



FRAMEWORK FOR JUSTICE, EQUITY, AND BELONGING

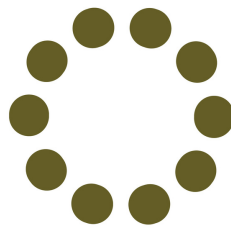
February 2021

"Truthfully, a brighter day is ahead."
- Vincent Medina, Muwekma Ohlone

"We will not go back to normal. Normal never was. Our pre-corona existence was not normal other than we normalized greed, inequity, exhaustion, depletion, extraction, disconnection, confusion, rage, hoarding, hate, and lack. We should not long to return, my friends. We are being given the opportunity to stitch a new garment. One that fits all of humanity and nature."
- Sonya Renee Taylor

"How do we start to imagine ourselves as deeper caretakers of the things that exist in the world?"
- Theaster Gates

"When we were sitting in, it was love in action. When we went on the freedom ride, it was love in action. The march from Selma to Montgomery was love in action. We do it not simply because it's the right thing to do, but it's love in action. That we love our country, we love a democratic society, and so we have to move our feet."
- Congressman John Lewis



INTRODUCTION

This Framework For Justice, Equity, and Belonging (JEB Framework) guides how the Board, staff, and members of TOGETHER Bay Area participate in the organization's governance, operations, and programs such that we center equity, work for justice, and ensure that everyone belongs. A key goal of this Framework is to set intentions and expectations about what this organization does to center and advance equity. The Framework does not provide static answers or prescribe specific actions. Instead, the goal is to provide guidance as we engage in the individual, organizational, and regional work of creating a more equitable and just world through TOGETHER Bay Area. A set of core values were established for this coalition through the 2019 planning process to reimagine and rebuild the Bay Area Open Space Council, and these values inform the development of this Framework.

Embedded throughout TOGETHER Bay Area's mission, goals, and programs – as well as the Framework – is the intention to transform how we live together on this planet. We make this distinction because we want to de-prioritize transactions, binary thinking, and a scarcity mentality. We want the impact of this coalition to be transformational. And this is particularly true when it comes to social equity.

It is important to note at the outset that TOGETHER Bay Area is a coalition of organizations and not a direct service organization. We do not serve the general public or acquire or steward lands. We convene, connect and catalyze action with our organizational members.

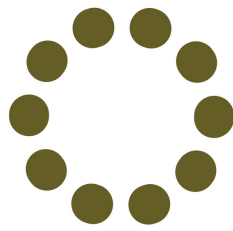
This Framework is the guiding document for the organization's and coalition's work, and the development of the Framework was an inclusive and transparent process. The process included:

- Staff created the first draft in July-August 2020, and the draft was shared with the Board of Directors and Policy Committee by email in September.
- The Policy Committee and Board discussed it at their respective meetings in September 2020.
- We solicited input from TOGETHER Bay Area members at a working session at the Fall Forum on October 1, 2020 which was attended by 54 people.
- We solicited input from the Board and Policy Committee at a workshop on November 16, 2020 which was attended by 22 people.
- Staff considered and incorporated the Board and Policy Committee input and presented an updated version to the Board at the January 2021 meeting.
- The Board approved the Framework, with a few changes reflected in this final version, at their meeting on January 26, 2021.

This Framework for Justice, Equity and Belonging is an external-facing document that will be assessed on an annual basis by the Board and staff. This is a living document.

The Framework for Justice, Equity and Belonging consists of five sections:

1. Invitation to acknowledge
2. Invitation to participate
3. TOGETHER Bay Area's role
4. Examples of equity in action
5. Definitions



INVITATION TO ACKNOWLEDGE

We want to tell the whole story about history, the lands we're on, the ancestors who came before us. We actively learn about the history of this place we live and the people who have preceded us. We work to understand the visible and invisible systems that guide our society, organizations, and lives. And we aim to leverage our privileges to lift up and benefit those without those privileges.

The dominant narrative about land conservation, parks and open spaces, as well as social and political history, is told through a white supremacy lens. Black, Brown, and People of Color and their stories have regularly been erased from the popular narrative. We acknowledge this, and we work to correct this.

The TOGETHER Bay Area coalition is diverse and we acknowledge different lived experiences of social inequities. Some people who work for our members are intimately aware of the systems of oppression in this country because they and their families have been living under those systems for generations. Some people who work for our members are recent immigrants. Some people who work for our members are just becoming aware of systemic racism and its impacts on neighbors and colleagues. TOGETHER Bay Area honors each individual's experience and invites you to learn different stories and work to tell a whole story that authentically includes Black, Brown, and People of Color.

We work to reckon with the past and current systems of oppression, and specifically we acknowledge:

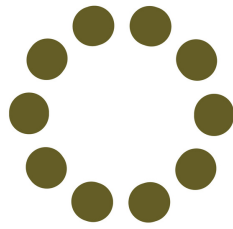
People have stewarded the land for thousands of years. We acknowledge that these are the ancestral lands of Indigenous People who live here today. We respect that Indigenous People are knowledgeable about land stewardship and have demonstrated tremendous resiliency over the past 400+ years of colonization.

All lands need to be stewarded. In the face of climate change, we need to take care of all lands: public, private, urban, and rural. Our definition of stewardship includes a wide range of activities that prevent destruction of the land, promote ecological function on the land, and connect people to the land. We recognize that there are many ways to have a relationship with the land, and that one type of relationship is not absolutely or universally better than another.

All people can be land stewards. Anyone - regardless of race, ethnicity, class, age, gender, or physical ability - can participate in and contribute to the work of stewarding the land upon which human life depends. From community gardens to street trees to major restoration projects, there is a plethora of opportunities for all people to engage and connect to this work.

All people deserve basic human rights and respect. Racism has and continues to play a central role in American society including the environmental movement. Despite this, there are many Black, Indigenous and People of Color who have contributed and are contributing to the environmental movement specifically and our society at large.

All people deserve the right to be safe and belong in the outdoors. We know that incidents of racism occur today in the Bay Area and in the region's parks, trails, and open spaces.



INVITATION TO ACKNOWLEDGE (continued)

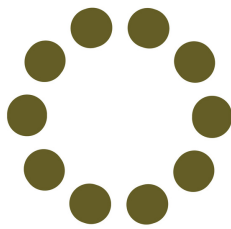
TOGETHER Bay Area chooses to focus on what we are working for. We also want to be clear what we're fighting against. This includes:

- Racism
- White supremacy culture
- Social inequities related to ethnicity, gender, physical ability, sexual identity.
- Greed
- Fear
- Scarcity mentality
- Destruction and degradation of natural resources
- Inaction on climate change

Invitation to learn more

This is not a comprehensive list of resources, but a starting point:

- *The Rise of the American Conservation Movement*, Dorceta Taylor
- *Characteristics of White Supremacy Culture*, Kenneth Jones and Tema Okun
- *The Rediscovery of North America*, Barry Lopez
- *Tending the Wild*, Kat Anderson
- *The Country in the City*, Richard Walker



TOGETHER BAY AREA'S ROLE

TOGETHER Bay Area, as a small organization that leads a coalition of organizations, needs to be clear about its role in advancing equity and justice. We do not want to commit “random acts of DEI” but rather identify the levers that we have access to and pull and push them to create the most impact. The Board and staff want to be clear with the full membership about what this small organization’s role is in centering and advancing social equity. If we are to be successful in our goals for justice, equity and belonging, we need this organization (our Board and staff) and our members (their Boards and staff) to take action.

The Board of Directors commits that TOGETHER Bay Area’s role – as an organization – is to:

Center equity in our two programs: Advocacy and Convening.

Our two programs are designed to build a climate resilient and equitable region. It is through our programs that we can have the most impact.

Shape an inclusive culture where everyone belongs.

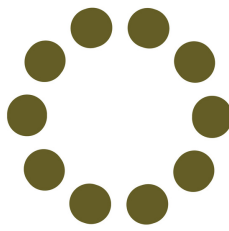
This includes:

- a. Make the invisible visible by naming our feelings, being explicit about our intentions, expressing our experiences, and proactively righting wrongs.
- b. Recognize the difference between intentions and impacts, and work to address the impacts of our actions.
- c. Speak up for and lift up the voices of marginalized and under-represented people and communities.
- d. Support multi-cultural and multi-benefit conservation and stewardship of all lands (urban, rural, natural, and working)

Lead by example.

TOGETHER Bay Area is a highly visible organization to our members, partners, and communities in the region and across the state. We can influence and empower our members, and we can structure and resource our organization so that we uphold our values.

Please note that we are clear about the activities we do not engage in, because of capacity or expertise, and this includes training, workshops, one-on-one coaching, and technical assistance.



INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE

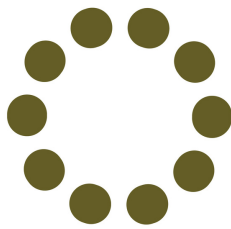
All TOGETHER Bay Area members – and everyone who works for a member organization – are invited into the conversation about how we center and advance equity. TOGETHER Bay Area was founded with social equity and climate resilience as the founding principles of our work. These principals are:

- **Social equity:** We are committed to creating a more just, equitable world, and are defining as a coalition how to advance this work. We recognize that the dominant narrative about land conservation, parks and open spaces, as well as social and political history, is told through a white supremacy lens. Black, Indigenous, and People of Color and their stories have regularly been erased from the popular narrative, and we work to correct this. We work to reckon with the past and current systems of oppression, and we specifically acknowledge that people have stewarded the land for thousands of years. We acknowledge that the Bay Area is the ancestral home of the Indigenous People who live here today. Also, systemic barriers must be dismantled so that all people can help steward the land on which human life depends, and benefit from the healing, rejuvenating power of nature.
- **Climate resilience:** We are committed to achieving climate resilience for communities and lands, including urban, rural, public, private, and working lands. Resilience is an ability to recover from or adjust easily to misfortune or change. We use “resilience” to express our coalition’s goals of a) preventing the loss and degradation of land and wildlife habitat; b) supporting ecological functioning; and c) connecting people to the land. Because of robust scientific research and application, we know some of what we need to do to ensure climate resilient lands, water, and food systems. This includes landscape stewardship, ensuring that undeveloped lands are contiguous to help flora and fauna move in response to the changing climate, prioritizing the stewardship of riparian corridors that provide habitat for wildlife and drinking water for people, and adaption to droughts, sea level rise, extreme weather events, and catastrophic wildfires.

These founding principles commit our coalition to creating transformative change in our region, for lands, people, and communities. Our coalition’s commitment to social equity is focused at the nexus of land and climate change issues. Our members’ participation in this coalition reflects their Tribal, organizational, and agency commitments to improving outcomes for Bay Area communities by dismantling barriers to participation in stewardship, creating more equitable access to nature, hiring and retaining staff from diverse backgrounds, meaningfully supporting equity-focused partners, and authentically engaging under-resourced and under-represented communities in programming and projects, as a few examples.

As these examples and those articulated below show, the problems our coalition seeks to address are multi-disciplinary and intersectional. We cannot look at environmental problems as separate from other issues that matter, such as poverty or systemic racism. We must work across geographies, nonprofits, agencies, and divisions to address the interconnected problems of the 21st century. This Framework supports our collaborative work to create a more just, equitable, and resilient world, where all people can participate in stewardship and benefit from nature.

We invite TOGETHER Bay Area members to help build an equitable conservation and stewardship movement.



EXAMPLES OF EQUITY IN ACTION

Relationships are our priority, not a written plan. We do not want to be prescriptive or rigid in our approach. Also, each situation requires thoughtful consideration of what is right and appropriate. These actions are simply meant to illustrate how we can manifest this Framework. We respect the emergent nature of this work. And we know that we have work to do at all levels: individually, organizationally, as a coalition, and around the region. The following examples reflect a variety of levels of engagement, as well as the different spheres in which we will engage as a coalition in the work to create a more equitable Bay Area. Not all of these activities will be undertaken necessarily, but they represent the many ways we can take action.

The Framework will influence our annual workplan, and it's there that we will clearly articulate how we will implement the intentions described here.

Examples: Organizationally with Board and staff (internal to the coalition)

Governance

- Create the space and culture so that equity, justice and belonging is discussed at every Board meeting
- Using the Framework, intentionally recruit a Board that reflects the diversity of our coalition and region

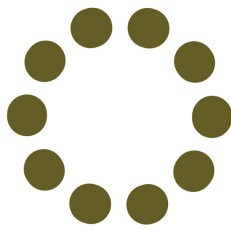
Operations

- Consider forming a working group of Board and staff to further develop and steward the Framework in support of the organization's work.
- Actively build and maintain a multi-cultural and inclusive culture by participating in JEDI trainings, ensuring hiring, management, and retention practices are informed by JEDI principles, and ensuring organizational systems are inclusive and culturally relevant so all feel welcome.
- Support the implementation of the values described in the Framework in the organization's systems and policies (i.e., personnel handbook) by welcoming dialogue about cultural relevance and being responsive to Board, leadership, staff, and contractor concerns and suggestions.

Examples: Programmatically with Board, staff and members (internal and external)

Advocacy Program

- Advocate for policies and funding opportunities that reflect the Framework by ensuring a connection between the Framework and the Policy Platform
- Advocate for improved access to nature for those communities who have been marginalized and disconnected from the land by the historic and current practices of the conservation movement
- Prioritize relationship-building with equity-focused partners, including those who work on "nexus" issues like housing and transportation; look for ways to align advocacy efforts and to provide meaningful support
- Seek opportunities to build coalition awareness and educate members about anti-displacement principles, inclusive stewardship models, and other JEDI-focused matters that connect to their projects and programs. Develop a justice, equity and belonging (JEB) framework for evaluating policies and guiding the decisions on how to engage
- Ensure Policy Committee structure and processes are inclusive and reflective of JEB values



EXAMPLES OF EQUITY IN ACTION (continued)

Examples: Programmatically with Board, staff and members (internal and external)

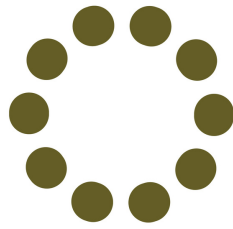
Convening Program

- Ensure representation of the people, cultures, and communities of our members and the Bay Area region as a whole.
- Work towards creating safe, welcoming, inclusive environment at meetings and events, where everyone's voice is heard and valued, people feel comfortable sharing their perspective, and potential impacts can be addressed.
- Consider starting events with an Indigenous land acknowledgment
- Consider paying stipends to speakers when appropriate
- Recognize and work to address the contributions and needs of small members with equity expertise
- Explore pathways to develop mutual aid opportunities, including resource-sharing and financial support
- Be mindful of who is not here, being left out of the conversation, or might not have access to the information we're sharing.
- Consider outreach to underrepresented BIPOC-centered organizations, programs, and networks such as sharing our jobs board or invitations to events.
- Consider story-telling forums to "unpack" the problematic roots of the conservation movement, in order to acknowledge the history as we move forward with our commitment to equity
- Consider hosting forums for members to discuss JEDI principles in the context of specific work topics, such as community engagement and volunteer practices, public access, hiring and Board recruitment, etc. so that members can learn from each other
- Center the voices of community-based organizations' leaders and members, and other BIPOC leaders in the conservation and stewardship space to help our members learn and hone their individual and organizational cultural relevancy
- Encourage relationship building between community based organizations and public agencies through introductions and connections.

Examples: Recruiting and retaining diverse members (internal and external to the coalition)

Membership

- Position ourselves to build relationships with new-to-us organizations by being open to learning from leaders outside of the conservation and stewardship community
- Welcome and authentically partner with Tribes, nonprofits and agencies that serve under-represented and under-resourced communities
- Implement a flexible dues program to ensure membership recruitment is inclusive and supportive of building a diverse coalition
- Build and support a diverse coalition through an inclusive business model



EXAMPLES OF EQUITY IN ACTION (continued)

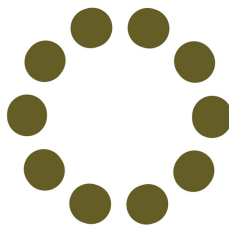
Examples: Working with partners with Board, staff, and members (external)

Partners

- Articulate our coalition's values for JEB and work to incorporate them into partnership projects and deliverables
- Identify opportunities to feature a diversity of leaders and thinkers focused on social justice issues in our programming
- Build on existing Board, staff, and member relationships with groups that share our focus on equity, so that we are supporting the creation of a more equitable, justice-focused, and culturally relevant conservation and stewardship movement

External communications

- Publish "thought pieces" online about current events and the coalition's work
- Participate on panels to share the coalition's work, including successes and challenges



DEFINITIONS

A shared understanding of the terms we're using within this coalition's work will help us move forward together. Through convenings like the Spring Summit and Fall Forum we will co-create definitions for key terms, including but not limited to the following as they relate to TOGETHER Bay Area's mission and programs:

- Justice
- Belonging
- Under-served and under-resourced

The definitions below are examples and serve as placeholders for now.

Equity

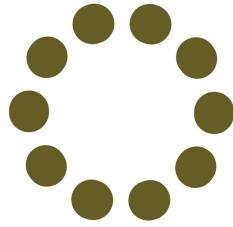
The guarantee of fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement while at the same time striving to identify and eliminate barriers that have prevented full participation of certain groups. The principle of equity acknowledges that historically underserved and underrepresented populations exist and that fairness regarding these unbalanced conditions is needed to ensure equality in the provision of effective opportunities to all groups. (adapted from UC Berkeley Initiative for Equity, Inclusion, and Diversity; Youth Outside).

Inclusion

The act of creating environments in which any individual or group feels welcomed, respected, supported, and valued to fully participate. An inclusive and welcoming climate embraces differences and offers respect in both words and actions for all people. (adapted from UC Berkeley Initiative for Equity, Inclusion, and Diversity; Youth Outside)

Diversity

Psychological, physical, and social differences that occur among any and all individuals, including but not limited to race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, socioeconomic status, education, marital status, language, age, gender, sexual orientation, or mental or physical ability. A diverse group, community, or organization is one in which a variety of social and cultural characteristics exist. (adapted from The National Multicultural Institute; Youth Outside).



TOGETHER Bay Area is a large and diverse membership-powered coalition of nonprofits, Indigenous Tribes, and public agencies all working for climate resilience and equity. Our members work for healthy lands, people and communities in the 9 counties of the Bay Area plus Santa Cruz County.

Mission

The TOGETHER Bay Area mission is to be the champion and regional voice of the resilient lands that are integral to a thriving Bay Area and all people who live here.

Vision

The health of these lands is integral to a thriving Bay Area and the health of all of the people and communities in our 10-county region. We connect, convene, and catalyze action for a just and equitable society where we live in relationship with the lands that sustain us now and will sustain future generations. We include parks, public lands, working lands like farms, ranches, and forests, rural and urban lands, gardens, trails, open spaces, preserves, and other similar natural spaces.

Members

The current list of TOGETHER Bay Area members can be found at www.TogetherBayArea.org/members

Contact

Annie Burke, annie@togetherbayarea.org
www.TogetherBayArea.org
@TogetherBayArea on Twitter and Instagram

TOGETHER
BAY AREA