Questions and Answers

PLANNING ESSENTIALS WEBINAR SERIES:
CENTERING EQUITY - EQUITY AND THE EQUITY ASSESSMENT STANDARD

Contents

Data and Existing Conditions

Question: In Element B: Existing Conditions, did BCDC consider any new or different factors that helped identify at-risk communities beyond those typically captured in standard planning practices or commonly used state designations like CalEnviroScreen?
Answer: Our existing condition requirements are largely aligned with established data sources and our institutional understanding of these communities. That said, this is still an active area of review, and we expect additional insights may emerge as jurisdictions bring in their local knowledge. Local partners often have a more nuanced understanding of communities that may not be fully captured in statewide tools, so we encourage utilizing the local expertise of community partners and incorporating it into your planning process. We also want to emphasize that there is flexibility in how vulnerable communities are defined. While the RSAP includes a baseline definition, jurisdictions may use local or alternative state definitions, provided they are not omitting key populations. Importantly, datasets like CalEnviroScreen or EPA tools should be treated as a starting point, not the endpoint. Direct engagement with communities is essential to validate and refine these definitions and to ensure that less visible or historically underrepresented communities are not overlooked.

Question: What does "recent" mean when referring to the review of existing conditions materials?

Answer: There is not a strict period we use for what counts as recent. What we are generally referring to is whether there has been recent community engagement or planning work that is still relevant to the questions being asked in the existing conditions report. For example, if you completed a general plan process or community engagement effort within the last few years, and the findings are still applicable, you can absolutely use that information in your existing conditions. We are also very aware of engagement fatigue, so we do not want jurisdictions going back to communities repeatedly to ask the same questions. As a general guide, work from the past 3 to 5 years may be considered recent enough, as long as conditions have not significantly changed and the information is still relevant. That said, we're happy to review materials and talk through whether it meets the intent of the engagement and the Equity Assessment Standard requirements for the element.

Planning Team and Roles

Question: Could you elaborate on what project team means here versus who you are engaging?
Answer: When we refer to the project team, we suggest thinking of it as two components. First, there is the internal planning team, meaning the internal team leading the subregional plan. Second, there is the broader planning team, which may include an advisory committee, partnerships with community-based organizations (CBOs), or other collaborators.
We are asking that the broader planning team reflects the community you are planning for. This can be achieved through CBO partnerships, including community leaders on an advisory board, or other approaches to structuring your larger project or planning team. The key is ensuring that the team helping shape the plan reflects the community you are engaging.

Question: What is the best way to sign up to join a planning session? League of Women Voters has leagues all throughout the Bay Area.
Answer: The best way is to connect directly with the city or county you are interested in and engage with their planning team and public engagement process. If you are unsure whether your jurisdiction has formally initiated a planning process, BCDC tracks these initiations across the region and posts notices when a city or county begins a plan. Those notices include links to the jurisdiction's website, where you can sign up for mailing lists, receive updates, and find information on upcoming meetings and ways to get involved.

Community Engagement Design and Requirements

Question: With providing stipends, what has been the most effective way to pay participants for their time?
Answer:
Environmental Justice Advisor Naama Raz-Yaseef: For the examples shared in the webinar, once we recruit specific community leaders and leadership teams, we bring them on through a contract and clearly outline how much they will be paid for participating in each meeting. It is organized, and we provide payment on a set schedule, such as quarterly. For larger workshops, it is more challenging because you do not always know how many people will show up. In those cases, our approach is usually to do a raffle, either with fun prizes or with cash-equivalent gift cards, like Visa cards.
Environmental Justice Advisor Julio Garcia: For us, we provide a gift card every time we have a meeting. If the meeting is two hours, we provide a $50 gift card. If it's a longer meeting, like three hours, it goes up accordingly, so we are generally paying community members around $25 an hour. We use Visa gift cards so they can be used anywhere. We also partner with local businesses so that when community members go there, they recognize that RISE is providing the support, and there are not as many questions or added surcharges on the gift cards or purchases. We also make sure we pay every project member who participates, and in addition we provide childcare, translation if needed, food, and everything else. The goal is to make sure community members do not have barriers to participation or barriers to voicing their opinions and are fully engaging in the process.

Question: Is the expectation that there will be community engagement or workshops for each Element in the RSAP Guidelines? For example, do we go back to the community to present the potential list of strategies and pathways or is it enough to use input received from the community to inform the final strategies and pathways?
Answer: You are expected to engage early and often throughout the process. There are five minimum points of engagement we ask jurisdictions to include, which correspond to key decision points in the planning process. These are outlined in the checklist we posted earlier this week. You do not need to hold a separate workshop for each step, and multiple engagement points can be combined into a single workshop where appropriate. That said, we do expect at least a couple of meaningful touchpoints over the course of the process so that engagement is iterative and builds over time. We also strongly encourage closing the loop with participants. When you receive input from the community, it is important to go back and share how that input was used and what decisions it informed. Ideally, this happens throughout the process

as engagement continues, but it is also important to provide a clear update on the final outcomes so participants can see how their input shaped the plan.

Question: What recommendations do you have for communication between the technical and communication teams, to incorporating feedback into plans? Often summary reports are the result of events but are not as effective (in my opinion).
Answer: Coordination between the technical and communications teams is key to ensuring community input is not only summarized but actively used to shape decisions. In practice, this means establishing regular touchpoints between teams throughout the process, not just after engagement events. The technical team should identify how input is influencing options, tradeoffs, and emerging strategies in real time, while the communications team helps translate that evolving information back out to the public in a clear and accessible way. Ongoing coordination helps ensure that public engagement is iterative and connected to decision-making, rather than treated as a separate reporting exercise.

Question: When you talk about aligning community input with technical decisions on a timeline, presumably that entails allowing enough time for understanding and thoughtful input prior to decision points. Do you have any advice as to how far in advance to start engaging the community around that specific upcoming decision point.
Answer: The expectation is that engagement happens early enough in the decision-making process to meaningfully shape outcomes, not just respond to a near-final decision. That means engagement should begin while options are still open and the decision space has not been narrowed. There is not a fixed lead time because it will vary by community, topic, and complexity of the decision. Instead, the focus is on sequencing engagement so there is sufficient time to introduce the issue, gather community input, incorporate that input, and return to the community to refine the direction before decisions are finalized. Engagement needs to be built into the decision-making timeline to allow community input to meaningfully influence technical work as it evolves.

Funding

Question: How does BCDC expect to transparently approach the gap in available resources?
Answer: We do require jurisdictions to lay out an implementation plan that begins to identify how projects may be funded. If you cannot identify funding sources that align with a particular project, we ask that you clearly note that in your implementation plan

and identify it as a funding gap. We are also developing a tool with MTC that will be released this summer. It links a database of adaptation projects to potential funding sources and allows users to filter based on project characteristics. For example, you could indicate whether a project benefits vulnerable communities, and the tool would help surface funding sources that may be most applicable. We recognize and agree that we do not want funding to be allocated in an inequitable way. The goal is to ensure that funding is prioritized for vulnerable communities and that cities are not left on their own to try to fund adaptation entirely through local resources. There is not a single answer to this challenge, but we expect it to be an ongoing conversation, and we will continue working with jurisdictions to refine how these gaps are identified and addressed over time.

Question: When thinking about outcomes for Elements D, E, F, and G, many communities may not have the resources in terms of dollars to adapt. How will the state step in to support communities when there is not sufficient local money to build or maintain the infrastructure and resilient housing needed in those vulnerable communities?

Answer: This is an issue we are actively working through with other state agencies, and we recognize the scale of the funding gap. At the state level, there are currently some resources available, including the SB1 Grant Program Track 2, which can support adaptation projects. We also work with partners like Coastal Quest, which maintains a regularly updated coastal funding database for adaptation and resilience projects. Looking ahead, SB 272 includes language indicating that jurisdictions that complete subregional shoreline adaptation plans should be prioritized for state funding. Right now, that applies primarily to SB1, but we are also working with other state agencies to explore how that prioritization could extend to additional funding programs. There are also broader state funding sources, including Proposition 4, the recent climate bond, which includes equity requirements intended to direct funding toward equity priority communities. That said, we fully recognize that there is a significant gap between available funding and the scale of need. Local financing is one tool, but it will not close that gap on its own and may not always be the most equitable approach. We are also exploring additional regional funding strategies and measures over time. We expect this to continue evolving, and we will be providing more guidance and discussion through future webinars focused specifically on funding and implementation pathways.