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change

Simple rules. Small wins. Big changes.

ABLe Change Agent Field Guide

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Introduction

This Change Agent Field Guide is designed to help organizations, groups, and individuals adopt new habits for effective community problem solving. The guide includes the following sections:

- Engage Residents (page 3-13)
- Use Systemic Root Cause Analysis (page 14-26)
- Use Action Learning (page 27-37)
- Use Equity Impact Assessments (page 38-49)
- References (page 50)

Use the following self-assessment to identify which sections of this field guide are most relevant to your goals and needs using the following scale:

1: Not at all
2: Starting to Make Progress
3: Making Good Progress
4: Fully in Place

To what extent does your organization or group…	1	2	3	4	Why is this habit important?	See this section to learn more
Engage local residents to support your efforts (e.g., by providing input, selecting priorities, co-designing strategies, taking action roles, etc.)					Local residents have first-hand experience with community problems; their perspectives and action roles can help your efforts meet local needs and achieve better outcomes.	Engage Residents, see page 3-13
Ask questions to understand the systemic reasons why problems are happening before designing solutions.					Strategies that address system root causes are more effective at solving problems.	Use Systemic Root Cause Analysis, see page 14-26
Gather rapid feedback from diverse perspectives on the implementation and impact of your efforts to promote continuous improvement.					Rapid feedback cycles helps stakeholders quickly develop and adapt their efforts until they discover the solution that works in their community.	Use Action Learning, see page 27-37
Ask questions during planning and decision-making processes to ensure your efforts are contributing to equity rather than unintentionally contributing to local inequities.					Many routine policies and decisions can unintentionally disadvantage certain groups in the community, and require intentional consideration to ensure they are designed to promote equity.	Use an Equity Impact Assessment, see page 38-49

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Habit 1: Engage Residents

How could you engage local youth and adult residents in new ways to support your efforts?

Residents could help you with understanding local community issues, defining, and implementing solutions, and learning for continuous improvement.

This pocket guide includes tips and resources to help you explore these engagement opportunities and create a culture of resident engagement within your organization or group.

Why engage residents?

Local residents have first-hand experience living and dealing with the problems you're trying to tackle, like trying to find affordable housing, geting a job, or staying healthy. They also have experience trying to get the supports and services they need from the service delivery system, like housing assistance and childcare.

These experiences provide residents with an invaluable perspective about what needs to change within the community to promote health and wellbeing, and how the system can improve to better meet residents' needs. These experiences can also equip residents to take on action roles within the community to support your efforts.

These perspective and action roles can help your efforts meet local residents' needs and achieve better outcomes.

Contents:

Engage Residents in New Ways

Use the following pages to explore new ways to engage residents in supporting your current work.

WHAT could you engage residents in to support your efforts?

Use the table below to identify some of the things you're working on right now that could benefit from engaging residents, and the roles residents could play to support these efforts.

What are you working on?		What roles could residents play? Use color coding to identify relevant engagement methods on pages 7-9
Defining Local Needs and Goals	☐ Doing a community needs assessment ☐ Identifying goals for your efforts (e.g., reduce obesity rates, help children get ready for school, etc.) ☐ Selecting outcomes related to goals ☐ Other:	☐ Provide input on local community conditions ☐ Help prioritize outcomes and goals ☐ Gather information from local residents or through observations (e.g., assess condition of playgrounds in neighborhood)
Designing Your Efforts	☐ Doing strategic planning ☐ Writing grants ☐ Designing programs ☐ Designing systems change efforts ☐ Figuring out how to better reach residents with your efforts ☐ Other:	☐ Provide input on your program or strategy ideas ☐ Help prioritize which of your strategies or programs to implement ☐ Co-design strategy ideas with you ☐ Gather feedback from other residents on strategy ideas
Implementing your Efforts	☐ Delivering services or programs ☐ Carrying out community or systems change activities ☐ Gathering feedback on how your efforts are working ☐ Addressing implementation barriers ☐ Other:	☐ Help implement strategies ☐ Provide feedback on how your programs, strategies, or efforts are working ☐ Gather data on how your programs, strategies, or efforts are working ☐ Help make decisions about how to respond to implementation barriers
Learning for Continuous Improvement	☐ Gathering and making sense of data on whether your efforts are starting to make a difference in outcomes ☐ Determining next steps ☐ Other:	☐ Provide data or feedback on the outcomes of your efforts ☐ Help prioritize next steps ☐ Help analyze and interpret data, and co-develop next steps
Supporting Organizational Development	☐ Hiring staff ☐ Training staff ☐ Other:	☐ Provide input on which staff/leaders are hired ☐ Influence decisions about who is hired ☐ Co-train new staff

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WHO do you want to engage?

Use the following to help determine all the different types of residents who are most important to engage related to your goals, and decide who to start engaging now.

Consider which residents are most relevant to engage

Which types of residents have the perspectives, connections, and/or skills to support the different things you're working on (see first column in table on prior page).

For example, let's say you're writing a grant to support your work around preventing homelessness. You might consider engaging residents who are currently or were formerly homeless to get their input on what would help address/prevent homelessness, help prioritize what strategies to include in the grant, or co-design activities residents can lead.

TIP: Focus on residents experiencing local inequities relevant to your work.
They are more likely to have first-hand experience with the situations and systems you're trying to improve.

How do you figure out who is experiencing these inequities? Identify which outcomes are most relevant to your work. Look at local, current data on these outcomes that has been split out or "disaggregated" by different demographic groups (see table below for examples). Then look to see which groups have the worst outcomes over time compared with all other groups.

Finding Data on Local Inequities
Tool to help find disaggregated data

Identify groups experiencing inequities
Consider these demographic categories as you figure out which groups in your community are experiencing inequities relevant to your work:

- ☐ Age
- ☐ Race/Ethnicity
- ☐ Gender/Gender Identity
- ☐ Sexual Orientation
- ☐ Religion
- ☐ Education Level
- ☐ Household Composition
- ☐ Geographic Area/Neighborhood
- ☐ English Language Proficiency
- ☐ National Origin
- ☐ Documentation Status
- ☐ Disability Status
- ☐ Employment Status
- ☐ Income
- ☐ Connection to Services/Supports
- ☐ Other

For example, if you're focused on preventing homelessness, you could look at data showing the demographics for which residents in your community have experienced homelessness in past 12 months. Then you could look to see which demographic groups have experienced higher rates of homelessness compared to other groups (i.e., inequities), and focus on engaging these residents.

REMEMBER! Pay attention to inequities affecting people at the intersection of multiple demographic groups – such as Latinx teenage moms or African American men with felony records.

Decide who to start engaging now

At this point, you may have identified many different groups of residents who could help support your efforts. Most organizations and groups don't have the capacity to engage them all at once. Here are some ideas for how to identify which groups to start engaging now, and which to engage moving forward.

1. Look at the table on page 4 and identify the most important things you are working in the next 3 months (e.g., an upcoming grant deadline, getting ready to launch a new program, etc.)

2. Make a list of all the different types of residents who could potentially play a role in supporting this work (see page 5).

3. Decide which resident groups from your list are most important to start engaging *now* to support your work in the next 3 months, knowing you can continue expanding who you engage over time.

Case Example

An organization working on issues related to improving access to affordable housing was preparing to go through a strategic planning process. The organization took time to identify which groups of residents they should engage to help them in their planning process.

They wrote each possible resident demographic group on a separate sticky note, and put the notes into the following 2 piles: "Start Engaging Now" and "Engage in Future." They also clustered several of the cards together to remember to look at the intersection of different demographic groups together.

START ENGAGING NOW	ENGAGE IN FUTURE
Latinx residents	Seniors over age 65
Residents with income under 150% of poverty	Veterans
African American residents	Residents from North River neighborhood
Residents with disabilities	
Creekside Neighborhood	

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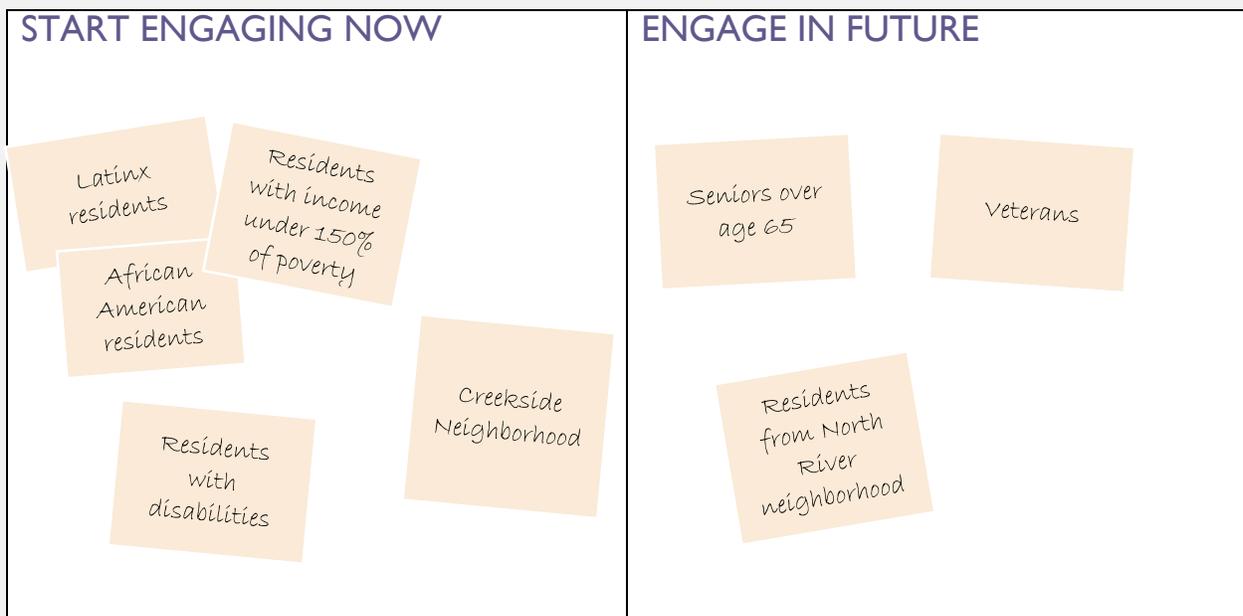
HOW do you want to engage these residents?

Look at the list of residents you want to start engaging now, and think about the easiest way to engage these individuals given your local community context and your current capacity (e.g., staff, community partnerships, financial resources, time, etc.).

Refer to the examples below for ideas. Mix and match these methods in any way to meet your needs.

Examples of how to gather residents' input
(see blue items from table on page 4)

Existing Interactions: Have individuals who have direct or natural interactions with your priority residents ask one or two questions with each client/family they touch. You can vary the questions every few months. Create an easy way for these individuals to send you this input (e.g., scan their notes and email to you, convene them together to share what they are learning, etc.), and have them close the loop with residents so they know how their input was used.

Example Interactions	
• Home visitation programs • Pediatricians/Health care • Pre-school/child care • Food pantry/donation center • WIC office • Police and probation department • Help or information hotlines • Substance Abuse Programs • Employment coaches	• Faith Based Settings (churches, synagogues, mosque, etc.) • Hair stylists, barbers, manicurists • Bank tellers • Libraries • Pharmacists • Mental Health Centers • Family support/education programs

Existing Meetings or Gatherings: Identify upcoming community gatherings or meetings engaging priority residents. Partner with the leaders of these settings to see if they could ask your questions with residents. Create an easy way for these individuals to send you this input (e.g., scan their notes and email to you, convene the providers together to share what they are learning, etc.). If possible, have them close the loop with residents so they know how their input was used.

Example Meetings or Gatherings	
• Neighborhood association meetings • PTA meetings • School events (e.g., open houses, kindergarten roundup)	• Community fairs or celebrations • Sports events • Religious gatherings • Support groups

Intake Forms: Add one or two questions onto the end of an intake form or questionnaire that is completed when residents enter or exit a service setting. Shift or add questions as necessary.

Waiting Room: Have a representative ask residents in a waiting room (or when they enter or exit a setting) one or two brief open-ended questions. The person asking the questions can keep the surveys on a clipboard as they go from family to family.

Invite Residents as Guest Speakers: Invite residents to share their experiences and answer questions from staff about how to better meet their needs or improve local services. Prepare residents for these conversations by sharing questions in advance and helping them practice sharing their story.

Survey: Work with partner organizations to collectively develop survey questions for residents. Have these partner organizations give the surveys to residents they naturally interact with (e.g., while providing services, doing outreach, etc.) and share the survey results with each other for collective learning and action.

Comment Box: Create a short (5 or fewer questions) closed-ended/multiple choice survey. Leave a stack of these surveys along with pencils and a box for residents to drop off their responses.

Reviews from Former Participants: Interview people who successfully or unsuccessfully participated in a service to ask them about what they would keep or change.

Technology: Post questions on the comment section of your efforts' website or Facebook page, and check for summaries of recent community conversations/forums.

Examples of how to engage resident as partners in decision-making
(see red items from table on page 4)

Involve Residents as Voting Members in your Decision-Making Meetings
Engage residents as voting members of committees, work groups, temporary task force teams, and even board of directors. Residents can participate in the discussions and take part in influencing final decisions. Tips for success: ensure enough residents are at the table to avoid token representation, and provide necessary supports to help residents fully participate (e.g., childcare, transportation supports, translation, resident liaisons, etc.). Also take efforts to ensure group members listen to and incorporate resident voice into the group's decisions.

Develop a Resident Coalition or Action Team
Support residents in setting up a coalition to partner with your efforts. These coalitions can not only provide ways for local residents to give you feedback, but they can actually create a way for you to engage residents in making decisions (e.g., selecting priorities, determining next steps, hiring staff, etc.) related to your work. Residents themselves can be hired and trained to support and facilitate these meetings.

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Examples of how to engage resident in taking action
(see green items from table on page 4)

Engage residents in helping to implement your efforts
Create new roles for residents to play in carrying out your work, and provide fair compensation for their efforts. For example, residents can co-facilitate programs or meetings, get the word out about available services and encourage residents to participate, and help with evaluations.

Develop a Resident Coalition or <u>Action Team</u>
Support residents in setting up a coalition or action team to partner with you in reaching your shared goals (e.g., preventing homelessness). These resident coalitions/action teams can not only provide ways for local residents to give you feedback and help you make decisions (see above), but they can also support residents in carrying out actions. For example, residents can co-design questions to understand local conditions related to your shared goals and then actively help collect information from the community. Residents can also develop and carry out their own action ideas to support your shared goals (e.g., create peer to peer support groups).

Sponsor a <u>Photovoice Project</u>
Provide opportunities for residents to document community conditions through photography in a "Photovoice" project.[1] Residents are trained in how to use cameras and then answer questions about local community conditions by taking pictures. Residents come together to share and discuss their photos, and the information is used to raise awareness of local problems (e.g., by putting photos in "gallery" style exhibits across community) and guide the design of strategies.

Develop Residents as Neighborhood Liaisons
Ask local residents to become their "Neighborhood or Community Liaison". Liaison's gather input from their neighbors, family, and friends and share this information with local organizations to help inform planning and decision-making. In some communities, Liaisons hold these gatherings in their homes and call them "Living Room" or "Back Porch Conversations."

Sponsor a Mini-Grant Program
Local organizations/funders create neighborhood small grant programs where residents can submit a simple application to get a small grant ($500 or so) to support a neighborhood improvement project (e.g., clean up a park, hold a neighborhood event). To qualify for the money, residents must include other residents in planning and implementing their project.

Support Residents as Advocates
Join residents in visiting local officials to advocate around change goals and solutions they have prioritized. Consider how to build residents' leadership capacity to further support them in taking these advocacy roles.

What are your next steps?

What are your next steps for starting to engage your priority residents? Use the following action planning template to help think through how to start.

Your Engagement Action Plan			
Engagement Goals	Current Conditions	Next Steps	Outcomes
Goal 1: WHO you want to engage? WHAT roles you want to engage them in to support your work? HOW do you want to engage them?	To what extent does your organization have the capacity (skills, resources, connections, infrastructure, etc.) to support this goal? How will you build needed capacity?	What are your immediate next steps?	What outcomes will you achieve related to this goal… in next 3 months? in next 6 months? by end of the year?
Goal 2: WHO you want to engage? WHAT roles you want to engage them in to support your work? HOW do you want to engage them?	To what extent does your organization have the capacity (skills, resources, connections, infrastructure, etc.) to support this goal? How will you build needed capacity?	What are your immediate next steps?	What outcomes will you achieve related to this goal… in next 3 months? in next 6 months? by end of the year?
Add additional rows as necessary			

Embed New Engagement Practices

The following pages can help you plan for how to make resident engagement a habit within your daily work.

Bring up resident engagement during meetings

Consider all the meetings your organization holds, facilitates, or attends each month. How could you ensure resident engagement is brought up anytime the group is prioritizing goals or local needs, designing programs or efforts, addressing implementation barriers, or learning about progress?

Here are some ideas:

1. **Add standing agenda items:** Add standing agenda items to help the group determine:
    - o   if a decision they are considering could benefit from resident input
    - o   which residents' perspectives are most relevant to engage, and how to engage them
    - o   specific next steps (who can do what by when) to gather this input, including how the group will use the input, and how they will communicate feedback on how the input was used back to the residents.

2. **Assign roles:** Have someone at the beginning of each meeting volunteer to watch for opportunities where decision-making could benefit from resident input. Engage someone else to ensure the group identifies next steps for gathering needed input.

3. **Bring a Cheat Sheet:** Make a habit of bringing a copy of this field guide to upcoming meetings to help you ask powerful questions and share engagement ideas with the group.

Meetings you typically attend each month where you could ask questions about resident engagement opportunities:

Add reminders into your forms and templates

One easy way to embed this habit is to embed prompts and reminders into all the protocols, templates, process guides, and systems you use on a daily basis within your organization and work. Use the table below to consider how you could add prompts or fields directly into these items to help remember to engage residents.

Consider the following types of activities within your organization or effort:	What protocols, templates, guides, forms, or systems are used in these activities?	How could you embed prompts or fields directly into these items to remind you to engage residents?
Strategic Planning		
Planning for meetings		
Planning evaluation efforts		
Developing communication materials		
Hiring new staff/leaders		
Delivering services or programs		
Other:		

Align your organizational context to support resident engagement

Organizations don't always have conditions in place to support new habits. For example,

- Resident engagement is not included within the organization's mission or value statement
- Staff and leaders sometimes don't see a need to engage residents, especially those experiencing local inequities
- New staff orientation processes don't include capacity-building on resident engagement

Use the table below to reflect on what might need to shift within your organization to better support making resident engagement a habit within daily work.

Consider the following within your organization or effort:	To what extent do these promote resident engagement?	How could you shift these to better support resident engagement?
Vision • Mission • Goals & Objectives • Value statements		
Shared Mindsets • Beliefs about the need for and benefits of resident engagement • Beliefs about residents experiencing local inequities		
Staff/Membership • Job descriptions • Orientation and training • Ongoing professional development • Evaluations, annual review criteria • Promotion/compensation • Supports		
Policies and Practices related to: • Governance, Decision-making • Service delivery • Funding		

Habit 2: Use Systemic Root Cause Analysis

Root causes are the underlying reasons why a problems is happening.

Systemic root cause analysis is a process to identify *systemic* reasons why a problems is happening. You can apply this process in almost any situation where a problem comes up that needs to be solved, and strategies that address these root causes are more effective at solving problems.[2]

This pocket guide includes tips and resources to help you use systemic root cause analysis to improve problem solving within your efforts.

Why use systemic root cause analysis?

Too often change efforts focus on addressing a single event (e.g., a service provider did not make a referral) or patterns of events (e.g., service providers from multiple organizations are not making referrals) without exploring why those events are occurring.[3]

Without identifying root causes, you risk wasting time and resources fixing *symptoms* rather than *causes* of a problem.

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Use Systemic Root Cause Analysis

WHAT is systemic root cause analysis?

Root Cause Analysis

Root cause analysis is a process to understand why a problem is happening. Strategies that address root causes are more effective at actually solving problems.

1. Identify a Targeted Problem
2. Why is this happening?
3. Why is *this* happening?
4. Why is this happening *here* in our community or setting?

Root cause analysis can be used to understand lots of different types of problems including:

- **population level problems** (e.g., homelessness)
- **social determinants of health** (e.g. limited access to healthy food, lack of jobs)
- **system/organizational problems** (e.g. lack of coordination or low employee morale)
- **local inequities** (e.g., why some groups are experiencing more obstacles to health than others)

There is no single prescribed way to do a root cause analysis. The approach shown above was developed by CADCA and involves asking a series of "Why?" questions. It can be done in groups or as an individual, and can use many types of data and information.

Tip: Engage diverse perspectives to enhance your root cause analysis

Diverse perspectives can help you identify a broader range of root causes affecting a given problem.

Consider engaging the following types of perspectives in your root cause analysis process (see the Identifying Relevant Perspectives tool more details).

Experiencing the problem	• Residents <u>directly</u> experiencing the targeted problem
Providing services	• Public and private service providers addressing the targeted problem
Supporting at the local level	• Stakeholders involved in resident-led, faith-based, local businesses, and neighborhood organizations • Individuals delivering informal supports
Deciding on changes and how resources are used	• Local institutions and local organizational leaders • Local officials • Funders

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Systemic Root Cause Analysis

The root cause analysis process is powerful…but often incomplete.

Why? Because stakeholders often "forget" some important causes, and rely only on what first comes to mind. This is problematic because it can reinforce the status quo and lead stakeholders to identify root causes within people (particularly within residents) instead of within the system.

To overcome this, ask about the following common types of systemic root causes:

See the **ABLe Manual** for more information on…

Mindsets p.125

Components p.126

Connections p. 127-129

Regulations p. 130

Resources p. 131

Power p.132

Interactions p. 133

Mindsets
Attitudes, values, and beliefs that shape behavior

Power
How decisions are made and who participates, whose voice matters, and the structures to support inclusion

Regulations
Policies, practices, procedures, and routines that shape behavior of individuals, groups, and organizations

Interactions
Interactions between these 6 system characteristics

Resources
Human, financial, community, and social resources used within the system

Connections
Relationships and exchanges between and across different actors, organizations, and sub-systems

Components
Range, quality, location, and effectiveness of services, supports, and opportunities

Practice Idea

Pick one of the six system characteristics to practice with each week. Look for examples of this characteristic during meetings, conversations, in written materials, or in your own practice. Stakeholders often note this approach is a practical way to get more experience in recognizing the system characteristics in everyday situations which can improve your ability to do systems-focused root cause analysis.

HOW do you use systemic root cause analysis?

There are many ways to carry out a root cause analysis process. Here are some method ideas you could consider – select the ones that work best for your problem or group.

Root Cause Analysis Worksheet

The of the easiest ways to engage people in a systemic root cause analysis process is to have them brainstorm root causes using a worksheet like the Root Cause Analysis Template. This approach doesn't require a lot of materials (just printed handouts), and afterwards individuals can take the handout back to their organization to replicate the process with colleagues.

The only challenge with the worksheet is space - if there are LOTS of root causes (and causes of causes), you may run out of room on the handout.

Given this, the worksheet works best for understanding system level problems (e.g., lack of referrals between organization A and B, access barriers related to enrollment processes) versus population-level problems (e.g., obesity, homelessness, etc.)

Once you have identified root causes on the worksheet, use the Root Cause Prioritizing Criteria cheat sheet to help prioritize root causes for strategy design.

Root Cause Analysis Template
Use the Root Cause Analysis Template to ask why issues are happening

Mindset Root Cause
What local beliefs, values, or attitudes may be causing this problem?

Connection Root Cause
How are the current connections and exchanges between local people and organizations causing this problem?

Resource Root Cause
How is the availability and quality of local resources causing this problem?

Regulation Root Cause
What policies, procedures or other rules and regulations are causing this problem, and how?

Component Root Cause
How is the design and delivery of local programs, services, and supports causing this problem?

Power Root Cause
In what ways are local power dynamics causing this problem?

Power Root Cause | Mindset Root Cause | Regulation Root Cause
Resource Root Cause | Problem | Connection Root Cause
Component Root Cause

Root Cause Analysis Template   **Root Cause Prioritizing Criteria**

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Sticky Notes

Some people like to use sticky pads to do their root cause analysis. The benefit here is you can move the pads around or replace them throughout the process.

Here's how this process works:

1. **Identify a problem** and clarify what is happening, where, and who is involved.

   Problem

2. **Ask why** this problem is happening, drawing on the common system characteristics (see page 16). List reasons under the problem.

   Reason Why   Reason Why   Reason Why   Reason Why   Reason Why

3. **Prioritize root causes** to continue exploring, and move non-prioritized causes into a parking lot for later. Prioritize root causes that are:
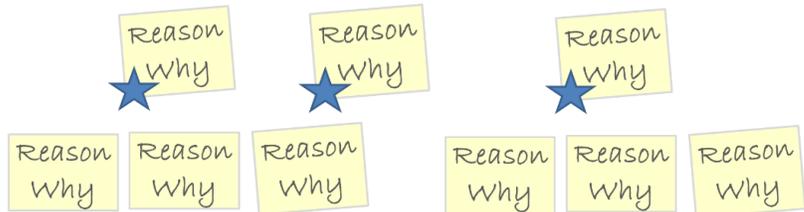
   Powerful Root Causes
   o   have the most influence on the problem
   o   affect multiple people and/or settings across the community
   o   affect other root causes or outcomes
   o   are prioritized by local residents experiencing the problem

   Feasible Root Causes
   o   are within your current scope or focus
   o   motivate people to action

4. **Ask why** these prioritized root causes are happening and add sticky notes underneath.

5. **Continue steps 3 and 4** until you have identified root causes with clear solution paths (see ABLe Manual page 120-121 for details).

   Problem

   Reason Why   Reason Why   Reason Why

   Reason Why   Reason Why   Reason Why   Reason Why   Reason Why   Reason Why
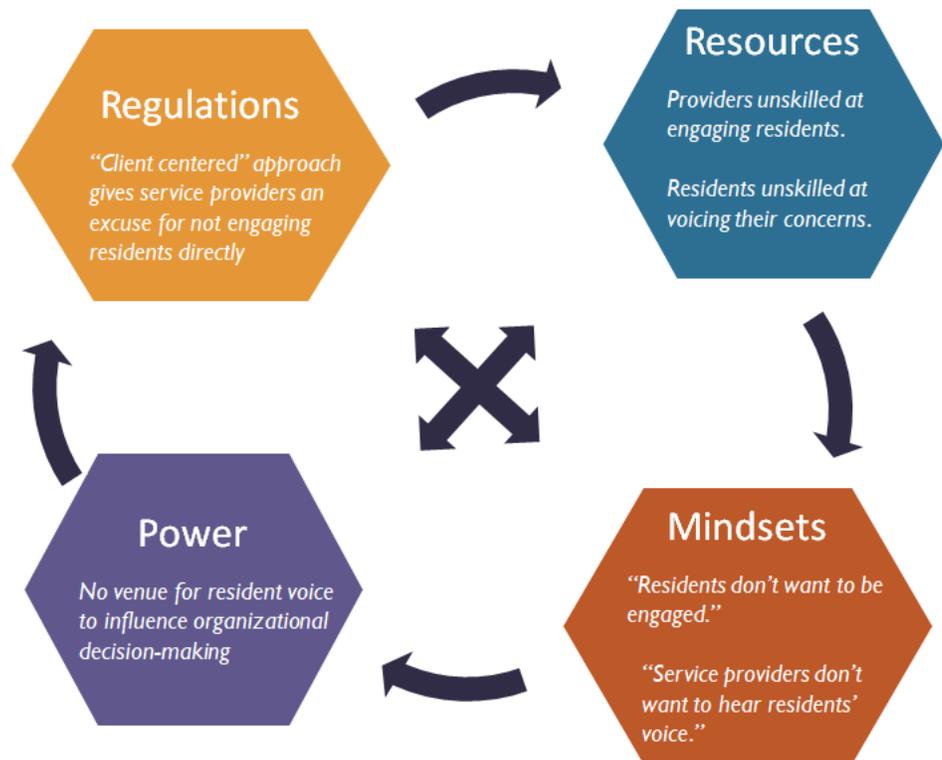
Casual Loops

Another way to do a systemic root cause analysis is to draw out how different system characteristics are influencing each other. Referred to as **casual loop diagraming**, this technique allows you to see the patterns of behavior and events that affect outcomes within a system,[2] and helps with guiding strategy design.

You can use this process to draw out interactions between the root causes you identified using a worksheet or sticky note process, or you can start from scratch and brainstorm root causes as you draw out the causal loops.

The following is an example of how casual loops were used to illustrate the interactions between four system characteristics, and how these interactions are working to maintain a system where resident voice is ignored.

These insights were used to develop a cluster of strategies to improve system responsiveness to resident voice.

Regulations
"Client centered" approach gives service providers an excuse for not engaging residents directly

Resources
Providers unskilled at engaging residents.

Residents unskilled at voicing their concerns.

Power
No venue for resident voice to influence organizational decision-making

Mindsets
"Residents don't want to be engaged."

"Service providers don't want to hear residents' voice."

Additional Resources on Causal Loop Diagraming:

Stroh, D. P. (2015). Systems Thinking for Social Change. White River Junction, VT: Chelsea Green Publishing

Systems Thinker Webpage: https://thesystemsthinker.com/causal-loop-construction-the-basics/

TIP: Get details!

Use these follow-up questions during your systemic root cause analysis conversations to get detailed information.

The more detail you gather on your root causes, the easier it is for people to design targeted strategies to address them.

Who? What? When? Where?	Can you tell me more?
Can you give me an example?	Why?

## TIP: Ask why until you have a clear solution path

How do you know when to stop asking why in your root cause analysis process? Stop asking why when you have identified a clear solution path where it's clear <u>what</u> needs to change to resolve the issue.

The root cause outlined in green has a clear solution path. While there is additional information to gather about this situation before moving to action (e.g., what specific policies are needed, what barriers are there to shifting current procedures, etc.), there is no need to ask "why" again for this root cause.

ROOT CAUSE:
Housing supports are not reaching some residents, particularly residents from disadvantaged groups

In contrast, you <u>should</u> ask why the root cause outlined in red in happening because there could be multiple reasons why these residents don't know about available supports or how to access them.

ROOT CAUSE:
No policies or procedures in place within local organizations to ensure staff are referring residents to housing supports

ROOT CAUSE:
Some residents don't know about available housing supports or how to access them.

For example, information about these supports could be:
- difficult for families to understand
- incomplete or outdated
- not reaching all residents
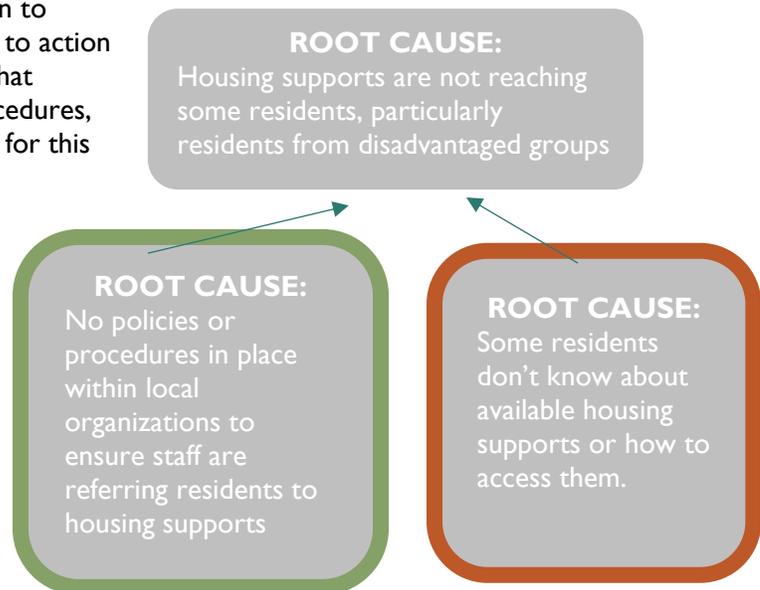
Asking the question "why do some residents experiencing this problem not know about housing supports or how to access them?" would help to uncover some of these additional reasons, and better guide actions to address this situation.

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TIP: Prioritize multiple types of root causes

Effective problem solving tackles <u>multiple</u> root causes from <u>different</u> system conditions. See image to the right for examples of different types of common system conditions.

If you notice all of your prioritized root causes are related to the same type of condition (e.g., mindsets, regulations, power, etc.), try to identify some additional root causes from other characteristics to boost the effectiveness of your change efforts.

TIP: Prioritize powerful and feasible root causes
Consider the following 2 criteria to prioritize powerful and feasible root causes.

POWERFUL Root Causes
- have a big influence on Shared Vision goals
- affect or involve multiple settings and/or individuals at different ecological levels in the community
- play a unique role in influencing other root causes and outcomes in the system
- contribute to inequities in the community

FEASIBLE Root Causes
- are within the scope of work
- motivate local stakeholders to take action
- are seen as important by local residents
- can shift relatively quickly

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HOW do you move prioritized root causes to action?

Once you've identified and prioritized a collection of powerful and feasible root causes to your problem (preferably from multiple system characteristics – see tip on prior page), start designing strategies to address them.

Remember, it often takes a cluster of strategies to address a collection of multiple systemic root causes. Once you have designed strategies, help individuals identify quick actions (e.g., that can be accomplished within 1-3 months) to start carrying them out.

See **ABLe Manual** pages 189-300 for more ideas and tips on designing powerful systems change

TIP: consider example strategies
After brainstorming some initial ideas, consider existing strategy examples to see if you want to incorporate any into your strategies.

Ask about "Bright Spots"
Ask people for any instances where they've been able to overcome or address your targeted root causes. Learn about what people have naturally done to make this happen.

Look at <u>formal</u> resources
Look for examples in reports, news reports, evaluations, or strategic plans.

Where to find strategy ideas?

Look at <u>informal</u> resources
Look for examples in blogs and Facebook groups around topics.

ABLe Example Strategy Guide
This guide includes hundreds of strategies used by communities around the world to promote systems change.
Click title above for hyperlink.

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Where could YOU use systemic root cause analysis?

Consider the following types of activities within your organization where you could use systemic root cause analysis to improve the effectiveness of your problem-solving.

	Opportunities to use Systemic Root Cause Analysis
Understanding Local Needs	☐ Use systemic root cause analysis questions to guide a local **community needs assessment** ☐ **Ask local residents** what systemic root cause are getting in the way of their ability to meet their needs and achieve their goals ☐ Engage partner organizations in doing a **System Scan** to identify systemic root causes impacting shared goals (see ABLe Manual page 113-160 for more details) ☐ Define **evaluation outcomes** related to your prioritized systemic root causes ☐ *Other:*
Planning	☐ Ask systemic root cause questions during **service planning with clients** ☐ Add systemic root cause questions to your **strategic planning process** ☐ **Write grants** to address prioritized systemic root causes ☐ Develop **Requests for Proposals** (RFPs) to targeted the community's prioritized systemic root causes ☐ Design / **expand programs** or services to simultaneously address prioritized systemic root causes ☐ *Other:*
Learning for Continuous Improvement	☐ Ask systemic root cause questions to understand what's getting in the way of the **effective implementation** of your programs or efforts ☐ Ask systemic root cause questions to identify what other community system conditions are affecting your **outcomes** ☐ *Other:*

Embed New Systemic Root Cause Practices

Use the following pages to plan how to make systemic root cause analysis a habit within your work.

Use systemic root cause analysis during meetings

Consider all the meetings you hold, facilitate, or attend each month (e.g., staff meetings, coalition meetings, service planning meetings, etc.). How could you ask systemic root cause analysis questions to help these groups problem solve issues emerging in conversation? Here are some ideas for how to make this into a habit:

1. **Add standing agenda items:** Add a permanent agenda item to your meeting agendas that asks the group to identify any problems or barriers that have come up in the last month related to your goals or efforts (e.g., service access barriers), and then engage in systemic root cause analysis to understand the reasons why this problem or barrier is happening. You can also add agenda items to help the group engage in problem solving these root causes.

2. **Assign roles:** Have someone at the beginning of each meeting volunteer to watch for opportunities during the meeting to ask systemic root cause analysis questions.

3. **Bring a Cheat Sheet:** Make a habit of bringing a copy of this field guide to upcoming meetings to help you use systemic root cause analysis with the group.

Which meetings do you typically hold, facilitate, or attend each month where you could bring in systemic root cause analysis questions?

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Add reminders into your forms and templates

One easy way to embed this habit is to add prompts and reminders into all the protocols, templates, process guides, and systems you use on a daily basis within your organization and work. Use the table below to consider how you could add prompts or fields directly into these items to help remember to use systemic root cause analysis. See example action planning template with embedded root cause fields.

Consider the following types of activities within your organization or effort:	What protocols, templates, guides, forms, or systems are used in these activities?	How could you embed prompts or fields directly into these items as reminders to use systemic root cause analysis?
Strategic planning or action planning		
Staff meetings		
Grant writing		
Service planning		
Evaluation efforts		
Staff annual review processes		

Align your organizational context to support systemic root cause analysis

Organizations don't always have conditions in place to support new habits. For example:
- Staff and leaders sometimes don't see a need to use root cause analysis and instead jump too quickly to strategy design before fully understanding the problem
- New staff orientation processes don't include capacity-building on root cause analysis

Use the table below to reflect on what might need to shift within your organization to better support making root cause analysis as a habit within daily work.

Consider the following within your organization or effort:	To what extent do these promote the use of systemic root cause analysis?	How could you shift these to better support the use of systemic root cause analysis?
Shared Mindsets: • Beliefs about the need for and benefits of using systemic root cause analysis • Beliefs about need for and benefits of engaging diverse perspectives in systemic root cause analysis process		
Staff/Membership & Capacity: • Orientation and training • Ongoing professional development • Evaluations, annual review criteria • Promotion/compensation • Supports		
Policies and Practices related to: • Organizational governance / leadership • Decision-making • Service delivery • Funding		
Other:		

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Habit 3: Use Action Learning

How can we more effectively solve problems and take action?

Groups around the world are seeing the benefits of using more adaptive problem solving practices that allows them to define and understand problems, design powerful strategies, act quickly and then reflect and learn for continuous improvement.

Referred to as action learning, this simple process helps stakeholders quickly develop and adapt their efforts until they discover the solution that works in their community.

This pocket guide includes tips and resources to help you use action learning within your organization or group.
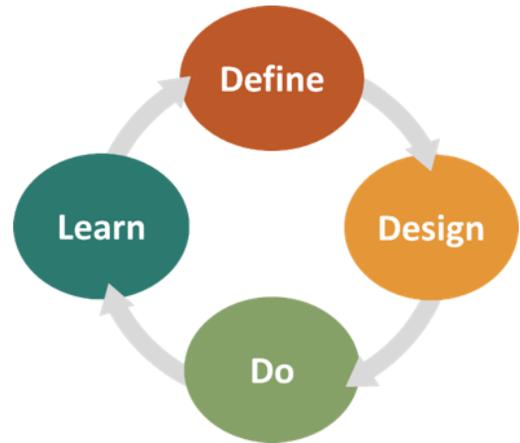
Why use action learning?

Effective problem solving requires quick cycles of learning and action where understanding, doing, learning and adapting become more important that planning.[4]

Action learning is a simple, flexible technique organizations, groups, and individuals can use in a variety of different situations for any type of problem they are trying to solve.

Contents:

Solve Problems in New Ways

The following pages can help you explore new ways to use action learning in your efforts.

WHAT is action learning?

Action learning is an ongoing problem-solving cycle involving the following four phases (see ABLe Manual page 347):

- **Define:** Reveal and understand problems or opportunities
- **Design:** Strategize solutions and prepare to take action to address the problem and leverage opportunities
- **Do:** Track implementation and trouble shoot while implementing strategies
- **Learn:** Assess the impact of your efforts and determine next steps

Organizations, groups, and individuals can use action learning to help address any type of problem such as:

- community or system issues getting in the way of your organization's goals/outcomes
- implementation barriers affecting a program or change effort
- access barriers preventing people from getting the supports they need
- how to leverage opportunities like new funding, relationships, or community initiatives
- individual challenges coming up in service interactions

Example of Action Learning in Practice

The following shows how action learning was used to problem solve an implementation barrier:

Define	• **Reveal the issue**: Some staff are not effectively using new shared consent form with clients • **Understand why issue happening:** Some staff didn't know they were supposed to be using new form. Other staff lack skills in effectively describing form to clients.
Design	• **Strategize:** Create more effective communication around expectations for staff to use form. Provide professional development around talking with clients about form. • **Prepare:** Create communication and training materials. Develop needed-buy-in from leadership and staff. Initiate next steps to finalize design and prepare for launch.
Do	• **Track:** Take action to initiate the strategies. Track progress to see if we start encountering any implementation barriers. • **Trouble-shoot:** Address implementation barriers related to low turnout to professional development sessions by adding into staff annual review criteria
Learn	• **Assess**: More staff are using shared consent form with clients. However, some staff are still struggling to describe form to families with Limited English Proficiency (LEP). • **Next Steps:** Return to "Define" phase to problem solve barriers with describing forms to residents with LEP

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WHO should be involved in action learning?

Improve your problem solving by engaging diverse perspectives in the action learning process. This is because no one perspective can understand all the different causes of a problem, ways to address those root causes, or take part in carrying out action and learning for continuous improvement.

Consider the following four categories of perspectives to engage in your action learning processes:

Experiencing the problem	• Residents <u>directly</u> experiencing the problems your organization is trying to address
Providing services	• People who are providing services directly and/or in a supervisory capacity to residents directly experiencing targeted problems
Supporting at the local level	• Individuals delivering informal supports, e.g., administrative staff who may have contact with families with LEP • Stakeholders who provide other services and/or supports to those your organization serves, e.g., people who work with families with LEP or seek consent from families
Deciding on changes and how resources are used	• Organizational leaders, e.g., internal leaders who must approve or support changes associated with use of the consent form • External officials and/or funders, e.g.,

Example
An organization that provides supportive housing is working to improve and simplify its application and intake processes. The following describes who the organization engaged in their action learning process to help them to problem solve this situation.

	The organization engaged…
Experiencing the problem	Residents who are interested in or have recently applied for supportive housing through the organization
Providing services	Intake workers at the organization and their supervisors. Case management staff who work with clients, and outreach staff.
Supporting at the local level	Local service navigators who work with residents interested in applying for supportive housing.
Deciding on changes and how resources are used	Leaders of the organization who are knowledgeable about federal and state application requirements and are in the position to approve of shifts to the organization's intake process.

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HOW could you use an action learning process?

Consider the following examples of how you could use action learning within your organization or group.

Facilitate Problem-Solving Conversations

One of the easiest and most effective ways to use action learning in your organization is to use action learning questions to facilitate problem-solving conversations. These conversations could take place in various settings and with diverse perspectives. For example, you could use these questions during staff meetings, collaborative meetings, committee or task force meetings, service interactions, or interactions with local residents in community settings.

Example Action Learning Questions		
Define	Reveal	What is the problem(s) – what does it look like? Who is experiencing it? Where is it happening?
	Understand	Why is it happening – what are the root causes? Do we need to understand anything else before moving to action?
Design	Strategize	How can we address the root causes of this problem? What example strategies can we draw from? What input do we need – especially from residents?
	Prepare	What are the action steps to carry out this strategy? What materials do we need to create? What buy-in, skills, or supports are needed?
Do	Track	What implementation barriers are we encountering? Why are they happening?
	Troubleshoot	What can we do about these barriers?
Learn	Assess	To what degree are our strategies making a difference? If they are not making a difference, why not?
	Next Steps	What should we do next given what we're learning? How can we expand what's working? How can we address what's not working?

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Facilitate Planning Processes

You can also use action learning to help facilitate planning processes, including strategic planning, program development, grant writing, among others. This involves asking action learning questions during planning processes and using the 4 action learning phases to help guide the overall planning process.

Example Strategic Planning Action Learning Questions		
Define	**Reveal**	• What problem(s) (e.g., population-level, system, community, social determinant of health, etc.) do we want to address? • What does recent data tell us about what this problem looks like in our community? Who is experiencing it? Where is it happening?
Define	**Understand**	• Why is this problem(s) happening – what are the root causes? • Do we need to understand anything else before we can move to designing strategies?
Design	**Strategize**	• How can we address the root causes of this problem? • What example strategies can we draw from? • What input do we need – especially from residents?

Design	**Prepare**	• What are the action steps to prepare this strategy to launch?
		   o What materials do we need to create?
		   o What buy-in, skills, or supports are needed?
		• What are the action steps to carry out this strategy?
		• Who should carry out these action steps?

Do	**Track**	• What process can we put in place to track implementation of these strategies to see if they are on track and to identify emerging barriers and why they are happening?
Do	**Troubleshoot**	• What process can we put in place to make sure emerging implementation barriers are addressed quickly?
Learn	**Assess**	• What process can we put in place to assess to what degree our strategies are making a difference in targeted root causes and problems – and if not, why not?
Learn	**Next Steps**	• What process can we put in place to determine what to do next given what we're learning?

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Support a Collaborative Community Change Process

Groups of organizations (e.g., coalitions, regional collaboratives) can use the action learning process to plan and launch systems changes. The at-a-glance graphic below illustrates how the ABLe Change 8-step process maps onto the four stages of the action learning cycle.

See the **BBO Field Guide** for more on how to facilitate the ABLe Change 8-step system change process.

Define		
	①	**Define a Targeted Problem and Identify Local Inequities**
	②	**Determine System Boundaries**
	③	**Understand the System**
	④	**Adopt a Shared Agenda for Systems Change**
Design	⑤	**Design Powerful Strategies to Change the System**
Do	⑥	**Promote Quick Wins**
	⑦	**Build a Climate for Effective Implementation**
Learn	⑧	**Learn for Continuous Improvement**

Continuously Improve Practices

Action learning can also be used to build upon and enhance what may already be working. Whether looking to improve internal processes and procedures or update organizational policies, action learning can support organizations to continuously do what they do better. In this regard, it is similar to other continuous improvement processes such as Plan Do Act Study (PDSA).

Here's an example of how the action learning cycle can be applied for continuous improvement.

- DEFINE: Identify potential improvements to the practice; determine the practice to be improved
- DESIGN: Strategize how you will make the improvement and prepare to take action
- DO: Implement the improvement, track implementation, and trouble shoot emergent problems
- LEARN: Assess the impact of your efforts and determine next steps

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Address Local Inequities

Organizations and group can use action learning, specifically equity-focused action learning questions, to more effectively addressing local inequities and promote equity. These questions can be used during meetings, planning processes, and discussions (see page 30-33 of this document for examples).

Example Equity-Focused Action Learning Questions		
Define	Reveal	• What problem are we trying to solve? • What inequities are we seeing related to this problem? • Which groups/settings are being advantaged/disadvantaged, in what ways?
	Understand	• What are these inequities are happening? (e.g., systemic root causes) • What additional information do we need to fully understand this situation? How can we feasibly gather it? Who can help?
Design	Strategize	• How can we tackle the root causes of the targeted inequities? • How can we promote equity by enhancing the social, economic, political, and learning power/capacity of groups experiencing inequities? • How can we ensure these strategies reach and benefit groups experiencing inequities related to this problem? • How can we anticipate and address positive or negative unintended consequences of our strategies for these groups? • What input do we need from groups experiencing targeted inequities?
	Prepare	• What are the action steps to carry out this strategy? • What materials do we need to create? • What buy-in, skills, or supports are needed?

Do	Track	• How is the implementation of our strategies going?
		  ○ Are people adopting the equity strategies – if not, why not?
		  ○ Are people effectively using the strategies – if not, why not?
		  ○ Are we reaching and benefiting targeted groups/settings – if not, why not?

	Troubleshoot	• What can we do about these barriers?
Learn	Assess	• Are the strategies starting to shift root causes of our targeted inequities, and the inequities themselves? Why or why not? • Are we seeing any unintended consequences from our strategies?
	Next Steps	• How can we support and scale up what is working? • How can we address, re-think, or better understand strategies that are not starting to make a difference?

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What are your next steps?

What are your next steps for starting to bring action learning into your efforts? Use the following action planning template to help think through how to start.

Your Action Learning Action Plan			
Action Learning Goals	Current Conditions	Next Steps	Outcomes
How do you want to apply action learning? ☐ Problem solving conversation ☐ Internal planning process ☐ Collaborative community change effort ☐ Continuous improvement ☐ Other Goal 1:	To what extent does your organization have the capacity (skills, resources, connections, infrastructure, etc.) to support this goal? How will you build needed capacity?	What are your immediate next steps?	What outcomes will you achieve related to this goal… in next 3 months? in next 6 months? by end of the year?
How do you want to apply action learning? ☐ Problem solving conversation ☐ Internal planning process ☐ Collaborative community change effort ☐ Continuous improvement ☐ Other Goal 2:	To what extent does your organization have the capacity (skills, resources, connections, infrastructure, etc.) to support this goal? How will you build needed capacity?	What are your immediate next steps?	What outcomes will you achieve related to this goal… in next 3 months? in next 6 months? by end of the year?
Add additional rows as necessary			

Embed Problem Solving Practices

Embedding action learning practices into organizational processes can help to sustain new habits around learning and continuous improvement. The following pages can help you plan for how to embed action learning as a habit within your daily work.

Use action learning during meetings

Consider all the meetings your organization holds, facilitates, or attends each month. How could you ensure action learning is used anytime the group is prioritizing goals or local needs, designing programs or efforts, addressing implementation barriers, or learning about progress?

Here are some ideas:

1. **Add action learning to standard meeting agendas:** This can be done in a variety of ways:

   o   Add an action learning agenda item: Each time the group meets they can determine what problem they want to address using action learning.

   o   Agree that action learning will be used on certain standard agenda topics, e.g., checking progress on current efforts, topics requiring problem solving, planning processes, continuous improvement conversations.

2. **Establish periodic action learning meetings:** Teams, groups, and/or departments can also create separate action learning meetings where they intentionally focus on continuous improvement.

3. **Bring a cheat sheet:** Make a habit of bringing a copy of this field guide to upcoming meetings to help you ask powerful action learning questions.

Which monthly meetings that you attend could benefit from using action learning? In what ways could action learning be helpful?

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Add reminders into your forms and templates

Embed this habit by adding prompts and reminders into all the protocols, templates, process guides, and systems you use on a daily basis within your organization and work. Use the table below to consider how you could add prompts or fields directly into these items to help remember to engage residents.

Consider the following types of activities within your organization or effort:	What protocols, templates, guides, forms, or systems are used in these activities?	How could you embed prompts or fields directly into these items to remind you to use action learning?
Strategic Planning		
Planning for meetings		
Planning evaluation efforts		
Developing communication materials		
Hiring new staff/leaders		
Delivering services or programs		
Other:		

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Assess and align your organizational context to support action learning

Organizations don't always have conditions in place to support new habits. Use the table below to reflect on what might need to shift within your organization or group to better support action. See ABLe Manual page 382 for a detailed assessment of how your organization is using an action learning process.

Consider the following within your organization or effort:	To what extent do these promote action learning?	How could you shift these to better support action learning?
Vision • Mission • Goals & Objectives • Value statements		
Shared Mindsets • Beliefs about the need for and benefits of action learning		
Staff Roles and Supports • Job descriptions • Orientation and training • Ongoing professional development • Evaluations, annual review criteria • Promotion/compensation		
Planning Processes • Strategic planning • Decision making • Organizational structure		
Continuous Improvement • Program Design • Service Implementation		
Collaborative Change Efforts • Problem identification • Strategy design • Implementation and tracking • Assessment and adaptation		

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Habit 4: Use an Equity Impact Assessment

An Equity Impact Assessment provides a systematic examination of current or planned policies, programs, practices, budgets, and decisions with the specific purpose of understanding their current or potential impact on inequities.

Insights gained from these assessments are used to inform decision-making processes.

This field guide includes tips and resources to help you explore how to use Equity Impact Assessment to enhance equity-focused decision-making within your efforts.

Why use an equity impact assessment?

Many routine policies, social structures, and decision-making processes unintentionally create advantages for some residents while disadvantaging for others. Equity Impact Assessments can help to identify and address these unintended consequences to promote greater equity.

Contents:

Use an Equity Impact Assessment

The following pages can help you explore how to use Equity Impact Assessments in your efforts.

WHAT is equity?

Equity is when everyone has a fair and just opportunity for health and wellbeing. Unfortunately, America has some of the most extreme inequities in outcomes across groups of people (e.g., related to socioeconomic status, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender, disability status, geographic location, or some combination of these characteristics).[5]

This is because some communities are "off the grid" in terms of their connection to opportunities and resources (e.g., quality housing, jobs, quality healthcare, etc.) that promote the wellbeing.

A focus on equity involves taking dedicated efforts to remove obstacles preventing some groups from accessing opportunities for health and wellbeing *and* putting conditions in place to promote equity (e.g., economic, social, political, and learning power and capacity). See ABLe Equity Supplement for more details.

Image from Alamance Achieves, http://alamanceachieves.org/

What is the difference between equality and equity?

Equity involves everyone having fair and just opportunity. Equality involves giving everyone the same things. A focus on Equality *only* promotes fairness when everyone starts from the same place and needs the same things - which rarely happens in our society.[6] The images below highlight the differences between inequity and inequality.
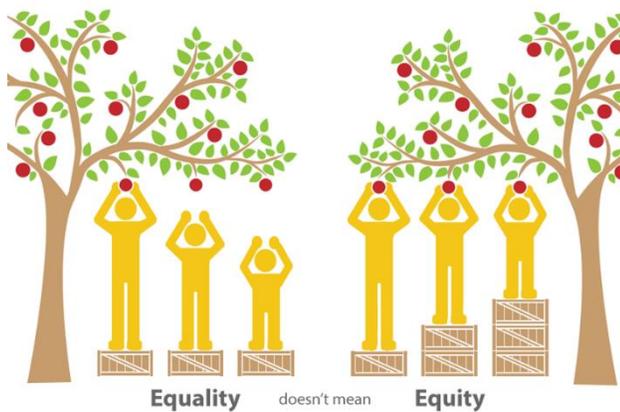
Source: Saskatoon Health Region Advancing Health Equity
https://www.communityview.ca/infographic_SHR_health_equity.html

Source: Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2017

WHAT are Equity Impact Assessments?

Equity impact assessments are essentially a set of questions to help you and your organization consider how current or planned policies, practices/programs, budgets and decisions could unintentionally contribute to local inequities. You can use the results of this assessment to guide your decision-making around what to shift or re-design within your efforts to promote equity.

These assessments are part of a broader Health Impact Assessment movement and draw upon several types of impact assessment tools used in communities, including:

- **Health Impact Assessments (HIA)** focus on understanding how plans, policies and practices affect health impacts.[7]

- **Health Equity Impact Assessment (HEIA)** assess how plans, policies and practices affect health inequities.

- **Racial Equity Impact Assessment (REIA)** focuses on how different racial and ethnic groups will be affected by a proposed plan, policy, or practice by looking at unintended adverse consequences, reducing structural racism, and discovering new approaches to eliminate long-standing inequities.[8]

Example Equity Impact Assessment Questions

What are the potential negative impacts of <u>existing or previously developed</u> policies, budgets, decisions, practices, programs, or community plans?

Which groups of people/neighborhoods are/will be most disadvantaged?

How can you eliminate or minimize these impacts - particularly for those experiencing the greatest inequities?

What recommendations do residents from groups/neighborhood experiencing inequities have about this situation?

Why are Equity Impact Assessments important?

Many routine policies, social structures, and decision-making processes are rooted in class, race, and gender imbalances. These biased conditions make up the status quo and create advantages for some community members and marginalize or produce disadvantages for others.

Unless we use a process to intentionally consider equity impacts within our planning and decision-making, we risk reproducing these biased conditions. Equity Impact Assessments are a tool for intentionally considering these equity impacts.

Equity Impact Assessments Videos:

Check out these short videos on how to use an Equity Impact Assessment in your efforts:

Equity Impact Assessment Overview (video 1/3 in series)

How to use an Equity Impact Assessment (video 2/3 in series)

Getting started with an Equity Impact Assessment (video 3/3 in series)
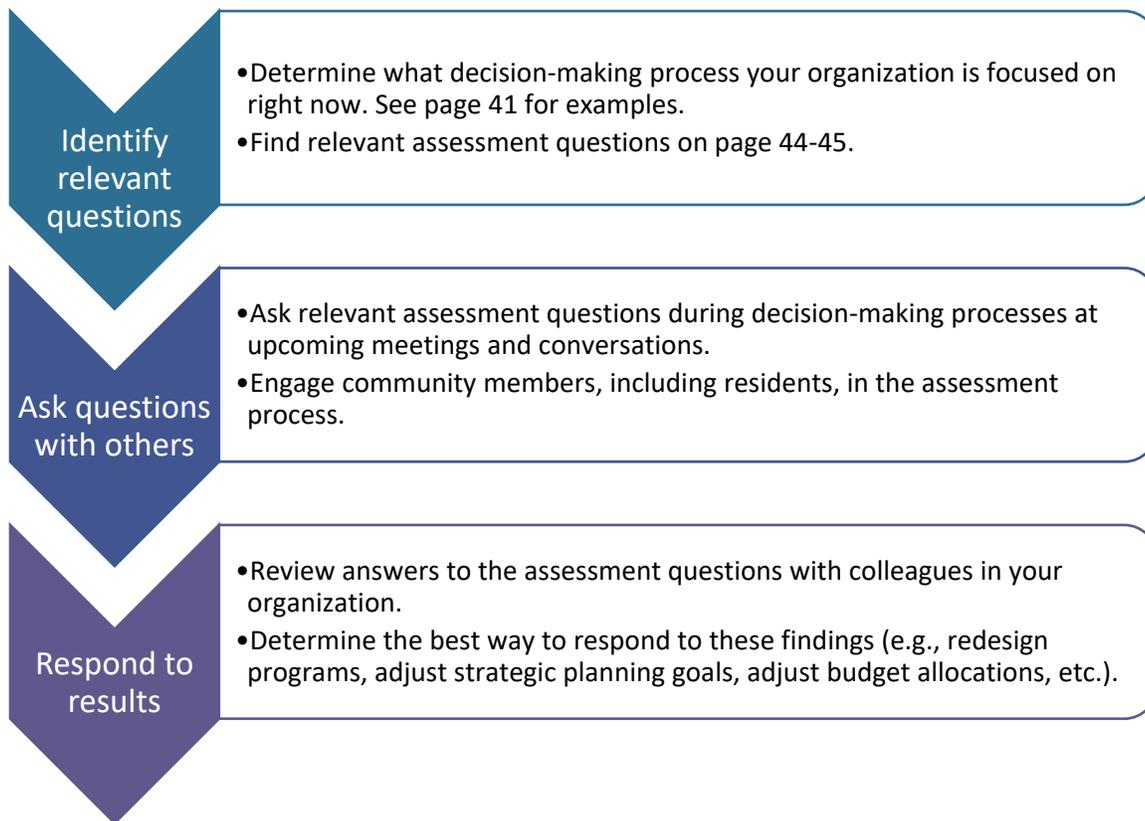
WHEN could you use an Equity Impact Assessment?

Consider the following types of processes within your organization where you could use equity impact assessments to bring a focus on equity into your decision-making.

Example organizational decision-making processes that <u>could benefit from a focus on equity</u>		Relevant EIA Questions (see pages 44-45)
Strategic Planning, Organizational Planning, or Grant Writing	☐ Understanding and prioritizing local needs to address with your efforts ☐ Defining outcomes and indicators ☐ Developing and prioritizing goals, objectives, and strategies ☐ Determining budget allocations	See questions 1-13
Program/Service Design and Delivery	☐ Designing programs and services ☐ Assessing the quality of existing programs/services/supports ☐ Developing communication materials ☐ Addressing access barriers ☐ Tracking implementation processes ☐ Evaluating program outcomes	See questions 1-21
Human Resources and Organizational Culture	☐ Defining job roles and responsibilities ☐ Developing/updating and assessing recruitment, hiring, compensation, and promotion policies and practices ☐ Creating well-defined equity principles and practices to guide daily staff behavior ☐ Developing/updating and assessing staff evaluation processes	See questions 8-9

HOW do you use an Equity Impact Assessment?

Equity impacts assessments can be used to improve just about any planning or decision-making process (see prior page for examples) across multiple divisions, departments, or teams in your organization.

Consider the following steps:

Identify relevant questions
- Determine what decision-making process your organization is focused on right now. See page 41 for examples.
- Find relevant assessment questions on page 44-45.

Ask questions with others
- Ask relevant assessment questions during decision-making processes at upcoming meetings and conversations.
- Engage community members, including residents, in the assessment process.

Respond to results
- Review answers to the assessment questions with colleagues in your organization.
- Determine the best way to respond to these findings (e.g., redesign programs, adjust strategic planning goals, adjust budget allocations, etc.).

TIP: Build needed capacities to use Equity Impact Assessments

Equity can be a new concept for many people. Consider what capacity-building individuals in your organization or group need before engaging in the Equity Impact Assessment Process.

For example, how can you help staff and leadership build a set of shared equity terms (e.g., equity vs. equality)? Recognize the structural causes of inequities? See their role in promoting equity?

See the **ABLe Manual Equity Supplement** for relevant resources and supports.

Equity Impact Assessment Phases

Assessments often include questions related to 4 common project phases organizations typically use in their work. These 4 project phases include efforts to:

- DEFINE and understand local problems
- DESIGN solutions
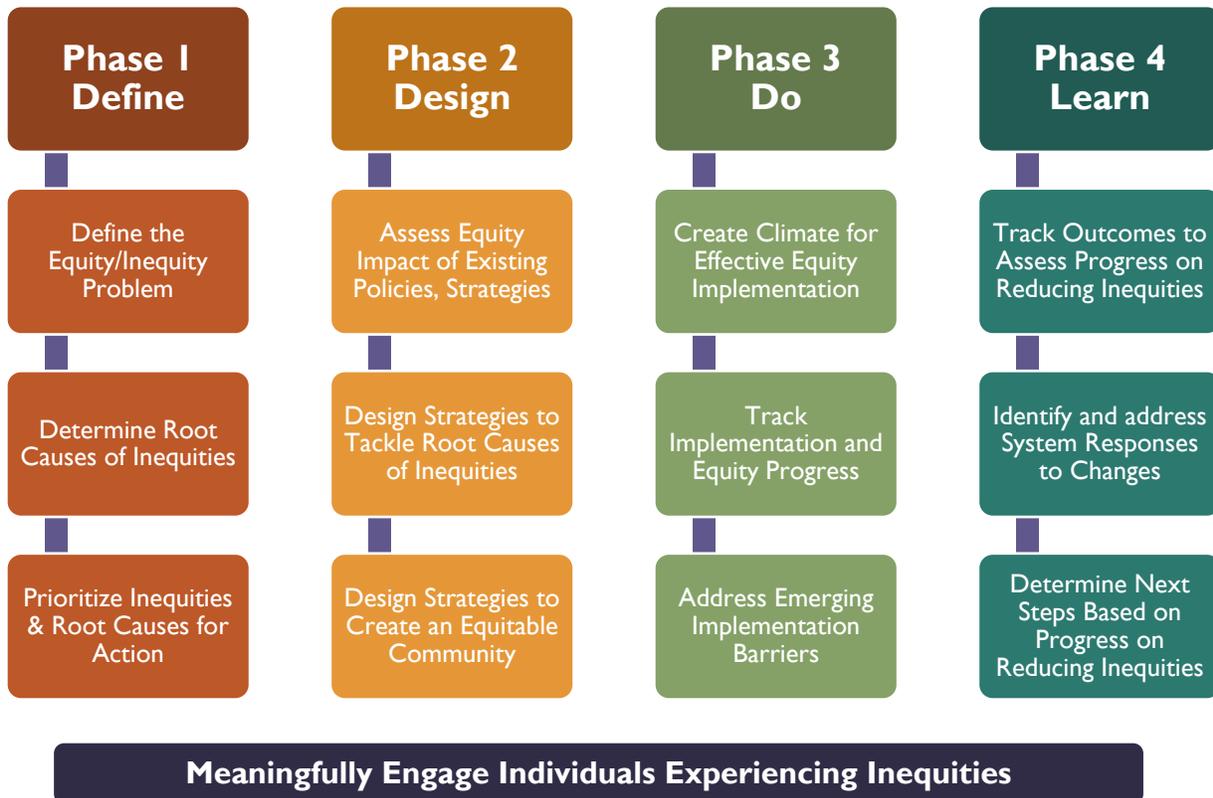- DO or implement action
- LEARN for continuous improvement.

The following diagram illustrates specific equity objectives an organization might pursue related to each of these 4 project phases.

The Equity Impact Assessment questions related to each of these phases are listed on the next page.

Example

If you are designing a program or initiative, see the DESIGN section of the assessment on page 44.

If you are implementing programs or strategies, see the DO section of the assessment on page 45.

Phase 1 Define	Phase 2 Design	Phase 3 Do	Phase 4 Learn
Define the Equity/Inequity Problem	Assess Equity Impact of Existing Policies, Strategies	Create Climate for Effective Equity Implementation	Track Outcomes to Assess Progress on Reducing Inequities
Determine Root Causes of Inequities	Design Strategies to Tackle Root Causes of Inequities	Track Implementation and Equity Progress	Identify and address System Responses to Changes
Prioritize Inequities & Root Causes for Action	Design Strategies to Create an Equitable Community	Address Emerging Implementation Barriers	Determine Next Steps Based on Progress on Reducing Inequities

Meaningfully Engage Individuals Experiencing Inequities

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Example Equity Impact Assessment Questions

The following are example Equity Impact Assessment questions groups into to the 4 common project phases. See ABLe Equity Impact Assessment Tool for more example assessment questions.

Phase	Equity Impact Assessment Questions
Define	**Define an Equity/Inequity Problem** 1. What disparities (e.g., differences in outcomes across groups) exist related to your organization's targeted outcomes? Which groups are experiencing these disparities? Are some groups disproportionally disadvantaged and advantaged? 2. Given this, which groups should be prioritized by your efforts? 3. What outcomes/indicators should be used to track progress on reducing these disparities? Which do residents from disadvantaged groups prioritize? What data can be used to assess these outcomes/indicators? **Determine Root Causes of Inequities** 4. What systemic root causes are driving these disparities/inequities? Consider mindsets, power, regulations, connections, resources, and service components. See ABLe Manual page 124-134 for details. 5. Which root causes do residents from disadvantaged groups identify and prioritize? **Prioritize Inequities & Root Causes for Action** 6. Which root causes are the most important to prioritize for action (e.g., have the biggest impact on affected groups, are prioritized by residents, etc.)? What outcomes/indicators should be used to assess progress on shifting these root causes? 7. What data can be collected to assess how affected groups experience these shifts in root causes?
Design	**Assess Equity Impact of Existing Policies, Strategies** 8. To what extent do existing or previously developed policies, budgets, decisions, practices, programs, or community plans address your prioritized root causes and how they are contributing to local inequities? How could you adjust these to better address the root causes? 9. What are the potential negative impacts of these existing policies, budgets, decisions, practices, programs, or community plans? Which groups of people/neighborhoods are/will be most disadvantaged? How can you eliminate or minimize these impacts– particularly for those experiencing the greatest inequities? 10. What recommendations do residents from groups/neighborhood experiencing inequities have about this situation? **Design Strategies to Tackle Root Causes of Inequities** 11. What new strategies could address your prioritized root causes and how they are contributing to local inequities? 12. What are the potential negative impacts of these new strategies? Which groups of people/neighborhoods are/will be most disadvantaged? How can you eliminate or minimize these impacts– particularly for those experiencing the greatest inequities? 13. What recommendations do residents from groups/neighborhood experiencing inequities have about how to design these strategies?

Phase	Equity Impact Assessment Questions
	Design Strategies to Create an Equitable Community 14. How can your strategies enhance… • Social and connective power and capacity within communities experiencing inequities (e.g., social networks, social capital, positive adult-youth relationships, etc.)? • Economic power and capacity within communities experiencing inequities (e.g., meaningful employment opportunities)? • Political power and capacity within communities experiencing inequities (e.g., local leadership, advocacy, activism, venues for political engagement)? • Learning power and capacity within communities experiencing inequities (e.g., gathering and using data, feedback loops with local organizations)?
Do	**Create a Climate for Effective Equity Implementation** 15. How are you meaningfully engaging groups experiencing targeted inequities (in addition to other relevant community partners) in carrying out your strategy(ies)? 16. How can you spread the word about this strategy to those who need to adopt it, and make sure they have the skills, knowledge, and capacity to implement it effectively? **Track Implementation and Equity Progress** 17. What rapid feedback data are you gathering to track the extent to which… • Relevant stakeholders/settings are adopting the strategy and using it effectively • The strategy is reaching and benefiting groups/settings experiencing targeted inequities • The strategy is having a strong enough effect to shift root causes driving inequities **Address Emerging Implementation Barriers** 18. How can you and other relevant individuals and settings address emerging barriers affecting the successful implementation of your strategies?
Learn	**Track Outcomes to Assess Progress on Reducing Inequities** 19. What are you learning about your efforts to reduce inequities? To what extent are targeted root causes starting to shift? Are these shifts benefiting the most disadvantaged populations? To what extent are these shifts starting to reduce targeted inequities? Why or why not? **Identify and Address System Responses to Changes** 20. How is the system responding to your equity efforts? What new opportunities and issues are emerging? How will you address these responses? **Determine Next Steps Based on Progress on Reducing Inequities** 21. How will you engage groups experiencing targeted inequities in making sense of these findings, including building their capacity to effectively engage in these processes? 22. Given what you are learning, how will you: • Expand or scale up efforts that are working? • Understand and address reasons why some efforts are not working? • Expand current partnerships to better address targeted health inequities and their root causes?

Questions adapted from Watson & Foster-Fishman (under review) and the **ABLe Equity Impact Assessment**

What are your next steps?

What are your next steps for starting to use an equity impact assessment process to enhance your organization's decision-making? Use the following action plan to help think through how to start.

Your Equity Assessment Action Plan			
When do you want to use this tool?	Who needs to be involved?	What capacity-building is needed?	What are your next steps?
[see the list on page 41 for ideas]	*[Which departments, teams, leaders, residents, community groups, etc.?]*	*[see bottom of page 42]*	
[see the list on page 41 for ideas]	*[Which departments, teams, leaders, residents, community groups, etc.?]*	*[see bottom of page 42]*	
[see the list on page 41 for ideas]	*[Which departments, teams, leaders, residents, community groups, etc.?]*	*[see bottom of page 42]*	
Add additional rows as necessary			

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Embed Equity Impact Assessment Practices

Use the following pages to plan how to make Equity Impact Assessments a habit within your work.

Add reminders into your forms and templates

One easy way to make the Equity Impact Assessment process a habit is to add prompts and reminders into all the protocols, templates, process guides, and systems you use on a daily basis within your organization and work. Use the table below to identify these opportunities.

Consider the following types of activities within your organization or effort:	What protocols, templates, guides, forms, or systems are used in these activities?	How could you embed prompts or fields directly into these items to use equity impact assessment questions?
Strategic planning or action planning		
Grant writing		
Program Design		
Evaluation efforts		
Organizational development		

Align your organizational context to support equity impact assessment

Organizations don't always have conditions in place to support new habits. For example:
- Staff and leaders sometimes don't see a need to use equity impact assessments
- New staff orientation processes don't include capacity-building on equity impact assessment

Use the table below to reflect on what might need to shift within your organization to better support making equity impact assessment as a habit within daily work.

Consider the following within your organization or effort:	To what extent do these promote the use of equity impact assessment?	How could you shift these to better support the use of equity impact assessment?
Shared Mindsets about: • the importance of addressing local inequities and promoting equity • the need for and benefits of using equity impact assessment in decision-making processes		
Policies impacting how decisions are made related to: • Strategic planning • Grant writing • Budget allocations • Service design and delivery • Evaluation		
Human Resources • Job descriptions, hiring • Staff orientations, professional development • Evaluations, annual review criteria • Supports		
Other:		

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Resources for Additional Learning

Use the following resources to learn more about Equity Impact Assessments.

Health Equity Impact Assessments

- HEIA Resources, Wellesley Institute: Advancing Urban Health
  http://www.wellesleyinstitute.com/topics/health-equity/heath-equity-impact-assessment/

- Health Equity Assessment Tool: A Users' Guide (New Zealand)
  https://www.health.govt.nz/system/files/documents/publications/health-equity-assessment-tool-guide.pdf

- Health Equity Impact Assessment (HEIA) Workbook (Ontario, Canada)
  http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/heia/docs/workbook.pdf

Racial Equity Impact Assessments

- Racial Equity Toolkit: An Opportunity to Operationalize Equity. Government Alliance on Race and Equity. http://racialequityalliance.org/newsite/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/GARE-Racial_Equity_Toolkit.pdf

- Racial Equity Impact Assessment. Race Forward
  https://www.raceforward.org/sites/default/files/RacialJusticeImpactAssessment_v5.pdf

- Race Equity and Inclusion Action Guide, Annie E. Casey Foundation
  http://www.aecf.org/resources/race-equity-andinclusion-action-guide/

- The Center for Social Inclusion http://www.centerforsocialinclusion.org/

- The Government Alliance on Race and Equity http://racialequityalliance.org/

- Resource Guide: Advancing Racial Equity and Transforming Government:
  http://racialequityalliance.org/newsite/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/GARE-Resource_Guide.pdf

- Racial Impact Statements by the Sentencing Project
  http://www.sentencingproject.org/publications/racial-impact-statements/

- "Making an Impact: Advancing Racial Equity in Schools" (video), bit.ly/RYY9eU

- Tools for Thought: Using Racial Equity Impact Assessments for Effective Policymaking. Annie E Casey Foundation. http://www.aecf.org/resources/tools-for-thought-a-race-for-results-case-study/

Change Agent Field Guide References

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