

Myriad Research

Equitable Evaluation Statement

from Research Director, Ben Hickman

1. Introduction

In the course of our work, Myriad Research undertakes work for a wide range of public and third sector organisations, including charities, educational institutions, and local and central government. This includes working with groups subject to marginalisation and examining subjects directly related to inequality and exclusion, including engagement with social work and family courts, economic exclusion, and treatment for both drug addiction and problem gambling.

In all of our work, we have a responsibility to be conscious of our own biases, their potential to cause harm and our position and role in an unequal and often exclusionary system. In trying to improve our own awareness of the way in which our position and biases may impact research, we have written this statement, setting out our commitments to Equitable Evaluation.

2. What is our approach to Equitable Evaluation?

We are committed to the three principles of Equitable Evaluation¹:

1. Evaluation and evaluative work should be in service of equity:
 - Production, consumption, and management of evaluation and evaluative work should hold at its core a responsibility to advance progress towards equity.
2. Evaluative work should be designed and implemented commensurate with the values underlying equity work:
 - Multi-culturally valid, and
 - Oriented toward participant ownership.
3. Evaluative work can and should answer critical questions about the:
 - Ways in which historical and structural decisions have contributed to the condition to be addressed,
 - Effect of a strategy on different populations, on the underlying systemic drivers of inequity, and
 - Ways in which cultural context is tangled up in both the structural conditions and the change initiative itself.

But what does this mean in practice? While it is easy to sign up to a set of principles, it is far harder to explain how that will actually change the way that we do things. I am a white,

¹ As set out in The Equitable Evaluation Framework: May 2023 Expansion (Equitable Evaluation Initiative (2023))

straight, cis-gender, man in his forties. We recently did a project on the working experiences of women over 50 in Wales. I was helping on survey design and it struck me how inappropriate it would be if I alone had developed the questions on the survey. For the project to provide a true reflection of women's experiences it couldn't be based on a set of questions developed by me, as I will never be able to understand the lived experience of women over 50 in Wales. As good as my intentions are, and as self-aware of my own biases as I try to be, I still work from within a set of assumptions and orthodoxies informed and reinforced by my cultural background and societal position.

To improve our research we must not only challenge our own assumptions, but also be aware of when that is not enough. As an organisation, equitable evaluation has not always been at the centre of what we do. Some projects just don't feel like they need a different approach. But to be truly committed to equitable evaluation, we must consciously shift our working practices.

To do this we will consider:

- the diversity of experience of our project team
- the cultural appropriateness and validity of our methods and tools and their ability to identify drivers of inequity
- the degree to which those affected by what is being evaluated have the power to shape and own how our evaluation happens.

With that in mind we make the following set of commitments to improve not only the quality of our research, but also dedicate our work to improve societal equity more generally.

3. Our Commitments to Equitable Evaluation

Myriad Research makes the following commitments²:

Project Proposals and Design

- We will make our commitment to the principles of equity more explicit in our proposals and research design. This includes challenging client assumptions when needed and being open to being challenged ourselves.
- When developing our project methodology or proposals, being aware of who is in the room, who is missing and how we might engage them.
- Acknowledging that sometimes we will not be the best fit for a project and it would not be appropriate for us to apply for or undertake it.

Project Delivery

- Dedicating time at each project initiation meeting to have open conversations with clients about how to embed equity in projects.
- Taking time as a team to consider how unconscious bias manifests in our work, and where we can use specific approaches (e.g. community researchers, participatory action research methodologies) to mitigate these.
- Considering how we can engage diverse or vulnerable groups and where sampling benchmarks would be appropriate.
- Ensuring our team has received guidance on appropriate, inclusive language to use

² We have taken inspiration in the structure and content of our commitments from Dartington Service Design Lab's "Embedding An Anti-racist Approach in Research and Design".

when designing and conducting research.

Project Reporting

- Using inclusive and accessible language in our reports.
- Highlighting how things impact different groups of people differently, with consideration to intersectionality and the possibility of multiple concurrent impacts.
- Driving positive change through our reporting, including making recommendations to clients around equity, diversity and inclusion and not being afraid to include challenging findings and discuss with clients where needed.
- Being transparent about limitations in our sampling and methodologies, and explicit about whose voice may be missing.
- Ensuring reporting and research outputs are shared with research participants and key stakeholders, where appropriate.
- Working with clients, to consider how to share outputs with communities and audiences who are the subjects of the research.