

# Being A Critical Consumer of Professional Development Related to Educational Equity



## 7 Important Aspects to Inquire About When Selecting a Speaker or Professional Development Program

### 01 HOW DIFFERENCE AND DIVERSITY ARE DEFINED

Be clear about how difference or diversity is talked about, framed, and defined in your agency. Learn about how potential speakers/facilitators or professional development programs discuss difference and diversity and make sure there is alignment.



**Ask:** “How do you talk about difference and diversity?”

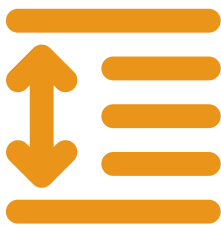
**Avoid:** Speakers/programs that frame difference/diversity as problematic or frame difference in a deficit manner.

### 02 ALIGNMENT TO AGENCY GOALS

Ensure learning opportunities/activities align with agency’s framing, theme, and goals/initiatives.

**Ask:** “How will your presentation, program, etc. align with our agency’s goals?”

**Avoid:** Speakers/programs that offer a canned or standard presentation that does not align with agency’s goals and objectives, even if the overall topic of the presentation is the same or similar.



### 03 DESIGN AND DELIVERY METHODS



Examine if the professional learning experience meets standards for professional learning and adult learning principles, and exhibits the characteristics of equity-focused professional development.

**Ask:** “How will you provide opportunities for participants to cultivate critical consciousness and culturally sustaining practices, explore the influence of one’s social identities and values on individual and systems practices, as well as reflect on the sociocultural dimensions of learning?”

**Avoid:** Speaker(s)/programs that ignore the role social identity has in mediating ones lived experiences and professional practice.

### 04 ANTICIPATED LEARNING OUTCOMES

Be clear on the anticipated level of competence the professional learning experience is to address (e.g., basic, intermediate, advanced, expert).

**Ask:** “What can we expect participants to know and be able to do as a result of the learning experience?”

**Avoid:** Speaker(s)/programs where the anticipated outcomes are vague or ones that over-promise participant outcomes beyond what is reasonable to expect given the duration and format of the learning experiences.



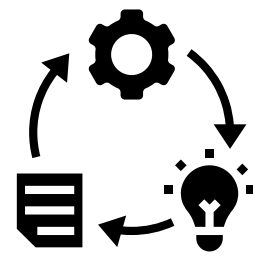
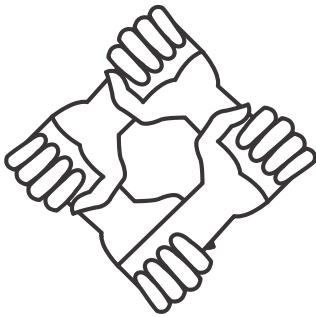
05

## HOW FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO STUDENT OUTCOMES ARE DISCUSSED

Ensure professional learning content focuses on examining and changing systemic and educator practices that are barriers to student learning opportunities and contribute to student outcomes (not on fixing the students, families, communities, etc.).

**Ask:** “How do you connect student learning and social outcomes to systemic factors?”

**Avoid:** Speaker(s)/programs that situate student/family/community outcomes solely in terms of personal effort, motivation, or individual intrinsic factors.



06

## REVIEWING A SAMPLE OF PRESENTER OR PROGRAM CONTENT

Avoid professional development or speakers that offer quick fixes, easy solutions, blame students, families and communities (i.e., deficit orientation).

**Ask:** “Can we review sample content?”

**Avoid:** Speaker(s)/program content that may reinforce stereotypes based on race, gender/gender expression, dis/ability, income status, national origin, religion, language, and sexual orientation (e.g., position educators as saviors for minoritized students) or over-simplistic solutions to complex social problems.

07

## RESEARCH FOUNDATIONS

Ask about and consider the scholars and the research foundations that inform the professional learning content/approach. Look for the inclusion of researchers with non-dominant identities (e.g., scholars of Color, scholars with disabilities, etc.).

**Ask:** “What theories, researchers or scholars do you draw from or that inform your presentation/program content?”

**Avoid:** Speakers/programs who draw from theories and research that segments populations by characteristics, describe them as "at-risk," and design interventions for them without examining the marginalizing conditions in which minoritized youth are educated. Do not assume that the social identity of the speaker guarantees the speaker will demonstrate criticality and an equity focus in their content or delivery.



## REFERENCES

Equity Alliance. (2009). *Inclusive education for equity: Professional learning for equity module*. Equity Alliance at ASU.

Learning Forward. (2022). *Standards for professional learning*. Learning Forward The Professional Learning Association.

Patel, L. (2016). *Decolonizing educational research: From ownership to answerability*. Routledge.

Scheurich, J. J., & Young, M. D. (1997). Coloring epistemologies: Are our research epistemologies racially biased? *Educational Researcher*, 26(4), 4-16.  
<https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X026004004>

Waitoller, F. R., & Kozleski, E. B. (2013). Understanding and dismantling barriers for partnerships for inclusive education: A cultural historical activity theory perspective. *International Journal of Whole Schooling*, 9(1), 23-42.