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Promising EJ Practices

Evans Student Consulting Lab

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Project prepared for the WA Department of Ecology



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Presentation Objectives

- Provide project overview
- Present emerging themes
- Discuss highlighted recommendations
- Share next steps
- Receive feedback

Project Focus

Identify & recommend promising practices for integrating EJ into Ecology's work at two levels:

- 1) Overarching departmental recommendations
- 2) Recommendations specific to select agency functions:
 - Grantmaking
 - Inspections & compliance
 - Permitting
 - Policy review
 - Rulemaking

Environmental justice is the **fair treatment** and **meaningful involvement** of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income, with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies.

U.S. EPA DEFINITION

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Communities with EJ Concerns

May include communities of color, low income, rural, urban, veteran, tribal, indigenous, and unhoused populations.



Our Approach

- Reviewed publicly available EJ & equity work, including frameworks, toolkits, and tools
- Reviewed academic and historical literature
- Conducted over 30 semi-structured interviews with individuals leading EJ work

Key Emerging Themes

1

Sustained, visible, and demonstrated investment in and prioritization of EJ from department leadership paves a path for EJ work.

2

Measuring progress on EJ requires intentionality about the purpose, limitations, and burdens of evidence collection.

3

Toolkits are imperfect if used as a sole resource for EJ work, but used in concert with other efforts they can be valuable stepping stones.

Theme 1: Sustained, visible, and demonstrated investment in and prioritization of EJ from department leadership paves a path for EJ work.

Attributes associated with success:

- Agency leadership modeling
- Clear expectations and accountability
- Sustained visibility of EJ as a priority

Theme 2: Measuring progress on EJ requires intentionality about the purpose, limitations, and burdens of evidence collection.

Attributes associated with success:

- Recognizing gaps in data
- Leaning on more than quantitative data
- Addressing barriers to community engagement
- Sharing data and lessons learned across agencies

Theme 3: Toolkits are imperfect if used as a sole resource for EJ work, but when used in concert with other efforts they can be valuable stepping stones.

Attributes associated with success:

- Toolkits and frameworks used together
- Adaptation to agency functions and context
- Tracking usage and measuring impact



Highlighted Recommendations

1

Build a community
of practice around
EJ work.

2

Use equity/EJ tools
carefully and
intentionally;
measure their use
and impact.

Recommendation 1: Build a community of practice around EJ work.

- Highlight and reinforce importance of EJ work
- Emphasize shared responsibility
- Reflect EJ focus in existing agency infrastructure
- Invest in sustained education about equity and EJ
- Strengthen connections with communities

Recommendation 2: Use equity/EJ tools carefully & intentionally; measure their use and impact.

Frameworks & Toolkits

- Pick a framework and a toolkit
- Tailor tools to specific agency functions
- Evaluate and adapt the process frequently
- Measure how their use affects policy outcomes

Mapping Tools

- Use the EHD Map as a screening tool
- Use as an accountability mechanism for measuring success

Next Steps



May

RECEIVE
INPUT



May

INCORPORATE
INPUT



June

FINALIZE
REPORT

Questions?

Please email millie.piazza@ecy.wa.gov
for additional questions or feedback.