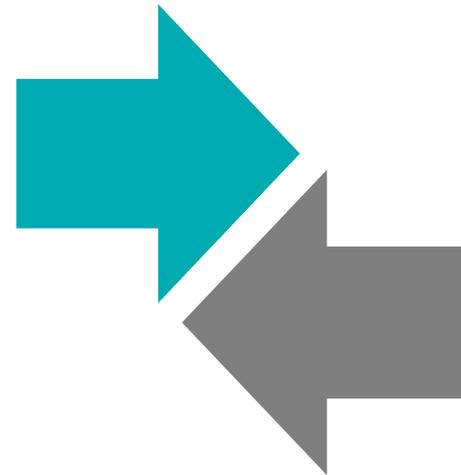


Walking a Mile in Our Communities' Shoes

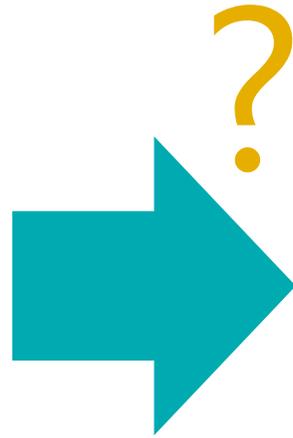
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What role do utilities
have in creating a
more equitable
world?



Utility Level
of Service
(5-year
storm event)



The lived
experience of the
people we serve



Find inequities here

We are
limited by our
experiences



It's a muscle
we haven't
developed

Today we are going to exercise that muscle and explore lived experience

- ➔ Resources
- ➔ Disenfranchisement
- ➔ Representation



Resources



Disenfranchisement



Representation

You come home from work to find 3 inches of sewage in your basement.

What do you do?

Our systems are built on assumed access to resources

- ✓ Bank account with some “float”
- ✓ Credit card
- ✓ Access to the internet
- ✓ Access to a vehicle
- ✓ Address to receive mail
- ✓ Insurance
- ✓ Ability to manage and track information
- ✓ Ability to manage appointments and deadlines
- ✓ Ability to communicate effectively in writing and in person

Resource

S

Even one missing link makes a big difference

You have
insurance,
but...

You don't have money to pay upfront for the hotel you will be reimbursed for

You don't have a car – so you can't get your kids from the hotel to their school

You can't find the name of your insurance company

So what do people who lack resources do?

Resource

Resources are one reason why we can do something the same (equally) in two different neighborhoods, yet still have inequitable incomes.

Whenever infrastructure fails, it creates inequities.

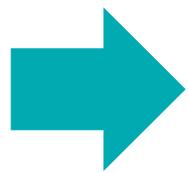
Exploring lived experience

➔ Resources

➔ **Disenfranchisement**

➔ Representation

Definition of Disenfranchisement:
To deprive of a legal right, or some
privilege or immunity.



In equity, often used to refer to a loss
of power and belonging.

Why?

- When people have water quality problems, why do only some of them call the City?
- Why will so many people not show up to public meetings, even if a project will affect them?
- How can well off people think the water in a community is the best in the country, while low-income people are afraid to drink it?
- The majority of rent assistance provided by the federal government has been left on the table – why aren't people asking for the money when there are so many that need it?

From a utility level of service perspective, we are offering services equally to all



The way the services are being used is not equal, even if we could eliminate other barriers

Many of our customers just don't trust government (for good reason) —and that distrust is increasing

What if?



McDonalds is now in charge of federal nutrition standards.

They release their first set of standards which includes a reduction in fruit and vegetable servings based on 'health research'.

How do you react?

Disenfranchisement

Even when we reduce or eliminate other barriers, disenfranchisement creates inequitable access to services.

Building trust throughout our communities is fundamental to achieving equity (and a long and difficult process).

Today we are going to exercise that muscle and explore lived experience

➡ Resources

➡ Disenfranchisement

➡ **Representation**

Standing out for being different—'other'

There are many examples where somebody may be a visible 'other'

- Transgender
- Person of color
- Differently abled
- Only operations person in a meeting full of engineers

Many of us have very limited experience of being conspicuously different

Masks have interestingly provided many of us with an experience of being a visible 'other'.

True whether you are a person who does—or does not—generally wear a mask

Representatio



What did it feel like to go somewhere new during the pandemic?

Hyper-aware of what other people are doing?

Concerned about how much I may be standing out?

Thinking about which places may be easier to be in

Very aware of potential othering – “oh, she’s one of those people”

Be mindful of the stress others can be other when they are a conspicuous 'other'.

Building trust requires us to meet people where they are—being willing to put ourselves in the position of being the outsider.

We've talked about three ways of walking in another person's shoes today

➡ Resources

➡ Disenfranchisement

➡ Representation

How else could you walk in another's shoes?

I believe in the people in our industry and the work that we do,
and I believe we can learn to serve our communities even better.

Thank you!

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