

Race and Equity Working Assumptions

- Race matters: almost every indicator of well-being and social success shows significant disparities by race.
- Disparities are created and maintained, often inadvertently, through institutionalized policies and practices that contain barriers to opportunity.
- It is only possible to close equity gaps by using strategies determined through an intentional focus on racial disparities and their root causes.
- If opportunities in all key areas of well-being are equitable, then equitable results will follow.
- Given the right message, analysis and tools, people will work toward racial equity.

(The above was adapted from Annie E. Casey Race Matters Toolkit)

What is an Equity Lens?

An “Equity Lens” is nothing more than a critical thinking exercise to help cultivate and maintain an equity mindset. It is the umbrella under which a Racial Equity Tool is devised and used. It is a means to think about operationalizing Equity. However, it is important to know what questions to ask. There are many versions of an Equity Lens, some very involved and some just a few questions.

Most importantly, almost all Equity Lens documents or tools, no matter their focus, emphasize five areas:

- Underlying Assumptions
- Data
- Benefits and Burdens
- Involvement of the most impacted in decision-making
- Mitigation Efforts

Basic Equity Lens Questions

The goal of the Equity Lens Questions should be to unearth or bring to light racial inequities that may be created or magnified by a policy, practice, procedure, or program, new or modified.

NOTE: *Asking questions does not imply judgement or accusation. It is simply a means to determine the status quo, whether there are detrimental outcomes or unintended consequences to certain groups, and to set a baseline from which to improve. These questions can be asked in almost every evaluation process.*

1. What are the assumptions underlying this thinking, policy, procedure, or practice?
2. How could this thinking, policy, procedure, or practice burden communities of color? (women, LGBTQ, etc.)
3. How do you involve the most impacted in the decision-making process?
4. What are some strategies for reducing or eliminating negative impacts?