



Making Waves in Equitable Coastal Resilience: A National Workshop on Social Equity and Coastal Resilience November 2022

Equity Concerns Underpinning Policy Analysis and Decision Making for Coastal Resilience

Summary: Equity is increasingly becoming a consideration in resilience-focused policy. There is heightened interest in measuring how resilience policies, projects, and programs may impact equity. Equity may be advanced by a more inclusive policy process, well-developed communication channels, regular reference to the resilience research body of knowledge, and consultation with subject matter experts. There is need for increased clarity in the conceptual and operational definitions of equity, and consideration of the impact of resilience investments on a range of social and economic disparities.

Issues and Recommendations for Practice

① Inclusive resilience policy process

Resilience policy is intended to protect or increase the well-being of populations and the vitality of communities. However, a lack of proactive reach-out during the policy process to include impacted stakeholders results in less equitable resilience. The policy process may engage only a narrow set of stakeholders with resources and knowledge to participate. Often, there are missed opportunities to incorporate knowledge from stories and narratives that can provide essential context to highlight the equity issues involved in resilience policy. Further, stakeholders are rarely included in creating the evaluation metrics for assessing policy outcomes. Thus, equity in the policy process – from evaluation metrics to policy formation to policy evaluation -- will be enhanced through engagement with a broader range of stakeholders. In order to encourage more equity-focused policy development and program design, policymakers must recognize the perspectives of a wide number of stakeholders through various engagement mechanisms and pathways. There is a need to increase connections among universities, communities, and government agencies to improve information transfer, translation, understandability, and accessibility in the policy process.

Recommendation: Emphasize inclusion in the policy process

- Increase collaboration with stakeholders and researchers in the resilience policy process.
- Increase inclusion in the design of the resilience policy evaluation mechanisms.
- Identify and communicate with community organizations and nonprofits serving impacted stakeholders and seek feedback on proposed policy through engagement mechanisms that are both familiar and accessible to the communities.

② Definitions and measurement

Conceptual clarity is lacking in defining equity in the resilience policy process, and there are even fewer operational definitions of equity. More clarity is needed with explicit conceptual and operational definitions within the resilience policy process. Once implemented, the impact of resilience policies may

be uneven across communities, have unintended consequences, or not deliver the expected changes in resilience. What may constitute the success of a resilience-focused policy from a vulnerable community's point of view often may not be considered until later in the policy process. Resilience programs and policies vary in amounts of risk reduction across communities, neighborhoods, and households. However, how the policy or program may also reduce disparities in health, well-being, and other aspects of resilience are often not considered. Addressing the impact of the program or policy on current and projected disparity may increase the likelihood of support for equitable resilience policies.

Recommendation: Define and measure equity and policy impacts with engagement of stakeholders

- Develop conceptual and operational definitions of equity early in the resilience policy process; include these definitions within the policy.
- Share definitions and measures of resilience and equity during stakeholder engagements.
- As part of the policy evaluation, identify the resilience policy's impact on the community's health, wellness, social, and economic disparities; incorporate these impacts within measures of success. Include impacted stakeholders in the development of measures of policy impacts.

③ Research-informed policymaking

Active engagement with resilience research is needed when developing resilience policy. Researchers need to be involved in validating the underlying assumptions of the policy. The channels and processes by which policymakers engage with research are often ad hoc. More consistent and thorough engagement will result in more equitable policies.

Recommendation: Increase engagement with research

- Require the resilience policy process be informed by research.
- Identify researchers and subject matter experts with insights to inform the resilience policy and establish a process for obtaining their expertise.

④ Equity in funding

Resilience investments may reduce risk but often not equally across all communities or neighborhoods. Funding for resilience projects should evaluate the equity-related merit of the project, such as by requesting an explanation of how projects will address traditionally underserved and vulnerable communities and households. Risk reduction benefits should also be considered across property values. This will increase the likelihood of funding projects that will have more equitable impacts. Funding mechanisms for many resilience-based programs and projects require the locality to meet a match requirement. However, these mechanisms do not consider the capacity of the locality to meet the matching requirement such that less-wealthy localities have a more difficult time meeting the match, resulting in fewer opportunities for low-income cities to receive resilience funding.

Recommendation: Incorporate equity in project evaluation and reduce the burden of matching funds

- Funding programs should include an equity-evaluation criterion in ranking proposed projects for funding that considers impacts upon vulnerable communities and across property values.
- Funding RFPs should require an explanation of how projects will address traditionally underserved and vulnerable communities and households.
- Develop a sliding scale for grant matching dollars that considers the economic capacity of the locality.

Direct questions to Dr. Wie Yusuf, School of Public Service, Old Dominion University (jyusuf@odu.edu)

This material is based upon work supported by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security under Grant Award Number 2015-ST-061-ND0001-01. The views and conclusions contained herein are those of the authors and should not be interpreted as necessarily representing the official policies, either expressed or implied, of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.



More information about the workshop:

<https://sites.wp.odu.edu/workshop>

