ABLe Change Manual
Equity Supplement: Design Phase

Righting the inequities within our community requires designing strategies powerful enough to shift the status-quo. Some efforts unintentionally increase inequities in their community because their strategies have not taken into account barriers and circumstances affecting groups experiencing inequities. Equity thinking helps change agents anticipate and address these equity considerations (Ramirez, Baker, Metzler, 2008).

The Design Powerful Strategies section in the ABLe Manual (pages 189-300) described a variety of approaches for developing strategies to transform your local community system. However, even well designed strategies can unintentionally increase local inequities instead of reducing them if equity is not considered during the strategy design process.

This supplement provides ideas and tools to consider in designing powerful strategies to bring about equitable health and wellbeing within your community. This supplement builds on the content within the Define, Design, and Do equity supplement chapters within the ABLe Manual.

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Adopt Equity Mindedness to Prepare for Strategy Design

A person's race, gender, social status, and past experiences create a lens or "bias" for how they understand the world - for example what is **normal, true, and of value**.

When those from more advantaged groups within a community own or lead a strategy design process, the strategies that emerge include content and approaches that reflect this "advantaged mindset". Often, this "advantaged mindset" produces solutions that are inappropriate, ineffectual, and sometimes even harmful for disadvantaged groups (APHA, 2015).

Certainly, one remedy to this dilemma is to engage the most disadvantaged groups in strategy design (see page 4 of this supplement). However, it is also important for those in more advantaged positions to adopt **equity mindedness**.

Equity mindfulness is an ongoing process of reflecting on the collective beliefs and biases that influence our conclusions and behavior. Without this active self-reflection, strategy design can quickly become driven by stereotypes and paternalism (Medium, 2018).

> "Defining a problem or creating solutions can and will perpetuate inequities if one does not asses, acknowledge, and combat biases, which we all have. Our identities (race, gender, upbringing, social status, home language, etc.) create our lens for how we see and make sense of the world." (Medium, 2018)

Example Collective Biases	Potential Influence on Strategy Design
Poverty and wellbeing is determined by a person's life choices and behavior.	This bias blames disadvantaged groups for their circumstances (instead of considering historical context and structural discrimination), and limits solutions to individual level interventions (vs. systems change)
People experiencing poor outcomes lack the ability to improve their own lives	Solutions do not take into account perspectives, assets, or agency of those in disadvantaged groups or work to build local capacity and empower disadvantaged groups.
There are some people who simply cannot be helped	Solutions focus on those with greater resources, not necessarily the most disadvantaged
Some individuals look for ways to take advantage of the "system."	Solutions focus on ways to control and limit access to services and supports

Reflection:

Use the following questions to reflect on how collective biases within your community could influence strategy design, and how to manage these biases during the strategy design process.

Language Biases	• What language or "narrative" does the broader community (or region, state, country) use when talking about people experiencing targeted inequities? • What language or "narrative" do leaders and colleagues use when they talk about clients experiencing targeted inequities? • What messages do the policies, protocols, and procedures within your organization convey about clients experiencing targeted inequities? • What collective biases might emerge from the above narratives? How might these influence how strategies are designed?
Experience Biases	• What benefits or advantages do you and your neighbors, friends, and/or colleagues experience as a result of current inequities in the community? • What collective biases might emerge from this experience? How might these influence how strategies are designed?
How can you manage these biases in your strategy design process?	

Design Powerful Strategies Promoting Equity

The ABLe Manual describes several approaches for designing powerful strategies including:
- Tackling Root Causes (p. 215)
- Saturating the Community (p. 223)
- Disrupting the Status Quo (p. 232)
- Designing for Equity (p. 236)

The following pages provide five additional approaches for designing powerful strategies promoting equity, including how to:

Co-Develop Solutions with Groups Experiencing Inequities	Use a Targeted Universalism Approach	Enhance Power and Capacity of Groups Experiencing Inequities	Address Powerful Leverage Points Driving Inequities

Co-Develop Solutions with Groups Experiencing Inequities

Most strategies are exclusively designed by people with power and privilege in the community. Because of the "advantaged mindset" noted above, most strategies are designed in ways that more often benefit and reach people with power and privilege, not groups "in the margins" of the community who are experiencing inequities.

Authentically engaging groups experiencing inequities in the strategy design process helps to (NACCHO, 2006; Plattner, 2016):
- ensure strategies are responsive to their needs, preferences, and goals
- lead to more creative problem solving
- build collective efficacy and relational power
- create community partnerships critical for the success of transformative change
- empower those in the margins as leaders to influence decisions affecting their lives and communities

Share and Redistribute Power in Decision-Making
Authentically engaging residents experiencing inequities in the strategy design process requires individuals who typically drive decision-making to invert current power dynamics in ways that share power with those in the margins. This provides more equitable opportunities for everyone to influence conditions impacting their lives and communities (Burnes and Ross 2010).

Sharing and redistributing decision-making power involves:

- Redefining roles for residents and professionals

New resident roles	• Share ideas from lived experiences • Have an equitable influence on final decisions
New professional roles	• Summarize and integrate resident input • Ask powerful questions (versus only giving answers)
New support roles	• Staff meets with residents before meetings to help them prepare and build needed capacities

- Valuing different ways of knowing (e.g., residents' lived experience *and* research)

- Creating more balanced decision-making processes that provide equitable opportunities for residents to influence final decisions

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Example of Sharing Power in Prioritizing Process

Issues valued by those in the margins are often overlooked during collective voting processes (Bulter & Adamowski, 2015), like sticky dot voting.

If using a sticky dot voting process in a group where professionals outnumber residents, distribute additional sticky dots to residents so they have an equitable proportion of influence on final decisions.

- Holding institutions accountable to using resident voice in decision-making

Make shared decision-making processes an expectation within funding requirements	Create new norms for organizational transparency in decision-making processes	Engage local community leaders in holding organizations responsible for sharing power in decision-making

Create Co-Designed Processes

There are many ways to create opportunities for residents from groups experiencing inequities to work together alongside other community partners in the design process.

One process is to engage residents in a **Resident Design Workshop**. Drawing from the field of "Design Thinking," this approach brings together residents and local partners to design strategies addressing local conditions impacting equity.

Case Example

The San Diego Unified School District partnered with local community organizations to engage 120 people - including diverse families and students representing six languages, teachers, principals, district staff, and community partners - in a day long design thinking workshop to design ways for family-school-community partnerships to support student learning and take collective action.

To support new roles and legitimacy of families' perspectives, families spoke in their own language while educators listened in (without interrupting) to the translated conversations using headsets.
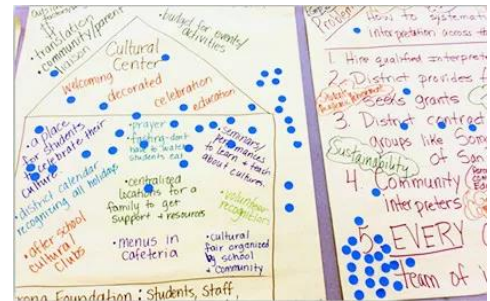
Image from focusonface.wixsite.com

This approach not only empowered the families and youth – but also shifted the mindsets of educators who had never heard these families' perspectives in such a direct way. The group reported this process helped to build their trust and shift their beliefs about each other. (Rowland, 2016)

See the following link for more details on how they made this workshop a success:
http://focusonface.wixsite.com/focusonface/single-post/2017/10/03/How-Do-We-Listen-to-Families-Try-a-Human-Centered-Design-Approach

ABLe Tip

Consider providing a variety of opportunities for residents to engage in the strategy design process, for example by using technology or existing gatherings (e.g., church service) instead of requiring residents attend additional in-person meetings (which often bring a range of barriers related to work schedules, transportation, childcare, etc.).

Engage Diverse Perspectives Simple Rule

Reflection:

Use the following questions to reflect on opportunities for co-designing strategies with groups experiencing inequities.

What local processes could you use to engage residents in co-designing strategies?

What typical roles and decision-making processes would need to shift to effectively share power with residents during these processes?

What are some next steps for moving these ideas forward?

Use a Targeted Universalism Approach

A common approach to tackling community problems is to develop universal strategies to improve outcomes for everyone in a community. While the intention is to improve outcomes of disadvantaged groups, this approach often fails because strategies are not designed to meet the unique needs of disadvantaged groups.

> See following link for a helpful (and brief) video on Targeted Universalism: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wgGcftWpwUQ&authuser=0

Targeted universalism is an alternative approach that aims to improve outcomes for all groups, but pays particular attention to the needs and circumstance of people experiencing the greatest inequities (powell et al., 2009).

Universal Approach	Targeted Universalism Approach
Example Universal Strategy: Create more affordable housing units within a community. **Limitations:** community members with greater resources, access to information, and freedom from discrimination are more likely to get new housing than those in disadvantaged groups.	**Example Targeted Universal Strategy:** Create more affordable housing units designed with consideration for unique needs of people experiencing inequities including: • on-site supportive services • rent pricing caps • targeted outreach and referral • policies addressing housing discrimination
Example Universal Strategy: Educational Reform such as No Child Left Behind Policies **Limitations**: Revised assessment, curriculum, and professional development did not consider other disadvantages many students in poor, urban schools faced that interfered with their learning.	**Example Targeted Universal Strategy:** School reform efforts attend to the whole child/family context and create supports and services easily accessible within schools.

Apply the Targeted Universalism approach to your strategy design process using the following steps (powell et al., 2009):

1. Identify which groups are experiencing the most inequities (e.g., worst outcomes compared to groups with best outcomes) related to your targeted problem and why

2. Design strategies to address those groups' specific needs, circumstances, and cultural traditions

3. Broaden solution to benefit as many additional people in the community as possible

ABLe Tip: Consider Intersections of Inequities

As you defined your Targeted Problem (see ABLe manual pages 42-47), you used disaggregated data to identify groups in your community experiencing inequities related to your problem. There is an increasing recognition that advantage and disadvantage emerge from combinations of these identities (PolicyLink, 2018). Inequities can apply to any combination of demographics:

- ☐ Age
- ☐ Race/Ethnicity
- ☐ Gender/Gender Identity
- ☐ Sexual Orientation
- ☐ Religion
- ☐ Education Level
- ☐ Household Composition
- ☐ Geographic Area/Neighborhood
- ☐ English Language Proficiency
- ☐ National Origin
- ☐ Documentation Status
- ☐ Disability Status
- ☐ Employment Status
- ☐ Income
- ☐ Connection to Services/Supports
- ☐ Other

Note that people belong to *multiple* demographic groups, and different group combinations may experience inequities differently and require unique strategy approaches.

For example, consider how these multiple group identities could impact strategy design:

- **Income + Location:** Low-income residents living in urban areas may experience different healthcare access barriers than low-income residents living in suburban areas

- **Gender + Race:** Men/boys of color often experience more contact with police or school discipline than women/girls of color

- **Race + Religion:** in the US, people of color from marginalized religious groups (e.g., Islam, Judaism) may experience greater discrimination and community exclusion than people of color from mainstream religious groups (e.g., Christianity)

Reflection Questions:

Which group intersections are most important to consider related to your targeted equity problem?

How can you design your strategies to take these intersections into account?

Enhance Power and Capacity of Groups Experiencing Inequities

Transformative change requires effort to address the root causes of inequities *and* to simultaneously create conditions that *promote equity*. This includes enhancing the **power and capacity** of groups experiencing inequities (NAACHO, 2006).

> "…any serious effort to reduce health inequities will involve changing the distribution of power within society to the benefit of disadvantaged groups." (WHO, 2010)

Without fundamentally shifting the power and capacity of groups experiencing inequities, change efforts aiming to transform local equity in health and wellbeing will not succeed (WHO, 2010).

Consider the following approaches for enhancing the power and capacity of groups experiencing inequities:

Power and Capacity	Example Strategy Approaches
Social *Power and capacity to work collectively to achieve goals*	**Support community organizing** Support residents in taking collective action (e.g., grassroots lobbying, direct action, civil disobedience) around social issues of mutual concern, such as policies related to public safety, employment conditions, transportation, public education, and environmental issues (Christens & Speer, 2015) **Support local social capital** Support efforts to help groups experiencing inequities build trust of one's neighbors, belief in the power of collective action, neighboring behavior, and participation in community organizations, as this leads to more cooperative action among residents to meet each other's needs (e.g., help repair house), share information, and provide social support (Perkins & Long, 2002)
Economic *Power and capacity to generate needed resources*	**Support efforts to improve employment opportunities** Support efforts to expand employment opportunities and job pipelines for groups experiencing inequities. Ensure these opportunities are accessible and include needed supports (Kneebone & Holmes, 2015). **Support community-led efforts to promote livable wages**

Support community-led efforts to improve living wages and benefits for low-income workers, such as janitors, nursing home aides, and hotel workers. (NACCHO, 2006)

Create community conditions supporting employment success
Support regional cross-sector, public-private partnerships in pursuing integrated approaches for simultaneously improving employment opportunities, education/job training, health, public safety, affordable housing, and transit options in targeted communities and neighborhoods. (Kneebone & Holmes, 2015)

Align institutional investments with promoting equity

Help institutions align their hiring, procurement, investing, and land use decisions with supporting the economic power and capacity of communities experiencing inequities (Rush University Medical Center, 2017).

Political *Power and capacity to influence decisions*	**Support and embed resident leadership capacity-building** Support local efforts to build the leadership capacity of people within groups experiencing inequities to help them get into formal and informal positions of power and decision-making. Embed these leadership capacity-building opportunities into existing settings, programs, and activities (Raderstrong & Boyea-Robinson, 2016). **Support intentional voting mobilization efforts** People experiencing inequities encounter additional barriers to participating in voting; to overcome these barriers, communities can use social marketing to increase motivation to participate and community organizing to help people logistically get to the polls. (Gallego, 2010).
Learning *Power and capacity to access and use information to guide decisions and action*	**Build local capacity to gather and use data** Build the capacity of community groups and residents to collect data, analyze, interpret, understand, and disseminate results so communities can better advocate and represent their interests. Support local residents in then using this data to advocate for needed changes (NACCHO, 2006) **Create feedback loops to promote learning** Create processes for organizations and institutions to rapidly deliver information on local conditions, opportunities, and changes to groups and communities experiencing inequities (Meadows, 2008).

Reflection:

Use the following questions to reflect on how to enhance the capacity of groups experiencing inequities.

	How could your strategies enhance the capacity of groups experiencing inequities in your community?
Social Capacity	
Economic Capacity	
Political Capacity	
Learning Capacity	

Address Powerful Leverage Points Driving Inequities

Systems thinkers have discovered that some root causes are more powerful "leverage" points than others for shifting community patterns and can be strategically targeted within a change intervention (Johnston et al., 2014; Meadows, 2008).

The following table summarizes in descending order the most powerful and least powerful leverage points for shifting patterns driving inequities. Consider which your strategies are currently addressing, and how you could expand your strategies to target additional powerful leverage points in your community.

Leverage Points (from most to least powerful)	Example Strategy Approaches
1. Mindsets Deepest held beliefs and paradigms, and the goals that emerge from these paradigms.	**Embed processes to explore implicit biases into existing professional development** Embed equity and implicit bias training experiences into existing professional development, orientations, and curriculums (Milner, 2006) **Create opportunities for dialogue and shared understanding** Create opportunities to understand and discuss current paradigms, create common language, and identify shared beliefs around equity paradigm (Meadows, 2008) **Embed social marketing** Community wide social marketing campaigns use broad, cross-sectoral and highly visible approaches to shift beliefs and mindsets. Successful efforts use multiple media (e.g., television, radio, Internet), disseminate messages, and use opinion leaders to influence and reinforce people's attitudes and behavior (Glickman, 2012). **Hold a shared visioning process** Engage diverse stakeholders, organizations, and community members in identifying shared outcomes and goals related to pursuing equity (see ABLe Change website for additional tools). **Engage partners in Embedding equity goals** Engage local initiatives, partner organizations, or collaboratives in embedding equity goals into their agendas, strategic plans, and/or work plans.

Leverage Points (from most to least powerful)	Example Strategy Approaches
2. Connections, Regulations, and Power Inter-<u>connections</u> between people, organizations, and sub-systems; <u>regulations</u>, incentives, and rules; <u>power</u> dynamics	**Embed an equity in all policies approach** Embed approach where considerations related to addressing inequities are embedded into cross-sector policies and decision-making processes (Rudolph, Caplan, Ben-Moshe, & Dillon, 2013) **Promote new connections** Expand relational networks across residents and organizations to promote cohesion, support, and efficiency (Carey & Crammond, 2015) **Expand boundaries** Shift which settings and stakeholders have power, influence, and authority, which stakeholders' voice matters, and who decides what happens and how it happens within a change effort (Midgley, 2000)
3. Interactions and Feedback the influence of one process on another and/or information exchanges that inform action; can be reinforcing or balancing	**Create new feedback loops** Create new processes and incentives for information to be shared with relevant partners to inform action and decision-making (Senge, 2006) **Reduce Delays in Feedback** Engage stakeholders in identifying and addressing root causes for delays in feedback throughout the system (Senge, 2006).
4. Components and Resources Shifts in program <u>components;</u> changes in <u>resources</u> (skills and knowledge, physical or built system environment, financial).	**Shift environments affecting equity** Create changes in physical and build environments within the community affecting social determinants of health equity outcomes such as equitable access to healthy food, opportunities for active living, social cohesion, etc. (Honeycutt, 2015) **Embed a focus on targeted skills and knowledge into ongoing training.** Integrate necessary skills and knowledge into annual trainings, professional development, new staff orientations, and leadership development opportunities (Powell, 2015). **Expand array of needed services, supports, or opportunities.** Expand continuum of accessible services, supports, and opportunities to meet needs of groups experiencing inequities.

(Adapted from Johnston et al., 2015; Meadows, 1999)

See the *Example Strategy Resource Guides* in your tool section for more strategy ideas.

Reflection:

Use the following questions to help address patterns of structural inequities in your community.

	How could your strategies address powerful root cause leverage points?
1. Mindsets Deepest held beliefs and paradigms, and the goals that emerge from these paradigms.	
2. Connections, Regulations, and Power Inter-<u>connections</u> between people, organizations, and sub-systems; <u>regulations</u>, incentives, and rules; <u>power</u> dynamics	
3. Interactions and Feedback the influence of one process on another and/or information exchanges that inform action; can be reinforcing or balancing	
4. Components and Resources Shifts in program <u>components;</u> changes in <u>resources</u> (skills and knowledge, physical or built system environment, financial).	

Anticipate and Address Unanticipated Consequences

The solutions we place into communities to solve targeted problems often have significant unintended consequences for people and community outcomes because of the interactions or dynamics they create. These consequences can also exacerbate existing inequities, making it important to anticipate and address these potential dynamics during strategy design.

Critical questions:

- Could your strategies create any positive or negative **unintended consequences** for groups experiencing inequities?
- If so, how can you enhance or address these consequences?

The following are 2 common unintended consequences affecting equity. Consider how you might design your strategies to prevent or mitigate consequences such as these in your community.

1. Problem Relocation

Attempts to eliminate problems within one neighborhood or community often leads to the relocation of that problem in a different neighborhood that lacks similar resources (Meadows, 2008).

- **Example:** efforts to reduce gang-related crime in one neighborhood through vigilant neighborhood watch efforts might successfully remove gang-related crime in that neighborhood. However, because the solution did not eliminate the gangs themselves, the crime behavior is likely to emerge in a different neighborhood that does not have such an effective neighborhood watch system.

- **Example:** Australia increased the taxes on ready-to-drink spirits-based alcoholic beverages as a way to decrease harmful drinking behaviors and alcohol related violence. However, while the tax decreased the consumption of the targeted beverages, the country saw a rise in the consumption of other types of alcoholic beverages, and no decrease in harmful drinking or alcohol-related violence. (Carey, 2015)

> **Key Strategy Considerations**
>
> *Which of your targeted problems or root causes might migrate to other community areas as a result of your strategies?*
>
> *What could be done to prepare other areas for this migration OR eradicate the problem from your community?*

2. Competition for Resources

Systems have a limited quantity of resources to achieve system goals. When a new goal or strategy enters the system, individuals sometimes feel compelled to respond by shifting resources away from one set of activities in order to support the demands of the new strategy requirements (Stroh, 2015).

- **Example:** the introduction of a higher set of literacy performance expectations within a school district may mean that teachers reduce their focus on other subject areas to ensure they meet these new requirements. This reduced focus on other core curriculum areas, such as math, may unfortunately lead to lower student performance scores in these areas.

> **Key Strategy Considerations**
>
> *Who in the system might have to shift resources away from other activities in order to support your strategies?*
>
> *How will this shift in focus affect the system? What could be done to reduce the negative consequences associated with this shift in resources?*

Reflection Worksheet

Use the following table to identify and address potential unintended consequences emerging from your strategies that could impact your equity goals.

Unintended Consequence	Ideas for Mitigating
Which of your targeted problems or root causes might migrate to other community areas as a result of your strategies?	*What could be done to prepare other areas for this migration OR eradicate the problem from your community?*
Who in the system might have to shift resources away from other activities in order to support your strategies? How will this affect the system?	*What could be done to reduce the negative consequences associated with this shift in resources?*

Equity Strategy Design Checklist

Use the following checklist to assess whether your strategies have drawn upon powerful approaches for promoting equity.

To what extent are your strategies...	√
Co-Developed with Groups Experiencing Inequities • Share and redistribute decision-making power with groups experiencing inequities by redefining roles, valuing different ways of knowing (e.g., lived experience *and* research), creating more balanced decision-making processes, and holding institutions accountable to using resident voice. • Authentically engage groups experiencing inequities in the strategy co-design process, for example through a co-design workshop.	
Using a Targeted Universalism Approach • Identify which groups are experiencing the most inequities related to your targeted problem and why. • Design strategies to address those groups' specific needs, circumstances, and cultural traditions. • Broaden solution to benefit as many people in the community as possible.	
Enhancing Power and Capacity of Groups Experiencing Inequities • Design strategies to enhance the social, economic, political, and learning power and capacity of communities experiencing inequities.	

Leveraging Powerful Root Causes
 	
• Design strategies to shift powerful root cause leverage points driving local inequities (listed below in order of most to least powerful)
 	
    1. Mindsets
    2. Connections, Regulations, Power
    3. Interactions and Feedback
    4. Components and Resources	

Anticipating and Addressing Unintended Consequences • Address potential of your strategy relocating the problem or root causes to another community area by preparing other areas for this migration OR eradicating the problem from your community. • Address potential of your strategy shifting resources away from other activities by reducing the negative consequences associated with this shift in resources • Address additional potential unintended consequences of your strategies.	

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