

USDN Equity Principles and Commitments

In the summer of 2019, the Planning and Advisory Committee (PAC) tasked the Equity Advisory Committee (EAC) with creating a strategy to prioritize equity network-wide. In response, the EAC collaborated to draft Equity Principles and Commitments, which outline USDN's foundational equity values and the resulting commitments the organization is making. In August of 2020, the EAC presented its work to the PAC, and the PAC unanimously endorsed the Equity Principles and Commitments (see below), which will help guide USDN's staffing, programming, and budget decisions.

Equity Principles

USDN recognizes that:

1. **The root causes of climate change, environmental injustice, and racial inequity are the same.** Climate change, environmental injustice, and racial inequity are systemic outcomes of colonization: the exploitative extraction of natural and human resources to generate profit for the few. Solutions that do not directly address these common causes will not succeed.
2. **Successful solutions prioritize the most marginalized.** We believe that to design better solutions, we must practice targeted universalism, prioritizing those who experience the most vulnerability to climate change, disproportionate exposure to environmental injustice, and the biggest barriers to benefiting from climate solutions. By doing so, we will produce solutions that meet the needs of everyone. By not doing so, we are upholding current disparities.
3. **Prioritizing marginalized communities means leading with race.** Race is the leading predictor of outcomes across the United States and Canada, yet governments have not systemically acknowledged or addressed disparities by race or their role in creating them. Because of this, racial analysis must be a priority. "Leading with race" does not mean "only race." It is a practice of starting with a racial equity analysis to understand how race impacts outcomes, recognizing how the intersectionality of identities and groups also impacts outcomes.
4. **Equity is a professional competency.** The skills associated with advancing equity make us better public servants, preparing us to deal with the complex nature of the social, economic, and environmental challenges our communities face.
5. **Equity is responsible governance.** The government has a fiscal and moral responsibility to address the long-term implications that inequity has on prosperity, health, and safety for residents and stakeholders. Governments can either create or eliminate barriers for better outcomes through their policies, programs, and relationships.
6. **Diversity is an asset.** Increasing diversity within the sustainability field, and particularly in decision-making positions within government, will increase the long-term relevance and accountability of our work to communities who have been systematically denied influence. Diverse perspectives produce more sophisticated solutions. To diversify successfully, the sustainability field must consciously build an inclusive culture.

Equity Commitments

USDN commits to:

1. **Creating a learning community.** Developing equitable solutions that will produce the change needed in our communities will be hard, complicated work. USDN is a space for us to be authentic and make mistakes, but it will also push us to do better and be better.

2. **Supporting our members' individual racial equity work.** To build our professional competency and confidence in racial equity work, we must honor the vulnerability, courage, and humanity required. Although systemic racism negatively impacts us all, Black, Indigenous, and People of Color bodies and white bodies will have different needs, from healing to humility. We will support each member's individual anti-racism practice.
3. **Building the pipeline of diverse sustainability professionals and developing leaders.** We are committed to using our positional power and influence to attract, train, and retain members from communities underrepresented in the sustainability field, particularly Black, Indigenous, and People of Color practitioners. We also commit to creating growth and leadership opportunities for these individuals.
4. **Structuring USDN funding and resources to support our equity principles.** USDN will use our equity principles to inform staffing, programming, and budget decisions for both our organization and the funds we make available to members.
5. **Accelerating adoption of equity values and commitments in our field of practice.** USDN will work with partners that share our values, and we will use our organizational influence to set an example of racial equity work for our community of practice.
6. **Creating an inclusive culture.** USDN will create spaces where members, staff, and partners feel welcome to participate fully with their identities, experiences, and positions.
7. **Being accountable to our principles.** USDN will evaluate and publicly report on how we are living up to our explicitly stated equity principles and our opportunities to do better.