

Equity for All Arizonans

ARIZONA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES (ADHS) COMMUNITY TOWN HALL

September 28, 2023 – Online via Zoom

DEFINING EQUITY AND ITS IMPACT

In rural areas, there are greater challenges in meeting the needs of community members. An equitable approach to rural residents requires more efforts to provide both the resources and the knowledge of how to use them. It also requires creative approaches to best meet their needs. As one example, rural set asides for federal grants would support a more equitable approach for rural areas.

For foundations and others who provide grants, an equitable approach means supporting smaller nonprofit organizations who do not always have the resources to apply for grants or who cannot qualify to even apply for grant funding. Providing creative, and accessible support to apply for grants, such as Local First's Economic Recovery Center, is an important way to support smaller and rural nonprofits as are other efforts that relax the requirements for grant funding.

An equitable approach can also help individuals who are isolated and experiencing health or financial concerns. An equitable approach should consider how services can best be provided to those with health issues and for those who may be experiencing homelessness.

OPTIMIZING EVERYONE'S POTENTIAL AND IMPROVING COMMUNITIES THROUGH EQUITABLE APPROACHES

Data can help us determine when an equitable approach is most needed to optimize the potential of people and communities. For example, the social vulnerability index is a set of indicators that helps to identify what areas are most vulnerable based on historic and current challenges and helps us to identify where we can provide a greater and more equitable focus to create more positive outcomes.

This concept of using data to "geomap" where communities have the greatest needs was successfully as part of the COVID pandemic to target outreach and to improve health outcomes for those communities who needed it the most. This approach continues to be a successful approach to improve health outcomes, especially when done with community and culturally appropriate partners.

Collaboration and partnerships are key. We need to explore how best to motivate successful collaboration and partnerships that explore equitable approaches to healthcare and other social determinants of health, including equitable approaches to financial and economic opportunities.

We are in this together. And we each have an individual role to play. We should be courageous in going to new places and experiencing new opportunities that allow us to learn, to collaborate and to better help our communities work together.

One person, one step and one conversation at a time can help us to spread the knowledge to those in our communities about the value to all of us of using equity as an approach for successful community outcomes.

NEXT STEPS AND ACTIONS

- Everyone is responsible for advancing equity, and those at the top have additional responsibilities as leaders.

- Equity should be wrapped into strategic planning and goals, vision and mission statements, workplace policies and procedures, and hiring practices. For example, The Public Health Association is working on an official statement that address systemic racism.
- It's important to use various educational and communications strategies.
- Social media is important for sharing evidence-based information about the positive impact of using equity as a tool for community improvement. Community health workers also play an important role as do business groups and organizations like Arizona@Work. Business groups are instrumental in creating resiliency and positive change. Youth are also important; we need to engage and empower youth in all of these efforts.
- We need to continue to bring likeminded organizations (including faith based, veteran and business organizations) together for more effective collaboration.
- We also need to leverage our library systems and other data related organizations.

INDIVIDUAL COMMITMENTS TO ACTION

Recognizing that the power to change the future begins with each individual, participants committed to take personal actions based on their experience and discussions during the Arizona Department of Health Services Community Town Hall. Below are individual actions that were shared.

I WILL...

- Work with public-private partners and ASU to share key learnings, findings, and recommendations based on our collective work during the pandemic.
- Find one group to partner/collaborate with
- Continue to engage with Arizona Town Hall. Through community town halls, I have been able to hear voices that can often be overlooked.
- Be more "mindful" of communication and generational differences when communicating about equity issues. One size does not fit all.
- Carry the message to my outlets in the state including workforce and economic development and local elected officials in our region.
- Make sure that additional outreach efforts are undertaken to encourage underserved communities to take advantage of grant programs administered by the Arizona Department of Agriculture and USDA.