

# CENTERING EQUITY in ELECTRIC MOBILITY: The first year of TEEM



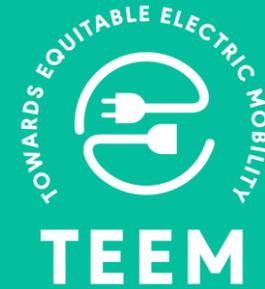
Electric transportation can simultaneously further racial equity and combat climate change. Before TEEM, organizations largely worked on these issues in silos and were missing an opportunity to build broader collective power through diverse, equity-focused collaboration. TEEM is a first-of-its-kind community of practice designed to create these types of collaborations.

TEEM builds on lessons learned from leading work at the intersection of racial equity and electric transportation. It creates space for equity-focused organizations and environmental organizations across four states to join forces. **It creates a new community for dialogue that leverages organizations' strengths in both the community and political spheres.**

To confront traditional power structures that often favor environmental organizations, TEEM centers equity in its design. TEEM facilitators understand that spaces where individuals have equitable participation will lead to equitable policy solutions. They worked to create a community of practice that centered the voices of equity organizations and the needs of community.

The first year of TEEM focused on building relationships, trust, and capacity. Members spent most of their time connecting, learning from each other, and finding common ground across their differences.

This brief summarizes findings from the first year of TEEM.



## About TEEM

Toward Equitable Electric Mobility (TEEM) was created in 2021 to improve equitable clean transportation by enabling cohort members to share policy goals, learn together, build capacity, and develop a sense of belonging and mutual commitment towards advancing racial equity and climate change goals in electric mobility.

## About the Learning Plan

The Learning Plan was a collaboration of Forth and Greenlining Institute (the facilitation partners for TEEM), the Wend Collective, and Innovation Network to engage with stakeholders involved in TEEM and learn about what it takes to build a successful Community of Practice.

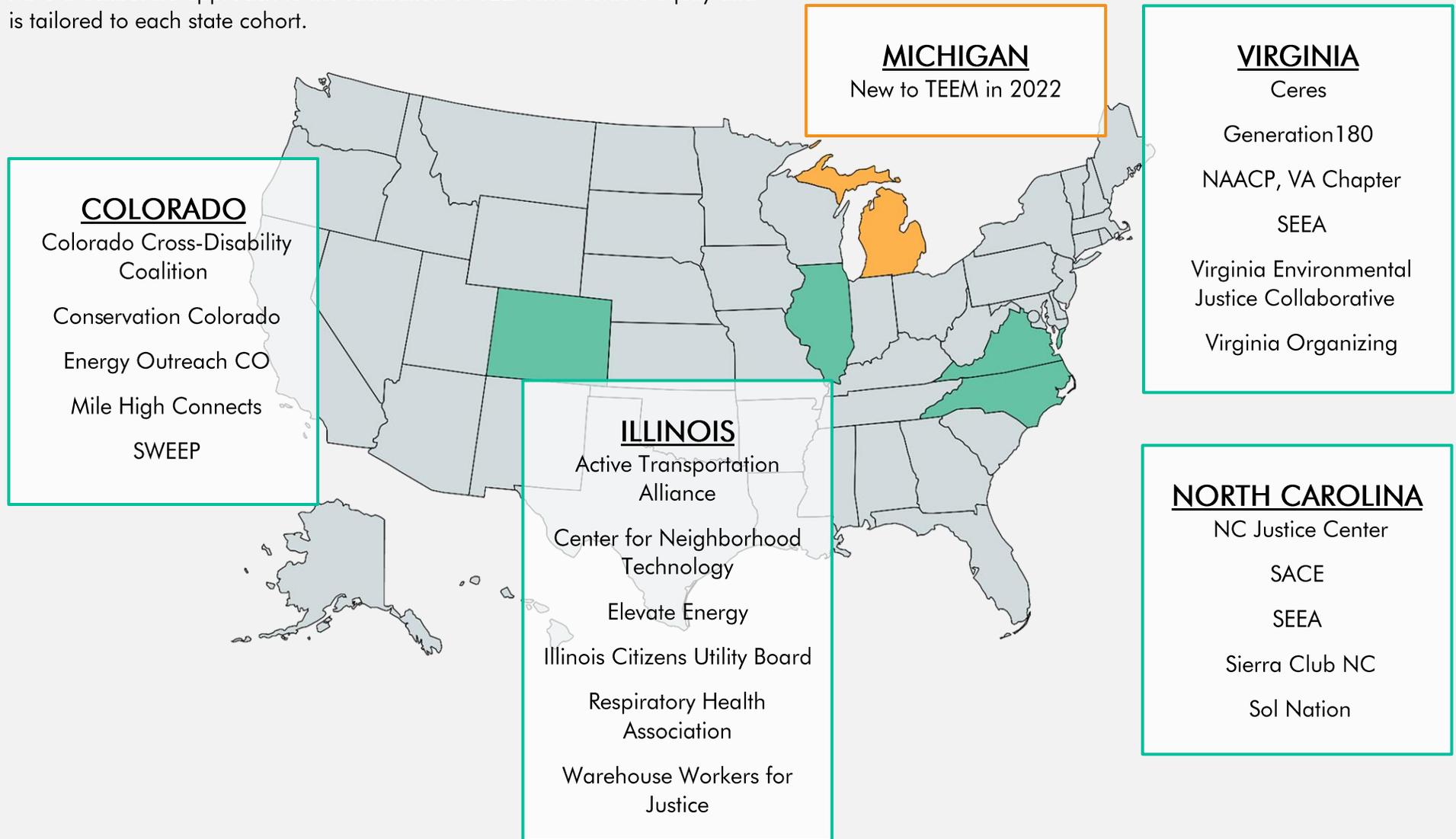
Innovation Network's work was guided by three central questions identified by TEEM facilitation partners:

1. What are we learning about implementation and what it takes to successfully design and facilitate a Community of Practice at the state and national level?
2. How can TEEM build Community of Practice members' capacity and shared power to influence equitable clean transportation?
3. What lessons are we learning about TEEM's approach that can be applied to other and future efforts?

## TEEM First Year Cohort

The founding members of TEEM represent four state-level groups (Colorado, Illinois, North Carolina, and Virginia) and a collective national-level group.

TEEM is centrally managed by Forth Mobility and Greenlining Institute, who have a deliberate approach to the facilitation of TEEM that centers equity and is tailored to each state cohort.



## Designing for Equity

The innovation of TEEM—which is also its overarching goal—is to create a container that centers equity voices, cultivates trust-based relationships and collaborations, builds capacity, and generates shared priorities among equity and environmental organizations that advance racial equity in electric transportation. Facilitators used several strategies to integrate equity into every component of TEEM, from recruitment to facilitation.

### BUILDING THE CONTAINER FOR TEEM

Forth and Greenlining designed TEEM to limit traditional power structures from its inception. They sought to design a space where a group of people can share a collective overall view of an issue and yet bring their individual perspectives on any given problem to create a social learning system that goes beyond the sum of its parts. As TEEM was created, TEEM facilitators:



**Set expectations around equity.** As they recruited members to TEEM, facilitators were explicit about the role of equity in TEEM and how members' experiences in TEEM would be different. Once they joined, members received core equity principles and commitments that defined the working relationship of members and their vision for success.



**Ensured representation of equity-focused organizations.** TEEM recruited organizations with experience furthering equity even when they had not worked in electric transportation. These organizations received a grant to participate in TEEM.

Ultimately, **TEEM brought together organizations who had not previously worked together.** TEEM created a community of practice that consisted of 55% environmental policy organizations and 45% community-based equity organizations. They offered each other different perspectives on equitable electric mobility.

In focus groups and a member survey, equity members reported higher value, satisfaction, and comfort with the facilitation of TEEM than environmental members.

### BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS ACROSS DIVERSE GROUPS

Members of TEEM meet twice monthly, once with a state cohort with members in their state, and once with all members of TEEM across states. Members share successes, challenges, and lessons learned across states and organization types. During TEEM calls, facilitators:



**Prioritized dialogue.** In the beginning, awkward silences were acceptable as members found the words to share their stories. Over time, TEEM facilitators added more time into agendas for sharing and prioritized questions that sparked conversations.



**Elevated equity organizations.** Facilitators spotlighted equity organizations on TEEM calls to emphasize their voices.

A member survey showed that **90% of members have developed a sense of trust and built connections** that they value as a result of TEEM.

*"TEEM creates a different and unique environment where people feel really comfortable to show up wherever they're coming from."*

TEEM Facilitator

## BUILDING CAPACITY

Members joined TEEM with different levels of understanding around equity and electric transportation policy. Facilitators created learning opportunities on these two topics through:

-  **Peer learning.** Members primarily learned from each other's shared experiences and varied perspectives.
-  **External speakers.** External speakers provided formal opportunities to learn on topics such as data equity and federal transportation policies.

While all members found value in TEEM, equity organizations rated TEEM activities more relevant and reported learning more from TEEM than environmental organizations. Overall, **84% of members reported increasing their knowledge** on topics such as the intersection of racial equity and electric mobility.

Members were interested in continuing building their knowledge, particularly on the topics of **electrifying school buses** and **financing for e-mobility**.

*"We work for policy-driven organizations where the work is technical. We work in spaces where community involvement comes up and nobody is great at it and we're figuring out what to do. Hearing people on other side of that, who represent organizations we are trying to engage is so valuable."*

Environmental member of TEEM

## BUILDING CONSENSUS AROUND PRIORITIES

Each state cohort of TEEM worked together to identify key policy priorities to pursue. TEEM facilitators held states accountable to TEEM's equity commitments, ensuring priorities were representative of both environmental and equity organizations' priorities, particularly through:

-  **Conflict resolution.** When disagreements arose in two state cohorts about what to prioritize in their policy agenda, TEEM facilitators served as active mediators and advocates for equity organizations.

Members of TEEM continue to work on finding common ground. A member survey showed that **75% of members find some common purpose in TEEM**. And while some indicated that collaboration could be improved, **members scored power sharing in TEEM at 83%**.

Both equity and environmental organizations reported gaining new perspective when it came to equity and transportation. They are incorporating equity at higher rates and with more influence and sincerity than before they joined TEEM.

*"We have more influence with climate organizations and institutions in the state."*

Equity Member of TEEM

## Lessons Learned

As a new community of practice that sought to collaborate across differences, TEEM offered many lessons learned in its first year and actions it will adopt in its second year:

### 1. *Environmental organizations are generally more established on electric transportation, which shifted power to them at times.*

TEEM facilitators were proactive to ensure equity organizations had equal if not greater voice and power within TEEM. However, some equity organizations faced a higher learning curve and had less established networks related to electric transportation compared to environmental organizations. Environmental organizations were often more familiar with each other and had a more cohesive vision for electric transportation than equity organizations, creating a common and amplified voice for environmental groups in TEEM.

*Action: In the second year of TEEM, facilitators will prioritize creating learning and networking opportunities primarily based on equity organization members' goals and feedback.*

### 2. *Level-setting was an important stage that allowed members to engage together more meaningfully.*

Members had to learn to speak each other's language. Time was needed to build trust, develop a common understanding, share individual priorities, and start co-developing strategies. While environmental members learned about what equity means in action, equity organizations learned about electric transportation policies.

*Action: TEEM facilitators will continue to translate why electric mobility is an important environmental and economic justice issue and opportunity and why equity is essential to the success of the electrification movement.*

### 3. *Power differentials made it more challenging to establish a common purpose.*

In every state, environmental organizations' priorities were easier and more efficient to pursue because of the attention and institutional forces that coalesce around their policy issues. TEEM's purpose is to address these forces directly. TEEM facilitators worked with individual members and state cohorts to ensure priorities are representative of the whole group and include equity organizations' priorities.

There's a distinctly different pace about the formation of this group. There's space given for education and learning. I appreciate that as opposed to feeling like you have to come in and be ready to move. That is a unique TEEM quality.

Equity Member of TEEM

*Action: TEEM facilitators will establish more frequent checkpoints to ensure members understand and are aligned with the purpose and objectives of TEEM activities.*

#### **4. TEEM relied on the strong capacity of its facilitators.**

TEEM facilitators led the design of meeting agendas, built close relationships with each member in one-to-one meetings, and navigated complex relationships through mediation. Even with guidance from outside facilitation consultants, the facilitators often felt stretched thin and over time built their capacity by inviting members to lead aspects of TEEM.

*Action: TEEM facilitators hired a Policy Associate to add dedicated support and create time for facilitators to focus on cohort strategies and long-term planning for TEEM. TEEM members will also be invited to take on increasing levels of leadership and responsibility to advance the work. For state cohort campaigns to be truly successful, members must utilize their connections in the states and communities in which they are rooted.*

#### **5. TEEM continues to seek the right balance among relationship building, capacity building, and state action.**

While members appreciated space for dialogue and relationship building created in TEEM, at the same time they desired deeper content and more direct action. While facilitators prioritized “moving at the speed of trust,” this was a balance with cohort members’ needs to see tangible progress and results from their participation in TEEM.

*Action: In its second year, TEEM is adding Michigan as its fifth state cohort and will attempt to strike a balance between relationship building, capacity development, and state action that corresponds with members’ preferences. The four states entering Year 2 will focus more heavily on strategy development and advancement.*

All of the work and experiences I've learned about through TEEM will help us design a program that meets the expectation and needs of vulnerable communities.

Environmental member of TEEM

As TEEM evolves, facilitators will continue to seek input and feedback from members so that all can learn from TEEM as and find new ways to incorporate equity into our practice.