Foundational Principles

Supported by the **Robert Wood Johnson Foundation**, *Raising the Bar* provides an actionable framework for the entire healthcare sector to embed equity and excellence throughout its work. In this first part of the project the **National Alliance to impact the Social Determinants of Health** (NASDOH) convened extensive discussions with providers, hospitals, payers, and community leaders to develop foundational principles, essential roles, and concrete actions for the sector to help achieve optimal health for all. A second part, led by the National Partnership for Women & Families, is exploring more detailed guidance for maternal health.

Foundational Principles

Raising the Bar outlines a vision for a transforming healthcare system. A healthcare system where all individuals are served well with the care and attention that meets their needs in a respectful and equitable manner. A healthcare system where service delivery is of the utmost quality and continually improves. Healthcare organizations that acknowledge all of their roles: as caregivers, as employers, as trusted members of a community, and as catalysts for change that advocate for and invest in the individuals and communities.

The project generated five principles for the healthcare sector that put the priorities of individuals, families, and communities at the center. These five foundational principles provide a broad framework to support healthcare stakeholders in their transformation.

The Principles illustrate the necessary ambitions and objectives for healthcare to comprehensively and holistically raise the bar, regardless of where they are currently on their journeys. The Principles are neither intended to be mutually exclusive nor expressed in any priority order. All are important and overlapping. In the next chapter, Framework in Practice: Bright Spots, there are stories of innovative healthcare organizations that are already working to raise the bar and living up to these foundational principles.

MISSION
Commit Above All to a Mission of Improving Health and Well-being

COMMUNITY
Serve the Community as an Engaged, Responsive, and Proactive Partner

TRUST
Earn and Sustain Trusting Relationships

EQUITY
Systematically Pursue Health Equity, Racial Justice, and the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination

POWER
Share and Effectively Use Resources, Influence, and Power

MISSION PRINCIPLE

Commit Above All to a Mission of Improving Health and Well-being

Healthcare shows a commitment to raise the bar by fully adopting and implementing the mission of improving the health and well-being of individuals, families, and communities, and putting this mission above all else.

Why is this principle important?

Improving the health and well-being of individuals, families, and communities is at the heart of healthcare. This mission is what drives many individual practitioners to pursue careers in healthcare and motivates the work of many healthcare organizations and institutions. Nevertheless, this mission is often obscured by the complexity of those organizations and institutions, and by payment systems and business models that are not aligned with the mission.

How does this principle raise the bar for equity and excellence?

Reaching well-beyond a narrow goal of "doing no harm" in delivering care to patients, this principle acknowledges healthcare has a broader imperative to provide effective, integrated care across a spectrum of physical health, mental and behavioral health, and social needs including working with partners across the health ecosystem (e.g., public health and social and human services providers) to treat the harms that result from underlying inequities and health risks to individuals and communities. The bar is raised for equity and excellence when healthcare organizations, institutions, and practitioners put improving health and well-being at the center of everything they do—in providing medical care, and in addressing social determinants of health—while adopting and advocating reform of payment systems and policies to accelerate the achievement of this mission.

> " The mission that drives us is improving the health of all people and communities—preventing illness, promoting well-being, and caring for the sick, no matter who you are."
>
> **Marshall Chin, MD,** MPH, Richard Parrillo Family Professor of Healthcare Ethics, University of Chicago, and Member, *Raising the Bar* Stewardship Council

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EQUITY PRINCIPLE

Systematically Pursue Health Equity, Racial Justice, and the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination

Healthcare shows a commitment to raise the bar by providing everyone with a fair and just opportunity to be as healthy as possible, regardless of their race, ethnicity, preferred language, gender, sexual identity, age, disability status, religion, employment, income, migrant status, and other factors.

Why is this principle important?

Achieving health equity requires concerted, proactive efforts to confront persistent inequities based on race, ethnicity, preferred language, gender, sexual identity, age, disability status, religion, employment, income, migrant status, and other factors that unjustly affect health, well-being, and life experience. This includes understanding how different forms of discrimination intersect and combine to prevent healthcare from achieving equity. It is essential that healthcare acknowledge and address historic and current structural factors, systemic racism, and other forms of discrimination and inequity—in society generally, within communities locally, and also within the healthcare system itself. Achieving equity entails providing access to high quality care, improving administrative and employment practices, and fostering respectful interactions with the broader community.

How does this principle raise the bar for equity and excellence?

This principle calls on healthcare organizations and institutions to promote health equity in their practices and across all their roles, actively seeking to improve health outcomes for those facing the greatest challenges. This work begins by treating individuals with dignity and respect, and by learning their values, needs, and priorities. It requires a proactive and comprehensive commitment to be antiracist, to pursue the elimination of all forms of discrimination, and to implement organizational policies and practices that support these commitments.

> "Health equity requires healthcare to support structural action—to understand how structural forces like poverty, racism, and nativism exact harm on specific groups of people through policies and systems; to acknowledge how healthcare systems have ignored or perpetuate these harms and inequities; and to replace harmful systems—inside our walls and in our communities—with new ones that can counteract structural violence, eliminate inequities, and advance the right to health for all."
>
> **Rishi Manchanda MD MPH**, CEO, HealthBegins, and Member, *Raising the Bar* Stewardship Council

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COMMUNITY PRINCIPLE

Serve the Community as an Engaged, Responsive, and Proactive Partner

Healthcare shows a commitment to raise the bar by recognizing its responsibility and potential as a collaborative, accountable partner with communities.

Why is this principle important?

Healthcare organizations and institutions are critical members of the communities and health ecosystems in which they are located, with roles and responsibilities beyond delivery of services to individuals. They share responsibility for the health and well-being of communities, requiring authentic and ongoing engagement from individuals, families, and organizations from the places in which they operate.

How does this principle raise the bar for equity and excellence?

Healthcare organizations and institutions treat the health consequences of deep social and economic inequities faced by communities. They are in a unique and powerful position to build on the strengths and resources of communities, including a wide range of partners who bring assets, expertise, and a commitment to improving their own communities' health. This principle recognizes that healthcare organizations and institutions are stronger and more effective when they embrace authentic partnerships that contribute to the health and well-being of the places in which they operate, including partnerships between public health institutions, social services, and other agencies and organizations that serve those communities.

> **To be a supportive partner and a strong leader in our community, it is imperative that we meet people where they are, listen to them, and be responsive to their needs."**
>
> **Marc Harrison, MD**, President and CEO, Intermountain Healthcare and Member, *Raising the Bar* Stewardship Council

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POWER PRINCIPLE

Share and Effectively Use Resources, Influence, and Power

Healthcare shows a commitment to raise the bar by using resources, influence, and power in service to the community, sharing them with individuals and community organizations to the benefit of those communities' health and well-being.

Why is this principle important?

Healthcare has significant power and influence that comes from its large share of the U.S. economy, and many healthcare organizations and institutions are the largest economic force or employer in their communities (often referred to as "anchor institutions"). Achieving equity and improving the health and well-being of communities relies on healthcare's ability to use its power in service to the community, and to respect, celebrate, invest in, and engage the expertise, life experience, and talent of local individuals, community organizations, and advocates by sharing their power.

How does this principle raise the bar for equity and excellence?

Healthcare organizations and institutions can drive critical changes within their own sector, but they can also exert considerable influence on broader social and economic policy if they use and share their power in service to the places in which their workforce and individuals they care for live, work, and play.

There are existing power imbalances, which are evident at the community-level in the relationships between healthcare, community organizations, and advocates, at the institutional-level in the relationships between the organization and its workforce, and at the individual-level in the relationships between individuals and their care practitioners. These power imbalances lead to a lack of understanding about and inaction on the needs and priorities of communities, and the provision of ineffective care or care which is misaligned with the needs and priorities of individuals and their families. This principle recognizes that healthcare organizations, institutions, and practitioners have their greatest impact when they use their influence effectively and overcome power imbalances to co-create mutually reinforcing partnerships with individuals, families, and communities.

> **I believe that healthcare can level the power imbalances that exist between communities and the institution by sharing power, influence, and resources with them. Healthcare must authentically engage with individuals that live within communities, partner with community-based organizations that work alongside residents, and understand agenda-setting should be co-created with the community and not simply for them."**
>
> **Josie Williams**, Executive Director, Greensboro Housing Coalition, Inc., and Member, *Raising the Bar* Stewardship Council

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TRUST PRINCIPLE

Earn and Sustain Trusting Relationships

Healthcare shows a commitment to raise the bar by cultivating meaningful relationships in which the trust of individuals, families, and communities is earned, and by trusting in the ability and expertise of those individuals, families, and communities.

Why is this principle important?

Healthcare institutions and providers need to earn and sustain the trust of individuals receiving care, and those individuals' partners and/or caregivers. They also need trusting relationships with individuals and community organizations representing the places where these institutions operate, and the communities of interest with which individuals identify. This starts with acknowledging persistent trust deficits, understanding the drivers of mistrust, and co-creating pathways for trust building. COVID-19 has highlighted the disparate and unequal effects of distrust of healthcare leaders, particularly in communities historically and currently underserved. Building and sustaining trust requires listening to and respecting the experience, expertise, and capabilities of the individuals, families, and communities to whom they provide care. It also requires trusting in the expertise and talents of those with whom healthcare seeks to work within the community.

How does this principle raise the bar for equity and excellence?

This principle recognizes that the development of trust between healthcare and individuals, families, and organizations in the community is necessary to facilitate productive, effective partnerships essential to improved health, and can only happen over time. Trust is a critical factor in the relationship between individuals and healthcare practitioners, as trust allows an understanding of needs and priorities that can be translated into the co-creation of responsive care plans and improved health outcomes. In the places where institutions operate, trust is essential to effective working relationships across the broad, interconnected ecosystem that impacts health, and can lead to improvements in adverse social determinants of health and other factors that lead to improved health and well-being.

> " There are a lot of reasons why people don't trust healthcare. Health center providers are trusted heroes in the community and people value their knowledge and wisdom. It's critical for larger healthcare systems to learn from community health centers in acknowledging root causes and working to build the foundation of trust."
>
> **Luz (Lucy) Moreno**, Community Engagement Program Manager, Innercare, and Member, *Raising the Bar* Council to Improve Healthcare for Individuals, Families, and Communities

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Raising the Bar

Healthcare's Transforming Role

2022