

## Partners for Places Project Lessons Report

**Project Name:** *Equity & Environment Initiative*

- **Year Complete:** 2016
- **Local Government:** City of Seattle, WA
- **Local Foundation:** Seattle Foundation, Bullitt Foundation, Loom-A Foundation, The Russell Family Foundation, Social Venture Partners Seattle

### **Project Purpose**

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To create opportunities for people of color, immigrant and refugees; people with low incomes; and people with limited English proficiency to be a part of Seattle's environmental movement.

### **Key Lessons Learned**

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*Lessons learned about tools and tactics through the project that other sustainability directors could use to advance their work.*

The Equity & Environment Initiative (EEI) developed a roadmap for advancing environmental justice through community-driven goals and strategies. There are a number of lessons from the work, including the following strategies and tactics for replication:

- Using participatory decision-making and transparency to build relationships and collaboration.
- Partnering with community experts and leaders to design and lead engagement.
- Balancing strong facilitation with support from behind.
- Active participation of City staff in the process and an openness to hearing and addressing concerns.
- Creating and supporting a “by and for communities of color” space and process.
- Linking like-minded initiatives builds capacity.
- Creating an Agenda for equity & environment that is co-owned by the City and community increases accountability and trust.

*Lessons for developing a collaborative process between a local government sustainability director and local place-based foundation(s).*

- Start early. Due to the differences in timelines and budgeting between foundations and local government, early and frequent conversations were necessary to create alignment.

- Align with current funding priorities where possible. The EEI was one of several efforts underway in Seattle that were building environmental capacity in communities of color and increasing equity within mainstream environmental organizations. Since funding partners were already working together on many of these other non-governmental efforts, the City and funders were able to leverage each other's work and had a greater impact in the community.
- Provide regular updates. EEI made a practice of providing updates via calls, emails and meetings to make sure that as the project developed funders knew what was going on and why.
- Integrate funders and community. This work was significant, and funders/community/government all work at a different pace.

### **Additional Information and Resources**

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The Seattle Equity & Environment Initiative was successfully launched as an effort to deepen Seattle's commitment to race and social justice in environmental work, and eventually create the Equity and Environment Agenda, which was released in 2016. Read more about the agenda's goals and strategies [here](#).