

Equity Review Tool - Glossary of Terms

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This document is a living, working document. It will always need to remain updated and flexible. This document is to be used as a guide that is ever growing as we learn from each other and our communities.

Accountability (Culture of Accountability): In the context of racial equity work, accountability refers to the ways in which individuals and communities hold themselves to their goals and actions, and acknowledge the values and groups of people to which they are responsible.

Anti-Blackness: A two-part formation that both voids Blackness of value, while systematically marginalizing Black people. A term used to specifically describe the unique discrimination, violence and harms imposed on and impacting Black people specifically.

Cultural Awareness: Refers to the ability to interact effectively with people of different cultures and the systems that uphold or reject these various cultures. Here are four components to consider: (1) Awareness of your own cultural worldview and dominant cultural norms, (2) Attitude toward a variety of cultural norms and practices, (3) Knowledge of different cultural practices and worldviews and how they show up in our institutions; and (4) Cross-cultural skills.

Discrimination: The unequal treatment of members of various groups based on race, gender, social class, sexual orientation, physical ability, religion and other categories.

Disparities: Refers to a state of being unequal. In health and social service systems, disparity is typically used to describe unequal outcomes experienced by one racial or ethnic group when compared to *another* racial or ethnic group. **Note:** Disparities can also occur between groups of people based on differences in gender, sexual orientation, ability, citizenship status, socioeconomic status, and more.

Diversity: Diversity includes all the ways in which people differ, and it encompasses all the different characteristics that make one individual or group different from another, such as: race, ethnicity, gender, age, national origin, religion or ethical value system, physical ability, ability, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, education, marital status, language, physical appearance, ideas, perspectives, and values. Diversity is all-inclusive and recognizes everyone and every group that should be valued.

Equity: A measure of justice that recognizes each person's different circumstances and is context specific to the history, systemic barriers, disadvantages, and power disparities present in any given situation. Equity is both a process and condition when outcomes for marginalized communities are improved, thereby lifting outcomes for all. **See Racial Equity to learn more specifically about the language the City of Austin uses to guide all equity work.**

Equality: Treating everyone the same exact way, regardless of need or context. Note the difference between Equality and Equity.

Inclusion: Authentically bringing traditionally excluded individuals and/or groups into processes, activities, and decision/policy making in a way that shares power.

Intersectionality: A concept developed by Kimberle Crenshaw in relation to Black women's experiences, arguing that classifications such as gender, class, ability, and others cannot be examined in isolation from race; these identities interact and intersect in individuals' lives, in society, in social systems, and are mutually constitutive.

Implicit bias: Also known as **unconscious or hidden bias**, implicit biases are negative associations that people unknowingly hold. They are expressed automatically, without conscious awareness. Many studies have indicated that implicit biases affect individuals' attitudes and actions, thus creating real-world implications, even though individuals may not even be aware that those biases exist within themselves. Notably, implicit biases have been shown to trump individuals' stated commitments to equality and fairness, thereby producing behavior that diverges from the explicit attitudes that many people profess. The Implicit Association Test (IAT) is often used to measure implicit biases with regard to race, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion, and other topics.

Institutional racism: Institutional racism refers specifically to the ways in which institutional policies and practices create different outcomes for different racial groups. The institutional policies may never mention any racial group, but their effect is to create advantages for whites and oppression and disadvantage for people from groups classified as people of color.

Limited English Proficiency (LEP): Individuals who do not speak English as their primary language and who have a limited ability to read, speak, write, or understand English can be limited English proficient, or "LEP." These individuals may be entitled language assistance with respect to a particular type or service, benefit, or encounter.

Marginalization: A social process by which individuals or groups are (intentionally or unintentionally) distanced from access to power and resources and constructed as insignificant, peripheral, or less valuable/privileged to a community or "mainstream" society. This term describes a social process, so as not to imply a lack of agency. Marginalized groups or people are those excluded from mainstream social, economic, cultural, or political life. Examples of marginalized groups include, but are by no means limited to, groups excluded due to race, religion, political or cultural group, age, gender, or financial status. To what extent such populations are marginalized, however, is context specific and reliant on the cultural organization of the social site in question.

Oppression: Systemic devaluing, undermining, marginalizing, and dis-advantaging of certain social identities in contrast to the privileged norm; historical and organized patterns of mistreatment of marginalized groups while maintaining power within dominant social groups.

Power: Power is unequally distributed globally and in U.S. society; some individuals or groups wield greater power than others, thereby allowing them greater access and control over resources. Wealth, whiteness, citizenship, patriarchy, heterosexism, and education are a few key social mechanisms through which power operates. Although power is often conceptualized as power over other individuals or groups, other variations are power with (used in the context of building collective strength) and power within (which references an individual's internal strength). Learning to "see" and understand relations of power is vital to organizing for progressive social change.

Race: The People's Institute for Survival and Beyond defines race as a specious classification of people, created by Europeans in the 16th and 17th centuries for the purpose of assigning worth and value and maintaining systems of power, using 'white' as the model of humanity.

Racial Equity: Because race is the most reliable indicator for quality of life outcomes in our community, the City of Austin leads with racial equity when working towards systemic change; racial equity is the condition when race no longer predicts a quality of life outcomes (such as health, education, employment, rates of homelessness, food access, poverty, among others) in our community.

Racism: A mix of prejudice and power leading to domination and exploitation of one group (the dominant or majority racialized group) over another (the non-dominant or marginalized racial group). It asserts that one group is supreme and superior while the other is inferior. Racism can be an individual action or institutional practice backed by institutional power, which produces harmful outcomes for marginalized racial groups.

Also consider:

- Structural Racism & Institutional Racism – historical, cultural, social psychological, policies and practices across society that produce outcomes that chronically favor one racial group and put others at a disadvantage.
- Individual Racism – The prejudiced individual, direct, or one-to-one action(s) against other individuals because of their racial group membership deprive them of some right (i.e. employment, housing). These acts are supported by institutions and are nurtured by societal practices.
- Colonialism – Usually refers to the period of European colonization from Columbus (1492) onwards, in the Americas, Asia and Africa, and taking on different forms from settler colonies like Canada to non-settler colonies such as India during British rule. It was a time of prominent settler colonialism and land/resource grab, forced removal and subjugation of Indigenous and people of African descent. The legacy of that lives in all of our institutions in the present day.

References:

[Glossary | Racial Equity Tools](#)

[What is Racial Equity? | Race Forward](#)

[City of Austin Equity Office](#)

[People's Institute for Survival and Beyond](#)

[A Call to Men](#)