Foundational Readings

This list of foundational readings was curated by members of the initiative leadership team for use by Extension professionals across the nation. Each of the items was used in some manner to inform systemwide health-related innovations and activities supported by Cooperative Extension System since 2017. Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in these publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of ECOP, USDA, the Extension Foundation, or National 4-H Council. Items are organized by topic.

Equity

Rural Health Disparities - Despite the many positive attributes and assets associated with working and living in rural communities, many rural American population groups experience significant health disparities. Health disparities are differences in health status when compared to the population overall, often characterized by indicators such as higher incidence of disease and/or disability, higher mortality rates, lower life expectancies, and higher rates of chronic pain. Rural risk factors for health disparities include geographic isolation, lower socioeconomic status, higher rates of health risk behaviors, limited access to healthcare specialists and subspecialists, and limited job opportunities. https://www.ruralhealthinfo.org/topics/rural-health-disparities

An Indigenous Peoples History of the United States - This book reframes US history through the perspectives of indigenous peoples – highlighting how United States policy was designed to displace, eliminate, and seize the territories of Indigenous peoples. http://www.beacon.org/An-Indigenous-Peoples-History-of-the-United-States-P1164.aspx

Achieving Health Equity - Across the nation, gaps in health are large, persistent and increasing - many of them caused by barriers set up at all levels of our society. After all, it's hard to be healthy without access to good jobs and schools and, safe, affordable homes. Health equity means increasing opportunities for everyone to live the healthiest life possible, no matter who we are, where we live, or how much money we make. https://www.rwjf.org/en/library/features/achieving-health-equity.html

White privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack - This document illustrates privilege and power in the United States and asks the reader to think about themselves and their families within a systemic context and in relation to their neighbors and peers. https://nationalseedproject.org/Key-SEED-Texts/white-privilege-unpacking-the-invisible-knapsack

Opportunities for White People in the Fight for Racial Justice - This community-sourced piece challenges readers to reflect on their roles in maintaining privileges and power for the historically dominant groups in society. It also seeks to connect readers with tangible resources to support their communities and act in support of social justice. https://www.whiteaccomplices.org/

Communicating About Equity

Talking about Health Equity - Addressing the health issues of today involves eliminating persistent inequities and prioritizing the perspectives of people most affected by a problem. Within public health circles, many use the term health equity to express such beliefs and commitments. But there are good reasons to take care when using this phrase more widely. Different audiences have different levels of comfort and familiarity with the concept. Among the general public, the term equity isn't widely understood. For communicators, this means that if you're using the term, it's vital to pair it with a clear explanation. https://www.frameworksinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Talking-about-Health-Equity.pdf

Communicating about Structural Racism and Health - This webinar unpacks new communications research from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation on how audiences understand structural racism and its implications for health in America. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N-ddLdp3uSs

Health Equity Guiding Principles for Inclusive Communication – This CDC resource emphasizes the importance of addressing all people inclusively and respectfully. These principles are intended to help public health professionals, particularly health communicators, within and outside of CDC ensure their communication products and strategies adapt to the specific cultural, linguistic, environmental, and historical situation of each population or audience of focus. https://www.cdc.gov/healthcommunication/Health_Equity.html

Communicating about Health Equity - This report from the Collaborative on Media and Messaging for Health and Social Policy examines how people understand the meaning of health equity. It explains the way that different audiences react to messaging and media that focuses on health equity. It also provides tools to avoid the misunderstandings that often stem from health disparities. https://commhsp.org/areas-of-focus/communicating-about-health-equity

Centering Equity in the Nation's Public Health System - The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation offers five considerations to support the CDC and its state and local partners as they seek to bring equity to the nation's public health systems. https://www.rwjf.org/en/insights/our-research/2022/12/centering-equity-in-the-nation-s-public-health-system.html

Well-Being

Federal Plan for Equitable Long-Term Recovery and Resilience - The Federal Plan for Equitable Long-Term Recovery and Resilience (Federal Plan for ELTRR) lays out an approach for federal agencies to cooperatively strengthen the vital conditions necessary for improving individual and community resilience and well-being nationwide. https://health.gov/our-work/national-health-initiatives/equitable-long-term-recovery-and-resilience

Vital Conditions for Well-Being - Vital conditions are properties of places and institutions that we all need all the time to reach our full potential, like food, humane housing, access to meaningful work and wealth and a sense of belonging. https://winnetwork.org/vital-conditions

Development, Well-Being and Human Needs - Acquaints the reader with the diverse conceptualizations of well-being and human needs theory in development. https://www.academia.edu/35756790/Development_Well_being_and_Human_Needs?email_work_card=view-paper

Food Systems

Just the Facts about Hunger - This resource offers up-to-date hunger facts that shed light on the root causes of hunger and poverty in the United States and across the globe. It examines food insecurity using a critical race lens – noting how the pandemic and structural oppression have perpetuated poverty, food insecurity, and injustice. https://whyhunger.org/just-the-facts/

Corporate Power and Structural Racialization in the US Food System This report by the Othering and Belonging Institute investigates corporate influence and structural racialization as promoted by the Farm Bill, the multiyear law that governs agricultural and food programs within the United States food system. This report examines the law's historical background, its universal influence, its expected outcomes, and "its role in the production and maintenance of structural barriers to socio-economic wellbeing for communities of color and low-income communities." https://belonging.berkeley.edu/farm-bill-report-corporate-power-and-structural-racialization-us-food-system

True Cost of Food: Measuring What Matters to Transform the U.S. Food System - This report analyzes, what the Rockefeller Foundation calls, "the true cost of food," or our food system's influence on our health, the environment, biodiversity, livelihoods, and more. Making positive change to the food system could catalyze communities to develop equitably. https://www.rockefellerfoundation.org/report/true-cost-of-food-measuring-what-matters-to-transform-the-u-s-food-system/

Creating a Sustainable Food Future - Offering ways we can feed people across the globe without exploiting labor and the environment, this report examines the food system and economic development using extensive research. https://research.wri.org/wrr-food

Well-Being Economies

The Vision for a Well-Being Economy - Governments and other institutions around the world need to embrace new ways of thinking and actively engage in widespread systems innovation to make real progress toward a healthier, more prosperous world. Yet most continue to frame their work within traditional economic models, without recognizing the damage it is causing to society and the planet. Instead, we need an economic system that takes a preventative approach to social and environmental challenges to ensure that the kinds of related, follow-on problems mentioned above do not occur in the first place or are far less severe. https://ssir.org/articles/entry/the_vision_of_a_well_being_economy

Equitable Development as a Tool to Advance Racial Equity - This resource describes what equitable development and racial equity are, and it offers a framework for advancing the two using case studies within the United States and noting current and historical realities of development. https://www.racialequityalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/GARE-Equitable-Development.pdf

Indigenous Knowledge and Implications for the Sustainable Development Agenda - This report combines current developmental goals with traditional methods of sustainable development. Emphasizing education, poverty, and climate issues, this piece highlights the need for shifting power and giving communities influence in decision-making processes. https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/ejed.12238

National Progress, Sustainability and Higher Goals: The Case of Bhutan's Gross National Happiness. Using the country of Bhutan as a case study, this research report illustrates the potential for well-being economies while making note of their critiques and origins. https://doi.org/10.1186/s42055-019-0022-9

Health Systems Transformation

Reimagining Public Health Leadership for Health Equity - This APHA policy statement policy describes a vision for transforming public health leadership to achieve health equity. It defines public health leadership for health equity as the creation of conditions, especially in the face of uncertainty, to improve health through a population-level and community-centered public health approach. Such an approach should enable equitable improvements in health by drawing from collective, adaptive, and emergent leadership perspectives that necessitate commitment, flexibility, and humility. https://www.apha.org/Policies-and-Advocacy/Public-Health-Policy-Statements/Policy-Database/2023/01/18/Public-Health-Leadership

Addressing the Blind Spot of Our Time - In this executive summary of Otto Scharmer's book, *Theory U: Leading from the Future as It Emerges,* leaders' intentions and attention are highlighted as being essential to conscious, collective leadership. In this work, leaders are asked to slow down, learn how to listen and embarace alternative means of developing movements. https://solonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Exec_Summary_Sept19-Theory-U-leading-from-the-emerging-future-copy.pdf

Pioneering a New Paradigm - Situating the possibility for change within communities and relationships, this collection explains how change is spurred from networks of localized movements. It also offers insights for how communities can develop leaders among themselves and connect with others. https://berkana.org/resources/pioneering-a-new-paradigm/

Relational Systems Thinking - Developed by Indigenous scholar, Melanie Goodchild, this article explains how relational systems thinking can create harmonious relationships while developing and existing alongside others. She also introduces cross-cultural dialogues as a means of healing people, the environment, and society. nhttps://doi.org/10.47061/jabsc.v1i1.577

Evaluation

How to Measure Community Impact and Its Impact – Measuring community engagement helps you track the quality of participatory activities, improve related processes, and show residents and stakeholders how their input influences decision-making. This resource shares how to use Key Performance indicators (KPIs) for individual projects and organization-wide initiatives. https://www.maptionnaire.com/blog/measure-community-engagement-impact-with-metrics

What Explains Community Coalition Effectiveness? - Community coalitions have become popular vehicles for promoting health. Which factors make coalitions effective, however, is unclear. The study's aim was to identify coalition-building factors related to indicators of coalition effectiveness through a review of the empirical literature. Published articles from 1980 to 2004 that empirically examined the relationships among coalition-building factors and indicators of coalition effectiveness were reviewed. https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/16530624/

How Cities can Redefine Progress Toward Health Equity and Well Being - A messaging guide by the National League of Cities, this reading helps cities make the case for a comprehensive, equity-centered systems approach and the data to support it. This reading is intended to provide a starting point for advancing equity, dignity and opportunity. https://www.nlc.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/NLC-WB-message-guide_final-11-12-21__508-Compliant.pdf