

Creating and Using an Equity Lens

An Equity Lens is a tool for use in processes like onboarding, hiring, and performance evaluation. It is simply a set of questions that are asked and answered to ensure that a given process deliberately reflects espoused values, surfaces and minimizes the negative impact of bias. To use an Equity Lens, identify a specific process or practice, like hiring.

Steps:

1. Identify topic/problem. *Example: Bias may be introduced following phone interviews in the selection of candidates for on-campus interviews.*
2. Identify SPECIFIC population/identity. *Example, People of Color or Women or Faculty of Color.*
3. Create list of questions.
Example,
 - *In what ways did we account for our response to language patterns such as non-native English speakers?*
 - *How might our criteria introduce bias? Are we excluding specific experiences over others in a biased fashion?*
 - *Are we over-emphasizing “preferred” qualifications that may undermine the process?*
 - *Are we over-valuing similarity or prestige in ways that reinforce structural biases?*
 - *How has our process supported the empowerment of people from historically marginalized communities?*
4. Identify 1-2 points within your process to apply this tool. Consider where in your organization’s hiring process a tool can be inserted that forces the individual or group involved to pause and consider possible bias. Ideally, an Equity Lens is applied at two points in a process, but start with at least one point.
Example,
 - *Creation of criteria and interview questions*
 - *Before phone interview*
 - *Before on-site interviews*
 - *Before final selection*
5. Identify an external group to answer questions at 1-2 points within the process.
Example: your organization’s HR Officer, Campus EEOC Office, or an appointed, trained and diverse team.

This individual or group reads and responds to the questions and answers supplied to the Equity Lens by the hiring team or manager.
6. The hiring team or manager individually answers the questions in the Equity Lens, honestly responding to potential points of bias in the process.
7. The identified external group reviews the answers and provides input that is shared by with hiring team or manager. The response may challenge the group’s process and expect them to be more diligent in their efforts to overcome bias. Or, the external group can express support for the group’s process and proposed plan of action.

Below are additional sample questions that may be applied as you consider implementation of a new service, initiative, or organizational change.

People

- Who is affected—positively, negatively, or not at all—by this plan?
- What are the specific advantages and/or barriers to each group?

Process

- How does this (initiative/plan element) foster the development of processes that address barriers to inclusion and contribute to the development of capacity?

Power

- Which demographic groups have the greatest need for greater inclusion?
- What steps should our organization take to mitigate these needs?

Tied to each initiative proposed:

- How will this (initiative) support the empowerment of people from historically marginalized communities?
- What are the specific ways that this (initiative) is expected to reduce disparities and advance equity?

Some things to remember

Organizations adopting an equity lens are encouraged to:

- Understand the impact of your organizational culture and structures on your efforts to be more inclusive and create equity.
- Realize that the important and worthwhile work of inclusion, diversity, and equality are separate and different from equity.
- Address equity in an actionable manner. Commitments to addressing and removing disparities are necessary to achieve equity.
- Be prepared to talk explicitly about race, bias, and other topics that may be uncomfortable for some.
- Challenge systems, which will be difficult because some people benefit from those very systems.