

EQUITY AND EMPOWERMENT LENS

LENS AT A GLANCE

Ready to Use the Lens

Now that you have reviewed the background, history, theoretical framework, and organizational readiness summary of the Equity & Empowerment Lens (E & E Lens) you are ready to begin using the components we have laid out to more thoughtfully examine your organization. Below you will find a simple reminder about the underlying concepts present in the actual Lens questions, and tips for maximizing your use of the tool.

At its core, the Lens guides the participant to:

- You are here**
- ➔ **Assess** your current organizational capacity for equity work.
 - ➔ **Describe** current direction and strategies.
 - ➔ **Identify** inequities and injustices in the current issue.
 - Reflect upon and understand** your strengths and challenges.
 - Enhance what is leading** to equity and empowerment.
 - Eliminate strategies** and root causes leading to inequities and injustices.
 - Celebrate** successes and improvements.

What are the foundational concepts and theories guiding these questions?

This basic version of the Lens is based on the foundational assumptions found in the Concept Papers (see pages 56 to 99). Essentially, the Lens asks questions in the areas of **People, Place, Processes, and Power**, and seeks to identify underlying patterns, barriers, and opportunities leading to equity and racial justice. (See *Introduction* for more information on connection to People, Place, Processes, and Power).

What are some guiding tips to complete this assessment?

Before beginning, make a personal and organizational commitment to a specific Lens application process. If you plan to fully apply the Lens, ensure that you have allocated appropriate resources, staffing, and time to move from analysis into meaningful action. If you intend to utilize the Lens to examine a particular institutional dilemma, make sure that you are prepared to shift your decisions in alignment with your reflection and discoveries. If you are interested in using elements of the Lens (e.g. *Concept Papers*) to promote organizational readiness and capacity building, be transparent with your staff about the ultimate goal being application at a broader level. The following suggestions will help guide your work at any initial capacity.

Creating the Space, Setting the Tone


- Arrange to host the Lens application session in a comfortable, private location with limited distractions and space for people to think, brainstorm, and discuss in a variety of ways (e.g. large group, small group, pairs, flip chart, individual notes, etc.)
- In advance, think about who should be in the room in order to meet the goal of representation from communities most affected by inequities. Provide reasonable notice about the day and time for the session to demonstrate the value you place on their presence and to increase the likelihood of their participation.
- Be intentional with time and goals for each session; if you intend to move through the whole Lens in one session, ensure ample time for completion to alleviate the loss of momentum if the conversation has to stop mid-stream because of time limitations.
- When introducing the Lens, explain the broad goals of the initiative and the specific goals of its application in your setting so your team understands the context and what they can expect of the process and outcomes.

Moving Through the Lens



- Moving through the process as a team? Consider breaking down the Lens questions in manageable chunks over a few meetings, and utilize meaningful engagement methods as a way to integrate active listening, diverse viewpoints, challenging conversations, thoughtful communication, and collective wisdom around data-sharing and recommendation creation.
- Strive to have the analysis completed by people who bring different racial and economic perspectives to the table, including communities who identify as people of color and as Caucasian. Diverse perspectives will lead to more robust solutions and bring about a more equitable analysis.
- Racism, class oppression, and gender inequity are often three major drivers of inequities. Think across these three lines in your answers to questions about who is being affected, how, and why, paying particular attention to communities of color, immigrants, and refugees.
- The *Concept Papers* are referenced by icon to questions below as a resource. Look back at the *Concept Papers* for more information, and / or over a longer period of time, commit to reading through them to build overall capacity.
- Some of your answers might be 'I don't know,' or 'we have low capacity in this area.' Honest and accurate answers will help you better determine where to start in terms of creating upcoming actions.
- If possible, engage an equity expert and someone well-versed in data as part of this analysis to ensure adherence to equity and racial justice principles and provide more relevant information for your discussion.

Equity and Empowerment Lens Questions




Basic Intro Questions

1. **Describe the policy/decision/program/practice/etc. used for this Lens application.**
 - a. Are social justice and racial justice clearly stated in the vision, mission, and goals?
 - b. Who does this intend to serve, and who is actually served?
 - c. How is this funded, and what are the limitations?
2. **What data or evidence guides the policy/decision/program/practice/etc.?** 
(See Evaluation Summary chapter, p. 51)
 - a. How does your organization currently **utilize** existing data to inform your practice?
 - b. How does your organization make data available for employees and community members to easily access and understand?







Connection to People

3. **Describe the groups that will be most affected by and concerned with this policy/decision/program/practice/etc.?**
4. **What are the benefits and burdens that communities experience with the policy/decision/program/practice/etc.?**  
 - a. What factors may be producing and perpetuating these positive and negative effects on communities?

Connection to Place

5. **There are three main areas of sustainability and equity (environmental, economic, and social justice) What impacts do communities of color, immigrants, and refugees experience in these areas?**  
6. **How are public resources and investments distributed geographically (such as funding, housing, education, transportation)?** 
 - a. What trends do you see in how resources are flowing in and out of certain areas?

Connection to Process and Power

7. **What barriers do you and your staff encounter in making changes directly related to equity and racial justice? (i.e., obligational, political, institutional racism, emotional, legal, programmatic, managerial, financial, internal biases)**  
8. **How does your organization engage the community in planning, decision-making, and evaluation?**  
 - a. What policies, processes and social relationships meaningfully and intentionally *include* communities most affected by inequities?
 - b. What policies, processes and social relationships contribute to the *exclusion* of communities most affected by inequities?
 - b.i. For policies and processes that exclude, what actions or strategies could build inclusion?
9. **How does the policy, decision, program, practice build community capacity and power in communities most affected by inequities?**  

LENS AT A GLANCE WORKSHEET

This worksheet provides a few guiding prompts, resources, and space to answer the questions within *Lens At A Glance*. During sessions with teams, this format has been helpful for individuals to jot down notes, or for a note-taker to cut and paste into Word to record the conversation and analysis.

Consider also using the *Concept Papers* as a resource for more thoroughly addressing the questions. Notice the icons that indicate which *Concept Paper* relates to the question. To know which icon is linked to which *Concept Paper*, refer back to the *Table of Contents*.

Before you begin completing the worksheet, read through the *Lens At A Glance* for guidance on how complete this assessment stage.

Before completing the Moving Into Action Guide, reflect upon the notes you have taken on this worksheet and consider the topics in the *Concept Papers*.

Basic Intro Questions

1. Describe the policy/decision/program/practice used for this Lens application.

- a. Are social justice and racial justice clearly stated in the vision, mission, and goals?
(See Appendix 3: Organizational Checklist for Racial Justice, section on Racial Justice Policy and Plan for ideas)

- b. Who does this intend to serve, and who is actually served?

- c. How is this funded, and what are the limitations?



2. What data or evidence guides the policy/decision/program/practice/etc.?

- a. How does your organization currently utilize existing data to inform your practice?
- Share all demographic data, maps, qualitative experience, reports, etc., used to guide your work.

- What is the data telling you about inequities experienced in our communities?
Pay particular attention to inequities experienced by communities of color, immigrants, and refugees.

WORKSHEET

- Did you use reports/data that were based on community priorities and culturally-specific feedback (paying particular attention to reports on communities of color, immigrants, and refugees)? If so, how?

A few examples include: State of Black Oregon Report, Coalition of Communities of Color Reports, State of Equity Report (from State Office of Equity and Inclusion), Multnomah County's Report Cards on Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities, Racial Equity Strategy Guide, visionPDX, etc.

- b. How does your organization make data available for employees and community members to easily access and understand?
 - Is your data transparent and available to employees and community members in a way that is easily understood, available, and interactive? If not, how can you begin to make it so?

Connection to People

(Write answers for #3 and #4 in the table below as guided)

3. Describe the groups that will be most affected by and concerned with this policy/decision/program/practice/etc.

Insert your answers in Column 1 below: Consider populations within racial/ethnic, income development, gender, and ability groupings, as well as geography.

- Pay particular attention to the effects on communities of color, immigrants, and refugees.
- Consider impacts to staff as well.

WORKSHEET



4. What are the benefits and burdens that communities experience with the current policy/decision/program/practice/etc.?



Insert your answers in Columns 2 and 3 below: Potential Positive and Negative Impacts.

Consider the impact to:

- The various sectors (physical, mental, spiritual, contextual)
- The overall distribution of resources
- Meaningful involvement in decision-making processes, which not only includes access, but the ability to influence the outcome based upon participation

- a. What factors may be producing and perpetuating these negative and positive effects on communities?

Insert your answers in Column 4 (table).

Time is needed to answer this question, and the first response is not always the most thorough. Possible root factors or causes can initially be things like 'lack of funding,' or 'the ending of a program.' However, continue to ask 'why' after you get your first answer. Why is there lack of funding? Why is a program ending? Incorporate deeper possible reasons like: biases, lack of awareness based on prioritization of other values, any of the -isms, the five faces of oppression, etc. You will also find there might be some overlap between this question and Question #7.

Table: Connection to People

COLUMN 1	COLUMN 2	COLUMN 3	COLUMN 4
<p>Demographics (Group affected – be as specific as possible) <i>Note: this includes an internal analysis, too: are staff affected?</i></p>	<p>Differential Impacts (Positive - benefit)</p>	<p>Differential Impacts (Negative - burden)</p>	<p>Root causes for benefits and burdens (mention the benefit/burden the root cause or oppression links to)</p>
<p>Etc.</p>			

Connection to Place



5. In the three main areas of sustainability and equity (environmental, economic, and social justice): What are the impacts in these areas experienced by communities most affected by inequities?

Pay particular attention to communities of color, immigrants, and refugees.

- Environmental Justice: Environmental impacts in areas such as access to nature, restoration of natural systems, preservation/increase of green space, air quality improvements, active transportation options? How are cultures and populations who have been historically connected to land and water included in decision-making around the particular policy/program/etc.? *See Appendix 2 for the main principles of Environmental Justice.*

- Economic Justice: Economic impacts in areas such as workforce development/training opportunities, Minority Women Emerging Small Businesses (MWESB), contracting/purchasing, support of regional economy, greater opportunities for income development, etc.

Helpful prompts for contracting/purchasing/MWESB areas:

Taken from Question #1 in the Resource Allocation Version of the Lens:

Consider all suppliers of goods and services that the organization purchases.

- Does your budget process have supplier diversity goals? (e.g. racial and ethnic, gender, small/large business suppliers.)
- What goals promote diversity outside of the organization in addition to internally?
- How does the proposed action support MWESB (Minority, Women, and Emerging Small Businesses)?
 - Building capacity for MWESB contractors? Examples include: technical assistance, educative online materials, etc.
 - Tracking who the contractors currently are (especially in areas that don't require bids, and do not already have MWESB in their language)?

WORKSHEET

- Social Justice: Social impacts in areas such as health, education, housing, public outreach and education, community capacity-building, access to decision-making.

(See Concept Papers on Social Determinants of Health and Inequity, Empowerment Theory and Practice)



- 6. How are public resources and investments distributed geographically (such as funding, housing, education, transportation)?** *What is the flow of resources across different geographic regions? What patterns might exist between the flow of resources (past, current, future), displacement of populations, or any forms of marginalization?*

Connection to Process and Power



- 7. What barriers do you and your staff encounter in making changes directly related to equity and racial justice?**

Examples include: obligatory (federal/state/grant requirements), institutional racism in structure/policy, political, emotional, personal biases manifesting in the workplace, financial, programmatic, managerial, legal, anything around the hierarchical structure of the organization).



- 8. How does your organization engage the community in planning, decision-making, and evaluation?**

Think about people internal as well as external to your organization, across position class and position within the communities. Pay particular attention to communities of color, immigrants, and refugees.

- a. What policies, processes and social relationships meaningfully and intentionally include communities most affected by inequities?

- b. What policies, processes and social relationships contribute to the exclusion of communities most affected by inequities?

- For policies and processes that exclude, what actions or strategies could build inclusion?



- 9. How does the policy, decision, program, practice build community capacity and power in communities most affected by inequities?**

Community capacity focus areas: active participation, leadership, rich support networks, skills and resources, critical reflection, sense of community, understanding of history, articulation of values, and access to power.

With this analysis, you are now ready to Move Into Action!