



EQUITABLE TRANSITIONS GUIDEBOOK

Local tools for fair and inclusive
sustainability programs



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About this guidebook

To support fair and inclusive transitions, ICLEI collaborated with cities from different world regions. This collaboration was under the Urban Transitions Alliance project and sought to develop a methodology that enables cities to map the social equity outcomes of local sustainability plans across three dimensions: access, participation and opportunity. For each dimension, tools and recommendations for action were identified, as well as indicators to monitor progress and best practices from cities within the ICLEI network. An initial version of this methodology was tested with the city of Turku, Finland, as part of the [Circular Turku](#) project.

The guidebook aims to provide insights, recommendations, illustrated by best practices, resources and tools for city practitioners to support:

- framing social equity along the three dimensions of access, participation and opportunities;
- mapping of social risks and opportunities associated with sustainability programs and initiatives at the local level;
- learning about key equity aspects to consider when designing sustainability programs and applying concrete policy instruments to integrate social equity in such programs; and
- identification of suitable indicators to monitor social impacts over time in a holistic manner.

Executive summary

Urban environments have largely been designed for and by economically prioritized populations, leaving less privileged groups such as persons with disabilities, gender minorities, children and seniors with significant challenges to access urban services and infrastructures, participate in the city's governance and benefit from the economic and employment opportunities available locally.

Investments and measures planned as part of sustainability programs offer a chance to rethink how residents access and participate in city life and enhance social equity across all groups and neighborhoods. For instance, redesigning mobility systems towards decarbonization offers an opportunity to rethink how the city is designed for different users, while recovery of construction materials for reuse hold the potential to increase local employment options. However, if sustainability programs are not planned to include positive equity outcomes, they will fail to benefit all residents alike, while some economic measures might increase the burden for vulnerable populations.

The Equitable Transitions guidebook presents a methodology that enables cities to map the social equity outcomes of local sustainability plans across three dimensions: access, participation and opportunity. For each dimension, tools and recommendations for action were identified, as well as indicators to monitor progress. These build directly on learnings from the ICLEI network and the Urban Transitions Alliance, a global network of industrial legacy cities who have committed to realizing sustainable and inclusive urban transitions.



ACCESS

To ensure just distribution and accessibility, local governments can implement targeted support measures for vulnerable groups and prioritize inclusive urban planning to ensure physical infrastructure serves all users. The guidebook presents three interconnected pathways that focus on geographic, demographic and economic components for local governments to support equitable sustainability transitions.



PARTICIPATION

Considering the governance aspect of equitable design, the involvement of residents in the process and the engagement of underrepresented voices to ensure no one is left behind are key approaches for local governments. From a local government perspective, enabling participation means identifying the groups that will be affected by initiatives and plans and ensuring appropriate channels are in place for meaningful and inclusive participation. It also means supporting existing civil society initiatives so that their local impact can be nurtured.



OPPORTUNITY

Sustainability programs hold the potential to provide the jobs of tomorrow but not all jobs are created to the benefit of local populations. Some rely on a highly-skilled workforce that may not be readily available locally while others might create vulnerable situations for workers if regulations and incentives are not in place to support fair and safe working conditions. To offer fair perspectives for all, local governments can target increased diversity in employment, the provision of career perspectives through training and support programs and strengthening and diversifying the local labor market.

The framework, good practices and tools presented in this guidebook can be applied by local governments to a variety of sustainability programs spanning diverse sectors such as mobility, energy, water, food and buildings and construction.





FRAMING EQUITABLE TRANSITIONS



Unpacking social equity: Three dimensions to advance equitable transitions

Cities are at the forefront of experiencing climate change impacts and play a critical role to deliver on the Paris Agreement. Climate change disproportionately affects low-income communities and vulnerable populations, while climate investments often fail to benefit these groups. When planned without equity in mind, climate policies and related economic measures risk increasing the burden for the urban poor. To mitigate these risks and advance climate and resource protection with special consideration of affected groups, this guidebook is one of ICLEI's knowledge products that supports city practitioners in designing and implementing equity-focused sustainability programs. To provide context for the practical insights included, the following paragraphs will begin to clarify the meaning and relevance of social equity from a local government perspective and introduce three equity dimensions that help to unpack the complex concept in urban development.

Healthy air and environments, accessible health services, safe housing, clean water and sanitation and consistent food access are among the basic human needs prioritized by the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), while recognising poverty eradication as a fundamental requirement of sustainable development. With a specific focus on sustainable cities and communities, SDG 11 defines the concrete targets of inclusively providing adequate and affordable housing and basic services, accessible and sustainable transport systems, safe and accessible public spaces as well as participatory and integrated human settlement planning and management (United Nations 2018). Inherently, these targets shed light on key inequality challenges concerning vulnerable populations and minority groups: Urban environments have largely been designed for and by economically prioritized populations, leaving less privileged groups such as persons with disabilities, gender minorities, children and seniors with significant challenges to access urban services and infrastructures. In urban societies, individuals are intricately embedded in social structures and rely on these links to thrive. While the availability and condition of physical spaces define the context of social interactions, the issues of poverty and social exclusion are closely interlinked in hindering access to meaningful participation in urban life.

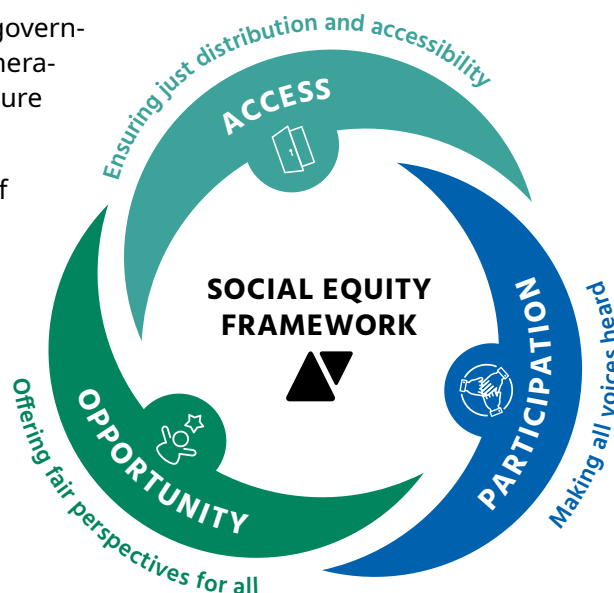
Local governments can address these challenges and initiate the equitable transition by re-thinking urban planning practices and co-creating sustainability programs that ensure inclusive services and infrastructures, while generating economic opportunities for residents in need. The initial step to improve social equity is the acknowledgement of existing inequalities that define reality for marginalized groups, and of their historic causes. Based on this recognition, the question of how to design programs that transform these realities can be addressed. For this purpose, the Urban Transitions Alliance equity framework has been developed to unpack the concept of social equity in urban planning.

The Urban Transitions Alliance is a global network of industrial legacy cities who have committed to realizing sustainable and inclusive urban transitions. In many cities that had relied on industrial growth for their overall development and prosperity, deindustrialization, severe job loss and ongoing disinvestment have led to social inequality as a major transition challenge. The equity aspect of urban transitions constitutes a joint priority for industrial legacy cities in the Alliance. Inspired by their forward-looking practices and programs to address local inequalities, the Urban Transitions Alliance equity framework enables local governments to prioritize just opportunities for local residents when designing climate and environmental interventions, with special consideration of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups. For this purpose, social equity is defined along three dimensions:

ACCESS: To ensure just distribution and accessibility, local governments can implement targeted support measures for vulnerable groups and prioritize inclusive urban planning to ensure physical infrastructure serves all users.

PARTICIPATION: Considering the governance aspect of equitable design, the involvement of residents in the process and the engagement of underrepresented voices to ensure no one is left behind are key approaches for local governments.

OPPORTUNITY: To offer fair perspectives for all, local governments can target increased diversity in employment, the provision of career perspectives through training and support programs and strengthening and diversifying the local labor market.



These three dimensions help to communicate social equity, spur equity thinking and can be used to assess and incorporate positive equity outcomes in sustainability projects.

The chapters in this guidebook are structured along this framework, while further detailing relevant pathways for each dimension. When designing sustainability interventions, these pathways provide clear action steps to advance social equity and mitigate risks of unintended inequality outcomes. Many cities in the Urban Transitions Alliance and worldwide are already considering social equity in sustainability planning. This guidebook is based on their wealth of knowledge and collects examples from various world regions, including good practice from ICLEI’s global network. Addressed to local government officials and sustainability practitioners, the ‘Action steps towards an equitable transition’ chapter summarizes these practices into guiding questions and practical tools for program design as well as indicators to monitor progress.





CASE STUDY

Applying the three dimensions to Circular Turku

The methodology and tools presented in this guidebook can be applied by local governments to a variety of sustainability programs. The methodology was tested in an earlier version with the city of Turku, Finland, to map the social equity risks and opportunities associated with the interventions planned in the [Circular Turku Roadmap](#).

When designing the Circular Turku Roadmap, the three dimensions of access, participation and opportunities were used to map how the planned actions could benefit Turku's residents and which pre-conditions would ensure a fair and inclusive circular transition. This process offers learnings that illustrate the risks associated with sustainability projects in general and demonstrates how the three social equity dimensions can help plan for equitable transitions. Below is a non-exhaustive list of the risks identified. A more detailed overview can be found in the [Circular Turku Roadmap](#).

Access: When circular innovations increase costs for consumers

Investments and innovations to support the circular economy through resource efficiency (e.g. data platforms) and labor-intensive recovery processes (e.g. repairing and refurbishing) may increase costs for end-consumers. Monitoring the affordability of circular options for consumers, especially for low-income households, while implementing framework conditions to favor affordability and access for marginalized groups is therefore key to ensure all residents benefit from the circular transition.



Participation: When scale supports circularity but impairs collaborative governance

Because circular economy infrastructure projects often play on synergies between public utilities (e.g. wasteheat recovery and nutrients recovery in wastewater treatment), they are often planned, implemented and governed from a top-down perspective, which may exclude residents from planning and decision-making processes. As a result, the voices of those affected by proposals may not be heard. This can lead to strong opposition and 'not in my backyard' movements. To mitigate these risks, cities can allow participation early-on in planning processes, for instance by creating an advisory panel including residents living close to the rollout area.



Opportunity: When circular jobs are created but the corresponding skills are not available locally

Circular economy practices, especially when linked to reuse and recovery, are more labor-intensive than traditional practices. The circular economy is also linked to new business models (e.g. service-based or sharing economy) that may create local employment opportunities. However, if the skills to implement these new practices are not readily available, there is a risk these innovations won't benefit the local workforce. For this reason, reskilling and upskilling programs are key to fair and inclusive transitions.







EXPLORING THE THREE DIMENSIONS OF EQUITABLE TRANSITIONS

ACCESS

Prioritizing equitable access to resources, services and infrastructures



Equitable access to resources, services and infrastructures constitutes the first dimension of the social equity framework and relates to both the provision of basic needs and the establishment of enabling conditions for meaningful participation in society. With increasing living costs and rising inequalities in cities worldwide (Nijman and Wei, 2020), vulnerable groups face the risk of further marginalization and exclusion. Too often, individuals have limited access to resources or services because they live in a certain part of a city, due to demographic factors such as age, gender, origin or the language they speak, or because they are simply unable to afford it. Access to information plays a critical role in this context. When designed without equity in mind, sustainability interventions often fail to benefit all residents alike, while some economic measures even increase the burden for vulnerable populations.

From a local government perspective, considering equitable access in sustainability planning means identifying access gaps and implementing targeted support measures for those in need as well as prioritizing inclusive urban planning to ensure physical infrastructures serve all users. Entry points for municipal programs include basic resources (water, food, energy), health and wellbeing, safety, housing, mobility, community resilience and social participation.

Concretely, local governments can support access to resources, services and infrastructures through three interconnected pathways that focus on place, people and finance. Inequalities caused by demographics, income and location often intersect: minorities as well as young and old populations face a greater risk of experiencing poverty and are relatively likely to live in low-income neighborhoods. Therefore, many of the cases presented in this chapter relate to multiple pathways.



GEOGRAPHIC ACCESS

Applying place-based approaches to support vulnerable neighborhoods

To address structural inequalities between urban districts that pre-define living conditions for local residents, local governments can identify geographic priority areas to develop comprehensive policies and programs in partnership with vulnerable communities.



DEMOGRAPHIC ACCESS

Ensuring equal access irrespective of gender, age, abilities and origin

To create inclusive cities, local governments need to acknowledge demographic inequalities and consider different realities with regards to gender, age, physical and mental abilities and language capacity in urban planning and service provision.



ECONOMIC ACCESS

Innovative funding models to empower low-income communities

Public investments to address economic inequalities on a structural level are well-placed when empowering local residents through enabling cultural and social participation and improving community infrastructure.

HOLISTIC EXAMPLE

Creating a mix in a vulnerable neighborhood through affordable student housing

City of Milan, Italy

Increasing rent and housing prices in cities worldwide (OECD, 2022) are further aggravating the struggle for economically vulnerable groups. Especially youth and young adults, facing the risk of poverty as they are pursuing education or early employment, often live in crowded settings, experience a lack of private space or cannot afford to leave their parent's home to start their own lives. The COVID-19 crisis has further accelerated this trend (Ladaique, 2021).

The city of Milan is a traditional student city with increasing numbers of young residents. At the same time, it is the most expensive city in Italy with regard to housing prices and general living costs. However, the local universities are only able to accommodate one out of 17 students that move to Milan from outside the region. In 2014, the city of Milan started the 'Ospitalità Solidale' (solidary hospitality) project in cooperation with the Comunità progetto cooperative and the social association ARCI Milano. This housing project combines the aspects of geographic, demographic and economic access as it is focusing on two apartment complexes in a socially and economically vulnerable area in the suburbs of Milan. Both properties were in bad maintenance conditions and had multiple vacancies. Through public subsidies, 24 small flats and two public spaces were renovated and made available to young students and workers between the ages of 18 and 30. In return for relatively low rents, the young tenants commit to voluntary work in the neighborhood.

The overall outcomes of the project combine **geographic access** through increasing the social mix and sense of safety in the area, **demographic access** through supporting youth but also other residents benefiting from social activities organized by the new tenants, and **economic access** by providing low-cost housing and decreasing social exclusion for local communities living in poverty.





GEOGRAPHIC ACCESS

Applying a place-based approach to support vulnerable neighborhoods

A key barrier to equitable access is spatial inequality between city districts. The urban economic theory identifies income inequalities as the root cause of spatial inequality, with differences in housing prices based on the desirability of location inviting an income-based separation of social groups (Kilroy, 2009). Subsequently, services and investments accumulate along similar patterns, to the benefit of residents with higher incomes. When local governments are analyzing the spatial distribution of environmental conditions as well as resources, services and infrastructures, an overlap of various factors are often identified: differences in income levels coincide with inequalities in food and health services access, housing quality, tree canopy cover, heat island risks and air quality. The aggregation of these factors creates a reinforcing trend and leads to a considerable gap in life expectancy - about 15 years between rich and poor neighborhoods in US cities (Holder and Montgomery, 2019).

Acknowledging these inequalities that pre-define living conditions for local residents, place-based approaches focusing on vulnerable neighborhoods constitute the first pathway towards municipal sustainability programs with equitable access outcomes. When municipal strategies are developed, a first step to improve geographic access is the identification of priority areas that are considered along with all policies and programs. Urban regeneration measures that improve the physical conditions have shown to improve feelings of safety, attract new investments and strengthen community cohesion. At the same time, risks of gentrification need to be mitigated through socially-oriented policies building on self-management and local community empowerment. A key prerequisite for equity-focused program design is the involvement of local populations early on, to ensure their realities and needs are recognized and addressed.



Resources for local governments

- The article from the Department of Urban Regeneration and Planning Theory at the University of Kassel on [Urban livability in socially disadvantaged neighborhoods: The experience of the German program “socially integrative city”](#) reflects on the German system of urban development grants and evaluates how urban neighborhoods can be improved with the help of publicly funded area-based urban regeneration.
- Baltimore City’s [2018 Food Environment Report](#) presents the methodology used by the city of Baltimore to map areas where an intersection of factors particularly contributes to food insecurity, the “Healthy Food Priority Areas”.
- Following a place-based approach, [Buffalo’s Raincheck 2.0 Opportunity report](#) provides a planning framework to incorporate equity considerations as critical elements of green infrastructure decision-making and maximize economic, social and environmental benefits of green infrastructure implementation.



GEOGRAPHIC ACCESS

City-led examples



Co-designing climate safe neighborhoods

City of Cincinnati, USA

Through the Climate Safe Neighborhoods project, the city of Cincinnati is working with residents and stakeholders to understand the relationship between the city's history of race-based housing segregation and the current and predicted impacts of climate change. In a 6-week co-creation process, residents from vulnerable areas are invited to contribute their expertise on how to make the community greener and more resilient to climate change. Outcomes include improved climate adaptation based on first-hand information on local needs, trust-building and improved collaboration with residents as well as the empowerment of vulnerable communities to take advantage of government programs.



Supporting social and spatial inclusion through cross-neighborhood emissions trading

City of Essen, Germany

For the TRANSCITY research project, Essen's Green Capital Agency is partnering with regional research institutions to pair two urban districts in the historically deprived North and more affluent South of Essen through emission analysis and trading. With support of an app, local climate footprints are estimated in both districts as a baseline for the distribution of emission certificates. The returns from trading these certificates will be used to fund local social and ecological projects, with a focus on the low-income districts in the north. Other expected outcomes include incentivizing low-carbon lifestyles as well as fostering dialogue and socio-economic awareness across the city.



Appointing food equity ambassadors to support healthy food priority areas

City of Pittsburgh, USA

Based on a methodology developed by the city of Baltimore to map different food security dimensions at district level, Pittsburgh has identified 23 Healthy Food Priority Areas where the constant access to adequate food is limited. In cooperation with the Pittsburgh Food Policy Council and other stakeholders, the city of Pittsburgh has established the food equity ambassadors program to co-create solutions with populations most impacted by food insecurity. Solutions from the first cohort include investments to increase local buying options, the support of food growing initiatives and free public transit to increase access and ease transportation of groceries.





DEMOGRAPHIC ACCESS

Ensuring equal access irrespective of gender, age, abilities and origin

The second pathway under the access dimension focuses on addressing inequalities that relate to a person's demographics or abilities. Demographic factors like gender and age, but also physical and mental abilities and language capacity directly affect individual access to services and infrastructures. Administrative processes and services are usually only set up in centralized locations and official language and therefore not accessible for all. By default, urban environments and mobility systems are planned to suit the dominant majority, which is traditionally men traveling to and from work (Nagendra and Sen, 2022). Adding to these design-based factors, ethnic and social minorities are prone to face discrimination and social exclusion. In this context, the perceived and actual safety in public spaces plays an important role.

When addressing these issues to create inclusive cities, the first step for local governments is to recognize and consider the different realities of men, women, children, seniors, persons with limited abilities and linguistic minorities. Across the needs of specific groups, success factors for inclusive urban design are 1) streets and transportation systems catered for pedestrians and cyclists of all ages and mobility levels, 2) decentralized and multi-language service provision to increase accessibility across different abilities and language capacities, and 3) community spaces that are fully visible and feature good lighting and sheltered areas to increase public safety. As already mentioned in relation to geographic access, the inclusion of priority groups in the planning is crucial. To generate structural changes and sustainable outcomes, it is advisable to implement a bundle of actions embedded in a wider strategy rather than individual measures.



Resources for local governments

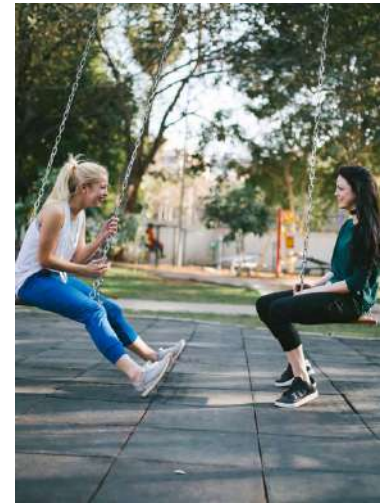
- The World Bank's [Handbook for Gender-Inclusive Urban Planning and Design](#) collects practical approaches, activities, and design guidelines for incorporating gender inclusion into urban planning and design.
- The monograph [Cities as Spaces for Opportunities for All: Building Public Spaces for People with Disabilities, Children and Elders](#) offers further context on needs and barriers to build inclusive and accessible cities, and selected case studies on cities that have built spaces and transit systems that help to remove these barriers.
- Initially driven by the accessible tourism agenda in Georgia, the Asian Development Bank's [Inclusive Cities: Urban Area Guidelines](#) provide guidance on inclusive city design with a specific focus on the implementation of universal design standards.



Co-creating public space to serve all genders equitably

City of Mendoza, Argentina

Addressing reports from women of feeling unsafe, the central plaza in the La Favorita district has been the focus of a gender-inclusive upgrade process jointly conducted by the Kounkuey Design Initiative, the Mendoza Municipality, the Argentine Ministry of Interior and the World Bank. Developed in cooperation with female residents and community groups, the final plan creates a multifunctional space that serves functions for all genders. In addition to basic safety upgrades like improved lighting, safe crosswalks and a protected bus shelter, key features include a playground with elevated seating, an open-air community center and a marked space for female vendors.



Designing inclusive urban environments for residents with limited mobility

City of Málaga, Spain

As Málaga's population is growing older, the city has committed to improve inclusiveness for the elderly and adults with limited mobility. With help of a dedicated Seniors Department, key approaches include: 1) participatory governance through 99 Senior Associations that offer cultural activities while increasing the reach of city programs, collecting community needs and reducing social isolation; 2) 50 Senior Centers and 100+ recreation areas for adults with limited mobility, connected to family facilities to foster cross-generational connectivity; and 3) decentralized provision of affordable housing suitable for limited abilities, in close proximity to health services and community spaces.



Embracing cultural diversity

City of Dortmund, Germany

To embrace cultural diversity while supporting language and information access, the city Dortmund has developed different programs for new residents: 1) A network of public institutions in the underprivileged North of the city to foster language education, reading competency and social integration for children and their parents; 2) Dortmund's city library that offers books in 125 languages, with a special focus on bilingual books for young readers; 3) the 'local welcome' integration network offering multilingual counseling and expertise to overcome bureaucratic and social barriers; and 4) the 'Integreat App' providing legal and administrative information for new residents in 13 languages.





ECONOMIC ACCESS

Innovative funding models to empower low-income communities

The third access pathway focuses on addressing economic inequalities through community empowerment. The issues of poverty and social exclusion are closely interlinked in hindering access to meaningful participation in urban life. Where financial means are lacking to access basic resources, social and cultural activities as well as political engagement are hardly prioritized. Traditional subsidies and welfare programs often fail to address the root causes and generate sustainable impact: socio-economic background and family education level commonly predefine individual income opportunities across the globe (OECD, 2018). On the other side of the coin, participation in social and cultural activities can help to overcome poverty and exclusion through building skills and confidence, overcoming social differences and discrimination and generating local employment opportunities (European Commission, 2006).

From a local government perspective, public investments that address inequalities on a structural level are well-placed when empowering local residents and improving community infrastructure. Programs to create accessible social activities and services in low-income neighborhoods create the most impact when financial support is provided in a way that generates multiple benefits, for example, local economic recovery and social inclusion through community activity. Pooling of resources from multiple local stakeholders and participatory budgeting approaches have proven beneficial to base economic support schemes on residents' needs. When designing such programs, administrative and information barriers to participation need to be overcome especially for those struggling from poverty and exclusion.



Resources for local governments

- The United Nations' publication on [Financing for Development Office: Financing sustainable urban development in the least developed countries](#) supports government officials to strengthen their urban finance frameworks with guidelines and case studies on local public financial management.
- Addressed to urban development practitioners, the ["Enabling Inclusive Cities" Toolkit for Inclusive Urban Development](#) by the Asian Development Bank offers guidelines for project development and implementation, using an integrated approach that encompasses sustainable, resilient, accessible, and affordable solutions and targeted investments.
- The City of Sydney's study on [Making Space for Culture in Sydney](#) emphasizes the challenges that increasing property prices present for the creative economy and outlines international efforts and new financing avenues to enhance cultural activity in cities.



ECONOMIC ACCESS

City-led examples



Distributing Covid-19 recovery funds equitably

City of Buffalo, USA

To ensure the resources received under the national Covid-19 American Rescue Plan are spent equitably, the City of Buffalo has developed a targeted anti-poverty program. Key measures include 1) the provision of financial support or debit relief with low administrative hurdles to low-income residents impacted by the pandemic and 2) the improvement of environmental conditions contributing to the cycle of poverty by investing in water and sewer infrastructure, affordable housing, community centers, parks and cultural institutions to serve local residents. The program also prioritizes violence prevention, digital connectivity and health services for the most impacted communities.



Funding a cultural hub and affordable housing for local economic revitalization

City of Toronto, Canada

For urban development projects above a certain size, the Ontario state planning act requires developers to provide resources to the local government to fund community infrastructure. In the Weston community, one of Toronto's 31 Neighborhood Improvement Areas, this funding model has been used to create a 800-square meter cultural hub with 26 affordable housing units and an open space area for community use. For the \$13 million investment sum, the development resources have been pooled with other city funds and affordable housing subsidies. The project is expected to create around 940 local jobs, contribute to economic and social revitalization and bring accessible culture to the neighborhood.



Innovating participatory budgeting to reduce application hurdle

City of Lille, France

In the Lille Metropolis, 21 priority districts with critical living conditions have been identified. Every year, 40 million Euros are allocated to around 1,000 projects proposed by residents from those districts, focusing on economic development, upgrade of public spaces and community activities. When adopting the participatory budgeting scheme after a practice from Lisbon, Portugal, Lille was adding two improvements: Firstly, to enhance local stakeholder cooperation, only applications from multiple entities are accepted. Secondly, the proposal submission procedure has been replaced by neighborhood workshops that lower application hurdles and enable economic access for disadvantaged groups.



PARTICIPATION

Designing programs with rather than for residents



This dimension refers to the governance aspect of equitable design, emphasizing both the involvement of residents in the process and the engagement of under-represented voices to ensure no one is left behind.

The more programs are designed with rather than for residents, meaningfully engaging different groups using various channels, the more they meet local needs and generate long-term impacts. This can be ensured by prioritizing collaborative co-creation with local agents and by empowering existing community initiatives that are already active in sustainability.

Participation is most promising when incorporated early on in the planning process and facilitated throughout all planning stages. This helps to ensure that programs are tailored to the case-specific context and implemented in a manner that serves local needs. There is no one-size-fits-all approach, as different groups require different tools for participation and personal characteristics determine ways of participating. Participation can have different degrees of involvement, ranging from citizen consultation and co-production to the extent of ownership and advanced implication in designing programs (Unger, 2014).

From a local government perspective, enabling participation means identifying the groups that will be affected by initiatives and ensuring appropriate channels are in place for meaningful and inclusive participation. Local governments can also act as conveners and enablers to support existing civil society initiatives, understand and address their needs so that their local impact can be nurtured.

Concretely, local governments can support participation through three interconnected pathways that focus on representation, engagement and collaboration.



REPRESENTATIVE PARTICIPATION

Identifying vulnerable groups when designing inclusive programs

To ensure that sustainability programs represent diverse interests and needs regarding the project and prioritize vulnerable communities, this dimension is about including affected residents and making all voices heard from the early stages of planning throughout the project.



ENGAGING PARTICIPATION

Co-creating with local stakeholders through various channels

While representation is about acknowledging and integrating the interests of various groups, engagement is about finding appropriate channels and tools for these groups to co-design and influence programs.



COLLABORATIVE PARTICIPATION

Empowering existing initiatives in the city

A key component of accelerating change on the ground is acknowledging and supporting existing civil society initiatives already contributing to the city's priorities and programs. This bottom-up approach is to empower local communities and enable co-ownership of the transition.

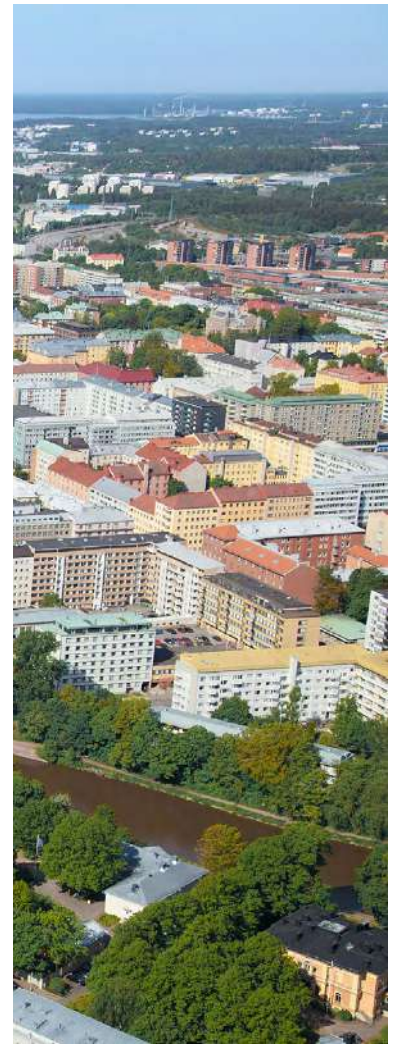
HOLISTIC EXAMPLE

Participation as an enabler of a fair carbon neutral transition

City of Turku, Finland

The city of Turku, Finland, is aiming to become carbon neutral by 2029 and has implemented a wide set of initiatives to support this transition. To make sure different groups are **represented** in governance processes the city established city councils for particular groups (ie. the multicultural council, the disability council, and the children's parliament). The multicultural council exemplifies the role of local governments to observe matters from the point of view of vulnerable groups such as migrants to better account for their needs. In addition, co-creating programs to enable meaningful **engagement** is at the heart of Turku's efforts. The city established a digital tool that allows citizens to vote on how the annual budget for programs is distributed by the city council. This ensures co-design in spending 1 million Euros per year in the city which has already generated a submission of over 700 proposals and engagement of more than 7,000 residents. Finally, building up coalitions of stakeholders and pairing with initiatives from civil society is a priority for the city. Turku is **collaborating** with citizens-led, community initiatives, knowledge institutions, and private and public initiatives on the design of the Circular Turku Roadmap, which supports the city's climate ambitions.

Turku's experience suggests that a holistic transition can benefit from identifying different groups that are affected, providing various channels for all to be engaged and building on existing knowledge in the city.



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REPRESENTATIVE PARTICIPATION

Identifying vulnerable groups to ensure diversity in program design

Including residents that will be affected by future reforms and ensuring they have a say early on in the planning process is central to the long-term impacts and acceptability of sustainability programs. Tailoring policies and initiatives to the residents' lived experiences and their interests and needs also make them more robust and resilient to changing political priorities.

This pathway highlights the relevance of identifying the ones that need to be included to diversify the representation of groups in planning. Representation is about making sure to ask who to include into planning and especially recognize the ones that are most affected. Vulnerable groups are often excluded or remain unheard in decision-making despite being highly prone to risks such as resource shortages, economic shocks, and the lack of social services (WRI, 2021). Ensuring a variety of groups are identified across socially constructed characteristics (such as age, gender, origin and socio-economic background) is key to support more equitable representation and socially just project design. Local governments play a key role in identifying those that are left out to ensure that the perspectives of the vulnerable groups are considered in the transition.

Local governments can use various means to identify who to include such as interviews with different stakeholders, living labs, and collaborative surveys. Participatory mapping with diverse target groups as well as vulnerability assessments in the local community can further help to better understand who is affected, and needs to be part of designing programs. Identifying the ones to include marks an initial step to creating procedural equity in decision-making processes.



Resources for local governments

- Chapter 12 of the report [Governance and Institutions – Creating Diverse Coalitions and Alignment](#) by the World Resources Institute compiles seven transformation pathways toward a more equal city with a focus on how representation of vulnerable groups enables inclusive governance in urban spaces.
- Under the UrbanA project, a [comprehensive report](#) was compiled to detail learnings on how to improve governance for sustainable and just cities. This report as well as the project's resources can be accessed at: <https://sustainablejustcities.eu/>.
- The [Vulnerability Sourcebook](#) published by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development provides concepts and guidelines for standardized vulnerability assessments aimed at identifying vulnerable groups to include in governance.



Mapping children's perspective on urban mobility

City of Stockholm, Sweden

The City of Stockholm applied participatory tools to identify who needs to be included in planning new cycling pathways to understand the needs of different groups related to active transportation and mobility in planning. Stakeholder mapping helped identify children as a group not sufficiently targeted for in planning, whilst interviews and visual mapping with this particular group contributed to the development of a comprehensive plan aimed at school workers and decision-makers to better consider their needs. Participatory tools helped the city to identify the ones to include, and create a healthier and more liveable environment for cycling in Stockholm's city center for all.



Identifying the most vulnerable to build resilience

City of Quito, Ecuador

The city of Quito, Ecuador prioritized representation of residents that are most affected by climate risks while compiling a local resilience strategy. Vulnerability mapping of neighborhoods in the initial stage of planning helped the city to better identify those that are most exposed to acute shocks and stressors. This was followed by community workshops and interviews with residents in the most under-served areas. Placing a focus on the identification and inclusion of the most vulnerable groups early on in designing the cities' resilience strategy ensured that all voices are represented in the resilience program of Quito.



© City of Quito

Living labs to represent women

City of Kathmandu, Nepal

Kathmandu joined forces to set up a series of urban laboratories, "living labs" aimed at identifying perspectives of women for designing post-earthquake construction. The labs functioned as a physical interface and safe space to connect with women in the local context, and identify their perspectives. Participatory methods such as interviews, focus groups or brainstorming sessions further supported the local process to better represent women in cases of disaster and emergency.





ENGAGING PARTICIPATION

Co-creating through various channels



Building on co-creation and offering various channels for engagement in sustainability planning is a critical component of fair and inclusive transitions. This pathway is about finding appropriate channels and tools to effectively reach out to residents and engage them along the planning and implementation process.

Engagement can be facilitated from the early stages of sustainability planning and across a variety of stakeholders. Different groups require different means of engagement to meaningfully participate in the design and implementation of programs, which is why a variety of channels and tools should be considered by local governments.

Finding suitable channels to support a wider outreach of participatory programs and the meaningful engagement of relevant stakeholders can effectively be supported by local governments through a variety of means, from multi-stakeholders platform to surveys and participatory budgeting, as explored in the examples below.



Resources for local governments

- The working paper [City Zine](#) reflects on the multi-stakeholder workshop series conducted in Rotterdam illustrating how to facilitate engagement with different participatory tools and how to reach out to participants.
- The [Handbook for Participatory Urban Planning](#) is a result of the Heat Project reflecting on diverse ways used to facilitate the engagement of citizens in urban planning through participatory methods and discuss how to best reach out to those to engage.
- The fact sheets provided in [GreenSAM \(Green Silver Age Mobility\) project toolbox](#) showcase different tools to increase engagement and explain how to apply participatory methods.



ENGAGING PARTICIPATION

City-led examples



Facilitating an arena for engagement in urban planning

City of Rotterdam, Netherlands

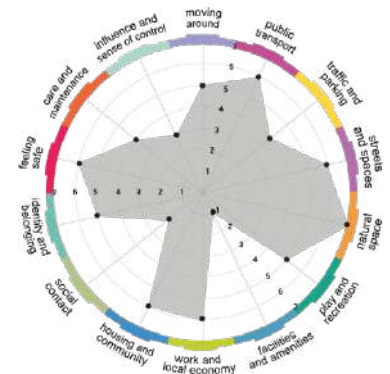
Under the UrbanA initiative, the city of Rotterdam conducted a series of participatory sessions to co-design the city’s sustainability initiatives with multiple stakeholders. Most of the events were conducted in a hybrid manner, with participants connecting remotely. Various participatory methods, such as group brainstorming and mind mapping, were used to jointly define what would support a more just and inclusive city and develop policy recommendations for the city government.



Structuring conversations around places and community with the Place Standard tool

City of Glasgow, UK

The city of Glasgow reaches out to citizens using the ‘Place Standard tool’. Both physical aspects (infrastructure, public space, transportation) and social aspects (safety, social contact and belonging) that define a place are plotted on a diagram with the points closer to the center representing those areas most in need of improvement while those towards the edge are strengths. The ‘Place Standard tool’ can benefit all new and existing communities and can also help tackle health inequalities. The tool has been built jointly by NHS Health Scotland, the Scottish Government and Architecture & Design Scotland.



© Glasgow official Place Standard Tool

Engaging residents through participatory budgeting

City of Porto Alegre, Brazil

The city of Porto Alegre has been a pioneer in participatory budgeting as a format for citizen engagement, and driving change on the ground in favor of the local community. This has inspired local governments throughout Brazil and the world to implement similar versions of the tool and to leverage participation in decision-making in cities. Porto Alegre’s experience demonstrates that participatory budgeting requires the involvement of coalitions across stakeholders and a well-structured format delivered through various channels to the local population to be meaningful.





COLLABORATIVE PARTICIPATION

Building on existing initiatives
to empower local actors



Empowering local actors and enabling partnerships and co-ownership is critical to ensure sustainability programs are long-lasting. Asking the question of where initiatives are already existing in the city and how to partner with and support them is the focus of this pathway.

Local governments can play a role as enablers and supporters of initiatives that are already contributing to more sustainability in their jurisdictions, as these initiatives know the local context and needs best. This advances a just transition as it mobilizes and reinforces grassroots movements and coalitions of multi-stakeholders in the city. Joining forces with existing initiatives enables local projects to be informed by local capacity and knowledge. Civil society-led programs can help to build a direct bridge to the communities as they are often seen as more neutral than governmental structures. Local governments can thereby play a role in forming or supporting coalitions of multi-stakeholders and offer a platform for exchange and collaboration across various actors.



Resources for local governments

- The working forum [Community-Driven Development](#) hosted by The World Bank compiles resources, policy briefs and case studies aimed to generate knowledge for governance schemes that are driven by communities and local empowerment.
- [The Co-Cities Open Book by LabGov.city](#) is the result of years of research and experimentations on the field to investigate new forms of collaborative city-making. It gathers tools and approaches that support participatory governance.



Building a community-based multi-stakeholder platform for collaboration and local exchange

City of Kisumu, Kenya

As part of its efforts to empower local initiatives through multi-stakeholder collaboration, a Local Interaction Platform was set up in Kisumu. Run by trustees coming from diverse sectors, the platform facilitates exchange and capacity to address pressing sustainability challenges through connecting local initiatives. Driving change on the ground, this has enabled opportunities for universities, civil society, residents association and NGOs to co-design, co-creation and co-ownership in designing sustainability programs.

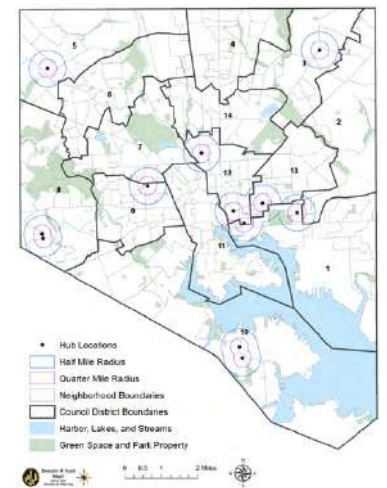


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Baltimore's Community Resiliency Hub Program: Enhancing community-based services for cases of emergency and disaster

City of Baltimore, USA

The city of Baltimore joined forces with existing local service-based non-profit organizations located in under-resourced neighborhoods to facilitate a Resiliency Hub Program for cases of emergency and climate disaster. Established in 2015, the program consists of 15+ service-based NGOs that partner with the municipality to provide community-centered emergency preparedness. Building on existing initiatives and forming local coalitions enabled co-ownership of information, resources, and training in Baltimore, and placed a focus on existing resources that are closest to the most vulnerable residents in the city.



© Baltimore Office of Sustainability

Collaborative urban gardening to facilitate community ownership

City of Florianópolis, Brazil

The Municipal Urban Agriculture Program (PMAU - Programa Municipal de Agricultura Urbana), established in Florianópolis in June 2017, builds on civil society organizations to co-manage urban agroecological practices. Collaborating with local communities has supported efforts to produce and process food efficiently and locally, as well as improved access to healthy and low-cost food within the urban context.

For example, the program includes the Rede Semea, a multi-stakeholder network for urban agriculture, as well as the 'Center for the Study and Promotion of Group Agriculture' which was founded by small farmers interested in the development of local productive networks.



OPPORTUNITY

Delivering equitable opportunities through employment, market and training



Equitable opportunities for employment, training and upskilling constitutes the third dimension of the social equity framework.

The COVID-19 pandemic induced lockdowns and recessions combined with increased automation and digitalization have created a highly uncertain outlook for job markets across all world regions (World Economic Forum, 2020). In reaction, the Building Back Better movement has called for all levels of governments to create incentives for investments in sustainability to provide the jobs of tomorrow while ensuring safety nets are available for displaced workers in the midst of job transitions.

The International Labor Organization estimates that 24 million jobs can be created globally by 2030 from the energy transition and the circular economy (International Labor Organization, 2018). Such a transition would enable millions of people to overcome poverty and enjoy improved livelihoods. Demonstrating that sustainability programs support the local economy and workforce and especially benefit vulnerable workers is also central to their long-term acceptability among city residents and to social equity.

However, not all sustainability jobs are created equal. Some rely on a highly-skilled workforce that may not be readily available locally and therefore require educational and training opportunities to support reskilling. Other sustainability jobs are lower-skilled and might create vulnerable situations for workers if regulations and incentives are not in place to support fair and safe working conditions.

As such, creating equitable employment opportunities through sustainability programs demands focusing not only on the quantity of jobs that result from sustainability programs but also on their accessibility and quality.

As employers themselves, enablers of market shifts and conveners of economic actors, local governments can support a sustainability transition that delivers equitable employment opportunities through three pathways.



EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Prioritizing vulnerable groups in municipal employment programs

Local governments can mobilize funds for sustainability programs that deliver employment benefits. Increasing diversity and prioritizing vulnerable groups in such programs is an essential step in designing equitable sustainability programs.



TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

Boosting employability through training and upskilling

Providing career perspectives through training and support programs that aid the upskilling and reskilling of the local workforce to meet new employment needs is key to ensure sustainability programs deliver opportunities for local residents.



MARKET OPPORTUNITIES

Supporting the market conditions for long-term equity

Working with local stakeholders to support emerging sustainability sectors and ensure that they create long-term quality jobs with decent working conditions is a precondition to social sustainability.

HOLISTIC EXAMPLE

Developing a systemic approach to economic and workforce equity

City of Philadelphia, USA

Philadelphia is one of the oldest municipalities in the United States and the most populous city in Pennsylvania. In the 19th and 20th centuries, Philadelphia became a major industrial center and a railroad hub and attracted high immigration during the 20th century. However, deindustrialization and disinvestment have left the city with high unemployment and a poverty rate which at 23.1% is double the U.S average.

'Shared Prosperity Philadelphia' was launched in 2013 as the city's response to the crisis of poverty and unemployment in Philadelphia. The city has worked in collaboration with public and private sector partners to develop an ambitious plan to both connect residents to high-quality employment opportunities and advance economic and workforce equity. Diverse city departments as well as private sector businesses, members of the Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce, and employment training providers have been collaborating since then to break down the existing silos within the workforce development landscape and construct a common strategy for the city.

This collaboration led to the implementation of three initiatives that address the different dimensions of supporting equitable opportunities at the city level.

Philadelphia's 'City as Model Employer Career Advancement' project onboards individuals with barriers to employment along a pathway to permanent **employment within City government** or with city employer partners. The project focuses on disconnected youth and young adults aged 16 to 29; formerly incarcerated and justice-involved individuals, and adults lacking the necessary workforce skills or credentials. **Training and reskilling** are also supported through Philadelphia Works, a non-profit organization that serves as the city's workforce development board. Philadelphia Works invests in public resources and manages employment services that **increase access to career opportunities** and respond to business needs in terms of skills. The platform also conducts research and collects data to further unpack the barriers to long-term employment and make recommendations to the city accordingly.





EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Prioritizing vulnerable groups in municipal employment programs

Through green economic recovery measures and sustainability investments programs, local governments can target municipal spending in sustainability sectors that deliver local employment benefits.

Both hard infrastructure projects (such as sidewalk repairs and new cycle lanes), as well as green infrastructure projects (such as building green roofs or rainwater harvesting systems), can create a variety of jobs. In addition to the staff they employ directly through construction and maintenance, these projects will also create jobs in other service industries that support them. Upgrading existing infrastructure to improve efficiency and make better use of existing assets also holds the potential to deliver local jobs. The World Resources Institute estimates for instance that in the United States investment in energy efficiency creates three times as many jobs as an investment in fossil fuels (World Resource Institutes, 2020). Finally, by making productive use of resources that would otherwise be wasted, the circular economy can create local jobs and relocalize portions of industries.

Prioritizing vulnerable populations in such municipal programs is essential to facilitate equitable income distribution. Local governments can further support a just transition by including a 'social return' clause in public tenders requiring contractors to create local employment, training or work experience for vulnerable groups.

The quality of the jobs created also needs to be considered. In developing countries, green jobs can provide avenues out of poverty, but many are informal and temporary, limiting access to work security, safety, or social protections. Cities can support fairer and safer informal workers' contributions to the local economy through various avenues, from dedicating public spaces to their activity, granting them the right to bid for public procurement contracts and supporting their access to core public services and workers rights (Jaeger, J. et al. 2021).



Resources for local governments

- The European Commission's report [Buying for social impact: Good practice from around the EU](#) offers an overview of how contracting authorities can use public procurement to pursue social goals.
- The World Resources Institute's working paper [Including the Excluded: Supporting Informal Workers for More Equal and Productive Cities in the Global South](#), written in collaboration with Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO) network, examines different approaches that cities have taken towards the informal self-employed workers and their livelihood activities.
- WIEGO's [COVID-19 Crisis and the Informal Economy Study](#) explores how workers are adapting to the Covid-19 crisis and provides [city fact sheets](#) and [policy insights](#) for policy makers.



EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

City-led examples



Creating jobs out of waste through the “Waste to Wealth” program

City of Baltimore, USA

The Waste-To-Wealth Program aims to support businesses in Baltimore that are making products out of valuable materials captured from the waste stream. This includes the Baltimore Compost Collective, through which youth employees collect and compost food scraps from several districts. The Compost Collective is also an entrepreneurship program where youth are trained in workforce skills, food access programming, and community-scale composting and receive hands-on experience managing a small-scale composting operation and its expansion. The compost they create is used to grow fresh produce for the community in a local garden.



© Baltimore Compost Collective

Developing employment opportunities through urban mining

City of Vienna, Austria

In 2017, the municipality of Vienna supported the setup of the 'BauKarussell', a social platform aiming at facilitating dismantling in the construction industry and finding a market for salvaged building materials ('urban mining') while bringing employment to the long-term unemployed, people with disabilities or mental illnesses and other disadvantaged groups. By the end of 2020, BauKarussell had dealt with more than 1,100 tons of materials, of which 550 tons were passed on for reuse. The outcome was achieved in 21,000 social economy working hours, thus creating jobs for over 100 persons with disadvantages in the labor market.

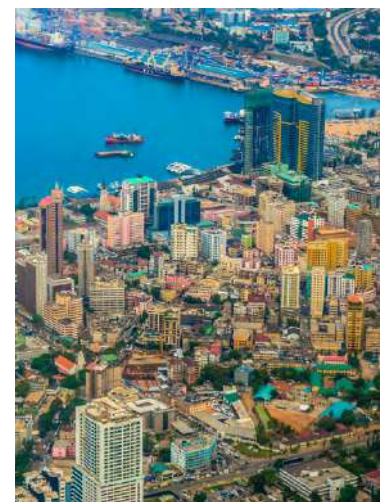


© Harald A. Jahn

Enabling the formalization of informal construction workers

City of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

The rapid growth in infrastructure projects in Dar es Salaam has led construction employers to increasingly seek seasonal or contract workers, most of whom are informally employed. As a response, informal construction workers in the city have formed the Tanzanian Informal Construction Workers Association and organized policy dialogues with the city government and employers. These dialogues underlined the need for informal workers to gain official recognition and be able to bid on public sector projects. As a result, a policy is now in place whereby organizations of informal construction workers are eligible to bid on projects worth a maximum of 60,000 US Dollars.





TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

Boosting employability
through training and upskilling

Cities can promote a just transition and enhance social equity through offering educational opportunities for training and reskilling to better connect available jobs to residents and municipal employees.

This entails assessing the risk of skills shortage for residents and municipal employees by investing in understanding the scale and nature of emerging employment needs. Cities can work with the private sector and employment and education actors to determine which jobs are at risk so that they can engage with specific companies and target resources to the industries or geographic areas with the highest upskilling needs.

Once the sources of risks are identified, cities can design training programs to both retain employees in at-risk roles and offer opportunities for students or residents that are unemployed. From a city's perspective, supporting training and reskilling means working with a variety of partners, from chambers of commerce and employer associations to education providers, social partners and professional associations so that needs for reskilling can be anticipated and appropriately addressed.

Critical to the equitability of reskilling programs is ensuring equitable participation. Caretakers, single parents, migrants as well as those who lack access to electronic devices or the internet all form vulnerable groups that are likely to lack access to adult learning systems and whose needs must therefore be carefully accounted for.



Resources for local governments

- European Commission's ["Intelligent Cities: A pragmatic guide to reskilling"](#) proposes a step-by-step approach to developing a reskilling initiative, provides examples of the experiences of cities, key success factors and lessons learned
- The World Economic Forum developed a [skills at work global taxonomy](#) to help decision-makers create programs that better assess and target skills development.



TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

City-led examples



Facilitating upskilling and skills matching in the circular economy

City of Amsterdam, the Netherlands

Amsterdam’s House of Skills initiative is a public-private partnership bringing together more than 90 representatives from businesses, employee associations, research institutes, the education sector and local government to facilitate upskilling and skills matching in the circular economy and information and communications technology sectors. The House of Skills develops various online learning and upskilling programs which workers and job seekers can access for free. Employers can find new employees on the same platform to address their recruitment needs.

Skillspaspoort (nog in ontwikkeling)

Het Skillspaspoort is een persoonlijk profiel waarin kennis, diploma's, werkervaring, skills en waardes zijn opgenomen. Hiermee kunnen werknemers zich oriënteren op weroldoelstellingen in hun loopbaan en uitdaken welke richting daar wettend is.

Het Skillspaspoort geeft werkgevers een beter inzicht in de match tussen het functieprofiel en het werknemersprofiel. Dit helpt in een snellere aanwerving van de juiste kandidaat. In de afgelegen jaren heeft House of Skills bijgedragen aan de ontwikkeling van een eerste versie van het Skillspaspoort op Schiphol, voor veldmannen in de techniek en bouw en voor studenten in het vbo en hbo.

Op dit moment wordt een Skillskaart ontwikkeld, waarin vertrouwelijke persoonlijke informatie over skills betrouwbaar is op te raven. Daarmee hebben we voldoende ervaring opgedaan om te komen tot een volgende versie van het Skillspaspoort voor onderneemsters. Binnen de Participatie Amsterdam, in dit traject worden samen met vbo (VCA, Nova College), hbo (HvA, Saxion, Hogeschool Arnhem-Nijmegen), universiteiten en onderzoekers (Vrije Universiteit, Universiteit van Amsterdam) bestuderen worden. In mei 2022 is dit project gestart. Het idee is om studenten vanaf het begin van hun opleiding een Skillspaspoort uit te reiken, zodat in de opleiding ontbrekende skills worden ingevuld. Het Skillspaspoort kan worden onderzocht hoe zij het beste het Skillspaspoort kunnen gebruiken in de verduurzaming van hun vacatures. [Meer informatie over het Skillspaspoort.](#)



© House of Skills

Training the future of the green construction workforce

New York City, United States

To prepare the city’s workforce for jobs in the growing green buildings sector, New York City has supported the training of 3,000 workers in the construction industry through the NYC Green Jobs Corps, a partnership between the city and the Building Construction Trades Council. In addition, New York City runs the NYC Cool Roofs initiative, which provides New Yorkers with paid training and work experience installing energy-saving reflective rooftops. This initiative is a partnership between the NYC Department of Small Business Services, its Workforce1 Industrial & Transportation Career Center, the Mayor’s Office of Sustainability and the Mayor’s Office of Resiliency.



Ensuring accessibility in training opportunities

Beijing Economic and Technological Development Zone (E-Town), China

E-Town is focusing on improving employment and entrepreneurship opportunities for people with disabilities through holistic support and policies through its Social Affairs Bureau. The Bureau created guidance for local enterprises to carry out training courses for people with disabilities to increase their employability in key areas of the economic zone. It also conducted extensive interviews to better understand the needs and aspirations of residents with disabilities. This led to the creation of new service platforms and employment assistance targeting the needs of people with disabilities. As of 2021, there were 1,261 enterprises in E-town hiring more than 4,000 people with disabilities.





MARKET OPPORTUNITIES

Supporting the market conditions
for long-term equitability



Recovery and investment programs, as well as reskilling initiatives, often focus on delivering employment opportunities in the short- to medium-term. The challenge is then for local governments to ensure the longevity of the new opportunities created and implement framework and market conditions that allow them to last beyond the timeframe of the initiative that created them.

Local governments can do so by supporting the market for sustainable products through various economic instruments such as public tenders or tax breaks. They can also create favorable conditions for social economy enterprises to thrive and support an ecosystem of local social innovations. Finally, by targeting partnerships and exchange amongst partners the city can increase opportunities for all and ensure the long-term sustainability of the job market.



Resources for local governments

- The European Commission's [social entrepreneurship ecosystem Assessment tool](#) allows governments to assess whether current policies and programmes enable and support social enterprises to start-up and scale-up.
- The OECD's [Methodological framework for building local ecosystems for social innovation](#) provides a framework for analyzing social innovation ecosystems at the local level to help policymakers better understand the different concepts around social innovation, and develop supporting policies.



MARKET OPPORTUNITIES

City-led examples



Securing fair revenue for local organic food producers

City of São Paulo, Brazil

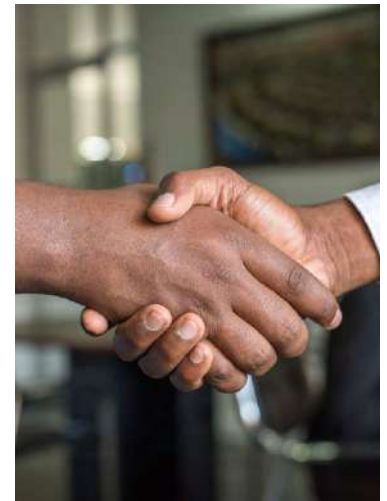
The city of São Paulo passed a decree in 2016 setting a target that by 2026, 100 percent of the 2 million school meals offered in the city every day should be organic. This allowed organic farmers in the region to bid directly with the city government to supply local schools. São Paulo buys produce from these local farmers at 30 per cent more than the market value to support the transition. In addition, the city's 'Connect the Dots' program is addressing logistical barriers that hinder direct interactions between consumers and local producers (e.g. improving the road infrastructure, facilitating access to warehouses). Today, 160 farmers are involved in the project.



Partnering with chambers of commerce towards an inclusive jobs ecosystem

City of Cincinnati, USA

Since 2020, the city of Cincinnati has been partnering with the regional chamber of commerce to launch consulting services to promote more inclusive employment practices as part of the Bloomberg Philanthropies' 'What Works Cities initiative'. The collaboration helps companies that want to adopt more inclusive practices but don't have the resources to assess, analyze and implement them themselves. The chamber also hosts the Minority Business Accelerator which helps minorities acquire existing businesses with no succession plan. These efforts have contributed to making Cincinnati the U.S. city with the highest percentage of minority businesses that make over 500,000 US Dollars per year.



Supporting private sector commitment to inclusive employment

Lyon Métropole, France


Lyon committed in 2019 to support local employment through its 'Charter of 1,000 Companies' which brings together local enterprises committed to hiring residents with barriers to employment. The charter is a collaboration between local enterprises, the Lyon metropolis and regional job centers. Having involved 1,071 companies which employ over 2,500 people, Lyon is now committed to improving the attractiveness of jobs in the new, green and digital sectors, creating training opportunities and coordinating a network of employers in the sector.







ACTION STEPS TOWARDS EQUITABLE TRANSITIONS



This last chapter is designed to help city practitioners navigate the different aspects of social equity when designing sustainability programs.

The section builds on the cases and learnings presented in the rest of the guidebook. The guiding questions are meant to support the identification of vulnerabilities and social equity risks for a specific program. The policy instruments overview offers inspirations for concrete actions local governments can undertake to design equitable sustainable programs. Finally, the last section suggests indicators to create accountability and monitor progress over time. As it is impossible to deliver a one-size-fits-all solution to embed equity in sustainability programs, the approaches listed below should be regarded as guidance and inspiration on what should be considered in program design based on best practices from the ICLEI network and the Urban Transitions Alliances. Local governments interested in going further can express their interest to support the Malmö Commitment (see p. 50) and learn from their peers on designing equitable transitions.

Guiding questions to design equitable transitions

The following tables summarize key aspects to consider when designing sustainability programs with an equity focus. The guiding questions included are not exhaustive, they are based on the best practices and resources detailed previously in this guidebook.



ACCESS

Prioritizing equitable access to resources, services and infrastructures



Applying place-based approaches to support vulnerable neighborhoods

- To address cross-district inequalities regarding residents' income and factors such as access to health services, fresh food, green infrastructure and active mobility, which districts need to be prioritized in the sustainability program?
- What are the most critical factors impacting quality of life in the priority neighborhoods which the program could help address?
- When channeling sustainability investment and support to priority districts, how can gentrification side-effects and other negative consequences be prevented?



Ensuring equal access irrespective of gender, age, abilities and origin

- How are public spaces designed in the city? Have different realities based on abilities, gender, age and language been well considered in urban planning? How can these aspects be enhanced through the program?
- Are there certain spaces and geographic areas that should be designed to serve specific user groups (e.g. areas in proximity to schools or elderly homes)?
- What could prevent inclusive access to services implemented through the sustainability program?
- In sustainability programs, where are entry points to make the built environment and service provision more inclusive, e.g. in terms of green mobility options and digital information tools?



Innovative funding models to empower low-income communities

- Which financial support programs exist in the municipality, and how could they be linked to the sustainability program to increase accessibility for low-income groups?
- How can subsidies and financial support measures be better leveraged to generate sustainable outcomes, e.g. through associated education or community empowerment components?
- What other resources and funding options, e.g. housing subsidies, could be built into sustainability programs to increase accessibility impacts?



PARTICIPATION

Designing programs with rather than for residents



Identifying vulnerable groups to ensure diversity in program design

- Are the most affected groups being identified in the initial stage of the program?
- How does the city ensure equitable representation in the design of the program?
- Does the program recognize specific perspectives of different residents based on gender, age, abilities and origin?
- How is the city planning to involve underrepresented groups throughout the program?
- What can be an entry point for particularly vulnerable groups to participate in the governance of the program?



Co-creating through various channels

- To what extent does the program build on co-creation with local stakeholders in the design process?
- To support acceptability, have the equity issues addressed in the program been sufficiently communicated to the public?
- Are the channels used likely to reach underrepresented residents?
- How can participatory approaches enhance engagement?
- Are inputs from consultations taken into account meaningfully for decision making purposes?
- Has capacity been unlocked to support resident engagement throughout the program?
- Are coalitions of multi-stakeholders in place to inform further developments of the program?



Building on existing initiatives to empower local actors

- What are the benefits of the program for existing civil society initiatives active in sustainability in the city?
- What incentives are in place for local initiatives to collaborate with the local government in designing programs?
- How likely is the program to empower local initiatives?
- Which support is the city providing for existing civil society initiatives contributing to the goals of the sustainability program?



OPPORTUNITY

Delivering equitable opportunities through employment, market and training



Prioritizing vulnerable groups in municipal employment programs

- Are the envisaged sustainability investments, procurement or support programs planned or framed in a way that supports local employment?
- Will these jobs benefit the local workforce and especially vulnerable groups?
- Do vulnerable groups have access to information regarding new employment opportunities linked to the sustainability program?
- Are these new jobs likely to replace existing ones, including informal ones?
- Is there a way to monitor the net distribution (loss and gains) of jobs through the program?



Boosting employability through trainings and upskilling

- Is the program likely to create new jobs that necessitate new skills that may not be readily available locally?
- Are some workers groups at risk of unemployment because of changes planned in the program?
- Would the program benefit from educational programs to guarantee its positive uptake in the long term?
- Are training providers available locally to provide the necessary upskilling support?
- Are these training opportunities available to all? Are special needs considered (e.g. disabilities, lack of internet access)?



Supporting the market conditions for long-term equitability

- Have social enterprises contributing to or delivering on the goals of the program been identified?
- Are favorable conditions in place to support social economy enterprises and small producers that deliver on the goals of the program?
- Is the city supporting the market for products or services produced by local social enterprises that contribute to the objectives of the program?
- Is the city facilitating minorities' access to entrepreneurship that delivers on the objectives of the program?



Policy instruments for equitable transitions

This section offers examples of instruments cities can use to address the gaps identified in the previous section and support positive equity outcomes in sustainability programs. The policy instruments presented below can be applied to all dimensions and sub-dimensions of the framework presented in this guidebook. As demonstrated in the best practices included in the previous pages, successful initiatives often mix various instruments to address several aspects of equity at the same time. As there is no one-size-fits-all approach that would be relevant in all contexts, local needs and singularities need to be considered when selecting the combination of policy instruments.

BACKGROUND NOTE

Categorizing policy instruments

The tools included are organized around the five traditional categories of environmental policy instruments (Wageningen University, 2015).

Legislative and regulatory instruments: Laws and regulations with binding requirements and sanctions in case of noncompliance.

Economic and fiscal instruments: Market-based incentives that stimulate or discourage certain behaviors, such as subsidies, loans, taxes, concessions of rights.

Agreement-based or cooperative instruments: Voluntary cooperation mechanisms between a government and civil society or private actors towards a shared agenda.

Information and communication instruments: Dissemination of information on certain issues in the hope that it will entice behavior change.

Knowledge and innovation instruments: Cooperation between actors to jointly increase their knowledge by engaging in social learning (e.g. communities of practice, living labs, workshops).

Legislative and regulatory instruments

Equity mainstreaming in governance processes is about integrating equity at all stages and levels of policies, programmes and projects. While the concept has mostly focused on gender considerations so far (see the World Bank's [Handbook for Gender-Inclusive Urban Planning and Design](#)), the approach can be applied to reflect and address a variety of vulnerabilities in the urban context. See the resources section and examples from Málaga and Dortmund on pages 18 to 19 for inspiration.

Procurement criteria and guidelines help to ensure that the equity objectives of sustainability programs are embedded in the city's public spendings. The European Commission's report [Buying for social impact: Good practice from around the EU](#) offers an overview of how contracting authorities can use public procurement to pursue social goals.

Place-based planning is a planning approach that aims at aligning government services and infrastructure to local needs. [Buffalo's Raincheck 2.0 Opportunity report](#) provides a planning framework to incorporate equity and place-based considerations as critical elements of green infrastructure decision-making. The State of Victoria (Australia) developed a comprehensive [framework for place-based approaches](#) which contains different planning support tools and case studies.

Economic and fiscal instruments

Participatory budgeting is a process in which community members directly decide how to spend part of a public budget. See the examples from Lille on page 21 and Porto Alegre on page 27 for inspiration and best practices.

Resource pooling coordinates the efforts and resources of different public agencies towards a joint goal. This is particularly relevant in the equity space as there often lacks a single public body focusing on the different aspects of social equity and a municipal budget dedicated to it. The [guidebook 'One place, one budget? Approaches to pooling resources for public services transformation'](#) by Rand Europe presents case studies of local authorities in England where a pooled approach was being used for service delivery.

Financial support and incentives for local social enterprises supporting sustainability (e.g. grants, tax breaks) help the social ecosystem and offer opportunities to residents with barriers to employment. This is particularly relevant when it comes to implementing recovery plans and target spendings at specific initiatives. See for instance how Buffalo supported an equitable spending of Covid-19 recovery funds on page 21.

Agreement-Based or cooperative instruments

Convening platforms can be set up by the local government to better align service providers with residents in need. Amsterdam's House of Skills initiative on page 35 provides an example of how a city can convene actors to support inclusive employment opportunities.



Social public-private partnerships tap into the strengths of governments, the private sector, and the social sector to address social disparities by looking at equitable ways of delivering city services. In social public-private partnerships, governmental and private sector entities align their resources to support a social-purpose organization (e.g. through funding or professional development) in the delivery of a service. See for instance Vienna's social platform for urban mining and inclusive employment on page 33.

Information and communication instruments

Resource hubs help make information available and accessible to all. See the efforts of Dortmund to support cultural diversity on page 19.

Creating specific guidance for well-defined situations and actors is a relevant way for local governments to support local action that supports equity. See for instance the guidance to increase employment opportunities for people with disability which E-Town developed for local enterprises (page 35).

Consulting services offered by the city in partnerships with local actors can help bridge knowledge and skills gaps locally. See for instance Cincinnati's consulting services to promote more inclusive employment practices on page 37.

Knowledge and innovation instruments

Mapping methodologies help to accurately represent physical and social space while engaging residents. Different types of mapping can be undertaken based on the scope and needs of the project. Stakeholder mapping helps identify key groups to engage. Spatial mapping can help to highlight geographic inequalities (see Baltimore's 'Healthy Food Priority Areas' mapping in their [City Food Environment report](#)). Participatory mapping can also be conducted to ensure planning is based on local challenges and needs (see the participatory tools the city of Stockholm used to recognize children's perspectives on urban mobility on page 25). To uncover structural vulnerabilities, vulnerability assessments can be conducted, such as the vulnerability mapping implemented in Quito (page 25).

Online consultations can be capacity-effective means to collect feedback from residents and scale engagement. Numerous platforms exist to facilitate online participation (e.g. MiroBoards, Mentimeter, Future Dialogue). Some cities also choose to develop their own digital platform such as Glasgow's [Place Standard Tool](#) (see page 27). When making use of such digital tools, the risk of exclusion of senior residents and other user groups need to be mitigated.

Co-creation processes, for instance through interviews, focus groups, roundtable and living labs, are relevant in-depth tools to gather inputs from local stakeholders and communities to jointly design programs. For inspiration, see the 6-week co-creation process undertaken in Cincinnati to create Climate Safe Neighborhoods on page 17 and the "living labs" aimed at identifying perspectives of women for designing post-earthquake construction in Kathmandu on page 25. The fact sheets provided in the [toolbox](#) compiled under the GreenSAM project showcase different tools to increase engagement and unpacks how to apply participatory methods.



Indicators to monitor equitable transitions

The below table provides an overview of indicators that can be used to create a baseline at the start of program design and monitor the equity outcomes of sustainability programs. These indicators are based on the best practices and resources detailed previously in this guidebook and should be regarded as inspirations to identify quantitative and qualitative indicators that fit the local context. The indicators listed below can be included in broader sustainability monitoring frameworks such as the 'Voluntary Local Reviews' of the Sustainable Development Goals and within sector specific transition plans, such as renewable energy or integrated waste management plans. They can also serve as a basis for developing local plans focused on social equity. Their main purpose is to create accountability and a framework to facilitate collaboration among different actors towards joint equity targets. It is also recommended to offer residents a space for suggesting additional indicators that might better reflect their context. Progress on adopted targets should be reported publicly.



ACCESS

Prioritizing equitable access to resources, services and infrastructures



Applying place-based approaches to support vulnerable neighborhoods

- Life expectancy between different neighborhoods
- Number or percentage of municipal programs targeted at most vulnerable districts in the city
- Housing prices and average living costs per neighborhood (development over time)



Ensuring equal access irrespective of gender, age, abilities and origin

- Existence of urban integration strategies for different groups
- Perceived and actual safety in public spaces impacted by the sustainability program, gathered per age group, gender and other demographic factors (e.g. monitored through surveys)
- Number of relevant languages reflected in municipal programs and services



Innovative funding models to empower low-income communities

- Amount of public funds allocated and spent for financial support and debt relief of low-income populations
- Percentage of financial support measures including sustainability and equity components
- Additional sum acquired through resource pooling for increasing accessibility impacts of sustainability programs
- Number of residents applying for support programs and citizen projects, per income and other groups



PARTICIPATION

Designing programs with rather than for residents



Identifying vulnerable groups to ensure diversity in program design

- Number of incentives and support mechanism for minority groups to participate in governance (including gender balance, inclusion of minority groups)
- Percentage of under-served neighborhoods in which participatory mapping was facilitated to ensure the sustainability program reflects local needs



Co-creating through various channels

- Existence and frequency of consultation mechanism between the city and local initiatives active in sustainability
- Number of residents-led and civil society initiatives consulted in program design and implementation
- Percentage of the program planning group stemming from the community
- Number of annual meetings of the city with community stakeholders
- Engagement of local multi-stakeholder coalitions in the program (number and/or frequency of engagements)



Building on existing initiatives to empower local actors

- Number of community initiatives already contributing to the goals of the program
- Existence of collaboration mechanism between local government and local initiatives active in sustainability (number and/or frequency of engagements)
- Number of local initiatives receiving support to co-implement the program



OPPORTUNITY

Delivering equitable opportunities through employment, market and training



Prioritizing vulnerable groups in municipal employment programs

- Number of jobs created per sum of money spent, the GDP or gross-value-added (GVA) multiplier
- Number or percentage of employment opportunities targeted at particular population segments, sectors, or geographies



Boosting employability through trainings and upskilling

- Percentage of unemployed city residents engaged in training or reskilling programs focused on sustainability
- Existence of collaboration mechanisms between the local government and education and training partners
- Existence of specific conditions to facilitate the access of vulnerable groups to trainings and upskilling programs



Supporting the market conditions for long-term equity

- Percentage of public tenders including a clause for social and inclusive employment
- Number of local social enterprises receiving support to co-implement the program
- Existence of incentives and support mechanisms for social economy enterprises to find a market for their products locally



The Malmö Commitment on Inclusive and Equitable Communities

Recognizing the multiple, interconnected challenges local governments face with regards to the climate and nature crisis and social inequalities, ICLEI and the City of Malmö are calling to action with the Malmö Commitment on Inclusive and Equitable Communities. It inspires local governments to be part of the solution and encourages sustainable approaches, innovation, adaptability, participation and inclusiveness. The Malmö Commitment was launched on 12 May 2022 during the high-level dialogue “Putting people at the heart of local sustainable development: The Malmö Commitment” at the ICLEI World Congress 2021 - 2022: The Malmö Summit.

Through four steps of actions the commitment empowers local and regional governments to prioritize all people and social equity at the core of local sustainable development. Adopters are asked to: 1) identify key sustainability challenges and the social dimensions against which each challenge must be addressed; 2) design social equity indicators to measure and monitor their progress in addressing these challenges; 3) report their progress and share successes and lessons learned with other committed local governments to develop a pool of knowledge for further advancing equitable sustainable local development around the world; and 4) encourage the local governments of neighboring communities, and others they work with and partner, to commit to the Malmö Commitment and further enhance the collective efforts.

Eight local and regional governments have already joined the Malmö Commitment: the City of Malmö (Sweden), the City of Austin (USA), the State of Yucatán (Mexico), the Glasgow City Council (United Kingdom), the Municipality of Manizales (Colombia), the Municipality of Santa Fe (Argentina), the Municipality of Utrecht (Netherlands) and the Municipality of Porto Alegre (Brazil).

Local and regional governments supporting the commitment have the opportunity to showcase their commitment to developing safe, inclusive, resilient communities for all. Other benefits include: 1) becoming part of a community of like-minded local and regional governments working on equity policies within the sustainability sphere; 2) gaining access to further tools, resources and good practice which support equitable local sustainable development planning and implementation; and 3) sharing knowledge and collaborating with other committed local and regional governments addressing similar challenges and dedicated to promoting equity in their cities, towns and regions.

Learn more about the Malmö Commitment: <https://worldcongress.iclei.org/malmo-commitment/>

Expressions of interest to support the Malmö Commitment can be sent to malmo.commitment@iclei.org.



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ABOUT THE URBAN TRANSITIONS ALLIANCE

From May 2017 until June 2022, the Urban Transitions Alliance, led by ICLEI and supported by the Stiftung Mercator, presented an opportunity for industrial legacy cities across the world to demonstrate their commitment to sustainable urban development.

The Alliance was a city network and knowledge-exchange hub of innovative urban transition policies and projects. It connected industrial legacy cities from across the globe to share transition achievements, jointly identify current challenges and develop solutions to successfully guide their individual green and just transitions.

Cities and urban districts represented in the Alliance:

- City of Baltimore, USA
- City of Buffalo, USA
- City of Cincinnati, USA
- City of Dortmund, Germany
- City of Glasgow, UK
- E-Town, City of Beijing, China
- City of Essen, Germany
- City of Gelsenkirchen, Germany
- Huairou District, City of Beijing, China
- City of Katowice, Poland
- City of Pittsburgh, USA
- City of Turku, Finland
- Yuhua District, City of Shijiazhuang, China

Local government representatives from the Alliance members have jointly prioritized social equity as the overarching focus of collaboration. The knowledge captured from the Urban Transition Alliance exchanges between July 2019 and June 2022 has been summarized in this Equitable Transitions Guidebook.

Read more: www.urbantransitions.org

ABOUT CIRCULAR TURKU

The Circular Turku project is a cooperation between the city of Turku, the Finnish Innovation Fund Sitra, Finland Futures Research Center, Valonia and ICLEI to support the development of a roadmap to operationalize circularity in the Turku region with the support of local stakeholders. The project ran between August 2019 and August 2022 and learnings from local activities have informed the development of this guidebook.

Read more: <https://www.turku.fi/en/carbon-neutral-turku/circular-turku>

ABOUT ICLEI

ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability is a global network working with more than 2,500 local and regional governments committed to sustainable urban development. Active in 125+ countries, we influence sustainability policy and drive local action for low emission, nature-based, equitable, resilient and circular development. Our Members and team of experts work together through peer exchange, partnerships and capacity building to create systemic change for urban sustainability.





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