

Sierra Club Partnership Principles



Principle 1: Recognize and acknowledge the historical inequality in the work of Sierra Club, and work toward equity

Sierra Club has come a long way in its history of change. Acknowledge our history— that which is beautiful and that which is challenging. Seek to understand the history of inequality in our work and in the communities we have worked in, and create plans that work toward equity and the resourcing of communities. Hold equity as a principle over fairness.

Equity, defined: Equity transcends fairness, creating an environment that ensures equal access and opportunity for everyone— especially those who have suffered the most from pollution, environmental degradation and systemic oppression. In practice, equity means that we are breaking down barriers and addressing imbalances that prevent all people from enjoying the same privileges and opportunities, whether staff, volunteer, or those that we work alongside. It means sharing power, influence, resources, and a commitment to the eradication of all forms of social oppression.

- Sierra Club Report: "[Join Us in This Walk Through the World Together](#)"



Principle 2: Plan and build for long-term power

Understand the needs for community, state, and national power. Build a larger, more diverse base of people. Aim for long-term power by engaging in both direct campaign work and work to change the root systems of power, inequality, and lack of democracy. Recognize that sustainable power comes from the ground up, not from the top down. This means investing in local organizations and local leadership towards the aim of sustaining long-term power on all levels. Use listening and mapping to determine when Sierra Club works through partners in base building, builds a base directly, or both.



Principle 3: Value relationship building



Measure deep relationships as successes in and of themselves and respect the history of those relationships. Form trusting relationships with individuals by committing to seeing them as whole people and approaching them with respect, compassion, and empathy. Be willing to prioritize relationships over agenda and campaign goals when partners need support to meet their goals. Work at the speed of trust. Aim for relationships that are transformational and are built on trust, curiosity, and mutual self-interest instead of one-way, issue-specific relationships that use partners to reach short-term goals. Authentic relationships require awareness of race, class, gender and ability privileges. Strive to build partnerships based on shared vision, values, and narrative, which will sometimes—but not always—align with a policy or with campaign goals.



Principle 4: Engage in early and thorough consultation with partners and stakeholders

Take time to engage and listen to communities on the ground and to stakeholders most impacted by the issue at hand. Communicate in advance and transparently with partners and seek to keep communication lines open, especially when goals differ. Value respect and honesty in relationships over agreement—acknowledge that disagreement is not bad when our approach or strategy is different from a partner's or when there are multiple strategies for moving toward a shared goal.



Principle 5: Share power and create transparency with partners

Ensure that frontline partners are included and at the table, even when Sierra Club isn't leading an alliance. Seek to have frontline voices speak for themselves at every stage of the work and receive power, space, resources, and relationship in alliance planning, decision-making, fundraising, and public communications. Actively support frontline voices with Sierra Club's institutional power. Be transparent by being clear about roles, what Sierra Club can and cannot do, and what community needs are from Sierra Club, as well as by sharing information and decision-making.



Principle 6: Support long-term capacity building of frontline partners

Plan campaigns in consultation with partners that build long-term capacity for frontline communities. Sierra Club's success is dependent on the success and health of community partners who may need support, resources, training, or relationships in order to be sustainable. Work together long-term, listening and learning about partners' long-term goals, concerns, priorities, and needs. Elevate the successes of partners, and defend partner victories from cooptation. Give real feedback and set clear expectations



about what Sierra Club can and cannot commit to. If Sierra Club must exit a community, leave communication lines open and leave a legacy of capacity building and political power.

Principle 7: Practice accountability

Grow Sierra Club's accountability practices internally as an ongoing commitment, through protocols and training. Create clear guidance on how communities needing accountability to these principles can access this process and who they can go to. Adopt and support practices to share ownership of this organizational change, hold each other accountable to these principles, and celebrate opportunities to stretch and grow our accountability.



Potential Add - Principle 8: Commit to ongoing internal transformation

These principles require individual commitments to learning and internal transformation, as well as institutional commitments to learning and organizational transformation. Deep relationships are built on practices of respect, people speaking for themselves, commitments to understanding history, and deep listening, all of which must happen internally among staff and volunteers as well as externally with partners. Engaging in our own internal, personal, organizational, and community transformation is an ongoing (and potentially fascinating) process.



Potential Add - Principle 9: Work with people and organizations with shared values

Sierra Club should articulate its core values. Commit to be involved in transformational change that shifts our economy and democracy towards fairness, inclusion, equity, and sustainability. This means a grassroots approach that places the concerns of frontline communities at the center of our analysis. Additionally, this means challenging systems of oppression at levels three and four of the Four Levels of Power (It should be clear if there are exceptions to working with people with shared values, the lobbying team, for example) and the values used in those partnerships should also be articulated.

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