PolicyLink Kirwan Institute Many Differences One Destiny

The Fair Housing and Equity Assessment (FHEA)

Deliberation Guide: Part 1 – Stakeholder Engagement

A key component to any successful collaborative endeavor, whether it's your regional planning process, or your regional equity assessment, is *getting the right stakeholders together at the table*. All too often, planning processes have failed to produce real results—or have even led to negative outcomes—because key stakeholders were missing, not playing the appropriate role, or lacked the capacity or political will to deliver on the expectations placed on them. Past fair housing assessments and analyses of impediments have not been able to reduce segregation or increase access to opportunity as effectively in part because they've relied upon consultants or only a few organizations to shoulder these complex efforts. Here, we discuss a few points to ensure you're building a FHEA table for success—and give you some methods that will be useful to engage the different types of stakeholders in your process.

Get clear about the purpose of the Fair Housing and Equity Assessment in your region and what makes it different from other processes. Before you reach out to key people to involve in the FHEA, it's important to be clear about the purpose of your fair housing and equity assessment and how it might help inform local planning processes. This isn't to say that you need a completed scope, and that stakeholders shouldn't be involved in helping you refine the goals and objectives for this process; in fact, they should be involved in both of these things to the greatest extent possible. However, it will be a lot easier to get the right folks to the table in appropriate roles if you can easily communicate the purpose of the FHEA, how it will contribute to changes in how planning decisions and investments are made in the region, how it might be different from other processes related to fair housing, equity, or opportunity, and what capacities are needed to complete and implement the assessment.

Conduct a "stakeholder mapping process" to identify key agencies and stakeholders that can advance equity and opportunity in your region. Stakeholder mapping can help you identify and organize those that should be involved and the capacities they bring to the table. The FHEA Roles and Responsibilities Guide may help you think through what the common agencies are in most regions and what they could bring to your process. It will probably help to sort stakeholders into different categories based on the level of capacity that they bring and their appropriate role, listed below.

- *Decision makers* are the people who will make the final decision on the FHEA and be able to commit their organizational resources to its implementation. This will likely include your consortium's main steering committee or policy board, but could also include additional decision makers that aren't formally included in the consortium at that level but are bringing their resources or regulatory authority to implement aspects of the FHEA (HUD entitlement jurisdictions, housing authorities, fair housing organizations, etc.). Follow the implementation money and get those agencies on board.

- *The working group* is made up of the people who are contributing to the FHEA process in a significant way, by developing the scope of work, conducting the data analysis, facilitating discussions on the findings, and writing the bridge to action. This group should include representation from any housing or equity working groups in your consortium, if not both.

- *Technical and community advisors* are the stakeholders that will have significant technical or local knowledge to contribute to the FHEA—both quantitatively and qualitatively—but aren't necessarily deeply involved in the planning process or represented in decision-making capacity. These advisors can

bring a wide range of capacities, and will be invaluable as a source of information, for their connections to broader networks, and their feedback on various iterations of the FHEA.

- *Residents of and organizations serving traditionally marginalized communities* are a distinct category of stakeholders that should be engaged in a specific and intentional way—if not through the broader regional planning process, then specifically through the FHEA. This may include residents of and organizations serving low-income communities, historic communities of color, the disability community, seniors, the LGBTQ community, or immigrants and refugees.

Create a differentiated engagement strategy for various types of stakeholders. Each of the four different types of stakeholders is going to require a different level of engagement to ensure that they're engaged in the process in a way that maximizes what they have to offer. It's important, as you identify these stakeholders, that everyone is clear as to what they can expect out of the process, how much time they will need to commit, and what they can bring (as well as take) to the FHEA. Also critical, especially with historically marginalized communities, is understanding that they may have great skepticism about this process—so be patient, focus on building trust, begin where people are, and be open to listening and iterating the process based on community concerns. Below we have identified six different engagement methods that may be useful for your FHEA depending on your needs, the target audience, and your objectives. See our table on the next page for ideas on what engagement methods to use.

- *Surveys* are a popular and good way to measure public/stakeholder opinion, collect a broad sample of quantitative data to obtain information about a larger population, while reaching populations that other forms of engagement may not reach.

- *Focus groups* are moderated group discussions in which targeted groups of people with a specific type of experience or knowledge are guided through open-ended questions.

- *Interactive workshops* are small sessions with around 20 or fewer participants that are focused on specific topics and designed to educate participants while working towards certain goals or objectives (i.e., developing a scope of work; how FHEA can inform the regional transportation plan).

- *Informal one x ones* are less structured meetings with stakeholders to discuss issues informally and in-depth, and to build relationships in a comfortable setting.

- *Public meetings* are the most common method of informing the public about plans or processes and getting information or feedback from a large group of people about the topic at hand. We recommend that they be used in combination with other engagement methods for the FHEA, or be structured as *public hearings* to receive formal input from organizations and residents.

- *Key informant interviews* are structured meetings with technical experts or community leaders to understand complicated policy issues, community history, or historic trends in the region.

Additional Resources on Stakeholder Engagement:

- Community Engagement Guide from PolicyLink and the Kirwan Institute
- Identifying and Engaging Stakeholders Tool from Envision Utah
- Needle-Moving Collective Impact Guide from Bridgespan
- Designing Robust Collective Processes from Professor Lawrence E. Susskind, MIT
- King County (WA) Community Engagement Worksheet

	Surveys	Focus Groups	Interactive Workshops	Informal One x Ones	Public Meetings	Key Informant Interviews
Decision Makers	• Useful to understand previous exposure to fair housing or equity issues	• Include decision makers in topical focus groups that they can provide leadership on	• Use to build capacity for understanding different issue areas of the FHEA	• Use to understand their interests, educate, find alignment, and build support for FHEA process	• Their presence can help build public support and draw community leaders • Serve as official panel for public hearings	• Use to understand how FHEA might inform decision making; to understand political context
Working Group	• If a large group, can be useful in identifying what participants have to offer in terms of knowledge, data, or networks	• Can be helpful to facilitate and organize focus groups	• Will be helpful to organize, facilitate, and structure agenda for workshops	• Use to find alignment, understand capacity • Can help conduct one on ones and broaden base of stakeholders	• Can help organize, structure agenda, and reach out to their constituencies	• Should help identify appropriate stakeholders to interview and develop questions
Technical + Community Advisors	• Use to identify what knowledge, data, or networks advisors can offer • Assess what previous reports, working groups exist on similar topics	• Can be helpful to identify types of focus groups, questions to ask, and potential participants • May be able to facilitate focus groups	• Will be helpful in facilitating, presenting findings, structuring agenda, and inviting stakeholders to participate • Use to understand how FHEA findings can inform other technical analyses or plans	• Use to find alignment, identify additional data sources, understand capacity to participate	• Can help present data and other technical information relating to transportation access, economic opportunity, affordable & fair housing, land use regulations, etc.	• Use to understand and inform analysis on complex technical and community issues, such as barriers in tax credit allocation to expanding opportunity, or how historic land use policies perpetuated racial segregation
Residents of and Organizations Serving Marginalized Communities	• Will help to understand community needs and priorities	• Use as follow up to surveys, workshops, or public meetings to explore nuance in barriers to opportunity, what created barriers, and potential solutions to move forward	• Invite them to "groundtruth" data findings, interact with local officials, and suggest solutions	• Can be helpful in establishing trust with community leaders and identifying additional networks to reach out to	• Invite them to "groundtruth" data findings, share experiences, and suggest solutions • Identify trusted allies to host meetings, particularly if community has a contentious history with public agencies	• Use, especially with community leaders, to understand community relations with public agencies, barriers to accessing opportunity, historic trends

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Deliberation Guide: Part 2 – Developing Questions for Productive Dialogue

The Fair Housing and Equity Assessment (FHEA) is unique in that the process emphasizes not just data analysis, but also a process of reflection leading to action. Getting to the core of the analysis will require asking questions that 1) reflect upon where current challenges and opportunities exist throughout the region; and 2) position organizations and agencies towards concrete action. Below we discuss the different types of questions you will want to consider as you frame conversations with stakeholders in your region.

Ask questions to help stakeholders understand the historic context of trends in the region. At the time of the passage of the Civil Rights Act (1964) and the Fair Housing Act (1968), attitudes toward fair housing and civil rights obligations were aspirational; they were about conferring self-determination on all Americans and giving them access to opportunity. However, the translation of these aspirations into statutory and legal frameworks relegated desegregation into siloes within fair housing law and focused primarily on individual acts of discrimination—rather than on the policy context that fostered disparities in access to opportunity. In conducting the FHEA, as you identify areas of high segregation, neighborhoods with high levels of concentrated poverty, and communities with various levels of opportunity, set the stage to dig deeper to understand what the national and local political, economic, and policy context was that contributed to the conditions that now characterize these areas. In the HUD webinar series on the FHEA, they have provided several questions to unearth this background. Here are a few that may be salient:

- What were the major social and economic events in your region?
- How did white flight and school desegregation efforts affect your region?
- How did urban renewal and the location of freeways impact your region?
- Who were the major employers and what were the major sectors in the 1960s, 1980s and in the present? Where were the major job centers located in previous decades and where are they located now?
- Where are your immigrant populations settling? Are these the same neighborhoods that immigrants settled in the past? If not, what accounts for this difference?
- As your region's population has grown, how has that growth been distributed?
- How have predatory lending issues or foreclosures impacted the region?
- What barriers have low-income residents, people of color, and immigrants faced in the past to living in high-opportunity neighborhoods? How have federal, state, and local policies shifted over time to increase access to opportunity?

Measure with stakeholders how these historic trends and current distribution of opportunity align with regional values. Getting your stakeholders on board to not only understand the history, but to own their role in the future, means that they need to understand how it fits into the regional vision that everyone has signed onto, as well as their own organizational goals.

- What are your regional vision, goals, and objectives?[1]

[1] A HUD webinar from April 2012 identified a number of areas for potential alignment of investments with FHEA findings, including: housing & community development, transportation/infrastructure, education/workforce development, economic development, health and recreation, safety, and governance/civic participation.

- How do housing opportunity and fair housing connect to regional planning goals?
- How would greater access to opportunity for low-income communities, people of color, and other marginalized groups, contribute to greater regional economic prosperity?
- What are the costs to the region if it remains at this level of segregation, concentrated poverty, and inequitable distribution of opportunity?
- Who will benefit if the status quo remains? Who will bear the burden of the status quo?

Get stakeholders to reflect on what progress might look like if they moved toward increasing access to opportunity. These types of questions help stakeholders to pivot from the broad vision to concrete ways of measuring their success. This is a crucial step toward making the FHEA an actionable document rather than a statement of needs and aspirations. These questions might focus on how success is defined or what metrics could be used to define success. Answers to these questions should be measurable results, such as "an increased share of low-income families that live in walking distance to a transit stop" or "a reduction in segregation in the most segregated school neighborhoods" or "reduced commute times between high unemployment neighborhoods and job centers." Be careful to manage expectations for the time frame—good performance metrics that will be useful on a programmatic level will get at more specific outcomes than "reduce segregation rate" or "fewer neighborhoods of racially or ethnically concentrated areas of poverty." While those are the outcomes we're all aiming towards, it may be helpful to develop more specific programmatic goals, to the extent that it makes sense for your region, that can be accomplished in the next 0-5 years.

Ask questions that help organizations and agencies clearly define their role in achieving these goals and aspirations. These questions help key actors get specific about their level of engagement and commitment to realizing these access to opportunity outcomes. Give participants time to reflect on their organizational mandates, commitments, and priorities; and how they might be able to make some traction in both the short and long term and with various levels of resources. The FHEA Roles and Responsibilities Guide may be helpful in identifying potential actions that various agencies and organizations can take to advance fair housing. Below are a few questions that may help narrow a focus toward action:

- What is one step, small or large, that I can take in the next three months, to work towards these measurable outcomes? (administrative, programmatic, policy, or fiscal)
- What can we do that will cost my agency little to no money?
- What current projects, processes, or policies are underway that we can use to increase investment in communities that have been left behind or to increase access to high opportunity communities?
- Are previous actions that we have taken to further fair housing, equity, or civil rights working? How can we improve them to have a greater impact?
- What future funding cycles can we align with these opportunity goals? Will policy guidance need to change to align it/them?

Additional Resources for Deliberation Questions:

More Pluribus, Less Unum? The Changing Geography of Race and Opportunity by Xavier de Souza Briggs (excerpted with permission from Brookings Institution Press)
The HUD Fair Housing and Equity Assessment Webinar Series
Implementation Questions from the Results Based Accountability Framework
King County Equity Impact Review Tool

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The Fair Housing and Equity Assessment (FHEA)

Deliberation Guide: Part 3 - Developing Shared Definitions

When working on complex issues in multi-sector collaboratives, developing an agreed upon set of definitions is essential to progress. The Fair Housing and Equity Assessment (FHEA) is an aspirational process embedded in an analysis of current trends and previous policies and investments that limited opportunity for certain groups of people—traditionally marginalized communities—based on their race, ethnicity, class, gender, or disability. When coming to this process, different individuals, agencies, organizations, and communities will bring different understandings of how regional disparities came to exist—and these will shape their conceptualization of terms crucial to the FHEA, such as equity[1], fair housing[2], or opportunity.

A process that brings all stakeholders to the table to develop a collective definition(s) can build cohesion in the group and ensure that the FHEA is developed and implemented in a way that is mutually reinforcing. Shared definitions ensure buy in and clarity of vision. These shared definitions can also provide benchmarks against which to measure decisions. The process of developing shared definitions is nearly as important as the definition itself. Below, we explore key points to consider in definition development:

The people with lived experience related to racism, poverty, or lack of opportunity, need to be engaged in and shape these conversations. Without the partnership of these communities in helping to define terms that will shape future decisions, the definitions may not be that useful, and these communities may disregard the process altogether. This is a challenge not only for the sake of an authentic process, but also because it will be difficult to craft meaningful and effective solutions to these communities' challenges without their full participation and support. For ideas on community engagement, please refer to the Community Engagement Guide for Sustainable Communities. As you continue through this process, make space for participants to raise further recommendations of who else might be needed at the table, and how they should be engaged. Finally, don't avoid talking about race because it may be uncomfortable. Many of the core issues that the FHEA is designed to address stem from issues directly related to our nation's history with race, ethnicity, and new Americans. Proactively eliciting observations and reflections on past and current trends and definitions creates a productive atmosphere for conducting the FHEA process.

Start with establishing a shared understanding of problems, assets, and recent work in this arena. When working in diverse groups, it is important for people to begin with a space to reflect on current challenges and assets in their communities—and how those inform their aspirations for what the FHEA can address. This should include having organizations that represent the community share their work and key challenges, and conducting roundtables to allow participants to process the information. Not all participants will share an understanding of the history of marginalized communities within the region. It's important to identify the diverse conditions that the FHEA will focus on. For example, it is fairly straightforward to get a factual understanding of where neighborhoods of concentrated poverty are located, or where infrastructure deficiencies exist. Developing a shared understanding, however, of *how* neighborhoods of deep, racialized concentrated poverty still exist nearly 50 years after the Fair Housing Act was passed, requires a deliberative

[1] PolicyLink defines equity as "Just and fair inclusion. An equitable society is one in which all can participate and prosper. The goals of equity must be to create conditions that allow all to reach their full potential. In

[2] Fair housing, in short, is about housing choice. For more about the history and legal framework of fair housing, please visit HUD's Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity site.

process where participants can listen to diverse stakeholders with experience working toward solutions in these areas.

Allow for enough time to develop a meaningful process. Developing shared definitions, articulating shared values, and developing a timeline of tasks and activities that stakeholders agree will be effective takes more than one meeting. The definitions process should be embedded in the iterative FHEA process that consistently builds upon previous understandings and work products and works towards shared definitions and ultimately shared goals.

Don't be constrained by technical or programmatic terms. A process about fair housing is going to invoke comparisons to previous types of fair housing assessments. However, the FHEA is unique in that it goes beyond typical assessments of fair housing, and looks at broader policies and structures that have created uneven opportunities for social and economic prosperity depending on where you live, your race/ethnicity, and your income. Grantees of different federal agencies might be more familiar with analyses related to environmental justice, or civil rights and Title VI requirements. All of these legal frameworks are working toward the same goal: increased opportunity and investment in traditionally marginalized communities. Create a functional definition that gets beyond the federal terminology.

Challenge common assumptions of participants about equity and opportunity. People often mistake "equity" for "equality"; while it's important to develop a regional definition of equity that fits the particular aspirations of the local community, equity requires a fundamental recognition that everyone comes from different starting points. Solutions that are universal in nature (and thus promote equality) will not necessarily increase opportunity for those who have fewer resources to begin with. PolicyLink defines equity as "fair and just inclusion." The Kirwan Institute defines opportunity as "a situation or a condition that places families and individuals in a position to be more likely to succeed." The definition is broad because access to opportunity on many different fronts is key to ensuring children, families, and communities have the best shot at success. Opportunity, in the context of the FHEA, focuses on the educational, economic, environmental, transportation, and housing choices available to residents, that are shaped by regional development patterns and public policies. Understanding the nuance of how these different aspects of opportunity shape people's lives and potential for economic mobility will be important for the FHEA.

Work with experienced and respected facilitators. Authentic conversations about these topics will require a facilitator with trust, experience, and prior knowledge about race, class, and public policies in the region. For more information on choosing a facilitator, refer to the brief on "Productive Facilitation" in our *Deliberation Guide*.

Additional Resources on Developing Shared Definitions:

- Kirwan Institute definition of an opportunity community
- Poverty and Race Research Action Council (PRRAC) and Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights definition of opportunity
- Puget Sound Regional Equity Network definition of equity
- Metropolitan Area Planning Council (Boston) definition of equity
- MA/CT Sustainable Knowledge Corridor definition of equity, from a Kirwan Institute report
- Developing a "Language of Accountability" from the Results Based Accountability guide
- Planning for Community Heart and Soul: A Review of Processes and Practitioners, from The Orton Family Foundation

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Deliberation Guide: Part 4 – Productive Facilitation

Choosing a Facilitator

Good facilitation is a key underpinning of the deliberation phase of the FHEA; without this support, it will be more difficult to bridge the process from data analysis to decision making in a meaningful way.

In general, an effective facilitator:

- Helps the group achieve their agreed upon goals;
- Has established trust with all participants;
- Is experienced in working with issues related to equity and traditionally marginalized communities;
- Uses the time allotted for the meeting(s) effectively;
- Is an objective participant; and
- Ensures the group works together in a respectful manner.

If you are uncertain about who would make a good facilitator in your region, check with local philanthropic institutions, universities, colleges, human rights commissions, or civil rights organizations for recommendations. If there is a history of litigation around fair housing or race in your region, it may make sense to bring in someone with a background in conflict resolution.

Structuring a Productive Dialogue toward Outcomes

One of the most important objectives of a FHEA discussion should be to create common understanding about challenges of low-income communities and communities of color that should be addressed through regional and local planning and policy. At different points in the conversation, these topics may become uncomfortable, but the deliberation should be structured around *constructive dialogue and problem solving*. While the FHEA can provide regions with a new framework and understanding of how to address persistent challenges, this process will likely involve challenging common perceptions and assumptions about how communities have developed and fared over time.

Conversations that seek to address issues of race are known as "courageous conversations." Courageous conversations allow those who possess knowledge on particular topics to have the opportunity to share it, and those who do not have the knowledge to learn and grow from the experience."[1] Below are four general guidelines for stakeholders engaging in these conversations:

Develop ground rules. At the outset of the discussion, ground rules should be developed that everyone agrees to. Potential ground rules in FHEA conversations could include:[2]

- Suspend judgment
- Assume a positive intent
- Seek first to understand before being understood
- Confidentiality
- Inquire within and reflect upon your assumptions

- Silence is okay
- Bring humor and laughter on the learning journey
- Avoid offensive or problematic language
- Even as understanding grows, stay focused on actions

Structure sessions to actively engage participants. One way that people often respond to the discomfort in courageous conversations is through silence. Silence in and of itself is not necessarily a bad thing. While it can feel awkward, a good facilitator will allow for silence. But it has been noted that white participants may lapse into silence out of fear of being misunderstood or comments misconstrued, and participants of color may become silent because they feel participation is futile, or do not feel that the space is safe enough for sharing honestly. Keep participants engaged through smaller-group breakouts and by focusing conversations that direct towards solutions and ways that the group can take action.

Prepare for uncomfortable or defensive reactions. In conversations about the causes of segregation and concentrated poverty, there are likely to be multiple perspectives on the issues at hand, and not all of them will be in agreement with each other. It is important to allow for this multiplicity, and to validate each perspective. Everyone comes to the table with a different history and experience with these issues. When these tensions can be managed, we develop new understandings of race, opportunity and equity within the region, which can help the stakeholders develop positive solutions for change. Help move from defensive to constructive reactions by focusing on how participants, as representatives of their agency or organization, can use their authority and responsibilities to make progress in increasing access to opportunity.

Speak your truth. Courageous conversations require open, honest dialogue without reprimand. However, if these are new conversations, stakeholders may not have a fully formed idea of what their truth is. A good facilitator will be able to ask questions to help participants engage more deeply with the issues, and reconsider positions they may have previously held. However, be careful about the power of language—it may be helpful to identify early on language which participants can agree is offensive or problematic, and to avoid that in speaking truth.

Identify constructive next steps. Even as these conversations should continue, participants should leave each discussion with a concrete sense of their role in reversing detrimental investment decisions and policies. This can be broken up into smaller, short-term steps (1-3 months) and longer steps towards progress (1-5 years).

Additional Resources for Productive Facilitation:

- Planning productive meetings using the "Purpose, Outcome, Process" (POP) method
- Growing Together for a Sustainable Future: Strategies and Best Practices for Engaging with Disadvantaged Communities on Issues of Sustainable Development and Regional Planning (Kirwan Institute)

[1] Glenn E. Singleton and Cyndie Hays, "Beginning Courageous Conversations about Race," http://www.tolerance.org/tdsi/sites/tolerance.org.tdsi/files/assets/general/TDSI_Singleton__Hays.pdf.

[2] Peggy A. Nagae and Jane DeGidio, "Facilitating Structured and Meaningful Dialogues across the Racial Divide," http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1058&context=pocpwi5.

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Deliberation Guide: Part 5 – Using Data in Deliberation and Decision-Making

The Fair Housing and Equity Assessment is an extraordinary exercise of data collection and analysis that needs to be absorbed and understood effectively by a wide variety of stakeholders in order to result in action. The information needs to not merely be presented as facts, but embedded in a larger historic context for the region to encourage discussions about root causes and clear paths for decision makers so that progress can be made. Below are key points to consider as you visualize and present data to effectively engage your consortia and other stakeholders:

Determine the message of the map or chart before you make it. This is an important consideration because it can help determine which types of data are appropriate to include on the map. Generally, maps and charts can be used for three different purposes: 1) creating common understanding of a problem to be solved; 2) engaging community in policy research and development; and 3) communicating a common vision or message to build public and political will.[1] While you are creating the map (or series of maps), determine what story you want the map(s) to tell. Using the data to create a narrative makes the data easier to understand. Rather than simply stating statistics or talking about areas of the map, work with core participants--especially stakeholders that represent traditionally marginalized communities--to help inform and craft that narrative.

Tailor the map to your audience. Different audiences and different purposes require different methods of presentation. Revisit the three different types of maps to narrow down the audience of the map and decide the type of information that would be useful to present. Being attentive to the needs and motivations of your audience can make your presentation more effective. Connect community narratives and life experiences to add power and weight to your presentation. Facts and figures can at times be hard to grasp, but demonstrating how people experience what is being described on the map can help community members understand the issue in a more direct way.

Focus on displaying as few variables as possible. Most people can process only two or three variables at once. When presenting a map or chart, it is best to choose a handful of data layers that orient the audience to the location and represent the main ideas that you are trying to convey. When details are called for, it can be helpful to display on a side panel on the mapping document, or relate them in a post-presentation discussion or written document. The use of video or audio is also a good idea for relaying details—as long as it is a critical component in delivering the main message of the map.

Clearly label and annotate maps and charts to ensure that the message is conveyed. Use clear graphic symbols, straightforward legends, and a sentence or two explaining what the map or chart is conveying to clearly communicate to your audience. Eliminate any information that isn't necessary to convey the point you are trying to make. Use simple and consistent color palettes.

Give people time and space to process the information presented. Maps and charts convey a wealth of data and people may need time to process all of the information imparted. In presenting a lot of data, it

[1] Sarah Treuhaft, *Communicating Mapping for Health Equity Advocacy*. http://opportunityagenda.org/files/field_file/Community%20Mapping%20for%20Health%20Equity%20-%20Treuhaft.pdf.

is helpful to create check-in points, to ensure that stakeholders are engaged. Highlight themes or patterns in the presentation and use those as starter questions to ensure that the data are contextualized in a process of moving toward action. Provide information as much as possible in advance to allow stakeholders extra time to process the information before coming to the group. Let the stakeholders work in small groups with the maps, or at poster stations, and have them chart their observations. Ask them to identify the most powerful elements of maps things that show them trends that they think need problem-solving or asset-building attention. Ask them what seems off about what the maps show.

Allow for an iterative and transparent process. Stakeholders can add context to the mapping data by adding their own qualitative data, such as personal experience of neighborhood trends, or tying in the effect of development in the community that may shed more light than the map alone is capable of doing. Using maps as a starting point for discussion about the issue can improve the quality of the analysis while also allowing stakeholders ownership of the map and the issue. From a place of ownership, it is much easier to engage stakeholders in conversations about possible solutions to the challenges highlighted in the map. Be flexible as the process unfolds and heads in different directions.

Combine maps with qualitative data to tell a rich story. Although maps provide data, people give that data meaning. Behind each of the maps and data points for the Fair Housing and Equity Assessment is an individual's or neighborhood's story. Engaging different individuals or organizations that live or work in areas of "low opportunity," and giving them a chance to provide more nuance on how opportunity or lack thereof plays out in people's lives—can enrich the maps. Also inquire about the assets in their neighborhood that may not be quantified through the data. Asset mapping in particular is a useful participatory exercise that centers community action on positive institutions and resources.

Use the data to build community capacity for understanding historic and current patterns. It's very likely that participants in your FHEA process will have a wide variation of understanding of the data you will present, from demographic trends to opportunity to concentrated poverty. Use the deliberation as an opportunity to educate stakeholders involved in the process on current and historic trends. Have them engage with the maps through questions and case studies that embed the maps in current and relevant contexts. Ask questions that help participants challenge their assumptions about the region. Work toward a shared understanding of the regions' history through the data—ensuring that the perspective of traditionally marginalized communities is represented—and then move toward questions that prod stakeholders toward concrete action steps.

Additional Data Visualization and Presentation Resources:

Denver Regional Equity Atlas
Equity, Opportunity, and Sustainability in the Puget Sound Region (from the Kirwan Institute)
Community Mapping Tool in the PolicyLink Equitable Development Toolkit
Flowing Data (website with demonstrations and tutorials for data visualization)
Worksheet: Telling Your Public Story (by Marshall Ganz)
PolicyMap (web mapping tool of demographic and other useful data)
Open Source Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Resources from GIS Lounge
Google Fusion Tables (tools to create maps and charts online)
Utilizing GIS to Support Advocacy and Social Justice: A Case Study of University-led Initiatives. (Kirwan Institute, 2009).