

SOLAR PLUS EQUITY FRAMEWORK

Why Equity in Solar

Structural inequities in our economic system, of which the current energy system is reflective, create disproportionate benefits for some communities and burdens for others, often people with lower incomes and people of color¹. Applying an equity framework in the development of solar deployment strategies leads to increased economic and social opportunity for all. Solar deployment can contribute to a more equitable energy system that addresses disparities in income/wealth, community engagement, health and the environment. By extending the decision-making and substantive benefits of solar to communities facing the greatest harms and/or least opportunity, we ensure a more just, sustainable, and effective solar deployment.

What We Want to Achieve (Goals)

- Solar deployment strategies prevent additional burdens and create targeted, direct environmental, social and economic benefits and opportunities for historically underserved communities (i.e., low-income communities and communities of color).
- Inclusive and transparent engagement and representation in decision-making for historically underrepresented communities in statewide solar deployment strategies and projects.

How We Do Our Work (Principles)

Acknowledge and address past policies, decisions, and incentives that contributed to inequities.

Account for past and current policies and decisions that contribute to and maintain a system that fosters disproportionate benefits from solar (e.g., policies that have concentrated solar in high income households and areas).

Use racial, economic, and environmental analysis to drive decisions.

Race- and income-neutral policies are rarely neutral. Policy choices and implementation have racial and income specific consequences due to existing disparities in resources and power -- if we do not prioritize equity, we risk maintaining or increasing these disparities. Thus equity must be at the center of Solar Plus decisions.

Include the leadership, knowledge and expertise of communities currently benefiting the least.

Who writes the rules matters. Solar Plus expands participation in the decision-making processes of solar generation. Ensure communities of color and people with lower incomes have an equitable role in decision-making process and forums, policy design, and implementation, at the outset and on an ongoing basis.

Use equity targeted strategies

Identify communities with burdens and negative disparities that can be addressed through solar deployment. Adopt targeted strategies that create benefits for all but are crafted to lift up communities facing the greatest barriers and negative disparities, and therefore provide beneficial community-specific outcomes.

¹ Race, income, language and geography are historical structural barriers to equitable benefits and disproportionate burdens in our energy system. We recognize that not all Solar Plus partners work on one or more of these structural barriers. Yet to realize equitable energy outcomes in Solar Plus, we must address and work at the intersection of these inequalities.

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