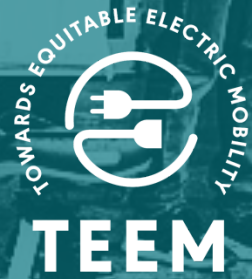


# 7

## Lessons for Centering Equity and Grassroots Organizations in an Electric Mobility Community of Practice

Findings from the second year of TEEM



Prepared by



# TEEM'S PURPOSE AND HISTORY

Toward Equitable Electric Mobility (TEEM) is a first-of-its-kind Community of Practice founded in 2021 with the goal of advancing environment and racial justice in improving equitable clean transportation.

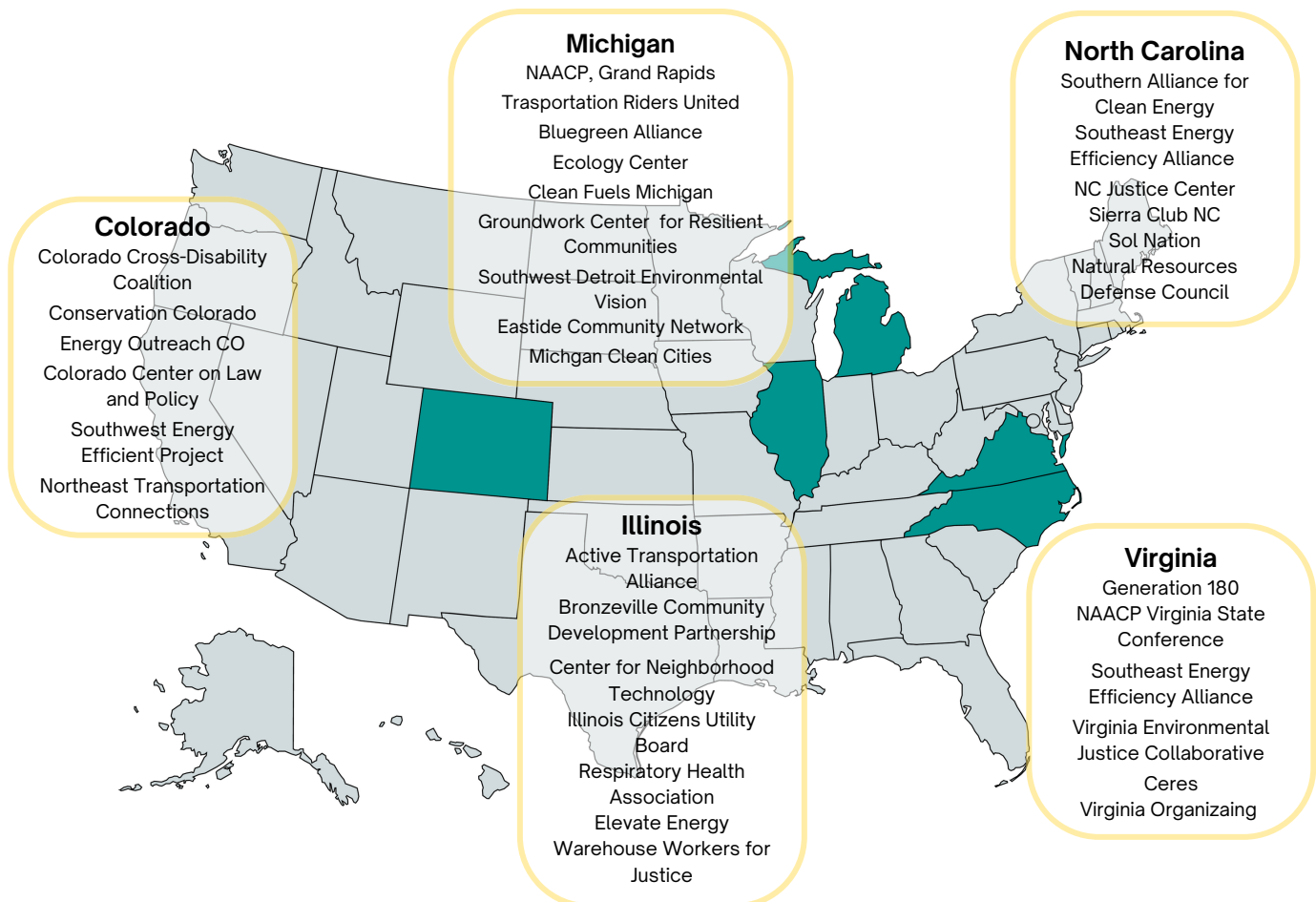
To accomplish this, TEEM brings together two groups who have typically worked in silos: organizations that have historically focused on environmental policy and grassroots organizations who work to advance equity within and for their communities. Together, cohort members share policy goals, learn, build capacity, and develop a sense of belonging and mutual commitment towards advancing racial equity and climate change goals in electric mobility.

In TEEM's first year, cohort members were able to focus on forming relationships, building trust, and

growing their capacity in equity and electric mobility work. This was foundational: members were able to learn from each other and find common ground across their differences, ensuring the space they were creating was intentional and geared towards equity.

While this relational and ground-setting work continued in TEEM's second year, it also evolved: cohort members started to look towards taking action together. In 2022, state cohorts hosted multiple events together and started identifying advocacy priorities.

TEEM operates across five states and is facilitated in partnership by the Greenlining Institute and Forth Mobility.



# THE LEARNING PLAN

The learning plan centered on learning about the implementation of TEEM, building its members' capacity, and what lessons from TEEM could translate to other future approaches. The learning focus was co-created with TEEM volunteers, the Facilitation Group, Wend, and Innovation Network. Together, they identified three central questions to be explored:

- ☀ What does it take for TEEM to support offensive, proactive work for equitable policies?
- ☀ How can TEEM move towards collective ownership of state-level and national strategies?
- ☀ How can TEEM operationalize equity across the community of practice?

Innovation Network used a mixed methods approach, including a survey of all members of TEEM, monthly reflection calls with the TEEM facilitation group, and a focus group with members of TEEM. Findings were validated with funders, facilitators, and members of TEEM. This summary was compiled by Cory Georgopoulos and Alissa Marchant of Innovation Network.

# LESSONS SUMMARY

1

Groundwork for building trust and relationships requires care, meeting people where they're at, and moving at the speed of trust; this has allowed members of TEEM to work through differences and find cohesion, ultimately leading to increased shared power

2

It takes longer to develop relationships when greater divides exist.

3

Centering and lifting up community needs from most impacted communities requires centering and including more community-accountable equity groups, which can be a challenge at times.

4

Transparency and open dialogue around differences can build momentum and shift power towards equity groups.

5

TEEM members require more capacity and resources to take full ownership of the community of practice.

6

TEEM demonstrates that a community of practice model can create alignment across actors and shift advocacy power to equity groups.

7

Building leadership from within the cohort enables the continued development of TEEM's work and its momentum. This requires a container with strong groundwork and skilled, inclusive facilitation.



# Lesson 1

**Groundwork for building trust and relationships requires care, meeting people where they're at, and moving at the speed of trust; this has allowed members of TEEM to work through differences and find cohesion, ultimately leading to increased shared power**

The first priority of TEEM in the first years was building relationships across members and doing grounding work on equity.



**TEEM set goals and norms and created opportunities to learn about equity through intentional workshops and speakers that addressed equity and historical context.** While some members said it would be helpful to have more clear guidance on how to make progress towards equity, this grounding created common values and priorities that they could call back on in the second year.



**Facilitators of TEEM intentionally built time for relationship building and discussion into national calls.** Trust was built by aligning on shared values and finding common ground. Meeting in-person at the TEEM annual convening was especially helpful for members to connect with each other on a deeper level. Members also caucused with like-organizations, which created a safe space for participants to discuss equity in the community of practice.

This grounding work fostered trust and vulnerability. It allowed for members to be open with one another, to share their stories, knowledge, and strategies. Facilitators of TEEM have noticed increased transparency and members have increasingly shared feedback.

**Relationships are key to effective collaboration, and they take time to develop and deepen. It is also crucial--especially when trying to share power--and requires sustained support.** Participants were keen to figure out how to communicate this to potential funders and other advocates looking to create similar spaces. Several participants highlighted the theme of patience and perseverance, talking about “going slow to go long,” and how often, this is not the type of work that more traditional funders want to support. Multi-year, predictable funding is needed for the long-term nature of TEEM’s work.



*TEEM clearly needs to get to know each other so we can dive into each other's work and be more vulnerable—so when you don't know, you're not afraid to say that and talk about the areas that are undeveloped in your organization.*

*- TEEM Member*



## Lesson 2

**It takes longer to develop relationships when greater divides exist.**



**Geography and experience affected states' ability to build relationships.** It has been more challenging to build relationships across members in Michigan where the cohort is geographically spread out and there are not as many relationship building opportunities. There is also a greater divide in electric mobility experience between members in Michigan.

## Lesson 3

**Centering and lifting up community needs from most impacted communities requires centering and including more community-accountable equity groups, which can be a challenge at times.**

**The members who make up TEEM are important to meet TEEM's equity goals.** Participants had mixed feelings on the current make-up of TEEM: some felt that the make-up of TEEM contributed to equity with active recruitment of BIPOC and community orgs, while others felt that more recruitment of equity groups was needed.

**Recruiting and sustaining the voice of equity groups in TEEM can be a challenge.**



Equity groups are invited to join many groups like TEEM and are stretched thin.



The recruitment of equity groups may take time and attention away from the advocacy work of some members.



When equity groups are included, they may have priorities other than electric mobility.

## Lesson 4

### Transparency and open dialogue around differences can help build momentum and shift power towards equity groups.

Both the TEEM facilitators and members brought up challenges they have experienced within TEEM, such as which groups to include in state cohorts and partnerships, and what priorities to pursue. **TEEM facilitators in particular played an important role in making these differences explicit and giving weight to equity groups in the decisions around differences that emerged.** For example:



**Facilitators of TEEM have acted as mediators, navigating differences in opinion about how advocacy can be done and who should be involved.** Facilitators consistently advocated for and deferred to the opinion of equity groups.



**Facilitators' conflict resolution and expectation-setting around equity allowed the Virginia cohort to come together after a disagreement about advocacy priorities.** Since their challenges were addressed openly, the state cohort has adapted to meet members' needs. Members are adapting their schedules to ensure the participation of equity groups and responding to their capacity needs and supporting each others' ideas.

Making these differences explicit allows for greater understanding of each other's values and creates opportunities to learn each other's perspectives. At times, these discussions have corrected assumptions and bias made about others. However, TEEM still has room to grow in terms of transparency and openness.

#### **Members feel a tension between state-level advocacy and centering lived experience.**

Members expressed concern about the time it takes to recruit equity groups and how it takes time away from their advocacy priorities. When equity groups are involved, community-based priorities are often sidelined.

**TEEM members did not necessarily see TEEM as being a space for healthy disagreement.** While the space may be conducive to the sharing of new ideas, if people don't feel they can be vulnerable, healthy disagreement won't happen.



*A sense of shared power was rated higher at the national cohort level than at the state cohort level.*

## Lesson 5

**TEEM members require more capacity and resources to take full ownership of the community of practice.**

*Members' actual upcoming capacity to engage is yet to be determined even though they are expressing a desire to increase involvement. For some organizations, 10 hours a month is still too much.*

- TEEM Facilitators

Cohorts are working more autonomously overall but TEEM facilitators continue to convene national calls and provide other support. There is some tension between facilitators' desire for cohorts to self-direct and members lacking all the capacity necessary for pushing TEEM forward themselves.

The cohort is at a transition point and a bit in flux as they figure out what higher ownership of the community looks like in practice.



Only 59% of survey respondents felt they had enough capacity to engage with TEEM to the extent they wanted to.

## Lesson 6

**TEEM demonstrates that a community of practice model can create alignment across actors and shift advocacy power to equity groups.**

**TEEM has elevated equity organizations and the communities they serve.** This was particularly apparent with elevating the leadership of equity organizations and communities such as making space for BIPOC voices in community listening sessions, centering equity-focused ideas in meetings, and "listening to equity groups first."

TEEM is optimized for equity groups and BIPOC members. Members who identified as Black, multiracial, or another racial category other than white tended to feel a stronger sense of shared power at the national and state level.

*I've noticed that when our conversations lean towards the most marginalized amongst us, our voices are heard, heavily considered, and in some cases the finality of that dialogue period.*

- Member of TEEM

*I think I've built new and deeper relationships, and prioritized equity in the work I do and how I think about building coalitions, policy etc. in a way that I may not have without activities I'm a part of like TEEM.*

- Member of TEEM



**Building leadership from within the cohort enables the continued development of TEEM's work and its momentum. This requires a container with strong groundwork and skilled, inclusive facilitation.**

The first year of TEEM included a lot of groundwork, level-setting, and building of the container which was necessary for the cohort to move to action together and to build members' leadership in TEEM's second year. This was exemplified when an equity organization created a proposal and was encouraged by a traditional environmental organization to take it to the wider state cohort. The proposal garnered support, and other members became engaged in the process, reinforcing each other's ideas.

**In the second year of TEEM, participants were further invited by facilitators into the management and facilitation of TEEM which increased their sense of ownership.** Members also took initiative on their own. Some of the ways in which TEEM members were able to grow their leadership and ownership of the community of practice include:

- ✿ Facilitating parts of the Annual Convening
- ✿ Locally-based Project Coordinators hosted at TEEM cohort organizations (including one working full-time on TEEM)
- ✿ Design sprints in each state where members mapped out the work they want to do together in the next year
- ✿ Recruitment of additional organizations for TEEM reflecting current members' desire to see the community grow
- ✿ Organizing and facilitating state working calls



*Our state groups can work together to develop shared values and policy priorities. TEEM can help ID policies that have worked elsewhere and help us shape our ideas into policy recommendation reports.*

- Group Reflection



*In a survey, the majority of TEEM members reported that TEEM's decision-making processes were highly collaborative and allowed for their input before decisions were made.*



*Continuously involving and sharing updates with the cohort contributed to feeling more clear and confident in the learning process. The sharing of drafts for the Learning Agenda, summary of findings, and discussing the learning process at the convening made the learning process stronger.*

- TEEM Facilitators

