

# Actions Toward Equity: Examples from RWJF Culture of Health Prize Winners

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) Culture of Health Prize honors and elevates U.S. communities working at the forefront of advancing health, opportunity, and equity for all. Prize-winning communities are selected based on the Prize [criteria](#) – all of which incorporate ways of acting collectively to ensure everyone has a fair and just opportunity for health. The table below, based on examples from Prize-winning communities, shows categories (on the left) and concrete approaches (on the right) that communities are using in their work toward advancing equity. These categories and approaches build on one another and are not mutually exclusive or exhaustive.

## Diverse Approaches to Advancing Equity

<b>Creating Equitable Conditions</b>	Comprehensive approach to improving health and well-being	Efforts that address upstream/root causes of health disparities	Substantive efforts to improve social and economic conditions	Strategies targeted to residents most affected by poor health outcomes
<b>Engaging Residents Most Directly Impacted by Inequities</b>	Residents most affected by an issue regularly informing priority-setting and decision-making processes	Residents with lived experience actively designing and/or implementing programs/services to address an issue	Intentional relationship building with organizations and networks representing historically excluded groups	Engagement processes and practices that reduce barriers and provide targeted supports to encourage resident participation
<b>Building and Supporting Resident Leadership</b>	Capacity building and support for community organizing and resident mobilization	Resident and youth leadership development activities	Residents most affected by an issue serving on related boards, committees, etc. with decision making power	Residents from underrepresented groups elected or appointed to formal positions of power  Structures to hold formal leaders accountable to equity goals
<b>Changing Policies, Systems, Institutions, and Structures</b>	Use of equity frameworks at governmental and institutional levels	Community organizations and networks aligned around shared goals and agendas that address inequities	Institutional-level offices or positions dedicated to advancing equity	Equitable processes to distribute resources
<b>Fostering Inclusion and Cultural Resilience</b>	Community awareness building, education, and critical analysis around structural inequities	Equity training for government/organization staff, stakeholders, decision makers	Creating connections across groups that experience different levels of privilege and inequity	Community-level commitment to inclusivity  Honoring and drawing on cultural and artistic traditions
<b>Tracking and Measuring Progress Toward Equity</b>	Use of disparities data as a call to action	Data-driven approach to targeting and improving efforts	Regular tracking and sharing of disparities data	Demonstrated measurable outcomes that show progress toward reducing disparities

# Select Examples of How Prize-Winning Communities Are Working to Ensure Everyone Has a Fair and Just Opportunity for Health

## Creating Equitable Conditions

- Full neighborhood improvement approaches
- Cradle-to-career initiatives
- Trauma-informed systems
- Restorative justice practices
- Community-engaged policing
- Voter-approved initiatives that address socioeconomic disparities
- Focus on priority populations such as communities of color and/or residents experiencing poverty, substance abuse, criminal justice involvement, homelessness, etc.

## Engaging Residents Most Directly Impacted by Inequities

- Engagement of residents across issues
- Leaders and residents collectively developing community vision and priorities
- Residents with lived experience implementing programs and services, such as community health workers, violence interrupters, parent-school liaisons, and substance abuse peer counselors
- Community-based participatory research and citizen science
- Community organizing
- Faith community engagement
- Accessible community meetings with rotating venues/times, translation, transportation, food, childcare, etc.

## Building and Supporting Resident Leadership

- Involvement of grassroots and community organizing groups
- Resident advocacy and civic engagement trainings
- Leadership development programs
- Youth leadership development and advocacy opportunities, such as youth commissions/councils
- Residents serving on council administering Community Health Improvement Plan and budget
- Representative municipal councils, nonprofit boards, institutional leadership, etc.
- Alignment of community-identified priorities with strategy and funding decisions across agencies and organizations

## Changing Policies, Systems, Institutions, and Structures

- Use of equity frameworks, such as the Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE) Toolkit, Massachusetts Health Equity Policy Framework
- Establishment of governmental or institutional offices/positions, community coalitions, or task forces dedicated to addressing equity
- Budgeting processes based on historical needs and/or disparities data
- Participatory budgeting
- Centralized education funding
- Micro-grants for resident-led action

## Fostering Inclusion and Cultural Resilience

- Community-wide trainings to develop awareness and common language about unconscious bias, race, class, culture, etc.
- Agency/organizational training on racial equity, adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), trauma
- Development of cross-class awareness and understanding through poverty simulations and community conversations
- Sanctuary city resolutions
- Welcoming committee for new immigrants and refugees
- Efforts to build cultural resilience and preserve native language and traditions to address historical trauma
- Public and political will building for strategies that reflect historical and cultural knowledge
- Artists as social change agents

## Tracking and Measuring Progress Toward Equity

- Regular dissemination of reports calling attention to disparities in income, poverty, race, geography, etc.
- Use of community health data to stimulate conversations with policymakers, community members
- Use of geographic information system (GIS) mapping techniques to identify and track community needs, such as access to resources and/or specific disparities in health factors or outcomes
- Systems to track and report health outcomes and disparities by race, zip code, city council district, etc.
- Publicly available platforms that provide data related to equity outcomes