

Integrating Health & Equity

GuideBox

How can communities become more engaged, inclusive, and equitable?

Is there a sense of equity, mutual trust, and exchange of resources among neighbors and within social networks?



Integrating Health & Equity



A healthy community uses inclusive actions to create places and spaces for everyone. Members within the same community can typically have different priorities, abilities, and knowledge sets; recognizing and attempting to meet the needs of everyone in the community is the goal. Many groups have historically been under-represented, such as people of color, older adults, youth, people that identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, plus (LGBT+), and people with physical or mental disabilities.

Our social networks are essential to our overall health; neighbors, family members, friends and acquaintances help to support the needs we do not always have the ability to do by ourselves. Engaging with one's community can create a sense of belonging that recognizes and celebrates the differences among residents. Importantly, it can offer awareness of health and social gaps within the community so that solutions can be carried out. Having a community that is actively engaged with one another can provide for a healthier community overall.

The initial set of questions that follow offer discussion points for planning a meeting or session with a focus on health and social equity. A second list is provided for more detailed discussion of social equity and community engagement. These lists are not exhaustive and should be discussed when thinking about your community.

Note, some of these questions may require some advance preparation and research on the part of the organizers or facilitators.

Questions for Discussion

1 Is there a sense of inclusivity and equity in the community?

Who within the community may experience or continues to experience exclusion?

- Youth
- Older Adults (65+)
- Racial and ethnic minorities
- Non-native speakers
- People who identify LGBT+
- People with physical or mental disabilities
- Low income groups
- People experiencing homelessness

Whose voices are heard by those making decisions for the community?

- Property owners or renters
- Those with more means
- Business owners or residents
- Men or women
- Older adults or young people

2 What is the level of social interaction and engagement with the community?

What is the status of the social network within the community?

- Strong (regular, friendly interactions between neighbors, planned events, community planned gatherings)
- Some (some interactions, limited to certain groups, few events or gatherings)
- Weak (few interactions, limited to groups or individuals, few to no gatherings or events)
- Non-existent

What are the barriers that prevent neighbor-to-neighbor interactions?

- Real or perceived safety concerns
- Design or placement of homes
- Ethnic, cultural or language differences
- Physical ability
- Time constraints
- Different economic status

2 What is the level of social interaction and engagement with the community? (cont.)

Are there enough connections and access to adjacent communities?

3 What actions can be taken to improve inclusivity and engagement?

- Community events or festivals (free, open to public)
- Community task force or initiative
- Engaging with advocacy groups
- Advocating for changes to the local policies or zoning code
- Advocating for inclusive and equitable policy
- Actively thinking about who is not at the table
- Allowing opportunities for community members to be heard and respected
- Allowing community members to share power and responsibility



Additional Discussion Points

The following are in-depth discussion topics with a focus on the relationship between health and social equity.

- Discuss the factors that may be limiting residents from participating in the community and how that impacts health.

- Food insecurity or living in a food desert
- Housing insecurity
- Health or safety concerns
- Language or cultural barriers
- Economic insecurity
- Physical location
- Limited or no transportation access

- Discuss ways to empower groups who have historically experienced exclusion or inequity. Discuss ways to celebrate diversity and promote inclusion.

- By creating a sense of ownership
- Giving opportunities for all members of the community to be heard and respected
- Creating trust between community members and city staff or other key partners
- Community gardens
- Community outreach programs
- Volunteer programs
- Art installations
- Participating in local festivals and events

- Discuss ways to involve children and teens in the community. Discuss ways to promote family-friendly designs within the community.
- Discuss factors to consider for including an aging population in the community.
- Discuss the area's available jobs in the area and who is excluded from potential jobs.

Additional Discussion Points (cont.)

- Discuss the pros and cons of current public engagement processes. Discuss how to involve the local community centers, schools, or places of worship in the engagement strategy and how they could benefit community outreach and engagement.

- Enhanced news and information-sharing
- Larger outreach ability
- More resources for engagement

For Further Discussion and Research

- Research and review the area's demographic data. Discuss the findings of the data and how to meet the needs and create inclusive and equitable measures for the current and future population. Reliable data sources include the United States Census and The Colorado Demographer's Office.
www.census.gov/data.html
www.demography.dola.colorado.gov
- Research nonprofit or government programs that improve equity and engagement in communities. Discuss how to involve local governments, nonprofits, and community members to achieve goals.
- Research initiatives other communities use to help improve community engagement and social efforts that promote equity or inclusion. Discuss initiatives that could be tried in the community.

- Meetup
www.meetup.com
- Translator technologies
- Pop-up events

Additional Resources



Learn more about CITIZEN PARTICIPATION and ECONOMIC INCLUSION in Section 1 of the *Creating Healthy Places Guidebook*

https://coloradohealthyplaces.org/wp-content/themes/Divi-child/files/Creating-Healthy-Places-Guidebook_Chapter1_Web.pdf



Learn more about LOCAL FOOD PRODUCTION in Section 4 of the *Creating Healthy Places Guidebook*

https://coloradohealthyplaces.org/wp-content/themes/Divi-child/files/Creating-Healthy-Places-Guidebook_Chapter4_Web.pdf

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