Community Outreach and Solar Equity

A Guide for States on Collaborating with Community-Based Organizations

CleanEnergy States Alliance

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About the Clean Energy States Alliance

The Clean Energy States Alliance (CESA) is a national, non-profit coalition of public agencies and organizations working together to advance clean energy. CESA members—mostly state agencies—include many of the most innovative, successful, and influential public funders of clean energy initiatives in the country. CESA facilitates information sharing, provides technical assistance, coordinates multi-state collaborative projects, and communicates the views and achievements of its members. Learn more at www.cesa.org.

About the Solar Energy Technologies Office

The U.S. Department of Energy Solar Energy Technologies Office supports early-stage research and development to improve the affordability, reliability, and domestic benefit of solar technologies on the grid. Learn more at www.energy.gov/eere/solar/solar-energy-technologies-office.

Disclaimers

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Introduction

This guide is designed as a resource for state energy agencies that are looking to strengthen their relationships with local under-resourced communities[1] or are beginning to engage in energy justice work. It is a collection of best practices, ideas, and principles that provide states a foundation for building equitable relationships with community-based organizations (CBOs) and for working with them on solar development.

The guide was produced as a product of the multi-state "State Strategies to Bring Solar to Low- and Moderate-Income (LMI) Communities" project, which was funded by the US Department of Energy and led by the Clean Energy States Alliance (CESA).[2] Through this project, five states (Connecticut, Minnesota, New Mexico, Oregon, and Rhode Island) plus the District of Columbia are implementing strategies to help under-resourced communities benefit from solar. These participating states have worked with CBOs over the course of the project and this guide reflects their experiences.

The guide gives considerable attention to the nexus of communities of color and environmental justice issues. Of course, not all under-resourced communities are communities of color; many of the suggestions in this guide may apply to working with CBOs whether they represent communities of color or not. However, we give special consideration to communities of color because undoing racism is an important part of environmental justice and energy justice, and it also plays a strong role in community-based energy work. In preparing the report, the authors drew on their prior contacts with environmental justice leaders and energy justice organizations. We also interviewed and learned from individuals active in the energy justice space.

Although we believe that this guide can serve a useful tool for developing and strengthening state energy agency and CBO relationships, it is not the last word on the topic. We on the project team are still in the learning process and will continue to learn from CBOs in the energy justice space. And we very much want to hear your reactions, suggestions, and additional ideas.

The guide begins with a discussion of why it is so important for state agencies (and other stakeholders) to work with CBOs to advance the benefits of clean energy technologies. It then turns to a section on CBO perspectives on energy justice to help state energy agencies understand how many CBOs view the energy sector.

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1   For this report, we define "under-resourced communities" as those that have high proportions of low- and moderate-income (LMI) residents and generally receive below average services and financial resources from the government. Many, but not all, of them comprise an above average number of people of color and immigrants. We are using the term "under-resourced communities" prominently in this report, because it centers equity in the context of access to prosperity and building community wealth. People earn lower incomes due to many factors, but they often have been negatively impacted by social and economic marginalization. Some communities have been intentionally disenfranchised by redlining and the associated economic disinvestment that limits access to resources and services, devalues physical assets, and weakens community anchor institutions. Combined, these conditions create what we refer to as under-resourced communities. Under-resourced is an accurate way to frame the compounding issues communities face as well as the reason that the conditions exist in the first place.

2   For information about this project, see its website, https://www.cesa.org/projects/state-energy-strategies-project.

The remainder of the guide provides advice and resources for working with CBOs. It argues that state agencies can prepare for engaging with CBOs by first examining their internal policies and undertaking anti-racism and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) training. States should also assess their current engagement methods with community groups.

The guide then provides advice on specific strategies for working with CBOs, including how to identify local CBOs and how to organize meetings. It ends with a discussion of some of the solar-specific issues related to working with CBOs. Along the way, the guide includes case studies based on the experiences of the states that have participated in the State Strategies project.

The Importance of Working with CBOs

Solar development in under-resourced communities will be most effective and most equitable when trusted community organizations are actively involved. Those community-based organizations (CBOs) are well placed to know how to engage and communicate with residents most effectively. They can help design programs that are responsive to the needs of the community and empower the community. They can also help overcome some of the distrust that many community residents feel towards utilities, energy companies, and the solar industry.

In recent years, some CBOs have been galvanizing residents in under-resourced communities around efforts that create access to, participation in, and ownership of solar energy. This builds on decades of work in the environmental justice movement aimed at moving communities away from an extractive[3] energy economy towards a regenerative[4] model.

Partnering with CBOs can lead to more successful outcomes that truly benefit residents.
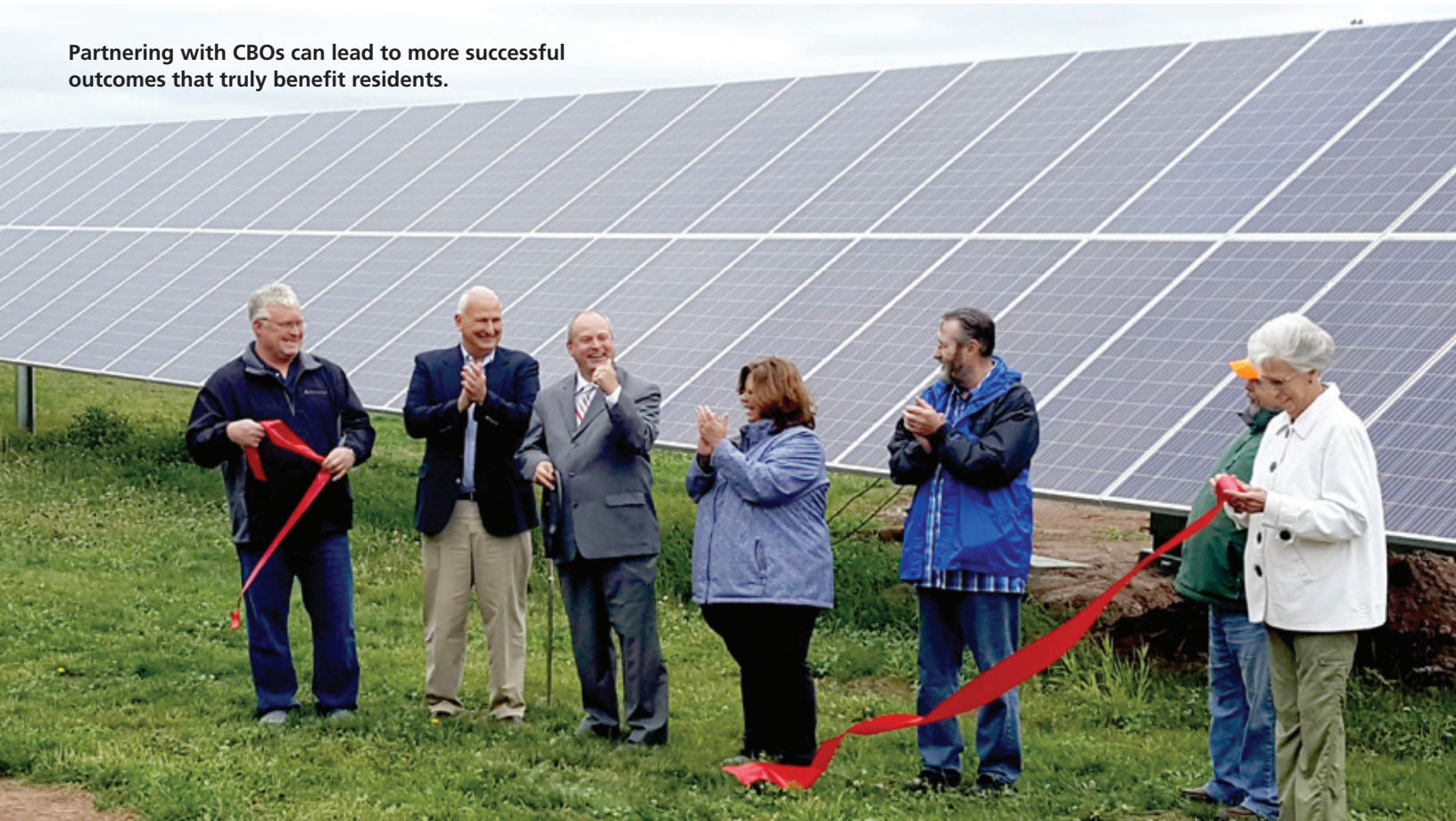
3   "Extractive Economy," *Grassroots Global Justice Alliance*, https://ggjalliance.org/program-activities/extractive-economy (accessed June 8, 2020).

4   "A People's Orientation to a Regenerative Economy," *Climate Justice Alliance*, https://climatejusticealliance.org/regenerativeeconomy (accessed June 10, 2020).

Partnering with CBOs not only brings an environmental justice perspective to the design and implementation of solar policies and programs, but it ensures that local knowledge is included. There is strong evidence that experiential knowledge, or local knowledge, can provide insights for environmental decision-making and problem-solving. Local knowledge—defined as knowledge that depends on context and pertains to a geographic or social community—is acquired through life experiences.[5] Local knowledge is dependent on lived and shared experiences. State policies can go amiss when they make uninformed assumptions about how a community understands and assesses an issue. With health-related issues, for example, it is important to incorporate the experiential knowledge of residents who understand the problem by living with it—through current illnesses or higher rates of mortality, through history, or through current events.

Engaging, collaborating with, and learning from CBOs also ensures that voices that have historically been marginalized or underrepresented are able to be heard and to bring their concerns forward. Community engagement can lead to innovative, equitable, and inclusive partnerships by connecting the concerns of communities to the decisions that allocate public funds. Targeted consultation from members of the community will increase an agency's understanding of the multifaceted problems for which it is creating solutions.

State energy agencies across the country are becoming increasingly aware of the need to work with CBOs and the opportunity to improve their programs by doing so. They have made significant progress toward the goal of expanding energy access but realize there is much more work to be done.

Establishing relationships with community groups takes time and resources. However, this will be time and money well invested as agencies may realize ancillary benefits from these relationships, such as gaining insight into new perspectives, access to voices who have not been heard previously, and new ideas. It may also aid in identifying barriers that may not have been addressed.

In many cases, states beginning to engage CBOs have found that they may not have the understanding, tools, and resources needed to create strong collaborative partnerships with under-resourced communities. States should especially seek out resources from organizations rooted in LMI communities and communities of color to expand their anti-racism efforts and education and to expand their partnerships with CBOs.

5   Jason Corburn, "Bringing Local Knowledge into Environmental Decision Making: Improving Urban Planning for Communities at Risk," *Journal of Planning Education and Research 22*, no. 4 (June 1, 2003): 421-22.

Understanding CBO Perspectives on Energy Justice

State policymakers and solar program managers who are preparing to work with CBOs can benefit from learning about the environmental justice principles that many of those organizations use. The concepts of energy justice and energy democracy, defined below, are becoming a growing part of the environmental justice work happening in under-resourced communities. Although not all CBOs that states will deal with use or focus on these concepts, they provide an important context for understanding the way many CBOs view the energy sector, and the role of energy in under-resourced communities.

Solar energy can be an effective tool for implementing the principles of energy justice and energy democracy in under-resourced communities.

Environmental justice and energy justice have varying definitions depending on the community and its priorities, but they all have the same underlying principles—equitable rights. **"Environmental justice"** means that all people are entitled to equal environmental protection, regardless of race, color, or national origin. It is the right to live, work, and play in a clean environment.

"Energy justice" goes further and calls for reliable, safe, affordable energy sources; protection from a disproportionate share of costs or negative impacts associated with building, operating, and maintaining electric power generation, transmission, and distribution systems; and equitable distribution of and access to benefits from such systems. It promotes the "goal of achieving equity in both the social and economic participation in the energy system, while also remediating social, economic, and health burdens on those historically harmed by the energy system."[6]

"Energy democracy" meanwhile, is concerned with shifting power throughout the energy sector to energy workers and users. Communities want an energy system that works in the public interest and supports their local social and environmental goals. Energy democracy highlights that communities should have a say in shaping their energy futures.

The History of the Environmental and Energy Justice Movements

The environmental justice movement has deep roots in the civil rights movement, centered in grassroots organizing and community power. It focuses on how communities of color contribute

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6   "The Energy Justice Workbook," *Initiative for Energy Justice*, https://iejusa.org/section-1-defining-energy-justice (accessed December 23, 2019).

little to environmental degradation and pollution but are affected disproportionately by that degradation and pollution. The history of the relationship between the civil rights movement, energy justice movement, and communities of color is long and complicated, and we will only provide a brief overview that does not cover all its nuances.[7]

In 1987, the United Church of Christ's Commission for Racial Justice released a landmark study called *Toxic Waste and Race in the United States* that found that race was the most significant variable in determining the location of commercial waste facilities, and that the chosen communities tended to have highly depressed economies and significant unemployment rates.[8]

A 2007 follow-up study found that people of color (PoC) and low-income communities were still disproportionately impacted by environmental problems, and that race was still an independent variable determining the placement of hazardous waste sites. African Americans were 79 percent more likely to live in neighborhoods where industrial pollution had the potential to pose great health risks. The same study found that 55 percent of U.S. residents living within 1.8 miles of hazardous waste were PoC. Because communities of color are already dealing with long-standing racism, it can be difficult for them to secure the resources and power to address their local environmental problems.

Low-income people and PoC are also disproportionately impacted by energy poverty and a high energy burden. A 2016 study by the American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy (ACEEE) found that on average, low-income households pay 7.2 percent of their household income on utilities, which is more than three times the amount that higher-income households pay (2.3 percent). Another ACEEE study in 2020 found that Black households spend 43 percent more of their income on energy costs than white non-Hispanic households; Hispanic households spend 20 percent more, and Native American households spend 45 percent more.[9]

Low-income people and PoC have historically been overlooked by traditional environmental movements. Until recently, CBOs have shouldered the work of advocating for environmental and energy justice for low-income communities and communities of color.[10]

Principles of Environmental and Energy Justice

The following brief overview summarizes the main principles behind the environmental and energy justice movements, but state agencies are encouraged to seek out additional information from the resources provided in the footnotes and in Appendix B.

THE ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE PRINCIPLES

Many of the driving principles of environmental justice were codified by the delegates to the first People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit held in Washington, DC in 1991. The

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7   To learn more about the history of the Civil Rights Movement and energy justice, visit the NAACP's Just Energy Toolkit at https://www.naacp.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Just-Energy-Policies-and-Practices-ACTION-Toolkit_NAACP.pdf.

8   Benjamin F. Chavis Jr., *Toxic Waste and Race in the United States: A National Report on the Racial and Socio-Economic Characteristics of Communities with Hazardous Waste Sites* (Commission for Racial Justice, United Church of Christ, 1987).

9   "Low-Income, Black, Hispanic, and Native American Households Face High Energy Burdens," *ACEEE*, https://www.aceee.org/energy-burden (accessed September 10, 2020).

10 Ray Galvin, "'Let Justice Roll down like Waters': Reconnecting Energy Justice to Its Roots in the Civil Rights Movement," *ScienceDirect*, Energy Research & Social Science 62 (April 1, 2020): 101385, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.erss.2019.101385 (accessed December 17, 2020).

17 principles from that Summit continue to drive much of the environmental justice movement today. They include the importance of ecological unity, the ethical use of land, an emphasis on self-determination, and equality in partnerships. (See Appendix A for the full list of Principles of Environmental Justice.) These principles, with their spirit and history, should be kept in mind when state agencies are preparing to engage in the environmental justice conversation.

THE JEMEZ PRINCIPLES FOR DEMOCRATIC ORGANIZING

The energy justice movement has focused greatly on equality in partnerships and places a high priority on incorporating fair relationships and participatory decision-making processes into their work. The Jemez Principles, a set of democratic organizing principles established in 1996 by the Southwest Network for Environmental and Economic Justice, is a key document that ties together the energy justice movement's goals surrounding equal participation. The Jemez Principles are:

1. Be Inclusive
2. Emphasis on Bottom-Up Organizing
3. Let People Speak for Themselves
4. Work Together in Solidarity and Mutuality
5. Build Just Relationships Among Ourselves
6. Commitment to Self-Transformation

The spirit of the Jemez Principles should guide state agency work with CBOs. They are a useful tool for centering conversations with community groups and amplifying underrepresented voices.

A JUST TRANSITION

In recent years, energy justice advocates have promoted "the Just Transition framework." The concept of a Just Transition lays out a tangible strategy for transitioning from an extractive economic model to a regenerative economic model, to approach consumption and production cycles holistically and waste-free.[11]

The Just Transition framework combines the need for environmental justice with the need for economic justice (the ability for all people to earn a living with dignity and without exploitation). Common threads are sovereignty and self-determination of historically exploited communities. Moving from an extractive economic model to a regenerative economic model is a multi-faceted process which encompasses environmental and energy justice.

Energy justice has a key role to play in a Just Transition. Shifting to lower-pollution energy sources like solar energy is a clear necessity for ecological well-being. Equally important, and necessary for solar development to be enduring, are the respectful and informed involvement and direction of communities that for years have been treated as a "resource" in the extractive sense: polluted, exploited, and denied power. Because of the need for that involvement, energy democracy also has an important role in a Just Transition.

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11 "Just Transition—A Framework for Change," *Climate Justice Alliance*, https://climatejusticealliance.org/just-transition (accessed December 2, 2020).

Preparatory Work by a State Agency

Given the complex and often fraught history between communities of color and state governments, it is important that state agencies seeking to build connections and trust with CBOs in communities of color do so with in-tention. Prior to partnering with CBOs, states should conduct a careful review of their inter-nal polices to avoid perpetrating additional harm to communities of color.[12] Although learning about the concepts of environmental justice, energy justice, energy democracy, and the Just Transition is an important step, state agencies should also strive to create an anti-racist workplace.

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Going Beyond Anti-Racism

Most state agencies will already have anti-racism or anti-discrimination policies in place. *Anti-racist* policies go a step further. An anti-racist education prompts individuals to examine how they, as members of certain groups, may inadvertently perpetuate systemic racism. It also directs individuals to critically examine the systems and structures they are a part of, including state agencies, to identify and dismantle internalized, systemic racism within those structures.

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Anti-racist is a term coined by historian Ibram X. Kendi. He uses the terms *anti-racist* and *anti-racist policy* to refer to actions and policies that actively work to create racial equity. Using Kendi's definition, lack of access to clean energy, disproportionately high energy burden, and lack of agency in the energy discourse are all symptoms of racism.[13] Addressing racial discrimination is necessary to advance energy justice.[14] Understanding how deeply rooted, systemic inequalities and racism can manifest in a state agency and addressing related issues begins to allow for policy development that does not negatively impact the communities the agency serves and its own staff members.[15]

Staff members of a state agency benefit from a clear understanding of the historic legacies of injustice in and around the energy sector, and from checking implicit and explicit biases and assumptions as they engage with community members. To prepare for working with CBOs, state agencies and individual staff members should begin the internal work of undoing racism.

Guidelines for Creating an Anti-Racist Workplace

Below, we provide several recommendations for state agencies to consider as they undertake effective communications regarding the implementation of anti-racist practices.

12 Center for the Study of Social Policy, "Working Across Differences in Race, Class, and Power," Building Neighborhood Capacity Program, https://www.prosperityindiana.org/resources/Documents/Resource%20Library/Working-Across-Differences-Race-Class-Power.pdf (accessed December 22, 2020).

13 Ibram X. Kendi, "What It Means to Be an Anti-Racist," *Extracts: How to Be an Anti-Racist, Penguin Random House*, June 9, 2019, https://www.penguin.co.uk/articles/2020/june/ibram-x-kendi-definition-of-antiracist.

14 Denise Fairchild and Al Weinrub, *Energy Democracy: Advancing Equity in Clean Energy Solutions*. Island Press. 2017.

15 Dereck M. Griffith, et. al., "Racism in Organizations: The Case of a County Public Health Department," *Journal of Community Psychology*, 2007, https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2565803/#!po=0.666667.

1. SEEK BUY-IN FROM LEADERSHIP

State agency leadership plays an important role in setting the tone for future partnership work and supporting anti-racist education efforts. Leadership's messaging is especially important for underlining the fact that anti-racist work benefits the agency. Leadership should send a clear message indicating that training and other activities designed to counter racism and implicit bias among staff is a priority and that time during the workday should be spent on these actions. This message should include why it is important for staff to participate. Additionally, recognition from leadership that this work can be difficult and uncomfortable, but that there will not be penalties for open conversation, is helpful to encourage staff participation.

Anti-racist work will be unlikely to be successful if it is presented as something an organization "has to do." Similarly, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) training will not succeed if it is viewed as a once-a-year checkbox that it ticked and forgotten until the following year. Strong support from agency leadership can avoid this sort of problematic messaging and ensure that staff engage productively.[16] Without careful preparation and support from leadership, anti-racist training can be ineffective or even backfire, leading to staff resentment.[17] See Appendix C for a thorough explanation of DEI and its importance.

2. RECOGNIZE THE DIFFERENT BURDENS FOR STAFF OF COLOR

Anti-racist training can provoke intense emotions for all those who participate. However, staff of color may have a very different context for those emotions than white staff. It is important to ensure that all staff feel adequately supported while undertaking anti-racist work, and that staff of color do not end up disproportionately burdened with, for example, educating their white colleagues.

It is critical that staff of color not end up being tokenized in these trainings. This can happen when staff of color are put on the spot to share their experiences with racism, or there is an assumption that the experience of one person of color is that of all people of color. Having a dedicated staff member for energy justice issues (see the Energy Justice Program Manager Case Study, below) or dedicated external consultants can be ways to prevent staff of color from having an excessive burden during anti-racist education efforts.

Further, recognizing the impact of societal events, such as police brutality or anti-Black dialogue in the news, is critical for creating an inclusive, supportive, and safe workplace for staff of color. Silence after such events can suggest that non-PoC staff members are not aware of these traumatic events or are not outraged. Left unaddressed, these perceptions—whether accurate or not—can contribute to a workplace where PoC feel like they do not belong. It is therefore important to mention the incident and validate the impact it has on staff of color, and to be sensitive and understanding if staff of color seem distracted.

3. BUILD A REPRESENTATIVE WORKFORCE

An agency can also prepare to work effectively with under-resourced communities by ensuring that the agency reflects the communities it serves. This means creating a team that includes PoC and other representatives of under-resourced communities.

16 Ruchika Tulshyan, "Do Your Employees Know Why You Believe in Racial Equity?" *Harvard Business Review,* June 30, 2020, https://hbr.org/2020/06/do-your-employees-know-why-you-believe-in-racial-equity (accessed December 17, 2020).

17 Tiffany Green and Nao Hagiwara. "The Problem with Implicit Bias Training." *Scientific American*, August 28, 2020. https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/the-problem-with-implicit-bias-training (accessed January 27, 2021).

State agencies are often represented in communities by people who do not look like, speak the same language as, or communicate effectively with the ethnically and culturally diverse communities in their state. Agency leadership can work with human resources staff to make changes to the hiring process, including advertising for diversity and targeted recruitment activities to under-represented populations. The agency can also evaluate the current on-the-job career mentorship ladders and mentorship opportunities for new hires and attempt to create mentor/mentee rela-tionships that are diverse and will uplift PoC. Take time to track demographic metrics of staff and make them publicly available to demonstrate an organizational commitment to diversity, inclusion, and equity.[18]

However, increasing diversity without actively changing the culture of the workplace to be more inclusive can still lead to feelings of othering and tokenization. (See Appendix C for a detailed explanation of DEI and its importance.) Ensuring that diversity and inclusion happen in tandem reduces the risk of tokenization. Open lines of communication between the human resources department and staff of color helps those staff members feel comfortable speaking up.

4. SET ASIDE FUNDING FOR TRAINING AND ANTI-RACISM WORK

Funding for DEI and anti-racism trainings is important and should be so identified in budgets. Because trainings are often the first items cut during budget tightening, agencies need to give special attention to preserving this funding. This shows that these issues matter to the agency and its leadership.

Anti-racism education is by its nature an on-going process, and state agencies should plan on ontinuing to educate themselves as they partner with CBOs. For additional anti-racist education resources, see Appendix B.

CASE STUDY #1
Rhode Island Office of Energy Resources' Energy Justice Program Manager

The state of Rhode Island has created a position within the Office of Energy Resources (OER) to focus on energy justice issues. This position, the Energy Justice Program Manager, focuses on the equitability, accessibility, and inclusivity of OER's programs, policies, and initiatives. Having a person or committee dedicated to energy justice and equity ensures that the agency continues to grow and that everyone on the staff continues to ask impor-tant questions surrounding equity. Ideally, the person hired for such a position would be a community member with prior social justice expertise, but that was not the case in Rhode Island.

Once someone was hired for the position, the priority was establishing a shared under-standing that energy injustice exists and that it is tied to systemic racism. Even though OER

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18 "A Toolkit for Recruiting and Hiring a More Diverse Workforce," *University of California*, Berkeley, April 2013, https://diversity.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/recruiting_a_more_diverse_workforce_uhs.pdf (accessed December 21, 2020).

had hired a full-time person to explore these issues, that shared understanding had not yet been developed and there was some skepticism around the intersection of racism and energy.

It was therefore important for the entire office to commit time to discuss these issues and clearly lay out a framework that connected systemic inequities to energy inequity. The Energy Justice Program Manager began giving staff meeting presentations, each approximately 30-45 minutes, to educate staff about systemic racism, Rhode Island's history, and current Rhode Island demographics (including socioeconomic indicators and energy-specific indicators like energy burden). These presentations connected the state's history of slavery, segregation, and redlining to wealth disparities that exist in various cities and towns across the state, and then demonstrated that those same cities and towns also face higher energy burdens and insecurities.

Other staff meeting discussions considered implicit biases, microaggressions, and facilitation techniques for more effective public participation events. These staff meetings showed dedication to understanding and addressing equity on the part of the entire staff and OER's leadership. They were the first step to integrating an energy justice lens into everyone's day-to-day work and into the center of OER's efforts.

In tandem with these staff meetings, OER took part in a 21-Day Racial Equity Habit Building Challenge offered through the Food Solutions New England network, an organization coordinated by the University of New Hampshire Sustainability Institute. This challenge, which takes place annually in April, emails participants a daily prompt surrounding racial equity in the United States and in food systems, including readings, videos, or audio recordings. Members of the OER staff met daily for those three weeks for a 30-minute discussion about the prompt, what they learned, and how it directly impacts their work. This further aided in highlighting ways in which social injustice and systemic racism penetrate everyday life. The OER staff were able to use the parallel field of food systems to begin making connections between the energy sphere and energy injustice. This initial foray into regular conversations about racial equity was a crucial step for getting buy-in from leadership and staff for continued conversations after the 21-day period.

Brief staff meetings, however, cannot replace a full-scale anti-racism or undoing-racism workshop. These trainings, which are often PoC-led, can establish a more wholistic understanding of the effects of individual and institutional racism. OER has been working to hold a full-staff workshop on undoing racism.

It was also important to create a safe space for additional discussions outside of work hours. These after-hours meetings were intended to debrief on interactions staff had throughout their day that they may not have known how to handle (e.g., a microaggression they heard, an assumption they made that they realized was inappropriate), or to discuss societal events that may be hard to digest. These meetings are not always well attended, but conversations are always interesting and feel satisfying to attendees.

Thus far, OER has done about a year of justice literacy and centering equity work, and it is very much just the beginning of the process. It will be a long journey that requires significant personal, interpersonal, institutional, and ideological changes, and it will not happen overnight. The following concepts have been especially useful in OER's continuing conversations around equity.

EQUALITY VERSUS EQUITY: "Equality" is often used to mean giving people the same resources, regardless of the situation. "Equity" is about ensuring everyone has what they need. That will mean expending more effort on some communities than on others, to ensure that all end up with fair opportunities for a healthy life. "Equity means working to overcome the historical legacy of discrimination, marginalization, and underinvestment that disadvantages specific groups of people, especially defined by race."[19] (See Appendix C for a useful graphic of equality versus equity.)

TARGETED UNIVERSALISM: This is the concept that universal goals should be set and pursued by targeted processes to achieve those goals. This approach attempts to design programs, policies, and initiatives that do not focus on the "average" person or the majority, but instead designs for the most vulnerable population, which ensures that everyone will benefit from the outcome. A targeted universal strategy is one that is inclusive of the needs of both dominant and marginal groups but pays attention to the situation of the marginal group.

THE CULTURE CYCLE: The culture cycle is a model for how individuals make cultures through everyday thoughts, feelings, and actions, which are in turn influenced by the cultures of which the individual is already a part.[20] The culture cycle shows the layers in which social injustice occurs, and acts as a reminder that changing one part of a system will be ineffective—we need to address oppression and injustice through the individual, the interpersonal, the institutional, and the ideological. These cultural and historic ideas about race and dominant groups are built into our world through social institutions

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19 "Equity in Education," *Achievement Network*, June 13, 2018, https://www.achievementnetwork.org/anetblog/eduspeak/equity-in-education (accessed December 21, 2020).

20 James Heskett, *The Culture Cycle: How to Shape the Unseen Force That Transforms Performance*. Second Edition. (Upper Saddle River, New Jersey, FT Press, 2012). See https://www.cultureclashes.org/book/the-culture-cycle.

and interactions, which in turn shape how individuals think, feel, and act. These layers reinforce each other.

Using this framework, OER's energy justice program manager has put together a document that asks questions around equity for every workstream the office has. The purpose of the document is to help staff integrate equity into their day-to-day work by asking important equity-centered questions at various stages of their workstreams (such as program design and management, administration, and policy making).

RECOGNIZING POWER DYNAMICS: As pointed out in a practice brief from the Center for the Study of Social Policy, "Because race, class, and power dynamics are rooted in history and hardwired into systems, they shape our interactions in ways that are not always explicit. The growing science on implicit bias also shows that the human brain has a natural tendency to harbor attitudes and stereotypes that unconsciously affect our understanding, actions, and decisions."[21]

21 Center for the Study of Social Policy, "Working Across Differences in Race, Class, and Power," Building Neighborhood Capacity Program, https://www.prosperityindiana.org/resources/Documents/Resource%20Library/Working-Across-Differences-Race-Class-Power. pdf (accessed December 22, 2020).

Engaging and Partnering with CBOs

State agencies should take time to assess their current level of engagement with community groups to establish a baseline from which to improve. A useful tool for that is the Spectrum of Community Engagement to Ownership.[22] Developed by Rosa Gonzales of consulting firm Facilitating Power, it defines the various states of community engagement and creates steps for moving from the earlier states of informing and consulting with CBOs to the more advanced stages of collaborating and deferring to CBOs.[23] By identifying their placement on the spectrum, state agencies can better target their efforts to improve their engagement and partnerships with community organizations.

After assessing the current nature of its involvement with CBOs, a state agency can move to develop an outreach plan. To advance solar for under-resourced communities, a state agency may need to work with a wide range of CBOs, many of which have little experience with energy topics and may not be actively engaged on environmental justice issues. To understand the organizational landscape of the under-resourced communities in a state and to learn what work is already underway on energy justice, it is good practice to reach out to existing national networks to begin to identify possible partners.

Organizations such as the Climate Justice Alliance, the Energy Justice Network, Green Latinos, and local NAACP chapters can provide useful resources for identifying local CBOs that are doing environmental justice work within your state. Those networks can also provide information on energy justice, energy democracy, the Just Transition, and other important national and local topics. Note that it is important to only initiate these meetings after having done preliminary learning on these topics, so that these groups are not given the primary burden for learning on such topics.

Once CBOs in the state are identified, make sure it is clear what groups and points of view are being represented. It can be easy to assume that all residents of under-resourced communities and communities of color think similarly; however, studies show that is not the case. For example, recent research and survey work among lower-income consumers from the Smart Energy Consumer Collaborative (SECC) found that saving money is an important driver of decisions related to energy, and that other concerns such as home comfort and environmental quality were important as well.[24] SECC created four personas across a spectrum of favorability toward energy efficiency that ranged from those who viewed energy efficiency favorably and were environmentally driven, to those who viewed it less favorably and were climate change skeptics. Survey respondents answered across this spectrum. Ultimately, low-income customers, under-resourced community

22 Rosa Gonzales, "The Spectrum of Community Engagement to Ownership," *Movement Strategy Center*, https://movementstrategy.org/directory/spectrum (accessed December 2, 2020).

23 Ibid. Gonzales.

24 "Understanding Lower-Income Consumers and the Smart Energy Future Report," *Smart Energy Consumer Collaborative*, November 17, 2020, https://smartenergycc.org/understanding-lower-income-consumers-and-the-smart-energy-future-report (accessed December 20, 2020).

members, and people of color should not be assumed to have the same opinions and beliefs—
while climate change may be important to some, it may not be important to others.

Getting Started with CBOs

It is critical that the conversations with CBOs start before proposed policies or programs are put
into place. When policies have been too fully developed for CBOs to play a meaningful role in
influencing them, it contributes to distrust and cynicism. A better starting point for discussions
with CBOs is to try to understand their values and issues of greatest concern. The state agency
and CBOs can then work together to create solar policies and programs that address those issues.

Conversations with CBOs should remain as honest as possible, laying out the constraints and
processes that will affect any policies or programs to be developed. State agencies must refrain
from overpromising or oversimplifying and should be prepared to provide (and in some cases,
translate) enough information about laws, policies, economic realities, site constraints, and other
factors that determine the scale and nature of a possible project or program. This will allow the
fully informed and meaningful participation of community members and leaders. This may require
a jurisdiction-specific analysis beforehand to determine and convey which entities have authority
to make decisions over a range of energy justice issues.

SOME RECOMMENDED DO'S AND DON'TS FOR ENGAGING WITH CBOS[25]

DO'S	DON'TS
• Make clear that you seek a long-term relationship • Honor local and community knowledge in equal regard to the technical knowledge needed for policy development • Partner with CBOs on addressing the information gaps within their communities regarding energy information (e.g., Energy 101, new and emerging technologies, solar finance tools, innovative policy models) • Have a process in place for transparently reporting progress and setbacks to the community • Determine goals shared by both the agency and the community, and prioritize those goals as outcomes for the project • Discuss the potential financial incentives that the community thinks would work best for them • Collaborate with universities and local community colleges as conveners in partnership with local CBOs • Participate in functions that are planned by the community, including presenting at workshops and tabling at community events	• Do not try to gather all the community reactions, positions, and concerns at a single event. That doesn't give people time to process, question, or challenge what they hear • Do not assume you know what is best for the community • Do not tokenize community voices or assume they speak for the entire community • Do not expect tangible results right away. Building relationships takes time. Getting community consent and consensus takes time as well • Do not make promises of change that are unrealistic • Do not ask too much of CBOs with limited resources, but rather bring resources to the table

25 These recommendations were shaped by interviews that Nicole Hernandez Hammer held in February 2020 with Paula Garcia,
    Berneta Haynes, Mark Magana, and Rudi Navarra.

CASE STUDY #2
Energy Trust of Oregon's Community Listening Sessions

The Inclusive Innovation program provided stipends to support community participation at its events.

Energy Trust of Oregon is a nonprofit organization dedicated to helping 1.6 million utility customers benefit from saving on energy costs and generating renewable power. Energy Trust provides services, cash incentives and expertise to help residents and businesses invest in energy efficiency and renewable energy.

Energy Trust has been one of the organizations participating with CESA in the DOE-funded State Energy Strategies project for helping LMI communities participate in solar development. Energy Trust concluded that, before finalizing any new programs, it was critical to better understand the perspectives of their stakeholders, especially those representing LMI communities and communities of color.

Energy Trust used design thinking to frame how the organization went about this process.[26] Design thinking works through six iterative development phases, with an emphasis on learning from the target product user. To learn about its "users," or customers, Energy Trust sought to address the organization's gap in expertise when it came to the issues LMI communities and communities of color face. The organization did not have pre-existing relationships with CBOs that could provide expertise at the time. To remedy this, Energy Trust strove to engage the community on multiple levels.

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26 Design thinking is a process originally developed for designers developing consumer products and breaks the creation process down into six iterative processes: empathize, define, ideate, prototype, test, and implement. Learn more about design thinking at https://designthinking.ideo.com.

Energy Trust of Oregon's Community Listening Sessions

In the first phase of the learning process, Energy Trust cast a broad net and hosted a series of community listening sessions across the state that were open to all. Not only was Energy Trust able to listen to the needs of community members at these sessions, but community members were also able to learn more about what Energy Trust and the Oregon Department of Energy could offer. The sessions incorporated sessions from speakers, small group discussions, and catering from a local business, which all served to deepen connections. From these community listening sessions, Energy Trust was able to identify community priorities and concerns and cultivate a shortlist of organizations that were interested in becoming more involved in LMI solar work.

These organizations were then invited to join a working group that met regularly over eight months. Energy Trust provided scholarships for some of these organizations to participate, acknowledging the value of their contributions and covering travel costs for rural participants. The group worked with Energy Trust to draft a set of strategies that could be used to provide solar to underserved communities. These strategies were then taken back out on the road, this time for one-on-one meetings with 30 CBOs across the state. This gave the organizations an opportunity to provide feedback and input on paths to implementation.

One insight that came out of this second cycle soliciting community feedback was a desire and need for capacity-building opportunities. To address this, Energy Trust put out a solicitation for CBOs serving LMI communities, communities of color, and tribal communities, who wished to join a second working group. To ensure Energy Trust received as diverse a range of organizations as possible, they worked with a diversity and inclusion consultant to expand their reach. Organizations were once again offered scholarships, both to acknowledge the value of their contributions and to enable groups to participate even if solar was outside their normal scope of work. This working group met for another eight months and focused on building the technical knowledge and skills of members when it came to solar project implementation. After the working group had ended, Energy Trust made sure to keep in touch with all the members through regular opportunities and gatherings.

Energy Trust's experiences with building a network of CBOs provide important lessons for any state seeking undertake a similar endeavor. States should be prepared for this process to take time – Energy Trust's process from conception to execution took over two years. In addition, network building is very iterative. It is not enough to conduct one broad survey of the CBOs in the state and use it to create your network. Doing multiple rounds of outreach ensures that the agency has reached a wide, diverse range of groups. Hiring an outside consultant, as Energy Trust did, can be helpful in this regard. Finally, ensuring CBOs are paid, or can apply for scholarships, to compensate them for their time and participation is very important. Not only does it acknowledge the value of their work and contributions, but it allows groups with tight budgets and non-energy missions to participate in discussions.

Continuing Patterns of Engagement

Although it may seem that an agency needs to undertake a great deal of preparatory work before engaging with CBOs, once the relationship is established it can pay dividends. Respecting communities' input and engaging early and often are key to develop a solid trust between CBOs and an agency. This symbiotic relationship can help an agency shift its internal policies and structures over time and ensure more successful programmatic outcomes. State agencies should be clear that they are seeking a long-term relationship when approaching CBOs. Many CBOs may be distrustful of state entities' intentions due to historical cyclical patterns of engagement and disengagement depending on the state's priorities at the time. Setting explicit intentions to continue engagement and following up on those intentions is an important way to rebuild trust. Working on long-term projects that can provide benefits to the community for multiple years, such as an extended community solar contract, is a clear way of declaring the state agency's intention to maintain the relationship.

CASE STUDY #3
District of Columbia Department of Energy and Environment and the DuPont Park Seventh Day Adventist Church

DOEE partnered with a prominent local church to provide lasting solar benefits to community members.

The District's Solar for All program aims to bring the benefits of solar energy to 100,000 LMI families in the District of Columbia. The DC Department of Energy and Environment (DOEE) is partnering with organizations across the District to install solar on single family homes and develop community solar projects to benefit renters and residents in multi-family buildings. All Solar for All participants are expected to see a 50 percent savings on their electricity bill over 15 years and can be proud to have gone solar.

District of Columbia Department of Energy and Environment and the DuPont Park Seventh Day Adventist Church

In 2019, during the innovation phase of implementing Solar for All, DOEE worked with Groundswell, a community solar developer, and SunCatch Energy LLC, a solar consulting firm, to establish a relationship with the 100-year-old DuPont Park Seventh Day Adventist Church located in DC's historic Ward 7 neighborhood. The Groundswell team approached the church about a community solar project to incorporate renewable energy in their neighborhood through Solar for All.

The Solar for All program installed a 45.4 kW solar system on the church roof and an additional 122.8 kW canopy on an adjacent parking area owned by the church. The solar project was completed in February 2020 and delivers the renewable energy benefits generated to 47 low-income families in the community at no cost. The residents who signed-up for this community solar project will continue to receive the benefits for at least 15 years.

Through the partnership with DuPont Park Seventh Day Adventist Church, the Solar for All program was able to connect with community members who needed support paying their utility bills and establish a trusting relationship that will last for years to come.

Developing Policies and Programs for Under-Resourced Communities

Partnering with CBOs should be an important step in designing and implementing the policies and programs that impact under-resourced communities. CBOs can provide valuable insight into the needs of local low-income communities or communities of color, as well as effective implementation strategies. They can also identify barriers that residents in under-resourced communities could face in participating in a program, such as language barriers, difficulty finding information easily, and so on. Engaging with CBOs can help create culturally competent programs and outreach that is based in local knowledge and expertise.

However, involving CBOs in any policymaking process requires a thoughtful and nuanced approach to create the best outcomes for all parties involved.

Participatory Policymaking

Many states have goals related to increasing low-income and PoC participation in solar. Having these goals can be a useful step for state agencies to begin creating or modifying programs and policies that specifically target adoption of solar in under-resourced communities. By doing this, communities that are often left behind in technological adoption can be at the front of the line for receiving the value and benefits clean energy provides.

Engaging with CBOs is integral to creating inclusive, participatory, and anti-racist policy interventions. Several steps can be taken to ensure a well-designed program or policy that will result in participation from under-resourced communities. A survey or surveys can often be a good first step. Although there have been national surveys conducted of low-income customers, it might be useful to conduct a survey of under-resourced communities in a state, county, or utility territory. A well-designed survey can help program administrators determine depth of knowledge on energy topics, the importance of energy to customers, barriers to participation in a program, importance of environmental, health, and financial benefits, and other topics relevant to program design. Consulting with CBOs about survey design, including the methodology for distribution, can ensure the results reflect the thoughts of the community. Many CBOs operate in sectors outside of energy and can provide valuable intersectional expertise as well. Any clean energy intervention should be designed using as full a picture of the target population as possible.

Other steps to ensure a well-designed program include holding public workshops and listening sessions, directly engaging CBOs to provide feedback throughout program design, and offering opportunities for public input through written and verbal feedback. Consider holding facilitated conversations with CBOs and under-resourced community members throughout the design process. Ensure that program design has intervals to pause and make improvements based on feedback.

Hosting accessible, public meetings and workshops is invaluable for building community relationships and promoting participatory policymaking.

Organizing Effective Meetings

In some cases, particularly with especially challenging energy concepts and issues such as renewable portfolio standards, utility rate design, or carbon pricing, it may be prudent to work with a third-party facilitator who is skilled at including all voices in the room, ensuring that difficult topics are explained in everyday language, and that acronyms are fully defined. That person can bring a level of trust to the conversation, especially in communities where a state agency or utility has not successfully engaged or listened to representatives of under-resourced communities in the past. A facilitator is especially useful for public meetings if the topic is known to be contentious because the person leading the meeting will not be perceived as having a vested interest in a certain outcome.

The timing and location of meetings also matters if a state agency seeks active participation by CBOs. Public meetings held by state agencies are often during business hours in their offices or in a public building large enough to hold the expected crowd. Depending on the location of the meeting, a vehicle may be needed to attend in person. Parking may not be easily accessible or require fees for a parking meter or garage. If an attendee does not have a personal vehicle, public transportation may be an option. However, riding a bus or subway also incurs a cost to the attendee. When a public meeting is held virtually, it can create additional challenges for CBOs and their members if they do not have access to a computer and internet service. Gaining access to these resources may require a visit to the public library or community center, requiring extra time.

Bringing meetings to LMI communities is one strategy for dealing with these problems. Another way to mitigate these costs is to provide a small stipend to all attendees. This could be as small as the cost a parking meter fee or bus fare or could be larger to further encourage attendance.

State agencies may find it challenging to directly pay people for attending a public meeting. A CBO may be able to help disperse funds if it can be brought on as a contractor. But there are other ways to help subsidize attendance, such as providing food and beverages to attendees

or providing childcare in a safe space nearby. A state agency can consider developing a budget to cover some of these costs for public meetings, if allowed. If an agency is planning a large initiative or new program design requiring public input, consider allocating or budgeting funding for the cost of a third-party facilitator. Explore grant funding opportunities to help cover the costs of trainings and/or facilitators.

CASE STUDY #4
Minnesota Department of Commerce and the Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa

The Minnesota Department of Commerce (MNDoC) originally planned on releasing a request for proposals to improve tribal solar accessibility in early 2020. MNDoC's tribal liaison put in significant effort to reach out to 11 tribes/bands in the state, to understand what the communities needed in terms of support around solar. The feedback the Department encountered indicated that some tribes were unclear about where to begin planning for solar projects or had limited staff resources due to competing demands brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Additionally, awareness remained of miscommunications that arose during a 2019 joint MNDoC/Tribal effort against a northern Minnesota pipeline. MNDoC desired to re-build trust levels with the tribal representatives and to ensure that any support offered would be welcome and utilized by the tribes. Rather than move forward with the RFP, MNDoC planned a two-hour listening session and webinar for all 11 tribes. The goals of this meeting were to convey that the Department was serious about hearing the tribes' concerns. Most of the time was spent listening to each tribe/band's needs, concerns, and desires regarding solar. In addition, MNDoC brought in the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe, which had already implemented several solar projects, to discuss their process.
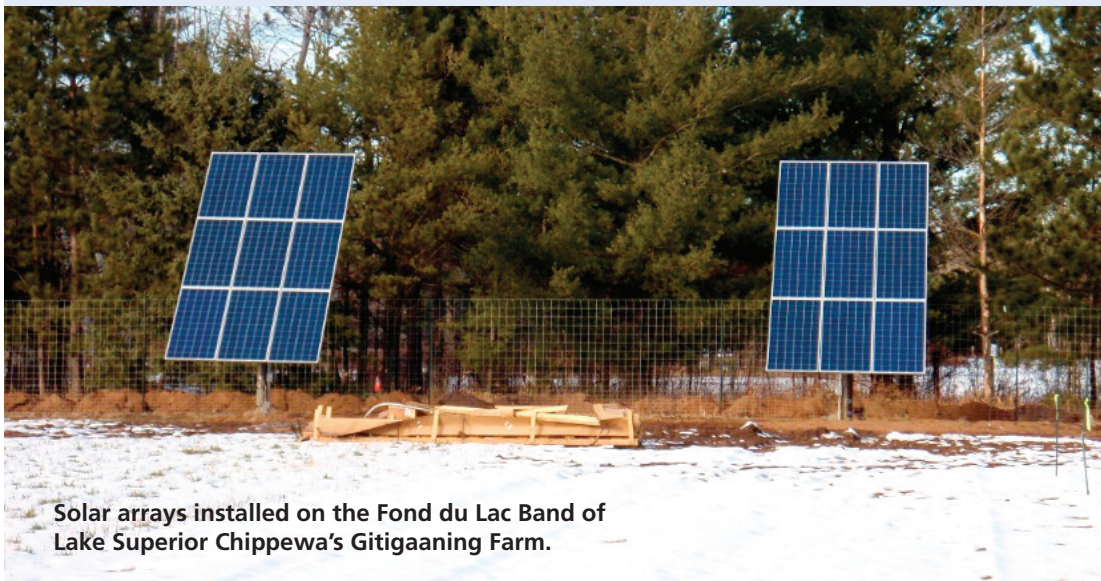
Solar arrays installed on the Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa's Gitigaaning Farm.

Minnesota Department of Commerce and the Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa

After this session, MNDoC wrote a targeted RFP. The awards were for any tribal governments, communities, or members who were undertaking, evaluating, or installing solar projects for Tribal members facing high-energy burdens. One of the two projects awarded was for the Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa's Gitigaaning Farm. The Farm is a community training center built around food sovereignty and sustainable living for tribal members. Classes are taught at the Farm on a full spectrum of food sovereignty issues, such as organic farming and soil management, composting, and food processing and canning. Introductory classes on solar energy were added to the curriculum once the installation finished. In addition to knowledge sharing, the farm also distributes crops to the low-income community. MNDoC's award allowed the Farm to build 5.5 kW of solar PV, and the value of the energy offset will allow the Farm to shift the cost savings to additional community training programs at the Farm.

The State Energy Office and MNDoC's tribal liaison continue to work with the tribes/bands to let them know about additional resources the state can provide to help them make progress on solar and build additional trust and mutual understanding.

How to Involve CBOs in the Policymaking Process

There is often an inclination to move fast implementing new programs, for understandable reasons. But acting too quickly has risks. All too easily, the urge to initiate programs expeditiously translates into a preference for a top-down approach. Policymakers are apt to assume that bottom-up methods of engagement will only slow the implementation of programs. However, even if community engagement may initially slow the implementation process for a program, it can greatly contribute to its impact, particularly for the target community. CBOs are valuable partners in the policymaking process and can work together with state agencies to coordinate community engagement.

It is important to bring CBOs into conversations early in the process. If community voices are brought into the discussion only at the end of the process, community members may feel that it is too late to provide input. This may lead to feelings of exclusion and marginalization which erode any goodwill an agency may have generated by inviting community feedback or it may hurt fragile relationships with CBOs that have been established. It risks negative feedback and vocal dissatisfaction with the concepts being proposed. It can also cause an agency that has already invested significant time and money into program development to be resistant to making changes based on public feedback.

Community engagement early and often can lead to successful project outcomes.

Here are some tips for working with CBOs on a community engagement process for a program or policy design:

- Include a community engagement timeline into the process for developing a policy or program.
- Decide early on how many opportunities for engagement with the public will occur. One meeting is likely not going to be enough.
- Make the timeline public and ensure community members know when the opportunities to directly engage will be.
- Ensure that the timeline includes adequate flexibility to incorporate necessary changes based on feedback.
- Ask CBOs to help spread the word about meetings, workshops or surveys within their organizations and communities. They can use their own social media platforms to inform their network.
- Consider co-branding the public meeting or workshop with CBOs.
- Consider establishing a working group of CBOs and community leaders to present ideas and brainstorm. For example, if a LMI carveout for a community solar program is being considered, a small working group can dive into detailed program design more effectively than a large group of stakeholders.
- Publish materials in advance of meetings so attendees will have an opportunity to read it in advance. Rushing to read and digest content on a slide during a presentation can be challenging for anyone, but especially for those unfamiliar with the concepts being presented and for whom English is not their first language.
- Make deadlines for public comment clear but be flexible when possible.

Throughout the process of engagement, it is important to remember to view community members as producers of outcomes, not just as recipients of outcomes. As noted earlier in "Getting Started with CBOs," for many CBOs, spending staff time and money to travel to community engagement meetings can be a high burden. Ensuring meetings are organized effectively and making some effort to compensate community members for their time and effort can greatly help a productive community engagement process.

CASE STUDY #5
Rhode Island Office of Energy Resources' Community Solar Outreach

In 2017, the Office of Energy Resources (OER) created a plan to increase solar adoption and participation of low- and moderate-income customers in solar programs. The strategies included Ask, Learn, Educate, Connect and Meet. The first step, Ask, deployed a survey of A-60 rate code customers, which is National Grid's income eligible rate. The focus of the survey was to gather information about the degree of awareness regarding community solar in order to better design web content and outreach materials. It also collected information on customer interest in participating in community solar and other clean energy technologies as well as the best ways for OER to connect with customers.

The next steps were Listen and Learn. The focus of these steps was to meet with community groups to provide education about community solar, how the current programs work, and ask what else we needed to consider. One such meeting was with the Rhode Island Basic Needs Network (BNN), in Charleston, RI, a coalition of area social services providers, including non-profits such as Habitat for Humanity and Goodwill and churches that serve low-income clients in the Washington County Area. The meeting took place at the WARM center, a comprehensive social services agency that provides essential services and programming for those in their service area. The coalition members brought valuable knowledge specific to utility issues faced by their communities. OER was looking for specific feedback on what resources would be most impactful for BNN to have in order to provide educational materials about community solar to their customers answer questions and hear feedback. Their critically important feedback included raising a concern for the possible customer impacts of community solar contracts on LIHEAP and A60 utility customer benefits.

OER sought feedback from LMI community members when developing the Community Solar Marketplace, a website where customers seeking a community solar project can find projects seeking subscribers.

This led OER to discuss the issue in detail with the RI Department of Human Services (DHS). They confirmed that there would be no conflict with LIHEAP benefits and community solar participation. This is great news for income eligible customers who receive LIHEAP because participation in community solar will not impact receiving these benefits. Additionally, OER worked with National Grid, Rhode Island's primary utility, to determine that customers in a repayment plan, also known as an arrearage management plan, are eligible to participate in community solar.

Conversations with BNN also identified a possible conflict between A60 customer participation and community solar participation, potentially resulting in additional electric bill costs for these customers because the of the utility's billing process. Once this issue was raised with National Grid, steps were taken to amend the billing process to ensure net metering credits applied to the bill before the income eligible discount.

In response to this problem, OER has created a participant-limited pilot program to work closely with select A60 customers enrolled in community solar programs, and to identify and troubleshoot barriers to participation that A60 eligible customers encounter. It was only through OER's engagement with stakeholder groups that led to the identification and resolution of these problems.

Overcoming Negative Perceptions

For solar policymaking, existing perceptions and biases can be obstacles to CBOs participating. Some people in under-resourced communities assume that solar is only for the rich or for white people. This belief is perpetuated when solar marketers only target neighborhoods where they think it will be easiest to make a sale. The location of existing solar PV systems also contributes to this perception. If there are no solar installations in an LMI neighborhood, the residents are unlikely to research solar PV options for their own home. There is a similar parallel with the solar workforce. If there are no Black or Latinx solar installers who live in those communities, a job within the solar industry may seem out of reach or completely unknown as a career pathway.

Nevertheless, solar can be a valuable tool in fostering energy justice and energy democracy for under-resourced communities and communities of color. As a distributed energy resource, solar can empower communities that have largely been at the mercy of large-scale energy providers. As a clean energy resource, solar is part of an energy future in which communities that have long had to deal with the polluting effects of fossil fuel plants located in their communities can breathe clean air.

If solar installations are not common in under-resourced communities, it contributes to the perception that solar is only for wealthier neighborhoods.

Understanding the Local Context

States that seek to work with CBOs to implement solar in under-resourced communities should bear in mind the perceptions of solar that many low-income communities and communities of color have and understand that developing trust in these communities may take quite some time. Having CBO partners is important to working through and around a community's lack of trust.

It is also important to think about the hyper-local context in which many CBOs operate. For example, many communities might not understand the differences between rooftop PV installations, which is what many people think of when they picture "solar," and large ground-mounted systems. Before promoting the opportunities to participate in a large shared solar project (what the solar industry usually refers to as "community solar"), it may be necessary to educate community members on what such a project is and how it is possible for them to receive electricity savings and other benefits. Working with local CBOs who can understand the specific points of reference for a community, and help provide opportunities for education, can make a huge difference in the success of a solar program.

Similarly, different communities may have different goals in what they hope to achieve through solar development. For example, participating in a solar project can be a chance for community members to feel ownership of their energy source. In other cases, other forms of empowerment, lower electricity bills, connections with neighbors, or helping an important community institution can be more important. For recommendations related to solar development in under-resourced communities, see *Solar with Justice: Strategies for Powering Up Under-Resourced Communities and Growing an Inclusive Solar Market*, a report from CESA in partnership with academic energy equity experts and environmental justice organizations.[27]

Metrics for Success

Designing an anti-racist solar policy should include mechanisms for tracking success. It is important to obtain data and feedback from the community to understand how the program, once implemented, is working for the community. Metrics for tracking the success of programs can be created with input from CBOs, who can also help solicit feedback, which residents may otherwise be reluctant to deliver to state officials. Cultivating a culture of participatory learning requires being flexible with program inputs and outputs as feedback is received from the community; what the state may consider success may not be what the community feels is success.[28]

CASE STUDY #6
Solarize Campaigns

States can use group purchasing and special marketing initiatives to work with CBOs to address the perception and marketing challenges of engaging LMI communities and communities of color in solar development. A wide range of campaigns, all called Solarize, was launched by state agencies in Oregon, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, and other states. Solarize initiatives usually combine four components:

1. **COMMUNITY-DRIVEN OUTREACH:** These methods may include peer-to-peer interactions, social media campaigns, town meetings, and booths at community events.

2. **COMPETITIVELY SELECTED INSTALLERS:** Through a competitive bidding process, the community selects an installer or installers to service the area throughout the duration of the Solarize campaign. This reduces installers' customer acquisition and screening costs and saves the consumer from the effort of shopping around for a reputable, price-competitive installer.

3. **DISCOUNT, TIERED PRICING:** Pre-negotiated discounts increase as more people sign up within a target community (i.e., the more people who go solar under a Solarize campaign, the lower the price or overall cost savings for everyone who participates in the community).

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27 Warren Leon et al., "Solar with Justice: Strategies for Powering Up Under-Resourced Communities and Growing an Inclusive Solar Market," *Clean Energy States Alliance*, December 10, 2019, https://www.cesa.org/resource-library/resource/solar-with-justice (accessed December 20,2020).

28 Section 2: Energy Justice Scorecard. *Energy Justice Workbook*. Initiative for Energy Justice. Dec. 2019. https://iejusa.org/section-2-energy-justice-scorecard.

Solarize campaigns rely on grassroots marketing tactics to spread the word about opportunities available to LMI homeowners who might otherwise think they cannot afford to go solar.

4. **LIMITED TIME OFFER:** Solarize campaigns are limited time offers. This motivates customers to act quickly, or risk missing the window of opportunity to install solar PV at a reduced rate.

Significant cost savings result from coordinated education, promotion, and outreach efforts by community volunteers, along with discounted pricing, which takes advantage of reduced customer acquisition costs. These savings are passed along to homeowners and create a compelling reason to sign up for Solarize.

Although Solarize was not specifically designed for LMI communities, it can work well there. The grassroots organizing involved in the campaigns empowers local communities and corrects what can otherwise feel like a predatory balance of power between solar program marketers and LMI communities and communities of color.

The Connecticut Green Bank began Solarize Connecticut in May of 2012 in four towns. The Green Bank partnered with SmartPower, a non-profit marketing firm with experience conducting community energy campaigns, for the development of promotional materials, recruitment of municipalities, management of town websites and social media, and coordination of local community outreach campaigns.

Solarize Connecticut was later incorporated into the state's Solar for All program, a public-private partnership between the Green Bank and PosiGen, a clean energy company that caters to LMI communities. The program offers LMI homeowners a solar lease paired with energy efficiency measures, regardless of participants' income or credit. Using the Solarize campaign method of leveraging community relationships helped reach underserved households who would otherwise not be aware of the solar financing opportunities available to them.

Concluding Thoughts

Entering the environmental and energy justice space as a governmental entity is fraught with potential pitfalls, but it can yield extremely promising outcomes for under-resourced communities. CBOs have been nurturing these communities for decades and have vast stores of experiential knowledge to share. If previous clean energy programs targeting under-resourced communities did not reach their desired target, understanding the agency's history with local CBOs could be a useful place to start re-evaluating these programs. The process for designing new programming should include ample time to solicit input and feedback, and to collaborate on solutions that best serve both CBOs and the broader community.

Programmatic work with CBOs will only be successful if it is anti-racist, participatory, and inclusive. Undertaking the process of creating an anti-racist workplace is vital to the success of partnerships with CBOs and policymaking for under-resourced communities. Agency staff should have the tools and resources to understand how to avoid perpetuating racist harms when conducting outreach among communities of color.

CBOs play a vital role as resources and leaders for low-income communities and communities of color. Even when not involved directly in energy resource issues, they all have intersectional, experiential knowledge about the needs of their local community. Partnering with them in a symbiotic relationship can lead to better, more equitable policy interventions.

The Environmental Justice Principles

Delegates to the First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit held on October 24-27, 1991, in Washington DC, drafted and adopted these 17 principles of Environmental Justice. Since then, the Principles have served as a defining document for the growing grassroots movement for environmental justice. To learn more, visit https://climatejusticealliance.org/ej-principles.

WE, THE PEOPLE OF COLOR, gathered together at this multinational People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit, to begin to build a national and international movement of all peoples of color to fight the destruction and taking of our lands and communities, do hereby re-establish our spiritual interdependence to the sacredness of our Mother Earth; to respect and celebrate each of our cultures, languages and beliefs about the natural world and our roles in healing ourselves; to ensure environmental justice; to promote economic alternatives which would contribute to the development of environmentally safe livelihoods; and, to secure our political, economic and cultural liberation that has been denied for over 500 years of colonization and oppression, resulting in the poisoning of our communities and land and the genocide of our peoples, do affirm and adopt these Principles of Environmental Justice:

1. **Environmental Justice** affirms the sacredness of Mother Earth, ecological unity and the interdependence of all species, and the right to be free from ecological destruction.

2. **Environmental Justice** demands that public policy be based on mutual respect and justice for all peoples, free from any form of discrimination or bias.

3. **Environmental Justice** mandates the right to ethical, balanced, and responsible uses of land and renewable resources in the interest of a sustainable planet for humans and other living things.

4. **Environmental Justice** calls for universal protection from nuclear testing, extraction, production and disposal of toxic/hazardous wastes and poisons and nuclear testing that threaten the fundamental right to clean air, land, water, and food.

5. **Environmental Justice** affirms the fundamental right to political, economic, cultural, and environmental self-determination of all peoples.

6. **Environmental Justice** demands the cessation of the production of all toxins, hazardous wastes, and radioactive materials, and that all past and current producers be held strictly accountable to the people for detoxification and the containment at the point of production.

7. **Environmental Justice** demands the right to participate as equal partners at every level of decision-making, including needs assessment, planning, implementation, enforcement, and evaluation.

8. **Environmental Justice** affirms the right of all workers to a safe and healthy work environment without being forced to choose between an unsafe livelihood and unemployment. It also affirms the right of those who work at home to be free from environmental hazards.

9. **Environmental Justice** protects the right of victims of environmental injustice to receive full compensation and reparations for damages as well as quality health care.

10. **Environmental Justice** considers governmental acts of environmental injustice a violation of international law, the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, and the United Nations Convention on Genocide.

11. **Environmental Justice** must recognize a special legal and natural relationship of Native Peoples to the U.S. government through treaties, agreements, compacts, and covenants affirming sovereignty and self-determination.

12. **Environmental Justice** affirms the need for urban and rural ecological policies to clean up and rebuild our cities and rural areas in balance with nature, honoring the cultural integrity of all our communities, and provided fair access for all to the full range of resources.

13. **Environmental Justice** calls for the strict enforcement of principles of informed consent, and a halt to the testing of experimental reproductive and medical procedures and vaccinations on people of color.

14. **Environmental Justice** opposes the destructive operations of multi-national corporations.

15. **Environmental Justice** opposes military occupation, repression and exploitation of lands, peoples and cultures, and other life forms.

16. **Environmental Justice** calls for the education of present and future generations which emphasizes social and environmental issues, based on our experience and an appreciation of our diverse cultural perspectives.

17. **Environmental Justice** requires that we, as individuals, make personal and consumer choices to consume as little of Mother Earth's resources and to produce as little waste as possible; and make the conscious decision to challenge and reprioritize our lifestyles to ensure the health of the natural world for present and future generations.

Anti-Racist Organizations

Below are a few groups actively working to dismantle systemic racism. Not all these organizations focus on environmental justice or energy justice issues exclusively, but all recognize environmental and energy justice as a facet of a Just Transition. This list is not exhaustive but can provide a useful starting point.

Climate Justice Alliance

Formed in 2013, the Climate Justice Alliance (CJA) seeks to create a new center of gravity in the climate movement by uniting frontline communities and organizations into a single grassroots force. CJA focuses on local organizing strategy and mobilizing capacity building to prompt a Just Transition away from extractive systems of production, consumption, and political oppression, and towards resilient, regenerative, and equitable economies. CJA members work together on anchor projects including Energy Democracy. climatejusticealliace.org

Initiative for Energy Justice

The Initiative is staffed by lawyers of color who are deeply involved in the policy debates concerning the transition from fossil fuels and an extractive economy towards an equitable and renewable energy future, with direct connections to communities working on that transition. The Initiative seeks to address the gaps in the way policymakers engaged in developing climate and energy policy incorporate issues of justice and equity into emerging policy frameworks. iejusa.org

Grassroots Global Justice Alliance

Grassroots Global Justice is an alliance of over 60 US-based grassroots organizing groups comprising low-income communities and communities of color. GGJ brings groups into a long-term process of relationship building, political alignment, and transformational leadership development. The group brings together global social movements working for climate justice, gender justice, an end to war, and a just transition to the next economy. ggjalliance.org

The Othering and Belonging Institute (formerly the Haas Institute)

The Othering & Belonging Institute at the University of California, Berkeley brings together researchers, organizers, stakeholders, communicators, and policymakers to identify and eliminate the barriers to an inclusive, just, and sustainable society in order to create transformative change. The Institute offers resources and toolkits for organizations seeking to implement diversity and inclusion trainings and initiatives in their workplace. belonging.berkley.edu

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion— Definitions and Importance

Diversity

Diversity can refer to *individual differences* (e.g., personalities, learning styles, life experiences) or *group/social differences* (e.g., race/ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientation, country of origin, ability, or cultural, political, religious, or other affiliation). A group can be diverse if it is comprised of individuals who have different life experiences, personalities, and different social identities or group identities. An individual is not "diverse."

Many factors make up and influence a person's individuality, and there are many factors that make a team diverse. If an agency has a too rigid definition of diversity, they might miss out on opportunities to truly diversify their teams or to value the differences that people bring to the table.

Equity

Equity involves trying to understand and give people what they need to enjoy full, healthy lives. Equality, in contrast, aims to ensure that everyone gets the same things in order to enjoy full, healthy lives. Like equity, equality aims to promote fairness and justice, but aiming for equality will not necessarily be effective everyone does not start from the same place or need the same things.

Equity therefore means ensuring that each person has what they need to succeed; it involves addressing barriers to having a level playing field. Another definition is "the absence of systemic disparities […] between social groups who have different levels of underlying social advantage/disadvantage."[29]

This image illustrates the difference between equity and equality. In the first image, everyone with standing-room tickets is being treated equally—they all have a box to stand on. Equity is displayed in the second image, where each person is given different supports to make it possible for them to have equal access to the game. They are being treated equitably.

EQUALITY   EQUITY

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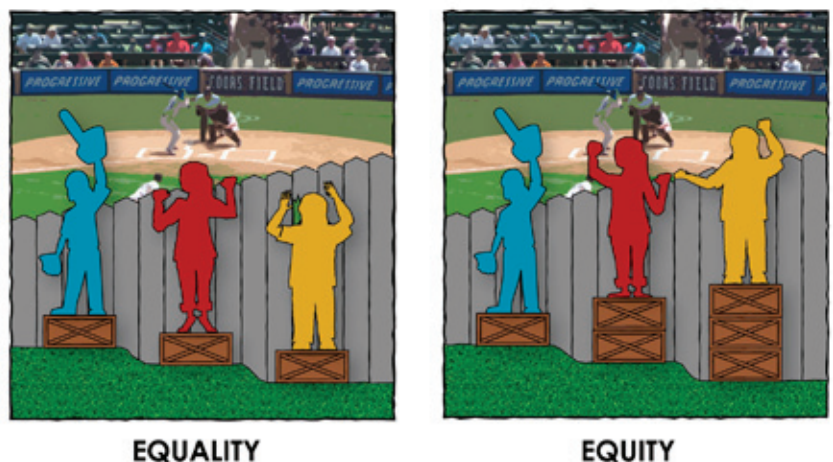
29 P. Braveman and S. Gruskin, "Defining Equity in Health," *Journal of Epidemiology & Community Health* 57, no. 4 (April 1, 2003): 254–58, https://doi.org/10.1136/jech.57.4.254.

Inclusion

Inclusion refers to the manner in which individuals of diverse backgrounds are not only included in an organization but valued as necessary voices within it. Inclusion is about welcoming, developing, and advancing a diverse mix of individuals. It is about making all people feel safe and valued and respected. This can involve changing practices that might unfairly benefit or disadvantage any one group and making sure that everyone feels they have the same opportunity to advance and make an impact.

Why Diversity Is Important in the Workplace

Research reveals that high-performing teams are often both cognitively and demographically diverse.[30] Diversity doesn't just mean people's gender or what they look like. It encompasses the wide array of lived experiences they have had, in part shaped by their identities. This leads to people thinking differently about things. Different work experiences or different educational backgrounds will also impact how a team problem-solves.

Demographic diversity matters, too. There is research that shows that hearing an opposing opinion from someone who is different from us provokes more thought than when it comes from someone who looks like us. One interviewee in a study on this topic remarked that "racial diversity stimulates curiosity, and gender balance facilitates conversational turn-taking."[31] Diversity on teams generates push-back to ideas, increasing the conversation around solutions, better locating the weakness in ideas, and strengthening the final result. Similar among team members increases the potential for groupthink, which is detrimental to the best end result.

State agencies exist to serve the members of the public. The population of states is diverse—when the make-up of an agency reflects the make-up of the state as a whole, the agency can build the public's trust by better understanding their needs.

Why Equity Is Important in the Workplace?

No one wants to feel like there is an uneven playing field. A recent study by McKinsey & Company on issues that women face in the workplace surveyed 279 companies employing more than 13 million people and also surveyed more than 64,000 employees on their workplace experiences. The study concluded that some employees face biases and barriers that others do not. These barriers lead to difficulties in moving upwards in organizations and produce feelings of frustration, less job satisfaction, and higher employee turnover.[32]

The McKinsey study showed that women receive fewer mentoring opportunities, less face time with senior leaders, and less support from managers, which all limit career growth. These things can hold back an otherwise qualified candidate from career growth. The numbers were worse for women of color and lesbian women.[33]

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30 Juliet Bourke and Bernadette Dillon, "The Diversity and Inclusion Revolution: Eight Powerful Truths," *Deloitte.com*, January 22, 2018, https://www2.deloitte.com/us/en/insights/deloitte-review/issue-22/diversity-and-inclusion-at-work-eight-powerful-truths.html (accessed December 20, 2020).

31 Ibid.

32 McKinsey & Company, "Women in the Workplace 2018," *Womenintheworkplace.com*, https://womenintheworkplace.com/2018#! (accessed December 20, 2020).

33 Ibid.

Here are some examples of inequity in the workplace and how they can be addressed:
- Parents may experience inequity when networking events or important meetings are consistently held when they have to be home with their kids
- Individuals who have a disability may experience inequity when their workplace will not make a reasonable accommodation for them
- LGBTQ+ individuals may feel that they cannot talk about their personal life in the workplace, which might limit their ability to make connections and feel welcomed and at home in their place of work.

When companies make the effort to create a more equitable workplace, employees report more satisfaction. In fact, the number of men and women who think about leaving their job decreases when their company 1) prioritizes diversity, 2) does not tolerate biased and disrespectful behavior, and 3) encourages diversity and inclusion. Ultimately, more equity means happier, more productive, and more satisfied employees. Having happier employees decreases employee turnover.

Why Inclusion Is Important in the Workplace

One woman interviewed as part of the McKinsey & Company pointed out that: "It's great for organizations to say they want to hire diverse employees. But when you get there and you're the only one who's like you, and nobody's really supporting what you bring to the table, it feels like exclusion."[33]

Inclusion in a workplace is best achieved when all types of people are present at all levels of the company. As an example, a workplace with 70 percent women working there, but with the top quarter of all jobs are held by men, would not be inclusive. Having a variety of voices on your staff will not matter ultimately if those voices can't be heard. Without a strong culture of inclusion, the diverse-team model may not perform well.

When employees feel valued and respected, they feel an increased sense of belonging and comfort in bringing their ideas to the table. They have improved performance and the teams are collaborative, innovative, and engaging. Similar to equitable workplaces, inclusive workplaces see employees who are happier, more engaged and satisfied, and less likely to leave.

Increasing diversity and equity may feel difficult, as they might require policy change, a change in procedures, or action on the part of senior leaders. However, anyone can increase inclusion in the workplace. It can be as easy as asking what someone thinks in a meeting, or making connections between new employees, or grabbing coffee with your team. Other ways to foster inclusion include educating staff and managers, listening and communicating effectively, and supporting employees to be their authentic self.

33 "Women in the Workplace 2018," 9.

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The Clean Energy States Alliance (CESA) is a national, nonprofit coalition of public agencies and organizations working together to advance clean energy. CESA members—mostly state agencies—include many of the most innovative, successful, and influential public funders of clean energy initiatives in the country.

Ørsted US Offshore Wind/Block Island Wind Farm

CleanEnergy States Alliance

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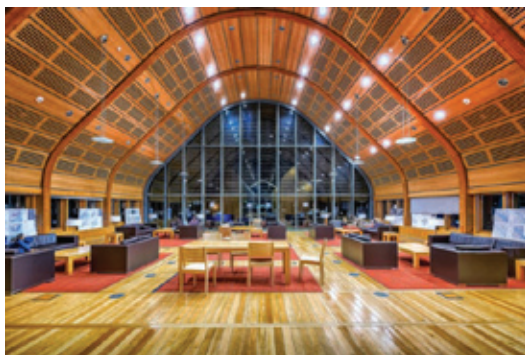
Clockwise from upper left: Shutterstock/Soonthorn Wongsaita; Tom Piorkowski; Resonant Energy; Portland General Electric; RE-volv; Bigstockphoto.com/Davidm199