

BEBS:

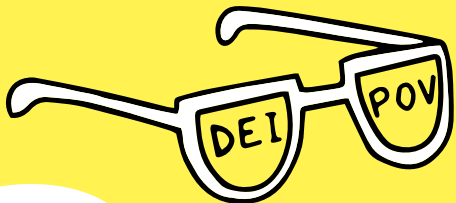
Building Equity-Based Summers

Workbook



Building Equity- Based Summers

Re-imagining and
Designing Library Services
with Your Community



Why equity

Working towards equity honors diversity and creates space for inclusion in all library services.

Why center library services in equity?

- Equity is foundational. Only on a bedrock of equity are library staff able to build and encourage strong and vibrant communities.
- Equity serves everyone. Libraries are one part of a greater community ecosystem which includes systemically marginalized youth, families, and adults.
- Equity requires sharing power. It's crucial that individuals from systemically marginalized groups have opportunities to bring their unique lived experiences to the design and delivery of community-based services.
- Equity embraces shared humanity and basic rights. Social justice and liberation require equity-based solutions.

Library staff goals are clear:

- As public servants, staff must center community needs over the desires of libraries and staff.
- Staff must focus on solutions, not problems. [See Subramaniam, et al.](#)

There are many aspects of summer library services that require attention to equity. Processes to re-think include: budgeting, program registration, performer and speaker hiring, programming activities, incentives, marketing and promotion, and collection development. When library staff apply a traditional cookie-cutter approach to summer services or when staff don't operate with an equitable mindset, those who could benefit the most are often left-behind. Rigid registration and completion restrictions, for example, tend to limit participation.

Working towards equity honors diversity and creates space for inclusion in all library services.

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Setting the Stage

Equity is more than making library services available to all. Building Equity-Based Summers (BEBS¹) empowers libraries to create summer services that are built on a foundation of equity.

BEBS launched in 2020 when 14 libraries from across California came together to better understand and incorporate equitable practices into summer services for youth, families, and communities.

The learning opportunities provided by BEBS and the content of this companion Workbook embody the learning and knowledge gained through this work.

¹ *Building Equity-Based Summers is supported in whole or in part by the U.S. Institute of Museum and Library Services under the provisions of the Library Services and Technology Act, administered in California by the State Librarian.*

Topics for Building Equity-Based Summer Services

Along with supplementing professional development opportunities, the Workbook acts as a guide to building equitable summer services. Don't engage in this equity work on your own.

Recruit a partner from your library to actively participate with you. Together you will develop a shared language and understanding of what equity in summer services requires and looks like in your community for your specific population of youth, families, and adults. You will also build relationships and gain confidence in working together towards the goal of equity in summer services, and ultimately in all library services.

Topics Covered in this Workbook

- THE WHYS OF SUMMER – dig deeply into the purpose of summer services and “why” equity-based summer services are essential.
- LETTING GO OF TRADITIONS – re-imagine the traditional ways in which summer services “have always been done.”
- CONNECTING WITH COMMUNITY VOICES – examine the value of relationship building and power sharing in bringing the voices of systemically marginalized community members to the forefront.
- MEASURING IMPACT AND SUCCESS – determine if equity outcomes are reached, by looking beyond the numbers.

We suggest that as you learn about building equity-based summers don't engage in the work on your own. Invite colleagues and community members to join in your learning.



Quality Principles and Indicators

The Principles and Indicators below focus on the key areas that library staff must acknowledge in order to build equity-based summer services and the Indicators act as benchmarks for succeeding in each area.

Summer Services are designed and implemented with community voices

- Systemically marginalized community members are actively engaged as co-designers in all aspects of summer services including design, implementation, assessment, and evaluation.
- The summer program expands and harnesses trusted relationships across the community. Library staff trust and empower partners to take center stage.
- The summer program celebrates systemically marginalized community member interests and assets.

Summer Service library decision-making processes are embedded in an equity-based community mindset

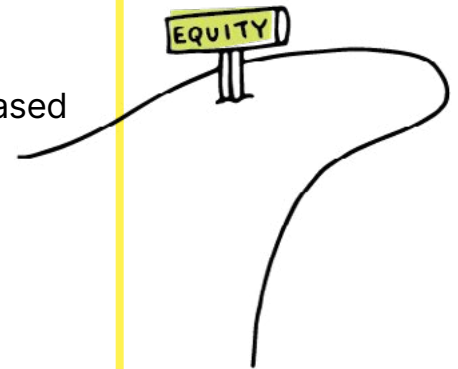
- A diverse set of staff voices are integrated into the design and implementation of summer services.
- Ongoing professional development provides all staff with an understanding of the “why” of equity-based summer services.
- Funding and staff resources provided for summer services are centered on meeting the needs of systemically marginalized youth and families.
- Library staff working on summer services actively inform and engage with administrators and managers.

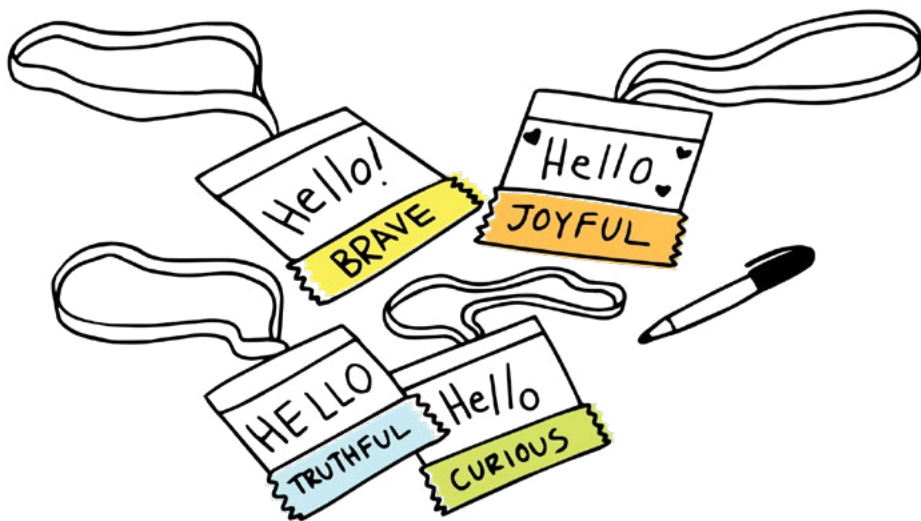
Summer Services expand opportunities for learning and connection

- Summer services and experiences focus on learning about self by relating to others and to the world.
- Multiple formats for learning are encouraged and include text-based, multimedia, mentors and coaches, and group and individual activities.
- Summer provides opportunities for access to quality literacy and enrichment activities to systemically marginalized youth and families.

Summer Services actively engage systemically marginalized youth, families, and communities

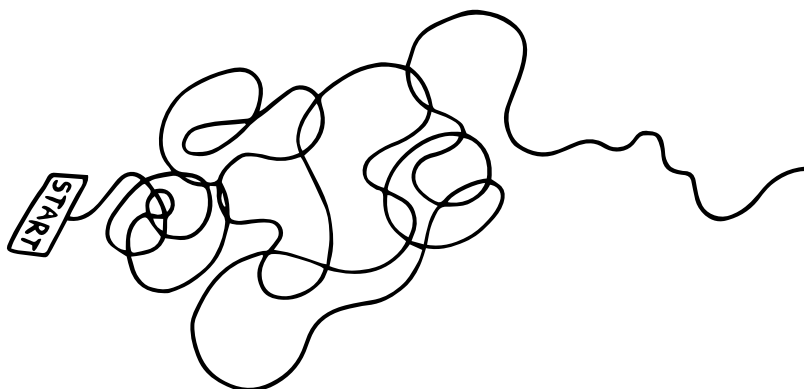
- Multiple methods of participation are encouraged and include sites outside of the library.
- Summer services are hosted and facilitated by community members, organizations, and stakeholders.
- Library staff acknowledge and actively work to overcome barriers to participation including internal policies, job descriptions, structures and systems, and external factors such transportation and family structures.





Essential Elements of This Work

- This work is **ongoing and takes time**. Get started and know that you will develop new knowledge and skills along the way.
- **You cannot do equity work on your own**. Involve library staff at all levels and community members in this work.
- **Don't expect hand-holding**. While we recommend that you work with others in learning about and building equity-based summer services, this is work that someone else can't do for you. Be ready to take risks as you learn, plan, build, and deliver.
- **Brave space is foundational**. Equity work requires bravery from library workers and community partners. That includes having uncomfortable conversations, asking tough questions, and considering the impact your decisions have on systemically marginalized communities. Brave spaces are non-judgemental and risk taking is encouraged.
- **Work of this type is messy. There is not a straight line in the learning**. There will be times when you and your colleagues need to go back and rethink ideas in order to move forward.



YOUR TURN: ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS REFLECTION

Equity work takes confidence, and that confidence is built along the way. Start to ask yourself questions such as, “How confident do I feel about each of the essential elements?” Once you’ve thought about your confidence levels, consider:

- How can you start to build confidence in your weaker areas?
- Who can you talk with to build your confidence?
- What should you practice to gain more comfort?

The goal is to grow your confidence as you dig into equity-based summer service design and implementation. The table below will help you assess where you are at. Check the appropriate boxes for your current state.

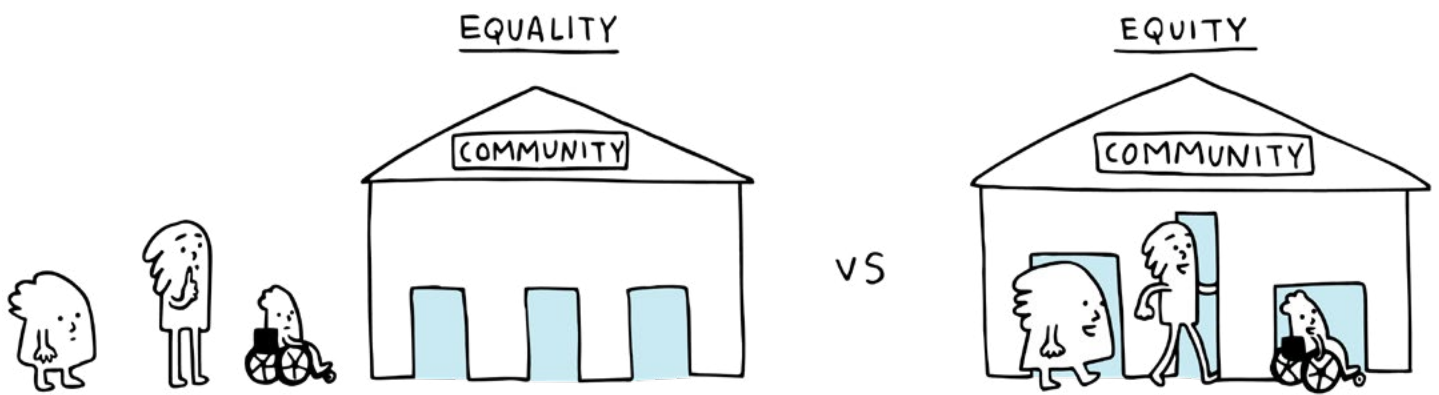
ESSENTIAL ELEMENT	CONFIDENT	NOT CONFIDENT	IDEAS FOR BUILDING CONFIDENCE
This work is ongoing and cannot happen overnight	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
You cannot do equity work on your own	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Do not expect hand holding	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Equity work is messy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Create brave space	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
It's OK to have trepidation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Being intentional is required	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Looking deeply into library practices is required	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Acknowledging who you are serving is essential	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Working in the middle ground as you get started is OK	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Equity work is not just about summer	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Equity work is never done	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Equality

The term equality focuses on people having the exact same support and services. Equal in that way means that solutions are the same for every individual no matter their situation.

Equity

As language is fluid, our current definition is: Equity “is the fair treatment, access, and opportunity for advancement for all people, while at the same time striving to identify and eliminate barriers that have prevented the full participation of some groups. Improving equity involves increasing justice and fairness within the procedures and processes of institutions or systems, as well as in their distribution of resources.” ([Worcester State University, n.d.](#))



Intersectionality

All members of a community are a part of a variety of identity groups and these groups overlap. For example, someone who is black, male, and homosexual is not each of those separately. These aspects of someone's identity overlap and have an impact on the ways in which they see themselves and the ways in which they interact with the world. Similarly, identities also overlap with a variety of social and legal structures. For example, someone who is black, male, and homosexual might find that those intersections also intersect with hiring practices or financial systems that they engage with.

Oppression

When those in power undermine, undervalue, marginalize, and exert dominance over others.

Power

When a person or system or organization is able to exert control over others. Within an equity context, power relates to the ability to determine the way in which resources, opportunities, and privilege are distributed within a community. Power can be demonstrated in many ways including the ways in which policies are written and carried out, the ways in which decisions are made, and the ways in which staff communicate both internally and externally.

Power Sharing

When community stakeholders engage in designing, implementing, and making decisions together. When truly sharing power with the community, library staff move from the expert role to a role in which they support opportunities and support others in the community in equity-based summer services designing, decision-making, and implementation.

Privilege

When a person or group is given an advantage based on a particular identity. For example, when white students are given more opportunities to participate in activities than students of color or students with disabilities or students from low socioeconomic living environments.

Structural Racism

Historically, public libraries have furthered oppression and racism through their structures such as policies, procedures, and administrative processes. These often create barriers to systemically marginalized youth, families, and communities. Public libraries summer service registration and finishing policies, performer and programming policies, and so on, often present structural barriers which make it difficult to build targeted equitable summer services.

Systemically Marginalized

In equity work, systemically marginalized is used as a way to express the understanding that there are members of every community who do not hold power and as a result are not able to participate in community activities and services of all kinds. This lack of power is often embedded in systems such as job descriptions, funding, and policies. Systemically marginalized can refer to many different lived experiences including socio-economic status, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age, education, ability, and neighborhood.

White Supremacy Culture

Okun defines culture and white supremacy culture: "Culture reflects the beliefs, values, norms, and standards of a group, a community, a town, a state, a nation. White supremacy culture is the widespread ideology baked into the beliefs, values, norms, and standards of our groups (many if not most of them), our communities, our towns, our states, our nation, teaching us both overtly and covertly that whiteness holds value, whiteness is value. It teaches us that Blackness is not only valueless but also dangerous and threatening. It teaches us that Indigenous people and communities no longer exist, or if they do, they are to be exoticized and romanticized or culturally appropriated as we continue to violate treaties, land rights, and humanity. It teaches us that people south of the border are "illegal." It teaches us that Arabs are Muslim and that Muslim is "terrorist." It teaches us that people of Chinese and Japanese descent are both indistinguishable and threatening as the reason for Covid. It pits other races and racial groups against each other while always defining them as inferior to the white group."



Now, that you've looked over the definitions created by the Building Equity-Based Summers group:

What changes, additions or ideas would you like to consider for your own understanding and implementation in your practice?

What do you find challenging about these terms and phrases and their definitions?

What questions do you have about these terms and phrases and what they mean?

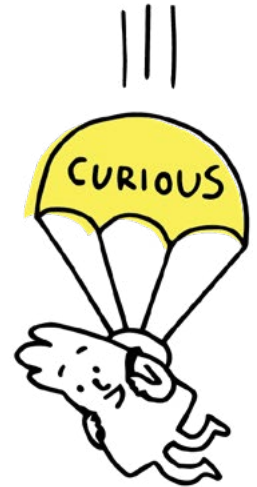
How do you see the terms and phrases helping you to talk about why equity must be at the foundation of summer services?

Talk with colleagues, friends, and community members about these questions, definitions, and ideas. What can you do with and learn from each other?

The BEBS co-designers used a set of agreements as a way to set ground rules and expectations for engagement. At each of our co-design sessions and in our professional development sessions, we talk briefly about what each agreement means. As you work with others on equity-based services, you will want to keep these (or a set that you design with your equity work colleagues) in mind:

Bring wonder and curiosity with you

By looking at ideas and people with wonder and curiosity you will find that you are less likely to be reactive. You can start to ask questions such as, "I am curious where that idea comes from?" or "I wonder how that works for members of your community?" The wonder and curiosity questions focus on learning from each other instead of making judgements, trying to win someone over to your side, or being reactive.



Be willing to be brave and courageous

Bravery and courage are demonstrated in multiple ways as a part of equity work. It takes bravery to try a fresh idea suggested by someone else. It takes courage to broach sensitive subjects like race, ethnicity, and culture.

Commit to fully showing up

To deliver equitable summer services, you need to filter out the noise and focus entirely on the equity conversations, learning, and design facilitated as a part of the BEBS sessions.

Lean into learning

Some of what is discussed during the equity-based summer services experience may be difficult to hear or grasp. Yet, it's important that you view these times as an opportunity to learn. When faced with a difficult situation or material, rather than shrugging it off or ignoring it, it's important to lean into the problem and ask yourself what it's teaching you about your own equity practices and ideas.



Support one another in bringing each of our lived experiences to the conversation

As you work with others on equity-based summer services, acknowledge the contributions of all team members. Recognize that each person's lived experience is valuable and allows for unique perspectives and ideas to be a part of the conversations you will have.

I, _____,
PRINT YOUR NAME

will to the best of my ability uphold these statements as I commit to this equity work.

SIGN YOUR NAME

DATE

Session 1

The WHYS of Summer



Introduction

To authentically develop equitable summer services, an understanding of the reasons why the library provides these services is required. That means you need to determine what that “why” is.

You can start thinking about your summer “why” by watching this TEDx Puget Sound video in which Simon Sinek talks about [How Great Leaders Inspire Action](#). While Sinek talks mostly about corporations and technology, keep in mind that the ideas about purpose and beliefs hold true for community organizations such as libraries.

As Sinek notes, the “why” defines your purpose. When thinking about the “why” of your equity-based summer services ask yourself, what is the purpose of these services? Keep in mind the importance of thinking about the purpose/the “why” within the context of the community and the impact that “why” can have on the community. For example, a “why” whose purpose is “To bring community members into the library during the summer” is focused on the library, not on the community. A “why” that is community focused might look like this: “Provide opportunities for systemically marginalized community members to engage in activities together.”

With a community-focused “why” you can begin to re-imagine summer services to reach that “why.”

Moving Beyond Obstacles to Equitable Summer Services

Even when library staff know their equity-based summer services “why,” they may find that there are actual or perceived barriers to building those services. These may include staffing, job descriptions, time, resources, capacity, and colleague and leadership buy-in. None of these is insurmountable, however each does require an honest look at library policies, procedures, and traditions.

As you work through any obstacles and analyze how much of a role they play in moving forward with equity-based summer services consider the following:

- **What do you have control over at this very moment?**

For example, it could very well be true that colleagues and/or library leaders aren't yet ready to go as deeply into building equitable summer services as you are. Ask yourself, what can I work on and/or change on my own or with those who are ready to take on this work? Do I have control over a part of the summer services budget or some summer scheduling? Get started with what you have control over and leverage what you are able to do in that area in order to build support for more summer equity work.

- **What am I really spending time on?**

Consider if you are spending time on tasks that either don't really have to be done anymore or that you can have someone else take charge of. When you think of summer specifically, is the time you are spending on traditional activities such as registration, incentives, and finishing requirements necessary? Could you build a more flexible and community-centered program if you spent less time in those areas and more time talking with community members who do not traditionally take part in summer services?

- **What are you already doing for summer that has the potential to be more equitable more quickly?**

Many libraries offer an array of programs over the summer months that are geared toward participants staying engaged in learning when school is not in session. Ask yourself, what is one way I can re-think how I plan those programs so to be more equitable? Could I ask colleagues who live in the community and have connections to community members who are not traditionally a part of summer library services to talk with their friends and relatives about their summer aspirations?

As you work to build equitable summer services, don't let the obstacles stop you from trying things out. Look for support from unexpected places – community members, colleagues, stakeholders, and so on. Remember, equity work is messy and moving beyond obstacles will certainly be messy and challenging, however it will be worth it as you find that you are able to serve more of your community than ever before.



Don't let the obstacles stop you from trying things out and looking for support from unexpected places.

Building Equity-Based Summers Quality Principles & Indicators

The BEBS project team and co-designers revised the original California Quality Principles & Indicators to center equity in all summer work. These Principles focus on the key areas that library staff must acknowledge in order to build equity-based summer services. The Indicators act as benchmarks for succeeding in each area. Together they act as a guide for you to follow as you design, plan, and implement equity-based summer services. They provide a frame for you to look through as you investigate your summer "why."

Summer Services are designed & implemented with community voices

- Systemically marginalized community members are actively engaged as co-designers in all aspects of summer services including design, implementation, assessment, and evaluation.
- The summer program expands and harnesses trusted relationships across the community. Library staff trust and empower partners to take center stage.
- The summer program celebrates systemically marginalized community member interests and assets.

Summer Service library decision-making processes are embedded in an equity-based community mindset

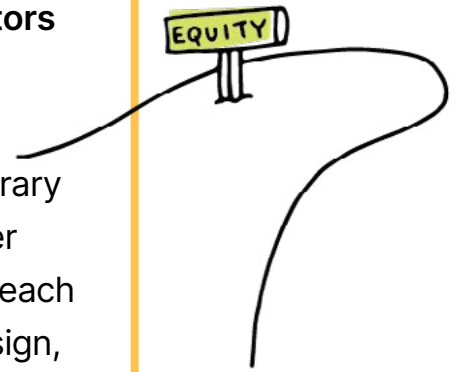
- A diverse set of staff voices are integrated into the design and implementation of summer services.
- Ongoing professional development provides all staff with an understanding of the "why" of equity-based summer services.
- Funding and staff resources provided for summer services are centered on meeting the needs of systemically marginalized youth and families.
- Library staff working on summer services actively inform and engage with administrators and managers.

Summer Services expand opportunities for learning and connection

- Summer services and experiences focus on learning about self by relating to others and to the world.
- Multiple formats for learning are encouraged and include text-based, multimedia, mentors and coaches, and group and individual activities.
- Summer provides opportunities for access to quality literacy and enrichment activities to systemically marginalized youth and families.

Summer Services actively engage systemically marginalized youth, families, and communities

- Multiple methods of participation are encouraged and include sites outside of the library.
- Summer services are hosted and facilitated by community members, organizations, and stakeholders.
- Library staff acknowledge and actively work to overcome barriers to participation including internal policies, job descriptions, structures and systems, and external factors such transportation and family structures.



Think about the summer services you already provide and answer the following questions about those services.

What is your “why” for library summer services?

How and “why” was that determined?

Review the BEBS Quality Principles and Indicators: how does your “why” help you to reach these principles:

- Design & implement with community voices
- Decision making processes are embedded in an equity-based community mindset
- Expand opportunities for learning and connection
- Actively engages systemically marginalized youth, families, and communities

How is your library targeting systemically marginalized youth and families in order to achieve the “why”?

How do you know that the “why” you focus on for summer services is one that relates to and reflects community needs, strengths, and assets and is equity based?

Reflect on the “why” you’ve written about and consider: Is this “why” centered on equitable summer services? Should the “why” be re-envisioned in order to better center equity in summer services?

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The BEBS team would like to thank and acknowledge the work of the library staff who joined and inspired us during the first two years of the initiative. The materials on this website are a direct result of their openness to difficult conversations and vulnerability.

Years 1 and 2 participating libraries:

Alameda County Library	San Diego County Library
Altadena Library District	San Diego Public Library
Arcadia Public Library	San Jose Public Library
City of Commerce Public Library	Santa Barbara Public Library
City of Santa Maria Public Library	Solano Public Library
Kern County Library	Tehama County Library
Los Angeles Public Library	Torrance Public Library
Madera County Library	Tulare County Library
Redwood City Library	Yolo County Library
Sacramento Public Library	

We would also like to thank the support of the California Library Association, supported in whole or in part by the U.S. Institute of Museum and Library Services under the provisions of the Library Services and Technology Act, administered in California by the State Librarian.

