Equity Guide for Green Stormwater Infrastructure Practitioners

Because green infrastructure can be a powerful lever for advancin

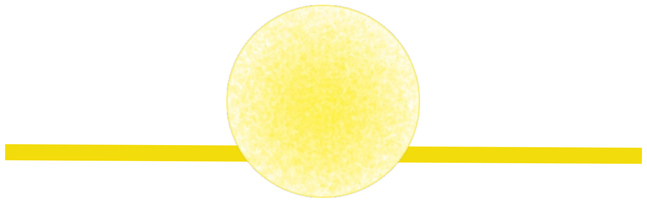
https://bit.ly/GSIEquityGuide

the green infrastructure leadership exchange

GREENPRINT PARTNERS

WHAT YOU'LL GET FROM THIS SESSION
Objectives

Understand how GSI can advance equity in communities



Identify what levers GSI practitioners can use to advance equity in your day-to-day practice

See equity principles in action through a case study of GSI projects

https://bit.ly/GSIEquityGuide

AGENDA

- INTRODUCING THE EQUITY GUIDE FOR GSI PRACTITIONERS
- HOW GSI CAN BE A LEVER FOR EQUITY
- USING THE GUIDE FOR YOUR WORK
- ST. LOUIS CASE STUDY

https://bit.ly/GSIEquityGuide

OPENING REMARKS
Introductions

Barbara Hopkins

Director

Green Infrastructure
Leadership Exchange

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CEO

Greenprint Partners

OPENING REMARKS
Introductions

https://bit.ly/GSIEquityGuide

- Green Infrastructure Leadership Exchange
- Mission: Activate local governments and water agencies to equitably implement green stormwater infrastructure
- 65 organizations, >250 practitioners
- Three pillars:
  - Leadership development
  - Member-driven solutions
  - Case-making & evidence-building

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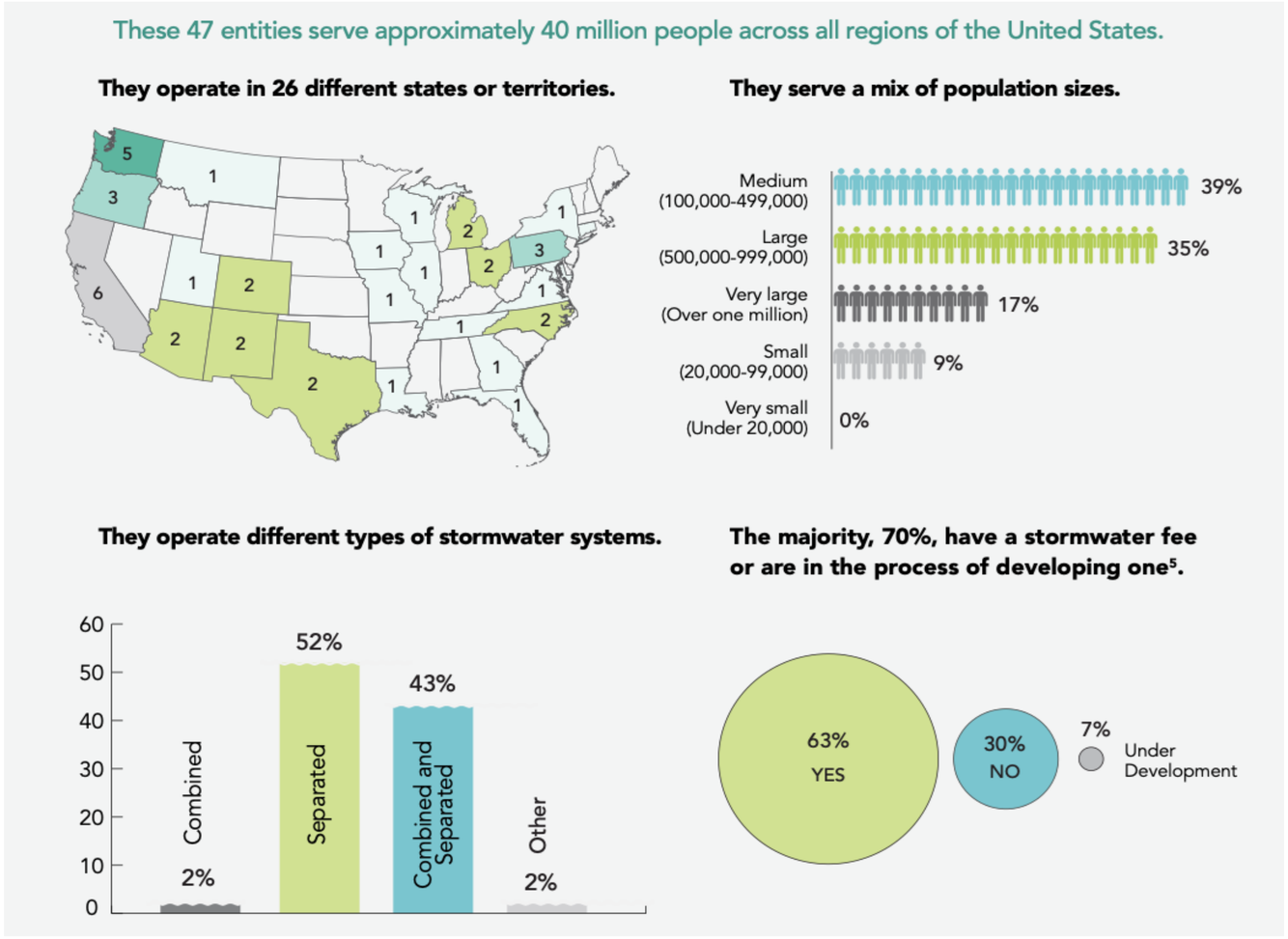
State of Equity in GI Survey Findings



State of Equity in GI
Survey Findings

1. **Many public sector water entities are investing in building internal equity focused capacity.**

1. **There is still much work to be done and multiple barriers exist to achieving the full equity potential of GSI. Unless these barriers are overcome, the public sector is likely to miss this opportunity.**

State of Equity in GI
Survey Findings

"My neighbors are frustrated. I'm frustrated. They have regular flooding in their basements from combined sewer overflows, and there's nowhere to turn to report issues or share what is happening. These issues are confusing and complex. My neighbors are rarely engaged by the local government or the utility. Many are renters and unsure how to navigate and advocate, compared to the white people in middle- and upper-class neighborhoods, and as a result their concerns seem to be deprioritized. I see the City responding to other neighborhoods with higher quality amenities and more engaged representatives." **– Robin**

"*We can work in partnership with residents to create holistic solutions to the many intersecting challenges that communities like ours face. When residents are involved in identifying the problems and the solutions, we can develop strategies that can address many of the concerns we have, in addition to flooding*." – Vaughn

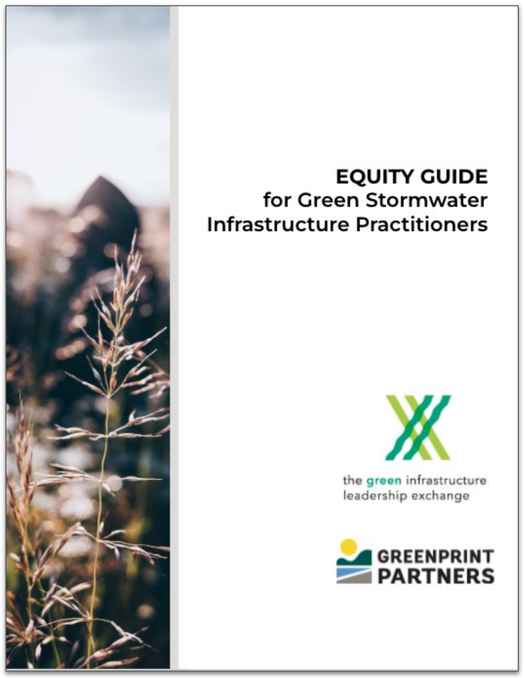
Source: *Community Voices on GSI and Equity*, Green Infrastructure Leadership Exchange, Sept. 2022

State of Equity in GI
Survey Findings

3. There is a clear path forward to ensure that the full equity benefits of GSI are achieved, which involves:

- ➔ Investing in equity-focused GSI staff capacity building
- ➔ Expanding innovative project partnerships to access external sources of funding
- ➔ Developing more equitable processes for project siting, design and implementation
- ➔ Supporting networking activities as a means of building a critical mass of equity-centered GSI practitioners
- ➔ Continuing to invest in research and dissemination to identify and address knowledge gaps

EQUITY GUIDE AT A GLANCE



The ***Equity Guide for Green Stormwater Infrastructure Practitioners*** is an action and evaluation roadmap that defines the GSI industry's shared long-term equity goals with:

- Sample metrics that help track progress toward those goals over time,
- Best practices that will ultimately move the needle, and
- Tools to support individual practitioners in customizing community-informed equity work plans, equity impact metrics, and evaluation plans to local contexts.

Ground ourselves in research | **Lean into a shared language** | **Cohere concrete goals + metrics** | **Turn insight into action** | **Measure impact consistently**

GUIDE TOOLS
Lean into a shared language

Definitions to Foster a Shared Language

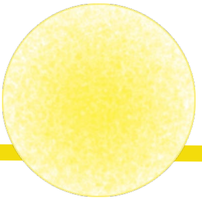
Throughout the Guide and in the appendix are definitions for terms for the industry to align around. Examples of defined terms include:

- Green stormwater infrastructure
- Equity (several definitions provided)
- Spatial Equity
- Identity Equity
- Process Equity
- Power Equity

How Green Infrastructure can Advance Equity

The Guide kicks off with critical context about our shared opportunity to drive equity by:

- Expanding nature in communities
- Increasing climate resilience
- Improving properties
- Investing in economic stability
- Creating spaces that facilitate community cohesion
- Increasing community participation and power
- Building trust and acknowledging past harms



The Roles We Play in Advancing Equity

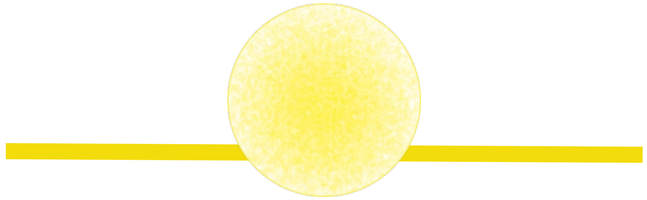
The following section illuminates the roles of important collaborators in this work, highlighting motivators, levers they can pull, and suggestions for engagement. These collaborators are grouped as follows:

- Internal Advocates: Build consistent levels of internal commitment to equity among leaders and workers within the public sector stormwater management organization.
- Implementation Teams: Foster deep alignment among green infrastructure implementation teams.
- External Stakeholders: Engage a broader set of stakeholders to maximize community benefits.

OPENING REMARKS
Defining Equity

"The state in which one's race, economic status, zip code, and other forms of **personal and community identities do not define one's privilege or oppression**."

Equity Statement of Purpose



"**Fairness in process and outcomes**, including the allocation of resources based upon need. The factors and processes that determine Equity are dynamic and may change over space and time, as new circumstances (i.e. climate change) and understandings arise."

giequity.org

The state in which, regardless of identity, **all are free from oppression and have equal access** to—and are sufficiently supported to fully participate in—rights, resources, and opportunities.

OPENING REMARKS
Defining Equity

Spatial equity

Describes **where communities are/have been underinvested or disinvested**.

- Where are communities experiencing multiple forms of systemic vulnerability and environmental injustice (e.g., housing, poverty, access to transportation, food, pollution, and/or environmental burdens)?

Identity equity

Describes the multitude of **ways individuals hold racial, gender, ability, age, economic status, and other identities**.

- What are the trends around access to green infrastructure and related investment?
- Are historically marginalized communities centered and included in projects directly affecting their communities?

Process equity

Describes the degree of **access various communities have to public decision-making**.

- Who has access to government leaders?
- Who is consistently engaged or not?
- What different kinds of barriers limit engagement (e.g., access to information, engagement platforms, language accessibility, time, and child care?)

Power equity

Describes who has **influence and control over resources** and considers whether the profiles of these influencers align with who is most marginalized from the benefits.

- Is power over resources, problem-definition, and solution-making shared?
- Who is being considered the “expert”? Can this group can be expanded to be more inclusive?

https://bit.ly/GSIEquityGuide

HOW GI CAN ADVANCE EQUITY
Community Impact View

Reduce communities' exposure to harm

- polluted water
- localized flooding
- severe heat
- poor air quality
- blight that invites crime and communicates worthlessness

Increase opportunities to thrive:

- visible investments that communicate worth
- increased access to naturalized spaces that support health
- process of centering community in the planning, design, and stewardship of green infrastructure increases **process equity** and **power equity**

GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE CAN IMPACT EQUITY BY...

Expanding nature in communities

Usable or visible green spaces create benefits we all need: cleaner air, soil and water, improved mental and physical health, and improved public safety and community relationships.

We can bring desired high quality vegetation, habitat, and biodiversity into communities that need it most.

Increasing resilience to climate hazards

Improving properties

Sparking strategic investments in economic stability

Infrastructure development and maintenance create jobs that can be directed to local workers and owners.

We can site and design projects to support struggling economic corridors and stabilize property values in shrinking communities.

Facilitating community cohesion

Neighborhood assets that reflect the cultural and social networks of the neighborhood can serve as powerful sources of pride, identity, and belonging

We can use our investments to create meaningful public and cultural spaces that help anchor and strengthen the community.

Increasing community participation and power

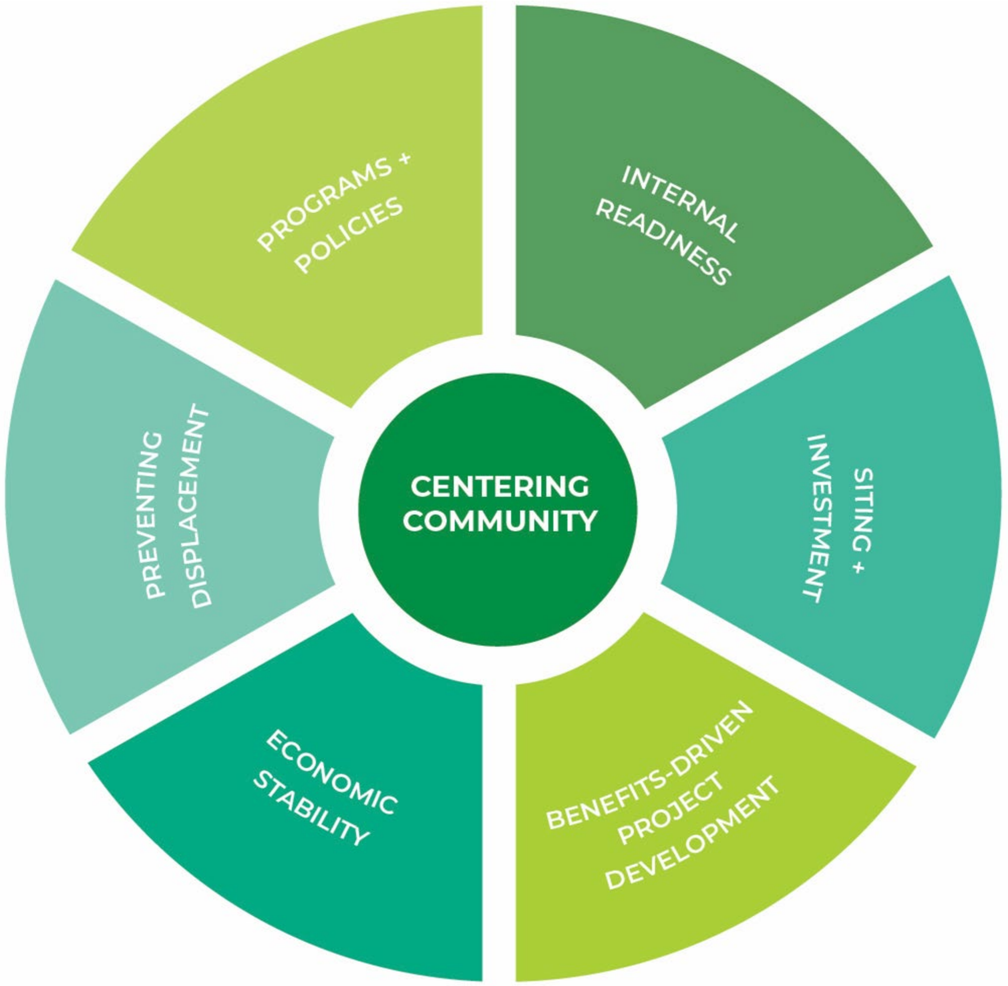
Creating opportunities to build trust and acknowledge past harms

It's fundamentally hard, but important for decision-makers to hear and acknowledge both the mistakes and intentional harms that have led to our current state of inequity.

We can build trust by inviting representative community members into the process of co-creating the green infrastructure projects that will shape their neighborhoods.

GUIDE AT A GLANCE
The seven equity goals

https://bit.ly/GSIEquityGuide



INTERNAL READINESS

Our team understands equity and we are committed and equipped to advance it through our work.

CENTERING COMMUNITY

Community members are essential partners and participants in all green infrastructure planning and development.

https://bit.ly/GSIEquityGuide

Robert Louis Stevenson Stormwater Schoolyard
San Francisco Public Utilities Commission

SITING + INVESTMENT

Our project selection approach and investment levels proactively consider potential to advance equity.

https://bit.ly/GSIEquityGuide

BENEFITS-DRIVEN PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

Our green infrastructure projects are designed, constructed, and maintained to provide lasting community benefit.

ECONOMIC STABILITY

Our green infrastructure procurement, employment, and workforce development practices build economic stability and wealth for underinvested communities.

https://bit.ly/GSIEquityGuide

PREVENTING DISPLACEMENT

Displacement risk is proactively addressed in all of our green infrastructure programs, policies, and projects.

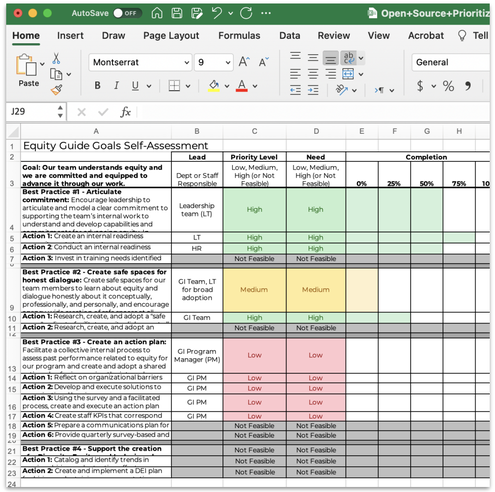
https://bit.ly/GSIEquityGuide

PROGRAMS + POLICIES

Our green infrastructure policies and program design, management, and reporting structures proactively elevate and drive transparency around equity.

GUIDE TOOLS FOR ALL 7 GOALS

Turn insight into action

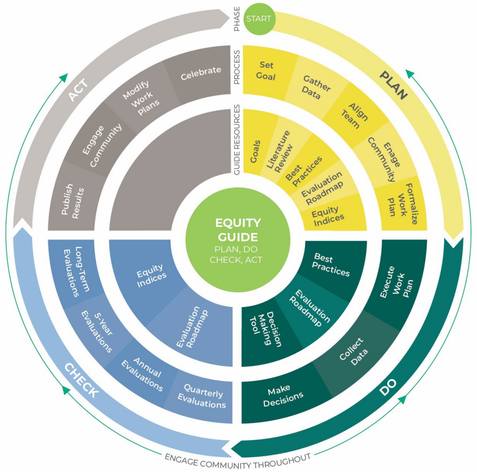


Equity Guide Goals Self-Assessment

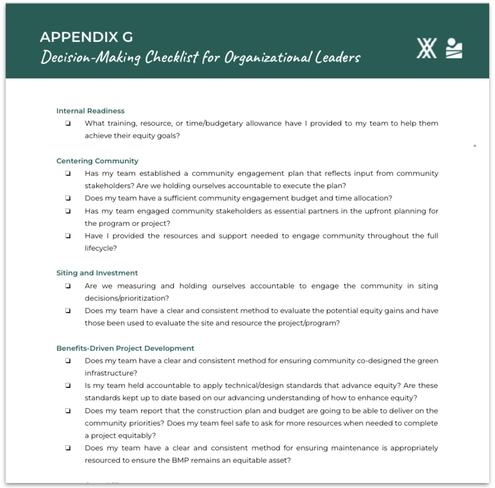
	Lead	Priority Level	Need	Completion				
Goal: Our team understands equity and we are committed and equipped to advance it through our work.	Dept or Staff Responsible	Low, Medium, High (or Not Feasible)	Low, Medium, High (or Not Feasible)	0%	25%	50%	75%	10
Best Practice #1 - Articulate commitment: Encourage leadership to articulate and model a clear commitment to supporting the team's internal work to understand and develop capabilities and	Leadership team (LT)	High	High					
Action 1: Create an internal readiness	LT	High	High					
Action 2: Conduct an internal readiness	HR	High	High					
Action 3: Invest in training needs identified		Not Feasible	Not Feasible					
Best Practice #2 - Create safe spaces for honest dialogue: Create safe spaces for our team members to learn about equity and dialogue honestly about it conceptually, professionally, and personally, and encourage	GI Team, LT for broad adoption	Medium	Medium					
Action 1: Research, create, and adopt a "Safe	GI Team	High	High					
Action 2: Research, create, and adopt an		Not Feasible	Not Feasible					
Best Practice #3 - Create an action plan: Facilitate a collective internal process to assess past performance related to equity for our program and create and adopt a shared	GI Program Manager (PM)	Low	Low					
Action 1: Reflect on organizational barriers	GI PM	Low	Low					
Action 2: Develop and execute solutions to	GI PM	Low	Low					
Action 3: Using the survey and a facilitated process, create and execute an action plan	GI PM	Low	Low					
Action 4: Create staff KPIs that correspond	GI PM	Low	Low					
Action 5: Prepare a communications plan for		Not Feasible	Not Feasible					
Action 6: Provide quarterly survey-based and		Not Feasible	Not Feasible					
Best Practice #4 - Support the creation		Not Feasible	Not Feasible					
Action 1: Catalog and identify trends in		Not Feasible	Not Feasible					
Action 2: Create and implement a DEI plan		Not Feasible	Not Feasible					

CHOOSING GOALS SELF-ASSESSMENT

(Downloadable .xls]



CHARTING A COURSE



APPENDIX G

Decision-Making Checklist for Organizational Leaders

Internal Readiness

- ❑ What training, resource, or time/budgetary allowance have I provided to my team to help them achieve their equity goals?

Centering Community

- ❑ Has my team established a community engagement plan that reflects input from community stakeholders? Are we holding ourselves accountable to execute the plan?
- ❑ Does my team have a sufficient community engagement budget and time allocation?
- ❑ Has my team engaged community stakeholders as essential partners in the upfront planning for the program or project?
- ❑ Have I provided the resources and support needed to engage community throughout the full lifecycle?

Siting and Investment

- ❑ Are we measuring and holding ourselves accountable to engage the community in siting decisions/prioritization?
- ❑ Does my team have a clear and consistent method to evaluate the potential equity gains and have those been used to evaluate the site and resource the project/program?

Benefits-Driven Project Development

- ❑ Does my team have a clear and consistent method for ensuring community co-designed the green infrastructure?
- ❑ Is my team held accountable to apply technical/design standards that advance equity? Are these standards kept up to date based on our advancing understanding of how to enhance equity?
- ❑ Does my team report that the construction plan and budget are going to be able to deliver on the community priorities? Does my team feel safe to ask for more resources when needed to complete a project equitably?
- ❑ Does my team have a clear and consistent method for ensuring maintenance is appropriately resourced to ensure the BMP remains an equitable asset?

DECISION-MAKING CHECKLISTS

https://bit.ly/GSIEquityGuide

GUIDE TOOLS
Charting a course

CENTERING COMMUNITY WORKBOOK
PLAN PHASE / Introduction

Launch the "Plan" phase leading up to the next annual green infrastructure program strategic planning and budgeting cycle. Begin by affirming readiness to take on the Centering Community goal, gathering data, aligning the team, and engaging community.

Gather Guide Resources

GOALS + CHOOSING GOALS TOOL | LITERATURE REVIEW | BEST PRACTICES | EVALUATION ROADMAP | EQUITY INDICES

Review the Process

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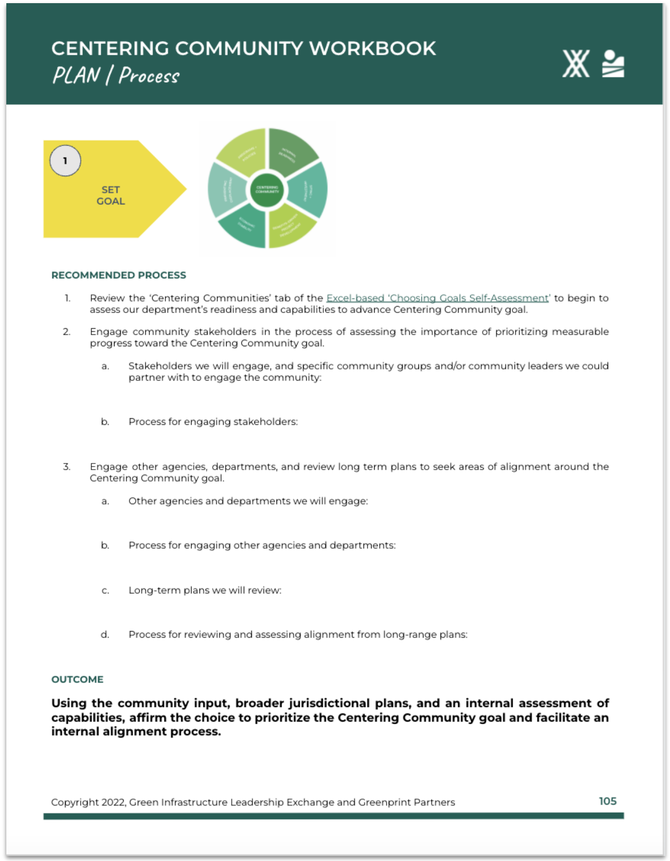

CENTERING COMMUNITY WORKBOOK
PLAN / Process

RECOMMENDED PROCESS

1. Review the 'Centering Communities' tab of the Excel-based 'Choosing Goals Self-Assessment' to begin to assess our department's readiness and capabilities to advance Centering Community goal.
2. Engage community stakeholders in the process of assessing the importance of prioritizing measurable progress toward the Centering Community goal.
   a. Stakeholders we will engage, and specific community groups and/or community leaders we could partner with to engage the community:
   b. Process for engaging stakeholders:
3. Engage other agencies, departments, and review long term plans to seek areas of alignment around the Centering Community goal.
   a. Other agencies and departments we will engage:
   b. Process for engaging other agencies and departments:
   c. Long-term plans we will review:
   d. Process for reviewing and assessing alignment from long-range plans:

OUTCOME

Using the community input, broader jurisdictional plans, and an internal assessment of capabilities, affirm the choice to prioritize the Centering Community goal and facilitate an internal alignment process.

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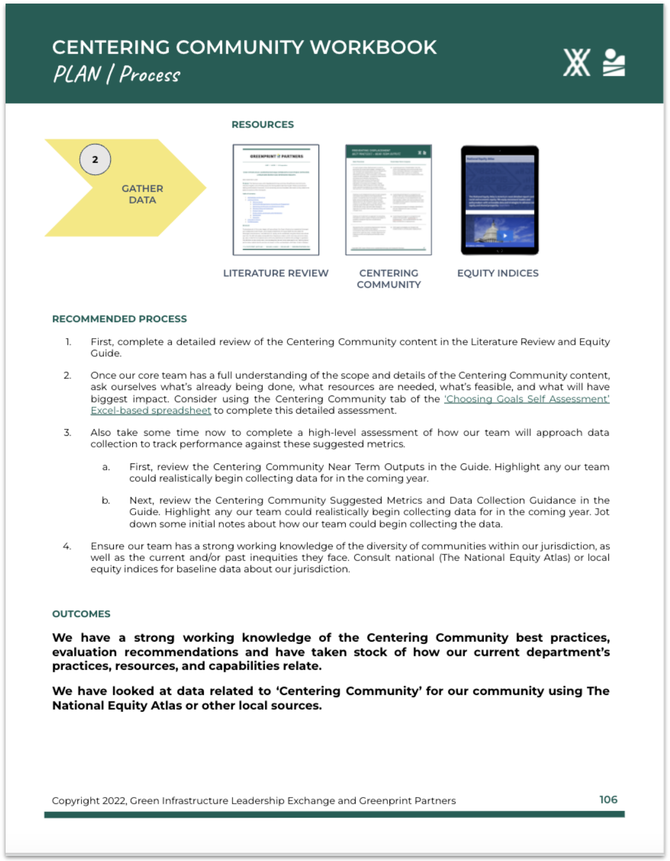

CENTERING COMMUNITY WORKBOOK
PLAN / Process

RESOURCES

LITERATURE REVIEW | CENTERING COMMUNITY | EQUITY INDICES

RECOMMENDED PROCESS

1. First, complete a detailed review of the Centering Community content in the Literature Review and Equity Guide.
2. Once our core team has a full understanding of the scope and details of the Centering Community content, ask ourselves what's already being done, what resources are needed, what's feasible, and what will have biggest impact. Consider using the Centering Community tab of the 'Choosing Goals Self Assessment' Excel-based spreadsheet to complete this detailed assessment.
3. Also take some time now to complete a high-level assessment of how our team will approach data collection to track performance against these suggested metrics.
   a. First, review the Centering Community Near Term Outputs in the Guide. Highlight any our team could realistically begin collecting data for in the coming year.
   b. Next, review the Centering Community Suggested Metrics and Data Collection Guidance in the Guide. Highlight any our team could realistically begin collecting data for in the coming year. Jot down some initial notes about how our team could begin collecting the data.
4. Ensure our team has a strong working knowledge of the diversity of communities within our jurisdiction, as well as the current and/or past inequities they face. Consult national (The National Equity Atlas) or local equity indices for baseline data about our jurisdiction.

OUTCOMES

We have a strong working knowledge of the Centering Community best practices, evaluation recommendations and have taken stock of how our current department's practices, resources, and capabilities relate.

We have looked at data related to 'Centering Community' for our community using The National Equity Atlas or other local sources.

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GUIDE TOOLS

Decision-making checklists

APPENDIX F

Decision-Making Checklist for Program Managers

Internal Readiness

- ❑ Is there any specific training, or resource, or time/budgetary allowance that will help me achieve my equity goals? If so, discuss this with management.

Centering Community

- ❑ Am I following a community engagement plan that reflects input from community stakeholders?
- ❑ Is my community engagement budget and time allocation sufficient?
- ❑ Have I engaged community stakeholders as essential partners in the upfront planning for the program or project?
- ❑ Do I have the resources and support to engage community throughout the full lifecycle?

Siting and Investment

- ❑ Was the community engaged in siting decisions/prioritization?
- ❑ Do I understand the potential equity gains and have those been used to evaluate the site and resource the project/program?

Benefits-Driven Project Development

- ❑ Has community co-designed the green infrastructure?
- ❑ Have I followed technical/design standards that advance equity?
- ❑ Is the construction plan and budget going to be able to deliver on the community priorities?
- ❑ Is the maintenance appropriately resourced to ensure the BMP remains an equitable asset?

Economic Stability

- ❑ Have I maximized opportunities for local/SWMBE firms who can realistically build wealth in the community served to provide any contracted services?
- ❑ What workforce development activities could be integrated into the program/project?

Preventing Displacement

- ❑ Is there real or perceived displacement risk for the project/program?
- ❑ Have I engaged a displacement expert to help me understand the risks and potential mitigation strategies? Have I asked them to participate in a community dialogue?
- ❑ Have I engaged the community in a dialogue about displacement risk mitigation strategies?
- ❑ Have I developed a displacement prevention plan for the project/program?

Programs and Policy

- ❑ Can the community easily access information about the equity efforts and outcomes of our policies and programs?

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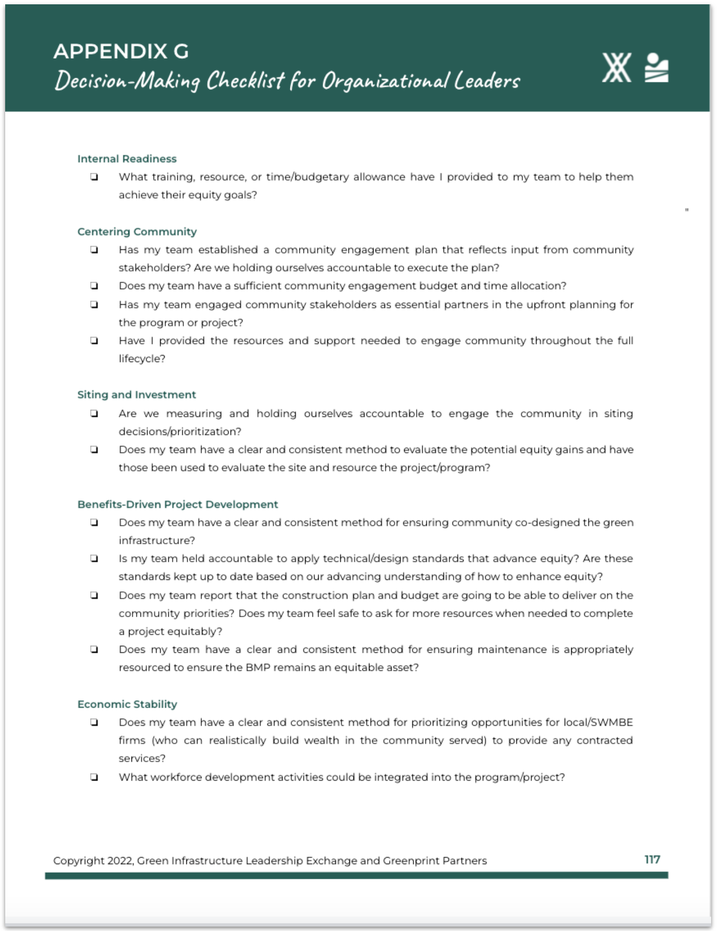
For Program Managers



APPENDIX G

Decision-Making Checklist for Organizational Leaders

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Economic Stability

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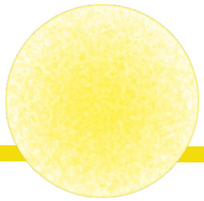
For Organizational Leaders

GUIDE TOOLS
Measuring impact

How to Approach Evaluation

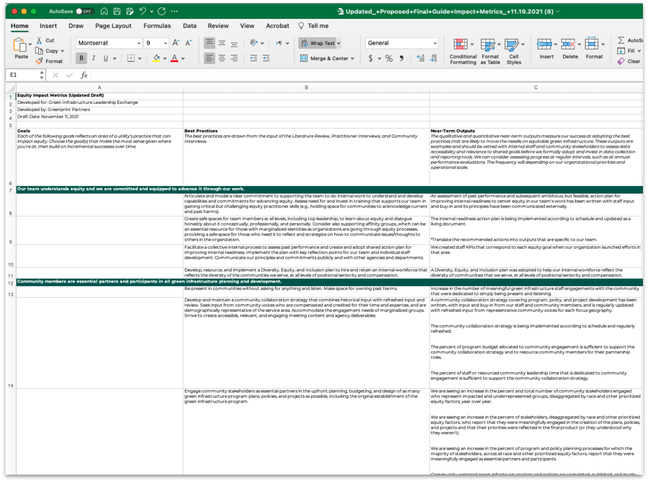
This section prepares program managers to get the most out of their evaluation efforts. Example guidance includes:

- Use the suggested metrics to catalyze conversations that clarify goals.
- Bring communities along to help prioritize and refine the goals, strategies, and metrics that matter most.
- It's better to have a little data that you will use than a lot of data that you won't.
- Gathering data is hard. Develop a feasible plan upfront.



Metrics Spreadsheet

All proposed metrics presented throughout the Evaluation Roadmaps are collected into an Excel-based spreadsheet laid out as a logic model.



Retrospective Project Assessment

This resource helps teams learn from past projects with the following resources:

- A sample community stakeholder pre-survey to collect community input uses recommended metrics from throughout the Guide
- Discussion pre-work recommendations to prepare the team
- Equity assessment discussion guidance to prepare for a productive session
- Discussion facilitation guide workbooks to fill out
- Post-discussion guided reflection to elevate key takeaways to inform growth

St. Louis Case Study: Equity in a GSI Financial Incentives Market

- ❑ Centering Community
- ❑ Siting and Investment
- ❑ Benefits-Driven Project Development

RAINSCAPING LARGE SCALE GRANTS PROGRAM

Metropolitan St. Louis Sewer District (MSD)

MSD's Rainscaping Large Scale Grants Program pays for green stormwater infrastructure projects on private properties within the Grant Program Area.

Combined Sewer Overflow

Natural Drainage Solutions

Each grant helps MSD meet their commitment to invest $120 million in rainscaping projects, with an overall goal of reducing combined sewer overflows to the Mississippi River and River de Peres.

But capacity and financing gaps limit program impact, especially for LMI communities.

WATER UTILITY

Limited staff availability.

Limited landowner outreach capacity and experience.

Lack of economies of scale from many individual projects.

THE KRESGE FOUNDATION

LANDOWNERS IN LOW-INCOME COMMUNITIES

Lack of awareness.

Limited staff capacity and technical expertise for design/build management.

Inability to float project costs.

Certified B Corporation

WOMEN OWNED

PARTNERING WITH ST. LOUIS LANDOWNERS

We specialize in helping nonprofits and public authorities build community-focused green stormwater infrastructure at little or no cost.

MANAGE

We manage the entire process at no cost

We manage the property portfolio assessment, application, and implementation processes

DESIGN

We offer community-driven project designs

Projects are designed to optimize benefits that make the greatest impact on your community

ENGAGE

We help engage your community

We can provide additional tools that educate and engage the community around the benefits of your projects

BUILD

We construct your project to last

We manage engineering, design, and construction to ensure your project is built to thrive

FUND

We manage costs + reimbursements

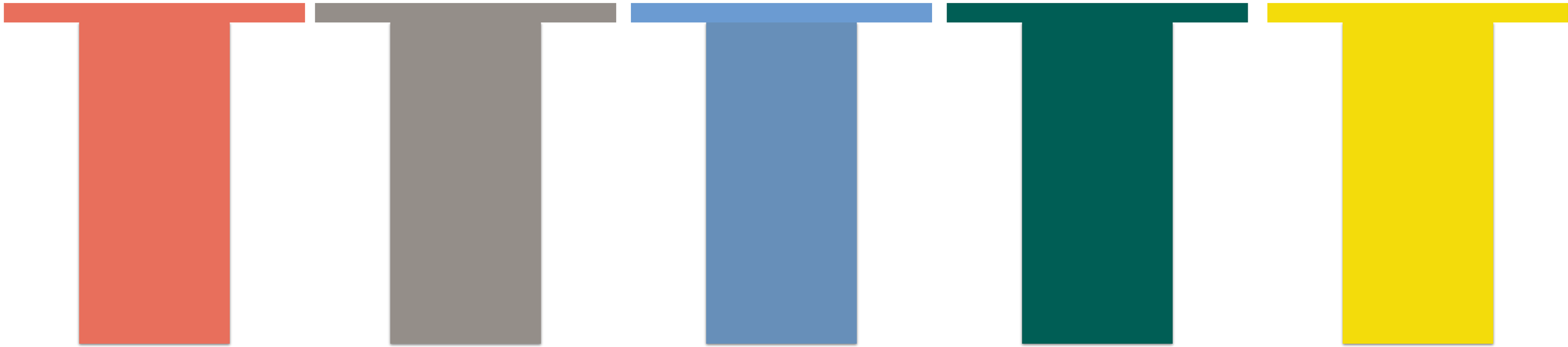
We pay all upfront project costs and manage the reimbursement process on your behalf

~ 18 to 24 Months

Project Name	Market Segment	Greened Acres	Vegetative	Gallons / Year	Low Income	People of Color	Co-Benefits	Status
Project	Healthcare	2.6	97%	887,960	56%	77%	Beautification, Social cohesion, Stress reduction	Design
Project	Non-profit	5.5	97%	667,823	69%	96%	Beautification, Safety, Economic development	Design
Project	Aff. Housing	2.4	100%	833,435	55%	69%	Beautification Social cohesion, Health	Design
Project	School	2.1	98%	915,675	64%	93%	Student performance, Beatification, Mental health	Design
Project	Non-profit	0.8	64%	243,925	49%	69%	Safety, Investment, Pride	Design
Project	Non-profit	0.4	55%	263,247	67%	74%	Safety, Calming traffic, Economic development	Design
Project	Non-profit	0.9	76%	425,148	46%	54%	Safety, Mental health, Health	Design
Intersect Arts	Faith-based	1.5	100%	421,797	62%	68%	Stress reduction, Social cohesion, Health	Construction
Hopewell	Faith-based	4.8	100%	1,500,000	44%	66%	Beautification, Pride, Social cohesion	Construction
Central Baptist	Faith-based	2.3	100%	1,026,000	57%	72%	Resiliency, Sustainability, Education	Construction
Catholic Charities	Non-profit	4.1	97%	560,000	42%	55%	Beautification, Mental health, Safety	Establishment
Wells-Goodfellow	Non-profit	6.91	100%	2400000	63%	98%	Resiliency, Sustainability, Education	Maintenance
TOTALS AVERAGES		**34+**	**90%**	**10M+**	**100% of projects are in income qualified census tracts and communities of color.**			

The 5 pillars of

COMMUNITY ACTIVATION



Trust Building

Knowledge sharing

Authorship

Celebrations

Storytelling

THANK YOU
Let's keep talking!

the green infrastructure leadership exchange

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https://bit.ly/GSIEquityGuide