



EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
COUNCIL ON ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20503

May 11, 2022

Ms. Peggy Shepard
Chair, White House Environmental Justice Advisory Council

Mr. Richard Moore
Chair, White House Environmental Justice Advisory Council

Dear Ms. Shepard and Mr. Moore,

On behalf of the White House Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ), I would like to express my gratitude to you and the members of the White House Environmental Justice Advisory Council (WHEJAC) for your extensive advice and recommendations on a whole-of-government approach to environmental justice.

Thank you for your March 8, 2022 letter. In response to your letter, I would like to provide the following updates.

Request for Resources for the White House Environmental Justice Advisory Council

The WHEJAC is a group of dedicated individuals who are volunteering their time to fulfill the WHEJAC's mission, as set forth in Executive Order 14008, of providing independent advice and recommendations to the Chair of CEQ and the White House Environmental Justice Interagency Council (IAC). As you noted in your letter, the WHEJAC, like other Federal advisory committees, is in need of administrative and financial support from the Federal Government to fulfill this mission. In addition to ensuring that CEQ staff attend all WHEJAC public meetings and provide support, as needed, to its workgroups, we have shared your request for additional support and resources with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). As set forth in Executive Order 14008, the EPA is responsible for providing funding and administrative support for the WHEJAC, and the EPA is dedicated to supporting the WHEJAC. We are working closely together to respond to your requests, including your request to have experts to support the development of your recommendations on metrics, data, and indicators for consideration for inclusion in the Environmental Justice Scorecard.

Request for Timelines for Key Deliverables

I understand that ongoing and clear communication is critical to the success of our shared efforts and goals. Consistent with the Federal Advisory Committee Act and as set forth in Executive Order 14008, the role of the WHEJAC is to provide public advice to the IAC and the CEQ Chair. We value receiving WHEJAC recommendations and advice early in the process to ensure that we are learning from your extensive expertise before developing and advancing these new initiatives.

In response to the WHEJAC's requests for timelines on key deliverables, included below are some direct responses to your questions:

- **The Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool:** CEQ released the Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool in beta—or draft—form to solicit feedback from the public, Tribal nations, and Federal agencies. The beta version of the tool is currently open for public comment. After hearing from environmental justice leaders, community-based organizations



EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
COUNCIL ON ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20503

and allied groups, and members of public from across the country, we extended the public comment period, which now ends on Wednesday, May 25, 2022. After the close of the public comment period, CEQ, in partnership with the U.S. Digital Service (USDS), will update the tool based on the robust feedback received. I expect that an updated version of the tool will be ready in the summer of 2022. Moving forward, the tool will be updated and refined based on feedback and as new datasets and research become available. I look forward to receiving additional and ongoing recommendations from the WHEJAC on the tool, which will help ensure it reflects the environmental and climate challenges that communities are experiencing.

- **Update to Executive Order 12898:** The WHEJAC's recommendations have been considered as the Federal Government has undertaken the process of updating Executive Order 12898. As specified in Executive Order 14008, the IAC submitted to the President, through the National Climate Advisor, a set of recommendations for further updating Executive Order 12898. Since submitting these recommendations, we have been working to further develop—based on the recommendations of the WHEJAC and ongoing communications with Federal agencies—a durable, impactful, and effective approach for updating Executive Order 12898. Based on where we now stand, I would like to schedule a meeting with the WHEJAC Executive Order 12898 Workgroup within the next two weeks. At this meeting, we will provide an update on the draft Executive Order and the status of our work to prepare it for the President's consideration and review this summer.
- **The Environmental Justice Scorecard:** In March 2022, we received the WHEJAC's phase one recommendations on the Environmental Justice Scorecard. We have shared your recommendations with the IAC, as well as with the White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and USDS, which have co-responsibility under Executive Order 14008 for developing the Scorecard. At this time, we are reviewing your recommendations and working with the IAC, OMB, and USDS, to determine our next steps in developing an Environmental Justice Scorecard, which the Federal Government will build on and improve, year after year. We will aim to provide a more substantive and detailed progress update on the Environmental Justice Scorecard in summer 2022. Additionally, I want to acknowledge your request for greater resources and guidance to support the development of additional recommendations on the Environmental Justice Scorecard, which, as noted above, we are working to address in partnership with the EPA.
- **The Justice40 Initiative:** Last year, based on the WHEJAC's May 2021 recommendations, CEQ, OMB, and the White House Climate Policy Office issued guidance on how agencies should be implementing the Justice40 Initiative. Since the guidance was released, agencies have been implementing and advancing the Justice40 Initiative, including through new and existing investments in the President's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. Additional guidance on the Justice40 Initiative will be released with the updated version of the Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool in the summer of 2022. This guidance will help inform how agencies use this new tool. Ongoing WHEJAC recommendations on the implementation of the Justice40 Initiative are critical to the Initiative's success in ensuring the benefits of investments reach disadvantaged communities that are marginalized, underserved, and overburdened by pollution.
- **The White House Environmental Justice Interagency Council:** I affirm that improved communication and coordination between the WHEJAC and IAC are important, and I am



EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
COUNCIL ON ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20503

committed to achieving meaningful and regular engagement between them. In response to your specific questions about the IAC, please find enclosed:

- IAC Designated Environmental Justice Officer List
- Frequently Asked Questions about the IAC

These materials will soon be posted online. I look forward to your collaborative partnership in developing the relationship between the two bodies.

- **Council on Environmental Quality:** The information you requested about CEQ is already available online at:
 - CEQ Organizational Chart: https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/2022_CEQ-Org-Final.pdf
 - CEQ Staff Chart: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/CEQ-Names-Titles-2022.05.11.pdf>
 - CEQ FOIA Page: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/ceq/foia>

Request for Key Agency Contacts to Attend Public Comment Period During Public Meetings

As noted in your letter, engaging directly with the public, including during WHEJAC public comment periods, enhances our shared understanding of the problems and issues impacting communities across the country. We have shared your request for more active engagement in WHEJAC meetings with the member agencies of the IAC and also invited IAC Environmental Justice Officers to attend today's WHEJAC public meeting.

The President has made historic environmental justice commitments. I am proud of the progress we have made and of the staff championing this work across the government, but we still have a lot more to do. On behalf of CEQ, I look forward to continuing to engage with the WHEJAC as we work collaboratively and collectively to advance a whole-of-government approach to environmental justice.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brenda Mallory". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being more prominent.

Brenda Mallory
Chair, White House Council on Environmental Quality