

# Austin/Travis County

Homelessness Response System

## ***EQUITY REVIEW TOOL***

### **Introduction: Why Equity Matters**

When considering who might be affected by a policy or procedure all populations must be considered. There is never a good time to infringe on anyone's human rights. includes all sexualities, gender identities, races, socioeconomic status, ages, and abilities. There is much to learn from continuing and including research on the effects of homelessness on all of the LGBTQIA+ & BIPOC individuals and families that reside within this ever growing and evolving population.

A question to keep in mind is: to what extent is the policy or procedure displaying cultural awareness and inclusivity through its language, interpretation & review process? For example will it be available in other languages, including braille? Cultural awareness is defined as understanding the dynamic values and beliefs of different cultures. Understanding that cultural differences and similarities between people exist without assigning them a value-positive or negative, better or worse, right or wrong. Lack of cultural awareness may mislead crucial decisions.

Language & interpretation can potentially lead to harm, foster discrimination, offend individuals, alienate, or create barriers to accessibility.

The practice of equity strengthens our collective ability to respond to homelessness inclusively and effectively, creating pathways toward justice and systemic transformation.

### **Instructions for Using the Equity Tool**

This Equity Tool is designed to guide the development and review of policies, ensuring that equity considerations are an integral, automatic part of the drafting process—not an afterthought. The purpose of the tool is to encourage policy drafters to identify potential harm to marginalized groups, to consider how policies might address inequities or unintentionally reinforce them, and recognize overt inequities, such as racial disparities, as well as subtle ones, such as funding sources and power dynamics.

Use this tool not as a scorecard or a punitive measure, but a mechanism for growth. The goal is to advance equity by continually representing marginalized populations and measuring our progress toward systemic change at a policy level. As such, some of the practical applications of the data collected herein include: assessing the inclusivity of decision-making bodies and addressing representation gaps, highlighting areas where additional investigation or new policies are needed, and serving as an internal litmus test for equity improvements and the steps taken toward inclusivity.

The Leadership Council requires the use of the Equity Review Tool in the development of all policies and/or procedures brought to a vote in the Austin/Travis County Homelessness Response System governance system. The completion and inclusion of this rubric by any group seeking the approval of a policy or procedure is mandatory.

The Leadership Council encourages the use of the Equity Review Tool in the development of all policies and procedures presented for a vote within the Austin/Travis County Homelessness Response System governance structure. To support equitable decision-making, completing and including this tool is an essential step for any group seeking policy or procedure approval.

To ensure a shared understanding of key terms, has been attached to this Equity Tool. To assist with understanding these potential issues a Glossary of Terms and List of Disadvantaged Groups have been included.

BIPOC	LGBTQ+	Domestic violence survivors	Youth	Families with Children
Seniors	Physical Disabilities	Mental Health Disabilities	People who use drugs	Immigrants
Formerly Incarcerated	Chronically Homeless	Veterans	Low Income	Geographically Isolated

### **Equity Review Tool Instructions: Step-by-Step Guide**

#### **Step 1: Review the Equity Tool**

Before beginning to draft your policy, thoroughly review this document to understand its purpose and how to apply it.

#### **Step 2: Integrate Equity Considerations Throughout**

Refer back to this tool at every stage of the drafting process. Reassess your policy as it evolves to ensure equity considerations are a part of the discussion.

#### **Step 3: Complete the Equity Review Form (below)**

Use the form provided below to evaluate potential impacts on marginalized groups. Address each question thoughtfully and comprehensively.

#### **Step 4: Submit the Completed Form**

Include the completed form alongside your policy when advancing it to the next stage of approval or review.

## **Equity Review Form**

### **Policy Information**

- **Policy Title:** \_\_\_\_\_
- **Date Completed:** \_\_\_\_\_
- **Committee Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

### **Equity Assessment**

#### **1. Target Population**

Name the primary group this policy is intended to serve.

*(Example: All individuals experiencing homelessness who are eligible for Rapid Rehousing (RRH))*

**Answer:** \_\_\_\_\_

#### **2. Marginalized Groups Potentially Impacted**

List all marginalized groups that could be negatively affected by this policy. You may add this answer on a separate sheet.

*(Examples: Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC), LGBTQ+ individuals, individuals with disabilities, etc.)*

**Answer:** \_\_\_\_\_

#### **3. Potential Harms**

For each group listed above, explain how they might be negatively impacted by the policy. Be specific. You may add this answer on a separate sheet.

**Answer:** \_\_\_\_\_

#### **4. Reducing Potential Harm**

- Is there a way to revise this policy to minimize harm to the marginalized groups listed in Question #2 while maintaining its overall effectiveness?
- Describe any alternative approaches or adjustments that could achieve the policy's goals more equitably. You may add this answer on a separate sheet.

**Answer:** \_\_\_\_\_

#### **5. Identifying Constraints**

- List the constraints or limitations that contribute to the potential harms identified in Questions #2–4. Some examples include: unreported or unknown data about specific subpopulations, HUD or other federal requirements, financial constraints, gaps in community partnerships or collaborations, or grant deadlines.

**Answer:** \_\_\_\_\_

#### **6. Future Considerations**

- What key factors should be taken into account for future changes or revisions to this policy?

**Answer:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_