

Policy and Process Review Through an Equity Lens Tool

Policies are the decisions made about how we will build and govern our communities.

Processes are the ways in which we make those decisions.

Assumptions are the underlying values that determine our policies and shape our processes.

The key questions when looking at existing policies are:

What are the current outcomes of this policy?
Who currently benefits from this policy?
Who, historically, does not benefit from this policy?

The key questions to help design new policies are:

What outcomes do we want?
Who should benefit?

Supplemental questions about policies:

How are the benefits of the policy or policies distributed among subgroups, such as across racial/ethnic and gender populations?
How has racism (historical or otherwise) contributed to the distribution of benefits across populations?
How are the benefits of the policy or policies distributed among places?
How has racism contributed to the distribution of benefits across places?
How might the benefits of the policy to populations or to places be more equitably distributed?

Adapted from Minnesota Department of Health, retrieved from:

<https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/practice/resources/publications/docs/1811advancingHEkeyQs.pdf>

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What groups are burdened by this policy? Which places?
How might the burdens on populations or on places be more equitably distributed?
What have been the outcomes of this policy? Were these the intended outcomes?
Does this initiative/policy maintain things the way they are now? Should it?
Are there unintended consequences from the policy? Is there a way to correct for unintended outcomes?
Are policies in other areas affecting the effectiveness of this policy? Where could policies be coordinated?

The key questions to examining existing processes are:

Who is at the decision-making table, and who is not?
Who has the power at the table?
The key questions to help develop new processes are:
How should the decision-making table be set, and who should set it?
Who should hold decision-makers accountable, and where should this accountability take place?

Supplemental questions about processes:

Who is involved in the decision-making process?
How connected are the decision makers to the communities affected?

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How is responsibility for making decisions shared?
What are the criteria used to make decisions? Are these the right criteria?
How inclusive and empowering is the decision-making process, especially for those historically excluded?
What mechanisms are in place to ensure the decision-making process considers the long-term interests of diverse populations?
What structures/mechanisms could ensure that experts and agency staff are “on tap” as resources versus “on-top” as deciders?
What is the implementation process? Is it reflective of stakeholder needs and values?
How are outcomes tracked and reported? Are there ways to improve data collection and transparency?

The key questions to identify existing assumptions are:

What values underlie the decision-making process?
What is assumed to be true about the world and the role of the institution in the world?
What standards of success are being applied at different decision points, and by whom?

The key questions to define new assumptions are:

What are our values?
What would it look like if equity was the starting point for decision-making?

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