

Equity-Grounded Leadership Fellow Program Principles Of Change

What is Equity-Grounded Leadership?

Equity-grounded leadership stems from the understanding that the current systems are unjust. It empowers leaders to mobilize themselves and others to create positive change. Equity-grounded leadership begins with courageous inquiry of personal and professional biases that impact how one views themselves and others, and how to collectively influence others to create communities that are rooted in resilience and promote healing.

Equity-grounded leadership recognizes the danger caused by unchecked power and hierarchies in all forms and works to mitigate them. It demands transformative solutions away from the status quo. Equity-grounded leadership is anti-racist, person-centered, recovery-oriented, trauma-informed, and acknowledges that individuals have different experiences, abilities, needs, and strengths. It allows leaders to account for those and develop strategies for decision making to include all voices. It is different from leading from a place of equality, which is about sameness and assumes that all individuals will benefit from being provided the exact same support.

Equity-grounded leadership ensures all leaders are equipped to lead with influence and from a position of love and humility.

Principles of Change

The Equity-Grounded Leadership (EGL) Fellow Program concept was co-produced with cross-sector behavioral health leaders from around the country and piloted in 2022. Program development included a literature review, environmental scan, and key informant interviews, all of which were used to guide the creation of program components and the first version of program competencies, or **Principles of Change**.

The Principles of Change were continuously refined throughout the pilot program with fellow input and based on cohort experience. Each principle is associated with necessary knowledge, values, and skills, as well as operational practice behaviors (see pages 3-7). The Principles of Change guided the Fellows' work throughout the program, as well as their ongoing journey to become equity-grounded leaders.

Principles Of Change

- Understands How Racism and Oppression Show Up in Behavioral Health** 
- Practices Intersectional Allyship** 
- Integrates Data Equity Frameworks and Culturally Responsive Behavioral Health Approaches** 
- Engages in Co-Production and Community-Driven Practices** 
- Demonstrates Transformational Leadership to Improve Communities** 

There are 5 Principles of Change. Each Principle is accompanied by the necessary, knowledge, values, skills, and operational practice behaviors associated with each principle.

The Principles of Change are aspirational competencies that equity-grounded leaders should work toward and aim to practice. Recognizing that equity-grounded leadership is an ongoing journey, the principles will continue to evolve over time.

Future cohorts, including the 2023-2024 Cohort, will continue to shape and refine the Principles of Change, including their necessary knowledge, values, skills, and operational practice behaviors.

Understanding How Racism and Oppression Show Up in Behavioral Health

Necessary Knowledge, Values, and Skills

- Aware of the historical and current practices, policies, and norms that perpetuate structural, institutional, individual, and internalized racism in behavioral health services
- Aware of the severity of racism and oppression in behavioral health systems
- Recognize the harm caused by sexism and ableism
- Identify microaggressions in behavioral health care workplaces and services, and are aware of the impact of these behaviors
- Familiar with the causes and effects of community trauma and adverse community experiences
- Aware of the ways in which people are exposed to racism
- Explore how racism and oppression have contributed to post-traumatic growth for individuals and communities

Operational Practice Behaviors

- Engage in self-directed learning
- Challenge peers to expand learning and understanding
- Understand the forms and mechanisms of oppression and discrimination
- Interact in peer settings to process learning and experiences
- Identify and remedy one's own biases
- Explore one's own identity and how it influences worldview
- Cultivate relationships and experiences with people from various backgrounds
- Enhance health equity for vulnerable, marginalized, and oppressed peoples

Practices Intersectional Allyship

Necessary Knowledge, Values, and Skills

- Know that equity is not only about race; it includes the intersections of various identities and experiences, e.g., socioeconomic or immigration status
- Seek to understand the experiences and worldviews of others
- Challenge their peers to be better
- Are teachable; willing, interested, and eager to learn from others
- Recognize and elevate the assets and expertise of community members

Operational Practice Behaviors

- Cultivate relationships and experiences with people from various backgrounds
 - Partner with community in all aspects of program and service development, e.g., planning, design, development, evaluation
 - Elevate lived experience, e.g., of Blackness, of service use, of others
 - Use power and privilege to invest in opportunities for others
 - Uses power and privilege to lift historically and currently marginalized voices in decision-making processes
 - Identify areas to shift back/down and create space for marginalized and oppressed peoples
 - Empower people to empower themselves, including when they currently lack the capacity for self-empowerment
- Work in solidarity with people of color to overcome the status quo

Integrates Data Equity Frameworks and Culturally Responsive Behavioral Health Approaches

Necessary Knowledge, Values, and Skills

- Strive to create services and environments that are:
 - Strengths-based
 - Resiliency-focused
 - Trauma- and grief-informed
 - Healing-centered
 - Recovery-oriented
 - Person-first and human-centered
- Are skilled in data analysis, interpretation, and interrogation to demonstrate disparities in access and outcomes
- Value qualitative data and use personal and collective stories to influence change
- Able to use qualitative and quantitative data to inform decision-making, design, and evaluation
- Understand that data is not objective and can be biased
- Recognize the value of n=1 and seek equitable outcomes for all, not just the majority impacted by inequitable policies and practices
- Apply responsive approaches wholly in their leadership, not simply naming them (e.g., be the thing vs. say one is the thing)
- Utilize frameworks and models driven by community interests and strengths

Operational Practice Behaviors

- Identify sources of public use data
- Access and interpret organizational and community data to identify needs, i.e., case studies or impact documents
- Complete racial impact assessments of existing practices and use results to create a plan for practice improvement
- Use data to drive quality improvement
- Apply data-driven and best-practice decision-making to improve services and make a policy change
- Engage in community-based participatory research
- Disseminate data and findings to community members in accessible language and formats
- Design at the margins
- Assess frameworks and models for cultural responsiveness and alignment
- Identify culturally and structurally appropriate strategies for effective change and community improvement
- Consider the application of frameworks and models on individual, organizational, and community levels

Engages in Co-Production and Community-Driven Practices

Necessary Knowledge, Values, and Skills

- Understand the benefit of and need for co-production as compared to other forms of involvement, e.g., engagement, consultation
- Honor community-defined practices and culture
- Familiar with frameworks and models driven by community interests and strengths
- Value the assets and expertise of community members who reflect intersections of various identities and experiences

Operational Practice Behaviors

- Evaluate community resources with asset mapping and conduct community needs assessments and evaluations
- Identify and allocate institutional support for individual-level resiliency and healing
- Communicate with members of the community to listen, hear, and process community needs
- Co-produce services based on data and experiences
- Include people with lived experience with behavioral health services and systems as leaders, decision-makers, and partners
- Partner and collaborate with community members on projects that impact them
- Increase funding and human capital dedicated to collaborative equity-driven problem-solving
- Foster community-led, cross-sector, equity-grounded systems changes.
Support person-centered, culturally responsive, strengths-based, and recovery-oriented models and services

Demonstrates Transformational Leadership to Improve Communities

Necessary Knowledge, Values, and Skills

- Serve as change agents in their organizations and communities
- Shift the dynamics and culture in their organizations and communities
- Improve systems
- Strive to flatten the hierarchy in organizations and communities by engaging in power-sharing and distribution
- Recognize power dynamics play a significant role in shaping the practice and effectiveness of transformational systems change
- Value team diversity
- Engage in extreme ownership and seek truth, reconciliation, and repair to transform organizations and communities
- Share their vision with others
- Foster alignment with their mission and vision
- Build shared values and understanding
- Can articulate the concept of equity in an accessible and concise way
- Recognize that there are things they do not know and do not understand
- Do their work with humility and curiosity

Operational Practice Behaviors

- Build trust and cultivate relationships and experiences with people from various backgrounds
- Use meaningful and culturally relevant community engagement strategies
- Engage community members at all levels
- Use data to affect change
- Change social norms, policies, and practices in organizations and communities
- Apply practices and approaches from implementation science, collective impact, and design thinking
- Evaluate the conditions of the systems operating in organizations and communities to co-create strategies for transformation
- Apologize for mistakes and acknowledge harm
- Develop voice, agency, and power to advance organizational and community equity
- Promote, facilitate, and model creating space for reflection, healing, and exploring different ways to conceptualize self-care
- Improve communication skills, including listening, giving and receiving feedback, and cross-cultural communication

- Can modify their communication and approach to reach various audiences
- Address harm
- Foster environments that are safe, brave, and liberated spaces for conversation and action
- Able to translate knowledge and skills into policy changes to improve communities
- Are compassionate
- Embody courage and vulnerability
- Elevates the need for self-care and wellness habits, routines, and rituals

- Engage in mindful self-reflection to increase self-awareness about one's own strengths, weaknesses, values, beliefs, and biases
- Practice inclusivity
- Explore one's own trauma and its impact on leadership
- Use influence to inspire, mobilize, and support others to work toward systems transformation
- Model what one speaks about, e.g., if talking about transparency, model what it looks like to be transparent
- Use restorative practices and approaches
- View self as a learner and an individual serving the collective
- Engage in activities that advance social justice
- Foster mutual trust and respect
- Share self-care skills and encourage others to engage in wellness activities