

What is an Equity Lens?

The purpose of an equity lens is to be deliberately inclusive as an organization makes decisions. It introduces a set of questions into the decision that help the decision makers focus on equity in both their process and outcomes.

It is explicit in drawing attention to the inclusion of marginalized populations, typically communities of color, and can be adapted to focus on other communities.

The lens questions are designed to create a more inclusive perspective, drawing attention to how the decision holds potential to affect marginalized groups. An equity lens will not tell you what action to take. Rather, the lens helps you discuss and reflect on the equitableness of the action and decision-making process.

Equity lenses can be customized for different organizations and decisions. The standard elements, however, ask for the decision makers to consider equity dimensions of involvement, process, values and assumptions, and outcomes, from a perspective that highlights how practices hold potential to shift power toward inclusion and equity.

What are the questions typically in an Equity Lens?

1. What decision is being made?
 - a. What beliefs, values and assumptions (some of which will be cultural) guide how the topic is being considered?
2. Who is at the table?
 - a. Who or what informs their thinking on the issue?
 - b. Who is most affected by these decisions, and thus should be at the table?
 - c. How can they be included?
3. How is the decision being made?
 - a. What participatory structures can be added to hear from more voices, to equalize participation, and elements of consensus be used?
4. What assumptions are at the foundation of the issue? Be explicit in naming these and the values and cultural bases for them.
5. What is likely impact?
 - a. Does the policy, program, or decision improve, worsen, or make no change to existing disparities? Does it result in a systemic change that addresses institutional inequity?
 - b. Does the policy, program, or decision produce any intentional benefits or unintended consequences for the affected groups?
 - c. What is the real impact likely to be for different groups who are important to the organization?
6. What is your decision?
 - a. Based on the above responses, what are the possible revisions to the policy, program, or decision under review that could address inequity/promote equity?