

CENTERING EQUITY & OPERATIONALIZING JUSTICE:

A Desk Guide for Practitioners in Conservation and Natural Resource Agencies and Departments



ABSTRACT

Continued calls to consider equity in policy development have left public administrators with few tools that clarify the language of equity and translate it to practical activities. Specifically in the conservation field, with a focus on biodiversity, habitat, and wildlife management, equity is a concept that can be hard to define in terms of human impact. This project provides three practical frameworks that any public administrator can integrate into discussions and policy decisions concluding with a reminder of the real need to improve outcomes for vulnerable and underserved Californians through practices of targeted universalism.

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Centering Equity and Operationalizing Justice:

A Desk Guide for Practitioners in Conservation and Natural Resource
Agencies

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Executive Summary

In the 2022-23 budget cycle, Governor Newsom directed approximately \$24 billion to the California Natural Resources (CNRA) and the Environmental Protection (EPA) agencies, approximately \$500 million of which was dedicated to equity focused initiatives. Subsequent executive orders and policy documents directed agencies and departments throughout the State, to utilize these investments to create a California for All. These historic investments signaled a fundamental shift in the development of public service programs away from equality-based delivery – ensuring a fair and “objective” process – towards equity-based development which recognizes the diverse history, background, experience, and perspectives of Californians.

Aiming for equity is a lofty goal and remains somewhat of a nebulous concept in the broad environmental space, but more specifically in conservation. These are technically complex policy arenas where objective, peer supported scientific knowledge and an understanding of the environmental regulatory environment are crucial to participating in decisions impacting all Californians. I professionally grapple with this push and pull daily, so it is my hope that this culminating project reflects an informed but approachable attempt to develop a resource for agencies engaging in conservation activities.

This report, submitted in partial fulfillment of my Master of Public Policy and Administration degree from California State University, Sacramento, presents three frameworks that integrate best practices from environmental justice and equity, diversity, inclusion, and access experts (EDIA) whose work has only recently become part of the common discourse to understand the ongoing impacts of racist environmental policies from the past. The report also explores how administrators can use tools that analyze multiple health and environmental indicators to understand the impacts of environmental actions, known as cumulative impacts, as part of the frameworks to prioritize work. These tools can also help understand the variety of factors that determine individual outcomes. What sets this project apart from a wealth of existing resources, however, is that I connect principles and best practices from these fields to diverse fields such as implementation science, political ecology, and public administration. I present a package of activities and steps that any staff or leader in a conservation agency can take and integrate into their work, regardless of the project size or scope. Practicality is essential to the success of equity goals in conservation as individuals working in these spaces are on a

wide spectrum of their own journey towards understanding. This framework removes some of the subjectivity of what equity means in practice and expands the State's ability to meet diverse Californians where they are and brings them into the activities that impact their overall health and well-being.

Chapter 1 necessarily makes the distinction between equality and equity. I then introduce the concept of targeted universalism as a theoretical perspective and foundation for ensuring equitable outcomes.

Chapter 2 explores the factors that impact outcomes. A history of racism in land use planning, environmental policy and conservation has added additional layers and complexity to what experts traditionally think of as cumulative impacts. I justify the need to make practical sense of what it means to “be more equitable”.

Chapter 3 provides additional foundational principles of equity and environmental justice that the framework builds on and utilizes as accountability measures in implementation. I also describe federal and state directives on achieving environmental justice and equity which are useful to understand the fundamental shift in how public administrators think about their work.

Chapter 4 shifts away from the big picture justification towards a brief introduction of existing frameworks that I rely on to create the three I present in this project. Each framework speaks to a level of specificity needed to engage in equitable activities depending on one's role within their organization. For example, an executive leader can take a step from the first framework that outlines activities based on the principle of equity it addresses to prioritize limited resources within the organization. The second framework is one that implements equity in terms of the activity an individual or team would like to engage in. The final framework builds on the first two and provides detailed actions and programming an organization can consider adopting to weave equity in internally, creating a more inclusive and representative workforce, and externally to improve outcomes for underserved and otherwise marginalized communities.

Chapter 5 is where I address inevitable resistance and challenges to implementing activities in the frameworks. In this section, I recognize the power of bureaucratic identities at all organizational levels which is prevalent with those who think of themselves as environmentalists. However, instead of focusing on naming each challenge, I provide strategies to address them and mitigate their impact on forward progress.

Chapter 6 provides suggestions on future collaborative opportunities on case studies that have applied these frameworks in part or totality and would build upon my work. I conclude with final thoughts as my project is a living artifact intended to be reviewed, revised, and updated based on most current best practices.

Acknowledgments

I am incredibly grateful for the support of my family and friends who have helped support me throughout my graduate studies. Thank you to one of my partners who encouraged me to step outside of my comfort zone and accept an executive position at a conservation department to lead equity and environmental justice activities in the middle of graduate school. To my other partner who provided a shoulder to cry on when I was overwhelmed from work, school, and life. To my sisters, a huge thank you for inspiring me to find purpose in serving others. A huge thank you to my mom for exemplifying how to speak up for others who may not have a voice.

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Finally, thank you to the MPPA faculty: Dr. Ted Lascher, Dr. Rob Wassmer, former profession Dr. Sara McClellan, Christian Griffith, Dr. Ahrum Chang, and Dr. Amal Kumar. I have learned so much from each of you and will be a better human because of your insight and guidance. I look forward to continued learning and collaborating with you beyond graduation.

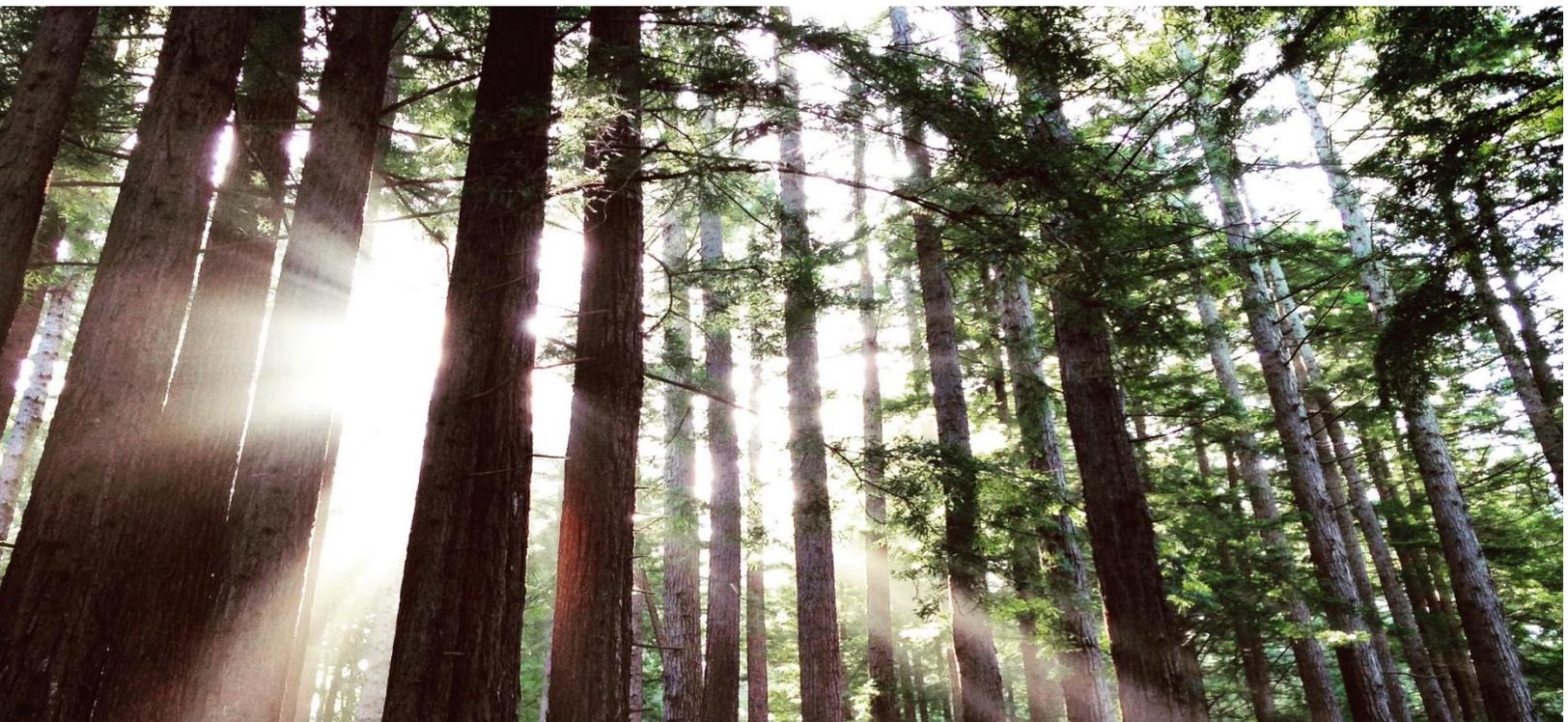


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Chapter 1: Introduction

In their 2017 TEDx Talk address, professor of change and implementation, Thijs Homan elucidated that change is about off-stage power dynamics in interpersonal relationships. For public agencies and departments, this is especially true as limited resources, broadening responsibilities, and political pressures complicate the way individual staff members engage with one another and the public. Further complicating these relationships are historical legacies that have created systemic disparities between some groups largely based on legally protected characteristics. Heightened cultural attention on the experiences of Black, Indigenous, People of Color, those with disabilities, low-income, rural, and other minority populations led to an increased focus on embedding equity in the administration of state government.

Despite this recognition on potential power imbalances. Conservation academics and practitioners largely only focused on building trust with various groups to ensure compliance. This is not to say that trust is not important, (for more discussion on the importance of trust and compliance, see: Hamm et al. (2016), (Shirley & Gore, 2019), but by ignoring its impact, experts also reproduce “narratives that maintain an organization's definition of the problem” (Mosse, 2004).

AYESHA MCGOWAN

“Equity is defined as the **quality** of being fair and impartial despite preconceived notions and traditions. Equality is defined as the **state** of being equal, especially in status, rights, and opportunities. Equality is not possible right now because not everyone is starting from the same place.”

POWER

in the conservation context is access to a complex subject matter area and resources to participate in the decision-making process on issues that impact others who do not have similar access.

DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN EQUITY AND EQUALITY

Generally, the government aims for equality, or rather, a circumstance where every eligible person receives the same service or benefit. Whereas by aiming for equity, which recognizes that societal and historical factors have led to disproportionate outcomes for some groups based on an individual and unchangeable characteristic, the government can direct services appropriately, thereby improving outcomes for all Californians. This concept is known as targeted universalism.

TARGETED UNIVERSALISM

The Director of the Institute of Othering & Belonging at the University of California Berkeley, John A. Powell suggests that by targeting the needs of the most vulnerable groups, everyone will achieve better outcomes. To direct activities, according to Powell, one must first understand the social structures, geography, and cultures of those potentially impacted by the policy. This philosophy

reframes how government traditionally delivers public services away from a one size fits all approach towards a universally beneficial approach.



Figure 1: Equality vs. Equity

LEVERAGING EQUITY TO ACHIEVE ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

While challenging to achieve, the Newsom administration has prioritized a fundamental shift in the delivery of and management of the state’s natural resources. In October 2022, Governor Gavin Newsom ordered all state agencies and departments to develop strategic plans to advance equity that are informed by engagement with California’s historically disadvantaged, marginalized, and underserved communities (hereinafter, underrepresented) (Executive Department State of California, 2022). Such a dynamic change in

government operations solidified actions that some organizations had independently taken in the form of environmental and/or social justice policies and internal justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion policies (JEDI). Early successes in incorporating an equity lens in environmental policy have paved the way for conservation focused that traditionally prioritize the landscape and biodiversity without integrating human dimensions.

Absent from existing literature though is a framework or strategy to consider equity from an organizational perspective. Much in the way that efficiency or compliance can be quantified and analyzed, I aim to provide public conservation organizations with a lens through which to embed principles of equity in all administrative and operational activities of the organization. I also hope this work contributes to a growing body of work that provides practical approaches to improving outcomes for the most vulnerable Californians.

This project seeks to take the efforts of many dedicated individuals who have previously engaged in this work across the state and nation combined with theories in public administration and change management, political ecology, and implementation science. Please note that I will refer to natural resource management and protection and conservation interchangeably, however in the technical context, natural resource management is a distinct practice of conservation.

Chapter 2: Understanding Factors that Impact Outcomes

Before turning to how to implement equity and environmental justice, it is important to understand the factors that determine an individual's experience of health and well-being.

ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH

Research has found that access to green space, air-pollution and exposure to extreme weather negatively impact public health and sense of well-being (Abed Al Ahad & et al., 2020). Climate change, which is causing drastic changes to our ecosystem and weather patterns, increase the threat of exposure to extreme heat, contaminated food or water, poor air quality, and changes in the distribution or infectivity of disease-causing insects.

SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS AND HEALTH

Income, demographic characteristics, and access to healthcare services influence public health outcomes. Additionally, as natural and built environments, governance and management, and institutions are key factors that influence vulnerability at larger scales. Individually, these factors greatly impact the ability of an individual to be resilient. Combined, these influencing factors can increase the vulnerability of an individual or a community to changes in exposure, sensitivity, resilience, or adaptive capacity.

HISTORICAL ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIONS THAT IMPACT HEALTH OUTCOMES

The contemporary conservation movement currently focuses on sustainable use of natural resources and preservation of wildlife, fisheries, and habitats to preserve biodiversity. However, around the same time that remnants of slavery took on other forms of discrimination along the East Coast, California received its statehood, and new settlers entered the state under the guise of Manifest Destiny, individualism, and colonization.

Manifest destiny is the ideology of European settlers that Christianity justified the westward expansion, control, colonization, and ownership of Indigenous lands, waters, and natural resources for the development and maintenance of civilization. Theodore Roosevelt solidified the idea of manifest destiny reflected in the Western conservation movement which embodied the idea that the natural environment should be protected for its intrinsic beauty, use, and enjoyment by humans. Much of his ideology was based on the views of Grant Madison, a staunch eugenicist who in 1916, published the book "The Passing of the Great Race".

REDLINING

Housing is important to discuss from a historical perspective as land use decisions and governmental actions have impacted California's ability to conserve parcels of land near urban centers where many underserved people live. Between the 1930-40s, the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) and the Veteran's Administration gave government-supported, low-cost loans to White Americans so they could purchase new homes while denying minorities access to home mortgages and homeownership opportunities.

Additionally, the Home-Owner's Loan Corporation (HOLC) assessment practices were later codified in FHA underwriting guidelines. The HOLC color-coded maps identified which neighborhoods were "secure" enough to receive federal loans. The HOLC neighborhoods categorized as those with Black, Indigenous, and

other people of color found high risk to lenders. The 1930s assessment resulted in the identification of neighborhoods as risky if “inharmonious racial or nationality groups” live there. The HOLC also considered the presence, odors, and fog -- environmental factors, that also drove the mortgage security risk rating for a neighborhood and outlined these neighborhoods in red. Neighborhoods deemed “declining” were outlined in yellow. The most desirable neighborhoods were outlined in green and blue, respectively. This four-tier system, also known as “A, B, C or D,” produced a hierarchy of credit risk rating that systematically advantaged certain neighborhoods and populations while disadvantaging others--with lasting and far-reaching effects. This practice became known as “redlining” (Aarons, Hartley, & Mazumder, 2020).

Figure 3: HOLC map of San Francisco

photo by the University of Richmond's Mapping Inequality project

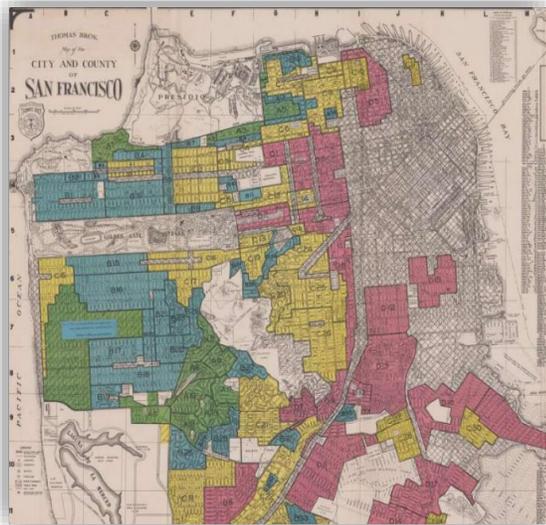
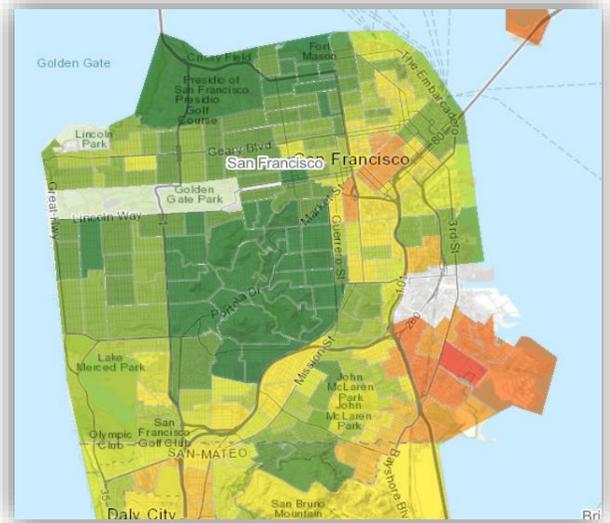
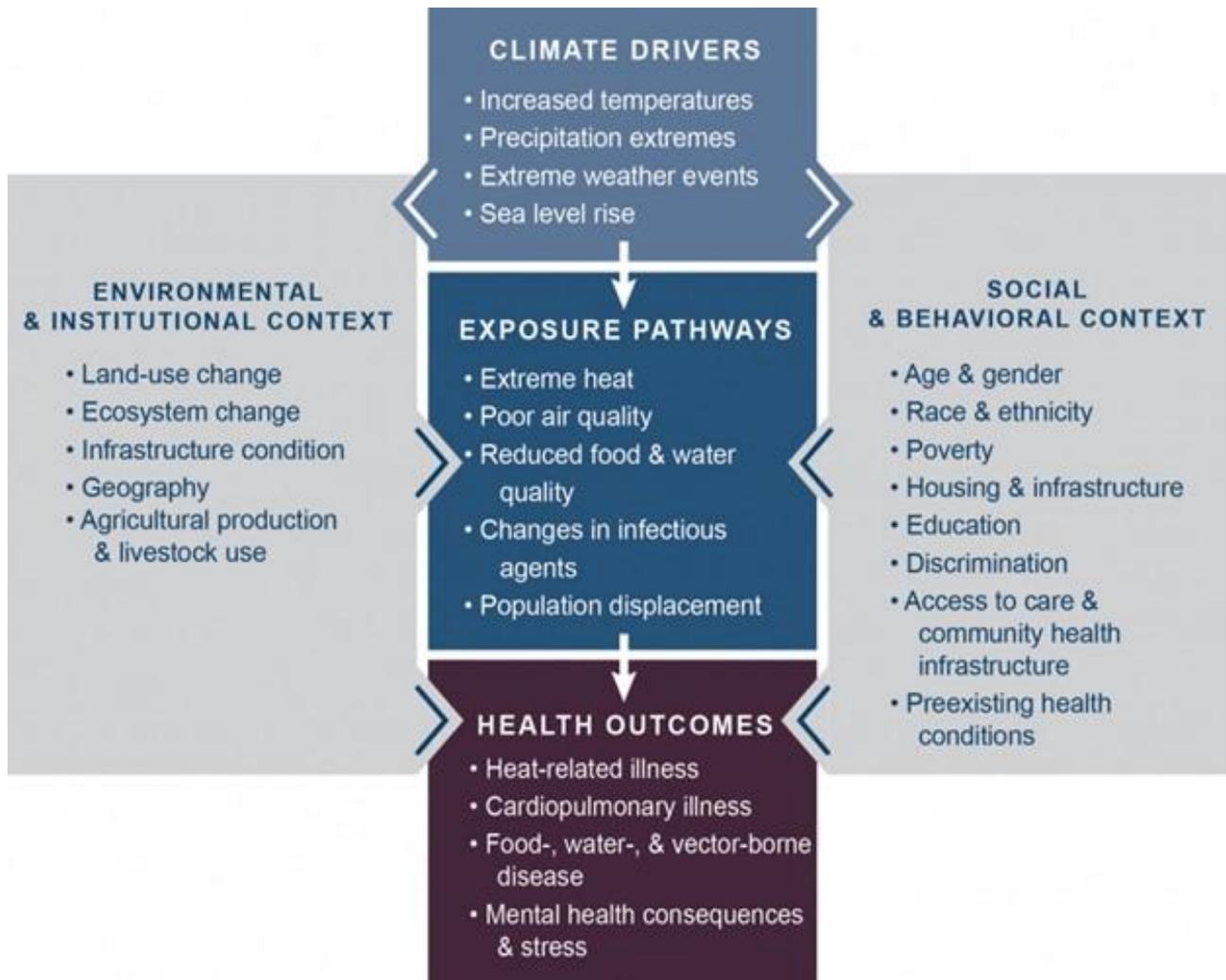


Figure 2: Modern Impacts of Redlining in San Francisco photo by CalEnviroScreen



Figures 3 and 4 compare San Francisco maps. Figure 3 is a HOLC map identifying scores of areas based on desirability. Figure 4 displays the pollution burden distribution of San Francisco and provides a snapshot of pollution burdens in a city that incorporated redlining practices into their housing and zoning law.

Figure 4: Cumulative Impacts



ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency defines “environmental justice” as requiring that “no group of people should bear a disproportionate share of the negative environmental consequences resulting from industrial, governmental and commercial operations or policies” and calls for “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.” (Banzhaf, Ma, & Timmins, 2019)

From the Annual Review of Environmental Justice

The environmental justice movement began after a series of environmental policy decisions that disparately impacted minorities.

From the United States Environmental Protection Agency:

The environmental justice movement was started by individuals, primarily people of color, who sought to address the inequity of environmental protection in their communities.



**February 11,
1968, Memphis
Sanitation Strike**

The Memphis Sanitation Strike advocated for fair pay and better working conditions for Memphis garbage workers. It was the first time African Americans mobilized a national, broad-based group to oppose environmental injustices.

December 1979: Bean v Southwestern Waste Management Corp. and the Formation of NECAG.

In Houston, Texas, a group of African American homeowners began a bitter fight to keep the Whispering Pines Sanitary Landfill from being placed within 1500 feet of a local public school (and within two miles of 6 schools). Residents formed the Northeast Community Action Group (NECAG). NECAG and their attorney Linda McKeever Bullard filed a class action lawsuit to block the landfill from being built. Their lawsuit, *Bean v. Southwestern Waste Management, Inc.*, was the first of its kind in the United States that charged environmental discrimination in waste facility siting under civil rights laws. While the lawsuit

ultimately failed to prevent the construction of the landfill, it sent a clear message for environmental justice cases across the country.

September 1982 Sit-in Against Warren County, NC PCB Landfill

The second time African Americans mobilized a national, broad-based group was a nonviolent sit-in protest against a polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB) landfill in Warren County, North Carolina. Over 500 environmentalists and civil rights activists were arrested, and the protest was unsuccessful in halting construction. This event is widely understood to be the catalyst for the Environmental Justice Movement.

The Warren County protests prompted the U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO) to investigate the racial composition of the communities near the four major hazardous waste landfills in the South. The GAO study found that, in all four cases, the communities around the landfills were disproportionately African American. And in three of the four cases, the communities were predominantly African American.



Many environmental justice scholars and activists point to the Warren County, North Carolina, protests as launching the beginnings of the environmental justice movement. Several civil rights organizations provided leadership and support to the demonstrators. The protests gained national media attention and were among the first to raise public awareness about the environmental concerns of African Americans and other people of color.

Chapter 3: Foundations

PRINCIPLES OF EQUITY

<p>Distributional Equity</p> <p>(McDermott, Mahanty, & Schreckenberg, 2013)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The allocation among stakeholders of costs and benefits resulting from conservation decisions. ■ The appropriate and fair distribution of goods or resources that result in equitable <i>outcomes</i> rather than the equality in the actual distribution as egalitarian systems demand. ■ Distributive justice should therefore take account of the different needs of an individual by taking account of the inherent disadvantages of some groups and allocate resources accordingly.
<p>Recognition Equity</p> <p>(Schreckenberg, Franks, Martin, & Lang, 2016)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Respect of diverse values, knowledges, and contributions. ■ Acknowledgment and acceptance of the legitimacy of a particular issue, right, or interest and respecting the enjoyment of that right. ■ Specifically relevant to engaging with Native American and other indigenous populations, who have voiced concerns over how their communities have been affected from a lack of recognition of traditional cultural perspectives, recognizing expertise in the form of lived experience or local ecological knowledge results in the incorporation of diverse perspectives into environmental policy decisions.
<p>Representational Equity</p> <p>Liang, Park, & Zhao, 2020</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A bureaucracy that demographically reflects the composition of the public for which it serves. ■ A more representative public sector can have a positive impact on outcomes and will better serve diverse interests and democratic principles specifically for underrepresented or otherwise marginalized groups.
<p>Procedural Equity</p> <p>(Schreckenberg, Franks, Martin, & Lang, 2016)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Concerns over membership and recognition of eligibility to participate in policy discussions and decision-making. ■ Focuses on meaningful outreach and engagement in the decision-making process to ensure a diversity of perspectives are considered in the policy-making process. ■ Recognition, inclusion, representation, and participation in decision-making are all required to achieve procedural equity.

	■ Built on the inclusive and effective participation of all relevant actors in affairs that concern them along with transparency and accountability for agreed upon actions and inaction.
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Chapter 4: Frameworks

The previous chapter provided the foundational background needed to understand principles of equity in relation to the complex interactions between those who vowed to preserve nature and those who were most harmed by these policies. The following discussion will introduce three frameworks: the first outlines actions by the equity principle it addresses; the second outlines actions in consideration of the activity – visioning, planning, outreach and engagement, implementation, analysis, or assessment – and provides equitable actions for each; the last framework provides specificity to the first two as well as outlines specific internal and external actions in the format of steps a team of any size can take to embed equity.

Practitioners can utilize these frameworks flexibly so that aspects of each phase can be applied based on context and circumstance. Any level of public administrator can apply these frameworks to situations where a policy decision and subsequent implementation has a human impact.

I present three frameworks developed from previous foundational models developed by experts in inclusive research, public engagement, and implementation science in public health and outlined briefly below. I draw on common themes from this work, most noticeably the importance of outreach and engagement, and situate them within the activities of a conservation organization. This distinctly addresses the culture of staff within these organizations whose identities as scientists and environmentalists tend to create unbalanced power dynamics when engaging with members of the public, due to the technical expertise required to do their jobs. A second distinct characteristic of these frameworks is that they connect internal EDIA work to external EJ work to highlight the importance of having an internal staff dynamic that better reflects the constituents of the organization. A culture of equity within an organization between staff and leadership provides the tools necessary to engage with equity and justice externally.



Foundational Models

- Environmental research: *Integrated Methodological Approach (IMA)* (Rauschmayer & Wittmer, 2006)
 - Public engagement in local government: *Think, Initiate, Engage, Review, Shift (TIERS)* which responds to public agency issues of a lack of staff time, resources, and knowledge for effective public engagement. (Institute for Local Government, 2018);
 - Public participation: *Spectrum of Public Participation (IAP2)* developed to ensure the best outcomes in a decision-making process that considers diverse priorities, needs, and interests based on the goals of an engagement effort. (International Association of Public Participation)
 - RUBIN Race & Equity-Focused Public Engagement Model (Rubin, 2023)
 - The field of Implementation science in public service: the scientific study of methods to promote the systematic uptake of research findings and other evidence-based practices (EBPs) into routine practice, and, hence, to improve the quality and effectiveness of health services (Eccles & Mittman, 2006) (Aarons, Hartley, & Mazumder, 2020) (Loper, Woo, & Metz, 2021).
-

FRAMEWORK 1: EQUITABLE IMPLEMENTATION BY PRINCIPLE (EIP)

Strategy: Practitioners involved in strategic, or resource management and planning efforts will find this framework useful. Intentionally broad and visionary, these actions provide leadership with tools to direct the work of teams. For other staff, these actions are aspirational but key milestones to achieve equity and justice in all activities. **Note: First, define equity, environmental justice, and related terms through inclusive decision-making.**

Action

Impact

Equity

Build trusting relationships*

Fuels implementation efforts.

Procedural, distributional

Conduct equity centered outreach and engagement (see RUBIN model in Appendix B)

Dismantles power structures by giving underserved communities agency in the decision-making process.

Procedural, distributional, representational, and recognition

Increase investments

Shifts practices towards identifying needs and finding financial resources and projects to address them.

Distributional

Incorporate community-defined evidence and culturally adapt

Responds to a community's needs, assets, and history based on cultural and societal context.

Recognition and representational

Analyze, revise, repeat

Encourages the ongoing interrogation of current interventions and explores reasons for inequitable outcomes.

Procedural

Framework 2: Equitable Implementation by Activity (EIA)

Strategy: This framework implements equity in terms of the activity engaged in. The below activities are examples of a few that occur in conservation-related activities. If for example, one is looking to develop a communications plan, actions focused on outreach and engagement would be most applicable; If on the other hand, staff approve permits, actions that focus on analyses would be most applicable. **Note: First, define equity, environmental justice, and related terms through inclusive decision-making.**

Potential Activities (Not an exhaustive list)		
Visioning	Outreach and engagement	Assessment
Planning	Analysis	Implementation
Design and select interventions with implementation in mind.	Planning	Examine community realities and root causes of the problem at hand early in the process to understand the needs and barriers that an intervention seeks to address. It is also important to involve those who may be impacted.
Focus on reach and equity from the very beginning of implementation.	Planning Outreach and Engagement	Consider how many people can and will access and benefit from interventions, and how those groups may require different strategies and adaptations. Identify the barriers that underrepresented groups may face in getting access to programs and services and develop explicit strategies to overcome those barriers to achieve procedural equity*.

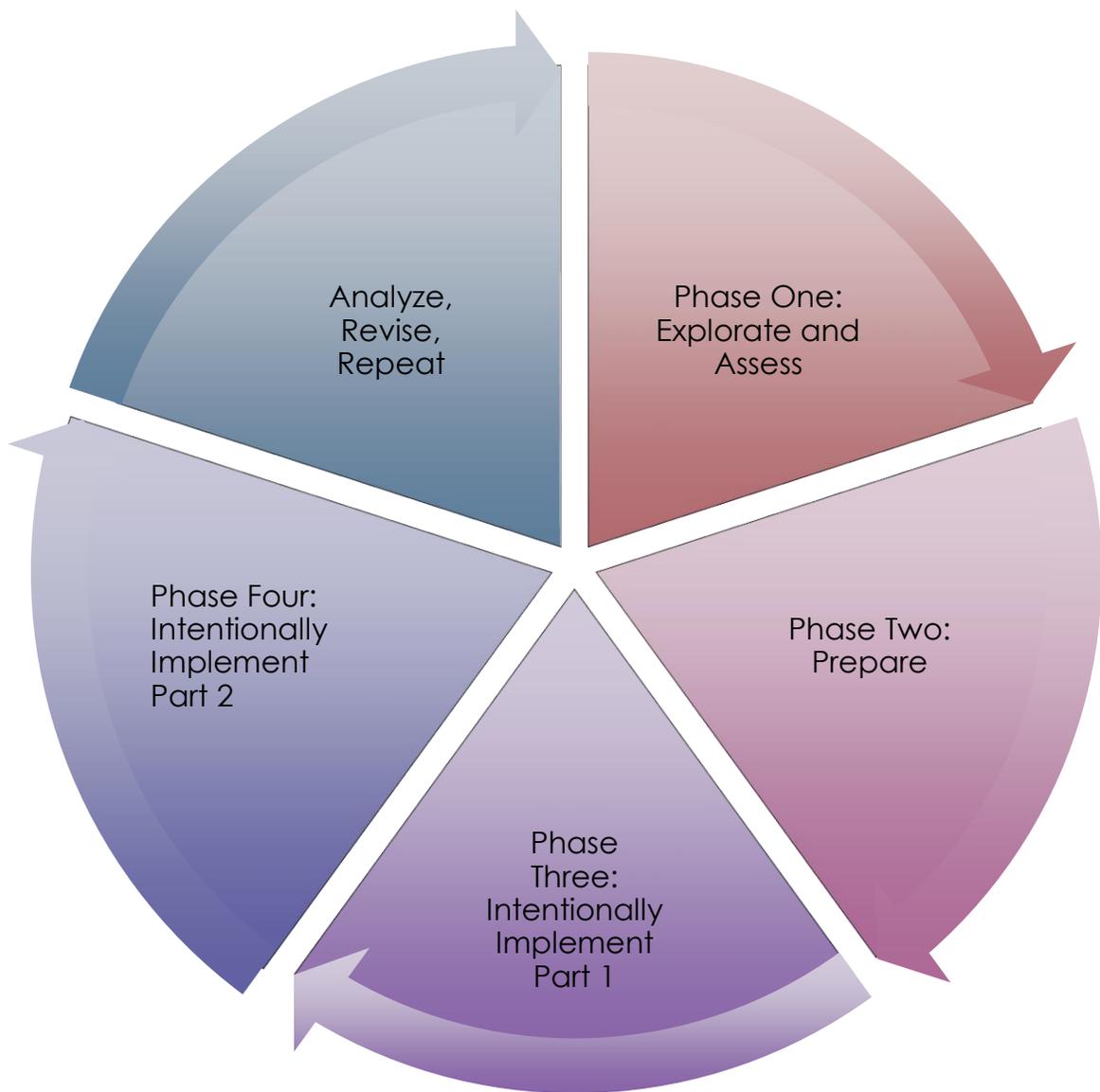
FRAMEWORK 2: EIA, CONT'D.

Potential Activities (not an exhaustive list)		
Visioning	Outreach and engagement	Assessment
Planning	Analysis	Implementation

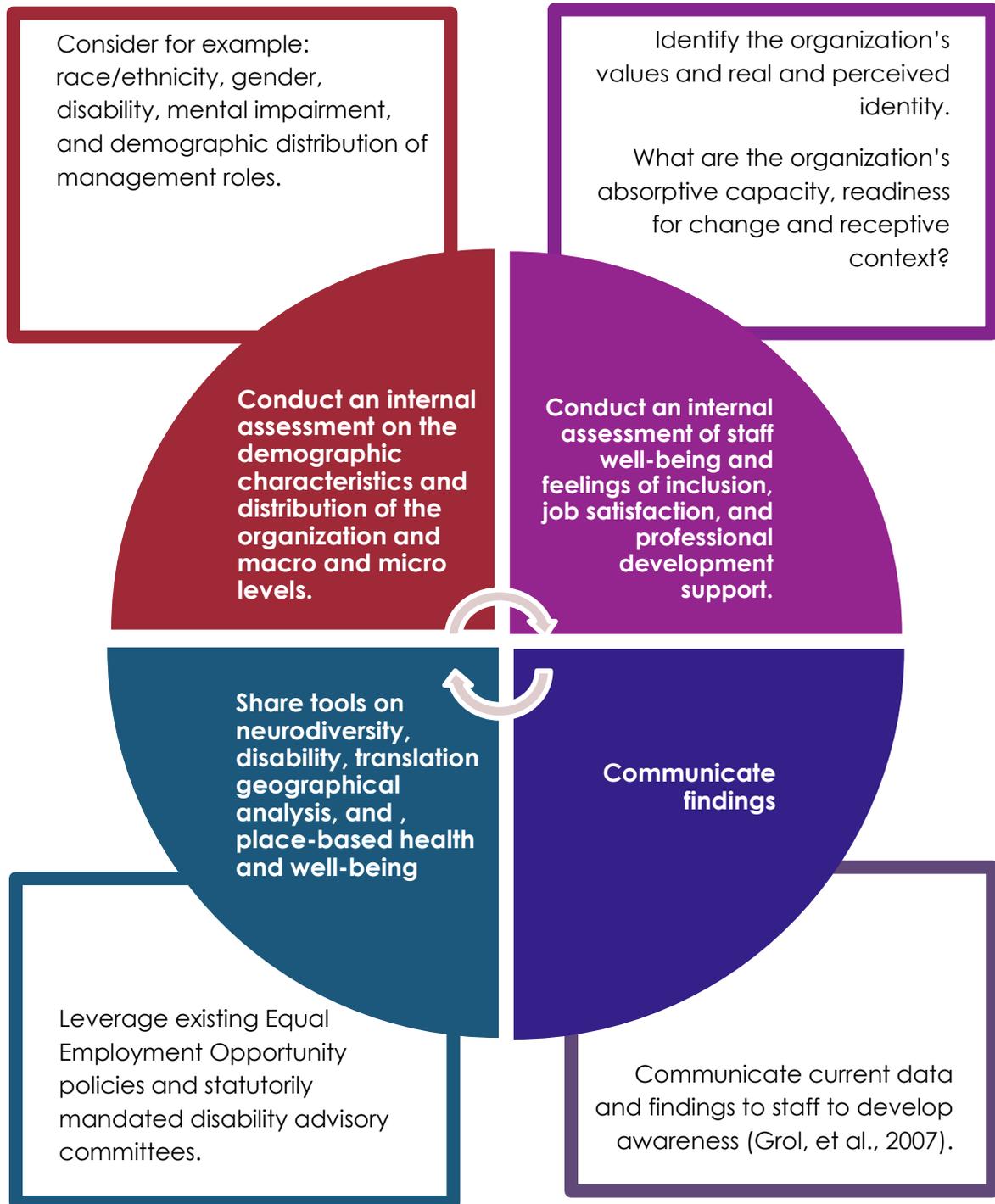
Action	Type of Activity	Details
Emphasize relationships, connection, and reciprocity.	Visioning Planning Outreach and Engagement Implementation Analysis Assessment	Build trust. Understanding what implementation strategies work, for whom, under what conditions, with explicit attention to how historical and structural issues have shaped the implementation context.
Identify and develop adaptations that respond to the strengths and needs of the most vulnerable.	Planning Analysis Implementation Assessment	To the extent possible, cocreate interventions with experts and community members to define the proposed adaptation and accompanying implementation strategies. Test assumptions of expected impact in both the adaptation and implementation strategy and integrate continuous improvement.
Develop strategies at the levels of macro, organization, and local contexts.	Visioning Planning Assessment	Acknowledge the limitations of existing strategies, that only address organizational level or the individual factors. Instead, explicitly address issues such as structural racism, at the sociopolitical and economic level.

FRAMEWORK 3: EQUITABLE AND JUST IMPLEMENTATION PLAN (EJIP)

EJIP integrates EIP and EIA into a process-based development plan and builds on their actions by including. EJIP reframes actions towards achieving equity and justice into phases with discrete goals, objectives, and actions to achieve those goals. While this framework can be utilized as an action plan, not all steps will be relevant for every conservation. Additionally, some organizations may wish to expand their actions in each phase and are encouraged to do so as embedding equity is an ongoing process of reassessing progress and pivoting actions as appropriate.



PHASE 1A: Explore and Assess Internal Power Dynamics



PHASE 1B: Explore and Assess External Power Dynamics

Conduct an external equity and environmental justice assessment

- Who are the groups that current programs or policies may impact?
- When answering this question, consider language, socioeconomic status, and historical factors that drive the current environment.

Conduct an external assessment at the program level on the demographic characteristics and distribution of the burden, resources, and benefits of current efforts.

- Consider for example: race/ ethnicity, health, socioeconomic status, geography, vulnerability to negative impacts from climate change.

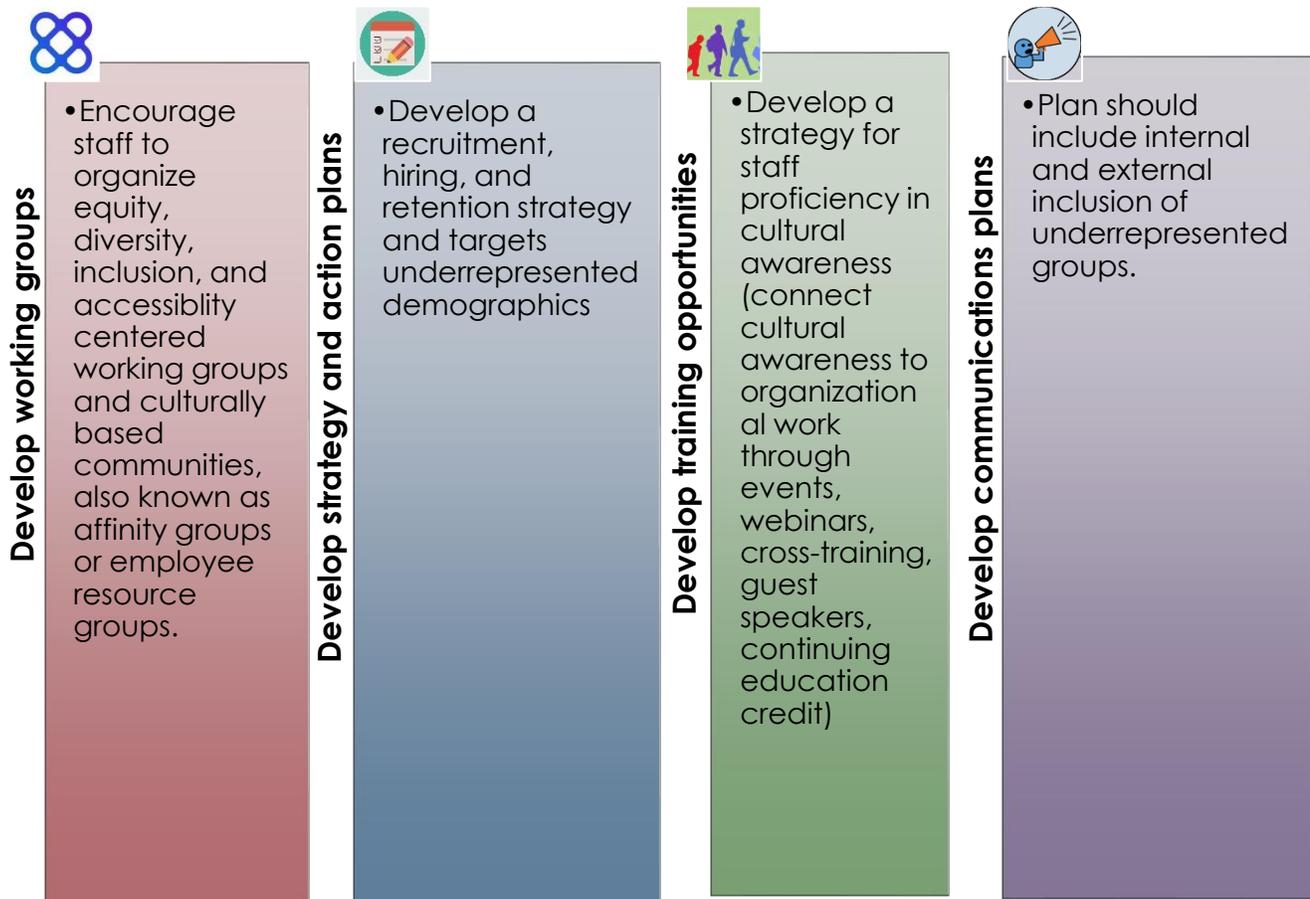
Identify current laws, Federal and State Executive Orders, Academic Institutional Reports, and other policies or directives that support new approaches

- Equal Employment Opportunity, Human Resources, Disability Advisory Committee for example

Communicate current data and findings internally and external parties.

PHASE 2A: Prepare to Build Internal Trust

The preparation phase is often viewed as a one-time event while, in practice, organizations, when planning equity centered actions, an organization may experiment with several pilot initiatives prior to broader implementation. It is therefore encouraged to use the reflect, revise, and react process outlined later in this framework to improve outcomes based on this practice of ongoing reflection.

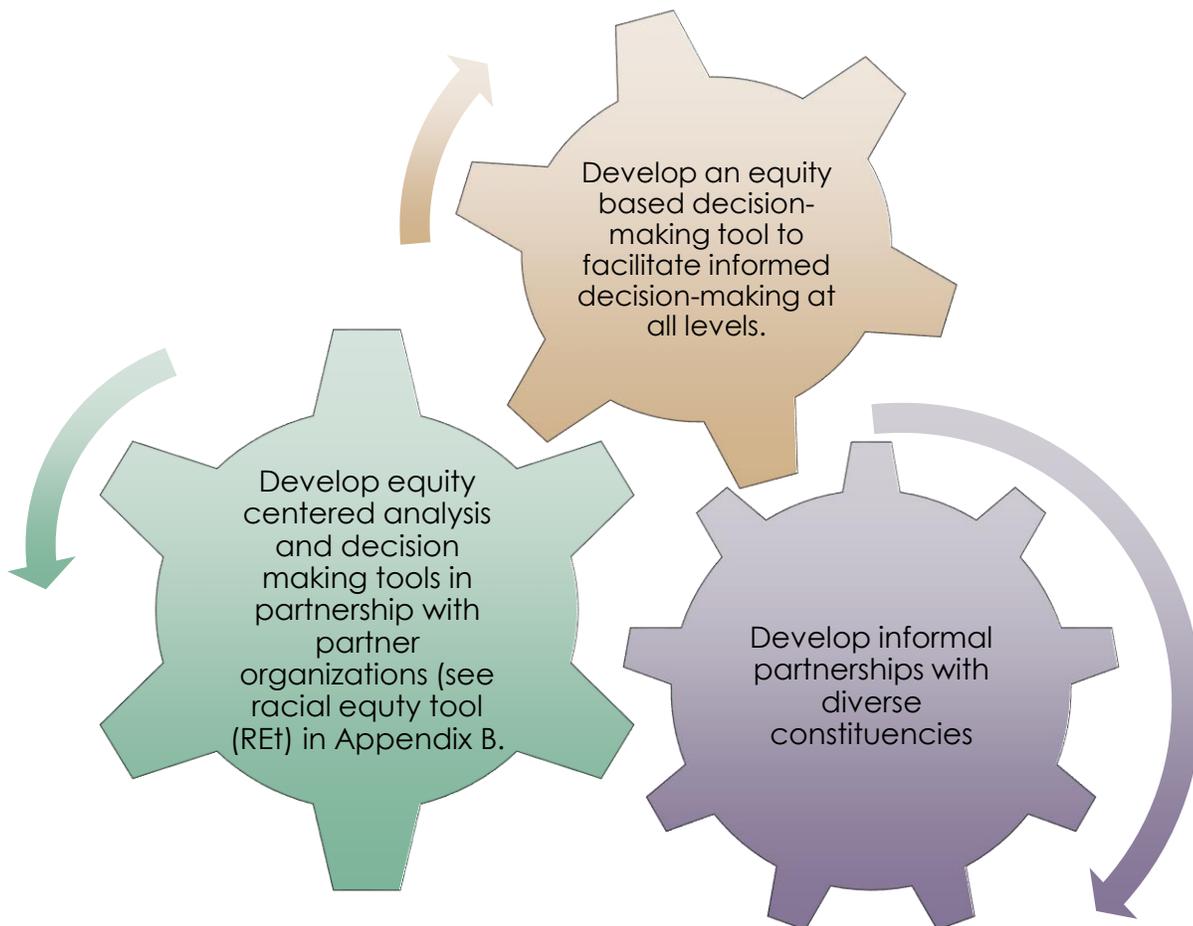


Benefits of forming working groups and plans

To create transformational change, similarly situated staff need to create relational spaces. These are intentional spaces of isolation, interaction, and inclusion—that allow them to work across different positions to build a committed group for change. (Gender & Work: Challenging Conventional Wisdom). Harvard Business School. Utilize these groups in collaboration with subject matter experts to develop policies for translation, accessibility, engagement, and data gathering, analysis, and sharing.

PHASE 2B: Prepare to Build External Trust

Partners will play a key role in the success of any equity or environmental justice related effort. When considering organizations, include foundations; think tanks; non-profits; community-based organizations; faith-based organizations; conservation industry leaders; tribal governments; industry incubators; and associations as potential partners. These partnerships can help develop ideas on activities that explore equity in various ways. For example, a community-based organization in an urban area may have a specific interest in connecting community members to the natural environment and need educational resources on the biodiversity of the urban landscape that the organization can (the California Conservation Corps, and local Regional Conservation Districts are examples of partners for conservation related activities).



PHASE 3A: Intentionally Implement Internal Actions to Mitigate the Impact of Power Dynamics.

Develop EDIA policies to support sustainment of practices can arise at the legislative or organizational level.

Set clear priorities and goals.

- Setting clear priorities and goals is critical to an organization's sense of mission and purpose. Communicating organizational priorities supportive of equity can guide employees toward a common purpose. Not clearly communicating priorities can lead to ambiguity of personal role in integrating equity into work.

Identify potential funding sources that can provide sustainable resources to support staff leading internal initiatives after initial implementation.

- For organizations with limited resources, utilize newly developed partnerships to identify funding partnership opportunities.

Implement strategies and action plans

- Recruitment, hiring, and retention strategy.
- Communications strategy which integrates culturally representative and sensitive language in internal and external messaging.

Report and celebrate progress

PHASE 3B: Intentionally Implement External Actions to Mitigate the Impact of Power dynamics.

Codevelop EJ and equity policies, targeted investment strategies, and goals with impacted underrepresented groups to build their capacity where feasible.

Encourage community decision-making where appropriate.

Examples include: decisions regarding access to recreational opportunities, regulatory actions, and funding allocation

- See the RUBIN model, TIERS, and IAP2 methods of public engagement in Appendix B.

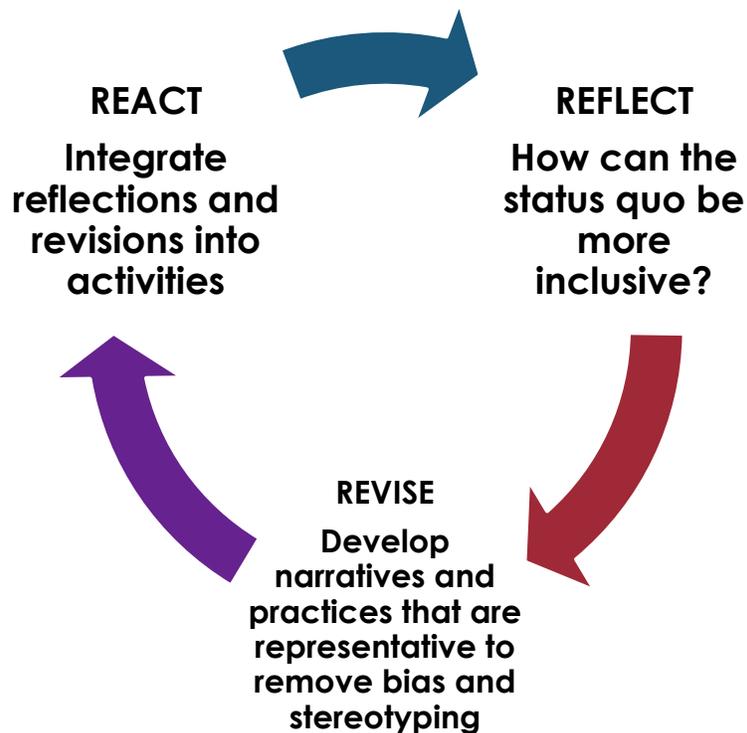
Increase community presence based on equitable outreach strategy

Examples include volunteer opportunities, after school programs, in class speaking opportunities, career fairs, professional organization events, community based events.

Diversify an awareness of opportunities grant opportunities with underrepresented groups identified in Phase 1B.



REMEMBER, this work is challenging, so it's important to step away when needed to reflect, revise the approach, and pivot direction. It is also important to remember that there is no formula for achieving equity. It is an ongoing process, we all will all make mistakes. What is important is to acknowledge those mistakes, say what you will do to do better, and acknowledge the harm.



Chapter 5: Resistance

PLAN FOR RESISTANCE AND CHALLENGES

Change is a letting go of one way of engaging with the world and adopting a new one. Resistance results from a lack of clarity of how a person's values are reflected within the new paradigm. The act of resistance can follow the traditional stages of grief model, so it is important to attend to the emotional experience of change in addition to the actual implementation. Providing forums for open communication, listening often, negotiating and compromising

will be key to the success of equity related efforts.

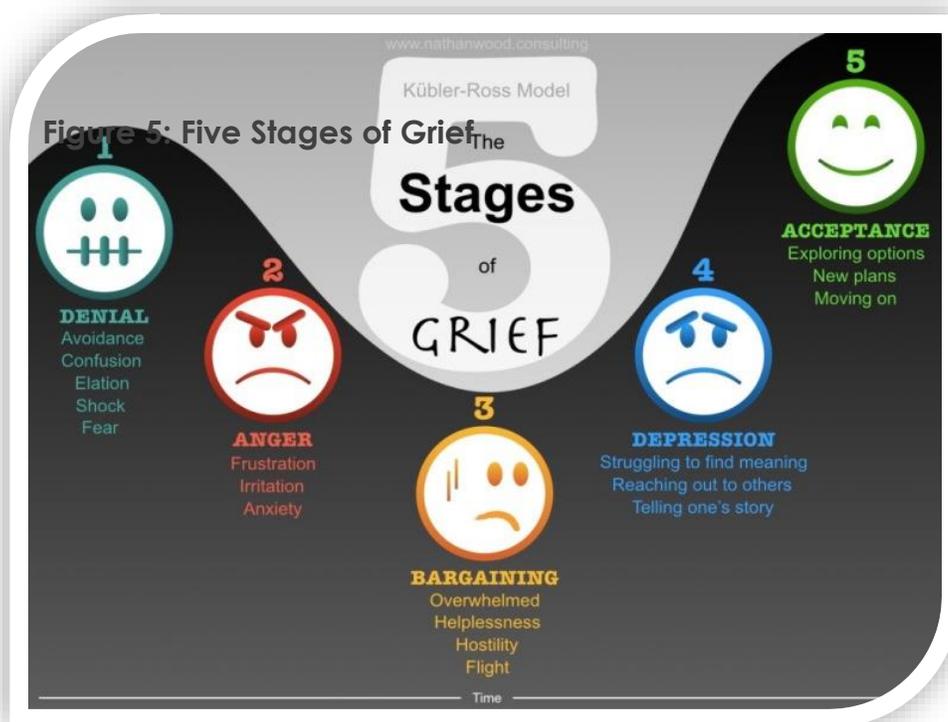


Figure 5: Five Stages of Grief

As with any public policy issue, public administrators in natural resource agencies should always plan for internal and external resistance. Bureaucracies are simply a group of individuals who collectively work

towards efficiency in achieving common goals. While not often considered as such, bureaucracies also include smaller networks of social circles and interpersonal relationships within an organization. These groups often have their own cultures and subcultures.

Understanding that expertise and efficient public organizations are critical to the delivery of public goods and services, mitigating the impacts of resistance will be key to success. The following strategies provide a few general tools to understand how to plan and address resistance. These tools will depend on the organization's size, internal culture, and the capacity or willingness to adapt and innovate. Most importantly, however, managing resistance will depend on

interpersonal relationships and the ability to identify a handful of supporters who are willing to engage with their peers to implement equitable strategies.

Supporters at the non-management and first line supervisor level -- street level bureaucrats -- are specifically situated to personally alter their daily activities to include a focus on equity and environmental justice which can shift conservation related operational processes.

Mid-level supervisors and program managers who support equitable implementation actions can develop policies within the units and programs they oversee. The implementation of these policies should be monitored and documented to serve as case studies for future activities.

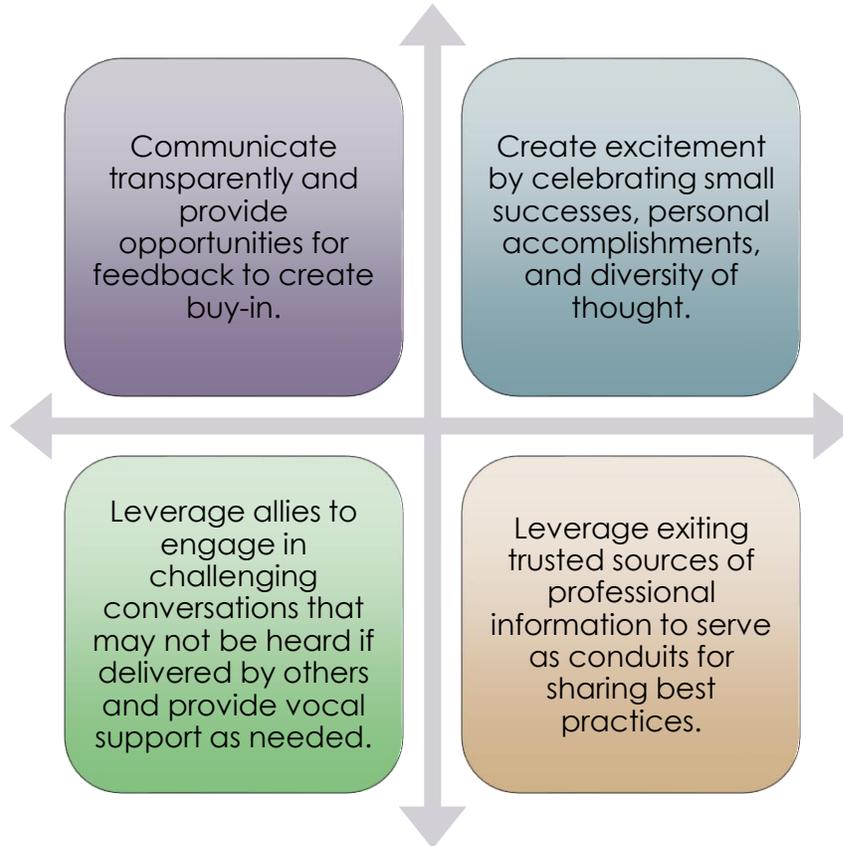
Finally, support from executive level leadership is critical to the success of equity and environmental justice related implementation efforts. Supportive leaders can reiterate values of inclusion, justice, and equity; they can direct the work of others to encourage policy compliance; they can aid in the development and success of partnerships; and perhaps most importantly, they have the final decision-making authority on directing resources towards the implementation of equity throughout the organization.



Leverage the work of supporters as allies to address resistance.

Bureaucracies by nature have somewhat fixed identities so any disruption to the status quo can be difficult. Transformative organizational change can oppose an organization's identity as well as that of its staff and traditional constituents. The difficulties with addressing issues such as systemic racism, difference, and redistributing resources -- which sometimes means others will "lose" -- are exacerbated in due to knowledge gaps of the public in scientific and technical fields.

Figure 6: Strategies to Address Resistance



Conclusion and Key Takeaways

Aiming for equity and environmental justice may appear like a lofty goal, especially in conservation organizations. Once deconstructed into key principles and actions that display these principles, however, achieving equity and environmental justice can be more attainable through intentional implementation. This project is the culmination of my work as a practitioner engaging in principles of environmental justice, equity, diversity, inclusion, and access for over a decade.

Governor Gavin Newsom's Executive Order N-16-22 (2022) directed all state agencies and departments to embed equity into its activities to improve outcomes for the people that call the state home. The administration also provided guidance on which areas to prioritize, such as human resources and government operations, to achieve this directive. While the areas called out in the EO provide services that are critical to the function of an equitable government, they do not reflect daily environmental risks that people face, and

thus do not highlight the disparate experience of health and well-being from these risks.

It is my hope that this project can support staff in these areas where objective, peer- supported, scientific knowledge and an understanding of the environmental regulatory environment are crucial to participating in the decision-making process. It is also my hope that underserved communities can also use this project to hold public organizations accountable to truly embed equity in measurable ways.

To continue to build upon this work and build relationships amongst practitioners, future research can consist of case studies that apply these frameworks to a variety of scenarios. For example:

1. New restoration grant program: apply in the development of program guidelines, eligibility, and scoring criteria.
2. Large-scale restoration project: apply in the development of construction plans, management of culturally relevant resources, and identification and creation of access opportunities -- all of which can improve outcomes for underserved groups.
3. Land acquisition for conservation related activities: apply in the identification and prioritization of lands to be acquired could be envisioned, planned, designed, and implemented in coordination with a community-based organization or higher education institution through an equity lens.
4. Improvement of internal diversity: apply in the development and implementation of a recruitment strategy to diversify staff demographics.
5. Wildlife actions plans (WMPs): apply in the development phase to better account for human wildlife dimensions, including human-wildlife conflict. This case study could provide valuable insight and evidence which would add nuance to each of these frameworks and contribute to the available but limited literature.

Of particular interest would be conducting a case study on a natural resource public organization that has already implemented a racial equity or environmental justice plan or policy. The aim would be to understand whether concepts in the three frameworks are reflected in practice. My hope is that this project will make it easier to determine if this is the case and if not, understand why so that underserved communities ultimately and finally receive the justice they deserve.

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Appendix A: Special Topics

DEFINITIONS (Rubin, 2023)

Community Engagement	Rooted in relationship building, this dynamic process facilitates communication, interaction, feedback, involvement and partnering between a community and government. This is done with community.
Community Outreach	Activities or actions that bring ideas or information to a community. This is done for a community.
Racial Equity	This is both an outcome and a process. As an outcome, we achieve this when everyone has what they need to thrive, no matter where they live.
Structural Racism	Is the normalized and legitimized range of policies, practices, and attitudes that routinely produce cumulative and chronic adverse outcomes for people of color. For more on the 4 levels of racism click here .

POWER

Conservation literature has brought attention to the intersectionality of power and trust as the “willingness to be vulnerable based upon positive expectations of the intentions or behaviors of another” (Rousseau et al., 1998) “Environmental justice, which seeks to achieve equity in the **process and outcomes** of environmental policy and decision-making” (Ulibarri, Pérez Figueroa, & Grant, 2022) is built on repositioning power towards communities most disparately harmed by past governmental decisions. Conservation literature, however, rarely addresses the integration of power through environmental justice into a construct of embedding equity into conservation activities. This is characterized by a fine first then educate approach to environmental enforcement and a “fence” or barrier approach in programs to change environmental behaviors (Kashwan, Duffy, Massé, Asiyambo, & Marijnen, 2021) Trust focused literature goes on to say to redirect power, achieve environmental justice, and advance

towards equity, distributional, recognition, procedural, and representational equity must be attended to (Saif, Keane, & Staddon, 2022). Justice then, must examine the impact of power dynamics that can be present when decisions are based on “objective” analysis of technically complex data.

Reconceptualizing equity to include a consideration of power and trust in the traditional one directional model of delivering public services and programs requires agencies to relinquish some decision-making control and accept vulnerability (Li, 2007) over management, resources, or ideas (Hughes & Vadrot, 2019). For more discussion on power and political ecology which is a critical research field within anthropology and related disciplines that examines how and why

economic structures and power relations drive environmental change in an increasingly interconnected world (Roberts, 2020). This transformational shift in perspective seems challenging as the fundamental premise of conservation continues to rely on the government as both the technical expert and final decisionmaker. Within this context then, how can governmental entities mitigate unbalanced outcomes to ensure equitable policy development and implementation?

Power, whether real or perceived, impacts outcomes of governmental decisions particularly for the typically donor-driven conservation sector. Power also determines to whom public agencies are accountable (Jepson, 2005) and, therefore, whose trust they need to win (Saif, Keane, & Staddon, 2022). Specifically prevalent in science focused areas such as in species protections under the California Endangered Species Act (CESA) and the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) power sometimes appears subdued in the form of prioritizing on Western scientific expertise over community experiences.

More on Trust

- Trust is a leap of faith, whereby individuals (trustors) believe that the trustee (an individual, an institution, or set of rules) will act favorably on their behalf and encapsulate their needs (Stern & Coleman, 2015).
- Trustworthiness pertains to individual or institutional benevolence, integrity, and ability (Colquitt & Rodell, 2011).
- Lack of trust and mistrust suggest ambivalence, whereas distrust suggests a relationship has been compromised (Stern & Coleman, 2015).

Appendix B: Additional Resources

Analytical Tools

- [Federal EJ Screen](#)
- [CalEnviroScreen](#)
- [Healthy Places Index](#)

Racial Equity Tool

The Racial Equity Tool is a simple set of questions to adjust for race in conservation decisions:

1. **Proposal:** What is the policy, program, practice, or budget decision under consideration? What are the desired results and outcomes?
2. **Data:** What's the data? What does the data tell us?
3. **Community Engagement:** How have communities been engaged? Are there opportunities to expand engagement?
4. **Analysis and Strategy:** Who will benefit from or be burdened by your proposal? What are your strategies for advancing racial equity or mitigating unintended consequences?
5. **Implementation:** What is your plan for implementation?
Accountability and communication: How will you ensure accountability, communicate, and evaluate results?

Community Engagement Tools

The [International Association of Public Participation's \(IAP2\) Spectrum of Public Participation](#) provides a helpful framework for thinking about developing engagement strategies that meet the objectives of the engagement activity. The spectrum outlines five goals ranging from an objective of informing to one of empowering and the describes the purpose of each how to involve stakeholders and the public in agency action or decision and to help agencies determine their expectations for public and stakeholder involvement (Doyle-Capitman & Decker, 2018).

IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation



IAP2's Spectrum of Public Participation was designed to assist with the selection of the level of participation that defines the public's role in any public participation process. The Spectrum is used internationally, and it is found in public participation plans around the world.

INCREASING IMPACT ON THE DECISION					
	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision making in the hands of the public.
PROMISE TO THE PUBLIC	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.

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Figure 7: IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation

- [U.S. Fish and Wildlife Spectrum of Engagement based on the International Association of Public Practitioners \(IAP2\)](#)
 - [Facilitating Local Stakeholder Participation in Collaborative Landscape Conservation Planning: Practitioner's Guide](#)

Principles of Public Engagement

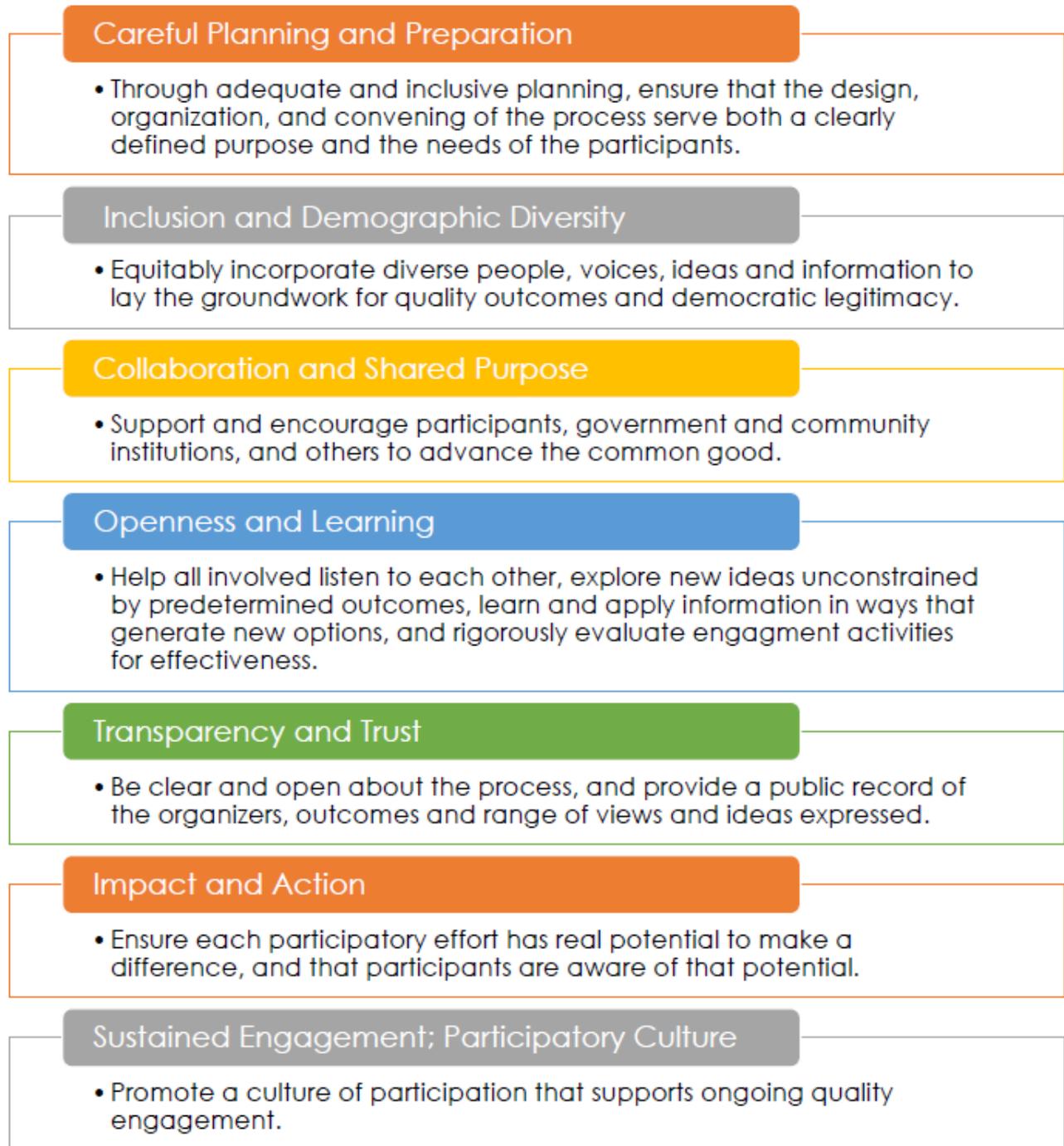


Figure 8: Principles of Community Engagement (Rubin, 2023)

Practical Public Engagement

*Shaping the Future Together:
A Guide to Practical Public Engagement for Local Government*

TIERS FRAMEWORK



THINK



INITIATE



ENGAGE



REVIEW



SHIFT

The Institute for Local Government (ILG) has developed a framework to support and assist any local government with planning and executing public engagement efforts. The Framework consists of five pillars for successful community engagement: Think, Initiate, Engage, Review and Shift.

Why TIERS? The TIERS Public Engagement Framework has been developed in direct response to what we have heard from local elected officials and staff across California. In 2015, ILG conducted a statewide survey and found that 69 percent of respondents said they do not have the sufficient staff, knowledge and financial resources for public engagement. These findings mirrored the results of a 2013 ILG & Public Agenda survey which found that 69 percent of respondents thought a lack of resources and staff could stand in the way of a deliberative [public engagement] approach.

Further, there is a lack of standard best practices for authentic and effective public engagement, which leads to a lack of common understanding of what public engagement is and how to approach it. The TIERS Public Engagement Framework and its companion program, the TIERS Training, provide a step-by-step approach to public engagement.

How Can Your Agency Benefit from Public Engagement?

Local governments will benefit from public engagement in the following ways:

- Improved local agency decision making and actions, with better impacts and outcomes
- More community buy-in and support, with less contentiousness
- Better identification of the public's values, ideas and recommendations
- More informed residents
- More constructive discussion and decision making
- Faster project implementation with less need to revisit again
- More trust in each other and in local government
- Higher rates of community participation and leadership development

Figure 9: Institute of Local Government- [TIERS Framework](#)



THINK

Step 1: Self-Assessment

- Public engagement project assessment
 - Quick Assessment (1 - 4 hours)
 - Deeper Assessment (8 hours - 6 weeks)
 - *Template provided*
- Agency assessment

Step 2: Consider Public Engagement Approach

- Draft public engagement approach for your specific effort
 - *Template provided*
- Draft public engagement approach for agency-wide application
 - Review your agency's public engagement policies and practices, including current staffing
 - Conduct an analysis of the public engagement functions and needs across your agency

Step 3: Contemplate Community Landscape

- Create or update a list of local community based organizations (CBOs) and others to inform outreach efforts
- Identify diverse locations to hold meetings with target audiences in mind
- *Template provided*



INITIATE

Step 1: Develop Public Engagement Approach

- Choose a mix of in-person and online activities
 - Consider the timeline, budget, staff time implications (your department and other departments as applicable)
 - Who will facilitate events? Who/how will data gathered be input, analyzed, summarized?
 - What might go wrong? How might your approach mitigate for challenges?
- *Template provided*

Step 2: Develop Outreach Plan

- Create an outreach plan
 - Consider what you know from your 'community landscape' listing; who you are trying to reach? How much time and money available?
- *Template provided*

Step 3: 'Reality Check'

- Are there local, state or federal laws or regulations you need to consider?
- Are there internal organizational 'politics' or challenges to take into consideration?
- Are there larger 'Political' issues to keep in mind?
 - For example: Is there an upcoming election? A significant recent incident?



ENGAGE

Step 1: Implement Outreach Plan

- Implement your plan, prioritizing outreach
- Ensure targeted audiences are represented (authentically) within your plan
 - Double check with local leaders to ensure authentic voices are reached

Step 2: Implement Public Engagement Approach

- Execute your plan; ensure roles are clear; adjust as appropriate
- *Template provided*

Step 3: 'Reality Check'

- Are there internal organizational 'politics' or challenges that have changed and need to be considered?
- Check in with key community leaders on a regular basis to understand new or coming issues; mitigate accordingly



REVIEW

Step 1: Evaluate Public Engagement Approach

- What worked? What could have gone better? See ILG resources like Rapid Review Worksheets
- Is training needed for any staffers in order to execute more effectively in the future? (e.g., facilitation skills, graphic design, survey question construction, meeting design)

Step 2: Evaluate Outreach Plan

- What worked? What could have gone better?
- Is training needed for any staffers in order to execute more effectively in the future? (e.g., communications skills, small group facilitation)
- Are there community leaders with whom the agency should build stronger ties?

Step 3: What Barriers Did You Overcome?

- What internal organizational barriers did you overcome?
- What other political barriers did you overcome?



SHIFT

Step 1: Internal Organizational

- Consider beneficial organizational shifts
- For example: public engagement assigned within job description(s); commitment to train elected officials and staff in public engagement policy and/or skills; ongoing communication strategies that go beyond traditional methods such as ethnic media
- Send out periodic surveys to understand satisfaction with public engagement related efforts and policies
- Ask for help when needed from organizations like ILG and/or consultants

Step 2: External | Your Community

- Consider beneficial shifts in external relations
- For example: set and track metrics related to in-person and phone meetings with diverse and underrepresented community members, choose time bound goals, engage with local leadership programs

Step 3: Policy Change

- Consider policy review/change/adoption
- Commit to review public engagement related policies if they have not been systematically reviewed in the last ten years
- Adopt a resolution demonstrating commitment to public engagement

RUBIN Model

This engagement model is a living guidance framework meant to help anyone working within a California state agency gain the knowledge and tools needed to develop and implement a robust community engagement plan. The model has five phases and 25 steps.

A Step-by-Step Guide Through the RUBIN Model

The model suggests Five Phases of work. Each Phase has a companion Template. Each phase has five steps or a total of 25 steps to follow. The steps do not need to be followed in order; but it is important to touch on all of them.

Reach Out and Listen

Phase 1: Ground yourself with the project

- **Step 1: What is your goal? What are the main engagement objectives?**
- **Step 2: How much time do you have?**
- **Step 3: What (if anything) is your budget? What staff resources are available?**
- **Step 4: Where does your effort fall on the IAP2 Engagement Spectrum**
- **Step 5: What do you want to learn? Ponder what your evaluation effort will look like?**

Understand and Learn

Phase 2: Exploring sensitive issues

- **Step 1: Who will benefit / be burdened analysis.**
- **Step 2: Language access**
- **Step 3: Political and legal considerations**
- **Step 4: Importance of a local site visit**
- **Step 5: Understanding history.**

Build Out your Effort

Phase 3: Who, What, Where, How, When

- **Step 1: Who are the participation targets? Create a community landscape listing.**
- **Step 2: What engagement activities and tactics?**
- **Step 3: Where will events take place? Explore logistical needs.**
- **Step 4: How will an evaluation framework be created.**
- **Step 5: When to conduct an informal process design check.**

Implement

Phase 4: Outreach, Authentic Engagement Efforts

- **Step 1: Create and implement outreach plan.**
- **Step 2: Delineate Engagement Activities.**
- **Step 3: Prepare for meetings.**

- **Step 4: Draft and implement a communication plan.**
- **Step 5: Implement community engagement activities.**

Nurture Change

Phase 5: Report Back, Celebrate, Evaluate

- **Step 1: Report back to participants.**
- **Step 2: Celebrate with your team.**
- **Step 3: External evaluation of engagement effort.**
- **Step 4: Internal evaluation of engagement.**

Evidence-Based Practice (EBP) Implementation Tool

From: Advancing a Conceptual Model of Evidence-Based Practice Implementation in Public Service Sectors (Aarons, Hartley, & Mazumder, 2020)

Figure 10: Conceptual model of implementation phases and factors affecting implementation in public service sectors

