Priority Populations Worksheet

Purpose: This worksheet will help you complete the following sections of your application:

- 'Community Challenges' section of the Community Vision Description (NOFO Section IV.B)
- 'Maximizing Economic Benefits of Projects' section of the Community Strength Plan (NOFO Section I.G)

Goals for Addressing Priority Populations

One of the EPA's goals for Track I grants is to reach and improve the lives of priority populations. Your application will need to show:

- Who are the priority populations in your Project Area.
- How your community's challenges affect them.
- How your planned strategies and projects will benefit them.

What Are Priority Populations?

Priority populations are groups of people who are more vulnerable, susceptible, or subject to climate change, environmental pollution, and weather-related threats when compared to the general population. When identifying priority populations in your community, consider that they may be vulnerable for at least one of the following reasons:

1. **Exposure**: They are more likely to live near pollution or other threats at higher levels for a longer time.
2. **Sensitivity:** They are more affected by the threat.
3. **Ability to Adapt**: They find it harder to respond to the threat due to their health or social and economic inequalities.

Priority populations are made up of individuals with diverse backgrounds, needs, and views. The NOFO Section I.G Footnote 3 notes that priority populations may include:

- Children
- Pregnant women
- Seniors
- Those with low incomes
- Those with limited-English-proficiency
- Those with disabilities or chronic medical conditions
- Those with other risks that may put them at greater vulnerability

These groups are listed because they are more vulnerable than the general population for a variety of reasons. For example, low-income populations generally have a harder time accessing quality medical care and have fewer resources (like paid sick leave) to deal with illness. Older adults are more likely to have medical conditions that make them more sensitive to pollution or power outages. A person can also be a part of more than one priority population. This can often make the person even more vulnerable to specific threats. Your community might also have priority populations that are not listed here.

Example Priority Population: Children

Small children have unique behaviors like crawling on the floor, playing outside, and putting their hands in their mouths. This makes them *more likely to be exposed* to pesticides, lead, or other pollutants. Children are also *more sensitive* to these exposures because they are going through important periods of development and growth. They also breathe more air, eat more food, and drink more water on a pound-for-pound basis. It is also *more difficult for children to adapt* because they are highly dependent on their caregivers.

Children may belong to more than one priority population. For example, children in low-income households may live in poorly maintained homes with greater exposure risks. These children may also have a more difficult time accessing needed but costly healthcare.

Guiding Questions

Work with your community to answer the following questions. Remember that your application will be evaluated on how well your strategies and projects address challenges and provide benefits to priority populations in your Project Area.

Link Priority Populations to Community Challenges and Strategies

1. Think about the challenges community members have brought up in conversations. Are some specific priority populations more vulnerable to these challenges than others? What makes them more vulnerable? (NOFO Section IV.B)

    (Try to be as specific as possible about why priority populations are vulnerable to each challenge. This will help you plan projects that benefit these vulnerable groups.)

Community Challenges	Priority Populations	Vulnerabilities
Extreme heat events	*Children*	*Usually spend more time outdoors exercising, more sensitive to extreme heat.*
Extreme heat events	*Low-income groups*	*More likely to live in urban areas that have higher temperatures than surrounding areas, more likely to work outdoors, less able to afford air conditioning or medical care.*

2. Think about the community challenges and the ways that priority populations are vulnerable to these challenges. What are some ways to address these vulnerabilities?

3. Think about specific Climate Action and Pollution Reduction Strategies (see NOFO Section I.G. and Appendices C and D). Which might be the best at addressing these challenges and related vulnerabilities?

4. How will priority populations be helped by specific projects?

Describing Priority Populations in Your Community

1. Which priority populations are most vulnerable to challenges you plan to address? Do these groups make up a significant portion of the community?

2. What additional information or data can you include about these priority populations?

   EJScreen and the U.S. Census Bureau's Census Profile website have useful data about priority populations. However, these tools are limited in terms of what they can tell us about a specific community and its priority populations. It is also important to include information on the specific lived experiences of your community and priority populations, which you can gather through community engagement exercises.

Tips to Consider

- In the Community Challenges section of the Community Vision Description, make sure to say how priority populations are affected by climate and pollution challenges (NOFO Section IV.B).
- In the Community Strength Plan, make sure to say how priority populations will benefit economically from your planned projects (NOFO Section I.G).
- People can be a part of more than one priority population. Many factors can influence how vulnerable populations are to climate and pollution challenges.
- Your community is made up of individuals with diverse backgrounds and views, and so are priority populations in your community. Data can provide a basic understanding of these priority populations, but it is important to provide additional information about lived experiences. You may need to engage with community members to get this information.

Resources

1. The Impacts of Climate Change on Human Health in the United States: A Scientific Assessment, Chapter 9: Populations of Concern
   A report from the U.S. Global Change Research Program that summarizes research on the health impacts of climate change in the United States. Chapter 9 covers vulnerability for different groups of people.
   https://health2016.globalchange.gov/populations-concern

2. Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool (CEJST)
   This screening tool identifies disadvantaged communities that are underserved and overburdened by pollution. https://screeningtool.geoplatform.gov/en/#3/33.47/-97.5

3. EJScreen
   The Environmental Justice Screening and Mapping Tool is a web-based interactive map with layers that allow users to identify disadvantaged communities and their environmental burdens. https://www.epa.gov/ejscreen

4. U.S. Census Bureau Census Profile
   Census Profiles provide helpful summaries of various types of demographic and socioeconomic data at many different geographic scales including at Census Block Groups. https://data.census.gov/profile

5. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Environmental Public Health Tracking – Info By Location
   Provides an overview of environmental health data and trends at the county level.
   https://ephtracking.cdc.gov/InfoByLocation/