



## Case Study

# Kaiser Permanente Health Sector

An Equity-Centered Community Design™  
Approach to Business Resource Groups





## About Creative Reaction Lab

**Creative Reaction Lab's mission is to educate, train, and challenge Black and Latinx youth to become leaders designing healthy and racially equitable communities.** We're challenging the belief that only adults with titles (e.g. mayors, CEOs, etc.) have the power and right to challenge racial and health inequities. *However, we are conscious that it's not just the work of the people that have been historically underinvested to dismantle oppressive systems. Therefore, we are rallying an intergenerational movement of Redesigners for Justice.*

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## About Kaiser Permanente

**Founded in 1945, Kaiser Permanente is recognized as one of America's leading health care providers and nonprofit health plans.** Kaiser Permanente exists to provide high-quality, affordable health care services and to improve the health of our members and the communities we serve.

***Care for all that is you***  
*At Kaiser Permanente, we believe the only way to care for all of you, is by seeing all that is you. Live well and thrive--We'll take care of the rest.*



# A Case for Equity-Centered Community Design™

Equity-Centered Community Design™ (ECCD), created by Creative Reaction Lab, is an award winning, unique creative problem solving process based on equity, humility-building, integrating history and healing practices, addressing power dynamics, and co-creating with the community.

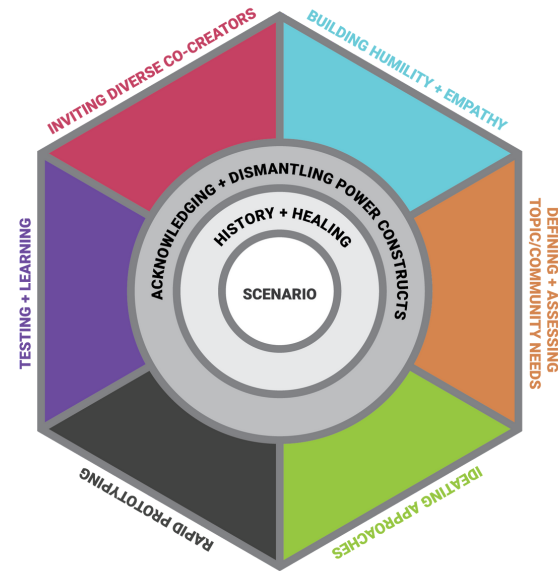
This design process focuses on a community's culture and needs so that they can gain tools to dismantle systemic oppression and create a future with equity for all. Creative Reaction Lab's goal is to share Equity-Centered Community Design™ to achieve sustained community health, economic opportunities, and social and cultural solidarity.

**ECCD™ highlights communities' culture and needs while assessing what needs to happen to create lasting change.**

## Unpacking ECCD™

While design thinking has become a more widely accepted field in creative problem solving, many practitioners and general adopters have challenged its neutral and incomplete approach in applying its practice to wicked social problems.

*I love your visuals. I love that you have concentric circles with the different elements and I think the more we can help people see that things are not linear, that things are interconnected, that things are layered and complex, but don't have to be messy in a certain way. – Jazmine Mora, Program Manager, National Equity, Inclusion & Diversity*



Additionally, people looking to intentionally design equitable solutions (not just improving diversity/representation) are calling out most institutional approaches as theory-based, performative, or non-existent. Since 2017, CRXLAB has pioneered, launched, and tested a framework in which the assets and application of "equity" and "design" approaches are unified: ECCD™. Sector agnostic, ECCD™ has been practiced in media departments, technology platforms, educational institutions, healthcare, philanthropy, and more.

The ECCD™ problem solving process centers the people with lived experience as the Living Experts with whom we should co-create to design interventions that are equitable, sustainable, and meet people's needs. Within this context, practitioners understand that if we are to build equitable interventions, there is significant value in seeking and understanding historical context and the need for healing practices, along with acknowledging and dismantling power constructs throughout a design process.

# Background.

Creative Reaction Lab piloted the Equity by Design Immersive Series in two locations in Spring 2019 – Oakland, CA and New York City, NY. Both engagements brought together 30-45 people from various backgrounds, sectors, and identities to learn about and practice the concepts of Equity-Centered Community Design™. In 2020 the Equity by Design Immersive Series continued in Seattle focusing on thoughtful ways Kaiser could embed principles of ECCD™ into their work practices. The learnings from those engagements inspired Kaiser to begin applying ECCD™ concepts to their Business Resource Groups (BRGs).

***"During that time of of reckoning for our organization [Kaiser] in the world, we did take it upon ourselves to start applying what we have learned [about ECCD™] into things like our BRG program or business resource group program." -- Michelle Linares, Senior Manager, National Equity, Inclusion & Diversity***

# EQUITY BY DESIGN IMMERSIVE WEEKEND

HOSTED AND SPONSORED BY  
KAISER PERMANENTE WASHINGTON

Seattle/Renton

Nov. 1 – 3, 2019

Register at: [bit.ly/ExD-Seattle](http://bit.ly/ExD-Seattle)



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# Reimagine Equitable BRGs.

Business Resource Groups (BRGs) have existed at Kaiser Permanente (KP) for over 30 years. They began as social networks that focused on skill building, support, mentoring, and establishing connections between co-workers in meaningful ways.

Kaiser continues to address challenges around centering living experts, shifting power and designing with employees as partners in redesigning systems of oppression within the healthcare sector.

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**I think about our members, our community and our workforce that we're all kind of trying to center lived experience and sometimes those lived experiences are in conflict given that we are in a system , we are in a healthcare system. So it's just interesting because we tailor it to whatever we're working on. We ask who's at the table, thinking about what we talked about in Equity-Center Community Design™, can we talk about the power dynamics here, how do people see themselves in their role, like, what power do they think they have? So we try to have more of those kind of tailored conversations when we are invited to spaces to help people think about, you know, what that looks like and what we mean by lived experience. -*Barbara Obena, Senior Manager, National Equity & Inclusion***

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# Approach.

*"Our [Kaiser's] leaders have amazing ideas and aren't always presented the opportunities to be part of different enterprise strategic approaches or conversations."*

Using ECCD™, Kaiser was able to think about the *"best ways to empower people to be designers at the table and design allies."* Out of this observation, Kaiser developed **Creative Labs**, a safe space for leaders to think, reflect and collaborate on best strategic approaches for centering equity.

Kaiser more formally began having intentional conversations around history & healing practices . Discussing ways to shift power by amplifying the voices of underrepresented team members and with their consent, providing them with a safe platform to be authentic and open equity at Kaiser.

We are "helping folx along their equity journey to "create those habits , mindsets and behaviors so folx could take a step back and really have people apply equity in their day to day work."

Reaching over 100 people with leadership, Kaiser began to explore what it would look like for their BRGs to contribute to the organization as "Equity Designer" "Equity Allies" and "Redesigners for Justice."

Kaiser did not want to simply check a box for equity, they wanted to embed ECCD practices that encouraged continuity and kept equity at the forefront of all of their conversations.

# Outcomes

30

**Years in  
existence**

10

**BRG Affinity  
Spaces**

5000+

**BRG Members**

Business Resource Groups (BRGs) have existed at Kaiser Permanente (KP) for over 30 years. They began as social networks that focused on skill building, support, mentoring, and establishing connections between co-workers in meaningful ways. Today, Kaiser has 10 BRG Affinity Spaces which continue to grow and expand various social identities. With over 5,000 BRG members, Kaiser is actively changing the way they address systemic oppression by center equity and the lived experiences of their employees and those they provide services to.

