

CATEGORY 1

SHARED HUMANITY INDICATORS

*Achieving the conditions that
ALL people in our community
need and deserve.*



belonging

A condition whereby ALL PEOPLE feel welcomed and where their lived experiences matter, their contributions are valued, and they have access to the systems, infrastructure, and services across multiple domains (education, housing, food, healthcare, employment, justice, transportation, safety, etc.) to optimize their well-being.

Historically, the idea of belonging was often tied to nationality, ethnicity, or local community membership. In contemporary social and political contexts, belonging is increasingly recognized as a fundamental human need that goes beyond mere inclusion or tolerance. It represents a deeper level of acceptance and integration within a community or society. The evolution of this concept has been influenced by various social movements, including civil rights, feminism, LGBTQ+ rights, and disability rights movements. These movements have highlighted the importance of creating spaces and societies where diverse individuals can feel truly accepted and valued for their whole selves.

This definition also touches on the importance of access to various systems and services, acknowledging that true belonging requires not just emotional acceptance but also equitable access to resources and opportunities. From the perspective of the Othering and Belonging Institute, the definition of belonging goes further as it requires agency, voice, power, love, and responsibility in service to everyone. Belonging void of power, agency, and engagement with structures and systems that impact the human condition can “other,” perpetuate inequities, and cause harm.

When true belonging occurs, bridging—when people are able to come together and see one another’s humanity—can occur and people like Community Action leaders are able to unify around common goals to better meet the needs of the local community and ensure the Community Action vision of creating opportunities for all people to thrive, building strong, resilient communities, and ensuring a more equitable society.

A condition whereby ALL PEOPLE are heard and understood and where their inherent value and worth as human beings transcend all differences, placing the common human identity above all else. Respect requires that we treat people the way WE want to be treated. Dignity demands that we treat people the way THEY want to be treated.

Dignity has deep roots in philosophical, religious, and legal traditions, but its understanding and application have evolved significantly over time. The modern conception of dignity, as reflected in our definition, emphasizes the inherent and equal worth of all human beings. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the United Nations in 1948, prominently features dignity in its opening article, stating that “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.” Additionally, within the Community Action context, “dignity” is included in the original Economic Opportunity Act: **“It is, therefore, the policy of the United States to eliminate the paradox of poverty in the midst of plenty in this Nation by opening to everyone the opportunity for education and training, the opportunity to work, and the opportunity to live in decency and dignity.”** Today it is regarded as a key lever for achieving the Community Action mission.

In contemporary social and political contexts, dignity has become a cornerstone of human rights discourse and social justice movements. It underpins discussions on a wide range of issues, from healthcare and education to labor rights and criminal justice reform. The concept has been particularly influential in debates surrounding end-of-life care, treatment of prisoners, and the rights of historically marginalized communities.

This definition offers a nuanced understanding of dignity that reflects a growing awareness of the complexities of the human experience and the need for personalized, culturally sensitive approaches in various social and professional contexts.

equity

A condition whereby ALL PEOPLE are seen, heard and acknowledged for their complete selves, where their lived experiences count, and where they have unbiased access to thriving opportunities and outcomes no matter their race, ethnicity, culture, religion, gender, gender identity, economic status, or social location. Equity mandates that we treat people the way they need to be treated.

While often confused with equality, equity represents a more nuanced approach to fairness and justice. The historical roots of equity can be traced back to ancient philosophical and religious traditions, but its modern understanding has been shaped by social movements, academic discourse, and policy developments over the past century. In the mid-20th century, the civil rights movement in the United States brought issues of racial equity to the forefront of public consciousness, resulting in a shift from the pursuit of formal equality under the law to a recognition that true fairness often requires differential treatment to account for historical disadvantages and systemic barriers. The concept of equity gained further prominence with the rise of intersectional feminism, disability rights movements, and critiques of neoliberal economic policies. These movements highlighted how various forms of oppression and disadvantage intersect and compound, necessitating a more comprehensive approach to addressing structural inequities. In recent decades, equity has become a central consideration in fields such as education, healthcare, urban planning, and corporate governance, reflecting an increased understanding of the complex, systemic nature of disparities and the limitations of one-size-fits-all approaches to achieving fairness.

Equity is a Community Action core value and is also regarded as a driver for mission and vision alignment. The Community Action belief is that all people should be treated with dignity and respect and recognize that structural race, gender, and other inequities remain barriers that must be addressed.

This definition embodies the multifaceted nature of equity and the need for nuanced, context-sensitive approaches to achieving it. It also aligns with contemporary discussions about the importance of representation, voice, and agency in equity work. In recent years, there has been increased focus on operationalizing equity in various sectors, which has led to the development of equity audits, impact assessments, and other tools designed to identify and address systemic barriers to fairness.

A condition whereby ALL PEOPLE are in right relationship with themselves, their community, and their world and where they can exercise an expectation of positive outcomes with respect to relationships and circumstances in their present and future lives.

Hope has always been recognized as a powerful emotional and motivational force and has been a central theme in the realms of philosophy, religion, psychology, and social movements.

This definition presents the notion of hope as not only an individual emotional state, but also as a condition deeply embedded in social relationships and community contexts. It also aligns with emerging recognition of the importance of social connections, community resilience, and collective agency in fostering hope. The COVID-19 pandemic has further highlighted the critical role of hope in individual and collective resilience, sparking renewed interest in understanding and fostering hope in challenging times.

The Promise of Community Action says it best: "Community Action changes lives, **embodies the spirit of hope**, improves communities, and makes America a better place to live. We care about the entire community, and we are dedicated to helping people help themselves and each other."

Organizations can work towards creating an environment that fosters hope by committing to an ongoing process of exerting consistent effort, especially during challenging times, and creating a culture where individuals feel empowered to envision and work towards positive futures, both for themselves and their communities.

liberation

A condition whereby ALL PEOPLE can freely exist, think, dream, and thrive in ways that transcend the limitations of their historical, geographical, political, social, or cultural circumstances.

This definition presents liberation as a multi-faceted concept that goes beyond mere absence of oppression to encompass positive freedoms and the ability to fully realize one's potential. The notion of liberation has a rich and complex history, deeply intertwined with social, political, and philosophical movements throughout human history. While its meanings and applications have varied across different contexts and time periods, liberation has consistently been associated with freedom from oppression, constraints, or limiting conditions.

Today, the understanding of liberation has been further enriched by intersectional approaches, recognizing how various forms of oppression and liberation intersect across race, class, gender, sexuality, and other dimensions of identity. There's also been growing recognition of liberation as not only a political or social condition, but also a psychological and emotional state and a way to envision and manifest what is possible. From the Community Action perspective, liberation is deeply tied to hope and the need for everyone to have the opportunity to reach their fullest potential.

In recent years, there have been increased efforts to apply liberation concepts in various professional and institutional contexts. Liberation is not just removing barriers, but actively creating conditions where all individuals can dream and flourish, today and in the future.

opportunity

Circumstances and access to resources that create fair or favorable conditions for individuals to develop their own capabilities. Opportunities in education, employment, housing, and health open pathways to mobility from poverty. Structural racism and structural poverty block opportunities for individuals to achieve well-being and their full potential.

The concept of opportunity has been closely linked to ideas of social mobility, equality, and justice, evolving significantly over time. Historically, opportunities were often seen as predetermined by social class, gender, or birthright. In the latter half of the 20th century, civil rights movements, feminist movements, and other social justice efforts brought increased attention to systemic barriers that limit opportunities for certain groups. This led to the development of such policies as affirmative action, aimed at leveling the playing field. Our definition reflects the understanding of opportunity as something that requires intention and needs to be actively created and sustained through mental models, policy, and social action, rather than something that naturally exists in society. It also acknowledges the importance of social and cultural capital in accessing opportunities, beyond simply economic resources.

Creating meaningful opportunities is an ongoing process that requires consistent effort and adaptation to changing circumstances. It is about creating conditions through structures and systems where all individuals can develop their capabilities and achieve their full potential, while actively working to remove structural barriers that might impede this process.