Promoting Inclusive Social Dynamics in Mixed-Income Communities: Implications for Action

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Ideas into Action

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Introduction

Drawing from the other documents in our inquiry on inclusive social dynamics—a conceptual framework and a report on promising practices—this document proposes implications for action by practitioners, policymakers, funders, researchers, residents and community members.

By "inclusive social dynamics," we mean interactions that promote a sense of belonging and aspiration, greater social cohesion and inclusion, and increased input and authority for all residents of a mixed-income community. We use a broad definition of "mixed-income communities" that refers to neighborhoods with a population that is economically and socially diverse, including a significant proportion of housing for low-income households and other affordable/"workforce" housing for those on moderate incomes. These communities can be both planned and managed through specific initiatives as well as more naturally-occurring through local market forces and social trends. Please see our Lessons and Implications report for more information on types of mixed-income communities and the scope of the mixed-income field.

The implications for all stakeholders include:
- Develop a Shared Vision and Explicit Commitment
- Promote Skill and Knowledge Building
- Establish Role Clarity and Accountability
- Sharpen Strategy and Intentionality
- Facilitate Assessment and Learning

Our recommendation is that these implications for action be considered universal. All parties to a mixed-income community intervention have a role to consider and act upon these implications. Acting on these interventions requires some nimbleness and adaptability of the actions to the particular community context and circumstances. These implications are offered as guidelines to facilitate more intentionality and vigilance rather than a prescriptive checklist.

Implications for Practitioners[1]

Establish a clear vision, theory of change, and commitment to inclusive social dynamics as an element of mixed-income community interventions.
- Elevate attention to the importance of inclusive social dynamics for positive outcomes in mixed-income communities, including health and well-being.
  - o Incorporate this information into project descriptions, proposals, reports, and other strategic documents.
  - o Anticipate turnover among staff and other personnel and develop means of briefing new staff and partners.
- Make summary background information on evidence about social dynamics, mixed-income communities and health outcomes accessible.
  - o RWJF and Strategic Alliance should determine how to make the information from this social dynamics inquiry readily available.
- Develop a theory of change that includes the social dimension of mixed-income communities as an indirect health intervention (the other key dimensions of indirect interventions are physical and economic).
  - o Include a racial equity and inclusion lens in the theory of change.
- Develop a shared vision for and commitment to promoting inclusive social dynamics among key stakeholders, partners, residents, and community members.

Build skills and knowledge base.
- Institute trainings, workshops, and other learning opportunities to provide a platform for shared understanding and common language among staff and partners.
  - o Anticipate turnover and the need for refreshing current and new staff.
- Maintain ongoing discussions about historical and current marginalization on the basis of race, class, and other lines of difference, and the implications for the current efforts.
  - o Draw from a growing set of resources and tools for racial equity and inclusion.

o   NIMC has a compendium of such resources available upon request.

Develop clarity around roles, responsibilities, and accountability.
* Determine organizational and individual staff roles in cultivating and supporting an ongoing process of promoting inclusive social dynamics.
  o   How is strategy defined, how do various actors contribute, how will efforts be coordinated and communicated, how is accountability maintained?
* Determine roles of residents and community members in cultivating and supporting an ongoing process of promoting inclusive social dynamics.
* Revise job descriptions to incorporate a focus on an operating culture shift to promote inclusive social dynamics.
  o   Consider ways to build out job pipelines that recruit candidates with a background that includes sensitivity to and a skill base around managing operating culture.
* Modify performance reviews to incorporate assessments of progress attending to social dynamics issues, including issues of racial equity and inclusion (develop benchmarks and metrics—see learning and assessment below).

Develop clear strategies to promote inclusive social dynamics.
* Develop specific strategies that facilitate positive change at all three levels:
  o   Individual—Address perceptual dynamics
    » e.g. strategies that promote a sense of belonging, that help shift narratives about who is valued member of community, that set a tone of aspiration and possibility
  o   Social—Address relational dynamics.
    » e.g. strategies that make it easy for individuals to make and deepen connections across lines of difference such as race, class, and housing category
  o   Structure—Address influence and power dynamics.
    » e.g. governance strategies and mecha-

nisms that provide inclusive opportunities for input, decision-making, and authority
* Consider the application of promising practices such as trauma-informed community building, community network building, racial equity and inclusion tools, and other methodologies geared toward promoting inclusive social dynamics.
  o   RWJF and the Strategic Alliance should determine how to help make information about these methodologies readily available to practitioners and others.
* Promote community "stewardship" as a vehicle for cultivating inclusive social dynamics and consider the identification, recruitment, training and ongoing support of a growing cohort of community "stewards" who can embrace the responsibility of cultivating an operating culture shift within organizations and in the community.
* Consider use of small, diverse mutual support cohorts to promote bridging relationships.
  o   Kindred model in Washington, DC is a promising practice for interracial, cross-class small group practice.
* Consider how to design, activate, and curate spaces—meeting rooms, lounges, parks, gathering places—that can serve as intentional, safe spaces for comfortable informal and formal interaction across lines of difference.
* Co-develop a clear plan, structure, and processes for decision-making and governance that facilitates voice and influence from a wide range of community members.
  o   Governance model at Regent Park in Toronto, Canada is a promising practice.
* Consider everyday norms, routines, habits, and practices that can effectuate a shift in "operating culture".
  o   Hospitality covenant developed by Trek Development in Pittsburgh with the support of Trusted Space Partners is a promising practice.
* Determine staff time allocations and other resource needs to activate and sustain attention to inclusive social dynamics.

Measure and track progress and facilitate ongoing learning and course correction
- Establish partnerships with research and academic institutions that can support the learning and evaluation process.
- Develop metrics and methods to track and document progress.
- Institute regular check-ins on progress and opportunities for determining course correction.
- Develop peer-to-peer organizational relationships for learning exchanges and mutual accountability and support.

Implications for Funders and Policymakers

Promote the establishment of a clear vision, theory of change, and commitment to inclusive social dynamics as an element of mixed-income community interventions.
- Elevate attention to the importance of inclusive social dynamics for positive outcomes in mixed-income communities, including health and well-being among grantees, practitioners, developers and their partners, government at all levels, and other key stakeholders.
- Use Requests for Proposals, Notices of Funding Availability, and other funding guidelines to promote a consideration of inclusive social dynamics.
  - o Ensure that program officers and other policy staff maintain a focus on these issues throughout the intervention, not just in the selection process.
- Ensure that program guidelines, regulatory and compliance requirements, and other policies incorporate a consideration of inclusive social dynamics.
- Help make summary background information readily available on evidence about social dynamics, mixed-income communities and health outcomes.
- Help make sample theories of change readily available that include the social dimension of mixed-income communities as an indirect health intervention.
- Require and support mixed-income community interventions to establish a shared vision for and commitment to promoting inclusive social dynamics among key stakeholders and partners.

Require and support the building of skills and knowledge base.
- Fund, support, and promote access (including for funder and policymaker staff as well as staff working on mixed-income community interventions) to trainings, workshops, and other learning opportunities[2] that can provide a platform for shared understanding and common language
  - o Determine how to help promote equitable access to these opportunities
- Promote ongoing discussions about historical and current marginalization on the basis of race, class, and other lines of difference and the implications for the current efforts and cultivate resources that can help practitioners do the same.[3]

Require and promote the development of clarity around roles, responsibilities, and accountability.
- Require and support practitioners to determine organizational and individual staff roles in cultivating and supporting an ongoing process of promoting inclusive social dynamics.
- Require and support practitioners to determine roles of residents and community members in cultivating and supporting an ongoing process of promoting inclusive social dynamics.
- Promote consideration of other organizational processes that can promote intentionality and consistency and mutual accountability.

Require and support the development of clear strategies to promote inclusive social dynamics
- Consider funding guidelines (foundation,

government, and any other funding) and policy requirements and promote the development of specific strategies that facilitate positive change at all three levels:

- o Individual—Address perceptual dynamics
- o Social—Address relational dynamics
- o Structure—Address influence and power dynamics
- Support practitioners to consider the application of promising practices such as trauma-informed community building, community network building, racial equity and inclusion tools and other methodologies geared toward promoting inclusive social dynamics.
- Require greater intentionality in mixed-income community interventions about specific mechanisms, routines, habits, practices, and design decisions that can help promote inclusive social dynamics.
- Require practitioners to co-develop a clear plan, structure, and processes for decision-making and governance that facilitate voice and influence from a wide range of mixed-income community members.
- Require specificity about staff time allocations and other resource needs to activate and sustain attention to inclusive social dynamics.

Support measurement and promote ongoing learning and course correction.
- Support the establishment of formal and informal partnerships with research and academic institutions that can support the learning, evaluation, and evidence-building process.
- Support the establishment of peer-to-peer organizational relationships for learning exchanges and mutual accountability and support.

Implications for Researchers

Help advance the formulation of theories of change and evidence pathways about inclusive social dynamics as an element of mixed-income community interventions.

- Conduct and disseminate research that provides more evidence about the relationship between social dynamics, socioeconomically diverse communities, and positive outcomes.
- Develop ways to test the proposed three levels of social dynamics—perceptual, relational, and influence/power—for their relative importance in the pathway to health and well-being and other social outcomes.

Conduct applied research that supports the building of skills and knowledge base.
- Package and disseminate research findings and implications in formats and venues that make them readily accessible to practitioners, funders, and policymakers.

Build evidence around roles, responsibilities, and accountability in mixed-income community interventions.
- Conduct research and evaluation on effective ways to designate and manage roles and accountability to promote inclusive social dynamics.

Build evidence around strategies to promote inclusive social dynamics.
- Conduct research and evaluation on various components of approaches to promote inclusive social dynamics, including:
  - o Community network building.
  - o Trauma-informed community building.
  - o Inclusive spaces and venues.
  - o Inclusive governance mechanisms.

Support measurement and promote ongoing learning and course correction.
- Support the establishment of formal and informal partnerships with funders, policymakers, and practitioners that can support the learning, evaluation, and evidence-building process.
- Engage as a learning partner in peer-to-peer organizational relationships for learning exchanges and mutual accountability and support.

Implications for Residents and Community Members

Understand and help shape the vision for inclusive social dynamics as an element of mixed-income community interventions.
- Probe implementers to understand their overall goals for the mixed-income community and how residents and community members are expected to benefit from living in the community.
  - Contribute ideas, aspirations and concerns to help shape these goals.
- Probe implementers to understand their definition of inclusive social dynamics.
  - Contribute ideas and experiences to help shape this definition.
- Probe implementers to understand how they see inclusive dynamics connected to positive outcomes in mixed-income communities.
  - Contribute ideas and experiences to help shape thinking about this connection.
- Probe implementers about their shared vision for and commitment to promoting inclusive social dynamics.
  - Contribute ideas and experiences to help shape the vision.
  - Help hold implementers accountable to carrying out the commitment.

Build skills and knowledge base.
- Seek to participate in any trainings, workshops, and other learning opportunities about promoting inclusive social dynamics.
- Seek to participate in any ongoing discussions about historical and current marginalization on the basis of race, class, and other lines of difference and the implications for the current efforts.

Understand and step into roles, responsibilities, and accountability.
- Seek to understand organizational and individual staff roles in cultivating and supporting an ongoing process of promoting inclusive social dynamics.

- Probe and propose roles for residents.
  - Step into those roles where possible and recruit other residents and community members to do so.

Understand and help shape strategies to promote inclusive social dynamics.
- Probe to understand the specific strategies aimed facilitate positive change at all three levels:
  - Individual—Address perceptual dynamics.
  - Social—Address relational dynamics.
  - Structure—Address influence and power dynamics.
- Seek to understand and help shape the plan, structure, and processes for decision-making and governance that facilitates voice and influence from a wide range of community members.
- Seek to understand the everyday routines and practices that can effectuate a shift in "operating culture".
- Determine the roles for residents and community members in advancing these strategies, step into these roles where possible, and recruit others to do so.

Understand and shape the process of measuring progress and facilitating ongoing learning and course correction.
- Ask about any partnerships with research and academic institutions that support the learning and evaluation process and probe for the role of residents and community members in informing this process.
- Seek to participate in check-ins on progress and opportunities for determining course correction.

Citations

[1] We have an extremely broad range of "practitioners" in mind as the audience for these implications. The core actors would be city planning departments, housing authorities, community intervention directors, real estate developers, property managers, service providers and other community-based organizations. But the strat-

egies and actions have implications for literally any actor involved in a mixed-income community including, for example, school principals, faith leaders, local retailers, police and security personnel, and other city agency staff.

[2] The Living Cities Integration Initiative is an example of an effort that provided extensive technical assistance along these lines.

[3] The Racial Equity Institute is just one example of a proliferating number of organizations that offer this support.

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