



# DIAGNOSING AND OVERCOMING BARRIERS TO ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

AN ARBOR DAY FOUNDATION ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE TRAINING RESOURCE

## INTRODUCTION:

When you are trying to achieve ambitious, multi-year goals like environmental justice, you will inevitably face barriers – and you likely already have. Barriers are any conditions that make it difficult to make advancements or to achieve an objective.

Review the types of barriers below, which are common in urban and community forestry. Would you revise or add any barriers to the list below? If so, please add your notes to the definitions.

## TYPES OF BARRIERS:

**Ecological:** One or more environmental elements that heavily influence the health of trees are inadequate or missing (e.g. soil quality, space, accessible water resources).

**Financial or funding:** Insufficient funds prevent us from achieving this goal.

**Capacity (of staff, residents, partners, and/or volunteers):** There are not enough people available with the required skills to help achieve this goal.

**Coordination and collaboration:** The people involved can't agree on the steps necessary to achieve this goal.

**Competing priorities:** Other priorities have taken precedence over this goal.

**Other barriers:**

## DIAGNOSING BARRIERS TO ACHIEVING ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE GOALS:

In the table below, place an X in the columns that best describe the types of barriers that prevent you from achieving each environmental justice goal listed in Column 1. For example: If you have faced difficulty obtaining funding needed to involve residents more meaningfully in decision-making, put an X under "financial/funding" for goal #1.

**DIAGNOSING BARRIERS TO ACHIEVING ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE GOALS: CONT...**

BROAD ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE GOALS	TYPES OF BARRIERS FACED					OTHER BARRIERS	
	ECOLOGICAL	FINANCIAL/ FUNDING	CAPACITY	COORDINATION/ COLLABORATION	COMPETING PRIORITIES		
1. Make decisions about the urban trees with those affected (i.e. residents living with low tree canopy)		X					
2. Prioritize the internal goals of a community in urban and community forestry programs a. For example, residents in low-canopy neighborhoods often want urban and community forestry programs that also provide economic and job opportunities for residents.							
3. Provide the support communities need to achieve their goals (e.g. tree stewardship support, partnerships with workforce development programs)							
4. Create metrics of success that integrate community experiences and voices							
5. Increase tree canopy coverage and tree equity <sup>1</sup> in low-canopy communities							
6.							
7.							

<sup>1</sup>Tree equity is defined as "having enough trees in an area so that everyone can experience the health, climate and economic benefits" (Travers, J., September 3, 2021, The Ecologist, <https://theecologist.org/2021/sep/03/tree-equity>).

If you have any broad environmental justice goals that are not represented in Column 1 of the table on page 2, please add them to the blank rows in the table above.



## STRATEGIES TO OVERCOME BARRIERS TO ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE:

1. What strategies have you used to try to overcome the specific barriers you have faced? For example, have you applied for grants that focus on more than just tree plantings in order to increase funding that would help you engage with residents in decision-making?
2. Which of these strategies have been most successful for you, and why do you think so?
3. Which barriers are you struggling the most to overcome, and why?





## **THE ARBOR DAY FOUNDATION AND FAIR FORESTS CONSULTING**

At the Arbor Day Foundation, we believe everyone should have access to the powerful benefits of trees. To help strengthen our focus on communities that need trees most, we partner with experts like Dr. Christine Carmichael from Fair Forests Consulting. This resource, crafted by Dr. Carmichael, is part of our ongoing commitment to empowering our partners to grow their environmental justice work in urban forestry.

Alliance for Community Tree members have access to our full environmental justice training series in the ACT Member Resource Center. Learn about this network and how to join at [arborday.org/ACT](http://arborday.org/ACT).