



SUSTAINABLE PA MUNICIPAL EQUITY TOOLKIT

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PURPOSE

The **Sustainable PA Municipal Equity Toolkit** (Toolkit) is designed to be a resource for Pennsylvania’s local government staff and elected officials when considering, developing, implementing and/or administering equity measures. It supports municipalities that are thinking about and/or working for an inclusive, fair, and just community in program and policy governance, administration, and outcomes.

PHILOSOPHY

Recognizing that municipalities have a profound role and responsibility for leading the way to quality of life and equitable access to opportunity in our communities and region, municipal leaders can use this Toolkit to guide their actions and opportunities to advance equity in their communities, with their communities, and for their communities. This Toolkit acknowledges that Equity Actions can be different in different settings and that each community’s familiarity and interpretation of equity will vary. With this in mind, equity means establishing a commitment to being a community where all people, across race, age, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, disability, ethnicity, origin, religion, economic or other status, are enabled and empowered to have basic needs met, exercise self-determination, and realize their full potential.

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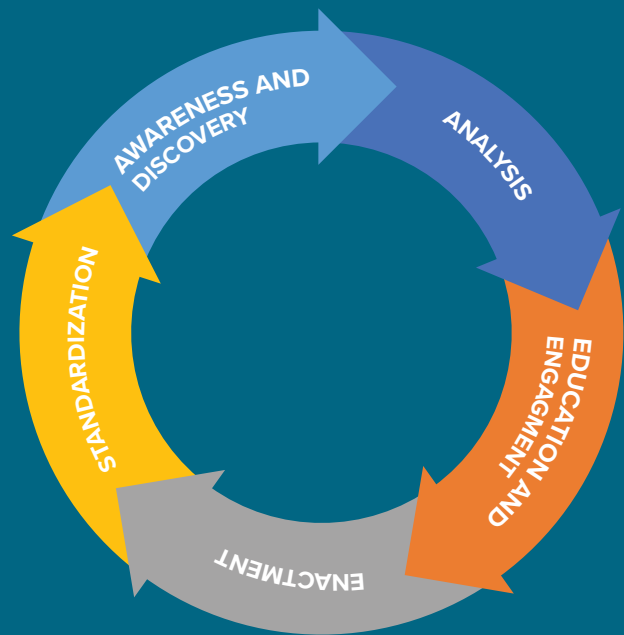
FRAMEWORK

This Toolkit integrates recommendations from the Equity in Action Toolkit, a national resource for municipalities to incorporate equity into policies and programs, and the Sustainable PA Community Certification program, a voluntary performance recognition program to help Pennsylvania municipalities achieve their sustainability goals. Although the Toolkit is structured sequentially, it is intended to enable a systems-wide awareness, analysis, and assessment of equity. It's recommended to review and explore the entire Toolkit before forming a specific purpose for its use.

The Toolkit begins with **AWARENESS AND DISCOVERY** of equity to enable acknowledgment and exploration of policies and practices that can be strengthened by applying an equity lens.

Next, the Toolkit advances intangible recognition of equity into a series of tangible actions. Guidance is focused on **ANALYSIS** to ensure evaluation of specific metrics, **EDUCATION AND ENGAGEMENT** to build higher levels of community awareness and buy-in, and **ENACTMENT** via new policies and/or strengthening equity in existing systems to create long-lasting impact.

Finally, the Toolkit prepares local governments for objective, transparent **STANDARDIZATION** to gauge success and adjust course when and where appropriate.



SCOPE

The following activities and measures follow the above mentioned framework, beginning with Awareness and Discovery and ending with Standardization. Each action and measure provides suggestions where equity can be integrated in municipal operations, policies and practices. Each recommendation serves as an indicator for determining progress on actions to create a more equitable municipality. Specific topics for consideration include, but are not limited to housing, food access, transportation, public engagement, community planning, social programs, economic development, and municipal staffing. The following list is not intended to be prescriptive, and it is encouraged to adapt and/or modify each suggestion to reflect current programming and policies that would benefit from the application of an equity lens.

AWARENESS AND DISCOVERY: includes recognition of a need for prioritizing equity, determining organizational definitions for equity, initiating organizational alignment across departments, and assessing capacity for equity commitments.

EQUITY ACTIONS

PRIORITIZATION

- The municipality has taken action to develop an equity vision and plan.
- The municipality has developed an equity vision for the municipality.
- The municipality has adopted a broad and inclusive definition of equity.
- The municipality has developed a strategy or plan to achieve the equity vision.

ASSESSING CAPACITY

- The community has identified vulnerable populations for emergencies and created a registry to contact those citizens in the case of an emergency.¹

ORGANIZATIONAL DEFINITIONS

- The municipality has taken or regularly takes the following actions to ensure it is improving organizational equity. Some of these steps could be included as part of vision, strategy, or plan development.
- The municipality has a written and implemented policy to ensure a wide range of candidates are sought, encouraged to apply, and interviewed for all municipal job openings. The policy should include a targeted outreach plan.
- The municipality has assessed the wage gap for all positions based on protected class status.
- The municipality has assessed organizational barriers to inclusion with the help of an employment professional.
- The municipality has written job descriptions for every position and has clear employment policies that have been reviewed by a solicitor or qualified labor attorney.
- The municipality has formed partnerships with community or cultural groups to notify underrepresented groups of open positions or committee seats.

ENCOURAGING ALIGNMENT

- The municipality maintains or supports program/s to recognize local businesses or leaders who encourage or improve equity.
- The municipality highlights businesses that encourage or improve equity in a periodic newsletter or on social media.
- The municipality recognizes local business or community leaders who foster equity in the community or region.
- There is a program that is supported by the municipality to encourage businesses to be aware of equitable business approaches and recognize their success.

ANALYSIS: includes evaluation of the situation quantitatively and qualitatively to identify the impacts of programs, practices, and policies, and how each creates or compromises equity.

EQUITY ACTIONS

HOUSING

- The municipality has inclusionary housing incentives/requirements for housing developments.
- An assessment has been completed regarding the need for affordable/equitable housing in the community and region. This can be a part of the community’s comprehensive planning process or by community organization with municipal support. (Note: it is important that a regional assessment is part of the of the process because many communities have been completely segregated from the issues of the region they exist within)
- The municipality has inclusionary housing requirements or incentives for housing developments that receive public funding.
- The municipality has affordable housing incentives or requirements for multifamily developments that do not receive public funding.
- The municipality provides support for or promotes local programs for affordable housing.

FOOD ACCESS

- The municipality supports local food access by assessing access, planning, and/or supporting programs or policies that increase local food access, focusing on under-resourced and overburdened communities.
- The municipality completed or was party to a food access assessment (this could be a part of another type of community assessment or plan).
- The community has a plan for improving access to health foods (this could be a part of another community plan) or supports a local organization that does.
- The local farmers market or stand accepts snap or similar benefits.
- The municipality hosts and/or supports a community produce garden that is open to the public.
- The municipality supports and/or promotes meal programs for vulnerable populations.

TRANSPORTATION

- The comprehensive plan includes transportation related goal/s to provide equitable access to all modes of transportation.
- Alternative transportation (e.g., transit, inter-modal, multimodal, bicycle/pedestrian) are accommodated and promoted. ¹
- The municipality is actively developing and maintaining bicycling and walking trails that extend and connect the community’s sidewalks, key community assets/amenities, and parks systems. ¹

ANALYSIS cont.

EQUITY ACTIONS

TRANSPORTATION cont.

- The municipal complete streets policy requires that all new construction and reconstruction/retrofits accommodate all users (i.e., pedestrians, bicyclists, people with disabilities, etc.)¹
- There are zoning and/or other incentives in place for transit-oriented development.¹

INFRASTRUCTURE

- The municipality has performed or has participated in a regional assessment of hazards and potential risks of climate change.
- The municipality has performed or has participated in a risk assessment that includes flooding, landslide, extreme temperature, heat island, wildfire, and/or disease.¹
- The municipality posts or links to daily information about local air quality on the municipal website and encourages residents to reduce outdoor activities on low air quality days.



EDUCATION AND ENGAGEMENT: includes shared learning through dialogue and relationship building that cultivates higher levels of problem awareness and expertise. Peer learning, ongoing training, and inclusive engagement focused on equity will identify gaps and build comprehension.

EQUITY ACTIONS

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT The municipality runs, supports, and/or promotes the following:

- ❑ Exercise and/or wellness programs for all age groups.
- ❑ A program to promote safe walking to school.
- ❑ Actively pursue and match residents and local businesses to volunteer opportunities, including boards, committees, and commission positions, and others that will strengthen community engagement and improve capacity for community organizations. This must include an online portal where potential volunteers can enter their information.
- ❑ Works with schools and local non-profits/community organizations to engage students about community issues such as waste reduction and recycling, public safety, wellness, conservation, and/or nature.

PUBLIC AWARENESS

- ❑ The municipality is engaged in programs to communicate that the community is welcoming to persons who represent diversity (sister city relations, diversity sensitivity training, multilingual signage, etc.)
- ❑ The municipality has a sister city in a non-European Country.
- ❑ The municipality has multilingual signage and/or website information.
- ❑ The municipality regularly features people of color and other ethnicities on the website, newsletters, and other marketing materials accessible or sent to residents and businesses.
- ❑ The community actively supports public events celebrating social and cultural diversity such as MLK day, Juneteenth, Pride, Cinco de Mayo, etc.

ACCESSIBLE POLICYMAKING

- ❑ The municipality has implemented policies to improve the creation of public policy that is equitable and to improve access to the political processes.
- ❑ The municipality publicizes efforts to make accessible and equitable infrastructure improvements. ¹
- ❑ There is a municipal policy ensuring that municipal information about purchasing, bids and contracts are intentionally distributed to Minority and Women Owned Business Enterprises.
- ❑ The Police Chief, Mayor, President of Council, and/or Manager regularly hosts sessions where the public can come and discuss issues with them, such as “coffee with the Chief” at the local coffee shop.

EDUCATION AND ENGAGEMENT cont.

EQUITY ACTIONS

CULTIVATING EXPERTISE

- ❑ Municipal public safety officers have participated in equity training.
- ❑ The municipality has participated in NLC's Race Equity And Leadership (REAL) program or the Pennsylvania Heart and Soul program within the last five years.
- ❑ Public safety officers have participated in an implicit bias and/or diversity and inclusion training designed for public safety personnel.
- ❑ The municipality has provided diversity, equity, and inclusivity training for municipal employees (these go beyond state and federal requirements, such as trainings in Cultural Diversity and Implicit Bias or the Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (JEDI) Training).
- ❑ The municipality has evaluated how to review and implement racially just and equitable public policy.



ENACTMENT: includes moving beyond implementation of new policies or resource flows to working across all system conditions to create long lasting impacts. Shared decision-making models, stakeholder and asset mapping, and partnerships can build trust and consensus that secures long-term equitable outcomes.

EQUITY ACTIONS

GOVERNANCE FOR EQUITY

- The community has an active sustainability or equity team.
- The municipality has a sustainability or equity team.
- The municipality has a sustainability or equity team, committee, and/or comparable body that has at least one board member, one staff member, and one resident that is responsible for at least three lenses of equity: Environmental, Social, and Economic (this can be part of the town’s Sustainability Team).

PROGRAM INITIATION

- The municipality has a Sustainability or Equity program.
- An executive/management level municipal staff person has responsibility for management of the municipal equity program expressly included in their job description.
- There is ongoing training for municipal employees and officials with the goal of advancing the objectives of the municipal equity program.
- Procedures are in place to measure and track the impacts of the equity program (and yearly or periodic reporting to the public on results is conducted).

PARTNERSHIPS

- The municipality collaborates with local economic development corporations to offer training/support for women or minority owned businesses.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

- The municipality supports or collaborates with a workforce development program to help at risk populations in under-resourced and overburdened communities obtain meaningful employment.

LEVERAGING LOCAL ASSETS

- The municipality has established partnerships with community and cultural groups.

COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- There is a municipal policy ensuring Minority Business Enterprise and Women Business Enterprise are prioritized in municipal purchasing, bids and contracts.

INFRASTRUCTURE

- The municipal policy requires that all new construction and reconstruction/retrofits of infrastructure or buildings accommodate all users (i.e. pedestrians, bicyclists, people with disabilities, etc.).

NEW DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

- The comprehensive plan encourages walkable/mixed use development.

STANDARDIZATION: to gauge success, it is important to objectively measure how strategies performed against goals and metrics. It is also important to highlight areas in need of change or improvement.

EQUITY ACTIONS

COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING

- The municipality has adopted an Equity plan. This could be part of a municipal comprehensive plan, an EcoDistricts plan, a capital improvement plan, a combination of a few plans, or a stand-alone document. To qualify it has to comprehensively address equity in social, economic and environmental policies, programs and practices.
- The Equity Plan includes consideration for access to transportation (including walkability and transit).
- The Equity Plan includes consideration for access to fresh food and/or passive and active recreational amenities.
- The Equity Plan includes considerations for access to jobs.

MEASUREMENT AND VERIFICATION

- Procedures are in place to measure and track the impacts of the equity plan (and yearly or periodic reporting to the public on results is conducted).
- The municipality has an Equity Plan that includes specific goals and guiding principles.
- The Equity Plan has an implementation schedule that is periodically updated.



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DATA RESOURCES

¹ University of Pittsburgh’s Center for Health Equity at the School of Public Health, Sustainable Pittsburgh, and the Western Pennsylvania Regional Data Center have collaboratively developed a set of tools that municipal governments in [REACH](#) communities can use to improve social and health equity. By pairing civic data about social determinants of health and health outcomes with specific actions that people in municipal governments can take to address them, community leaders can follow a road map informed by local conditions to inclusively advance equity in partnership with community members. <https://profiles.wprdc.org/reach>

Equity in Action Database – list of actions, frameworks, toolkits, data, and sample equity plans to support municipalities incorporate equity into their standards and programming. <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1RaqVZhopufs8BTR9QH5yjofKjZCbAQ9x/view>

The Western Pennsylvania Regional Data Center provides a shared technological and legal infrastructure to support research, analysis, decision making, and community engagement. It was created in 2015 and is managed by the University of Pittsburgh Center for Urban and Social Research, in partnership with Allegheny County and the City of Pittsburgh. <http://www.wprdc.org/>

Allegheny County Behavioral Risk Factors Surveillance System - survey to assess behavioral and environmental risk factors that affect the health of county residents. <https://www.alleghenycounty.us/Health-Department/Resources/Data-and-Reporting/Chronic-Disease-Epidemiology/Behavioral-Risk-Factors-Surveillance-System.aspx>

Pittsburgh Regional Quality of Life Survey 2018 - survey of Greater Pittsburgh residents to understand the region’s citizens and measure changes of views over time. https://ucsur.pitt.edu/quality_of_life_2018.php

Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission GIS - data mapping that includes sidewalks, steps, crosswalks, and trails. <https://spcgis-spc.hub.arcgis.com/datasets/sidewalks-1/explore>

Allegheny County Landslide Portal - identifies areas with potential slope stability problems significant to development. <https://landslide-portal-alcogis.opendata.arcgis.com/pages/map-tools>

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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

National League of Cities: Race Equity and Leadership (REAL) – offers tools and resources to help local elected leaders build safe places where people from all racial, ethnic and cultural backgrounds can thrive. <https://www.nlc.org/program/race-equity-and-leadership-real/>

All-In Cities Policy Toolkit (an initiative of PolicyLink) – offers actionable strategies that advocates and policymakers can use to advance racial equity. <https://allincities.org/toolkit/tools-index>

Sustainable Connecticut Equity Toolkit – outlines a process for local governments to engage communities in planning and implementing equity actions. https://sustainablect.org/fileadmin/Random_PDF_Files/Files_and_Resources/SustainableCT_EquityToolkit_January2019.pdf

Local and Regional Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE) – this “How-to” Manual outlines racial equity action plans to drive institutional and structural change. <https://www.racialequityalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/GARE-Racial-Equity-Action-Plans.pdf>

Equity in Action Database – list of actions, frameworks, toolkits, data, and sample equity plans to support municipalities incorporate equity into their standards and programming. <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1RaqVZhopufs8BTR9QH5yjofKjZCbAQ9x/view>

Governing for Equity: Implementing an Equity Lens in Local Governments – examines lessons from the experiences of local governments initiating equity actions, defining equity and measuring success. https://icma.org/sites/default/files/Governing%20For%20Equity%20Implementing%20an%20Equity%20Lens%20in%20Local%20Government_0.pdf

Advancing Racial Equity and Transforming Government – provides strategies, resources and information on building equity strategies from lessons learned in local governments across the country. https://www.racialequityalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/GARE-Resource_Guide.pdf

National Equity Atlas – detailed report card on racial and economic equity to equip leaders and policymakers with actionable data and strategies to advance racial equity and shared prosperity. <https://nationalequityatlas.org/>



WORK CITED

Sustainable States Network (SSN) commissioned Be Bold LLC to create the Equity in Action Toolkit. <https://sustainablepittsburgh.org/strengthen-your-community-with-committed-and-equitable-leadership/>

The Sustainable PA Community Certification program, a project of the Pennsylvania Municipal League and Sustainable Pittsburgh, is a voluntary performance recognition program designed to help municipalities achieve sustainability goals, which in turn will allow them to save money, conserve resources, and encourage innovation. Find more at <http://sustainablepa.org/>

Collaborators: Pitt Public Health, The REACH program, and Western Pennsylvania Regional Data Center (WPRDC)

Version History: March 11th, 2022

This toolkit uses materials and concepts previously published in “Equity in Action” on March 8, 2020 by Be Bold Services, LLC and the Sustainable States Network, the work of whom is licensed under the terms of Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial ShareAlike 4.0. This toolkit was prepared by Sustainable Pittsburgh and its contents may be utilized under that same Creative Commons license’s provisions.

