Applying an Equity Lens in Age-friendly Communities Planning

What is equity?

Equity is the fair distribution of opportunities, power and resources to meet the needs of all people regardless of factors such as age, ability, gender, income, education level, culture or background.

EQUALITY VS. EQUITY

Equality is everyone getting access to the same opportunity, power or resources. Equity is tailoring opportunities, power and resources to fit individual and community needs. The uneven ground below represents inequities or barriers caused by structural/systemic influences beyond the peoples' control—the Social Determinants of Health—that impact their ability to reach the 'fruit.'

Equality **Equity**

What is an equity lens?

Applying an equity lens means asking ourselves certain questions throughout the entire process from beginning to end:

- **Who benefits?**
- **Who is not included?**
- **What contributes to this exclusion?**
- **What can you do differently to ensure inclusion?**

WHY APPLY AN EQUITY LENS?

- To be aware of inequities that exist within the older adult population in the community
- To be deliberately inclusive as you make decisions and aim to address systemic barriers and inequities that people face
- To create Age-friendly policies, programs and services that consider all community members

Intersectionality in Age-friendly Planning

Age-friendly Communities intentionally plan to reduce inequities faced by older adults. The older adult population is a diverse group, and intersecting identities contribute to unique experiences and needs. See the list to the right for some groups who may experience inequity.

Groups who may experience inequity

- Indigenous
- People who are racialized
- People of colour
- Women
- LGBTQ2S+
- Newcomers
- People living with dementia
- People living with disabilities/ mobility needs
- People experiencing poverty or low income
- People experiencing homelessness or precarious housing
- People experiencing mental illness
- People experiencing addictions

Applying an equity lens to the four planning phases

ESTABLISH AN AGE-FRIENDLY ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Consider those population groups/ organizations who are affected by the issue and which organizations or community groups are working to address it.

1

- Who is on your advisory committee? Does it include older adults?
- Are you including older adults who have lived experience with inequity, such as those experiencing homelessness, poverty, mobility issues, etc?
- Considering your target group is always a main stakeholder, how will you include them in planning and implementation?

- What barriers may exist for some groups to be a part of your engagement? How might you address those barriers?
- Who is participating? Who is missing and why? How can you adjust outreach and tactics to reach those voices that are not being heard?
- Is it clear to people how their input will affect decision-making and how you will follow up? How can you enhance transparency and trust?

2

CONDUCT AN AGE-FRIENDLY COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT
Consider which groups are most affected and if those groups benefit from existing policies, programs and services. Consider how you will reach out and engage with them to identify gaps and barriers (e.g., contacting non-profit and/or service organizations who may serve those populations).

ESTABLISH AN AGE-FRIENDLY ACTION PLAN
Consider sharing your ideas for the action plan with the community to determine whether they are supportive of the strategies and approaches selected.

3

- Does your proposed initiative address the barriers and root causes of inequity, identified through community assessment and engagement?
- How will your target group be involved in the design of the plan?
- What assets, knowledge and experiences exist in your community that can be leveraged and built upon?

- Are you engaging the community during implementation and sharing progress?
- How will you determine if any inequities have been reduced? Consider from whose perspective you are defining success.
- How are you sharing the outcomes of your evaluation and lessons learned with diverse populations?

4

MONITOR IMPLEMENTATION & EVALUATION
Consider collecting qualitative information (stories) which provide the context/meaning behind the numbers, derived through quantitative data, and can reveal experiences of inequity in the community.

Remember, equity is context-specific.

The application of an equity lens and its outcomes will look different across unique community contexts. The key to creating meaningful changes is that policies, programs and services are developed in partnership with—and respond to the needs of—population groups most impacted by systemic inequities.

Resources

1. PHAC Age-Friendly Communities in Canada: Community Implementation Guide
2. Age Friendly Capacity Building Equity Resources