

Equity & Inclusion Lens: Guide for Decision Making, Policy Creation, and Program & Process Design

The vision of the Village of Cottage Grove is that the Village be a safe, friendly, and attractive community for businesses, neighbors and families to live, learn, work, play and enjoy the richness and opportunities and ensuring that this vision is a reality for all persons regardless of their race, ethnicity, culture, religion, beliefs, background, gender or orientation. As such, the Village of Cottage Grove is committed to acknowledging, confronting and addressing systemic discriminatory practices and biases.

Incorporating an Equity and Inclusion Lens into how we plan and deliver programs, make decisions, and create policies, ensures that we are doing so in a way that thoughtfully engages, includes, and considers individuals and communities who have been historically excluded.

What is an Equity and Inclusion Lens?

An Equity and Inclusion Lens is like a pair of glasses – it helps you see things from a new perspective. It helps us explore and address systemic barriers and inequities, by strengthening awareness of different viewpoints and incorporating those differences into decisions, processes, and policies.

When we consider equity, check assumptions, ask about inclusion, and apply those insights to our work, we create tangible change. This doesn't replace a decision-making process – it adds information and knowledge for consideration.

Demographics for considerations include but are not limited to:

- Race
- Culture
- Ethnicity
- Faith
- Ability (Physical and Cognitive)
- Age
- Gender
- Gender identity and expression
- Language
- Sexuality
- Veteran status
- Socioeconomic status (Income)
- Immigration status
- Education level and Literacy

Using various lens as suggested above, consider the following questions as it relates to the policy, decision, process, or program:

- Who may be **burdened**?
- Who **benefits**?
- What **biases** may be present?
- What are the potential **unintended consequences**?
- What will **be done** to eliminate and/or mitigate the disparate impact or unintended consequence?

Additional considerations

- Use gender-neutral pronouns.
 - they/them/theirs
 - For person instead of Forman
- Use people first language.
 - Puts the person before the disability and describes what a person has, not who a person is. Some examples:
 - “Person with a disability” instead of ‘disabled person’;
 - “Bathrooms accessible to people with disabilities” instead of ‘bathrooms for the disabled people’
 - “People with mental health conditions” instead of ‘the mentally ill’;
 - “Person who uses a mobility chair” instead of ‘wheelchair bound’
- Use plain language.
 - Communication an audience can understand the first time they read or hear it. Material is in plain language if the audience can:
 - Find what they need
 - Understand what they find the first time they read or hear it
 - Use what they find to meet their needs