



Equitable Engagement: Best Practices & Blind Spots

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Overview

Objectives of the Session

Defining Equitable Community Engagement

Key Elements

Small Group Discussions & Debrief

Resources

How do you define community engagement?



Two-way communication process between local government and the public. It provides a platform for people to voice their opinions and inform the decisions that impact their lives. (MAPC Community Engagement Guide)

How do you define equitable community engagement?

Identifying significant disparities between different groups for influencing municipal decisions.

(e.g. budget, policies and practices) and agreeing to change the way you make decisions to allow for different perspectives to influence decisions

Key Elements

Are all stakeholders being served equitably? How do you know?

Beware of biases & blind spots

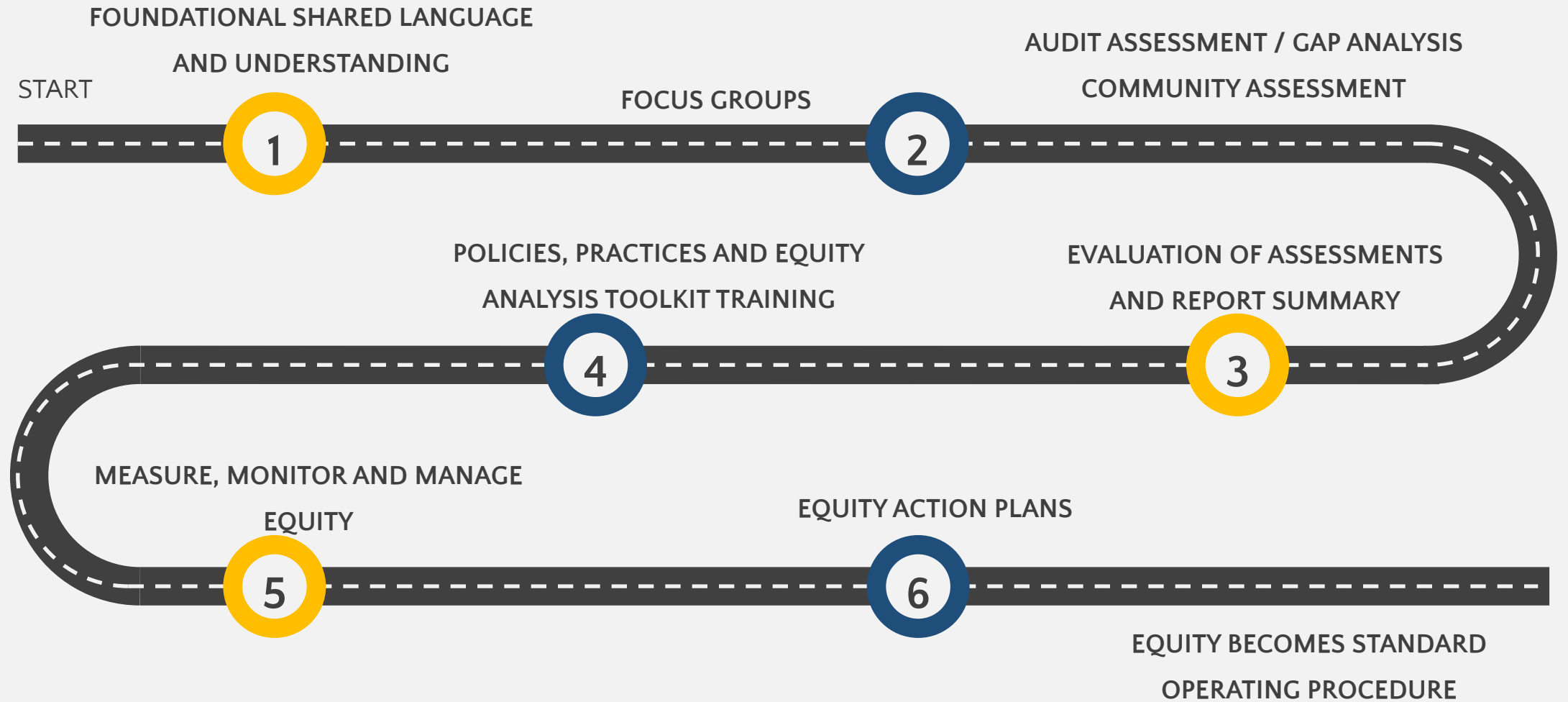
Cultivate & invest in social infrastructures

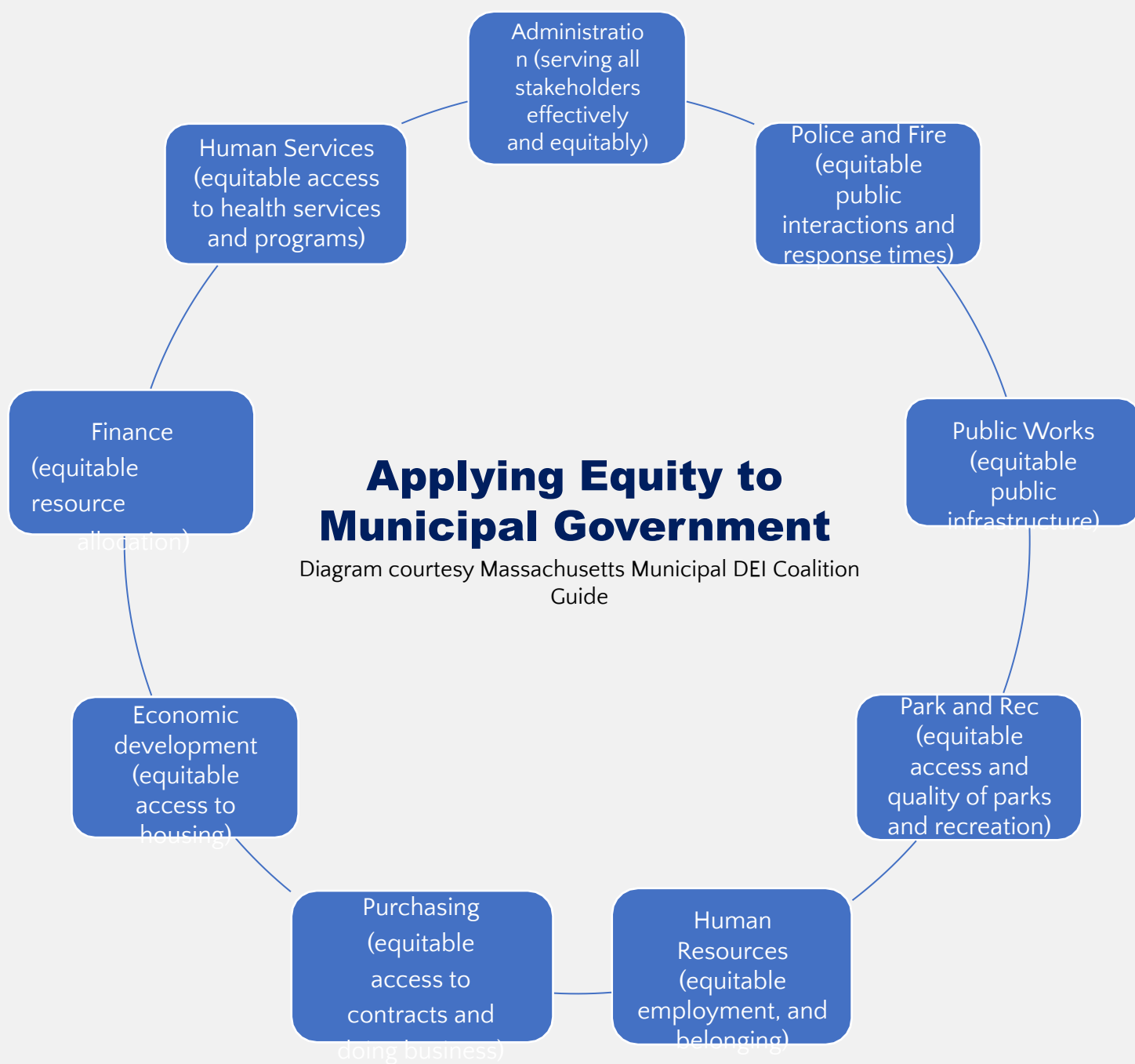
Build trust through accessible language & symbols of belonging

Are all stakeholders served equitably?

- Why government must use an equity mindset:** government agencies at every level (federal, state, local) contributed significantly to creating racial and gender inequities with exclusionary policies and practices.
- Municipal governments must proactively monitor and measure** their performance to equitably serve all stakeholders
- Services and Programs:**
 - Do all stakeholders have equitable **access** to municipal services and programs?
 - Are all stakeholders **treated** fairly and with respect by municipal employees?
 - Are the **quality** of services, facilities, programs equitable in all neighborhoods?
- Employment:**
 - Are we **attracting and selecting the best talent** for employment and delivery of services and programs?
 - Is our talent pool limited, homogenous, and only based on referrals of family and friends?
- Purchasing and Procurement:**
 - Are we purchasing and spending taxpayer dollars effectively?
 - Are we attracting diverse vendors, contractors and suppliers** to ensure our municipality is obtaining the best quality and economical products and services?
 - Is our vendor and supplier pool **limited only to businesses we know** and are familiar with?
- Stakeholder Engagement:** do all stakeholders have equitable access to join boards and committees, provide input on municipal policies, budgets, projects and programs? **How do we know? If we don't have data, all we have is an opinion.**

ROADMAP TO EQUITY MINDSET





Biases and Blind Spots

Biases: automatic mental associations that inform conscious thoughts, and shapes decision-making and social interactions with different people.

How Biases May Impact Services: *Public Works*

“Residents in city’s poorest neighborhoods — Roxbury, Mattapan, and parts of Dorchester — much more likely to have buckled asphalt, cracking concrete, and tree roots smashing through sidewalks.”

“65 percent of sidewalks in Roxbury and Dorchester are either in fair or poor condition; by contrast, 68 percent of sidewalks downtown and in Back Bay are in good condition, city data show.”

—*Boston Globe* 2018, Boston’s rich and poor neighborhoods sidewalk repair disparity

*Census data: Roxbury, Mattapan, Dorchester: 60 to 80% Black and Hispanic
Downtown and Back Bay Boston: 70 to 80% White*

How Biases May Impact Services: *Park and Rec*

“We compared the quality of urban park systems of 99 cities in the U.S. We found affluent majority-White municipalities have higher quality park systems than those with larger concentrations of low-income ethnic minority people, and predominantly Latino cities are more disadvantaged than predominantly Black municipalities.”

Rigolon, Alessandro; Browning, Matthew; Jennings, Viniece. 2018. Inequities in quality urban park systems: An environmental justice investigation of cities in the United States

How Biases May Impact Services: *Housing*



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April 7, 2022 editor Ashland Source, MetroWest Source, Realty Executives Boston West

Cultivating & investing in social infrastructures

- Public areas to gather (libraries, parks, farmer's markets)
- Neighborhood associations, groups, block parties for people to come together in community
- Communication channels and events that connect community to government and vice versa
- Civic committees and resident volunteers
- Partnering with community groups and faith-based organizations



Build trust through accessible language & symbols of belonging

- Do you have a language access plan and policy? Do residents know about it?
- Do you have public awareness materials and signage in different languages?
- Celebrating heritage days, months and other identities that reflect the community
- Wayfinding: municipal buildings that are set up to make people feel welcome and provide direction



Small group discussion & debrief



Resources

Racial Equity Group

<https://racialequitygroup.com/category/research/>

Metropolitan Area Planning Council: Community Engagement Guide & MA DEI Coalition's Guide

<https://www.mapc.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/MAPC-Community-Engagement-Guide-2016.pdf>

<https://www.mapc.org/resource-library/ma-municipal-dei-coalition/>

Eric Klinenberg

<https://www.ericklinenberg.com/books>

MA Immigrant & Refugee Advocacy Coalition

<https://miracoalition.org/>

Thank you

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