


EYE ON THE PRIZE



**The
Environmental Justice
and Racially Equitable
Community Development
Workbook**



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OF THIS RESOURCE TO
SAVE TIME OR FOR EASIER
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“Our communities are drastically, demonstrably, and increasingly self-evidently contaminated. On fire. Uninsurable. Storm-battered. Overheated. Underwater. And if you’ve developed even a cursory understanding of how segregation, disinvestment, and gentrification work in the United States, you’re not going to be surprised about who’s living with the biggest impacts of climate change.”

- The People’s Practice, Issue 07

Let’s face it: The state of our planet is not great. The consequences of our failure to act are showing up. The impacts on communities of color and communities with low incomes are enormous. But this document isn’t intended to be a place for despair. It’s a place to focus on promising practices for bringing environmental justice and racially equitable development together. Given the existential stakes, it’s pretty easy to get stuck in mindsets that might not be all that helpful. If we fall into climate “hopium,” we can have an optimism that cuts against making the transformative changes and investments we need to make. If we fall into climate doom, we can grow so pessimistic that we fail to act at all, or we can bring an energy into our community work that turns people away instead of welcoming them in.

There’s a lot of room in between those two extremes. We can acknowledge how challenging things are and how much worse they will be if we fail to act. And we can believe wholeheartedly that grassroots, on-the-ground action can make a difference for individuals, families, communities and the whole planet. In this document, we’re focusing on what pragmatic but visionary work can look like and what it can mean. We outline what we found in our research that applies to the intersection of environmental justice and racially equitable development. We’ll consider the role of policy in this kind of work, as well as some of the most promising practices we’re seeing out there. We’ll close out with prompts that you can use to celebrate, improve and track your own work ... and connect it to a broader movement.

If you care about work at the intersection of environmental justice and racially equitable development, and you're feeling like going even deeper on this topic, one place to look is the broader work in [The People's Practice](#), including what we've already uncovered in the Anti-Racist Community Development research project.

We've taken an explicit look at the intersections between community development and environmental justice. In [Issue 07 of The People's Practice](#), folks weighed in with a variety of perspectives through visual and audio art, op-eds and Q&As. They explored the nuts and bolts of environmental justice and racially equitable development; the kinds of leadership and other supports required to advance it; and why this cross-sector work is so necessary.

Environmental justice wasn't an explicit focus of our [Core Characteristics of Community Development](#) report ... but it's worth noting that the working definition of community development highlighted that community development, "at its best ... can ... improve health, quality of life, and economic, *environmental*, and social wellbeing." Anti-racist community development asks us to go a step further, considering how structural racism negatively impacts community wellbeing and remedying that in our policies and practices moving forward. This echoes environmental justice's [own emphasis](#) on addressing "the unequal distribution of environmental benefits and harms" and considering "whether procedures and impacts of environmental decision making are fair to the people they affect."

For folks looking to draw a stronger tie between environmental justice and racially equitable development, the Core Characteristics report also suggests that community development can support environmental efforts through a lot of different functions. While affordable housing and small business space are big focuses of the sector (with lots of opportunities for integrating environmental justice), our research demonstrated that people are contributing to communities in many different functional roles and at different geographic levels, from direct service to financing to policymaking, all of which have potential roles to play at the intersection of racially equitable development and environmental justice.

Our [High-Level Research Findings](#) gathered a wide range of perspectives from interviews and literature review, ones that we organized in the Status Quo Community Development vs. Anti-Racist Community Development Framework (page 19). Interviewees described status quo community development as race-neutral, top-down, rigid, compartmentalized and sterile and uniform. Meanwhile, they saw the principles of anti-racist community development as being race-explicit and race-conscious; bottom-up and inside-out; adaptive and flexible; holistic; and culturally contextualized ... principles that align well with the [Jemez Principles](#) that have been widely applied in environmental justice work.

Interviewees were particularly likely to lift up the link to environmental justice when thinking about holistic practice – what they described as “cross-sector and holistic strategies that integrate arts and culture, *environmental justice*, and public health; healing, reparative, and reparations strategies; asset-based and abundance-based strategies; and history-, narrative-, and culture-centered strategies.” They went on to say that anti-racist community development requires “an authentic appreciation for (and resourcing of) perspectives coming in from outside the sector, such as ... environmental justice practitioners ... equipping communities of color’s resilience in the face of climate change.”

WHY ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE MATTERS FOR ANTI-RACIST COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

If we don't recognize environmental justice as part of community development, we won't be able to address a key factor in building healthy, vibrant places.

If we don't address environmental issues like climate change, pollution, soil contamination and extreme temperatures, we won't be able to protect people's ability to remain in place. In many places, residents will be much more vulnerable to negative impacts, and other places may be completely uninhabitable.

If we don't ensure people have access to healthy environments where they can thrive, they'll be denied access to their homelands, generational communities, family homes and their ability to age in place.

If we don't recognize that contaminants from commercial farming, freeways, high-health-risk industries or waste facilities disproportionately impact communities of color, we risk continuing to invest in industries in the name of economic development even if they create toxic environments.

If we don't integrate attention to environmental justice into community development, we'll be far more likely to make harmful decisions around where development happens and what materials are used.

WHY ANTI-RACIST COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT MATTERS FOR ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

If we don't pay attention to zoning in environmental justice work, we'll be less prepared to fight concentrated environmental harms like cancer alleys, sacrifice zones, areas with soil contamination or residential proximity to commercial farms.

If we don't bring an understanding of how real estate development works and what profit motives exist around property, we'll be less prepared to combat the narrative that environmental protections decrease economic opportunities in communities.

If we don't understand how community development policies have historically caused environmental harms, we'll be less able to recognize that community development policy can also remedy those harms and promote environmental benefits.

If we don't understand how community development practices directly inform the networks, financial flows and overall structures of neighborhoods, our efforts to build grassroots environmental justice action might be less effective or less culturally relevant for some communities.

If we don't explore the ways that anti-racist community development is working to build self-determination and self-governance, then we might underinvest in community-level stewardship of environmental resources, which could severely undermine our ability to build a just transition nationally.

considering FEDERAL POLICY

As we write this in early 2025, we're seeing an enormous shift in the policy arena around community development, environmental justice and racial justice. With hard-won progress under threat, and lots of indicators that things could move quickly and dangerously backwards, it's easy to despair. How could we possibly think about anti-racist community development, let alone the intersection with environmental justice, when even status quo community development may have to fight to defend itself?

Policy has the potential to both help and harm, and it doesn't generally move in one linear direction. We find ways to work in difficult policy environments, and we look for policy windows where we can move things in positive directions. The truth is that community development policy and practice have a long history of being in communication with one another, and meaningful grassroots action has happened even in incredibly difficult policy environments – often, in fact, *because* people are actively fighting against them. In A Brief History of Race, Place, and Policy in the Sector, we profiled how federal land use and wealth policies explicitly disadvantaged people of color in the United States. Those same policies contributed to decades of environmental degradation and set up physical and social structures that make it difficult and costly to address carbon emissions. The research also highlighted how resident leaders and activists began building new models for investing in their own communities in sustainable and equitable ways, models that would go on to challenge federal policy to also be more equitable.

That grassroots work was a long game, but it ultimately led to the formalization of community development as a sector. Even when the federal policy environment feels difficult for environmental justice and racially equitable development, history suggests that's *exactly* when to invest in that work and push policymakers to act more responsibly. Decades of work informed the Biden-Harris administration's approach to environmental policy, which led to enormous (if insufficient) investments in addressing climate change and other community-identified environmental concerns. That included some direct remedies to past federal development decisions, like the Reconnecting Communities Pilot. It also showed up across sweeping shifts in environmental policy in the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022, including financing of projects across the country aimed at reducing pollution; addressing environmental issues at schools; combating emissions at ports; and reducing emissions from government vehicle fleets.

Importantly, the legislation included a range of technical assistance and grant programs supporting environmental and climate justice work at a community level. That included support for projects led by community-based organization collaboratives; regional grantmakers; community-based organizations exploring collaborative problem-solving; and state, tribal and local governments.

The reach of these investments is historic, but that doesn't mean that grassroots organizations or national networks stopped trying to challenge the policy environment to be more effective or equitable. Organizations took advantage of public comment to ensure environmental justice programs live up to their full promise, while others developed resources for how applicants and awardees can improve their own approaches.

That effort around effective and equitable implementation has value regardless of who is at the helm of environmental justice and community development policy. Although some of these programs were anticipated to continue to make awards into 2026, there was widespread fear that the Trump-Vance administration might push for elimination of these programs. In its final months, the Biden-Harris administration tried to safeguard against that situation, including through both announcements of awards and obligating funding. That has not stopped the Trump-Vance administration from working to claw back obligated funds. Even beyond these specific investments, many anticipate federal policy will be far less supportive of environmental justice or equitable development in the near future. But again, the work doesn't stop. Organizations continue to track how environmental justice policy is shifting, develop detailed plans for how to continue to move policy forward and push grassroots practice forward. Even if the headwinds feel strong, we know that promising work can and must continue.

CONSIDERING FEDERAL PROGRAMS.

How federal funding can
impact the work:

Reconnecting
Communities Pilot

Community Change

Thriving Communities

Environmental
Justice Collaborative
Problem-Solving

Environmental Justice
Government-to-
Government Program

CONSIDERING EXECUTIVE ORDERS.

How presidential actions
can impact the work:

Revitalizing Our
Nation's Commitment
to Environmental
Justice for All

Federal Actions
To Address
Environmental Justice
in Minority Populations
and Low-Income
Populations

Ending Illegal
Discrimination and
Restoring Merit-Based
Opportunity

CONSIDERING OUTSIDE ACCOUNTABILITY.

How outside voices and
visibility can impact
the work:

NCRC's Comment
on the EPA's
Environmental and
Climate Justice Grant
Program

WE ACT for
Environmental
Justice Community
Engagement Brief

Federal Environmental
Justice Tracker

Defending and
Advancing Climate
Justice Policies

eight PROMISING PRACTICES

A core advantage of both community development and environmental justice are that, because they're so responsive to different geographic contexts, resident priorities, and resident solutions, they're constantly experimenting with ways of working. We can review a whole range of promising practices to determine what might be meaningful in our own work and what similarities and differences we're seeing across those practices. We don't all have to do everything, but we can all do something. Our stakeholder interviews and literature review pointed to eight practices that we think are worth considering.

PROMISING PRACTICE 1: ACKNOWLEDGE AND ADDRESS COMMUNITIES' ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS BEYOND CLIMATE CHANGE.

Even though there's a long history of communities of color leading environmental work, there's arguably an equally long history of minimizing those communities' concerns while prioritizing environmental concerns of white communities. That can understandably lead to skepticism in some communities regarding climate action, especially for those dealing with other environmental concerns. Community development and environmental justice have clear links far beyond climate vulnerability, including in addressing the legacy of federal land use policies supporting urban renewal and suburban sprawl, which caused widespread environmental harm in communities of color. Especially for those that don't specialize in place-based work, that demands attention to long-term trust-building and taking the time to understand local geographic context, including in rural communities.

That's not to suggest that communities of color aren't investing in really sophisticated environmental justice work ... or that they don't care about climate change. They just disproportionately face a range of other environmental harms that might feel more immediate, such as failing septic tanks, illegal dumping, oil drilling and lead poisoning. In communities like Flint and New Orleans, communities of color's first-hand experience with environmental disaster has led to cross-sector, cross-issue work but also potential skepticism about environmental work that doesn't center resident voice. Many environmental health concerns have clear linkages to climate change, but overlooking these concerns can do real damage to coalition-building. Addressing other environmental justice concerns can strengthen casemaking for climate action, helping to overcome cynicism that local action can make a difference by focusing on containing other pollutants where the case for hyperlocal action can be more obvious.

PROMISING PRACTICE 2: TIE GREEN INVESTMENTS TO EQUITABLE COMMUNITY ACCESS TO EDUCATION, JOBS AND WEALTH.

Global efforts to reduce carbon emissions have long run up against a powerful dominant narrative – that transitioning to a green economy will cause disruptions that will result in everyday people paying more, losing jobs and being more susceptible to market conditions. Today, there are lots of clear examples of exactly the opposite happening – green investments opening up new job and wealth opportunities for communities, and potentially, for communities of color and communities with low incomes specifically, especially where there's emphasis on Just Transition principles and practices.

Integrating green economics into community development isn't without challenges. We have to make sure that green economy investments are made equitably, *and* that community development is equitable, *and* that those two efforts are well-integrated. Even work attempting to reduce environmental hazards and increase community benefits has the potential to surface new unintended consequences. That's why this work requires attention to complex structural barriers to wealth-building and employment, and it requires long-term assessment to ensure investments deliver in equitable ways. There are lots of roles that state and national organizations can play in supporting patient, cross-sector equity work – folks like national networks, and CDFIs – and hyperlocal efforts can demonstrate clear attention to equitable green economies. It can look like community-owned green infrastructure that reduces energy expenses and preserves energy access even opposite disasters. It can look like ensuring residents have reliable, paid access to training in green industries or to employment opportunities tied to green investments. It could look like connecting on-the-job training with cultural heritage or harnessing cultural heritage to inform how to address priorities like access to sustainable housing.

PROMISING PRACTICE 3: DRAW EXPLICIT CONNECTIONS BETWEEN ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE AND AFFORDABLE ACCESS TO QUALITY HOUSING.

Simultaneously addressing the housing and climate crises offers tremendous opportunity for cross-sector action. Low-income housing is more proximate to environmental hazards, and that's particularly true for public housing. In older lower-income housing stock, environmental hazards are even in materials like flooring and insulation, and there's insufficient support for remediating this. Climate change is increasing likelihood of homelessness and the immediate emergency risks the unhoused face. Communities with lower incomes are less able to absorb climate-related increases in housing insurance costs and are at greater risk of climate gentrification after natural disasters.

Those harsh realities are probably why this intersectional focus is increasingly showing up in analyses of housing and environmental policy and the state of environmental justice in federally-assisted housing, and policy assessments in places like New York City, Boston and California. The current landscape is keeping quality, sustainable housing out of reach for many households. With some thoughtful, cross-sector action, though, we can ensure that investments in sustainability also improve housing equity. We can invest in home outreach initiatives that offer resident employment opportunities *and* help residents address environmental health impacts like asthma. We can develop interventions like cooling and heating stations to address climate impact for the unhoused. We can put time and resources into equity planning around investments like energy efficiency programs. We can make sure that we're centering residents in our sustainable housing strategies, especially groups like public housing residents that haven't traditionally been invited into the work. We can make sure that when we're investing in affordable housing, we're also addressing environmental issues, whether in federally-assisted housing, housing cooperatives or tribally designated entities.

PROMISING PRACTICE 4: INTEGRATE INDIGENOUS LAND PRACTICES INTO COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORKS.

Despite occupying relatively small geographic footprints and contributing little to carbon emissions and other pollution, Indigenous communities face high climate-related health impacts. Native leaders have identified environmental stewardship as a priority area, but historically, they have not been well represented or funded in environmental work.

In the U.S. context, there's considerable opportunity to elevate the voice of Native American stewards and invest far more in their work – but also in efforts to amplify Afro-Indigenous, Native Alaskan, Native Hawaiian and Latin American Indigenous environmental practices. Rather than exploit natural resources, many Indigenous communities actively work to protect them. They are simultaneously stewarding the natural environment and addressing other priorities, like investing in affordable career training and providing safe space for those recovering from violence.

Structural barriers have prevented those practices from scaling, including the long history of land theft from Indigenous communities in the United States (and elsewhere). The Land Back movement has offered one avenue for returning land to Indigenous stewardship, albeit to date in limited circumstances. Land transfers have occurred in places like Eureka and Oakland, and even in an individual Los Angeles landowner's transfer (sadly, that land was severely damaged by wildfires, although Indigenous stewardship practices may have limited the devastation). While Land Back has particularly strong momentum in western States, it's also taking root in communities far removed from what we typically recognize as "Indian Country." Beyond land transfer, Indigenous environmental work deserves considerably more funding support, whether through federal funding like the Native American Lands Environmental Mitigation Program; state funding like the Colorado Environmental Justice Grant Program; or philanthropic funding like the Alaska Conservation Foundation's Indigenous Voices Fund. Native-led and -informed work also benefits from learning supports, both to increase understanding of people like state legislators and federal workers and to increase access to relevant information, technical assistance, and in-person exchange for Native leaders advancing their own environmental work.

PROMISING PRACTICE 5: SUPPORT EQUITABLE ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE PLANNING AT STATE, MUNICIPAL AND NEIGHBORHOOD LEVELS.

Federal policy can play a core role in either enabling or disabling environmental justice and community development work, through new support infrastructure like the Tribal Environmental Justice Assistance Program or by incentivizing specific on-the-ground strategy work through presidential actions like Executive Orders 14096 (2023) and 12898 (1994) (both were revoked in 2025 by Executive Order 14173). While many communities might do this kind of strategy work anyway, federal standards and funding criteria can incentivize it through devices like Priority Climate Action Plans. The result is broad environmental planning work being done across the country in places like Kansas, tribal communities in Mississippi, central Oklahoma, greater Providence, Oakland and El Paso. Such planning varies in detail, sophistication and attention to equity practices, but there's at least some value in just getting government entities to be explicit about how they approach environmental justice and community development. Those plans can be even more meaningful when they're specific about different kinds of government impacts on environmental justice, such as zoning reform or hazardous waste management.

So can funding to actually implement those plans. That might be securing federal dollars, but it can also happen at a state level, such as Transformative Climate Communities, which has provided more than \$200 million in funding to community initiatives like Watts Rising. It can also come from within local government budgets themselves, such as through Pittsburgh's exploration of priority-based sustainability and equity budgeting. Funding can be particularly impactful when it helps make plans more accessible to residents, both so implementation can be informed by lived experience and so there are ongoing accountability opportunities. Accountability work can happen by analyzing infrastructure like municipal sustainability offices or through ongoing tracking of environmental justice policies.

It takes on different meaning when grassroots organizations and residents are invited into review and implementation, like when the [Minneapolis Climate Action and Racial Equity Fund](#) encourages applicants to review the city's Climate Action and Racial Equity Action Plans; [bcWORKSHOP](#) and the Texas Organizing Project engage residents in [disaster recovery leadership development](#); or the New York City Housing Authority offers [funding support for residents' own sustainability efforts](#).

PROMISING PRACTICE 6: COLLABORATE TO CREATE POLICY AGENDAS AND ORGANIZING LED BY COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS AND RESIDENTS.

In some places, government may be resistant or even hostile to this kind of work. In those cases, community-based organizations and residents may be able to incrementally push government in positive directions or develop infrastructure that allows the work to continue even in the absence of government. Even in places where government is supportive, robust agenda-building and organizing has the potential to ensure lived experience informs policy development and implementation; identify and address unintended consequences; create strong external accountability; and stretch collective imagination of what's possible.

Agenda-building and organizing around environmental justice and racially equitable development can occur nationally (like the [National Black Climate Agenda](#)); statewide (like in [Comunidades Organizando el Poder y la Acción Latina's](#) legislative agenda in Minnesota or in [NY Renews'](#) agenda-building); or locally (like [People for Community Recovery's](#) work in Chicago or [Casa Familiar's](#) efforts in San Diego). Coalitions can also do powerful work that cuts across geographies, like the [Black Appalachian Coalition's](#) story-based work across a very large region, paired with its [Freedom to Breathe](#) program's initial specific focus on Allegheny County.

This work to build long-term coalitions requires time and effort, but it also benefits from reliable support infrastructure, including accessible learning resources like [Community-Driven Climate Resilience Planning](#) and professional supports like [Greenlining the Block](#). It also includes reliable funding, especially support that values the process of building up engagement (since it's not always easy to predict the results of long-term coalition-building). That might look like the [Rural Democracy Initiative's](#) focus on rural civic infrastructure, [Social Justice Fund NW's](#) explicit support of environmental justice organizing across five states or the [Emergent Fund's](#) rapid response organizing grants, as well as sustained learning support for *funders* of organizing, such as the [Midwest Organizing Infrastructure Funders](#) program.

PROMISING PRACTICE 7: DEVELOP DATA AND LEARNING SUPPORTS THAT ENABLE TARGETED EQUITABLE INVESTMENTS IN ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE.

Long-term learning supports, like accessible data sets, can pull together information that's relevant for both environmental and community development practitioners. Mapping can be particularly relevant for finding linkages between environmental justice and development, marking where inequities are localized (and potentially why). It can be powerful to define terms that are relevant at that intersection and map it, like raising visibility of ["fenceline communities."](#) Scoring is another way to make place-based conditions clearer, aggregating data into systems like [CalEnviroScreen](#), which enabled analysis that [people of color are overrepresented in pollution-impacted communities](#).

Scoring can also facilitate side-by-side comparisons around equity practices and outcomes. In Leading with Equity, for example, clean energy scoring coupled with equity scoring enables us to see which government and utility equity practices are most and least common.

Of course, data sets can also present structural barriers that prevent people from non-scientific backgrounds from understanding it. Citizen science efforts that put research directly into the hands of residents can address some of these barriers, such as in the Rural Empowerment Association for Community Help's work to support resident learning in the aftermath of Hurricane Floyd and the North Carolina Environmental Justice Network's emphasis on resident organizing training and environmental justice data training. That kind of program speaks to the promise of increased investment around environmental justice and racially equitable development learning, whether to increase understanding of funders around the role of community self-determination in environmental justice work, community development practitioners in how to integrate environmental justice attention into their work or community leaders in how to develop green workforce development supports. This kind of programming can be particularly impactful when it brings people together across sectors for extended peer-to-peer learning, like the California Climate Leaders Fellowship.

PROMISING PRACTICE 8: SUPPORT FRAMEWORKS THAT BRING TOGETHER RACIALLY EQUITABLE DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE.

Cross-sector collaboration is important, impactful ... and hard work. Social sectors have their own values and principles, language and terminology (often including jargon), industry standards, status quo and alternative practices, funding sources and policy mandates. Those aspects of sectors aren't always visible or easy to understand. That's one reason that sectors can remain pretty siloed ... even when they might be trying to tackle the same issues of inequity. It can be tough, but it's not impossible. Take the example of ArtPlace America, which over a decade, brought together different kinds of organizations to apply different cultural practices to different development priorities in different geographic contexts. That work necessarily required cross-sector collaboration and strong support infrastructure. ArtPlace organized themes into a community development matrix. It financially supported around 300 community-based projects (including environmental projects like Re-locate Kivalina), invested in research scans across themes (including an Environment scan and a Water scan) and brought folks together in convenings and theme-based groups (such as an Environment working group). At the conclusion of the initiative, it reaggregated learnings to highlight cross-cutting themes that extended across sectors.

It's not always easy to predict where this kind of concerted cross-sector work will end up, but it can strengthen organizing and policy outcomes. It can help us reimagine what our coalitions can look like, such as Building a Regional Voice for Environmental Justice's focus on organizing, philanthropy and research and the Coalition of Communities of Color's focus on environmentalist, labor union, health, business and faith communities. It can facilitate the creation of new tools that get to more holistic metrics, like the Equitable Development Principles and Scorecard. It can lead groups to experiment with practices well outside their sector norms, like Ironbound Community Corporation's use of tours and documentary film to expose people to real-life consequences of environmental injustice. To arrive at those kinds of outcomes, it helps to have platforms sharing and comparing learnings – and resourcing to do that learning work. Peer learning groups that pair funding support with structured opportunities for folks to share across sector and geographic lines, like Climate Change, Health & Equity and the Strong, Prosperous, And Resilient Communities Challenge, can be particularly impactful.

That's a lot of research, policy and practice! If you're feeling overwhelmed, that's natural. We're trying to do work that can be highly complex, but we don't want it to be so complicated that it reduces our ability to have meaningful impact.

The goal here isn't to memorize every single element of content about this important intersection. It's first and foremost to highlight that you're not doing this work alone – that others have the same drive to push place-based equity forward, running into the same kinds of challenges and wrestling with their own questions about what to do next. In the following pages, we'll consider the specific work we can do in service to the broader movement. You can do this reflection and action planning independently, within an organization or in broader coalitions and communities. You can also use the prompts to get your thoughts together either on your own or in a small group and then use that to launch dialogue in a bigger group. Before we turn to the specifics, though, it can be helpful to start by just gathering your highest-level reflections.

How are you *feeling* after reviewing the content (e.g. excited, angry, sad, overwhelmed, etc.)? Does the way you're feeling about the content suggest anything about how you might want to approach this work moving forward?

Based on what you've read, where do you think your work has been strongest in terms of contributing to environmental justice and/or equitable community development?

Based on what you've read, where do you think you could stretch your work to be even more impactful?

getting GRANULAR

In this section, we want to take a look at each of the promising practices we outlined above to consider how they might fit in our work, the degree to which we're investing in them today, and what that might mean for our work in the future. To start, rate how strongly you agree or disagree with each of the statements. If you're working in a group, you may want to start by taking a little time completing ratings individually and then comparing your assessments. After you've finished rating the statements, consider each of the follow-up questions.

	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NOT SURE OR DOESN'T APPLY	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
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Addressing environmental concerns, including but not limited to climate change, **is relevant and important** to the community I serve.

Within my work, **addressing community environmental concerns** is receiving the **time, attention and resources** that it needs.

Tying green investments to **education, job and wealth access** is **relevant and important** to the community I serve.

Within my work, tying green investments to **education, job and wealth access** is receiving the **time, attention and resources** that it needs.

Connecting environmental justice to **affordable housing access** is **relevant and important** to the community I serve.

Within my work, connecting environmental justice to **affordable housing access** is receiving the **time, attention and resources** that it needs.

STRONGLY
DISAGREE

DISAGREE

NOT SURE
OR DOESN'T
APPLY

AGREE

STRONGLY
AGREE

Integrating **Indigenous land practices** into community development work is **relevant and important** to the community I serve.

Within my work, integrating **Indigenous land practices** into community development efforts is receiving the **time, attention and resources** that it needs.

Supporting **equitable government environmental and climate planning** is **relevant and important** to the community I serve.

Within my work, supporting **equitable government environmental and climate planning** is receiving the **time, attention and resources** that it needs.

Collaborating to create shared, **community-led policy agendas and organizing efforts** is **relevant and important** to the community I serve.

Within my work, collaborating to create shared, **community-led policy agendas and organizing efforts** is receiving the **time, attention and resources** that it needs.

Developing **data and learning supports** that enable targeted, equitable environmental investment is **relevant and important** to the community I serve.

	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NOT SURE OR DOESN'T APPLY	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
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Within my work, developing **data and learning supports** that enable targeted, equitable environmental investment is receiving the **time, attention and resources** that it needs.

Investing in long-term **collaborations between environmental justice and equitable community development** is relevant and important to the community I serve.

Within my work, investing in long-term **collaborations between environmental justice and equitable community development** is receiving the **time, attention and resources** that it needs.

Note the practices above that you generally felt were more relevant, important *and* resourced. These are places where your work might already be leaning into the intersection of environmental justice and racially equitable community development. What are some next steps you could take to deepen the impact of those practices and/or build from them to address other community priorities?

Note the practices that you generally felt were more relevant and important but *not* receiving sufficient attention or resources. Are there specific barriers that are preventing that work from being taken up? Are there ways that you could begin to address them? If you're not in a position to address them, are there ways that you could influence the decision-making of people who could?

Now let's consider any practices you generally felt were getting more attention and resources but *were not* necessarily relevant and important to the communities you serve. Are there ways to change approaches to make them more relevant and important? If not, what are the reasons that keep you (or potentially those you work with most frequently) from letting go of that work?

One of the places we can get stuck in cross-sector work is not recognizing where those sectors might be different – even among people who share a common goal of equitable change. One way we can start to change that is by being more explicit about what makes a sector tick. That way, we'll be in a better position to find commonalities to build from and identify differences more directly so we can bridge them ... or at least be aware that they might slow us down. It can take some time to map how sectors work. That's certainly true if we've never worked in them, but we rarely even get an opportunity to delineate how the sectors we're *most* familiar with work. We should start to be more aware of:

Values. We all have individual values that motivate us to do the work we do, but it's also true that sectors can have some core, common values that influence who does the work, how they show up, what kinds of things contribute to our notions of success and what things frequently lead to tensions.

Narratives. Underneath the more technical parts of sectors, narratives form a pretty powerful part of our collective thinking about the world and our roles in it. For more information about dominant community development narratives and how we can respond to them, check out [Crafting Anti-Racist Narratives For Community Development](#), a resource we created in partnership with [Storytellers for Change](#).

Language. Sectors tend to build up their own ways of talking – specific technical language, jargon, acronyms or any other way that we develop our own kind of shorthand for communicating. That language, though, might not mean much at all for lay people or for people who work in other sectors.

Industry Standards. As sectors professionalize, they tend to standardize credentials required to enter and to advance, as well as specific processes, guidelines and regulations that might not be legally binding but are still highly formalized.

Practices. Even beyond those expectations within a sector, there also tend to be generally expected approaches for how we work. Even though these might be less formal, they still impact things like timelines, when and how we engage the people we serve and how actively we collaborate with others.

Financial Flows. Funding is a big one. A sector could be primarily publicly or privately funded. It could rely on earned income or grant funding. It could flow in large annual chunks or small, ongoing contributions. It could involve complex financing with lots of income and expense categories.

Policies. Policy can loom pretty large, too. Sector-related policies could influence how organizations are funded and taxed. They could mandate what an organization must do or cannot do. They could incentivize equity work or thwart it ... and that might vary at national, state and local levels.

That's just a sampling of the kinds of sector characteristics that can support or get in the way of cross-sector work. It can help to be explicit about where we think there's alignment and misalignment across sectors (in this case, racially equitable community development and environmental justice) ... and where we still have questions or need to establish more collective understanding.

Based on what I know about environmental justice and community development right now, what characteristics of those two sectors seem *most* aligned? How could we leverage that alignment in our own work?

Based on what I know about environmental justice and community development right now, what characteristics of those two sectors seem *least* aligned? Are there ways that we could start working to address those potential misalignments in our own work?

What are the biggest questions I have about how folks in environmental justice and/or racially equitable community development do their work? Are there places or people I could turn to to start addressing those questions?

considering the ENVIRONMENT

Even after we start building shared sectoral understanding, we still have to take into consideration the broader environment in which the work takes place. Depending on our focus, that environment might be a single neighborhood or a region or even an entire country. Being explicit about the environment we're working in can help us seize on opportunities and address challenges as they come.

Based on what I know now, what federal, state or local policies are having the biggest impacts on our environmental justice and/or equitable development work? What single policy (or proposed policy) could support that work the most? What single policy (or proposed policy) is the biggest threat to that work being successful?

In the community where we do our work, what existing environmental justice and equitable development practices seem *most* inspiring and meaningful?

In the community where we do our work, what status quo environmental and community development practices seem like they might create the biggest barriers to doing meaningful racial equity work?

what's POSSIBLE

We've considered high-level takeaways, relevance and importance of different practices, sector characteristics and our operating environment. Of course, our analysis isn't going to be static. Even after we sit with research and organize our thoughts, it's natural to have lingering questions. The important thing is that we've pushed our understanding forward a little bit, and that puts us in a better position to consider our next steps and lay out an initial plan of action.

Based on everything you've captured above, what are your biggest aspirations for what environmental justice and racially equitable community development work could look like in the community you serve? How do you see your long-term contribution to that vision?

On the way to that bigger vision, what shifts could you make in your work within the next year to create some positive momentum? Are there specific ways that you can collaborate with others to keep that momentum going?

Based on what you've captured above, what do you think are the biggest challenges or threats those efforts could face over the next year? Are there ways that you could minimize or disrupt those obstacles?

how we'll LEARN ALONG THE WAY

If you've made it this far, you've already dedicated time to learning, and you've outlined some ways you can lean into this work in the short term and stay committed over the long term. That's something to celebrate, even more when you get to put that plan into action and find ways to partner with like-minded collaborators. It's important, though, that as we move to action, we continue to prioritize our learning. Community needs and the environment we're working in are bound to shift. Not every practice we test is going to work. Some practices might actually open up new opportunities that we never imagined. To round out our work, we need to continue to invest in deepening our understanding.

How will you know if your environmental justice and equitable development work is successful? How will you engage the community you serve to get their perspectives on the work?

What are the one or two biggest outstanding questions you need to address around environmental justice and racially equitable community development? Are there specific actions you can take, especially on an ongoing basis, to help prioritize exploring those questions?

Are there particular times in the upcoming year when you can assess your progress? Are there any forums or events where you could engage in that learning work with partners?

When you look back on your work a year from now, what's one thing you want to remind yourself about where you are right now? What's the final thought that you don't want to lose?

The People's Practice

We hope you've found something promising in these practices!

Feeling inspired to keep going deep on anti-racist community development?

Visit us at www.thepeoplespractice.org for additional op-eds, Q+As, research, resources and more!

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