

# BUILDING EQUITY INTO YOUR BBRC PLANS

Equity is a core priority of the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA), which seeks to “advance Equity across America.”

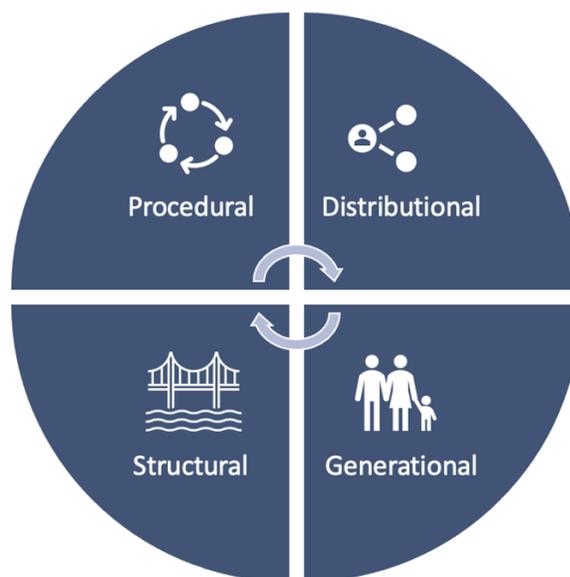
Equity is the first of EDA’s Investment Priorities: economic development through the planning or implementation of projects that advance Equity across America through investments that directly benefit 1) one or more traditionally underserved populations (PDF), including but not limited to women, Black, Latino, and Indigenous and Native American persons, Asian Americans, and Pacific Islanders or 2) underserved communities within geographies that have been systemically and/or systematically denied a full opportunity to participate in aspects of economic prosperity such as Tribal Lands, Persistent Poverty Counties, and rural areas with demonstrated, historical underservice. ([read more](#))

## Equity Frameworks

### *Equity in Sustainability*

When thinking about equity as a FRAMEWORK, one approach is to examine equity as having four components<sup>1</sup>.

## 4 Types of Equity\*

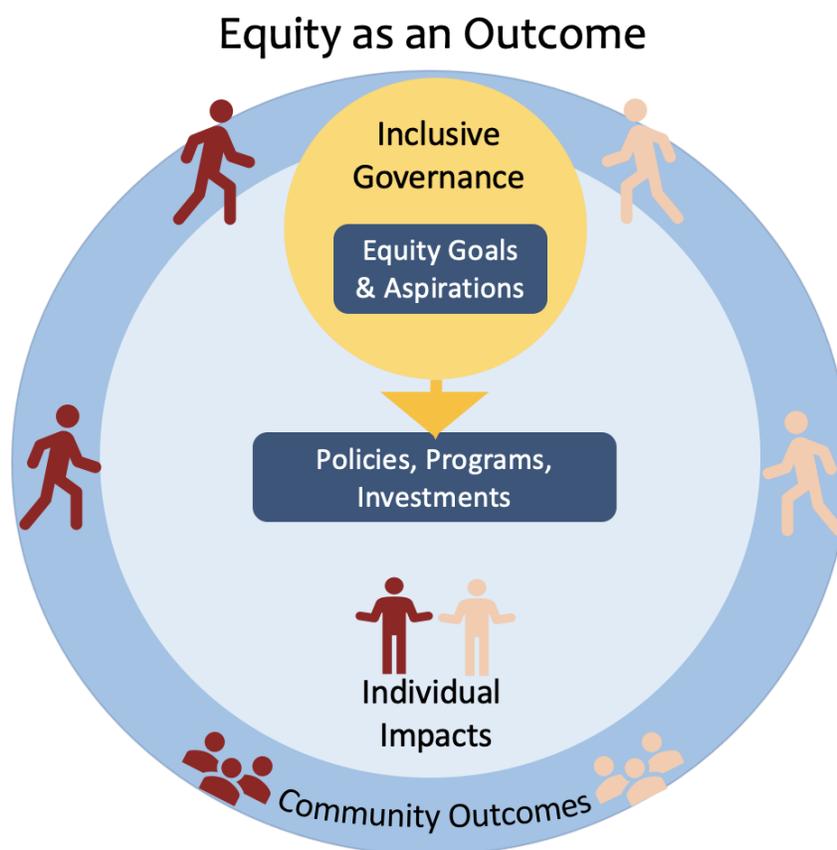


\* Adapted from The Urban Sustainability Directors Network's *Equity in Sustainability* (2014)

<sup>1</sup> *Equity in Sustainability*, The Urban Sustainability Directors Network (USDN), 2014

1. **Procedural:** inclusive, accessible, and authentic engagement and representation in processes to develop or implement programs and policies.
2. **Distributional:** programs and policies result in fair distribution of benefits and burdens across all segments of a community, prioritizing those with highest need.
3. **Structural:** decision-makers institutionalize accountability; decisions are made with a recognition of the historical, cultural, and institutional dynamics and structures that have routinely advantaged privileged groups in society and resulted in chronic, cumulative disadvantage for subordinated groups.
4. **Generational:** decisions consider historical conditions and exclusion along with future generational impacts and don't result in unfair burdens on future generations.

### *Equity as an Outcome*



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When thinking about Equity as an **OUTCOME** of development or programmatic implementation, a guiding principle is to reduce disparities and provide more equitable quality of life (e.g., living wage employment, affordable housing) through public and private investments, programs, and policies.

In order to assess whether or not your equity goals are translating into equitable outcomes, you will need to develop your own equity framework (adapting it from existing frameworks, as you wish), the equity indicators you want to track, the data you will draw upon to monitor your progress towards these outcomes (qualitative and quantitative), and how and when you will communicate this data to ensure accountability and transparency. Key here is also the disaggregation of data by race, ethnicity, geography, etc., in order to assess impacts on particular population segments.

Your project will have impacts on individuals from Historically Excluded Communities – tracked by the number of people employed, the number of BIPOC business owners mentored, etc. Yet also worth examining are the impacts on communities as a whole. If individuals have such a difficult commute to access a new job, do they move away from their neighborhood or leave the job? Are people from outside these communities relocating to the project area in such great numbers that they are displacing people from Historically Excluded Communities, who can no longer afford to live in their neighborhoods?

Lastly, how will the lessons learned from your analysis of your equity data change the governance, leadership and stakeholder participation that drives your project? You may realize the need to bring on additional partners or increase your level of engagement with communities you may have overlooked.

*Equity as a Process*



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Equity is an integral part of an iterative and ongoing governance **PROCESS**. This process requires inclusive engagement of all impacted stakeholders and conflict resolution that accounts for past history and negative legacies of development.

**1. Identify the Affected Stakeholders**

Which stakeholders you want to reach, include and engage? To identify these stakeholders, you will want to examine the historical, cultural, and institutional dynamics and structures that shape the context in which you are working. What (and where) are the Historically Excluded Communities? What are their potential stakes in your project(s).

**2. Invite the Affected Stakeholders to the Table**

Consider the organizations, institutions, community and civic leaders who have already built relationships of trust with people in the Historically Excluded Communities you want to impact. If included as coalition partners, these individuals and entities can help invite community members to the table for decision-making at key points in the processes of your projects.

**3. Mitigate Barriers to Access**

How have the communities you seek to impact been excluded not only from the impacts of economic development but from the decision-making processes that could help change these inequities? Be thoughtful about where and when you hold community meetings, for instance, or where you offer skill-building training classes for workers.

**4. Increase the Capacity to Participate**

How might you keep all participants well informed about your project? Make sure to translate technical industry-specific jargon to plain language terms that are more accessible to community members. Consider how to level the playing field of participation. Include all the information someone would need to know in your outreach materials, community meetings, advertisements and other engagements so that stakeholders can participate in a fully informed way.

**5. Facilitate Dialogue vs. Debate.**

How will you facilitate a meaningful exchange versus a shouting match? Set ground rules for engagement and create an atmosphere of respect, in which everyone's lived experience and opinion is valued. Spend the time to build relationships and so that stakeholders can share their perspectives in an atmosphere of integrity. If there isn't time to build relationships in an initial meeting, 1) acknowledge that reality and that people have experience trauma and disappointment in similar processes and 2) commit to making the time in the future to learn everyone's perspectives (through small group or individual engagement)

**6. Build Accountability & Transparency**

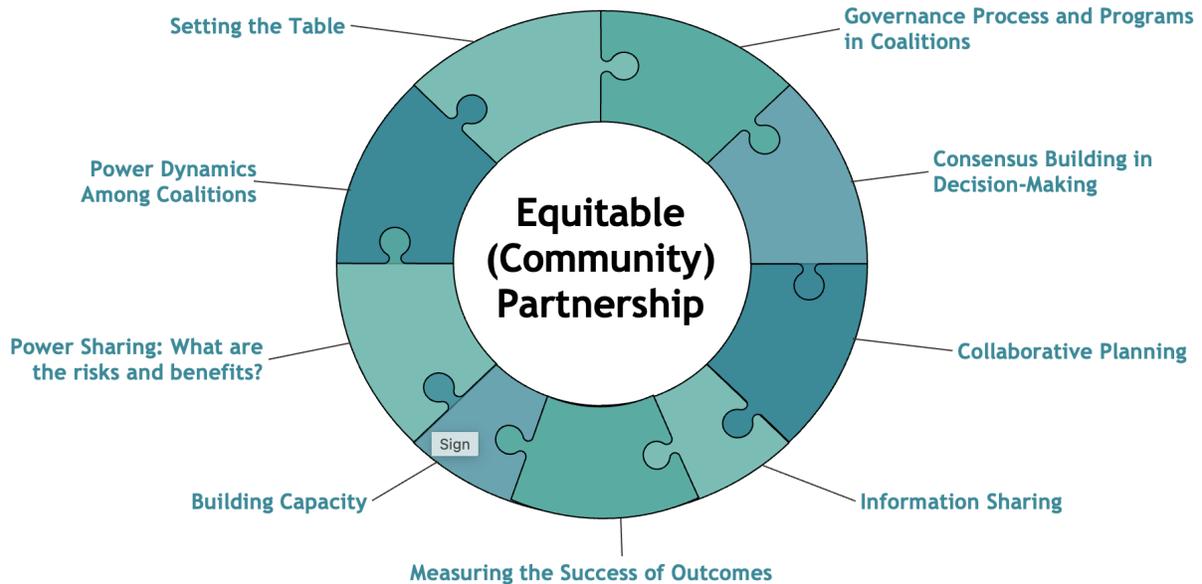
People and organizations want to know that their participation is making a difference. Monitoring and sharing the equity data related to your project will build trust and engagement. State from the outset that you will provide status reports and data metrics, and then follow through.

**7. Resolve Conflict and Build Consensus**

In coalition and community meetings, disagreements are inevitable. How will you ensure that coalition partners don't have their voices drowned out? Trained facilitators can help as well as

governance structures imbued with power-sharing functionality (e.g. steering committee, working groups, terms of reference).

## Creating Equitable Partnerships



- **Setting the Table**
  - Include historically excluded communities in decision-making
  - Decide how coalition partners will ensure accountability for inclusion
  - Clarify and communicate the partners' equity-related roles and responsibilities
- **Power Dynamics among Coalitions**
  - Understand power dynamics and context
  - Take partner capacity into consideration
  - Determine how you will manage disagreements
  - Put procedures/policies in place that include not exclude (no Robert's Rules of Order).
- **Power Sharing: What are the Risks and Benefits?**
  - Don't rule out "unlikely partnerships."
  - Be cautious about excluding or rejecting partners just because they do not "tow the line" on a particular issue.
  - Collaborating rather than competing or avoiding conflict.
  - In other words, equitizing the process—ensuring equity at every step.
- **Building Capacity (making sure people have the information and ability to be part of decision-making)**
  - Providing information and education
  - Authentically engaging stakeholders

- Listen and meet people where they are
    - Don't make assumptions; Ask!
- Governance Processes and Programs in Coalitions
  - Equitable decision-making processes that articulate...
    - How policies are established
    - How decisions are made
    - Who has a voice in decision-making
    - Who is held accountable
- Consensus Building in Decision-Making (the process of deliberating and finalizing a decision, as well as the social and political effects of using that decision-making process)
  - Define shared outcomes
  - Surface issues and conflicts
  - Reach agreement around approach
  - "A meeting of the minds"
  - Structure
    - Steering Committee
    - Working Groups
    - Terms of Reference (See JSA's Terms of Reference and Ground Rules template)
      - Purpose
      - Ground Rules
      - Behavioral Expectations
    - No voting
- Collaborative Planning
  - Stakeholders and Partners...
    - Have their "Fingerprints on the Plan"
    - Participate in all decisions and see their communities benefit
    - Access ongoing opportunities to influence the plan
- Information Sharing
  - Information should...
    - Be freely available
    - Be accessible
    - Consider all audiences
    - Build trust through transparency
- Measuring the Success of Outcomes
  - Did we do what we said we would do?
  - Did we solve the problem we intended to solve?