



To: BARC Governing Board

From: Allison Brooks, BARC Executive Director

Date: February 15, 2019

Re: *Collaboration to help advance racial equity in the Bay Area*

This memo is intended to report on BARC member agencies' progress to better coordinate and align efforts to advance racial equity in the Bay Area region through the Level Playing Field project. This work is an important element of BARC's emerging two-year work plan (2019-2021) that will be shared in draft form at the BARC Governing Board meeting on April 19, 2019.

I. Introduction

Each BARC member agency has a mission to improve the quality of life for Bay Area residents. They do this by working to meet critical goals related to improving air quality, transportation and mobility, housing affordability, access to opportunity, sustainability, climate mitigation and adaptation. These goals are often driven by the needs and priorities of local jurisdictions and residents and validated through data and analysis conducted by agency staff and partners. Sometimes these goals are created and enforced through state and federal policy. In order to achieve these goals, the BARC member agencies develop programs, policies and investment strategies that are intended to move the needle on both qualitative and quantitative measures that demonstrate progress in local communities and across the region. The agencies track their progress in meeting different outcomes in different ways—some methods are more effective than others at capturing the actual impacts of specific programs, policies and investments—and tying those back to larger set of regional goals.

In a perfect world, local, regional, state and federal strategies are aligned and work in concert to improve the quality of life for Bay Area residents, particularly for low-income communities often at the frontlines of risk, highly vulnerable to shifts in the economy, the environment and social conditions. Of course, we don't live in a perfect world either in policy or practice. In reality, there are people and communities in the Bay Area that are disproportionately impacted by chronic exposure to toxic air, lack of affordable housing, displacement pressures, poor transportation choices, vulnerability to hazards and climate impacts, limited access to good paying jobs, fresh food, and/or a quality education. As the BARC member agency's methodologies help illustrate—discussed in more detail below—the majority of these communities are comprised of low-income people and people of color.

The challenges that low-income people and people of color are up against are not new. They are a product of structural racism and segregation fostered through government policies over many years. As stated by Richard Rothstein in his groundbreaking book *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America*:

“...until the last quarter of the twentieth century, racially explicit policies of federal, state, and local governments defined where whites and African Americans should live. Today’s residential segregation in the North, South, Midwest and West is not the unintended consequence of individual choices and of otherwise well-meaning law or regulation but of unhidden public policy that explicitly segregated every metropolitan area in the United States. The policy was so systematic and forceful that its effects endure to the present time.” (Preface, page VII - VIII)

The effects of these policies on African-American people, in particular, have been profound. Addressing the scale of the injustice therefore calls for government agencies to operate at the appropriate scale to meet the scale of the challenge. An important step is building trust by working alongside our most impacted people and communities to overcome the barriers to opportunity that have been erected and sustained over time. BARC recognizes that achieving a more level playing field for all Bay Area communities and people calls for an intentional focus on addressing racial inequalities, aligning policies and investments towards that end, and recognizing the status quo is not sufficient to improve the quality of life for the Bay Area’s most impacted communities.

II. Background

Over the last three years, BARC has facilitated the participation of over 90 staff from the BARC member agencies – the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG), the Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC), the Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAQMD), and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) – in the Northern California Government Alliance for Race and Equity (GARE) program. The Executive leadership from the agencies have championed the GARE program and the participation of staff from different departments and levels of responsibility at each agency. The yearlong GARE program explores the core concepts of racial equity, the role government has played in supporting systemic racism and racial segregation, and shares tools and strategies for advancing racial equity both internally and externally in a city, county or regional agency. GARE has fostered a network of passionate public agency staff in Northern California and across the United States that strives to eliminate the barriers erected through structural racism which severely limits equitable access to opportunity for people of color.

An outgrowth of the GARE work has been BARC’s Level Playing Field project. Level Playing Field is an effort by BARC staff and member agencies focused on improving both our internal and external processes to help advance racial equity and social justice, recognizing that change often has to start from within. We focus on areas and issues where our agencies can have the most impact through our programs by working to put the needs and ideas of low-income people and communities of color first in our project design, partnership development and investments in local capacity building. This program acknowledges the important efforts underway and being led by individual agencies – such as BCDC’s Environmental Justice Bay Plan Amendment, BAAQMD’s Community Health Protection Program (AB617), and MTC/ABAG’s Committee to House the Bay Area (CASA) – while also identifying areas of convergence, where we can work together in partnership with local communities to achieve multiple objectives through more integrated and coordinated efforts.

III. Starting with the Data

The first activity BARC and member agency staff engaged in as part of the Level Playing Field project was a GIS-based analysis of the methodologies employed by the regional agencies to

identify disadvantaged and vulnerable communities in the 9-county Bay Area region and the California Environmental Protection Agency's CalEnviroScreen 3.0. These methodologies include MTC's Communities of Concern, BAAQMD's CARE Communities, and BCDC's Adapting to Rising Tides Vulnerable Communities. The methodologies utilize a combination of socioeconomic vulnerability indicators, health data, exposure to poor air quality, and flood risk to identify the most impacted communities. A map was developed overlaying all three methodologies to illuminate the Bay Area geographies most impacted by mobile and stationary sources of air pollution and the persistent environmental and socio-economic factors that result in disproportionately worse outcomes for vulnerable residents. MTC's inclusion of race and income data in their Communities of Concern methodology brings to focus the disproportionate impact experienced by low-income communities and people of color.

The goal of this mapping exercise was to allow the BARC member agencies to identify the places – cities and/or neighborhoods – that show up consistently year after year in all methodologies. For the purposes of this effort we are calling the places that emerge from this analysis “priority communities”. These are places identified in each of the agencies' regional planning efforts for targeted investments and outreach, such as the Community Health Protection Program (AB 617) and Plan Bay Area (SB 375). The Level Playing Field Project provides an opportunity to intentionally coordinate efforts in specific places to move the needle in improving critical quality of life measures across issue areas.

IV. New Outcome-Oriented Partnership Model

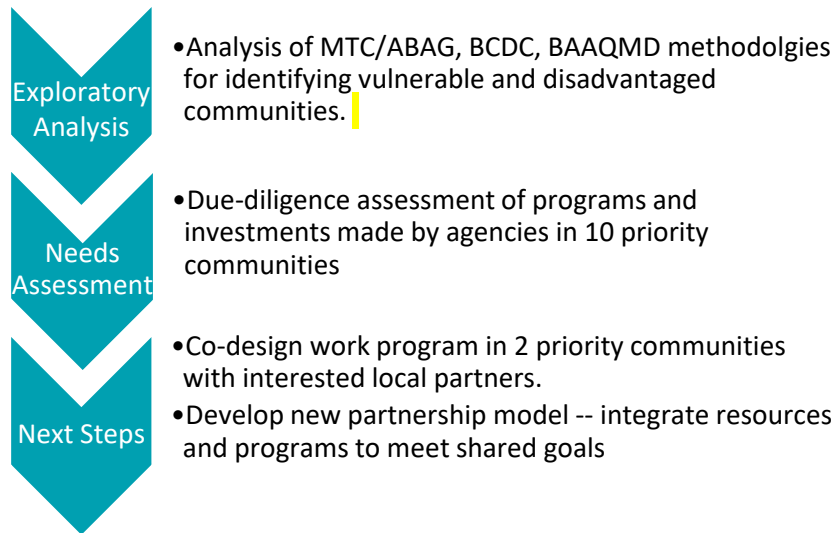
The Level Playing Field Project proposes that the BARC agencies come together to pilot an effort that leverages resources across federal, state and regionally funded programs to accelerate progress in meeting critical quality of life measures in priority communities. Through this coordinated effort the agencies can more intentionally partner with each other and with specific priority communities to better align with local priorities and needs. And, rather than asking community stakeholders to engage in different efforts led by individual agencies to meet different but related goals, we can do the hard work on our end to provide essential resources, service and support to communities in a more coordinated and cohesive way. We can strive to make accessing support easier for communities by providing support that is better matched with the needs and priorities of local partners with the ultimate goal of also making it more impactful.

The agencies hope to work with two interested local partners to pilot this effort over the next two years. This approach will allow for mutually beneficial outcomes and the trusting relationships needed to continue to advance progress in meeting complex challenges over the long-term. Some identified goals for this effort include:

- (1) Establish a more aligned, synergistic and outcome-oriented partnership across regional agencies, local jurisdictions and community-based organizations, and state agencies to meet important quality of life goals for priority communities;
- (2) Increase capacity of local jurisdictions and community-based partners to manage short and long-term challenges through an interdisciplinary and multi-benefit approach;
- (3) Strengthen local capacity to be competitive for regional, state and federal funding opportunities to accomplish shared goals;
- (4) Align ongoing and future regional engagement efforts to minimize burden on communities, community-based representatives and local jurisdiction staff;
- (5) Coordinate across agencies and programs to better leverage dollars and staff time for optimal outcomes across multiple agency goals and objectives.

Level Playing Field – Program Development

GOAL: *Coordinated Support and Partnership with Low-Income Communities of Color*



V. Regional Agency Leadership: Past, Present and Future

In addition to analyzing the methodologies developed by the BARC member agencies to identify priority communities, BARC is working with agency staff to collect information on program and operational investments in priority communities over the last 10 years. Through this analysis we can understand the types of investments that have been made to date in specific communities, the types of partnerships that were formed, the source and purpose of the regional, state and/or federal funds deployed, and any data on outcomes achieved within a specified timeframe.

Agency leadership have been very supportive during the data collection phase still underway, designating staff to help collect and synthesize a significant amount of information to help inform our work together.

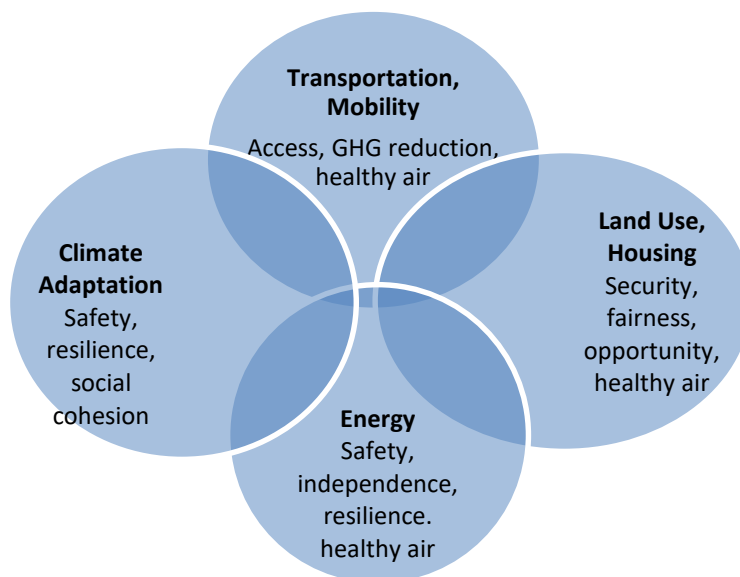
As mentioned earlier, the agencies are leading some important efforts that illustrate the growing focus and attention being paid to advancing social and environmental justice and racial equity. Some examples include:

- **ART Bay Area** – The project partners (BCDC, BARC, MTC/ABAG and Caltrans) are working with the Bay Area Regional Health Inequities (BARHII) and local community-based partners in East Palo Alto and East Contra Costa County to design a community-driven public participation effort. This effort is focused on building strong relationships with local community partners, engaging in dialogue and learning about sea level rise and flooding, and building a shared understanding of how a longer-term issue like sea level rise may intersect with other more near-term local concerns and priorities.
- **BCDC's Environmental Justice Bay Plan Amendment** – BCDC is considering an amendment to the Bay Plan that incorporates principles of environmental justice and social equity into the planning, design, and permitting of projects in and along the San Francisco Bay. The Commission is slated to vote on the Environmental Justice Bay Plan Amendment in Fall 2019.

- **The Committee to House the Bay Area (CASA)** – CASA has brought together a diverse, multi-sector set of partners from the Bay Area's private and public sectors to build an actionable political consensus around increasing housing production at all levels of affordability, preserving existing affordable housing, and protecting vulnerable populations from housing instability and displacement.
- **Community Health Protection Program (AB617)** – BAAQMD will work with Bay Area communities to plan and implement Assembly Bill 617 (C. Garcia, Chapter 136, Statutes of 2017). This collaborative initiative will employ proven and innovative strategies to improve community health by reducing exposure to air pollutants in neighborhoods most impacted by air pollution.

While the above programs touch on different issues impacting local communities, there is an opportunity to find places where these issues converge and intersect and where resources can come together to achieve multiple-benefits (see image below) through integrated planning and program development. BARC staff and the BARC member agencies will work together, in partnership with local communities, to find how we can best meet these multiple challenges in more impactful and coordinated ways.

Convergence of Issues



VI. Conclusion

A key objective of the Level Playing Field project is to develop a coordinated approach to integrated problem solving that is flexible and nimble enough to be responsive to the priorities that emerge in specific communities. By working alongside jurisdictional and community-based partners the BARC agencies can meet people where they are and where their energy is focused and help orient resources in a way that can meet multiple objectives while also building trust and partnership that will be critical over the longer-term. The agencies will be working together over the coming months to further refine this program, reviewing data and information, working

alongside priority communities in different capacities to develop a thoughtful approach to our pilot efforts.