

Greater Portland Pulse: Challenges to Measuring Racial Equity

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What is Greater Portland Pulse?

- A regional (2 states; 4 counties) initiative to develop a set of measurable, consensus-based outcomes and provide and maintain the associated indicators
- Project's Key Champions:
 - Metro (Portland area's regional government),
 - Portland State University, and others
- ***“Measuring Results/Inspiring Action”***
 - Data (9 outcome categories), updated in “real time”
 - Dialogue
- A website and a set of indicators that measure progress toward the desired outcomes

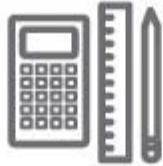
Greater Portland Pulse Process

- Consensus driven
- Outcomes driven
- Top-down/bottom-up process
 - Top-down (Advisory Team) = 9 outcome categories; limited number of indicators
 - Bottom-up (Results Teams, 200+ participants) = articulation of the outcomes; identification of the indicators

Greater Portland Pulse Outcome Categories



economic opportunity



education



healthy people



safe people



arts and culture



civic engagement



healthy natural environment



housing and communities



access and mobility

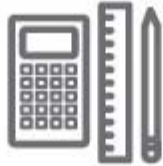
The question of Equity?

- Its importance
- Its meaning
- Its position

The Position of Equity in Indicator Projects: GPP Proposal A – its own outcome category



economic
opportunity



education



healthy people



safe people



arts and
culture



civic
engagement



equity



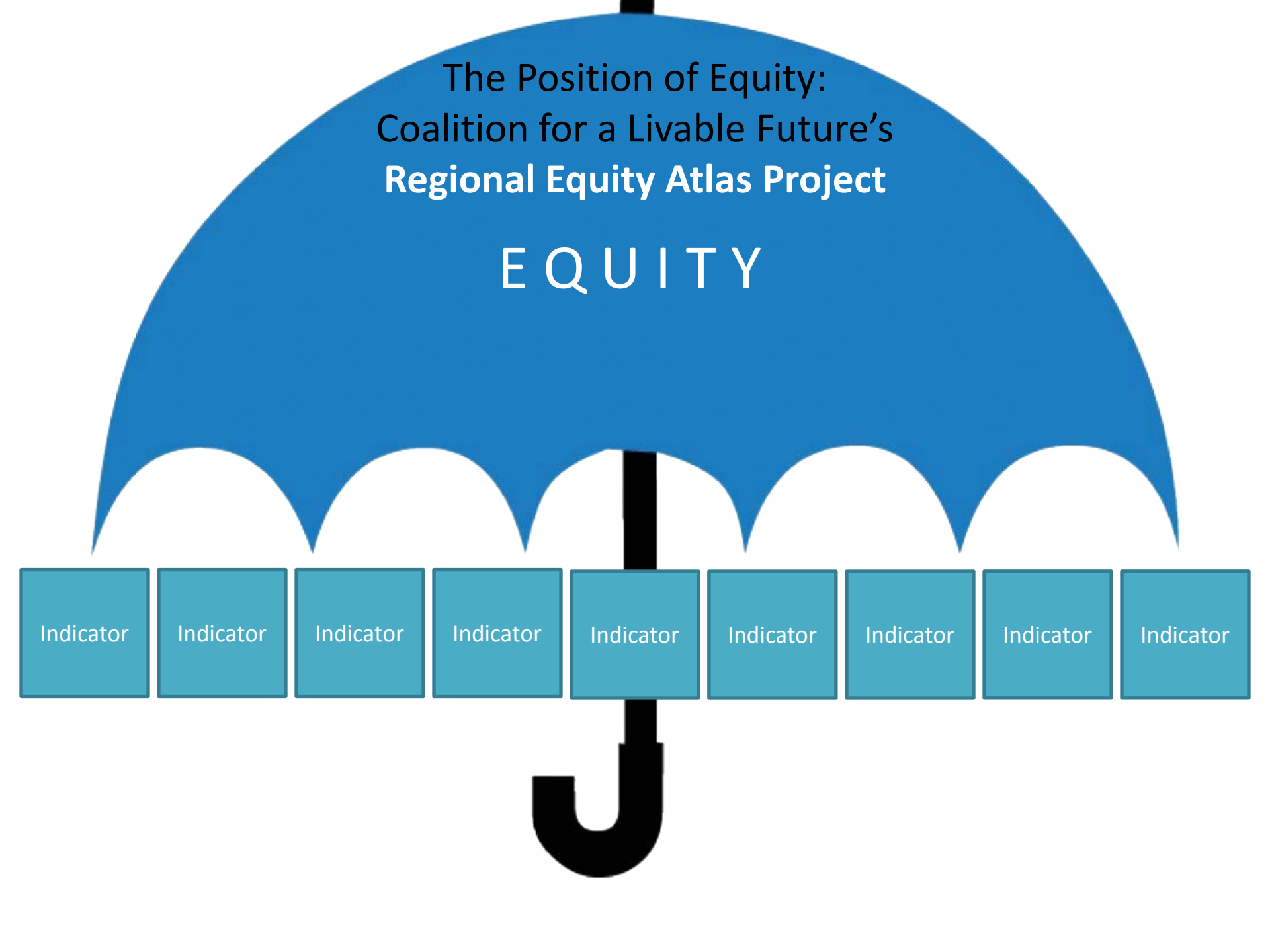
healthy natural
environment



housing and
communities



access
and mobility



The Position of Equity:
Coalition for a Livable Future's
Regional Equity Atlas Project

EQUITY

Indicator

Indicator

Indicator

Indicator

Indicator

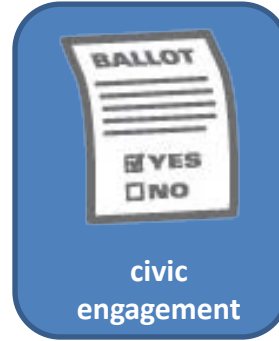
Indicator

Indicator

Indicator

Indicator

The Position of Equity in Indicator Projects: GPP Proposal B



← Equity

GPP's Adopted Definition of Equity

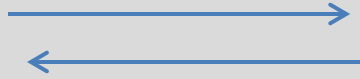
Equity means that all individuals, regardless of “markers of difference” including but not limited to race, ethnicity, income, disability, and age, have equal privilege and opportunity to access the basic needs, services, skills and assets required to succeed in life. This includes affordable **access** to healthy food, adequate and appropriate housing, quality jobs, safe neighborhoods, transportation and mobility options, education, civic engagement, health services, natural areas, and opportunities to participate in arts and cultural activities.

Equity Panel's Criteria

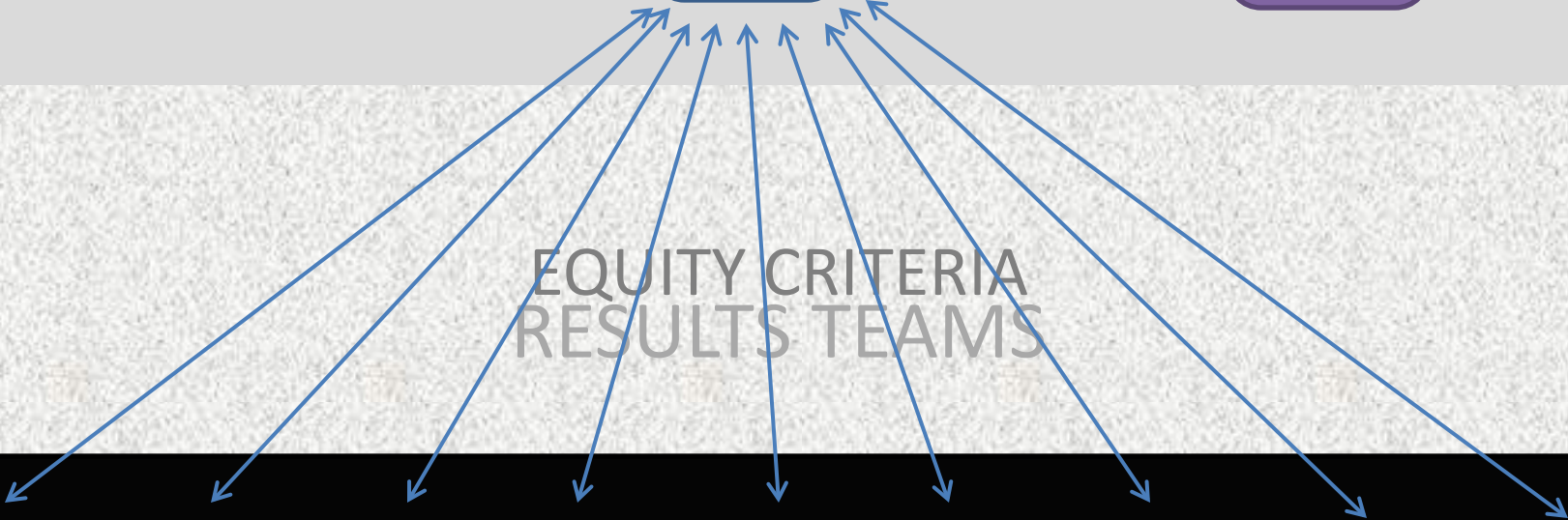
- Disaggregation: *whenever possible the indicator data should be broken down by race, ethnicity, age, and income*
- Mapping: *to understand the effects of place-based issues, it is critical to map as many indicators as possible to a neighborhood level*
- Data Availability: *to address the lack of disaggregated data at the neighborhood level, a list of “aspirational” indicators should be developed*
- Community Perspective: *the issues must be seen from the perspective of diverse communities*

Equity Panel

Advisory Team



EQUITY CRITERIA
RESULTS TEAMS



“Learning Dialogues”

General Topics and Key Struggles

- What are equity indicators (including *importance* or prioritization and *meaning*)?
- The lack of disaggregated data and the appropriate geographies (and cross state data collection discrepancies)
- Having to use proxy measures and the challenge of interpretation
- The need for cross-category use of the indicators and triangulation for measuring equity conditions
- For some, the priority of equity generally

“Learning Dialogues” Examples

- Economic Opportunity team:
 - What should economic opportunity outcomes be from an equity perspective?
 - Is income distribution relevant from an equity perspective?
 - Is homeownership an appropriate measure for wealth?
- Education
 - The “paradox of choice” (too much data)
 - Too little data from an equity perspective
- Housing and Communities
 - The importance and meaning of the segregation or dissimilarity index
 - The inadequacies of quantitative data to tell equity stories
 - The question of homeownership as a proxy for wealth

Equity Dialogue Outcomes

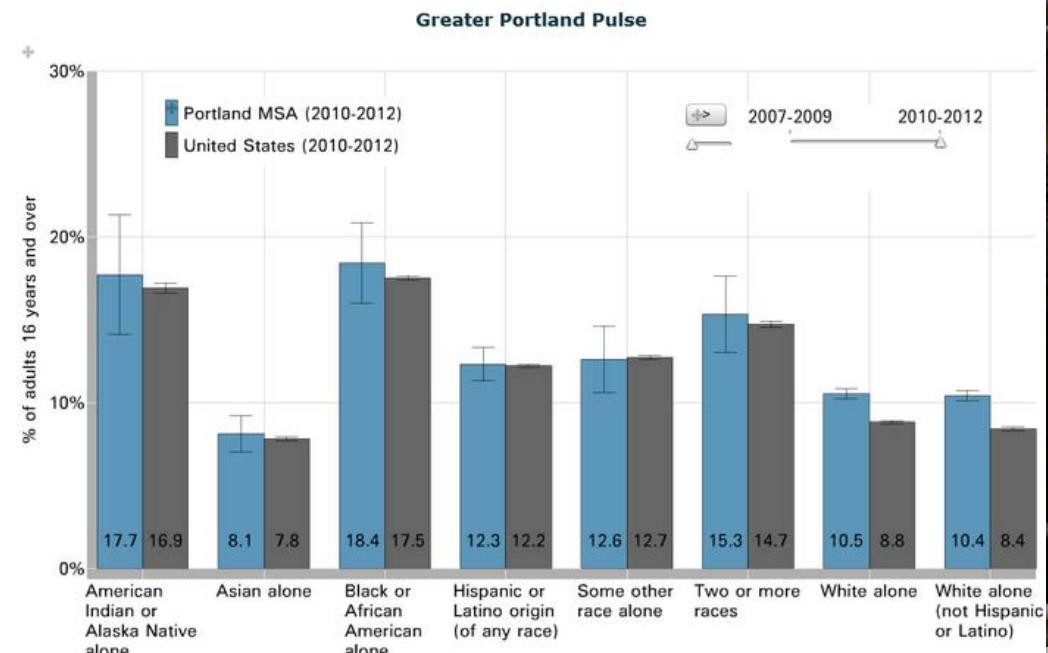
- Profound learning experience for the participants
 - Appreciation for the complexities of the issue
 - Awareness of the trade-offs related to the indicators
 - Temporal vs spatial resolution
 - The lack of adequate data
 - The need for triangulation, cross category integration, imprecise and inadequate measures
 - The importance of advocating for “aspirational” measures
- Impact on the GPP indicators
 - Disaggregation (generally at the MSA and county levels only)
 - More sub-county level data

Re-Thinking the Position of Equity in the Context of Consensus-based Outcomes

- Indicators can influence policy outcomes by “*expanding awareness and focusing attention*” (Cobb and Rixford, 1998)
- *The single most important factor in determining the success of indicators whether they are designed with a purpose in mind – more specifically, a political purpose. The formation of a political purpose requires an ideology, which simply means a set of ideas or theories about what works and doesn't work... In short, without an ideology, there is no story, and the absence of an effective story is a recipe for political failure.* (Cobb, 2000:15)
- Invisible unless specifically called out



Unemployment by race and ethnicity, Portland MSA and United States, 2007-2009 and 2010-2012, three year estimates



portlandpulse.org

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