Introduction

Equality — The assumption is that **everyone benefits from the same supports**. This is equal treatment.

Equity — **Everyone gets the supports they need** (this is the concept of "affirmative action"), thus producing equity.

Justice — All 3 can see the game without supports or accommodations because **the cause(s) of the inequity was addressed**. The systemic barrier has been removed.
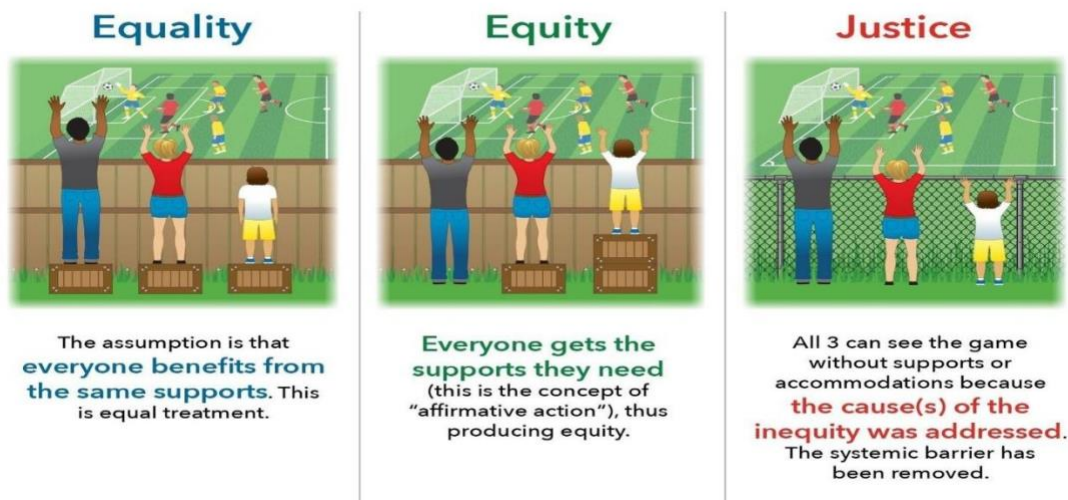
A healthy, equitable community is one that offers complete social, physical and mental well-being at all stages of life and strives for justice and fairness in meeting the needs for all residents. The Center for Community and Economic Development is dedicated to co-creating sustainable prosperity and equitable economies with communities. To that end, we have developed a set of self-assessment or self-evaluation tools that help individuals know and rate their:

- Individual skills and competencies needed to enact equitable community and economic development
- Organizational norms/practices, culture, and structure that reinforce equitable community and economic development
- Community practices that promote equity

These tools help to identify the disparities and inequities that exist within our own practice, our organizations, and our communities, and provide a framework for developing strategies to address them.

The self-assessments are designed for utilization by professionals in the fields of economic and community development which includes health and human service professionals, community organizations, policymakers, and other stakeholders to collect data on key indicators of equity. The tools provide a systematic and structured technique for assessing equity and can help to detect patterns and trends that may not be immediately apparent.

The equitable community and economic assessment tool can be used to:

Identify disparities and inequities in the community: The tool can help to identify areas of the community where certain groups may be experiencing higher levels of disadvantage or marginalization.

Inform policy and program development: The data collected through the tool can be used to inform the development of policies and programs that are intended to address the identified disparities and inequities.

Engage the community: The tool can be used to engage community members in conversations regarding equity, and to involve them in the development and implementation of policies and programs that are designed to address equity issues.

Monitor progress: The tool can be used to track progress over time, and to assess the effectiveness of policies and programs that have been executed to address equity issues.

The community equity assessment tool serves as a significant instrument for communities that are committed to promoting equity and addressing disparities and inequities. By using this tool, communities can develop more targeted and effective strategies for advancing equity and can work towards building a just and equitable society.

Importance of equity in community development

Equity is a fundamental component of community and economic development, as it promotes fairness and justice, and helps to ensure that everyone has an equal opportunity to thrive and succeed. Below are some reasons why equity is important in community development:

Promotes social inclusion: Equity ensures that every individual in the community has access to the resources and opportunities necessary to fully participate in society, thus helping to build a more inclusive community in which everyone feels valued and supported.

Reduces disparities: Equity helps to address the disparities and inequities that exist within communities. By promoting fairness and justice, equity can help reduce disparities in areas such as education, employment, health, and housing.

Improves community well-being: Equity promotes community well-being by ensuring that everyone has access to the resources and services necessary for a healthy and fulfilling life, such as quality healthcare, education, and affordable housing.

Increases economic growth: Equity can also contribute to economic growth by creating a more inclusive and diverse workforce, which can lead to increased innovation and productivity, ultimately yielding benefits for the entire community.

Build trust and social cohesion: Equity can help to build trust and social cohesion within the community. Ensuring fairness and justice for all individuals fosters a sense of trust and inclusivity, ultimately encouraging a collective vision for the future.

Equity is an essential component in the establishment of a healthy, robust, dynamic, and inclusive community. It promotes the principles of fairness, justice, and social integration, while facilitating the assurance that each individual possesses the chance to realize their maximum potential. By prioritizing equity in both community and economic development, it is possible to construct a society characterized by greater equality and fairness for all members.

How to Use the Tools

The three equity assessment tools are straightforward and easy to use. Each has a detailed version and a concise summary version. We recommend using the detailed version for a comprehensive assessment, whereas the summary version can be used for a quick, snapshot assessment.

The rating scales for each tool have been designed to show journeys or pathways to greater equity. Scores of 1 or 2 indicate where work is needed, while scores of 3 and 4 indicate that progress has been made towards equity, community, and economic development.

Individual Assessment

A community/economic development specialist practicing equity should possess a range of competencies to effectively promote and advance equity in their work.

The detailed Individual Assessment contains 35 competency or skill statements to rate individual proficiency along the following continuum:

1 - **Being Developed**: you demonstrate a **minimal use** of the competency and are currently developing it.

2 - **Basic:** you demonstrate **limited use** of a competency and require additional training to apply without assistance or frequent supervision
3 - **Intermediate**: you demonstrate a **working or functional** command of the competency which enables it to be exercised effectively
4 - **Advanced**: you demonstrate **in-depth** proficiency level; you can assist, consult or lead others in the application of the competency

Improving low-rated skills involves a continuous effort to develop and enhance your knowledge, skills, and abilities. Here are some steps you can take to improve your competencies:

1. Set specific goals for yourself to develop new skills or enhance existing ones.
2. Ask for feedback from colleagues, supervisors, or mentors.
3. Seek out opportunities to learn from people who have the skills and knowledge you want to develop.
4. As regular practice is essential to improving your competencies, look for opportunities to apply what you have learned in your work or personal life.
5. Reflect on your progress to see what experiences worked well and what you can improve on.
6. Keep up-to-date with equity practices in your field by reading publications, attending conferences, networking with peers and the like.

Organizational Assessment

In equitable organizations:

- Mission, values, operations, and services reflect the contributions and needs of the wide diversity of cultural and social identity groups.
- Leaders and members act on the organizational commitment to eradicate all forms of oppression within the organization.
- Members across all identity groups are full participants in decision-making.
- The organization actively works in larger communities (regional, national, global) to eliminate all forms of oppression and to create multicultural organizations.

Source:https://friendsnrc.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Creating-Equitable-Inclusive Organizations.pdf

The detailed Organizational Assessment contains 7 categories and 70 statements to rate organizational proficiency along the following continuum:

1. **Haven't started** work in this area yet
2. **Plans exists to use** in planning and implementation
3. **This is in place**, and we have evidence of its use
4. **This is part of our routine**, and we model it for others

Multiple individual ratings can be aggregated and averaged to understand a collective perception of organizational equity.

Improving organizational norms/practices, culture, and structure can be a complex and ongoing process. Here are some steps that can be taken to improve these areas:

1. Assess the current state by conducting surveys, interviews, or focus groups with employees.
2. Developing a vision for the desired state of the organization's norms/practices, culture, and structure.
3. Communicate the desired state to all employees and stakeholders to gain buy-in and support.
4. Develop a plan that outlines the specific actions needed to achieve the desired state.
5. Implement the plan and monitor progress regularly. Adjust the plan as needed based on feedback and results.
6. Reinforce desired behaviors by recognizing and rewarding employees who demonstrate them.
7. Evaluate the results of the efforts to improve organizational norms/practices, culture, and structure.

Remember, improving organizational norms/practices, culture, and structure is a long-term process that requires ongoing commitment and effort. It is important to involve employees at all levels in the process and to maintain open communication throughout the process.

Community Assessment

A community will be equitable when all people, – regardless of their appearance, who they know or who they love, what language they speak, what they believe, whatever their level of means or ability, when or where they were born, where they live, where they go to school or why or how long they've called this place home – have the opportunity, resources and tools needed to achieve their potential, to lead healthy and fulfilling lives with rewarding work, and to access, experience, and participate in all the community has to offer while ensuring others – now and in future generations – can do the same.

Source: https://makecommunities.com/defining-an-equitable-community/Appendix

The detailed Community Assessment contains 13 categories and 64 statements to rate community equity along the following continuum:

1. **Not a regular** community practice
2. **Efforts are underway to increase** this community practice
3. **This community practice is in place**, and we have evidence of its use
4. **This is** our community practice, and **we model** it for others

Multiple individual ratings can be aggregated and averaged to gain a collective perception of organizational equity.

Promoting equity within a community involves creating an environment that is inclusive, supportive, and fair to all members. Here are some community practices that can promote equity:

1. Foster dialogue and understanding
2. Provide education and training
3. Advocate for policies and practices that promote equity
4. Support underrepresented groups
5. Engage in community-led initiatives
6. Collaborate with community partners