

To kick off our quarterly learnings on Political Engagement for Health Equity, the P4HE Collaborative sat down with Omar Dauhajre, Dr. Kristefer Stojanovski, Dr. Andrew Anderson, and Dr. Mieka Smart for a level setting dialogue on political engagement in relation to health equity. This document offers a high-level overview of key themes and takeaways from the session, serving as a quick reference guide for learners and setting the stage for deeper exploration and understanding of political engagement for health equity.

P4HE's Working Definition of Political Engagement

Political engagement for health equity involves collaborative, evidence-based, and non-partisan advocacy to address systemic barriers and advance policies that promote equitable health outcomes. It emphasizes bridging divides, fostering systemic change, and empowering marginalized communities to shape solutions.

Key Takeaways

Why is it important to have a common definition of political engagement? Political engagement can mean a multitude of things. It is not limited to running for office, mobilizing voter registration, participation in elections, and policy advocacy; political engagement can also include controlling budgets for government spending, as well as examining and changing political systems across the state, local, and municipal levels. Forming a common operational definition ensures that everyone has an aligned understanding and is working towards the same goals across all avenues of political engagement.

Why is political engagement important for health equity? All political engagement activities are necessary to advance systemic change for health equity. Advocacy, participation in elections, and running for office are useful means for enacting important public policy. These policies all have implications for equity that have the potential to impact health, even if they are not explicitly health policies. Political engagement affects how we build and leverage power to shift existing systems toward policies, government spending, and necessary programs that will help to improve health outcomes.

Looking for more on Political Engagement?

Check out this quarter's [Topical Exploration Blog](#) and [Resource List](#).

How can political engagement confront and disrupt the influence of money in the political process? The political process and resulting policies are often swayed by money. Various large, wealthy lobbyists and interest groups, such as insurance companies, health systems, and pharmaceutical companies, have significant influence in the political process. These groups leverage their wealth to persuade politicians to create and implement policies that are in their best interest, without regard for the implications on communities directly impacted by such policies. Grassroots and community-based organizations, with the help of organizations with more resources and a shared mission for health equity, can build power and increase their political engagement to disrupt the wealthy interest groups that are perpetuating harmful policies, and thereby negatively affecting health.

What role does research play in political engagement? Research plays two key roles in political engagement: analyzing current policies and informing future policies. Since policies are subject to interpretation, research can help identify weaknesses in language and programmatic gaps in current initiatives. Research can help strengthen policies in pursuit of health equity. Research also [generates evidence](#) that can effectively inform and influence policy decisions. Accurate and accessible information are key to supporting decision-makers and proposing research-based solutions. Conducting research generates information and tools that movements involved in political engagement can leverage to demand change for health equity.

What is the role of collaboration in political engagement? Collaboration builds collective power for political engagement. This involves engaging with communities and building cross-sector coalitions to advocate for health equity to inform decision-making. [Building coalitions](#) for political engagement brings together those with lived experience with health inequities and cross-sector expertise. This ensures that all voices are heard on pressing matters and policy solutions aimed at protecting communities and improving health.