

GUIDANCE AND RESOURCES FOR ADDRESSING EQUITY

Co-created with PSRCs Equity Advisory Committee (EAC), the project selection criteria related to equity evaluate how projects address key issues such as disparities, gaps in the transportation system, and community engagement specific to the equity focus populations within the project area. This document includes various resources to assist project sponsors as they address these topics throughout the project selection process, including:

- [Project Selection Resource Map](#)
- [Transportation System Visualization Tool](#)
- [Equitable Engagement Guidance](#)
- [Housing Opportunities by Place Tool](#)

Please view the sections below to learn more about these resources and how they can be used throughout the project selection process.

PSRC Project Selection Resource Map

Project sponsors are asked to identify the Equity Focus Areas within their project's location, provide details on the transportation related disparities or gaps these groups are experiencing, and describe how the project will reduce these disparities or eliminate these gaps. Disparities are considered demographic imbalances related to access to jobs and services, safety, exposure to emissions, etc. Gaps are considered missing links in the transportation system.

[PSRC's Project Selection Resource Map](#) is an interactive web map designed to assist sponsors in identifying Equity Focus Areas. Equity Focus Areas (EFAs) refer to areas that have concentrations of underserved communities above the regional average. The EFAs all have unique transportation needs. They include:

- **People of Color:** This layer displays the spatial distributions of census tracts with percent share of people of color above the regional average (35.9%).

- **People with Low Incomes:** This layer displays the spatial distributions of census tracts with percent share of people with low incomes (with incomes less than 200% of the Federal Poverty Level) above the regional average (20.7%).
- **People with Disabilities:** This layer displays the spatial distributions of census tracts with percent share of people with disabilities above the regional average (11%).
- **Older Adults (aged 65 and above):** This layer displays the spatial distributions of census tracts with percent share of older adults (age 65+) above the regional average (13.4%).
- **Youth (ages 5-17):** This layer displays the spatial distributions of census tracts with percent share of youth (ages 5-17) above the regional average (15.4%).
- **People with Limited English Proficiency:** This layer displays the spatial distributions of census tracts with percent share of people with limited English proficiency above the regional average (8.5%).
- **Intersectional Equity Focus Areas:** in addition to the above layers, five pairs of areas of intersection between different EFAs are provided as layers in the web map. Each of these layers represent the Census tracts with above 50% threshold and the regional average of combined EFAs addressed above. These pairs are selected for cross-tabulations to address their unique transportation challenges.

Sponsors should review the data in the web map to determine if their project impacts areas with any of the populations above, and if so, identify how the project might provide benefits or reduce disparities for these populations. For example, do these populations currently have less access to jobs and services due to incomplete infrastructure and services, experience higher rates of pedestrian injuries or fatalities, have more exposure to air pollutants, etc. If so, is the project improving access to jobs or services, improving safety, reducing exposure to air pollutants, or providing other benefits?

Below please find examples of other layers that are included in the web map:

[Air Quality Focus Communities](#)

The Puget Sound Clean Air Agency has identified focus communities that bear the highest impact of air pollution and also tend to have greater socioeconomic challenges. Sponsors should review the data in the web map to determine if their project impacts any of these areas, and if so, identify how the project might improve health conditions for these populations. For example, does the project have the potential to reduce air pollutant emissions, particularly from diesel sources. This could be the result of a reduction in freight truck idling, reduction of overall vehicle miles traveled, the introduction of alternative fueled vehicles, etc.

More information on this topic may be found on the Puget Sound Clean Air Agency's website at: <https://pscleanair.gov/372/Community-Equity-Access>.

PSRC Opportunity Mapping

PSRC has conducted a geographic analysis of opportunity in the Puget Sound region, analyzing factors such as housing and neighborhood quality, education, jobs, transportation and health.

The web map provides data on the Comprehensive Opportunity Index, which is the compilation of all five factors. Areas are identified as ranging from very low to very high opportunity. Sponsors should review the data in the web map to determine if their project impacts areas of moderate, low or very low opportunity, and if so identify how the project might improve opportunity for these locations. For example, if the project is improving access for these communities to jobs and/or services, improving safety or providing additional modes, reducing emissions of air pollutants, etc.

More information on the Opportunity Mapping may be found [here](#).

Freight Routes

PSRC's Project Selection Resource Map identifies state-designated T-1 freight routes, defined as corridors carrying more than 10 million tons per year, and T-2 freight routes, defined as corridors carrying between 4 to 10 million tons per year. Sponsors may identify if their project is on or affects one of these routes, and if the project will

improve the flow of freight traffic, thereby reducing the impact of diesel emissions on the surrounding community.

The web map provides information on the location of regionally designated growth and manufacturing/industrial centers and the federally designated rural/urban boundary, as an additional resource.

PSRC Transportation System Visualization Tool

PSRC has also provided a [Transportation System Visualization Tool](#) to assist sponsors in answering project selection questions. The tool will allow sponsors to zoom to the geographic area in which their project is located, and choose from a variety of data layers, including existing and future conditions for various aspects of the transportation system including bicycle and pedestrian facilities, public transportation, etc. These layers can be displayed in context with other regional information such as EFAs. Click [here](#) to view the full list of data layers.

Sponsors may review the data in the visualization tool within their project area to identify gaps in the transportation system for any EFAs. For example, is there currently a gap in bicycle facilities limiting access to jobs and services for one or more of the population groups? If so, the sponsor could note where the gap is and describe how the project would fill this gap and connect the population group(s) to jobs and services.

PSRC Equitable Engagement Guidance

Traditional outreach methods, such as online open houses, public hearings, and online surveys, often only reach a subset of community members. These community members are typically those who are already familiar with the local planning process and have the time to stay up to date with what is happening. As a result, many planning processes fail to adequately consider the perspectives of marginalized communities most impacted by planning decisions. This can lead to additional burdens on impacted communities, exacerbating disparities in the region.

Consequently, project sponsors are also asked to describe the general or project specific public outreach conducted with Equity Focus Areas that led to the development of the project and how this outreach influenced the development of the project. Outreach activities that are reflected in PSRCs [Equitable Engagement Guidance](#) should be highlighted for this question. This guidance includes best practices for engaging with marginalized communities. Examples include:

- Compensating community members for their input
- Effectively addressing language barriers
- Partnering and co-creating with community-based organizations

PSRC Housing Opportunities by Place Tool

Project sponsors are asked about the likelihood that populations vulnerable to displacement currently living in the surrounding community will enjoy the benefits of the project in the future. PSRC's [Housing Opportunities by Place](#) resource should be used to determine the typology associated with the location of the project and identify the strategies the jurisdiction uses to reduce the risk of displacement that are aligned with those listed for the typology (click [here](#) to learn more about the methodology).

After contacting their Community Development or Planning Departments to learn more about their local comprehensive plans and the broader jurisdiction wide strategies that are currently in place to deter displacement, project sponsors should use the interactive map to identify where the project is located. After the project's location has been determined, project sponsors should select "Link to typology page" and identify the local strategies that are aligned with those listed for the corresponding typology, which include strategies such as:

- Implementing mandatory inclusionary zoning
- Creating fee waivers for rehabilitation of affordable housing
- Removing unnecessary large minimum lot size requirements for development
- Encouraging affordable housing near high-capacity transit stations

PSRC Regional Demographic Profile

The [Central Puget Sound Demographic Profile](#) includes key demographic data on people of color and low-income populations in the region, as well as other populations of interest such as older adults and people with disabilities. This document includes additional background information and detail that can supplement the aforementioned resources (e.g., race specific data). The data is based on the U.S. Census Bureau's 2015-2019 5-year American Community Survey (ACS) estimates.

Other Resources

Please note: This is not a comprehensive inventory of all data that may be available to sponsors regarding various populations within their project area, or data that may assist sponsors in addressing how their project improves health and equity. For example, King County has tools and resources available such as the [Equity Impact Review](#) tool and maps featuring key demographic data within the county related to equity. Pierce County also has [Health Equity Maps](#) available, related to a variety of measures including income and environmental health. Two additional examples of available tools include the United States Environmental Protection Agency's environmental justice mapping and screening tool called [EJSCREEN](#), and the Washington State Department of Health's [Environmental Health Disparities Map](#). Sponsors are welcome to provide more community-specific data if it is available and are encouraged to contact their county health departments or other local resources for further assistance.