

Environmental Equity Project Examples

CLIMATE

[Making Justice40 a Reality for Frontline Communities](#)

Funders: Climate & Clean Energy Equity Fund and Heising-Simons Foundation

President Biden's Justice40 Initiative aims to direct 40 percent of climate investment benefits to disadvantaged communities. This report provides a framework that federal officials could use to maximize Justice40's impact. Drawing from analysis of state-level climate programs seeking to address environmental justice, the authors identify key areas of focus for the initiative: investing to provide resources for the people who need them most, empowering communities to make local policy and investment decisions, and holding government agencies and contractors accountable for furthering environmental justice goals.

[Learning from Transformative Climate Communities](#)

Funder: Strategic Growth Council

We are assessing progress and results of investments through the Transformative Climate Communities (TCC) program, one of the world's most holistic and equity-centered climate action programs driven by residents of historically disadvantaged communities. We focus on five TCC grants, totaling over \$160 million, in Fresno, Watts, Ontario, Northeast Valley Los Angeles, and Stockton. These investments are being evaluated along environmental, health, economic, and social justice dimensions and could serve as a national model.

[Measuring Heat Impacts to Design and Target Protective Policies](#)

Funder: Strategic Growth Council's Climate Change Research Program

We are completing multiple studies that measure significant financial and health risks that extreme heat poses on vulnerable populations, including workers, low-income households, pregnant mothers and infants. In 2021, we published a report that examines the network of programs and funding opportunities that address heat in the state — most of which do not explicitly or intentionally target heat risk — and identifies the missing pieces that can help protect residents from extreme heat. We are also developing a tool to identify vulnerable populations and communities.

ENERGY

[COVID-19 and Utility Debt](#)

Funder: Chan-Zuckerberg Foundation

In this project, researchers from across the UCLA Luskin School of Public Affairs examined the extent of water, gas, and electric bill debt in California and found that the burdens of unpaid bills fell disproportionately on Black, Latinx, and low-income households. The studies outline several policy implications, including the need for an equity lens to avoid intensifying energy burdens for disadvantaged communities.

[Southern California Regional Energy Needs Assessment](#)

Funder: Los Angeles Cleantech Incubator

This analysis examines geographic differences in per capita energy consumption, clean energy, greenhouse gas emissions intensity, and energy program adoption (e.g., solar and electric vehicles) for Los Angeles, Ventura, Santa Barbara, and Orange Counties, with a focus on assessing energy needs in disadvantaged communities.

TRANSPORTATION

[Setting an Agenda for Equity-Centered Clean Transportation](#)

Funder: Los Angeles Business Council

This study, led by our researchers and aided by a working group of community advocates, business leaders, and policymakers, links equity to the effectiveness of California's ambitious clean transportation goals. Key recommendations include targeting clean vehicles incentives towards moderate- and low-income drivers and ensuring public and private zero-emission fleets are first deployed to disadvantaged communities.

Designing Clean Vehicle Incentive Programs for Low-income Households

Funders: California Air Resources Board, the Strategic Growth Council and CalTrans

Our current and recent studies have helped California improve clean transportation access for disadvantaged communities. Researchers surveyed low- and moderate-income households about their vehicle history and travel preferences and assessed how existing state incentive programs are helping lower-income households replace their polluting vehicle. The findings of these provide a roadmap for programs that can most effectively and equitably support transitions to clean transportation for lower income households.

URBAN GREENING

Supporting Park Equity and Access in L.A. County and Across California

Funder: Resources Legacy Fund

We are advancing the goal that every Californian has access to parks and green spaces through two innovative projects. Part of an initiative led by the Office of Governor Newsom, we are assessing an array of programs in California to increase park access and equity. The objective is to inform the state's actions to strengthen such programs. In L.A. County, residents demonstrated support for investing in local and regional parks by voting for Measure A. Now we are evaluating the Link program, a partnership of First 5 Los Angeles, local governments, residents, and community-based organizations providing technical assistance and other resources to expand park access through Measure A and other funding in park-poor communities.

Understanding the Needs of Diverse Park Users

Funder: U.S. National Park Service

Researchers and volunteers with the Luskin Center for Innovation worked with the National Park Service to survey more than 4,000 visitors of the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area, the nation's largest urban national park. Results are informing how to meet the needs of a diverse array of users, for improved park equity and access in L.A. County and with broader implications for park planning throughout the state and nation.

WATER

Assessing the Effectiveness of L.A. County's Safe Clean Water Program

Funder: L.A. County Flood Control District

L.A. County's Safe Clean Water program funds projects to capture, clean, and reuse water runoff — and ultimately strengthen the local ecosystem and build community resilience. We are conducting a 2-year study with collaborators from across UCLA, funded by the L.A. County Flood Control District. We are leading the equity focus of the study, measuring how the program allocates funding to disadvantaged communities and how residents prioritize project types. Results from the study will help the county and Safe Clean Water Program stakeholders assess both the priority of investment proposals and the impacts of the program over time.

First-of-Its-Kind Needs Analysis for Drinking Water in California

Funder: California State Water Resources Control Board

Supported by a \$3 million contract, this study identified a risk for failure among a significant portion of the state's drinking water systems. The report is the first comprehensive analysis of how clean water is provided in California, and it estimates how much it would actually cost to deliver safe water to every resident.

See more examples at: <https://innovation.luskin.ucla.edu/environmental-equity/>

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