

Big Goal Setting Exploration: Toward a Working Definition of Equity [by Urban Market Analytics]

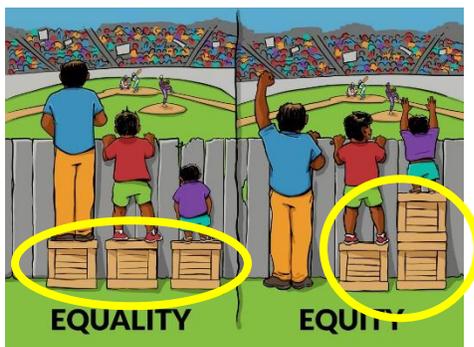


What does the term “equity” mean to leaders of the Equity & Advocacy Collective? And what does EAC mean by “Bridging the Equity Gap?” Does that translate to “Closing the Gap” or “Narrowing the Gap?” Will EAC direct efforts to a certain field of development (e.g., youth development)? These and other questions are the subject of a special segment of a 2017 training series commissioned by The Children’s Trust and Allegany Franciscan Ministries. This document was prepared by the team of Urban Market Analytics to help EAC leaders explore their purpose.

What is “Equity?”

After decades of focus on “equal access to opportunity,” development organizations of all kinds are evolving to the concept of “equity” and grappling with how to achieve it.

Here’s a common distinction between the two terms: “Equity is giving everyone what they need to be successful. **Equality** is treating everyone the same.” (Source: Everyday Feminism, Amy Sun)



The above graphic is widely used to illustrate the difference between equity and equality. The article excerpt (in blue box, right) was published by *The Education Trust*. It is one example of how the topic is being discussed among industry leaders in education, human services, health, and other development fields.

Equity and Equality Are Not Equal¹

There is a common misconception that equity and equality mean the same thing. But the truth is **they do not — and cannot**. So please, don’t talk about equality when you really mean equity. What’s the difference? Should per student funding at every school be exactly the same?

Yes, making sure all students have *equal* access to resources is important. All students should have the resources necessary for a high-quality education. But some students need *more* to get there.

Here’s where equity comes in. The students who are furthest behind — most often low-income students and students of color — require more resources to catch up, succeed, and eventually, close the gap.

Giving students who come to school academically lagging (due to factors outside a school’s control) the same resources as students in higher income schools will not close the achievement gap. But making sure [struggling] students have exceptional teachers and the high-quality education they need to succeed will continue narrowing that gap.

Equality has become synonymous with “leveling the playing field.” So let’s make equity synonymous with “more for those who need it.”

Numeric Difference between Equal & Equitable Investment

When measured in dollars, the difference between **equal** and **equitable** can be mammoth. Let's apply this to a specific hypothetical – a \$10 million investment to grow youth employment across Miami Dade County (MDC) by a collaborative of funders. Let's say, for illustration, that the EAC is advocating for funding equity for the target area.

What investment level does that translate to?

The graph below illustrates the significant differences that arise from applying various mathematical parameters to the term "equity."

A **representative** share of investment might be \$1.23 million or 12.3% of the \$10 million to the target area, if funding decisions are based upon the share of MDC youth who live within the target area, which is 12.3%.

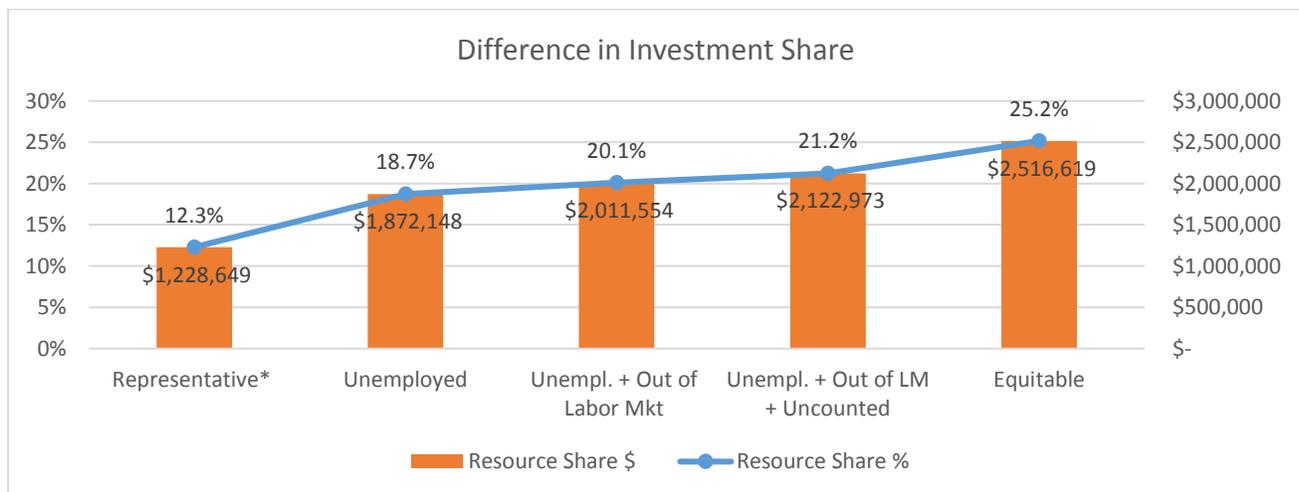
A closer look reveals that the investment share to the target area should likely be larger than that. Census data show that the target area is home to 18.7% of unemployed youth in Miami Dade County. Should 18.7% be the investment there?

What about incarcerated and homeless youth (most of whom are not counted by the Census)? Conceptually, when we factor them in, the target area may be home to approximately 20.1% of unemployed, incarcerated and homeless youth combined.

Added to that, the target area may also have a higher number of youth living in families who are uncounted by the Census. If this is a recognized challenge in the county, then, conceptually, the target area may be home to 21.2% of the true total of unemployed youth.

Yet there may be one additional factor that calls for an even larger share of investment going to the target area: youth there may need a greater sum of money (per capita) to achieve the same employment outcomes as youth who reside elsewhere in the county (e.g., target area youth employment programming may cost \$1,250 per youth versus \$1,000 per youth in other parts of the county). If this is the case, then an equitable level of investment could be as high as 25.2% of the \$10 million investment countywide.

CONCEPTUAL FIGURES: *The bars for "Representative" and "Unemployed" use actual Census data (2015 5-year estimates by the American Community Survey; all other figures are conceptually estimated for illustration purposes.



So what does EAC mean by “Equity?”

UMA created the following statement as a starting point for discussing the EAC’s vision for equity.

For the next 20 minutes, let’s mold it and shape it to be more precise in capturing EAC’s focus.

The EAC is dedicated to achieving equitable investment of resources on the part of local and national funders, in fields that are essential to closing economic gaps in six majority-black areas of Miami-Dade County. These fields include employment, earnings, education and entrepreneurship for families in the target area.

The founding leaders of the EAC – which include 16 chief executives of community-based organizations – will focus their efforts on two levels: one, on the systems level, the EAC will work with local, regional and national funders to define and pursue equitable advancements in closing economic gaps; and two, on the human and community levels, the EAC will collectively implement initiatives that prove the potential for transformation in Miami-Dade County communities where the roots of poverty are stubbornly entrenched.

Beginning on January 1, 2018, EAC leaders will launch a multi-year campaign for the target area that actualizes and demonstrates the merit of the quest for equitable investments. EAC will work to...

- *Close the gap in youth employment for young people, ages 16 to 24, by the year 2020*
- *Grow the middle class by 25% by the year 2025*

The six communities in the target area account for over one-quarter of unemployed youth in Miami-Dade. As for their parents, 60% of target area households fall below low-income level.*

The EAC is inviting funders to collaboratively invest in a transformative vision that will measurably improve the quality of life for men, women and children reflected in the figures above.

Let’s Be Creative

Facilitated by the UMA team, EAC leaders, let’s take the time we need to delve into the various facets of this brief description.

1. Is it five targeted communities or six? Who can help identify the precise census tracts to analyze in each community?
2. Is employment the right domain for the EAC, as a “show and prove” starting point for efforts toward equity?
3. How many founding organizations do you recognize? Who’s with you that you have not yet recognized?
4. Will funders become part of your “core” group or will you intentionally sustain a distinct service provider identity?
5. Are you able to launch on January 1?
6. Will you pursue only local funding equity, or will you cast your net more broadly to regional, statewide and national funder? If the latter, will you time-phase your focus (e.g., focusing on local funders first, then broadening efforts)?

(*Does not include North Miami).