

Partners for Places Project Lessons Report

Project Name: *Equity and Environment Initiative*

- **Year Complete:** 2019
- **Local Government:** City of Seattle, WA
- **Local Foundation:** Seattle Foundation, Bullitt Foundation, The Russell Family Foundation

Project Purpose

To implement the Equity and Environment Agenda and ensure people of color, immigrants, and refugees, people with low incomes and limited-English proficiency lead and benefit from Seattle's environmental progress.

Key Lessons Learned

Lessons learned about tools and tactics through the project that other sustainability directors could use to advance their work.

Power-building and network creation is hard to predict, evaluate, and quantify, especially for systems of bureaucracy that have a very specific focus on numeric outcomes. The more the team tried to measure work using old systems of measurement, the more difficult it becomes to do work differently. The collaborative governance framework is an important one for other sustainability directors to understand and utilize. A continued challenge is the tension between community and city timelines and capacity. The team is constantly re-learning that work moves at the speed of trust. Trust is not a one-time event - it takes constant attention and cultivation. Organizing from the inside takes significant strategic capacity and staffing time. This work requires a thoughtful, multi-layered process, and a deep connection to race and social justice strategy and other internal advocates. Much of that work is invisible in the outcome, but alignment across efforts pays dividends so that city resources can be leveraged, while avoiding duplication of efforts and building community capacity.

Lessons for developing a collaborative process between a local government sustainability director and local place-based foundation(s).

It is difficult to shift from a grantor-grantee relationship to a collaborator relationship without thinking from the outset what that collaboration entails. Future grants should have specific outcomes and milestones related to this relationship building so that when there is less staff capacity, there is still clarity that relationship building and co-creating of foundations and government is valuable. It's important to recognize that foundations and government are both funders to community and therefore we must be in deeper strategy with one another to achieve change at scale. In the future, hopefully foundations can serve as conveners for policy development in partnership with the City as we have seen in other cities.

Additional Information and Resources

Learn more about the City of Seattle's Equity and Environment Initiative [here](#).