

Glossary of Terms

Diverse/Diversity: The demographic mix of a specific collection of people, taking into account elements of human difference. (e.g., racial, and ethnic groups, income, spectrum of built environment settings (rural to urban), faith communities, LGBTQ+ populations, people with disabilities, gender, relationship to the natural environment)

Equity: Improving equity is to promote justice, impartiality and fairness within the procedures, processes, and distribution of resources by institutions or systems. Tackling equity issues requires recognition of the underlying or root causes of disparities within our society.

Racial Equity: when the distribution of resources and opportunities is neither determined nor predicted by race, racial bias, or racial ideology and when everyone has what they need to thrive, no matter the color of their skin, sexual orientation, and where they live.

Inclusion: Refers to the degree to which historically marginalized individuals are enabled to participate fully in the decision making processes within an organization or group. While a truly “inclusive” group is necessarily diverse, a “diverse” group may or may not be “inclusive.”

Underserved: Populations who receive inadequate or inequitable services, who experience quality-of-life disparities, and who by design have little power or influence over outside decisions that impact their daily quality-of-life.

Justice: The quality of being just, impartial, or fair. (1)

Social Justice: Equal access to wealth, opportunities, and privileges within a society. (2) This may mean addressing the present-day impacts of past inequities in order to achieve equity going forward.

Environmental Justice: The fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations and policies (3), and refers to “decisions [that] support sustainable communities where people can interact with confidence that their environment is safe, nurturing, and productive.” (4)

Systems of Oppression: Institutions, policies, social structures, and systems that oppress and discriminate against groups of people. Racism, sexism, ageism, ableism are all systems of oppression.

1 Merriam-Webster: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/justice>

2 Pachamama Alliance: <https://www.pachamama.org/social-justice/what-is-social-justice>

3 U.S. EPA: <https://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/learn-about-environmental-justice>.

4 Bunyan Bryant, PhD., Professor Emeritus, former Director of the Environmental Advocacy Program at University of Michigan School for Environment and Sustainability