

Using the Racial Equity Impact Tool in Crisis Response and Recovery

*There is potential during crisis to have existing racial and economic disparities exacerbated. Often times crisis is more acutely felt within communities of color and low wealth communities. The decisions made during times of crisis have the potential to result in both immediate and long-term impacts. To facilitate consideration of racial equity, the following should act as a **framework and guidance**, and are intended to aid the centering of equity in response and recovery efforts.*

Continue to make equity a priority

Hennepin County prioritizes equity in times of crisis and crisis recovery. Aid and support should focus on the communities who need it most and that are most vulnerable to the impacts of crisis. Both short-term and long-term impacts of proposed actions or decisions should occur.

Equity-based decisions can be fast if the right people are already in the room

During an emergency or crisis there is a tension between acting quickly and acting equitably. There is sometimes a misconception that making equity-based decisions or completing the Racial Equity Impact Tool process takes too much time. That does not have to be the case. Even with a short time frame, asking questions relating to racial equity can have a meaningful impact.

Include staff with a variety of experiences, backgrounds, and skills in decision-making processes. These voices should be incorporated into the regular response structures so that they have the ability to accelerate solutions and immediately elevate disparate impacts to communities.

Provide transparency of decisions and data

During an emergency or crisis, it is imperative that we make concerted efforts to maintain clear and transparent communication as information becomes available, and decisions are made and implemented. Providing the community with information to assist them in understanding issues, alternatives and/or solutions amidst the crisis will go a long way in building trust across the organization and with the community.

Ask, at a minimum, the central Racial Equity Impact Tool (REIT) questions

- **Who was involved in making the decision and what data was used to guide it?**
If voices from a particular impacted group/community are not represented, determine who you will call on to help address equity concerns. Balance the charge to make swift decisions with data collection and engaging the community; consider what resources and community relationships you already have that you can lean on to help inform critical decisions.
- **What are the racial equity impacts of this particular decision?**
Consider populations that are experiencing health and economic inequities in your community already (e.g., people of color, people with disabilities, LGBTQ populations, native and indigenous communities) and any additional strain or potential barriers they may face in light of the crisis.
- **Who will benefit from or be burdened by the particular decision?**
What are potential unintended consequences? Identify groups and communities that are most likely to be impacted. Have the longer-term impacts been considered in addition to the immediate?
- **Are there strategies to mitigate the unintended consequences?**
What are the ways the proposed action can be modified to enhance positive impacts or reduce negative impacts? Are there strategies that not only provide stabilization during the crisis, but are also bridges to a more equitable future?

Resource from Policy Link

PolicyLink is a national research and action institute advancing racial and economic equity by Lifting Up What Works.® PolicyLink advocates for groundbreaking policy changes that enable everyone, especially people of color, to be economically secure, live in healthy communities of opportunity, and benefit from a just society. They offer the following set of principles - listed below – to deliberately solve for issues facing low-income communities and communities of color during crisis (COVID-19). More information can be found here:

<https://www.policylink.org/covid19-and-race/principles>

Center Racial Equity

- Collect and use disaggregated data.
- Plan for the most vulnerable.
- Implement race-conscious approaches to counter persistent racial inequities.

Put People First

- Support essential frontline workers.
- Guarantee incomes.
- Freeze costs and protect people from losses.
- Prioritize people over corporations.

Invest in Community Infrastructure

- Fortify community-based organizations.
- Provide financial support for state and local governments.
- Invest in physical infrastructure in high-need communities.

Build an Equitable Economy

- Ensure economic security during the crisis.
- Use stimulus funds to build the next economy.
- Forge a new social contract that enables shared prosperity.

Protect and Expand Community Voice and Power

- Center community voice in policymaking and spending.
- Protect the right to vote and increase access to the ballot box.
- Remove barriers to organizing and include labor unions in pandemic response planning.