Equity in Sustainability

A USDN scan of local government sustainability programs that incorporate social equity concerns provides insights, examples, and recommendations for cities.

A USDN scan, "Equity in Sustainability: An Equity Scan of Local Government Sustainability Programs," researched and written by Angela Park and guided by a USDN member committee, provides insights, examples, and recommendations for cities.

The report defines equity in sustainability in four dimensions:

- Procedural — inclusive, accessible, and authentic engagement and representation in processes to develop or implement sustainability programs and policies.
- Distributional — sustainability programs and policies result in fair distribution of benefits and burdens across all segments of a community, prioritizing those with highest need.
- Structural — sustainability decision-makers institutionalize accountability; decisions are made with a recognition of the historical, cultural, and institutional dynamics and structures that have routinely advantaged privileged groups in society and resulted in chronic, cumulative disadvantage for subordinated groups.
- Trans-generational — sustainability decisions consider generational impacts and don't result in unfair burdens on future generations.

The report provides 10 examples of good practice in equity in sustainability, with spotlight cases from USDN members in *Albany*, *Cleveland*, *San Francisco*, *Seattle*, *St. Louis*, and *Washington DC* and non-members in *King County WA* and *Richmond CA.*

It offers six recommendations for next steps:

1. Spread what works by expanding opportunities for information sharing and peer learning on equity in sustainability.
2. Multiply and deepen professional development opportunities.
3. Expand the use of equity metrics and support their increasing sophistication.
4. Diversify the sustainability field.
5. Strengthen community partnerships across sectors to accelerate progress on equity.
6. Push the envelope on equity in sustainability to innovate on high impact strategies.