

Equity-Centered Policy Change Model



At every step of the process, did you...

- Think about who else needs to be there and recruit them
- Authentically include community members, centering people of color
- Ensure adequate time for building strong relationships
- Use an equity & racial justice lens
- Consider how to support transformative justice in the process
- Clarify roles, responsibilities and process
- Define decision making process that is transparent, equitable & community driven
- Ensure transparency
- Identify and address barriers and incentives for community participation
- Adapt your process & tools to make it relevant & accessible for different groups (i.e. plain language, translation, interpretation)
- Value life experience
- Create consistent messages
- Surface, discuss & address power imbalances
- Address conflict, harm or failures, and unintended consequences
- If community is not onboard, go back to the beginning

1. Identify Focus Area

- This is broader than the goal or strategy, and informed by community priorities and data (qualitative and quantitative) that have emerged from the community. Find something specific enough to start a conversation, but not too narrowly defined before community has a chance to participate in goals and strategies. For example, alcohol use in the community.

2. Build Core Team and Process

- Include community members and center people of color in the core team.
- Include community members, especially those disproportionately impacted, and center people of color in the core team.
- Create process for information sharing, decision making, transparency and language access (Including both translation/ transcreation and easy to understand content, i.e. plain language).
- Create agreements for shared ownership.
- Start to define strategy for strengthening government accountability in the process.
- Provide group members tools for increasing self-awareness about their own beliefs and behaviors related to equity, accountability and team work.
- Continually encourage additional members to expand learning and participation.

3. Co-Define and Frame the Problem With Community

- Define, assess and frame the problem using the most current and relevant information available, including stories and qualitative information.
- Recruit a broader coalition than core team that includes people of color and those experiencing health disparities. Create clear criteria for who is at the table and their participation.
- Create a plan for surfacing, addressing, and managing power dynamics.
- Build a shared understanding within your group of health equity, social determinants of health and the policy change process to ground your team in the larger context.
- Crosswalk language and concepts to ensure common understanding; strive to use accessible language
- Create a process to assess and resolve concerns as they surface.
- Find champions and supporters – people who are respected in their communities and motivated or willing to speak on the issue.

4. Conduct Community Assessment

- Assess who, what, when, how community members and people of color are affected and how to center their perspectives. Use data, community priorities and stories.
- Map the system and landscape. Identify and consider how the issue connects with existing work being done. Discuss the limits of the current system.
- Crosswalk and align priorities and agendas of community members and government representatives participating in core team.
- Assess external dynamics and context that influence the problem and the plan.
- Assess decision maker readiness.
- Assess community coalition & policy environment strengths, opportunities, weaknesses, threats.
- Assess existing power structures in community and government settings.
- Assess current policies and laws in place related to the focus area. With this information, you can identify where improvement should be considered.
- Assess if political will and community support for policy change can be activated and understand where there may be opposition to the policy change.
- Collect and review actions and successes from other places.
- Estimate the health, fiscal, administrative, legal, social and political implications.
- Connect with agencies/organizations who would be involved in implementing and enforcing policies.

5. Co-create a Plan for Your Project With Community

- Create a vision for your ideal system, community and environment!
- Discuss shared goals, values, priorities and commitments that center community priorities.
- Consider how the group can support community priorities beyond policy work.
- Identify possible policy and systems changes needed to address problem. Choose a policy or system to target for change.
- Examine evidence-based practice & practice-based evidence for fit with community needs.
- Assess potential for the solutions to improve equity—are they inclusive? who benefits?
- Create project timeline.
- Secure resources and create project budget Consider how to compensate community members and community-based organizations supporting project.
- Make clear criteria and process for group accountability.
- Define clear roles, opportunities for participation, expectations and commitments of group members (e.g. testifying, policy drafting, education, etc.)
- Define success and how it will be measured.

6. Implement Project Plan

- Policy development process, if applicable
 - Learn about local agency process for drafting policy.
 - Identify resources, like model policies, from other partners.
 - Plan a policy review process that incorporates legal and policy expertise.
 - Develop a plan to implement, monitor and evaluate the policy (e.g., develop budgets, rules, procedures, materials).
- Document your process and decisions made.
- Team members follow shared agreements to work together and hold each other accountable with clear expectations of roles.
- Discuss strategies for sustaining the change.

7. Communicate About Your Project

- Develop a cohesive communication and education plan that incorporates multiple methods of outreach.
- Co-create and share consistent messages about your project alongside community. Include policy impacts to particular communities.
- Discuss multiple formats for engagement (i.e. not just digital).
- Carefully articulate (frame) why the policy solution is necessary using community information and data to describe and frame the problem.
- Communicate about the focus area chosen and health equity impacts with partners to make it public (community members, organizations, decision makers, government).
- Connect with potential government leaders and champions.
- Engage with decision-makers about the public health need and policy solution. Provide decision makers with information and options for changing policy to improve health equity. Listen to decision-maker priorities and provide fact-based information to build the case for necessary change. Hold decision makers and leadership accountable for community commitments.
- Integrate two-way feedback between team and community.
- Communicate and elevate successes.

8. Adopt Policy

- Work with policy makers to formally adopt the policy.
- Plan for public comment to support the policy. Alert coalition members and the public with timely accurate information about all opportunities to comment on the proposed policy. Assist coalition members to develop testimony and comments (when appropriate).
- Provide information to decision-makers.
- Count votes before the actual vote. This step involves asking or estimating how many decision-makers are likely to support or oppose the policy. This can be done by talking to advocates who have asked decision-makers about their opinion on the policy or talking directly to decision-makers. Either way, it's important to have some sense of how decision-makers may vote prior to a public hearing.
- Anticipate possible last-minute amendments.

9. Evaluate Impact

- Evaluate the impact of the policy change through an equity lens.
- Track the implementation process (Is the policy and plan functioning as intended?).
- Take appropriate action to address evaluation results about violations when needed.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the policy change process. For example, what lessons learned can be gleaned from your policy change process? What would you do differently in future policy change projects? What would you do the same?
- Make changes if the policy isn't working.
- Communicate findings back to community members.
- Incorporate evaluation findings into future planning.
- Evaluate equitable enforcement. Address unanticipated effects or inequities.