

Multi-Cultural Inclusion Mindsets

Consumption Mindset Relational Mindset

When engaging across difference to inform our own or our organization's actions, our approaches can vary along a continuum of being **consumptional** to **deeply relational**. When engaging with others to gather information, a consumption approach requests information to benefit the individual, team, or organization asking for the feedback to better themselves. When moving towards a more relational mindset, you enter into a 2-way relationship that is based on mutual respect, benefit, and impact that is centered on human connection and trust.

Approaches:

- Shift from "I" to "we."
- Center the mission rather than the organization.
- Shift from "doing to" to "doing with."
- Decision-making processes include those who are most impacted.
- Shift from transactional approach to long-term partnership approach.

"If you have come to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mind, then let us work together." –Australian Aboriginal Elder Lilla Watson

"Nothing about us without us." –Various sources in Europe and South Africa

Need-based Mindset Asset-based Mindset

When working with communities that have experienced disparities and oppression, it can be instinctual to focus on the needs, lack of skills, or gaps in the person or community rather than leveraging and focusing on the assets, strengths, and networks that already exist in the community.

Approaches:

- Understand and acknowledge that underprivileged people bring integral, unique, and essential values, skills, and knowledge to our society, and problems we seek to address. Those who experience a problem often have the context and information to solve it.
- Build awareness of strengths and assets through relationships.
- Shift power to the individuals or community impacted.
- Design programs that leverage and build on strengths to address disparities and challenges.

"If you focus on people's weaknesses, they lose confidence." –Tom Rath

Current - Future Mindset ↔ **Historical Context Mindset**

Focusing solely on the context of the now and future can leave out important historical context that informs the way we behave, understand systems, and build relationships. By not only honoring the current and future context, but also historical narrative, we can better understand systems and cultural behavior.

Approaches:

- Learn about organizational and cultural histories to inform current and future.
- Explore systems thinking and how it can inform human behavior and cultural norms.
- Understand systems of oppression and exclusion and how they are connected to policy and resources.
- Partner across difference to create innovative solutions.

“Every system is perfectly designed to get the result it gets.” –Paul Baralden, M.D. & Dr. W. Edwards Deming

Dominant cultural orientation ↔ **Multi-cultural orientation**

Dominant culture centers whiteness and the individual as the “norm” or preferred way of operating. This can leave other perspectives and cultural norms out, or value them as “less than.” Understanding other cultural contexts that are non-dominant can re-frame our behaviors and interactions. It takes effort to see culturally specific norms, which can seem out of place or incorrect to those within the dominant culture. Examples include: time, high-context low-context, family focus, and communication styles.

Approaches:

- Develop relationships with those who are from different cultures.
- Voluntary displacement activities, when engaged in thoughtfully and authentically, can build connection and provide data related to cultural difference.
- Engage those from the culture you hope to work with in decision-making and program design – or consider shifting all power and decision making to those most impacted.

“The American idea of racial progress is measured by how fast I become white.” – James Baldwin