



CALIFORNIA

# STRATEGIC GROWTH COUNCIL

## Strategic Growth Council Racial Equity Action Plan (2023-25)

## Letter from Executive Director (2021-24), Lynn von Koch-Liebert

I am thrilled to introduce the [2023-25 SGC Racial Equity Action Plan](#) (REAP), which is an evolution and continuation of SGC’s 2019-22 REAP. When the Strategic Growth Council unanimously adopted its REAP in 2019, we embarked on a process to transform State government to advance racial equity. Black, Native American, and people of color, as well as many other historically marginalized and under-resourced communities continue to bear the burden of environmental harm, civic exclusion, health emergencies, and economic inequality – among myriad impacts. SGC aims to undo systemic and institutional injustices that prevent opportunity for all, and to provide resources that support healthy, thriving, and resilient communities for all and the most at-need Californians.

The SGC REAP involves all facets of our organization – from our leadership, to our grant programs, policy initiatives, cross-sector collaborative work, and more. Our staff, programs, and investments reflect a dedication of the State legislature and administration to advance racial equity through intentional investment and cross-sector collaboration. Staff will continue to prepare annual updates presented to the SGC that will build accountability and provide opportunities for public input. SGC made strides in its first REAP to integrate and advance racial equity in government practice. Updated for 2023, this REAP includes new topics to ensure SGC programs address barriers and improve outcomes, including organizational improvements for equity, innovative granting strategies, policy advancement, data collection, and culturally competent and empowering engagement with Californians of color and tribes. Importantly, the REAP also carries forward Goals and Actions from the 2019-22 REAP that still require work and attention. While we find it imperative to move swiftly, we have balanced this with the need to be thoughtful, thorough, and to recognize that systematic changes should be institutionalized before we move to the next Action.

Racial equity is a top priority at SGC and [its interagency Council](#). Since 2020, the Council has built on its landmark [Racial Equity Resolution](#) to expand racial equity across State entities – including [Council Priority 1: Racial Equity Resource Hub](#) and [Council Priority 2: Advancing Capacity Building as A Key Equity Strategy](#). Most recently, SGC’s leadership, staff, and interagency Council have begun to work together to support the implementation of Governor Gavin Newsom’s historic [Executive Order N-16-22](#).

This work is just getting started! Our vision for racial equity will enable us to continue delivering key outcomes with the help of our staff, support from state partners, and input from local leaders and communities across California. I invite you to learn more about our commitment to racial equity within the 2023-25 SGC Racial Equity Action Plan and to partner with us in advancing this important work.

Sincerely,

*Lynn von Koch-Liebert*

*Executive Director (2021-24), Strategic Growth Council*

## Introduction

### What does the REAP do?

A Racial Equity Action Plan (REAP) is critical to planning for, implementing, and measuring racial equity outcomes. SGC strongly values the voices, perspectives, and lived experiences of California’s diverse communities, which have helped shape and adjust the programs and initiatives administered to date. SGC’s REAP is a **strategic plan, statement of intent, and accountability measure** that ensures all facets of SGC will continue to implement strategies that prioritize and advance racial equity. Embedding racial equity as an organizational priority and implementing associated actions advances SGC’s vision of healthy, thriving, and resilient communities.

### SGC’s Racial Equity Vision

***All people in California live in healthy, thriving, and resilient communities regardless of race.***

### Prioritizing Racial Equity at SGC: Timeline and Process

In April 2019, the SGC approved the [2019-22 REAP](#), making SGC the first multi-agency State body in the United States to adopt a plan outlining concrete actions to achieve racial equity across five organizational categories: 1) Leadership, 2) Operations, 3) Grant Programs, 4) Technical Assistance and Capacity Building, and 5) Interagency Collaboration. Many milestones have been achieved in the process of advancing racial equity at SGC, including:

- Spring 2018: SGC partners with the Public Health Institute (PHI) and Race Forward to launch the Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE) Capitol Cohort Pilot (now the Capitol Collaborative on Race and Equity, or CCORE), which builds the capacity of California’s State Government agencies and departments to advance racial equity.
- April 2019: SGC approves and publishes the 2019-22 REAP.
- April 2020: SGC establishes a Health and Equity Program to track and measure implementation progress of the REAP.
- August 2020: SGC approves a landmark [2020 Racial Equity Resolution](#), further embedding racial equity as a priority of each Council agency.
- October 2020: SGC establishes an interagency Racial Equity Working Group (REWG) with representatives from each Council agency with a focus on strategizing and sharing best practices for advancing racial equity.
- April 2021: Councilmembers provide the first written SGC Racial Equity Resolution Report documenting their progress.
- October 2021: The 2020-2021 CCORE Learning Cohort commences under the facilitation of PHI, comprising of fifteen staff from SGC and the Governor’s Office of Planning and Research.
- April 2022: SGC launches the [Racial Equity Resource Hub](#) in alignment with the updated [2021 Racial Equity Resolution and Council Priority 1](#), to provide a public resource for State and local entities to access information about racial equity initiatives being led by diverse governmental agencies.

- October 2022: SGC finalizes the [2019-22 REAP](#) and reports on progress and next steps at the October 27, 2022, Strategic Growth Council Meeting.
- Early 2023: SGC publishes an updated REAP with goals for implementation from 2023 to 2025.

#### Methodology and Measurement: How do we set goals and track our progress?

The implementation and evolution of the SGC REAP involves various facets. As programs set and implement goals, metrics are set to measure the impact and progress of each REAP priority. The steps below are those taken to carry out this process:

- **Cross-Programmatic Coordination to Set Goals and Metrics:** Programs work together to set and advance goals. This includes, but is not limited to:
  - Collaboration within programs to embed the REAP into programmatic operations;
  - Ongoing consultation with Health and Equity Program staff to track REAP progress;
  - Ongoing implementation and tracking of the 2019-22 REAP and building on pre-existing commitments and lessons learned to inform the goals, actions, and metrics for 2023-25;
  - Incorporation of metrics that align with programmatic REAP goals, which includes setting metrics based on: program objectives or scopes of work, data, enabling legislation, research of best practices, community engagement, and more; and
  - Staff-led working groups around specific topics to increase cross-programmatic efficiency and collaboration on REAP goals.
- **Interagency Collaboration:** SGC convenes agencies and departments leading racial equity-focused initiatives, including through the Council and SGC Racial Equity Working Group, which enables additional oversight of the SGC REAP.
- **Reporting and Research:** Staff research best practices for advancing racial equity in government, partner with trusted organizations in the racial equity capacity building space, and develop annual reports for accountability and Council and public input.
- **External Feedback:** SGC seeks input from external audiences to ensure accountability in SGC’s racial equity advancement work, including through public Council meetings, external engagement and affairs, and through programs and partnerships (such as grants, collaboratives, and Task Forces).
- **Building Capacity and Competencies:** SGC staff commit to ongoing, collective learning about advancing racial equity in government through participation in trainings, collaboratives, and engagement with external audiences.

## Executive Summary: Embedding Racial Equity Across SGC

The [2023-25 Racial Equity Action Plan](#) (REAP) sets racial equity-driven goals across all facets of the SGC organizational structure. The REAP engages **SGC Leadership** (including the interagency council, executive and deputy directors, administration, and operations), **SGC Grant Programs** (including California Climate Investment and Social and Climate Infrastructure Grant Programs), **SGC Technical Assistance and Capacity Building Initiatives**, and **SGC Interagency and Cross-Programmatic Collaborative Initiatives**. SGC hosts diverse programs across these areas, all which have set and begun progress on racial equity-driven commitments. Internally, staff convene within three internal working groups on the following topics: Technical Assistance and Contract Equity; Workforce Equity and Organizational Culture; and Engagement and Coordination with Tribes.

SGC maintains a commitment to ensuring and improving access to resources, information, and civic engagement for historically under-served communities in California. The way that different programs within SGC carry out these commitments are often associated with specific, but sometimes different designations of communities. These designations are often informed by legislation or funding programs. In order to connect specific racial equity actions with existing strategies at the program level, this document includes these designations including but not limited to **disadvantaged communities, under-resourced communities, disadvantaged unincorporated communities (DUCs), under-served and low-income communities, and rural communities**. The REAP includes actions across the organization that specifically work to improve access for and outcomes within Black, Native American, and communities of color, including meaningfully working with tribes. The characteristics that make up a priority community are intersectional and compounding. Determinants include but are not limited to race and ethnicity, gender and sexual orientation, age, disability, geographic location, low income or high unemployment rates, burdens due to housing costs, exposure to environmental hazards, levels of educational attainment, and more. For more information on the designation of priority communities and other key terms, please click here to reference the [Glossary](#).

Building on the 2019-22 REAP, the following section highlights key racial equity actions and thematic approaches across each SGC initiative. Please click the following link to the 2023-25 REAP to review detailed **goals, actions, metrics, and implementation timelines**: [https://sgc.ca.gov/initiatives/healthandequity/docs/20230814-SGC\\_Racial\\_Equity\\_Action\\_Plan.pdf](https://sgc.ca.gov/initiatives/healthandequity/docs/20230814-SGC_Racial_Equity_Action_Plan.pdf).

### Council, Leadership, and Administration Council Meetings, Priorities, and Resolutions

- Continue to utilize public Strategic Growth Council meetings as forums to discuss and develop agency equity initiatives.
- Continue to implement the SGC Racial Equity Resolution and priorities – including [Council Priority 1: Racial Equity Resource Hub](#) and [Council Priority 2: Advancing Capacity Building as a Key Equity Strategy](#).

### Organizational Culture: Leadership, Human Resources, and Operations

- Further develop an organizational culture of prioritizing equity and furthering workforce equity for SGC staff, including embedding equity in SGC’s hiring practices, consistent with constitutional and legal requirements, and providing greater opportunities for new and existing staff at all levels to thrive at SGC.
- Explore strategies to improve engagement with and support to communities through contracting and other strategies embedded within SGC grant programs, procurement, and other strategies. This includes identifying ways to support community payment strategies within select programs, including the Land Equity Task Force and building on the Council Priority to remove barriers to accessing State resources.
- Further align SGC REAP with existing racial equity advancement efforts across State and local government(s), including the [Governor’s Executive Order N-16-22](#).

#### Communications and External Affairs

- Develop and disseminate key messages around race and racial equity across SGC programs including language pertaining to SGC’s Racial Equity Action Plan.
- Further ground communications materials, content, and reporting in racial equity data.
- Expand outreach to priority communities through key media outlets that are based in and represent local communities.

#### California Climate Investments Grant Programs

##### Affordable Housing and Sustainable Communities (AHSC)

- Ensure racial equity approaches are embedded in AHSC projects.
- Build greater capacity and technical assistance offerings, and increase outreach, program visibility, and access to priority communities.

##### Climate Change Research Program (CCR)

- Continue to prioritize non-traditional forms of knowledge in State climate change research, including through partnerships between academic researchers and with community-based organizations that represent Black, Native American, and communities of color. Support integration of this model within research conducted to inform the California Fifth Climate Change Assessment.

##### Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation (SALC)

- Expand outreach to and engagement with tribes to increase tribal participation in SALC.
- Evaluate program to identify gaps in accessibility for priority communities, including beginning farmers and ranchers, California tribes, and/or disadvantaged communities.

## Social and Climate Infrastructure Grant Programs

### Community Resilience Centers (CRC)

- Ensure tribal access to program resources via outreach, engagement, funding targets, and technical assistance for tribes.
- Incorporate best practices for equity-driven grant application, review, and scoring processes, including best practices that have been operationalized by other SGC grant programs within the SGC REAP.

### Transformative Climate Communities (TCC)

- Identify and address barriers for priority communities – including Disadvantaged Unincorporated Communities (DUCs) and tribes – in the TCC application process. Explore mechanisms to direct TCC applicants – including unsuccessful applicants – to alternate funding sources for their projects.
- Implement a pilot program to administer advance payment to select grantees, in accordance with enabling legislation AB156.
- Further highlight racial equity impacts of TCC through media content, program metrics, and community-driven stories.

## Technical Assistance and Capacity Building

### Community Assistance for Climate Equity (CACE)

- Create a tribal-focused technical assistance and capacity building program to assist California tribes in navigating and accessing SGC resources.
- Share technical assistance models across State government, including via CACE's Technical Assistance Guidelines for State Agencies.

## Interagency and Cross-Programmatic Collaborative Initiatives

### Health and Equity Program (HEP)

- Center racial equity within the activities and policy priorities of the interagency [California Health in All Policies Task Force](#).
- Engage and support racial equity practitioners within SGC and across California State government through technical assistance, implementation support, communications, and more.
- Facilitate tracking, implementation, and reporting of the SGC REAP.

### Tribal Coordination and Engagement Initiatives

- Across SGC programs, increase outreach to, engagement of, and access to resources for tribal populations. Improve technical assistance and capacity building opportunities for tribal applicants; improve SGC staff competency for engaging with, consulting, and supporting tribes.

## Glossary – Key Racial Equity Terms

### *Advanced Payment*

- Practice that allows grant applicants to receive payment for grant-related activities in advance rather than taking on the cost associated with the work up front themselves and receive reimbursement thereafter.
- Enabling Legislation for the Transformative Climate Communities and Community Resilience Center programs: [Assembly Bill No. 156](#) and [Assembly Bill No. 211](#).
- Involves close coordination with the Department of Finance.

### *California’s Fifth Climate Change Assessment*

- The California Governor’s Office of Planning and Research is leading implementation of the California’s Fifth Climate Change Assessment (Fifth Assessment), in partnership with the California Energy Commission, California Natural Resources Agency, and California Strategic Growth Council. The Fifth Assessment is a suite of original research and tools describing the impacts and risks of climate change to equip communities and leaders across the state with the best available science to inform their adaptation planning and decision-making processes.
- Engaging and partnering with communities across the state in the development of the Fifth Assessment, specifically those that have been traditionally underrepresented in research, results in research outcomes and tools that better address community needs to inform equitable responses to the impacts of climate change.
- Enabling Legislation: [Senate Bill No. 1320 \(2020, Stern\)](#).

### *Capacity Building*

- The process of strengthening local coordination, leadership, knowledge, skills, expertise, and access to resources in California tribes and under-resourced communities with the goal of helping to develop or increase the ability of that community to independently compete for grants and implement projects in the future.
- Reference: [Building the Capacity of Community Leaders: Best Practices & Lessons Learned from the Partners Advancing Climate Equity \(PACE\) Pilot Program \(Medium\)](#).

### *Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR)*

- An approach to health and environmental research meant to increase the value of studies for both researchers and the community being studied. SGC’s Climate Change Research Program advances CBPR through its community engagement initiatives and research models, including a co-principal investigator model. CBPR increased the inclusion of priority communities and their needs in state-led climate change research.



- References: [2021-2022 Strategic Growth Council Racial Equity Action Plan Update \(ca.gov\)](#) (page 6), [Community-Based Participatory Research: Assessing the Evidence: Summary - AHRQ Evidence Report Summaries - NCBI Bookshelf \(nih.gov\)](#).

### *Disadvantaged Communities*

- See “Priority Communities.”

### *Disadvantaged Unincorporated Communities (DUCs)*

- Disadvantaged Unincorporated Communities (DUCs) are defined by Section 79505.5 of the Water Code (2002) as “an area of inhabited territory located within an unincorporated area of a County in which the annual median household income is less than 80 percent of the statewide median household income.” State law considers an area with 12 or more registered voters to be an inhabited territory as determined by California legislation. DUCs also vary in size and population, but the lack of data accuracy has resulted in many DUCs not being formally defined under the U.S. Census; Census Designated Places (CDPs) is the term the federal government uses to account for unincorporated areas in the U.S. Notably, disadvantaged communities may be defined differently by various programs as explained by the Department of Water Resources’ White Paper: [Disadvantaged Communities Nomenclature Within the State of California: Findings and Conclusions — A Recommendation Document](#).
- Reference: [TCC DUC Staff Report June 2021 \(ca.gov\)](#) (pages 7-8).

### *Health in All Policies (HiAP)*

- Health in All Policies (HiAP) advances a collaborative, interagency approach to embed health, equity, and sustainability into decision-making processes, and to improve health for all.
- Reference: [California Health in All Policies Task Force Factsheet](#).

### *“Priority Communities”*

- “Priority Communities,” including Under-Resourced Communities, Disadvantaged Communities, and/or Low-Income Communities, are referenced throughout the SGC REAP. This term aims to be inclusive of historically under-resourced communities and encompasses Black, Native American, and communities of color, disadvantaged communities, low-income communities, California tribes, communities of diverse gender identity and sexual orientation, intersectional communities, and more.
- Under-resourced communities are disadvantaged and/or low-income communities as designated by Senate Bill (SB) 535 (Disadvantaged Communities) and Assembly Bill (AB) 1550 (Low-Income Communities). “Disadvantaged Communities” refers to the areas throughout California that, “are disproportionately affected by environmental pollution and other hazards that can lead to negative public health effects, exposure, or environmental degradation.” These areas may include communities that, “are of low income, high unemployment, low levels of home ownership, high rent burden, or low levels of educational attainment.” More information about the designation of disadvantaged communities per SB 535 and AB 1550, as put forth by the California Environmental Protection Agency, can be found

here”: [https://calepa.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/6/2022/05/Updated-Disadvantaged-Communities-Designation-DAC-May-2022-Eng.a.hp\\_-1.pdf](https://calepa.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/6/2022/05/Updated-Disadvantaged-Communities-Designation-DAC-May-2022-Eng.a.hp_-1.pdf).

### *Procedural Equity*

- Inclusive, accessible, authentic engagement and representation in decision-making processes regarding programs and policies – particularly when involving priority communities.
- Reference: [Environmental Justice Primer for Ports: Defining Environmental Justice | US EPA](#).

### *Resilience*

- A capability to anticipate, prepare for, respond to, and recover from significant multi-hazard threats with minimum damage to social well-being, the economy, and the environment ([California Climate Adaptation Strategy](#)).
- A community’s resilience may also be determined by its ability to survive, adapt, and thrive no matter what acute shock or chronic stressor it experiences (according to the State’s [Planning and Investing for a Resilient California guidebook](#)).

### *Structural Barriers*

- An Urban Institute Research Report defines structural barriers as, “obstacles that collectively affect a group disproportionately and perpetuate or maintain stark disparities in outcomes.” Within the REAP we utilize structural barriers to refer to the policies, processes and structures that contribute to inequitable access to State resources.
- Reference: [Structural Barriers to Racial Equity in Pittsburgh: Expanding Economic Opportunity for African American Men and Boys \(urban.org\)](#).

### *Technical Assistance (TA)*

- The process of providing targeted support to an agency, organization, or community with a development need or resource gap. TA may be delivered in many ways, such as one-on-one consultation, small group facilitation, technical resources and analysis, or through a web-based clearinghouse. TA is one of the most effective methods for building the capacity of an organization.
- Reference: [Strategic Growth Council Technical Assistance Toolkit: Definitions](#), [Senate Bill No. 1072 \(2018, Leyva\)](#).