

Equity and Climate Preparedness

A USDN Innovation Fund 2015 Grant

Building on the pilot program Seattle WA executed to understand how municipal agencies can better support low-income communities and communities of color during extreme heat events, the USDN Innovation Fund – in part with funding from the Kendeda Fund and Kresge Foundation – is supporting a \$91,500 project to develop a planning model to assist cities in their efforts to embed equity into their climate preparedness planning work. The project will be complete in December 2016.

The consultant team (Raimi Consultants and Bay Localize) is working with the project co-leads (Seattle and Baltimore) to work with the city team (Denver, Cleveland, Portland OR, San Antonio, Toronto, and Washington DC). This interaction is informing a draft model to be created by the consultants and further developed during a convening of cities. At least half of the participants will be from organizations working on climate justice, equitable development, or community development to ensure cross-sector collaboration.

Convening participants will reflect on the results of the research, and will provide input to refine the planning model. The model will include a suite of strategies and community-driven planning tactics, as well as an evaluation framework. The evaluation framework will serve to benchmark a city's progress to equitable climate preparedness planning.

Cities will pilot test and assess the planning model or a subset of strategies and tactics depending on the stage of each city's preparedness planning efforts. As cities are currently at different planning stages, ranging from launching a comprehensive effort to addressing specific risks to designing implementation strategies from an existing plan, each city will use the pilot materials in a slightly different way. A simple case study template will be developed for cities to capture the experiences from their pilots.

The model in development will identify specific climate resilience strategies, to advance both equity and climate preparedness goals as well community engagement tactics. It will provide transferrable lessons for communities to use. The goal is that the model will help advance the field of urban sustainability by identifying specific strategies that address underlying causes of disproportionate climate risk (e.g. reducing air pollution).

The model will also outline specific community-driven planning tactics to foster collaboration between local governments and their frontline communities (e.g. meeting in non-government, culturally appropriate facilities). Planning tactics will be applicable to any city planning process, fostering a stronger partnership between the city and community by involving a broader range of community involvement that are represented at typical public meetings.

Expected Project Deliverables

- A benchmarking document highlighting the findings best practices research on strategies that address root causes of disproportionate climate vulnerability, community engagement, and community-driven climate planning tactics.
- Draft climate planning model and case study template.
- Summary of insights derived from a convening of city planners and climate justice experts.
- Pilot project case studies and final planning model.