Equity & Climate Action Lens

Office of Equity and Inclusion

Climate Protection Program

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Why This Tool?

County mission:
"To enhance the well-being and quality of life for all community members through the provision of the highest level of public service consistent with the prudent use of public funds."

Fulfilling this mission requires:

- accounting for how equitable our service is—including what is working and what isn't for community members
- consideration of how climate change will exacerbate many existing challenges faced by our community and how responding effectively to climate change can benefit the community.

Why This Tool?

Board of Supervisors leadership: Through resolutions, comments to staff, and other actions, the Albemarle County Board of Supervisors has emphasized the importance of centering equity and climate action in our organization and service to the community.

AC44: Staff responsible for the Comprehensive Plan update requested a tool that could aid the integration of these perspectives into that document.

Purpose of Tool

- The purpose of the Equity & Climate Action Lens is to reveal information that can create opportunities to benefit our community.
  - By incorporating the perspectives of equity and climate action in our work now, we will be setting ourselves up for a resilient, equitable, thriving community in the coming decades.
- The tool will aid you in examining proposed policies, programs, or projects with respect to climate change and equity impacts.

Equity & Climate Action Lens

Equity

The term “equity” describes the continuous process of action, reflection & analysis of what is fair and just for all. This term is distinguished from equality: whereas equality means providing the “same to all,” equity is a process that begins by acknowledging an unequal starting place and continues to correct and address the imbalance.

Equity: Four Aspects

Equity Aspect	Definition
Recognitional	Seeks to quantify/measure existing disparities in quality of life, health, education, economic opportunity, political participation, and access to resources and services, as well as the historical and present causes and conditions of such disparities, in order to inform decision-making.[1]
Distributional	Maximizes access to public services and program benefits for all members of a community, especially those most in need; minimizes cost burdens on disadvantaged community members.[2]
Procedural	Seeks to ensure meaningful involvement in community engagement processes by members of historically underrepresented or excluded groups.[2]
Structural	Aims to rectify policies and institutional practices that exclude some groups from participation in political processes or that systematically contribute to maintaining disparities in quality of life; embeds procedural equity into an organization's standard practice, with adequate resources.[2]

1. Meerow, Pajouhesh, and Miller (2019), https://doi.org/10.1080/13549839.2019.1645103.
2. City of Portland and Multnomah County, Climate Action Plan (2015); USDN, *Guide to Equitable, Community-Driven Climate Preparedness Planning* (2017)

Climate Action

Climate Change: Drastic shifts to global weather patterns—including increasingly extreme weather events and seasonal disruption—due to average warming of the earth's surface temperature.

Climate Action includes:

1. **'Mitigation':** Reducing greenhouse gas emissions to limit the severity of climate change
2. **'Adaptation & Resilience':** Preparing our community for the changes that are now unavoidable

Why Local? How we (re)develop our communities and steward our natural areas has a huge impact on greenhouse gas emissions and our resilience to climate hazards.

Local Environmental Health

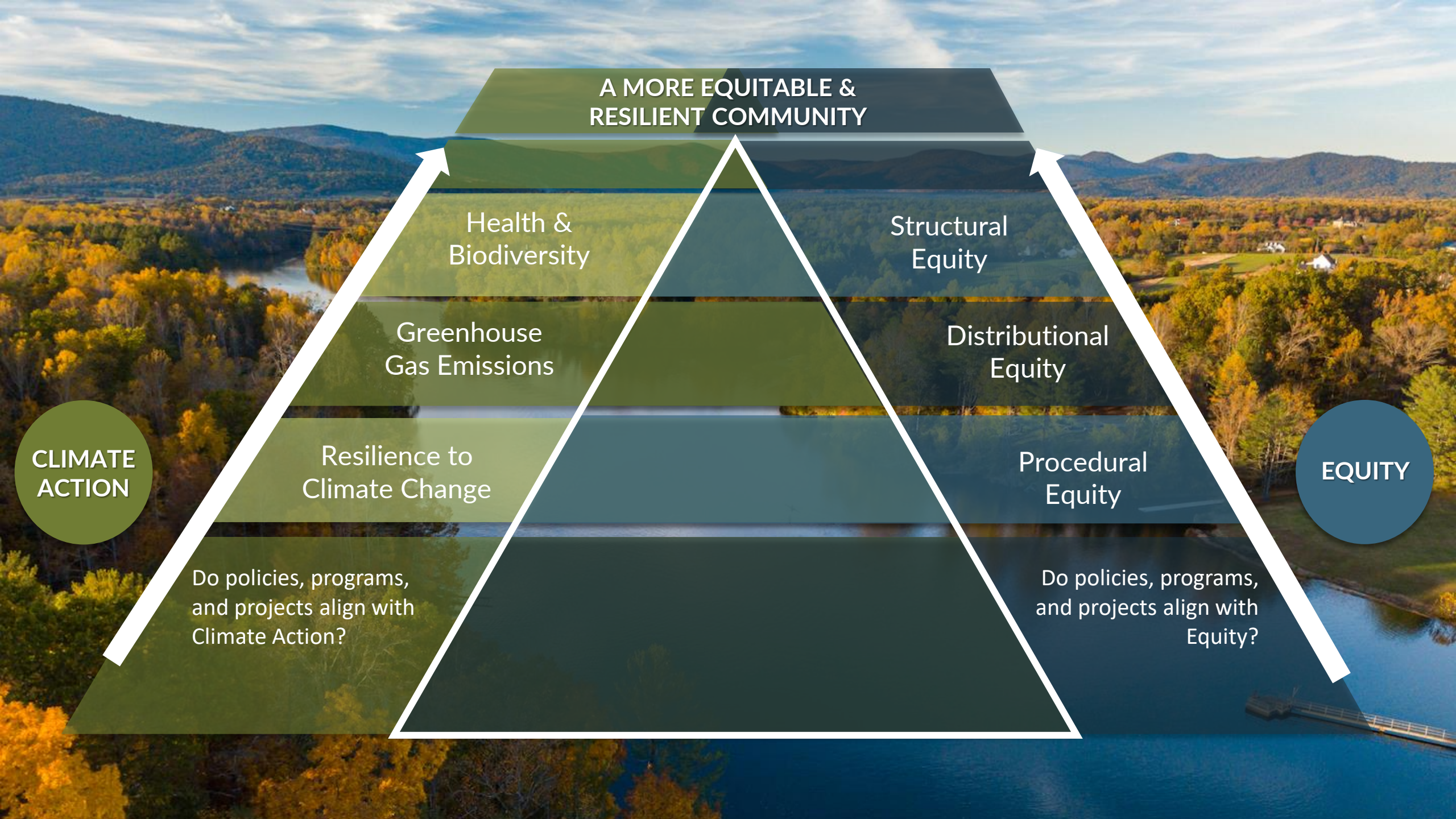
Examples

Biodiversity: the variety of life in all of its forms and at all levels, from genes to ecosystems

- **Why it matters (to humans):** generally, the more biodiverse an ecosystem, the healthier it is; humans depend on the services provided by healthy ecosystems
- **Biodiversity Action Plan:** Details goals and recommended actions to preserve and promote biodiversity in Albemarle County

Clean Water: a healthy watershed provides water for humans, habitat for plants and animals, recreation, and other benefits

- **Stream Health Initiative:** policies and programs to improve our waterways
- **Stormwater management:** stormwater facilities, drainage infrastructure


A MORE EQUITABLE & RESILIENT COMMUNITY
Health & Biodiversity
Greenhouse Gas Emissions
Resilience to Climate Change
Structural Equity
Distributional Equity
Procedural Equity
CLIMATE ACTION
EQUITY
Do policies, programs, and projects align with Climate Action?
Do policies, programs, and projects align with Equity?

How the Tool Works

- The tool asks several questions that will help to identify the extent to which an initiative makes a meaningful contribution to equity and climate action in Albemarle County.
- The tool contains three preliminary questions and seven main questions.

Preliminary Questions

Three preliminary questions will help identify any major deterrents to equity or climate action associated with an initiative that warrant an assessment of whether the initiative should be redesigned.

Equity & Climate Action Lens – Preliminary Questions
Does the initiative account for preexisting disparities and climate impacts that intersect with the issue at hand? *(Yes or No)*
Is there a compelling reason or evidence to suggest that the initiative would set back efforts…
to achieve a more equitable and resilient community? *(Yes or No? If yes, please list the reason or evidence.)*
to reduce greenhouse gas emissions or engage in other forms of climate action? *(Yes or No? If yes, please list the reason or evidence.)*

Main Questions

The main questions will reveal whether an initiative—such as a policy or a project—have significant, incidental, or no meaningful impact on equity or climate action.

Equity & Climate Action Lens – Main Questions
To what extent does the initiative...
include **meaningful involvement** by affected or underserved groups in its design?
advance **equitable access to benefits** or services created through pursuing the objective?
integrate **equitable distribution of the costs** associated with pursuing the objective?
help **overcome structures** and/or institutional practices that create disparities?
enhance the community's **resilience** to the impacts of climate change?
lead to **reduced greenhouse gas emissions** in Albemarle County?
enhance the **health and biodiversity** of the local natural environment?

Answering the Main Questions

When proceeding to the main questions, there are three tasks:

1. Assign a score from 1 to 3 based on the defined range (next slide).
2. Provide a reason to support the assigned score, citing research or data as evidence whenever possible.
3. Provide a recommendation for how the score could be improved by meaningfully addressing the associated priority for equity and climate action.

Scoring Rubric

Score	1	2	3
Rubric	**Status Quo:** Does not address the question in a meaningful way. The initiative can be expected to have no positive impact on the priority indicated by the question (or otherwise maintain the status quo).	**Incidental Impact:** Partially addresses the question. The initiative can be expected to have some incidental positive impact on the priority indicated by the question.	**Meaningful Impact:** Clearly addresses the question. The initiative can be expected to have meaningful positive impact on the priority indicated by the question.

Purpose of Tool for AC44

Purpose	How the Tool Is Organized	How Staff Will Use the Tool	Outcome
Evaluate objectives within each chapter of the AC44 Comprehensive Plan update according to the types of equity defined previously and three aspects of local climate action.	The tool asks a series of questions about the extent to which an objective in the Comprehensive Plan meaningfully addresses equity and climate action.	Staff responsible for drafting chapters in the Comprehensive Plan will collaborate with OEI and Climate staff, and staff topic experts to evaluate and refine the plan's objectives.	By using the tool, staff will be able to revise proposed objectives and policy options to better advance the County's equity and climate action goals.

Next Steps

1. For AC44, apply the tool to the development of objectives and strategies for the new Comprehensive Plan.
2. Work with Office of Performance & Strategic Planning to make the tool available for use by staff across the organization.


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