

Equity and Inclusion Lens



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Mobile Guide

Learn how to use an Equity and Inclusion Lens to ensure that every aspect of work and interactions are equitable and inclusive.



What is an Equity and Inclusion Lens?

Note to Learners

We believe the nonprofit sector strengthens the fabric of our democracy and our communities by creating many public benefits. We believe that nonprofits have the ability to help our society to address inequities and to create innovative solutions to community issues.

As an organization meant to create public benefit, we recognize that our communities are diverse and so are the needs and aspirations of the people we serve. Incorporating an Equity and Inclusion Lens into how we plan and deliver programs and services and how we support nonprofit organizations, not only helps us remain relevant, meaningful and effective but ensures that we are doing so in a way that thoughtfully engages and includes individuals and communities who have been historically excluded.

What is an Equity and Inclusion Lens?

An Equity and Inclusion Lens is like a pair of glasses. It helps you see things from a new perspective and helps you be more effective in your everyday work by getting a clearer focus and a more complete view. The full inclusion and participation of community members and employees, in turn, contributes to a vibrant society where everyone benefits.



An Equity and Inclusion Lens can help to:

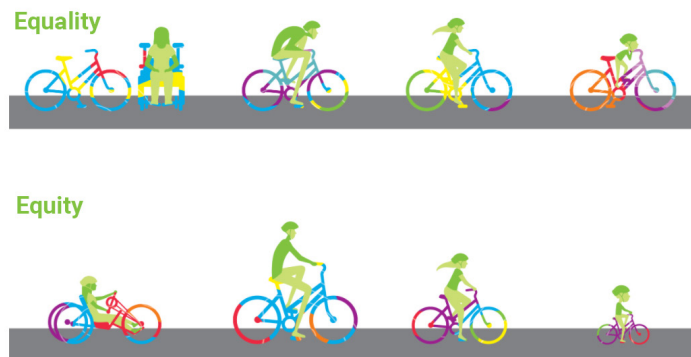
- Strengthen everyone’s awareness of and ability to incorporate difference.
- Create teams that are relevant to and representative of community.
- Create energizing and innovative work environments.
- Collectively address systemic barriers and inequities.

An Equity and Inclusion Lens is for everyone, particularly:

- Nonprofit leaders, staff, board and volunteers.
- Community partners, consultants, funders and businesses that support nonprofits.
- Government organizations that partner with nonprofits.

What is Equity?

Equity is the concept of treating everyone fairly by acknowledging everyone’s unique situation and addressing systemic barriers. The aim of equity is to ensure that everyone has access to equal results and benefits and overcome the obstacles to equity that are being maintained in workplace culture, policies, practices and service delivery.



The infographic above is based on a graphic available through the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (www.rwjf.org) as part of their Visualizing Health Equity: One Size Does Not Fit All #PromoteHealthEquity project

Terms

Diversity

A wide range of qualities and attributes within a person, group, or community. When we celebrate diversity, communities and workplaces become richer, drawing upon the variety of experiences, perspectives, and skills that people can contribute.

Assumptions

Something we presuppose or take for granted without questioning it. We accept these beliefs to be true and use them to interpret the world around us.

Stereotypes

Making assumptions about an entire group of people. We generalize all people in a group to be the same, without considering individual differences. We often base stereotypes on misconceptions or incomplete information.

Bias

Showing prejudice in favor of or against a person or group compared with another, usually in a way considered to be unfair. We all have both conscious and unconscious biases that shade our thinking and interactions.

Inclusion

Acknowledging and valuing people's differences so as to enrich or shift social planning, decision making, and quality of life for everyone. In an inclusive society, we all have a sense of belonging, acceptance, and recognition as valued and contributing members of society.

Privilege

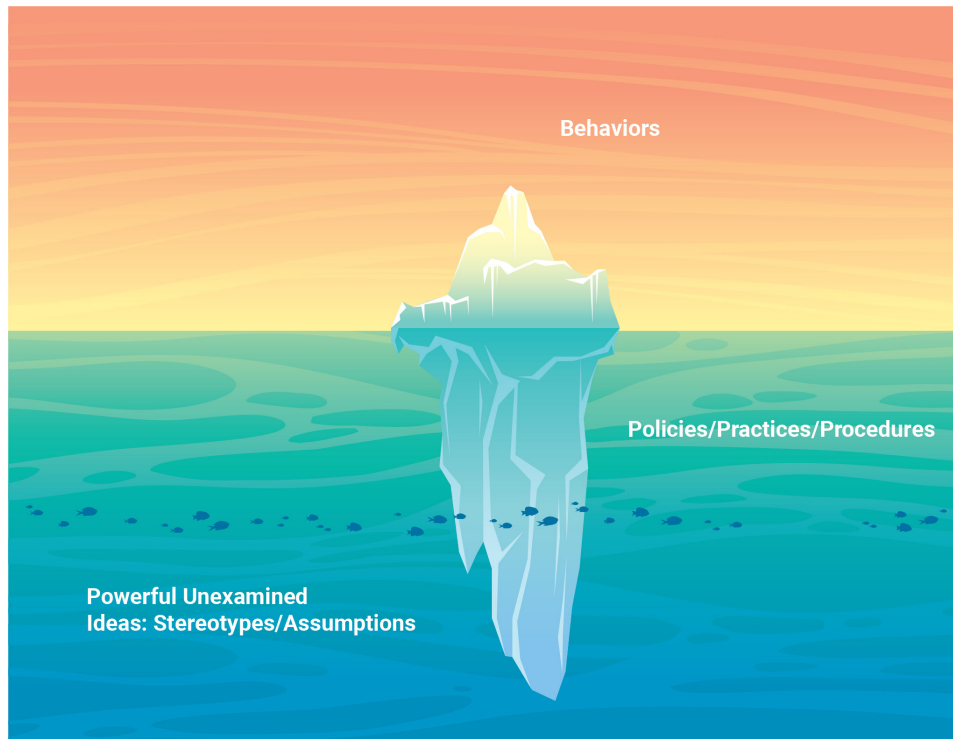
The experience of unearned freedoms, rights, benefits, advantages, access, and/or opportunities afforded to members of a particular dominant group in society or in a specific context.

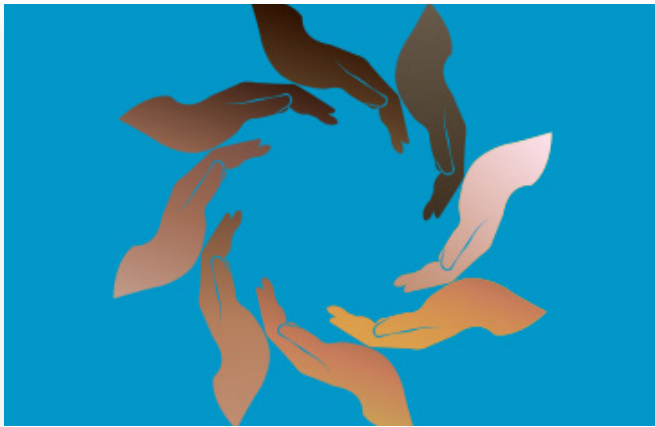
Change Agent

A person who assumes leadership by working with others to create and influence change in the organization or the wider community. This often grows out of the self-awareness of inequities or privileges we have experienced or seen. Action is taken individually or collectively to create conditions that enable everyone to have equal access to resources and benefits.

Systemic Barriers

When you see people treating each other unfairly, you may think that just by addressing the behavior the problem is addressed. However, making the problem about individuals' behavior alone does not address the context in which the behavior is operating. You need to look beyond the surface to see what else is going on, because like an iceberg, 90% of what is happening is under water and out of your view. That is, defined behavior expectations are critical to change but you need to look at the structural problem to identify built-in mechanisms that support current behaviors in order to create new paths (policies, processes, practices) that will sustain change in a system.





Steps Toward an Equity and Inclusion Lens



Steps Toward an Equity and Inclusion Lens

When you consider your own diversity, check your assumptions, ask about inclusion, and apply your insights to your work, you can create change. The end result is that you become a change agent and take action.

Step 1: Consider Your Diversity

Recognizing diversity within ourselves and others can help us understand how multiple factors influence the way you provide services, design policies and programs, or interact with staff and community members or stakeholders.

Step 2: Check Assumptions

When you question your own ideas and biases, you can open up to new ways of understanding. Keep in mind that each of us could identify with more than one group, and that individual personalities make each person unique.

Step 3: Ask About Inclusion

By always asking some intentional questions, you can thread equity and inclusion throughout your work.

Step 4: Apply to Your Work

To help us apply equity and inclusion to a specific area of work, you can ask some practical questions and learn from examples of how others have applied the lens.

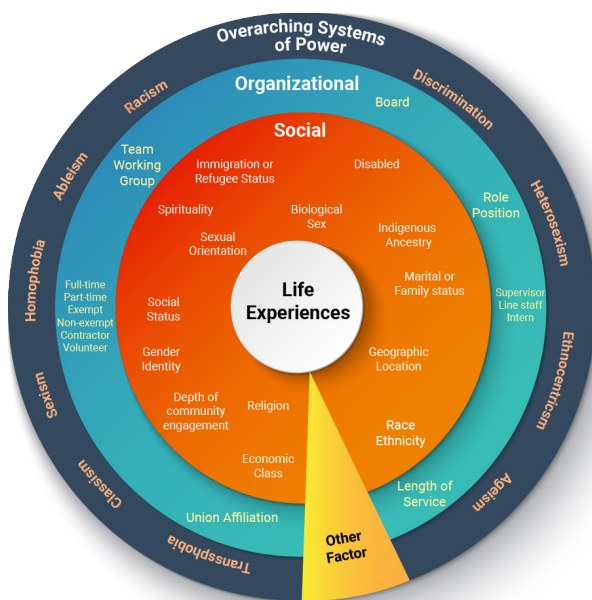
Step 5: Be a Change Agent – Take Action

When you become a change agent and take action, you commit to using the information you learn in this work. It is not a one-time action. Being a change agent is a lifelong learning process of asking questions so you can apply (and re-apply) insights to action.

Step 1: Consider Your Diversity

As a consequence of systemic barriers and inequities, we all have experienced exclusion in some areas of our life, but inclusion in others. Each of us has multiple factors at play in our lives. Who we are could contain a variety of life experiences, multiple social factors, and crossovers with many groups. It is this intersection or crossover of identities of who we are that affects how we experience the world around us.

When we reflect on our own experiences, we can ask to what extent does this relate to the degree to which we will experience inclusion or exclusion (privilege or marginalization) in a given context? Sometimes we experience both.



Life Experiences

Life experiences can be learned experience or interpreted stories that we affirm to be true or have knowledge of.

Social Factors

Factors that influence our life experiences: racial or ethnic identify, sexual orientation, ancestry, age, education, social class, gender identity, religion or spirituality, length of time in community, geographic location, place of origin, income, immigration status, marital or family status, language, and other factors.

Organizational Factors

Factors that might add a layer of how we experience our workplace: our position as a board member, leader, manager, supervisor, staff, or volunteer. This may include our occupation and profession, our lengths of service, whether we are full-time, part-time, on contract, or a volunteer.

Overarching Systems of Power

The “-isms” that indirectly and directly impact our life such as: racism, heterosexism, sexism, classism, ethnocentrism, transphobia, ageism, homophobia, ableism, and any other forms of discrimination that aim to maintain separation among group members.

Step 2: Check Assumptions

Considering a situation from the perspective of people who are or who have been excluded is a key step in ensuring equity and inclusion. It is an ongoing learning process for everyone.

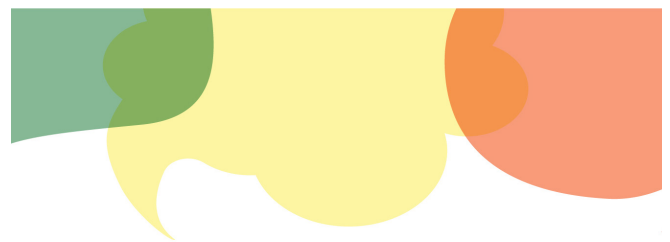
There are specific groups or identities who have been historically excluded in an ablest, white, male-dominated, heterosexual society that favors urbanism. It is important to remember that there is diversity within each of these groups. All groups are not at risk of exclusion in every context. You may identify other people who have been historically excluded in a given context or in the work you are doing. This list is not intended to be all-encompassing. The way a group of people choose to identify themselves can and will expand beyond the groups described below. Each of us could identify with more than one group. It is this intersection of who we are that affects how we experience our workplaces and the communities and geographic regions where we live.

- Native and Indigenous people
- People Living in Poverty
- People of Color
- People with Disabilities
- LGBT2SQIA+ people
Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender/Transsexual, Two Spirited, Queer/Questioning, Intersex, Asexual, + other forms of sexual expression and gender identity.
- Immigrants & Refugees
- Minority Religious Groups
- Older Adults
- Women
- Youth

Step 3: Ask About Inclusion

By always asking these questions, we can thread equity and inclusion in all the work we do and apply them to a given moment, decision, or to a larger planning process:

- Are the people most impacted and informed meaningfully included in discussions and decisions?
- What policies or practices contribute to the exclusion?
- Who is accountable for making changes that ensure inclusion?



Step 4: Apply to Your Work

When diversity, equity, and inclusion are reflected throughout the organization, we benefit from a diversity of insights and are better prepared to address the needs of the populations we serve. From strategic planning to managing human resources to direct service, equity and inclusion matters.

After asking yourself these questions about inclusion:

[Are the people most impacted and informed meaningfully included in discussions and decisions?](#)

[What policies or practices contribute to the exclusion?](#)

[Who is accountable for making changes that ensure inclusion?](#)

Apply your answers in the detailed equity and inclusion lens questions sets across these common work areas. Keep in mind, this includes both the internal and external work of your organization:

- Communications
- Engaging Community, Staff and Board
- Gathering Information and Research
- Leading and Supervising
- Monitoring and Evaluation
- Planning
- Policy Development
- Recruiting and Hiring
- Strategic Planning
- Training
- Working with People
- Public Policy

Step 5: Be a Change Agent – Take Action

It is not enough to say that you do not intend to be hurtful; it is the actual impact that matters regardless of intentions. You are an agent of change when you take the initiative to join with others in creating change in the organization and ensure that programs are equitable and inclusive of the wider community.

To be a change agent or take action you:

1. Listen
2. Be aware of your own advantages and disadvantages and how you can use them to make a difference
3. Check assumptions to unlearn biases and stereotypes
4. Stand beside and walk with others
5. Speak up against hurtful comments or insulting action, rather than wait for others to point it out
6. Take steps to make the workplace and services inclusive, safe, and welcoming
7. Help others to understand discrimination and exclusion
8. Avoid the trap of “knowing what is good” for someone else



Applying an Equity and Inclusion Lens to Your Work

Ask About Inclusion

Our communities are diverse and so are the needs and aspirations of the people we serve. Incorporating an Equity and Inclusion Lens into how we plan and deliver programs and services and how we support nonprofit organizations, not only helps us remain relevant, meaningful and effective, but ensures that we are doing so in a way that thoughtfully engages and includes individuals and communities who have been historically excluded.

An Equity Lens is something you use daily; it is essential to ensure we are asking ourselves the questions that will make us think about being equitable and inclusive in every aspect of our work and interactions.

- Are the people most impacted and informed meaningfully included in discussions and decisions?
- What policies or practices contribute to the exclusion?
- Who is accountable for making changes that ensure inclusion?

[Access downloadable worksheets in the course by clicking on the Menu, then on Resources](#)



Communications

When you apply equity and inclusion to all communications, you take action to ensure that historically excluded groups are heard and everyone is informed.

Engaging Community, Staff and Board

When you welcome the diversity of perspectives of staff and community, you take action to ensure everyone benefits.

Gathering Information and Research

When you consider diversity in conducting environmental scans, needs assessments or collecting data, you take action to be inclusive of everyone.

Leading and Supervising

When you become change agents for equity and inclusion in the way you lead, you take action to create a model that utilizes everyone's diverse talents and skills.

Monitoring and Evaluation

When you consider equity and inclusion in how you measure results, you take action to ensure that all benefit from the processes and outcomes.

Planning

When you consider the range of equity and inclusion issues, you take action to eliminate barriers so that everyone can benefit from services, projects, programs and events.

Policy Development

When you make policies that are equitable and accessible, you take action to ensure that everyone is included in the organizational community.

Recruiting and Hiring

When you integrate equity and inclusion in your hiring practices and policies for your staff and volunteers, you take action to increase diverse skills and perspectives in the workplace.

Strategic Planning

When you apply a vision of equity and inclusion to your planning, you take action to create an organization and services for everyone.

Training Staff and Volunteers

When you apply equity and inclusion to all stages of the on-boarding and training process, you take action to create an environment where everyone can contribute.

Working With People

When you treat people with respect, you are taking action to create a welcoming workplace and quality service.

Public Policy

When you engage in public policy and advocacy efforts, you take action to ensure that everyone is included and all voices are heard in the nonprofit sector..

Conclusion



In completing this Mobile Guide course you have a general understanding of what an equity and inclusion lens is, and how to apply it in your work. The related reference worksheets and question sets will help you put your learning into meaningful action.