

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE CONSIDERATIONS AND PROJECT INTEGRATION

USACE, Galveston District (SWG)

Virtual Winter 2022 Portfolio Review and Stakeholder Partnering
Forum (SPF)

February 24, 2022

Gloria Vaughn

PRESIDENT JOE BIDEN

“We’re standing at an inflection point in world history. Cleaner air for our children. More bountiful oceans. Healthier forests and ecosystems for our planet. We can create an environment that raises the standard of living around the world. And this is a moral imperative, but this is also an economic imperative.”

Statement made at 26th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26)

MICHAEL
REGAN, EPA
ADMINISTRATOR

“Our responsibilities are to protect the health and environment of all Americans, including those historically marginalized, overburdened, underserved, and living with the legacy of structural racism.....To succeed, we must infuse equity and environmental justice principles and priorities into all EPA practices, policies, and programs.

“While EPA has advanced environmental justice initiatives in the past, we have much more work to do. Too many communities whose residents are predominantly of color, Indigenous, or low-income continue to suffer from disproportionately high pollution levels and the resulting adverse health and environmental impacts. We must do better.”

EXECUTIVE ORDER 12898

E.O. 12898 directs federal agencies to:

Address Environmental Justice in minority populations and low-income populations

Develop a strategy for implementing environmental justice.

Achieve environmental justice as part of their mission

What is Fair Treatment?

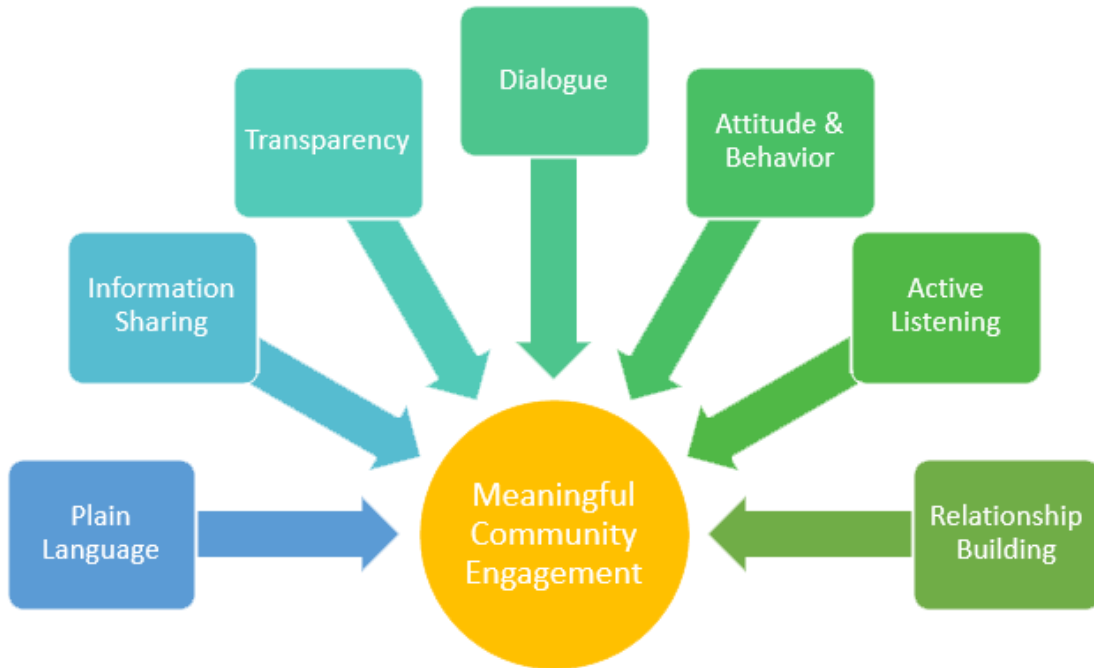
Fair treatment means no group of people should bear a disproportionate share of the negative environmental consequences resulting from industrial, governmental and commercial operations or policies.

Communities with EJ Concerns: Common or Similar Traits

- Low-income
- Minority or people of color
- Indigenous or Native Americans
- Special populations, such as immigrants, farmworkers, etc.
- Proximity and exposure to pollution sources (mobile or point)
- Health impacts and disparities
- Language barriers
- Lack of trust
- Unable to access traditional communication channels
- Multiple and/or cumulative adverse, disproportionate environmental impacts
- Social vulnerability
- Psycho-social stress
- Health and wellness vulnerabilities
- Vulnerable populations of children and elderly
- Lack of meaningful participation
- Lack of political power and understanding
- Limited capacity to access technical and legal resources



What is Meaningful Involvement? (Community Engagement)



- **Meaningful involvement** means:

- People have an opportunity to participate in decisions about activities that may affect their environment and/or health
- The public's contribution can influence the regulatory agency's decision
- Community concerns will be considered in the decision-making process
- Decision makers will seek out and facilitate the involvement of those potentially affected

Tools for Different Levels of Community Engagement (CE)

Low Engagement

- Website updates
- Social Media Updates
- Press Releases
- Only notifying political officials

Medium Engagement

- Porch-side chats
- Newsletters
- Fact Sheets or Flyers
- Yard Signs at Intersections
- Advertising Meetings and Events
- Email blasts
- Video or tele-conferences
- Webinars
- Radio PSAs or Shows
- Conference calls, Webinars, Email
- Public Comments *
- Public Hearing *
- Public Meeting *
- One-on-One Appointments

High Engagement

- Advisory Groups
- Community listening sessions
- Hotlines
- Press conferences and telebriefings
- Community Forums or Roundtables or Town Halls

- **Engaging communities means more than just pushing messages out. It means listening and reacting to community concerns and needs, ensuring reach to isolated or hard-to-access community segments, and giving them active roles in the response.**

* A key tool is the “Making Your Voice Heard” (Environmental Law Institute) brochures, which State/EPA agencies have shared with communities for step-by-step tips for making excellent [written comments](#) and [verbal comments](#)

Common Mistakes

Lack of opportunity for input in decisions

- Not providing those affected with opportunities for input

Inadequate accessibility

- Decision-making done only internally
- Not providing information openly and allow for questions

Not communicating clearly

- Lack of Plain Language
- Using jargon
- Not considering literacy

Problems with timeliness

- Waiting for ALL facts before releasing ANY information

Lack of empathy in the response

- Officials neglect to understand real human experiences

Source: CERC Psychology of a Crisis, CDC, 2014 and 2019 version and CE manual

TOOLS

EJScreen 2.0



Climate and Economic Justice Screening
Tool (CJEST)

EO 14008

Justice 40



EJSCREEN UPDATE

EJScreen Uses

The tool may help users identify areas with:

People of color and/or low-income populations

Potential environmental quality issues

A combination of environmental and demographic indicators that is greater than usual

Other factors that may be of interest

New EJSCREEN 2.0 Features

Version 2.0 with more intuitive interface

Downloadable data at the tract level

New environmental and demographic indicators, and a new EJ index

Fact sheets on the various indicators and indexes

New health, climate, and critical service map layers

NEW EJSCREEN 2022 DATASETS

Indicator	Definition
Unemployment	Without a job during the reporting period
Life Expectancy	Average life expectancy data (tract level)
Heart Disease	Heart disease prevalence among adults aged 18 years or older (tract level)
Asthma	Asthma prevalence among adults aged 18 or older (tract level)
Wildfire Hazard Potential	An index that quantifies "the relative potential for wildfire"
Drought	Changes in drought conditions from 1900 to 2020
Food Desert	Low income and low access (1 mile for urban areas and 10 miles for rural areas)
Medically Underserved	Areas or populations designated as having too few primary care providers, high infant mortality, high poverty or a high elderly population
Broadband Internet	Household with broadband internet access
Underground Storage Tanks	Underground storage tank (UST) and leaking UST (LUST) data



Environmental indicators are mostly screening-level proxies for actual exposure or risk



Indicators vary in vintage



EJSCREEN does not cover all environmental or EJ issues



Census data has limitations and can obscure small communities



Results should be verified on the ground when possible (i.e., leverage use of aerial maps too).



EJSCREEN does not identify EJ communities

*It helps identify areas that may have **higher pollution burdens** and **vulnerable populations** present.

CAVEATS & LIMITATIONS

CLIMATE AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE SCREENING TOOL (CJEST)

Beta version of the CJEST released February 18, 2022, with a 60-day public comment period

<https://screeningtool.geoplatform.gov/en/>

Identify underserved, disadvantaged, marginalized, and overburdened communities to ensure that they receive 40% percent of the overall benefits from Federal programs.

Includes factors such as low income, proximity to hazardous waste sites or facilities using or storing extremely hazardous substances, climate change factors, energy cost burdens, air pollution levels, wastewater discharge levels, lead-paint in housing and housing value, health burdens, education levels, and unemployment rates

TAKE AWAYS

EJ is not something intangible and did not happen by accident – it is everyone's responsibility to seek equity and justice

If you wait until you need to engage communities, then you are already too late

The impacted community might not be where you think it is

EJ practice and requirements are only going to become more defined and rigorous – there is every reason to start changing business practices right now

Communities have the right to influence what happens in their communities, and some industries will never be desirable

Utilities must be real partners, not just neighbors – support local health, economics, environmental quality, education

There are tools, people, and practices to help you on your Justice Journey

Thank you to the Region 6 Environmental Justice Team for the work they do in advancing Environmental Justice:

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