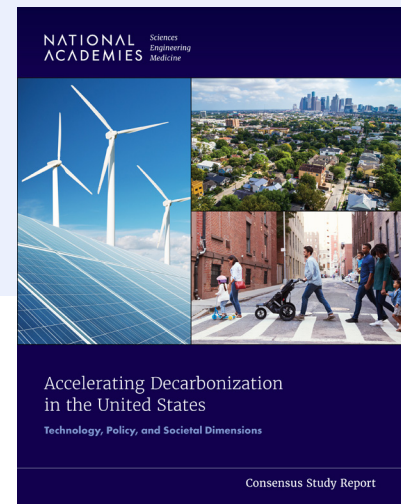


Accelerating Decarbonization in the United States

Technology, Policy, and Societal Dimensions



SUPPORTING A JUST TRANSITION THROUGH A COMMUNITY-LED APPROACH

Achieving energy justice—providing safe, affordable, and sustainable energy to all individuals—should be a central goal as the United States transitions away from fossil fuels and toward decarbonized energy sources. Decarbonization policies and programs need to intentionally address past and current energy-related inequities, particularly for communities that have historically been marginalized, underserved, and overburdened by pollution and excluded from decision-making.

A just energy transition will ensure all communities, workers, and social groups are engaged and considered in transition activities and receive the benefits from a net-zero energy economy. Implementing a just energy transition will require community-led programs working in conjunction with legislation initiated at the federal and state level.

The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine have released a comprehensive report that addresses the technical and societal elements of this necessary energy transition. The report provides actionable, sector-by-sector recommendations to guide policymakers toward achieving deep decarbonization of the U.S. energy system over the next decade and beyond, including critical recommendations focused on energy justice. Learn more and download the report at <https://nationalacademies.org/decarbonization-report>.

THE OPPORTUNITY TO SAVE LIVES

The single gravest energy-related injustice in the United States is that up to 355,000 deaths per year are caused by air pollution from the combustion of fossil fuels, which disproportionately affects communities of color and low-income households. Although air pollution will be reduced due to recent federal actions such as the Inflation Reduction Act, the United States can and must continue to prioritize public health in its transition to a clean, net-zero carbon economy.

The legacy of discriminatory and exclusionary practices further aggravates the disproportionate, adverse impacts of the current energy system. For example, the 1930s practice of redlining—systematically excluding certain community members from quality homes and neighborhoods based on race—has prevented racial and ethnic minority communities from experiencing the economic and health benefits of good-quality housing, tree shade, and cleaner air. Any solutions-oriented approach to securing a safe, healthy future for all means making sure impacted community members are meaningfully included and prioritized as part of this transition.

PRIORITIZING COMMUNITY-LED EFFORTS

Evidence from the planning and deployment of new infrastructure during technological transitions shows that public consensus and support requires a careful collaborative process managed by public engagement specialists with active participation by a diverse set of stakeholders. It is also important to involve affected

community members early and throughout the planning for energy program development and implementation with a focus on clearly defining the benefits and risks communities can expect from a project.

IMPROVING CURRENT PROGRAMS FOR MAXIMUM EFFICIENCY AND EQUITY

The current federal portfolio contains many policies and provisions designed to ensure a fair, just, and equitable distribution of costs and benefits from the energy transition and to eliminate current injustice in the energy system. For example, the White House's Justice40 Initiative aims for 40 percent of the overall benefits of certain federal investments to flow to disadvantaged communities. Additionally, the government's Thriving Communities Technical Assistance Centers program helps provide under-resourced and disadvantaged communities assistance for capacity building for community transformation. These programs and others must be equitably implemented, codified, and made durable so that all communities can access the benefits of the nation's clean energy transition.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

By balancing societal, environmental, and economic considerations, the nation can expect an energy transition that benefits everyone. For a full list of findings and recommendations, download the report at <https://nationalacademies.org/decarbonization-report>.

NECESSARY ACTIONS	ANTICIPATED RESULTS
<p>To equitably distribute the benefits of the energy transition, policymakers should engage communities, especially those most impacted by energy system inequities, in the design and implementation of decarbonization policies. Federal policymakers should include energy justice principles—recognitional equity, procedural equity, and distributional equity—to develop policies and programs informed by and responsive to community concerns.</p>	<p><i>With energy justice principles at the forefront of any decision-making, communities can rest assured that they will be engaged throughout the policy process and their concerns will be validated with timely responses.</i></p>
<p>The federal government must develop a standardized set of core metrics to ensure that federal programs progress and outcomes are measured and evaluated at the same level, regardless of the program goals.</p>	<p><i>The federal government will have standardized and measurable metrics for energy transition programs that support impact assessment and adaptive management if programs and policies are not achieving equitable outcomes.</i></p>
<p>To help under-resourced communities access funding and technical assistance, and to facilitate community-driven mitigation projects, Congress should authorize a National Transition Corporation to consolidate transition resources, expand the Thriving Communities Technical Assistance Centers program, and make funding available for local initiatives such as the Climate Opportunity Zones.</p>	<p><i>All communities will have access to technical and educational assistance to facilitate community-driven climate mitigation projects.</i></p> <p><i>There will be enough capacity for meaningful coordination at the federal, state, and local levels to support efforts for the energy transition to address the needs and concerns of all communities.</i></p>
<p>Public health experts and community members must be engaged early and often in the decision-making process to maximize health co-benefits and broaden the consideration of health and equity impacts into their planning decisions.</p>	<p><i>Community members, especially from disadvantaged and under-resourced communities, will be engaged continually in the energy transition process.</i></p>

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FOR MORE INFORMATION

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