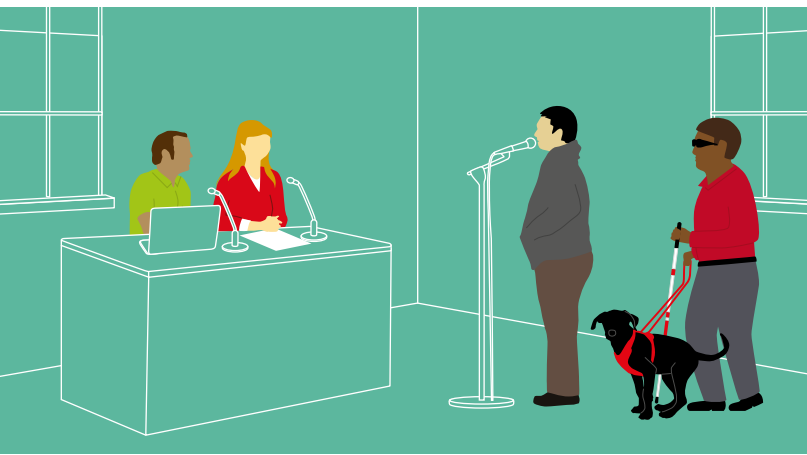
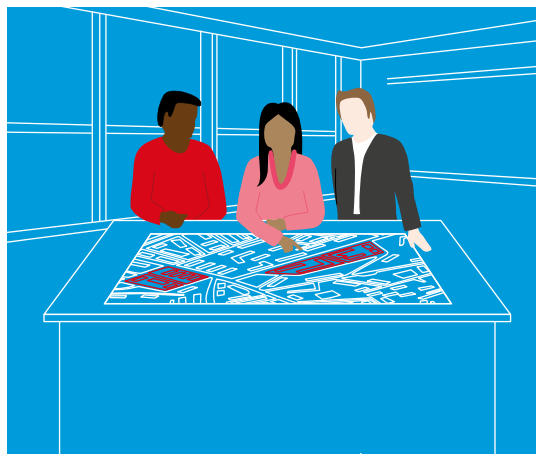
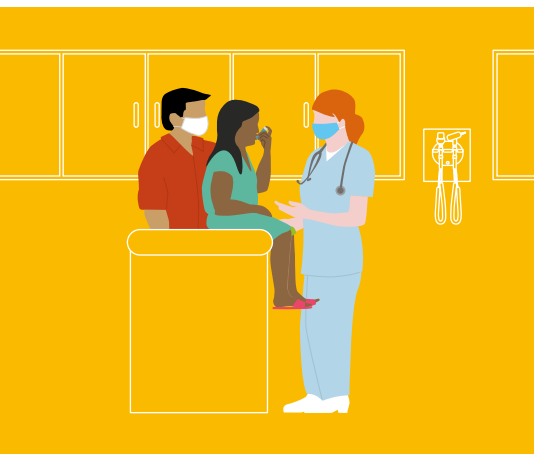


Strategies for Equitable Policymaking

Applying Law & Policy Frameworks to Improve Health



Building on *A Blueprint for Changemakers*

Released in 2019, [*A Blueprint for Changemakers: Achieving Health Equity Through Law & Policy*](#) offers critical frameworks for the local cross-sector work that we do with partners throughout the country to change policies and create healthy, equitable communities. The *Blueprint* has proven to be a valuable resource in helping to demystify law and policy for our audiences and partners.

Now, four years from its original release, much has changed in the world, yet the *Blueprint* continues to be a foundational resource for our work to advance health equity as well as for our government and community partners. On one hand, we've heard great enthusiasm from partners who have found the explanations and frameworks in the *Blueprint* compelling and applicable to their work. On the other hand, we've heard from our partners that they want to learn more about how to implement and operationalize this work in their day-to-day projects and programs. Generally, our partners ask, how can we apply the lessons and frameworks from the *Blueprint* to improve our equitable policymaking?

This resource, *Strategies for Equitable Policymaking*, attempts to answer that question. ChangeLab Solutions uses the law and policy frameworks from this guide in our day-to-day work in all policy areas, from housing and food justice to paid leave and equitable city planning. We share our own equitable policymaking approach in these pages with the intention that our frameworks, resources, and examples will be useful to our audience in improving their own equitable policymaking practices.

This resource builds on *A Blueprint for Changemakers* in the following ways:

- Expands on the frameworks presented in the original *Blueprint* and other more recent publications from ChangeLab Solutions
- Grounds those frameworks in examples from our work
- Suggests next steps for applying those frameworks to equitable policymaking

We hope that you will benefit from using this guide to think through, develop, and implement equitable approaches to policymaking and policy design. Keep reading to learn more about how these frameworks and concepts can improve your equitable policymaking process.



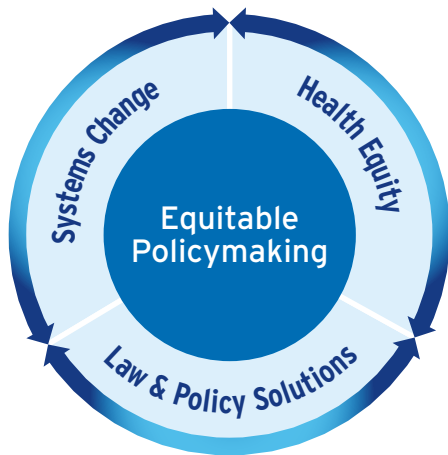
How can we apply the lessons and frameworks from the *Blueprint* to improve our equitable policymaking?

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Sharing ChangeLab Solutions' Approach to Equitable Policymaking

Laws and policies that have perpetuated racism, discrimination, and segregation throughout our nation's history continue to have profound impacts on everyone's health. By analyzing local and state policies, systems, and practices, we help identify innovative approaches and support community transformations that will yield the most improvement in health and equity. Our partnerships with communities and governments to advance equitable law and policy changes rely on the following shared values and principles:



Systems Change Is Necessary to Advance Health Equity

All people and communities are part of the broader systems that form our society. Laws, policies, and practices shape how people earn money, access food, use transportation, find housing, exercise, interact with police and courts, or obtain an education. Because systemic inequities created disparities in our society, solutions aimed at mitigating inequities must change the systems that produced them in the first place. We need many types of strategies to promote community health, and evidence indicates that efforts that aim to change underlying systems are exceptionally effective at reducing population-level inequities.

Health Equity Is Essential to Effective Policymaking

Everyone should have the opportunity to be healthy. All people should have access to health-promoting services and resources, limited exposure to unhealthy environments, and real opportunities to better themselves physically, emotionally, and socioeconomically. We should be able to live healthy, prosperous lives regardless of our race, ethnicity, income, gender, sexual orientation, age, or ability. Centering health equity often entails using data to identify communities that have limited access to health-promoting supports, taking into consideration the role that historic laws and policies have played, and incorporating the assets and strengths of communities in the policymaking process. Policy changes within systems, institutions, and governments must prioritize health and equity considerations to ensure that new policies do not perpetuate existing disparities.

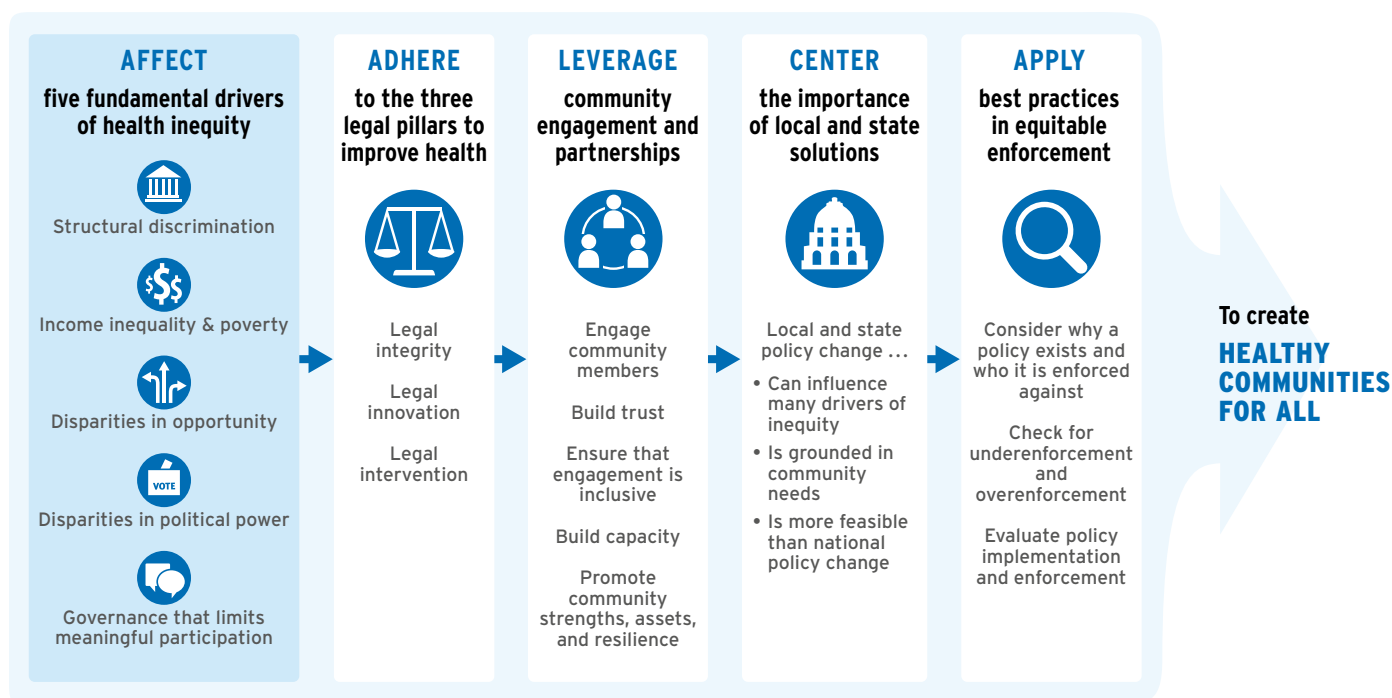
Law & Policy Solutions Create Enduring Systems Change

Equitable policymaking that makes a significant difference in health equity often requires multi-year project timelines, cross-sector partnerships, committed community leadership and engagement, and considerable research and planning. Given those parameters, it can sometimes be challenging to maintain efficacy, momentum, and cohesion across the entire duration of a community health initiative. Concentrating on law and policy solutions coupled with effective community engagement keeps policymaking processes focused on addressing the underlying causes of health inequities.

How the Frameworks Work Together

Using the principles of equitable policymaking articulated on the preceding page as a foundation, ChangeLab Solutions applies the law and policy frameworks below to advance health equity. Although each framework is a valuable resource by itself, when the frameworks are considered holistically as a set of tools that work together, the policymaking process is more equitable – and the resulting policies are more just. The following figure illustrates the interconnection of the legal and policy frameworks we discuss in more detail in the rest of this guide.

To advance health equity through equitable policymaking, we create solutions that...



Naming the Fundamental Drivers of Health Inequity

ChangeLab Solutions believes that deliberate legal and policy change can address the unjust distribution of money, power, and resources, to undo fundamental drivers of health inequity and thereby increase health equity. Our experience and our portfolio of practice throughout the nation, as well as [research evidence](#) point to five fundamental drivers of health inequity that are created by law and policy. As such, law and policy interventions that center health equity through effective community engagement practices can undo the systemic sources of these harms and create healthier, more just communities moving forward. Policy changes that confront the fundamental drivers of health inequity will be more effective at creating lasting, equitable improvements than policy changes that intervene at a more superficial level.

How We Address the Drivers of Health Inequity in Our Work

The [fundamental drivers of health inequity](#) are an interdisciplinary framework, drawn from a wide range of research, theories, and practices, that helps us understand complex equity challenges and needs in a clear way. We can understand equity challenges by assessing the systemic and policy-based origins of...

- [Structural discrimination](#): historical and structural harms in our systems that perpetuate racial or other forms of discrimination;
- [Income inequality and poverty](#): who can access and afford basic resources and services that are needed to lead a healthy life;
- [Disparities in opportunity](#): who has access to quality education and economic opportunities that support health and equity;
- [Disparities in political power](#): who has access to what types of political and economic power; and
- [Governance that limits meaningful participation](#): how our governance structures are set up to listen to or ignore community voices.

When we consider these five drivers of inequity in our equitable policymaking work, we can ensure that policy changes will have the greatest impact for health and equity.

When we consider the drivers of inequity in our equitable policymaking work, we can ensure that policy changes will have the greatest impact for health and equity.

Structural Discrimination as the Preeminent Driver of Health Inequity

The first driver of inequity, [structural discrimination](#), encompasses and directly influences the other four drivers. Structural discrimination is the primary driver of inequity because discrimination against people of a certain economic status or identity — and formalization of that discriminatory intent within systems, laws, and policies — is the genesis of wider societal inequities. Structural discrimination can reinforce existing prejudices while also creating barriers to accessing the systems and resources that promote health and opportunity.

As such, **all equitable policymaking work must operate from the standpoint of acknowledging and seeking to remedy structural discrimination.** Some instances of equitable policymaking involve all five drivers of inequity, while other instances will involve only one or two. But by definition, all opportunities for equitable policymaking in the real world stem from instances of structural discrimination.

Examples of How We Address the Drivers of Health Inequity



Structural discrimination

Many rural BIPOC communities face a history of structural discrimination that impedes their ability to access health care and other resources that are essential for good health. We partner with rural communities throughout the United States to improve access to healthy food, housing, health care services, job opportunities, and investment grant opportunities. [Read our story](#) about promoting health equity in rural communities.



Income inequality & poverty

Renters with disabilities are particularly challenged by our nation's housing affordability crisis and are often overlooked in the planning and development of affordable housing. We partnered with housing stakeholders in Oakland County, Michigan, to explore inclusionary zoning and affordable housing trust funds as potential solutions that can set a foundation for reducing poverty and income inequality. [Read our story](#) about inclusionary zoning and housing for residents with disabilities.



Disparities in opportunity

Exclusionary school discipline practices are disproportionately enforced against students of color, leading to adverse childhood experiences and missed opportunities to learn and grow. We work with education policy experts to implement reforms that create a school culture of belonging, respect, and connection to ensure that students have a fair opportunity to learn. [Learn more](#) about exclusionary school discipline practices and opportunities for reform.

“Residents experience firsthand the shortcomings in the communities where they live and are committed to improving their collective experience. It is imperative that BIPOC community members and others who’ve experienced marginalization have a seat at the policymaking table.”

Shauneequa Owusu, *chief strategy officer*, ChangeLab Solutions, in “Promoting Health Equity in Rural Communities”



Disparities in political power

ChangeLab Solutions partnered on a lawsuit to challenge the penalty provision of a California law that prevents cities from enacting new sugary drink taxes until 2031. By working to overturn this harmful law that was backed by the beverage industry, we aim to restore local voters' power to determine whether they want to impose health-promoting taxes on sugary drinks rather than having industry forces make that decision for them. [Read our press release](#) on the lawsuit against state preemption of sugary drink taxes in California.



Governance that limits meaningful participation

Community-based organizations (CBOs) are indispensable elements of public infrastructure. ChangeLab Solutions partnered with more than twenty California-based CBOs to create a report on why CBOs should be empowered and funded in accordance with the vital services and supports they provide for underserved communities, filling the gaps in government services. [See our recommendations](#) on how government can better partner with CBOs to improve public health.

"It is imperative that local governments throughout the country be permitted to enact policies that protect their residents' health and advance health equity."

Sarah de Guia, *chief executive officer*, ChangeLab Solutions, in press release on preemption lawsuit

Next Steps for Addressing the Drivers of Health Inequity in Your Work

- Consider how the drivers of inequity can inform and improve your policy goals and outcomes
- Read the section on the five fundamental drivers of health inequity in [A Blueprint for Changemakers](#) (pp. 9–10)
- Explore our [interactive web tool](#) to see more resources and stories of how we work with communities to undo the drivers of health inequity



Upholding the Three Legal Pillars to Improve Health Through Law & Policy

In our work for equitable policy change, ChangeLab Solutions applies concepts that we call the *three legal pillars* to ensure that our solutions adequately address the drivers of inequity, meet community needs, and can withstand legal challenges. The three legal pillars are as follows:

- **Legal integrity** means that laws and policies must be grounded in strong legal practice and precedent, must be based on the best available scientific evidence, and must meet the needs of community-led legal and policy change efforts.
- **Legal innovation** means devising cutting-edge policy solutions that push the boundaries of what's possible in using the law as an agent for change and establishing new theoretical frameworks that bridge legal and public health disciplines and better meet community needs.
- **Legal intervention** means the ways in which communities implement actionable law and policy solutions. Local governments must have sufficient knowledge, tools, and authority to properly implement legal innovations that will benefit communities.

Policy solutions must adequately address the drivers of inequity, meet community needs, and be able to withstand legal challenges.

How We Adhere to the Three Legal Pillars in Our Work

When we partner with community representatives and other stakeholders, we make every effort to ensure that our legal and policy analysis, research, interventions, and technical assistance meet the highest standards for **legal integrity**. For example, when partnering with the Cancer Center at the University Medical Center New Orleans and the Second Harvest Food Bank to establish an on-site food bank for patients, [ChangeLab Solutions' in-depth legal research](#) revealed that providing food to patients does not qualify as a beneficiary inducement under the Social Security Act. This work cleared a legal hurdle and paved the way for food pantry services to be offered to patients without incurring legal risk.

Whether our role is bridging disconnects between community health stakeholders, supplying up-to-date law and policy expertise, or creating space for community members to lead problem-solving efforts, ChangeLab Solutions aims to equip our partners with cutting-edge solutions to improve health and equity. The realities of the US political system and government often mean that creativity and a willingness to try new ideas are required to advance equitable policy solutions. We've delivered **legal innovations** — for example, [strategies to push back against punitive preemption](#) — to our partners in government and community health across the United States.

Strategy and research are important for optimizing project and program outcomes. But without action, nothing changes in the real world! **Legal intervention** entails the ability of community health stakeholders to enact on-the-ground policy solutions that improve health. To aid community leaders and partners in devising policy solutions that are right for them, ChangeLab Solutions provides them with know-how on navigating barriers to equitable policymaking. For example, our [Public Health Law Academy](#) offers free online trainings to help all public health professionals understand how to use the tools of law and policy to promote (and not hinder) health equity. The easy-to-use training modules feature case study examples and the on-the-ground health equity tips.

To aid community leaders and partners in devising policy solutions that are right for them, provide know-how on navigating barriers to equitable policymaking.

Next Steps for Applying the Three Legal Pillars in Your Work

- Evaluate how the legal pillars map to your equitable policymaking work
- Read the section on the three legal pillars in [A Blueprint for Changemakers](#) (p. 14)
- Explore our Public Health Law Academy resources on [legal epidemiology](#) — the scientific study of how laws affect public health. Legal epidemiology provides an important way to ensure legal integrity by grounding policies in evidence on what is effective.
- Learn how to respond when [preemption](#) might affect a local policy campaign to promote public health
- Explore our [model legal documents](#) to find sample language for health-promoting policies that can be adapted to align with state and local laws as well as community needs



Centering Community Engagement & Partnerships

Public participation and **community engagement** in policy development processes are crucial to ensuring that policy interventions address the most pressing community needs and reduce health inequities over the long term. The needs of traditionally marginalized communities that have often been left out of policy decision making must be front and center at every stage of the process when changing laws and policies to create healthy, equitable communities.

Similarly, **cross-sector partnerships** — especially within government institutions — are necessary to remove deep-rooted structural discrimination from the complex and multi-faceted systems that affect public health (like health care, as well as laws and policies at local, state, and federal levels). Stakeholders with different areas of expertise, varied types of experience, and diverse professional networks will find collaboration with partners mutually beneficial, and their involvement will strengthen equitable policy outcomes.

Policies created in step with community members are better able to respond to pressing community needs.

How We Center Community Engagement in Our Work

In the policymaking process, community engagement efforts range from informing community members of decisions to empowering them to make policy decisions. To be most effective, any approach must use culturally appropriate and language-appropriate outreach as well as strategies that normalize and operationalize equity. Robust community-centered policymaking incorporates community voices, input, and involvement throughout the policy development process. ChangeLab Solutions asserts, based on both our own experiences and [research evidence](#), that robust and inclusive community engagement is indispensable to equitable policymaking. When policymakers seek extensive community buy-in and support, they are more apt to make decisions based on the best available information. Policies created in step with community members are better able to respond to pressing community needs.

How We Center Cross-Sector Partnerships in Our Work

Partnership is a core tenet of ChangeLab Solutions' approach to equitable policy development. We encourage our cross-sector partners to prioritize community input and leadership, and we advocate for the importance of authentic community engagement. As such, our projects and partnerships across the United States focus predominantly on empowering local communities to pursue equitable policy changes of their own choosing. Three prominent examples of our cross-sector

partnerships are [The BUILD Health Challenge](#), the [Toward Better Rural Futures](#) project, and the [Housing Solutions Collaborative](#) — all of which support community health improvement and equitable policymaking efforts at the local level. We strongly urge anyone pursuing equitable policy change to consider the strategic advantages of cross-sector partnerships.

We strongly urge anyone pursuing equitable policy change to consider the strategic advantages of cross-sector partnerships.

Next Steps for Leveraging Community Engagement & Partnerships in Your Work

- Consider how you can incorporate robust community engagement and cross-sector partnerships in your equitable policymaking efforts
- Read the section on community engagement in [A Blueprint for Changemakers](#) (pp. 28–34)
- Learn more about how to engage community members and center equity at every stage of your policymaking journey in [The Planner's Playbook: A Community-Centered Approach to Improving Health & Equity](#)
- Read The BUILD Health Challenge's [Community Health Workbook](#) to help you employ cross-sector and community-driven approaches to improve the root causes and systems that affect community health and health equity
- Explore our [resources on Health in All Policies](#) — a collaborative approach to improving a community by incorporating health, sustainability, and equity considerations into decision making across government agencies and policy areas
- Learn how cross-sector partnerships can foster more just and resilient food systems and support healthy communities. [Legal & Policy Strategies for Health Care & Food System Partners](#) provides practitioners on the ground with law and policy considerations and real-world case examples.

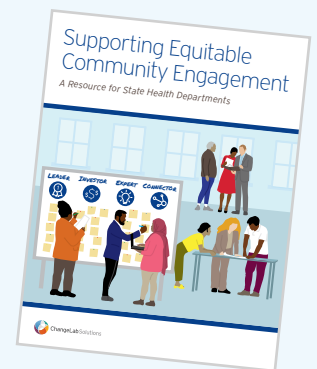
RESOURCE SPOTLIGHT

[Supporting Equitable Community Engagement](#)

Why is community engagement essential for improving public health and reducing health inequities?

How can state health departments support local health departments' community engagement efforts?

ChangeLab Solutions' guide helps state health departments understand the importance of equitable and inclusive community engagement in their work to address social determinants of health and promote the well-being of all their residents. The guide explains the roles and activities that state health departments can pursue to support equitable community engagement work in local health departments.



Highlighting the Importance of Local & State Solutions

Policymaking to advance health equity is often most impactful when undertaken at local and state levels, for the following reasons:

- Many drivers of health and equity can be influenced through decisions about how local and state programs and services are delivered.
- Local and state-level policy change is more likely to be grounded in a deep understanding of the health needs, community goals, and lived experiences of residents and therefore more likely to create lasting change.
- Local and state-level policy change may be more feasible than policy change at the national level.

How We Center Local & State Solutions in Our Work

ChangeLab Solutions does much of its equitable policymaking work in partnership with community-based organizations (CBOs) and leaders as well as with local and state government agencies and departments. In addition, our work with federal partners often involves capacity building for public health efforts at local and state levels. Partnerships with CBOs and local and state governments allow us to gain a deeper understanding of the unique challenges and opportunities faced by each community so that we can develop policies and solutions tailored to their specific needs. Here are a few highlights of our work that focuses on local and state solutions:

Act for Public Health

[Act for Public Health](#) — a collaborative working group of public health legal organizations — provides resources, technical assistance, and training to help push back against attempts to block local and state public health officials' ability to do their job. ChangeLab Solutions is proud to be part of this group of public health law experts who are applying their decades of experience in public health law and policy work to protect public health authority and infrastructure to promote health equity.

Anti-Preemption Efforts

Powerful interest groups have recently led numerous state-level efforts to [preempt local laws](#) aimed at advancing health equity. These interest groups have successfully thwarted laws that threaten their profits — for example, local minimum wage laws, sugary drink taxes, and tobacco control ordinances. ChangeLab Solutions is a go-to expert for law and policy expertise on counteracting harmful preemption and preserving local powers and local control.

Partnerships with community-based organizations and local and state governments allow us to gain a deeper understanding of the unique challenges and opportunities faced by each community so that we can develop policies and solutions tailored to their specific needs.

Affordable Housing

The US affordable housing crisis has been shaped by local laws and policies as well as larger structural factors. Through our [Housing Solutions Collaborative](#), ChangeLab Solutions has partnered with communities across the country to develop equity-informed options that aid affordable housing tax incentives, emergency rental and utility assistance, anti-displacement policies, affordable housing production, and strategies to address racial inequities in our housing system.

Next Steps for Centering Local & State Solutions in Your Work

- Learn more about which laws, policies, and programs are administered at local and state levels, and seek out cross-sector partnerships for increased collaboration on equitable policy solutions
- Read the section on local solutions in [A Blueprint for Changemakers](#) (pp. 15–21)
- Learn how to navigate [preemption](#) and its effects on local and state policy campaigns to improve public health

SUCCESS STORY

[Promoting Health Equity in Rural Communities](#)

Solutions to improve life in rural communities often fail to address the deep-rooted and unjust laws, policies, and practices that have shaped the physical, economic, and social conditions experienced by rural populations over many generations. Reframing assumptions about racial homogeneity in rural places is crucial to health equity work. And given the unique diversity and strengths of each rural community, policy solutions need to be tailored to local communities and to the lived experiences of people in those diverse communities.

ChangeLab Solutions has a long track record of working in rural places that dates back to our inception as a public health nonprofit focused on tobacco control and chronic disease prevention. We have worked to address upstream drivers of health inequity through policy initiatives that are nationwide, statewide, and local in scope. One of our projects that serve rural communities is **Toward Better Rural Futures**, which aims to foster greater collaboration and alignment across local, regional, and state levels of government, equipping leaders with the tools and knowledge to fundamentally shift power, opportunity, and resources in order to create healthy rural places where everyone can thrive.

Applying Best Practices in Equitable Enforcement

Laws and policies require compliance at individual and institutional levels in order to be effective in promoting community health. Laws and policies often include provisions that direct local or state governments to enforce or oversee compliance or that allow agencies to develop such provisions. Our experience and academic research by others both find that some enforcement actions taken in the name of public health can and do cause harm, perpetuate discrimination, and otherwise undermine health. Enforcement actions that are carried out inequitably can create, maintain, or exacerbate health inequities.

Equitable enforcement is a process of ensuring compliance with law and policy that considers and minimizes harms to people affected by health inequities. An equitable enforcement approach means considering equity — both at the level of the public entity's overall enforcement strategy and at the level of individual enforcement actions. It also means considering equity at all stages of enforcement, from determining when to undertake an enforcement action — and against whom — to deciding which enforcement tools to use.

Two primary aspects of equitable enforcement analysis are underenforcement and overenforcement, both of which can have negative effects on community health and equity. **Underenforcement** means that a policy is not sufficiently enforced to serve community needs, creating a burden or harm that disproportionately falls on some community members. Conversely, **overenforcement** means that a policy is enforced against some community members more than others, often due to systemic injustices or despite evidence that noncompliance occurs at similar rates across the whole community.

Equitable enforcement is a process of ensuring compliance with law and policy that considers and minimizes harms to people affected by health inequities.

How We Apply Equitable Enforcement in Our Work

Because ChangeLab Solutions considers equitable enforcement to be a key component of creating effective and equitable policies, we include sections on equitable enforcement in many of our publications. Laws and policies must contain a compliance mechanism in order to enact improvements in community health. However, these compliance mechanisms do not need to be — and, in many cases, shouldn't be — traditional punitive enforcement provisions. Even policies that are designed with equity in mind, that address the fundamental drivers of health inequity, and that incorporate robust community engagement might still perpetuate health inequity if their enforcement provisions do not adhere to equitable enforcement principles. We have created a number of products to help policymakers create alternative enforcement mechanisms that consider equity issues and minimize harm to underserved communities.

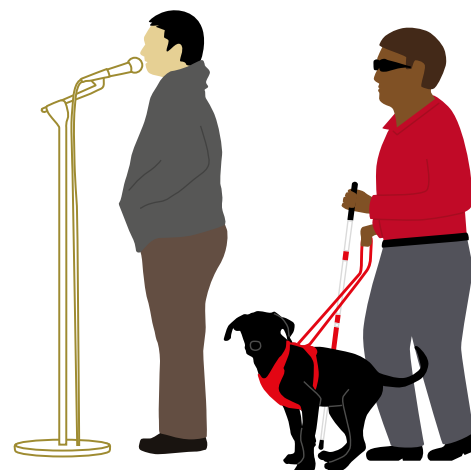
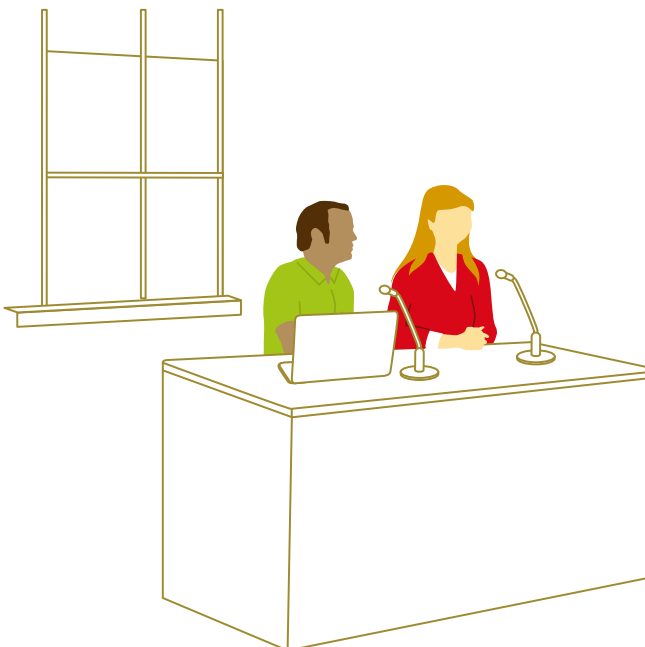
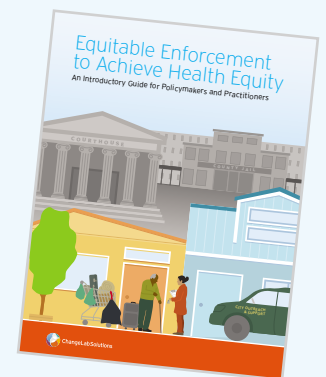
Next Steps for Applying Equitable Enforcement in Your Work

- Consider the [enforcement provisions](#) of your policy work and whether they might have inequitable consequences that you can change and improve
- Read our introductory guide [Equitable Enforcement to Achieve Health Equity](#) to learn more
- Listen to a [podcast](#) on how government officials can improve compliance with public health laws while minimizing harms to underserved communities
- Explore our [collection of equitable enforcement resources](#), which were designed to help policymakers incorporate equitable enforcement principles and practices into their processes

RESOURCE SPOTLIGHT

[Equitable Enforcement to Achieve Health Equity](#)

Our introductory guide outlines equitable enforcement principles by posing a series of questions to consider when drafting, implementing, and enforcing a policy. It helps policymakers, advocates, and enforcement officials explore the equity implications of traditional public health enforcement tools and implement strategies to avoid unintended negative consequences when addressing violations of the law. This guide also discusses best practices in design and development of enforcement provisions to help avoid inequitable impacts and promote community health.



Preemption & Aligning Health Equity Policies Across Local Government

In this section, we briefly cover two additional best practices that ChangeLab Solutions applies in our equitable policymaking:

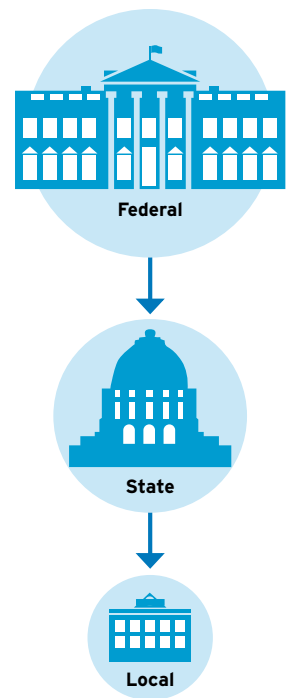
1. Checking for state-level preemption that blocks equitable policymaking at the local level
2. Aligning health equity policies across local government departments

Checking for Preemption

Preemption — a legal doctrine in which a higher level of government may limit or even eliminate the power of a lower level of government to regulate a specific issue — can have profound significance for public health.

Preemption historically has been used as a legislative and judicial tool for resolving problems that arise when different levels of government adopt conflicting laws on the same subject. Preemption in itself is neither bad nor good; it is simply a legal concept. However, powerful interest groups have initiated many state-level efforts to preempt local laws that threaten their profits — from local minimum wage and paid leave laws to sugary drink taxes and tobacco control ordinances — thus impeding communities' ability to pursue equity- and health-promoting policies. Any community that wishes to pursue equitable policymaking should take steps to ensure that their approach is not limited by existing or impending preemption at a higher level of government. If existing preemption stands in the way of a specific policy approach, communities may be able to pursue other options.

For more information about preemption and equitable policymaking, including how to analyze the role of preemption as part of the policymaking process, please explore ChangeLab Solutions' [preemption tools and resources](#).



Higher levels of government can preempt lower levels of government

Aligning Health Equity Policies Across Local Government

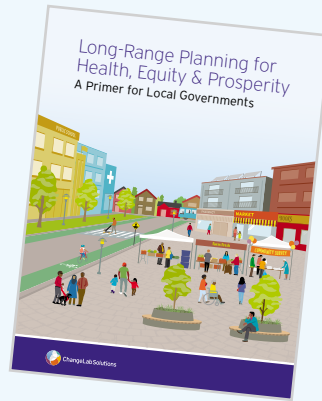
Every part of government has a role to play in planning for health equity. Approaches that one department or agency takes to reduce health disparities may be limited by factors that are better addressed by partners in other sectors of government. Consequently, aligning action across sectors will be more effective than any one intervention. The most effective way to achieve alignment is for representatives of various government agencies and institutions to meet regularly. A multidepartment task force or advisory committee can be convened at each stage in the equitable policymaking process.

Health in All Policies (HiAP) is a similar approach that more broadly ensures that government decisions are aligned in ways that promote health, equity, and sustainability. HiAP involves establishing protocols and processes for departments, agencies, institutions, and partners to exchange and align health-promoting ideas, resources, and programs.

For more information on aligning health equity policies across government, please review ChangeLab Solutions' [primer on long-range planning](#) or [HiAP resources](#).

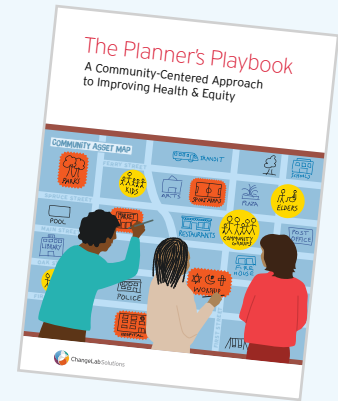
RESOURCE SPOTLIGHT

Planning decisions underlie many elements of the built environment in our communities — from housing and transportation to schools, public spaces, and food outlets. ChangeLab Solutions has created a [collection of resources](#) to help planners and other professionals who are working to improve their health equity and community engagement strategies. In particular, the following two publications can help users apply the frameworks outlined in this guide.



[Long-Range Planning for Health, Equity & Prosperity: A Primer for Local Governments](#)

This guide explains how planners and public health professionals can prioritize health and equity in their everyday work and decision making. It provides broad guidance on incorporating equity considerations in long-range planning, community engagement, investment, and evaluation processes.



[The Planner's Playbook: A Community-Centered Approach to Improving Health & Equity](#)

Our playbook is intended for planners, decision makers, and other practitioners who develop or influence their local government's plans and policies and thus shape the pattern, design, and function of their communities. This practical guide offers concrete steps, resources, and examples to help planners engage community members and center equity at every stage of their planning practice.

Looking Ahead to an Equitable Future

Incidents of civil unrest, along with the economic and public health crises resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, have made visible the insidious injustices and inequities that are embedded in our systems, institutions, practices, laws, and policies. The good news is that countless communities, governments, and institutions across the United States are taking innovative action to uproot structural discrimination through actions like declaring racism a public health crisis or considering reparations. Despite difficult setbacks and many obstacles yet to be overcome, we are striving to make a meaningful difference and make progress toward a world in which everyone has a fair opportunity to access health, wealth, and opportunity.

Equitable policymaking is the key tool that community leaders can use to create a healthier, more just future.

Equitable policymaking is the key tool that community leaders can use to create a healthier, more just future. From our own work and practice, we know that the frameworks uplifted in this resource — the fundamental drivers of health inequity, the three legal pillars, community engagement and partnerships, local and state solutions, and equitable enforcement — are powerful tools for creating lasting systems change that will improve community health. We invite you to partner with us, use and improve on our resources, and pursue equitable policy change in your own communities.

A healthier and more just future awaits.



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