



LOCUS Guide to Equity Action Plans: Environmental Protection Agency

In April 2022, the Biden Administration released the federal government's first ever Equity Actions Plans for over 90 federal agencies. These strategies delineate department-specific long range goals and operational priorities that aim to improve the delivery of equitable outcomes for all Americans through systemic reforms and investments in historically underserved communities. The actions proposed in these plans will have broad impacts on land use, infrastructure investment, housing and regional planning, which are summarized succinctly in these LOCUS guides.

Equity Priorities:

The EPA places environmental justice at the forefront of its six strategic priorities in the agency's Equity Action Plan, defining environmental justice as "the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations and policies." Noting the disproportionate exposure to environmental burdens, harm and subsequent health disparities faced by communities of color, the Plan seeks to both address systemic racism in environmental regulation and land use policy and directly support impacted communities.

The strategies outlined in the Equity Action Plan include methods to more directly involve and engage communities in decision making and land use planning, and offers strategies to invest in local capacity building and 'community science.'



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Key Equity Actions:

- Develop an interdisciplinary justice framework that analyzes the impacts of EPA's programs and policies, considering environmental and social stressors and recognizing the harmful impacts that regulatory decisions have had on underserved communities; this framework will guide future decision-making and initiatives;
- Invest in capacity building, education, and infrastructure to amplify EPA's collaboration, support, and engagement in underserved communities; these actions will include both offering more grants and technical assistance, reducing barriers to applying for grants, and developing more consistent agency-wide approaches to community engagement and participation in EPA initiatives;
- Improve EPA's internal capacity to engage and support underserved communities by addressing internal processes, budgets, and approaches with an equity mindset, and elevating civil rights and environmental justice as an agency-wide commitment;
- Support community science and technical expertise through investing in community science grants and encouraging the use of community science in EPA and federal research;
- Uplift underrepresented businesses and Minority-Serving Institutions through agency networking events and structural improvements to EPA's procurement and contracting processes.

Land Use or Real Estate Highlights:

- Reinstate the EPA's commitment to expedite the cleanup process of Superfund sites and tackle the nearly 50 backlogged brownfield sites through a \$1 billion investment from the Infrastructure Law;
- Allocate significant funding from the American Rescue Plan in order to deliver technical assistance, grant support, and infrastructure development for disenfranchised communities.

Measuring Impact:

Each of the priorities includes proposed strategies to track progress and impact, related to the specific actions proposed. Some notable metrics include:

- Pollution reduction, and benefits related to pollution reduction, in historically underserved communities;
- Percentage of EPA programs active in environmental justice communities that are community-driven;
- Percentage of grants awarded to community-based organizations addressing environmental justice issues;
- Diversification of EPA's vendor base;
- Increased partnership (through contracts and technical assistance) with small businesses.

Read EPA's Equity Action Plan [here](#).