

EJ IWG Framework for Collaboration

Fiscal Years 2016 - 2018



*Working
together towards
collaborative
and innovative
solutions*

MARCH 2016



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INTRODUCTION



EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy and CEO Managing Director Christy Goldfuss

The Federal Interagency Working Group on Environmental Justice (EJ IWG) plays a central role in creating healthy and sustainable communities by bringing together the federal family to address critical environmental justice issues. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) defines environmental justice as: *The fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people-regardless of race, color, national origin, or income-with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies.*

The EJ IWG provides leadership, guidance, and support to federal agencies by:

- Coordinating a focused and concerted effort by federal agencies to directly address the environmental, social, economic, and public health burdens in minority, low-income, indigenous and tribal communities;
- Implementing policies that have measurable impacts on environmental justice;
- Focusing federal agency resources and technical assistance to address disproportionately high and adverse health or environmental effects; and
- Developing partnerships with colleges, universities, and other organizations outside of the federal government to facilitate long-term support for, and improvement in, overburdened communities.

The EJ IWG Framework for Collaboration (Framework) outlines goals for the next three years that advance greater federal agency collaboration to improve quality - of- life and support economic opportunities in overburdened¹ and under-resourced communities. Increased coordination and cooperation among federal agencies will promote holistic community-based solutions to environmental justice issues and ensure that the public has meaningful opportunities for participation in the decision-making process.

Successful community engagement meets communities “where they are” by employing approaches to outreach and communication that they value and find effective. The EJ IWG listening sessions held across the country between 2011 and 2015 generated numerous public comments that influenced the development of the draft Framework. The draft also underwent a public comment period and the EJ IWG reviewed and considered all of the comments received to develop this final Framework document. The Framework builds upon the earlier work of the EJ IWG and outlines activities, priorities, and resources to strengthen a comprehensive federal approach to improve the health and sustainability of those communities that need the most assistance. As the EJ IWG and its committees implement the Framework, the input received during the public comment period will continue to be incorporated, as appropriate, and the EJ IWG will work to ensure that its community engagement efforts are successful.

¹ <https://compliancegov.zendesk.com/hc/en-us/articles/211430208-What-is-the-definition-of-overburdened-community-that-is-relevant-for-EPA-Actions-and-Promising-Practices->

BACKGROUND:

Federal Interagency Working Group on Environmental Justice

The EJ IWG facilitates the active involvement of all federal agencies to implement Executive Order 12898, "Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations," (Order)². The Order states that federal agencies must identify and address, as appropriate, disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects of their programs, policies, and activities on minority populations and low-income populations.

Established by the Order, the EJ IWG provides a forum for federal agencies collectively to advance environmental justice principles. The EJ IWG works as a federal family to assist communities in building the capacity to promote and implement innovative and comprehensive solutions that address environmental justice issues.

The EJ IWG is chaired by the EPA Administrator and includes federal agencies and White House offices. The EJ IWG has standing committees and other committees established as necessary to carry out responsibilities outlined by the Order. The EJ IWG consists of senior leadership representatives, senior staff representatives, and other persons designated by a federal agency. Additional information on the EJ IWG governance structure and a list of agencies can be found in Appendix A of this document.

In 2011, the EJ IWG agencies took a landmark step to support environmental justice by signing a Memorandum of Understanding³ on Environmental Justice and Executive Order 12898 (MOU) and adopting a Charter. The MOU serves as a formal agreement among federal agencies to recommit to addressing environmental justice through a more collaborative, comprehensive, and efficient process. The Charter, revised in late 2014,⁴ outlines the EJ IWG governance structure which includes the following four standing (permanent) committees:

- Public Participation
- Regional Interagency Working Groups
- Strategy and Implementation Progress Report
- Title VI of the Civil Rights Act



EJ IWG Senior Principals Meeting

²Executive Order No. 12898, 59 F.R. 7629 (1994):

http://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/resources/policy/exec_order_12898.pdf

³ Memorandum of Understanding on Environmental Justice and Executive Order 12898 (2011):

<http://www3.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/resources/publications/interagency/ej-mou-2011-08.pdf>

⁴ Charter for Interagency Working Group on Environmental Justice:

<http://www3.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/resources/publications/interagency/iwg-charter-2014.pdf>

In addition, consistent with the Presidential Memorandum⁵ issued with the Order, and based on public recommendations, every three years the EJ IWG determines if there are additional focus areas for federal agencies to consider and address.



Mustafa S. Ali, Senior Advisor to the Administrator on Environmental Justice

During years 2016 - 2018, the EJ IWG will maintain committees to address the following five focus areas:

- Native Americans/Indigenous Peoples
- Rural Communities
- Impacts from Climate Change
- Impacts from Commercial Transportation (Goods Movement)
- National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

Additional information on these committees is found in Appendix A.

⁵ Presidential Memorandum for Executive Order on Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations, 1994:

http://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/resources/policy/clinton_memo_12898.pdf

EJ IWG FRAMEWORK FOR COLLABORATION GOALS

The EJ IWG developed this Framework, which builds on decades of environmental justice work, to focus the collective efforts of the federal agencies on four goals for years 2016, 2017, and 2018:



HHS Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary Dr. Wanda Jones

- I. Enhance communication and coordination to improve the health, quality-of-life, and economic opportunities in overburdened communities;
- II. Enhance multi-agency support of holistic community-based solutions to provide assistance as needed to address environmental justice issues;
- III. Advance interagency strategies to identify and address environmental justice concerns in agency programs, policies, and activities; and
- IV. Develop partnerships with academic institutions to assist in providing long-term technical assistance to overburdened communities.

Outlined below are a few ways the EJ IWG committees will work to achieve the goals over the next three years.

I. Enhance communication and coordination to improve the health, quality-of-life, and economic opportunities in overburdened communities

- Enhance community outreach to provide greater public access to federal information, resources, and trainings;
- Increase public access to and understanding of data, mapping, and assessment tools to address environmental justice issues; and
- Maximize opportunities for federal agency leadership to consider stakeholder feedback.



EJ IWG Tribal Meeting in Bismark, North Dakota

II. Enhance multi-agency support of holistic community-based solutions to provide assistance as needed to address environmental justice issues



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- Enhance community capacity building by sharing lessons learned, promising practices, and resources;
- Identify and leverage federal resources to address environmental challenges and build sustainable community infrastructure; and
- Foster federal interagency collaboration on a regional, state, tribal, and local level through various outreach efforts and other activities.

III. Advance interagency strategies to identify and address environmental justice concerns in agency programs, policies, and activities

- Increase community awareness of federal agency environmental justice strategies and goals to get feedback that assists the federal family in implementation;
- Identify opportunities to highlight interagency community solutions to help advance implementation of federal environmental justice policies and guidance; and
- Improve implementation of federal environmental justice policies and guidance by creating appropriate benchmarks.



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IV. Develop partnerships with academic institutions to assist in providing long-term technical assistance to overburdened communities



Butch Blazer, Deputy Under Secretary for Natural Resources & Environment

- Improve technical assistance to overburdened communities by leveraging programs such as the College/Underserved Community Partnership Program (CUPP);
- Encourage enhanced training from federal agencies to academic institutions, particularly minority serving academic institutions and tribal colleges and universities, in areas such as grant writing and access to federal resources organized by community issues, rather than federal agency; and
- Develop internship opportunities for college students in overburdened communities to enhance the knowledge base of the communities and to educate college students on the conditions in overburdened communities.

APPENDIX A: GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

EJ IWG Federal Agencies

- Environmental Protection Agency (Chair)
- Department of Agriculture
- Department of Commerce
- Department of Defense
- Department of Education
- Department of Energy
- Department of Health and Human Services
- Department of Homeland Security
- Department of Housing and Urban Development
- Department of Interior
- Department of Justice
- Department of Labor
- Department of Transportation
- Department of Veterans Affairs
- General Services Administration
- Small Business Administration
- White House Office: Council on Environmental Quality

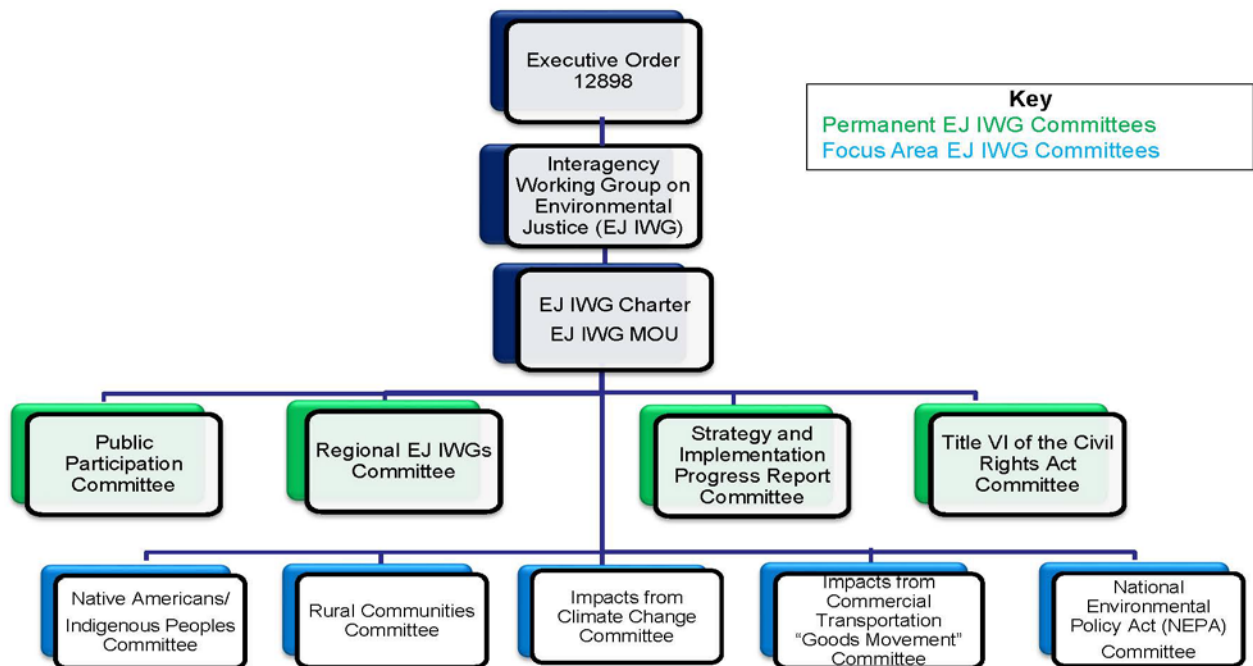
The EJ IWG responsibilities and authority to act on environmental justice issues are established by Executive Order 12898, "Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations," with two accompanying documents: 1) the 2011 Memorandum of Understanding on Environmental Justice and Executive Order 12898 and 2) the Charter for the Interagency Working Group on Environmental Justice. Both documents are available at:

<http://www3.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/interagency/resources.html>.

The chart below outlines the committee structure and focus areas for the EJ IWG. The Charter created the Permanent committees listed in green. Consistent with the MOU, at least every three years, the EJ IWG will, based in part on public recommendations identified in annual progress reports, identify important areas for federal agencies to consider and address, as appropriate, in environmental justice strategies, annual implementation progress reports, and other efforts.

APPENDIX A: GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE (CONT'D)

EJ IWG Governance Structure 2016 - 2018



December 2015

EJ IWG STANDING COMMITTEES

(PERMANENT, Displayed in green on the Governance Chart)

COMMITTEE NAME	PURPOSE OF COMMITTEE
Public Participation	Increases transparency, language accessible outreach and addresses technological barriers. Develops listening sessions and opportunities for public input. Facilitates collaboration and public participation with federal agencies and external stakeholders. Utilizes traditional means of communication and social media to build participation. Helps coordinate responses to public input.
Regional Interagency Working Groups	Provides targeted and coordinated technical assistance; develops relationships between federal field and regional staff; and develops best practices for prioritizing environmental justice concerns. Develops community resource materials. Strengthens education, training, and/or engagement on environmental justice among local and state agencies.
Strategy and Implementation Progress Report	Serves as a resource for federal agencies as they review, update, or develop their environmental justice strategy, and the annual implementation progress reports. Works with agencies to help coordinate programs, policies, and activities. Coordinates EJ IWG Senior Leadership meetings. Manages implementation of the EJ IWG Framework for Collaboration and standard operating procedures.
Title VI of the Civil Rights Act	Serves as a resource to help agencies connect their civil rights enforcement responsibilities with their other efforts to achieve environmental justice.

EJ IWG AD HOC COMMITTEES

(AD HOC, Displayed in light blue on the Governance Chart)

COMMITTEE NAME	PURPOSE OF COMMITTEE
Native Americans/Indigenous Peoples	Facilitates effective coordination and collaboration of federal agencies in identifying and addressing issues of environmental justice that are of concern to federally recognized tribes, indigenous peoples (including state recognized tribes, tribal members, indigenous community-based organizations, Native Hawaiians, Alaska Natives, American Indians), and others living in Indian country.
Rural Communities	Supports efforts to: ensure collaboration between federal agencies and rural environmental justice communities, develop economic opportunities so rural overburdened communities are self-sustaining and economically thriving, and coordinate federal agency investments to further holistic community-based solutions that reduce environmental justice issues.

EJ IWG AD HOC COMMITTEES

(AD HOC, Displayed in light blue on the Governance Chart)

COMMITTEE NAME	PURPOSE OF COMMITTEE
Impacts from Climate Change	Supports collaboration across federal agencies and with communities with environmental justice concerns around climate change-related issues including facilitating consideration of vulnerable populations in agency climate adaptation activities; providing information, services, and data to help make communities more resilient; providing relevant tools, systems, and policies to communities and businesses to mitigate impacts on natural resources and human health due to climate change; and ensuring two-way communication around climate-change related issues. Implements the Educate, Motivate and Innovate (EMI) Project.
Impacts from Commercial Transportation “Goods Movement”	Serves as a resource to coordinate with other federal agencies on reducing environmental and health effects of commercial transportation and supporting infrastructure (“goods movement”) that impact low-income, minority and tribal populations (overburdened communities). Ensures that overburdened communities have greater opportunities to access benefits from federal efforts related to goods movement.
National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)	Improves effective, efficient and consistent consideration of environmental justice principles in the NEPA process by sharing promising practices and lessons learned developed by federal departments and agencies.

APPENDIX B: 2016 PRIORITIES

The Framework spans a three-year timeframe. The 2016 priorities are a snapshot of the activities planned for implementation by the end of October 2016. The EJ IWG will produce an annual EJ IWG Framework for Collaboration Progress Report and increase opportunities for public input and engagement with the EJ IWG.

Collaboration

- Identify, highlight, and replicate, where possible, successful community-based models that leverage federal investments, technical assistance, and community-based resources; use the EJ IWG website and other appropriate methods to share these success stories with stakeholders.
- Increase collaboration and leveraging of resources for capacity building, economic investments, and research (e.g., climate, traditional cultural resources) in rural communities.
- Improve the effective, efficient, and consistent consideration of environmental justice issues in the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process by promoting the use of Promising Practices for EJ Methodologies in NEPA Reviews.
- Promote awareness of and solutions to community-based environmental challenges associated with Goods Movement (commercial transportation of freight and supporting infrastructure) in and through overburdened communities and communities enduring adverse health impacts as a result of goods movement.

Community Resources

- Issue and post on the EJ IWG home page a memorandum to federal funding recipients on how Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended, applies to federally funded activities that have an impact on the environment and human health; use other appropriate methods to share the information provided in the memorandum with communities.
- Update and post on the EJ IWG home page a Community-Based Federal Environmental Justice Resource Guide and Directory and make the document available in multiple languages; use other appropriate methods to share the resource guide and directory information with communities.
- Post on the EJ IWG home page an Annual Framework Progress Report and the annual agency Environmental Justice Implementation Progress Reports; use other appropriate methods to share the information in these reports with communities.

External Communications and Outreach

- Through traditional and electronic communication methods, select EJ IWG Committees intend to conduct trainings, webinars, or presentations on EJ IWG focus areas to inform, engage, and provide community residents and stakeholders an opportunity to provide feedback.
- The Public Participation Committee (PPC) will identify opportunities to increase transparency and address the linguistic, cultural, and technological barriers that exist between federal agencies and overburdened communities.
- The PPC will focus on prioritizing in-person outreach efforts through community visits and public dialogue sessions that solicit feedback from residents directly experiencing environmental impacts. The PPC will also explore opportunities to add state and local government engagement dialogue sessions as part of existing agency community outreach efforts.

APPENDIX C: ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT FOR THE FRAMEWORK

The EJ IWG will post annual progress reports (i.e., 2016, 2017, and 2018) on the EJ IWG website (www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/interagency) to share its progress in implementing the EJ IWG Framework for Collaboration. In addition, each federal agency will include relevant Framework highlights in their annual Environmental Justice Implementation Progress Reports posted in accordance with the 2011 Memorandum of Understanding⁶ on Environmental Justice and Executive Order 12898.

⁶ Memorandum of Understanding on Environmental Justice and Executive Order 12898 (2011): <http://www3.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/resources/publications/interagency/ej-mou-2011-08.pdf>

SEND COMMENTS TO EJSTRATEGY@EPA.GOV



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