



# Equity in Action

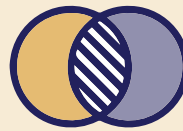
Research in Action rejects the idea that knowledge creation is for the privileged few and uplifts how community members have and are creating knowledge in their everyday lives. We replace extractive, top-down practices of traditional research and community engagement with **Equity in Action** – a model that redistributes power and is accountable to the inherent leadership of impacted community members at every step of the process.

## In traditional community engagement processes...

An institution or entity with power and resources comes into impacted communities with a plan to address a problem they have determined is the most important.



That institution or entity holds listening or engagement sessions to extract information or ideas from those most impacted to appear interested in the solutions they share.



The institution or entity, in fact, already knows what's in their control and what they intend to do, often telling community about a plan they've already developed.



The institution or entity seeks feedback on its narrow proposal and provides no resolution to issues raised by community that they believe fall outside of their work or institutional powers



## In Research in Action's Equity in Action model...

We engage only with institutional or organizational partners that are committed to an ongoing learning and change process that rejects traditional transactional relationships with community members and instead embrace reciprocal relationships that are accountable to and benefit community as *they* envision it.

Equity in Action intentionally rebalances power by creating new tables where impacted community members intentionally outnumber individuals with institutional or organizational rank so that community members are centered as essential experts and project leaders throughout any process.

Equity in Action recognizes that community expertise reveals what the problem is and how to solve it. Rather than simply consulting or seeking feedback from community members on a question or proposal created without them, Equity in Action redirects power so that every step is designed and implemented *with and by* community.

Equity in Action centers community members in defining the issue, making sense of the data and deciding what should be done about it. Our model is intentionally directed toward actionable outcomes that lead to tangible, real world changes – and cultivate community power and authentic, mutually beneficial relationships with partners after the project has ended.

Our work is rooted in **racial justice**, proactively and authentically partnering with Black, brown and Indigenous people to acknowledge and eliminate white supremacy, the systematic impact of racism, the harms of anti-Blackness, and the oppressive policies and practices upheld by institutions that prevent marginalized people from exercising their full humanity. We are committed to strategic and purposeful action to create material change in people's everyday lives, and to heal the multifaceted trauma of generations of exploitation and intentional harm.

**Iterative** Unraveling complex problems is iterative, not fixed or linear. Creating change requires constant shifts to not simply *receive* input but act on that input to consistently redirect power to impacted community members. We reject urgency because we expect adjustments and embrace unknowns to prioritize equitable and lasting outcomes over arbitrary timelines.



## Equity in Action Process

**Accountability** is an ongoing practice as we collectively process institutional harms, uncover contentious histories, and grapple with challenging questions. We are committed to naming and mitigating the harms of white supremacy culture, holding space for generative conflict management and bridging to external resources when significant harm has occurred.



### 6) Identify Solutions & Next Steps

Based on the data and community input, we identify policies, practices and systems changes that will lead to concrete improvements in community members' lives – and shift relationships and power dynamics between the institutional partner and impacted community beyond the project.

### 5) Community Review & Action Planning

We make data understandable and clear so community members who haven't been part of the advisory committee can make sense of what it means, identify where we have misunderstood or made mistakes, and surface multiple solutions.

### 4) Collect Data

We train advisory committee members in data collection to work with the research team to connect with community members through a shared purpose to solve a common problem.

### 1) Assess the Landscape

We investigate with partners and community members the history and context that has led to the proposed project, honestly identifying institutional harms, pain points, and impacted partnerships. We define shared values, as well as stakeholder goals and interests.

### 2) Create Advisory Committee

We create an advisory committee made up of individuals who are personally impacted by a specific issue. Because they understand the issue better than anyone else, we elevate community members as project leaders in accurately identifying and solving the problems they experience.

### 3) Co-develop Approach

We support community members to use their expertise to describe the problem, design the process to understand it and develop tools to gather information.



**Shared meaning making** is iterative and ongoing throughout our process. We use our technical skills as researchers to 1) create space for all collaborators to develop a shared understanding of key language to describe the context and define the problem together, 2) ensure all collaborators recognize the specific gaps our research seeks to fill and the specific goals of the project, and 3) at every step in the process, revisit our shared values and reassess our collective knowledge based on what we're learning to ensure our process results in concrete policies and practices most needed by impacted communities.