



# EQUITY IN CLIMATE PLANNING:

## Trends and Best Practices for U.S. Local Governments

December 2023



Local Governments  
for Sustainability

USA

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# About this Report

## Acknowledgements

This report was created by ICLEI-Local Governments for Sustainability (ICLEI) USA, led by University of Colorado Boulder Masters of the Environment (MENV) students George Jutras and Audrey Wheeler, with support from Naomi Hennefeld and Margot Shrift. We are grateful for the advisory support and input from ICLEI USA and MENV through the following people:

- Josh Radoff, Zero Carbon Cities Advisor for ICLEI USA and Renewable and Sustainable Energy Specialization lead for the University of Colorado MENV program
- Gregor MacGregor, Environmental & Natural Resources Policy Specialization Lead for the University of Colorado MENV program
- Angie Fyfe, Executive Director for ICLEI USA
- Calyn Hart, Senior Program Officer for ICLEI USA
- Anne Marie Cleary Rauker, Communications Officer for ICLEI USA

We would like to thank the following people for their input in creating this report<sup>1</sup>:

- Katie Coyne, City of Austin, TX
- Zach Baumer, City of Austin, TX
- Ava Richardson, City of Baltimore, MD
- Donald Wilborn, City of Birmingham, AL
- Jane Cogie, City of Carbondale, IL
- Jen McGraw, Center for Neighborhood Technology
- Caesar Garduno, City of Fort Collins, CO
- Angela Peña, City of Fort Collins, CO
- John Phelan, City of Fort Collins, CO
- Linda Arbogast, City of Oberlin, OH
- Johanna Arendt, Travis County, TX
- Max Morales, Travis County, TX
- Commissioner Brigid Shea, Travis County, TX
- Marianne Shiple, Boulder County Public Health

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<sup>1</sup> These acknowledgements do not necessarily constitute an endorsement of this document by listed individuals or their organizations.



## About ICLEI USA

ICLEI-Local Governments for Sustainability (ICLEI) is the first and largest global network of more than 2,500 local and regional governments devoted to solving the world's most intractable sustainability challenges. The worldwide network is active in 125+ countries, focused on influencing sustainability policies and driving local action across five key pathways: low emissions, resilient, equitable, people-centered, nature-based, and circular development.

As the USA Office of a global ICLEI network, [ICLEI USA](#) develops and delivers leading-edge tools and resources, including its state-of-the-art emissions-management tool, ClearPath Climate Planner, to support local government's climate change efforts. Our standards, tools, and programs credibly, transparently, and robustly reduce greenhouse gas emissions, improve lives and livelihoods, and protect natural resources in the U.S. communities we serve. ICLEI USA and our network partners are working to keep 1.5°C alive through a data-driven approach focusing on just and equitable communities.

### Five Pathways


ICLEI USA drives change through five interconnected pathways: low emissions, resilient, equitable and people-centered, nature-based, and circular. These pathways cut across sectors and jurisdictions, empowering local governments to develop holistic and integrated solutions. While this report is aligned with the Equitable and People-Centered Pathway, it is essential to consider equity within and throughout the broader context of these five pathways.

## Equity: First Steps Guide

ICLEI USA's [Equity: First Steps Guide](#) (*Equity: First Steps*) introduces local governments to equity by helping them identify and track inequities that occur within their community. The guide provides local governments with a starting point for tracking inequities in five distinct categories. These categories are:

- Energy Access
- Public Health
- Infrastructure
- Economic Prosperity
- Education





At a minimum, these are the areas in which communities must analyze inequities. Throughout *Equity: First Steps*, you can find links to a selection of tools and resources to collect data on equity indicators in each of the categories. Data collected through the *Equity: First Steps* process can be used as an entry point for engaging community members, and community engagement can help fill in data analysis gaps. This report builds on *Equity: First Steps* by providing an overview of equity in all phases of climate action planning, beyond identifying and tracking inequities in the community.

## How to Use this Report

ICLEI USA created this report to share trends and best practices for incorporating equity into local climate action planning. While anyone can use this resource, it is aimed at local government staff working on climate and sustainability. You do not need to be an expert on climate science or equity to use this report, though some familiarity with these topics is helpful. A glossary of relevant terms is provided in [Appendix A](#).

This report does not claim to be comprehensive, nor to dictate what local governments should or should not do. Each local government should assess its own community needs and values to determine a process for integrating equity into climate action plans. This report focuses on bringing equity into the *process* of creating a climate plan. Therefore, the analysis looks at published climate plans and is not a comprehensive review of all the equity-related actions each local government is taking. Equity in climate planning should be concurrent with and integrated into other equity-related efforts and plans within a jurisdiction, including resilience, housing, land use, and comprehensive planning.

This paper aims to answer the following questions through a comparative analysis of existing climate plans for local governments and informal interviews with staff in sustainability offices.

- How are local governments integrating equity into their climate plans?
- How are local governments engaging the community in climate planning, particularly historically marginalized and frontline communities? How are they incorporating the community's ideas and feedback into climate action plans?
- What actions are local governments pursuing to tackle climate change and improve equity simultaneously?
- How are local governments using data to assess existing inequities in their communities, and how are they measuring the impacts of their work to reduce inequities?

- What funding sources and partnerships are local governments using to strengthen the planning process or implementation of their climate plans?

Incorporating equity into climate action is not a box to check or a temporary project to complete. It requires ongoing commitment. The suggestions in this document provide a starting point for efforts that should continue into the future. ICLEI USA and its members are committed, together, to a journey toward a more equitable, sustainable future.

## Introduction

### What is Equity?

Equity can be defined differently based on the context in which the concept is considered. In this report, we examine the role of equity specifically in climate planning at the local government level. Within this specific context of climate planning, one definition of equity is:

**“Equity** in climate resilience means that one’s race, class, ability, or other characteristic is not a determinant in how well one is equipped to deal with climate change. Equity is defined as the equal and fair distribution of opportunities, resources, and environments free from climate hazards and risks regardless of individual/group identity or background. Equity and equality are not the same thing. **Equality** is treating everyone the same, while equity is ensuring everyone has what they need to be successful. While equality aims to promote fairness, it can only work if everyone starts from the same place and has the same needs and goals.”<sup>2</sup>


Committing to equity in climate planning includes acknowledging the deficits of the past and proactively addressing past wrongs for historically marginalized people, while facilitating opportunities in the present and future.<sup>3</sup>

Many groups face exclusion, marginalization, and unequal distribution of resources. In the U.S., the fundamental determinants of inequality are wealth and income, which are strongly correlated with race. Every community is unique, and a community’s approach should strive to understand specific environmental justice issues in a local context. It is

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<sup>2</sup> Clara Fang et al., “Centering Equity in Climate Resilience Planning & Action,” U.S. Climate Resilience Toolkit, NOAA, (2022): 12, [https://library.oarcloud.noaa.gov/noaa\\_documents.lib/OAR/CPO/Climate\\_Smart\\_Communities/Vol\\_03\\_C\\_SC\\_CenteringEquity.pdf](https://library.oarcloud.noaa.gov/noaa_documents.lib/OAR/CPO/Climate_Smart_Communities/Vol_03_C_SC_CenteringEquity.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 6.



important to also consider other groups that have been marginalized or excluded from dominant power structures based on characteristics such as race, religion, gender, age, or sexual orientation.

## Why is an equity-centered approach important for local governments?

An equity-centered approach focuses on the challenges faced by frontline communities and creates strategies that address those challenges while reducing greenhouse gas emissions and adapting to the effects of climate change.

Before taking action, it is crucial to recognize and aim to understand the history and continued role of local governments in denying equity. In the U.S., federal, state, and local governments have long been culpable in denying the rights, needs, and experiences of certain groups. “Planning and development have centered the needs of White communities while marginalized communities have been relegated to areas that are more exposed to pollution and environmental hazards. Systemic racism, from housing discrimination to exclusionary participatory processes, has led to inequity in many communities in terms of climate resilience.”<sup>4</sup> For example, zoning decisions around the country resulted in locating industrial sites near communities of color, causing disproportionate health impacts from air and water pollution.<sup>5</sup>

Present inequities have been shaped by economic, social, and cultural patterns of discrimination and disenfranchisement. Inequities in many communities are a direct result of local government planning efforts. From ICLEI USA’s *Equity: First Steps Guide*: “Historically, plans and policies related to community development (land use, infrastructure, jobs/economy, housing etc.) have been – *by design* – harmful to certain communities. These policies and plans were rooted in biases that have transcended generations, evolving into historical inequities.”<sup>6</sup>

Both wealth and income inequality in the U.S. are increasing. Since 1981, incomes for the top 5% of earners in the U.S. have increased faster than the incomes of other families. Similarly, median wealth for upper-income families increased by 85% since 1983, outpacing growth for lower-income (67%) and middle-income families (42%).<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Fang et al., “Centering Equity in Climate Resilience Planning & Action,” 6.

<sup>5</sup> Richard Rothstein, *The Color of Law*, Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2018.

<sup>6</sup> ICLEI USA, “Equity: First Steps Guide,” September 2022, 12.

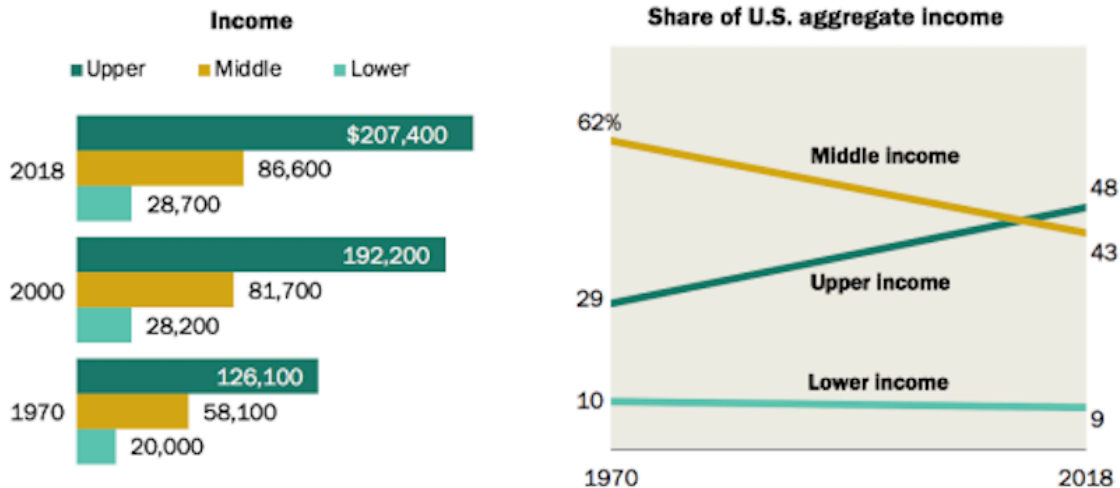
[https://icleiusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Equity\\_-\\_First-Steps-Guide.pdf](https://icleiusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Equity_-_First-Steps-Guide.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> Horowitz et al., “Most Americans Say There Is Too Much Economic Inequality in the U.S., but Fewer Than Half Call it a Top Priority,” Pew Research Center, January 9, 2020.

<https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2020/01/09/trends-in-income-and-wealth-inequality/>

## The gaps in income between upper-income and middle- and lower-income households are rising, and the share held by middle-income households is falling

Median household income, in 2018 dollars, and share of U.S. aggregate household income, by income tier



Note: Households are assigned to income tiers based on their size-adjusted income. Incomes are scaled to reflect a three-person household. Revisions to the Current Population Survey affect the comparison of income data from 2014 onwards. See Methodology for details. Source: Pew Research Center analysis of the Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplements (IPUMS). "Most Americans Say There Is Too Much Economic Inequality in the U.S., but Fewer Than Half Call It a Top Priority"

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As inequality and climate-related threats increase, they will disproportionately impact the most vulnerable in our communities. As the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) explains, "Even though climate change affects everyone, its impacts are not experienced equally across populations. [In the U.S.,] Black, Indigenous, people of color (BIPOC), low-income, elderly, and other historically marginalized communities are more vulnerable to flooding, extreme heat, sea-level rise, and other hazards of a changing climate."<sup>8</sup>

At the global level, the world's poorest people and countries, who have contributed the least to greenhouse gas emissions, are more exposed and vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. For example, "In the poorest economies, a large part of the population depends directly on activities that may be the most affected by climate change, notably, the agricultural, forestry, and fisheries sectors. People with the lowest incomes are the most likely to depend for their survival on resources provided by nature. Rising temperatures are exacerbating pre-existing disparities in access to clean water and affordable food. Most of the time, the poorest populations do not benefit from insurance mechanisms or have access to basic health services, making them particularly

<sup>8</sup> Fang et al., "Centering Equity in Climate Resilience Planning & Action," 6.

vulnerable to any shock hitting their assets and income streams.”<sup>9</sup> This vulnerability is part of why it’s so important to take action to improve equity and resilience in communities.

As climate change compounds the existing inequities in our society, there has been an accelerating movement to address inequity, which has included massive new investments from philanthropic foundations and incentives from the federal government in addition to local government efforts.

## Equity and Climate Planning at the Local Government Level

The idea of explicitly addressing social equity in climate planning for local governments has been rapidly expanding throughout U.S. communities.<sup>10</sup> Climate action planning provides an opportunity for local governments to consider historical and existing inequities and to invest resources into mitigating climate change, adapting to climate impacts, and improving equitable outcomes for people. If climate action plans do not specifically incorporate equity considerations, they can further exacerbate inequities. An example described by Chu and Canon explains how this played out: “For example, to catalyze adaptation, cities began to selectively protect economically valuable land against projected risks, enact exclusionary zoning and land use policies to protect property values, and privilege infrastructure and public services upgrading in wealthy neighborhoods. As a result, scholars began to critique how plans were leading to displacement, poverty entrenchment, and in some cases even higher exposures to climate impacts in historically disadvantaged communities.”<sup>11</sup>

Some local governments (Austin, TX, Portland, OR, Fort Collins, CO, Atlanta, GA, Oakland, CA, and others) have begun to incorporate equity broadly across all local government actions by creating an equity office that examines the internal processes and delivery of public services from every department of the local government. These offices aim to proactively identify and eliminate inequities and advance equity in policy and program development, budgeting, and decision-making.<sup>12</sup> There can be advantages to this holistic, government-wide approach, but our analysis focuses narrowly on equity in climate planning efforts.


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<sup>9</sup> Céline Guivarch et al., “Linking Climate and Inequality,” International Monetary Fund, September, 2021. <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/fandd/issues/2021/09/climate-change-and-inequality-guivarch-mejean-faconet>

<sup>10</sup> Schrock et al, “Pursuing Equity and Justice in a Changing Climate: Assessing Equity in Local Climate and Sustainability Plans in U.S. Cities,” *Journal of Planning Education and Research*, (2015): 282–295. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0739456X15580022>

<sup>11</sup> Chu and Cannon, “Equity, inclusion, and justice as criteria for decision-making.”

<sup>12</sup> T. Favro, “City Equity Offices in America,” City Mayors Society, 2023. <http://www.citymayors.com/society/usa-city-equity-offices.html>



Equity in climate planning for local governments is a developing field. According to the American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy (ACEEE)'s 2021 Clean Energy Scorecard, “a substantial number of cities are in the first stages of addressing equity in their clean energy work. Twenty of the 30 new equity-driven city clean energy actions we documented were related to planning work. This planning may lead to an increase in equity-focused policies and programs in the future.”<sup>13</sup> As local governments continue to explore this area, test solutions and outreach strategies, and implement creative ideas, it is important to share and learn from others to collectively advance the field of knowledge.

The climate crisis requires an unprecedented level of investment and action to rapidly cut greenhouse gas emissions and prepare for a changing world. These efforts must go hand-in-hand with advancing equity, inclusion, and justice to foster lasting benefits for the most vulnerable populations. Climate change and justice are intertwined, and their solutions must be intertwined to be successful.

Greenlink Analytics explains that the climate crisis should be viewed as part of a range of core issues that affect community well-being, stating that “Climate solutions that do not center racial equity can limit a city’s capacity to achieve its climate goals by exacerbating harm in the communities hit first and worst by climate disasters. On the other hand, cities that partner with impacted communities to advance comprehensive racial equity strategies can accelerate climate action by identifying more realistic and effective solutions, avoiding negative impacts to our most vulnerable communities, and increasing collaborative capacity to implement solutions.”<sup>14</sup>

With this background of how inequity manifests in communities and how both societal trends and specific planning decisions have furthered inequity, planners must aim to create goals, engage communities, draft actions, and implement plans that explicitly elevate equity.

## Trends and Themes from Local Governments

To establish trends in climate equity planning, we analyzed a selection of climate planning documents from cities and counties of varying sizes and regions across the U.S. This list was chosen based on recommendations from ICLEI USA staff,

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<sup>13</sup> Samarripas, et al., “The 2021 Clean Energy Scorecard,” American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy, 2021. <https://aceee.org/research-report/u2107>.

<sup>14</sup> González and Toloui, “Process Guide for City-Community Collaboration,” Greenlink Equity Map, 2021, 3. [https://www.equitymap.org/files/ugd/4aef44\\_92ea7a0176f144ed810d85fe73cde1a6.pdf](https://www.equitymap.org/files/ugd/4aef44_92ea7a0176f144ed810d85fe73cde1a6.pdf)

word-of-mouth suggestions, other reports, and web searching. It is not a representative sample nor an exhaustive list of all climate equity plans in the U.S. A local government's inclusion in or exclusion from this list does not represent any ranking or evaluation of the quality of their climate equity planning. Each of these plans tackles challenges associated with incorporating equity into climate planning and offers ideas, lessons learned, and creative strategies.

We compared these plans to assess trends, themes, and best practices organized into five categories:



The 16 plans in our final comparison were finalized from 2017 (Atlanta, GA) to 2023 (Cincinnati, OH and Milwaukee, WI) and come from cities ranging from 8,555 people (Oberlin, OH) to governments with jurisdictional area populations over 2 million (Miami-Dade County, FL). The communities represented are from seven regions of the country and include plans from municipal and county governments and collaborative city-county or dual-city projects.

Table 1: Background Information on Climate Action Plans Analyzed

Plan City and Title	Year Created	Population	Region	Government type	Gini Coefficient	Percent Non-White
Ann Arbor, MI <a href="#">A<sup>2</sup>Zero Carbon Neutrality Plan</a>	2020	Medium	Midwest	City	0.5181	32.5%
Atlanta, GA	2017	Large	Southeast	City	0.5740	60.9%



<a href="#">Clean Energy Atlanta</a>						
Austin, TX <a href="#">Austin Climate Equity Plan</a>	2021	Large	Southwest	City	0.4775	52.2%
Boston, MA <a href="#">Climate Action Plan</a>	2019	Large	Northeast	City	0.5353	56%
Cincinnati, OH <a href="#">Green Cincinnati Plan</a>	2023	Medium	Midwest	City	0.5405	51.4%
Fort Collins, CO <a href="#">Our Climate Future</a>	2021	Medium	Mountain West	City	0.4579	21.9%
Marin County, CA <a href="#">Climate Action Plan</a>	2020	Medium	West Coast	County	0.5095	31.6%
Miami-Dade County, FL <a href="#">Climate Action Strategy</a>	2022	Large	Southeast	County	0.5134	86.2%
Milwaukee, WI <a href="#">Climate and Equity Plan</a>	2023	Large	Midwest	City and County	0.4745	67%
Missoula, MT <a href="#">Climate Ready Missoula</a>	2020	Medium	Mountain West	City and County	0.4911	11.6%
Oakland, CA <a href="#">Equitable Climate Action Plan</a>	2020	Large	West Coast	City	0.5035	71.4%
Oberlin, OH <a href="#">Climate Action Plan</a>	2019	Small	Midwest	City	0.4662	26.8%
Portland and South Portland, ME <a href="#">One Climate Future</a>	2020	Small	Northeast	Dual-City	Portland: 0.4791 South Portland: 0.4233	Portland: 18.3%; South Portland: 13%
Portland, OR <a href="#">Climate Emergency Workplan</a>	2022	Large	West Coast	City	0.4733	31.2%



<a href="#">Providence, RI Climate Justice Plan</a>	2019	Medium	Northeast	City	0.5295	65.9%
<a href="#">Richmond, VA Climate Equity Action Plan</a>	2021	Medium	Southeast	City	0.5236	58.6%

Table 1 Category Definitions:

- **Population:** Jurisdictional population of 0-100,000 (Small); 100,000-400,000 (Medium); 400,000+ (Large)
- **Gini Coefficient:** The Gini coefficient is a summary measure of income inequality. The Gini coefficient incorporates detailed income data into a single statistic, which summarizes the dispersion of income across the entire income distribution. The Gini coefficient ranges from 0, indicating perfect equality (where everyone receives an equal share), to 1, perfect inequality (where only one recipient or group of recipients receives all the income).<sup>15</sup> The Gini coefficient for the U.S. was 0.488 in 2022.
- **Percent Non-white:** This is the share of the population identified by the U.S. Census as non-white, including the share of the population that identifies as Hispanic or Latino. This provides a simplistic indicator of population demographics, with the aim of representing a variety of localities that represent different demographic makeups from across the country. In the U.S. as a whole, 58.9% of the population was estimated to be non-white in 2022.



## Broad Themes

This section provides a broad overview of how 16 local governments chose to embed equity within their climate planning and to what extent equity concerns informed the plan’s actions and strategies. The following is a simplified table referencing the “Broad Themes” assessed regarding equity in each plan. The full questions summarized in this table are:

- What role does equity play in the climate plan?
- Is climate adaptation or resilience discussed? If yes, is it discussed in relation to equity?
- Does the plan explicitly identify inequities that local residents are facing?
- Does the plan propose actions or goals based on specific equity challenges in the community?
- Does the plan include a land acknowledgement?

Table 2: Equity in Climate Plans: Approach Summary

<sup>15</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, “Gini Index.” Accessed August 21, 2023. <https://www.census.gov/topics/income-poverty/income-inequality/about/metrics/gini-index.html>

Plan City and Title	Equity “Incorporated Throughout”/ “Lens”/ “Pillar”	Resilience/ Adaptation Discussed	Identifies Local Inequities	Actions based on equity challenges	Land Acknowledgement
Ann Arbor, MI <a href="#">A<sup>2</sup>Zero Carbon Neutrality Plan</a>	“Introduction”, P.13	“Strategy 6: Enhance the Resilience of Our People and Our Place”, P.99		Example: “Invest in Resilience Hubs”, P.100	
Atlanta, GA <a href="#">Clean Energy Atlanta</a>	P.58		P.13	P.31	
Austin, TX <a href="#">Austin Climate Equity Plan</a>	P.20	Mentioned Throughout	P.22	P.24	P.1 B
Boston, MA <a href="#">Climate Action Plan</a>	Mentioned Throughout	P.19		P.38	
Cincinnati, OH <a href="#">Green Cincinnati Plan</a>	P.37	P.135	P.138	P.38	
Fort Collins, CO <a href="#">Our Climate Future</a>	P.13	P.18			
Marin County, CA <a href="#">Climate Action Plan</a>	P.21	Mentioned Throughout		P.1	“Credits and Acknowledgements”
Miami-Dade County, FL <a href="#">Climate Action Strategy</a>	P.8	P.2		P.41	P.5
Milwaukee, WI <a href="#">Climate and Equity Plan</a>	Mentioned Throughout	“Vulnerabilities and Opportunities”	“Executive Summary”	“10 Big Ideas”	
Missoula, MT <a href="#">Climate Ready Missoula</a>	ES-1	ES-1	P.32	ES-7	P.63
Oakland, CA <a href="#">Equitable Climate Action Plan</a>	P.5-21	Mentioned Throughout	P.5-21	P.31	P.ii
Oberlin, OH		P.62			

Plan City and Title	Equity “Incorporated Throughout”/ “Lens”/ “Pillar”	Resilience/ Adaptation Discussed	Identifies Local Inequities	Actions based on equity challenges	Land Acknowledgement
<a href="#">Climate Action Plan</a>					
Portland and South Portland, ME <a href="#">One Climate Future</a>	P.44	P.223		P.56	
Portland, OR <a href="#">Climate Emergency Workplan</a>	P.5	P.11		P.5-18	
Providence, RI <a href="#">Climate Justice Plan</a>	P.18	P.35	P.13	P.13	
Richmond, VA <a href="#">Climate Equity Action Plan</a>	P.3-1	P.5-1	P.3-1	P.515	P.v

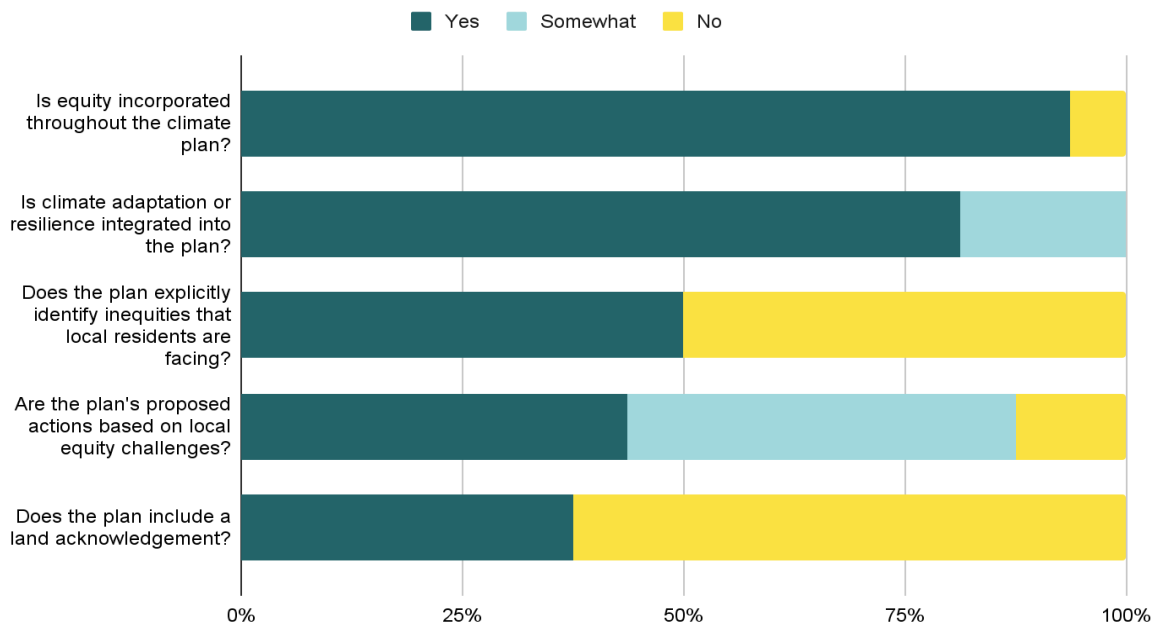
Table 2: Dark blue indicates the presence of an idea in that category, light blue indicates that the idea is somewhat represented in the plan, and yellow indicates that the idea was not covered in the plan. A corresponding page number points to a strong example (not necessarily the only example) of that idea in the corresponding plan. This is not an evaluation of the quality of each plan. The table is intended to simplify and provide a summary of trends and commonalities among local government climate action plans.

Of these 16 plans, five state that equity is incorporated throughout the plan, three of the plans mention equity as a “lens” through which the plan was created, and three of the plans frame equity as a “pillar” on which they were built (alongside resilience and climate mitigation/climate action/sustainability). Six plans include “equity” or “justice” in the plan’s title. These offer a few models for how equity can be made central to a planning process.

Six of the plans include a land acknowledgement that recognizes the history and current presence of Indigenous Peoples in the region. Land acknowledgements are not universally supported by Indigenous groups because they can be seen as an empty gesture, but they can be a starting point for recognizing past harms and working toward justice for Indigenous communities.<sup>16</sup> Effective land acknowledgements start with engagement of local Tribal Nations and Indigenous communities, and should reflect

<sup>16</sup> Michael C. Lambert, Elisa J. Sobo, and Valerie L. Lambert, “Rethinking Land Acknowledgments,” *Anthropology News*, December 20, 2021. <https://www.anthropology-news.org/articles/rethinking-land-acknowledgments/>

Indigenous peoples' input. Of the climate action plans that do not include a land acknowledgement, five make no mention of Indigenous peoples or Tribal Nations. Local governments should make an effort to engage local Indigenous communities, whether that is through a land acknowledgement process or otherwise in community engagement efforts.



### Spotlight: Seattle Equity and Environment Agenda

Not all climate action plans incorporate equity as a core component of their plan. However, this doesn't mean that equity isn't a major focus of the cities' climate planning efforts. The City of Seattle took an alternate approach to equity planning when city staff wrote an Equity & Environment Agenda in 2016 to complement their existing climate action plan. This Agenda "provides goals and strategies which serve as a roadmap for sectors to work together to advance environmental equity in Seattle" (p.8). This approach, which is not unique to Seattle, has pros and cons, which include:

**Pros:**



- Offers a more comprehensive discussion of environmental equity outside the direct purview of climate change
- May help bring together more municipal programs and departments to work toward aligned goals
- Can incorporate equity objectives without requiring a premature update to the entire climate action plan

**Cons:**

- Plan might not get the same attention from the public or government employees
- May be viewed as having less political weight than a large-scale climate action plan

Resilience and adaptation to climate-related risks are mentioned in every plan, and are integrated throughout 13 of the plans. The cities of Atlanta and Boston name separate resilience-focused efforts that are encompassed in other plans, while Providence makes it a strategy of their Climate Justice Plan to create a resilience and adaptation plan in the future. **Resilience planning is strengthened when it includes equity throughout the process, as frontline communities are also the most vulnerable to climate-related risks.** ICLEI USA's [Adaptation in Climate Planning: Recommendations for U.S. Local Governments](#) provides a step-by-step process for resilience planning that includes equity considerations at every step.

One example of an equity and resilience strategy is resilience hubs. These came up in several climate plans as a strategy for providing support to residents during climate-induced extreme weather events. The City of **Ann Arbor** centered equity outcomes by placing its first resilience hubs in underserved neighborhoods. This has the dual benefit of making sure that underserved residents are provided with services during emergencies and also helps the City better provide services to residents with a direct, friendly, and trusted presence year-round. The day-to-day services of a resilience hub can include a food bank, educational space, community gathering space, and associated jobs for local residents.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> City of Ann Arbor Office of Sustainability & Innovations, *Ann Arbor's Living Climate Neutrality Plan*, Ann Arbor, Michigan: 2020.  
<https://www.a2gov.org/departments/sustainability/Documents/A2Zero%20Climate%20Action%20Plan%204.0.pdf>





*Bryant Community Center and Resilience Hub Ribbon Cutting in Ann Arbor, MI. Credit: [Missy Stults/Second Wave Media](#)*

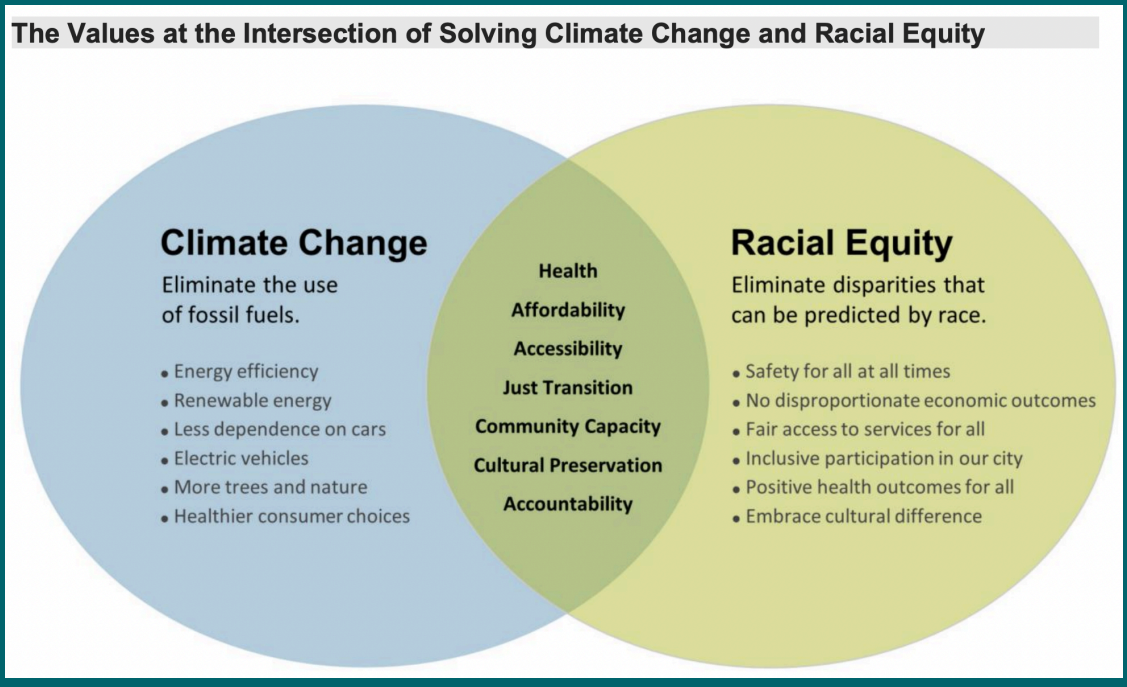
Half of the 16 plans explicitly identify local inequities based on data and/or community outreach. Seven of the plans propose actions or goals based on specific equity challenges in the community, while seven other plans include some equity focus in their goals but do not directly link goals to specific local inequities. Gathering local information about inequities and creating actions that address those inequities is central to creating a plan that makes a difference in terms of equity outcomes (See [Data and Metrics](#) section of this paper for more detail about how data can be employed).

### **Spotlight: Austin Climate Equity Plan**

The City of Austin's plan was created with the underlying idea that equity goals, climate mitigation, and climate adaptation efforts all need to be addressed simultaneously and cohesively for meaningful change to be made. The City began by identifying climate and equity challenges facing the community through a variety of community engagement strategies, including a Climate Ambassador

program. Stakeholders assessed proposed actions with a racial equity tool<sup>18</sup> that was built from priorities identified by the community, such as health, affordability, and accessibility. The resulting Climate Equity Plan centers the community’s equity challenges through the implementation process by building implementation teams made up of city staff and members of frontline groups. The plan states, “Low-income communities and communities of color must be included and centered in implementation to learn from their lived experience and design solutions in a way that works for them.”<sup>19</sup>

An introductory letter from their Steering Committee says: “You might ask, ‘*Why is equity a core driver of a climate plan?*’ With a desire to build on and acknowledge what communities of color in Austin have been saying and working on for years, the Steering Committee’s response is, ‘*How could it not be?*’ Currently, race predicts a person’s quality of life outcomes in our community, which means communities of color in Austin are disproportionately impacted by the effects of climate change.”<sup>20</sup>



Source: City of Austin Climate Equity Plan

<sup>18</sup> Erika Bernabei, “Racial Equity: Getting to Results,” Local and Regional Government Alliance on Racial Equity, July 2017. <https://www.racialequityalliance.org/resources/racial-equity-getting-results/>

<sup>19</sup> City of Austin Climate Program, *Austin Climate Equity Plan*, Austin, Texas: 2020, p.95. [https://www.austintexas.gov/sites/default/files/files/Sustainability/Climate%20Equity%20Plan/Climate%20Plan%20Full%20Document\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.austintexas.gov/sites/default/files/files/Sustainability/Climate%20Equity%20Plan/Climate%20Plan%20Full%20Document_FINAL.pdf)

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, p.2.

## Major Takeaways

- **Consider equity in every planning and programmatic phase.** Plans that strive to create beneficial equity outcomes generally include thorough community outreach; examination of locally-specific equity data; priorities and actions that address local equity challenges raised by the community; metrics that track equity-related impacts; and partnerships or funding efforts that lean on existing local institutions.
  - **There are many ways to incorporate equity.** There are many models for making equity central to a planning process. Equity can be included throughout a plan as a “lens” or “pillar”, or included as a consideration in each subsection.
  - **Land acknowledgements can be a starting point.** Local governments should make an effort to engage local Indigenous communities, whether that is through a land acknowledgement process or otherwise in community engagement efforts.
  - **Resilience and equity are closely linked.** Frontline communities are often the most vulnerable to climate-related risks. For this reason, resilience and equity planning should go hand-in-hand to ensure equitable outcomes for the most at-risk communities.
  - **Local data is key.** Strong equity plans incorporate local information about inequities and include actions that specifically address local challenges.
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## Community Engagement

Reflecting community priorities in a climate plan is central to creating more equitable outcomes. Engaging the community thoughtfully, elevating frontline voices, building trust, and moving toward community ownership of actions are key means of understanding the challenges faced by your community and are important for shaping climate equity plans.

It is challenging to conduct effective community engagement. Traditional engagement practices tend to favor the privileged: those with the time, money, and power to engage meaningfully. At the same time, discriminatory practices have continued to impact historically marginalized communities, eroding trust held by residents in their local governments. Communities are not monolithic, and outreach can reveal many distinct



communities or different factions and opinions within the community. Community members can bring inequitable perspectives built on biases toward other populations or resistance to change. These challenges are helpful to keep in mind when planning specific questions or formats for community engagement, and when processing information from the community.

The following is a simplified table for reference to the community engagement themes assessed regarding equity in each plan. The full questions summarized in this table are:

- Were multiple methods used to engage community members in the creation of the plan? (For a detailed list of community engagement strategies, see [Table 4: Community Engagement Strategies](#).)
- Was community feedback meaningfully incorporated into the planning process?
- What practices were used to specifically ensure the voices of frontline or historically marginalized communities were heard?
- Is there a plan for continuing community engagement beyond the planning process?
- Did the local government or partners use any creative strategies for communicating the plan and outcomes to residents?

Table 3: Community Engagement Summary

Plan City and Title	Community Input Incorporated into Plan via Multiple Engagement Methods	Specific Practices to Engage Disadvantaged Communities	Plan for Continued Engagement through Implementation	Creative Strategies for Communicating the Plan
Ann Arbor, MI <a href="#">A<sup>2</sup>Zero Carbon Neutrality Plan</a>	"A <sup>2</sup> Zero Planning Process", P.15	"Public Engagement", P.16		"A <sup>2</sup> Zero Planning Process: Other", P.17
Atlanta, GA <a href="#">Clean Energy Atlanta</a>	P.23		P.53	
Austin, TX <a href="#">Austin Climate Equity Plan</a>	P.42	P.27	P.27	
Boston, MA <a href="#">Climate Action Plan</a>	P.29	P.30	P.30	P.22
Cincinnati, OH <a href="#">Green Cincinnati Plan</a>	P.43			

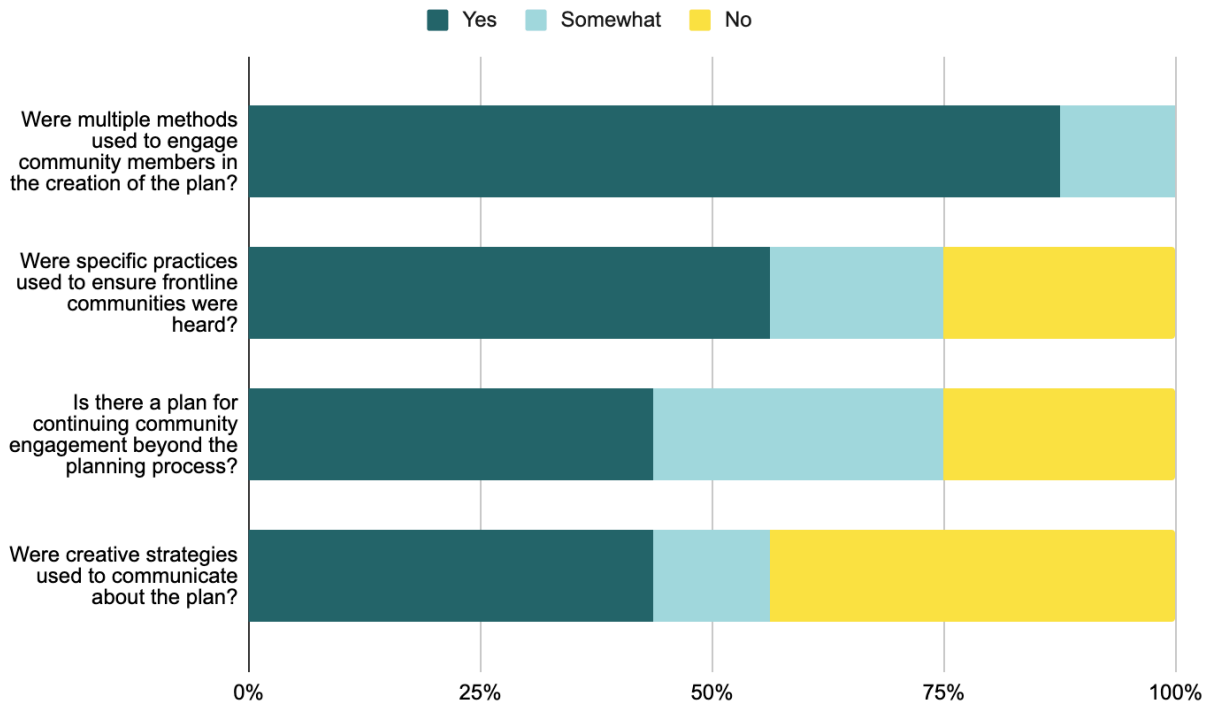
Fort Collins, CO <a href="#">Our Climate Future</a>	P.11	P.15	P.29	
Marin County, CA <a href="#">Climate Action Plan</a>	"Community Inclusivity and Empowerment"			
Miami-Dade County, FL <a href="#">Climate Action Strategy</a>	P.6	P.6	P.63	P.63
Milwaukee, WI <a href="#">Climate and Equity Plan</a>	"Executive Summary"	"Executive Summary"	"Executive Summary"	<a href="#">City Website</a>
Missoula, MT <a href="#">Climate Ready Missoula</a>	P.2			
Oakland, CA <a href="#">Equitable Climate Action Plan</a>	P.129	P.129	P.113	P.129
Oberlin, OH <a href="#">Climate Action Plan</a>			P.49	
Portland and South Portland, ME <a href="#">One Climate Future</a>	P.37	P.39	P.214	
Portland, OR <a href="#">Climate Emergency Workplan</a>				
Providence, RI <a href="#">Climate Justice Plan</a>	P.18	P.18		P.19
Richmond, VA <a href="#">Climate Equity Action Plan</a>	P.6	P.6	P.6	P.6

Table 3: Dark blue indicates the presence of an idea in that category, light blue indicates that the idea is somewhat represented in the plan, and yellow indicates that the idea was not covered in the plan. A corresponding page number points to a strong example (not necessarily the only example) of that idea in the corresponding plan. This is not an evaluation of the quality of each plan. The table is intended to simplify and provide a summary of trends and commonalities among local government climate action plans.

Of the 16 plans analyzed, 14 discussed multiple methods used to engage the community. Employing multiple methods can help reach different groups within the

community. Some of these plans went further to explain the role that community members played in the conceptual development of the plan.


From these plans, seven included steps for continuing to engage the community throughout implementation. Creating a plan for continued engagement with the community into the future can boost awareness of the climate plan and involve residents in meeting the community’s climate and equity goals.



Sharing takeaways from the community engagement process is useful to help others learn. For example, **Richmond, VA**’s Climate Equity Action Plan includes a “Lessons Learned” section reviewing what worked well and what did not work so well for community engagement. The goal was to “promote transparency, honesty, and more equitable processes moving forward.” This short reflection makes their process more honest and open, and could inform future planning efforts in the city as well as other local governments.<sup>21</sup>

Making sure community members are heard relies on asking good, often probing questions. In **Miami-Dade County, FL**’s Climate Action Strategy, the questions asked

<sup>21</sup> City of Richmond RVA Green 2050, *Climate Equity Action Plan 2030*, Richmond, Virginia: 2023, p. ES-1. <https://www.providenceri.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Climate-Justice-Plan-Report-FINAL-English-1.pdf>



through community outreach gave residents thoughtful ways to engage. When participants were asked to imagine their lives in 2030, “The general themes reiterated by the majority of participants included their hopes for a future with more access to green spaces, compact development along transit corridors, bike and pedestrian friendly neighborhoods, more electric vehicles and charging stations, improved public transportation (and better coverage), flex working/telecommuting policies, and more widespread and accessible solar energy for residential and commercial buildings.”<sup>22</sup> Asking open-ended questions can spur vision-oriented thinking, deepen community engagement efforts, and guide participants toward common ground by basing divisive conversations in values.

### **Reaching Frontline or Historically Marginalized Communities**

Nine plans discussed how their community engagement tools were designed to specifically reach frontline or historically marginalized populations within their communities. The following examples show three public engagement strategies aimed at reaching these distinct communities from the plans we reviewed, and [Table 4](#) shows an overview of community engagement options.

➡ **Street Teams:** The City of **Boston** hired a ‘Street Team’ consisting of youth and other local residents who were recruited by community-based organizations. They connected with residents to understand their priorities and values to inform the climate planning process. “By taking climate action engagement into Boston’s neighborhoods, the Street Team [of Boston youth and residents] engaged communities whose voices are often underrepresented in climate action planning.”<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Miami-Dade County, *Miami-Dade Climate Action Strategy*, Miami-Dade County, Florida: 2021, p.6. <https://www.miamidade.gov/green/library/climate-action-strategy-final-draft.pdf>

<sup>23</sup> City of Boston Climate Action, *Boston Climate Action Plan: 2019 Update*, Boston, Massachusetts: 2019, p.30. [https://www.boston.gov/sites/default/files/embed/file/2019-10/city\\_of\\_boston\\_2019\\_climate\\_action\\_plan\\_update\\_4.pdf](https://www.boston.gov/sites/default/files/embed/file/2019-10/city_of_boston_2019_climate_action_plan_update_4.pdf)



Boston Street Team in action. Credit: [Boston Climate Action Plan](#)

➔ **Targeted interviews:** Targeted interviews can ensure specific people are reached. Community members in the City of **Providence** were trained to interview other residents to better understand key priorities and climate concerns of BIPOC community members through the Energy Democracy Community Leaders Program. Through this program, community leaders conducted 40 interviews with community members of color to understand their lived experiences. From these interviews, the project team aimed to formulate policies that would be responsive to community priorities.<sup>24</sup>

➔ **Town Halls:** Town hall meetings can reach specific populations, if done with equity in mind. The City of **Oakland** hired an Equity Facilitator to ensure their outreach, including Town Halls, was conducted in ways that served frontline communities. They hosted town halls at recreation centers in East Oakland and Chinatown, provided a full meal for participants, and offered childcare and language interpretation services in Spanish and Chinese for free upon request.<sup>25</sup>

## Spotlight: MarinCAN (Marin County, CA)

<sup>24</sup> City of Providence, *The City of Providence's Climate Justice Plan*, Providence, Rhode Island: 2019, p.19. <https://www.providenceri.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Climate-Justice-Plan-Report-FINAL-English-h-1.pdf>

<sup>25</sup> City of Oakland. *Oakland 2030 Equitable Climate Action Plan*. Oakland, California: 2020, p. 21. <https://cao-94612.s3.us-west-2.amazonaws.com/documents/Oakland-ECAP-07-24.pdf>

As Marin County’s Board of Supervisors committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and preparing for climate change impacts, the County created a collective impact initiative called Drawdown: Marin. The county served as the backbone organization and hired a staff person as the project coordinator. The initiative was supported by 150 volunteers (individuals, local organizations, County Board and staff, and policymakers) to design a countywide strategy to address climate change and engage and empower the public to participate and act. Drawdown: Marin evolved into MarinCAN, which is now a nonprofit supported by the county. MarinCAN works with Marin County residents, businesses, organizations, agencies, and local governments to design and implement local climate change solutions. The model of creating a nonprofit emphasizes the need for ongoing relationship-building and communications with the community. **It is not just during the planning phase when community engagement is important; it requires a long-term commitment and dedicated resources.**<sup>26</sup>

### **Stakeholder Compensation**

Out of 16 plans reviewed, six of these plans offered payment for stakeholders (using methods such as stipends or gift cards) to participate on advisory boards or committees. In Richmond, VA, the city offered optional compensation, and noted that “Compensation provided a fairer exchange of expertise, led to more trusting relationships, and also enabled and encouraged participation for many members. Notably, the Roundtable members who initially applied and elected not to receive a stipend all eventually had to discontinue their participation (although this was not directly tied to not being compensated for their time).”<sup>27</sup> Even a relatively small amount of compensation can help lower-income community members participate in the planning process and reframe participation between community members and local governments as a collaborative if transactional relationship as opposed to an extractive relationship.

### **Community Engagement Strategies**

Conducting community engagement should be done thoughtfully, with respect towards local preferences, community needs, repairing or acknowledging past harms, and long-term relationship building. Local government representatives should avoid “one-way” communication, or simply presenting plans, policies, or ideas to a community without a forum for meaningful community input on those plans and policies. There are

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<sup>26</sup> County of Marin. *Drawdown: Marin Strategic Plan*. Marin County, California. 2020. <https://www.marincounty.org/-/media/files/departments/cd/planning/sustainability/climate-and-adaptation/marincan/strategic-plan/drawdownmarinstrategicplan120820.pdf?la=en>

<sup>27</sup> City of Richmond RVA Green 2050, *Climate Equity Action Plan 2030*, p.ES-1.



many resources available that lay out best practices and key considerations for community engagement (see: [Resources - Community Engagement](#) section).

Before determining strategies for reaching the community, consider:

- The level of engagement (how will the community’s ideas shape the process)
- Goals (who do you want to reach, how will you know when you have been successful)
- Frequency of engagement (when and how often will you engage the community)
- Relationships (how will you follow up and continue to build trust with those who engage)

Once these considerations have been made, there are many different ways to reach community members that have been tested in the plans analyzed in this paper. The list below contains many of the community engagement strategies that were employed by at least one local government from our review. This list is not exhaustive, nor will these strategies necessarily work for every community. This list provides some ideas of what other communities have tried.

Table 4: Community Engagement Strategies

Community Engagement Strategy	Outcome With Specific Audience	Noted Practices	Good Example
Community board or advisory group	Deep relationship-building with a select group of stakeholders	Pay stakeholders, recruit with help from local community-led organizations	<a href="#">Austin Climate Equity Plan</a> (p. 42)
Ambassadors	Relationship building between residents and representatives from their communities	Pay ambassadors, host ambassador-led meetings and interviews without city staff present	<a href="#">Austin Climate Equity Plan</a> (p. 26)
Neighborhood leaders	Reach a targeted population through hiring and training people to communicate with their networks	Provide trainings and payment to leaders, focus on empowering participants	<a href="#">Oakland Equitable Climate Action Plan</a> (p. 130)
Town Hall meetings	Share information and request input from a group	Host at community gathering places; provide food, childcare, and language interpretation services	<a href="#">Oakland Equitable Climate Action Plan</a> (p. 130)
Community workshops	Gather big-picture ideas from a group (i.e. values, priorities, principles)	Ask open-ended questions; seek feedback individually, in small groups, and as a whole through democratic processes; provide	<a href="#">Climate Ready Missoula</a> (p. 2)

		food, childcare, and language interpretation services	
Community survey	Make it easy for a large number of people to submit feedback	Provide a mix of multiple choice and open-ended questions; offer survey in multiple languages; offer at in-person events for those who don't have Internet access	<a href="#">Miami-Dade Climate Action Strategy</a> (p. 6-8)
Stakeholder interviews	Targeted relationship-building with a smaller time commitment for stakeholders	Focus on building trust and relationships; offer financial compensation	<a href="#">Marin County (through MarinCAN)</a> (p. 2)
Presentations at existing events	Meet community members where they are	Make a brief, interactive presentation; seek out a variety of community events; focus on building relationships over presenting materials	<a href="#">One Climate Future (Portland/South Portland)</a> (p. 38)
Distributing materials	Potentially reach a large audience with a low budget	Provide materials in multiple languages; make them simple, visually-pleasing and easy to skim; consider creative ways to distribute to different audiences	<a href="#">Ann Arbor's A<sup>2</sup>Zero Carbon Neutrality Plan</a> (p. 17)
Youth Engagement	Specifically seek involvement and ideas from younger generations	City staff/ambassadors visit classes, engage with student organizations or existing climate/green energy programs, offer competition or youth-specific input options	<a href="#">Oakland Equitable Climate Action Plan</a> (p.21)

Once a plan is created, the way it is presented to the public can help increase buy-in, promote collaboration, and improve awareness around what a local government is doing. Part of creating community ownership is to create a plan alongside community members and present it as an option for them to accept. Ten of the 16 plans offered specifics for how community engagement will be continued beyond the planning phase through the implementation of this plan. There are many options for creative methods to communicate the plan and its outcomes to residents. Best practices for communications include: 1) identify communication goals, 2) identify audiences, 3) select communications channels, 4) measure success, and 5) use storytelling.<sup>28</sup> Some examples of creative communication strategies and channels include:

<sup>28</sup> Anne Marie Cleary Rauker, "Climate and Sustainability Communications: Elevate Your Community's Story", *ICLEI USA*, February 9, 2022. <https://icleiusa.org/climate-and-sustainability-communications-elevate-your-communitys-story/>



➔ **Incorporating Art:** Communication strategies can involve art or creative content. The City of **Providence, RI** created “future stories” told from the perspective of future residents. According to the plan, “this helped community members visualize how their communities could change depending on the policies and actions being presented.”<sup>29</sup>

➔ **Positive Messaging:** A positive message can inspire and drive action. The City of **San Francisco** invested \$500,000 to research, develop, and implement a marketing campaign to communicate its climate plan to residents. In response to findings from market research, the city came up with a tagline meant to offer hope: “Thanks to you, The Plan is working.” Paired with individual actions, like eating less meat or riding the bus, this message was shared through print ads, billboards, bus shelters, social media, and community newspapers in multiple languages. This campaign increased awareness of the climate action plan while identifying easy, everyday actions for people to take to make climate change more tangible and actionable.<sup>30</sup>



*San Francisco Climate Action Plan Messaging. Credit: [Most Likely To](#)*

➔ **Broad Outreach:** Other strategies focused on reaching large swaths of the population. For example, the City of **Ann Arbor** sent information about their plan out to

<sup>29</sup>City of Providence, *The City of Providence's Climate Justice Plan*, p. 19.

<sup>30</sup> Michael Shank, “How San Francisco translated its 300-page climate plan into tangible actions for residents,” *Fast Company*, June 12, 2023.

<https://www.fastcompany.com/90906510/how-san-francisco-translated-its-300-page-climate-plan-into-tangible-actions-for-residents>

families via 11,000 backpack fliers to all K-5th grade students in Ann Arbor Public Schools, as well as to home-bound Meals on Wheels recipients.<sup>31</sup> Another way to reach more people is through providing interpretation or translation to multiple languages spoken in your community. In **Miami-Dade County**, “Spanish and Haitian Creole language interpretation were available for each of the public meetings and the meetings were recorded and shared online.”<sup>32</sup>

➔ **Peer-to-Peer Communication:** Many communities have found peer-to-peer communication to be effective. The City of **Boston’s** Greenovate Boston Community Leaders program aims to expand the community of people in Boston who are aware of, talking about, and taking action on climate change. The program has trained nearly 300 Bostonians as leaders, who have reached more than 2,000 community members through their engagement actions. The program is incorporated into city planning, as it “added a new track for highly engaged residents to participate as co-facilitators of the program and serve as community ambassadors to the City’s climate and energy planning.”<sup>33</sup>

The City of **Milwaukee** demonstrates another peer learning model through its Resilience Ambassadors program. The City’s Environmental Collaboration Office built a team of neighborhood sustainability ambassadors comprised of local organizers, community leaders, and residents. This team facilitates “environmentally-friendly events, beautification projects, and other actions to make their neighborhoods more climate resilient, prosperous, and attractive.” These ambassadors will help connect residents to city resources for increasing neighborhood climate resilience.<sup>34</sup>

### **Shifting Mindsets Internally**

Many of the plans analyzed include a mention of internal trainings or workshops for staff or volunteers related to understanding diversity, equity, and inclusion concepts, implicit bias, and local context and history. Some local governments reported positive impacts from these trainings on relationship-building efforts in the community and cultivating a shared understanding of language and mindset for grappling with equity issues.

Efforts that highlight and challenge the biases held by staff, elected officials, and volunteers, along with local context for how inequities have resulted from local government policies and programs, can lead to more effective community engagement.


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<sup>31</sup> City of Ann Arbor Office of Sustainability & Innovations, *Ann Arbor’s Living Climate Neutrality Plan*, p.18.

<sup>32</sup> Miami-Dade County, *Miami-Dade Climate Action Strategy*, p. 6.

<sup>33</sup> City of Boston Climate Action, *Boston Climate Action Plan: 2019 Update*, p.22.

<sup>34</sup> City of Milwaukee Environmental Collaboration Office, *Milwaukee Climate and Equity Plan*, “Resilience Ambassadors.”



People who understand how local government structures and policies can perpetuate subjugation of marginalized populations may be more prepared to develop relationships with community members.

By highlighting how different policies, programs, word choice, and language may continue exclusion of certain groups, a local government can more intentionally begin the process of creating more equitable outcomes.

Internal equity training can set the stage for an equity-based climate plan. For example, in the **City of Austin**, members of the city's advisory groups (including municipal staff and volunteers) were required to attend equity trainings with a professional in the field, discussing themes around the colonizer mindset, privilege, historic disparities, Austin's historical socio-political context, and trust-building across communities.<sup>35</sup> These trainings helped participants think outside of paradigms of the past, work through the specific policy history of the city, build trust and relationships with each other, and start their planning process with equity at the forefront.

See [Community Engagement Resources](#) for additional resources on understanding implicit bias and building community ownership.

## Major Takeaways

Community is at the heart of strong plans that advance equity outcomes while mitigating climate change. Community engagement can help ensure that the people who are most impacted by climate change are part of the planning process and policy actions identified.

The climate plans with the most thorough community engagement also had the most equity-oriented goals and outcomes. We infer that involving community members in the planning process helps ensure that more perspectives are taken into account and that the goals identified in the plan rectify past injustices and do not cause further harm to those who have been harmed by government policies in the past.

- **Try multiple methods for engagement.** A key means to involve community members is to broaden the array of methods used for engagement. Some plans we analyzed discuss five or more community engagement methods, while others offer creative methods specific to their local context.
- **Build ongoing relationships.** Community engagement is an ongoing process. Once people give their time and energy toward creating a plan, there is the

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<sup>35</sup> Katie Coyne, Conversation with Audrey Wheeler and George Jutras, August 15, 2023.

potential to build a relationship with them, including following up later on with progress updates. Seek to create a climate plan that directly responds to community members' challenges, inequities, or ideas.

- **Design community engagement strategies with equity and inclusion in mind.** Strive to meet community members where they are, support their involvement through compensation or other means, and employ strategies to make engagement welcoming and accessible for all.



## Core Actions










At the core of climate plans are the actions (alternatively called strategies, pathways, initiatives, programs, solutions, big moves, or big ideas) that a local government plans to implement to reach its goals. There is a wide array of ideas for how equity can be centered in the actions selected by a local government. In this section, we review general categories of climate actions that incorporate equity, provide examples of how equity can show up in each of those categories, and discuss evaluation tools that local governments use to determine whether potential strategies will advance equity.

Some plans specify as many as 13 major action categories with sub-actions under each category (**Fort Collins, CO**), while others have fewer categories. The climate action plan for **Portland and South Portland, Maine**, has four major action categories with sub-actions under each category, as well as a layer of sub-sub-actions for additional specificity.

The full questions summarized in this table are:

- How many major actions outlined in the plan connect directly to equity-focused outcomes (displayed as a fraction with sections of the plan that include equity over a total number of sections)?
- Does the plan have a system for ensuring equity is incorporated into actions (using a filter or tool)?

Table 5: Areas of Focus that Advance Equity

Plan City and Title	Sections in the plan that include equity (dark blue) out of the total number of sections (light blue)	Tool or filter to ensure equity is a focus
Ann Arbor, MI <a href="#">A<sup>2</sup>Zero Carbon Neutrality Plan</a>		"Equity Impacts" under each strategy, starting on P.22
Atlanta, GA <a href="#">Clean Energy Atlanta</a>		P.58
Austin, TX <a href="#">Austin Climate Equity Plan</a>		P.24
Boston, MA <a href="#">Climate Action Plan</a>		
Cincinnati, OH <a href="#">Green Cincinnati Plan</a>		P.55
Fort Collins, CO <a href="#">Our Climate Future</a>		P.27
Marin County, CA <a href="#">Climate Action Plan</a>		
Miami-Dade County, FL <a href="#">Climate Action Strategy</a>		
Milwaukee, WI <a href="#">Climate and Equity Plan</a>		"10 Big Ideas" - "Equity"
Missoula, MT <a href="#">Climate Ready Missoula</a>		
Oakland, CA <a href="#">Equitable Climate Action Plan</a>		P.5-21
Oberlin, OH <a href="#">Climate Action Plan</a>		

Portland and South Portland, ME <a href="#">One Climate Future</a>	4	P.55
Portland, OR <a href="#">Climate Emergency Workplan</a>	2	
Providence, RI <a href="#">Climate Justice Plan</a>	7	P.29
Richmond, VA <a href="#">Climate Equity Action Plan</a>	5	P.7-3

Table 4: Dark blue indicates the presence of an idea in that category and yellow indicates that the idea was not covered in the plan. A corresponding page number points to a strong example (not necessarily the only example) of that idea in the corresponding plan. This is not an evaluation of the quality of each plan. The table is intended to simplify and allow for a summary of trends and commonalities among local government climate action plans.

### Categories and Examples of Actions

The analyzed climate action plans organize their action areas in a variety of ways, with some combining or separating action areas in different categorical structures (e.g., energy, transportation, and buildings). The following are ten action areas that were common among plans, along with examples of specific actions that either respond to equity challenges or were created to positively impact equity outcomes within each category. Each plan may have many good examples of equity-based actions; however, for this analysis, we chose one to two examples to show what an equity-based approach may look like under each category.

#### **Energy:**

- Equitable Community Solar Program: Develop a program through which payments for solar provided to the grid are credited to low-income bills. ([Atlanta, GA](#), p.56)

#### **Buildings, Housing, and Energy Efficiency:**

- Reduce and Prevent Displacement of Residents and Businesses: Expand support of Community Land Trusts, Community Development Corporations, and limited equity cooperatives to prevent displacement of residents and businesses, prioritizing tenants at highest risk for displacement. ([Oakland, CA](#), p.35)
- Adopt climate and health standards for existing buildings: BPS has collaborated with the Build/Shift community members since 2019 to develop a racially just and equitable building decarbonization policy. Climate and health standards are the result of this long-term engagement. ([Portland, OR](#), p.6)

### **Local Government Operations:**

- Conduct a municipal building electrification study to determine a plan for transitioning all City buildings off natural gas and oil and towards zero energy. This study should include community collaboration and prioritize buildings most used by and/or located in frontline communities, such as recreation centers, schools, and community libraries. ([Providence, RI](#), p.26)

### **Materials and Waste:**

- Create “Eco-hubs” that provide equitably distributed in-person neighborhood centers for borrowing, reuse, and repair services. Distribute Eco-hubs around the city in appropriate locations with community input, prioritizing guidance from low-income communities and communities of color. Co-locate Eco-hubs with existing community centers, such as libraries, recreation centers, and culturally relevant retailers. Collect and publish demographic data on Eco-hub users to ensure equitable accessibility and use. ([Austin, TX](#), p.76)

### **Transportation:**

- Transit: Assess low-income fares; Hire organizers from within the community to build support for new transit projects in underserved neighborhoods; Use social vulnerability metrics to guide the formation of the City’s new Bus Priority Network; Use partnerships to build community support for bus priority projects; Increase affordable housing supply along regional transit lines. ([Boston, MA](#), p.57)
- Electric Vehicles: Facilitate the transition to affordable, convenient, and reliable electric vehicles for transit vehicles (buses, shared vehicles, and vehicles for hire). The transition to electric transit vehicles and privately owned electric vehicles in Richmond will require an ‘all in’ approach with all sectors supporting and promoting opportunities, including incentives and rebates, corporate programs, public transit modifications, curb management initiatives, parking requirements, and vehicle sales. ([Richmond, VA](#), p.TM-14)

### **Natural Systems:**

- Assess the current percentage of urban tree canopy coverage and work with Million Trees Miami stakeholders to develop new policies, procedures, and timelines to achieve canopy coverage goals. Prioritize County planting of trees in neighborhoods with the highest heat or highest utility burden. ([Miami-Dade County, FL](#), p.44)

### **Water:**

- Reduce extreme heat, overland flooding, landslides, and water pollution vulnerabilities by incentivizing, improving, and increasing green infrastructure and



other mitigating methods, prioritizing communities with extreme heat and flood vulnerabilities. ([Cincinnati, OH](#), p.138)

**Food/Community Health:**

- Promote local affordable, and healthy food through education; reduce barriers to home gardening and small farms; further partnerships between government, nonprofits, and businesses to promote local food accessibility and affordability. ([Fort Collins, CO](#), p.47)

**Community Resilience/Emergency Preparedness:**

- Ensure fair and robust inclusion of lower-income households and diverse communities in the planning and response to climate change impacts, including sea level rise, wildfire, public health, and emergency preparedness. ([Marin County, CA](#), p. 42)

**Workforce Development:**

- Recruit, train, and employ Milwaukee workers with family-supporting wages in growing green jobs sectors, with a goal of 40% people of color. ([Milwaukee, WI](#), “Green Jobs”)

As the field of equity in climate planning continues to evolve, there will undoubtedly be new developments and ideas for integrating equity into the actions of a plan. Many great ideas are already being explored by local governments around the country, and using these ideas for inspiration may help governments think more expansively about how actions can be centered on equity.

**Ensuring Equity is Embedded in Actions**

Out of sixteen plans reviewed, ten plans used a tool, filter, or rating system to evaluate every action in the plan for its equity impacts. In many cases, these filters were built on community feedback. In some of these plans, each section included a paragraph or call-out box about equity implications. In others, each action was evaluated through a discussion based on a series of questions or considerations about equity. These methods helped elevate equity to a key focus of the plan’s actions, beyond simply stating a commitment to equity.

A 2021 analysis of 170 climate action plans in California found several important limitations in how actions address social equity, finding “little congruence between the kinds of policies and actions recommended in the plans and the local needs for such recommendations (a plans/needs mismatch),” as well as “a discord between aspirations outlined in the plans and outcomes of planning CAPs (a goals/impacts mismatch).”



These findings highlight the importance of assessing potential actions to ensure they address local needs, and to design outcomes that match the equity commitments stated in the plan.<sup>36</sup>

The following examples demonstrate different ways of ensuring that equity is embedded into a plan's actions.

➔ **Equity Screening Tool:** As part of **Richmond, VA's** Climate Equity Action Plan 2030 process, the Racial Equity & Environmental Justice Roundtable and Working Groups helped create an [Equity Screening Tool](#). It was designed to determine the extent to which proposed actions prioritize equity. It was used to conduct a basic equity assessment of every action in the Climate Equity Action Plan 2030, as well as prior to making related decisions on policy, planning, programming, and budgeting.<sup>37</sup> The Equity Screening Tool is organized by the seven community priorities gathered during the listening phase of the planning process. It provides suggested questions for stakeholders to review to recognize inequities, the conditions under which inequities thrive, and the possible solutions and environments that would mitigate negative effects and enhance positive results. The Equity Screening Tool requires ongoing evaluation and refinement to ensure effectiveness.<sup>38</sup>

➔ **Citywide Guide for Racial Equity Implementation:** The City of **Oakland** mandates that the City integrate the principle of “fair and just” in all that it does. The City’s Department of Race and Equity created the Racial Equity Implementation Guide in 2018 to assist City staff in “ensuring that the policies and programs they develop and implement will lead to more equitable outcomes, by centering the needs of historically underserved or disproportionately burdened communities.”<sup>39</sup> The Guide includes questions and requirements related to:

1. Racial equity outcomes
2. Identify and plan to engage stakeholders
3. Gather supplemental information/qualitative data
4. Identify equity gaps (burdens and barriers)
5. Address equity gaps
6. Implementation
7. Evaluation and accountability<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Angelo et al, “Missing the Housing for the Trees: Equity in Urban Climate Planning,” Journal of Planning Education and Research, 2022. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0739456X211072527>

<sup>37</sup> City of Richmond RVA Green 2050, *Climate Equity Action Plan 2030*, p.7-1.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., Appendix H.

<sup>39</sup> City of Oakland, *Oakland 2030 Equitable Climate Action Plan*, Oakland, California: 2020, p.146. <https://cao-94612.s3.us-west-2.amazonaws.com/documents/Oakland-ECAP-07-24.pdf>

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p.148.

## BIG MOVE 3 CLIMATE RESILIENT COMMUNITY

NM#	NEXT MOVES	CONNECTIONS	INVESTMENT	EQUITY	MITIGATION	RESILIENCE
CRC5*	Educate and communicate the current emergency sheltering process and explore expanded options for disproportionately affected groups	HAH	\$	●	●	●
CRC6	Integrate climate resilience considerations into city strategic and operational plans	SLCP	\$	●	●	●
CRC7	Partner with trusted community sites to provide resources and information during community emergencies (Resilience Hubs)	SLCP	\$	●	●	●

Shaded items are included in the Tactical Plan 2021/2022 and are currently being implemented. \* = Inspired by the community

● = HIGH ● = MED ● = LOW

A demonstration of visualizing equity impacts of actions in the Fort Collins plan, where concentric circles demonstrate levels of impact for each action in terms of equity, climate mitigation, and resilience. [Fort Collins, CO](#) p.37.



Another way of visualizing equity impacts from the One Climate Plan for Portland and South Portland, ME. Each strategy is marked with indicators based on how it advances an equitable, regenerative, and resilient future. [Portland & South Portland ME](#) p.55 and p.81.

## Priority Actions

	GCP PILLARS			ADDITIONAL PRIORITIES			
	Sustainability	Equity	Resilience	Jobs	Investment	Health	Feasibility
Grow and expand programs such as WarmUp Cincy to support low-income renters, homeowners, and landlords of affordable housing with the installation of weatherization, energy efficiency, and healthy home upgrades	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Implement and fund programs to install solar on low-income housing	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Create programs and standards that will increase the energy efficiency of residential and multi-family buildings in order to decrease energy poverty	●	●	●	●	●	●	●

● strong alignment ● moderate alignment ● weak alignment

Cincinnati's plan shows another option for representing equity impact, by rating each action on seven indicators, representing strong, moderate, or weak alignment with a colored dot. [Cincinnati, OH](#) p.65.

## Major Takeaways

- **Incorporate community feedback and local data into actions.** It is crucial to take community engagement feedback and use local data to identify the biggest equity needs in your community, and to consider meeting those needs a central goal of the plan's actions.
- **Strategic methods can ensure equity is part of every action.** To truly embed equity into a climate action plan, it must be incorporated into the actions that the plan recommends. This can be done through several methods:
  - Putting all proposed actions through an **equity filter or tool** can ensure that all actions include equity outcomes and do not cause further harm. These tools should be built from community engagement.
  - Some plans include a **visual indicator** to demonstrate how equity is part of the action. These indicators can be used to compare equity impacts by predetermined criteria to show the scale or the field of impact.
  - Another way to integrate equity is to include a **designated section** within each action area of the plan that discusses current inequities and potential equity impacts of action.



## Data and Metrics

**Data** can help understand the landscape of inequity in a community. It can provide a starting point for understanding trends and dynamics for different neighborhoods or populations in an area.

It's important to keep in mind that data can be faulty and does not tell the whole story. Incorporating both qualitative and quantitative data can expand the scope of what is covered. **Data analysis is most effective when accompanied by community outreach to understand lived experiences and to address subjects or areas that may be overlooked in large data sets.**

For example, if you're using data from the U.S. Census, the finest level of detail it can provide is census tract. Several distinct populations may live in the same census tract, but the data will only tell you about the dominant group, or it will average outcomes (such as income level) so that one may miss the finer differences between neighborhoods or areas. In addition, the method of gathering data itself may be faulty. Language barriers or immigration status can make it difficult or intimidating for people to want to fill out the U.S. Census, resulting in undercounting of certain populations.<sup>41</sup>

The following is a simplified table for quick reference to the themes discussing data and metrics assessed regarding equity in each plan. The full questions that are summarized in this table are:

- Does the plan discuss state or national equity data relevant to the planning area? If yes, from what source?
- Does the plan offer metrics for evaluating future equity efforts discussed in the plan?

Table 6: Incorporating Data and Specifying Metrics

Plan City and Title	State or national equity data relevant to the planning area?	Metrics for evaluating future equity efforts
Ann Arbor, MI <a href="#">A<sup>2</sup>Zero Carbon Neutrality Plan</a>		

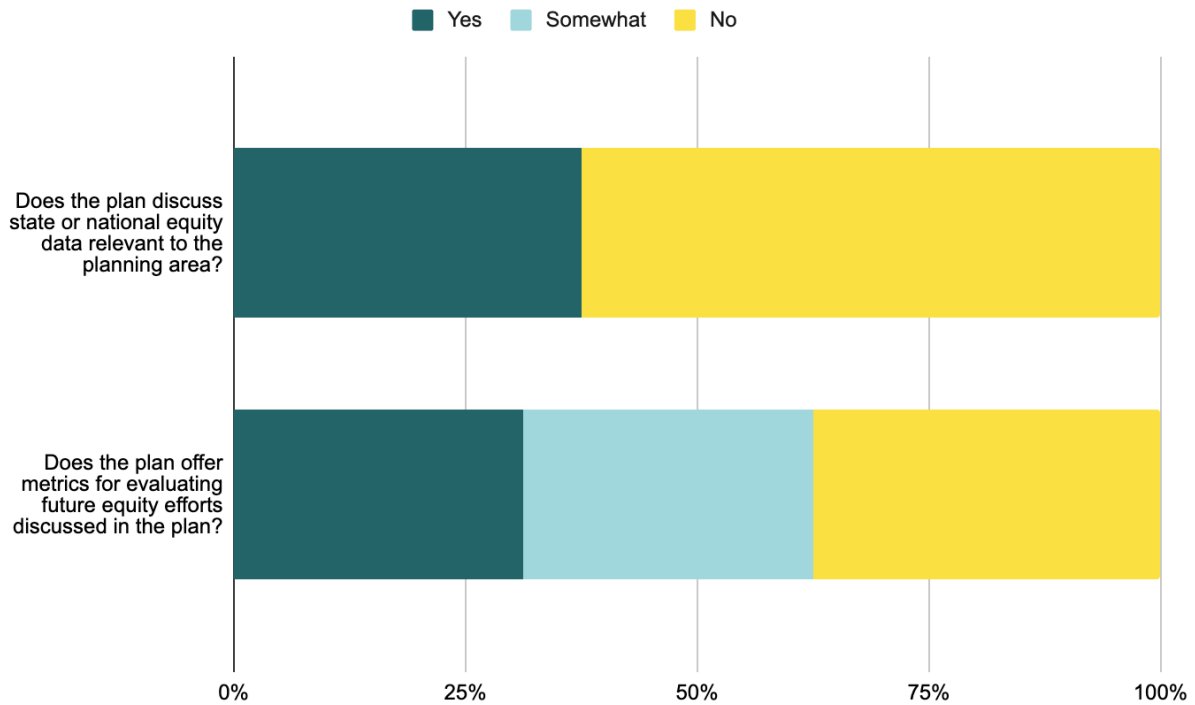
<sup>41</sup> National Network for Immigrant & Refugee Rights, "Immigrant Undercount," NNIRR. <https://nnirr.org/immigrant-undercount/>

Atlanta, GA <a href="#">Clean Energy Atlanta</a>	Greenlink Analytics	
Austin, TX <a href="#">Austin Climate Equity Plan</a>	U.S. Census Bureau	P.96
Boston, MA <a href="#">Climate Action Plan</a>		Municipal Website
Cincinnati, OH <a href="#">Green Cincinnati Plan</a>		
Fort Collins, CO <a href="#">Our Climate Future</a>		P.30
Marin County, CA <a href="#">Climate Action Plan</a>		
Miami-Dade County, FL <a href="#">Climate Action Strategy</a>		
Milwaukee, WI <a href="#">Climate and Equity Plan</a>	University of Wisconsin-Madison	“10 Big Ideas”
Missoula, MT <a href="#">Climate Ready Missoula</a>		P.51
Oakland, CA <a href="#">Equitable Climate Action Plan</a>	CalEnviroScreen	P.33
Oberlin, OH <a href="#">Climate Action Plan</a>		P.9
Portland and South Portland, ME <a href="#">One Climate Future</a>		
Portland, OR <a href="#">Climate Emergency Workplan</a>		Supplemental Report
Providence, RI <a href="#">Climate Justice Plan</a>	EPA EJScreen	P.25
Richmond, VA <a href="#">Climate Equity Action Plan</a>	CDC Social Vulnerability Index	P.8-1

Table 5: Dark blue indicates the presence of an idea in that category, light blue indicates that the idea is somewhat represented in the plan, and yellow indicates that the idea was not covered in the plan. A corresponding page number points to a strong example (not necessarily the only example) of that idea in the corresponding plan. This is not an evaluation of the quality of each plan. The table is intended to simplify and allow for a summary of trends and commonalities among local government climate action plans.

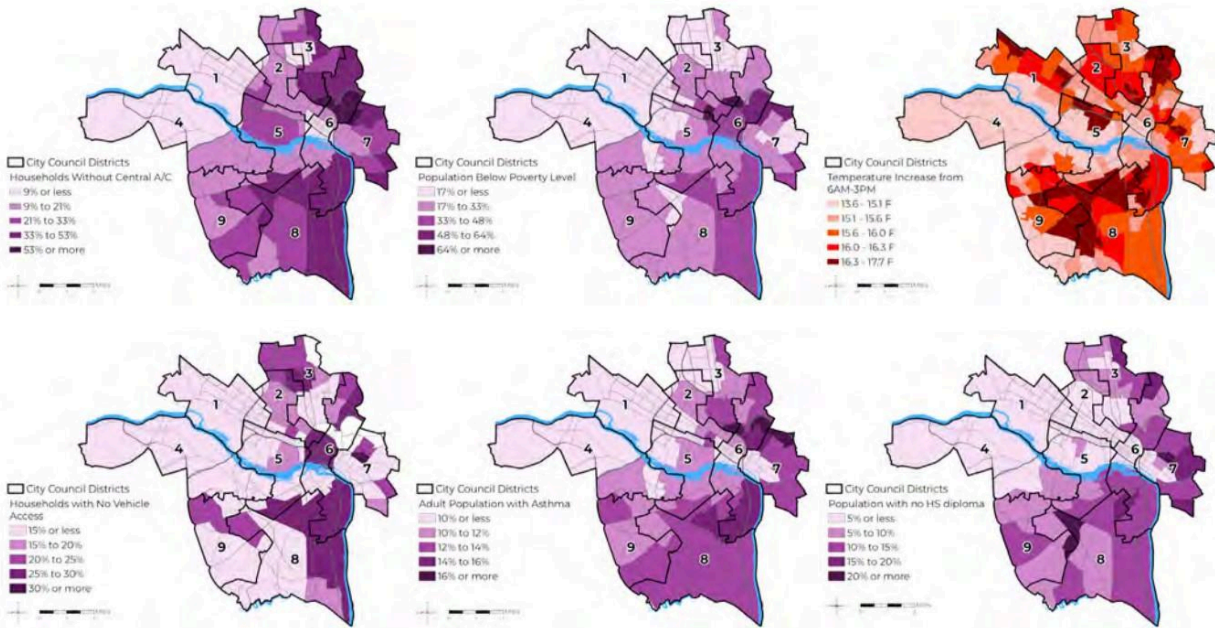
Six of the 16 plans incorporated an analysis of state or national data relevant to the planning area to help identify or prioritize frontline communities. As this is a rapidly-developing field, some states and other groups are developing additional

sources like these that can aid local planning efforts. Reach out to state or regional organizations to see if something like this exists that is specific to your area (See: [Resources for Addressing Equity Challenges](#) section of this report for a list of recommended tools).



One example of local data analysis is the City of **Richmond, VA's** Office of Sustainability, which created its own Climate Equity Index. This consists of an online mapping tool that shows demographic, health, and other factors affecting Richmond neighborhoods' potential vulnerability to crises such as climate change. Viewers can explore these factors within the historical and current context of institutional racism that has created many inequities and caused communities of color to be more susceptible to harm. This tool was used in the city's planning process to identify neighborhoods most susceptible to harm from climate change, and is available for public use.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>42</sup> City of Richmond RVA Green 2050, *Climate Equity Action Plan 2030*, p.3-5.



Households without central air conditioning, population below poverty level, urban heat islands, households without access to a vehicle, adults with asthma, population over 25 without a high school diploma, from The City of Richmond’s RVAgreen 2050 Climate Equity Index (RVAgreen Climate Equity Plan, 3-3)

### Spotlight: Climate Equity Indicators Report

The City of Cincinnati Office of Environment & Sustainability created the Climate Equity Indicators Report, which shows data on climate risks along with geographic, social, and economic factors by neighborhood. The city partnered with the University of Cincinnati, Green Umbrella, Groundwork Ohio River Valley, and Adaptation International to develop this analysis. This report is the foundation for many Green Cincinnati Plan recommendations. While there are several existing databases and tools available for understanding a community’s climate risks, Cincinnati found that taking a discrete approach based on the specific geography, demographics, socio-economic factors, health data, and climate risks of the City was most useful for climate planning efforts.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>43</sup> City of Cincinnati Office of Environment & Sustainability, “Climate Equity Indicators,” Cincinnati, Ohio: 2021.  
[https://www.cincinnati-oh.gov/sites/oes/assets/File/Climate%20Equity%20Indicators%20Report\\_2021.pdf](https://www.cincinnati-oh.gov/sites/oes/assets/File/Climate%20Equity%20Indicators%20Report_2021.pdf)



**Metrics** are a crucial part of climate plans, used to measure and demonstrate impact toward desired outcomes. Stating equity values is an empty exercise if the measures of success do not reflect specific equity-related outcomes. The term “metric” is used here as a catch-all term to describe the method used to measure something, the resulting values obtained from measuring, as well as a calculated or combined set of measures.<sup>44</sup>

In contrast, **indicators** are qualities, traits, or states of a system that suggest or hint at something one is interested in. Indicators may demonstrate specific but non-quantifiable factors and can be valuable in demonstrating trends but should not be a replacement for metrics in areas that can be measured.<sup>45</sup>

Of the plans analyzed, four included some reflection or analysis of past efforts related to climate and equity. These reflections provide an opportunity to learn from and build on previous or existing climate plans and other initiatives. Six plans included explicit metrics to measure equity outcomes from their strategies, while four plans report or plan to report on equity-related metrics in other ways.

➔ An example of a plan that includes explicit equity metrics is from the City of **Oakland**. This can look like the following: “By 2022, identify and prioritize specific resilience needs and gaps in frontline communities, and assess feasibility of establishing Resilience Hubs at both municipal and community facilities in areas with prioritized gaps. By 2025, partner with established community resilience groups to co-develop and pilot three Resilience Hubs: community serving facilities that support residents year-round and support resource distribution and onsite services before, during, or after a natural hazard event. Identify ways that the City can support decentralized community facilities to serve residents who are unable to travel to centralized resilience hubs during disasters and emergencies.”<sup>46</sup>

➔ In addition to measuring actions or strategies, it is also helpful to set measurable targets. **Providence’s** plan states: “By 2040, reduce low-income energy burden to <5%. (Low-income energy burden is the percent of income that low-income households are spending on energy).”<sup>47</sup>

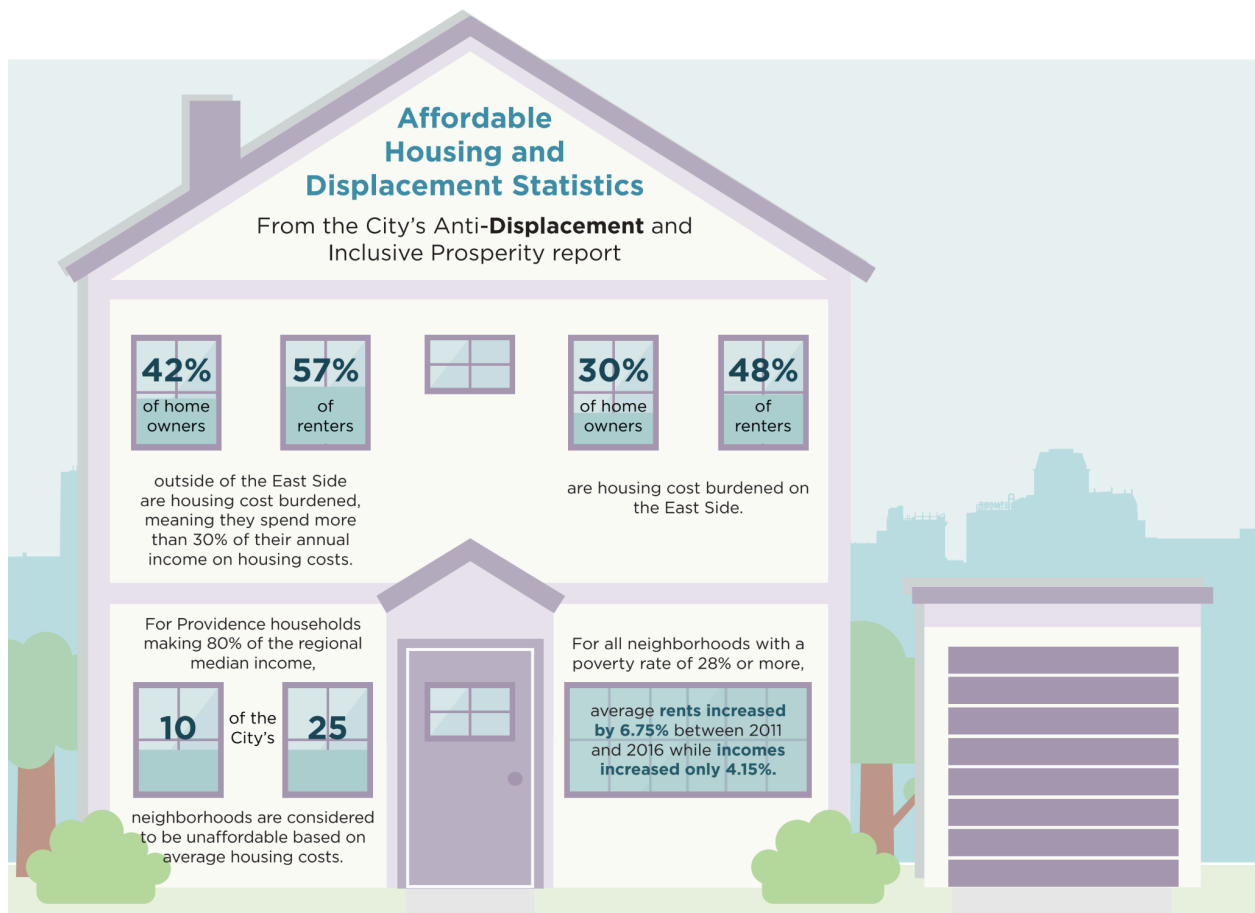
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<sup>44</sup> Livia Labate, “Metrics, Measures and Indicators,” The Carebot: Meaningful Analytics for Journalism, April 29, 2016. <https://thecarebot.github.io/metrics-measures-and-indicators/>

<sup>45</sup> “Terminology,” Resilience Metrics, N.d. <https://resiliencemetrics.org/terminology#term-indicators>

<sup>46</sup> City of Oakland, *Oakland 2030 Equitable Climate Action Plan*, p.80.

<sup>47</sup> City of Providence, *The City of Providence’s Climate Justice Plan*, p.39.



Affordable housing and displacement statistics from Providence, RI. Credit: [Climate Justice Plan](#)

It's important to not only discuss what actions were completed and how successful their implementation was, but whether actions *made a difference* in your community. **A thorough plan goes beyond measuring the activities of the local government and aims to measure the actual outcomes and impacts.** The following graphic, adapted from *Trying Hard is Not Good Enough*,<sup>48</sup> shows examples of how to measure activities, impacts, and outcomes, making a more holistic measurement.

How much did we do?	How well did we do it?
<p><b># Clients/People served</b></p> <p><b># Activities (by type of activity)</b></p>	<p><b>% Common measures</b> (e.g. client staff ratio, workload ratio, turnover rate, staff morale, % staff fully trained, % clients seen in their own language, unit cost)</p> <p><b>% Activity-specific measures</b></p>

<sup>48</sup> Mark Friedman, *Trying Hard is Not Good Enough*, 2005.

	(e.g. % timely, % clients completing activity, % correct and complete)
<p><b>Is anyone better off?</b></p> <p><b># or % Skills/knowledge</b> (e.g. emergency plan)</p> <p><b># or % Attitude/opinion</b> (e.g. toward climate urgency)</p> <p><b># or % Behavior</b> (e.g. driving vs. walking)</p> <p><b># or % Circumstance</b> (e.g. working, in stable housing)</p>	

It is important to consider both visible and invisible impacts. Visible impact is the measure of *outputs*, while invisible impact measures *outcomes*. Invisible impacts are often less tangible and straightforward, and they are measured in the long term. However, there are visible metrics you can use to measure these outcomes.

## Major Takeaways

- **Establish a baseline.** Collecting data at the beginning of your planning process allows you to set up a baseline for measuring progress over time. If the goal of a climate plan is to improve equity in the community, this can be measured by choosing metrics or indicators that represent equity and tracking them over time.
- **Data should be accompanied by community input to understand people’s lived experiences.** Data from a variety of sources can provide an overview of where you’re starting: what inequities exist, how populations and resources are geographically distributed, and what historical trends influence this. However, raw data on its own does not tell the whole story, and many measurements of race or inequality are flawed. Data analysis must be accompanied by community input and stories to understand people’s lived experiences.
- **Prioritize local data.** While national trends can be relevant for local communities, it is important to consider the stories in your community at the most granular level possible. National or global trends can be a starting point for identifying inequities, but local information is needed to make sure these are priorities in your community.

- **What gets measured gets done.** The metrics chosen for holding ourselves accountable get the most attention. Identifying equity-related metrics and keeping track of them moves a plan from commitments to action. While it can be difficult to accurately measure and track success related to equity goals, measuring progress is key for long-term and large-scale change.

Goal-setting and progress-tracking related to equity goals is particularly important over a longer time horizon. On this larger scale, are the government's policy and planning initiatives making people better off? Are specific equity challenges being addressed? Are the outcomes that the plan set out generally being reached? Equity actions are not accomplishing their goals if they're not making anyone better off. Beyond tracking the work your local government accomplishes, it is key to measure actual community outcomes and reassess whether your actions are having an impact over time. If equity actions are not measuring up to their proposed outcomes, then they are not meeting the benchmark of success that your plan stated and that your community asked for.

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## Funding and Partnerships

**Funding:** Most plans in this analysis were funded fully from the local government's budget or did not include information on how the planning process was funded. Two plans mentioned grants from private foundations, while two referred to federal funds that supported the planning process. In addition, there are many potential funding mechanisms local governments can explore for program and policy implementation work over time.

The Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) of 2022 and the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) of 2021 are principal federal funding opportunities for climate investment that could apply to many local governments. Both of these bills prioritize funding for projects that advance environmental justice and equity.

In addition, President Biden's Justice40 Initiative sets the goal that "40 percent of the overall benefits of certain Federal investments flow to disadvantaged communities that are marginalized, underserved, and overburdened by pollution." The categories for these federal investments are climate change, clean energy and energy efficiency, clean transit, affordable and sustainable housing, training and workforce development, the remediation and reduction of legacy pollution, and the development of critical clean

water and wastewater infrastructure.<sup>49</sup> Justice40 itself doesn't provide specific funding opportunities, but rather directs federal funding opportunities in the above categories to direct 40% of benefits to 'disadvantaged communities'. The main federal sources of funding for the above categories are the IRA and the IIJA.

### **Local Governments and the IRA:**

There are six broad ways local governments can benefit from the IRA.<sup>50</sup>

1. **Direct Funding:** There are several opportunities for direct funding to cities from the federal government under the IRA. The following funds, grants, and programs are administered by various federal agencies and each has different availability, requirements, and stipulations.
  - **Environmental and Climate Justice Program**
    - [Community Change Grants Program](#)
    - [Thriving Communities Grantmaking Program](#)
    - [Collaborative Problem-Solving Cooperative Agreement Program](#)
    - [Government-to-Government Program](#)
  - **Greenhouse Gas Reduction:**
    - [Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund](#)
    - [Climate Pollution Reduction Grants](#)
    - [Technical Assistance for the Adoption of Building Energy Codes](#)
    - [Clean Heavy-Duty Vehicles Program](#)
    - [Low Emissions Electricity Program](#)
  - **Transportation and Infrastructure Planning:**
    - [Neighborhood Access and Equity Grant Program](#)
    - [Environmental Review Implementation Funds](#)
    - [Transmission Siting and Economic Development Grants Program](#)
  - **Climate Resilience and Adaptation:**
    - [Coastal Communities and Climate Resilience Program](#)
    - [Forest Landowner Support Program](#)
2. **Funding for Disadvantaged Communities:** Many areas of the IRA have extra funds set-aside for disadvantaged and low-income communities, as well as "energy communities" (areas that meet certain thresholds for employment or tax revenues from fossil fuel extraction, processing, transport, or storage of

<sup>49</sup> The White House, "Justice40: A Whole-of-Government Initiative," n.d.  
<https://www.whitehouse.gov/environmentaljustice/justice40/>

<sup>50</sup> Adapted from Amy Turner, "Cities & the Inflation Reduction Act." Climate Law: A Columbia Law School Sabin Center Blog. August 22, 2022.  
<https://blogs.law.columbia.edu/climatechange/2022/08/22/cities-the-inflation-reduction-act/>

coal, oil, or natural gas; that have above-average unemployment rates; that have had coal mine or plant closures within a specified timeline; or brownfield sites as designated under CERCLA). These provisions appear across the IRA and are administered through tax credits, funding programs for which local governments are eligible, and funding programs for which individuals may be directly eligible.

3. **Clean Energy Tax Credits:** Local governments with municipal utilities are eligible to benefit from the IRA's clean energy tax credits. Section 13801 of the IRA allows states and municipalities, along with other tax-exempt organizations like municipal utilities and rural cooperatives, to receive as a "direct payment" many of the IRA's tax credits that would otherwise only have value for tax-paying entities. This allows governments without tax liability to access funding that is otherwise only available to taxed entities.
4. **Direct-to-Consumer Tax Credits:** The IRA includes several direct-to-consumer tax credits and grants for vehicle and building electrification, which can help local governments meet their emissions reduction targets. Local governments can maximize these programs for their residents through outreach and education about the benefits available. Some of these programs are administered by the federal government, as with vehicle tax credits claimed directly by individual purchasers, while others will be administered by states (such as through rebate programs).
5. **State Funding:** Some funds will be routed through states and state energy offices. State energy offices are specifically tasked with administering two broad rebate programs for which individuals and building owners are eligible. The first is the HOMES (short for Home Owner Managing Energy Savings) rebate program, for which \$4.3 billion is appropriated under Section 50121 of the IRA. Under this program, households and residential building owners are eligible for rebates to cover some of the costs of energy efficiency upgrades. Second, under Section 50122, state energy offices are to administer a \$4.275 billion electrification rebate program under which individuals, households, and other eligible entities can receive rebates for electric heat pumps, heat pump water heaters, stoves, and clothes dryers, and for non-appliance home electrical system upgrades. Again, there is room for local governments to maximize use of these programs through outreach and encouraging residents to access funding through the state.

6. **Funding for Ports:** Communities that are located near ports can benefit from significant appropriations for port decarbonization. Section 60102 of the IRA appropriates \$2.25 billion for a competitive grant and rebate program for the purpose of “purchas[ing] or install[ing] zero-emissions port equipment or technology” at ports (Section 133 of the U.S. Clean Air Act). These funds may also be awarded for planning and permitting related to zero-emission equipment and technology, and for a port’s climate action planning. To qualify for funding, a climate action plan must include: “a strategy to collaborate with, communicate with, and address potential effects on low-income and disadvantaged communities and other stakeholders that may be affected by implementation of the plan.” An additional appropriation of \$750 million is made for the same set of activities in ports located in nonattainment areas (designated under Section 107 of the Clean Air Act). Local governments with jurisdiction over a port authority or a port are eligible to apply for funding.

More information on federal funding opportunities can be found in the [Funding Resources](#) section of this paper.

Advancing equity can make it more likely a project will receive federal funding. *Ready-to-Fund Resilience*<sup>51</sup> lays out characteristics of projects that are considered “ready-to-fund” to help local governments pursuing federal funding opportunities. These include equity-specific criteria, such as:

- Prioritize equity in all project decisions
- Get buy-in from community and government leaders in power
- Co-develop climate resilience projects with community residents

### **Spotlight: Portland, OR Clean Energy Community Benefits Fund**

In a separate effort from their climate emergency workplan, the [Portland Clean Energy Community Benefits Fund](#) (PCEF) was approved by Oregon voters in 2018 to invest in community-led projects that reduce carbon emissions, create economic opportunity, and make the city more resilient. From 2023 to 2028, PCEF will invest \$750 million in community-led projects like energy-efficient upgrades to make apartment buildings safer and more comfortable during extreme heat, or tree planting to increase shade in neighborhoods that lack tree canopy coverage. Climate-action projects funded by PCEF must provide racial, social, and/or

<sup>51</sup> Coffee, et al, “Ready-to-Fund Resilience: Technical Input Paper,” National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, 2022. <https://doi.org/10.25923/CRR2-DH90>.



economic justice benefits. PCEF is the first climate-fund measure created and led by communities on the frontlines of climate change. The implementation plan for PCEF is grounded in climate research, deep community engagement, and multiple rounds of input from residents, subject matter experts, and community organizations to ensure the proposed solutions address the needs of Portland residents most impacted by a rapidly changing climate. PCEF is funded through a 1% surcharge on the Portland sales of large retailers with \$1 billion in national revenue and \$500,000 in local revenue.<sup>52</sup>

**Partnerships:** While most plans mentioned organizations that contributed to community outreach, funding, facilitation, or other aspects necessary to the development of the plan, three plans discussed a critical partner that was instrumental in leading the planning process.

➔ The **City of Oberlin**, Ohio, has 8,500 residents and a one-person sustainability office. The city partnered with Oberlin College for many aspects of GHG accounting and other planning components contributing to the climate action plan. Oberlin College is the largest employer in the city, and college students comprise approximately one-third of the population. The partnership included hiring student interns to work for the Sustainability Office, bringing in professors and students from the environmental studies department to help with specific tasks such as a climate vulnerability assessment, and working closely with the Assistant Vice President of Energy Management & Sustainability for the college, who was a member of the City's Climate Action Committee.<sup>53</sup> By partnering with the local college, the City was able to accomplish more in terms of both planning and implementation.

➔ In **Missoula, MT**, the City, the County, and a nonprofit partner came together to combine resources and work across scales to create the *Climate Ready Missoula* plan. The nonprofit, Climate Smart Missoula, was launched in 2015 and was fiscally sponsored by the Missoula Community Foundation until 2020, when they became an independent 501(c)(3) organization. The nonprofit helps navigate collaboration between the city and county. The implementation of the plan is overseen by Missoula County and Climate Smart Missoula, in partnership with the City of Missoula.<sup>54</sup> This collaboration

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<sup>52</sup> City of Portland, Oregon, "Portland Clean Energy Community Benefits Fund (PCEF) Climate Investment Plan," May 2023.

<https://www.portland.gov/bps/cleanenergy/climate-investment/documents/pcef-climate-investment-plan-ful-l-draft/download>

<sup>53</sup> Linda Arbogast, Conversation with Audrey Wheeler and George Jutras, June 29, 2023.

<sup>54</sup> Climate Ready Missoula, "Our Team," n.d. <https://www.climatereadymissoula.org/our-team.html>

between different entities strengthened the climate plan and leveraged resources to have a greater impact on climate action.

For several plans, working together across jurisdictional boundaries broadened the plan's impact and fostered regional collaboration. There are many models of how to do this effectively.


➔ The cities of **Portland, ME and South Portland, ME** developed a joint climate action and adaptation plan for the two cities. This is a strong example of how smaller communities can come together and share resources to create a plan that magnifies their impact and creates a more regional response to climate change. The solutions in the plan call on regional partnerships for implementation, such as building out a robust and integrated transportation system, as well as coordination and advocacy at the state level for supportive policies. A letter in the plan from Kate Snyder, Mayor of Portland, and Kate Lewis, Mayor of South Portland, explains, “This plan recognizes and builds on the strong geographic, economic, and social connections that join our two cities. It recognizes that our efforts to address climate change will have more impact if we coordinate our actions and speak in unison at the State and Federal levels for policies that we will need to make our work successful. It builds on our shared vision for regional climate action...”<sup>55</sup>



Portland and South Portland, ME. Credit: [One Climate Future](#)

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<sup>55</sup> One Climate Future, *One Climate Future: Charting a Course for Portland and South Portland*. Portland, Maine: 2021, p.3.  
[https://www.oneclimatefuture.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/OneClimateFuture\\_FinalJan2021\\_Downsized.pdf](https://www.oneclimatefuture.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/OneClimateFuture_FinalJan2021_Downsized.pdf)



➔ In **Travis County, TX**, the County's Environmental Resilience Program emphasizes partnerships and communication to enhance regional efforts in reducing greenhouse gasses and increasing climate resilience. The County sees its role as facilitating, supporting, and informing efforts by county departments and local partners. One of their main partners is the City of Austin, the largest metropolitan area in the county, who they worked with on a shared contacts database to connect people working on climate adaptation and resilience. They also meet regularly with the sustainability officer of Harris County, where Houston is located, to exchange ideas on grant opportunities and out-of-the-box concepts. They have been active in an internal group of county departments conducting community engagement to share best practices and coordinate their efforts, convened by the County's Economic Development and Strategic Investments group.<sup>56</sup>


Partnerships can ensure that new efforts are additive and not duplicative, and that climate action plans take into account lessons learned from previous local projects. This type of collaboration works best when entities share openly and transparently about challenges, lessons learned, and barriers in doing the work. By working in partnership with others, local governments can increase the scope of what's possible within a climate plan and bring others along to collaboratively implement the plan.

## Major Takeaways

- **Seek federal funding.** While most local governments create climate action plans through their own city or county budget, there are options for seeking both private or public funding. Currently, big investments from the federal government (IRA and IJJA) can be leveraged at the local level, particularly for equity-related outcomes. More information on federal funding opportunities can be found in the [Funding Resources](#) section of this paper.
- **Leverage existing community resources.** Sustainability and climate planning is most effective when it leverages the resources that already exist in a community to strengthen the process. Bolster what already makes the community great, whether it's academic institutions, existing government programs, nonprofit organizations, or other innovative partnerships.
- **Work together across jurisdictional boundaries.** Where possible, look for opportunities to collaborate and share resources with neighboring city governments, county governments, or other regional governmental partnerships.

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<sup>56</sup> Johanna Arendt and Max Morales, Conversation with Audrey Wheeler and George Jutras, June 30, 2023.



This may help both reduce upfront planning costs to your community and share the benefits of planning actions over a broader population and geographic area.


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## Conclusion

Climate action plans that reflect the local community's specific equity challenges and work toward beneficial equity outcomes are becoming more common throughout the U.S. Climate planning is an opportunity to look at current and historical inequities and invest in solutions that address local needs without shying away from complex challenges.

Through our research, we found major takeaways in five thematic areas: Broad Themes; Community Engagement; Core Actions; Data and Metrics; and Funding and Partnerships.

- **Broad Themes:** Planning does not need to fall into a binary of either climate or equity, but can instead address equity, climate mitigation, and climate adaptation simultaneously to create meaningful change. Thinking about these major planning objectives as interrelated entities from a holistic approach rather than from a hierarchical priority-based approach can encourage stronger planning that can be beneficial to a community into the future.
- **Community Engagement:** Climate action plans with the most thorough community engagement also appeared to have the most equity-oriented goals. Efforts should aim to build relationships with community members to understand their perspectives and incorporate their ideas. Climate planning provides an opportunity to engage with people who have historically been left out from government involvement, so strategic and inclusive efforts should be made to reach people of color and historically marginalized populations.
- **Core Actions:** A plan's actions represent the government's prioritization in particular areas, and the planning process provides an opportunity for government investment to have impact in communities that have had disproportionately less investment in the past. Core actions of a climate plan should reflect community-identified challenges and work towards tangible equity outcomes within the scope of climate mitigation and adaptation.

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- **Data and Metrics:** Local government planning is more effective when it considers locally specific qualitative and quantitative data to assess existing inequities. Metrics for success that monitor equity outcomes are important to ensure the plan is meeting its intended goals.
  - **Funding and Partnerships:** There are many opportunities for federal funding that local governments can benefit from, particularly for equity-related efforts. Leveraging existing resources in a community such as academic institutions, government programs, nonprofit organizations, or other innovative partnerships can bring in more perspectives and help with a plan's implementation. Many communities have opportunities to leverage existing partnerships to align planning efforts and share resources to more effectively reach goals.

**The climate planning process presents an opportunity for a local government to listen to the specific needs of historically marginalized and frontline communities and build actions, policies, and programs that reduce greenhouse gas emissions, advance resilient communities, and equitably serve the community.**

Embedding equity within climate planning requires an ongoing commitment to learning. It is a journey, and many local governments around the U.S. are in the process of growth toward this goal. New ideas and changes to best practices will continue as the field evolves. For this reason, it's important to share lessons learned from both planning and implementation so that others can learn from your process. It can be daunting for local governments to share their experience, particularly with failures, but more transparency can help ensure that mistakes are turned into opportunities for growth. This process is different for every community and their specific needs. As you run into questions along the way, the following section includes some of the top resources that may provide guidance and best practices.

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## Resources for Addressing Equity Challenges

There are many resources available for every step of incorporating equity into climate planning. Here, we provide a curated list of top resources and tools that may be helpful in addressing specific parts of the planning process. The following resources are grouped based on our overarching categories, and can address the questions listed below:

- Broad Resources
  - Where do we start?
  - How and when do we incorporate equity in climate action planning?
- Community Engagement
  - How should the community be involved in our planning process?
  - What are the best practices and key considerations for community engagement?
- Data Collection and Metrics
  - What resources are out there for collecting data related to equity in our community?
  - How should we create metrics to meaningfully measure progress?
- Funding
  - What federal funding opportunities are available?
  - How can we best set ourselves up to receive federal funding?

We also provide a short list of sector-specific guides that apply equity to specific processes.

## Broad Resources

### [Centering Equity in Climate Resilience Planning & Action: A Practitioner's Guide](#)

(2022)

*National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA's) U.S. Climate Resilience Toolkit*

This paper provides principles and best practices for centering equity in climate resilience planning and action for communities in the U.S. Equity is a frame, a goal, and a process, and as such, it cannot be boiled down to a linear, step-by-step recipe.

Therefore, this paper offers a summary of best practices, recognizing that these actions may be taken in any order and should be conceived of as a dynamic, continuous spiral process. The paper includes:

- 5 Guiding Principles
- 10 Practices for Integrating Belonging, Equity, Justice, Diversity and Inclusion
- Considerations for Specific Groups (Black Americans, Latinos, Asian Americans, and Native Americans)

**WHEN TO USE:** Early in the planning process to shape the overall approach

**AUDIENCE:** U.S. climate practitioners

**SUMMARY:** Best practices for centering equity in resilience planning





[Guide to Equitable, Community-Driven, Climate Preparedness Planning](#) (2017)  
*Urban Sustainability Directors Network (USDN)*

The purpose of the Guide to Equitable, Community-Driven Climate Preparedness Planning is to provide guidance to local governments in designing and implementing a more inclusive, equitable planning process. Many climate preparedness and adaptation guides exist and most acknowledge the importance of equity and public participation; however, few address equity issues by addressing specific adaptation solutions, tactics for inclusive community engagement, or the root causes of inequities in climate risk.

This document addresses these gaps. It contains:

1. **Background and Introduction**  
Introduces the problem of increased climate risk among lower-income communities and communities of color and the need for an equitable climate preparedness planning process.
2. **Social Inequities**  
Discusses how institutions typically sustain racial and social inequities, and key concepts for countering structural and institutional biases in government planning.
3. **Equitable, Community-Driven Climate Preparedness Planning Framework**  
Provides a 6-step structure to help define the solutions necessary to build community resilience, which builds on a conventional planning process.
4. **Equitable Climate Resilience Solutions**  
Provides typical adaptation strategies for different climate hazards, describes equity considerations for each, and defines specific planning solutions.

**WHEN TO USE:** Early and throughout your process as a guide


**AUDIENCE:** U.S. local governments

**SUMMARY:** Planning framework for local governments to create equitable climate mitigation and resilience plans

[Equitable Climate Adaptation: Considerations for Local Governments](#) (2022)  
*ICLEI Canada*

This resource is intended to address the barriers preventing local governments from taking action to support climate change adaptation in a way that centers equity and community engagement. The resource both creates a case for this approach as well as





offers a toolkit of tangible, actionable ideas and tools for partners in local government. The three goals of this resource are to:

1. Understand and address primary barriers preventing municipalities from centering equity and engagement in climate change adaptation.
2. Provide replicable and inspiring case studies of local governments and partnerships that have had relevant success.
3. Highlight tangible and applicable tools for centering equity and engagement in adaptation efforts.

**WHEN TO USE:** Early in the planning process as a guide

**AUDIENCE:** Canadian local governments (also applicable to the U.S.)


**SUMMARY:** Equity in adaptation planning guidance

[From Seed to Harvest: A guide for collaborative racial equity strategies](#) (2021)  
*Race Forward*

This tool is meant to guide racial equity practices in the creation and assessment of sustainability and renewable energy policies and programs. It offers a framework and systematic process to build cultures of accountability and work towards racial equity outcomes in decision-making. Lastly, it provides a tangible pathway for an ecosystem approach to operationalizing collective racial equity values.

- Preparing the Ground
  - Know history and lived experience
  - Build understanding of power
  - Orient to vision and principles
  - Invest in trust and relationship building
  - Inform your structural race analysis through personal stories and experiences
  - Center those most affected by structural racism
- Project Planting and Growth
  - Climate setting (internal work)
  - Optimizing growth (project work)
- Harvest and Regrowth
  - Establish accountability through implementation
  - Evaluate racial equity progress
  - Sharing and celebrating

**WHEN TO USE:** Early and throughout the planning process as a confidence check



**AUDIENCE:** Community organizations, advocates and governmental institutions collaborating to advance racial equity in policies, recommendations and practices  
**SUMMARY:** List of questions to ask in each step of the process for creating strategies that advance racial equity

[Racial Equity Evaluation Tool](#) (2017)

*City of Seattle / USDN*

The purpose of this interactive tool is to assist cities and departments or organizations in embedding racial equity as the foundation of climate adaptation planning. This tool walks the user through several specific tools meant to be used by departments and representatives of local communities of color to understand where the government is on its racial equity journey.

Tools include:

- Stoplight evaluation system based on self-reflection questions
- Chart mapping racialized power
- Survey template evaluating racial equity

**WHEN TO USE:** Early in the planning process to gain a baseline understanding of racial equity in your area

**AUDIENCE:** U.S. local governments

**SUMMARY:** Questions to ask and tools to fill out for evaluating racial equity

[Racial Equity: Getting to Results](#) (2017)

*Local and Regional Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE)*

This broad guide operates within a six-part framework to aid organizations and governments to push institutional change with the goal of advancing equity. The guide covers topics such as data and tools, population accountability, and performance accountability.

Related tools from [GARE](#)

- Advancing Racial Equity and Transforming Government: A Resource Guide to Put Ideas into Action
- Racial Equity Toolkit: An Opportunity to Operationalize Equity
- Racial Equity Action Plans: A How-to Manual

**WHEN TO USE:** When beginning the planning process to help establish a framework for action

**AUDIENCE:** Local governments and community-based organizations

**SUMMARY:** A guide for establishing and using a racial equity framework

[Equitable Transitions Guidebook](#) (2022)

*ICLEI Local Governments for Sustainability*

This broad-based tool discusses many aspects of planning for an equitable transition to sustainable practices that a local government may consider. The guidebook aims to provide insights, recommendations, best practices, resources and tools for city practitioners to support:

- Framing social equity along the three dimensions of access, participation and opportunities;
- Mapping of social risks and opportunities associated with sustainability programs and initiatives at the local level;
- Learning about key equity aspects to consider when designing sustainability programs and applying concrete policy instruments to integrate social equity in such programs;
- Identification of suitable indicators to monitor social impacts over time in a holistic manner.

**WHEN TO USE:** When beginning the planning process to consider dimensions of equitable transitions

**AUDIENCE:** Local governments (International)

**SUMMARY:** Guidebook with guiding questions and suggested policy instruments and indicators

[Integrating Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Into Municipal Climate Action](#) (2022)

*ICLEI Canada*

This resource includes an overview of equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) in climate action, reviews important terminology and offers a number of examples of climate action and EDI practices. This resource explores three lessons to introduce how EDI principles can be incorporated into climate action planning:

- Laying the groundwork and understanding context
- Relationship building and collaboration
- The feedback loop, open communication and evolution

**WHEN TO USE:** When beginning the planning process as an introduction for EDI in local government planning

**AUDIENCE:** Canadian local governments (also applicable to the U.S.)

**SUMMARY:** Guidebook with broad overview of EDI and includes lessons learned

## Community Engagement

[The Spectrum of Community Engagement to Ownership](#) (2019)

*Facilitating Power and Movement Strategy Center*

The Spectrum serves as a guide to community-based organizations and local governments working to progress developmentally towards community-driven governance models. It lays out developmental stages of community engagement along with ways to assess community engagement efforts and set goals for how efforts can advance along the spectrum toward greater community ownership.

**WHEN TO USE:** When planning and setting goals for community engagement

**AUDIENCE:** Community-based organizations, local governments, philanthropic partners, and facilitative leaders

**SUMMARY:** A framework of developmental stages to assess and deepen community engagement

[Unlocking the Power of Youth: Youth Engagement Checklist](#) (2023)

*ICLEI USA*

Local and regional governments are increasingly acknowledging the pivotal role that youth play in achieving ambitious climate targets through local action. This guide is a checklist offering suggestions for different means of engaging the youth demographic and measuring the impact or success of particular actions.

Categories of increasing youth engagement include:

- Advocacy
- Governance
- Knowledge Sharing and Capacity Development

**WHEN TO USE:** When preparing for general community engagement

**AUDIENCE:** U.S. local governments

**SUMMARY:** Checklist for engaging youth in climate action policy and planning

**[Jemez Principles for Democratic Organizing](#)** (1996)

*Southwest Network for Environmental and Economic Justice*

The *Jemez Principles* have served as an outline for building inclusion of different perspectives since 1994. The six outlined principles serve to build common understanding between people of different cultures, politics, and socioeconomic and racial backgrounds. These principles offer a conceptual framework for the the level and type of community engagement work that many organizations and governments strive to do across scales, boundaries, and disciplines.

The Six Principles:

1. Be Inclusive
2. Emphasis on Bottom-Up Organizing
3. Let People Speak for Themselves
4. Work Together in Solidarity and Mutuality
5. Build Just Relationships Among Ourselves
6. Commitment to Self-Transformation

**WHEN TO USE:** When designing and beginning the community engagement process

**AUDIENCE:** A wide range of governments and organizations striving for equitable community involvement

**SUMMARY:** Broad principles for equitable community engagement

**[Addressing Implicit Bias at the Local Government Level and Beyond](#)** (2022)

*Health Equity Initiative*

There are many resources and nonprofit organizations dedicated to understanding and confronting implicit biases within an organization. This is an example of a national-scale organization offering a variety of resources, including blog posts, reports, toolkits, webinars, and more, for carrying out this work.

**WHEN TO USE:** When designing and beginning the community engagement process

**AUDIENCE:** Governments and organizations aiming to confront implicit bias within the organization

**SUMMARY:** Website with resources for addressing implicit bias at the local level

## [Climate & Sustainability Communications Toolkit](#) (2022)

ICLEI USA \*Access for ICLEI USA Members only

A communications guide for local governments to elevate messaging, employ effective techniques, and tell your community's story. This guide offers strategies and steps for creating a comprehensive communications plan as well as best practices for compelling storytelling. Additionally, this covers use and best of various engagement tools from social media, web platforms, and public engagement.

**WHEN TO USE:** When determining how to communicate with residents

**AUDIENCE:** Local governments and organizations striving for effective communication

**SUMMARY:** Toolkit for effective communication strategies

## Data Collection and Metrics

### [Environmental Justice Index](#) (EJI)

*Centers for Disease Control and Prevention/Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry*

The EJI is the first national, place-based tool designed to measure the cumulative impacts of environmental burden through the lens of human health and health equity. The EJI offers data for up to 36 environmental justice indicators grouped into three categories for analysis: Social Vulnerability, Environmental Burden, and Health Vulnerability. The EJI offers mapping capabilities and data downloads to the census block level for government agencies or NGOs to use as an initial data assessment tool.

#### **Similar National Data Tools:**

[EPA EJ Screen](#) (Environmental Protection Agency - nationwide)

[CEQ Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool](#) (Council on Environmental Quality - nationwide)

**Similar State-Level Data Tools** (many states are developing mapping tools like these, check to see if there is one relevant to your area):

[CA OEHHA EnviroScreen 4.0](#) (California)

[CDPHE EnviroScreen](#) (Colorado)

**WHEN TO USE:** Early and throughout your planning process as one tool for examining environmental justice challenges in your community

**AUDIENCE:** U.S. local governments, public health officials, policy makers, and community organizations

**SUMMARY:** Interactive data-viewing platform comparing environmental justice indicators

[Greenlink Equity Map](#) and [Process Guide for City-Community Collaboration](#)

*Greenlink Analytics* \*Access may require a paid subscription

The Greenlink Equity Map (GEM) is an interactive, place-based data analysis tool that offers equity data on race, income, health, broadband accessibility, housing, cost of living burden and other factors. The Process Guide for City-Community Collaboration is a related framework that alongside GEM is meant to aid the user in preparing for and conducting collaborative data analysis with community stakeholders and partners. This guide is process-based and touches on relevant topics such as identifying community-based organizations and leaders and engaging community partners.

The mapping tool and dataset is free for *some* city staff and local organizations, as well as community-based organizations that make under \$5 million per year anywhere in the country.

**WHEN TO USE:** Early in your planning process as an additional tool for understanding equity challenges in your community

**AUDIENCE:** U.S. local governments, public health officials, policymakers, and community organizations across all scales

**SUMMARY:** Interactive data-viewing platform and guide for understanding equity indicators, free for some users and available for a fee for others

[Whole Measures for Urban Conservation](#) (2017)

*The Nature Conservancy and Center for Whole Communities*

Focusing on the human impacts of conservation strategies must be central to how we define success in conservation work in cities. The Whole Measures for Urban Conservation framework provides a foundation for a highly integrated, whole-systems approach to urban conservation. It is intended to guide planning and evaluation of urban conservation projects and programs through the lens of socioeconomic impacts and equitable outcomes. Rubrics focus on:

- Justice and Fairness
- Economic Vitality
- Community Engagement



- Community Resilience

**WHEN TO USE:** Can be used at various points in a program's life span to set and evaluate metrics for urban conservation

**AUDIENCE:** Organizations or communities focused on urban conservation

**SUMMARY:** Four rubrics for measuring the impact of programs and projects to advance equity and justice

### [A Toolkit for Centering Racial Equity Throughout Data Integration](#) (2020)

*Actionable Intelligence for Social Policy, University of Pennsylvania*

This toolkit seeks to provide a structure and resources for centering racial equity throughout the data collection and use process. It opens with the analogy that, similarly to how roads and highways both developed and decimated communities, data today holds similar power. This toolkit follows the 'life cycle' of data through planning, collection, access, statistical tools and analysis, and reporting to offer opportunities for centering racial equity.

**WHEN TO USE:** When planning for and carrying out the data gathering and analysis process

**AUDIENCE:** Any organization involved with data at some point of the data life cycle

**SUMMARY:** Toolkit for normalizing, organizing, and operationalizing racial equity throughout the data life cycle

## Funding

### **Federal funding opportunities:**

#### **Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) 2022**

[Inflation Reduction Act Guidebook](#) (2023) and [CleanEnergy.gov](https://www.cleanenergy.gov)

*The White House*

A broad-based guide to understanding the programs and components of the IRA, including who is eligible to apply for funding and for what purposes.

#### [Climate Action and the Inflation Reduction Act: A Guide for Local Government Leaders](#) (2022)

*C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group and Climate Mayors*

A guide that walks through the opportunities for funding and specific roles that local governments can have in participating in the IRA.

## [Climate Law Blog](#)

*Sabin Center at Columbia Law School, written by Amy Turner*

A useful blog that analyzes the IRA and the ways local governments can take advantage of funding opportunities. The following posts about the IRA and local governments are particularly helpful:

- [Cities & The Inflation Reduction Act](#)
- [Inflation Reduction Act: Implementation Gaps for Local Governments & How to Close Them](#)
- [Proposed Regulations for Direct Pay Under the Inflation Reduction Act: Guidelines for Cities](#)
- [New Details about the Inflation Reduction Act's Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund & Takeaways for Cities](#)

## **Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) 2021**

[A Guidebook to the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law for State, Local, Tribal, and Territorial Governments and Other Partners](#) (2022)

*The White House*

This guide is the official policy manual from the White House for non-Federal users of the IIJA.

[Investing In America Technical Assistance Guide](#) (2023)

*The White House*

This document offers specific guidance for accessing infrastructure and clean energy funding through both the IRA and IIJA.

[Funding transportation climate priorities through the US Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act](#) (2022)

*C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group*

This short slide deck shows examples of projects funded by the IIJA as well as descriptions of new transportation programs and changes to existing transportation funding programs.

## **Justice40 Initiative (J40) 2021**

[Justice 40](#)

*The White House*

This web page answers foundational FAQs about J40 and includes useful links to federal agencies that have specified which programs will be “Covered Programs” per the act.

### [Justice40 Funding Finder](#)

#### *Equitable & Just National Climate Platform*

This web-based tool helps distinguish which federal programs are eligible for state and local governments, NGOs, tribal governments, or other institutions are eligible to apply for. Use the dropdown menu to select for environmental category and government/organization type.

### [Energy Justice Mapping Tool](#)

#### *Department of Energy*

This web-based mapping tool is intended to allow users to explore and produce reports on census tracts that the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) has categorized as “disadvantaged communities” pursuant to EO 14008 creating the Justice40 initiative. This tool maps cumulative burden based on indicators in four categories: fossil dependence, energy burden, environmental and climate hazards, and socio-economic vulnerabilities.

## Sector-Specific Guides

Additional resource guidance for specific sectors:

- [Equity in Zoning Policy Guide](#) (2023) - American Planning Association
  - [Mobility Equity Framework](#) - Greenlining Institute (California focus)
  - [Equity in Practice - A guide for transit agencies](#) (2021) - TransitCenter
  - [Equity Guide for Green Stormwater Practitioners](#) (2022) - Green Infrastructure Leadership Partnership
  - [Equitable Transportation Community Explorer](#) - USDOT
  - [Trust for Public Land Databases and Decision Support Tools \(Parks/Open Space\)](#) - Trust for Public Land
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## Glossary

From ICLEI USA’s [Equity: First Steps Guide](#)

Term	Definition	Sources
<b>Climate Reparations</b>	Compensation mechanisms to former colonized and marginalized developing countries [and communities] that address historical and ongoing injustices of disproportionate impacts of climate change.	Adapted from <a href="#">Perry, 2020</a>
<b>Colonization</b>	Colonization can be defined as some form of invasion, dispossession, and subjugation of a people. The invasion need not be military; it	<a href="#">Racial Equity Tools</a>



	<p>can begin—or continue—as geographical intrusion in the form of agricultural, urban, or industrial encroachments. The result of such incursion is the dispossession of vast amounts of lands from the original inhabitants. This is often legalized after the fact. The long-term result of such massive dispossession is institutionalized inequality. The colonizer/colonized relationship is by nature an unequal one that benefits the colonizer at the expense of the colonized.</p>	
<b>Diversity</b>	<p>The presence of different and multiple characteristics that make up individual and collective identities, including race, gender, age, religion, sexual orientation, ethnicity, national origin, socioeconomic status, language, and physical ability</p>	<a href="#">NACo</a>
<b>Environmental justice</b>	<p>The fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations and policies.</p>	<a href="#">EPA</a>
<b>Equity</b>	<p>Just and fair inclusion into a society in which all can participate, prosper, and reach their full potential. Unlocking the promise of the nation by unleashing the promise in us all.</p>	<a href="#">PolicyLink</a>
<b>Frontline communities</b>	<p>Frontline communities are those that experience “first and worst” the consequences of climate change. These are communities of color and low income, whose neighborhoods often lack basic infrastructure to support them and who will be increasingly vulnerable as our climate deteriorates. These also include Native communities, whose resources have been exploited, and laborers whose daily work or living environments are polluted or toxic.</p>	Adapted from <a href="#">EcoTrust</a>
<b>Health equity</b>	<p>Means that everyone has a fair and just opportunity to be as healthy as possible. This requires removing obstacles to health such as poverty, discrimination, and their</p>	<a href="#">NACo</a>

	consequences, including powerlessness and lack of access to good jobs, with fair pay, quality education and housing, safe environments, and health care	
<b>Historically Marginalized Communities</b>	Historically marginalized communities are groups who have been relegated to the lower or peripheral edge of society. Many groups were (and some continue to be) denied full participation in mainstream cultural, social, political, and economic activities.	<a href="#">Oregon Heritage Bulletin</a>
<b>Inclusion</b>	Creating environments in which any individual or group can feel welcomed, respected, supported and valued to participate fully.	<a href="#">NACo</a>
<b>Justice</b>	The process of society moving from an unfair, unequal, or inequitable state to one that is fair, equal, or equitable. A transformative practice that relies on the entire community to acknowledge past and current harms to reform societal morals and subsequently the governing laws. Proactive enforcement of policies, practices, and attitudes that produce equitable access, opportunities, treatment, and outcomes for all regardless of the various identities that one holds.	<a href="#">NACo</a>
<b>Just transition</b>	Just Transition is a vision-led, unifying and place-based set of principles, processes, and practices that build economic and political power to shift from an extractive economy to a regenerative economy. This means approaching production and consumption cycles holistically and waste-free. The transition itself must be just and equitable; redressing past harms and creating new relationships of power for the future through reparations. If the process of transition is not just, the outcome will never be. Just Transition describes both where we are going and how we get there.	<a href="#">Climate Justice Alliance</a>
<b>Procedural equity</b>	An examination of procedural rights that includes authentic engagement through an inclusive and accessible development and implementation of fair programs or policies.	<a href="#">NACo</a>

**Restorative justice**

Restorative Justice is a theory of justice that emphasizes repairing the harm caused by crime and conflict. It places decisions in the hands of those who have been most affected by wrongdoing, and gives equal concern to the victim, the offender, and the surrounding community. Restorative responses are meant to repair harm, heal broken relationships, and address the underlying reasons for the offense. Restorative Justice emphasizes individual and collective accountability. Crime and conflict generate opportunities to build community and increase grassroots power when restorative practices are employed.

[Movement4BlackLives](#)

**Structural equity**

The identification and removal of institutional barriers to fair and equal opportunities with recognition of historical, cultural and institutional dynamics and structures that routinely advantage privileged groups in society and result in chronic, cumulative disadvantage for subordinated groups

Adapted from [NACo](#)