

Equity Impact Assessment

What are Equity Impact Assessments?

An Equity Impact Assessment (EIA) is a systematic examination of how individuals and communities will likely be affected by a proposed action or decision. EIAs are used to minimize unanticipated adverse consequences in a variety of contexts, including the analysis of proposed policies, institutional practices, programs, plans and budgetary decisions. The EIA can be a vital tool for preventing institutional racism and other forms of discrimination and for identifying new options to remedy long-standing inequities.

Why are they needed?

EIAs are used to reduce, eliminate and prevent discrimination and inequities. The persistence of deep disparities and divisions across society is evidence of institutional discrimination—the routine, often invisible and unintentional, production of inequitable social opportunities and outcomes. When equity is not consciously addressed, inequality is often unconsciously replicated.

When should it be conducted?

EIAs are best conducted during the decision-making process, prior to enacting new proposals. They are used to inform decisions, much like environmental impact statements, fiscal impact reports and workplace risk assessments.

Where are they in use?

The use of EIAs in the U.S. is relatively new and still somewhat limited, but new interest and initiatives are on the rise. The United Kingdom has been using them with success for nearly a decade.

Equity Impact Assessment (Long Version)

1. Identifying stakeholders:

- a. Which communities*, demographic groups* and protected classes* may be most affected by and concerned with the issues related to this proposal?

2. Engaging stakeholders:

- a. How have all stakeholders—especially those identified in question 1a —been informed, meaningfully involved and authentically represented in the development of this proposal?
- b. Who's missing and how can they be effectively engaged?

3. Identifying and documenting inequities:

- a. How does the current quantitative and qualitative evidence reveal disparities in experiences and outcomes related to this proposal?
- b. How are the people in communities*, demographic groups* and protected classes* advantaged and disadvantaged differently by the issues this proposal seeks to address?
- c. What evidence is missing or needed and how do you obtain it?

4. Examining the Causes:

- a. What factors may be producing and perpetuating inequities associated with this issue?
- b. How did the inequities arise? Are they expanding or narrowing?
- c. How does the system and/or actors within it perpetuate the inequities?
- d. Does the proposal address root causes? If not, how could it?

5. Clarifying the purpose:

- a. What does the proposal seek to accomplish?
- b. How will it reduce disparities?
- c. How will it advance equity and inclusion?

6. Considering adverse impacts: (negatives)

- a. What adverse impacts or unintended consequences could result from this decision?
- b. Are there ways to reduce the opportunity for unintended consequences that arise from individual unconscious bias?
- c. Which communities*, demographic groups* and protected classes* could be negatively affected, and how?
- d. How could adverse impacts be prevented or minimized?

7. Advancing Equitable impacts: (positives)

- a. What positive impacts on equality and inclusion, if any, could result from this proposal?
- b. Which communities*, demographic groups* and protected classes * could benefit?
- c. Are there further ways to maximize equitable opportunities and impacts?

8. Examining alternatives or improvements: (possible or different: change)

- a. Are there better ways to reduce disparities and advance equity?
- b. What provisions could be changed or added to ensure positive impacts on equity and inclusion?

9. Ensuring viability and sustainability:

- a. Is the proposal realistic, adequately funded, with mechanisms to ensure successful implementation and enforcement?
- b. How will the impact of this proposal be evidenced in current data collection and public reporting?
- c. Are there provisions to ensure ongoing data collection, public reporting, stakeholder participation and public accountability?

10. Identifying success indicators:

- a. What are the success indicators and progress benchmarks?
- b. How will impacts be documented and evaluated?
- c. How will the level, diversity and quality of ongoing stakeholder engagement be assessed?

Equity Impact Assessment draft – some helpful notes

- The tool is very research based. It is adapted from work done at the Applied Research Center.
- The purpose of the tool is to guide practice in effective decision making. It is intended for critical and complex decision making, and may surface relevant subsequent questions and needs.
- The EIA is a specific process, following the linear progression of the queries will provide best outcomes. Shortcuts don't work. An appropriate shortcut would be to use the pocket version and to follow that progression in a linear fashion.
- Not every section or question may apply to every situation. Be thoughtful, and take your time dismissing a line of inquiry.
- The pocket version is a condensed version with only 9 sections and much simpler questions, using simpler language. It is intended for use once the long version has become usual practice, or for large groups and potentially less complex situations where a condensed process is required as a starting place.
- The long version should always be used as a reference to support the pocket version.

Equity Impact Assessment (Pocket Version)

1. **STAKEHOLDERS:** Who are the different groups of people _____ would affect? How have they been meaningfully engaged? Who has been missed?
2. **INEQUITIES:** Would _____ affect different groups differently? If so, in what ways? If we don't know, how could we find out?
3. **ROOT CAUSES:** Why would _____ affect some groups unequally? What could _____ do to address these root causes?
4. **PURPOSE:** What are we trying to achieve with _____? How would it reduce disparities and advance equity and inclusion? Are there better ways to do this?
5. **NEGATIVE EFFECTS:** How could _____ be bad for different groups? What could we do to prevent or reduce negative effects and unintended consequences?
6. **POSITIVE EFFECTS:** How would _____ be good for different groups? What could we change or add to increase positive effects on equity and inclusion?
7. **ALTERNATIVES:** Are there better ways than _____ to reduce disparity and provide better opportunity?
8. **SUSTAINABILITY:** Is _____ realistic and adequately funded? What does it need to be successful over time?
9. **EVALUATION:** How do we measure _____'s success? How can we share that information with people?

*Glossary

Communities: groups of people connected by ideology, culture and/or location. Some examples are migrant workers, African American, Vietnamese, South Corvallis, LGBTQ, researchers, parents.

Demographic groups: groups of people defined by criteria such as socio-economics, education, gender identity, race and ethnicity.

Protected class: Characteristics of a person that federal and/or state law protects from discrimination (federal protections are consistent across the US; state protections vary), which includes some but not all demographic groups and communities. Most applicable protected classes are race, national origin, color, sex, age, disability, religion, marital status, veteran status, sexual orientation, and gender identity.