



Climate Ready SMC  
Local Government Planning  
Climate Change  
Equity Primer  
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## Description:

Climate Ready SMC prioritized equity and inclusion as a key outcome of the Climate Change Collaborative initiated in 2018. Through this process, a significant gap was identified in the availability of a comprehensive tool that could be used to embed climate equity and inclusion in local planning processes and projects. The goal of this equity primer is to provide accessible documentation about methods and practices to integrate principles of climate justice and equity into decisions, plans and investments by local agencies, and to help frontline groups and communities plan for and manage climate adaptation and resilience. Fortunately, extensive resources and evidence based models of equitable climate adaptation planning and action have already been created and this primer references some of the best and most comprehensive of those documents. Well over one thousand pages of guides, models, case studies and checklists exist and more are being created every year. An objective of this document is to summarize the key elements of this body of literature in a way that is as practical and useful as possible for local agencies and community organizations.

## Intended Users:

The primary audience for this Primer is County and City government and special district staff of San Mateo County. This document is focused on climate adaptation and resilience planning and working with frontline communities but will be relevant for planning and likely useful for other government programs.

## Presupposition:

San Mateo County, like most counties in the United States, has conditions that emerge from a history of social inequity and injustice. For example, parts of the County including East Palo Alto experienced racial steering and blockbusting as recent as the 1950s and 1960s - techniques of racial housing exclusion that have contributed to significant wealth inequities.<sup>1</sup>

## Understanding and Defining Social Equity

Similar to other far reaching concepts that integrate into many aspects of life, it is best to consider that there is no one true definition of equity. Below are examples of common misconceptions of what equity is and is not, and a set of recommendations to assist with an understanding of equity which is followed by a description of what equity means in a climate change context.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://belonging.berkeley.edu/rootsraceplace/exclusionaryrealestateindustrypractices>

“Understanding equity is somewhat like the proverbial blind men describing the different parts of an elephant they touch but failing to “see” the whole animal. True understanding will come by gathering multiple perspectives.”<sup>2</sup>

That said, there are more than ample real world lived experiences of equity and how equity can show up in planning and action; some of which will be described herein. Understanding equity can often be supported by comparison to other concepts that are similarly important aspects of growing a more just world, but are distinct.

### **Diversity ≠ Equity**

Valuing diversity is important. Diversity across race, age, sexual orientation, gender, cognitive and physical ability, and other factors is an essential component of equity, but it is not the same thing. For example, it is possible to have a diverse group of people involved in aspects of planning, but no changes to power, decision-making, influence, resource access or redress of other barriers to participation. One tragic expression of attempting to incorporate diversity in a process to be aware of is tokenization. One way this shows up is when, for example, white people recognize a need for more diverse perspectives in their planning or action process so they invite one person of color into the process and feature that person in visible roles in the group to give the appearance of diversity, but with no sustained commitment or other effort to embrace any additional shifts to a more inclusive or equitable process. (PLEASE NOTE: Tokenization can create undue stress and emotional labor {invisible and unpaid work to attempt to keep others happy even when being singled out to address issues of diversity, point out blind spots, respond to microaggressions or other cultural incompetence related to exclusion} or even trauma for people of color, people with disabilities, and other underrepresented groups).

### **Inclusion ≠ Equity**

An important distinction is often drawn between diversity, described above, and inclusion. Inclusion is when diverse people are enrolled in the power structure of a group to make or, at least, influence decisions, allocate resources and authentically share in the emergence of strategy and action. Inclusion, while an important component of and related concept to, is not equity. Being included in a process does not necessarily mean that the process itself is not predicated on inequitable precedents. For example, a process that includes community members from a marginalized population to vote on ideas or contribute ideas to a process that is already predefined and predetermined to not address the priority needs of that population could be described as inclusion, but not equity. While having some shared power to affect outcomes might lead to equity, inclusion does not always lead to addressing the root causes of the existence of exclusion.

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<sup>2</sup> [https://ssir.org/articles/entry/what\\_the\\_heck\\_does\\_equity\\_mean](https://ssir.org/articles/entry/what_the_heck_does_equity_mean)

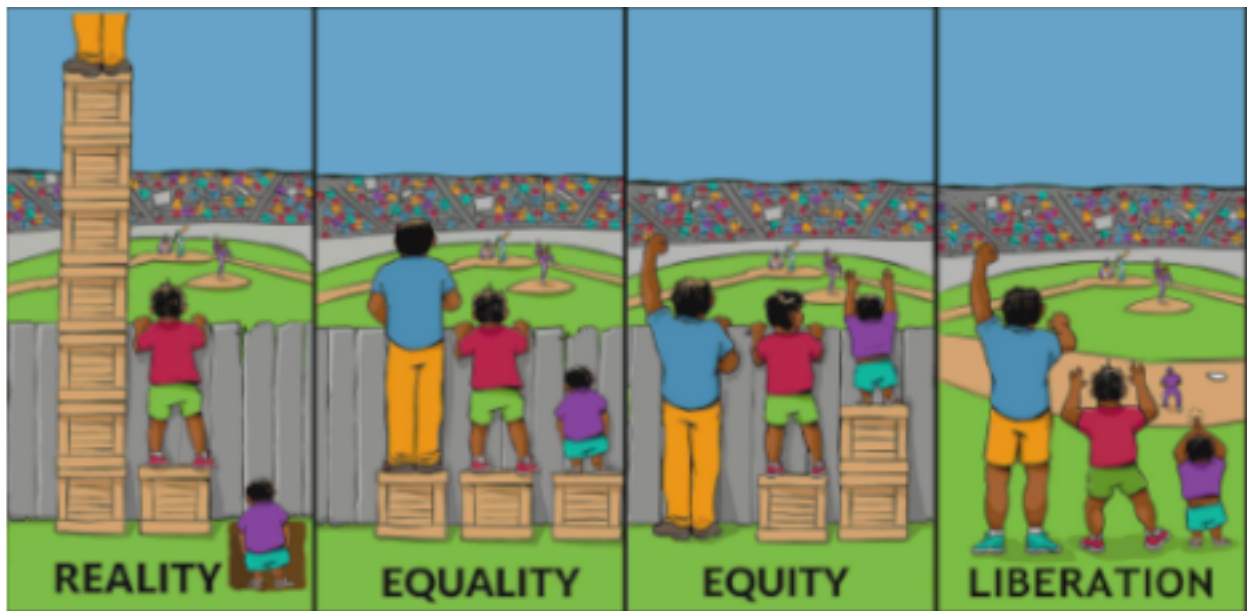
### **Equality ≠ Equity**

One might often hear about the need to be “fair” and provide “equal” treatment in processes and action. Whereas equality and fairness are important concepts, neither is equivalent to equity. Expressions of equality in action, for example, giving everyone an equal vote (say one vote per participant) or equally cutting service hours at community centers in all neighborhoods whether they are affluent neighborhoods that rarely use the centers or low income neighborhoods that depend on community centers, does not account for historical harms and injustice and structural and oppressive systems operating in current reality that have created massive differential in power, time, income, wealth, land tenure and other resources. All communities are different and have varying needs, as a result some people will need more support to show up and others will need less. Equity acknowledges these differentials and redresses them.

### **Equity ≠ Liberation**

It is important to note that equity is an essential stepping stone to a collective liberation that benefits all human and non-human life. One can imagine a liberated world of collective belonging where systems have been transformed so that everyone’s needs are met in ways that benefit everyone and all life. Every person regardless of current situation could benefit from a world of increased health, beauty, joyful expression, peace and mutual caring. Almost nothing could underscore the need for a liberated world more than the existential threat to humanity -- climate change.

Here is a popular symbolic image that represents some of the above distinctions<sup>3</sup>:



This image is useful in as much as it makes clear the distinctions between equality and equity and liberation. Capturing equity in a single image is likely not possible. Making an image about

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.californiaadaptationforum.org/2018caf/equity/>

equity is difficult and can inadvertently cause harm. In consideration of the usefulness of this image as a means to deepen collective learning, here are some ways in which this image could be modified in order to more fully and effectively capture the essence of equity.

- The visualizations of the people would be more diverse and nuanced.
- While the image intends to symbolize those who are oppressed through historical and current injustice as “smaller than / shorter than” to set up the self-evident need for additional resources and consideration (boxes); the symbol could inadvertently imply that those represented by the shorter person are themselves inherently “lesser than” or in deficit in comparison to others.
- The last image would include the idea of participation - at the end the humans would move from spectators to being a role in co-creating the game and participating in the game.

### **Equity = Equity**

Seeing as Equity is not diversity, equality or inclusion, we land on an understanding that describes something deeper and more complex. It is about each of us getting what we need to survive and succeed—access to opportunity, networks, resources, and support—based on where we are and where we want to go. We do not all start from the same place due to current and historical injustice, harm and systemic exclusion. Access to what is needed might be more opportunity, networks, resources and support to those who have been excluded. This could include financial resources, more time to respond, opportunity to participate by changing the location of gatherings, technical assistance, access to technology resources, and more. Nonet Sykes, Director of Race Equity and Inclusion at the Annie E. Casey Foundation, thinks of it as each of us reaching our full potential.<sup>4</sup> “The fact is that we don’t know what equity looks like as a society, because we’ve never actually had it.”<sup>5</sup>

If diversity is being invited to the room and inclusion is being given a seat at the table, equity might be seen as relinquishing power so that those most marginalized and oppressed are resourced to pick the room, design the table, set the invitation and lead the process with technical assistance provided by existing power holders as needed and requested.

“Systems change is about advancing equity by shifting the conditions that hold a problem in place.”<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> [https://ssir.org/articles/entry/what\\_the\\_heck\\_does\\_equity\\_mean#](https://ssir.org/articles/entry/what_the_heck_does_equity_mean#)

<sup>5</sup> [https://ssir.org/articles/entry/what\\_the\\_heck\\_does\\_equity\\_mean#](https://ssir.org/articles/entry/what_the_heck_does_equity_mean#)

<sup>6</sup> [https://www.fsg.org/publications/water\\_of\\_systems\\_change](https://www.fsg.org/publications/water_of_systems_change)

## Equity in the Context of Climate Change

The Urban Sustainability Directors Network (USDN) and National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) have produced important literature connecting equity to climate change adaptation and mitigation planning contexts and each describes this connection so well their language is quoted here.

“While we have not seen true equity as a society, many communities are working to center {prioritize in an authentic way} principles and practices that elevate the realization of its potential. As we work to center equity, it is important to understand the historical context that created its need. Structural and institutional racism has resulted in the disproportionate distribution of benefits and burdens in our society, which results in increased climate risk. Institutions – particularly governments – and the structural system that they are part of, may function to sustain racial and social inequities that increase disproportionate risk to climate change. Race is a major determinant of life outcomes and is a reliable predictor of climate hazard risk.”<sup>7</sup>

“The root causes of the problems our communities face—like climate change, racism, and economic inequality—are all deeply connected. Since the problems are connected, so are the solutions. Normally climate adaptation work focuses on practical actions to manage risks from climate impacts, framing resilience within the scope of disaster and crisis response. For example, preparing communities for extreme weather events that increase with climate change. We [NAACP] want to do that too, but we want to take a more transformative approach to climate adaptation that accounts for the inequities already in our communities and moves to reduce or minimize further harm through reducing or eliminating the kinds of emissions that create climate change.

We believe that frontline communities can create their own plans, or that they should be an integral part of the formal planning process, so that those plans equitably meet community needs. In practice, a community-driven climate resilience planning process should build community leadership. It should focus on connecting neighbors to one another to share knowledge and experiences. And through the process, communities will work together to build on existing assets and develop solutions to the specific problems confronting each community while advancing the components of a broader vision of a thriving community.”<sup>8</sup>

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[https://www.usdn.org/uploads/cms/documents/usdn\\_guide\\_to\\_equitable\\_community-driven\\_climate\\_preparedness\\_high\\_res.pdf](https://www.usdn.org/uploads/cms/documents/usdn_guide_to_equitable_community-driven_climate_preparedness_high_res.pdf)

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<https://live-naacp-site.pantheonsite.io/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Our-Communities-Our-Power-TOOLKIT-FINAL.pdf>

## Language of Equity

The State of California and the Federal Government have developed terminology to describe communities that have been subjected to historical and current injustice. Such terms include communities of concern, vulnerable communities, disadvantaged communities, as examples. It is important to note that the communities that are being referred to by these terms did not invent or sanction them. When needed for grants, reports, and other official documents one might feel compelled to use vernacular that fits the context but it can be important NOT to use the same language in the context of interacting directly with and within a community. Language around identity is complicated, personal and always evolving.

Each person has the right to define their identity on their own terms. Avoid terminology that casts the person or group as a victim. When in doubt, ask. A guiding principle is to adopt the language preferred by people from groups you are serving to name themselves when communicating with or writing about them. It should be noted that sometimes groups reclaim terms that previously have been used as injurious slurs against them and, even if they use those terms amongst themselves, sometimes hearing those terms from outsiders can be triggering. Naming can be fluid, contradictory and sometimes confusing and it is important to remain sensitive and alert to changes. Be wary of language that focuses solely on 'deficit language' that highlights lack and does not acknowledge resources and assets. Although the following terms may change over time, as of the writing of this primer some rules of thumb that can be observed include the following :

USE THESE	NOT THESE
"Disabled person"	"Handicapped"
"You all"	"You guys"
"All genders"	"Men and women"
"Gender Balance"	"50/50 balance"
"Humankind"	"Mankind"
"LGBTQIA+"	"Gay and lesbian"
(When possible, name the specific group you are referring to eg.) "Seniors living on SSI in Menlo Park who lack transportation and speak Spanish, Cantonese and Arabic."	"Disadvantaged" "Underprivileged" "Marginalized"
"Traditionally underserved" or "Traditionally under-resourced"	"Underserved" "Under-resourced"



## Climate Change Mitigation + Adaptation + Deep Democracy + Equity = Resilience

“Our work must be organized through democratic and voluntary cooperation, rather than coercion and exploitation. When we freely apply our labor together to solve our problems and meet our needs, we will both liberate the soil from the physical concrete that paves over life, and liberate our spirits from the cognitive concrete that has paved over our imaginations.”<sup>9</sup>

## Centering Equity in Climate Work Plans

When equity is “sidebarred” or addressed only in rhetoric (and not in authentic, committed action, attention and resource allocation) rather than centered in, or prioritized in each step of climate planning, the cost is great. Sometimes it costs the planning agency, district or asset owner’s reputation. Often it can be fatal for community members.

For example, if the biological vulnerability of those with chronic respiratory conditions are not considered in emergency response to fires, it could lead to emergency room visits. The slow violence of economic exclusion could exacerbate displacement, houselessness, and hunger.

Centering equity requires a shift in both mental models and behaviors. On the mental model side it means assuming those closest to the problems are excellent partners in identifying them and developing solutions. On the behavior side it means questioning trauma triggering approaches like science alarmism {using oversimplified and sensational statements about potential impacts of climate change without qualifying or contextualizing such statements} and taking an unflinching look at standard operating procedures like budgeting for ways they promote injustice. Because authentically centering equity requires such shifts many government and district staff will feel frustrated in their role if the power structures around them have not shifted to embrace an equity centered approach. A number of the frameworks presented in the literature review below show a continuum or gradient moving in the direction of progressively reducing harm in planning processes to ultimately fully centering equity and community driven and owned approaches.<sup>10</sup>



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<https://live-naacp-site.pantheonsite.io/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Our-Communities-Our-Power-TOOLKIT-FINAL.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> <https://movementstrategy.org/b/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Spectrum-2-1-1.pdf> (page 2)

Building internal awareness and buy in to shift models and behaviors amongst power systems and stakeholders is part of centering equity. When compromises need to happen and equity cannot be authentically centered, efforts to be transparent with community members can reduce harm. Perhaps the most immediate benefit of centering equity is that people will show up. Surveys will get responses. Focus groups will lead to insights. Blindspots will come into view earlier to be addressed rather than costing time, talent, and treasure. Doors will open as community members allow you into their social-sphere. The best benefit is that the plans you create will match what is happening and what is needed. Furthermore, equitable climate adaptation planning will address several other urgent priorities such as housing, public health, transportation, and economic opportunity.

Adding and stirring equity into a plan template from peers can be met with cautious attitudes, political obstruction, expensive experiments, failed plans, and at worst, the lives of residents.

WHEN EQUITY IS CENTERED	WHEN EQUITY IS <i>NOT</i> CENTERED
Protection of lives and people’s safety	Costs lives
Better results and outcomes	Plans and projects fail
Reduce long term costs	Increased cost
Better alignment with what people want	Disenfranchised “constituents”
Address multiple problems at once	Worsens problems (e.g., displacement)
Community care, buy in, social cohesion	Lack of buy in and/or protest and obstruction
More participation and better feedback	Erodes trust and promotes apathy

“The NAACP believes that equity in climate change adaptation is a civil and human right that belongs to everyone...an issue of morality and fairness in that the people who have least benefited from the economic system which created climate change – in the US and around the world – are the ones who are disproportionately bearing the burdens of the negative consequences.”<sup>11</sup>

Sea level rise and climate change are global and local issues of such magnitude that it is likely that major restructuring of society will be required in order to have long term human survival. This is the best and most opportune moment while there is still time to plan, in anticipation of those changes, shifts and transitions, to intervene with the monumental task of restoration and repair of a just society.

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<https://live-naacp-site.pantheonsite.io/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Our-Communities-Our-Power-TOOLKIT-FINAL.pdf>

## Literature Review

This primer is designed to be an accessible summary of the growing body of work developed by committed NGOs and CBOs at the forefront of equitable climate adaptation and resilience planning. The following documents are given a summary description, an indication for use and some highlights of note are referenced with respective page numbers. Whereas potential uses are indicated, these documents contain insights developed from considerable effort and from the lived experience and work of both community members and organizational leaders and planners and one is encouraged to fully read each document whenever capacity allows.

### **CJA Green Zones Report**<sup>12</sup> (40 pages)

This report documents nine community led initiatives that are developing solutions to long-standing environmental health and justice issues. Specific tools, approaches and policies are highlighted and described in application in the case study documentation. This is best used for reference and inspiration for community led planning initiatives and pilot projects.

Highlights for quick reference (pages):

- Cumulative impacts → Comprehensive planning (3-4)
- Overview project location map (8)
- Clean up Green up (29)

### **Greenlining: Making Equity Real In Climate Adaptation And Community Resilience Policies And Programs: A Guidebook**<sup>13</sup> (104 pages)

This guidebook offers California policymakers (developing bills, executive orders, local measures) a blueprint on how to operationalize equity in policies and grant programs. It provides specific recommendations on how to operationalize social equity and includes examples from existing policies and grant programs to illustrate what the recommendations look like in practice. This is best used for developing policy development processes and funding programs. Specific language for policies is provided and copious examples.

Highlights for quick reference (pages):

- Questions to consider in 4 step process (12-14)
- Multisector objectives chart (24)
- Increasing levels of public impact (35)
- Examples of dedicated funding for community engagement (44)
- Strategies to avoid displacement (55-58)
- Examples of policies with equitable budgeting (60-61)
- Evaluation guidelines in policies (73)
- Social equity scores charts (87-88)
- Community interview responses (90)

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<sup>12</sup> <https://caleja.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/2018-CEJA-GREEN-ZONES-SMALLERpdf.pdf>

<sup>13</sup>

<https://greenlining.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Making-Equity-Real-in-Climate-Adaption-and-Community-Resilience-Policies-and-Programs-A-Guidebook-1.pdf>

### **USDN Equitable Community Driven Climate Preparedness<sup>14</sup>** (68 pages)

This framework provides a concise background and introduction to the problem of increased climate risk among frontline communities, describes the need for an equitable climate preparedness planning process, an introduction to social inequities and models to advance equity, an overview of the equitable, community-driven climate preparedness planning framework, which builds on a conventional planning process and describes some equitable climate resilience solutions that include typical adaptation strategies and equity considerations. This is best used for internal stakeholder engagement to ‘make the case’ for equity; developing a planning process including agency and community readiness practices and brainstorming or benchmarking solutions and strategies that incorporate equity.

Highlights for quick reference (pages):

- Figure 2 Root Causes (12)
- How government perpetuates racism (15)
- Conventional vs Equitable (26, 27)
- Good quote on community perspective on planning (31)
- Transformative Actions (intersections/stacked functions) (42, 43)
- Example solutions visuals (49, 51, 53, 55)

### **Movement Strategy Center (MSC) Facilitating Power Spectrum of Community Engagement to Ownership<sup>15</sup>** (13 pages)

This tool was developed by Rosa González of Facilitating Power, in part drawing on content from a number of public participation tools, including Arnstein’s Ladder of Citizen Participation, and the Public Participation Spectrum created by the International Association for Public Participation. The focus on this tool is to shift notions and action related to community engagement to possibilities of community ownership highlighting activities and resource allocation ratios for inspiration and benchmarking. This is best used for articulating and asserting goals for development and planning process and assessing and benchmark progress on processes in place or being implemented.

Highlights for quick reference (pages):

- Using the tool for goal setting (8)
- Using the tool for assessment (13)

### **APEN Mapping Resilience A Blueprint for Thriving in the Face of Climate Disasters<sup>16</sup>** (92 pages)

This report provides a review of approaches to community vulnerability to climate impacts in California with a background on communities disproportionately impacted by climate change related disasters in California, a set of case studies for lessons learned from examples across the U.S.; descriptions of data, tools, and analytical frameworks for understanding the

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<sup>14</sup>

[https://www.usdn.org/uploads/cms/documents/usdn\\_guide\\_to\\_equitable\\_community-driven\\_climate\\_preparedness-high\\_res.pdf](https://www.usdn.org/uploads/cms/documents/usdn_guide_to_equitable_community-driven_climate_preparedness-high_res.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> <https://movementstrategy.org/b/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Spectrum-2-1-1.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> [https://apen4ej.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/APEN-Mapping\\_Resilience-Report.pdf](https://apen4ej.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/APEN-Mapping_Resilience-Report.pdf)

intersection of climate impacts, health and well-being outcomes. This is best used for state-level decision makers (e.g., legislative committees and regulatory agency staff) offering concrete suggestions for policy applications for climate adaptation and resilience efforts.

Highlights for quick reference (pages):

- Key Recommendations (10)
- Vulnerability is multidimensional and not distributed equally across communities (21-22)
- Comparison table of mapping frameworks and indicators, by elements of climate vulnerability (58-59)
- Adaptive Capacity (68-70)
- Cascading hazards (71-72)

### **NAACP Our Communities Our Power Toolkit<sup>17</sup>** (478 pages)

The toolkit has a modular design so that modules can be used by themselves or together with the other modules so that every community can develop the adaptation plan that best meets their needs through community member led planning processes. This is one of the most comprehensive documents providing process guidance for equitable climate adaptation planning. The specific modules have strategies and models for communities to use that describe everything from affordable housing, policy development, economic justice to resilient transportation systems. This is best used for community led design processes for adaptation planning. Agencies, departments and districts can reference the toolkit to inform their role as partners to or in some cases as facilitators of community led planning processes.

Highlights for quick reference (pages):

- List of some of the ways that frontline communities in the US experience climate change (13-16)
- A few examples of what equity looks like in the context of climate adaptation (19)
- Shares the importance of and strategies for developing community vision alignment early in the process (45-52)
- Elevates the importance of community social cohesion and offers practices and examples (59-74)
- Excellent checklist for the “Anatomy of a Flawed Climate Adaptation Plan” (79-80)
- Includes the key step of assessing “pre-existing vulnerabilities” and “root causes” (87-99)

### **MSC Community Driven Resiliency Planning Framework<sup>18</sup>** (64 pages)

This document is referenced heavily in the remainder of this primer and is the most specific document to outline an equitable climate adaptation planning processes and community led process that could be used for General Planning, Hazard Mitigation Planning, Housing Elements or other local planning efforts.

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<sup>17</sup>

<https://live-naacp-site.pantheonsite.io/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Our-Communities-Our-Power-TOOLKIT-FINAL.pdf>

<sup>18</sup> [https://movementstrategy.org/b/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/10.24.17\\_WEB\\_CD-CRP1.pdf](https://movementstrategy.org/b/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/10.24.17_WEB_CD-CRP1.pdf)

# Community Driven Climate Resiliency Planning. A Framework for Centering Equity in the Planning Process.

Advocates for Community Driven Climate Resiliency Planning (CDCRP) understand that community-driven planning processes will create stronger climate resilience solutions because communities most vulnerable to the effects of climate change have relevant direct experience and information that is not otherwise accessible to public agencies and departments. Community-driven planning processes increase the flow of critical data from communities to decision-makers, while cultivating human capacities essential to putting solutions into action.

When those who are most vulnerable are at the heart of society's efforts to build a resilient future, then equity is baked into every aspect of the planning process and planning itself becomes a climate resilience activity. It's a way for us to move towards a future in which ecosystems, human labor and cultures are integrated into a thriving regenerative web of life.<sup>19</sup>

The CDCRP is especially relevant for an "equity in planning model" because it has been developed by community-based organizations from across the country to strengthen the fields of City Planning and Climate Adaptation through culturally relevant, democratic processes that meaningfully engage vulnerable and impacted communities in defining and building climate resilience.<sup>20</sup>

## Principles of Community Driven Resiliency Planning

<sup>21</sup>Because climate solutions require fundamental shifts in governance, community stewardship, and essential systems such as food and energy, it is useful to view planning processes as opportunities to cultivate the human and organizational capacity for such shifts. These principles provide stakeholders some direction on how best to implement planning processes in ways that support necessary shifts.

1. Whole Systems Thinking - Building climate resilience calls for a holistic view of the challenges we face and solutions at the intersection of people, the environment and the economy. Systems and ecological thinking can help restore and cultivate balance within and between human communities, and between human communities and the rest of the natural world.

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<sup>19</sup>

[https://kresge.org/sites/default/files/library/community\\_drive\\_resilience\\_planning\\_from\\_movement\\_strategy\\_center.pdf](https://kresge.org/sites/default/files/library/community_drive_resilience_planning_from_movement_strategy_center.pdf)

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[https://kresge.org/sites/default/files/library/community\\_drive\\_resilience\\_planning\\_from\\_movement\\_strategy\\_center.pdf](https://kresge.org/sites/default/files/library/community_drive_resilience_planning_from_movement_strategy_center.pdf)

<sup>21</sup> [https://movementstrategy.org/b/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/10.24.17\\_WEB\\_CD-CRP1.pdf](https://movementstrategy.org/b/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/10.24.17_WEB_CD-CRP1.pdf)

2. **Desired Outcomes Reflected in Every Step** - By grounding planning processes in the practices of equity, democracy, health and wellness, we increase the likelihood that plans will deliver on decreasing vulnerability, and increasing long-term community viability. Local resilience practitioners recognize that strategies already exist in impacted communities, and effective resilience planning processes build on these strategies and community assets.
3. **Planning Process as a Learning Process** - We are all on a steep learning curve when it comes to understanding and adapting to the confluence of climate disruptions with economic inequality, pollution, and inadequate democratic structures. Community Driven climate resilience planning is ripe with opportunities for learning among a range of stakeholders. Taking a learning approach can help shift dominant narratives towards equity and resiliency and can expand stakeholder awareness of a wider range of climate solutions.
4. **Planning into Action** - A common pitfall of community-driven planning is that the process stops with the publication of the plan and implementation stalls due to lack of resources and political will. Due to this there is a need to:
  - Actively organize residents and other stakeholders to integrate planning and implementation.
  - Begin early in the planning process to identify and/or develop creative financing models and mechanisms to build community wealth and assets for implementation.
  - Build necessary systems changes—such as shared governance practices and removal of barriers to public participation—into advocacy efforts.
5. **Balancing Power Dynamics Among Stakeholders** - Bringing our communities into balance is not just about using resources sustainably; it's also about recognizing the imbalances of power that negatively impact vulnerable communities. Community-driven planning gives us the opportunity to:
  - Increase awareness of systems of oppression and cultures of exclusion that contribute to climate vulnerability.
  - Build new alliances that increase the capacity of historically marginalized communities to influence decision-makers and drive change.
  - Build new institutions that increase community capacity to finance local solutions in ways that continue to increase community assets.

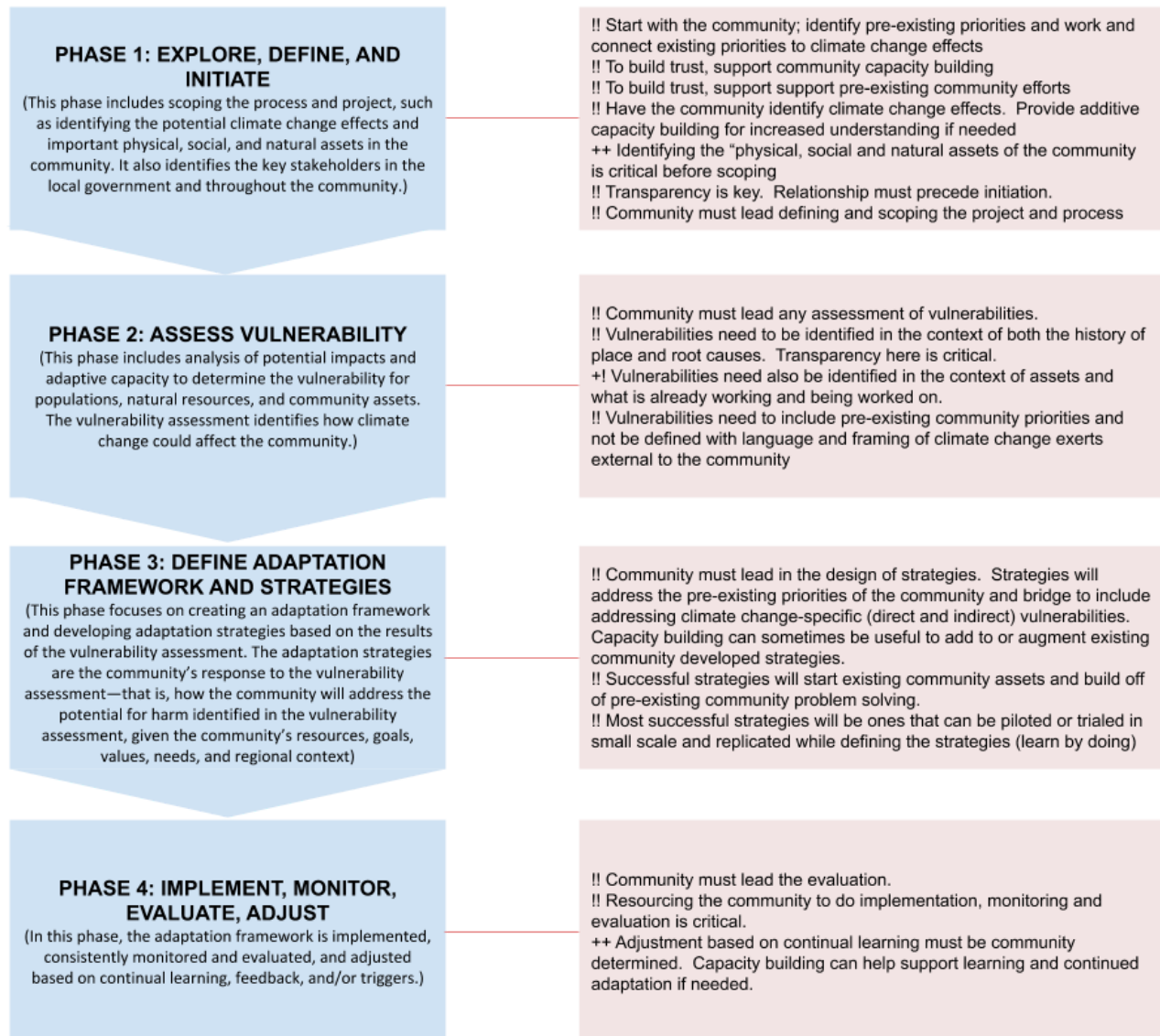


# Practical Applications

## Equity in a Planning Process

Constructive critique of reference (conventional and contemporary) planning processes can help in both understanding where current processes break down trust between communities and City and County staff as well as inform a revised planning process which includes equity at each step (presented later in this document). Here CalOES’s “Phases of the Adaptation Planning Process”) is used as a reference point for current planning processes. Adapted from source: [CALOES CA Adaptation Planning Guide](#)

### EQUITY LENS CRITIQUE





## Equitable Planning Process

Typically, planning processes are denoted as linear. Those solving for equity must shift mental models to match the complex nature of social issues and community partnership building. Thinking about the co-design process as notes of sounds that get composed into song or pieces of fabric that get sewn into a quilt may allow for flexibility inside structure.



Government agencies and departments should not ever do this web of steps on their own. Equitable planning is a partnership where community groups hold power and help to guide and co-design processes. If an agency or district does not have internal buy in to center equity in planning processes or a commitment to a community driven, shared power co-design process then staff are encouraged to make the case and build power internally to facilitate the required shifts. Where authentic commitment to centering equity is not yet possible, harm reduction can sometimes be facilitated through transparency with community organizations about the limitations. Trusting relationships is the critical success factor in co-design partnerships.

Community is not inserted into one phase. Community is the engine that drives the process. CalOES planning process is linear. If you are truly partnering with a community you “move at the speed of trust” (Adrienne Marie Brown) and start where it makes sense for the community. For example, if the planning is taking place in a city where a significant amount of its citizens are newly arrived due to displacement from other countries or cities, then power building might be a more effective place to start than problem definition. When planning efforts are required on a specific timeline that is prohibitive to trust building, one can attempt to push back on imposed deadlines or move into a harm reduction and transparently disclose to community members the constraints imposed by a timeline in each of the following steps.

It is important to acknowledge that community-based organizations have capacity constraints due to the sometimes urgent nature of their work and an invitation to a planning process might exceed potential capacity. Similar to time constraints, when this happens one can move into a harm reduction position.

### Comparing and Contrasting CalOES and CDCRP Framework

1. Before you **Explore, Define and Initiate** you need a process for **Internal Power Building** and **Visioning** [correlates closest to CalOES Phase I] We recommend utilizing a [“Strategic Compass”](#) for the beginning Power Building Phase to identify the values and spectrum of strength represented on the internal team implementing the planning process. Ideally, “all stakeholders are aware of the differentials in power and privilege among them and consciously work to balance power.” Some Power Building activities include “conducting trainings on race, power and privilege and articulating participation agreements which actively address issues of race, power and privilege that impact participation. The purpose of a [Strategic Compass](#) is to support the cohesion, coordinated actions, purposeful practice, and strategic decision-making of the team in the development of a planning process that centers equity and community driven processes. Identify funding available to implement the planning process and properly resource partners:
  - o Examples:
    - i. Identify that CalTrans has funds but do not apply until you have Community Partners
    - ii. Identify that you have \$100,000 (or more or less based on your context) reserved for “community engagement”. These funds reserved to eventually pay community to lead/participate, not to do something already written out. In any process that has been defined by state policy transparency about the process and what types of decisions or policies community members can address through that process is important to disclose to community members.
    - iii. Be creative when constraints arise due to formal competitive bid processes. Engage community members in developing RFP processes if possible.

Clarify your vision through a visioning process. We recommend using this [Practice Guide for Visioning Exercises](#). To answer the question “What is your vision for centering equity in your planning process”. Below is an example created for another County.

Vision: By the mid 21st century, the communities of XX have a culture built on the practice of community-led solutions. People who serve in government actively work to disrupt

structural oppressions and address the impact to communities, shifting systems to lift up the leadership of those who were historically most excluded from decision-making (such as, people of color, low income people, indigenous people, people with disabilities, rural residents, and others). Community members who are most impacted by climate instability and targeted by unjust systems work together to identify challenges and design solutions that directly improve their lives. These processes draw on multiple ways of knowing, including systems thinking, ecological principles, cultural practices, knowledge of social and ecological history of the community, imagination, and creativity. People throughout the county come together across differences, intergenerationally, to foster connection and belonging, cultivating a thriving, just, and resilient society regionally and beyond.

2. In place of **Assessing vulnerabilities** focus instead on "assessing the assets" that your local community brings through an [Ecosystem mapping](#) process. Once you have completed your ecosystem mapping, you will have identified Community Organizations and leaders that will be centered in the planning process. Humbly request a partnership with communities that are *already* utilizing their own processes. They may not be using the same language as you but every community is organizing and planning for their future. The goal is to align your work with their existing plans and processes (essentially advancing it and them as it has to be worth the time and effort of the communities you partner with to engage). From here you will partner to:
  - o Establish and co-design a formal agreement. Funding for Community Organization participation should be in place at this point (not fundraising for it). We highly recommend funding come from an intermediary such as private foundations, community foundations or agencies at other jurisdictional levels. [Example here](#)
3. The beauty of Community Driven planning is that it is not always linear but oftentimes allows for redundancy to revisit crucial steps in the planning process. The next step after solidifying the leadership role of the Anchor org/s and establishing your formal agreement is the official launch of the **"Co-Development of the Planning Model"**. Once you launch with the Community anchor in the lead, then you will revisit previous steps outlined in the CDCRP wheel including Power Building and Visioning, only this time the process is done grounded in a true partnership model.
4. **Co-Development of Planning Model**  
The pre-planning phase where cross-sector coalitions of community-based organizations and resident leaders define core values, principles, practices, and approaches for community-driven planning.
5. **Power Building**  
Investing in both people and systems to build cross-sector coalitions, increasing self-governance and democratic engagement capacity {this can look like training in communication, effective dialog and deliberation, collective decision making skill building and, often, conflict resolution skill building}, and building strategies and connections across all levels of governance and stakeholders (from residents to decision-makers).
6. **Visioning**  
Defining the goal - making sure it's community-derived, inspires social cohesion and motivates engagement for the work ahead.

### **7. Problem Definition**

Identifying a shared and holistic understanding across stakeholders of the nature of the challenges the community faces.

### **8. Community Assessment**

A participatory process engaging residents in assessing their climate vulnerabilities and resiliency assets.

### **9. Solutions Development**

Utilizes two complementary strategies - 1) transforming existing systems and 2) building a new climate resilience civic and economic infrastructure. An example of this type of solutions development approach is described in the Acterra Community-based Vulnerability Planning Pilot Project Report - a project in partnership between the San Mateo County Office of Sustainability, Acterra, Climate Change Community Team of East Palo Alto, Ecology and Environment, Inc. a Member of WSP and Urban Permaculture Institute with funding from the California Department of Transportation.<sup>22</sup>

### **10. Interventions to Keep the Planning Process on Track (woven throughout)**

Interventions to ensure the planning process maintains its integrity and commitment to community-derived solutions and processes for equitable outcomes. This can be accomplished through regular feedback from the community organizations or through a process assessment tool such as the Movement Strategy Center (MSC) Facilitating Power Spectrum of Community Engagement to Ownership resources described in the Literature Review.

## Planning Process Steps - Practical Applications

In effort to show, not just tell, below are practical examples of how mental model and behavior shifts have taken place to produce planning projects with multiple outcomes and engaged community partners.

The crucial disclaimer for this section is that logic models or matrices are limited attempts at showcasing what happens; they are often missing the social ecosystemic conditions that can make or break a process. In other words, following the steps may get you further but success will be determined by the relationships, trust in those relationships, and the planned agility to go where the relationships take you.

### **Readiness for planning / relationship building**

#### Considerations and recommendations:

As you begin this process it will be important to build your institution's internal capacity to truly center equity and a community driven planning approach. A recommended starting place is to complete a Strategic Compass, whose goals are to support the cohesion, coordinated actions, purposeful practice, and strategic decision-making of the team in the development of a planning process that centers equity and Community driven processes. Your Strategic Compass will then lead you to clarifying your vision and goals for centering equity.

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<sup>22</sup> <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1fXw0uqyvG-umlteTmfYuZN1lz0CBmvR3/view?usp=sharing>

We also recommend implementing an ecosystem mapping process once you have completed your vision, to identify the community partners with existing activity with, at the right time, the intent to humbly invite them into planning leadership.

### Pre-planning / Budgeting

#### Considerations and recommendations:

As mentioned above, it is important to identify funds to compensate community leadership and partnership in your planning process. Ideally these funds would be identified at the same time that you are finalizing your own budget for your internal team. If you have existing relationships with community leaders and organizations who may eventually partner with you, it is wise to hear from them what budgetary needs they have. In the same way that budgets are created for external consultants, the budget for community leadership is central for the success of the planning approach.

***All of the below become community led and the institutions become “partners” so there is no need to pre-design.***

#### **Scoping planning efforts/RFP for consultant / planning partners - Stakeholder engagement (other than community) - Finalizing plan - Plan Implementation**

#### Considerations and recommendations:

The above steps may or may not happen but key is that the anchor organization will lead that process. {Leading organizations can self-determine which pieces are most appropriate for them to focus on or delegate to other organizations or to the city, county or state partner -- the key here is that the determination of capacity is initiated by the community organizations}

Current non-community led planning processes often hire non-local technical experts to consult and implement the planning process. Instead of hosting an RFP for an outside consultant to lead the planning, our model has you preparing a partnering agreement with Community leads directly or a trusted intermediary (e.g., UPI, MSC, local facilitator) who will facilitate this process. This partnering agreement will be executed after you have completed an ecosystem mapping process to identify anchor org/s and leads, or after you have identified a Community lead who is trusted and excited to partner with you on the planning effort.

## Components of an Ideal Climate Adaptation Plan<sup>23</sup>

By definition, each community-developed climate adaptation plan is unique to the community that developed it to meet their own needs. With that said, there are some broad components that ideal climate adaptation plans have in common. These plans center equity and resilience in the process of mapping out climate change adaptation strategies. Here are some of the components of an ideal climate adaptation plan to keep in while working through the practice of crafting a plan:

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<https://live-naacp-site.pantheonsite.io/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Our-Communities-Our-Power-TOOLKIT-FINAL.pdf>

- ❑ Community-derived visions are at the core of adaptation plans
- ❑ Community-driven planning that advances a culture of democratic engagement (participatory dialogue, deliberation and decision making)
- ❑ Engages all members of the community, including youth, older adults, differently abled people, LGBTQ+, low-income people, etc.
- ❑ Assesses local/community vulnerabilities and assets
- ❑ Includes equity and resilience indicators
- ❑ Includes racial justice, gender justice, economic justice, etc. analyses that address systemic issues that contribute to disproportionate climate impacts
- ❑ Budget transparency, advances the new economy {community wealth building strategies that include more community ownership of real assets, cooperative business ownership, non-extractive returns on capital, etc}, includes community-based financing
- ❑ Includes both infrastructure-related indicators and human impacts
- ❑ Puts forth comprehensive solutions that address the root causes of climate vulnerability
- ❑ Provides place-based adaptation solutions
- ❑ Includes aspirational goals that will result in true resilience, for example: housing security for all, food security for all, energy security for all, water security for all, etc.

## Summary

“The opportunity for increasing community resilience is in the very process of developing a plan when those who are most vulnerable are at the heart of society’s efforts to build a resilient future.”<sup>24</sup> This primer attempts to clarify the scope of equity in planning, make the case for why equity is important or imperative in climate adaptation and resilience planning and only superficially describes the steps and phases of equity centered planning processes, but references a significant body of work with extensive practice and process illustration for more comprehensive review. Whereas it is beyond the scope of this primer to detail the methods for internal power building and galvanizing commitment or even transforming models and systems to authentically center equity in planning processes the resources referenced include significant detail on activities and resources on how to get to the point where this primer can be more effectively utilized. If the reader finds that their agency, department or district is not yet committed to equity then the primary role might be to implement internal power building activities as an equity advocate and to reduce harm through transparent communication with frontline community members and leaders. This primer mainly focuses on outlining a vision for a practical authentic approach to centering equity, once defined. Such a vision may not yet be achievable in all jurisdictions and in all circumstances. Indeed it may be an exceedingly rare circumstance where the commitment and resources are aligned to support equitable planning, but without a navigation device to know where we need to orient we may get stuck inadvertently in perpetuating cycles of oppression, disenfranchisement and harm. We hope this primer can be like a needle on the compass (the increasing body of detailed literature and evidence based practice) to support guiding our collective work in the storms that are to come with the inevitable impacts of climate change.

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<sup>24</sup> [https://movementstrategy.org/b/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/10.24.17\\_WEB\\_CD-CRP1.pdf](https://movementstrategy.org/b/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/10.24.17_WEB_CD-CRP1.pdf)