

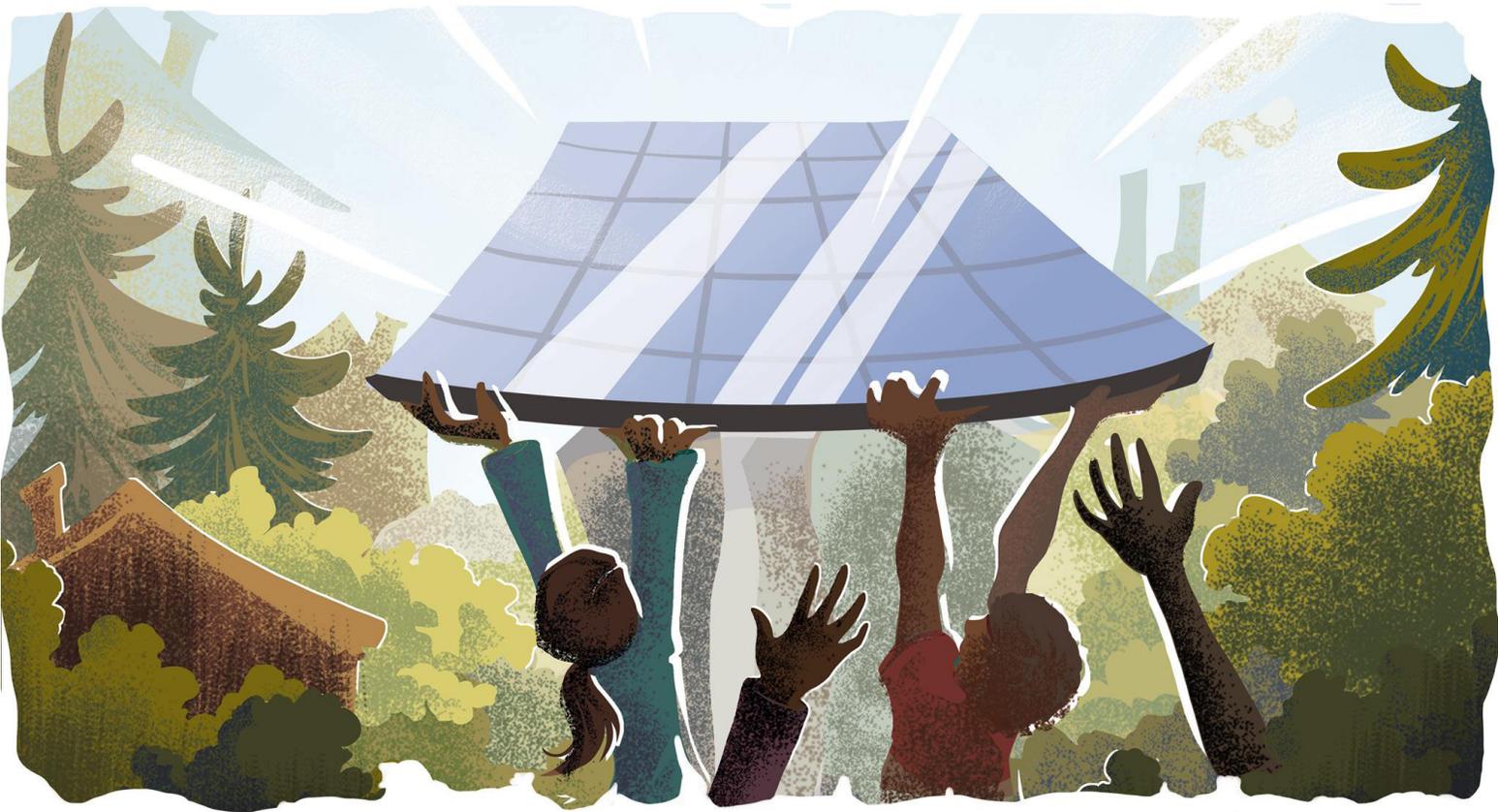
THE ENERGY EQUITY PROJECT

SUMMARY

At a moment when climate action and clean energy programs are expanding rapidly, it is imperative that access to the benefits of these programs are distributed equitably, particularly for Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) and frontline communities historically overburdened by the costs and pollution of our energy system. Historically, the energy sector echoes racial and class disparities in housing, education, and economic development. Despite the semblance of uniform utility rates and ubiquitous service, the negative outcomes of power shut-offs and cost burdens—and the positive benefits of weatherization, retrofits, and renewable energy—are not evenly distributed.

The Energy Equity Project will create a framework for measuring equity across energy efficiency and clean energy programs among utilities, state regulatory agencies, and other practitioners, while engaging and centering BIPOC and frontline communities. An equity measurement framework, set to launch in beta form in 2022, will serve environmental and climate justice advocates, practitioners, regulatory agencies, and utilities to drive more equitable investments and outcomes in energy efficiency, distributed generation and storage (i.e. solar + batteries), demand response, electrification, and electric vehicle infrastructure.

The Energy Equity Project is housed at the Urban Energy Justice Lab at University of Michigan's School for Environment & Sustainability. More at www.energyequityproject.com.



THE NEED

The clean energy transition is on the rise. The falling costs of solar and battery storage, improvements in technologies like air source heat pumps and electric vehicles, new zero emissions targets across states and cities, and an infusion of public and private investment give us hope for a future that is free from fossil fuels.

But clean energy does not necessarily ensure an equitable energy future. Despite more than \$125 billion in energy efficiency and renewable energy investments in the U.S. in 2020, about 120 million households simultaneously face energy insecurity. They face threatened or actual shutoffs of heat or electricity and cut back on other basic needs to pay monthly energy bills.

We are concerned that benefits like green jobs, lower energy bills, cleaner air, resilience to climate impacts and power outages, and ownership of renewable energy systems will be divvied up according to race and class. Continuing this pattern in the energy sector would flood wealthier, whiter communities with clean energy incentives but trickle into communities that are poorer, predominantly BIPOC, and in the shadow of polluting facilities.

While benefits accrue to the privileged, BIPOC and frontline communities may be left to pay higher costs to stay connected to failing electric grids and aging natural gas infrastructure, finding themselves priced out of housing that was affordable before “gentrification.” Without an emphasis on energy equity, tens of millions of Americans will continue to endure shutoffs and face impossible choices between “heating and eating”—between paying the energy bill and paying for other basic needs. If we are not vigilant, the acceleration of clean energy may result in less carbon but a new state of energy apartheid.

How can we safeguard a just transition, so that BIPOC and frontline residents move to the front of the line for clean energy benefits? How can we ensure that their voices are not only heard but prominent, that they are not only the recipients but the architects of this clean energy future? And how can we work to recognize and rectify the historical legacies of racial and economic injustices to usher in an equitable clean energy future? These questions are political, programmatic, and moral. They apply to all levels of government, to Public Utility Commissions, and especially, to utilities. They are at the heart of what the Energy Equity Project sets out to achieve.



VISION:

A missing foundational ingredient for creating a just energy transition is an energy equity framework: a process for employing a set of indicators that can be used to measure multiple dimensions of equity in any location. The framework will:

- Assess metrics in four dimensions of equity: i) Recognition, ii) Procedural, iii) Distributional, and iv) Restorative
- Aggregate existing social, environmental, and economic metrics and indices
- Address data gaps and barriers to access
- Generate baseline equity ratings for all locations while enabling users to customize which dimensions and equity metrics are prioritized
- Measurably improve outcomes for BIPOC, lower-income and frontline environmental justice communities
- Provide guidance and implementation support to a range of users
- The framework will be open source and embrace the principles of equity in its creation

OPPORTUNITIES TO SHAPE THE FRAMEWORK: WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

- Get project updates and let us know how you'd like to be involved on our interest form
- Sign up for our upcoming kickoff and listening sessions
- We invite you to join an ongoing conversation about energy equity on Slack
- If you'd like to set up a time to meet with us, we welcome that, too

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