Our office space

The office space is rented from Marino Institute of Education (MIE), and as landlord they are responsible for the control systems in relation to energy use. Age & Opportunity liaises with MIE to ensure that all boilers, thermostats and air conditioning units are regularly maintained and updated if needs be.

Most employees use laptops which use less energy than a personal computer and the office printer is set to sleep mode and is switched off when not in use.

The way we travel

Age & Opportunity only completes necessary business journeys and online meetings are used where appropriate. It is organisational policy to use public transport where practicable.

All employees have access to the cycle to work scheme which encourages cycling and many employees cycle to work. Age & Opportunity does not own or lease any company vehicles.

The essence of much of our programme delivery requires in person attendance in order to participate. Any employee that must travel to deliver or attend a programme will do so via public transport where possible.

Calculating our carbon emissions

The calculation of carbon emissions in relation to energy and waste is difficult because the costs for same are included in the overall rent of the office space.

The organisation can however begin to collate the relevant information in order to calculate our carbon footprint in relation to travel, both domestic and international.

Use of paper

Less paper is printed for internal use across the organisation as all documents are shared in soft copy as opposed to in hard copy. Agendas, minutes and all documents required for meetings are circulated online and are saved in a central location for ease of access. Age & Opportunity commits to using recycled paper where possible.

With regard to programme delivery some of our participants do not have access to internet or are unfamiliar with online programming. Many older people also prefer receiving documents in hard copy. It is our intention to record our use of paper with a view to understanding how much we use however it might not be possible to reduce same.

In an increasingly digital world, the delivery of services to citizens is not always age friendly. In October 2020, Age & Opportunity conducted a peer led research study and spoke to almost 900 older persons aged over 65 in five counties to find out more about the reasons why people do not or cannot use computers, the internet or other digital technology.

Our peer researchers indicated that the policy of pushing all services online is not a welcome age friendly development amongst their peers. Essential government or financial services which take a 'digital first/digital only' approach should continue to ensure that other options are available to older people who are experiencing digital exclusion. At the same time, those who feel intimidated by digital services could be helped to address fears and improve skills through practical training and support.

Our external work in relation to climate

In relation to our external work Age & Opportunity have identified Global Solidarity and Respect for Older People Everywhere as a policy priority and believe that positive climate action by Irish people of all ages will make life better for older people, and their families, living in climate vulnerable regions.

We are working towards this by encouraging media organisations to represent all age groups in media coverage and debate about climate action. We also influence stakeholders to include data on older persons in all research and data collection relating to climate action.

We are recommending more Government investment in research and data collection about climate related behaviour and attitudes in Ireland and the creation of more Government policies and actions to promote positive climate action by individuals and organisations in Ireland.

Our stakeholders

Age & Opportunity works with many different organisations and venues, and we endeavour to make a positive contribution to sustainability by asking our partners to align with our priorities where partnering on specific projects.

2025 Climate Action Plan

2025 is the first year that Age & Opportunity has set climate action goals the ultimate aim of which is to reduce our environmental impact, inspire change and engage stakeholders.

Goal #	Area for Development	Goal	Target date	RAG Status*
1	Our people	We will complete a workshop on climate and sustainability where we will have a guest speaker from BOLD – Older People for Climate Action.	End of Q1	
2	Our people	All employees will complete Sustainable Pass training through Skillnet Climate Ready.	End of Q2	
3	Our people	After completion of the Sustainable Pass training, we will explore the idea of appointing a climate champion at our full team meeting	End of Q3	
4	Our programmes	We will explore opportunities to incorporate climate action into our existing programme content and delivery and consider how to develop new content focusing specifically on climate action.	End of Q4	
5	Our way of work	We will develop and communicate a Climate Policy and Action Plan to be distributed to all employees and made available to stakeholders on our website.	End of Q1	
6	Our way of work	We will record the use of paper both in the office at events.	End of Q4	
7	Our way of work	We will review our digital footprint and circulate a leaflet to employees on how to reduce same.	End of Q3	
8	Our way of work	The topic of climate and sustainability will be raised at a Board meeting to discuss how climate and sustainability can be incorporated onto meeting agendas and into decision making across the organisation	End of Q4	
9	Our way of work	We will communicate with our partners in relation to our priorities and ask them to align with same when working on joint projects.	End of Q4	
10	Our way of work	We will highlight our commitment to sustainability in the relevant documents with suppliers, contractors and participants.	End of Q4	
11	Our vehicles and travel	We will commence the process to measure our carbon footprint in relation to travel.	Q1 2026	

* RAG Status

Dark green		The action is completed.
Lighter Green		The action is in progress / on track
Amber		The action is delayed or behind target,
Red		The action is at risk of not being delivered
Blue		The action is not due to be commenced