



# **Creating a Strong PIT Project: Applying an equity lens to PIT work**

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# Agenda

- Introduction
- What does DEI mean? Why does DEI matter in PIT?
- How do we apply an equity lens to PIT?
- How can DEI be done by design?
- Review
- Open Discussion, Q&A



# Introduction

# Introduction: Afua Bruce

- Former Director, Public Interest Technology, New America
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- Public Interest Technology Strategy Consultant



# Public Interest Technology, Defined

Public interest technology refers to the study and application of technology expertise to advance the public interest/generate public benefits/promote the public good.

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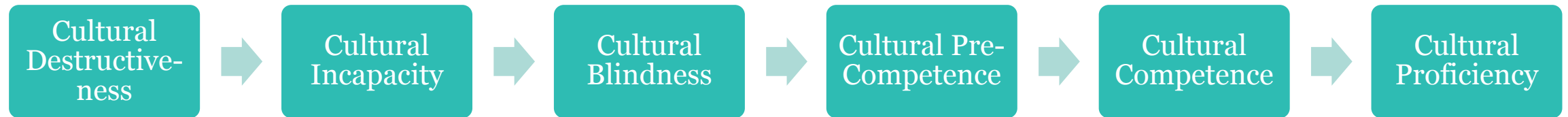
# Applying an Equity Lens to PIT work

- Historical discussions about “public interest” referenced DEI
- DEI cannot be an add-on; must occur from design through deployment
- Today’s discussion: DEI framework, not a checklist



# **What does DEI mean? Why does DEI matter in PIT?**

# New America's Racial Equity Charge Learning: A Cultural Competency Framework





# Diversity vs. Equity vs. Inclusion

## Diversity

is the presence of differences that may include race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, ethnicity, nationality, socioeconomic status, language, (dis)ability, age, religious commitment, or political perspective. Populations that have been-and remain-underrepresented among practitioners in the field and marginalized in the broader society.

## Equity

is promoting justice, impartiality and fairness within the procedures, processes, and distribution of resources by institutions or systems. Tackling equity issues requires an understanding of the root causes of outcome disparities within our society.

## Inclusion

is an outcome to ensure those that are diverse actually feel and/or are welcomed. Inclusion outcomes are met when you, your institution, and your program are truly inviting to all. To the degree to which diverse individuals are able to participate fully in the decision-making processes and development opportunities within an organization or group



# DEI & Justice Embedded into Discussions

“generate public benefits” & “promote the public good”

- Todd Park, Former U.S. Chief Technology Officer
- Cecilia Muñoz, Former Director of the Domestic Policy Council & Current New America Senior Advisor
- Kathy Pham, Harvard Kennedy School Adjunct Lecturer



# How do we apply an equity lens to PIT?

# Start by understanding what values projects are designed around

- the knowledge and wisdom of lived experience
- the participation of a diversity of people in decision-making, planning, and building technology
- accessibility as a priority from the start in all technology and social impact work
- the multiple ways that change is made, balancing the need to meet immediate challenges with a long view for how we can systemically eliminate those challenges
- the strength of collectively creating a vision of a better world
- the dedication of individuals and communities in pursuing knowledge, experience, and skills

# Designing for all is Necessary but Insufficient

- Specificity matters
- Lack of intentional design can lead to unintended consequences



***PIT isn't just about correcting harm, it's also about proactively creating different, stronger tech & policy.***

# Mini Case Studies



Rural Community Assistance  
Partnership



New Practice Lab



# Designing With is the Starting Point for Community-Focused Work

## Step 1

- Define who the community is that will use and will be affected by what you're designing`

## Step 2

- Talk to the Community

## Step 3

- Modify plans based on community feedback

## Step 4

- Repeat



# Example Discussion Questions

- Who would be harmed if the technology we build fails?
- Who will profit and benefit the most from the technology we build?
- What technologies or services do you not currently have access to, either because of availability or affordability?
- What experiences or knowledge do you have that you could share with us for better policymaking?



# How can DEI be done by design?



# Design & Development Activities

- Listening sessions
- Inclusion in product design meetings
- Open prioritizing and review meetings
- Testing in real environment
- Incorporation on oversight boards
- Checks for acceptance and approval



# Ownership & Maintenance

- How will the community continue to be involved and supported?
- How will fit and acceptance be assessed?



# Review

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# Today's Key Concepts

- Public interest technology - the study and application of technology expertise to advance the public interest/generate public benefits/promote the public good
- DEI isn't one section of a project; it's embedded throughout
  - Specificity matters
  - Design for DEI and call it out in project plans, objectives, and descriptions
  - Consider DEI aspects for ownership and maintenance



# Open Discussion



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