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AMERICAN CITIES CLIMATE CHALLENGE  
KAPWA CONSULTING

**EQUITY  
CAPACITY  
BUILDING  
FUND FINAL  
REPORT**

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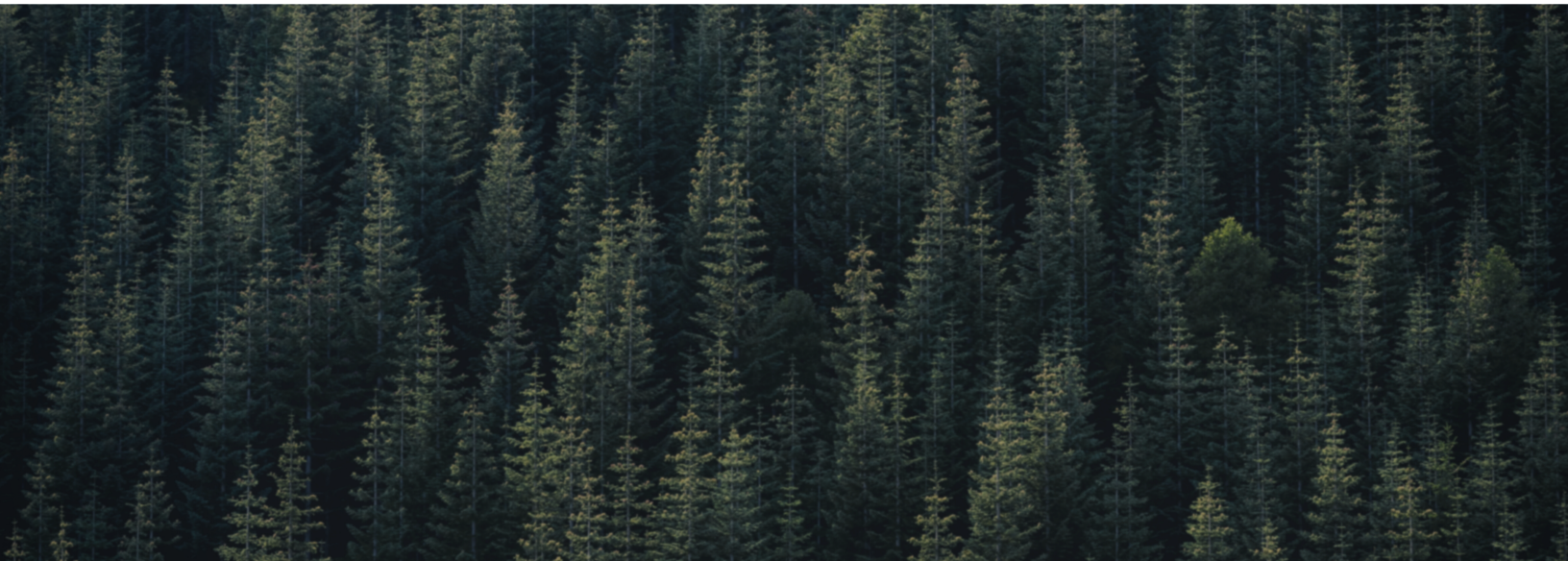
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American Cities  
Climate Challenge

**KAPWA CONSULTING**  
EQUITY SUSTAINABILITY COMMUNITY

**Bloomberg  
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Following the racial uprisings of 2020, the Climate Challenge responded by creating Equity Co-Director roles to lead the charge of understanding how equity could be implemented alongside GHG emission reduction targets within the initiative. Eloisa Portillo-Morales and Maria Stamas took on the difficult task, and were enabled by a six month extension to test out new methods for supporting equitable initiatives within Challenge cities. The focus was to create proof of concepts that addressed gaps and opportunities in the existing Climate Challenge structure. This included network learning, partnership development activities and the development of a rapid response fund - They Equity Capacity Building Fund.

After listening to City staff and leadership, Stamas and Portillo-Morales knew a capacity fund could fill the gap in services not able to be performed through the standard support services provided by the Challenge. This included facilitation, training, research, and other local partnership development work not supported through the national partner budgets or government budgets.

This was an opportunity to capacitate local equity expertise quickly to effectively get projects through a hurdle and move a project from “point F to G or M to N.”

In order to do this, the fund needed to be nimble. It also needed to be mission driven so that the funds could encourage collaboration and equity work across the different partners. Kapwa Consulting, LLC was brought on as a fund management partner to design and manage the application and distribution of funds, while also providing thought partnership and support on equitable implementation of projects and the management of relationships between government and community with consulting partners.

The total fund was \$240,000 dollars. All funds were all distributed as equity support service contracts across 11 different Climate Challenge Cities. The first round of the fund officially launched at the end of March 2021 with all projects completed by August 2021.

The purpose of the American Cities Climate Challenge Equity Capacity Building Fund is to help city staff and/or community groups meaningfully and intentionally advance equitable initiatives. The Fund intends to meet cities and communities where they are in their equity journey and to advance the city or community's specific needs.

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*Primary Goals:*

- Assist cities who want to advance equitable initiatives by providing timely, short-term support otherwise not available within the city.
- Build capacity amongst city staff to meaningfully integrate equity into their work beyond the funding.
- Investigate new methods for contracting directly with local equity service providers and identify needs/gaps they experience in working with the City.
- Facilitate learning across equity service providers.

*Secondary Goals:*

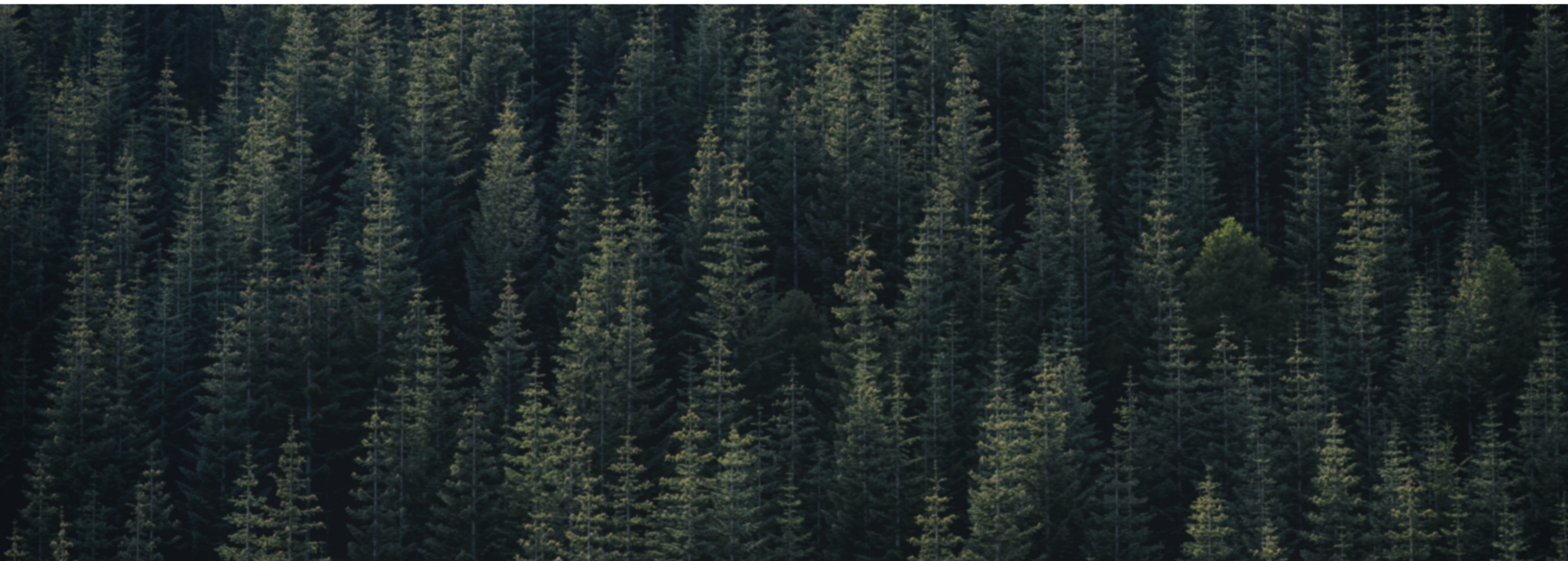
- Increase Interdepartmental and interdisciplinary collaboration.
- Increase the involvement of Mayors and their offices in climate and equity work.
- Invest and implement \$200K of equity capacity building support in less than 6 months.

The Equity Fund is committed to supporting work that centers and uplifts BIPOC, low-income, and other frontline communities who have been left out of climate action policy design, implementation, and benefits.

In working to address the impacts of decades of systemic and institutional racism, cities had to make a strong commitment to investing in authentic collaboration, capacity building and decision making power of impacted communities as well as racial equity competencies within city staff and structures. Partners committed to moving forward work and remaining accountable to the key mission and principles of the Fund outlined below:

*Key Principles:*

- Lead with a racial equity analysis: Ensure that the dynamics of institutional and systemic racism are considered and addressed throughout the design of the project.
- Center communities: Build upon identified priorities, needs, and community assets; move forward people-centered planning, adapt to the needs of communities
- Support collaborative learning: Through open communication and honest reflection, aim toward solutions that move the work forward, honoring where everyone is starting from. Commit to giving partners the information needed for everyone to move together.



After the initial meeting, the contractors were offered up to 2 hours of paid strategy support sessions with Kapwa staff, NRDC staff, and any other approved individual or group. In these sessions, contractors could solicit advice on their project goals and process.

In addition to strategy support sessions, Kapwa organized a Convening of all 11 contracting teams. The contractors were fully compensated for their time in an effort to encourage iteration and peer-to-peer learning. The teams were provided with each other's contact information in case they found parallels in their work or challenges and wished to remain in contact.

During the Convening, the Kapwa team provided an overview of Kapwa's mission and the goal behind this Fund, introduced each of the contracting teams, provided space for networking, and held dialogue around how equity practitioners who work with government and community define and hold themselves accountable.

The project teams (city project manager and contractor) were evaluated before beginning their projects and at the conclusion of their projects. Contractors also submitted an evaluation after the Contractors Convening.

In the pre-assessment, all of the project teams shared the following: They anticipated shifts in relationships with BIPOC communities, between the contractors and cities, and among city staff, departments, and agencies and they made a commitment to centering BIPOC communities in their work, with a particular emphasis on equitable community engagement. All teams anticipated the funding amount to be enough for the time period and the specific scoped portion of the larger project. They did mention that additional funding would help push their projects an extra step forward. And finally, they mentioned that without these funds, their projects would not have been possible at all or at this specific time.

After the Contractors Convening, the contractors shared the following: The overall Convening and each of the components were of high and very high value for all contractors. They did request a more formal peer-to-peer network for sharing lessons learned.

In the final evaluation, the project teams shared the following:

#### *Fund Structure*

- Almost all applicants found the Fund application and contracting process to be easy to navigate and found that receiving the money through a contract was easier than normal. The initial meeting with Kapwa, contract support, contractors convening, and support sessions were all helpful or very helpful.
- In order to improve the process for future opportunities, a longer time frame for scoping the project and executing deliverables is critical, examples of previous funded projects and relationships would be helpful, and a more streamlined application process or single form/system would help reduce any confusion.

*Relationship Shifts*

- 6 participants said that the relationship between the city and contract team at the start of the project was a new relationship, 10 participants said that the relationship was a mature relationship or close to mature, and 6 were somewhere in between. There were discrepancies between the contractors and the city on their rankings among 5 teams.
- At the end of the project, 4 participants said the relationship was the same while 18 participants stated it was better than at the start of the project. All participants said it was highly likely that they would work with their project partners in the future and that they would like to stay involved in this network.
- Project funding through a 3rd party contract had a positive impact on relationships for 13 participants because it allowed them to focus on the project goals instead of contracting or administrative logistics and the funding did not strain the city's limited budgets which made for a more open relationship.
- One participant, however, remarked that this process was easier to manage but may have reduced the potential closeness of a working relationship between the city and contractor. Two participants remarked that the process was slightly confusing at times in terms of who was accountable to who. The remaining participants noted that the 3rd party contract did not have an impact on relationships.
- All participants were successful in engaging BIPOC communities or preparing city staff to engage with BIPOC communities.



*What helped, hurt, or deepened the relationship between the city and the contract team?*

- Building trust is crucial and a frank discussion around whiteness as well as other issues helped center racial equity in the work.
- The shared application process and project design helped deepen the relationship as it felt like having a common stake in the process.
- Weekly check-ins, even if they were 10 or 15 mins, helped set clear expectations on what could be delivered in the timeline and ensured flexibility.
- Feedback and edits from the City to project pieces delayed some parts of the project. The City needs to be given a large window of time for response due to capacity.
- The City needs to actively fund these projects to show a deep commitment to the work.

*What were 1-3 takeaways from implementing your project?*

- A facilitator that is trusted by the community leads to deeper engagement and provides the space for honest feedback.
- A third party (Kapwa) contract manager helps eliminate some bureaucracy.

- When engaging community members, the work proceeds at the pace of trust, which can take more time.
- Establish a clear equity lens.
- Stipends are critical - valuing people's time by paying them is a critical piece of the work
- Offering compensation to focus group participants isn't a guarantee of a big turnout. Developing relationships with NGOs and service providers who work in this space to help recruit participants is even more important.
- Environmental Jargon can be overwhelming for those who want to get involved
- Cities need to create and build communication with the BIPOC community. Many people in the BIPOC community care about sustainability issues but don't feel connected to the City's work, or understand how to get involved. Speaking about climate & sustainability as a safety issue came up during community focus groups.
- It takes time to coordinate interdepartmental collaboration - each department functions like its own organization.
- Enabling community members to help design and co-create the project energized the group.

*Were you successful in engaging BIPOC communities (and/or priorities) as planned in your project? Please describe any successes or changes that were made in working toward, reaching or exceeding these and other equity goals set forth in your scope.*

- Community members were paid to participate in conversations and surveys. This helped give voice to BIPOC activists in the city an outlet to communicate.
- A BIPOC designer and writer were hired to support the project.
- Utilizing the networks of non traditionally environmental groups was key to the volume of engagement.
- Racial justice was emphasized in trainings and white participants were encouraged to find their self-interests in racial equity work and to strengthen their voice regarding advocacy.
- It is important to build authentic relationships with BIPOC communities and groups that serve BIPOC communities.



*“The third party contract allowed for rapid turn around, less bureaucratic tape in moving funds, and allows for community led practices.”*

*- Fund Recipient*

A lot of great work came out of this short timeline (see Addendum for Summary of Projects) and there is a clear appetite to continue and/or launch similar projects. In order to strengthen the structure of the next iteration of the Fund and to center the Fund's equity foundation, Kapwa can do the following:

- *Allocate more time for intentional co-design and project scoping.*
  - Cities and contractors were asked to develop a project within a month. This did not provide for a lot of time for co-design. Additionally, our team was not able to be a part of the project scoping, so asking teams to restructure their proposals was challenging given the time constraints. Being able to work alongside the city and contracting team to center equity in their projects can help lay out a stronger foundation and ensure that everyone is approaching the work with the same equity lens.
- *More time for implementation.*
  - Both our team and all of the applicants recognized the extremely short timeline as a challenge. A lot of projects were engaging community members and in some cases, recruiting community members to join focus groups or councils. These processes take time and are often subject to external forces, so more time is needed to implement successful projects and to build authentic relationships.
- *More accountability.*
  - The fund needs to be even clearer about the city, contractor, and Kapwa's role to ensure that everyone is committed to the principles of the Fund. One example of this is ensuring that cities are working with new contractors and/or cultivating local and BIPOC consultants. This may not have been a possibility for some cities who were trying to meet the Fund's deadline but this can be addressed the second iteration.

- *Develop a peer-to-peer network.*
  - The Contractors Convening was of very high or high value for all attendees. Contractors even expressed an interest in hosting the meeting earlier on in the process so they could connect with one another about their projects. There was also an interest in setting up communication avenues for the cohorts. In the next iteration, Kapwa can help foster a peer learning network.
- *Constantly iterate.*
  - All of the projects and the Fund process were constantly being iterated on and improved. Throughout the process, it's important to make adjustments. Making sure that all project teams are aware of this is important to the work.
- *Streamline application process.*
  - Most applicants stated that the application process was straightforward; however, it can be improved to be even simpler. The application materials can be condensed into one online version.

*“It was a much more positive and open relationship. Usually, the City grant process is more rigid and requires more formality, which can be off-putting or unachievable with a small staff. Not having to worry about meeting the usual requirements allowed us to spend more time talking about the roundtable sessions and strategizing on next steps.”*

*- Fund Recipient*

The City of Seattle and Rule Seven engaged communities of color in equitable road-pricing policies. This first round of the project included engagement of the City of Seattle's BIPOC-led advisory groups and the development of Racial Equity Outcomes. The engagement effort is still underway and the City and Rule Seven will host a workshop series to continue this dialogue in the near future.

The City of San Antonio and Southwest Workers Union (also known as Centro por la Justicia) hosted a multi-stakeholder participatory roundtable and series of work sessions with grassroots organizations, unions, direct service providers and more. These conversations began a coordinated process to develop a system of resilience hubs that can support communities in normal, disruption, and recovery modes, with a specific focus on extreme weather events. The City and SWU will continue to support resilience hub efforts through technical support and relationship managing. They plan to host a 6 month check in with the group.

The City of Columbus and CommEN Strategies engaged BIPOC community members through focus groups and a survey to understand how to increase engagement in the Sustainability Department's programs. They identified three major barriers and provided recommendations for each.

The City of San Jose and Winter Consulting hosted 9 meetings with the City's Equity Task Force (ETF), community partners, and City Staff to discuss a variety of topics related to the Department of Transportation's work. Equity Task Force members also conducted community outreach to understand community concerns with public transportation. In person pop-ups were also used to solicit stories about people's transportation experiences. Winter Consulting and ETF members will create outreach materials and share these with community members.

The City of Charlotte and Amplify Consulting partnered to provide more robust community engagement for the Charlotte Strategic Mobility Plan through a series of equity focus groups. 34 participants who were historically underrepresented in transportation planning were engaged and asked to share about their experiences with different modes of transportation.

The City of Pittsburgh and Bloomfield-Garfield Corporation (BGC) facilitated community workshops and a survey to understand how information is shared between city departments, how the city communicates with its residents, and how different city neighborhoods are identified and prioritized for green infrastructure improvement projects. The final Toolkit will serve as a resource for the City and help the City understand how to equitably engage residents and distribute resources.

The City of Atlanta and independent consultant Cicely Garrett engaged in a series of meetings to understand how city departments worked and engaged with one another, what equity foundations the city needed, and how to move forward with this work. They plan to host another series of joint department meetings to develop a Shared Racial Equity Framework and Equity Definition.

The City of Los Angeles and Nelson/Nygaard Consulting collaborated on a stakeholder assessment and engagement framework and facilitated inclusive listening sessions to ensure that LADOT programs and service delivery are equitable and internal culture prioritizes racial equity. The City will now review the community recommendations and determine how to support the work of a Community Advisory Board committed to centering equity.

The City of Denver and independent consultant Candace Johnson provided a series of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) training sessions for the Sustainability Advisory Committee (SAC) and their subcommittees. 6 different cohorts attended the 3 hour long introductory training intended to establish a shared vocabulary, help participants understand oppression, and apply the learnings to their lives.

The Washington DC DOEE and independent consultant Carmen Bolt drafted an equity narrative to share DC history from an equity and environmental justice perspective, vignettes to demonstrate the connection between government supported racist policies of the past and their impacts on current residents, and a bibliography of texts and data sources. The equity narrative and training materials will support DOEE staff on their equity journeys.

The City of Cincinnati and Adaptation International, GroundworkUSA, and Dr. Trott's lab created the City's first ever Climate Equity Indicators Report. The Report provides neighborhood-level disaggregated socio-demographic and environmental data that will lay the groundwork for an equity-informed approach to local climate policy. The learnings from this Report and the efforts of the Equity Steering Committee will be integrated into the Climate Action Plan.