



ACTIVITY 1, CASE STUDY: UNDERSTANDING THE PURPOSE AND INFLUENCE OF THE EQUITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

EAC Retreat 2024

Background:

The Equity Advisory Committee (EAC) for the Metropolitan Council is a group of dedicated individuals committed to advancing equity and addressing systemic barriers in the seven county region. The committee plays a crucial role in advising the Council on policies and initiatives that promote fair and just outcomes for all residents. However, some members of the committee may not fully understand the extent of their influence and power in their advising role.

Facilitating Group Discussion Instructions:

1. Begin the group discussion by explaining the purpose of the activity, which is to explore and discuss hypothetical scenarios related to equity and advisory committee decision-making.
2. Divide the participants into small groups of individuals, ensuring a diverse mix of backgrounds and expertise within each group.
3. Provide each group with a copy of the two hypothetical scenarios: one focused on a grant program for environmental initiatives and the other focused on a Housing Voucher program for individuals experiencing homelessness.
4. Instruct each group to read through the scenarios and discuss the following questions:
 - What are the key challenges and considerations presented in each scenario?
 - How can the Equity Advisory Committee leverage their influence and expertise to address these challenges?
 - What innovative approaches or recommendations can be made to ensure equity and effectiveness in the decision-making process?
 - How can the council collaborate with external stakeholders, such as government agencies, developers, and community organizations, to achieve the goals of the program?
 - What potential opportunities for expansion or future direction could be explored based on the scenarios presented?
5. Encourage each group to engage in open and inclusive discussions, allowing all members to share their perspectives and ideas.
6. Provide a designated amount of time for each group to discuss the scenarios and come up with recommendations and solutions.

7. After the discussion period, reconvene the full group and invite each small group to share a summary of their key takeaways and recommendations based on the scenarios.
8. Facilitate a larger group discussion to compare and contrast the insights and recommendations generated by each small group, encouraging cross-collaboration and idea-sharing.
9. Conclude the discussion by highlighting the importance of collective decision-making and the impact of leveraging influence and expertise to promote equity and effectiveness in advisory committee activities.

Hypothetical Scenario 1:

The Equity Advisory Committee has been tasked with reviewing and providing recommendations for a grant program offered by the Environment Protection Agency (EPA) to fund initiatives focused on reducing greenhouse gas emissions and providing community benefits, specifically to federally identified communities in Minnesota. The requirements for the grant program include meeting environmental justice standards, such as ensuring that the benefits of the program are equitably distributed among all members of the community.

However, the committee faces a challenge as there are no clear federal guidelines on how to meet these requirements, leaving it up to the Met Council to determine the best course of action. The Met Council must work closely with the state of Minnesota to align their proposed initiatives with the state's own climate goals and environmental justice priorities.

As Committee members, each individual has a unique set of skills, expertise, and connections that can be leveraged to influence the decision-making process. For example, one Committee member may have experience working with marginalized communities and can provide valuable insight on how to ensure that the benefits of the grant program reach those who need it most. Another member may have connections within the state government and can help facilitate communication and collaboration between the council and state officials.

By working together and utilizing their collective influence and power, the Equity Advisory Committee can make informed decisions that prioritize equity and sustainability in the grant program. Through thoughtful deliberation and collaboration, the Met Council can ensure that their recommendations align with the values and priorities of both the federal and state governments, ultimately leading to the successful implementation of initiatives that benefit all members of the community.

Hypothetical Scenario 2:

The Equity Advisory Committee (EAC) has been tasked with providing recommendations for a Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program specifically targeted towards individuals experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness. The program aims to provide stable and affordable housing options for this vulnerable population, with a focus on addressing the root causes of homelessness and promoting long-term housing stability.

One of the challenges facing the Metropolitan Council is the lack of clear guidance on how to tailor the HCV program to effectively serve individuals experiencing homelessness. The Met Council must navigate this issue by leveraging their influence and expertise to develop innovative approaches that prioritize the needs of this target market.

EAC members with experience in housing policy and social services can offer valuable insights on how to structure the program to address the unique challenges faced by individuals experiencing homelessness. For example, they may recommend implementing supportive services, such as case management and mental health resources, to help participants secure and maintain stable housing.

Additionally, Committee members with connections to local housing developers and landlords can play a key role in advocating for the inclusion of affordable housing units in the program. By working with developers to secure partnerships and funding for housing projects, the Met Council can ensure that there are sufficient housing options available to meet the needs of program participants.

As the program evolves, the Met Council can also consider expanding the HCV program to serve other vulnerable populations, such as veterans and individuals with disabilities. By laying the groundwork for a comprehensive and inclusive housing assistance program, the Met Council can set a strong foundation for future initiatives that prioritize equity and housing stability for all members of the community.

Through collaborative decision-making and strategic planning, the Equity Advisory Committee can effectively guide the development of the HCV program to ensure that it meets the needs of individuals experiencing homelessness and sets a precedent for future housing assistance programs.