



Using the Louisville Charter for Safer Chemicals To Create Change

A GUIDE BY COMING CLEAN

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How communities, organizations, institutions, and individuals can **transform the chemical industry** and **win policy solutions** that protect public health and the environment.

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What is the Louisville Charter for Safer Chemicals?

To guide the transformation of the chemical industry so that it is no longer a source of harm for people and the planet, our movement created, and has now updated and expanded, our common chemicals policy platform to:



- Speak with a united voice about priorities for chemical policy reform; and
- Clearly state the core principles and policies needed to transform the chemical industry so that it is no longer a source of harm.

The Louisville Charter for Safer Chemicals (the “Charter”) was developed by dozens of diverse organizations and leaders through a process initiated in 2004 by grassroots environmental justice groups in Louisville, Kentucky, where 11 industrial facilities released millions of pounds of toxic air emissions each year. It was updated and expanded through an extensive process in 2020-2021. A set of background policy papers provide the detailed blueprint for action and policy framework that governments and companies at all levels should adopt.

At its core, the Charter is a roadmap for safer chemical policy development that rejects false solutions that sacrifice the health and livelihood of workers and communities, and seeks to build a more inclusive movement rooted in scientific data, principled partnerships, and policy alignment between environmental justice communities, mainstream environmental and health organizations, workers, and frontline communities. The Charter envisions all of these parties working together to build a safer chemicals movement that advances shared policy goals and ideas, and is fully grounded in justice and equity. To this end, the Charter is guided by the [Principles of Environmental Justice](#) and the [Jemez Principles for Democratic Organizing](#).

What's in the Charter?

The Charter consists of an introductory Vision Statement followed by 10 principles (“planks”) that, adopted collectively, are essential to achieving the vision of a safe and sustainable chemical industry that does not harm people, the environment, or exacerbate climate change. The planks build upon each other to construct the platform that is the Charter. Each plank has a detailed Policy Background Paper that explains the principle in depth, the problem it is trying to solve, and a list of specific policy goals. The Charter is endorsed by over 100 organizations representing environmental justice and grassroots communities, environmental and health nonprofits, and leaders in the medical, public health, business, science and research communities.

The 10 planks of the Charter call on us to:

1. Address the Significant Impacts of Chemical Production and Use on Climate Change;
2. Prevent Disproportionate Exposures and Hazards, and Reduce Cumulative Impacts on Environmental Justice Communities;
3. Require Safer Substitutes and Solutions for a Non-Toxic Economy;
4. Use Scientific Data to Support Health-Protective Policies and Practices;
5. Take Urgent Action to Stop Production and Recover Chemicals that are Unsafe and/or Accumulate in the Environment and People;
6. Act with Foresight to Protect Health and Prevent Pollution;
7. Take Immediate Action to Protect, Restore and Strengthen Communities;
8. Ensure the Public and Workers Fully Have the Right-To-Know, Participate and Decide;
9. Incentivize Responsible Business & Safer Chemicals;
10. Build an Equitable and Health-Based Sustainable Economy.

See also:



The complete Louisville Charter, including the full statement of each platform plank



Policy background papers

Who is the Charter for?

Bold new leadership must develop inclusive strategies that acknowledge and repair the legacy of environmental and public health harms inflicted on workers, communities, and the planet by the chemical and fossil fuel industries. This leadership must come from the ground up and involve a diverse set of partners in the non-governmental, labor, government and private sectors.



For communities/workers...

Fenceline communities and workers are disproportionately exposed to multiple hazardous chemicals and pollution. The Charter articulates ways in which these impacts can be identified, mitigated, and eliminated. The Charter also provides guidance for identifying and rejecting false solutions, while demanding that: communities and workers are meaningfully involved in decisions that affect them; the public and workers are meaningfully informed about hazardous chemicals they may be exposed to in products and the workplace; and communities are fully restored from ongoing and legacy pollution. Finally, the Charter calls for the building of an equitable, values-based, non-toxic economy and centers this transition on the needs of small and medium enterprises, local economies, communities of color and low-income community-owned businesses, in ways that support worker ownership, livable wages and a just workplace. **(See Planks 2, 6, 7, 8 & 10).**



For mainstream environmental, health and safer chemical advocates/organizations...

The Charter provides a framework and set of principles to build a more inclusive, equitable, sustainable, long-term and just movement rooted in communities and the workers that are the backbone of our economy. We believe that we cannot win our individual organizational goals without a shared and justice-based mobilization. To this end, the Charter is centered on innovative and equitable solutions with racial and economic justice as core goals. The Charter's vision is that all people and all communities have the right to breathe clean air, live free of toxic pollution, access healthy food, live free of racial discrimination, not bear the burden of cumulative impacts from exposure to multiple pollutants, and share the benefits of a prosperous and vibrant economy. **(See Planks 1, 2, 6, 7, 8, 9 & 10).**



For policymakers...

The Charter provides specific recommendations (outlined in the ten policy background papers) that policymakers must enact in order to advance a sustainable chemical industry and address the long-standing legacy of environmental and health harms on communities by the chemical and fossil fuel industries.

How to Use the Charter?

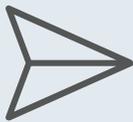
The Louisville Charter for Safer Chemicals is not just a document, but a vision for change and roadmap for how to get there. It is only meaningful if community, worker, health, environmental, and justice organizations and leaders put it to use.

From 2005 through 2020, many organizations, leaders, institutions, companies, and governments used the original Charter and associated policy recommendations to phase out harmful chemicals, reduce toxic pollution, and advance green chemistry.

The updated Louisville Charter can be used:

- **Externally** - to promote the Charter principles and policy recommendations as a roadmap for action by government officials and corporate leaders, to which we will hold them accountable;
- **Internally** - to hold ourselves accountable to the common platform and principles of the Charter, and develop campaigns and solutions that truly reflect and work toward the vision of systemic transformation that leaves no one behind.

Externally - Promote the Charter Platform and Safer Chemical Policy Solutions



- **Build awareness and support for the Louisville Charter.** Share the Charter with your organization's leadership, members, and allies; and ask allied organizations and supportive individuals to endorse the Charter.



- **Encourage elected officials to enact safer chemical policies based on the Charter.** Share the Charter and policy recommendations with local, state, and/or national elected officials; ask them to endorse the Charter; and ask them to support and help pass policies that align with the Charter.



Resources on our website make this easy!



- **Promote business support for the Charter.** Share the Charter with business leaders and businesses; ask them to endorse the Charter; and ask them to promote the Charter and its solutions in business networks and adopt them at their own companies.



Resources on our website make this easy!

Internally - How Can We Embody the Louisville Charter in Our Work?

The Charter is meant to guide not only public policy makers, but also our own organizations and movements. We need a coordinated effort in which many partners advance elements of the Charter through separate and interconnected efforts that stay true to our common vision and principles. In order to reject false solutions that shift burdens or fail to protect everyone, advancing environmental justice must be central to all of our work.



- **Use our checklist.** Consult the Charter Checklist below, a preliminary tool to check if your policy and campaign work is in alignment with the principles of the Charter.
- **Read the policy papers.** Visit our website for background policy papers to be published regularly throughout 2021. These papers will offer detailed policy guidance from expert members of our network.



Find them at louisvillecharter.org

Charter Checklist

NOTE: This checklist is not intended to be a complete guide to implementing the Louisville Charter. Detailed background papers, which provide specific policy recommendations for each plank, are available on www.louisvillecharter.org. This checklist is intended as a tool to support alignment with our vision and principles as embodied in the Charter, and to avoid misalignment that can hold back our success.

Moreover, in order to achieve the vision and intent of the Charter, all the planks must be implemented **collectively, not individually**.

1. Address the Significant Impacts of Chemical Production and Use on Climate Change

Guidance: We can't fix the chemical industry without stopping climate change, and we can't stop climate change without transforming the chemical industry. It is important to link chemicals and climate issues and solutions.

Questions to consider:

- What are the links between the chemical policy issue you're facing and climate change?
- If you're working on chemicals, are you including the need to address the climate impacts of chemical feedstocks, production, use, and disposal?
- If you're working on climate, are you emphasizing the need to transform the chemical industry as an essential solution to climate change?
- If you're working on the climate impacts of fossil fuels, are you including the environmental health and justice impacts caused by toxic fossil fuels and their derivative chemicals in communities of color, Tribes and Native/Indigenous communities, and low-income communities?
- Do your proposed solutions help expose and address the interconnections between chemicals and climate change?
- Are you supporting just and equitable solutions and avoiding false solutions that address the problem by shifting burdens to communities that are already disproportionately impacted?

2.

Prevent Disproportionate Exposures and Hazards, and Reduce Cumulative Impacts on Environmental Justice Communities

Guidance: Environmental justice is central to achieving the goals and vision of the Charter. Building a collaboration or campaign that is not rooted in justice and equity fails to build a long-term, sustainable, winning movement around an issue and may further put vulnerable communities or workers at risk.

Questions to consider:

- How do the proposed solutions to the chemical policy issue you're facing advance environmental justice?
- Are you adhering to the Principles of Environmental Justice and the Jemez Principles for Democratic Organizing? Doing so will help achieve your goals in a way that is inclusive and breaks down racial and economic injustices.
- Are you adopting policies and practices that remedy the disproportionate chemical hazards and exposures faced by communities of color, Tribes and Native/Indigenous communities, and low-income communities?
- Are you addressing the burdens of multiple pollutants, multiple sources, and accumulation over time with vulnerabilities that exist in a community?
- Does your solution relocate harm to another community or maintain disproportionate harm in existing communities?
- Does your solution assist in ending discriminatory practices and policies that result in disproportionate and cumulative impacts in frontline communities?
- Are grassroots, frontline and environmental justice communities at the table as you are conceptualizing, developing and advancing chemical policies at all levels?

3. **Require Safer Substitutes and Solutions for a Non-Toxic Economy**

Guidance: In order to eliminate hazardous chemical use, production, and emissions, we must stop allowing replacement of toxic chemicals with other toxic or untested alternatives, and require alternatives that are demonstrably safer, especially for disproportionately impacted communities.

Questions to consider:

- How do your strategy and policy demands ensure substitution of hazardous chemicals with demonstrably safer alternatives?
- Does the solution adhere with Green Chemistry Principles?
- Are you ensuring that alternatives are safer for those disproportionately impacted across the chemical's lifecycle

4. **Use Scientific Data to Support Health-Protective Policies and Practices**

Guidance: The availability of credible, independent, and verifiable scientific data is critical to inform policies that protect human health, especially vulnerable populations and the environment. We have enough scientific data to act now to phase out groups of harmful chemicals and expand protections.

Questions to consider:

- In your campaign/issue, how can scientific data be applied to address classes of chemicals, and expand protections, especially for the most affected populations?
- Is it required that the chemical manufacturer, importer, and/or business you are trying to change provide credible independent and verifiable scientific data?
- Is lack of data, inadequate data, or non-independent (i.e. industry) data being used as an excuse for not taking action?
- How can available scientific data be used to support early action to identify and address potential hazards?

5.

Take Urgent Action to Stop Production and Recover Chemicals that are Unsafe and/or Accumulate in the Environment and People

Guidance: Prioritize chemicals and classes of chemicals that present immediate threats to health and the planet.

Questions to consider:

- Does the campaign you're working on involve chemicals that are a threat to safety due to flammability or potential to explode; do not break down or are slow to degrade in the environment (persistent); accumulate in people and the food chain (bioaccumulative); are highly mobile in the environment and supplies; and/or contribute to climate change?
- If so, then are you advocating for phasing it out, banning and/or recovering it from the environment?

6.

Act with Foresight to Protect Health and Prevent Pollution

Guidance: Ensure that our efforts and recommendations prioritize prevention and acting on early warnings before harm has accumulated.

Questions to consider:

- Is there already sufficient data that the chemical you are working on is potentially hazardous and/or harm is likely to occur?
- Does your campaign limit or stop the manufacturing and use of chemicals in the market where scientific data shows harm to human health or the environment?
- How does your campaign/issue identify environmental or health harms?
- Are you prioritizing pollution prevention?

7.

Take Immediate Action to Protect, Restore and Strengthen Communities

Guidance: Ensure that when communities or workers are exposed to levels of chemicals that pose an imminent health or safety hazard, immediate action is taken to eliminate these exposures or risks.

Questions to consider:

- Does your campaign involve a community or workers that are exposed to levels of chemicals that pose an immediate health or safety hazard?
- If your work is focused on products or retailers, are you including demands and solutions that will protect communities and workers exposed by manufacturing of the products or chemical ingredients?
- What steps are being taken to ensure that communities and workers that have been harmed by chemical exposures, or that face ongoing legacy exposures, are fully restored and supported in their growth beyond restoration?

8.

Ensure the Public and Workers Fully Have the Right-To-Know, Participate and Decide

Guidance: Ensure that our solutions include meaningful involvement for the public and workers in decisions that impact their health, and model that involvement in our own work.

Questions to consider:

- In your campaign/issue, how are you ensuring that the public and workers have the right-to-know, participate and decide in decisions that impact their health because of the potential harm from a toxic chemical?
- How can barriers to public information and participation be eliminated?
- Are we fully including affected workers and communities in our own planning and decision making?
- Are the names and quantities of chemicals produced, used, stored, released, and/or exported publicly available?

9.

Incentivize Responsible Business & Safer Chemicals

Guidance: Our efforts and solutions should prioritize and incentivize responsible business, oppose subsidies for companies and industries that harm health and the environment, and make businesses financially responsible for their harmful practices.

Questions to consider:

- Does your campaign/issue aim to incentivize responsible business practices and safer chemicals and hold companies that continue to disproportionately pollute and produce harmful chemicals accountable?
- Does the business you are incentivizing act responsibly by providing third party-verified safer and healthier chemicals, materials products and services?
- How are you ensuring that they are not engaged in greenwashing?
- Does the business your campaign targets engage in harmful practices which causes incredible damage to local, state and national economies? If so, how will you take action to hold them accountable and publicly highlight this harm?

10.

Build an Equitable and Health-Based Sustainable Economy

Guidance: Our solutions and efforts should help build an equitable, values-based economy that transitions us from short-term profit at all costs to one which advances a non-toxic and just economy.

Questions to consider:

- Does your campaign take steps towards an equitable and health-based sustainable economy?
- Are you centering the transition on the needs of small and medium enterprises, as well as supporting local economies?
- Does the transition also equitably support communities of color, Tribes and Native/Indigenous communities, and low-income community-owned businesses?
- Are you supporting corporate forms that value people over profit, provide opportunities for worker ownership, and help build the solidarity economy? Are you supporting companies that provide livable wages and a just, inclusive and equitable workplace?