

Identifying Strategic Issues to Address Health Equity

As you develop strategic issues, remember that questions are never neutral. Rather, people apply frames that influence the questions they ask. They are posed within specific social, political, historical, and cultural contexts. Questions are often driven by institutional agendas, values, and priorities that may or may not address community members' needs and wants.

The following table contrasts conventional and health equity questions that can be used to understand public health problems and identify potential solutions. When analyzing data from the MAPP Assessments to identify strategic issues, use a health equity frame to ask your community these questions.

| CONVENTIONAL APPROACH | HEALTH EQUITY APPROACH |
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| Why are people unhealthy in our community? | What social conditions and economic policies make some people more likely to be unhealthy? |
| Why can't vulnerable populations access services? | What institutional policies and practices prevent people from accessing services? |
| What types of services and resources do we need to improve health? | What fundamental policy changes do we need? |
| How do we reduce disparities in health outcomes? | How do we eliminate the social injustices that produce inequities in health outcomes? |
| What programs and services do we need to address health disparities? | What kind of collective action and structural social changes do we need to tackle health inequities? |
| What unhealthy behaviors should we discourage among vulnerable populations? | What interests and power structures affect people's health and wellness? |
| Which government officials, expert researchers, or media personalities best understand the issue? | Which community members and grassroots organizations can best define the issue? |
| Which public officials and research institutions will decide on appropriate courses of action? | How can we work within our communities to define and prioritize public health concerns? |
| How can we make people more responsible for their own health? | How can we create social responsibility and public accountability to protect the public good? |