

Air and Climate Public Advisory Committee

Environmental Justice Toolkit

Update Proposal

Proposed Project

Provide for sustainable institutional capacity in environmental, climate, and energy justice to inform the education, outreach, and policy work of the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments' (COG) Metropolitan Washington Air Quality Committee (MWAQC); Climate, Energy and Environment Committee (CEEPC); and their support staff and technical committees. This work will also serve local jurisdictions and COG stakeholders in providing a resource to incorporate inclusion of equity in all air quality, energy and climate planning, and policymaking, and implementation of policy. The project is part of the Air and Climate Public Advisory Committee's (ACPAC's) mission, which includes, among other duties, assisting in reviewing the consequences of air quality policies and programs.

Background

MWAQC conducts interstate air quality attainment and maintenance planning for the metropolitan Washington region on behalf of the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia. It is charged with developing regional air quality plans and maintenance plans for criteria pollutant controls suitable for incorporation into State Implementation Plans (SIPs). MWAQC's state and local members have regulatory authority over air quality issues including issuing air discharge permits in accordance with federal and state clean air acts and attendant regulations.

CEEPC develops and maintains policies, plans, agreements, and programs concerning climate change and energy. CEEPC develops action reports, policy statements, recommendations, and proposals to advance its mission.

ACPAC is an advisory committee comprising members of the public from COG jurisdictions. ACPAC is charged with advising MWAQC and CEEPC on air quality, climate, and energy issues. In 2017, ACPAC members became more actively involved in COG advocacy and outreach efforts and developed the 2017 Environmental Justice (EJ) Toolkit. The 2017 EJ Toolkit included 9 approaches intended to build EJ capacity to assist COG staff, local jurisdictions, and COG stakeholders to set the direction for inclusion of equity in all air quality, energy, and climate planning and policy decisions. As environmental, climate, and energy justice issues continue to be local, national, and global imperatives, these areas remain of great interest to the Committee.

Updated Scope

Environmental, climate, and energy justice are a related set of concepts that refer to 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, climate, and energy laws, regulations, and policies, respectively. The goals of environmental, climate, and energy justice are to ensure that everyone enjoys the same degree of protection from environmental and health hazards and to ensure equal access to the decision-making process to have a healthy environment in which to live, learn, and work.

Since publication of the 2017 EJ Toolkit, there has been additional scholarship, research, and implementation surrounding EJ principles, as well as climate and energy justice principles. An update to the 2017 EJ Toolkit seeks to incorporate the latest developments in these areas and improve the utility and relevance of the document with the addition of further in-practice modeling and recommendations. ACPAC's work should include a review of the existing resources and materials to identify their strengths and weaknesses and incorporate available best practices to the Toolkit.

Decisions that have an impact on environmental, climate, and energy justice and democracy issues are made at the local, state, regional and national level. Therefore, educational efforts focused on air, climate and energy issues must recognize the context in which these actions are taken related to broader development related decision making.

MWAQC, CEEPC, and its members have various levels of authority to address these issues in decision making. Therefore, any educational efforts must reflect an understanding of these requirements, and limits. What is currently being conducted at the state and local environmental and transportation agencies – and in other air quality, energy, and climate work at COG – must be part of ACPAC's examination of environmental, climate, and energy justice and democracy issues.

Updated Objective

ACPAC recommends that the Committee, in collaboration with COG Staff, MWAQC, the MWAQC Technical Advisory Committee (MWAQC-TAC), CEEPC, and the Built Environment and Energy Advisory Committee (BEEAC) develop an update to the 2017 EJ Toolkit. A revision and expansion of the 2017 Environmental Justice Toolkit would provide an updated resource for MWCOC members and stakeholders concerning these pertinent issues.

ACPAC brings this proposal to MWAQC and CEEPC for consideration. The update would build on the 2017 EJ Toolkit – taking into consideration existing environmental, climate, and energy justice resources, including those developed since publication of the 2017 EJ Toolkit, to refine and expand upon the approaches identified in the existing Toolkit. The update is expected to include regional and nationwide best practices, case studies, and other relevant information or examples, as appropriate. Information and provisions in the Toolkit update would include the following:

- Principles and Definitions

- EJ Authorities and Practices of COG, MWAQC and CEEPC Members
- EJ Metrics
- Sources: Data and Tools
- Policy Recommendations
- Financial and Non-Financial Resources

COG staff would facilitate educational efforts for ACPAC, MWAQC, MWAQC-TAC, CEEPC, and BEEAC to help develop and share the toolkit update and build institutional capacity to further incorporate environmental, climate and energy justice into their work. This might include online materials, face-to-face training sessions, and/or webinars.

Key Stakeholders

Internal Committee Review

- ACPAC
- MWAQC and MWAQC-TAC
- CEEPC
- BEEAC
- Chief Equity Officers Committee

Potential External

- Regional Grassroots Organizations in DC, MD, and VA
 - [Empower DC](#) - builds campaigns to address key issues that directly-impact low- and moderate-income DC residents
 - [WE ACT DC](#) – advocates for people of color and/or low-income residents for the of sound and fair environmental health and protection policies and practices
 - [Fairfax NAACP, VA](#) – longstanding organization with a history of advocacy
 - [Montgomery County NAACP, MD](#) - longstanding organization with a history of advocacy
- [Energy Equity Project](#) – a framework for measuring equity across energy efficiency and clean energy programs
- [Indigenous Environmental Network](#)
- Other external organizations and advocacy groups

Next Steps and Proposed Timeline

- February 2023 – March 2023: Obtain approval from CEEPC and MWAQC to move forward with development of the EJ toolkit update.
- April 2023 – Spring/Fall 2024: Develop the toolkit update and educational material through a multi-step process involving review and consideration by internal committees and identified external organizations and advocacy groups.

For MWAQC Approval – February 22, 2023

- Conduct a review of existing resources, materials, toolkits, and best practices from public, private, and academic sources.
- Identify topics relevant to CEEPC and MWAQC to be addressed in the update and educational program.
- Identify how environment and climate is currently being addressed in decision making at CEEPC and MWAQC and by their members.
- Develop an outline for the toolkit update and educational plan for COG staff, BEEAC, MWAQC-TAC review and input.
- Work with COG staff to develop the toolkit update and education materials.
- Present toolkit update and educational materials to MWAQC TAC and BEEAC, for a recommendation whether to present to MWAQC and CEEPC.
- Present to MWAQC and CEEPC for review.
- Work with COG ACPAC staff to present the toolkit update and enhance the EJ knowledge and capacity of MWAQC, MWAQC-TAC, CEEPC, and BEEAC members and COG staff.