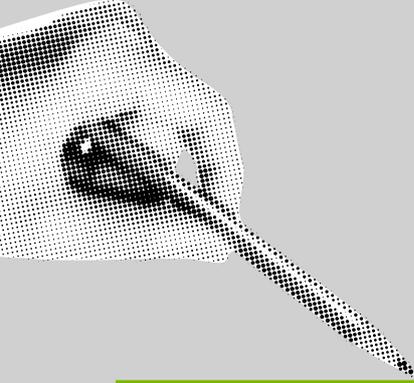


The People's JUSTICE40+ Community Benefit Playbook



Step-by-Step Guide to Creating a Community Benefit Plan





Step-by-Step Guide to Creating a Community Benefit Plan

THE GOAL: CENTERING “COMMUNITY” IN COMMUNITY BENEFITS

The goal of a Community Benefit Plan is straightforward—to ensure that government funded projects deliver direct, clear, and measurable benefits to the community. Examples of government funded projects include those funded through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), and any publicly subsidized private development project. The rationale is that public taxes should produce public benefits. Procedural equity—inclusive, accessible, and authentic community engagement and representation in the decision making process—will be necessary for that to happen. Communities must be directly involved in the process of defining what a community benefit looks like for them or for a particular sector of the economy.

WHAT IS A COMMUNITY BENEFIT PLAN?

A Community Benefit Plan *is not* a Community Benefit Agreement (CBA) or a Community Workforce Agreement (CWA); however, they can include provisions of a CBA or a CWA. A Community Benefit Plan is different. It is a plan that is:

- led and developed by the community (as opposed to a government or developer-defined CWA or CBA);
- rooted in equity principles and values;
- focused on the needs and priorities of under-resourced communities;
- inclusive of labor and economic inclusion standards that are typically codified in a CWA or a project labor agreement; and
- centered in high-road strategies that emphasize shared prosperity, environmental sustainability, and deep democracy by prioritizing family sustaining wages, union jobs and business opportunities for the local community, and racial equity and inclusion while building climate resilient communities.

Further, a Community Benefit Plan can be:

- a process and tool to build or deepen a coalition of multiple stakeholders (such as community, labor, and business) around this unprecedented opportunity to rebuild America with an equity and justice lens;
- a strategy document to advocate for, capture, and track government funding and to hold federal, state, and local agencies accountable to spending 40% or more of their public grants and contracts on community priorities in compliance with the Justice40 Initiative; and
- a holistic and comprehensive community plan or a sector-specific plan that targets community priorities around clean energy, water, or public transportation.

HOW TO DEVELOP YOUR COMMUNITY BENEFIT PLAN

In many ways, this is a classic organizing project. It requires bringing people together to share a vision, assess needs, and define priorities and strategies. The end game is not just a plan, or even a campaign for money and projects. The core objective is more enduring—to create a stronger, more cohesive civic infrastructure that will withstand the test of changing political seasons and will work to address the long-term racialized structural issues that reproduce income, wealth, health, and other disparities. This is the missing piece in a Justice40 strategy in which the vested interests of different communities are not vetted and resolved.

Before starting, consider these questions and approaches:

- How do you define community? Is it a specific geographic community? Is it a specific sector within the local community? Is it population-specific (such as immigrant communities or youth)? Refer to the table below (Types of Community Benefit Plans) to examine the pros and cons to each approach.
- The plan you create should be intersectional, focusing on environmental, economic, and racial equity outcomes. For example, if your local government has funding for clean water infrastructure, how do you ensure it produces good jobs and business opportunities and that low-income and Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) communities are full beneficiaries? This requires a multi-stakeholder table of community members, labor organizations, community-based organizations, and workforce and business development organizations.
- Don't reinvent the wheel or duplicate efforts. If a stakeholder table that is community-led and justice-centered already exists—build on that platform.



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TYPES OF COMMUNITY BENEFIT PLANS

PLAN TYPES	COMMUNITY BENEFIT PLAN GOALS	COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS	POTENTIAL POSITIVES	POTENTIAL NEGATIVES
Comprehensive Community Benefit Plan	Community Benefit Plan seeks funding for a full range of community priorities, such as affordable housing, economic opportunities, and mitigating environmental harms.	Multi-stakeholder table of local community leaders and organizations, such as local businesses, churches, labor organizations, civic associations, community-based organizations, or anchor institutions (hospital systems and institutions of higher education).	An established community plan that you can build on may already exist.	<p>Funding opportunities are often siloed.</p> <p>Federal programs can be very prescriptive and lack flexibility.</p> <p>Federal programs tend to be sector specific.</p> <p>Funding a community-wide plan will rely on ingenuity and capacity of government agencies willing to work with communities to identify opportunities to fully fund community priorities.</p> <p>A community-wide organizing and planning process may take longer due to varied community needs, interests, and stakeholders.</p>
Sector Specific Community Benefit Plan	Community Benefit Plan seeks funding to address a specific community priority, such as clean water infrastructure or reducing air pollution.	Stakeholders working in a particular sector, such as community-based organizations that target specific community priorities, labor organizations, industry leaders, and sector specific national nonprofits that can provide additional capacity and resources.	<p>Community priorities can be more aligned with state or federal programs and funding opportunities. This makes tracking program and funding opportunities a little easier.</p> <p>Focusing on a specific sector allows you to focus on who has decision making capabilities, the decision making process, and the agencies involved in implementing decisions.</p> <p>Organizing by sector can be less complicated and time consuming.</p>	<p>Focusing on one sector can leave many community priorities on the table.</p> <p>This incentivizes funding silos.</p> <p>May require multiple Community Benefit Plans and planning processes to cover all of the available funding streams.</p> <p>Organizing this way may not leverage the full capabilities and resources of government agencies or push them to operate differently.</p> <p>This approach does not provide for intersectional planning, development, and implementation.</p>
Population Specific Community Benefit Plan	This Community Benefit Plan seeks funding to address the unique needs and priorities of a specific population group, such as youth or farmworkers.	Representatives from the target population and those who provide services to the targeted population.	Clearly defined benefits for individuals.	While addressing the unique population needs, those needs may not align with available funding.

ASSET MAPPING¹



- **Center the community as experts.** Make sure you use an “abundance frame” when discussing community assets. Many technical and out-of-touch policy solutions rely on ivory tower research to make a case about what’s best and or most needed for impacted communities. Participatory research requires those at the frontlines to be in the driver’s seat as experts of their own experiences, which helps inform both the challenges and potential solutions. It is important to avoid the frame that communities must compete over a “scarcity of resources.” Rather, conduct the community assessment using the frame of “we have an abundance of gifts.”
- **Identify the community’s strengths and assets.** Messages of scarcity and deficit are part of the structural violence caused by an unequal and unjust distribution of power. Part of the assessment process must reframe and ground community members in a different and often erased reality. By naming the skills, resources, land, ideas, knowledge, experience, and stories held and stewarded by the community, we not only start from a place of assets and strength, but we also begin to shift the false narrative that the communities most impacted have little or nothing to offer. Starting from a place of asset, you must also identify the growth areas and gaps that the community (and external partners) need to fill to be successful. A SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) analysis can be a helpful tool.
- **Identify the barriers to achieving your strategy.** Focus on the opportunities that can be leveraged to win.
- **Who are trusted partners that you can rely on to support your work?** When taking stock of your community, you may have gaps and needs that go beyond your capacity. Identify what needs you have in this assessment and survey to find potential partners who can be trusted to support your work while centering the community’s leadership and voice.



STEP 1: ASSET MAPPING

Start by assessing the landscape of your community. Here are some questions you'll want to consider:

- Who are the major stakeholders who work on issues related to energy, water, transportation, economic inclusion, and environmental and climate justice?
- Are they tracking and advocating for community benefits from the climate, clean energy, and infrastructure investments?
- Is there an organized community table?
- Who is at the table?
- Is the table community-led?
- Are there other existing coalitions?
- Are there any community-wide advocacy groups?
- What strengths, skills, expertise, and knowledge does the community hold and are there any gaps in skills and resources?
- Who are the regulatory bodies responsible for making and enforcing decisions?
- What is the process for engaging with the regulatory bodies?
- Who has the power to influence the regulatory bodies?

The answers to these questions will help you and your community assess how things are working within your community and whether this is working for your community

DELIVERABLES AND OUTCOMES:

- The community has established shared language and analysis that has deepened their understanding of their community needs and priorities, identified community strengths and gaps in resources, and developed a foundational knowledge of the systems in place that have the power to change the current status quo.
- This, in turn, has built community power that will lend a foundation to the coalition-building step.
- The community also has a shared baseline from which they can name specific investments and benefits that are intersectional, allowing the community to take a holistic approach to addressing community needs.



ASSET MAPPING TOOLS & RESOURCES ²

- [Energy Democracy Flipbook](#), Emerald Cities and JCET Project
- [Energy Justice Scorecard](#), Initiative for Energy Justice
- [Power Mapping Tools, Strategic Concepts in Organizing and Policy Education](#), SCOPE-LA
- [Power Mapping Relationships](#), DFA Training Academy
- [Upside Down Power Triangle](#), Training for Change
- [Spectrum of Allies](#), Training for Change
- [The Illuminator](#), Quioveo
- [Comparison of Asset vs Deficit Based Approaches](#), Memphis University
- [Neighborhood Planning](#), HOPE Collaborative
- [Assessing Community Needs & Resources](#), Community Toolbox, Kansas University
- [Community Needs Assessment](#), Centers for Disease Control
- [Conduct a Needs Assessment](#), Rural Health Information Hub
- [Environmental Justice Mapping](#), Center for Earth Energy and Democracy
- [Lowndes County Freedom Party](#), SNCC Digital Archives
- [Participatory Action Research](#), Institute of Development Studies



STEP 2: ORGANIZE A MULTI-STAKEHOLDER COALITION

While organized community groups are likely to already exist, it is rare to find a community-driven, multi-stakeholder coalition that includes community-based advocacy organizations and local policy groups, workforce organizations, small and minority contractors, and local labor unions. The goal of a community-driven, multi-stakeholder coalition is to develop a community consensus on an advocacy strategy for the federal funding opportunities that state and local agencies and institutions will receive. These state and local agencies and institutions need to know who you are and that your community has a plan for yourselves, as opposed to them planning for you.

You do not need to organize a new stakeholder table if one already exists. The stakeholder table could be an existing community-centered collaborative. For example, there are Green New Deal tables in many localities.

However, these multi-stakeholder tables must specifically be a working group that is led by BIPOC, Environmental Justice (EJ), and/or Climate Justice (CJ) communities, and include the following stakeholders:

- affordable housing communities—to clearly establish the needs and benefits for low-income families;
- workforce and labor organizations—to identify the jobs and business objectives, outcomes, and strategies; and
- mainstream environmental groups—to ensure alignment and support.

The overall goal of the stakeholder coalition is to build power and to maximize the potential impact of the federal investments across all sectors.

Be sure to establish a vision and mission for the stakeholder table and the rules of engagement. A key principle for engagement should be that your partners are collaborative. If they are not, move without them.

DELIVERABLES AND OUTCOMES:

The outcome of this phase is a working group to which local Justice40 efforts are accountable and who are resourced to develop, implement, monitor, and update funding related to the Justice40 initiative. The outcome is a structure that is led by BIPOC, EJ, and CJ communities that will validate whether the Justice40 benefits are being realized in communities.

RESOURCES

- [Communities First Principles](#)
- [We Power Policy Toolkit](#)

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STEP 3: EDUCATE

Finding out how much funding exists for your community's priorities and when funding will flow is a protracted and uncertain process. Funds are flowing now, but there is still time to get in the game. To get informed and educated, you'll want to find out:

- Quantitative and qualitative (story-telling) data on the issues and problems you want to fix.
- How much funding is coming to your city and state from the federal government? And, how much of the funding is competitive versus non-competitive?
- How much funding is flowing directly to local communities on a competitive or non-competitive basis?
- Which local and state agencies will be responsible for receiving and managing the funding?
- What guidance or regulations are attached to the funds, especially as it relates to Justice40?

Action Steps to Get Updated and Stay Informed:

- Get updates on federal, state, and local policies and plans from these sources:
 - [Treasury](#)
 - [COVID-19 Economic Relief](#)
 - [Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds \(SLFR\) National Conference of State Legislatures](#)
 - [ARPA State Fiscal Recovery Fund Allocations](#)
 - [White House: Environmental Justice](#)
 - [Just Solutions Collective](#)
 - [Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act Guidebook](#)
 - [Inflation Reduction Act Guidebook](#)
- Connect to Emerald Cities Collaborative's [Justice40+](#) website to stay engaged and sign up for The People's Community Benefit Playbook Quarterly Updates.
- Organize an information and accountability session for agency officials for a two-way exchange. What are they doing? What are your needs? What are their commitments?

DELIVERABLES AND OUTCOMES:

- Community has developed a shared narrative (with supporting data) to amplify their advocacy strategy for federal funding.
- Community has familiarized themselves with how federal funding will flow from federal agencies to state and local government agencies and have identified the state and local decision-makers and intervention points to effectively deploy their people power.
- Community has identified the federal funding opportunities that will address community priorities and needs.

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STEP 4: FUNDRAISE

Garner public and private-sector commitment to fund the community engagement, planning, and advocacy process. It is now considered unreasonable and inequitable to ask community members to volunteer their expertise for this important work. The new standard and best practice is to pay for staff and stipends for community members, facilities, and food to undertake this work. Potential sources include:

- **City Agencies:** They have the money and you are helping them meet the Administration's Justice40 goals. If you host an information and accountability session, get a commitment to support your on-going planning efforts.
- **Community Foundations:** Local community foundations often are easily approached to provide \$50-\$100k to support your efforts.
- **Federal Programs:** Many of the programs established through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act and the Inflation Reduction Act include community engagement requirements and allow grant funding to be used to support these efforts. Engage your local and state officials and leverage these requirements to resource your community's participation in project planning and implementation.
- **Emerald Cities Collaborative:** The Emergent Community Capacity Building (ECCB) Program provides grant funding, technical assistance, and training to communities who are newly engaging or deepening their organizing to include energy, energy democracy, or attempting to engage with Justice40 resources.

fundraiser
thank you!

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STEP 5: PLAN

Even before the appropriations are finalized, it is important to start developing your Community Benefit Plan with your Justice40 partners. The planning process should consider all the resources coming into your locality. In other words: the goal is to know how to best harness 40% or more of available federal investments and to understand how to use the available tools to ensure the community benefits.

The essential elements of the plan include:

1. A community vision that identifies your community needs and outlines your community priorities.
2. Critical community projects to repair environmental damage and build climate resilience.
3. Local hire and procurement opportunities for project implementation.
4. Community wealth-building opportunities.
5. Community engagement resources and capacity building.

The ideal projects are those that work at the intersection of environmental and climate justice, equity, and the economy. The Biden Administration is interested in all three of these goals and has made statements to that effect to BIPOC communities and unionized labor, who are likely to be a major beneficiary of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act and the Inflation Reduction Act.

It is critical to understand how to navigate both direct community investments and also indirect benefits through unionized labor. Few projects combine these infrastructure investment benefits to address the disparities in health, income, and wealth in order to build short- and long-term community gains.

Potential Action Steps³:

- **Develop a Community Benefit Plan in a participatory manner and outline what community needs are addressed within the plan and how the plan addresses those needs.** Use the [Energy Democracy Scorecard](#) as an example of how to identify community named priority investments and benefits.
- **Complete an impact analysis on the design and implementation of the plan.** Consider the following: Who does it benefit? How explicitly does it benefit them? Are there indirect benefits? What is needed to advance the plan? What source is the funding coming from? Is there a timeline? Who is the decision making authority or federal agency? And , what is their relationship or accountability to the community?
- **Develop clear and specific benchmarks and metrics in the Community Benefit Plan for accountability.**

DELIVERABLES AND OUTCOMES:

The community has a self-defined Community Benefit Plan that outlines investments and benefits they want to see in their community. The community connects these plans to the resources coming in from the federal, state, and local level. The plan may even name anchor institutions or philanthropic partners who have been invited into the process.

RESOURCES⁴

- [Poor People's Moral Budget](#), Poor Peoples' Campaign
- [Resources](#), Grassroots Policy Project
- [Research](#), Action Center on Race and the Economy
- [Equity, Health, Resilience and Jobs: Lessons from Just Growth Circle](#), Partnership for Southern Equity and Climate Interactive
- [Comprehensive Building Blocks for a Regenerative and Just 100% Policy](#), Just Solutions Collective
- [Water Equity and Climate Resilience Caucus](#), PolicyLink
- [Propagate, Pollinate, Practice Curriculum Toolkit](#), Movement Generation
- [Regenerative Economy & Peoples Solutions Lens](#), United National Frontline Table





STEP 6: ADVOCATE

The major goal here is to get your Community Benefit Plan (CBP) funded by the state and local agencies responsible for spending the federal dollars.

Action 1: Conduct a power analysis. Identify the formal and informal influencers and key decision makers. The goal is to understand the context for your policy initiative and develop a winning strategy of persuasion and/or confrontation. Rank the friends and foes. Identify your messaging and strategy to sign on your friends, neutralize indecisive parties, and limit potential adversaries.

Action 2: Set up community meetings to garner widespread support for your CBP and begin to flex your community power muscle.

Action 3: Write op-eds, blogs, and social media posts to announce your CBP to the broader community.

Action 4: Set up meetings with the mayor, city council, county administrators, or state agencies to seek support.

And/or

Action 5: Host an information and accountability session for decision-makers and invite them to endorse or support your CBP.

Action 6: Develop ongoing information and accountability sessions, creating a direct communication channel for CBP stakeholders with decision-makers.

DELIVERABLES AND OUTCOMES:

- A power analysis.
- Widespread visibility and awareness of a CBP clearly identified as the community-led solution—including awareness at federal, state, and local agency level.
- Well-established relationships with relevant government agencies and a CBP supported by elected officials (city council, state representatives and senators, and Congressional representatives and senators).
- Formal adoption (ideally but not necessary) of the CBP at the local or state level as part of the planning and budgeting process.
- Community representation on the relevant local agencies' planning committees.



STEP 7: ACCOUNTABILITY

Accountability requires a proactive monitoring and a reporting system based on clearly defined and accepted metrics that were established in the CBP. The Biden-Harris Administration has created the [Environmental Justice Scorecard](#) to report on their accomplishments towards Justice40. This scorecard can be used as an accountability tool to ensure the Administration is delivering 40% of climate and clean energy investment benefits to disadvantaged communities.

It's also important to ensure that funding is available to support community oversight (See step 4). As part of an ideal Community Benefit Plan, ensure there are a significant number of positions funded for community oversight. This is a full-time job and needs to be explicitly supported by the agencies and executive branch resources as well as any legislative oversight boards or committees.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ Excerpted from Community-Led Participatory Policymaking Toolkit by [We Power Policy](#).
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- ⁴ Excerpted from Community-Led Participatory Policymaking Toolkit by [We Power Policy](#).