KENT COUNTY
ESSENTIAL NEEDS
TASK FORCE

EQUITY TOOLKIT

Developed for the
Economic & Workforce
Development

Developed By
Inclusive Performance Strategies

INTRODUCTION

As the ENTF continues toward its goal of reducing the unemployment rate within the Neighborhoods of Focus and increasing household income over 200% of poverty, it will pursue specific actions towards addressing economic stability disparities. Ultimately, the ENTF Economic & Workforce Development (WFD) Subcommittee aims to understand where disparities in economic stability exist, how they relate to race, ethnicity, gender, and ability, and will utilize tools to create inclusive and effective strategies.

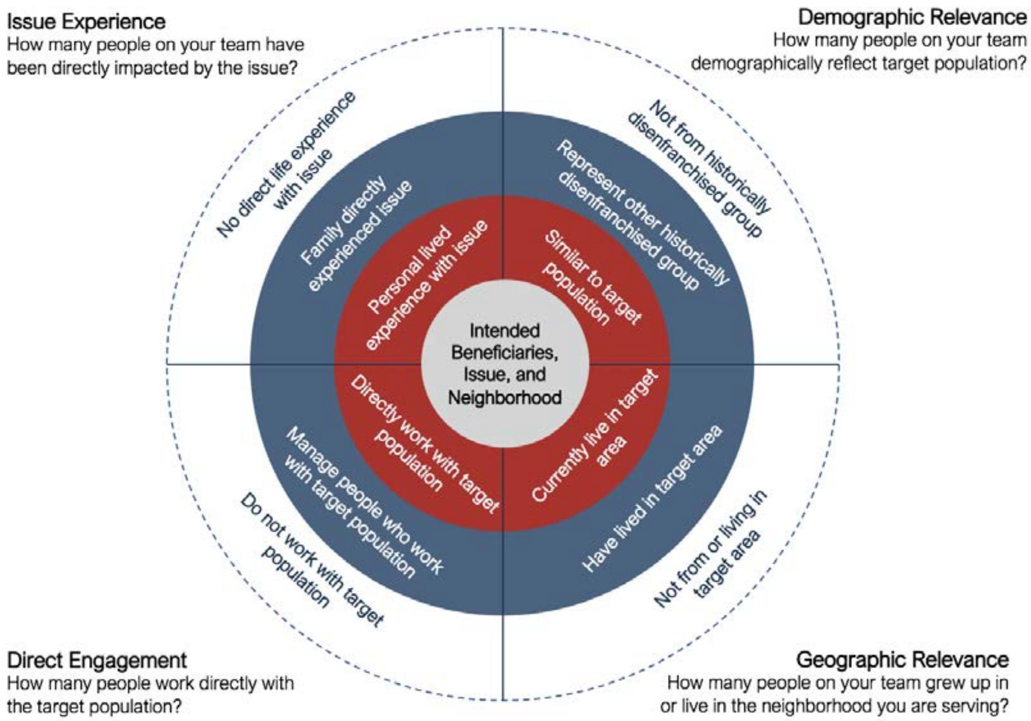
This toolkit was developed to support the Addressing Economic Stability Disparities Action Team (a.k.a. the Equity Action Team) of the WFD Subcommittee to fulfill the broader strategic goal, in addition to equipping itself the full subcommittee to foster inclusive and collaborative environments designed to achieve equitable outcomes throughout Kent County. It is comprised of established tools & strategies from national resources as well as tools customized for the needs of ENTF.

The toolkit is designed to encourage the following throughout all phases of action team work:

- The people engaged in the work are representative of the target market and/or mindful of the group's limitations if it is not
- Action teams understand how racial and economic disparity impacts the work and identify intentional strategies to mitigate those disparities
- Action teams are mindful of the need for authentic and empowering community engagement
- Action teams identify power dynamics of community context; strategies are created to empower the disenfranchised and leverage existing influence/resources
- Action teams use creative strategies to explore solutions that move beyond the dominant discourse (as the dominant discourse has either perpetuated or ignored current disparities)

Notes for facilitation have been added to each tool. Each facilitator's guide defines the purpose of the tool, provides suggested directions for engaging it, and gives an example of an ENTF WFD action team using the tool. The examples are hypothetical, but on scope with the general purpose of each action team. These examples are used so that action teams are not primed or constrained to use a certain tool.

WHO IS AT OUR TABLE?



Purpose of the Tool:

- To understand the backgrounds of current involved stakeholders as they relate to the target population or issue
- To identify gaps in representation and discuss opportunities to engage additional stakeholders

Suggested Use:

1. Begin by ensuring the group has a common understanding of the intended beneficiaries or the issue being addressed.
2. Provide each member of the current group an opportunity to identify where they fall within each of the four quadrants (Direct Engagement, Geographic Relevance, Demographic Relevance, Issue Experience).
3. Discuss where the group primarily lies within each quadrant. How does this affect your work (positively or negatively)? If there is only one person in the inner circle or in any of the inner rings, are they comfortable sharing their experience working with the group (do they fee fully valued, included, and/or equipped? Tokenized? Dismissed? Negative group behaviors may be unconscious but should still be identified and addressed if possible).
4. Discuss the goals of the group and where the group is in the process. Given that information, what is the ideal representation?
5. Identify any gaps and discuss opportunities to bring more people into the work.

Example: The Communicating System Resources action team decides to identify client success stories and then create a marketing campaign bringing those stories to the public. This tool may be used to help determine who needs to be involved to best identify different sources for stories, how to shape the narratives, and when/who/where to share them with.

DEFINE THE PROBLEM WITH DATA

PROBLEM	STAKEHOLDERS	BARRIERS
What is the problem we are trying to solve?	Who are the main stakeholders?	How has the current context created barriers? What are those barriers?

STATUS QUO	SITUATEDNESS	CURRENT WORK
What is currently driving the status quo that perpetuates the identified barriers (i.e. assumptions, cultural norms, resources, other)?	How are different groups impacted, and do we understand why? (Narrative and quantitative)	How does the work already being done in community help to answer these questions?

Purpose of the Tool:

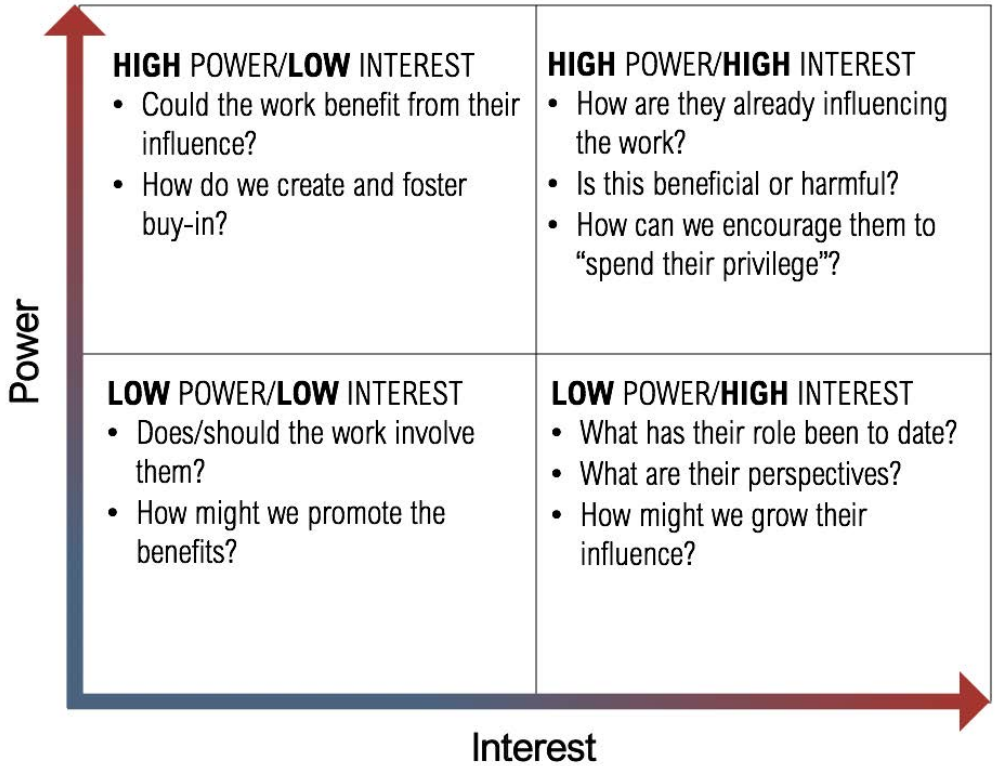
- A large part of consciously working towards equity is fully understanding the context your group/program/organization is working within, as well as understanding what you are actually hoping to influence. This tool helps group members methodically think through different contextual considerations.
- The information defined here can help to identify areas or populations of focus, stakeholders to include in the planning and implementation, and potential problem areas in the landscape to be aware of.

Suggested Use:

1. Have group members work individually to answer each question prompt.
2. Come together to discuss similarities in responses, reconcile any opposing differences, and decide on a common understanding.
3. Decide which prompts the group does not have enough information about. Create an action plan to discover what is needed.
4. Identify current inequities. Consider how barriers, competition, the status quo, or stakeholder's situatedness currently perpetuate these inequities.
5. What can be done to address inequities within the scope of your group's work? What does the group realize it cannot address? Can the group illuminate inequities outside of its scope to others (i.e. partners, stakeholders, decisionmakers, power brokers)?

***Example**: The Engaging External Systems group decides to form a deeper partnership with the mental health system. This tool can help the group understand more fully why they may want to pursue that partnership and the context they will be stepping into.*

POWER MATRIX



Purpose of the Tool:

- To more fully understand all individuals and groups of stakeholders that are affected, can affect, or have interest in the issue/project
- To consider the action team's ability to influence, onboard, empower, or neutralize stakeholders as needed.

Suggested Use:

1) Begin by making sure the action team has a common understanding of the project, problem definition, or target goal.
2) Before looking at the matrix, brainstorm a list of people and groups that are involved, should be involved, will be impacted by the work, or will influence the work.
3) Sort the list by putting each identified group or individual into a quadrant of the matrix by level of interest and power.
4) Review the matrix sectors and determine who is missing.
5) Discuss the questions listed in each quadrant, specifically considering the groups and individuals the action team has placed there.
6) Discuss priorities for action, considering both the overall success of the project and action needed to ensure equitable input, opportunity, and outcomes.

Example: The Data Action Team decides to pursue a community dashboard where the public can quickly understand the landscape of unemployment in Kent County. The matrix can help to identify who needs to be involved for the dashboard to be useful—what powerful people/organizations must buy-in, what stakeholders need to be included in the planning and implementation so that the data is accessible, empowering, and clear.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

STAKEHOLDERS	ENGAGMENT GOALS	CURRENT ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES	INPUT	CURRENT COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SPECTRUM (IAP2) STATUS	NEEDED CHANGES
Who do we hope to engage?	*What do we hope to accomplish with this stakeholder?*	*What are we currently doing that we can utilize to accomplish those goals?*	*How is the stakeholder's input incorporated the project?*	*Use the "Input" column to help determine the status along the IAP2 spectrum.*	*Given the goal we have defined, and current state of engagement, what do we need to add, stop or rework?*
Stakeholder #1					
Stakeholder #2					

Purpose of the Tool:
- To identify current levels of engagement
- To be intentional about the level of engagement of each relevant stakeholder/group and make improvements as necessary

Suggested Use:
This tool is best used in conjunction with the "Who is at Our Table?" or "Power Matrix" tools, though it may be used alone. To complete the table, the group will need to reference the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) Community Engagement Spectrum.
1) Identify target stakeholders (reference other tools if needed).
2) As each cell of the matrix is completed, consider both current engagement and desired engagement. Engagement at any level is only valuable when input is actually considered and used. Not every stakeholder group must be at a "Co-Lead" level on the IAP2 spectrum. Sometimes, "informing" is the most appropriate for that stakeholder. However, discuss the merits, risks, and challenges of deeper engagement with each stakeholder group and be able to explain the action team's decisions.
3) Discuss how stakeholder engagement can be used to address inequities in power and/or outcomes, enhance the perspectives of decision makers or implementers, gather more community support for your issue, etc.

***Example**: The System Navigators action team decides to identify best practices and pain points of clients engaging with system navigators across participating ENTF WFD agencies. This tool can help to consider the diversity of clients that can offer perspective on how to collect information, develop meaningful reports, and consider recommendations. The tool can also help identify stakeholders within the organizations that will be essential for the success of the project and subsequent recommendations.*

THINKING BEYOND THE STATUS QUO

What alternatives are possible…

…with current resources and partners?

…with a modest increase in resources/one new strategic partner?

…with unlimited resources and buy-in from anyone?

…in 6 months?

…in 1 year?

…in 5 years?

How do we leverage what we already have? How do we make the impossible more feasible (incremental steps)?

Purpose of the Tool:

- This tool considers the importance of leveraging the diversity of thought in your action teams. After a common problem/issue has been identified, this tool is useful for considering alternatives for action beyond what is typical or what dominant discourse may suggest.
- In particular, use the tool to consider addressing barriers to access or systemic situations that are currently perpetuating inequitable outcomes with your issue.

Suggested Use:

1) Begin by ensuring a common understanding of the problem, issue, target populations, and situational context (see "Define the Problem with Data" for more assistance)
2) Break into groups and allow each group to select one or multiple prompts. Creativity is more essential than feasibility at this stage. The goal is to generate many ideas.
3) Come together to discuss the results. For example, are there any common threads worth considering? For far-fetched ideas, are there elements that are particularly appealing that could be translated into something more incremental and realistic? What is 'usually done' in your situation? What are the benefits and risks of pursuing a different route?

Example: *The Steering Committee is considering the latest data project reports and is trying to identify ways to decrease unemployment disparities in neighborhoods with high levels of identified racial disparities in outcomes. The group can use the tool as a starting place to identify potential action steps.*

IAP2 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SPECTRUM

	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	CO-LEAD
Objectives of the Approach	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, or solutions	To gather feedback from targeted stakeholders on the project's goals, processes, shared metrics, or strategies for change	To work directly with stakeholders continuously to ensure that concerns are consistently understood and considered	To partner with stakeholders in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives & priorities	To place final decision-making in the hands of stakeholders so that they drive decision and implementation of the work
Examples*	• Email newsletters • Send press releases announcing progress milestones	• Ask for input on initiative strategies • Invite to small group or individual presentations, focus groups, surveys	• Schedule regular meetings where stakeholders can advise in progress. Partner in policy advocacy	• Invite to join action teams. Appoint to a leadership role on an Action Team to help shape strategies	• Invite to join the Steering Committee with decision-making power in ENTF. Use Action Team as a mechanism of support for stakeholder's goals or projects.

Purpose of the Tool:

- To understand the current of level of engagement of various stakeholders, and to identify the desire level of engagement for those groups throughout the progression of a given project or initiative

Suggested Use:
This tool can serve as a reference tool that can be helpful to consider at any point, though it may be used alone. Specifically, this tool needs to be utilized when completing the table in the "Putting It All Together" tool. Additionally, the tool can be used in conjunction with the "Who is at Our Table?" or "Power Matrix" tools.

1. Begin by identifying the common goal and the stakeholders involved (reference other tools as needed).
2. Review each of the objectives that correspond with the levels of engagement. For each stakeholder group, identify the objective that most accurately describes the current level of engagement.
3. Continue to follow the steps within the "Putting It All Together" tool to discuss current vs. desired engagement, and to identify appropriate action steps to implement.

Example: The Communication of System Resources action team is considering effective marketing strategies to facilitate outreach around ENTF agencies' impact. The team utilizes the tool to understand the current level of engagement of various stakeholder groups and to shape effective tactics.

CHANGING THE DISCOURSE

DISCOURSE I ATTRIBUTES	DISCOURSE II ATTRIBUTES
• Singular truths • Answers & technical fixes • Improving what exists • Externalization/blame (“Look out the window”) • Limited time & ability	• Multiple stories • Inquiry & adaptive challenges • Addressing root causes • Internal reflection (“Look in the mirror”) • Getting started anyway

Purpose of the Tool:
Often groups can fall into “Discourse I Attributes.” The consequences of this range from limiting perspectives that hide opportunities to perpetuating false narratives that support inequity and systemic disparities. Consciously bringing “Discourse II Attributes” into conversation can help groups to:

- More fully understand the issues and context at hand
- Think beyond the obvious
- Be aware of the impact of biases
- Identify opportunities for action in constrained environments
- Move past conversations that start with “This is too hard because…”; “This has always been a problem because…”; “If only others would…” and so forth. Instead focusing on what the group can influence now or within the immediate future.

Suggested Use:
1) Throughout conversations, keep these attributes at hand, perhaps as a handout.
2) Make sure group members understand what each attribute means, then rely on the common language the tool establishes to support and challenge one another in conversation, such as:
3) “I hear your point, but I wonder what other perspectives come into play to define this– do we know multiple stories?”
4) “Although it may be complicated, I appreciate that you are trying to address root cause. Let’s try and think of some useful and immediate steps we can take to get started, even in a limited context.”

Example: *The Equity Action Team is considering the latest Service Analysis and has identified several organizations that do not have clients’ representative of the most unemployed demographics in their neighborhood. The action team can consider how Discourse II Attributes will lead to more productive and fruitful sources of support for these agencies as the action team considers how to bring this information to light.*

CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE TOOLKIT

Ongoing Committee Use

This toolkit was created in 2018 with the insight of the ENTF WFD Equity Action team and input from the larger subcommittee. As local and national expertise continue to evolve, the toolkit should be reviewed, updated, and revised.

Inclusive Performance Strategies recommends that the ENTF WFD Subcommittee review the toolkit as a group and ask the following questions:

Quarterly Troubleshooting Discussion:

1. Are action teams clear on the purpose and use of each tool?
2. How are the tools being used in each action team?
3. What questions or concerns do action team members have about utilizing the toolkit?

Annual Revision Discussion:

1. Are these particular tools still relevant to our current work?
2. What utilization lessons can action teams share with one another?
3. Have group members come across other tools that would be useful?
4. What resources are missing?

Additionally, as the subcommittee expands or membership changes, the ENTF should be intentional about understanding the equity practices of participants and their agencies so that relevant expertise can be incorporated into the toolkit.

Community Use

While this toolkit was created for the ongoing use of the ENTF Workforce Development Subcommittee, it is the hope of ENTF that subcommittee members and the larger community will find it useful in a variety of contexts. The pursuit of equitable outcomes cannot be isolated to collective efforts but must be infused within the work of all individual organizations. ENTF staff and Equity Action Team members should discuss how to best support individual organizations that want help implementing any of the tools in the toolkit. Offering support will not only ensure the tools are utilized as intended but will build the ENTF's network ties in community and align collective equity goals.

Toolkit Limitations

While the toolkit is designed to provide procedural support and concrete activities that support community engagement and a focus on equitable outcomes, users should note that no amount of predesigned activity can replace the need for all involved individuals to develop an 'equity mindset'. Action team members should remember to seek out one another's expertise and always remember to A.S.K about equity in ongoing discussions and decision-making:

- ADD intentional prompts: "What do you mean by that?" or "How will that impact X group?"
- SUGGEST relevant resources: "Can we find data illuminating context or disparities on that?" or "Have you considered this training?"
- KEEP equity at the center: "Who will be left out?" or "How might people interpret that word or phrasing?"

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Several of the tools in the 2018 toolkit are part of a larger suite of resources from various national experts. Below are the links to these full suits:

"7 Steps to Advance and Embed Race Equity and Inclusion Within Your Organization," Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2014

- Link: http://www.aecf.org/resources/race-equity-and-inclusion-action-guide/

Table of Contents:

- 7 Steps to Advance and Embed Race Equity
- Step 1: Establish Principles
- Core Concepts
- Step 2: Engage Populations
- Step 3: Gather Data
- Step 4: Conduct Analysis
- Step 5: Identify Strategies
- Step 6: Conduct Impact Assessment
- Step 7: Evaluate Effectiveness

Living Cities Resource Page

- Link: https://www.livingcities.org/resources

The mission of Living Cities is to harness the collective power of philanthropy and financial institutions to improve the lives of low-income people and the cities where they live. The group has put together a wide variety of tools focused on enhancing equitable outcomes. Many relate to community engagement, encouraging inclusive discourse, and creating measurable action plans.

National Equity Project Resource Page

- Link: http://nationalequityproject.org/resources

The mission of the National Equity Project (NEP) is to "dramatically improve educational experiences, outcomes, and life options for students and families who have been historically underserved by their schools and districts." The organization specializes in building the capacity of partners for equity. The resource page includes academic studies, publications, links to additional tools from other experts, and recommended reading. While NEP is heavily focused on educational initiatives, many of the resources are readily adaptable to any sector.