



Contribute

Every community member has the opportunity to contribute to climate justice in Multnomah County.

Goal: Every community member has the opportunity to contribute to climate justice in Multnomah County.



Description

Climate justice is not a destination reached through policy alone; it is the active practice of shifting power to marginalized communities. It requires us to ask not only who receives resources, but how decisions are made, whose voices are prioritized, and how historical harms are acknowledged and repaired.

For too long, decisions made behind closed doors have misaligned with lived experiences and community priorities. Frontline communities are not a monolith; they experience climate impacts uniquely across Multnomah County's diverse populations and neighborhoods.

For every community member to have true access and autonomy in how they contribute to climate justice, it requires moving the spectrum of engagement to ownership. This shift in climate planning shifts from tokenization and simple information-sharing in favor of a community ownership model.

By shifting how we approach community from merely "informing" to community leadership and co-creating strategies, we ensure that climate action is no longer something imposed upon the community, but something built by them. Realizing this vision requires the active dismantling of systemic barriers, such as deliberate outreach and engagement to hard to reach populations, addressing language barriers, and ongoing relationship building. Only by shifting power can we foster a lasting culture of mutual trust and genuine civic empowerment.

How we measure progress

Indicator 1: Voter participation rates, including by age and geography for general election.

Description: The Multnomah County Elections Division developed a "Visualization Dashboard Pilot" with a detailed breakdown of voter turnout in Multnomah County for the November 2024 Election, comparing voter turnout by precinct to census block demographic data. This map provides insights into who is voting and which communities are engaging with the democratic process.

Current data: November 2024 voter turnout 73.66%

Indicator 2: Demographic data on who is applying for and appointed to County advisory committees.

Description: While Multnomah County maintains over 40 advisory groups, specific demographic reports for all applicants and appointees are not always published as a single standalone document. Instead, data is often released through the Office of Community Involvement (OCI) or within individual committees "Area Plans." In 2025, the County continued to refine its processes for tracking these metrics to ensure that committees reflect the diverse, "lived experience" of the residents. The County is developing a tracking system for this metric as part of the County's strategic plan.

Current data: *Data is being aggregated*

Strategy: Ensure Climate Justice Plan implementation is accountable and transparent to the community.

Why does this matter?

By codifying oversight within the Advisory Committee on Sustainability and Innovation (ACSI), the plan's implementation will move beyond government reporting toward true community-led accountability. This existing committee has provided valuable insights for over a decade. Codifying the role of the committee in helping to oversee implementation of the plan, and inform reporting and future revisions to the plan, ensures ongoing community involvement, oversight, and co-creation. Enhancing the committee structure by implementing a stipend policy would help to lessen the financial barriers to participation, honoring the labor of community members and ensuring that regional leadership reflects the diverse lived experiences of our residents. Ultimately, these measures transform the Climate Justice Plan from a static document into a living, accountable commitment to those it serves.

STRATEGY CATEGORY

- County Strategy
- Investment Opportunity
- Community Leadership

STRATEGY TYPE

- Advocate
- Research
- Convene
- Implement

COUNTY CAPACITY

- Existing
- Additional
- New

COUNTY CONTROL

Low Med High

COUNTY INFLUENCE

Low Med High

COUNTY PRIORITY

Low Med High

Putting this into practice

- Work with ACSI members to make recommendations on how to amend the Multnomah County Advisory Committee on Sustainability and Innovation Code (Chapter 3.450) to expand ACSI's oversight in the CJP implementation. Revisions will prioritize community-led governance, co-creation, and explicit oversight of CJP milestones.
- Develop a Climate Justice Plan tracking platform to regularly report on greenhouse gas emissions, goal indicators, and strategy implementation progress.
- Implement a stipend policy for ACSI members and community partners to compensate for their time and expertise, ensuring that financial status is not a barrier to influencing County policy.

Lead Department(s)

Office of Sustainability

Strategy: Support the development of a community-led data ecosystem to inform County policy and decision-making.



Why does this matter?

Relying solely on quantitative metrics can often obscure deep-seated inequities or overlook the reality of a neighborhood's climate vulnerability. Rooted in storytelling and lived experience, community-led data is a vital source of truth that compliments quantitative data. It can help fill the gaps left by overreliance on quantifiable data that might obscure inequities or miss important information that help enhance service delivery, community resilience, and health. A community-led data ecosystem can help to shift the power of narrative back to the community, allowing those most impacted to define success on their own terms.

One promising local example is the Collective Environmental Datahub for Action and Resilience (CEDAR) project led by the Coalition of Communities of Color (CCC). CEDAR seeks to serve as a critical bridge between data-driven policy and the lived experiences of environmental justice communities in the region. This grant funded, multiyear project has been supported by Multnomah County and a number of other local community based organizations. In the context of the Climate Justice Plan, CEDAR provides a unique opportunity to move beyond simply "counting," to a deeper understanding of the lived reality behind the numbers. Community based organizations have collected significant qualitative community data as part of their organizing work, and CEDAR is working to provide a platform to organize that data across organizations. Projects like CEDAR can help build community power and provide an opportunity for local governments to better align programs and policies with community experience and priorities.

Putting this into practice

- Partner with community based organizations to identify and support existing community-led data efforts, and ensure these insights directly shape the ongoing implementation of the Climate Justice Plan.
- Support a community data platform such as CEDAR to serve as a repository for community-led research and health narratives.
- Establish formal processes for incorporating storytelling and qualitative feedback into County climate related decision-making to ensure policy is informed by more than just numerical data.

Lead Department(s)

Office of Sustainability, Department of County Assets, and Health Department

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COUNTY CONTROL



Low Med High

COUNTY INFLUENCE



Low Med High

COUNTY PRIORITY



Low Med High

Strategy: Explore partnership opportunities to support community-based organizations in climate justice planning and implementation.

Why does this matter?

The landscape of climate justice is rapidly evolving, with federal, local, and philanthropic initiatives creating both unprecedented opportunities and risks for frontline communities to lead this work. To capitalize on the opportunities and minimize risks, we must move beyond transactional engagement and toward restitutive, long-term partnerships. Authentic partnership is the cornerstone of community governance; it ensures that those most impacted have the sustained resources, decision-making authority, and structural support necessary to dismantle systemic barriers.

Historically, government engagement has operated under a “savior” framework that assumes communities need to be “saved” rather than supported. True climate justice requires a fundamental shift in recognizing that the most effective solutions are already present within the community. We must build upon existing community strengths rather than imposing external mandates.

By prioritizing the leadership of Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC), as well as elders, youth, immigrants, refugees, youth and rural residents, we ensure that the Climate Justice Plan is a vehicle for co-creation and autonomy.

Putting this into practice

- Continue to collaborate with community-based organizations (CBOs), including on securing grant funds. This ensures the County uses its institutional weight to secure regional and federal resources that are directly funneled into community-led initiatives.
- Design community engagement that respects the specific cultural and linguistic needs of County residents. This includes hosting climate education in multiple languages and partnering with Black, Indigenous, and people of color.

Lead Department(s)

Office of Sustainability; Health Department, Public Health Division

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COUNTY INFLUENCE

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COUNTY PRIORITY

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Strategy: Ensure age-appropriate climate justice education across K-12 curriculums for students in public schools.

Why does this matter?

Climate education is a fundamental life skill and a cornerstone of civic readiness in an age of climate crisis. Currently, most students only encounter climate topics in science classes or elective clubs, if at all, which can overlook the social, economic, and systemic impacts of the crisis, and holistic solutions.

Integrating climate justice into the K-12 experience is a fundamental strategy for equipping youth with the tools to navigate and lead in a changing world. By moving beyond traditional science lessons, this approach embeds climate literacy into social studies, math, and professional teacher development, transforming schools into hubs for civic agency. Investing in these educational pathways honors student activism and leadership that has demanded the critical need of a climate justice curriculum.

This approach ensures that climate literacy is treated as a universal life skill, empowering the generation most impacted by climate change to be the primary architects of their own future.

Putting this into practice

- Leverage the Portland Public Schools (PPS) Climate Crisis Response, Climate Justice and Sustainability Practices Policy to develop curriculum and best practices across school districts in the County.
- Utilize the Community Data Portland (contribute strategy 4) toward interactive, storytelling-based data. Using dynamic portals that allow students to explore the “story” behind the data rather than just static facts.
- Develop teacher training and support tools to help integrate curriculum into lesson plans.

Lead Department(s)

Local School Districts (e.g., Portland Public Schools, Reynolds, Gresham-Barlow), Multnomah County Educational Services District

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- Community Leadership**

STRATEGY TYPE

- Advocate Research
- Convene Implement

COUNTY CAPACITY

- Existing Additional New

COUNTY CONTROL



COUNTY INFLUENCE



COUNTY PRIORITY



Strategy: Reduce voting age to 16 years old for local elections.

Why does this matter?

No demographic group is as impacted by climate change as young people. Because atmospheric carbon dioxide concentrations continue to climb, young people will be living with the worsening consequences of the climate crisis throughout their entire lifecourse. Oregon has long been committed to expanding ballot access and the voting franchise, this step would allow young people to have a greater voice in decisions that impact their future. Lowering the local voting age to sixteen years old steers youth advocacy to the center of democracy and climate action. Expanding voter access to youth can support sustaining long-term health of our democracy and the success of climate action. Empirical evidence suggests that the earlier in life a voter casts their first ballot, the more likely they are to develop voting as a habit.

While initiatives like Oregon's pre-registration for sixteen year olds are important, they do not replace the power of casting a ballot. Allowing young people to vote on issues, such as climate justice, has a direct hand in shaping their environment. This early taste of political agency builds a foundation for broader civic participation, including community organizing and leadership. By integrating youth into the democratic process today, we ensure that the youth voices are recognized as essential partners in the present.

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COUNTY PRIORITY



Putting this into practice

- Research state and local jurisdictions to identify viable pathways for reducing the voting age in cities and other local elections in Multnomah County, including potential changes in state law.
- Center youth voices in a community-led coalition that is championing change.
- Partner with community-based organizations and educational institutions to develop robust "voter readiness" programs, utilizing existing policies (like Oregon's pre-registration)
- Research efforts in other states and jurisdictions that have lowered the voting age to gather lessons learned.

Lead Department(s)

Oregon Legislature