Equity Toolkit: Individual Equity Lens, Team Equity Lens, and Business Equity Analysis

August 2022

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CHILD CARE AWARE OF MINNESOTA MISSION AND VALUES

Child Care Aware is a statewide early childhood leader driving change through partnerships to build an equitable, high-quality early care and education system that meets the needs of Minnesota's families and children.

We work with integrity, honor diverse ideas and approaches, and foster a culture of respect and trust. We are child-centered and equity-driven.

Practical Vision - external:

- Access to high-quality, responsive care for all children
- Highly visible programs and support
- Equitably compensated workforce
- Informed and supported profession
- Creative recruitment and retention strategies
- Innovative, accessible technology

Practical Vision - Internal:

- Innovative early childhood leadership
- Intensive and inclusive relationships
- Responsive and equitable workplace culture

EQUITY TOOLKIT INTRODUCTION

Child Care Aware of Minnesota's equity toolkit is a set of questions we ask ourselves when we plan, develop, or evaluate a policy, program, or decision. The purpose of this toolkit is to help us be deliberately inclusive as we make decisions and to support us as we strive toward more equitable outcomes. This toolkit will not tell us what action to take. Instead, it will help us discuss and reflect on equity as we act and make decisions.

Why do we need this toolkit? We need it because Child Care Aware of Minnesota has a duty to support an equitable child care system for all families in Minnesota. Not only is this the right thing to do, but it will contribute to the overall success of families. Minnesota consistently ranks among the top most livable states in the United States; however, Minnesota also has some of the most glaring racial disparities. Income, education level, life expectancy, health outcomes, and business ownership all reflect some of the worst racial disparities in the country and affect the outcomes for young children of color.

To reduce inequities in Minnesota's child care system, it is necessary to address broad social, economic, and political factors that result in systemic disadvantages and inequities. This equity toolkit helps us see things from a new perspective. With this toolkit, we hope to identify barriers and then take action that creates a better early care and education system for all of Minnesota's children.

Similar to a hammer, this tool has limits. A hammer cannot fix all problems, but it can help in many ways. This tool may not help in every situation, but it is a starting point for proactively and intentionally establishing programs, policies, and proposals that advance equity.

The equity toolkit is for everyone to use. However, it was specifically created for employees within the Child Care Aware of Minnesota system. When to use this toolkit will be determined by your role, as you shift between being an individual, being a member of a team, or being a change agent. The toolkit includes both an **individual equity lens** and a **team equity lens**.

These will ground you and your team in diversity, equity, and inclusion. This allows for open discussion on who is at the table, how those people show up, and how to build a solid foundation rooted in equity. These are voluntary reflection questions that help you dive deeper and build your awareness. In general, this is something you can use whenever you are making a decision because it's essential to ensure we think about being equitable and inclusive in every aspect of our work and interactions.

The toolkit also includes a **business equity analysis**. This is applied early in developing a program, policy, or proposal so inequitable impacts can be identified and remedied before projects are finalized. This is an expected step in any planning process that an individual or a team must complete and submit for review.

As a team or individual, decide what level of support you need to complete the analysis.

If completing the Business Equity Analysis with support from the Coordinating Office's equity team, you will receive guidance and one-on-one support through the process and do not need to submit your analysis for approval.

If completing the Business Equity Analysis individually or as a team, you will complete the following steps:

1. Gather all available data relevant to the program, policy, or proposal being analyzed.

2. Identify stakeholders in the decision-making process, the impacted populations, and plan for accountability (Team Equity Lens is provided for guidance).

3. Complete the Business Equity Analysis guide specific to the project you are working on.

4. Submit the analysis to the Coordinating Office's equity team.

5. Receive feedback and make changes as necessary.

GLOSSARY:

Assumptions: Something we presuppose or take for granted without questioning it. We accept these beliefs to be true and use them to interpret the world around us.

Bias: Prejudice in favor of or against one person or group compared with another, usually in a way considered to be unfair. It can be both conscious and unconscious.

Change Agent: The individual or group that undertakes the task of initiating and managing change in an organization.

Diversity: A wide range of qualities and attributes within a person, group, or community.

Equity: Everyone is treated fairly by acknowledging everyone's unique situation and addressing systemic barriers. The aim of equity is to ensure that everyone has access to equal benefits and outcomes.

Inclusion: Acknowledging and valuing people's differences while providing a sense of belonging, acceptance, and recognition as valued and contributing members of society.

Intersectionality: The interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, ethnicity, class, gender identity, sexual orientation, and disability as they apply to a given individual or group.

Microaggressions: Indirect, subtle, or unintentional discrimination against members of a marginalized group.

Privilege: The experience of unearned freedoms, rights, benefits, advantages, access, and/or opportunities afforded to members of a particular dominant group in society or in a specific context.

Stereotypes: Assumptions about an entire group of people that generalize about all people in a group without considering individual differences. Stereotypes are based on misconceptions or incomplete information.

HISTORICALLY EXCLUDED GROUPS:

In our understanding of equity, we need to bring awareness to historically excluded groups. Within each of these groups, diversity and intersectionality exist. Depending on the context, environment, and moment in time, some groups can experience more exclusion than others.

In order to shift towards equity, we all must take on the responsibility of recognizing the history of oppression that has resulted in ongoing disparities for some communities. Here is a non-exhaustive list of groups who experience exclusion and discrimination in the United States. If there is a group that you have had limited experience with, reflect on why that may be and use the resource below as a starting place to understand different communities.

- Native and Indigenous people

- People Living in Poverty

- People of Color

- People with Disabilities

- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and/or Questioning, Intersex, Asexual, and/or Two-Spirit people

- Immigrants and Refugees

- Jews, Muslims, and other religious minorities

- Older Adults

- Women

- Youth

This document includes more information about historically excluded and included groups.

INDIVIDUAL EQUITY LENS

When we consider our own diversity, check our assumptions, ask about inclusion, and apply our insights to our work, we can create change. The end result is that we become change agents and take action. That journey starts with grounding ourselves in equity and inclusion. Start a self-reflection with the questions below:

Check your awareness:

Why is it important to consider historically excluded groups when I make decisions?

Are there groups that I know more about? (list)

Are there groups that I know less about? (list)

What more do I need to do to learn about the groups that I know less about?

What questions about historically excluded groups do I still have?

Check your assumptions and biases:

What are my biases or assumptions that I have?

How do my biases or assumptions show up in my work?

How do I disrupt them?

What is my accountability plan for myself when I make a mistake, act on a bias, or make a decision based on assumptions?

Check-in with your identities:

What identities do I bring to the table?

How do my identities intersect?

How can I share my identities in my role or work?

What do I need to feel safe and brave enough to share my identities at work?

Check your Effort:

Is the amount of time I willing to spend on equity and inclusion enough for my personal or professional development? Why or why not?

What self-reflection and self-learning am I engaged in?

What other tools, resources, or support do I need?

Check the Risk:

Do I have a brave space to enter when practicing, learning, or growing my mindset? How do I hold that space for others?

How uncomfortable am I willing to be?

What coping techniques do I have in place if I am feeling uncomfortable?

What coping techniques do I have in place when I make a mistake?

BEING A CHANGE AGENT IN YOUR ROLE

Being a change agent is when you work with others to create change that provides an equitable and inclusive impact on the wider community. Action can be taken individually to create an environment that allows everyone equal access to resources and benefits. Assess your ability to be a change agent with the questions below:

Working with others

How do I respect others' differences? How do I recognize what we have in common?

How am I paying attention to those not expressing their ideas and ensuring their voices are heard?

When working with others, how do I consider potential barriers they may be experiencing in each situation and work to minimize them? (e.g., language, prejudice, sexual or racial discrimination)

If I am unsure what barriers may exist, how do I ask my colleagues or the people I serve?

How do I discourage jokes, insults, and negative comments that are offensive to people?

How do I interrupt stereotypes and microaggressions?

How do I actively practice being an ally?

Leading or participating in a team

How have I practiced our equity and inclusion mission and values with my staff or team?

How am I supporting and creating opportunities for my employees or team to meet diversity, equity, and inclusion goals on their annual performance review?

How do I encourage my staff or team to create an inclusive workplace?

How do I utilize support systems for my staff or team members that have been harassed, treated disrespectfully, or discriminated against at work?

How do I support them if they feel discriminated by me?

What policies, procedures, practices, or attitudes do I enforce that may unintentionally prevent some people from fully engaging in our work? (e.g., schedules conflicting with religious holidays, workload, or schedule conflicting with family responsibilities.)

Planning or facilitating a meeting

How do I create a respectful and inclusive environment? (Introductions of each participant to ensure names are pronounced correctly, pronouns announced during introductions, name-tags or cards at an in-person meeting, rooms that are open and allow participants to move as they are able, etc.)

How do I clearly communicate to participants that inappropriate behavior such as offensive jokes and negative comments are unacceptable?

How do I navigate difficult conversations, conflicts, or challenging topics in a meeting?

How can I actively gather input and ideas from staff from diverse perspectives?

How do I actively include perspectives and feedback from historically excluded groups?

How do I raise issues in a way that encourages dialogue?

If someone is unable to make the meeting, but their input is critical to decision making, how do I include them later or before the meeting?

MEETING ACCESSIBILITY CHECK

Checking access helps to ensure that everyone in the room can participate and feel welcome. When scheduling a meeting or event, use the examples below to ensure accessibility in a meeting:

For people attending visually or virtually:

"Do you have what you need to engage today? Are the sight lines clear? Does the lighting need to be adjusted in any way?"

"When you speak, please say your name, so we all know who is in the room." (This prevents mispronunciation of names, allows anyone who is away from a screen to know who is talking, and supports visually impaired people).

Tip: If possible, videos should be captioned, and audio captioning can be turned on for Zoom and other platforms.

Tip: Use an ADA-friendly font such as Tahoma, Calibri, Helvetica, Arial, Verdana, and Times New Roman at a text size that should effectively be displayed on all devices, including mobile, desktop, tablets, etc.

For people who are accessing auditorily or by phone:

"Do you have everything you need to engage in today? Does the volume need to be adjusted?"

"When you speak, please say your name, so we all know who is in the room."

Tip: Everything in a presentation should be spoken out loud, and all images should be described.

For people who have different learning styles and abilities:

"I have provided a few handout copies in size 12 font and size 16 font for those who need them. I have printed copies of the presentation material to help those of you who process information better when you can read along."

"(Name) will be taking notes for me, and they will be accessible at (location they will be shared). Are there any specific requests regarding how notes should be taken and distributed later?"

"I want to encourage you all to be in the room in whatever ways enhance your participation – I trust you to know what this means for yourself, but feel free to move, eat, or use the restroom as needed."

"Please interrupt if you need the speaker to slow down, pause, clarify, or repeat at any time. Please feel free to ask for definitions of any words that may be unfamiliar to you."

"Before we begin, are there any other access needs that have not been addressed that people would like to discuss? If at any time these change, please let me know."

TEAM EQUITY LENS

When we consider our team's diversity, check our collective inclusion, and hold each other accountable, we can create change. Ground your team in equity and inclusion by asking these intentional questions below:

1. **Check your team's assumptions and biases.**

   What assumptions or biases show up at the foundation of our organization, our team, or our work? **Be explicit in naming the assumption or bias and the cultural bases for them.**

   Example:

   > Assumption: No one in our office likes apple juice.

   > Cultural Base: For years, only orange juice has been provided in the office kitchen

   What background information or historical context can aid in unpacking our team's assumptions and biases?

   Example:

   > Background information: A orange farmer's dying wish was to donate an endless supply of orange juice to our organization.

2. **Check how your team is showing up.**
   - What are the identities at our table?
   - What identities or intersectionality can we benefit from learning from?
   - What barriers does our team encounter in making changes directly related to equity and inclusion? (e.g., political, institutional, emotional, legal, programmatic, managerial, financial, and internal biases

3. **Check your team's inclusion:**
   - What identities are missing from the table, and why are they missing?
   - Are we providing barriers to keep them excluded? If so, explicitly name those barriers.
   - Do we have relationships with those most impacted by our work and decisions?
   - Are we providing barriers to keep them excluded? If so, explicitly name those barriers.
   - What are we doing to promote inclusion at our table and in the community?

4. **Check your team's accountability:**
   - How does our team hold each other accountable for making equitable decisions?
   - How will we track and evaluate the outcomes of our decisions?
   - How will we measure our ability to remove barriers and promote equity and inclusion?

BUSINESS EQUITY ANALYSIS

PROPOSING A NEW POLICY, PROJECT, OR RECOMMENDATION

Please describe the new policy, project, or recommendation.
Click or tap here to enter text.

Does this policy, project, or recommendation have an impact internally (team, department, or organization), externally (system-wide and customers), or both? Please explain.
Click or tap here to enter text.

Who internally and externally (immediate team, department, organization, system, educators, families, families, etc.) will this policy, project, or recommendation affect?
Click or tap here to enter text.

How will these individuals or communities be affected?
Click or tap here to enter text.

How would this new policy, project, or recommendation support equity and inclusion (e.g., accessibility, affordability, safety, culture, gender identity)?
Click or tap here to enter text.

Explicitly state the equity and inclusion goal areas that this proposal aligns with:

- [ ] MN-ParentAwareRacialEquityPlan-_2022.pdf
- [ ] DHS-PA-Equity-Engagement-Analysis-and-Compilation.pdf (ParentAware.org)
- [ ] Legislative report: Parent Aware Equity Report (state.mn.us)

What background information can aid in addressing equity and inclusion (old policies, data, stories from the field, historical context, etc.)?
Click or tap here to enter text.

What resources are required to address equity and inclusion in implementing this policy, project, or recommendation (staffing, financial, time, etc.)?
Click or tap here to enter text.

If new resources are required, how can we build that in from the beginning? (e.g., partner with community groups, collaborate across departments, seek matching funds, etc.)

Click or tap here to enter text.

If the new policy, project, or recommendation is approved and has an external or internal impact, how will our team communicate the change to the communities affected? (See Publicizing A Project or Service)
Click or tap here to enter text.

BUSINESS EQUITY ANALYSIS

Describe the change you propose to a current program, project, or policy guide.
Click or tap here to enter text.

What is the desired outcome of this change you are proposing?
Click or tap here to enter text.

Does this proposal have an impact internally (team, department, or organization), externally (system-wide and customers), or both? Please explain
Click or tap here to enter text.

Who will this policy or recommendation affect internally and externally (immediate team, employer, system, educators, families, etc.)?
Click or tap here to enter text.

How will these individuals or communities be affected?
Click or tap here to enter text.

How would this change support equity and inclusion (e.g., accessibility, affordability, safety, culture, gender identity)?
Click or tap here to enter text.

Explicitly state the equity and inclusion goal areas that this proposal aligns with:

☐   MN-ParentAwareRacialEquityPlan-_2022.pdf

☐   DHS-PA-Equity-Engagement-Analysis-and-Compilation.pdf (ParentAware.org)

☐   Legislative report: Parent Aware Equity Report (state.mn.us)

What background information can aid in addressing equity and inclusion (old policies, data, stories from the field, historical context, etc.)?
Click or tap here to enter text.

What resources are required to address equity and inclusion in implementing this change (staffing, financial, time, etc.)?
Click or tap here to enter text.

If new resources are required, how can we build that in from the beginning? (e.g., partner with community groups, collaborate across departments, seek matching funds, etc.)
Click or tap here to enter text.

If this proposed change is approved and has an external or internal impact, how will our team communicate this change to the communities affected? (See Publicizing a Program or Service)
Click or tap here to enter text.

BUSINESS EQUITY ANALYSIS

Describe the program or service being publicized.
Click or tap here to enter text.

Who is the target audience?
Click or tap here to enter text.

Who is excluded from that audience, and why?
Click or tap here to enter text.

What specific communication strategies are needed to reach them (e.g., working with community leaders, word of mouth, bulletin boards, community newspapers, social media)?
Click or tap here to enter text.

How is our form of communication easily accessible and understood by the target audience?
Click or tap here to enter text.

If applicable:

Is it written at an appropriate reading level and available in the languages our audience prefers? Please explain.
Click or tap here to enter text.

Do visual images represent the full diversity of early educators and families while preventing stereotypical images? Please explain.
Click or tap here to enter text.

If hosting a meeting or listening session, how will we implement an accessibility check? (see Meeting Accessibility Check) Click or tap here to enter text.

BUSINESS EQUITY ANALYSIS

OUTREACH AND RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

Describe the purpose of the outreach or relationship-building efforts.

Click or tap here to enter text.

Describe the individual, the organization, or the community we are trying to connect with.

Click or tap here to enter text.

How has our team or organization created barriers to this individual, this organization, or this community? Explicitly name those barriers and how they will be prevented in this outreach or relationship-building moving forward.

Click or tap here to enter text.

What approaches and outreach will help ensure that everyone can participate fully? (e.g., use of multiple techniques such as online surveys and focus groups, kinds of questions asked, simultaneous interpretation, sign language, anonymous feedback)

Click or tap here to enter text.

How can we create opportunities for people least likely to be heard to ensure they share their specific concerns?

Click or tap here to enter text.

How is our team representative of the diversity of the population we are engaging?

Click or tap here to enter text.

Which employees, departments, or community agencies with experience in these specific communities can help us do outreach?

Click or tap here to enter text.

How will your outreach or relationship-building benefit the individual, the organization, or the community you are trying to connect with?

Click or tap here to enter text.

How will your organization or team benefit from your outreach or relationship-building?

Click or tap here to enter text.

How will your outreach or relationship-building benefit the greater good (state-wide, system-wide, ECE field, etc.)? ***Tip:*** *If all three are not benefitting, remind yourself and your team that the aim of equity is to ensure that everyone has access to equal benefits and outcomes.*

Click or tap here to enter text.

BUSINESS EQUITY ANALYSIS

What identities in our organization reflect the diversity of the community we serve? Who is under-represented?

Click or tap here to enter text.

How are we attracting candidate pools that offer diversity to our existing staff?

Click or tap here to enter text.

How are we creating job requirements and selection criteria that encourage knowledge, skills, experience, and diversity that would enhance our team's capacity to carry out our work?

Click or tap here to enter text.

Where will we post this employment opportunity to ensure that the widest diversity of people can apply? Please explain.

Click or tap here to enter text.

Is our interview panel composed of individuals who bring diverse backgrounds and experiences relevant to the position? Please explain.

Click or tap here to enter text.

How will we reduce barriers in the interview process to make it more welcoming and friendly (i.e. physically accessible, provide a copy of the questions, give a choice to be interviewed in a language other than English)?

Click or tap here to enter text.

How will we consider that candidates may present interview behaviors that differ from what we expect but still have the skills to do the job?

Click or tap here to enter text.

BUSINESS EQUITY ANALYSIS

How will we include equity and inclusion requirements in our contracts with trainers?
Click or tap here to enter text.

How will we prioritize recruiting trainers from diverse backgrounds so they reflect the diversity of early educators?
Click or tap here to enter text.

How will we ensure training is designed to improve participants' awareness and consideration of individuals and communities from diverse backgrounds?
Click or tap here to enter text.

How will we ensure training is designed to help participants develop competency and skills to work effectively with individuals from diverse backgrounds?
Click or tap here to enter text.

How will we ensure everyone can fully participate (ensure safety, language, accessible location, time of day, schedule around religious-cultural holidays, etc.)
Click or tap here to enter text.

How will we ensure the content includes the perspectives of participants completing the training? (e.g., photos or examples representing historically excluded groups, relevant questions for all participants to answer, examples not specific to the dominant culture, etc.)
Click or tap here to enter text.

How will we evaluate the training or trainer's success at supporting equity and inclusion? (training evaluation includes a question assessing barriers to training, assessment on if the facilitator was inclusive, asking if materials represented the diversity of ECE, etc.)
Click or tap here to enter text.

If a trainer or a participant experiences discrimination, how will we receive this feedback?
Click or tap here to enter text.

How will you support the individual who experiences discrimination?
Click or tap here to enter text.

Is there an accountability plan to prevent such actions from happening in the future?
Click or tap here to enter text.

BUSINESS EQUITY ANALYSIS

ADVOCACY AND PUBLIC POLICY

Describe the issue, advocacy initiative, or policy.

Click or tap here to enter text.

Does this issue, advocacy initiative, or policy have an impact internally (team, department, or organization), externally (system-wide and customers), or both? Please explain.

Click or tap here to enter text.

Who internally and externally (immediate team, employer, system, educators, families, etc.) will this issue, advocacy initiative, or policy affect? What historically excluded groups will be impacted?

Click or tap here to enter text.

How will these individuals or communities be affected?

Click or tap here to enter text.

How would our involvement help advance equity and inclusion?

Click or tap here to enter text.

What capacity do we have to be effective advocates on this issue? If limited, are there others engaged in this effort? Please explain.

Click or tap here to enter text.

How can we create opportunities for new partnerships for engagement?

Click or tap here to enter text.

From whom do we need feedback about the impact of this work?

Click or tap here to enter text.

How will we solicit that feedback to ensure alignment with our equity and inclusion values?

Click or tap here to enter text.

What resources are required to address equity and inclusion in our advocacy (staffing, financial, time, etc.)?

Click or tap here to enter text.

How can we build that in from the beginning if new resources are required? (e.g., partner with community groups, collaborate across departments, seek matching funds, etc.)

Click or tap here to enter text.

If our engagement has an external or internal impact, how will our team communicate this to the communities affected? (See Publicizing a Program or Service)

Click or tap here to enter text.

BUSINESS EQUITY ANALYSIS

What are your organization/company's diversity, equity, and inclusion commitment and practices?

Click or tap here to enter text.

Do your organization/company's long-term goals and plan include equity and inclusion?

Click or tap here to enter text.

Does your organization have an internal diversity, equity, and inclusion committee or team? If so, when was it established, and what is its mandate?

Click or tap here to enter text.

Do your employees participate in diversity, equity, and inclusion training sessions?

Click or tap here to enter text.

Does your organization have a formal diversity and inclusion policy or initiative? If so, please provide the documentation.

Click or tap here to enter text.

Do you have a vendor diversity or disadvantaged business enterprise program? Does it cover tier one and tier two suppliers?

Click or tap here to enter text.

Please provide any relevant supplier diversity certifications.

Click or tap here to enter text.