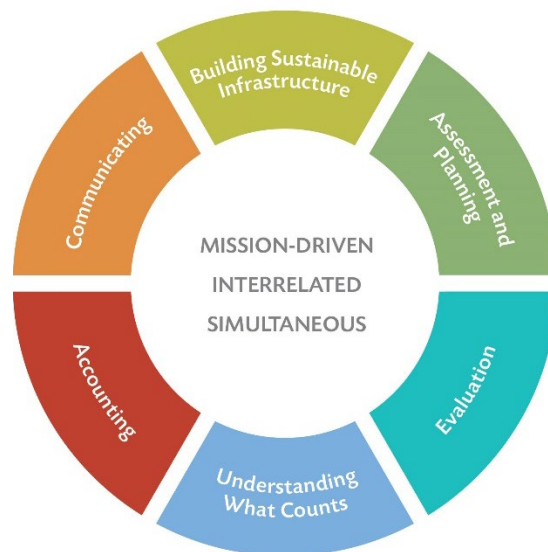




Incorporating Equity into All Aspects of Community Benefit





Addressing the complexities of health inequities is beyond the scope of any one organization or entity. To make a difference, we must work with community members whose voices have not been heard and who experience disparities. **This resource provides a summary of ways to incorporate equity into each component of the Community Benefit Framework.**

Equity is a central tenet of community benefit – with the guiding principles of human dignity, common good, and preferential option for the poor. Always ask: **Who's benefiting? Who's burdened? Who's missing? Who's deciding?**

Building a Sustainable Infrastructure

Establish or Renew Commitment and Build Basic Structures

- Establish a commitment to equity in critical documents, including mission and values statements, strategic and organizational plans, and policies.
- Work toward building diversity among community benefit staff, consultants, and advisory bodies.
- Participate in coalitions with community organizations working with persons who experience disparities and discrimination.
- Allocate resources to addressing the social determinants of health and disparities.
- In addition to budgeting for community benefit programs, another way to fund community health improvement and reduce disparities is to use the assets of the organization to support community investment. Health care organizations have an array of assets that can be harnessed to support community investment and that can have a significant impact on areas that have suffered from redlining and disinvestment because of past racist policies. For more information, visit the CHA website at <https://www.chausa.org/communitybenefit/social-determinants-of-health/cha-resources> and see the resource “Investing in Community Health.”

Community Engagement

- Work with community groups and members to understand the history of discrimination and structural racism in the community.
- Assess current partnerships for diversity and whether they include cross-sector organizations and persons who experience disparities and discrimination.
- Assess and address any barriers to community engagement, such as past negative experiences with the organization and other trust issues.
- Hold meetings and conduct activities at times and places convenient to the community and provide transportation and childcare if needed.

Partnerships

- Partnerships and coalitions can help organizations amplify the often-unheard voices of populations most directly affected by health inequities.
 - Engage partners from multiple fields and sectors that have a role in advancing health equity.
 - Include partners working with population groups experiencing health inequities. Establish mechanisms to ensure new voices and perspectives are heard.
 - Develop a common language among partners from different sectors and backgrounds.
 - Acknowledge and manage turf issues.
 - Recognize and address the power dynamics in a partnership.

Assessment and Planning

Assessment

- Gather data using culturally appropriate tools and methodologies that consider factors such as the population's language needs, literacy levels and trust of institutions.
- Collect and analyze data on health outcomes, risk behaviors, and other factors impacting health by income, disability status, geography, and race and ethnicity.
- Involve community members in collecting and analyzing assessment information.
- Make assessment findings available to community members and groups who experience disparities and request their feedback. Make sure to report back on actions taken and outcomes.

Planning

- Build on community strengths and assets and value community expertise.
- Look at your existing programs: Are they addressing racial and ethnic disparities identified in the community?
- Develop implementation strategies collaboratively with community members who experience disparities and get feedback from them to ensure services meet their stated needs.
- Consider factors that contribute to diverse populations' higher health risks and poorer outcomes and revise implementation strategies if community demographics and circumstances change dramatically prior to the next assessment planning cycle.
- Without an intentional focus on health equity in the strategy development process, strategies may unintentionally widen health inequities. Well-designed strategies can include supportive activities to address barriers or unintended consequences underserved populations may face during implementation and to help ensure maximum impacts across communities experiencing health inequities. Consider these ideas to enhance strategy development efforts:
 - **Balance community input and the best available evidence.** Build in community ownership at the very beginning of this process to increase the effectiveness and sustainability of strategies.
 - **Establish a process to ensure strategies are linked to identified inequities.** Ensure strategies are aligned with desired outcomes by writing goals that incorporate identified inequities.
 - **Select a comprehensive set of strategies.** Consider selecting a comprehensive set of strategies that work together, as one strategy in isolation has limited reach and impact.
 - **Account for the diversity within the community.** Understand the diversity within our community (e.g., age, disability status, geographic area, race and ethnicity, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status). Subpopulations may have different needs that should be considered and accounted for in strategy selection, design and implementation.

Program Implementation

- Focus the implementation strategy on health disparities in the community and ensure that programs and activities address health inequities.
- Collaborate with diverse community organizations to identify and address issues that might prevent programs from achieving desired impacts.
- Maximize the use of community health workers in assessment, planning, implementation, and evaluation.
- Use advocacy to address laws and regulations that enable structural racism in the community.

Evaluation

- Engage stakeholders reflecting the diversity of the community in evaluation planning. Ensure that all stakeholder voices are heard when making judgments on how to improve programs or continue offering them.
- Incorporate health equity into evaluation goals, questions, and design.
- Gather data using culturally appropriate tools and methodologies that consider factors such as the population's language needs and literacy levels.
- Look at the impact of interventions across different population groups.

What Counts and Accounting

- In community benefit reporting, call out programs that address disparities and promote equity.
- Reach out to racial and ethnic minority members with information about financial assistance policies.
- Align community benefit budget decisions with equity goals.
- As part of the organization's investment strategy, include investments in community organizations that will improve social determinants of health and advance equity.

Communicating

- Use language that is accessible and meaningful to your audience, avoid jargon, and tailor communications to different populations.
- Look beyond traditional or commonly used methods of delivering content. For example, for younger populations, social media can be an effective communication tool.
- Work with trusted messengers in the community, such as places of worship or schools to communicate content.
- Emphasize the value of ensuring that everyone has an equal opportunity for health care and that reducing disparities contributes to the common good and benefits all.