

EQUITABLE EVALUATION PROJECT

Framing Paper

A CALL FOR EQUITABLE EVALUATION

We believe that evaluators of philanthropic efforts have a moral imperative to approach their work in ways that contribute to equity. We believe this is even more essential for those engaged in efforts specifically related to equity. This includes a commitment to three principles:

1. Evaluation work is in service of and contributes to equity.
2. Evaluative work can and should answer critical questions about the:
 - Effect of a strategy on different populations
 - Effect of a strategy on the underlying systemic drivers of inequity
 - Ways in which history and cultural context is tangled up in both the structural conditions and the change initiative itself.

“Equitable evaluation weaves the principles of cultural competence... throughout the entire evaluation process... Its primary aim is not only to shed light on equity, but also to analyze and assess interventions, investments and strategies through a lens of *promoting equity*.”⁵

3. Evaluative work should be designed and implemented in a way that is commensurate with the values underlying equity work:
 - Culturally competent
 - Multi-culturally valid
 - Oriented toward participant ownership

If we do not work in this way, and if foundations do not support evaluators to work in this way, evaluation practices risk reinforcing or even exacerbating the very inequities the change initiative seeks to address.

Our goal is that funders and evaluators of equity efforts commit to “equitable evaluation.”⁸ To align evaluation practices with an equity approach—and even more powerfully, to use evaluation as a tool for advancing equity—evaluators must consider all of these aspects at once:

- Diversity of their teams (beyond ethnic and cultural),
- Cultural appropriateness and validity of their methods,
- Ability of the design to reveal structural and systems-level drivers of inequity,
- Degree to which communities have the power to shape and own how evaluation happens.