



Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in Climate Policy and Tech

MAY 2022



Overview

Following a roundtable on improving diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in the climate policy and climate tech spaces, a cross-disciplinary, intergenerational, and diverse group of climate professionals identified the following approaches that institutions can take right now to improve DEI within their organizations:

Ensuring Leadership Accountability

- ▶ Establish a set of DEI principles that are incorporated into a mission statement and strategic plan;
- ▶ Incorporate transformative justice practices and proven conflict management strategies into leadership teams; and
- ▶ Develop a set of leadership competencies and associated targets for holding leadership accountable.

Creating a Culture of Inclusivity and Trust

- ▶ Establish spaces like affinity or employee resource groups, anonymous feedback processes, and/or mentorship programs;
- ▶ Collect demographic data to measure workplace disparities and create hiring and retention plans based on demographic data results; and
- ▶ Provide and subsidize ongoing learning and development regarding DEI to increase knowledge and skills of staff members.

Hiring

- ▶ Develop structured processes for hiring that include standardized interview questions and anonymized reviews; and
- ▶ Create paid internship opportunities and formal intern-to-employee pipelines, especially in the clean energy space.

Strengthening the Pipeline

- ▶ Bolster partnerships and collaboration with institutions that support women-identifying people and communities of color in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) careers; and
- ▶ Develop fun and accessible tools and programs to educate youth on climate issues.

Influencing Funding Institutions

- ▶ Support cleantech venture capital and early stage venture funds led by women-identifying people and people of color; and
- ▶ Host roundtables to encourage philanthropy to cater to youth climate advocacy groups.

Participants also identified a series of shared resources that could be developed and suggested cross-organization changes to more effectively execute these recommendations.

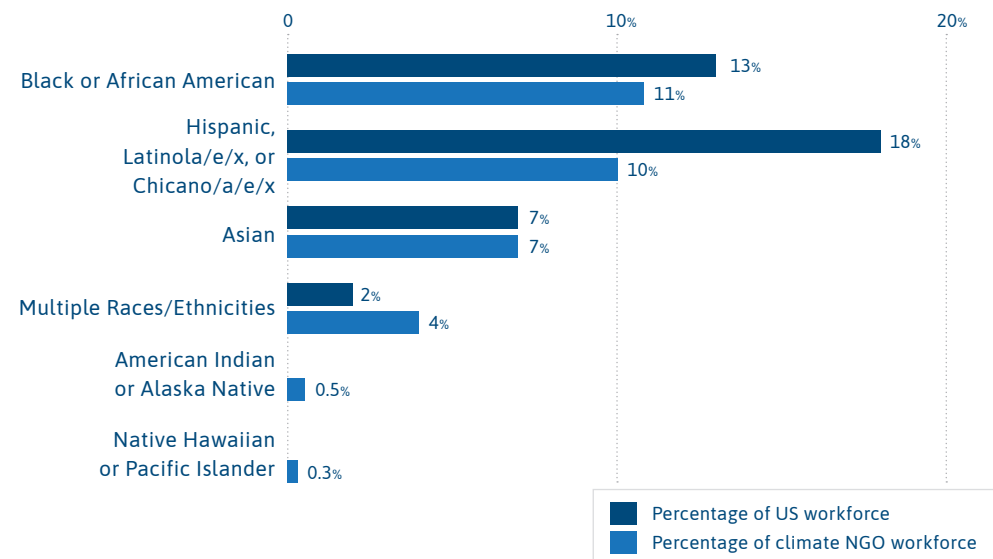


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Introduction

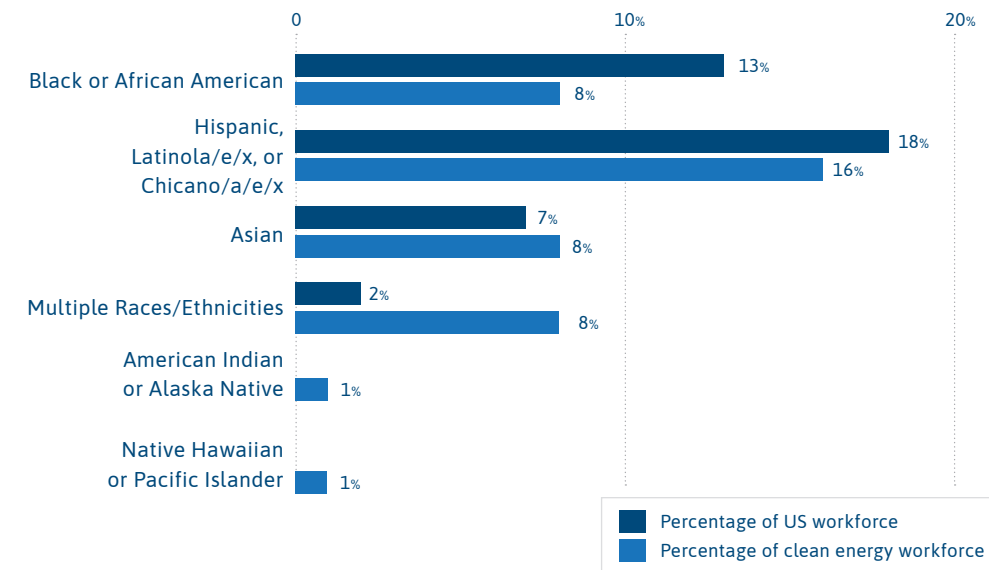
The climate policy and climate tech spaces suffer from a stark lack of racial, ethnic, and gender diversity in the workforce. Sixty percent of [climate policy](#) and [clean energy](#) workers in the United States identify as non-Hispanic/Latino/a/x/e and White, [while less than 30% of workers](#) in the clean energy sector identify as women. Workers of color are much [less likely](#) to hold leadership positions in climate organizations. Moreover, there is a [26% gender wage gap](#) in the solar industry. Despite progress made over the past few years in [hiring more workers of color in environmental policy](#), disparities across race, ethnicity, and gender remain.

Racial and Ethnic Diversity in the Climate Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) Workforce



Sources: Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey, US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2021, <https://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat18.htm>; "2021 NGO & Foundation Transparency Report Card", Green 2.0, 2021, <https://diversegreen.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/2021-ngo-foundation-transparency-report-card.pdf>.

Racial and Ethnic Diversity in the Clean Energy Workforce



Sources: Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey, US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2021, <https://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat18.htm>; "Help Wanted: Diversity in Clean Energy," E2, 2021, <https://e2.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/E2-ASE-AABE-EEFA-BOSS-Diversity-Report-2021.pdf>.

Women-Identifying in Clean Energy



Sources: "Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey," US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2021, <https://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat18.htm>; "Help Wanted: Diversity in Clean Energy," E2, <https://e2.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/E2-ASE-AABE-EEFA-BOSS-Diversity-Report-2021.pdf>



To make progress on this critical issue, the Aspen Institute’s Tech Policy Hub and Aspen Institute Energy and Environment Program, in consultation with Green 2.0, convened an intergenerational, cross-disciplinary group of climate professionals to improve diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in the climate policy and climate tech spaces. This roundtable, which took place in mid-March 2022, brought together both young talent and senior leaders in climate tech and climate policy from government, academia, the private sector, and civil society. The purpose of this meeting was to put forth best practices that organizations in the United States can follow to move DEI work forward within their own institutions, while also identifying further cross-organizational investments that need to be made. Over 40 attendees participated. The meeting was conducted under the [Chatham House Rule](#) to allow participants to speak freely.

The participants first identified the greatest challenges they faced in improving DEI within their organizations, and were then divided into 5 groups to brainstorm specific action items that would address those challenges. The discussion roughly focused on 5 themes:

- ▶ Ensuring Leadership Accountability;
- ▶ Creating a Culture of Inclusivity and Trust;
- ▶ Hiring;
- ▶ Strengthening the Pipeline; and
- ▶ Influencing Funding Institutions.

This report summarizes: (1) the diversity, equity, and inclusion issues that the group identified; (2) recommendations that single actors (e.g., organizations, individuals, and executives) can take right now with existing resources; and (3) recommendations that would require additional support (e.g., funding, staff time, and institutions). In section II, we summarize the recommendations that individual actors could take to improve DEI. In section III, we summarize the overarching issues that the group identified and provide more detail on the recommendations in the 5 themes.

This report is authored by the Aspen Tech Policy Hub and Aspen Institute Energy and Environment Program, in consultation with Green 2.0. We would specifically like to thank Adriane Alicea, Betsy Cooper, Gregory Gershuny, Raviya Ismail, Andrés Jimenez, and Maitreyi Sistla for their thought leadership; Maeve Sneddon for her assistance in writing this report; Meha Ahluwalia, Hazel Choi, Melanie Diaz, Miecha Forbes, Alyssa Garza, and Shaila Vester-Skinner for their critical support during the roundtable; and all of the roundtable participants.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Key Recommendations for Organizations

During the workshop, participants agreed that individual organizations could do more to improve diversity, equity, and inclusion within their institutions. Attendees identified the following priority needs that organizations should be implementing now to improve DEI:

Ensuring Leadership Accountability

- ▶ **Establish a set of equity principles that are incorporated into a mission statement and strategic plan.** DEI initiatives require institution-wide changes. Although many climate organizations want to make these changes, they can be difficult to prioritize if DEI is not embedded within an organization's mission statement. Organizations should create a set of equity principles and ensure that they are included in their mission statement and strategic plan.
- ▶ **Incorporate transformative justice practices and proven conflict management strategies into leadership teams.** Despite a desire to incorporate DEI initiatives into their work, climate leadership teams often lack adequate training required to facilitate conversations and initiatives around equity and inclusion. To overcome that barrier, leadership teams should be trained in transformative justice and conflict management.
- ▶ **Develop a set of leadership competencies and associated targets for holding leadership accountable, including requirements to dedicate a specific percentage of time to DEI work or incorporate DEI in all major initiatives.** To hold leadership accountable, concrete and measurable DEI competencies must be developed for climate leaders. These leadership competencies, defined by each organization, should include requirements for dedicated staff time toward DEI work or requirements to include DEI in all major organization decisions. To measure progress, organizations should conduct an annual review to determine whether leaders are meeting their leadership competencies and take steps to close any gaps. [Similar tools](#) have been piloted by environmental organizations such as the Green Leadership Trust.

Creating a Culture of Inclusivity and Trust

- ▶ **Establish spaces such as affinity or employee resource groups, anonymous feedback processes, and/or mentorship programs.** Organizations should establish safe spaces for historically excluded groups to speak openly about their experiences at the organization and in the environmental sector, and for allies to discuss how they can implement DEI policies and practices. Anonymous feedback surveys should also be conducted so that historically excluded staff and allies can express concerns, and mentorship programs should be developed for junior and senior staff to learn from one another.
- ▶ **Collect demographic data to measure workplace disparities and create hiring and retention plans based on demographic data results.** Organizations should collect high-quality demographic data using [best practice demographic data collection](#) techniques in the environmental sector to better measure pay or promotion disparities, and assess the awareness of current DEI initiatives. Organizations should use demographic data to reflect and adjust their hiring and retention practices to create a more inclusive workplace.
- ▶ **Provide and subsidize ongoing learning and development DEI trainings to increase knowledge and skills of staff members.** These trainings can teach staff members, and especially managers, to be more aware of inclusivity in the workplace, and should also encourage staff to commit to a set of individual DEI goals that complement their current climate work. Trainings should occur on a regular schedule instead of being delivered as one-off sessions, a practice that has already been established by some [climate advocacy organizations](#).

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Hiring

- ▶ **Develop structured processes for hiring that include standardized interview questions and anonymized reviews.** As hiring in climate policy and climate tech organizations can take place on a quick timeline, applicants within an organization's own network are often prioritized. This can lead to bias in hiring; [from 2015 to 2018, only 12.8% of new hires](#) at climate organizations were racial or ethnic minorities. Organizations should counter this networking bias to ensure that all applicants undergo the same hiring processes and that all application materials are reviewed anonymously.
- ▶ **Create paid internship opportunities and formal intern-to-employee pipelines.** Investing in interns allows organizations to expand their networks for recruitment and improves diversity of the field in the long term. Despite the importance of internships in improving diversity, [most environmental organizations do not provide a formal pathway for interns to become full-time employees](#). Organizations should ensure that internship programs are paid and should provide formal pathways for interns to be hired full-time.

Strengthening the Pipeline

- ▶ **Bolster partnerships and collaboration with institutions and affinity groups that support women-identifying people and communities of color in STEM fields.** Institutions and national affinity groups that support women-identifying people and people of color have played a significant role in helping them pursue STEM and environmental careers. Climate organizations should build intentional partnerships with these entities and ensure their presence at conferences and workshops, commit to formal internship programs, and share organizational resources such as grant funding and infrastructure.
- ▶ **Develop fun and accessible tools and programs to educate youth on climate issues.** Often the narrative around climate change is one of "doom and gloom," leading many young people to [experience "climate anxiety."](#) This can prevent young people from becoming interested in working in the environmental space. Educators and climate organizations should tailor their outreach and make climate education more fun and encouraging for youth.



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Influencing Funding Institutions

- ▶ **Support cleantech venture capital and early stage venture funds led by people who are women-identifying and/or people of color.** Venture capital plays an especially critical role in the clean energy and cleantech sectors, [investing over \\$60 billion in climate tech between 2013 and 2019](#). As DEI initiatives may not always be aligned with maximizing the financial returns for an organization – the primary focus of most traditional venture capital firms – social impact venture funds led by women and people of color may be necessary for allowing companies to create a true culture of inclusivity. Organizations should pressure donors to invest in venture funds led by women and people of color and ask potential investors about their DEI commitments.
- ▶ **Host roundtables to encourage philanthropy to cater to youth climate advocacy groups.** Youth climate advocacy organizations such as [Generation Green](#) and the [Sunrise Movement](#) have become critical players in advocating for more effective climate policy and including young, diverse voices in the climate movement. However, many large philanthropic organizations have overlooked these youth organizations. Climate policy organizations should host a series of roundtables with funders to discuss how the current system of philanthropy can better cater to youth organizing structures.

Detailed Review of Workshop Findings

Participants began the roundtable by discussing overarching themes within their own organizations with respect to diversity, equity, and inclusion. These issues fell largely into 5 buckets:

- ▶ **Ensuring Leadership Accountability**, to encourage executive leadership to make DEI a key priority;
- ▶ **Creating a Culture of Inclusivity and Trust**, to encourage organizations to actively invest in historically excluded workers and ensure that diverse perspectives are in decisionmaking rooms;
- ▶ **Hiring**, to encourage organizations to effectively recruit diverse talent;
- ▶ **Strengthening the Pipeline**, to welcome historically excluded groups to build careers in the climate and clean energy spaces; and
- ▶ **Influencing Funding Institutions**, to encourage investment in organizations led by people of color, women, and youth.

The sections below provide further detail on these subtopics. For each subtopic, we review actions that organizations can pursue today and those that would require additional institutional support.

Ensuring Leadership Accountability

Roundtable participants continually stressed that best practice DEI initiatives require institutional changes driven by executive approval and buy-in. For any DEI initiative to succeed, leadership within climate organizations must be actively invested in and held accountable to addressing diversity practices and equitable policies.

Actions That Can Be Taken Now

Recommendation

Organizations should establish a set of equity principles to guide any decisions that leaders make and incorporate those principles into a mission statement and strategic plan.

Organizations should set a clear set of equity principles that allows employees to hold leaders accountable to a set of specific standards. These principles will likely be different for each organization, but should address how the organization's climate mission is intertwined with equity and where the organization is lacking in its own internal equity. For example, [the Environmental Defense Fund](#), the US-based environmental advocacy group, has adopted a set of equity principles that includes commitments for the organization to seek input from affected communities, to ensure that diverse voices are at decisionmaking tables, and to confront bias and discrimination within the institution. Similarly, the Nature Conservancy has [established a set of equity commitments](#) that include building partnerships that reflect the diversity of the people in the places they work, supporting the rights and autonomy of Indigenous peoples, and inviting dialogue with funders interested in advancing DEI.

Once these equity principles are developed, they should be incorporated into the organization's mission statement and strategic plan. DEI standards and goals thus become central to the organization.

Organizations should undergo a strategic planning process to develop equity principles and incorporate them into a mission statement. Some steps in that planning process might include:

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Success Story

One organization that has made considerable strides to improve inclusivity and transparency is the climate advocacy group [350.org](#). In 2022, 350.org is implementing a three-year framework it has developed for improving justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion (JEDI) within the organization. The strategic framework aims to improve key gaps identified within the organization, such as improving retention rates of staff of color, revising policies and procedures to ensure that JEDI principles are centered, and improving the language accessibility of training materials. This framework includes concrete priorities over the next 3 years and a process for measuring the outcomes of these priorities.

- ▶ **Building a common language that is rooted in experiences of historically excluded communities.** This language should be shared with all staff at the organization for feedback before being included in the mission statement and strategic plan. A valuable resource used by participants in this roundtable is [Asset-Framing](#), developed by Traban Shorters. This framework helps leadership build more dignifying relationships with staff and communities of color, make a more convincing case for equity, and bring to light opportunities for improving DEI.
- ▶ **Understanding the motivations of leaders.** This may include a formal dialogue session led by a mediator where leaders explain why equity work is essential to them on both personal and organizational levels.
- ▶ **Reviewing organizational policies and processes with an eye toward equity.** This may include defining the desired end state of the organization in terms of diversity, equity, and inclusion, and developing a plan to reach that goal.

After the new principles are added to the mission statement, some important adoption steps might include:

- ▶ Transparently sharing the new principles with staff at all levels;
- ▶ Teaching leadership and staff how to tie the principles into their individual work plans; and
- ▶ Onboarding new leadership and staff with the guiding principles.

Recommendation

Organizations should incorporate transformative justice practices and proven conflict management strategies into leadership teams.

Although many leaders are committed to improving diversity, equity, and inclusion within their organizations, they are not always trained to have the discussions necessary to advance DEI work. For leadership to successfully improve DEI in climate organizations, leadership teams should adapt their transformative justice and conflict management strategies.

[Transformative justice](#) is a set of practices for repairing harm. It recognizes that to develop trust, it is important to first address past trauma. In the context of climate organizations, transformative justice could take many shapes and could include sessions for self-reflection of leadership teams and departments, transformative justice workshops, or discussions hosted by outside professionals.

Conflict management is also essential to effective leadership. [Some argue](#) that without proper conflict management, diverse teams will become stuck in differing viewpoints and fail to make progress on equity and inclusion initiatives. Leaders in climate organizations should attend conflict management trainings to improve their ability to handle the difficult situations that often arise as a part of DEI work.

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**Recommendation**

Organizations should develop a set of leadership competencies and associated targets for holding leadership accountable, including requirements to dedicate a specific percentage of time to DEI work or to include DEI in all major organizational decisions. Annual reviews should also be administered to measure how well leaders are meeting targets related to competencies.

It is essential that climate organizations create a set of leadership competencies to delineate what skills leadership should be developing. Organizations should also establish a set of leadership targets associated with these competencies to hold leadership accountable to the principles set out in the mission statement. For example, the [Green Leadership Trust](#), a network of people from diverse backgrounds serving on environmental nonprofit boards, has a [“CEO Evaluation Tool”](#) to assess the equity performance of environmental CEOs. All climate organizations could benefit from a similar performance-tracking tool for their leadership. While the targets themselves will likely be different for each organization, they should be concrete and measurable.

Some important areas in which to develop leadership targets include:

- ▶ **DEI training.** Organizations should mandate how many trainings leaders should attend each year.
- ▶ **Incorporation of DEI into major organizational decisions.** Leadership should be required to state how DEI principles were incorporated into any major decisions (e.g., those that result in a press release) they have to make for the organization.
- ▶ **Budgets.** Organizations should withhold a certain amount of the budget every year for leadership and staff to participate in DEI work.
- ▶ **Staff time.** Organizations should define how much time leaders dedicate each quarter on DEI initiatives.
- ▶ **Strategic planning.** Organizations should measure leadership actions against their internal policies each year to ensure that leaders are maintaining their equity principles.

In addition to creating these competencies, organizations should develop tools to measure progress in reaching these leadership targets. Some examples to measure leadership accountability could include:

- ▶ An annual survey asking all employees to review leadership against the previously defined competencies;
- ▶ An annual review system in which staff are interviewed about leadership and how they have measured up to their competencies; and
- ▶ An annual self-assessment for leaders to measure how close their performance is to the equity lens defined by their organization.



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Actions Requiring Additional Institutional Support

A number of broader initiatives could greatly improve organizations' ability to hold their leadership accountable. These actions require buy-in and collaboration from multiple climate organizations.

Clean energy organizations should share data related to diversity across organizations. This would include demographic data at all levels, especially at the leadership and board levels. While many climate and sustainability organizations already share this data as part of [Green 2.0's Transparency Report Cards](#), more clean energy and utilities companies should participate in this process.

A coalition of climate organizations should:

- ▶ **Develop a guide for incorporating equity principles into organizational missions.** This guide would include definitions, questions, and competencies that organizations can use as they rework their mission statements to include equity principles.
- ▶ **Develop a curriculum to educate leaders on the history that informs current DEI issues in climate policy and clean energy.** Improving DEI is not a quick process, and it requires substantial education to understand the historical traumas that show up every day in climate work. This curriculum would serve as a starting point for climate leaders to learn the historical context in which they are working.

Creating a Culture of Inclusivity and Trust

Diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts may succeed only if an entire organization commits to building an overall culture of transparency and inclusivity. Individual employees should feel supported by their organization and should have space to discuss their experiences at work.

Actions That Can Be Taken Now

Recommendation

Organizations should establish formal spaces, such as affinity or employee resource groups, anonymous feedback processes, and/or mentorship programs.

Organizations should establish spaces to allow historically excluded staff to speak openly about their experiences in the workplace, or for allies to discuss how they can most effectively implement DEI policies and practices in the climate space. These spaces can help promote a culture of inclusivity for staff and can take a variety of forms, including:

- ▶ Formal affinity or employee resource groups such as LGBTQ+ in clean energy or Black professionals in climate policy;
- ▶ Employee resource groups that allow allies to discuss how to best implement DEI policies;
- ▶ Formal mentorship programs between senior and junior staff;
- ▶ Anonymous feedback processes so that historically excluded staff or allies can provide candid feedback about their experiences; and
- ▶ A safe person or ombudsman with whom employees can discuss conflicts and concerns outside of formal channels.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), for example, has a series of affinity groups (called "non-labor employee groups") for historically excluded staff including the [African American Male Forum](#) and the [Hispanic Advisory Council](#).

When organizations create these spaces, they should be careful to collect metrics that measure their effectiveness. Organizations should be documenting the number of participants in these activities and conducting regular assessment surveys to ensure that these programs are achieving their intended goals.

Recommendation

Organizations should collect demographic data to measure workplace disparities and create hiring and retention plans based on demographic data results.

Organizations should prioritize the collection of demographic data to (a) better measure potential pay or promotion disparities in the workplace; and (b) assess the awareness and effectiveness of their hiring and retention practices. Leadership should consider sending separate surveys that measure:

- ▶ **Demographic data:** This survey might ask for demographic information of staff.
- ▶ **Inclusion in the organization:** This inclusion survey might ask respondents whether they are aware of various DEI policies and whether they think those policies are effective. This inclusion survey should also ask whether inclusion is included as a formal company value.

These surveys should be administered annually so that leadership can measure improvement in DEI over time. Leadership should specifically look at changes in leadership and board composition over time, as well as composition of candidate pools. Those administering the surveys should also be sure to follow best demographic data collection practices, as documented in reports such as [Tracking Diversity: The Green 2.0 Guide to Best Practices in Demographic Data Collection](#).

Leadership should also create an annual plan on how to improve DEI based on these survey results, as having a strategic plan for DEI has been shown to [improve diversity within an organization](#). The annual plan should be grounded in transparency and should summarize the results of the survey, while also providing a road map for new DEI initiatives the organization promises to take on. It should also include new hiring and retention practices based on demographic survey data results. Example road maps include the [DEIJ in Action report](#) published by the Chesapeake Bay Watershed, which created a step-by-step action guide for participating organizations to integrate DEI recommendations into their organizational frameworks.

Recommendation

Organizations should provide and subsidize ongoing learning and development DEI programs to increase knowledge and skills of staff members.

Organizations should provide their staff with meaningful DEI learning and development programs to ensure that individual staff members are being inclusive in their actions. These DEI trainings should teach staff members to be more aware of who is included in workplace settings, and should allow employees to commit to a set of achievable DEI principles. Trainings should also be ongoing and throughout the year, as progress in DEI is less likely to occur with one-off events. EarthJustice, for example, provides all staff with a [structured DEI training series](#) to understand issues of inequity.

These trainings might include:

- ▶ The use of a third-party auditor or assessor to tailor the training to the organization;
- ▶ A cohort-learning structure, as employees will be able to learn from one another and build deeper relationships; or
- ▶ The use of an individual consultant or coach.

Trainings should also be subsidized by the organization, and both employees and leadership should be required to participate in a set number of training hours so as to encourage participation. Staff work plans developed during performance review processes should also be used to build in dedicated time for DEI work.

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Actions Requiring Additional Institutional Support

Participants identified a number of broader activities that would allow organizations to better create a culture of inclusivity and trust.

A coalition of experts should create a repository of existing best practice DEI resources in climate and climate tech, including templated surveys that organizations can use to assess their DEI work and best practices for how to establish effective safe spaces. Many organizations in the roundtable commented on how they are unaware of current best practice DEI guides, such as [templated surveys](#) for collecting demographic information in environmental organizations or [best practice guides for creating cleantech products that center equity](#), even though many such resources already exist. A coalition of experts should join together and create a repository for these resources.

Funders should:

- ▶ **Support the development of free DEI training modules.** These training modules should be tailored to all levels of staff (e.g., individual team members, managers, and executives), could be delivered either live or via online modules, and would be accessible by everyone.
- ▶ **Make DEI a formal requirement for grantees to receive funds.** Funders should consider making grants only to organizations that have a formal DEI plan in place or that report on demographics and have shown improvement.
- ▶ **Organize a dialogue series with funder and grantee leadership** to share ideas and discuss how both groups can better encourage trust and inclusivity within the climate policy and climate tech space.
- ▶ **Survey grantees led by women and people of color to determine how grant processes can be reworked to be more equitable.** Foundations should work with organizations led by women and people of color to learn how their grantmaking processes can be improved to support DEI initiatives. Foundations should be sure to hire a consultant to do this work to minimize the amount of work required for organizations to respond to these inquiries.

Hiring

Climate policy and clean energy companies will have difficulty hiring diverse talent if their recruitment pools are skewed toward elite institutions, or if job requirements or hiring practices are biased against people of color and other historically excluded groups. [From 2015 to 2018, only 12.8%](#) of new hires in conservation and preservation organizations were racial minorities, proving that climate organizations need to improve their hiring mechanisms. Hiring teams should create equitable and standardized processes for hiring that do not favor candidates within the organization's own network, and should establish formal internship-to-employment pathways.

Actions That Can Be Taken Now

Recommendation

Hiring managers should develop structured processes for hiring that include standardized interview questions and anonymized reviews.

Hiring in many climate policy and climate tech organizations often takes place on a quick timeline. As a result, applicants recommended from an organization's personal network might be prioritized over outside applicants, which disadvantages historically excluded communities. Women of color, for example, are [35% less likely to receive a job referral](#) than White men. According to a [2018 report](#), the 2 most common ways that mainstream environmental organizations recruit new hires is via posting on their website and word of mouth, both of which prioritize candidates already within the organization's network.

Organizations should be cognizant of this networking bias and should ensure that hiring processes are standardized and equitable for all applicants. This might include:

- ▶ Resisting the urge to fill roles quickly and instead taking time to spread the word about job openings in diverse networks;
- ▶ Allowing positions to be remote where possible;
- ▶ Instituting a blind hiring process that anonymizes all application materials throughout the hiring process;
- ▶ Ensuring that employees from historically excluded backgrounds are involved in the hiring process;
- ▶ Requiring that interviewers use a standard set of questions for all applicants;
- ▶ Encouraging hiring managers to take part in unconscious bias training prior to interviews; and
- ▶ Holding any personal job referral recommendations until the last stage of the hiring process, so that referred candidates must first make it through screening on merit.

Recommendation

Organizations should create paid internship opportunities for historically excluded students and create formal pipelines from internship to full-time roles.

Investing in interns and early career employees is an important lever for ensuring that the climate policy and climate tech fields are diverse in the long term. Internships are promising avenues to improving diversity because they allow students to explore new fields and provide critical opportunities for early career professionals who may not have otherwise had them. Internships also allow employers to expand their networks for recruitment, which is especially helpful in the clean energy space, [where jobs are expected to grow over the next decade](#).

Some climate policy and clean energy organizations have already adopted internship programs to specifically recruit diverse candidates. An example includes the [EDICT internship program](#), a paid internship program in the clean energy sector specifically targeted toward students from traditionally excluded backgrounds.

Internship programs should be structured:

- ▶ So interns are paid, as unpaid internships [unfairly benefit](#) students and graduates from a higher socioeconomic status;
- ▶ With a full-time employee overseeing the intern program, so that interns are not seen as an afterthought; and
- ▶ With additional mentorship opportunities for interns to cultivate their skills.

Organizations should build on these internship programs and provide formal pathways for interns to be hired as full-time employees. While many climate organizations have internships geared toward increasing diversity, [very few offer clear opportunities for full-time roles](#). Formalizing this pathway will ensure that diversity fostered in an internship program becomes reflected in an organization's workforce. This may also encourage more students to pursue specific internship opportunities if they know a path to full-time employment may be available to them.

Actions Requiring Additional Institutional Support

Additional institutional support is necessary to create more equitable hiring practices across the field. Participants noted that:

- ▶ **A coalition of experts should create a repository of best practice interview guides in the climate policy and climate tech spaces.** Though many best practice guides for equitable interview processes already exist, many organizations during the roundtable admitted to not knowing about all available resources, especially resources tailored to the climate policy and clean energy spaces. A coalition of experts should create a repository of resources for developing equitable interview processes for clean energy and climate hiring, which would include information on how interviews should be structured to mitigate unconscious bias.
- ▶ **An organization should create a repository of existing job boards** that focus on supporting workers of color and women in the climate policy and climate tech spaces. This repository can be used by other organizations to help spread the word about job postings.

Strengthening the Pipeline

Improving diversity, equity and inclusion in climate policy and tech requires investing heavily in historically excluded students and youth. Historically excluded groups often do not have access to environmental studies curricula in their high school or college years, making it difficult for them to enter climate policy careers later on; only [3% of college graduates in environmental studies](#), for example, are Black. Women also face barriers in K-12 and beyond in entering clean energy careers, and only [29.5% of environmental engineers are women](#). It is not enough for organizations to wait for these historically excluded communities to join them; organizations must proactively strengthen the resources available to youth in these communities to welcome them into the climate and clean energy spaces.

Success Story

[The Climate Initiative](#) is dedicated to empowering youth voices for climate action and aims to educate, empower, and activate youth on climate issues. Partnering with diverse leaders from the climate sector, [it has created](#) a climate justice and equity learning lab for youth and instructors to ensure that they have a well-rounded understanding of the intersectionality of climate change and social justice. In addition, the organization has partnered with [Youth Climate Collaborative](#) to create and run Climate Courage Workshops that provide a space for young leaders to share their feelings related to climate change, exchange strategies for self-care and community healing, and strengthen their emotional resilience.

Actions That Can Be Taken Now

Recommendation

Organizations should bolster partnerships and collaboration with institutions that support communities of color such as tribal colleges and universities, and STEM-focused national affinity groups such as the National Society of Black Engineers.

Organizations should be sure to deepen their partnerships with institutions that support people of color – including historically Black colleges and universities; Hispanic- and Latino/a/x-serving institutions; tribal colleges and universities; and institutions serving Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders – and STEM-focused affinity groups such as the [National Society of Black Engineers](#), [Society for Advancement of Chicanos/Hispanics & Native Americans in Science](#), and [Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers](#). These institutions and affinity groups often have direct ties to the local community and with grassroots organizations that can be leveraged down the road for inclusion and equity work.

Organizations should also strengthen partnerships that support women in these fields, such as [Women in Renewable Energy](#) or the [Society of Women Engineers](#).

Partnerships with these entities can include:

- ▶ Ensuring their presence at conferences and workshops;
- ▶ Making students aware of clean energy, sustainability, and climate-related careers through effective outreach;
- ▶ Committing to internship opportunities with these institutions; and
- ▶ Sharing organizational resources such as grant funding to support research and infrastructure.

Recommendation

Educators and organizations should develop fun and accessible tools and programs to educate youth on climate issues.

Too often, the narrative around climate change is one of doom and gloom, with [many young people reporting they feel “climate anxiety.”](#) This negative attitude is not conducive to encouraging youth to join the climate sector, even though their voices are sorely needed. To rectify this, climate organizations should tailor their outreach to make it more fun and accessible for youth.

Educators and organizations that work with youth can do this by:

- ▶ Creating interactive events to teach youth about climate change;
- ▶ Organizing field trips to get youth excited about the environment;
- ▶ Crafting accessible science experiments; and
- ▶ Bringing youth into the curriculum and design process for outreach and events.

Organizations can do this by:

- ▶ Holding partnership events with libraries and schools to improve their environmental resources;
- ▶ Establishing climate-focused collaborative workspaces, also known as [makerspaces](#), in communities, working with local schools and chambers of commerce; and
- ▶ Partnering with other influential media organizations targeted toward youth to teach them about climate policy and clean energy.

Actions Requiring Additional Institutional Support

To help deploy these recommendations, broader changes need to be made in educational institutions and within philanthropy.

More specifically, educators should:

- ▶ **Share any best practice curricula on teaching climate policy and clean energy to youth with educator convenings, affinity groups, and conferences.** Ideally, these curricula would focus on making climate policy and clean energy education accessible and interactive.
- ▶ **Introduce environmental topics informed by skills and job needs into these curricula.** These may include topics related to renewable and clean energy, as job growth is predicted in these fields over the coming decade.
- ▶ **Invite clean energy and climate tech professionals into the classroom** to discuss potential career pathways.
- ▶ **Advocate for increased education funding focused on developing climate curricula.**

Funders should:

- ▶ **Revisit how grants are awarded to reduce unnecessary barriers that make it difficult for institutions that support women and communities of color to receive awards.** Funders might need to develop a survey specifically catering to institutions serving women and communities of color to determine what barriers might exist with current funding structures.
- ▶ **Fund programs that develop effective climate curricula for K–12 schools** so that these curricula can be scaled across school districts.

Influencing Funding Institutions

Venture capital, accelerators, and philanthropy play a major role in addressing climate change, contributing billions of dollars annually to supporting new cleantech initiatives. These powerful institutions have a critical role to play in pushing DEI as a core priority in this field.

Success Story

[Elemental Excelerator](#) is a nonprofit organization that works to fund and support climate tech startups and diverse clean energy entrepreneurs. Much of its support includes training the startups on critical [equity and access](#) work. For example, its [Square Partnerships tool kit](#) for companies encourages equitable collaboration with customers and underserved community members. The tool kit includes sample community partnership agreements and guidance for meeting with community members and customers.

Recommendation

Organizations should support cleantech venture capital and early stage venture funds that are led by women and people of color and that prioritize social or environmental impact in investment outcomes.

Organizations should consider creating or supporting venture capital and early stage funds that are led by women and people of color, and that require positive social, community, and environmental impact as part of their investment outcomes. Venture capital plays a critical role in the clean energy and cleantech sectors, [investing over \\$60 billion in climate tech between 2013 and](#)

Photo by Li-An Lim on Unsplash



[2019](#). Some participants expressed skepticism that companies backed by traditional venture capital firms will ever be able to make DEI a key priority, as DEI initiatives may not always be aligned with maximizing financial returns for the organization — the primary focus of most traditional venture capital firms. Companies might be able to create a true culture of inclusivity only when they are supported by venture capital funds that value social impact as a key outcome.

One example of a social impact venture fund that has prioritized diversity is Kapor Capital. Kapor Capital specifically focuses on funding tech startups that [aim to close a gap of access for low-income communities](#) and are committed to building diverse teams. Its investments include the environmental intelligence company Aclima, the waste startup Compology, and the clean energy company BlocPower, all of which specifically focus on working in low-income communities.

To help support social impact venture capital and early stage funds, organizations can pressure donors to invest in venture funds led by women and people of color and ask potential investors about their DEI commitments before accepting their money.

Recommendation

Organizations should host roundtables to encourage philanthropy to cater to youth climate advocacy groups.

Youth climate advocacy organizations such as [Generation Green](#) and the [Sun-rise Movement](#) have become critical players in advocating for more effective climate policy and ensuring that the climate space includes voices of young people of color. However, many large philanthropies have overlooked supporting these youth advocacy organizations. To rectify this, climate organizations should host a series of roundtable discussions with both philanthropic leaders and youth to discuss how the system can be changed to better cater to youth organizing structures.

Some steps to take to host these roundtables include:

- ▶ Researching the landscape of funders for youth work, including the structure and needs of youth organizations for funding and the concerns of funders to support these groups; and
- ▶ Creating a survey for anonymous input from staff, youth, and funders to guide the roundtable discussion.



Conclusion

The participants of the roundtable on increasing DEI in climate policy and climate tech organizations coalesced around a series of best practices for institutions to take. First, and emphasized most often by participants, leadership teams need to make DEI a core part of their organization by establishing a set of equity principles, holding themselves to a set of DEI leadership competencies, and incorporating transformative justice practices. Simultaneously, organizations should commit to strengthening the pipeline and allowing more young professionals to enter into the climate policy and clean energy spaces, whether that is through internship opportunities, supporting institutions that serve communities of color and affinity groups, creating programming for youth, or encouraging philanthropy to better support youth organizations. These interventions can be enabled by developing new, shared resources, establishing cross-organizational initiatives, or pushing for changes in philanthropic or venture funding priorities. In doing so, organizations will be able to better welcome historically excluded groups into the space and make climate policy and climate tech a more inclusive field for all.

SUMMARY

Key Report Recommendations

Ensuring Leadership Accountability

Actions That Can Be Taken Now

- ✔ Organizations should establish a set of equity principles to guide any decisions that leaders make, and incorporate those principles into a mission statement and strategic plan.
- ✔ Organizations should incorporate transformative justice practices and proven conflict management strategies into leadership teams.
- ✔ Organizations should develop a set of leadership competencies and associated targets for holding leadership accountable, including requirements for them to dedicate a specific percentage of time to DEI work or include DEI in all major organizational decisions. Annual reviews should also be administered to measure how well leaders are meeting these competencies.

Actions Requiring Additional Institutional Support

- ⋯ Clean energy and climate tech organizations should share diversity data as part of environmental transparency reporting initiatives.
- ⋯ A coalition of climate organizations should develop a guide for incorporating equity principles into organizational missions.
- ⋯ A coalition of climate organizations should develop a curriculum to educate leaders on the history that informs current DEI issues in climate policy and climate tech.

Creating a Culture of Inclusivity and Trust

Actions That Can Be Taken Now

- ✔ Organizations should establish formal spaces, such as affinity or employee resource groups, anonymous feedback processes, and/or mentorship programs.
- ✔ Organizations should collect demographic data to measure workplace disparities and create hiring and retention plans based on demographic data results.
- ✔ Organizations should provide and subsidize ongoing learning and development DEI programs to increase knowledge, skills, and attitude of staff members.

Actions Requiring Additional Institutional Support

- ⋯ A coalition of experts should create a repository of existing best practice DEI resources, including templated surveys that organizations can use to assess their DEI work and best practices for how to establish effective safe spaces.
- ⋯ Funders should support the development of free DEI training modules.
- ⋯ Funders should make DEI a formal requirement for grantees to receive funds.
- ⋯ Funders should organize a dialogue series with grantee leadership to share ideas and discuss how both groups can better encourage trust and inclusivity within the climate policy and climate tech space.
- ⋯ Funders should survey grantees led by women and people of color to determine how grant processes can be reworked to be more equitable.

Hiring

Actions That Can Be Taken Now

- ✔ Hiring managers should develop structured processes for hiring that include standardized interview questions and anonymized reviews.
- ✔ Organizations should create paid internship opportunities for historically excluded students and create formal pipelines from internship to full-time roles.

Actions Requiring Additional Institutional Support

- ⋯ A coalition of experts should create a repository of best practice interview guides in the climate policy and climate tech spaces.
- ⋯ An organization should create a repository of existing job boards that focus on supporting workers of color and women in the climate policy and climate tech spaces.

Strengthening the Pipeline

Actions That Can Be Taken Now

- ✔ Organizations should bolster partnerships and collaboration with institutions that support communities of color and women—identifying people in STEM fields such as tribal colleges and universities, and STEM-focused national affinity groups such as the National Society of Black Engineers.
- ✔ Educators and organizations should develop fun and accessible tools and programs to educate youth on climate issues.

Actions Requiring Additional Institutional Support

- ⋮ Educators should share any best practice curricula on teaching climate policy and clean energy to youth with educator convenings, affinity groups, and conferences.
- ⋮ Educators should introduce environmental topics informed by skills and job needs into these curricula.
- ⋮ Educators should invite members of the clean energy, sustainability, and other climate professions into the classroom to discuss potential career pathways.
- ⋮ Educators should advocate for increased education funding focused on developing climate curricula.
- ⋮ Funders should revisit how grants are awarded to reduce unnecessary barriers that make it difficult for institutions that support communities of color to receive awards.
- ⋮ Funders should support programs that develop effective climate curricula for K–12 schools so that these curricula can be scaled across school districts.

Influencing Funding Institutions

Actions That Can Be Taken Now

- ✔ Organizations should support venture capital and early stage venture funds that are led by women and people of color and that prioritize social or environmental impact in investment outcomes.
- ✔ Organizations should host roundtables to encourage philanthropy to cater to youth climate advocacy groups.

