



# RACIAL EQUITY ACTION PLAN

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# DWR RACIAL EQUITY VISION

*All people in California are healthy, financially stable, and safe.*

This vision articulates an ideal state of being that we want all Californians to experience. It inspired the strategies contained in this Racial Equity Action Plan. Although DWR cannot achieve this vision alone, we are committed to doing our part to make it a reality.



# DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

The Department of Water Resources has a responsibility and opportunity to be a force for positive change by supporting initiatives and programs that promote the human right to safe, clean, and affordable water supplies and protection from floods.

Historically, many of these initiatives and programs have failed to meet the needs of all Californians regardless of race. While California is blessed with rich natural resources, past actions have at times threatened that abundance with the effects felt unevenly by communities across California. The data speaks for itself: marginalized communities experience uniquely different realities - including access to drinking water, water quality issues, and infrastructure investments - when compared to their more affluent counterparts. These inequities are exacerbated by climate change and during times of crisis, including the current historic drought.

It is our responsibility to recognize and address these inequities by promoting proactive policies, procedures and practices that advance racial equity. Across our industry, there is now greater awareness about the importance of equity to water management. But awareness is not enough. We cannot ignore our collective responsibility to do better with concrete actions, more accountability and greater transparency.

This plan marks the Department's first centralized effort at building our capacity to integrate greater racial equity into our programs, policies, and practices for the benefit of all Californians. I encourage all employees to embrace this opportunity to learn, improve our processes, and ensure the benefits of our work are realized more deeply in all of the communities we serve.



**Karla Nemeth**

Director



## PART I: INTRODUCTION

Water is life. It impacts everything from our physical and mental health to the creation of and access to green spaces to our economy's ability to thrive. We are entrusted to support the sustainable management of water for all Californians. But when we examine outcomes based on race, it becomes clear that not all Californians have been afforded the necessary protections against health and environmental hazards, climate change, floods, or drought.

There are significant outcome gaps between people of different races based on historical or current factors or structures that benefit White people more than Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC). These gaps are known as racial inequities, and they continue to exist across every measure of success including housing, employment, education, and health.

Government systems at the local, state, and national level have played a role in creating and maintaining racial inequities. The repercussions of past racist laws, regulations, and policies are maintained by historic legacies and structures that repeat patterns of exclusion. Certain communities have experienced an outsized impact from water management decisions – greater risk of flooding, higher exposure to toxic water substances, and increased water shortages. Government has an opportunity and responsibility to correct the racial inequities it has created and maintained for centuries.

Prior to this Racial Equity Action Plan, the Department of Water Resources has not conducted an honest and critical assessment of its work and how it has contributed to upholding structural racism. This is a point of no return for the Department – reversal is not possible. Collectively, we must identify racial inequities that exist within our programs, policies, and institutional culture and actively work to remove them.

This plan sets the intentional and continual practice of changing policies, practices, systems, and structures that creates meaningful change in the lives of People of Color. This inaugural plan is a living document – an iterative process – and will expand as we make our way through the strategies contained herein. As such, this plan is not all-inclusive of every action DWR must take to advance racial equity, but it will set the foundation for the work and help us build trust with the communities we intend to serve.

## **PART II: BACKGROUND:**

### **Capitol Collaborative on Race and Equity**

The Capitol Collaborative on Race and Equity (CCORE) is a program of the Public Health Institute (PHI) and the Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE) housed at Race Forward, offered in partnership with the California Strategic Growth Council. GARE is a national network of governments working to achieve racial equity and advance opportunities for all. CCORE represents a historic decision by the State of California to begin the work of a whole-of-government approach to racial equity.

DWR participated in the CCORE in 2020 to invest in and enact racial equity change at the Department. DWR's CCORE team, known as the Wave of Hope (WOH) is comprised of 14 multi-cultural members from various disciplines and programs. The team participated in over 210 hours of specialized racial equity education between August 2020 and October 2021 to support the creation of this Racial Equity Action Plan.



## PART III: DESIRED OUTCOMES AND STRATEGIES

### Desired Outcome 1:

#### Workforce is Reflective of the People of California

As DWR employees, we take pride in our role to sustainably manage the water resources of California, in cooperation with other agencies, to benefit the state's people and protect, restore, and enhance the natural and human environments. To effectively deliver on our mission, it is critical that our workforce represents the population that we intend to serve. Attracting, supporting, and retaining employees with diverse lived experiences is more critical than ever as we rise to the challenge of creating a resilient water system that serves all communities for generations to come.

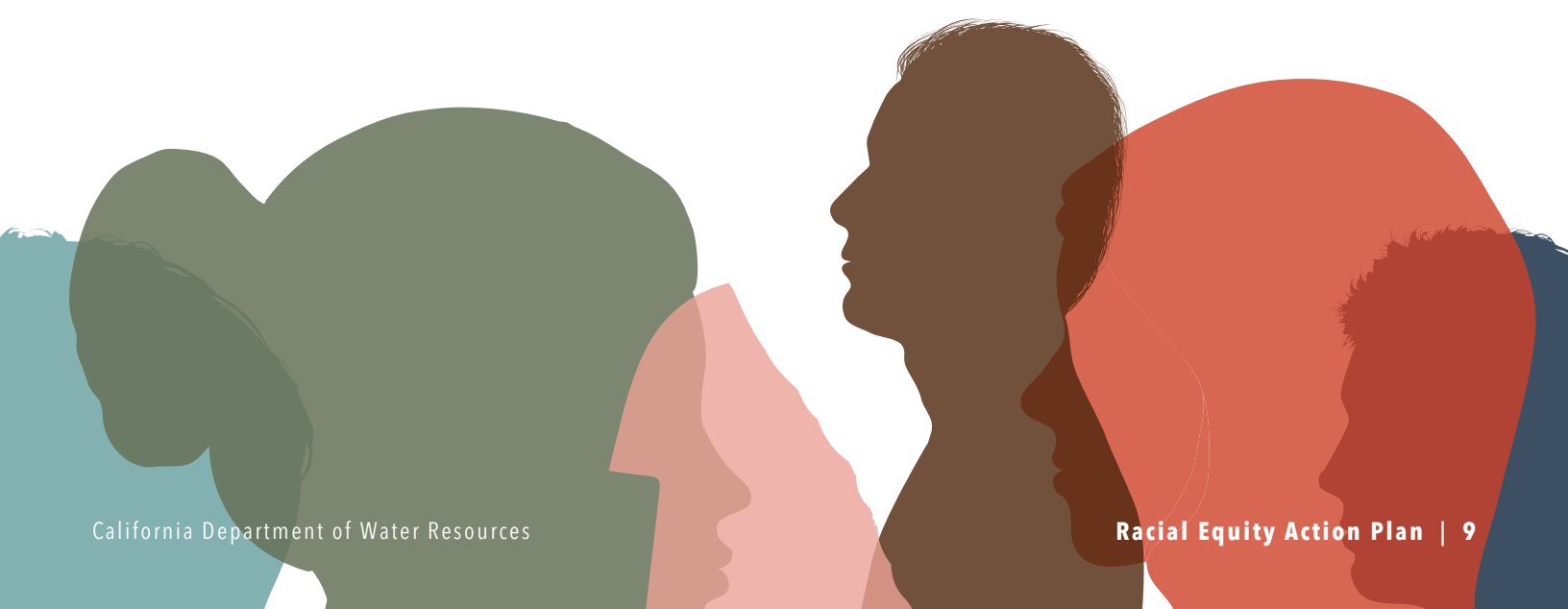
Strategy	Start Date	Lead(s)	Performance Measures
<b>1.1.</b> Develop uniform guidelines for racial equity on job advertisements.	August 2022	DHR	Exam links, commitment to equity, and benefits explanation added to all job advertisements; guidelines on qualifications developed and distributed to hiring managers; audit of job advertisements.

Strategy	Start Date	Lead(s)	Performance Measures
<p><b>1.2.</b> Increase recruitment outreach efforts and materials that focus on reaching underrepresented groups.</p>	<p>January 2022</p>	<p>DWR Recruiter, Recruiters Roundtable Members, PAO, DHR, WOH</p>	<p># of new partnerships built; # of job events/fairs at schools or organizations previously not visited; # staff engaging with new partners; # of new partnerships with underrepresented communities or related NGOs; # of workshops presented and # of attendees; # of new hires from targeted outreach; LinkedIn Recruiter implemented; # of job advertisements on LinkedIn Recruiter; # of job applicants from LinkedIn Recruiter; DWR Jobs social media pages launched; # of job applicants from social media.</p>
<p><b>1.3.</b> Expand redaction requirements of job applications to remove name and address of candidates.</p>	<p>September 2022</p>	<p>DHR</p>	<p>Redaction occurring on job applications</p>
<p><b>1.4.</b> Expand recruitment resources for all involved in the hiring process, including mandatory training for hiring panels.</p>	<p>October 2022</p>	<p>DHR</p>	<p>Toolkit and process flowchart developed and distributed to hiring managers; # of classifications identified and criteria distributed; % of hiring managers trained.</p>
<p><b>1.5.</b> Highlight education reimbursement programs to support employee upward mobility.</p>	<p>October 2022</p>	<p>Managers &amp; Supervisors, LDSS, Blue Team</p>	<p>Educational reimbursements in use by employees in categorized low pay classifications.</p>





Strategy	Start Date	Lead(s)	Performance Measures
<b>1.6.</b> Establish employee-led committee to improve employee belonging and engagement.	July 2022	BusOps, PAO	Workgroup/committee formed; Increased employee spotlights on DWR social media accounts and Blue; employee engagement surveys.
<b>1.7.</b> Develop and implement a mentoring program and promote to all staff.	March 2023	DHR	Mentoring program established, first set of mentors/mentees paired.
<b>1.8.</b> Implement exit interviews for employees changing positions within the Department.	August 2022	OWE, OGC, DHR, DTS	# exit surveys distributed to existing employees.
<b>1.9.</b> Add equity efforts as an evaluation metric on Appraisal & Developments for all manager/supervising/senior specialist.	September 2022	DHR	Guidance document developed and distributed; equity added to managers' A&Ds.
<b>1.10.</b> Clarify complaint processes for employees across the Department.	April 2022	OWE, DHR, OGC, IAO	Resources developed; centralized complaint process available; Ombudsperson contact information publicized.



## Desired Outcome 2:

### Improve Community Engagement with Communities Most Impacted by Structural Racism

Moving from an ‘inform’ approach to a community-led approach will allow DWR to improve sharing the ownership of projects. We have a lot to learn from communities impacted by structural racism and will begin by applying the Racial Equity Tool (RET) to understand their needs and where we can form lasting partnerships. We will use the findings of the RET to further develop policies and initiatives.

Community members with lived experiences are experts of their own community, and their perspective is essential to all government decisions that impact them. The Department has not consistently incorporated intentional public input strategies into their engagement and outreach plans. Moving forward, we must better account for the limited resources available to the public to effectively participate in public comment periods, meetings, program or project development, or grant solicitations. This desired outcome intends to improve the level of trust community members associate with government systems that are not designed to support their active engagement.

Strategy	Start Date	Lead(s)	Performance Measures
<b>2.1.</b> Work with partners in under-represented communities to cultivate relationships and mitigate negative impacts.	June 2022	All Programs	Pilot project RET completed; # of community partners established.
<b>2.2.</b> Develop best practices for Department community engagement and outreach.	June 2022	Executive and WOH	Best Practices document completed and distributed to all staff.

Strategy	Start Date	Lead(s)	Performance Measures
<p><b>2.3.</b> All programs and projects that solicit community input must develop intentional public engagement strategies.</p>	January 2023	All Programs	Increased attendance at public engagement events; increased submittals of public comments.
<p><b>2.4.</b> For community meetings provide language access services.</p>	November 2022	Executive, PAO, All Programs	# of available language access services at meetings.
<p><b>2.5.</b> Establish permanent positions at the Department to engage with communities and support capacity building.</p>	January 2023	Executive	Permanent positions established in headquarters and region offices.
<p><b>2.6.</b> Provide mentorship and resources for K-12 students in underrepresented communities to support water resources career pathways.</p>	October 2022	PAO, DHR, OWE, WOH	List of educational partners established; youth mentoring program, # of students being mentored has increased; internship research and proposal completed.



### Desired Outcome 3:

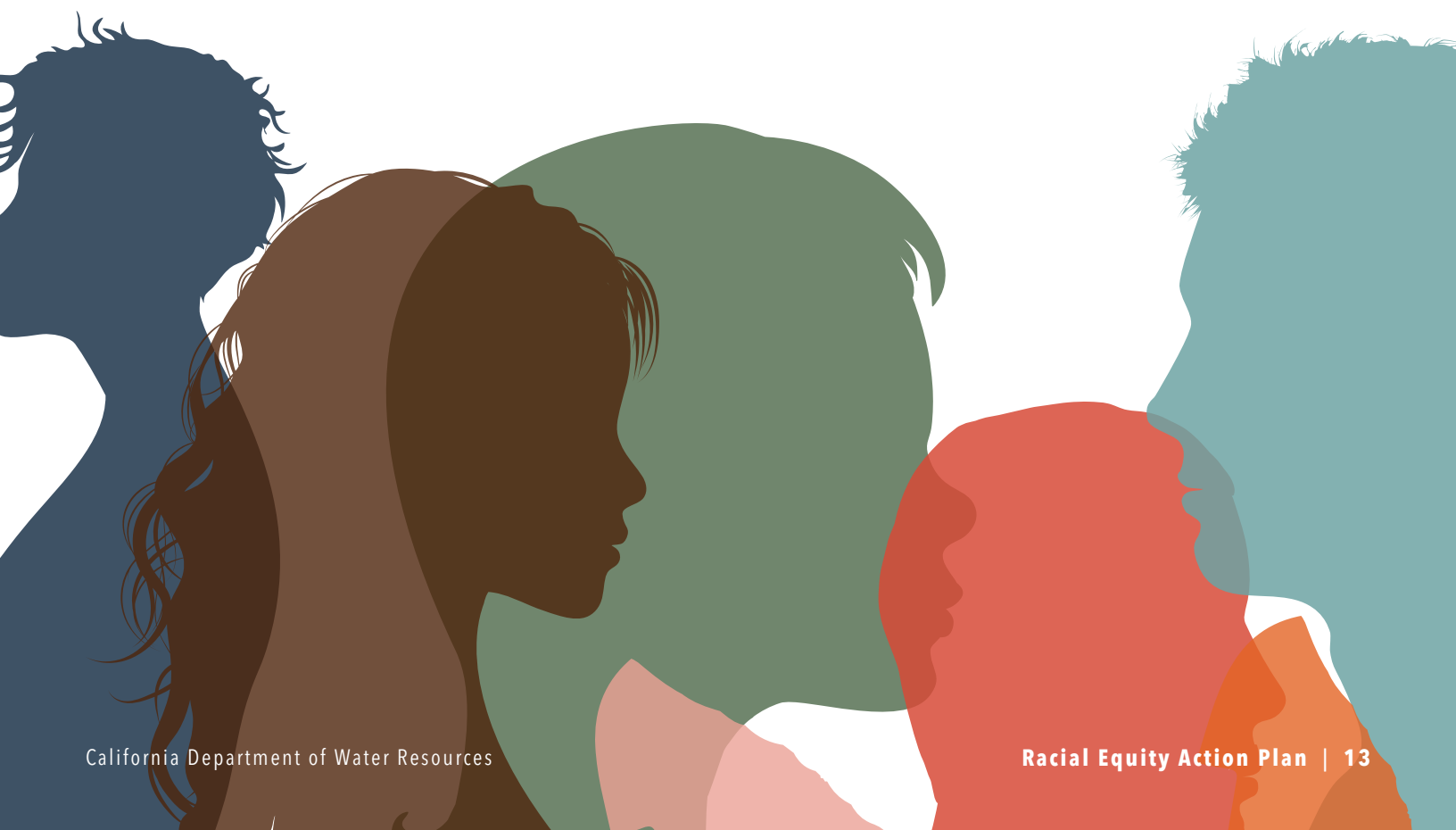
#### Embed Racial Equity into our Projects and Programs

We acknowledge that this work is just beginning. In order to meaningfully change how we do business, staff at all levels will apply a racial equity lens to the planning, programming, and implementing of projects. All programs and projects will contribute to the development of training, policies, program and project design to ensure more equitable outcomes.

Strategy	Start Date	Lead(s)	Performance Measures
<b>3.1.</b> Embed Racial Equity in Strategic, Workforce, and Succession Plans.	June 2022	Executive, DHR, and WOH	Inclusion in Strategic, Workforce, and Succession Plans.
<b>3.2.</b> Develop Racial Equity Statement for DWR.	June 2022	Executive, WOH	DWR equity statement established and shared with staff.
<b>3.3.</b> Determine organizational needs to support Racial Equity efforts.	June 2022	Executive, WOH	Staffing increased for Racial Equity work; staff have assignments from the plan; creation of Racial Equity Office.
<b>3.4.</b> Develop racial equity training for all DWR employees.	August 2022	LDSS	Training developed; number of employees trained; survey responses.



Strategy	Start Date	Lead(s)	Performance Measures
<p><b>3.5.</b> Develop Racial Equity Tool (RET) curriculum to apply to DWR Projects.</p>	<p>January 2023</p>	<p>WOH, LDSS, PSO</p>	<p>DWR RET curriculum developed; tools and resources developed and distributed; # of people trained in pilot training; Development of sample RET; survey partners of DWR programs using RET; RET case studies identified for ongoing training; recommendation on recognition methods.</p>
<p><b>3.6.</b> Create a network of equity advocates throughout the Department.</p>	<p>December 2022</p>	<p>WOH and Programs</p>	<p>Number of advocates trained and deployed in Divisions.</p>
<p><b>3.7.</b> Information exchange with other agencies engaged in Racial Equity work and apply it to internal and external Department programs and projects.</p>	<p>June 2022</p>	<p>Executive, WOH</p>	<p>Engagement established with other agencies; meetings established.</p>



## PART IV: IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Upon adoption of this plan, the Department will establish a permanent Racial Equity Office (REO) within the Executive Division. The REO would manage the implementation of the plan. The REO will serve as program manager for the above actions and work with the implementing partners to achieve desired outcomes.

The REO will report progress and status annually to the Department.



# APPENDIX

## List of Acronyms in Document

<b>BusOps</b>	.....	Business Operations
<b>DHR</b>	.....	Division of Human Resources
<b>DTS</b>	.....	Division of Technology Services
<b>IAO</b>	.....	Internal Audit Office
<b>LDSS</b>	.....	Learning and Development Services
<b>MOU</b>	.....	Memorandum of Understanding
<b>OGC</b>	.....	Office of the General Counsel
<b>OWE</b>	.....	Office of Workforce Equality
<b>PAO</b>	.....	Public Affairs Office
<b>PSO</b>	.....	Project Services Office
<b>WOH</b>	.....	Wave of Hope

## Key Terms of Racial Equity Work

This glossary of terms was developed by DWR’s Wave of Hope Team using articles, reports, and materials developed by Race Forward and other academic institutions, government agencies, and social justice organizations. The definitions below were put together based on the consensus understanding of the folks working on DWR’s plan. This selection of terms is not exhaustive and seeks to clarify terminology frequently used in conversations about race and racial equity.

**BELONGING:** The feeling of security and support when there is a sense of acceptance, inclusion, and identity for a member of a certain group. It is when an individual can bring their authentic self to work.

**BIPOC:** A term that stands for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color. It is intended to center the experiences of Black and Indigenous groups and demonstrate solidarity between communities of color.

**DIVERSITY:** All the inherent and acquired qualities that make us unique as individuals or groups. Diversity is necessary but not sufficient to achieve equity, which demands an ongoing commitment not just to include, but to value and empower, all people.

**ETHNICITY:** A social group that shares a common and distinctive culture, religion, language, history, and customs.

**IMPLICIT BIAS:** Biases people are usually unaware of and that operate at the subconscious level. Implicit bias is usually expressed indirectly. Also referred to as 'unconscious bias.'

**INCLUSION:** The intentional act of creating environments in which all individuals/groups feel and are empowered and welcomed as a valued member. Authentically bringing traditionally excluded individuals and/or groups into processes, activities, and decision/policy making in a way that shares power; values each individual's or group's heritage, contributions, and aspirations; and guarantees full belonging to all interested parties and participants. Inclusion is related to, but distinct from, Diversity.

**INDIVIDUAL RACISM:** Bigotry or discrimination by an individual based on race.

**INSTITUTIONAL RACISM:** Policies or practices that work better for White people than for People of Color, often unintentionally or inadvertently.

**RACE:** A social construct that categorizes people based on physical characteristics and ancestry to justify inequitable distribution of resources and power.

**RACIAL EQUITY:** Eliminating race-based outcome gaps so that race cannot predict one's success and improving outcomes for all. This approach centers those who are worse off and moves from a service-based approach toward focusing on policies, institutions, and structures.

**RACIAL EQUITY TOOL:** A product and process designed to integrate explicit consideration of racial equity in decisions, including policies, practices, programs, and budgets.

**RACIAL INEQUITY:** Outcome gaps between people of different races based on historical or current factors or structures that benefit White people more than People of Color. We occasionally use "equity" or "inequity" as shorthand for "racial equity" and "racial inequity," but only when the full phrase has just been used. While it's tempting to shorten for brevity's sake, it's more important to be explicit.

**REGGI:** Race, ethnicity, gender, geography, and income. These are the preferred topics to disaggregate data by when evaluating who is most negatively impacted by policies, practices, and procedures.

**STRUCTURAL RACISM:** A history and current reality of institutional racism across all institutions, combining to create a system that negatively impacts communities of color.



## Racial Equity Tool (RET)

The WOH used GARE's Racial Equity Tool (RET) to develop the desired outcomes, and strategies included in this document. The RET is designed to integrate explicit consideration of racial equity in decisions, including policies, practices, programs, and budgets. It is both a product and a process. Use of a RET can help to develop strategies and actions that reduce racial inequities and improve success for all groups. It includes 6 major steps as shown below with many questions and sub-steps within the process:

**STEP 1:** Define your desired result. This is an aspirational vision and desired condition of well-being for ALL. The statement is broader than just the specific purview of DWR.

**STEP 2:** Analysis of Data. Data disaggregated by race, ethnicity, gender, geography, and income (REGGI) to identify who is most negatively impacted and who is furthest away from the desired result stated in step 1.

**STEP 3:** Community engagement/partnership. This is the most important and time-consuming step in the process. It is a means of shifting the decision-making power to those most impacted to find out what solutions they desire and what solutions will work best for them. Those most negatively impacted by policy decisions are the experts on what is needed for their community. Consideration should be taken in compensating them for that expertise if possible.

**STEP 4:** Strategies for racial equity. The strategies developed in this step are informed by the information gathered during the desired results, analysis of data, and community engagement steps. A root cause analysis is part of this step to identify, and each strategy must be tied to a performance measure.

**STEP 5:** Implementation plan. Identify tasks, responsible persons, resources needed, and timelines for implementing the strategies.

**STEP 6:** Communications, Evaluation, and Accountability. This step includes forming an effective messaging strategy. Engaging with the communities is an iterative process and metrics need to be developed and evaluated to see if the strategies are doing what they are supposed to over time. If not, they need to be revised. This step includes continued partnership with the impacted communities.

# Spectrum of Community Engagement



Source: Spectrum of Community Engagement to Ownership, Rosa González, Facilitating Power, and Movement Strategy Center





2022