



# 5 winning strategies for tackling inequity through the Reconnecting Communities Pilot (RCP) grant program

Top recommendations from Ashleigh Gardere, Executive Vice President at PolicyLink

## #1 Collect and use disaggregated data to prioritize underserved communities and reverse negative impacts of previous policies and investments.

Environmental impact statements and assessments should consider more than air quality and carbon capture – they should consider long-term health impacts, life expectancy, and chronic disease. Tools like the [National Equity Atlas](#) can help identify where past and existing policy investments have perpetuated racially and economically disparate outcomes and support the development of policies, strategies, and investments to advance equitable growth.

Looking forward, quantitative data must weigh the market-based impact of the proposed project on real people. Qualitative data should consider the relationship between the infrastructure asset and the lived experience of the community's residents. Applications will be evaluated for their connection to and benefits for [Justice40](#) communities.

## #2 Put people first. Connect your transportation strategy to other relevant community needs.

While transportation assets have historically centered on commerce, initiatives like RCP offer an opportunity for grantees to make multi-sector investments that will maximize benefits for people, while also clearly addressing transportation. Strong applicants will have a cross-cutting or intersectional approach to solving community challenges.

## #3 Advance deep partnerships to sustain this work over time. This isn't just a city government effort.

Strong applications will be rooted in strong partnerships. Work with existing partners and invest in new ones to ensure long-term sustainability. Partnerships in formation or projects early in their planning stages may not be ready to apply for capital grants. For these applicants, planning grants may be a better place to start and allow leaders to build up strong partnerships and projects over the life of the program – and strong partners outside of government can ensure that a project is sustained even if elected leaders change.

## #4 Center community voice – and engage historically underserved communities in prioritizing investments.

The most successful community infrastructure projects originate from a clear understanding of the priorities of impacted communities – and particularly low-income communities and communities of color that have experienced the highest rates of historic disinvestment. Plans should be developed from [inclusive planning processes](#), characterized by broad-based public engagement that gives people from impacted communities direct involvement in how decisions are made around use of funds. RCP encourages community voice and power through community advisory boards and evaluates proposals accordingly.

## #5 Manage change to benefit the existing community.

A comprehensive planning process should consider the impact of removal, retrofit, mitigation, or replacement of eligible transportation infrastructure facilities on housing affordability for current residents. Local partners should develop land redevelopment, financing, and community organizing strategies that improve the way capital is attracted and deployed to projects that expand housing and cultural opportunities and neighborhood services to low-income communities and communities of color.

**RCP application deadline: October 13, 2022**

Ashleigh Gardere is a national expert in economic and workforce development, organizational leadership and culture change, and large-scale systems transformation. She was a Senior Advisor to former New Orleans Mayor Mitch Landrieu and has been recognized as one of the nation's top leaders working to close racial opportunity gaps.