

Climate Planning for Social Equity & Environmental Justice

Environmental injustices arise when a group or community are heavily impacted by pollution, lack of natural resources, or environmental degradation caused by outside parties or corporations. Commonly, indigenous communities, communities of color, and low-income communities are disproportionately affected by environmental injustices. Many communities have turned to grassroots organizing in order to share their plight and fight for the clean environment they deserve.

By addressing the root causes of environmental degradation and accurately representing the demands and rights of communities affected, climate planning strategies that incorporate social equity can be hugely fortuitous.

How to Address Environmental Justice Issues in your community

1. Identify the problems facing your community

- Whether there is one large polluter or decades of resource depletion, identify what the largest obstacles are and how the environmental pollution is affecting your society. Approaching the problem from multiple perspectives, including but not limited to environmental concerns, social equity, and sustainable development and job creation will help to identify where the problems exist.

2. Identify the stakeholders and the people you need to involve in your initiative

- Work with the stakeholders, including community organizations, resident groups, government officials, corporate parties and other entities. Keep an open door policy, utilize facilitated discussions, and create space for public comment and feedback to understand the needs of your community. Create a unified voice that can better address the problem. This will help ensure a win-win situation for all!

3. Organize and develop your goals

- Once you have your party together, start developing your main goals and priorities. Develop a clear unified goal and be able to show how cleaner energy alternatives or sustainable job growth will help promote social equity in your community. Clear incentives to promote social equity through cleaning the environment will not only help to spread the word but will help educate people on how greener living can create a more just community. Having the facts behind you will help convince stubborn corporations or government officials.

4. Activate & Educate

- Get out and spread the word! Once you have your team behind you and your goals clearly laid out, it's time to hit the street! Develop a plan to activate the community and educate people on cost-saving green living and sustainable job creation! Make sure to

have a variety of events to attract people from every walk of life. Always utilize social media and make efforts to keep your project goals and strategies accessible to everyone. Receiving public comments is helpful in gaining public trust and support!

5. Keep researching and practice adaptive management

- Overtime, keep up with changes in your community and study similar campaigns in other areas and learn from their successes/failures. Keep adapting your own strategy to see what resonates the best with your community and keep an open mind. Make sure to establish a measurement system to track your success and be sure to learn from everyone you talk with.

Some great Mass Organizations addressing Environmental Justice:

Alternatives for Community and Environment: <http://www.ace-ej.org/>

Neighbor to Neighbor Massachusetts: <http://www.n2nma.org/en/>

Chelsea Greenroots: <http://www.greenrootschelsea.org/>

How to plan for Social Equity:

1. Identify your constituents and clarify their goals for attaining equity

- Identifying your constituents and the increasing your knowledge of the demographics in your area will help set the stage for an equity movement that accurately fights for the goals of your community. By hosting a variety of events with public comment opportunities you'll be sure to reach a vast group of people and identify their equity aspirations.

2. Consider access and inclusion in your movement

- Allocate funding or develop creative transportation and accessibility solutions to ensure that previously underserved or marginalized neighborhoods can voice their opinions.

3. Examine recruitment and advancement policies within businesses

- Encouraging the examination of business models for inclusion and accessibility for all demographics is key to promoting equal growth and opportunity in business. Try integrating a review of equity within business models to track progress and address weak areas. Make sure to promote equitable salary and promotion structures.

4. Promote sustainable job development

- Incorporating environmental justice campaigns into equity planning will work to address environmental injustices occurring in marginalized neighborhoods (commonly communities of color, indigenous communities, and low-income areas). Including green infrastructure and protecting natural resources will help the entire community, ease environmental degradation, and address potentially unequal access to resources.

5. Follow through and track your progress

- Tracking and monitoring your program’s progress is key to ensure that your project is implemented in a timely and effective manner. Also, continue allowing for public comment to guarantee you continue to address your community’s changing needs.

Success Stories

Springfield, MA

Grassroots organizers in Springfield, MA have a substantial environmental justice agenda that demands change not only for the environment but for human health and wellbeing. Following a conference on climate justice, the *Springfield Climate Justice Coalition* (SCJC) began pushing for a “Springfield Climate Action Plan” that addresses air pollution in the city, increases energy efficiency, expands access to public transportation and housing, increases healthy food options, adopts better waste management, and



lastly empowers the community through education. Groups like *Arise for Social Justice* and the *Pioneer Valley Planning Commission* pushed Springfield’s Mayor, City Council and other stakeholders to implement a Climate Action Plan and appoint a full-time Environmental Coordinator. When the city applied for a resiliency grant, the SCJC positioned itself as a useful ally to city leaders in pushing the local environmental agenda.

Detroit, MI



In Detroit, MI communities are fighting countless environmental polluters, including coal plants, oil refineries, waste incinerators, and Superfund sites, which have created a highly polluted atmosphere for residents of the city. Detroit suffers from one of the nation’s highest rates of asthma among children and clean sustainable energy and jobs are not readily accessible. Community members have started to organize for a grassroots urban renewal with recycling

programs, food security, pollution reduction, and the promotion of sustainable jobs. The *East Michigan Environmental Action Council* has become an anchor to unify the local movement to work cross-sectorally and build community resilience to climate change.