BayCAN Equity Work Group
Equity Definition

Part 1: Equity

Equity ensures fair outcomes, treatment, and opportunities for all people,[1] ensuring everyone gets what they need to enjoy full, healthy lives.[2]   It is the process of reducing disparities that are systematically associated with social advantage/disadvantage.[3]

Part 2: Climate Justice

Addressing equity in the context of climate change requires community resilience and adaptation leaders to work towards **climate justice --** ensuring that frontline communities, those who are least responsible for and most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, do not suffer disproportionately as a result of historical injustice and disinvestment.[4] In addition, climate justice ensures that all people have the opportunity to benefit equally from climate solutions that are developed.[5]

Frontline communities — including people of color, immigrants, low income individuals, people with disabilities, those in rural areas, LGBTQIA+ people, indigenous people and elderly populations — experience continued injustice. They face a legacy of systemic, largely racialized, inequity that can influence factors such as where they live and work, the quality of their air and water, their economic opportunities and their access to transportation, basic necessities and public services. All of these factors face compounded negative impacts in the face of climate change.[6]

Part 3: Solutions

Climate justice requires that those working in community resilience and climate change adaptation empower and center frontline communities as the **primary experts** and **leaders** in **every level of decision-making** as we create solutions to protect and preserve our air, water, land, and communities, despite the historical exclusion of frontline communities from decision making as well as from public resources and services.[7]

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[1] California Department of Education
[2] Anna E. Casey Foundation
[3] Phoenix's Definition
[4] Safeguarding California Report: Advancing Climate Justice in California
[5] ICLEI USA
[6] The Greenlining Institute, Making Equity Real in Climate Adaptation
[7] Safeguarding California Report

Climate justice, as applied in climate change adaptation and community resilience building, means embedding equity into the following four aspects[8] of planning and decision-making:

1. **Processes and procedures** (Procedural Equity)— inclusive, accessible, authentic engagement and representation in processes to develop or implement programs and policies

   →*Ways to implement: Hiring agency staff directly from frontline communities so that they can lead not just "community-engagement" phases, but also the initial ideation and planning phases, centering community leadership and public engagement through the implementation and evaluation phases (informed by the Community Engagement to Ownership Spectrum)[9]*

2. **Considering the equitable distribution of benefits and burdens** (Distributional Equity) — programs and policies result in fair distribution of benefits and burdens across all segments of a community, prioritizing those with highest need

   →*Ways to implement: Assessing disproportionate burdens from existing policies or* programs, *then setting goals and working with specific populations in order to mitigate, repair and close existing inequitable gaps.*

3. **Considering transgenerational impact** (Transgenerational Equity) — adaptation and resilience decisions consider generational impacts, avoiding unfair burdens on future generations and keeping their well-being in mind at each step

   →*Ways to implement: Integrating a long-term view and program sustainability - environmental, relational, economic - into solutions*

4. **Prioritizing structural accountability** (Structural Equity) — decision-makers institutionalize accountability; decisions are made with recognition of the historical, cultural, and institutional dynamics and structures that have routinely advantaged privileged groups in society and resulted in chronic, cumulative disadvantage for frontline groups

   →*Ways to implement: Make the time to build trust and real relationships with partners and the community at large. Set measurable goals through an inclusive process with clear roles; devise a flexible planning and implementation process that can accommodate changes when they are needed; publicly recognize and repair for past programs or policies which may have contributed to the marginalization of frontline communities.*

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[8] USDN, Equity in Sustainability Report
[9] USDN, Community Engagement to Ownership Spectrum