

Evanston Equity Framework

Central to the City of Evanston’s goal of becoming the most livable city in the United States is the commitment to achieve equity in the City’s operations for the benefit of all residents, city staff, and elected officials, especially for those historically underserved by the city and presently disempowered from civic participation by the structures and practices of racism, classism, sexism, ableism, ageism, ethnocentrism, chauvinism, environmental discrimination, heterosexism, and other forms of inequity.

The Evanston Equity Framework is a tool to improve planning, decision-making, and resource allocation to create more racially equitable policies and program. The Equity Framework applies principles, goals, and processes to address inequity at all levels of municipal governance. Institutionalizing use of a racial equity tool provides the opportunity to develop thoughtful, realistic strategies and timelines to advance racial equity. This Equity Framework supports and implements the Evanston City Council’s goal to “Ensure Equity in All City Operations.” [confirm 2019-21 Council goals]

The goals of the Evanston Equity Framework:

- A City of Evanston workforce that reflects the community it serves.
- Commitment to equity in decision-making, with transparency and collaboration.
- Equitable delivery of services, fair and just distribution of resources and opportunities.
- Inclusive and meaningful community outreach and engagement in planning, decision-making, and evaluation.
- Accountability for measurable outcomes.

The Equity Framework strives to understand and assess the impact of the City’s policies, programs, and operations by applying essential inquiries:

- **Stakeholder engagement:** Who is affected by the policy, program, practice, or decision and how can they be involved?
- **Systems and data analysis:** What has caused or contributed to the inequity and what does the data say?
- **Developing equitable solutions:** What are the desired results and outcomes? What are the best strategies for advancing racial equity or mitigating unintended consequences?
- **Accountability and communication:** How will we ensure accountability, communicate, and evaluate results?

Equity impact assessment

Stakeholder engagement

Ask the following questions to ensure that your outreach and engagement are inclusive:

1. Are all racial and ethnic groups that are affected by the policy, practice, or decision at the table?
2. How will the proposed policy, practice, or decision affect each group?
3. Who is most adversely affected by the issue being addressed?
4. How will the proposed policy, practice, or decision be perceived by each group?
5. Who faces racial barriers, bias, or exclusion, related to this issue?
6. How are people of different racial groups differently situated or affected by this issue?
7. Will the proposal have impacts in specific geographic areas (neighborhoods, areas, or regions)? What are the racial demographics of those living in the area?
8. Ideally, what would the racial composition of the leadership look like?
9. In what ways are stakeholders most affected by the issue already involved in addressing it? How can these efforts be supported and expanded?
10. What are the ways stakeholders adversely affected by the issue can be further engaged?
11. How can diverse community and leaders be engaged from the outset so they have a real opportunity to shape the solutions and strategies?
12. How can community engagement be inclusive, representative, and authentic?
13. How will stakeholders exercise real leadership and power?
14. Who can be allies and supporters, and how can they be engaged?
15. Who needs to be recruited or invited to join the effort to address the issue? Who will approach them? How? When? What will they be asked to do to get involved?
16. Who are the most affected community members who are concerned with or have experience related to this proposal? How have these community members been involved in the development of this proposal?
17. What has the public engagement revealed about the burdens or benefits for different groups?
18. What has the engagement process revealed about the factors that produce or perpetuate racial inequity related to this proposal?

Systems and data analysis

Use the questions below to guide you through a systems analysis to address key elements of systemic racialization, including history, culture, interconnected institutions and policies and racial ideologies:

1. What institutions are involved?
2. What factors produce or perpetuate racial inequity related to this issue?

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3. What social conditions or determinants contribute to the problem, such as poverty, housing segregation, education?
4. What other compounding dynamics are involved (such as income or gender inequities)?
5. What cultural norms, myths, or popular ideas justify or maintain the problem?
6. Does the policy, practice or decision worsen or ignore existing disparities?
7. Based on the above responses, what revisions are needed in the policy, practice, or decision?
8. What are the key causes, contributing factors, and cumulative impacts?
9. What can be learned from prior efforts to solve the problem or change the system?
10. What solutions or interventions could eliminate the inequities?
11. What strategies could result in systemic change and advance equitable solutions?
12. What does population level data say about existing racial inequities? What does it say about root causes or factors influencing racial inequities?
13. What performance level data is available for the proposal? This should include data associated with existing programs or policies.
14. Are there data gaps? What additional data would be helpful in analyzing the proposal? If so, how to obtain better data?

Developing equitable solutions

The following questions can help ensure that targeted strategies will address inequity:

[note: need to edit these to third person]

1. What racial disparities do you want to eliminate, reduce, or prevent?
2. What groups most adversely affected by the current problem do you want to benefit?
3. How can those most adversely affected by the issue be involved in solving it?
4. Is there a specific change in policy that could help produce more equitable outcomes?
5. What are potential unintended consequences? What are ways to minimize any negative impacts that may result? What opportunities exist for increasing racial equity?
6. How will the proposed solution address root causes and advance systemic change?
7. What positive principles or shared values are reflected in the proposed reform?
8. Does the proposal have clear goals, plans, and timetables for implementation, with sufficient funding, staffing, public reporting, accountability, and evaluation?
9. How will the proposal increase or decrease racial equity?
10. Are there complementary strategies that can be implemented? What are ways in which existing partnerships could be strengthened to maximize impact in the community? How can stakeholders be engaged for long-term positive change?

Examples of what this looks like in practice:

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1. A reduction of hours at a community center includes conversations with those who use the community center as well as staff who work there.
2. Before implementing a new penalty fee, people from the demographic most represented in those fined are surveyed to learn the best ways to minimize negative impacts.
3. [other examples?]

[Accountability and communication: How will we ensure accountability, communicate, and evaluate results?]

The Evanston Equity Framework can be used at multiple levels, and in fact, doing so, will increase its effectiveness.

- **City staff:** Use of the Equity Framework by staff provides the opportunity to integrate racial equity across the breadth – meaning all governmental functions – and depth, meaning across hierarchy. For example, policy analysts integrating racial equity into policy development and implementation, and budget analysts integrating racial equity into budget proposals at the earliest possible phase, increases the likelihood of impact. Employees know their jobs best and will be best equipped to integrate racial equity into practice and routine operations.
- **Elected officials:** Elected officials can employ the Equity Framework to set broad priorities, bringing consistency between values and practice. The integration of an Equity Framework can be reflected in the City’s Council’s goals and priorities, in direction to senior staff, and in the City Council’s inquiries, to put theory into action.
- **Community-based organizations:** Community-based organizations can use the Equity Framework to ensure accountability. In addition, community based organizations can use a similar or aligned racial equity tool within their own organizations to also advance racial equity.

Community Engagement

The City of Evanston values meaningful community engagement that contributes to the development and implementation of City programs, policies, and services decisions and provides the City Council and staff with the best possible information and community expertise to inform decision making. The City strives for community engagement in support of its Equity Framework and equity goals that is:

- Inclusive
- Relevant
- Consistent
- Coordinated
- Accountable

Community engagement must facilitate public input to decision making through effective and efficient communications, outreach, involvement, collaboration, and empowerment, and will include communities that have historically been excluded.

[This policy is supplemented by the Public Engagement Policy, which will guide the implementation of the policy and outlines the key administrative components of community engagement.]

Application:

Community engagement is an integral part of decision-making in all phases of City policies, programs, and services:

- Design
- Implementation
- Evaluation
- Changes, revisions, elimination
- Responding to a community-initiated request

This Policy applies to the City's policies, programs, and services that have an impact on the public, whether they are planned and delivered by City staff, or by external contractors or community volunteers.

Role of decision makers

City staff and elected officials must strive for the best understanding of the public's perspective on topics and issues, consider community input and expertise in decision making, and communicate to the public how their input was used and why decisions were made. Community engagement offers opportunities for City staff and elected officials to:

- Strengthen their role as community representatives through a better understanding of the public interests;

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- Identify areas where community engagement can and will make a meaningful difference;
- Promote and direct the public to community engagement opportunities;
- Carefully and thoughtfully consider public input as part of the decision-making process;
- Ensure community expectations for community engagement opportunities and influence are balanced with the awareness of resource capacity, fiscal realities, and other important context and considerations; and
- Clearly explain the rationale for decisions and how public input was used in decision-making.

This shall be achieved with the leadership of the Evanston City Council, with understanding enhanced by their participation in racial equity training(s) and consideration of other best practices in municipal community engagement.

Principles

The following principles will guide the City's community engagement:

- **Respectful:** The City shall support opportunities for civil discourse and promote public engagement among the City Council, City staff, stakeholders, and residents that is based in principles of respect.
- **Shared responsibility:** The City shall engage stakeholders in an authentic way that contributes to equitable and sustainable solutions to challenging issues.
- **Relationship-building and perspective-seeking:** The City's public engagement shall value all perspectives and community experiences recognize that respect and equitable processes foster trust and stronger relationships.
- **Proactive, timely, and transparent:** The City shall share clear, concise, and timely information to stakeholders and communicate how their input is considered and incorporated into decision-making.
- **Inclusive and accessible:** The City's public engagement shall include, but is not limited to, language accessibility, physical accessibility, and plain language.
- **Best practices:** The City shall embrace innovation and seek to co-create better engagement processes.

Public engagement spectrum

The public engagement spectrum assists with the selection of the level of participation that defines the public's role in any process:

- **Inform:** The City provides the public with balanced and objective information to assist in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.
- **Consult:** The City consults with the public for feedback and perspectives that are considered for analysis, alternatives, or decisions.
- **Involve:** The City works directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.

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- Collaborate: The City partners with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution
- Empower: The public is empowered to make decisions directly or on behalf of the City.

Supporting activities for community engagement

The City's public engagement activities will be supported by:

- Communications: Accessible, clear, and transparent communications underlies all four levels of the public engagement spectrum.
- Project management: Carrying out engagement within a project management process.
- Relationship Building: Developing and enhancing relationships through meaningful dialogue based on respect and trust.
- Capacity Building: Providing the knowledge and tools to engage by building capacity internally and within communities.
- Leadership Development: Building community and staff leadership by facilitating leadership development opportunities such as racial equity trainings and involvement in municipal government including commissions and working committees.

Tools and methods

The City can employ a variety of tools and methods to serve its public information and community engagement goals, including:

Blog posts	Public meetings
Briefings	Seminars
Coffee With a Cop	Summits
Committees	Social media
Community events	Surveys
Drum circles	Town hall meetings
Conference calls	Visioning exercises
Facebook live	Ward meetings
Focus groups	Webinars
Newsletters	Website, webpages
Presentations	Workshops
Public comment	

Definition and implications of Community Empowerment

Generally speaking, community empowerment refers to the process of enabling communities to increase control over their lives and in the context of a municipal civic engagement commitment and process it refers to enabling community members, in particularly historically excluded communities in municipal decision-making. "Enabling" implies that people cannot "be empowered" by others; they can only empower themselves by acquiring more of power's different forms. It assumes that people are their own assets, and the role of the external agent is to catalyze, facilitate or "accompany" the community in acquiring power.

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Community empowerment, therefore, is more than the involvement, participation or engagement of communities. It implies community ownership and action that explicitly aims at social and political change and requires leadership development such as racial equity training(s) and participation at various levels of municipal government including commissions and working committees. Community empowerment is a process of re-negotiating power in order to gain more control. It recognizes that if some people are going to be empowered, then others will be sharing their existing power and giving some of it up.

[INSERT DATA ANALYSIS]

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Definitions and concepts

The following definitions and concepts¹ will help guide the implementation of the Evanston Equity Framework.

Privileged/Dominant persons and groups are systematically advantaged by society not because of earned merit but solely on the basis of their personal/group identity. Privileges are benefits available to some but not others, and usually at the expense of others, based on dominant social group membership. ~~In our society, those who live with unearned privilege are able-bodied, adult, Christian, cis gendered, heterosexual, U.S born, English speaking, with citizenship, male, wealthy, and white skin colored.~~

Marginalized/Disadvantaged persons and groups are systematically disadvantaged by society not because of deserved mistreatment but solely on the basis of their personal/group identity. ~~In our society, those who live with undeserved mistreatment are black, brown, red, olive, and yellow skin colored, disabled, female, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, or asexual, poor, young or old, foreign born, without citizenship, non-English speaking, and non-Christian.~~

Social identity describes the totality of a person's individual make-up, including age, living/working environment, ethnicity, gender, physical or mental ability, race, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, and religion. Social location describes persons' existence in society as determined by their individual identities in relationship to others and society. Most everyone has some identities that entail unearned privilege and yet others that include undeserved disadvantage. For example, a poor, white male may be privileged in our society because of his gender and race but disadvantaged because of his economic status, whereas a wealthy black female might be privileged due to her class position but still unfairly disadvantaged and even disrespected, regardless of her professional achievements, solely because of her gender and race.

Diversity represents the various differences that exist among social identity groups and persons, including but not limited to ability or disability, age, class, gender and sexuality, living/working environment, marital status, physical appearance, race and ethnicity, and religion. ~~Absent an equity perspective, diversity and multicultural approaches most often end at the recognition and celebration of differences without also addressing the ways these differences are directly related to social group inequities.~~ "Diverse" and "multicultural" approaches can end simply at the recognition and celebration of these differences --- it is important to also address the ways these differences relate to inequity.

¹ For a more in-depth exploration, see *Readings For Diversity And Social Justice, 4th edition* (New York: Routledge, 2018), edited by Maurianne Adams, Warren J. Blumenfeld, D. Chase J. Catalano, Keri Dejong, Heather W. Hackman, Larissa E. Hopkins, Barbara Love, Madeline L. Peters, Davey Shlasko, and Ximena Zúñiga.

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Inequity is based in socially-constructed beliefs that differentiate and then rank personal and social identities in a hierarchy of value and importance. White racism, for example, is rooted in the unscientific and unverifiable belief that lighter skin-colored persons are of greater worth than darker skin-colored persons. At the same time, inequity is also the social practice of conferring unequal privilege, power, advantage, respect, and validity to persons and groups based upon their social location in that hierarchy. Those who are deemed disabled in our society, for example, face a host of practical challenges as they navigate systems, built environments, and attitudes that those deemed fully-abled do not. Inequities function at three overlapping levels of society: the interpersonal (micro), the institutional (meso), and the structural/systemic (macro). Finally, inequities are manifest through indirect and direct acts, including discrimination, stereotyping, microaggression, exclusion, disempowerment, marginalization, degradation, disrespect, violence, and more.

Equity is a goal for the full and equal fair participation of persons of all social identities in communities, institutions, and society structured for the benefit of everyone. Equity is also a process marked by inclusive access, democratic empowerment and participation, respectful engagement, and the socially fair and ecologically sustainable distribution of goods and services for all persons, groups, and places.

Intersectionality is a perspective that recognizes how multiple forms of inequity overlap to disadvantage the most marginalized social groups in society. For example, persons who are poor, black, and transgender will experience greater and more exponentially-harmful levels of discrimination and disempowerment than those who are wealthy, white, and cis-gender, heterosexual, and female. At the same time, an intersectional perspective rejects attempts to reduce all inequities into one primary form of discrimination, understanding that each form of inequity has unique causes, dynamics, and consequences. Not all forms of discrimination are tied to class status, for example, or to race, or to gender/orientation, or to ability. An intersectional approach therefore seeks to recognize the connections between inequities while not collapsing analyses of problems and proposals for equitable solutions.

An Equity Framework is designed to ensure the achievement of equity in decisions, policies, programs, and budgets. Since society is presently structured for the benefit of some and the disadvantage of others, inequities will continue to be perpetuated, including by individuals and institutions that don't understand themselves to be discriminatory, unless direct, explicit, and focused attention is given to achieving the goal of equity through equitable processes.

Ableism is an inequitable system of interpersonal, institutional, and structural beliefs and practices that benefit those deemed fully-abled and disadvantage those deemed dis-abled by society.

Ageism is an inequitable system of interpersonal, institutional, and structural beliefs and practices that benefit adults and disadvantage children, youth, and the elderly in society.

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Chauvinism in its nationalistic form is an inequitable system of interpersonal, institutional, and structural beliefs and practices that benefit those who are born in the United States, are U.S. citizens, and/or speak English and disadvantage **those who do not hold those identities**. ~~are not born in the United States, are not U.S. citizens, and/or do not speak English.~~

Classism is an inequitable system of interpersonal, institutional, and structural beliefs and practices that benefit those who are wealthy and disadvantage those who are poor in society.

Environmental Discrimination operates through an inequitable system of interpersonal, institutional, and structural beliefs and practices that environmentally benefit dominant groups (e.g., rich, white) and environmentally disadvantage marginalized groups (e.g., poor, black) in society.

Ethnocentrism is an inequitable system of interpersonal, institutional, and structural beliefs and practices that benefit European-American, Northern, and Christian cultures and disadvantage all other ethnic, regional, and a/religious cultures. **It considers the former cultures to be superior.**

Heterosexism is an inequitable system of interpersonal, institutional, and structural beliefs and practices that benefit those who are heterosexual and cisgender and disadvantage those who are **not heterosexual, for example**: lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, or asexual.

Racism is an inequitable system of interpersonal, institutional, and structural beliefs and practices that benefit those deemed white and disadvantage those deemed non-white by society.

Sexism is an inequitable system of interpersonal, institutional, and structural beliefs and practices that benefit those deemed male/masculine and disadvantage those deemed female/feminine by society.