



Making Climate
Infrastructure Equitable
A Toolkit and Workbook





Acknowledgments

The generous support of the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Wells Fargo Resilient Communities Program, and Mitsubishi Corporation Foundation has made this toolkit possible. The author would also like to thank [HIP Investor](#) for its contributions and input throughout the process of this toolkit's development.

About the Author and Contributors

The authors and contributors to this toolkit and workbook are a collective of three women who each center cultural context, belonging, and equity in their work.

Erin McClarty - Author

Erin McClarty is an impact architect and attorney by training. Her Houston-based practice helps organizations, institutions, and local governments translate their impact ideas into life-changing projects, programs and initiatives through education, resources, and tools.

Maya Ford - Graphics and Contributor

Principal of FordMomentum! (FM!), Maya Ford is a first generation American of Afro-Latino descent with a strategic communications firm that inspires inclusion around the globe through behavior change communications.

Lonna Dawson - Editing and Contributor

Lonna Dawson is a writer and journalist. She applies journalistic principles to strategic communications to create authentic, accurate, and engaging brand messages.

About CDP	3
Context & Intention	3
Methodology & Approach	4
Definitions & Language	6
Big Picture Concepts	7
Internal Work	10
Ideating & Designing Projects	11
Implementing Projects	12
Social Equity & Financing	13
Before You Go	15
Workbook	16

CDP is a global non-profit that drives companies and governments to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions, safeguard water resources and protect forests. Voted number one climate research provider by investors and working with institutional investors with assets of over US\$106 trillion, we leverage investor and buyer power to motivate companies to disclose and manage their environmental impacts. Over 8,400 companies with over 50% of global market capitalization disclosed environmental data through CDP in 2019. This is in addition to the over 920 cities, states and regions who disclosed, making CDP's platform one of the richest sources of information globally on how companies and governments are driving environmental change.



This toolkit originates from a yearlong initiative of CDP through its Matchmaker Program. Matchmaker aims to bridge the divides among infrastructure ideas, interdepartmental communication and funding. By working directly with cities, CDP highlights sustainable urban infrastructure projects to the investment community.

Launched in 2017, Matchmaker provides investors, project developers, banks, engineering firms and other subscribers with information on climate change and water infrastructure projects in need of financing across cities worldwide. Through Matchmaker's specialized dashboard, potential financiers can view analytical data on city climate and water risks, as well as opportunities for investment.

The intention of this document is not to serve as a template, but to ignite ideas on how to ideate, pilot, implement, and facilitate projects that equitably benefit people and respond responsibly to the causes and impacts of anthropogenic climate change. This toolkit is developed, written, and designed within a North American context, using a lexicon and concepts most familiar in the North American region. Moreover, the target audience for this toolkit is individuals working with a government (whether city, municipal, or state), regional consortia, academic institutions, or other organizations to develop climate interventions in their communities. The concepts, however, just as easily apply to organizers, community leaders, or other individuals with an interest in developing community-centered solutions to mitigate or adapt to the impacts of climate change.

Please use this toolkit and workbook as you feel is appropriate for you and your city, based on where you and your city currently are in your undertakings. Some sections may not resonate at this moment; take what does, and put your own equity spin on it.



Methodology and Approach

More Than a Lens

Metaphors for **social equity** are many. For some, social equity is a filter. For others, social equity is a lens. Then, there are those who see social equity as a framework. Though subtle, the nuances among each approach have a monumental impact on how, and whether, social equity manifests in climate interventions. For this reason, how the author perceives social equity warrants brief discussion.

To filter requires that a design or “thing” of some sort go through a screening process. Filtering, however, is not an integral part of the “thing” being filtered but instead an application after. Similarly, a lens divorces us from the object of observation. A lens intimates an observer and not a participant—at least in the moment of observation.

For these reasons, the treatment of social equity in this toolkit is as an outline that requires development. In this context, social equity moves from a mental construct to a sensory way of being. Instead of social equity being something to look for, or think about, it becomes a way to see and be. A shift to embodiment allows projects, initiatives, and programs to move from “becoming” more equitable to being built equitably. The dynamism of embodiment means social equity is no longer a static goal but a life-long practice that requires doing the work and

the work is self-investigation into the beliefs and behaviors that intentionally or unintentionally instigate the suffering of others by upholding practices of oppression.

Equity Must Be Intentional and Explicit

While some applications of inequity may be unconscious and unintentional, the narratives, beliefs, systems and institutions from which they originate are *very much* intentional. Social equity requires explicitness and intention. Note, equity differs from equality in that equality focuses on equal treatment while equity focuses on equal outcomes. Parity in outcome comes in acknowledging and honoring our difference, not in erasing it.

Without heat there is no friction, and without friction there is no movement. With explicitness and intention comes discomfort—especially when met with responses of dismissiveness, **gaslighting** or incredulity. The departments and agencies in cities and counties must equip internal stakeholders with the language, license, and skills to name this discomfort. They must supply these tools to create non-traumatic spaces to talk about this discomfort in a generative way. The tools must be prioritized and included as part of training mentorship and peer-circles in order to create trust and support for when the work is challenging. There are groups, such as GARE¹ or USDN’s Urban Sustainability Directors Network², that create spaces for such support.

It Is Not a Matter of “If” But “Where”

The places, systems, language, processes, and institutions surrounding us are all a product of design. An individual, or group of individuals, built infrastructure with their perspectives, biases, or prejudices. When we think of how many systems, processes, procedures, or institutions we use originate from times when inequity was codified, it is easy to see how prejudice, discrimination, or inequity are built into every facet of our society.

Knowingly or unknowingly the perpetuation of these systems happens when we rely on language and systems without interrogation—unaware of who is responsible for its design, the original purpose of the design, and who the design is for. All this to say, it is not a matter of whether inequities are in a department, agency, program or initiative but a matter of where. Local government stakeholders must develop the capacity to acknowledge this reality, and the role we each play, with compassion and consciousness.

Think Bigger

The level of deep expertise, experience and passion in city and county departments can cause a hyper focus on specific projects, programs, or interventions. It is important to remember a community solar project is not about the solar panels; it's about creating affordable, accessible, regenerative, and reliable energy in a way that allows for dignity, autonomy and a higher quality of life for the community. This larger purpose must be centered to keep projects from going in a direction that benefits the solar panels and not the community.

Use a **multi-disciplinary** approach that integrates the different skill sets, perspectives, aptitudes and strengths of the community. Simultaneously, use an **interdisciplinary** approach to acknowledge the holistic nature of the community—many hands make light work, as they say. Using the example of solar again, under an interdisciplinary approach solar becomes an opportunity to train community members in solar installation and then hire residents to complete the solar project in their neighborhoods.



Scan to View:
What is Affordability?

KICKSTART QUERY

IS THIS COMMON IN HUMANS?

All organisms organize using systems. The systems change by time and organism type, but historically repeat themselves. Identify what system you're trying to solve a problem in, first, then look for root cause. This is the most important step because inputs are important to the outcomes. If the inputs aren't based on evidence, the outputs will not matter.

IS THIS A DERIVATIVE OF OPPRESSION, SUPPRESSION, OR ENSLAVEMENT?

If the answer is **YES, STOP EVERYTHING**. Determine if your part is to be a part of the problem, or solution. The oppression, suppression or enslavement of others is not only morally corrupt, but it's also economically and socially corrupt. While there may be benefits short term, the practice is not sustainable or cost-effective. Go back a step and identify where this has happened in the past and identify what methods were used to oppress, suppress, or enslave. Seek solutions that do not repeat that and seek competitive advantage in other ways.

DOES THIS SYSTEM EXIST ELSEWHERE?

Where is this system currently implemented in a successful way? Look at other industries who serve the same group that you're trying to solve a problem for. Look at their outcomes and then identify what systems they use. Most successful systems have streamlined processes that are familiar to consumers. Examples include: ATM banking processes are the same as grocery store and air travel self-checkout. Apple iTunes and Amazon Kindle both use cloud storage so you can use any device you want to access entertainment. Public interfacing systems can be found in every industry and their improvements can easily be a part of your solution.

IS THERE SPACE FOR INNOVATION OR INVENTION?

If everything in the universe is in constant motion this implies that change is constant, too. Thus, there is always opportunity for change. Innovation encourages the improvement of what already exists. Invention is when something new is created. Most solutions are solved by removing things that are no longer useful and maximizing existing resources to increase productivity and use. Depending on which one is necessary, you're now prepared to explore solutions with a solid foundation.

© 2019, Maya Ford. All rights reserved.

¹ For more information on GARE, please visit <https://www.racialequityalliance.org>.

² For more information on the Urban Sustainability Directors Network, please visit <https://www.usdn.org/products-equity.html#HumanDesign>

Definitions and Language

Asset: More than financial wealth and belongings, this toolkit takes a much broader view of what constitutes an asset. All the things that make a community what it is, not just institutions or buildings, are an asset. This includes history, tradition, stories, existing relationships, relationship structures, culture, heritage and similar attributes of a community.

Capital: As defined here, capital follows the Eight Forms of Capital: social, material, financial, living, intellectual, experiential, spiritual, and cultural.³

Co-Benefits: The benefits we create in managing climate control, above and beyond the benefits of a more stable climate.⁴

Ecosystem Builder: An individual or entity that facilitates the connection between people, places, resources, knowledge, assistance, and services.

Feedback Vehicle(s): This is where a community is forced to center its conversations, ideas, and decisions on topics developed by entities outside the community and brought to the community for thoughts after the fact.

Gaslighting: Gaslighting is a term based on a play in 1938, that was also the subject of subsequent films, in which a husband manipulates his wife into believing she is clinically insane by making changes to her environment and facts and insisting that she is misperceiving. It captures the practice of denying, dismissing, lying, and misdirecting in a way that causes an individual to question their experience, perceptions or reality.

Implicit Bias: A belief or attitude that affects our understanding, decisions, and actions and that exists without our conscious awareness.⁵

Interdisciplinary: Designing projects in a way that involves multiple industries, topics, or areas of interest within the same discipline.

Intersectionality: Coined by Professor Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989, this term describes the ways in which race, class, gender, and other aspects of our identity

intersect, overlap and interact with one another, informing the way in which individuals simultaneously experience oppression and privilege in their daily lives interpersonally and systemically. Intersectionality promotes the idea that aspects of our identity do not work in a silo.⁶

Multi-Disciplinary: Engaging in climate initiatives in a way that combines more than one discipline or field of study that may be disparate but are interconnected.

Self-Determination: The ability for someone to make choices freely, without influence, manipulation, or pressure from an individual or entity other than themselves.

Social Equity: To define social equity the authors look to the definition of equity from the Center for Study of Social Policy. It is "The effort to provide different levels of support based on an individual's or group's needs in order to achieve fairness in outcomes. Working to achieve equity acknowledges unequal starting places and the need to correct the imbalance."⁷

Some practitioners recognize various forms of equity—racial equity for example. Where **racial equity** ensures "Race is no longer a predictor of outcomes, leading to more just outcomes in policies, practices, attitudes, and cultural messages,"⁸ social equity, as used in this toolkit, seeks to ensure zip codes, dwellings, culture, citizenship status, or financial status do not determine outcomes, and that all people have access to the resources, expertise, and systems of a local government.

Sustainability: Present day application of sustainability places a focus on the "what"—things such as recycling, solar, or removal of greenhouse gases. This toolkit encourages local governments to center on the "why" of sustainability. Sustainability is the creation of life conducive environments that take care of present needs renewably, so as not to compromise the needs of future generations. Sustainability is not solar panels; it's the creation and maintenance

of life in a way that nurtures people and the planet. This being the case, use of sustainability throughout this toolkit does not limit itself to specific interventions but encapsulates this much larger vision. The needs of a specific community, and not the means of meeting those needs, becomes the priority.

Values: The traits, behaviors, characteristics, or moral imperatives an individual, entity, or community cares about that motivates action, priorities, inspiration, and decisions.

CALLOUT LEGEND

Explore Through Experiments: These indicate a tip to help readers develop small experiments around the concepts introduced. The intention is to help normalize iteration, learning, and information gathering.

³ The Eight Forms of Capital is a framework popularized in the field of permaculture. More on the concept can be found in a 2011 article by Ethan Roland & Gregory Landua <http://www.regenterprise.com/8-forms-of-capital/>, with traces of the language found in a 1986 academic journal piece by Pierre Bourdieu Bourdieu, P. (1986) The forms of capital. In J. Richardson (Ed.) Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education (New York, Greenwood), 241-258

⁴ What are co-benefits? (n.d.). Retrieved October 30, 2020, from <http://www.theclimatebonus.org/cobenefits.php>

⁵ CSSP (2019). "Key Equity Terms and Concepts: A Glossary for Shared Understanding." Washington, DC: Center for the Study of Social Policy. Available at: <https://cssp.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Key-Equity-Terms-and-Concepts-vol1.pdf>

⁶ CSSP (2019). "Key Equity Terms and Concepts: A Glossary for Shared Understanding." Washington, DC: Center for the Study of Social Policy. Available at: <https://cssp.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Key-Equity-Terms-and-Concepts-vol1.pdf>

⁷ CSSP (2019). "Key Equity Terms and Concepts: A Glossary for Shared Understanding." Washington, DC: Center for the Study of Social Policy. Available at: <https://cssp.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Key-Equity-Terms-and-Concepts-vol1.pdf>

⁸ CSSP (2019). "Key Equity Terms and Concepts: A Glossary for Shared Understanding." Washington, DC: Center for the Study of Social Policy. Available at: <https://cssp.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Key-Equity-Terms-and-Concepts-vol1.pdf>

Big Picture Concepts

Tailor Social Equity to the Community and Cultural Context

Just as our environments are dynamic, so too is social equity. To see social equity as static increases the likelihood of perpetuating inequity in climate programs and initiatives.

City and county stakeholders must be intimate with what social equity looks for their neighborhoods, communities, cities, counties, and regions. How fair outcomes look will change dramatically when applying the cultural, historical, and geographic context of a city or county. Does the local government know what its city or county looks like when where an individual lives, works, or plays is no longer a determinant of their resources, health, financial wealth, or service accessibility?

The clearer and more collectively drawn the picture is—the better. Developing big picture concepts is an ongoing conversation that is essential to not only understanding what lies underneath the spoken needs of the community, but what local governments are working toward in the eyes of those they work for.

[See Building Muscle Moment #1 - Big Picture Concepts in the workbook, page 17.](#)

Dive Into the Complexity of the Problem

As humans, our inclination is to resolve dissonance as quickly as possible. We quickly resolve disconnects between what we see and what we believe to be true when it does not align with our understanding or experience. In the process, complex and systemic challenges undergo oversimplification. From here it is easy to assume direct causation chains that do not exist or fill gaps as best we can from our own experience bank. Not only does this oversimplification happen on the side of local government, it happens on the side of the community as well. Community members may cite one challenge when in fact there are a number of layers hiding a deeper challenge.

The systems perpetuating inequity are deep, complex and felt even when not fully understood or spoken. It is important city and municipal stakeholders employ different tools to see, hear, and experience challenges as a way of better understanding. It's in experiencing challenges first hand that local governments will understand what levels of support will lead to outcomes in parity with the rest of the city or county.

[See Building Muscle Moment #2 - Dive into the Complexity of the Problem in the workbook, page 18.](#)

Does the local government know what its city or county looks like when where an individual lives, works, or plays is no longer a determinant of their resources, health, financial wealth, or service accessibility?



Work Backwards From The Solution

To work in a way that overcomes the inequities built into so many facets of life requires diversity in thought and solutions as well as approach. To designate a solution as *the* solution for specific challenges in a community is to fall prey to the oversimplification discussed above. The approach of adopting solutions communities opt in and out of encourages a monolithic perspective of community—that being what works for one works for all.

However, this is equality not equity. It does not accommodate differences in preference or needs, which can diverge substantially across a neighborhood let alone a city or county.

For example, if older home stock leaks energy, the solution is not an HVAC system. HVAC systems are an *approach*. The *solution* is to develop a suite of interventions allowing for comfort and efficiency *that do* not result in high energy bills or **capital** costs. From this suite, community members may choose variations or packages that meet their needs. Another example is the [“middle housing” solutions](#) Green Hammer built in Portland, working backwards from the need to densify housing to supply more affordable housing stock as a *solution* and developing multi-unit complexes on a smaller footprint to create that affordable housing as an *approach*.

Social equity acknowledges **self-determination** and preference in a way that does not impose and ensures the appropriate services, initiatives, technology, expertise or assistance is available to various communities in varying degrees due to varying barriers.

Understand the People

Implementing projects that provide the appropriate level of support to ensure parity in outcomes requires local governments know its people outside of numbers alone. There are a number of ways individuals choose, or choose not to, identify themselves that necessitate a move from demographics to embracing **intersectionality** through individual storytelling. Experiences vary greatly depending on intersectionalities, even where individuals cluster within specific demographic categories.

Community data collection must include stories, as storytelling is a data point. For many communities, storytelling not only includes accurate intergenerational data points on genealogy and geographic migration, but it is a first person account of needs, fears, challenges, and desires. [Germantown Hub](#) in Philadelphia has seen this first hand with its community journalism project.

Every story follows general formats and archetypes.⁹ Through active and empathetic listening, local governments can track for these archetypes to discover who comprises trust networks and support systems (the heroes), what barriers and challenges exist (the hero’s dilemma), or alternatively what is of most importance to them (the voyage and return). Tracking stories ensures climate interventions respond to the multifacetedness of communities and allows government stakeholders to better curate service partners, resources, and approaches that generate **co-benefits**. Additionally, CDP has resources to help brainstorm co-benefit opportunities.¹⁰

Explore Through Experiments

When community members laser in on specific and granular interventions, note answers, while digging deeper to what underlies those answers. There may be unspoken experiences, assumptions, and values that offer rich insight into a much bigger vision. Try Taiichi Ono of Toyota’s approach of asking “why” five times in a way that is not antagonizing but gently prodding.

Explore Through Experiments

The next time the local government is collecting data on community members during a community meeting or design chaurette try having the community members discuss themselves through story. A story can be a prompt that asks about a specific experience.

⁹Though the phrase finds its origins in Carl Jung’s psychology work, the use here is literary. There are dilemmas, struggles, and triumphs all human beings can relate to. Archetypes are a shorthand way of packaging these themes through the values, behavior traits, or struggles of a character or through the symbolism of an event or place. Jean Shinoda Bolen has written a seminal book on archetypes in *Goddesses in Everywoman*.

¹⁰ CDP. (2020) [The Co-Benefits of Climate Action: Accelerating City-level Ambition](#) [White paper].

Sustain Progress, Regenerate the Environment and Transform the Community

Stabilizing community members physically, financially, mentally, and spiritually is key to building the trust, safety, space, and healing necessary to increase the efficacy of climate interventions. Stabilization, however, is a means and not the end. For impact, the goal of climate interventions must be transformation. What constitutes “transformative” will change with circumstances and the community. However, the key differentiator of transformative interventions is that more of what currently exists is unsatisfactory as an outcome. Transformative interventions seek to get a community exponentially closer to equity.

Getting communities to outcomes of parity means moving toward climate interventions that not only sustain but are generative. For example, the decision of [Huerto Roma Verde](#) to crowdsource the rebuild of its community after a natural disaster is an exemplar of community transformation, bioconstruction, and regenerative design. The creation of an energy innovation center that crowdsources intellectual property and resources to create an energy hub the community owns and then leverages to fund additional infrastructure projects is more impactful than simply hiring community members. The latter, while helpful, is transactional and prioritizes short-term, incremental change that may reinforce existing inequities. The former regeneratively seeds progress through progress in a way that transforms the community.

Networks Versus Hub and Spoke

Not all communities have access to the same tools, technical expertise, and knowledge with respect to climate control interventions. Where local governments deploy tools, resources, expertise, capital, **assets**, and materials is in an important step toward outcomes of parity. However, equally important is where those tools, resources, expertise, capital, assets, and materials live. Decentralize access by pushing tools, resources, expertise, capital, assets and materials out into community spaces —let the community decide its challenges, solutions, and approach.

A term used in the entrepreneurial space, an **ecosystem builder** takes a network approach by facilitating the connection between people, places, resources, knowledge, assistance, and services. For example, Al Borde, an architectural practice, created a collective architectural school in a community after completing several projects for them. The private practice felt it important the community cultivate architectural skill sets that their cultural context could inform and adapt while the firm took on a more facilitative role of advising, finding partners, and connecting resources. CDP has a resource to help with building these collaborative relationships.¹¹

Explore Through Experiments

The Heron Foundation is in the process of pushing its assets into the community, for the community to decide the amount of grants and who receives them. What tool, resource, or asset does your local government have that it's traditionally held control over and can experiment with having the community steward?

¹¹[City-business Climate Alliances](#): A step-by-step guide for developing successful collaborations

CLICKABLE TOOLS

- ▼ Tailor social equity by researching through [ethnographic techniques](#)
- ▼ Understand more about your community by developing [personas](#) and [storyboards](#)
- ▼ See the need to deconstruct by reading about [Atlanta's transportation wins and struggles](#)
- ▼ Learn how to design regeneratively and transformatively by reading [Designing for Regenerative Cultures](#) by Daniel Christian Wahl
- ▼ Better understand problems by developing [journey boards](#) and [empathy maps](#)

So Without, So Within: Doing the Internal Work

How local governments approach social equity in climate interventions necessitates looking at external manifestations of inequity. Social equity hinges on local governments choosing to do internal work on an individual, departmental, and agency level as well. The following sections detail what some of that internal work must encompass.

Don't Externalize Social Equity Work

There are fundamental tasks individuals and agencies can undertake to further equity. Anti-racism training and **implicit bias** work are essential due to the design and codifications of intentional inequity in so many of our systems and institutions. It's important to develop a level of awareness as a means of identifying and counter-balancing inequity.

However, creating a consciousness of inequity requires looking at the ways each of us internalize and perpetuate inequity. Look at the ways a department or agency operates. Does its mission, vision, and **values** center equity? Or, do the mission, vision, and values communicate a direction that presents barriers to equity? Is the pursuit of equity even acknowledged? Institutions, such as the Raikes Foundation, [have begun to open up](#) on their journeys with this work.

Diversity and inclusion alone are not enough to overturn systemic imbalances. Center equity in order to shift the focus from activities that are passive, commoditize, or tokenize. For example, limiting marginalized populations to **feedback vehicles** without altering approaches to financial compensation, financial ownership, or decision-making reinforce existing imbalances.

Interrogate Everything

Many of the tracks, rails, and streets cities use for transportation have origins over one-hundred years old. Similarly, there are processes cities still engage in that originate from the eighteenth century. The [study on Atlanta's transportation systems](#) is a great example of how history gets baked into our infrastructures. Take a moment to think about the social and political contexts that existed in the eighteenth century or one-hundred years ago. What biases, perceptions, prejudices, and experiences can we imagine are built into route decisions or process design based on what we know about those eras?

When ideating and designing climate interventions centered on specific case-studies, equipment, or materials, it is important local governments develop a habit of constant scrutiny. Who designed this intervention or equipment? Why? To accomplish what purpose? For whom? What bias, prejudices or experiences might be built in? Is there incongruence or incompatibility with your community?

A great practice is to take ideas and deconstruct them down to their bare components and values. Then, reconstruct following the North Star of the project [discussed in more detail below]. This helps monitor the unconscious perpetuation of inequity and ensures interventions center the context of a community from inception.

[See Building Muscle Moment #3 - Interrogate Everything in the workbook, page 19.](#)

Developing an Experimental Culture

Social equity is dynamic, people are dynamic, and communities are dynamic. The complexity that underlies climate change is one that will deepen over time. New challenges will continue to present themselves. This means best practices (practices and solutions based on what has transpired) will not be sufficient.

CLICKABLE TOOLS

- ▼ Learn to design an experimental culture by reading [Lean Impact: How to Innovate for Radically Greater Social Good by Annie Mei Chang](#)
- ▼ Discover potential bias using [Harvard's Implicit Bias Test](#)

An experimental culture moves away from the fixed mindset of believing “experts” have the answers, into a growth mindset of continuous learning and curiosity by launching quick experiments to gather information.

Not an encouragement to be reckless or unprepared, an experimental culture means moving thought-partnership out into the community. An experimental culture sees data collection and expertise as community roles. The shift to an experimental culture keeps local government from anchoring to interventions that may not work for the community while giving unusual or unknown interventions that speak to a community more exposure.

CLICKABLE TOOLS

- ▼ Learn more about the [Eight Forms of Capital](#)
- ▼ [Experiment with different forms of capital by developing projects with local currency](#) similar to the Lewes Pound or Bristol Pound
- ▼ Help prioritize co-production through [the Project Springboard Planner](#) and [the New Economics Foundation’s Planning Guide](#)

Ideating and Designing Projects

Local governments choosing projects for a community robs the community of choice and perpetuates power dynamics that only reinforce more inequity in outcomes. The following sections walk through a few ways to ensure equity is top of mind as initiatives come to life.

Co-Creation and Co-Production

More often than not, communities are approached too late in the development of new climate interventions, relegating them to simple feedback vehicles. Not only is this disempowering, it’s a barrier to developing solutions responsive to the community.

Often, this specious approach operates under the guise of “stakeholder engagement.” However, simply gathering does not ensure parity in outcomes. Equity requires something more deliberate and participatory than engagement. Local governments must move beyond stakeholder engagement into community co-creation. Co-creation prioritizes the thoughts, minds, beliefs, and assets of a community throughout the process. Co-creation addresses inequity in project ideation and design and it develops deep community connections that result in dynamic and iterative processes of accountability, collective

effort, and joint implementation. What this looks like in practice is collective visioning on climate interventions and processes, developing shared language and understandings, building trust, and transparently navigating generative conflict.

The process of co-creation and co-production is much longer, much more complex, and much more uncomfortable. It calls into question traditional power dynamics and forces local governments to build capacity around consensus-building. It also means the community has the agency to say, “No, thanks” without penalty of preclusion from future projects. Still, co-creation and co-production at project inception are necessities to ensure the appropriate variety of support and approaches that equity calls for.

Note: Co-creation and co-production is not an invitation to encourage free labor. Community members must be paid for their time, thoughts, and resources.

The process of co-creation and co-production is much longer, much more complex, and much more uncomfortable. It calls into question traditional power dynamics and forces local governments to build capacity around consensus-building.

Re-Defining Assets and Capital

In order to create a world that removes barriers, we must address the barriers we continue to create and call “standards.” There is no more important a place for this conversation than the discussion on assets and capital.

Climate interventions must account for disparities in capital, resource, and fixed asset allocation. To start, develop inclusive approaches that do not designate importance, value, or “legitimacy” based on proximity to “finance” or “financial models.” Design interventions so that not owning fixed assets does not become a penalty to progress.

For example, existing climate interventions often require home ownership. However, most marginalized communities have exceptionally high rates of rental tenants. Why not account for this disparity by using local skillsets, knowledge, and relationships—all assets—to develop interventions that require no aesthetic or structural damage to homes, easy installation, and that renters can return after move-out for a rebate? Why not use the Eight Forms of Capital Framework to develop a “community credit score” instead of lending off of antiquated collateral models? [The Matriarch Response Loan Fund](#) lent hundreds of thousands of dollars based on a character credit system.

Focusing on what a community does not have feels defeating and can cultivate shame. More importantly, it does not inspire action. Shift to valuing a community’s knowledge, traditions, access, connections, expertise, rich intergenerational storytelling history, or even its cherished heirloom seed banks to create equitable financial systems.



Scan to View Video:
Hubs of Resilience

Build On What Exists

In building relationships with a community, develop an asset map to understand what assets the community has. Oftentimes, even the community is not aware of the treasures it holds. Developing and publishing a map that graphically depicts various assets is a wonderful way to cultivate pride and interest. The conversations had in the process of identifying assets also helps community members see the value in what they possess. From here, local governments can co-create programs that center, celebrate, and honor what already exists instead of parachuting resources in.

Implementing Projects

Have a North Star

Implementation of our projects go in the direction we face and lead them. To center equity as an approach requires we deliberately center equity as part of the outcome. To determine whether we are getting close to our equity outcome of parity requires we have a clear picture of what the equity goal is. Create an incredibly clear picture that can serve as a North Star for the project as local government and the community work through its various phases. From this North Star, local governments can work with the community to distill a mission for the project. From the mission statement, city and county stakeholders can also work with the community to elucidate values.

Don’t Be Afraid of Research and Development

As local governments collect a community’s stories, it may start grasping how large the spectrum of needs is within and among that community. Yet climate interventions often revolve around equipment and materials already on the market, manufactured completely out of context, and produced under profit maximization models.

CLICKABLE TOOLS

- ▼ Inspire potential product ideas from these [clickable insulation panels](#)
- ▼ [DIY Weatherization Workshop](#) from Community Energy Project
- ▼ Sample research and development process from [National Institute of Justice](#)
- ▼ Trust the Process: [Community-based Researcher Partnerships](#)
- ▼ Three Models of [Community-Based Participatory Research](#)

Embrace partnerships that allow a local government to develop new products, services, or business models to meet its communities where they are. Challenges with "affordability" means there is an opportunity to see if a product or service can be manufactured, developed, or packaged in a way that fulfills value and meets budget realities.

Cities can look to models such as Software as a Service (SaaS), where the resource burdens of ownership are not passed to the customer. Typically, this makes access cheaper. Is there an opportunity for Energy Efficiency as a Service? Are there new ways to manufacture energy efficiency kits that lower the cost of access and remove the burden of maintenance? Or develop entirely new products such as the facade panels developed by a Dutch consortia that snap together like Legos™ and are sold in Ikea stores? Many current business models rely on extraction, oppression, and reinforce inequity. Revisiting these models—with the query "For whom, by whom?"—is a holistic way of ensuring equity throughout a project.

CLICKABLE TOOLS

- ▼ Find inspiration in [Streetwell's bid to make the community property owners](#)
- ▼ [Black Girl Ventures funds businesses by turning to the community](#)

Social Equity and Financing the Visions

Bringing the Vision to Life

Inevitably, local governments will develop a plan for funding its climate interventions. It's important to remember, interventions need resources to bring them into fruition. While financial capital is an important resource, it is but one resource of many.

Through asset maps and intentional ecosystem building, cities and counties can identify potential resources to mitigate the need for financial capital by building on what exists. For larger infrastructural projects, or gaps requiring financial capital, local governments must resist the inclination to divorce finance from the social equity considerations above. The equity work continues through securing capital, in all its forms, for implementation.

The reality is many current financial vehicles have extractive and inequitable practices that make life harder for the communities local governments want to serve. Extraction can present in exorbitantly high interest rates for borrowing, allocation percentages favoring private investors, or using community assets without financial compensation or financial equity. Acknowledge the potential for harm through careful matchmaking between intervention, community, and funding. Look at the type of funding you intend to use and ask the following questions.

- ▼ Do potential investors or partners already have touches with the community? Through current investments, civic participation, or a business in the community?
- ▼ Do potential investors or partners have a vested interest to act in the best interests of the community? Are investors engaging in the community to understand local priorities and focus funding in those areas and related projects?
- ▼ Is there an opportunity for the community to be investors?
- ▼ Are there incentives as part of financing that prioritize, or even reward, social equity? For example, pay-for-success financing for high performance on a social equity metric such as community wealth built?
- ▼ Who will potential investors or partners be accountable to and how will they be held accountable?

The reality is many current financial vehicles have extractive and inequitable practices that make life harder for the communities local governments want to serve.

- ▼ Is there an opportunity to engage a number of different individuals and entities by stacking different funding sources?
- ▼ Once funding is determined, are there opportunities to use that capital to hire contractors that reflect the local community and build social equity? This may necessitate changes to local procurement procedures to prioritize businesses owned by marginalized populations over the lowest cost bidder.

Not all partners are good partners. While the stress and desire to find funding for important interventions must be acknowledged, when choosing funding vehicles ask, “At what cost?” Use tools like the finance menus created by HIP and CDP to help visualize different options on a project by project basis.

[See Building Muscle Moment #4 - Choosing a Funding Approach in the workbook, page 20.](#)

Not all partners are good partners. While the stress and desire to find funding for important interventions must be acknowledged, when choosing funding vehicles ask, “At what cost?”

Developing Equity Driven Impact Measures and Funding Standards

Depending on the type of funding approach, metrics typically focus on the amounts lent, the amount leveraged, or number of individuals touched. While important, none of these center social equity. Local government will need to append additional metrics to include funding benchmarks that prioritize social equity as an outcome and centralize social equity as a goal alongside return on investment. A list of potential metrics follows below.

The vision work from discussion on the North Star is incredibly instructive in developing equity driven impact benchmarks by which to measure the efficacy of financing. By understanding what the community and partners see as an equitable future, local governments can work backwards to identify indicators that signal whether a project is moving closer to or from that future.

Ideas for Impact Measures and Benchmark

In addition to the ideas above, here are a few more impact measures to consider. Note, take care with impact measures that focus purely on quantity. For example, “Number of Business Loans Given” may not be meaningful if they are going to individuals and businesses that were receiving them previously. However, “Number of Loans Given to Households with an income under X” would move measurements closer to a social equity focus. Adding a measure for percentage of dollars forgiven for those same loans would move the project closer to transformative social equity.

Social Equity Impact Measures

- ▼ Amounts of money saved in a household
- ▼ Percentage of community investors or owners
- ▼ Increase in personal savings accounts
- ▼ Number of individuals accessing the product or service
- ▼ Number of individuals paid a certain percentage above minimum wage
- ▼ Dollar amount of loans forgiven for community members
- ▼ Number of acres owned by community members under a certain annual income
- ▼ New square feet of main street businesses
- ▼ Number of community members certified or hired
- ▼ Increase in revenue for vendors under “X” annual income
- ▼ Behavioral change in use (for example gallons of water saved, pounds of waste reduced, increase in air quality)

Note, the “X”s would be replaced with threshold amounts appropriate for the communities in which interventions take place

Before You Go

When embarking on new initiatives or entering new project phases, it is helpful to brainstorm potential barriers, form strategies to identify when these barriers present themselves, and develop strategies for navigating these barriers.

Throughout projects, schedule in mandatory times of reflection to ensure there is still co-creation, and course correct if there have been slips. Asking the questions below may help develop a higher level of consciousness around inequitable treatment, beliefs, or outcomes built into the project, its outcomes, or its approach.

- ▼ How do we consistently develop internal consciousness around our bias, prejudices, and inequitable practices?
- ▼ Where does ownership lie? Who owns what?
- ▼ Am I doing this in a way that cultivates agency and exponentially transformative change?
- ▼ Does this move us to the next horizon?
- ▼ Where does inequity lie in our current systems, processes, procedures, stories or narratives?
- ▼ Where are we perpetuating systems of injustice?

As mentioned throughout the toolkit and the accompanying workbook, the work of moving climate interventions and outcomes closer to parity across all people is ongoing. There will be mistakes, however, each mistake is an opportunity to learn, deepen our knowledge, and develop more learning partners. Use this toolkit as a resource you turn to often. Make notes in the margins, make adjustments for your context, and make it your own as you learn. Secondly, we are all doing the work of unlearning inequitable ways of being, seeing, and engaging that we have internalized. Choosing to uncover your own internalized bias or prejudices does not label you, but is instead the best way to liberate yourself and your communities. Please be gentle and compassionate with yourself and others as we each unlearn inequitable frameworks and relearn equitable engagement. Last, this work is not meant to be done in isolation. Reach across departments, disciplines, cities, or even countries to find others with whom you can share learning experiences, challenges, and triumphs.



Making Climate
Infrastructure Equitable
Workbook





CDP is a global non-profit that drives companies and governments to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions, safeguard water resources and protect forests. Voted number one climate research provider by investors and working with institutional investors with assets of over US\$106 trillion, we leverage investor and buyer power to motivate companies to disclose and manage their environmental impacts. Over 8,400 companies with over 50% of global market capitalization disclosed environmental data through CDP in 2019. This is in addition to the over 920 cities, states and regions who disclosed, making CDP's platform one of the richest sources of information globally on how companies and governments are driving environmental change.



DISCLOSURE INSIGHT ACTION