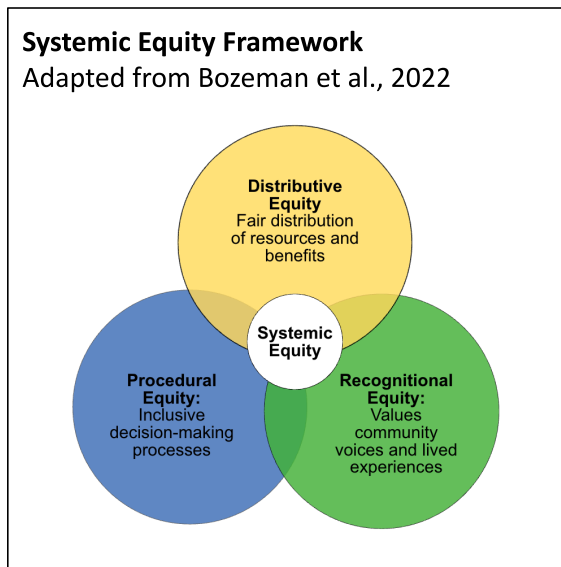


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Appendix 6a: Equity Evaluation Methods

We internally evaluated the LWW project to assess how project processes aligned with the dimensions of systemic equity: distributive, procedural, and recognitional equity.¹ The evaluation process consisted of a “warm-up” discussion activity with the LWW team, interviews with team members, a resident-facing evaluation activity at the community workshop, and a final project team “cool down” exercise.

The systemic equity framework was chosen because it provides a practical framework for conceptualizing systemic equity in project implementation. It defines systemic equity as all components of a project working together to practice distributive, procedural, and recognitional equity: distributive equity refers to providing resources in an unbiased manner; procedural equity refers to decision-making activities that ensure the unbiased allocation of resources; and recognitional equity refers to addressing the emotional and cultural needs of historically marginalized groups.



During the “warm-up” activity, the LWW team evaluators prompted the full team to reflect on their understandings of equity and asked for feedback on the proposed framework. Discussion questions included, “What words do you associate with equity?” and “What does it mean for a project to be equitable?”

The LWW team evaluators interviewed six team members individually and conducted one group interview with the three team members leading the literature review. Interview questions aligned with the systemic equity framework were tailored to be relevant to each team member’s role in the project (see questions below). The evaluators summarized the notes from the interviews and focus group, organizing points into six categories: distributive, procedural, and recognition equity; co-creation processes; critiquing the approach; and recommendations/lessons learned.

The evaluation activity at the community workshop consisted of a questionnaire asking community members about the extent to which they enjoyed the event, felt that it valued their knowledge and experiences with flooding, and were confident in understanding the different NBS strategies presented at the workshop. Community members also had the option to submit anonymous, handwritten comments to elaborate on their workshop feedback and to mark where they live on a map of South Park to identify which areas of the neighborhood were represented at the event.

At the end of the project, the LWW team participated in a “cool down” exercise where they discussed shared understandings of principles of equity and the adapted equity framework, as well as general reflections on the project’s strengths and areas for improvement.

Equity Evaluation Interview Questions

The following is a sample of questions used in each interview. Interview questions were tailored to match the interviewee’s role in the project.

Process Questions

1. How did the research team arrive at the three aims of this project? How, if at all, has this project evolved during the grant development phases and its implementation?
 - a. Whose perspectives were incorporated during the development of this project?
2. How, if at all, has your process incorporated social context such as cultural and lived experiences of this community, or power dynamics between community and the research team?
3. Have the resources available to the project been fairly distributed across the project team? Why or why not?
4. Have there been opportunities for reflection and course correction or accountability throughout the life of this project?
 - a. If so, in what ways has the project team changed their approach?

Outcome Questions

1. How could the insights gathered from your work in this project inform systemic changes to the research process that could promote long-term equity in similar projects?
2. In addition to the activities of the project's equity evaluation, are you asking for feedback or assessing community members' experience during project activities? Feedback could be related to participants' full ability to share insights and experiences, empowerment during the discussion, inclusivity and respect for participants' identities, experiences, and personal contexts.
 - o If so, how and what types of feedback?

References

1. Bozeman JF, Nobler E, Nock D. A path toward systemic equity in life cycle assessment and decision-making: Standardizing sociodemographic data practices. *Environ Eng Sci.* 2022;39(9):759-769. doi:10.1089/ees.2021.0375

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Appendix 6b: Equity Evaluation Results

Reflections on the Equity Framework

During the warm-up activity, as team members considered how the equity framework could be adapted for LWW, they highlighted the importance of recognizing historical and current environmental racism in South Park. Others considered whether the definition of “community” should be expanded to include natural systems and if the framework could be adapted to make more sense for the community. This exercise shaped questions later used in the equity evaluation interview guide.

Distributive Equity

Activities during the project’s planning process facilitated the equitable distribution of project resources and expectations. The process of drafting a Community Partnership Agreement (CPA) helped to outline the roles, responsibilities, and time commitments of UW and DRCC team members. Project funding was distributed equally between UW and DRCC, with the UW team absorbing some additional costs, such as food. Although differences existed between academic and community schedules and priorities, the team maintained flexibility in the content and timing of the community-facing events, facilitating the prioritization of community needs. As one example, the team learned during the focus groups that providing community members with more education on NBS was an important step before engaging in a visioning workshop, and adapted the workshop design accordingly.

Several aspects of the project led to an unequal distribution of burdens amongst team members. By design, outreach responsibilities primarily fell to DRCC, as their trusted relationships and networks were key for recruiting community participation. At times, this placed the DRCC team members in a vulnerable position, as they needed to leverage their personal relationships and reputations to recruit community participation, while balancing requests for community members’ involvement in multiple projects. Additionally, Spanish-speaking team members experienced an additional burden on their participation. For instance, at community events, they often had to facilitate large groups of participants compared to smaller group sizes for the English discussions, due to a larger availability of English-speaking team members. This limited the Spanish-speaking facilitators’ abilities to fully document notes on the discussions. Finally, while funding was split equally, it became apparent that the available funding for the project was not always sufficient to cover team members’ time dedicated to the project – a burden that fell more heavily on less well-resourced DRCC.

Procedural Equity

Several processes strengthened outreach efforts and representative participation. UW members took time to build trust with community members (e.g., attending community events, conducting initial interviews with trusted community members), which built community confidence in academic partners and the study overall. DRCC also tailored outreach strategies to community members’ preferred communication channels, including a one-page handout, WhatsApp messages, texting, newsletters, and word-of-mouth, with all materials translated into Spanish. Several team members’ Spanish fluency was a particular strength in enabling deeper engagement of Spanish-speaking interviewees.

Other aspects of the project created challenges to inclusive and accessible decision-making processes. Team members with no prior relationship with DRCC may have lacked context about the community before the project. The full team did not meet until the study began, which may have delayed trust-building among the team. A few team members called out the lack of structured opportunities to reflect on successes and challenges during the project to allow for course corrections. In addition, the

use of certain words with different meanings in academic and community contexts, e.g., “focus groups,” may have led to differing perceptions between team members. These differences led to some challenges in managing timelines and expectations of team capacity.

Finally, the limited evaluation data collected at the workshop suggest that different methodologies of feedback collection may need to be pursued to garner more community feedback in the future. Furthermore, despite concerted efforts to recruit more robust participation, only a few members of South Park’s Khmer community participated in the study activities.

Recognitional Equity

The study design and goals drew from previous research partnerships and reflected a shared understanding that the project's stakes were high, as it could directly inform the City’s priorities and decisions regarding flood adaptation. The team worked to refine research questions to focus on learning *with* the community, rather than only learning *about* the community. The six participants in the Community Workshop that responded to the evaluation survey all indicated that the workshop was enjoyable, and they felt that their community’s knowledge and experiences with flooding were valued. Regardless, the level of participation in this activity was not sufficient to draw strong conclusions.

The previously discussed limitations of sparse staffing to facilitate Spanish-speaking community participation and the inadequate participation of Khmer community members meant that the study did not sufficiently engage and represent all groups living in South Park who had been affected by flooding.