
GC3 EQUITY Lens

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What is equity?

Equity starts by recognizing that there are disparities and inequities in living conditions. Some communities lack resources, lack political power, lack access to higher education, or have poor health outcomes. These examples place low-income communities and many communities of color at greater risk while limiting their capacity to adapt.

Equity based Planning takes these disparities into account.

Inclusion is Equity based

Moreover, equity is also about communities having a meaningful opportunity to participate, and requires that community perspectives and viewpoints be considered into adaptation and mitigation decision-making and planning.

Equity and Climate Action

Equity as it relates to climate action, is the assurance of environmental justice, and equitable access to resources, including basic necessities such as safe shelter, water, food, heat, and light, as well as opportunities for safe employment to support oneself and one's family, equal access to community supports such as public education, public transportation, healthcare and mental health care.

Why does equity matter?

Climate change poses the greatest threat to those communities that are the least responsible – particularly low-income populations and communities of color. These communities already experience disparities in health outcomes, inequities in living conditions, and lack of political power. Such disparities place low-income communities and many communities of color at greater risk and limit capacity to adapt.

Why does equity matter? (cont.)

Conversely, those who have contributed the most to climate change are better positioned to protect themselves from its impacts. These inequities are the result of historical injustices rooted in race, class, and political representation, here in Connecticut and across the country.

The Urgency of Climate Change

As the effects of climate change mount, so does the urgency of addressing this challenge.

If equity isn't taken into account in the planning process, not only do actions risk further exacerbating inequalities, but we will lose the good ideas and important perspectives of the people whose lives and futures are most on the line.

How does equity relate to climate change?

The concept of equity has a number of components that are related to climate change adaptation and mitigation:

- We are concerned about the distribution of Benefits and Burdens (*distributive equity*).
- Process and the need to ensure that the GC3 provide meaningful opportunities to participate and to have perspectives heard and considered (*procedural equity*).
- The fact that some communities are more vulnerable to the impacts of climate change (*contextual equity*).
- Concerns that mitigation and adaptation strategies must aim to achieve racial and economic justice (*corrective equity*).

How does equity relate to climate change? (cont.)

<i>Component</i>	<i>Description</i>
Distributive Equity (or Equitable Outcomes)	Equitable mitigation and adaptation strategies places the most vulnerable communities at the forefront. Such strategies would provide our most vulnerable communities with work opportunities and quality-of-life benefits.
Procedural Equity (or Equitable Planning)	Equitable mitigation and adaptation strategies must be planned in partnership with low-income communities and communities of color.
Contextual Equity	Equitable mitigation and adaptation strategies take into account that low-income communities and communities of color are often more vulnerable to climate change, and the development of mitigation and adaptation strategies must take into account the special mapping of these vulnerabilities.
Corrective Equity	Equitable mitigation and adaptation strategies would provide communities with clear processes to hold the state accountable to its commitments to pursue equity.

Examples of how equity relates to climate change:

- **Energy:** An equitable approach to energy equity would include larger investments in expansion of energy demand reduction: such as insulation upgrades for LMI communities, and efficiency upgrades to keep energy costs affordable and lower air pollution. Solar expansion would include community solar projects that benefit all residents, including residents of low-income housing and public housing vs only those who own homes.
- **Green Industry:** An equitable approach to green industry development would include a workforce development component, to strengthen the capacity of low-income communities and communities of color to participate.

Examples: (cont.)

- **Tax Policy:** It would be wrong to allocate tax funds or ratepayer resources to high income communities, or businesses, while denying access to low income communities and minority owned businesses.
- **Indoor Health Barriers:** It would be wrong to deny supports to remove indoor health barriers from low and moderate income communities, while affording supports to high income communities. (Income Eligible crumbling foundation supports vs lead and asbestos-like material removal supports.)
- **Transportation:** It would be wrong to invest in the expansion of personal electric vehicle (EV) infrastructure which can only be purchased by affluent households, vs expanded public transportation which is accessible to all communities and also lowers carbon emissions.

The areas of focus should include necessary resources or basic necessities for all humans:

- Safe Air
- Safe Water
- Safe Food
- Safe Shelter
- Affordable Access to energy for heating and lighting
- Opportunity to earn a decent living wage
- Equal Access to education for our youth
- Workforce training, adult education, continued education such as college or secondary education options
- Access to safe accessible transportation
- Many of our people don't have all of their basic needs met in our state

Some of the key principles that flow from an equity lens include:

- The GC3 process – including all aspects of the process -- must be inclusive, offering opportunities for meaningful participation
- The goals of any climate action plan just include racial and economic justice
- The benefits of a transition must be distributed equitably
- No community should be left behind: any plan must include pollution reduction in legacy communities, benefits at the community level, access to affordable energy, health monitoring, infrastructure that can withstand floods and storms, accessible housing for people who have been displaced, maintaining and protecting water resources
- Plans must assess cumulative impacts in order to understand which communities are most vulnerable to climate change

Distributive Equity:

Placing the most vulnerable communities at the forefront; ensuring that the distribution of the benefits and burdens of climate change mitigation and adaptation are equitably distributed.

Equitable sharing of environmental impacts by a community can be achieved by ensuring no one subset of people or socio-economic group bears a heavier burden. Equitable environmental policies and laws strive to ensure that no one group of community bears a larger, unfair share of harmful effects from pollution of environmental hazards. These policies and laws should aspire to offer support to more vulnerable communities, as measured by the social determinants of health, and ensure that they do not accidentally bare an unfair share if the cost of the work which needs to occur.

Connecticut's climate mitigation and adaptation strategies should ensure that benefits and burdens are not unfairly allocated and focus on benefitting low-income communities of color, Native American tribes and nations, and low-income populations in rural Connecticut, among other vulnerable communities.

Procedural Equity:

Planning in partnership with low-income communities and communities of color.

An equitable approach to climate change mitigation and adaptation requires the government to meaningfully partner with low-income communities and communities of color. The state must co-produce its plans with those communities. Otherwise, its plans will not be equitable. Far too often, low-income communities and communities of color are not at the table to advocate for their needs.

Unfortunately, and historically most decisions are made by affluent communities and therefore result in resources being allocated to those affluent communities or affiliated communities.

As other jurisdictions have found, partnership with communities has led to specific mitigation and adaptation strategies that work.

Contextual Equity:

Assessing the vulnerabilities of communities across Connecticut to climate change, due to the legacy of racial and income inequality and other factors.

Connecticut has an unfortunate expanding affordability gap. When it comes to energy and transportation, for example, the state's low-income population is stuck in a state of disparity with over 400,000 households unable to pay their electric bills and keep their heat on.

It is critical to identify the special patterns of vulnerability to climate change stresses to provide guidance on strategies that will work and on indicators that can be used to measure vulnerability and performance over time.

Low-income communities are busy struggling to survive and often work more than one job, or have other pressing responsibilities. Many low-income families are dealing with serious medical issues, housing displacement, or lack of safe affordable housing, and are impacted by general lack of resources.

Corrective Equity:

Providing communities with clear processes to hold the state accountable to its commitments to pursue equity.

Because vulnerable communities often lack traditional forms of economic and political clout, the state must create processes that allow those communities to hold public leaders accountable. Equitable climate mitigation and adaptation strategies would consist of clear processes that (a) allow the state to check on its progress towards its goals and (b) allow communities to hold the state accountable.

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Questions?

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