

Pathways to Equity at Scale

Appendix

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In January 2021, the Biden administration released an executive order, Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities through the Federal Government, which prompted federal agencies to release equity action plans to advance equity in their organizations and programs. This appendix to the Urban Institute brief “Pathways to Equity at Scale: An Analysis of the 2022 Federal Equity Action Plans and Recommendations for 2023 Plans” contains the rubric our team used to evaluate parts of those plans, including how the agencies are thinking about the definition of equity and historic conditions resulting in present-day inequities; the agencies’ priorities and focus around equity and how they are approaching programs, policies, engagement, and partnerships; how the agencies plan to support and resource its efforts, including what kinds of infrastructure and implementation mechanisms they will put in place; and how they plan to practice accountability, measure progress, and sustain their work. We invite you to utilize this as a tool for your work and adapt it as needed. The rubric draws from a combination of equity maturity and equity evaluation models and from our own research.

Acknowledgment of Present Barriers and Past Harm

The following questions examine how the organization is thinking about the definition of equity and historic conditions resulting in present day inequities. These questions illustrate the underlying frameworks and theory of change the agency is employing as it relates to equity.

Focus Area	Questions	Notes
Paradigms and Definitions	1. How is the agency defining equity? a. What is its articulated North Star?	
	2. Which communities are mentioned? (The search terms for underserved communities in our dictionary are: AAPI, Asian, Pacific Islander, Alaskan, Native American, BIPOC, Black, Latinx, Disabled, LGBTQ+, Rural, and Women (includes exact and near-match terms) a. Does the plan mention any other specific communities of focus not listed above?	
History	3. How does the plan acknowledge groups that were intentionally or unintentionally excluded from the program/service at any point during its history?	
	4. How does their vision for equity incorporate a recognition of past harm specifically related to the agency's purview?	
Drivers of Inequity	5. How does the plan discuss barriers to equitable access?	
	6. What is the "problem" the agency is trying to solve? What does it assume? What does it miss?	

Impact

The following questions examine the priorities and focus of the organization as well as how it is approaching programs, policies, engagement, partnership, etc. These questions illuminate how the organization is defining impact and how they are seeking to align their priorities accordingly.

Focus Area	Questions	Notes
Priorities	1. What are specific goals and activities outlined in the plan? Which ones seem particularly compelling?	
	2. How does the agency prioritize its goals and activities? What criteria does the plan cite? Which groups are prioritized in the goals of the plan?	
	3. How will the goals and activities identified solve the aforementioned problem? How will the goals and activities identified address historic harm under the purview of this agency?	
Programs	4. What kinds of programmatic changes does the plan propose or include (eligibility, access, outreach, etc.)? To what extent do these align or address the problems the agency is trying to solve?	
	5. Which barriers to participation or completion of their programs has the agency identified?	
Policies	6. What kinds of policy changes does this plan propose or include (examples: elimination, expansion, etc.)?	
Procurement	7. What procurement or grantmaking processes are outlined? How is procurement discussed as a specific lever for advancing equity in the implementation (or other areas) of the plan?	

Engagement	<p>8. How does the plan describe the process of identifying its key stakeholders? Who are the groups identified as program beneficiaries or stakeholders?</p> <p>a. What stakeholders appear to be missing from the plan?</p>	
	<p>9. How does the plan outline how program beneficiaries (if applicable) were engaged in the development of their agency priorities? How inclusive was the agency's community and stakeholder engagement process?</p>	
	<p>10. Does the plan discuss language accessibility and other accessibility in its community engagement efforts?</p> <p>a. If yes, our text mining dictionary looks for the following terms: "language", "limited english proficiency", "translation services", 'visually impaired', 'hearing impaired', 'ASL', 'non-english speaking'.</p> <p>b. Are there any other key terms in the plan we should add?</p>	
Partners	<p>11. Which federal partners has the agency identified for collaboration? Why are these useful (or why not)?</p>	
	<p>12. Which external partners (non-Federal) has the agency identified for collaboration? Why are these useful (or why not)?</p>	
	<p>13. How does their selection of partners reflect a wholistic view of the problem(s) the agency is trying to address?</p>	

Action

The following questions examine how the organization plans to support and resource its efforts including what kind of infrastructure and implementation mechanisms it will put into place. These questions demonstrate how the organization is planning to take action to advance equity and what internal investments it will make to ensure success.

Focus Area	Questions	Notes
Internal capacity	1. How does the agency outline their plan to build the capacity (including knowledge and skill) of its staff to advance equity? (if they propose a training, what detail or priorities do they include)	
	2. How does the plan identify priorities related to internal culture, process, and policy?	
	3. What plans does the agency have to sustain this effort over time including but not limited to: internal infrastructure, ongoing learning, regular organizational assessments?	
Staffing	4. Does the plan detail the agency's commitment to staffing the implementation of the plan?	
Implementation	5. What timeline for implementation and/or measurement does the plan include?	
	6. Does this responsibility of implementation fall on more than one person, office, or function?	
	7. Does the agency have a plan to communicate progress internally and externally?	

Accountability

The following questions examine how the organization plans to practice accountability, measure progress and sustain the work over time. These questions highlight what data sources the organization will utilize to understand its impact and how the work will be sustained.

Focus Area	Questions	Notes
Data and Measures of Success	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What outcomes does the agency propose to measure its potential impact on equity? What data sources are listed? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. (if different outcomes are listed for different goals, bullet each pair) 	
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. What does the agency list as measures of successful implementation of priorities outlined in the plan? 	
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Does the plan discuss accountability measures for its implementation? How do these differ from typical outcome measures the agency uses to monitor its performance? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. If yes, our text mining dictionary looks for the following words "accountability", "accountable", "community feedback", "performance metric(s)". b. Are there any other key terms for accountability measures mentioned in the plan? c. What quantitative and qualitative data are used for accountability measures? What non-administrative quantitative data are used or proposed? 	
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. How does the agency use data to drive its priorities? How does it utilize new/additional information released in datasets, reports, tools etc.? Has it identified new/additional target populations? 	
Internal Infrastructure	Has the agency established a position responsible for data management/collection such as a Chief Data Officer? If yes, what is that position called?	

Racial Equity	
Questions	Notes
1. Does this agency definition or discussion of equity include structural racism? If so, please paste the relevant text in the Notes section.	
2. Does the agency articulate relevant history of racial inequity? If so, please paste the relevant text in the Notes section.	
3. Does the agency describe a practice of disaggregating data by race and ethnicity? If so, please paste the relevant text in the Notes section.	
4. Does the agency identify partners that are representative of BIPOC communities?	
5. Does the plan include internal supports and priorities related to BIPOC staff and other marginalized groups including but not limited to: recruitment and retention efforts, internal supports such as affinity groups and mentorship or other targeted approaches?	
6. Does the plan identify potential barriers or potential benefits for BIPOC and other marginalized populations and discuss how it will mitigate or enhance those?	

Analysis Summary				
	Acknowledgment	Impact	Action	Accountability
What are the strengths of this section?				
What are the weaknesses of this section?				
What is missing in this section?				

Field or Sector Context	
Where do you see the greatest opportunity for this agency to advance equity? (What can this agency do that others cannot?)	
Where do you see the most significant threats to this agency's success in implementing their plan? What are the equity implications of this? (e.g., What activities in the plan might be particularly vulnerable to changes in political will?)	
How does the timeline to implementation balance urgency with a commitment to inclusive processes? Why or why not?	

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