Message

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Sent: 1/22/2021 3:09:57 PM
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Subject: FW: Answering President Biden's EJ Mandate - an appeal for your leadership
Attachments: OECA Ideas to Increase Help to EJ Communities (003).docx

Good morning! FYI.

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Sent: Thursday, January 21, 2021 12:45 PM
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Subject: Answering President Biden's EJ Mandate - an appeal for your leadership

Colleagues,

First, I hope you are all safe and well and as excited as we are in the EJ Program about the prospect of making an enormous leap forward on delivering EPA's mission for our country's people of color, indigenous and low-income communities in a new and powerful way. And that work begins right now.

Several of the executive orders signed by President Biden in the past 24 hours have serious implications for achieving such an enormous leap forward. EPA can and will play a meaningful role in the new forums and bodies established. **That role must be one of leadership** – across the federal family in these new bodies and initiatives in addition to setting an example for what the serious integration of equity and justice looks like for a federal agency. There is not a single program, office, branch, or division in EPA that I can think of which does not have some role to play in this work.

Conversations are already happening regarding the resources EPA will require to adequately and successfully meet the mandate of thoroughly integrating EJ throughout our work. It is absolutely critical that we have more resources – FTE, support, travel, etc. – for the work of EJ to be implemented by the national programs and regions. Please know that attaining resources for all of us to more seriously pursue environmental justice is at the very top of my list of priorities.

However, I do not believe we can wait for the new resources to arrive before we begin this work in earnest. So I am appealing to all of you in your leadership capacities to start that work today in several ways:

1. Identify individuals with leadership authority within your organizations to begin to "wear the EJ hat" immediately. Each region and program has an EJ Coordinator in some capacity, but they should be there to coordinate EJ efforts across an organization, not to lead the actual integration of EJ in the work on their own. They need partners to work with to develop those opportunities and they will need your personal involved leadership to actually implement the ideas.
2. Convene or re-establish an EJ council/forum/body for your overall organization to bring together the managers and staff who will be responsible for pursuing EJ integration along with you all as leaders to identify and prioritize opportunities to meaningfully integrate EJ in your work.
3. Convene a larger conversation or series of conversations open to all members of your organization along with regional program counterparts to discuss ideas and opportunities to integrate EJ in your work. Over the past couple of years I have personally heard many ideas that can be seized on immediately to advance EJ integration. The ideas are out there (many of them from junior staff in the regions). We need to identify them and make decisions to move on them. I need your leadership in doing this.
4. Much of our work begins with using previously developed tools for EJ, chief among them EJSCREEN. Developing a consistent and meaningful programmatic use of EJSCREEN to begin considering EJ integration is a great place to start.

OECA has recently reconvened their EJ Council, which has already developed the attached working list of ideas. Please note this is a first draft and will be further crafted and prioritized, but I thought it a great example of the kind of action and thinking we need to start putting on paper, framing up, and moving on right now.

As you begin this work, **please reach out and involve your already established EJ Coordinators and Managers**. We have had numerous conversations in the EJ Program over recent months focused on our strategic priorities. Your EJ Coordinators and Managers are ready to help inform your thinking so that we have a consistent and meaningful effort.

The EJ Program is here to support you in this work, but we cannot integrate EJ throughout EPA alone. We need each one of you in your leadership capacities to answer this call. If any of you would like to discuss, have questions, or desire my participation in a forum or conversation, please let me know. That is why I am here, why OEJ is here, and why the EJ program has worked hard over the past four years to be in the strongest position possible to act in this moment.

I want to end this message with a few of the words from President Biden's inaugural that I thought were particularly poignant for the moment we are in and the work that is before us:

Folks, this is a time of testing. We face an attack on our democracy and on truth, a raging virus, growing inequity, the sting of systemic racism, a climate in crisis, America's role in the world. Any one of these will be enough to challenge us in profound ways. But the fact is, we face them all at once, presenting this nation with one of the gravest responsibilities we've had. Now we're going to be tested. Are we going to step up? All of us? It's time for boldness, for there is so much to do. And this is certain, I promise you: We will be judged, you and I, by how we resolve these cascading crises of our

era. Will we rise to the occasion is the question. Will we master this rare and difficult hour? Will we meet our obligations and pass along a new and better world to our children? I believe we must. I'm sure you do as well. I believe we will. And when we do, we'll write the next great chapter in the history of the United States of America.

Sincerely,

Matthew

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Pronouns: he, him, his

For up-to-date information, subscribe to EPA's Environmental Justice listserv by sending a blank email to: join-epa-ej@lists.epa.gov