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Program Development Toolkit for Equitable Climate Action

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CAEJC Program Development Toolkit

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Department of Environmental Protection & Energy Programs Office

The DEP works to protect the commonwealth’s air, land, and water from pollution; restore these natural resources; and provide for Pennsylvanians’ health and safety through a cleaner environment. Advancing this mission, the DEP Energy Programs Office is the primary entity under the Governor’s jurisdiction responsible for programs that promote knowledge and use of energy efficiency and energy conservation technologies as well as indigenous, clean, alternative fuels, including energy production and use technologies. One of the core functions of the Energy Programs Office is to work with partners to gather data and develop resources to help policymakers, planners, and other leaders in Pennsylvania make informed and best-outcome energy decisions. To inform statewide planning and decision-making, Fourth Economy was commissioned to develop resources to better incorporate Environmental Justice considerations into DEP program design and implementation, particularly for grant and technical assistance opportunities available to Pennsylvania residents, businesses, local governments, non-profits, and educational institutions.

About Fourth Economy

Fourth Economy Consulting offers services that advance economic strategy, resilience, and equity. We specialize in helping public and private sector clients take meaningful action to create innovative, equitable, and sustainable outcomes. We aim to create more prosperous and equitable communities and organizations by working in partnership with leaders in government, business, and the community.

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Introduction

A guiding principle in The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection’s (DEP) [Clean Energy Program Plan](#) is to “Consider effects on equity, access, and inclusion and the needs of

and effects on vulnerable communities”. Furthermore, PA DEP’s Draft [Environmental Justice \(EJ\) Policy](#) requires the consideration and prioritization of communities disproportionately impacted by climate change in climate change-related initiatives, including Pennsylvania’s Climate Action Plan (CAP), which is updated every three years. To this end, DEP’s Energy Programs Office (EPO) the Climate Action for Environmental Justice Communities (CAEJC) Program to incorporate equity and justice considerations in its climate planning.

In particular, [EPO](#) created the CAEJC Program to support and carry out strategic actions to help Pennsylvania’s EJ communities adapt to climate change while striving to lower greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions with measures that reduce risk and capitalize on potential opportunities to strengthen local economies. While climate change impacts are happening around the state, historic and persisting socioeconomic inequities mean that some Pennsylvanians are more vulnerable to climate impacts because of where they live, the type of home they live in, their income level and degree of mobility, and other factors. Pennsylvanians who live in [environmental justice communities](#) in particular are disproportionately exposed to climate hazards, such as flooding and heatwaves. At the same time, they have limited access to tools to adapt to impacts and transition to cleaner energy to slow down climate change.

In partnership with DEP and the U.S. Climate Alliance, Fourth Economy developed this Program Development Toolkit designed to enable EPO to better prioritize the needs of these communities in the design of federal funding programs administered by DEP, and strengthen its ability to take and promote climate actions that produce benefits and reduce harms to environmental justice communities across Pennsylvania.

The Program Development Toolkit presents a variety of questions that could be posed by departmental (DEP) staff and/or other program developers. These questions are designed to assist program developers in thinking through how their programs can be designed, administered, and implemented to increase positive and reduce potential negative impacts on Environmental Justice (EJ) communities and ensure their equal access to resources. As federal funding programs are developed and launched, this Toolkit and its companion documents, including the resource list and the outreach template, should be built on and added to according to available resources.

This Program Development Toolkit is designed as a foundational step for developing funding and technical assistance programs administered by EPO, and should be supplemented by adherence to DEP policies as they related to environmental justice and public participation, as well as engagement with relevant advisory bodies and community members and groups interested in program participation.

How to Use This Toolkit

This toolkit offers guidance and, where possible, tools to support answers to the questions posed by those who are developing programs that EJ communities will be eligible for.

This toolkit will be updated as programs and tools are developed and feedback is received.

Definitions and terms

The following definitions and terms should be considered draft as much of the language used to describe the various programs continues to evolve.

- **Environmental Justice:** Environmental justice means the just treatment and meaningful involvement of all people, regardless of income, wealth, race, color, national origin, area of residence, Tribal affiliation, or disability, in agency decision-making and other activities that affect human health and the environment so that people: are fully protected from disproportionate and adverse human health and environmental effects (including risks) and hazards, including those related to climate change, the cumulative impacts of environmental and other burdens, and the legacy of racism or other structural or systemic barriers; and have equitable access to a healthy, sustainable, and resilient environment in which to live, play, work, learn, grow, worship, and engage in cultural and subsistence practices. It further involves the prevention of future environmental injustice and the redress of historic environmental injustice
- **EJ Communities/Populations:** The residents of a place that face environmental justice concerns or issues, both current and historic.
- **EJ Area** (from the Interim Final EJ Policy): A geographic area characterized by increased pollution burden, and sensitive or vulnerable populations based on demographic and environmental data. This term identifies the geographic location where DEP's EJ Policy applies. These areas are mapped using the Penn EnviroScreen. The methods to identify EJ Areas will be updated regularly. Mapping: <https://gis.dep.pa.gov/PennEnviroScreen/>
 - **Note on using Penn EnviroScreen's EJ Area definition:** For federal programs, federal definitions should be applied as outlined in program guidance, unless explicit permission from the funding agency is granted to use alternative definitions.
 - **Other tools to define EJ Areas:** In addition to the Penn EnviroScreen web tool there are other resources that are being offered or required by federal programs. Program guidelines should be specific about all suitable mapping tools that can be used to define EJ Areas such as the [US Climate Justice Screening Tool](#) - managed by NOAA's Climate Program Office.

Key Questions to Consider

Program Administration

How will the launch and subsequent reminders and new cycles of the program be communicated to Environmental Justice communities in general and specifically to possible eligible applicants?

Recommendations

Use these resources to look for similar programs and other resource opportunities that could be available as complementary to the program.

Outreach Plan Template: From Launch to Award Completion [link to a template resource]

Description: The outreach plan template provided here is a template for how to create a thorough set of communications at launch and then as the program advances. It will be important to set out key dates at the outset and identify a ‘communication champion’ who administers the outreach plan implementation. The template includes prompts for the developer to consider at each phase. The template will need to consider the appropriate sign-off required by agency officials prior to launch.

[DEP Website: News and Grants, Loans, Rebates pages](#)

Description: DEP’s website includes information for both applicants and existing grantees. Ensuring that any program information is kept up to date on these pages will help support communication to EJ Community members.

[Community Infrastructure Center](#)

Thousands of under-served and high-need communities in every area of the country often struggle to access the resources they need to build critical community infrastructure and economic development projects, from basic water and energy facilities to climate-smart buildings and housing to the new workforce and entrepreneurial systems that can drive long-term resilience and equitable growth. Operated by the Milken Institute, a 501(c)(3), The CIC serves as a connection point to link communities with projects with trusted providers who can help, with funding and expertise. This is a resource for both applicants looking for technical assistance and Capital Providers (such as DEP) looking to share information on their programs.

[HUD Exchange Funding Navigator](#)

Description: The Funding Navigator provides a listing of funding opportunities under the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), and others across federal agencies to support efforts to enhance climate resiliency, energy efficiency, renewable energy integration, healthy housing, workforce development and environmental justice in HUD supported communities, programs and properties. Find open and upcoming opportunities, including funding status and where to apply, for funds to implement projects that reduce energy use and strengthen resiliency in communities.

[American Cities Climate Challenge: Federal Funding Opportunities Through Local Decarbonization](#)

Description: America's Federal Funding Opportunities and Resources for Decarbonization (AFFORD), is designed to help you identify, compare, and prioritize federal funding, tax credits, and other incentives. This tool is primarily intended to streamline public, non-profit, and community efforts to increase understanding of eligible funding and incentives that are relevant to your project, goals, and community.

[US Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool](#)

Description: The Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool (CEJST) is a geospatial mapping tool that identifies areas across the nation where communities are faced with significant burdens. These burdens are organized into eight categories: climate change, energy, health, housing, legacy pollution, transportation, water and wastewater, and workforce development.

[Climate Program Portal:](#)

Description: Access is open to advocates working on the intended and equitable allocation of federal climate investments, as well as public officials who would benefit from the information on the site. For access, email: info@climateprogramportal.org

[Department of Energy Savings Hub](#)

Description: The Energy Savings Hub contains information for homeowners, renters, and drivers about how to save energy and take advantage of financial incentives available through the Federal government.

[Environmental Protection Agency \(EPA\) - EPA Region 3 \(Mid-Atlantic\)](#)

Description: EPA Region 3 (Mid-Atlantic) covers the entire state of Pennsylvania. The website contains information on air and water quality, community meetings, and opportunities for public engagement.

[CIC Tool \(forthcoming\)](#)

Additional Tools and Resources to Support Communication and Awareness Building

- DEP EJ email list
- [Community Action Agencies \(LIHEAP/Weatherization service providers\)](#)
- Community Development Organizations including the [Philadelphia CDC Association](#)
- Pennsylvania Community Foundation Association
- [PA Association for NonProfit Organizations](#)
- Leverage DEP's [Environmental Justice Advisory Board](#) as a tool for both feedback and outreach

How will DEP get feedback on its approach from EJ Area-related stakeholders and expected program beneficiaries?

Recommendations

Incorporate strategies to address barriers into program design and roll-out.

Develop benchmarks at the outset of the program development in collaboration with impacted and/or experienced stakeholders as appropriate.

- As a program is developed consideration should be given to what the intended/potential impacts are. Examples may include the reduction of GHG emissions, reclamation of polluted land, and measured changes in energy sources from fossil fuels to renewable.
- Where possible assemble a group of stakeholders, including the expected beneficiaries of the program as well as other representatives, to identify the range of equity measures that should be considered.
- Take into consideration community organizational capacity and what benchmarks and metrics are already being collected. Reduce burden where possible.
- Review these [Grant Reporting and Evaluation](#) best practices.

Incorporate elements from the [Spectrum of Public Participation](#) into program development and participatory decision-making, including, but not limited to:

- Advisory Groups
- Workshops

- Deliberative polling
- Review of application scoring criteria with advisory bodies or other groups as appropriate
- Delegated decision-making

Create case studies early on in the program to demonstrate wins and review impacts.

- As part of, or in addition to, program reporting, request applicants provide accomplishments that can be easily incorporated into a case study template.
- Case studies should include project name and location and detail the problem-solving strategy to be addressed through the project and expected outcomes.
- As the program progresses, measurable outputs can be included as recipients report on their metrics.

Sample case study templates:

- US Environmental Protection Agency, [“Case Studies from the Environmental Justice Collaborative Problem-Solving Program”](#)
- UNECE Sustainable Development Goals [“Template for Case Studies on Measuring Climate Change Adaptation.”](#) (downloadable Word file)

Assess program impacts based on feedback in the [CAEJC 2023 Stakeholder Engagement report](#) early on in program life and tweak where possible to better match EJ-related priorities.

Provide a monitored email address and telephone number to respond to individuals with questions or comments.

How can EJ impacts/benefits be factored into the proposal evaluation and scoring process?

Recommendations

Require a statement of impact from all applicants that quantifies:

- Households served that are within EJ Areas
- Impact on EJ community assets (schools, community centers, parks, etc.)
- Partnership with EJ community organizations
- Collect metrics during the application phase and incorporate into scoring.

List and define metrics that applicants will be evaluated on and require them in the application process.

- DEP staff should be made available to provide assistance in clarifying evaluation

criteria and connecting applicants to technical assistance resources to the greatest extent that is possible.

- Evaluate/score them, add them as requirements in the grant/contract, and require reporting during project implementation and closeout.
- The program’s outreach and engagement plan should include details on how outreach will address each of the barriers experienced by EJ communities.
- Each program requires a narrative that defines the community need that the initiative is seeking to address.
 - Alternatively, when creating the program, the EJ need that is being met should be clearly articulated in the program development to reduce the burden on communities/applicants in EJ communities. The following list is adapted from the [WhiteHouse produced Justice40 Guidance](#) and the prior CAEJC work commissioned by DEP.
 - Climate Change - Adaptation
 - Climate Change - Source Reduction
 - Clean Energy and Energy Efficiency
 - Clean Transit and Increased Mobility Access
 - Affordable and Sustainable Housing
 - Training and Workforce Development
 - Reduction and remediation of current and legacy pollution
 - Development of Clean Water and Wastewater Infrastructure

What Environmental Justice community need is being met by the program? How will the program design address each barrier experienced by EJ communities?

Recommendations

Identify and anticipate barriers early in the process.

Barriers that have already been identified through community engagement include:

- Local organizations have very low capacity available to engage in planning for and applying to programs.
- Local organizations have to prioritize the projects and assistance based on need and current funding streams. These things do not always align with CAEJC program priorities.
- Costs to participate, or to make improvements, are barriers to participation, even when there is a rebate or incentive available.
- Based on previous programs and projects, there is significant distrust of governmental agencies and business and industrial entities.
- Mental health issues and stress can be created/exacerbated by requesting resources, navigating program applications, reporting, and other elements of program

participation.

- Communities are already financially burdened, so programs with fees to participate, or those that could affect local tax rates, may affect EJ communities unequally.

Development of citizen and leadership empowerment toolkits to accompany programs and support applications.¹

Toolkit Examples

- Philadelphia Citizens Planning Institute [“Citizens Toolkit”](#)
- American Rivers [“Water Justice Toolkit: A Guide to Address Environmental Inequities in Frontline Communities”](#)

Reduce the barrier to entry for EJ communities

- Stipends should be considered for applicants to compensate them for their time, even if no award is made.
- Where possible, partner with local libraries to promote computer access for potential applicants with a technology barrier.

When creating program materials, ask yourself, ‘why should EJ Communities consider this program?’

- Program materials and communications should include clear information on the benefits of program participation and should be tailored to the specific needs of EJ communities where possible.

Partner Management (if using a 3rd Party or regranting funds)

How will DEP request that 3rd party vendors/ partners ensure EJ Community access?

Recommendations

- If the application or proposal requires 3rd party vendors/grantees to define the specific impacts that are expected in EJ communities. Establish a minimum threshold, such as 50% of the benefits must be experienced in EJ communities.
- In addition, the application/ plan should require that 3rd party vendors/grantees define their own community outreach plan, any technical assistance they will provide, and in general, how they will meet the stated EJ community benefit threshold.
- DEP can require via contract a quarterly or bi-annual report on program impact in EJ Communities.
- Similar to the [HOME Investment Partnership Program](#) (HOME), DEP could establish performance incentives for delivering benefits specifically to EJ communities or for

¹ CAEJC Report p. 19

enhancing the impact on EJ communities. This incentive would vary by program and be developed through the use of various data tools.

- Host semi-routine 'town hall' sessions to have partners share program information and receive questions that enable the production of FAQs or other guidance.

How will potential applicants receive support/guidance in producing an application?

Recommendations

- Utilize the EJ Area Resource Identification matrix, developed and available as part of this project.
- [Shared Energy Manager Program](#) is a general resource that should be considered.
- Consider if the funding stream will support a dedicated staff position or the allocation of a specific number of hours to devote to applications from eligible EJ communities.

Will applicants require technical expertise to complete, e.g., feasibility or cost estimation support?

Recommendations

- If so, clearly state these requirements up front in a checklist or other form that allows a potential applicant the opportunity to quickly understand what will be required.
- Provide case studies of past projects that have been completed (where appropriate)
- Share information with potential applicants regarding how to connect with resources.
- Engage with [Environmental Justice Thriving Communities Technical Assistance Center Programs Region 3](#) (serving PA), which is an EPA-sponsored technical assistance resource, or other resources where available.
- Consider where alternative measures might suffice for meeting technical application requirements.

How can EJ communities be made aware of complementary programs and encouraged to “braid” multiple funding streams and program opportunities to increase impact?

Recommendations

- As guidelines are developed by DEP or partners, consideration should be given to other opportunities that applicants could pursue. This could include both public and philanthropic opportunities.
- Identifying the intersections between [Climate Pollution Reduction Grants](#) (CPRG) and other funding opportunities is vital for the most impactful and efficient use of these funds.

How is the program addressing accessibility in terms of language/tone accessibility, upfront capital demand, and correlated needs/requirements for participation as well as third parties involved in negotiation (e.g. landlords)?

Recommendations

- Do an initial mapping of available resources/partners that can flesh out the feasibility and accessibility of a program.
- Convene a ‘panel’ of representatives from EJ Communities to conduct tabletop/ scenario reviews of the application process to qualify and, where possible, quantify time/ cost burden vs. benefit.
- Assess upfront capital demand and quantify based on anticipated benefits. Capital may be in the form of both financial resources but also the human capital of time required to complete the application and implement the program if awarded.
- Incorporate feedback from the panel into program development and modifications.
- Identify specific resources that applicants can seek to access.

What are best practices for outreach and accessibility incorporated into program design and rollout?

Recommendations

Accessibility

- Application materials are available in multiple languages.
- Application steps were reviewed with a ‘panel’ of representatives from EJ

communities.

- Both online and paper options may be considered
- Dedicated phone and email that is regularly monitored to answer program questions.
- FAQ sheet developed and available in multiple languages

Outreach

- DEP email lists
- [Community Action Agencies \(LIHEAP/Weatherization service providers\)](#)
- Community Development Organizations including the [Philadelphia CDC Association](#)
- Pennsylvania Community Foundation Association
- [PA Association for NonProfit Organizations](#)
- Leverage DEP’s Environmental Justice Advisory Board as a tool for both feedback and outreach
- A list of accessible locations where applicants can log in for free to access application materials (public libraries, community centers, etc.) within the program geography.

What are the expected benefits and impacts to EJ Areas?

Can the impact be readily measured? If not, is there a proxy to determine the impact on EJ communities?

Recommendations

- Areas to be measured might include reductions of co-pollutants, increases in resilience, elimination of the documented barrier(s), improved access to services (measured by pre and post-project survey of beneficiaries), and economic benefits such as job creation, workforce development, and decreased energy costs.
- [2022 Pennsylvania Energy Employment Report](#) and the [2022 Pennsylvania Clean Energy Employment Report](#) measure current and projected clean energy jobs, and may provide supplemental workforce metrics.

What tools can help amplify the impacts by “braiding” of multiple programs and funding streams.

Recommendations

- Conduct a review of other available programs that may complement a program or could be used to identify matching funds, help with application technical assistance, etc. A resource matrix is a companion piece/compendium being developed under this contract and should be utilized for this purpose.
- Develop a training tool for communities using the ESA grant portal that is program-specific if necessary.

How can we measure the burden to communities and quantify it against anticipated benefits where needed?

Recommendations

- Convene a ‘panel’ of representatives from EJ Communities to conduct tabletop/ scenario reviews of the application process to qualify and, where possible, quantify the time/ cost burden. This should take into consideration cumulative impacts already experienced by the community to look for ways projects might inadvertently amplify EJ concerns, or alternatively, what "wrap around" measures should be considered for projects to create co-benefits.

How to measure impact

What is the level of difficulty in reporting on the impact? (eg time, measurement complexity, reporting format, and cycle)

Recommendations

- Provide reporting tools to grantees and sub-recipients that are standardized across programs and require minimal additional data collection or research
- Where possible, allow for submission of a narrative case study if quantification of impact will be difficult/costly. This opportunity will vary by specific program funding requirements.

