



Environmental Justice and the HEAL Act

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Agenda

- Environmental injustice and health disparities
- Healthy Environment for All Act (WA 2021)
- Environmental Justice Assessments
- Identifying overburdened communities and vulnerable populations



Environmental injustice and health disparities

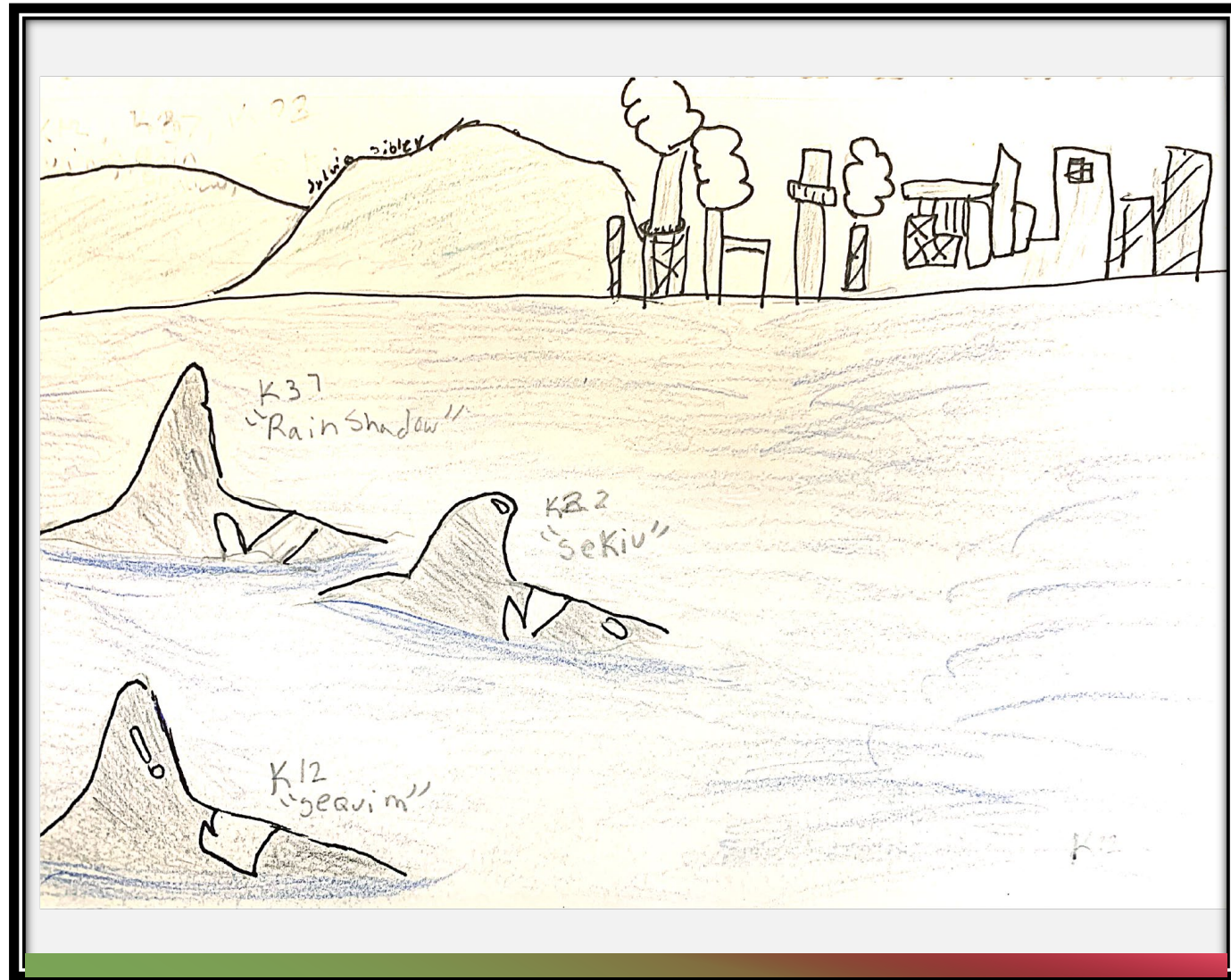
Why environmental justice?



The screenshot shows the top portion of a news article on The Seattle Times website. At the top left is the site's logo and name, "The Seattle Times". To the right of the logo is the word "Data". Further right are links for "Log In", "Subscribe", and a search icon. Below this is a horizontal navigation bar with categories: LOCAL, BIZ, NATION, SPORTS, ENTERTAINMENT, LIFE, HOMES, OPINION, | THE TICKET, JOBS, EXPLORE, and a dropdown menu for "All Sections". A second row of sub-categories includes Politics, Law & Justice, Watchdog, Mental Health, Project Homeless, Education, Traffic Lab, Eastside, Climate Lab, and Obituaries. A prominent orange banner highlights a "TRAFFIC" article titled "Truck fire blocks most of NB I-405 lanes in Renton" with a right-pointing arrow. Below the banner, there are breadcrumb links: "Data | Health | Life | Local News". The main headline of the article is "Life expectancy in WA counties varies by as much as 11 years". Below the headline is the publication date and time: "March 21, 2024 at 6:00 am | Updated March 21, 2024 at 6:16 am". At the bottom right of the article preview are icons for Facebook, email, and Twitter.

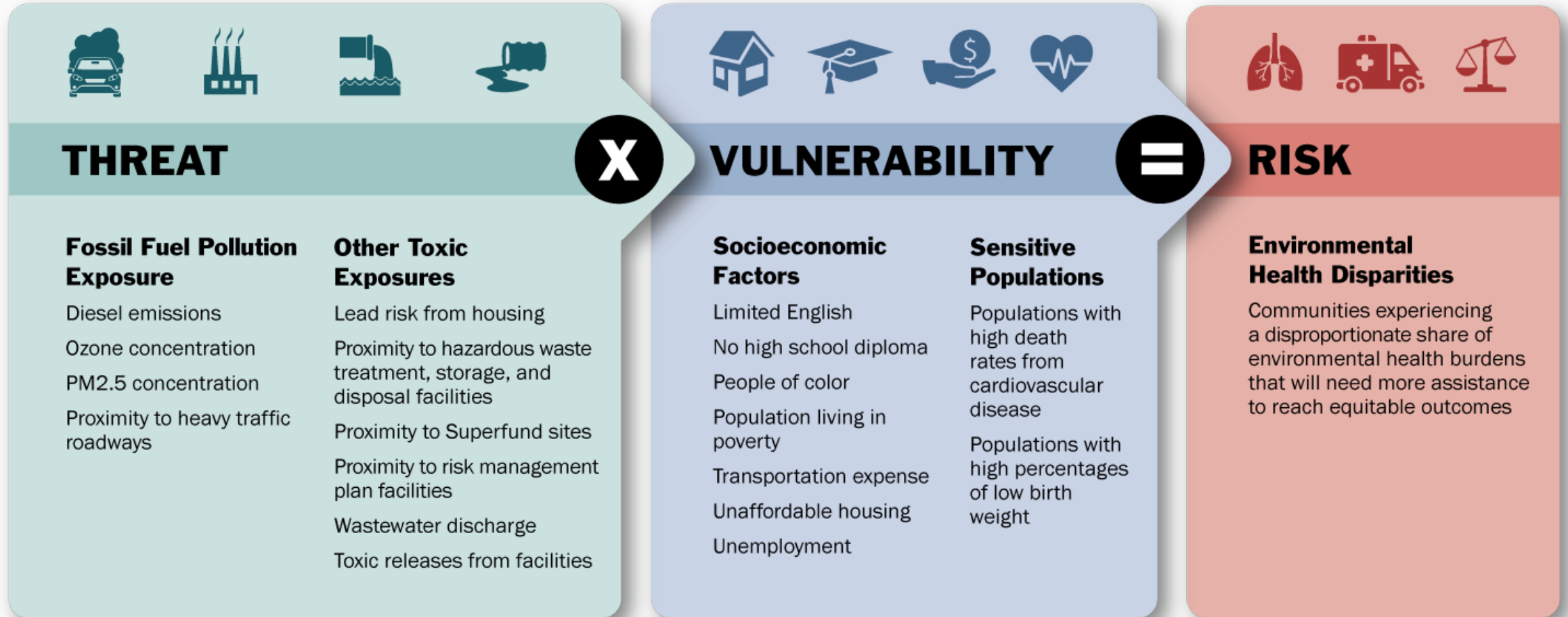
Environmental exposures predict health outcomes

- Deaths are increasingly caused by diseases that linked to environmental conditions
- Pollution is the leading cause of global deaths
- People of color are disproportionately harmed by environmental conditions



Washington Environmental Health Disparities

Threat x Vulnerability = Risk



Policy and racism

When evaluating how to improve our society, racist research has historically posed the question, “what is wrong with these people?”

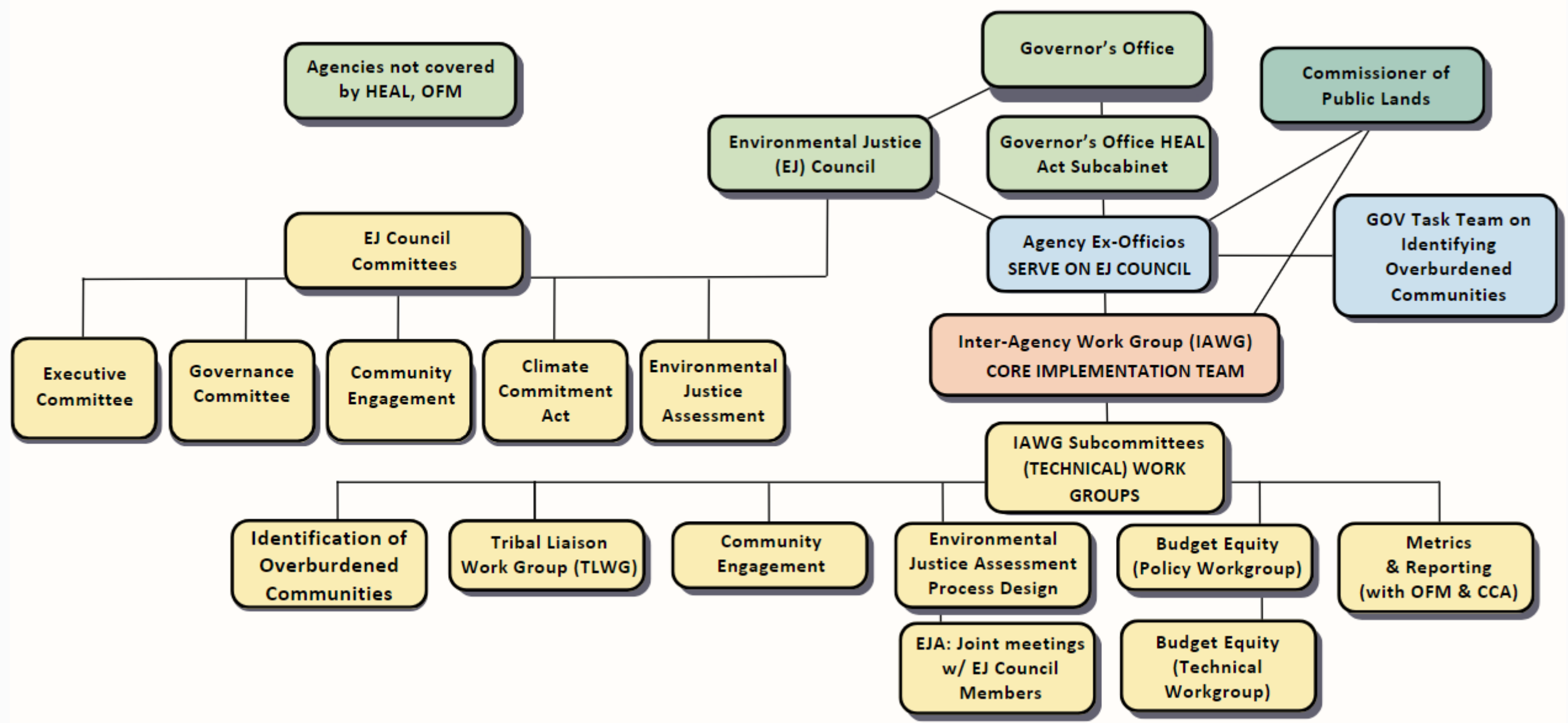
Instead, we want to ask, “what is wrong with these policies, that they are producing results that disproportionately affect some people groups more than others?”

Healthy Environment for All Act



What is the HEAL Act?

- The Healthy Environment for All Act passed in Washington State in 2021.
- Agencies must consider, plan for, and address environmental justice issues in a wide scope of activities.
- This means addressing environmental and health issues in WA through an equity and justice lens:
 - Prioritizing overburdened communities, vulnerable populations, and Tribes who disproportionately bear the largest environmental burdens.
 - Preventing and addressing root causes.



Major HEAL Obligations



Adopt community engagement & tribal consultation plans



Incorporate EJ into agency strategic plans



Incorporate EJ into budget & funding decisions



Conduct EJ assessments of Significant Agency Actions



Develop EJ metrics for tracking & reporting

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Develop EJ metrics for tracking & reporting on C-D



Incorporate EJ
into budget &
funding decisions

1. Directing 40% of grants and expenditures that create environmental benefits to overburdened communities and vulnerable populations.
2. Create opportunities for overburdened communities to meaningfully inform expenditure decisions.
3. Consider developing innovative approaches, such as:
 - (i) Community grants to monitor pollution
 - (ii) Grants to providing training for community involvement
 - (iii) Delivering technical assistance to new beneficiaries
 - (iv) Education and work readiness programs

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Environmental justice analysis



Environmental
Justice
Assessments of
Significant Agency
Actions

Significant agency actions

1. New rulemaking
2. Agency request legislation
3. New grant or loan program
4. A new capital project, grant, or loan (at least \$12 million)

**Ecology will consider additional activities for 2025+*

Environmental Justice Assessments

Invite Tribal
consultation

Identify the
geography and
people who are
burdened or
benefited

Engage
communities

Correct for harms
and benefits


Share out
assessment







Identifying overburdened communities and vulnerable populations

A practical approach




 Environmental Health Disparities 

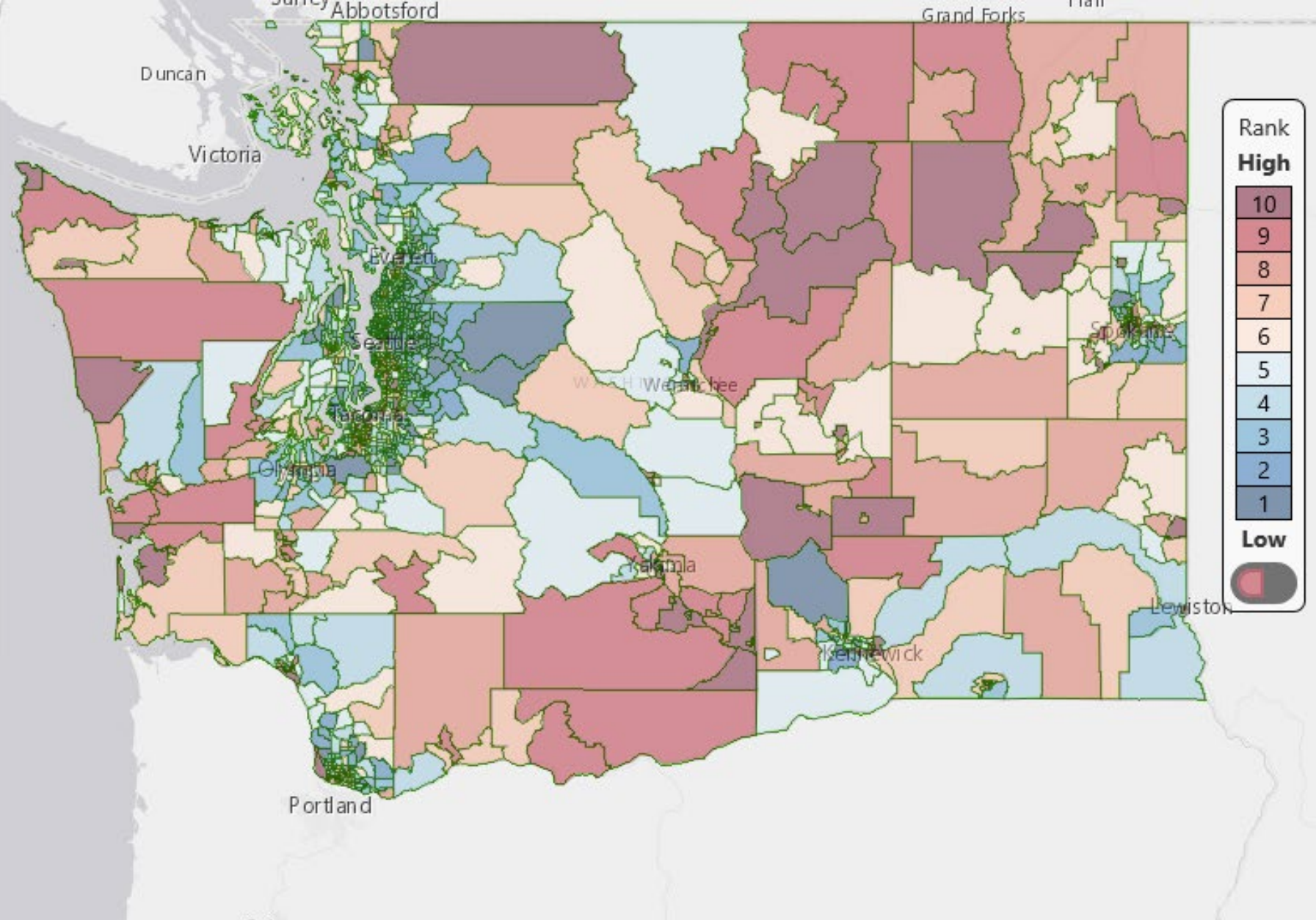
 Diesel Pollution and Disproportionate Impact 

 Social Vulnerability to Hazards 

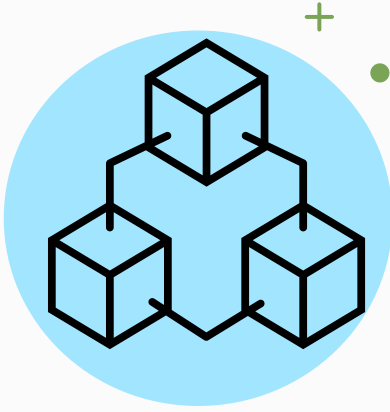
 Lead Exposure Risk 

 Health Disparities 

 Planning for Health 



WASHINGTON TRACKING NETWORK (WTN)



Components of justice

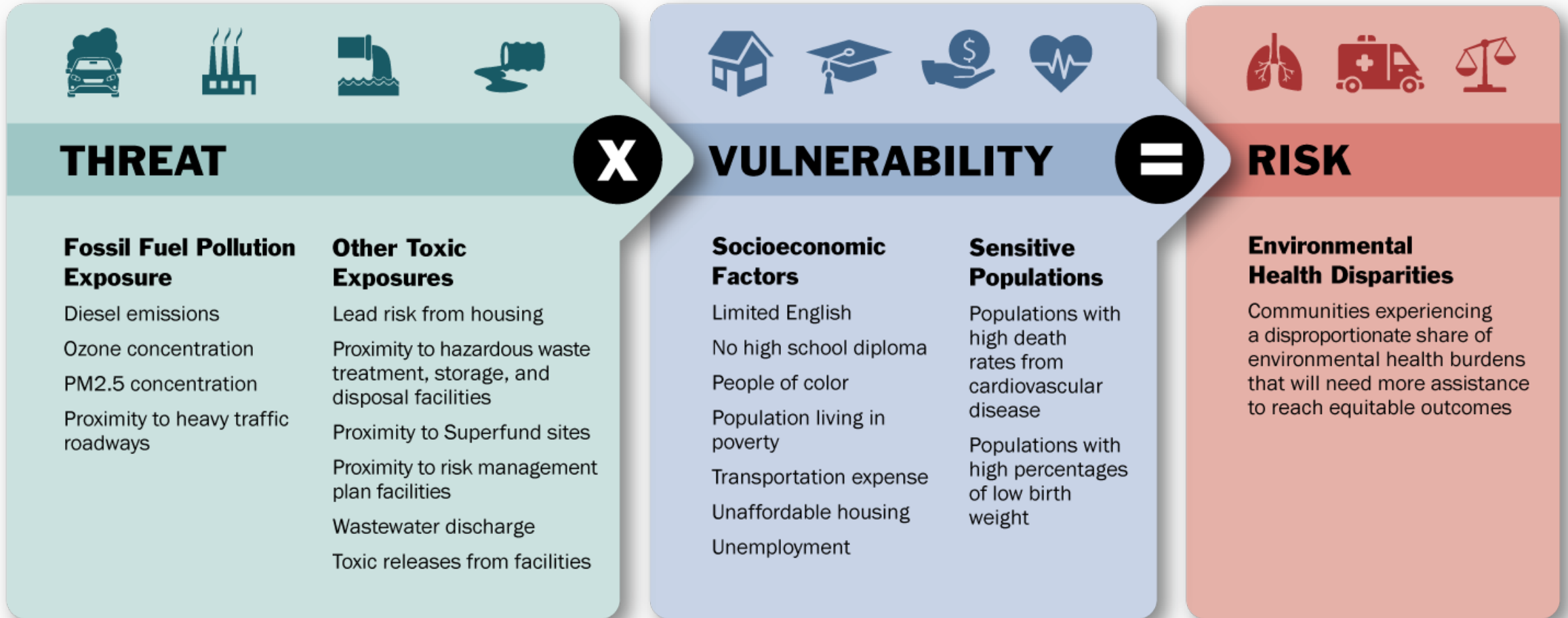
Recognition: Affirming the inherent value of everyone involved

Procedure: Decisions and management are inclusive, participatory, trusted, and transparent

Distribution: Harms and benefits are spread fairly across space, time, and groups

Washington Environmental Health Disparities

Threat x Vulnerability = Risk





Now we practice!

Threat x Vulnerability = Risk

1. Consider a current project you are working on.
2. Take a minute to identify the components of this equation for that specific project.
 - What are the threats related to your project?
 - What are the vulnerabilities present for the community impacted by your project?
 - What does this say about the population's risks from this project?
3. Share out!

One last thought...

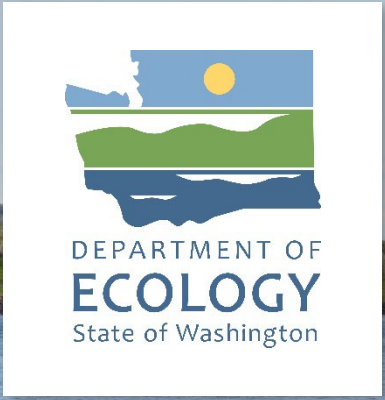
Threat x Vulnerability = Risk

Resources x Competencies = Capacity

Risk – Capacity = Impact

Take aways!

- ✓ Some people continue to be disproportionately impacted by policies, public administration, and social norms that inequitably protect and benefit some groups more than others.
- ✓ While the HEAL Act was a historic victory, no single tool or law perfectly addresses environmental and health disparities.
- ✓ Taking Pro-Equity Anti-Racism actions is our shared work and opportunity.
- ✓ Ecology's Water Quality program will implement HEAL Act obligations and continue to pursue anti-racist practices that create equity in our funding and regulatory decision.



Discussion Q&A

Don't be a stranger:
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