



SHORT-FORM PLAN

Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

2022

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A Message From The Director

"WHEN YOU HEAR PRESIDENT BIDEN SAY HE WANTS TO BUILD A BETTER AMERICA... HE MEANS A MORE EQUITABLE AMERICA. A MORE INCLUSIVE AMERICA. A MORE JUST AMERICA. AND WE'LL BUILD IT WITH CLEAN ENERGY."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY SECRETARY JENNIFER GRANHOLM

Louisiana Clean Fuels is first and foremost a US Department of Energy designated Clean Cities coalition that serves as "boots on the ground" to facilitate the adoption of clean transportation technologies and practices. If we are to do this in a fair and equitable way, we must first look inward to how we operate our non-profit. It is for this reason that I have embarked us on this journey to better serve our communities.

Historically, some of our most vulnerable populations have been overlooked and have not benefited from federal investment programs. The federal Justice40 initiative aims to change that by requiring that "40% of the overall benefits of certain Federal investments – including investments in clean energy and energy efficiency; clean transit; affordable and sustainable housing; training and workforce development; the remediation and reduction of legacy pollution; and the development of clean water infrastructure –flow to disadvantaged communities (DACs)" (<https://www.energy.gov/diversity/justice40-initiative>)

We see this initiative both as a moral imperative and as smart business. How can we call ourselves successful when there are those in our community that don't share in that success? We must do better to ensure that we are including folks of all walks of life when we conduct outreach and education.

We must become open to working with new partners on grant funding opportunities. We must get out of our comfort zone of working with the same individuals and companies that we have worked with for so long and develop new partnerships. This does not mean that we abandon those with whom we have built long-lasting relationships. It means we set more places at the table and welcome new voices to the conversation. This is how we will move our state towards a clean transportation future that benefits all of our citizens – together.

~ Executive Director, Ann Vail



Executive Summary

Through the inception, development, and execution of this Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Plan, the leadership of Louisiana Clean Fuels is embarking on the much needed and well-intentioned journey of ensuring that diversity, equity, and inclusion are central components of their work.

By doing so, Louisiana Clean Fuels will be better enabled to work towards equitable development and environmental justice in our territory's underserved communities.

The Louisiana Clean Fuels team is committed to pursuing the creation of a comprehensive and achievable plan that will better inform and empower the coalition's project areas. The first step to creating our comprehensive plan is producing this short-form plan. This Diversity, Equity & Inclusion short-form plan will be utilized as a preliminary step to establishing our guiding principles and identifying priorities.

These principles and priorities will be the cornerstone of our efforts to produce a plan that envisions and works for an equitably developed Louisiana. We are guided by our want to combat environmental racism, inadequate investment in underserved communities, and misguided planning throughout the coalition's established territory

Our top priority in this creation process is moving outside of the typical coalition bubble and directly engaging with the most affected communities. We are developing this set of plans through intensive efforts, leaning into our lived experiences, and by showing up to each conversation ready and willing to learn. Further, we will seek input and buy-in from members of the public, sector experts, community activists, and established community organizations. In addition to seeking input in these areas, we will utilize the most up-to-date information to further inform our planning, outreach, and research strategies.

Our development approach is intentionally holistic. To create an adequate and well-positioned plan, we must engage a large swath of relevant industry partners, community members, and organizations dotted throughout our territory.

Continued on to find out exactly how we plan to do this.

Our Mission & Goals

Louisiana Clean Fuels is committed to instilling the values of diversity, equity, and inclusion into the way we work and the ways we interact with communities throughout our territory. To remain properly committed to these values, we are in the process of engaging with communities, taking the time to learn, and engaging in areas that we believe will be beneficial for our impacted communities.

In relation to this mission, we have identified four goals that we believe effectively and adequately captures the hopes of our associated plans. These goals determined the foundational points and supplemental priorities.

We aim to create an informed staff and board to ensure that values laid out herein are found in every decision we make and task that we undertake. It is from this informed core that we will be able to positively impact communities and lives throughout our territory.

We aim to ensure accountability through review and guidance of our selected projects. By establishing a Review Committee that continuously refers to the principles, priorities, and actions outlined in our short-form and long-form plans we will be able to consistently gauge our performance. Also, this reviewal committee will serve as a benefit to the various community members and organizations

We aim to create more thorough and accessible ways to work hand-in-hand with communities' territory wide; meaning that we want to be plugged in to communities and its members across the territory. The only way that we can achieve the equitable development that we are seeking is through engaging the public and various committed stakeholders.

Lastly, we aim to build an inclusive community that works for all people. The only way that we will be able to create a livable and thriving future is by ensuring that society works for everyone.

Introduction

Access to transportation is one of the largest indicators of economic mobility in the United States of America.

Several studies, some of which are from Harvard University and New York University's Rudin Center for Transportation, establish that commuting times are valid indicators of social mobility. Typically, communities with longer commute times and inadequate modes of public transportation face higher rates of unemployment and low-income levels. As noted within the Harvard study, on average the longer a typical commute time the less likely it is for a low-income family to move up the socioeconomic ladder.

Historically, marginalized, minority and underserved communities in Louisiana have been the victim of a lack of investment, environmental racism, and inadequate outreach and engagement strategies. Louisiana Clean Fuels is uniquely situated to positively impact these historical inadequacies. By utilizing our affiliations, grant writing capabilities, and acquired expertise in "urban planning" we hope to spark lasting and beneficial change.

In our work, we recognize that systemic and environmental injustices pose barriers to a safe and healthy environment, sustainable development, and access for many people across our territory. We are committed to identifying and implementing sustainable solutions to combat these systems of oppression in all aspects of our work.

Here at Louisiana Clean Fuels, we envision a thriving Louisiana community. Our goal is to establish a living document to guide our outreach and implementation policies, to increase accountability and transparency in our organizational structure, and to champion environmental justice in our work. To accomplish these goals, we will centralize environmental justice as a key metric for continued planning and as a solution-based policy lens. By doing so, Louisiana Clean Fuels will work proactively to combat challenges presented to underserved communities through untenable land use, transportation, and associated planning needs.

~ Tyler Sanchez



State Geography, Terrain, Climate, and Land Use Patterns

The EPA defines ecoregions as “areas of general similarity in ecosystems and in the type, quality, and quantity of environmental resources.”

Louisiana is subdivided into six “Level III” EPA ecoregions: South Central Plains ecoregion (northwestern and center-west parishes); Mississippi Alluvial Plain ecoregion (northeastern, center-east, and southeastern parishes); Mississippi Valley Loess Plains, Southeastern Plains, and Southern Coastal Plains ecoregions (southeastern inland parishes); and Western Gulf Coastal Plain ecoregion (southwestern parishes). The listed ecoregions are further subdivided into smaller regions denoting more detailed comparisons of land areas within the state, however, for the sake of brevity, this document will summarize only the six Level III ecoregions that make up the state.

Major land uses in the South-Central Plains EPA ecoregion consists of timber production, livestock grazing, and oil and gas production. Dominant vegetation includes pines (native short leaf pines are now largely replaced by commercial pine plantations), several varieties of oak, sweetgum, and understory growth including sumac, greenbriar, and hawthorn. Rolling plains are one distinguishing feature of this ecoregion that differentiates it from the flatter Mississippi River Valley plains or Gulf Coast plains. The major body of water running through this ecoregion is the Red River. The Red River floodplains are naturally bottomland hardwood forests but have been largely cleared for crop cultivation and grazing, although some wooded areas remain. Crops dominating this region include cotton, soybeans, corn, wheat, and rice.

The Mississippi Alluvial Plain EPA ecoregion spans the entire length of Louisiana (north to south), following the current course of the Mississippi River and covering some areas west of the river, and north near Lakes Maurepas and Pontchartrain. Climates are notably variable throughout the region, with temperatures and precipitation increasing from north to south, however there are many commonalities along the river corridor. Constructed levees restricted river overflow and opened adjacent land for agricultural use. Northern and central Louisiana climates and soil are amenable to cultivation of cotton, soybeans, corn, and rice; while southern Louisiana agriculture is dominated by sugarcane, with some soybeans and pastures. This ecoregion is also home to extensive wetland habitats. Though deforestation and development have reduced cohesion of wetland habitats over time, this region remains a major bird migration corridor and is rich with biodiversity. Bald cypress and water tupelo trees can be found in freshwater wetland areas throughout this ecoregion, as well as oak in more well-draining areas. The southern portions of this ecoregion are host to many live oak, laurel oak, and Spanish moss.

The main distinguishing feature of the Mississippi Valley Loess plains EPA ecoregion is the prominent presence of loess – loosely compacted wind-blown sediment. Soils in this ecoregion tend to be sandy, silty, and well-draining in comparison to the dense clayey deposits found in the Mississippi Alluvial Plains. This ecoregion covers a relatively small portion of southeast Louisiana, including much of East Baton Rouge Parish, and West and East Feliciana Parishes. Land use in this region hosts a heavy presence of pine plantations, pasture, and crop land, however, urban use covers a large portion in the Baton Rouge vicinity.

Northern St. Helena, Tangipahoa, and Washington Parishes make up the Southeastern Plains ecoregion of Louisiana. This landscape is home to oak-pine and mixed hardwood forests, pastures, cropland, and growing residential and commercial development. Dairy is a prominent industry here. Soils of this ecoregion are largely sandy, gravelly, and well-draining.

Eastern Livingston Parish, southern Tangipahoa Parish, and southern St. Tammany Parish make up the Southern Coastal Plains ecoregion of Louisiana. Lower elevations than the Southeastern Plains and wetter soils are characteristic of this ecoregion. Habitats here include marshes and swampy lowlands. Soils range from poorly to moderately well-draining. Floodplains in this ecoregion contain forests of bald cypress, water tupelo, and oak-dominated hardwood forests.

The Louisiana portion of the Western Gulf Coastal Plain ecoregion spans from the Sabine River to the Atchafalaya Basin. The southernmost latitudes of this ecoregion contain the Chenier plains which are largely treeless but do contain live oak and hackberry with a palmetto-heavy understory, and extensive salt or brackish-water grassy marshes along the Gulf Coast. Much of the northern portions of this ecoregion are dominated by grasslands and herbaceous plant species, with inclusions of live oak and long-leaf pine. The area has suffered urbanization and conversion to croplands and pastures. Crops include sugarcane, rice and crawfish agriculture, and soybeans. Soils of this ecoregion are primarily clayey and poorly draining, though sandy, loamy textures are somewhat present at surface-levels in some areas.

According to EPA, statewide average annual precipitation falls somewhere between 44.8 – 84.7 inches per year, with northern regions generally receiving between 50 – 60 inches per year, and southern regions receiving between 60 – 70 inches per year. According to National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) maps depicting areas vulnerable to storm surge flooding, areas as far north as central Livingston Parish may be vulnerable to storm surge flooding during a Category 1 storm. During a Category 5 storm, areas as far north as northern Pointe Coupee Parish may be vulnerable to storm surge flooding.

What Does DEI Have To Do With Clean Fuels?

Research has shown that minority groups and marginalized communities are disproportionately impacted by a lack of access to vital infrastructure, environmental racism, and flawed community engagement strategies.

Louisiana Clean Fuels' expertise in implementing clean transportation projects best situates us to engage community and government partners to ensure that underserved communities are given the opportunity to interact with the decision-making process. By doing so, Louisiana's underserved communities will be better equipped to access vital and sustainable infrastructure, combat environmental racism, and reinvent community engagement strategies.

Where We Are?

Louisiana Clean Fuels positively impacts the aforementioned communities and areas in a “by chance” manner. This means there is no policy, plan, or overarching principles that have been identified to ensure accountable and measurable interactions between underserved communities and Louisiana Clean Fuels. Currently, Louisiana Clean Fuels is in the process of building beneficial community partnerships with community organizations that serve underserved communities, in attempts to bolster ongoing project areas.

Where We Need To Be?

Louisiana Clean Fuels needs to occupy a space that allows the organization to engage with underserved communities proactively and intentionally in a way that uplifts their needs and amplifies their voices in the spaces that they have historically been blocked from participating in.

This means taking an advocacy approach through the ability to leverage government connections, grant writing, and funding opportunities to benefit underserved communities.

To adequately address these concerns, Louisiana Clean Fuels will need to review internal and external policies, staff, and organization structure to identify areas that need to be implemented, amended, or removed to ensure that the organization is well equipped to take on the stated mission. To get to this place, we will establish guiding principles and identify priorities to create tangible and trackable metrics to roadmap our progress and related areas of interest.

Developing The Vision

Establishing guiding principles is of the utmost importance as it relates to the development and delivery of the long-term plan.

Louisiana Clean Fuels' DEI plan will be based on a four-point foundation of Building Trust Through Transparency, Creating a Proactive and Informed Coalition, Curating Meaningful Connections, and Environmental Justice, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.

By utilizing a varied and targeted set of sources, community partners, and public input, Louisiana Cleans Fuels will identify actions appropriate to each established foundational point. These points have been identified and established to centralize underserved communities in the way that the coalition works to positively impact our territory. Further, these points will be used to develop concrete and measurable actions that will thoughtfully redress historical inequalities across the impacted territory. By redressing these historical inequalities underserved and overburdened communities will be impacted and brought into the decision-making fold in a meaningful and tangible way. Below we have taken the opportunity to provide context to each foundational point and identified priorities.

- Building Trust Through Transparency
- Creating a Proactive and Informed Coalition
- Environmental Justice, diversity, Equity & Inclusion
- Curating Meaningful Connections

To complement these four foundational points, we have identified three supplemental priorities to further guide and focus our foundation. By working to establish our foundation points through the lens of community & public engagement strategies, equitable development, and the guidance of projects and engagements.

- Community & Public Engagement Strategies
- Equitable Development
- Guiding LCF Projects & Engagements

Foundational Points

1

Building Trust Through Transparency

We understand that the only way to adequately engage in this work is to foster a culture of trust through transparency. This means that we are intentionally working to be more forward-facing. To better foster this environment, we will be more transparent in our internal processes related to grant management, project selection, and board of director relations.

3

Environmental Justice, Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

As Director Vail stated, having environmental justice, diversity, equity & inclusion as the central component of our work and this plan is both a moral imperative and a smart for business operation.

To best serve our territory, these values, ideals, and best practices will become enshrined in our work. These values will lead to better support of the Louisiana Clean Fuels' territory.

2

Creating a Proactive and Informed Coalition

Creating a proactive and informed coalition requires that we as an organization address our own flaws that hinder diversity equity, and inclusion work.

This will be done by undergoing a full sweep of Louisiana Clean Fuels' processes. Further, we will consistently make educational and engagement opportunities available for our staff and board members.

4

Curating Meaningful Connections

To maintain the gains of the previous three foundational points, we must curate meaningful connections with communities across our territory.

We want to know your needs as it relates to the expansion of alternative fuel usage in your community. We will make it a point to remain plugged into the connections we facilitate over the course of this process.

Supplemental Priorities

1

Community & Public Engagement Strategies

Throughout this process, we will be working to refine and identify community & public engagement strategies that work to best inform and engage communities in the Louisiana Clean Fuels Territory.

In the past, we have found that many communities and individuals have not heard of our organization or the work that we do. This is an issue that we must work to correct.

3

Guiding LCF Projects & Engagements

All of this is being done to better guide Louisiana Clean Fuels' projects and engagements. By establishing a living document, we will be better positioned to advocate on behalf of our territory and to produce equitable projects.

Further, we will create a back-end Review Committee comprised of relevant stakeholders to ensure that Louisiana Clean Fuels' is being held accountable for its work.

2

Equitable Development

In order to best serve our community, equitable development has been identified as one of our supplement priorities. By doing so, we will utilize this lens when working to develop projects and Louisiana Clean Fuels' engagements.

As defined by the Environmental Protection Agency, equitable development is an approach to meeting the needs of underserved communities through policies and programs that reduce disparities while fostering places that are healthy and vibrant.

Setting The Foundation For Long-Term Success

It is recommended that a “task force” is established with community advisory groups comprised of relevant stakeholders from across the Louisiana Clean Fuels’ territory, both private and civil, to produce a tested long-form plan.

By doing so, the long-form plan will be established on a firm grounding when compared to the plausible in-house creation of this plan. To aid in the creation of the long-form plan, advisory groups will be established in relation to Louisiana’s ecoregions. This move is taken out of the respect for the shared qualities, similar landscape, and plausible development status. By taking this move, advisory groups will be established based on commonalities. In attempts to ensure areas across the Louisiana Clean Fuels’ territory are given the chance to voice concerns specific to their region.

The core DEI development team will be a 16-member committee. The membership breakdown is as follows.

Three seats will be allocated to the Louisiana Clean Fuels’ staff. Two seats will be allocated to the Louisiana Clean Fuels’ board. Each of the following government partner departments and offices will receive one seat: Department of Environmental Quality, the Governor’s Office of Coastal Activities, the Department of Transportation & Development, the Department of Natural Resources, and the Federal Highway Administration. Three seats will be allocated to community organizations. One seat will be allocated to a planning/consulting firm. Two will be reserved for colleges/universities within the Louisiana Clean Fuels’ territory.

There will be at least six Advisory Groups of no more than 10 members to coincide with Louisiana’s six ecoregions and other relevant areas. The EPA ecoregions are as follows: South Central Plains, Mississippi Alluvial Plain, Mississippi Valley Loess Plains, Southeastern Plains, Southern Coastal Plains, and the Western Gulf Coastal Plain. The membership of this groups will include key industries related to the mission of Louisiana Clean Fuels, small businesses, and community activists.

Public Engagement Strategies

To supplement the input of the Advisory Groups, Louisiana Clean Fuels will implement community listening sessions to directly engage with its members and we will create a public feedback page to allow for comments, thoughts, and concerns on upcoming actions, plans, and draft documents.

Plan As a Living Document

To ensure that our long form plan operates as a living document that allows for constant updates and progress tracking, we will employ the use of a structured decision-making approach (SDM). SDM is an approach for careful and organized analysis of possible decisions. Based in decision theory and risk analysis, SDM encompasses a simple set of concepts and helpful steps, rather than a rigidly prescribed approach for problem-solving. Key SDM concepts include making decisions based on clearly articulated fundamental objectives, recognizing the role of scientific predictions in decisions, dealing explicitly with uncertainty, and responding transparently to societal values in decision making; thus, SDM integrates science and policy explicitly. Every decision consists of several primary elements – management objectives, decision options, and predictions of decision outcomes. By analyzing each component separately and thoughtfully within a comprehensive decision framework, it is possible to improve the quality of decision-making.

Key Partners

We have identified several key partners to bolster our mission, goals, and the creation of our long-form plan. These key partners include, but are not limited to, the Urban League of Louisiana, EVHybridNoir, Southern University & AM College, and various Louisiana state government offices and departments.

Timeline

Broadly, our aim is to have the long-form plan completed and published within a year. This accounts for core task force meetings, advisory group meetings, listening sessions, and other outreach and development tasks. We understand that this is an ambitious goal, and we have

Core Task Force

MEMBERSHIP BREAKDOWN

Louisiana Clean
Fuels' Staff
Member

Louisiana Clean
Fuels' Staff
Member

Louisiana Clean
Fuels' Staff
Member

Louisiana Clean
Fuels' Board
Member

Louisiana Clean
Fuels' Board
Member

Department of
Environmental
Quality Member

Governor's Office
of Coastal
Activities Member

DOTD Member

Department of
Natural Resources
Member

The Federal
Highway
Administration
Member

Community
Organization Seat

Community
Organization Seat

Community
Organization Seat

Planning or
Consulting Firm
Seat

Two Seats for
Educational
Institutions

We Thank Y'all For Joining Us On This Journey!

Call To Action

As outlined herein, we are undertaking an ambitious goal to engage communities across our territory in the creation of our Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Plan.

We urge you, your organization, and your community to join us in this process. Take a look at our website and our connected social media handles.

We look forward to working with y'all.

Louisiana Clean Fuels'


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