Promoting Equity, Transforming Communities, Improving Health

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PolicyLink is a national research and action institute advancing economic and social equity by Lifting Up What Works. ®
Defining Health: Overall state of physical, economic, social and spiritual well-being
Environments have critical influences on behaviors that directly and indirectly affect health.
What is Equity?

Equity means *just and fair inclusion*.

- An equitable society is one in which all can participate and prosper. The goals of equity must be to create conditions that allow all to reach their full potential. In short, equity creates a path from hope to change.

- Achieving equity requires intentionality, focus, and a commitment to community engagement and participation.
Community Revitalization

Communities of Opportunity
- Parks
- Grocery Stores
- Financial Institutions
- Employment Opportunities
- Safe & Affordable Housing
- Better Performing Schools
- Good Public Transportation

Disinvested Communities
- Fast Food Restaurants
- Liquor Stores
- Unsafe/Limited Parks
- Poor Performing Schools
- High unemployment
- Increased Pollution and Toxic Waste Sites
- Limited Public Transportation
- Inadequate Child Care & After School Programs

Good Health Status

Poor Health Status
Contributes to health disparities:
- Obesity
- Diabetes
- Asthma
- Infant mortality

Communities that have access to good health status are more likely to have lower levels of obesity, diabetes, asthma, and infant mortality. On the other hand, communities that lack these opportunities may experience higher levels of these health issues, contributing to health disparities.
What Have We Done Well?

- Broadening framing of prevention
- Emphasizing social and economic determinants
- Focusing on upstream approaches
- Bringing greater attention to inequities
If you had to give a grade on advancing equity what would it be?

Pass or Fail?
Raising the Grades:
Other Considerations for Achieving Equity and Improving Health
The Face of America is Changing
2030 Percent People of Color by County

Less than 30% People of Color
30% to 40% People of Color
40% to 50% People of Color
Greater than 50% People of Color

Sources: Woods & Poole Economics projections data (adjusted using the 2010 Census), Census TIGER/Line, NHGIS, and ESRI.

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2012 Health Outcomes - New Hampshire

Legend:
- Rank 1-2
- Rank 3-5
- Rank 6-8
- Rank 9-10

Counties:
- CO
- GR
- CA
- BE
- ST
- SU
- ME
- CH
- HB
- RG
Why is community engagement important?

• Processes have *historically excluded* and marginalized low-income communities and communities of color

• Knowledge and perspective of low-income communities and communities of color is *vital* to turning visions for revitalization into reality

• Lack of engagement in the process also sometimes resulted in *opposition to results* that didn’t reflect community needs
Principles for Community Engagement

- **Empower residents** through meaningful inclusion and partnerships
- **Build capacity** for high level engagement
- Prioritize **community knowledge and concerns**
- **Target resources** to support ongoing engagement
- Facilitate mechanisms that encourage **mutual learning and feedback mechanisms**
Towards More Equitable Public Engagement Processes

**Inclusive:** What communities and interests need to be represented and in what capacity?

**Accessible:** Will people and organizations from a diversity of backgrounds feel comfortable and engaged?

**Transparent:** How does public engagement interact and influence decision-making?
Engagement and Leadership

• Efforts to achieve revitalized communities of opportunity will not be successful without **substantial community engagement**

• Meaningful community engagement requires **participation in governance and decision making**
Community Engagement Considerations

- Acknowledge power dynamics
- Address issues of race, culture, class
- Craft framing and messaging components
- Be willing to slow the process down
- Monitor and evaluate progress and impact
Barriers to Effective Community Engagement

- Undervaluing community participation
- Competing community priorities
- Race and class related tensions
- Demographic shifts
- Inadequate resources and support
Institutional Structures for Community Engagement

**Governance Level**
- Appointment to decision making boards and commissions

**Consortia**
- Membership based group with options for decision making

**Advisory Groups**
- Provide guidance and advice to policymakers

**Task forces**
- Short term participation with opportunity to offer recommendations

**Focus Groups**
- One-time opportunity to provide input

**Town Hall Meetings**
- Information provided one time, sometimes an ability to offer group comments
MOVING UPSTREAM…

“WE ARE STILL STANDING ON THE BANK OF THE RIVER, RESCUING PEOPLE WHO ARE DROWNING. WE HAVE NOT GONE TO THE HEAD OF THE RIVER TO KEEP THEM FROM FALLING IN. THAT IS THE 21ST CENTURY TASK.”

GLORIA STEINEM
Policy impacts the economic, social, physical and service environments

**Health in All Policies:** Policies not traditionally thought of as health policies (transportation, agriculture, land use, education, economics) impact health and obesity rates

**Equity in All Policies:** All policies can produce either positive or negative impacts on low income communities and communities of color
Equitable Policies

- Equity is a criteria for inclusion and/or prioritization of policies
- Identify policies that are important to low-income communities, communities of color and other vulnerable populations specifically
- Target benefits to vulnerable populations
- Prioritize the provision of resources to areas that need it most
Policy & Environmental Changes

- Safety/violence prevention
- School wellness policies
- Land use/zoning
- Safe Routes to School
- Trails and safe parks
- Bike share programs
- Developing or updating neighborhood/general plans

- Grocery stores/supermarkets
- Corner store/bodega and restaurant initiatives
- Farmers’ markets & collaboratives with local farmers
- EBT access at farmers’ markets
The Road to Equitable Policy

How do we make it happen?

- Be intentional
- Be specific
- Be inclusive
- Remember it’s a marathon
Integrating Equity into Health Strategies

**Policy Strategy**

- Bike share program

**Equity Considerations**

- Is your strategy conceptualized to promote equity/reduce inequities? If not, how can you modify the planning process that incorporates equity?
- How will you deliberately focus on implementing this strategy in a way that promotes equity?
- How will your strategy promote meaningful and authentic community engagement?
- How will low-income communities and communities of color benefit from implementing this strategy? What could be unintended consequences?

**Equity Strategies**

- Engage community members in development and implementation
- Target specific places for bike stations
- Determine cost subsidy system
- Prioritize additional resources for implementation in underserved communities
- Incorporate a violence prevention approach
- Consider complementary strategies to improve built environment
- Incorporate a job/skills based program or service

**Equitable Outcome**

- Increase access to physical activity opportunities
- Connection to services and education and employment opportunities
- Strengthen local infrastructure
Advocacy

- Leadership Development
- Educate & Inform Policymakers
- Training
- Convene Stakeholders
- Create Model Programs
- Build Public Will
- Build Capacity for Civic Action
- Non-Partisan Research & Voter Education
- Advocate for an Issue
- Partner with Governments
- Public Dialogues
- Provide Technical Assistance to Policymakers
- Outreach to Social Media Networks
- Communicate via Websites, E-mail, Listservs
- Outreach to Media
- Regulatory Efforts
- Lobbying
- Influencing Elections
Equity in Action

- Market Creek Plaza
- 3AJC
- Urban Habitat Board & Commissions Leadership Institute
- Oglala Lakota Nation Sustainable Communities
Appalachian Alternative Agriculture of Jackson County

- 3A JC focuses on promoting and processing locally grown food in Eastern Kentucky.
- Built the Jackson County Regional Food Center—a processing center that includes a commercial kitchen, a mobile poultry processing unit, and a farmers’ market shelter.
- Provided jobs, brought nutritious foods to community, and increased food self-reliance in the county.
- Make their own product line—Old Time Recipe.
Urban Habitat BCLI

- Identifies, trains, places, and supports low-income people and people of color for priority boards and commissions in the Bay Area.
- “Seats First”
- “Just in time” mentoring
- Movement-based

To date, BCLI graduates have won 24 seats and some running for elected office.
Oglala Lakota Nation Sustainable Communities

- Developing regional plan to serve as blueprint for investment decisions to support sustainable development for Pine Ridge Reservation of South Dakota
- Coordinated planning process explored ways to integrate housing, land use, economic and workforce development, transportation, and infrastructure investments
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Beginning with what is valued by the People
Tools/Resources
Healthy communities are those in which residents have access to social interactions with neighbors, clean safe parks and recreation areas, services such as quality transportation options and local grocery stores with affordable nutritious food, local economic opportunities, and other amenities that promote community and individual wellbeing and prosperity. Engaging community members to have a participatory role in creating healthy environments is a powerful tool for generating sustainable change. This outline is designed to offer an opportunity for reflection on a common process for achieving authentic community engagement and participation. The foundations of participatory community change, which are represented below, are trusting relationships, shared vision, partnerships with public agencies, capacity, and policy action.

How to use this tool:
The items included in this outline are important components of an authentic and participatory community engagement process. This outline should be used to help assess the extent to which you are integrating community input and involvement into your project. Rate each item based on whether or not you included that step in the development and implementation of your initiative.

0 = no/never, 1 = yes, but not recently/need to revisit, 2 = yes/frequently

This tool is not designed to be prescriptive, but to serve as a guide. The exact process may look different depending on the specific policies being addressed and the conditions present in your community.

I. Build Trusting and Accountable Relationships with Community Leadership and Residents
   A. Conduct an environmental scan to identify areas in need of change, community assets, and potential opponents and allies
      i. An environmental scan is a strategic planning tool that can be utilized to assess internal and external conditions and data to inform the development of initiatives that are uniquely tailored to the needs of communities.
   B. Conduct SWOT analysis of each organization and of the coalition as a whole
      i. A SWOT analysis is a strategic planning process used to evaluate the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats associated with an organization or initiative.
      ii. To learn more about how to conduct an environmental scan and a SWOT analysis click here.
   C. Identify and invite leaders and organizations in communities of interest facing disparate impacts
   D. Identify community resources and strengths and assets of each person or organization
      i. Conduct a community assessment and power analysis to inform the development of a proactive, community-generated policy initiative.
   E. Use facilitators skilled in principles of equity
Tools

- Why Place and Race Matter Executive Summary & Report
- Maps of Tomorrow: Equity in a Changing Nation
- Equitable Development & Advocating for Change Web Toolkits
- Healthy Food, Healthy Communities report
- Community Engagement Checklist
- Community Mapping for Health Equity Advocacy
If we have the sense of a goose, we will stand by each other. We will go quicker and easier, because we are traveling on the thrust of each other.
Thank you!

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