1.1 Optimize for Equity — REQUIRED for All Certification Levels

10 Points | 20 Points | 30 Points | 40 Points | 50 Points

Action Updates

This action was last updated in 2026. A version of this action from the prior program year is available for comparison. Edits are highlighted in yellow.

This action is required for all certification levels.

Objective

Build and strengthen municipal processes to be more inclusive, cohesive, and representative of all community members, now and in the future. These system-wide, structural changes are an important step in creating open and equitable communities.

Resources and assistance are available for this action. Visit our "Equity Resources" page for more information.

What to Do

You may complete the Sustainable CT Equity Toolkit for up to five Sustainable CT actions. **(10 points per application)**

1. Complete the Sustainable CT Equity Toolkit in its entirety for any new Sustainable CT action of your choice. We suggest that you allow at least three to six months to complete this action, along with the action to which you will apply it. You must have completed the Equity Toolkit process in the last three years to be eligible for points.

   Your submission must answer the five questions listed below (these questions are described in more detail on page 13 of the Sustainable CT Equity Toolkit document):

   - Who lives and works in your community?
   - How did you connect with each other?
   - What emerged from your dialogue?
   - What was the result of your collaboration?
   - How will you refine, revisit, and improve?

   Submit: Apply the Sustainable CT Equity Toolkit to one or more actions in your submission and submit a narrative that includes the submission requirements outlined on page 13. ***Please note:*** You must also submit for the new action(s) to which the Toolkit was applied in the corresponding submission page(s). This subaction is included in the Sustainable CT Climate Leader Designation.

   *For **Bronze Certification**, you must complete the Sustainable CT Equity Toolkit for one Sustainable CT action that you are submitting for certification.*

   *For **Silver Certification**, you must complete the Sustainable CT Equity Toolkit for at least three Sustainable CT actions that you are submitting for certification.*

   *For **Gold Certification**, you must complete the Sustainable CT Equity Toolkit for at least four Sustainable CT*

actions that you are submitting for certification.

Engaging Partners

Sustainable CT encourages regional collaboration and other forms of partnership. For every action, please complete the "Partners" box in your submission, indicating the name(s) of any municipalities and/or organizations you partnered with (if any) and a brief description of your municipality's role. If you collaborate with other municipalities, each community will receive points. For additional information, please see the "Partners Guidance Document".

Potential Municipal and Community Collaborators

Municipal staff from all departments as well as representatives from existing local commissions, committees, or community organizations; civic leaders, representatives from neighborhood organizations, seniors and youth; and community members who rely on or are impacted by public services and amenities, including transportation, built infrastructure, local municipal operations, planning, natural resources, land conservation, economic development and retention, housing, arts and culture, food systems, public health, community engagement, equity, etc. may be helpful in implementing this action.

Funding

If available, below are potential funding sources specific to this Action. For a complete listing of potential funding opportunities to assist with implementing Sustainable CT Actions, please visit the Sustainable CT Grants Portal, which is searchable by Action. Please also visit the Support for Your Town page for opportunities for technical assistance and other supports.

- Urban Act Grant Program
- Sustainable CT Community Match Fund
- State Funding Readiness Project

- If applied to Sustainable CT Action Conduct Health Impact Assessments: Connecticut Health Foundation

Resources

Messaging Resources

- Interaction Institute for Social Change, "Illustrating Equality VS Equity"
- The Praxis Project, "Developing an Equity Impact Statement, A Tool for Policy Making"
- Center for Social Inclusion, "Talking About Race Toolkit"
- Frameworks Institute, "Mixing It Up: Reframing Neighborhood Socioeconomic Diversity"
- The Annie E. Casey Foundation, "It's Time To Talk: How to Start Conversations About Racial Inequities"
- The Aspen Institute, "Ten Lessons for Taking Leadership on Racial Equity"
- Georgetown Environmental Law Review, Disability Disregarded: A Call to Action for Disability-Inclusive Climate Commitments
- Harvard Law Today, "People with disabilities must be included in climate planning and responses, say Harvard researchers"

Engagement Resources

- Lidiya Girma, "Community Engagement Planning"

Data Resources

- Connecticut Data Collaborative
- Connecticut Town Equity Reports
- CDC WONDER (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
- National Equity Atlas
- US Census Bureau - Explore Census Data

General Resources

- Examples of actions that align well with Action 1.1 Optimize for Equity
- Sustainable CT x Though Partner Solutions, Belonging, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Workshop
- Seattle Race and Social Justice Initiative, "Racial Equity Toolkit"
- City of Portland, "Racial Equity Toolkit"
- Government Alliance on Race & Equity, "Racial Equity Toolkit"
- Government Alliance on Race & Equity, "Advancing Racial Equity and Transforming Government"
- Commission on Equity and Opportunity
- PolicyLink
- Multnomah County, Office of Diversity and Equity, "Social Determinants Framework"
- PolicyLink, All-in Cities Policy Toolkit
- PolicyLink, "Equity: The Soul of Collective Impact"
- University of Southern California, Program for Environmental and Regional Equity, "Diversity and Inclusion for the 21st Century Economy: An Imperative for Chambers of Commerce"
- W.K. Kellogg Foundation, "Truth, Racial Healing, and Transformation Implementation Guidebook"
- Harvard Law School Project on Disability
- Harvard Law School Project on Disability, People with Disabilities: Taking Action on Climate Change
- C40 Cities Knowledge Hub, Delivering disability inclusive climate action: Resource pack for cities
- Global Disability Innovation Hub, Building a Case for Disability-Inclusive Local Climate Action

Why This Matters

Building inclusive and equitable communities is a process that recognizes the intrinsic value of each member of a community and the need to connect; and is achieved when social, economic, and political opportunities are not predicted based upon a person's race, gender, age, or sexual identity. To build communities that embrace equity, Sustainable CT cities and towns will create a table where diverse relationships are welcomed and valued, where decisions are made collectively, and where success will be measured by having a variety of perspectives and experiences represented. Sustainable CT encourages cities and towns to include marginalized voices in their decision making processes, and to specifically identify barriers to access for marginalized residents in order to identify and respond to community priorities.

CT Success Stories

- Lyme - May 2022 Certification
- Goshen - Oct 2022 Certification
- Wilton - Oct 2022 Certification
- Middletown - Sep 2023 Certification
- Branford - Sep 2023 Certification
- Bristol - Sep 2023 Certification
- New Haven - Sep 2023 Certification
- Groton - Oct 2024 Certification
- Killingly - Oct 2024 Certification
- Woodbridge - Oct 2025 Certification
- Bloomfield - May 2026 Certification