

Drafts and Thoughts on Equity

What is the most productive way to comment on the Equity framework? List comments here? YES. The Github wiki we are using does not have a Talk or Comment page.

Equity Framework

[Equity Framework in Github wiki](#)

To meet the accessibility needs of some members, the draft document is in the Github wiki. Some members find that wiki difficult to work with, therefore we have set up a Google doc so people can comment and add their thoughts.

This is not the original document. See the Github link above for the original. These documents are being synced manually. If you edit the [Copy of the Framework document](#) below, your edits will not go into the original.

If content is marked as crossed out, it has been moved to the master document. Note that ~~strikeout may not be accessible to screenreader users.~~ As of 16 August 10:30am ET, all the comments have been moved to the [master document](#) and deleted from this document.

Copy of the Framework Document

Only editorial suggesting mode below this point. Put substantive thoughts above in the appropriate section. This can be in Edit mode or Suggesting mode.

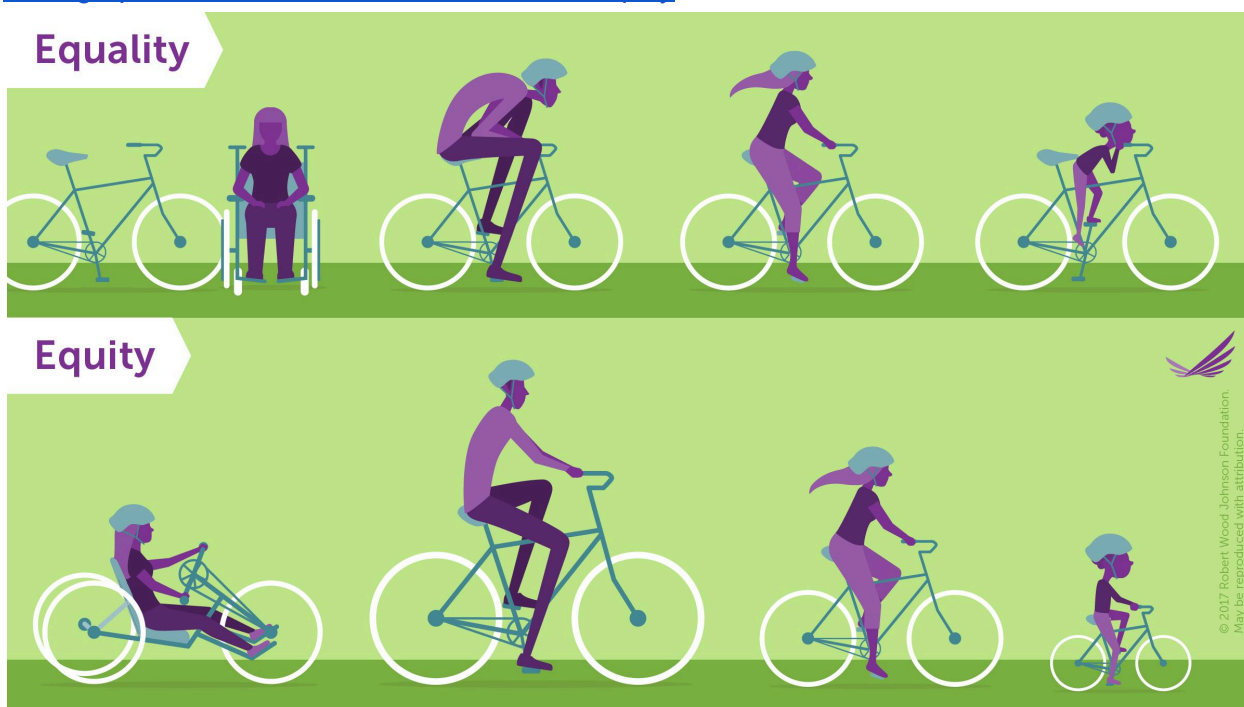
Equity Framework Draft

Return to [Equity Subgroup](#)

This is the draft document for the work being done by the WCAG3 [Equity Subgroup](#).

Research and Prototypes

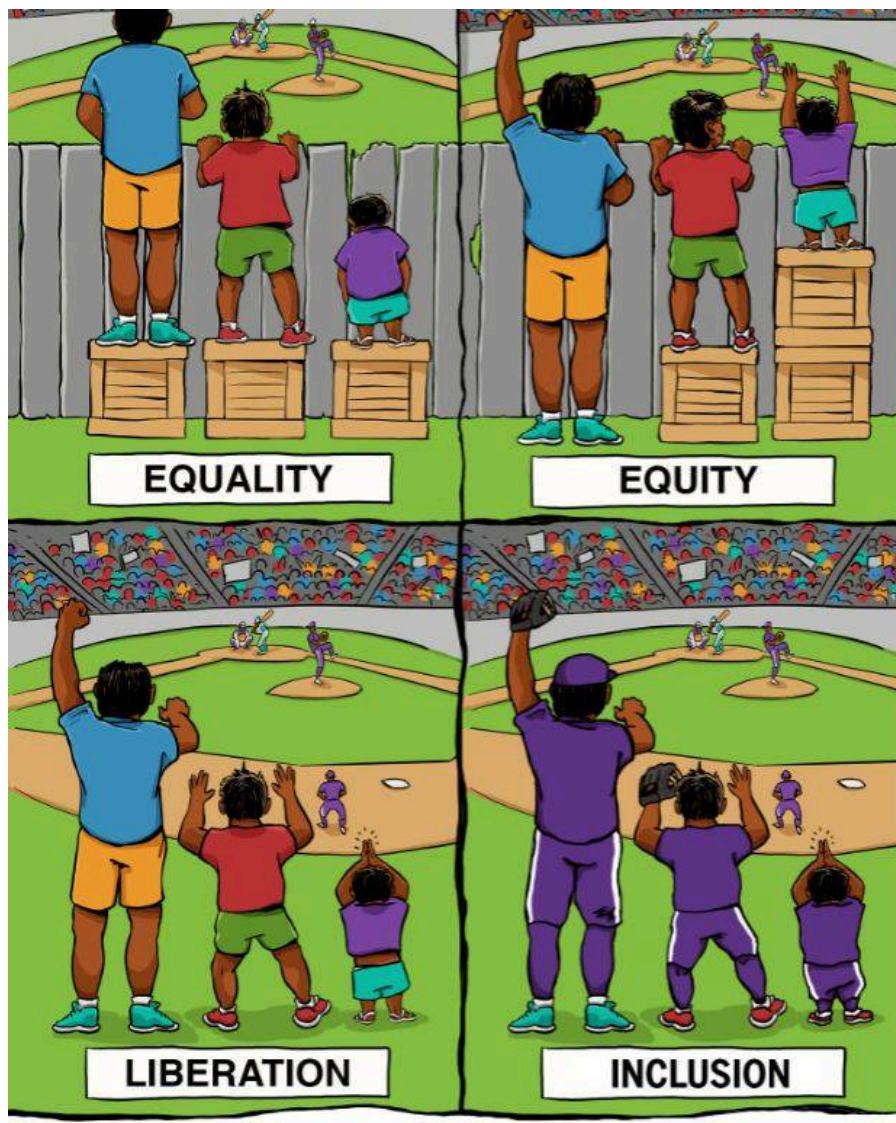
- [Improving Equity research summary slide deck](#) slide deck summarizing the research and prototypes as of Q3 2022
- [Meaningful Involvement research and proposals](#) - Proposal to extend Silver to cover requirements for involving people with disabilities in the digital authoring process. Based on 11 September 2018 meeting.
- [Maturity Model](#) - link to the Editor's Draft
- [Evaluating Procedures proposal \(from Protocols sub-group\)](#) is a way of addressing equity
- [10 Principles of Design Justice](#) originating from Sasha Costanza-Chock author of [Design Justice](#)
- [2017 graphic from Robert J. Wood on Health Equity](#)



- [Equality vs. Equity](#) - Aaron Gustafson Specifically:

"Though I didn't make the connection until much later, the philosophy of progressive enhancement in web design, which I've been advocating for nearly two decades now, is very much the embodiment of equity. It's concerned with building interfaces that adapt to a wide range of circumstances, both tied to an individual user's capabilities as well as those of the devices, networks, and environment in which they are accessing our creations."

- In the U.S. there is a new [Digital Equity Act](#) to address the digital divide in the U.S.
- Relevant reading in this [article from Code for America on why multilingual research matters](#). "Equity is about providing extra support for populations who may be underrepresented in or excluded from public programs." Another insightful quote, "Having native speakers conduct research with their own language communities both opens trust in the research process and means that researchers carry cultural and linguistic sensitivities that can make the research a better overall experience for clients." — turning the language subject to disability would translate that having people with disabilities conduct research, design, and develop would deliver more accessible and equitable experiences. A range of people with disabilities must be involved in the delivery of digital services to deliver equity. Accessibility SMEs are not enough.



- This [Instagram reel from @lastrealindians](#) shares a key point about equity efforts. It's not about going back, rather it's about acknowledging erasure, exclusion, systemic inequity, and being self-aware in our decisions and outcomes.

Definition Description

We are looking at definitions of "equity" that are accepted in different areas. "Equity" and "equal" are similar, but not the same concepts. We want to look at what "equity" means specifically to WCAG2 and WCAG3. These are some of the ideas we had:

- In English, equivalent is not the same as equal. = vs ≈ It allows more concepts to be addressed. Math symbol is called "congruent" or "approximately equal"
- [Merriam-Webster 'Equity' and 'Equality'](#) — "Sameness or equal distribution are the principal denotations of equality." This aligns with the working definition of accessibility, that those have access. Equity adds "justice, fairness, and impartiality, the principal denotations of equity." With equity we aim to restore justice.
- "Equality is equal access, while 'equity' is equal outcomes." - Antoinette Carroll, [Creative Reaction Lab](#) Founder
- Consider **equity** not so much as an outcome but as a process that we consistently engage in to ensure that people with disabilities are not marginalized, excluded, or deprived from an equitable outcome. It is a lens and filter.
- Disability groups are not disadvantaged by the conformance model, e.g., if needs of some groups are only addressed at higher conformance levels.
- Usability for a site at a given conformance level is approximately **equivalent** across disability groups. ** NOTE: not sure how to measure that and added it to the Known Challenges section.
- Groups are not "forgotten about" during the development process.
- Awareness of and efforts to resolve issues caused by barriers to participation in the AG, such as culture, language, tools, and time zone.
- Guidance is not omitted because of measurability concerns, instead we come up with realistic ways to measure all guidance. ** NOTE: There has been concern how that can fit in a regulatory environment. We may not be able to do all of it, but can help regulators make choices with more guidance.
- For people with disabilities paired with other socio-economic characteristics, marginalization's effect on the intersectional becomes even more impactful. Consider

Veterans with disabilities on tribal lands, People of Color sexual assault survivors that develop PTSD or TBI.

Draft Definition from Janina:

Equity is the continual process of providing and enhancing the web technologies people need to succeed.

It is not requiring all content providers to implement every known accessibility markup, because some of these will be edge cases inappropriate to certain user groups. It does require that basic functional needs will be met so that any user with average web skills can interact successfully with content. Also, it requires that any user requiring additional content for those edge cases will have a clear mechanism to obtain that additional markup in a timely manner.

Draft definition from Jennifer:

Equity is the outcome of processes and actions that ensure the spectrum of human reality obtains what is needed to participate, not solely access. As equity relates to WCAG it is about the impact the standards/guidelines have on people with disabilities, along with actually including people with disabilities in the work.

Note

Equity is the goal as the W3C evaluates documented guidelines. This requires evaluating through a variety of lenses from disability through socio-economic characteristics to consider impact on equity. Equity is the "perfect" and we are unlikely to fully attain it since technology is introduced and evolves so quickly, though that should not stop our efforts to deliver equitable outcomes.

Draft definition from Jeanne:

Equity is the process that the AGWG follows to develop guidelines that:

1. Are based on user needs
2. Do not prioritize measurability over user needs
3. Has a way to add new user needs
4. Does not prioritize one disability need over another
5. Considers the impact of Intersectional UX when developing guidance

Draft definition from Laura:

Equity is more than fairness and justice in the way people are treated. It describes something deeper and more complex. It is about people getting what they need to succeed: beyond just access, but to comparable opportunity, resources, and support, etc. **Notes and**

Considerations:

- In the past, there has been a resistance to scope broadening of talking about "access to opportunity, resources, and support".
- A danger of broadening the scope of the definition of equity is that discussions can quickly degenerate and lose focus, rather than addressing the use cases needed by people with disabilities.
- Access for people with disabilities is essential. This does not mean that things should be omitted if not all users can fully make use of them but rather that alternative/equivalent mechanisms must be provided where needed. People with disabilities face some unique challenges and barriers (and are only too often systematically excluded).

MC definition notes

- "Usability for a site at a given conformance level is approximately equivalent across disability groups." seems to be the central definition, the rest seems like explanation of that.
- I see descriptions of equity as a state, and as a process. I would like to define equity as a state, the hypothetical perfect state towards which we strive. Since we won't achieve perfection, we'll need to set a landmark somewhere on the path that is "equitable enough". I would move the process descriptions to other resources that describe how we will work to achieve the state of equity.
 - GV: +1 Equity doesn't sound like a process - but a state - or goal.
 - GV: Also - the illustrations are of an outcome or state - not a process.

GV: Alternate Suggested Definition of Equity

- Equity is when everyone has the same opportunity and access in spite of differences in how that is achieved.
 - Jennifer: I'm curious about the use of state or outcome. I lean more towards outcome, because we are focused on the impact / consequences.
 - From Oxford Languages: <https://languages.oup.com/google-dictionary-en>
 - State: the particular condition that someone or something is in at a specific time.

- Outcome: the way a thing turns out; a consequence.

Jennifer suggests the following definition:

- Equity is the outcome of processes and actions that ensure the spectrum of human reality obtains what is needed to participate, not solely access. As equity relates to WCAG it is about the impact the standards/guidelines have on people with disabilities, along with actually including PWD in the work.

Use Cases

As we discussed, we wanted to capture some of the edge cases that need to be considered as part of equity. This is a parking area for the ideas, they are not developed.

- Cognitive and Deaf needs having many of their needs be optional.
- The company being sued by a person with a hearing disability that wants to prioritize remediation for hearing barriers.
- A site that teaches ASL being accessible to screen readers. The site should not assume that screen reader users cannot see, for example. Providing descriptions can support learning ASL for those who have vision considerations.
- Music site that offers audio recordings that aren't meaningfully captionable.
- **Intersectionality:** Many people with disabilities also have socioeconomic challenges that result in slower older equipment and bandwidth. Progressive enhancement is a technical solution that could potentially be included in guidelines.

Notes on Use Cases

MC: The wording of the use cases are so brief, it's unclear if they are problem descriptions, descriptions of what could happen if there is equity, etc. I think I know what they're about, but someone not working in this group might not. I think we need to either clarify the use cases, or omit them from the first presentation to the group.

MC: The issue of socioeconomic challenges is out of scope for web accessibility guidelines. The resulting impacts on equipment, bandwidth, training, etc. are in scope but are in my opinion an accessibility support problem. That means complicated things for equity goals, as a lot of equity efforts will require newer technological solutions. Progressive enhancement can reduce but not eliminate those equity costs. The description of how to set a reasonable accessibility support level will need to take this into consideration.

Known Challenges

- Because some guidelines are more resource intensive than others, there is a natural tendency to want to remove the most resource intensive guidelines, which decreases equity. Support for Sign Language, Plain Language, and Good Design are examples of this.
- Absent Personalization, a known challenge is technical solutions that support one group but make things harder for another group.
- How do we incorporate normative guidelines content that we don't ourselves have expertise on?
- Differing needs within the same community. [<https://dcmp.org/learn/captioningkey> Caption Key] notes the following, which will need to be decided upon: "A re-occurring question about captioning is whether captions should be verbatim or edited. Among the advocates for verbatim are organizations of deaf and hard of hearing persons who do not believe that their right for equal access to information and dialogue is served by any deletion or change of words. Supporters of edited captions include parents and teachers who call for the editing of captions on the grounds that the reading rates necessitated by verbatim captions can be so high that captions are almost impossible to follow." ** Comprehension is more important for understandable for what remains available over time.
- Complexity in scoring and the conformance model. Not as easy to score as WCAG2x true/false. ** The problem of small sites with small resources can have an impact on uptake. A potential solution is to have different conformance models for different groups. For example, small business should meet Easy Checks and have an accessible framework. This has implications across different subgroups working on solutions.
- Usability for a site at a given conformance level is approximately equivalent across disability groups. ** NOTE: not sure how to measure that from a technological point of view. User Journey project and testing across functional needs could be a path forward.
- How to include use cases for including Intersectional Usability in Guidelines, for example, recognizing that many people with disabilities also have socioeconomic challenges that result in slower older equipment and bandwidth. Progressive enhancement is a technical solution that could potentially be included in guidelines.

Outstanding Questions

- Should Equity assist in uptake of WCAG3 by regulators?

- How do we incorporate guidance for functional needs for which we lack expertise in the group?
 - Recommend W3C reach out to include those with lived expertise, which is an equitable design practice.
- How can we add guidance for technological solutions that don't yet exist?
- How do we make WCAG conformance realistically adoptable for various organization types?
- How do we address circumstances where user groups have conflicting needs? (Again the example of captioning exactly)
- Could including more functional categories could get a better score and less functional categories would get a poorer score? Would that improve equity or reduce it in practice?
- How can we make the usability of the guidelines equitable across user needs (a blind person being able to caption or judge color contrast). Guidelines should be implementable by people with disabilities. (A variant of "Nothing About Us Without Us")
- In a guideline specification, how far can we go to support socioeconomic impact on people with disabilities?
- How can we ensure that we are in alignment with the various international civil rights legislation?

Recommendations

From Jennifer Strickland

- Recommend replacing instances of “intersectional UX” throughout with “intersectionality,” as the usage is not specific to user experience. It references the human condition of more than one historically marginalized / excluded / oppressed / etc. identity (as shown in the [Matrix of Oppression table](#)).
- Recommend referring to Equity as an outcome, and then processes as equity-centered processes — to align with other organizations doing this work (i.e., Creative Reaction Lab, HmntyCntrd, Anti-Racism at Work, Design Justice Network, and Ethical Design Network). I haven't understood the proposed “state.”

Future Topics to Address

Comments on Research and Prototypes section

Comments on Definition Description section

Draft definition from Jeanne:

Equity is the process that the AGWG follows to develop guidelines that:

1. Are based on user needs
2. Prioritizes user needs over measurability
3. Has a way to add new user needs
4. Does not prioritize one disability need over another
5. Considers the impact of Intersectional UX when developing guidance

Comments from Cybele:

1 - Another document to reference: <https://designjustice.org/read-the-principles>

2 - Before defining equity (as a solution), can we please define inequity as a problem? With use cases of how WCAG has been inequitable and the impacts thereof. (or a place to put them).

3 - Can we please refer to equity as both a process and an outcome? Within process, can we describe how equity can be implemented in creating WCAG guidelines, as well as how process-based conformance models may address some aspects of equity. eg. meaningful involvement fits under equity as a process. Can we use equity as a principle and requirement for developing the conformance model (e.g. to address A, AA, AAA inequity)?

Draft definition evolution from Jennifer

Equity is the outcome sought by the processes AGWG follows to develop guidelines that:

Then, only have a suggested edit to #5 above:

“Considers the impact of intersectionality when developing guidance.”

Often having a disability creates additional barriers, such as financial considerations.

“The concept of intersectionality describes the ways in which systems of inequality based on gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, class, and other forms of discrimination “intersect” to create unique dynamics and effects.”

Source: <https://www.intersectionaljustice.org/what-is-intersectionality>

Matrix of Oppression

Social Identity	Privileged Social	Border Social	Targeted Social	-ism
Race	White People	Biracial People (White / Latinx, Black, Asian)	Asian, Black, Latinx, Native People	Racism
Sex	Bio Men	Transsexual, Intersex	Bio Women	Sexism
Gender	Gender-conforming Bio Men & Women	Gender Ambiguous Bio Men & Women	Transgender, Genderqueer, Intersex	Transgender Oppression
Sexual Orientation	Heterosexual	Bisexual	Lesbians, Gay Men	Heterosexism
Class	Rich, Upper Class	Middle Class	Working Class, Poor	Classism
Ability / Disability	Temporarily Able-bodied	Temporary Disabilities	People with Disabilities	Ableism
Religion	Protestants	Roman Catholic (historically)	Jews, Muslims, Hindu	Religious Oppression
Age	Adults	Young Adults	Elders, Young	Ageism / Adultism

Source: Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice, Second Edition by Routledge 2007 from <https://www.deanza.edu/faculty/lewisjulie/MOD.pdf>

Comments on Use Cases section

Comments on Known Challenges section

Comments on Outstanding Questions section

Comments on the Recommendations section

Jeanne:

- We come up with 3 definitions of equity that are specific to WCAG3:
 - Equity as an Outcome
 - Equity as a State
 - Equity as a Process
- Identify specific aspects of the process of writing WCAG3 that equity has an impact, such as:
 - Encourage more people with disabilities to participate in WCAG3 development
 - Ensure that the conformance model generally treats disabilities equally and does not prioritize one user need over another.
 - Ensure that the conformance model does not prioritize a guideline or outcome because of ease of testing.
 - Ensure that the conformance model can add new disability needs and types in the future.
 - Ensure that the guidelines are based on user needs.

Comments by Cybele:

Is an equity based process a model that involves a journey towards an outcome/result, with states along the journey?

HMW create an equity-based process for the development of WCAG 3.0?

HMW create an equity-based process for end users to increase equity-based social outcomes (how does that impact conformance models, guidance content, etc.)?

Comments on the Future Topics to Address section

- Since the solutions to intersectional UX are specific guideline based, the intersectional UX notes should be moved here.
- Use Cases section should move to Future Topics