



Green Cincinnati Plan
2023

Operationalizing Equity



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Integrating equity throughout the GCP journey

A Word from Ashlee Young, Equity Committee Chair

It has been my honor to serve as the Equity Committee Chair for the Green Cincinnati Plan. One of the greatest challenges facing our community is climate change. Often when we talk about climate change, the language we use is not accessible to everyone and it doesn't center those most impacted. Like other issues in our community, climate impacts are not created equally or distributed equally; many of them disproportionately impact our Black and Brown communities, and communities with low wealth. It is important that we are deliberate about reducing those impacts.

What excites me most about the 2023 Green Cincinnati Plan is the intentionality of embedding equity into the process and plan with an explicit focus on racial equity.

It is up to all of us to hold our community accountable for how the plan is developed and implemented. Every step of the way it will be important to assess who will benefit and who will be burdened by the decisions we make. We see this intentional focus from the federal government with Justice40 and, it is our time as a community to put this commitment into practice through implementation and budgetary process.

Accountability lies with all of us, so the next time you are asked to be involved in any effort, think about who will benefit from this decision, who will be burdened by this decision. And we must ask, are those most impacted not only at the table, but are they leading and deciding what is best for their community? The choice is ours: as a city we can do the hard work now or we can suffer the consequences of having the same patterns repeated later, causing further harm to our communities.

If we want to see real change, we have to do things differently. Doing things differently is being intentional about creating a community-driven process for climate action planning. Investing in and supporting the leadership, knowledge, and expertise of those most impacted by any aspects of climate change will be needed to create community solutions that work.

EQUITY COMMITTEE CHAIR



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Ashlee Young

ORGANIZATION
Vice President of Policy &
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Moving from equity as a concept described in the pillar to real-life application is neither simple nor easy, but it is imperative. The building blocks of common language, commitment, strategy, and tools will assist in integrating equity; a detailed description of these resources follows below.

As a public statement of collective commitment to the integration of equity, the GCP Steering Committee adopted the following Equity Commitment Statement.

This statement and the collective honesty and buy-in that it embodies will continue to guide and inform all involved in the Green Cincinnati Plan moving forward.

Equity Commitment

The Green Cincinnati Plan (GCP) is committed to equity—with an explicit focus on racial equity. We acknowledge Cincinnati’s demographic makeup and our history of injustices. We believe that we will be better able to create an environment where all Cincinnatians can thrive by explicitly centering race in our efforts. The GCP will have an intentional focus on addressing the needs of those people and communities who experience elevated burdens from climate change and on an equitable distribution of benefits moving forward. We commit to embedding racial equity throughout the engagement process, written product, and implementation of the Green Cincinnati Plan to ensure accountability and impact.

Common Language

As discussed in Equity Pillar above and approved by the Steering Committee, the Green Cincinnati Plan shares the following foundational definitions of equity:

Equity: just and fair inclusion in which all can participate, prosper, and reach their full potential. In sustainability work, equity must be recognition, procedural, distributional, restorational, and transformational.

Racial Equity: an outcome in which “race no longer determines one’s socioeconomic outcomes. As a process, we apply racial equity when those most impacted by structural racial inequity” can fully participate in the development of “institutional policies and practices that impact their lives.”²⁴

There are five types of equity as identified in the GCP's definition:

1. **Recognitional equity** identifies and acknowledges injustices affecting specific populations that various institutions have created, including government.²⁵
2. **Procedural equity** addresses power structures and access to participation in decision-making. A key to this is ensuring equitable, inclusive, and meaningful engagement and asking how our engagement shifts power, builds trust, and ensures accountability, both structurally and intergenerationally.²⁵
3. **Distributional equity** addresses the distribution of burdens and benefits and deploys targeted resources to reduce inequities across different populations.²⁵
4. **Restorational equity** makes commitments to correct past harms and facilitate repair, including revitalizing degraded relationships, land, and other resources.²⁵
5. **Transformational equity** addresses underlying structural conditions that cause social and racial injustices while cultivating accountability, reducing harm, and preventing future unintended consequences.²⁵



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ASHLEE YOUNG
GCP Equity Committee Chair

Priority Communities: communities where climate mitigation and efforts to close the disparity gaps are likely to be most impactful due to historic and systemic discrimination, vulnerability to climate-related events and disasters, and capacity to adapt to these challenges.

As the City works to operationalize the climate equity strategies of the GCP, a common language and approach to prioritizing communities hit first and worst by the climate crisis is needed. In climate equity work, communities are referred to by many different terms—frontline, disadvantaged, under-resourced, minority, low-income, and more. The GCP uses the term “Priority Communities” to communicate the essence of these various terms and to signal the importance of elevating these communities’ needs based on a nuanced approach that is supported by both data and lived experience.

The particular strategy being implemented and the exact focus of the implementing partner will help determine how communities get prioritized. Tools like the [Climate Equity Indicators Report](#)²⁶—and other resources found in the GCP Equity Framework (see Appendix)—will provide the necessary quantitative data while residents’ lived experiences will provide the necessary qualitative data. In fact, the GCP Equity Framework

provides an expanded set of tools and offers guidance on determining Priority Communities for GCP implementation.

We live during a critical moment in human history. We have created a problem that will require us to come together to deliver the transformational change the moment requires. This Plan is a community vision born from the many voices who have contributed their ideas and energy.