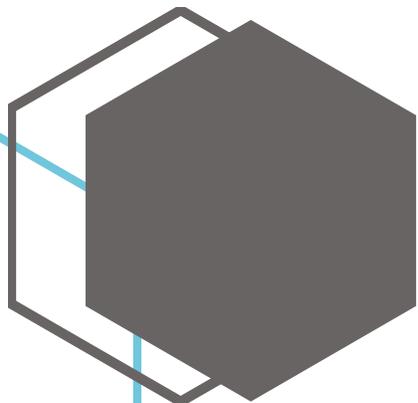


COVID-19 Equity Framework and Rapid Response Tool

City of San Antonio
Office of Equity



CITY OF SAN ANTONIO
OFFICE OF EQUITY





COVID-19 Equity Framework and Rapid Response

There is potential for crises such as COVID-19 to exacerbate existing racial and economic disparities in our city. While anyone can contract the virus, its impact will be most deeply felt in Latinx, Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) and low wealth communities. The decisions made by the City during this crisis will have impacts both now and long after it ends. To facilitate consideration of racial equity, this tool should be used to examine how Latinx and BIPOC communities will be affected, both short-term and long-term, by a proposed action or decision of the City during the COVID-19 crises.

COVID-19: Rapid Response Tool - Equity Impact Analysis Instructions

- Have this tool available during any meeting where decisions are being made related to COVID-19 response. Before a decision is made, answer the questions listed below.

- Include staff with a variety of experiences, backgrounds, and skills at the decision-making table and include them in the decision-making process. Identify groups and individuals most likely to be impacted.

- If this decision requires City Council action, we suggest consulting with the Office of Health Equity at **Metro Health** before filing. For all other decisions, email completed form to the Office of Equity for review by the COVID-19 Equity Action Team: Equity@sanantonio.gov

- If you need assistance completing the tool please reach out to anyone at the **Office of Equity** and check out the resources listed in the tool.

Equity is Everyone's Job



As the coronavirus pandemic continues to unfold, we do not want to see old patterns play themselves out again.

Historically marginalized communities are often left behind in crisis responses and as the result of decision making that isn't rooted in equity.

At the City of San Antonio, we are committed to equity, and now more than ever, equity must be everyone's job, and be embedded into every decision made in every Department.

The Office of Equity offers a preliminary framework on how to navigate the COVID-19 response while centering lived experience and racial and economic equity.

COVID-19 Equity Operating Framework

Much of the content from the first five principles listed here are borrowed from the National Innovation Services March 27, 2020 blog post entitled: “**An Equitable Systems Transformation Framework for COVID-19**”, which can be found here:

<https://www.nis.us/blog/0jpt3zevqsdwgd3hv2zv2n74xckhvz>

1. Equity-based decisions can be fast if the right people are in the room.

Good emergency management decision making is typified by its speed. In an emergency we are better served by moving quickly than by moving perfectly. This often creates a tension between acting quickly and acting equitably. This is particularly true because of the guidance we have repeatedly given that equity-based decisions require slower processes. **This is still true.**

HOWEVER, WHAT'S NOT TRUE IS THAT WHEN WE HAVE LESS TIME WE STOP TRYING TO ACT EQUITABLY.

What's critical for us to remember is that equity-based decisions can still be made quickly **if** the right people are already in the room. Now is the time to look around our decision-making tables. Are your staff trained in equity at the table? Are members of the most marginalized communities at the table?

Key populations to include in our emergency management structures:

- Black people
- Latinx people
- Asian people (particularly people who are being targeted with racist attacks right now)
- Pacific Islanders
- People who identify as LGBTQIA+
- Native and Indigenous people
- Trans and gender-expansive people
- Incarcerated and formerly incarcerated people
- Undocumented people
- People living with disabilities



All of these groups are facing elevated risks that we still don't fully understand and have community needs that must be accounted for. And, to be clear, these voices should not be relegated to specialized "equity" tables. They must be incorporated into the regular command structure of our emergency management centers so that they have the ability to accelerate solutions and, when necessary, prevent or stop harm to their communities.

Now is the time to reach out to the City of San Antonio equity staff, the Community Health Workers, the organizers and activists who work with these communities daily, and pull them into decision making so that as we continue to make rapid-fire decisions, we know that critical voices are present in key roles.

2. Remember that a lot of populations have excellent reasons to be distrustful of the government and the medical system.

Many communities have every reason to distrust the government and its solutions. There have been too many Tuskegee Trials for that not to be true. These populations will likely not be rapidly engaging with some of the pop-up testing sites that have been stood up or other healthcare connection opportunities.

As a result, we will have to figure out how to engage these communities and ensure that they have the proper access to testing and care. As with other pandemics, this will require the activation of specialized outreach teams. We must look to activate the community health workers and mobile medical units that have developed relationships in those communities and begin asking for guidance on how best to engage.

As we ramp up our available supplies of personal protective equipment (PPE), these kinds of specialized outreach and engagement teams will be crucial to identifying communities that may be experiencing coronavirus transmission but avoiding connections to care. It's important to understand that because of historical interactions that many people may be reluctant or unwilling to engage with systems that have traumatized their friends and family in the past, even when they have severe symptoms.

3. Focus. On. Housing.

Shelter systems are likely to be overwhelmed in waves over the coming months. System flow through is critical right now. As we see unprecedented amounts of money



enter the homelessness system, we must remember that our goal can't just be to pivot our crisis response system and shelter in response to the pandemic.

Our goal must be to house people.

The only way to enable proper social distancing is to ensure that people are in homes of their own. As the economy continues to struggle over the course of the pandemic, we must assume that there may in fact be a spike in need for our crisis response system. As a result, new dollars should be used not only to redesign the current shelter system to accommodate non-congregate shelter and get desperately needed supplies and staffing but also to prioritize the creation of new **permanent** solutions.

Additionally, the best way to keep people from needing the crisis response system is to keep them housed to begin with. Communities should seize this opportunity to create or expand large-scale diversion programs that are easily accessible through 311 or web-based systems that do not require in-person visits to providers or government agencies.

4. Hold your standards. The Federal administration has already begun to waive standards meant to protect marginalized communities. But you don't have to.

The Federal administration has already used the pandemic to eliminate regulatory standards at the Department of Labor and the Environmental Protection Agency. As the pandemic continues to unfold, we must expect to see more and more abdication of the federal responsibility to hold standards around non-discrimination and other regulations like preventing and addressing toxic living environments for marginalized communities.

*But that doesn't mean you need to roll back **our** standards.*

Cities, counties, and states have the power to set their own standards around non-discrimination, around ensuring dollars get to businesses and providers owned and operated by folks from marginalized communities. Now is the time to ensure that those standards are strong, that they do not require federal support, and that you are prepared to enforce them.

5. Racial and economic equity is still our priority. If equity is only your priority in times of ease and surplus, then it was never really your priority.



But as COVID-19 hits the United States and we begin to marshal our responses we're seeing something disturbing: **equity initiatives are being shelved**. Equity-based strategic planning, outreach to marginalized communities, and strong community engagement have all been downgraded in importance as we shift our attention towards crisis responses. **The message is that equity, for the people who run our systems, is a luxury**; that it's not something to be prioritized in times of crisis, in the lean times. As our country looks at a year or more of COVID-19 response, of a worsening economic climate, are we telling people that equity can wait? **That justice is only an acceptable aim when the powerful have no skin in the game?**

The idea that equity is a luxury good, something only a surplus economy can produce, is a dangerous and misguided concept. It would seem that the roots of this idea are that the racism, misogyny, homophobia, and transphobia we see are bugs or glitches rather than features of the American system. A bug is something that you could reasonably hope that maybe, this time, wouldn't act up. That maybe this time we wouldn't get the same incredibly racist results that we always do. **The problem is that racism in America is a feature not a bug.**

This is precisely why, in these moments of crisis, when the stakes are high, we must double down on equity and justice as the core elements of our approach. When we **don't** respond to disasters with equity, we get failed responses like those in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina; we get Puerto Rico. **And we can choose differently.**

6. The Budget Equity Tool is an essential process that ensures every Department is embedding equity, even when their funding is stretched or reduced.

A limit on your budget does not translate to a limit on your equity work. Every Department **must** find ways to make equity a part of everyone's job, and the City of San Antonio's Budget Equity Tool is more essential now than ever. The health and economic inequities entrenched in our community are exacerbated in emergencies such as this pandemic, disproportionately affecting low-income families and communities of color. In order to improve outcomes for everyone, we must ensure that equity is at the core of how we work at the City, and that equity efforts are embedded into all our basic operations, now and in the future. COVID-19 will have an enormous financial impact on us, and on our communities, and we know that the economic impacts to will only exacerbate existing inequities. The Budget Equity Tool will continue to ensure all Departments prioritize funds and efforts that will have the most strategic impacts and support the most marginalized community members.



Conclusion

An Excerpt from a Message by Michael McAfee, President and CEO of PolicyLink

During this health and financial crisis, leaders must commit to a recovery that benefits all people, including people living in or near poverty and to restructuring our democracy and economy so it works for everyone. More than 100 million people, most of whom are people of color, have struggled to make ends meet even before this pandemic. Leaders must meet this crisis with the truth about what the nation needs to stabilize, rebuild, and prosper. We must change the rules of the game to reverse toxic inequality, remove the burdens and barriers of structural racism, and rebirth a just and fair nation for all.

To realize the promise of equity — just and fair inclusion into a society in which all can participate, prosper, and reach their full potential — leaders must be dedicated to the full set of principles outlined below. This is not a list to follow sequentially or a menu from which to pick and choose. Rather, these principles, collectively, must guide leaders in developing plans and policies and executing on them to deliver equity results. This guidance emerges from a cross-section of people, the expertise of many organizations in the equity movement, and PolicyLink experience in partnering with local residents and leaders to chart a course toward equitable recovery after Hurricane Katrina and the 2008 financial collapse.

From this moment, every action — every policy and investment — must provide significant, sustained support to the people hurting most and serve as a bridge to creating an equitable economy, an inclusive and compassionate society, and a strong, accountable democracy. It is time to “Win on Equity”!

Yours in struggle and solidarity,

Michael McAfee, President and CEO of PolicyLink

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- 1. Center Racial Equity**
 - 2. Put People First**
 - 3. Invest in Community Infrastructure**
 - 4. Build an Equitable Economy**
 - 5. Protect and Expand Community Voice and Power**
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