



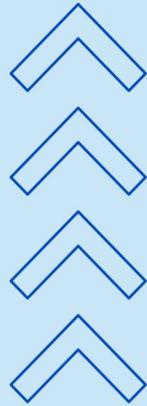
Operationalizing Equity: Tools from the Chicago Department of Public Health

December 4, 2023 - 2023 Illinois Minority Health Conference

Presented by:

Rev. Nilsa Irizarry, Senior Equity Officer, Office of Racial Equity and Belonging
Sydney Edmond, Projects Administrator, Office of Health Equity in All Policies

★ Rev. Nilsa Irizarry



**Senior Equity Officer,
Office of Racial Equity
and Belonging**

Rev. Nilsa Irizarry (she/her/Ella) is a faith-based, human rights activist, and a passionate leader in public health and social services with two decades of experience working with complex communicable disease prevention and control programs. She serves as the Chicago Department of Public Health's (CDPH) first Senior Equity Officer and oversees the Office of Racial Equity and Belonging. Her office has partnered with staff across the department and manages the CDPH's first-ever Racial Equity Action Plan (REAP) project aimed at improving racial equity outcomes in each department's core work. She is cultivating an intentional culture of belonging, promoting civility, and centering employee holistic well-being in the workplace.

Rev. Nilsa holds a Master of Divinity from Chicago Theological Seminary. She is an ordained clergywoman with Metropolitan Community Churches (MCC) and a volunteer associate pastor at Church4Me, MCC, Chicago. As a jewelry artist, she creates necklaces and earrings as a faith practice—pieces that dance with the spirit, and to bring joy to others. The loves of her life are her three adult children and six grandchildren. She values sharing cultural traditions, creating memories, and building a legacy of service with them.

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★ Sydney Edmond, MHA



**Projects Administrator,
Office of Health Equity in
All Policies (HEiAP)**

Sydney Edmond (she/her) is a social justice advocate who leads cross-sector initiatives to eliminate health and racial inequities. She is part of the Health Equity in All Policies team at the Chicago Department of Public Health where she works with partners to embed equity into decision-making and practices. Her expertise in racial justice, health equity, community care practices, and process improvement provides her with the foundation to create systems change through community-government partnerships.

Sydney earned a master's degree in Health Administration from Tulane University's School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine and a bachelor's degree in Biology from the University of Louisiana at Lafayette. In her spare time, Sydney embraces creativity by expressing herself through various art forms.

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LAND AND LABOR ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Source: Native Land Digital (native-land.ca), Tynisha George and John Jones, Chicago Department of Public Health



Objectives

Attendees will learn:

- How a Racial Equity Action Plan (REAP) and an Equity Decision Support Tool are useful and innovative tools to operationalize equity
- The importance of centering equity across processes, practices, and decision-making.
- How to develop new strategies for equity inclusion across teams to advance racial equity and produce equitable outcomes.

Racial Equity Action Plan (REAP): Vision and Desired Result

HEALTHY CHICAGO 2025

Citywide Health Improvement Plan
To Close Our Life Expectancy Gap

Identify Local Priorities



EQUITABLE ACCESS TO RESOURCES, ENVIRONMENTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

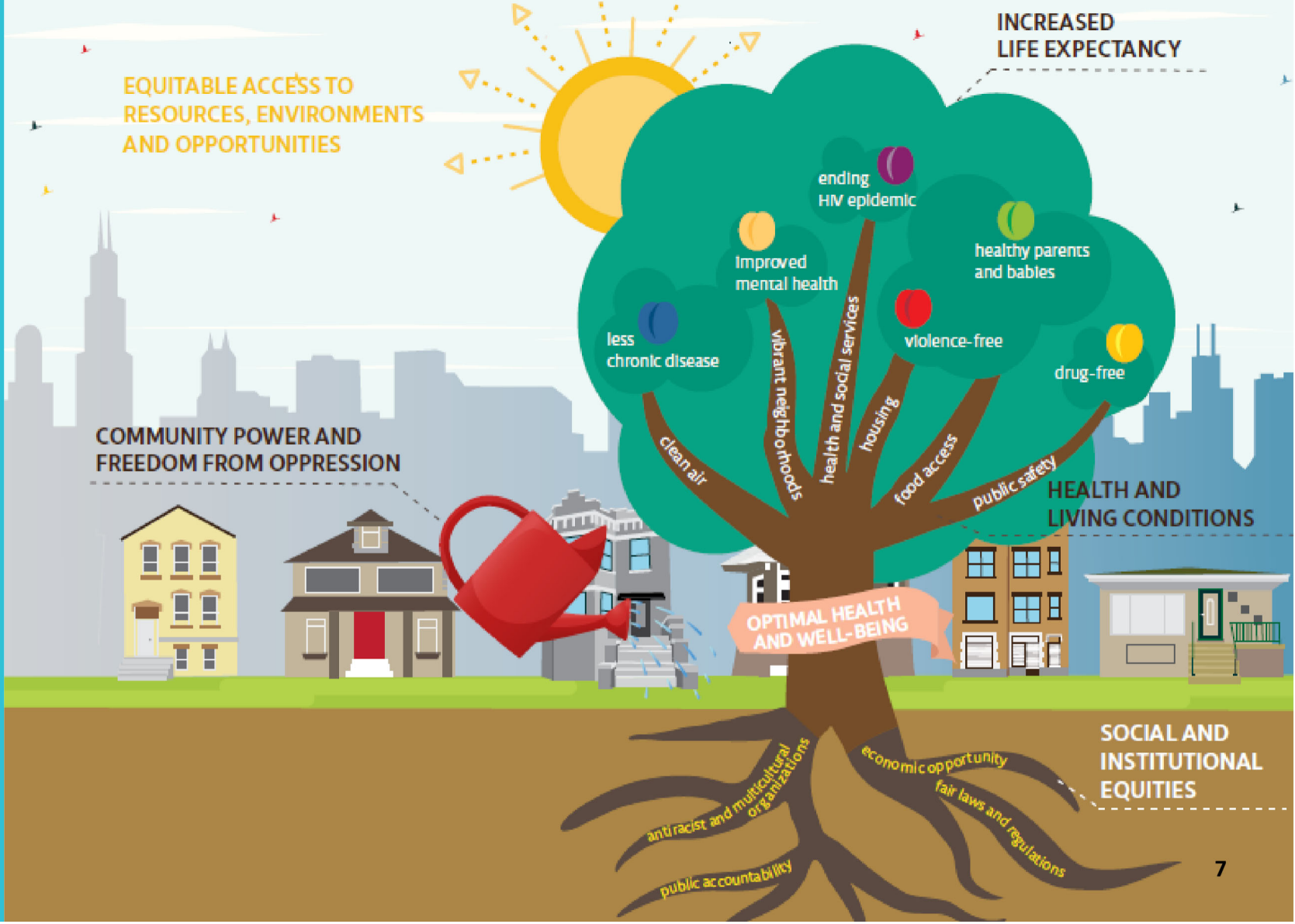
INCREASED LIFE EXPECTANCY

COMMUNITY POWER AND FREEDOM FROM OPPRESSION

HEALTH AND LIVING CONDITIONS

OPTIMAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

SOCIAL AND INSTITUTIONAL EQUITIES

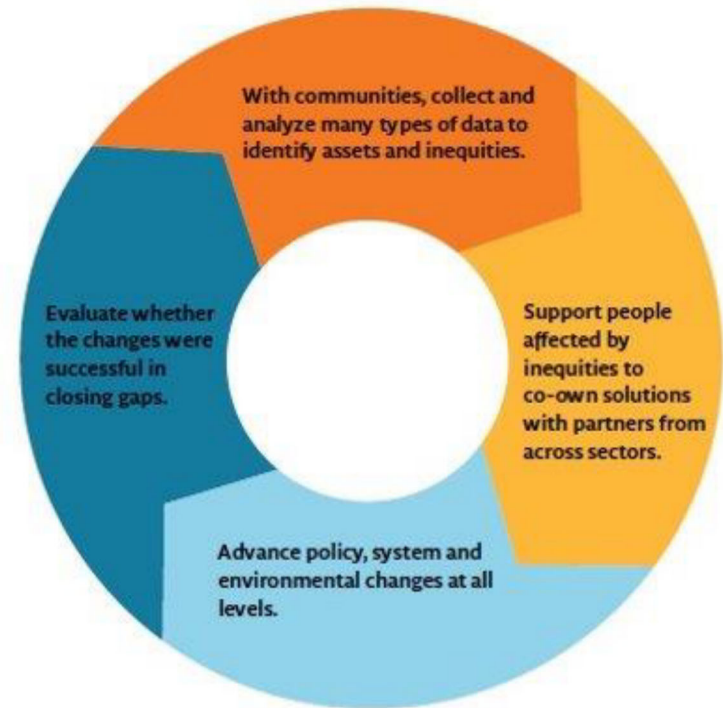


★ Equity is both a Process and Outcome

As an **outcome** equity results in fair and just access to opportunity and resources that provide everyone the ability to thrive.

As a **process**, equity requires a new way of doing business, one that...

- prioritizes access and opportunities for groups who have the greatest need;
- methodically evaluates benefits and burdens produced by seemingly neutral systems and practices;
- and engages those most impacted by the problems we seek to address as experts in their own experiences, strategists in co-creating solutions, and evaluators of success.



Sources: [Chicago's Equity Statement of Principles](#); [Healthy Chicago 2025](#)

Historical Context

- With funding from CDPH's Health Equity in All Policies office, the Mayor's Office of Equity and Racial Justice launched cohorts in 2021 and provided substantive training for all departments to gain deep professional development on how to operationalize equitable policies and practices and build Racial Equity Action Plans.
- This training was designed by the Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE).

Source: [Racial Equity Action Plans](#) – Mayor's Office of Equity and Racial Justice

What is a Racial Equity Action Plan?

Multi-year strategic plan to improve equitable outcomes in each department's core work.

Which seeks to:

- Drive institutional and structural change in the depts core work
- Coordinate department levers, resources, and strategies to produce more racially equitable outcomes and processes
- Build internal capacity and skills of dept staff
- Strategically align with improving citywide outcomes for all residents, focusing on targeted resources and strategies for populations with the biggest gap



Guidelines for developing REAPs

1) All REAPs must align to our shared vision:

“All people and all communities have power, are free from oppression, and are strengthened by equitable access to resources, environments, and opportunities that promote optimal health and well-being.”

-Healthy Chicago 2025

Guidelines for developing REAPs:

2) All REAPs should advance equity in three citywide priorities



There are 13 priority Areas

- 9 around outcomes
- 4 around internal processes

Departments selected 3 priority areas

- One from "equity in our processes"
- One from equity in our outcomes
- One of their choosing

	Priority Areas	Desired Results
EQUITY IN OUR OUTCOMES	Housing	All Chicagoans have healthy, accessible, and affordable homes.
	Environment, Climate, & Energy	All Chicagoans breathe air free from pollutants and have resilient and sustainable communities.
	Public Safety	All Chicagoans are safe across the city and have trusting relationships with law enforcement and first responders.
	Neighborhood Planning & Development	All Chicagoans live in vibrant neighborhoods that reflect their identities and foster community belonging.
	Transportation & Infrastructure	All Chicagoans have a safe multi-modal transportation system and broadband access.
	Public Health & Services	All Chicagoans are healthy and benefit from a full range of health and human services.
	Economic Development	All Chicagoans are economically self-sufficient, can build wealth, and thrive.
	Arts & Culture	All Chicagoans celebrate, connect with, and contribute to the city's creative and cultural ecosystem.
	Education/Lifelong Learning	All Chicagoans gain meaningful knowledge and skills to thrive.
EQUITY IN OUR PROCESSES	Workforce	The City of Chicago's workforce reflects the demographics of the City, and all employees are connected to training and advancement opportunities.
	Data	All Chicagoans can obtain, view, or use public-facing data from the City of Chicago.
	Contracting	All Chicagoans benefit from and can participate and economic business with the City of Chicago.
	Community Engagement	All Chicagoans have a meaningful opportunity to influence City of Chicago programs, policies, and initiatives.

Source: [Racial Equity Action Plans](#) – Mayor's Office of Equity and Racial Justice

Guidelines for developing REAPs:

3) All REAPs should include...

1. Citywide desired results
2. A problem statement rooted in data, community engagement, and root cause analysis
3. Strategies that leverage key opportunities to drive change
4. Measures of impact to track progress
5. Actions and Implementation plans on a timeline

RACIAL EQUITY ACTION PLAN OVERVIEW

The City of Chicago's Vision: All people and all communities have power, are free from oppression, and are strengthened by equitable access to resources, environments, and opportunities that promote optimal health and well-being. (HC2025)



Citywide Desired Result:

What is the ideal state for ALL Chicagoans?

Indicators:

What data can you look at to understand the status quo? Are there patterns that breakdown along racial lines?

Community Data

Identify community-level metrics to assess the current standing of desired results and measure progress towards reaching it.

Program/ Department Data

Identify program/department metrics to assess the current standing of desired results and measure progress towards reaching it.

Community Feedback and Narratives

What are the communities most impacted saying the problem is?

Define the Problem

Which population(s) are not experiencing the citywide desired result? What are the demographics of these populations (consider race and other identities)?

Identify Root Causes to the Problem

Why are the populations identified in the problem statement not experiencing the desired result? How has systemic and structural racism shaped historical and current events related to the problem?

Define the Opportunity

What can your department do to impact the desired result for the populations most impacted by the problem?

Department Strategies

What specific commitments can your department make to help the City move closer to the desired result?

Measures of Impact

What can you look at to measure if this strategy had an impact?

Actions	Implementation Plan	Timeline	Status
How will your department achieve each strategy? (These actions should be specific, measurable, and time-bound)	What specific steps/milestones will you take to complete each action? This is a place to identify internal department roles, teams, other government departments and agencies, and community partners who will contribute to each action.	What are the start and completion dates for each action?	What is the current status of each action?

REAP and Budget Equity Process Codified

Municipal Code 2-4-100

Summary: Under the direction of the Chief Equity Officer, all departments must create a multi-year Racial Equity Action Plan and provide annual, public progress updates each year alongside the budget process.

Chicago Department of Public Health's Racial Equity Action Plan



CDPH's REAP Priority Areas

Priority Area #1	Priority Area #2	Priority Area #3
<p>Community Engagement: All Chicagoans have a meaningful opportunity to influence City of Chicago programs, policies, and initiatives.</p>	<p>Workforce: The City of Chicago's workforce reflects the demographics of the City, and all employees are connected to training and advancement opportunities.</p>	<p>Public Health & Services: All Chicagoans are healthy and benefit from a full range of health and human services.</p>
<p>Opportunity Statement: Provide capacity-building support to help staff grow their skills around community engagement in order to achieve community engagement goals externally.</p>	<p>Opportunity Statement: Create intentional and effective approaches to workforce and leadership development with measurable, quantifiable, and accountable goals.</p>	<p>Opportunity Statement: Reduce the number of fatal opioid overdoses in Chicago, and close the race gap in fatal overdoses, in partnership with community members and providers from the areas most affected by opioid overdoses.</p>
<p>Measure of Impact: Increased staff knowledge and coordination Improved community engagement experiences with CDPH</p>	<p>Measure of Impact: Staff attendance rates to department training (dismantling racist systems, trauma-informed, etc.) Feedback from new hires Efficacy of the career development strategies Employees, reflective of the racial and ethnic makeup of Chicago, who are prepared to step into leadership roles within CDPH.</p>	<p>Measure of Impact: Number of fatal opioid overdoses in Chicago Number of people served annually by these recovery programs disaggregated by type of treatment (alcohol, opioids, stimulants, co-occurring, etc.) Successful formation of an advisory council Pre/post surveys on overdose prevention education delivered by CDPH</p>

Source: [Racial Equity Action Plans](#)

★ Community Engagement

Department Strategy: Convene representatives from across CDPH bureaus to establish aligned, coordinated systems to collect and disseminate information about CDPH's current community engagement efforts (CDPH REAP, pg. 5).

Action: 1.1 Establish committee of CDPH programs to develop engagement strategy.

Status: Since October, the Community Engagement (CE) Team has been actively working to identify staff that do community engagement for their programs. The goal is to get a better understanding of the work others are doing, identify key data resources to measure the effectiveness of our community engagement, work towards streamlining our work across the department, and aim to share best practices.

Source: [CDPH_REAP_2023.pdf \(chicago.gov\)](#)


★ Public Health & Service – Opioids (Truncated Data)

Department Strategy: Improve access to and education about harm reduction strategies to prevent opioid overdose (CDPH REAP, pg. 22).

Action 1.3 Pilot public health vending machines with harm reduction resources in them to understand how this distribution mechanism affects access to harm reduction services.

Status: In November 2023, the Office of Substance Use at CDPH launched 5 Public Health Vending Machines in areas of Chicago most affected by opioid overdose. The machines offer naloxone, harm reduction supplies, and basic health and hygiene items at no cost to the public. This kind of harm reduction intervention is designed to reduce drug overdoses and meet the needs of highly vulnerable populations that may be reluctant to receive services from in-person or more traditional brick and mortar settings.

Source: [CDPH_REAP_2023.pdf \(chicago.gov\)](#)



Public Health & Service – Opioids (Truncated Data)

Between November 2nd – 28th, 2023	
Unique PIN Codes Distributed*	284
Narcan Kits Distributed	113
Demographics	
Gender*	
Women	92
Men	106
Non-binary/non-conforming	7
Transgender	6
Race*	
Black or African American	84
Asian	13
American Indian or Alaskan Native	6
Middle Eastern or Northern African	4
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	3
White	96
Other	13

Source: Chicago Department of Public Health, Bureau of Behavioral Health

*Note: The number of unique PIN codes will not match demographic totals, as demographic questions were optional. Additionally, respondents may select more than one option for the demographic questions.

★ Workforce – (Truncated Data)

Department Strategy: Intentionally develop policies that advance racial equity and increase racial competence of staff through training (CDPH REAP, pg. 12).

Action: 1.2 Create internal capacity to develop and produce training and streamline processes to assign and track training participation.

Status: The entire Workforce Development team has received training on the City of Chicago's eLearning platform and the Articulate software. The workforce development office has started working with individual programs to determine their training needs, in addition to creating training modules for bureau-specific and/or department-wide use.

HEiAP's Equity Decision Support Tool

★ Tools to Support Advancing Health Equity

While considering what kind of tool and approach to use, get clear on your purpose and goal, who and what you are trying to influence, what evidence is needed, what expertise you can bring, what value you can add, and what partners are seeking from you. These tools are helpful, but not sufficient on their own to mobilize partners and collaborators to advance health equity.

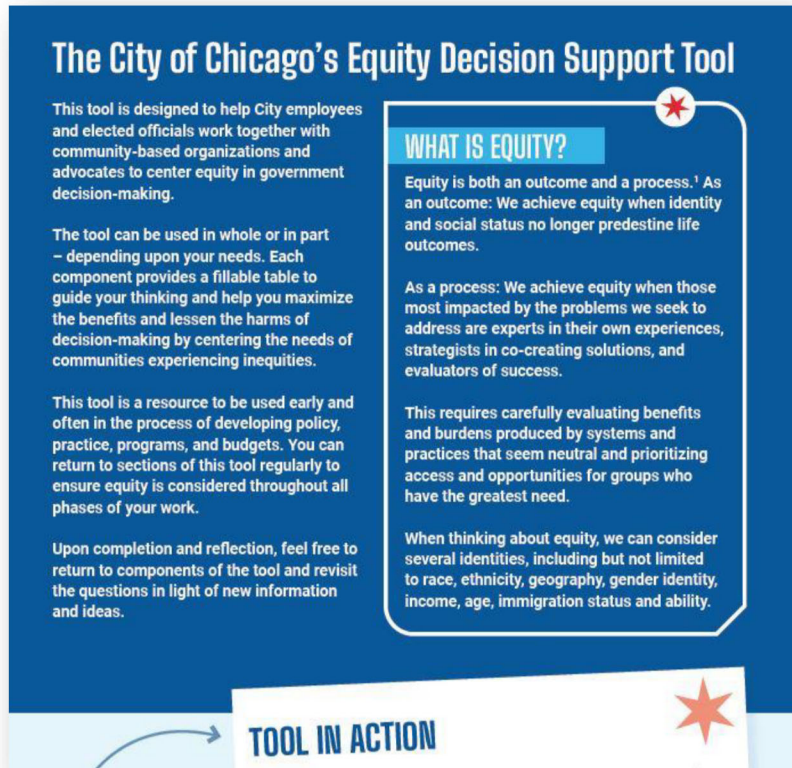
When you have a concrete proposal you can influence:

- Race Equity Impact Assessment
- Health Impact Assessment

When you do not have a concrete proposal you can influence:

- Baseline conditions assessment
- Equity lens tool/analysis
- Community health needs assessment
- Health equity/racial equity note
- White papers
- General reports
- Program evaluation
- Racial Equity Action Plans
- Equity Decision Support Tool

Equity Decision Support Tool



The City of Chicago's Equity Decision Support Tool

This tool is designed to help City employees and elected officials work together with community-based organizations and advocates to center equity in government decision-making.

The tool can be used in whole or in part – depending upon your needs. Each component provides a fillable table to guide your thinking and help you maximize the benefits and lessen the harms of decision-making by centering the needs of communities experiencing inequities.

This tool is a resource to be used early and often in the process of developing policy, practice, programs, and budgets. You can return to sections of this tool regularly to ensure equity is considered throughout all phases of your work.

Upon completion and reflection, feel free to return to components of the tool and revisit the questions in light of new information and ideas.

WHAT IS EQUITY?

Equity is both an outcome and a process.¹ As an outcome: We achieve equity when identity and social status no longer predestine life outcomes.

As a process: We achieve equity when those most impacted by the problems we seek to address are experts in their own experiences, strategists in co-creating solutions, and evaluators of success.

This requires carefully evaluating benefits and burdens produced by systems and practices that seem neutral and prioritizing access and opportunities for groups who have the greatest need.

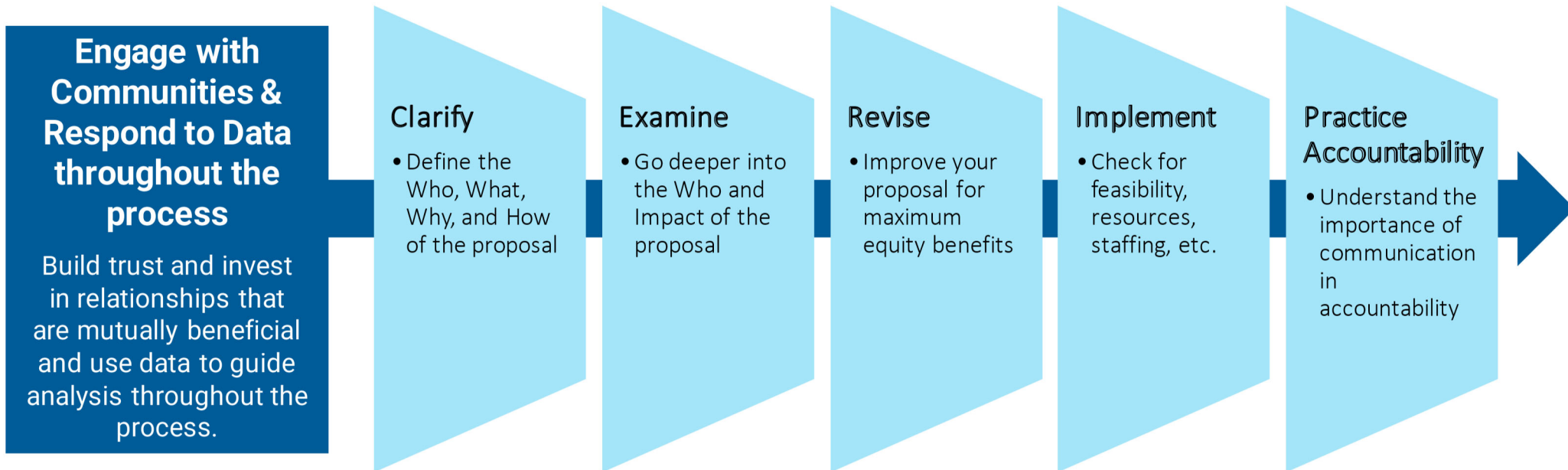
When thinking about equity, we can consider several identities, including but not limited to race, ethnicity, geography, gender identity, income, age, immigration status and ability.

TOOL IN ACTION

- Chicago's Equity Decision Support Tool will support City departments, community organizations, and elected officials to incorporate equity into everyday decision-making.
- The HEiAP community accountability committee—made up of representatives from nine community-based organizations—provided strategic input.
- Equity is an outcome AND a process. This tool supports the work of equitable, collaborative processes across government and community partners to develop and implement projects and policies for more equitable outcomes.

Coming Soon!

★ Equity Decision Support Tool



Challenges and Key Takeaways



- Sustainability of funding
- Other resources – people, time, championship, etc.
- Accountability
- Leadership transitions
- Resistance to change

Challenges



Key Takeaways

- **Know your "Why"**
 - What's the overall vision and desired result?
 - Why are you doing this work?
 - What are you trying to change or influence?
- **Collaboration is key**
 - Who can you partner with?
 - Who is being most impacted? Do they have decision-making power or opportunity for input?
 - Can your plan align with existing equity initiatives?
- **Continuous improvement is a part of centering equity**
 - How are you evaluating progress?
 - How can you standardize equitable decision-making?
- **Create buy-in with leadership**
- **Think through funding, sustainability planning, and resources**



Resources

City of Chicago Racial Equity Action Plans

<https://www.chicago.gov/city/en/sites/office-of-equity-and-racial-justice/home/racial-equity-action-plans.html>

Chicago Department of Public Health's Racial Equity Action Plan

[CDPH_REAP_2023.pdf \(chicago.gov\)](#)

Chicago's Health Equity in All Policies Office

[Chicago.gov/heiap](https://chicago.gov/heiap)

Government Alliance for Race Equity (GARE) Race Equity Toolkit

https://www.racialequityalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/GARE-Racial_Equity_Toolkit.pdf

Racial Equity Action Plans – Mayor's Office of Equity and Racial Justice

<https://www.chicago.gov/city/en/sites/office-of-equity-and-racial-justice/home/racial-equity-action-plans.html>

Workforce Diversity Equity Dashboard

<https://www.chicago.gov/city/en/sites/office-of-equity-and-racial-justice/home/dashboard.html>

Chicago Equity Dashboard

<https://chicagohealthatlas.org/equity-dashboard>

Thank You!



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