UVA | INCLUSIVE EXCELLENCE

Toolkit for Equity-Minded Decisions & Policies

UNIVERSITY of VIRGINIA | Division for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

We Acknowledge

We acknowledge that the land we live, learn, and work on is the traditional territory of the Monacan Indian Nation. We pay respect to their elders – past, present, and emerging. We also pay respect to the Pamunkey Indian Tribe, the Chickahominy, the Eastern Chickahominy, the Upper Mattaponi, the Rappahannock, the Nansemond and many additional sovereign Indigenous nations who have an enduring relationship with and call our surrounding area home today. In addition, we acknowledge and pay respect to the enslaved people who built and labored at the University of Virginia.

Equity-Minded Leadership

Why Does Equity-minded Leadership Matter?

The ultimate purpose of UVA, as a public institution, is to serve the public. In fulfilling our mission, we know that the very best faculty, students, and staff want to live, work, and study at an institution in which they can believe wholeheartedly; an institution that is both outstanding and ethical; an institution that is not only excellent, but excellent for a purpose. If the animating purpose of UVA is to serve - we must ask ourselves if in the present we are laying the groundwork for a better future? Our actions today must be rooted in our values, chief among them equity, which creates a path towards not only a more just future, for all members of our community, but a healthier, more sustainable institution.

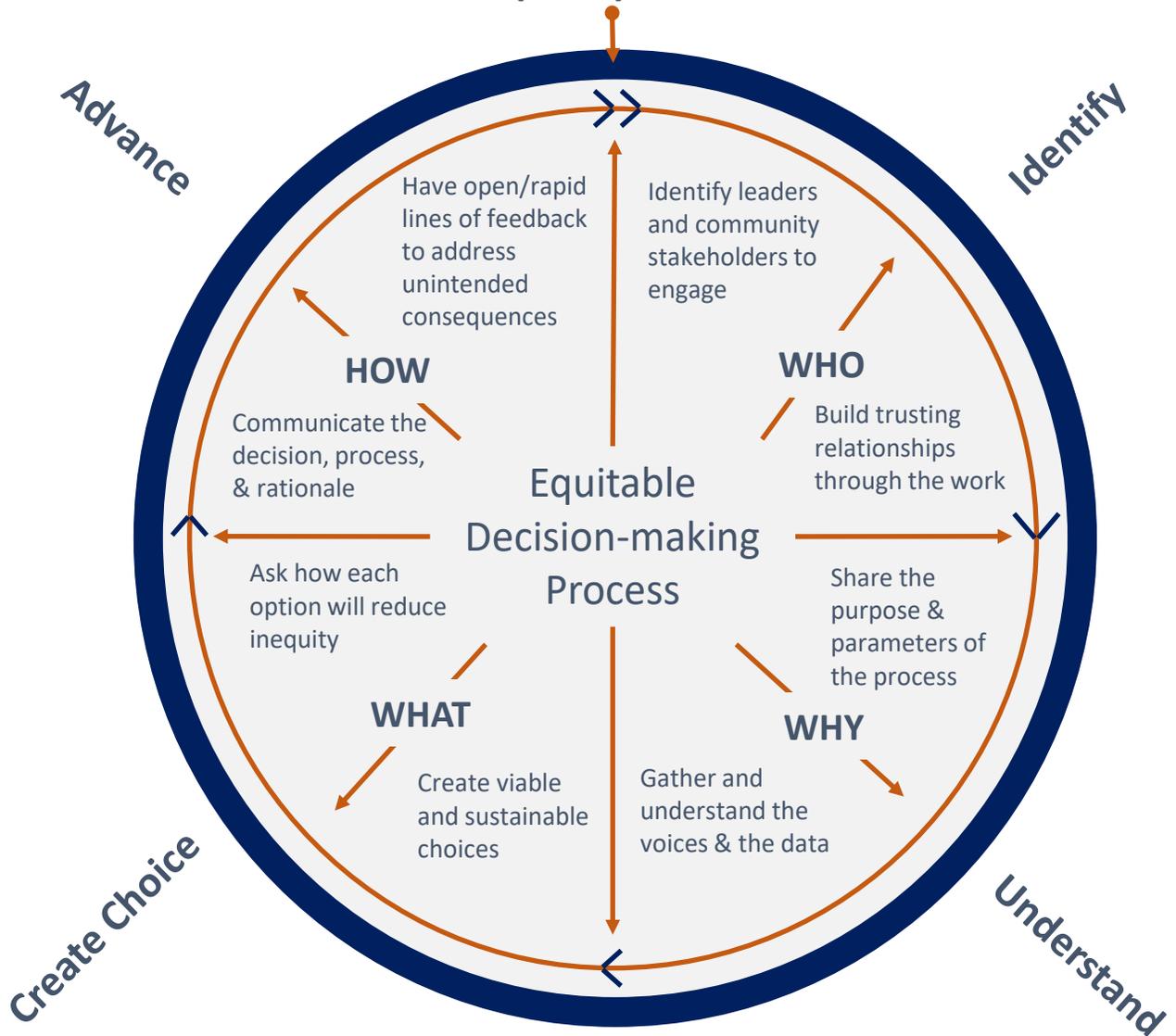**Core Principles of Equity-Minded Leadership**

- Equity-minded leaders recognize that the differences in backgrounds, perspectives and experiences of our community are not a challenge to be overcome, or needing assimilation, but are assets to be affirmed and leveraged as part of that which defines excellence.

- Equity-minded leaders are aware of the systemic nature of inequities and work to address the ways that previous policies and practices have created inequities throughout institutions.

- Equity-minded leaders do not base their decisions and policies on assumptions or stereotypes. They rely on research, evidence, and multiple sources of input to guide practices.

Equity-Minded Leadership Practices

- Asking strategic equity and inclusion questions at every decision point;

- Engaging and empowering a diverse team to gather evidence, hear from the community impacted, and help identify viable and sustainable alternatives and recommendations on which leaders can act;

- Highlighting the core values that will inform the decision and policy making process, even if all details are uncertain;

- Engaging reciprocity, or leveling the power dynamic, such that those in the community most impacted by the decision or policy have an authentic voice in the process and greater stake in the outcome;

- Enabling and honoring the rapid surfacing of impactful but unanticipated consequences;

- Communicating early and transparently; and

- Conducting an "Equity Impact Assessment" for each policy and decision-making process.

Equitable Decision-Making Process

Each School/Unit/Leader Starts Here

Advance

Identify

Create Choice

Understand

Have open/rapid lines of feedback to address unintended consequences

HOW

Communicate the decision, process, & rationale

Ask how each option will reduce inequity

WHAT

Create viable and sustainable choices

Identify leaders and community stakeholders to engage

WHO

Build trusting relationships through the work

Share the purpose & parameters of the process

WHY

Gather and understand the voices & the data

Equitable Decision-making Process

Guiding Questions

Who: Who is impacted and whose relationships most shape the opportunities and challenges in the decision-making process?

Why: Why is the current context creating the situation that we are experiencing and why do we need to take action/make a change? What does the decision-making process seek to accomplish?

What: What alternatives and possibilities can we identify or create together? Are the choice sets equal in terms of potential impacts? What will reduce inequities and/or mitigate risk/harm for those with the least power?

How: How will we honor our values and hold ourselves accountable for achieving the purpose we started with, promoting equity, and mitigating risk/harm? How will we communicate why we chose a specific path/action/option?

Engagement and Communication Strategies

For decisions big and small, co-creating with equity in mind is often simply about getting people involved and giving people options and information for making equal choices that best support their individual circumstances. The following are a few strategies that support these goals.

Communicate Openly – Communicate the circumstances you are facing and what goals you are prioritizing, who is involved in the decision-making process, how to get involved, and the rationale and potential impacts of the final decision.

Communicate Authentically– You should not communicate broad statements you cannot objectively back up with action, such as "we put our people first". It is better for you to be specific. For example, if your goal is to save jobs while meeting your need to cut spending, say that.

Get the People Impacted Involved - Show people, do not just say, that you care about their opinions by offering meaningful and well communicated opportunities for groups impacted by the decision to voice their ideas and have a genuine impact on the decision-making process. Wherever you can ,"share the air" in the deliberation process and seek to level the power dynamic of the interaction, serving with humility.

Example: UVA's Community Working Group

When James Ryan began service as the 9th president of UVA, a process for creating a new strategic vision was initiated. Among the top issues identified through that collaborative process was the need to focus on UVA's relationship with its Charlottesville-area neighbors. The President initiated a working group charged with engaging the community to identify and prioritize the major issues that UVA could begin to tackle with co-created solutions. The Community Working Group (CWG) included UVA faculty, staff, and students as well as members of the Charlottesville community. The CWG used face to face meetings and leveraged technology to engage with a broad range of stakeholders to inform their work and recommendations. While the efforts of the CWG continue, some of the first material actions resulting from their work included a sub-committee to work on pathways to employment with UVA for individuals from neighborhoods surrounding UVA and a commitment from UVA to work with community groups to lessen the impact of UVA's growing footprint on housing availability and cost. This process is an example of equity-minded decision making in action because it:

• Included a broad range of individuals with differing levels of power

• Included individuals impacted by the decisions being made

• Included a transparent communication plan and engaged the public

• Utilized technology to engage a broad range of individuals in the process

The Equity Decision-making Process model can be scaled from institution-wide decisions like those in this example or be used for more local or classroom level actions, policies, and proposals. The overarching goal is to make equity intentional rather than accidental.

Equity Impact Assessment Guide

Purpose of Tool

This guide can aid you in examining proposed actions or decisions through an equity lens to help minimize unintended adverse consequences in a variety of contexts. This assessment can be completed and converted into an Equity Impact Statement which could be a supporting document to the decision analysis and making process for proposed policies, institutional practices, programs, plans, and budgetary decisions. Where possible, list concrete action steps taken and/or roles/names of people involved in the process.

STEP 1. IDENTIFY STAKEHOLDERS
• *What groups, organizations or individuals may be most involved with, affected by, and/or concerned with the issues related to the proposal, policy, practice, plan, or decision?*

STEP 2. ENGAGING STAKEHOLDERS
• *Have those stakeholders most involved or impacted been informed, meaningfully involved, and authentically represented in the development of the proposal, policy, practice, program, plan, or decision?*

STEP 3. IDENTIFYING AND DOCUMENTING INEQUITIES
• *Which groups, organizations, or individuals are currently most advantaged and most disadvantaged by the issues this proposal, policy, practice, program, plan, or decision seeks to address?* • *How are they affected differently?* • *What quantitative and qualitative evidence of inequality exists? What evidence is missing or needed?*

STEP 4. EXAMINING THE CAUSES

- *What factors may be producing and perpetuating inequities associated with this issue? How did the inequities arise?*
- *Are the inequities expanding or narrowing? Does the proposal, policy, practice, program plan, or decision address root causes? If not, how could it/they?*

STEP 5. CLARIFYING THE PURPOSE

- *What does the proposal, policy, practice, program, plan, or decision seek to accomplish?*
- *How does it/they align with our mission and values?*
- *Will it reduce disparity?*

STEP 6. CONSIDERING UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES

- *What adverse or unintended consequences could (or has previously) result(ed) from this type of proposal, policy, practice, plan, or decision here or somewhere else?*
- *Is there research on this topic and prior case examples that could be reviewed?*
- *Is it possible some groups would be more negatively affected than others? Is that necessary or could it be minimized?*

STEP 7. ADVANCING EQUITABLE IMPACTS

- *What positive impacts on equity and inclusion, if any, could result from this proposal, policy, practice, program, plan, or decision?*
- *Are there further ways to maximize equitable opportunities and impacts?*

STEP 8. EXAMINING ALTERNATIVES OR IMPROVEMENTS
•   *Are there better ways to achieve the purpose and align with our goals?* •   *What provisions could be changed or added to ensure positive impacts on equity and inclusion?*

STEP 9. ENSURING VIABILITY AND SUSTAINABILITY
•   *Is the proposal, policy, practice, program, plan, or decision realistic, adequately funded, with mechanisms to ensure successful implementation and/or enforcement?* •   *Are there provisions to ensure ongoing data collection, public reporting, stakeholder participation, and public accountability?*

STEP 10. IDENTIFYING SUCCESS INDICATORS
•   *What are the success indicators and progress benchmarks?* •   *How will impacts be documented and evaluated?* •   *How will the level, diversity, and quality of ongoing stakeholder engagement be assessed?*

Adapted from the Center for Racial Justice Innovation "Racial Equity Impact Assessment" tool.

Policy Equity Guide

Purpose of Tool

This guide is intended to aid you in examining your area's written and unwritten policies with an equity lens. The reflection questions can be used to guide a team discussion or individual written reflection.

STEP 1. IDENTIFY WRITTEN AND UNWRITTEN POLICIES/PRACTICES

What policies/practices are in place in our school/unit?
- *What formal written policies govern how our areal/unit is organized, operated and distributes resources and opportunities? (e.g. employee tuition support)*
- *What unwritten/informal decision-making processes and practices determine how we organize, operate, and distribute resources and opportunities?*

STEP 2. INDIVIDUALLY EXAMINE FORMAL AND INFORMAL POLICIES/PRACTICES

1. Foundations of the policy/practice:
- *What is the intent behind the policy/practice? What are the desired outcomes?*
- *Who is responsible for policy/practice implementation and oversight?*
- *How is the policy/practice communicated to policy decision makers and individuals impacted by it?*

2. Equity in language:
- Does the policy/practice make normative/stereotypical assumptions?
- What types of words are used to describe individuals/groups identified in the policy/practice?
- Is there language that includes or excludes communities that have been historically minoritized? (Ex. "She/He" > "They")

3. Data Collection and Reporting
- Who does the policy/practice impact? Who benefits and who does not?
- How is accountability measured? What data are collected to monitor policy/practice implementation and impact?
- Are data disaggregated in collection and reporting? What groups are disaggregated?
- Are there individuals and/or communities that are disproportionately affected by this policy?

4. Accountability for Equity
- At what points in the policy/practice are there points of individual discretion? Are those points structured (e.g., there is an evaluation rubric or guideposts for the decision)?
- Does this policy/practice have the potential perpetuate or help dismantle historical, or other barriers? How?

STEP 3. ADDRESSING INEQUITIES

If the policy perpetuates unnecessary barriers or inequities, how can they be mitigated or eliminated?
- What actions will we take to redress the inequities in our formal and informal policies/practices?

The Praxis Project – "Developing an Equity Impact Statement"

https://www.thepraxisproject.org/resource/developing-an-equity-impact-statement?rq=equity%20impact

The Aspen Institute – "Ten Lessons for Taking Leadership on Racial Equity"

https://www.aspeninstitute.org/publications/ten-lessons-taking-leadership-racial-equity/

Association of American Colleges & Universities – "Understanding Equity-Mindedness"

https://www.aacu.org/node/11118

W.K. Kellogg Foundation – "Racial Equity Resource Guide"

http://www.racialequityresourceguide.org/guides/guides-and-workshops

Higher Education Administration for Social Justice and Equity: Critical Perspectives for Leadership [Edited by Adrianna Kezar & Julie Posselt]

https://pullias.usc.edu/blog/higher-education-administration-for-social-justice-and-equity/

USC Center for Urban Education – "Protocol for Assessing Equity-Mindedness in State Policy"

https://cue.usc.edu/files/2017/02/CUE-Protocol-Workbook-Final_Web.pdf

Institute for Local Government – "Effective Public Engagement through Strategic Communication"

https://www.ca-ilg.org/EffectivePE-Strategic-Communication

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