

Racial Equity Assessment Tool



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Racial Equity Assessment Tool

Introduction

Purpose

The purpose of this Racial Equity Assessment Tool is to support local jurisdictions and agencies in San Bernardino County with implementing and monitoring the implementation of the environmental justice goals, policies, and actions¹ of their general plan. This tool is intentionally designed to guide planners in thinking through ways to incorporate racial equity into their general plan's environmental justice implementation actions or programs (EJ program). Since the tool is meant to be a flexible framework, the eventual details of how racial equity is implemented will vary from one EJ program to another.

Why should local jurisdictions and agencies use this Racial Equity Assessment Tool?

Many of the current environmental burdens and health inequities in San Bernardino County are sustained by government practices, structures, and systems that unintentionally repeat patterns of exclusion. When racial equity is not consciously addressed, implicit biases deepen within organizational decision making, which in turn contributes to disproportionate environmental burdens and health inequities to unconsciously be replicated and perpetuated in planning and decision-making outcomes. Without intentional reflection, such as through routine use of a racial equity assessment tool like this one, local jurisdictions and agencies will continue to perpetuate disproportionate environmental burdens and health inequities. However, by intentionally incorporating racial equity in everyday decision-making, local jurisdictions and agencies are also in the prime position to minimize unintended adverse consequences, reduce existing environmental burdens, and improve health and wellbeing outcomes for all residents.

When should you use this Racial Equity Assessment Tool?

As early in the planning or decision-making process as possible. If this tool is used early on, then individual decisions can be aligned with environmental justice goals and desired outcomes. Moreover, by using the tool more than once, government staff can ensure racial equity is incorporated through all phases of an EJ program.

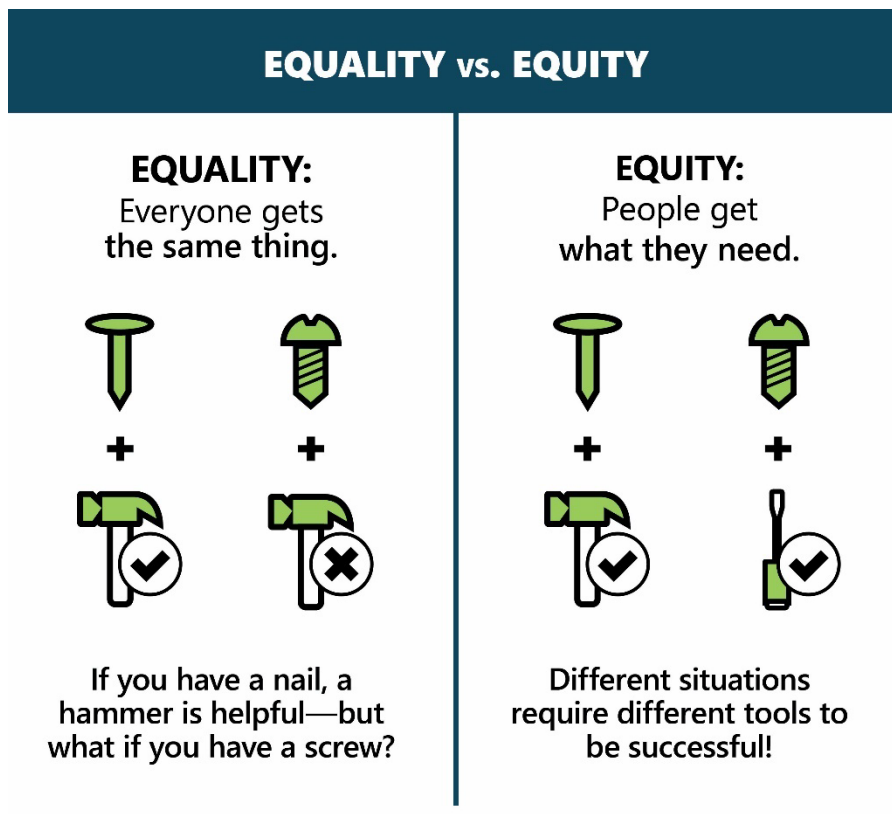
¹ A **goal** states the envisioned end state for the community. An **objective** establishes the level of performance to measure goal implementation, often at a time period shorter than a goal. A **policy** is a position statement to support a goal and provide guidance to decision-makers when reviewing development proposals or implementing new initiatives. An **action** sets a program or strategy to implement a policy and fulfill a goal. For complete definitions, please refer to the "EJ Element Model Language" resource part of the SB 1000 toolkit.



Why Racial Equity?

Although racial equity is like racial equality, they are not the same thing. Equality means everyone receives the same thing regardless of any other factors. Equity, on the other hand, aims for equal outcomes and is about ensuring that all people have access to the opportunities they need to thrive and succeed. The image below provides a visual representation of this distinction.

Planning and decision making that applies a racial equity lens recognizes that communities or populations may have different starting points and may need different types and levels of support to flourish. To achieve racial equity, policies and procedures may require unequal, but just, distribution of resources to address historical disparities and disadvantages, and to truly achieve equal outcomes moving forward. Thus, racial equity is achieved when race can no longer be used to predict economic, educational, health, and other life outcomes.



Source: Raimi + Associates



Racial Equity Assessment Tool

The Racial Equity Assessment Tool is a set of guiding questions meant to spark discussion and reflection on how to better integrate racial equity into a jurisdiction's environmental justice programs. The questions are divided into three sections: Initiation, Program Development, and Implementation. Each of the below sections have an overarching question and then a set of sub-questions to initiate deeper discussion.

Initiation

Defining Outcomes

The overarching question to consider in this phase is: **What are the desired outcomes for the EJ program under consideration? Can those outcomes be quantified to support learning and evaluation?**

Sub-questions to consider in this first phase include:

- How will the EJ program help to achieve the general plan's environmental justice goals, policies, and objectives?
- What are the desired outcomes for community members?
- What populations or types of people will be affected if the EJ program is implemented? Are there different populations or types of people who will be affected if the EJ program is not implemented?
- How will the EJ program change internal organizational norms around racial equity? What actions will the EJ program take to normalize and operationalize racial equity?

Community Engagement

The overarching questions to consider in this phase are: **How have Priority Equity Communities² been engaged? Are there opportunities to expand engagement?**

Sub-questions to consider in this phase include:

- Who are the most affected community members who are concerned with or have experience related to the EJ program (see Data Analysis below)? How have you involved these community members in the development of this EJ program, in a meaningful and culturally appropriate manner?
- Which best practices for meaningful engagement will the EJ program incorporate? (see the [Spectrum of Public Participation](#) or [The Spectrum of Community Engagement to Ownership](#))
- How will the EJ program clearly define the role of public input in the process? Will the EJ program share any decision-making power, as feasible, with Priority Equity Communities?
- How will the EJ program help build trust and long-term relationships between government and Priority Equity Communities? How will you partner with stakeholders for long-term positive change?

² "Priority Equity Communities" are "disadvantaged communities" as defined in Senate Bill 1000. These are low-income areas that are disproportionately affected by environmental pollution and other health hazards. Please refer to the SB 1000 Toolkit's ["Data Tools" webpage](#) for a full analysis of Priority Equity Communities in the county.



- What do your conversations with stakeholders tell you about existing disproportionate environmental burdens and health inequities that influence people's lives and should be taken into consideration?
- How will the EJ program involve other government departments and agencies (e.g., the San Bernardino County Department of Public Health) in development, implementation, and evaluation?

Program Development

Data Analysis

The overarching questions to consider in this phase are: **What's the data? What does the data tell us?**

Sub-questions to consider in this phase include:

- What does population level data tell you about existing disproportionate environmental burdens and health inequities? What does it tell you about root causes or factors influencing racial inequities?
- Will the EJ program have impacts in specific geographic areas (neighborhoods, areas, or regions)? What are the racial demographics of those living in the area?
- What performance level data do you have available for the EJ program?
- Are there data gaps? What additional data would be helpful in analyzing the EJ program? If so, how can you obtain better data?

Program Planning

The overarching questions to consider in this phase are: **How will the EJ program ensure that Priority Equity Communities receive a fair share of resources and benefits?**

Sub-questions to consider in this phase include:

- How will the EJ program connect to other California laws related to racial equity, including the Fair Employment and Housing Act and the Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing mandate?
- What have the data and engagement processes told you about the factors that might affect disproportionate environmental burdens and health inequities related to this program?
- Will the EJ program have dedicated set-asides for Priority Equity Communities?
- Are the benefits of the EJ program broadly accessible to households, especially communities of color, low-income populations, tribal and indigenous communities, and immigrant communities?
- What are some potential unintended consequences? What are the ways in which the EJ program could be modified to enhance positive impacts or mitigate negative impacts, especially for Priority Equity Communities?
- What mechanisms will you use to ensure the EJ program provides Priority Equity Communities with local capacity building and economic opportunity (e.g., local hire, youth job training, local vendor contracting) to help address root causes of inequities?



- What are ways in which existing partnerships could be strengthened to maximize impact in the community?
- Are the EJ program's implementation strategies aligned with the outcomes defined in Phase 1?

Implementation

Capacity and Funding

The overarching question to consider in this phase is: **What is your plan for implementation?**

Sub-questions to consider in this phase revolve on asking whether the plan is

- Is the EJ program adequately funded and resourced with personnel?
- Is the EJ program adequately resourced with mechanisms to ensure successful implementation and enforcement?
- Is the EJ program adequately resourced to ensure on-going data collection, public reporting, and community engagement?
- How will the EJ program continue to engage with Priority Equity Communities during the implementation phase?

Learning and Evaluation

The overarching question to consider in this final phase is: **How will you ensure accountability, communicate, and evaluate results?**

Sub-questions to consider in this final phase include:

- How will the EJ program measure, evaluate, and report on the distribution of resources, benefits, and burdens to Priority Equity Communities?
- Is the EJ program achieving the anticipated environmental justice goals, policies, and objectives from the general plan? Is the EJ program having impact in the community?
- What are your messages and communication strategies that will help advance racial equity and environmental justice?
- How will you continue to partner and deepen relationships with communities to make sure your work to advance racial equity and environmental justice is working and sustainable for the long haul?
- What measures are in place to assure accountability and transparency, especially in communicating results to Priority Equity Communities?



Further Reading

Additional resources to guide further reading on the intersection of planning and racial equity:

- California Governor's Office of Planning and Research. 2017. Resiliency Guidebook: Equity Checklist. Retrieved from: https://www.opr.ca.gov/docs/20180312-Equity_Checklist.pdf.
- California Strategic Growth Council. 2020. Governing for Racial Equity: California's Collaborative on Race & Equity. Retrieved from: <https://sgc.ca.gov/programs/hiap/racial-equity/>.
- City of Seattle. 2012. Racial Equity Toolkit. Retrieved from: https://www.seattle.gov/Documents/Departments/RSJI/RacialEquityToolkit_FINAL_August2012.pdf.
- Government Alliance for Racial Equity. 2016. Racial Equity Toolkit: An Opportunity to Operationalize Equity. Retrieved from: https://racialequityalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/GARE-Racial_Equity_Toolkit.pdf.
- Multnomah County. 2021. Equity and Empowerment Lens. Retrieved from: <https://www.multco.us/diversity-equity/equity-and-empowerment-lens>.
- Riverside University Health System - Public Health. Healthy Development Checklist, 2017. Retrieved from: https://www.healthyriversidecounty.org/Portals/3/RUHS%20HDC_FINAL09142017.pdf
- The Greenlining Institute. 2019. Making Equity Real in Climate Adaptation and Community Resilience Policies and Program: A Guidebook. Retrieved from: <https://greenlining.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Making-Equity-Real-in-Climate-Adaption-and-Community-Resilience-Policies-and-Programs-A-Guidebook-1.pdf>.
- Urban Sustainability Directors Network. 2017. Guide to Equitable Community-Driven Climate Preparedness Planning. Retrieved from: <https://www.adaptationclearinghouse.org/resources/guide-to-equitable-community-driven-climate-preparedness-planning.html>.

