

Short Summary and Synthesis

Short summary:

This quarterly meeting was the third in a series of JEDI quarterly meetings for 2022 covering JEDI & Adaptation Projects ([slide 5](#)). In this meeting we focused on *Designing Adaptation Projects to Center Equity*. The EPA presented on their Equitable Resilience Builder and we had an extended Q&A with them. Afterwards we spent the bulk of our time on scenario-based discussions.

Four main take-aways emerged from the Q&A, chat and discussions: the role of funders in design of adaptation projects, community agency in adaptation projects, the need for system change, and language impacts on equity.

- Funders play an important role in the design of adaptation projects by setting timelines, guidelines, and requirements, which all impact the equity of a project. Many funders need to change what they are doing to support equity.
- Community agency needs to be respected and supported. Recognizing and valuing skills, assets and expertise supports equitable project design. Respect the community and enable agency.
- The system needs to change to enable equitable adaptation projects. Realistic scenarios raised systemic underlying issues: , i.e. a BIPOC person having to carry-out a project designed by a White person in a BIPOC community; , funder criteria/timelines and more. Please see the synthesis and/or the jamboard for many more examples. Long-term, caring, invested relationships need to be developed as equally important system change.
- The language that adaptation professionals, adaptation projects, and project solicitations use impacts the equity of the adaptation project. A vulnerability frame will produce a different type of project design than an asset frame.

Ideas for action:

Add potential next steps to future discussions and to meeting jamboard

Push funders to change their criteria, timelines, approaches

Follow up with Emily Eisenhauer Eisenhauer.Emily@epa.gov if you have questions/ideas

Synthesis

My goal was to catch all the overarching themes and then to gather the rest at the end of the table. The chat had some great questions and comments so I also put in a bullet summary of the main themes and a few key JEDI adaptation comments.

I would like to highlight several recurring themes in the chat and scenarios: role of funders, language, what skills and assets are valued (or not) and system change. Role of funders is

raised in all sections. Language is directly raised in the chat but I noticed quite a few indirect references and/or uses of language that are important for JEDI in adaptation. What skills and assets are valued is not a category anywhere but is touched on directly and/or indirectly in the chat, in do, mix & expertise categories in scenario 1 and potentially is an underlying issue in scenario 2. Finally, system change is touched on in all sections but only has a category in scenario 2.

Meeting Evaluation

Like/Continue	<p>Multiple responses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiple people thanked and appreciated Julia’s facilitation • Multiple people stated scenarios were excellent and realistic • Appreciation for starting with BIPOC for comments after the brainstorm sessions • Enough time for the break-out sessions • Loved the format of this meeting, one person in particular liked that we only had one person as primary facilitator
Change/Improve	<p>2 responses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One person would like more participation from ASAP members (probably mean general membership vs JEDI committee membership?) • One person cannot simultaneously discuss and fill-in the jamboard
Learning/Surprise	<p>1 response:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The meeting was very practical and had sensible discussions

Discussion from chat

The chat had a rich discussion so I decided to pull out what appeared to be repeating themes and/or key themes for JEDI adaptation

- Language - there were multiple discussions of what words to use, how and meaning; I pulled this out b/c it is a potential topic for an entire quarterly meeting or other workshop at some point. (maybe even an entire arc - ie moving from vul to asset based, military terms to regenerative terms . . .)
- Agency mission - how manage the disconnect b/t broad issue that community brings up and narrow mission of agency (person asking was from federal agency)
- Compensation - provide meals, payment for time, a certificate (context was not clear in chat but these were mentioned specifically)
- Methods - there were several references to storytelling and arts; another space for potential workshop – Emily pointed out in answer that ‘how’ matters (and indirectly ‘when’)
- Diversity - asked if BIPOC members were on the EPA team (primarily white young to middle aged women)
- Local connections – necessary

- Internal community reality - there were a couple on this and someone suggested talking about it in the small group; from David Kay “active discussion about the need for bridging . . . divides on the one hand and . . . raising profile of existing divides on the other”; recognition of internal conflicts
- Resilience indicators – attempting to include social and cultural considerations but have not used yet
- Funders - provide active feedback on the structure of funders programs

Break-out Session Jamboard

Scenario 1

There’s a funding opportunity you found that seems to be a great fit for a particular underserved community, but you do not have existing relationships with the community. This community is severely under-resourced and capacity-constrained, but you believe they could benefit greatly from the funding and that their proposal would be competitive.

How would you proceed? How might the community react?

How might the community react?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Not quick to respond, not trusting ● May not be interested ● May not have capacity ● May talk to students more than government agencies
How would you proceed?	
Should have done earlier	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Started establishing direct relationships ● Send out email lists to multiple communities with funding opportunity info and areas of potential support ● Earlier capacity bldg so can get engaged (one note - how?) and include environmental issues
Do	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Make community aware of resource (don’t force) ● Find a contact <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Through other networks, via via (individual network) ○ Online ○ Look for people/orgs already working with the community (<u>repeated many times</u>) ○ Go through religious orgs (don’t need to be already working on environ issues) ○ Find champion ○ Focus on “grass tops” of grassroots orgs ○ Org may already have contact through another part of org

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Start with county educators - know a lot of people but not necessarily the best ● Explain how can get support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Find org that can apply on their behalf (this note assumes that already connected to community) ○ Clear about what support your org can/could offer ● Find common ground and get to know on personal level ● Show you value them by providing child care, eating with them, paying for time ● Be clear the money is not for your own org <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Risk that perceived as extractive if a private org would reach out ● Organize workshop to generate interest ● Explain what is in it for the community <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ To network contact, community WITHOUT expectations from them ○ Begin developing a relationship (if have time volunteer in that community) ○ Wait to hear if there is interest (do not force, push etc) ○ Show humility and willingness to change proposal to fit their needs
Beyond scenario (in some manner)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Funding sometimes framed to be overly ambitious ● Go to funder and share recommendations to make more accessible and better fit for underserved communities

What are some potential pitfalls or common blindspots for planners that stand in the way of equitable project design?

Assumptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● There is representation for the underserved community ● interest/capacity to get involved ● Happy to redirect resources - which may not be the case ● Understand priorities of the community, CBO (mistaking my own priorities as a community's priority) ● Can make community feel like you are imposing specific solutions and perspectives ● How do you know what you know about a community? ● Assume do/don't have the resources
Capacity: lacking or available	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Pay people for their time, food, childcare ● Lack of grant writing capacity and/or fiscal sponsor for community ● Assuming that everyone is on same work schedule and has same capacity as you ● ● Not thinking through the barriers that a community is facing to pursue this opportunity

Project Fit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Need long-term actions/solutions not short-term band-aids
Time for the Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Raising expectations about what can be done in practice – builds long-term cynicism esp if not long-term follow through ● Timelines that are not realistic for the ask you are making
Expertise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Don't assume they need help ● We see financial vulnerability and forget the assets that enable the community to survive and thrive anyway ● Forget that community is and have experts ● Missing that people who understand the problems also have good ideas about the solutions
Mix	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How build trust with partners found online? ● Not getting representation of the community that we are trying to help ● Tend to adhere to status quo: INSTEAD should assess opportunities for alignment with values ● Miss opportunities for a justice-lens instead of “bandaid” actions ● Duplicate relationships across a large org that disrupts accountability and transparency
Beyond scenario	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Despite pitfalls & risks worse is not acting at all ● Grant programs can be overly burdensome - need to communicate to funders ● Can we reimagine a manner to reverse the exploitative dynamic in “leveraging funding” even if we don't have the power to implement?

Scenario 2

You're working on a 3-year long project and you're halfway through. This is a project you “inherited” from a predecessor where you weren't involved in the project design. The project is going well, but the budget and timeline provide little flexibility. You just received a coalition letter signed by community and EJ groups with concerns about the lack of community engagement.

What are some initial steps you might take towards finding a resolution?

Acknowledge/Connect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Call a meeting with those who sent the letter ● Don't engage under false pretenses ● Immediately acknowledge letter and significance of issue ● proceed with transparency – ie tell what you know about the project, gather their input ● Community engagement is not one-off; from resident's perspective its full experience and interactions over time
Understand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Make sure understand all their concerns ● Repeat back what you think you understand to demonstrate that you did or to get corrected

Alter funding/composition of	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Talk to funders, explain - need to make everyone's issue (ie should not have happened to start with) ● Get buy-in internally (from own org) ● Ask about flexibility options and share responses with community ● Use the values funders and orgs claim to have to bring them back to those values ● Push leadership to alter
Internal & reallocation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Workshop with a few people - to think through ● Brainstorm potential steps with JEDI CoP ● Pull in community engagement through one of the "set" categories ● Raise issue with own leadership and gather their thoughts ● Figure out why/how this happened (retrospectively) so can change - or find efforts that not aware of that could highlight ● Find if a flexible "category" and reallocate to community engagement ● Half-way through is a good time to do an evaluation
Advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Advocate within and/or towards funder for community engagement ● Lean on mission/values of both
Find more/other funding/options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Seek additional and/or alternative funding ● Extend timeline for community engagement ● Dovetail this community engagement with other existing community engagement ● Look to others to add money and/or time
Project Diversity & Capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● As a BIPOC person inheriting projects from White colleagues can be a problem - do not align with perspectives/values ● A lot of turnover in our field - losing background and knowledge . . . what does this mean for a scenario like this?

What would be the ideal outcome and how might you gain buy-in from your project partners and funder?

Immediate change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Opportunity to refocus and recommit to the project with community needs in mind ● Agency you represent gives you the power to slow things down
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Funder could bring more support ● Funder is willing to extend timeline or add resources or allow reallocation from other categories to community engagement
Hearing/understanding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Members of the coalition feel heard ● Power shift to them ● Team makes adjustments to ensure coalition feels heard (based on substantive work being acceptable to coalition)

System change

- Create liaison positions to actively engage and involve communities
- Take time to educate the powers that be
- Build long-lasting trust for next time
- Both funders and partners understand why there were limitations
- Capacity building on own team to understand how this “sense of urgency” or “expected firm deliverables” are concepts of white supremacy