

# EQUITY AND EMPOWERMENT LENS

## Resource Allocation Questions

### (Budget, Human Resources, Grants, Purchasing, Contracting)

Identifying and eliminating the root causes that lead to inequities is the heart of our Lens work. Providing support, technical assistance, and a toolkit to engage institutions in deep, reflection conversation, planning, and action to promote transformational change is the goal of this initiative. We know that all organizations follow a set of guiding practices to allocate resources, create policy, and make decisions. We also know that existing processes are often inequitable. For this reason, we have included two additional Lens versions that build upon the nine questions in the *Lens At A Glance* to more specifically address critical root cause areas in organizational structure and practice: resource allocation, and policy and decision-making.

Before starting this *Resource Allocation* version, please review the *Lens At A Glance*, paying particular attention to the section about barriers to success (Question #7). Identifying barriers and constraints is exceptionally important when assessing decisions in the areas of resource allocation, as many of the decisions are dependent upon external factors such as federal mandates, grant requirements, and personnel rules and regulations.

The four areas we focus on for this version are budget, funding (new or existing), purchasing, and human resources.

- **Budget:** How are we prioritizing funding? What are our true priorities and how are they reflected in the numbers?
- **Funding (new or existing):** Regarding grant funding, how are we using the grant money for addressing equity and racial justice? What are the plans for ongoing sustainability? What limitations exist around funding?
- **Purchasing:** Includes any expenditures on supplies, services (contracting), and other supportive resources for programming.
- **Human resources\*:** Includes hiring, demotions, firing, retention, talent development.

\* The area of human resources requires more in-depth analysis and application. This version includes just a few questions to provide an overview of the intersection between human resources and equity/racial justice. For more information, see the Employment Systems, Complaints Processes, and Management sections of Appendix 3, the Organizational Racial Equity Checklist.

## Questions

1. Consider all suppliers of goods and services that the organization purchases.
  - Does your budget process have supplier diversity goals? (e.g. racial and ethnic, gender, small/large business suppliers.)
  - What goals promote diversity outside of the organization in addition to internally?
  - How does the proposed action support Minority, Women, and Emerging Small Businesses (MWESB)?
    - By building capacity for MWESB contractors? Examples include: technical assistance, educative online materials, etc.
    - by tracking who the contractors currently are (especially in areas that don't require bids, and do not already have MWESB in their language)?
2. How does your budget prioritize programs and strategies that build community capacity, specifically in communities most affected by inequities?
3. Often programs and practices funded by a single source of funding are more easily eliminated during budget cuts. How are you developing multiple funding streams for programs that address equity and racial justice?
4. As part of the budget process, do documents and presentations clearly state a commitment to equity and racial justice, including any guiding principles and values?
5. In the creation of your budget, how are you engaging various levels of staff (paying particular attention to communities of color, immigrants, and refugees) in frequent, proactive, ways to identify yearly budget priorities?
6. How have you or how can you innovatively engage communities of color, immigrants, and refugees who are not staff in your budget process?
7. For specific budget proposals (Keleher, 2009):
  - Will the budget proposal reduce, limit, or eliminate programs that are vital to or disproportionately needed by, particular disadvantaged racial/ethnic communities?
  - Will the proposal increase, expand, or create programs that are vital to or disproportionately needed by particular disadvantaged racial/ ethnic communities?
  - Will there be adequate provisions to ensure success and fairness, including sufficient public participation by stakeholders in development, implementation, and evaluation?
  - What modifications in the proposal are needed to maximize racial justice and inclusion?
8. Regarding human resources (Lopes & Thomas, 2006):
  - What are your hiring practices? How do they incorporate multiple strategies?
  - How do job announcements/postings state the organization's desire for candidates from equity-seeking groups (paying particular attention to communities of color, immigrants, and refugees)?
  - How do job qualifications acknowledge the value of experiences in working with communities of color, immigrants, and refugees, knowledge of anti-racism/anti-oppression frameworks, the ability to work within racially diverse teams, and the capacity to work in languages other than English?

# EQUITY AND EMPOWERMENT LENS

## Policy and Decision-making Questions

Identifying and eliminating the root causes that lead to inequities is the heart of our Lens work. Our goal is to providing support, tactical assistance, and a toolkit to engage institutions in deep, reflective conversation, planning, and action to promote transformational change. We know that all organizations follow a set of guiding practices to allocate resources, create policy, and make decisions. We also know that existing processes are often inequitable. For this reason, we have included two additional Lens versions that build upon the nine questions in the *Lens At A Glance* to more specifically address critical root cause areas in organizational structure and practice: resource allocation, and policy and decision-making.

Policies and decisions within organizations can be spoken or unspoken, formal or informal. We must understand the impact of policies on all stakeholders, and take measures to enhance positive and decrease negative outcomes that occur as a result. **Before starting this *Policy and Decision-making Version*, please review the *Lens At A Glance*, paying particular attention to the section about barriers to success (Question #7).** Identifying barriers and constraints is essential when assessing decisions in the areas of resource allocation, as many are dependent on external factors such as federal mandates, grant requirements, and personnel rules and regulations.

## Questions

1. Who does the policy or decision benefit? Community members? The organization? Both?
  - If the answer is one or the other, how can your organization incorporate the needs of both?
2. What forces are restraining your decision or policy? What are your supportive or driving forces?
  - Specifically, what community support exists for or in opposition to the proposal? Why? (City of Seattle, Racial and Social Justice Initiative, Budget Policy Filter)

3. How does your organization use data that reports specifically on inequities?
  - Pay particular attention to data on the experiences and outcomes for communities of color, immigrants, and refugees.
4. How does the policy or decision explicitly acknowledge the value of equity and racial justice to the organization?
5. How are you integrating diverse perspectives, even when you do not agree with them?
6. How does the policy/decision perpetuate or help to dismantle historical, legal, or political oppressions set in the past?
  - General examples of oppression include exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and violence (See Concept Paper on *Hierarchy and Root Causes*).
  - Specific examples include policies that perpetuate redlining, exclusion of native voice in land use decisions, impacts of gentrification, inequitable homeownership and rental laws, exclusion of communities most affected by inequities in decision-making, etc.
7. How does the policy or decision anticipate and address influence or differential power within the organization? (Lopes and Thomas, p.243)
  - For example, performance reviews could include an appraisal of a manager's or supervisor's ability to provide employees from diverse backgrounds with ongoing support and necessary resources to perform well in their jobs, in addition to being monitored for basic performance.

# MOVING INTO ACTION GUIDE

## CREATING AN ACTION PLAN

The Equity & Empowerment Lens (E & E Lens) is intended to be a catalyst for organizational change to promote equity and racial justice within multiple sectors. An action-oriented mindset, accompanied by a deep, reflective approach is essential to create sustainable and equitable policies, procedures, and practices within your organization. While this document contains resources and helpful tips to support development of an action plan that reflects your analysis and reflection, remember that the collective passion of your team's commitment to lasting change is the most powerful tool to maximize during this phase. Actions toward equity can range from subtle and internal (e.g. utilizing racial justice definition in organizational documents) to visible and public (e.g. organizational policy to prioritize contracts with minority-owned businesses). Whether subtle or visible, every step is important and should be recognized as part of the process.

At its core, the Lens guides the participant to:

- ✓ **Assess** your current organizational capacity for equity work .
- ✓ **Describe** current direction and strategies.
- ✓ **Identify** inequities and injustices in the current issue.

You are here

- ➔ **Reflect upon and understand** your strengths and challenges.
- ➔ **Enhance what is leading** to equity and empowerment.
- ➔ **Eliminate strategies** and root causes leading to inequities and injustices.
- ☐ **Celebrate** successes and improvements.

### Resources needed for this section:

- Copy of your answers from any and all of the lenses; Appendix 1 on page 108: Menu of Outcomes for Advocacy and Policy Work;
- Appendix 3 on page 113: Organizational Checklist for Racial Justice;
- Appendix 4 on page 118: Empowerment Assessment Tool; and
- Any Concept Papers that might support your recommendations.

A high quality action plan requires organizations to dedicate time and space to thoroughly review comments of the action plan and will help you integrate intentionally the perspectives of multiple staff members'. These two steps develop accurate timelines, identify appropriate leads, and select meaningful

evaluative measures. Additionally, we discovered during our pilot with the Health Department that it was vital to have a technical expert on equity and/or racial justice present available during these conversations to provide research, information, and a focus on strategies to eliminate the root causes of inequities.

Most importantly, remember that transformational equity work calls for a new way of organizational being; one that takes a step back to examine root causes, looks closely to recognize intersectionality between elements of the issue, and seeks to embrace multiple perspectives. Once you have considered each of these things, you have set the stage for an effective and transformative action planning session. The following steps will guide you further:

### Step 1:

- **Create the space** where you (and your team) can quietly and thoroughly reflect and discuss your Lens application. Whether at a particular meeting, or in between meetings, encourage moments of silent reflection and stillness, providing space for the surfacing of images and feelings, both positive and challenging in nature. Engaging emotions taps into unique reservoirs of creativity and resolve. Case Clinic models that utilize these principles have been effective methods for meaningful and successful group analyses (Presencing Institute).
- **Review the answers** in your *Organizational Readiness Summary*, Lens assessment(s), and any other data relevant this work.

### Step 2:

- Based on what you have reviewed, **brainstorm a list of potential actions** that build upon existing strengths and/or mitigate challenges. To assist your process:
  - Think about root causes related to the issue, examine the challenges and barriers that you face, and highlight specific strengths you bring to the work.
    - Be sure to focus on where and how institutional racism and personal biases manifest in order to identify racial injustices that need addressing.
  - Renew your responses to the *Organizational Readiness Summary*. If you scored mostly 1's and 2's, look at strategies that focus on Shifting Social Norms (Outcome Area 1) and Strengthened Organizational Capacity (Outcome Area 2). If you are further along, and answered mostly 3's and 4's, look to institutionalize and begin shifting policies, considering strategies that focus on Improving Policy (Outcome Area 5).
  - Use the Appendices 1, 3, or 4 (Menu of Outcomes for Advocacy & Policy Work, Organizational Checklist Racial Justice or the Empowerment Assessment Tool).

- Include a wide range of strategies that speak to the internal (e.g. human resources, strategic planning) and external (e.g. community partnership building and service provision changes).

### Step 3:

- **Organize the brainstormed list** of recommendations or strategies along the six outcome areas. (See Concept Paper on *Six Outcome Areas for Advocacy & Policy Work* and refer to Appendix 1). A filled-out list might have two to three strategies or recommendations under each outcome area.
  - Example: Developing and implementing an organization wide training on racial justice would be under the **Strengthened Organizational Capacity** outcome area.
- **Select one action (strategy)** that has political will behind it, addresses root causes, and can have far reaching benefits. The remaining strategies can be done over time.

### Now you're ready to complete your action plan!

### Step 4:

- **Review the Sample Action Plan** to familiarize yourself with the tool.
  - Notice how each outcome area intersects to support the main action and outcome area you selected.
  - As you begin thinking about the prioritized strategy for your action plan, imagine that it is like one root of the tree, and if you implement only that action without other supportive roots, the tree will fall.
  - Create a draft list of the additional outcome areas that will provide supportive roots to your selected strategy, and find a supporting action or two under each that will maximize the impact of your main action. Use the Sample Action Plan examples as a guide:
    - **Main Action:** Equity Lens trainings for all departmental management and staff (under the outcome area Strengthened Organizational Capacity).
    - **Supporting Actions:**
      - Equity and empowerment message development (under the outcome area Shift in Social Norms).
      - Revision of HR policy to include mandatory Equity Lens training (under the outcome area Improved Policy)
      - Partnership development with leaders, staff, union (under outcome area Strengthened Alliances)



### Step 5:

- **Complete every column of the Moving into Action Plan** with your specific action in mind.
  - For every column, **reflect upon the intersectionality** between the action you have chosen and the six outcome areas; you will see overlap and alignment. Opportunities for innovative practice often emerge from this synchrony.
  - In the economic and environmental justice column, consider the following: contracting equity, supplier diversity, prioritizing Minority Women Emerging Small Business (MWESB), environmental impact. (See Appendix 2, page 112 on the principles of Environmental Justice)
  - In the accountability and institutionalization row consider how to sustain the recommendation or action beyond the presence of any one leader, staff member, or employee. (See upcoming Evaluation Summary for further information)
    - How can this work become part of the institutional policies, practices, planning methods, and programs of your organization?
    - How can you improve the sharing and celebrating of accomplishments in the areas highlighted by the E&E Lens?

**Congratulations!** You have completed your first Equity & Empowerment Lens Action Plan to build equity and racial justice within your organization. Now you are ready to **take action** and **communicate your results to leadership, staff and constituents.**