

MAKING EQUITY REAL: LOCAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT & HIRING PRACTICES

WHY EQUITY

Equity is not just a commitment – it is a practice. Equity is transforming the behaviors, institutions, and systems that disproportionately harm marginalized communities.

Due to a history of discriminatory government practices, communities of color have borne the brunt of generational disparities in socioeconomic and health outcomes, as well as in ownership over the decisions that impact them. Equity means increasing access to power, redistributing and providing additional resources, and eliminating barriers to opportunity, in order to empower marginalized communities to thrive and reach full potential.

THE PROBLEM

Two-thirds of jobs require some postsecondary education or training; in communities of color, systemic barriers to secondary and postsecondary education and employment contribute to persistent generational disparities in wealth, income, and health outcomes.¹ Some of these barriers to employment include income, disability, homelessness, English language ability, literacy, criminal record, and immigration status. Black and Latino workers are overrepresented among these groups, are more likely than other groups to have low-wage jobs, and educational attainment for Black, Pacific Islander, American Indian/Alaska Native and Hispanic adults lags behind educational attainment for white adults.

Job training and education are vital pathways out of poverty for low-income workers. Gaining skills, earning industry-recognized credentials, and getting access to high-quality jobs improves access to economic opportunity. As investment flows into a community and the risk of displacement increases, projects must ensure that they provide employment and economic opportunities to workers. Workforce development is an important way to advance racial equity by addressing systemic, structural, and institutional barriers for communities of color. The AHSC application awards points for identifying and implementing workforce development strategies. This handout helps you identify meaningful workforce development strategies.

PLANNING FOR EQUITY

Below are some guidelines for putting an equity lens on the selection of workforce development strategies.

- Explicitly state a commitment to equity in the goals, vision, and values of the Project -- up front, while you are planning for it. Outline equity goals and metrics at the beginning to use as a roadmap for implementation.
- To understand the needs for workforce development, it is paramount to include community involvement. You should have early, continuous and meaningful engagement with the communities impacted by the Project to ensure that implementation reflects their needs, perspectives and input. See the *Community Benefits & Engagement Handout* for best practices.
- Take a collaborative approach. Along with workforce development agencies and organizations, create partnerships with other stakeholders such as developers, local jurisdictions, school districts, public agencies, and local organizations representing low-income people of color.
- Prioritize workforce development strategies that offer shared, direct, and multiple benefits to communities. The strategy you implement should bring long-term tangible impacts to the community that reflect the actual training and hiring needs of its population.

THE PROCESS

Your project should seek to implement a workforce development strategy that responds to the specific needs of the community. If you partner with a community-based organization or workforce development agency, you should keep the following principles and best practices in mind when designing your strategy.

The strategy you choose or agency you partner with should implement equity-based principles and best practices for workforce development. These principles and practices are adapted from “Working for Equity: Workforce Development and Advocacy to Connect Communities to 21st Century Employment”ⁱⁱⁱ and “San Francisco Bay Area Analysis: Creating Economic Opportunity Through Green Infrastructure Investments”ⁱⁱⁱⁱ by Betony Jones & Associates. These include:

- **Sectors:** Your strategy should target sectors that are slated to grow in the 21st century.
- **Good quality jobs:** Partner with workforce development organizations working to improve conditions, wages, and job quality in new or existing sectors.
- **Institutions:** Local community colleges can provide focused technical training to link workers to career opportunities as well as post-secondary educational opportunities. Anchor institutions such as hospitals or universities can also be leveraged for local economic development.
- **Connections:** Link opportunities to communities with greater barriers to employment, such as formerly incarcerated individuals, immigrants, or single female heads of households.
- **Broad training:** Orienting training toward broad occupations rather than narrow industries gives workers the skills to switch between industries during a recession.
- **Union apprenticeships:** Union apprenticeship programs provide good wages, benefits, training, and a pathway to the middle class. Formal agreements between apprenticeships and employers removes certain entry cost barriers.
- **MC3 Curriculum:** The Multi-Craft Core Curriculum (MC3) rigorously prepares trainees for adaptability in jobs, thus creating a pathway for success in the trades.
- **Additional support:** The program should have additional funding to support workers with high barriers to employment, such as homelessness, criminal record, hunger, or other challenges.

The table below offers some guidance on key workforce development terms, and how they are relevant to advancing equity in local workforce development and hiring practices.

Term	Definition or Application
<i>Disadvantaged population or targeted hire</i>	To be equitable, the workforce development strategy you implement should target historically underrepresented groups such as minorities, immigrants, formerly incarcerated individuals, single female heads of households, veterans, people experiencing homelessness, people on public assistance, lacking a high school diploma, or other barriers to employment.
<i>Pre-apprenticeship</i>	Pre-apprenticeship programs prepare individuals for union apprenticeships by building basic literacy, math, and work-readiness skills. These programs also help workers, including youth and job seekers with low skill levels, begin a pathway to a career. ^{iv}
<i>Workforce Investment Board</i>	California has 45 local Workforce Investment Boards that distribute federal, state, and local funding to workforce development programs. ^v

<p><i>Community Workforce Agreement (CWA)</i></p>	<p>A community workforce agreement consists of a project labor agreement that includes a targeted hire provision designed to get low-income workers into construction careers. Over the past decade, community workforce agreements have emerged as one of the best vehicles for establishing strong job quality standards on publicly-funded or subsidized construction projects, and for outlining a plan to recruit and hire low-income workers onto those projects.^{vi}</p> <p>Key components of CWAs include targeted hire, pre-apprenticeship programs, supportive services, and accountability mechanisms.^{vii}</p>
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SELECTING LOCAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES FOR AN AHSC APPLICATION

Implementation of the actual workforce development strategy may lie with a separate organization or agency that you partner with. However, the strategy you choose to design should reflect the specific needs and preferences of the community where your Project is located. The table below contains some guiding questions for selecting, designing, and implementing an equitable strategy.

Guiding Questions for Local Workforce Development and Hiring Practices	
<p><i>Neighborhood Demographics & Identifying Target Groups</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are there specific declining industries or employers in the neighborhood that have affected its workforce? What kinds of skills will people in this community benefit from? What kinds of skills do people in this community <u>want</u> to build? Which groups will benefit most from the workforce development strategy? Who are you targeting with the strategy?
<p><i>Community Engagement</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How does the Project reflect a collaborative effort among multiple organizations? Does the Project align with and support existing community priorities, creating an opportunity to leverage resources and build collaborative partnerships? Does the Project help foster the building of effective, long-term relationships and trust between diverse communities and stakeholders? How would a local community-based organization describe the community engagement process and how feedback from Project Area residents was incorporated into the Project?
<p><i>Accessibility</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are the benefits of the proposed program or policy broadly accessible to households throughout the community, particularly communities of color, low-income populations, Tribal and indigenous communities and immigrant communities? Are the strategies accessible to community members with different cultural backgrounds, languages, or education levels? Have you considered the long-term benefits of targeting youth with the strategy?

After answering the guided questions, you will have to develop workforce strategies using the categories below from the AHSC application. Your Project will have to implement the workforce development strategies, either as part of the development of the Project or ongoing operation of the Project. As part of the AHSC application, you must include a document stating who is responsible for implementing the strategy and include an explanation of the partnership and strategy. If you cannot legally implement local hire or workforce development strategies, you must detail those barriers in your document.

Workforce Development Strategies
Establishing a partnership with community-based workforce development and job training entities that have a track record of success serving disadvantaged populations and/or have demonstrated a high job placement rate among trainees from disadvantaged communities
Partnerships with pre-apprenticeship programs, state certified community conservation corps program, “earn-while-you-learn” programs, YouthBuild programs, and/or registered apprenticeship programs that lead to industry recognized credentials, certifications, and/or references to long term employment
Partnerships with local Workforce Investment Board programs serving disadvantaged populations
Projects that have developed project labor, community workforce, or high-road agreements with targeted local hire specifications OR that are located in jurisdictions with local hire ordinances that directly apply to the proposed project

SELECTED RESOURCES

Resources for Workforce Development
Partnership for Working Families PWF has several resources for a range of training and workforce development issues including best practices, sample language, and case studies of existing workforce development strategies. This toolkit contains tools to develop workforce agreements, community benefits agreements, targeted hire, training and apprenticeship, and living wage (among others).
Workforce Investment Boards One-Stop Career Centers across California provide workers with access to job search assistance, career counseling, vocational training, and other workforce development services.
Apprenticeship and Pre-Apprenticeship Programs Earn-as-you-learn apprenticeship training unlocks career opportunities for good union jobs with living wages and benefits.
Community-Trades Partnerships Collaboration between community groups and the construction industry can create equitable outcomes by ensuring that local communities benefit from development projects. This link outlines best practices for creating equitable community workforce agreements.
Workforce Development Racial Equity Readiness Assessment The equity organization Race Forward has produced an assessment tool for workforce development agencies to increase their equity impact.

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- ⁱ Pham, Duy. (2018). Advancing Racial Equity Through Career Pathways: Community Centered Solutions. *CLASP*. Retrieved from <https://www.clasp.org/sites/default/files/publications/2018/10/2018.10.30%20Career%20Pathways%20Racial%20Equity%20.pdf>.
- ⁱⁱ Benner, C. & Pastor, M. (2016). Working for Equity: Workforce Development and Advocacy to Connect Communities to 21st Century Employment. *Activating Markets for Social Change*. Retrieved from https://socialinnovation.usc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Pastor_Benner_Workforce-Final.pdf.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Betony Jones & Associates. San Francisco Bay Area Analysis: Creating Economic Opportunity Through Green Infrastructure Investments. Link available upon request.
- ^{iv} Pre-Apprenticeships: Building Strong Apprentices. <https://apprenticeshipusa.workforcegps.org/resources/2017/04/10/11/56/Pre-Apprenticeships-Building-Strong-Apprentices>
- ^v California Local Workforce Investment Boards. https://cwdb.ca.gov/local_boards/local_workforce_investment_associations/
- ^{vi} Partnership for Working Families. Policy & Tools: Community Workforce Agreements. <https://www.forworkingfamilies.org/page/policy-tools-community-workforce-agreements>
- ^{vii} East Bay Alliance for a Sustainable Economy & Building and Construction Trades Council of Alameda County. (2018). Making Collaboration Work: Best Practices for Community-Trades Partnerships. <http://workingeastbay.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Prop-39-Report-Website2.pdf>