

RACIAL EQUITY TOOLKIT

A Road Map for Government, Organizations and Communities

In partnership with the Michigan Department of Civil Rights
and the Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy at the University of Michigan





A Note from MDCR Director Arbulu

During 2016, MDCR sought to better understand the role of systemic racism, implicit bias and racial equity and how it could be advanced in local communities and jurisdictions.

The Flint Water Crisis Report: Systemic Racism Through the Lens of Flint, released in February 2017 by the Michigan Civil Rights Commission (MCRC), included key recommendations for advancing racial equity and rebuilding trust and credibility in Flint. As a result, MDCR is developing a collective impact approach firmly grounded in inclusion and equity that recognizes the role of government and local communities in fostering collaborations and leveraging institutional partnerships to help achieve racial equity.

MDCR seeks to offer resources and strategies for creating and implementing inclusive practices through a racial equity lens that can serve as a model for other government agencies and communities to create and sustain long-term change. We recognize that this is an ongoing process that requires developing strategies to embed inclusion internally as well as constructing a racial equity framework that will serve as a template for other government agencies and communities to follow.

The **Racial Equity Toolkit** is such a template – a step-by-step guide available to any government agency, community or organization looking to advance racial equity. The Toolkit provides an easy-to-follow process for incorporating racial equity into all decision-making and policy development.

We designed this toolkit to help you launch your own equity efforts, but you're not in this alone. MDCR stands ready to help you begin to approach problems and solutions from an equity perspective. We look forward to joining forces with you and learning from your experiences as we work together to build a more equitable Michigan.

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Racial Equity

Why Focus on Race?

Race is a social construct that has evolved over time and is frequently misunderstood. Race is often assumed to have a biological basis and ethnic groups are perceived as sharing genetic bloodlines – misconceptions that can lead to assumptions about the correlation between race and behavior, physical attributes, skin color and more. However, race, like ethnicity in general, is a cultural category rather than a biological reality. “Races” are defined through socially-constructed categories rather than from scientific classifications based on common genes.¹ As communities remain segregated and racially isolated due to historical practices, the opportunities for meaningful multicultural exposure – a process that helps to dismantle assumptions and stereotypes – become limited.

For all residents of Michigan to experience and create equitable opportunities to grow and thrive, we need to promote a shared understanding of the role that history and culture play in perpetuating racial disparities. Through this shared knowledge, we can develop intentional approaches to dismantle institutional and structural inequities that are found across indicators for success, such as education, employment, housing, health, quality of life and incarceration.

Racism – a system of advantage based on race – is pervasive, yet it can be dismantled through strategies that promote systemic change along with real conversations about shared values and principles. For instance, by reviewing racially discriminatory practices and policies that have led to the allocation of resources based on where we live, we can begin to understand why some communities have prospered while others have not. Too often we try to address these racial disparities through “color blind” and/or “race neutral” approaches that do not take into account the impact of unconscious biases influenced by racialized societal messages. Intentional strategies aimed at acknowledging the impact of structural marginalization and discrimination are needed to create meaningful and long-lasting change.

¹ *Cultural Anthropology, Appreciating Cultural Diversity*, 17th Edition, Conrad Phillip Kottak

Why Now?

If we want to create an effective and inclusive democracy, now is the time to act. The demographics of the United States, including Michigan, are changing. Between 2000 and 2015, Michigan witnessed rapid growth in its Middle Eastern, Asian and Latinx populations.² To benefit from the innovation, creativity and broader perspective that reside in diverse communities, Michigan will need to be intentional about developing policies and practices designed specifically to address and/or eliminate embedded systems of exclusion.

Why is a Systems Approach Important?

To bring about constructive change, we need to develop the habit and the capacity to think systemically in order to better understand how systems of advantage create inequities. Systems of advantage are embedded in history, culture and identity. They have internal components and external components. These components are moved by power and economics. The internal components are shaped by biases, privilege and internalized messages about race. The external components play out in relationships which are interpersonal, institutional and structural.³

The Four Dimensions – A System of Advantage Based on Race

Internalized: refers to biases and ideas about race induced by our human predisposition to form in-groups and out-groups and the impact of internalized racialized messages.⁴ When these processes are combined with our natural tendency to follow cognitive scripts,⁵ we begin to experience dissonance between our conscious values and unconscious biases.

Interpersonal: refers to internalized cultural messages that are shared through personal interactions. Since human beings do not live in isolation, these messages are sustained through shared practices that often include some individuals and groups and exclude others.

Institutional: refers to institutions and organizations adopting and/or maintaining policies and procedures that result in inequitable outcomes for people of color. Institutional racism may occur within schools, courts, the military, government agencies, businesses and any number of other organizations and societal structures. Some of these institutional practices lead to disparities in employment, education, incarceration, health and more.

² Michigan’s Changing Demographics – What do they mean for our Future? Presentation to Michigan State University’s 2016 Legislative Leadership Program, Kurt Metzger, Dec 6 2016. http://ippsr.msu.edu/sites/default/files/llp/metzger_llp.pdf

³ *Cracking the Codes – The System of Racial Inequity* by Shakti Butler

⁴ Jane Elliot – [A Class Divided](#)

⁵ [Association for Psychological Science](#)

Structural: refers to the way historical, social, psychological, cultural and political norms perpetuate advantages based on race. An example would be the way racial disparities in income, wealth and access to quality education originated from a combination of factors including our history of slavery, Jim Crow laws and educational or governmental policies that created access for some and barriers for others.

Developing a Common Language

The cultural factors that shape our shared understanding are often guided by the words and language we inherit from our communities. Edward Sapir, widely acknowledged as the founder of American anthropology, believed that the language we use influences the way we think and how we understand the world around us. He suggested that once we become a part of a linguistic system, the system imposes and dictates our orientation in the world.⁶

To increase shared understanding, it is important to clearly define the terms we use in conversations. Words with different meanings are often used as synonyms in discussions about race, which can lead to confusion. Although the terms below are interconnected, they are not synonyms and must be used with precision.

Defining the Terms

Diversity vs. Inclusion

In conversations about race, we often hear the terms diversity and inclusion used as synonyms. But diversity simply points to difference. On the other hand, inclusion describes the need to incorporate these differences on a shared platform where they are accepted and valued. At times, the concept of diversity is used to imply something positive, yet the term by itself is neutral as there are many environments that are diverse but not necessarily inclusive. For instance, we may find a workplace where leadership belongs to the dominant group while those outside of the dominant group occupy the remaining roles. We must take proactive steps to create and sustain inclusion, recognizing that diversity does not necessarily lead to integration and inclusive practices.

Equality vs. Equity

Equality is often associated with justice and sameness, yet when its practice and implementation lack an equity lens through which physical, structural and historical differences are acknowledged, inequitable outcomes are created and sustained. Equity takes into consideration how the past has shaped the present and assesses social advantages/disadvantages in order to promote justice and fairness.

⁶ Ottenheimer, Harriet Joseph. *The Anthropology of Language An Introduction to Linguistic Anthropology*. Belmont: Wadsworth, 2005.

Prejudice vs. Racism

Prejudices are preconceived notions and opinions about an individual based on limited information. A person can harbor prejudices that are not exclusive to race. On the other hand, racism, a system of advantage based on race is shaped by racial prejudice and derives its strength from the collective actions and practices sustained throughout history by an ideology of racial hierarchy. Although people from all racial and ethnic backgrounds have internalized prejudices and stereotypes which devalue groups based on assumptions about behavior, values, capabilities or attributes, the dominant group is often sheltered by the system of advantage in ways that differ from those who reside outside of it.

Melting Pot (Assimilation) vs. Pluralism (Multiculturalism)

The concept of a melting pot is often used to represent an open and inclusive society. It describes a place where people from all over the world come to build a better life and eventually become one united group. However, this concept directly relates to the concept of assimilation, a process where formerly distinct groups socially merge together to form one cultural identity. These ideas are often used hand in hand with notions of pluralism and multiculturalism. Yet, pluralism is shaped by a process where distinct groups share and coexist with others of differing cultural and social identities. Multiculturalism recognizes that while we share many things in common, our cultural experiences are not the same. Pluralism and multiculturalism share at their core the recognition that differences are not deficiencies. The melting pot notion is often controlled by the dominant culture and forces others to comply with the prescribed norms set in place by those in power.

Why Focus on Racial Equity?

A [racial equity lens](#) is valuable because it sharpens and improves the decision-making process by separating symptoms from causes when identifying solutions to persistent problems. The implementation of racial equity shapes a social condition where racial identity no longer predicts how one fares in society, and a focus on racial equity allows us to acknowledge the intergenerational effects of discrimination while purposefully seeking to promote strategies where those who have been marginalized can fully participate. Through a racial equity lens, decision makers can identify and dismantle policies, practices, attitudes and cultural messages that sustain differential outcomes by race and/or fail to eliminate them.⁷

⁷ Center for Assessment and Policy Development



How the Past Shapes the Present

From the 1930s through the 1960s, Federal Housing Administration policies explicitly limited loans to neighborhoods of color based on race.⁸ Approximately 98% of FHA loans during this time went to white applicants. This practice combined with others – segregation in schools and a lack of access for people of color to housing based on location through exclusionary brokering – illustrate how past practices that shaped residential segregation and racial isolation led to disproportionate generational wealth accumulation and racial inequities today.

The Fair Housing Law of 1968 was designed to protect buyers and renters from sellers' and landlords' discriminatory practices and to provide housing opportunities to all people. The Fair Housing Act (Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1968) introduced mechanisms to prohibit:

- Refusing to sell or rent a dwelling to any person because of race, color, religion, sex or nation origin.
- Discriminating on the basis of race, color, religion or national origin in the terms, conditions or privilege of the sale or rental of a dwelling.
- Advertising the sale or rental of a dwelling indicating preference based on race, color, religion or national origin.
- Coercing, threatening, intimidating or interfering with a person's enjoyment or exercise of housing rights based on discriminatory reasons, or retaliating against a person or organization that aids or encourages the exercise or enjoyment of fair housing rights.

Even with the implementation of mechanisms to disrupt discrimination, residential segregation and racial isolation continue to increase. Intentional strategies that raise awareness of the root causes of systemic inequities strategically help to sustain long-term inclusive policies and practices.

⁸Race and Recession – Applied Research Center

Exploring Racism Within Your Community

The metaphor of a lens – a racial equity lens – allows us to see present day problems, such as gentrification and the marginalization of communities of color, in new ways. Viewing these issues through a racial equity lens reveals that disparities in Michigan are the result of historic policies, practices and power dynamics which disproportionately affect communities of color and are not the result of inherent racial differences based on skin color. To address past injustices and serve the residents of Michigan adequately, we need to acknowledge the historical root causes of racial disparities and **a racial equity lens serves as an effective tool for creating systemic solutions for change.**

As an initial step, decision makers can utilize a racial equity impact assessment (REIA) tool to measure desired goals and challenges to avoid unintended consequences. **An REIA is a systematic examination of how different racial and ethnic groups are likely to be affected by a proposed decision or action.**⁹

In other words, a REIA helps to engage decision makers in a process that promotes intentional change and anticipates adverse consequences. The REIA provides clear options for dismantling, reducing and preventing inequitable outcomes. It is best used during the decision-making process, prior to enacting a new proposal. It is used to inform decisions, much like environmental impact statements, fiscal impact reports and workplace risk assessments.¹⁰

REIA Samples:

[REIA - Race Forward](#)

[REIA - Center for the Study of Social Policy](#)

For a list of nationwide resources and examples that advocate for racial equity in economic policies and public budgets, see [Resource File](#).

Targeted vs. Universal Strategies

In a time of perceived scarcity and contracting government budgets, targeted policies may be viewed as favoring a particular constituent group rather than the public good.¹¹ As a default alternative to targeted policies, a universal approach – often depicted as race neutral – is introduced as a method to increase equal positive outcomes for everyone. Both targeted and universal approaches are often controversial since they appear to favor certain groups and/or neglect historical inequities. An alternative to either a straight universal approach or a targeted one is targeted universalism. This method rejects the tendency of a universal approach that often discards the reality of historically oppressed groups who are often situated differently relative to the institutional access to resources in society. It also rejects the controversial methods found in targeted strategies.

⁹ raceforward

¹⁰ [RaceForward.org](#)

¹¹ Poverty and Race Research Action Council

Targeting within universalism means being proactive and goal-oriented about achievable outcomes and requires intentional steps:

Step 1

Define a **universal** goal - i.e., 100% proficiency in eight grade math.

Step 2

Measure how the overall population fares relative to the universal goal - i.e., 80% of eight graders are proficient.

Step 3

Measure the performance of population segments relative to the universal goal - i.e., 70% of Latinxs are proficient.

Step 4

Understand how structures and other factors support or impede group progress toward the universal goal - i.e., classroom instruction materials and lessons designed for English speakers may impede learning including math proficiency in Latinx students.

Step 5

Implement **targeted** strategies so that each group can achieve the universal goal based upon their need and circumstances - i.e., ESL-specific math tutoring for Latinx students (another group may require a completely different strategy to achieve the same universal goal.)

Targeted universalism is a frame for designing policy that acknowledges our common goals while also addressing the sharp contrasts in access to opportunity between differently-situated sub-groups, such as barriers to quality education, well-paying work, fair mortgages and more. To transform structural inequity into structural opportunity, policies need to address these contrasts and measure success based on outcomes.¹²

The implementation of equity requires that we view inequities through a systemic lens, recognizing that culturally principles based on meritocracy, equal opportunity and personal responsibility are often shaped and influenced by external factors that generate advantages for some and disadvantages for others. To create and implement equity, we must build into the decision-making process intentional steps designed to dismantle patterns of discrimination created by these systems of advantage.

¹²Projectlinkedfate.org

Racial Equity and MDCR



In January 2016, the Michigan Civil Rights Commission (MCRC) passed a resolution to investigate the intersection of civil rights and the Flint Water Crisis. After hearing from Flint residents, elected officials, experts, and considering generations of racially-exclusionary public policies and practices that contributed to these circumstances, MCRC issued its [Flint Water Report](#) on February 17, 2017. Among its recommendations, the Commission called for the development of a racial equity framework at all levels of government to examine the opportunity gap that persists in Michigan, especially for people of color. The Commission directed the Michigan Department of Civil Rights (MDCR) to develop a plan to embed racial equity analysis into its work, which will serve as a blueprint for working with other state departments and local units of government.

MDCR is the lead agency in championing equity in the state of Michigan. It is responsible for carrying out the guarantees against discrimination in the Michigan Constitution and state civil rights laws, which include ensuring equal opportunity and equal access for all in the areas of education, employment, housing, public accommodations and public services.

To begin to address the opportunity gap, MDCR became a member of the Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE), a network of state and local governments across the United States working to achieve racial equity and advance opportunities for all. Through its membership in GARE, MDCR seeks to work with cities and counties across the state to champion racial equity policy-making.

To advance racial equity in the state of Michigan, MDCR aims to serve as a resource hub, a network facilitator and a partner to local governments committed to this work. Through its Community Engagement officers, MDCR will provide training and education to local government officials and community leaders and encourage collaboration with communities across the state. MDCR will also advance racial equity policies at the state level and attempt to reduce the opportunity gap that persists within our state.

Long-term sustainable changes within MDCR and in Michigan communities

will require a comprehensive pro-equity approach in housing, employment, education, public accommodation and public services. While state and local government institutions may not be solely responsible for creating the institutional and systemic racial disparities in our state, they are able to address it. The effort will require increased coordination, collaboration and cross-sectoral approaches and solutions that match the scale of the inequities that exist. Only by creating a network of communities committed to change and by integrating a racial equity framework into our day-to-day work can we hope to achieve our goal of achieving racial equity in Michigan and ensuring that Michigan is a welcoming, diverse, inclusive and thriving state with equal opportunity and access for all.

Why a Racial Equity Toolkit?



Government, from the federal level to the municipal level, has at times upheld laws, public policies and practices that have had devastating consequences for communities of color. Government has upheld racial hierarchy through policies that have sustained – through seemingly race-neutral approaches – unintentional forms of prejudices which normalize one dominant racial experience and result in policies and practices that negatively impact individuals who are not members of the dominant group. In this way, government has actively decided who benefits and who is burdened by these policies and practices. Examples include developing infrastructure in neighborhoods where people of color would be most impacted without evaluating the projected harms and benefits to this community, promoting healthcare practices that are culturally insensitive resulting in decreased participation and distrust, and imposing identification requirements to receive social services that disadvantage families with mixed citizenship status.

What role does local government play in advancing a racially equitable future?

Agencies of local governments are closest to the people. As such, they possess a unique and significant role in advancing racial equity. Local government can advance racial equity by revising or removing harmful policies and laws, creating new policies and practices to eradicate barriers, and collaborating with influential institutions and systems to advance equitable outcomes. Municipal government can address the root causes of racism and racial inequities rather than focusing on its symptoms. By eliminating inequitable policies and practices, local government opens the door for more participation and access to opportunities and encourages cultural competency through shared learning.

By using a [Racial Equity Toolkit](#), local governments can develop a framework, strategy and the resources needed to intentionally disrupt unintended

outcomes and maximize the effectiveness of strategies designed to eliminate racial inequities in their communities. Given the complicated and pervasive nature of racism, this effort requires focus and specificity, as each inequitable outcome requires a tailored strategy that:

- Seeks to proactively eliminate racial inequities and advance equity.
- Identifies clear goals, objectives and measurable outcomes.
- Engages community in decision-making processes.
- Identifies who will benefit or be burdened by a given decision, examines potential unintended consequences of a decision, advances racial equity and mitigates unintended negative consequences.
- Develops mechanisms for successful implementation and evaluation of impact.¹³

Purpose/Mission/Goal/Commitment

The racial equity toolkit is a compilation of frameworks, strategies, implementation processes and resources from localities working on racial equity. **It serves as a step-by-step guide to help municipal governments start their racial equity work.** While the toolkit has a general structure, it is by no means a one-size-fits-all model. It is a beginning guide providing tangible options – options that have been tried by other cities and townships – that can assist governments in deciding which methods would best suit the demographics and needs of their communities and their goals. With this toolkit, local governments can better assess their internal and external capabilities to accomplish their racial equity goals.

Who Should Use This Toolkit?

The MDCR racial equity toolkit – the first of its kind – is designed to guide government, communities and organizational leaders committed to building a more equitable Michigan. The toolkit was created with local government, elected officials and community-based organizations in mind, as each has a unique role in shaping equitable policies and practices and ensuring that communities participate throughout the process.

In the racial equity toolkit, we discuss how to begin an honest conversation within local government or a specific department on racial equity. We then move to information gathering to understand the specific racial inequities in a community. Equipped with a better understanding, local governments can then begin developing a strategic plan to address racial inequities with

community engagement where possible. One approach may be to pilot test the plan by working with a particular area or unit, modifying the plan as needed. Once it has proven successful, governments can roll out their strategic plan on a broader scale, keeping in mind existing government structures, procedures and the role of community engagement. During and after the implementation phase, local governments will want to continuously evaluate their work and make changes as needed.

¹³ Government Alliance on Race and Equity

RACIAL EQUITY TOOLKIT



STEP 1: Begin a Conversation About Race

Starting the Conversation

Beginning a conversation about race and racial inequity within communities or organizations can be a difficult process, but it is an important part of building a foundation for change. When talking about sensitive topics, creating a climate of dialogue conducive to growth takes time, patience and faith in the process. Building a framework for open and frank dialogue is a central component of building better understanding. When getting started, it is important to keep in mind a few key aspects to creating a climate conducive to constructive dialogue.

Participation

In the beginning stages, consider working with a small group of participants. We recommend limiting the size of each group to 10 individuals to allow the dialogue to function most effectively. A small group will help build trust, ensure personal investment, allow participants to practice the process, and peak the interest of others who may be interested in participating. If participation is mandatory in a dialogue, keep in mind that there may be greater resistance and skepticism from participants. Leaders will need to exercise careful consideration in developing creative methods to promote dialogue and engagement.

Developing a Common Language

It is essential to develop a common language, where terminology is defined and provides a foundation for clear understanding. The definition of terms such as diversity, inclusion, equality, racism and prejudice need to be reviewed and revised. Participants must recognize that the conversation will focus on race extensively but not exclusively, since the exploration of systemic advantage frequently leads to conversations that extend beyond race to other areas such as gender and class.

Finding a Facilitator

In building the space for dialogue, participants come with titles and positions. As such, it is important that all participants feel that they are on equal footing. A well-trained facilitator can serve a mediating role between staff and directors and should be someone who can foster meaningful dialogue. Individuals in managerial or supervisory positions need to be conscious of the power dynamic their presence may create. Being mindful of these distinctions will help to create the space required to achieve sustainable change in the long run. Having a facilitator with experience in addressing the questions that will arise is important.

Facilitator's Role

Good facilitators help establish an environment where participants can discuss complex and sometimes emotionally-charged issues. Facilitators also help participants understand that the dialogue is a place for shared learning and not a forum for participants to voice their opinion without listening to others.¹⁴ Facilitators must adopt an approach that promotes a sense of shared responsibility to be a part of the solution. **Facilitators must help participants understand that the ideology that has sustained racism and discrimination for centuries did not go away with the Civil Rights Act of 1964.** Facilitators must remind participants that what sustains racism in the 21st century is no longer solely rooted in overt discrimination, but rather in unintentional practices rooted in social dissonance, implicit bias and cultural conditioning. Facilitators must present racism as a system based on racial hierarchy in order to effectively dismantle the commonly-held perception that personal success is rooted in individual efforts isolated from systemic advantages. Developing the capacity to think systemically will help participants understand the need to unlearn internalized social messages in order to create the new level of awareness needed to develop socially-conscious solutions.

Facilitators must guide the conversation by using specific talking points that engage participants through a compassionate approach that promotes collective engagement and a desire to be a part of the solution. Some helpful talking points include:

- We all have internalized messages that shape our biases; the work of breaking down those biases is and will always be an on-going process of unlearning old messages and learning new ones.
- Racism today is primarily sustained through implicit bias rather than overt discrimination.

¹⁴ Inclusion, Diversity & Equity – University of Missouri

- We did not create the system of advantage, but we have a social responsibility to dismantle it.
- Color consciousness is different than color blindness. The former is rooted in the recognition that we do see color, the latter is focused on sameness and often ignores systemic advantages that have created an uneven playing field.¹⁵

Setting Common Group Expectations

In holding the initial dialogue session, work as a group to develop a list of common expectations that all agree on. The facilitator should refer to these expectations if conversation begins to derail or participants stray too far from these expectations. Agreed-upon expectations ensure that everyone involved feels safe, heard and challenged to grow. Examples of common group expectations include:

I am a Teacher and a Learner – This phrase means that everyone has something to share and teach the group from their personal experiences and expertise, and at the same time, everyone is a learner and can learn new information from the teachers surrounding them. When practiced regularly, this phrase can help to equalize power dynamics within a dialogue. One technique is to invite every participant to repeat this phrase as the dialogue begins and everyone is introducing themselves.

Listen Actively – This group expectation creates a distinction between hearing what a person says and truly listening to what someone is sharing or allowing yourself to become preoccupied with what to say next. To listen actively, all individuals in the group must maintain eye contact with the speaker, display body language that demonstrates engagement and practice empathy in understanding what someone is sharing. To encourage active listening, the group should discuss this phrase in the initial dialogue session and have individuals talk about how we know that someone is truly listening to us when we are speaking.

Step Up, Step Up – This phrase is a reminder for individuals who are typically more vocal to **step up by listening** more, and for people who are typically quieter to **step up and speak** and share more.

Use I Statements – This expectation asks individuals to speak for themselves and refrain from using stereotypes or generalizations about groups of people using “we” or “they” statements. This also allows individuals to take responsibility for their thoughts and opinions. Examples of “I” statements include, “I think...”, “I feel...”, “I’ve heard...”, “I know...”

¹⁵ For more information regarding the facilitation process – see guideline in resource section.

Intent vs. Impact – Acknowledge that although we may have good intentions, our words may have a negative impact. To participate in community dialogue, keep in mind that impact matters more than intent.

Address the Idea, Not the Person – Ask everyone to be mindful of distinguishing between information received and the person providing the information. When discussing what someone says, it is helpful to address the idea someone shared and to avoid personalizing it. This allows individuals to disagree or agree with what was said without placing blame, shame or praise on a particular person. For example, one might say “I don’t agree with the idea shared because...” instead of “I don’t agree with Maya...”

Practice Mindfulness – be aware of your personal connection to the topic and remain receptive to multiple perspectives. Each person’s sharing provides an opportunity for learning. Focus on understanding the person’s point of view rather than on your counter-response.

Incorporating Opinions and Data

The facilitator and individuals involved in planning a dialogue session should prepare a guide or generalized goal for the session. Keep in mind that this plan is always subject to change because of the natural flow of the dialogue. The plan should involve ways to introduce dialogue and develop an approach for a given controversial topic. Throughout the session, the plan should include a means to introduce new information based on research, data and trends. Introducing facts and data is essential and allows opinions to be articulated within an understanding of the data. This framework can help challenge preconceived notions or stereotypes that may appear to be commonly accepted within your community. The definitions and data that you will find throughout this toolkit can aid in developing a robust conversation around difficult topics.

STEP 2:

Understand the State of Your Community’s Racial Equity

Why Start a Community Dialogue?

To begin an authentic and sustainable dialogue, it is important to consider the ways that racial inequities are understood and discussed within your community. After completing step 1, these same principles and structure for dialogue can take place within the greater community at large. With a more informed understanding of your community’s current state in terms of racial equity, you can meet the wider community where they are and develop a more realistic plan to move forward.

Facilitate a Community Dialogue

The focus of your community dialogue should be to hear from members of your community and their current thoughts and feelings about race relations. We encourage local government employees who are comfortable with the topic to play the role of facilitators in listening to community members, as opposed to introducing data and facts. Keep in mind that effective community dialogue:

- Moves toward solutions rather than continuing to discuss the problem.
- Reaches beyond usual boundaries and offers opportunities for new partnership.
- Aims for a change of heart, going beyond sharing and understanding to transforming participants.

Here are some technical details to keep in mind when facilitating a community dialogue:

- Seek appropriate ways to gather more information from residents.
- If possible, have participants sign waiver forms for participation and to allow use of residents’ feedback.
- Follow up with participants should you decide to include their feedback in any future public information.

How Can MDCR Help?

MDCR and its partners in racial equity have a shared vision that Michigan can become a place where residents from all communities have equitable opportunities to grow and thrive. To achieve this mission, MDCR can offer technical assistance as communities begin to do this work. MDCR staff have been trained on racial equity and recognize that addressing racial equity is not an easily-achieved goal. MDCR is available to answer questions, to develop a plan for creating change and to support communities as they run into unexpected hurdles along the way.

Conduct a Community Survey and Create a Community Equity Profile

When developing a strategic plan for addressing racial inequity, it is important to accurately address the challenges that residents will face, and the role racism has played within your community and the state of Michigan. To direct departments within your city or county to make necessary policy or program changes, provide examples of disparate outcomes that exist within your community. For example, some communities may face significant racial disparities in health outcomes but not in educational outcomes. In other communities, access to affordable housing might be the greatest challenge, while access to other city services might not be an issue.

To support the work you plan to do within your department, among partner departments and organizations and externally to the community, consider creating a [Community Equity Profile](#) that accurately displays the demographics and outcomes in your community. Data collected to create your profile may come from:

- Census data
- Local and state-level data
- Qualitative surveys conducted with community members
- Qualitative surveys conducted with government employees around racial equity policies and programs
- Comments collected during your community dialogue
- National racial equity groups

Quantitative data and qualitative data offer different stories about the outcomes based on race in your community. In addition to collecting raw data from sources like the U.S. Census or from the Michigan Open Data portal, consider developing and implementing a **Community Survey** to measure attitudes and knowledge about disparate outcomes in your community. This allows you to gather information specifically on the policy areas of greatest interest or impact.

Making the data you've gathered available is also important. Creating easy-to-read graphs and tables which can be understood by a variety of audiences and pulling out poignant quotes from your survey data is helpful in developing a compelling case as to why it's important to eliminate racial inequities. Producing high-quality materials may help with competitive grants centered on achieving racial equity in government.

Here are some resources which can help you gather this data:

- [American Fact Finder](#): The U.S. Census Bureau's website is free to use and contains Decennial Census data as well as 5-year, 3-year, and 1-year estimates from the American Community Survey.
- [National Equity Atlas](#): Created by PolicyLink and the USC Program for Environmental and Regional Equity, the National Equity Atlas is a data and policy tool which maps many equity-related variables in the 100 largest cities and 150 largest metro areas in the country. To generate city-specific or region-specific data, type a city or metro area name into the search box under the Data Summaries tab. Cities and regions in Michigan for which data is available on the NEA include:
 - o City of Detroit
 - o Ann Arbor
 - o Detroit-Warren-Livonia Metro
 - o Flint Metro
 - o Grand Rapids-Wyoming Metro
 - o Kalamazoo-Portage Metro
 - o Lansing-East Lansing Metro
- [Detroit Open Data](#): In the City of Detroit's open data portal includes information on education, public health, transportation, public safety and property.
- [Michigan Open Data](#): The State of Michigan's open data portal consists of data from the Michigan Department of Transportation, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, the Michigan Bureau of Labor Statistics and Michigan school data.
- [City of Seattle's Race and Social Justice Initiative Employee Survey](#): A summary of the findings of the City of Seattle's Employee Survey on Race and Social Justice, the survey asks respondents if they are familiar with the concept of racial equity, have ever participated in Race and Social Justice Initiative (RSJI) trainings or programs, have ever implemented a racial equity policy in their department, and what their feelings are about race relations within their department. At the end of the report is a copy of the survey that was given to City of Seattle employees, which can be modified and used to survey municipal employees in your community.

For examples of how this data can be displayed once collected, consult the following resources:

- [Inclusive Dubuque Community Equity Profile](#)
- [Kansas City Equity Profile](#)
- [Equitable Growth Profile of Fairfax County, Virginia](#)

Understand Your Community's Unique History and Your Government's Role in Creating Racial Inequities

The last step before you design your strategic plan for addressing racial inequity is to understand your community's unique history on race relations and how your local government may have contributed to creating racial inequities. As stated in the [City of Portland Racial Equity Toolkit](#), **"Past harm is likely to still have current day impacts on people's quality of life and most certainly on communities' lack of trust in government."** This context is useful when developing community engagement strategies and crafting a specific community engagement plan.¹⁶

In attempting to look closer at your community's history, finding specific information about this harm at the local level may be difficult. Many communities have only recently begun to capture data which breaks down impact and participation by race. It also may be difficult to track the direct impact of policies created in the past on present-day racial inequities.

Areas to consider in your research may include the impact of housing policy in your community, trends in housing affordability, locations of new public housing units and the racial demographics of people moving in and out of your community. Another example is examining the neighborhoods where residents of color live and attempting to trace the differences in property values in these neighborhoods compared to neighborhoods with predominantly white residents. You can also research differences in police/community relations through traffic stops data analysis as well as school district's efforts to address racial disparities in suspension, expulsion, etc. The City of Portland's Racial Equity Toolkit suggests that your city's human resources and procurement departments "...may be able to provide the history of barriers people of color faced in attaining employment in city government or obstacles contractors of color faced in securing public contracts."¹⁷

While collecting city or county-specific data on disparate impact policies may be difficult, it is essential to pointing out differences in outcomes in your community based on race/color.

¹⁶ Brooks, Danielle, et al. City of Portland Racial Equity Toolkit. Office of Equity and Human Rights, <https://www.portlandoregon.gov/oehr/71685>.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

STEP 3: Develop Your Racial Equity Strategic Plan

Identify Community and Intergovernmental Partners

You want to engage residents in a thoughtful and meaningful way at every stage of the process - from the beginning stages of information gathering and strategic planning to implementation and finally evaluation. Consider recruiting residents from various local non-profits, community development corporations and community-based organizations to create a **Resident Advisory Board**, which will be actively involved in the racial equity work you do. This board can provide feedback and guidance during all stages of the planning, implementation and evaluation processes.

To create policies and programs which undo existing racial inequities, it is important to work with various departments of government as well as with regional policy-making bodies to devise a strategy that brings all relevant stakeholders to the table and capitalizes on the resources, funding, networks and capacity that each organization or department possesses.

For example, if your community identifies that significant racial disparities exist in health, you might bring together stakeholders from the City and County Health Departments, the State of Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, the local Red Cross chapter, the public school system and university health researchers who study health locally. If housing is of great concern, you might bring together the city's housing department, local real estate developer groups, the local Public Housing Authority and the local fair housing centers. At the state and national levels, there are many organizations committed to racial equity work which may be interested in supporting your efforts, including:

- [Government Alliance on Race and Equity](#): GARE is a national network of governments working to achieve racial equity and advance opportunities for all.
- [Michigan Department of Civil Rights](#): MDCR investigates and resolves discrimination complaints and works to prevent discrimination through educational programs that promote voluntary compliance with civil rights laws.
- [Michigan Roundtable for Diversity and Inclusion](#): The Roundtable is one of the oldest human rights organizations in Detroit, going back to before the 1943 race uprising. The Roundtable conducts community engagement campaigns and trainings around the state to educate people about racial equity, LGBTQ issues and cultural competency, and they provide youth programming.¹⁸

¹⁸ *Michigan Roundtable for Diversity and Inclusion*, <http://www.miroundtable.org>

- [The Center for Michigan](#): The Center for Michigan is a “think-and-do” tank founded in 2006 by former newspaper publisher and University of Michigan Regent Phil Power. A 501(c)3 nonprofit organization, the Center’s objective is to make Michigan a better place by encouraging greater understanding and involvement in policy issues among the state’s citizens and making sure their voices are heard. The Center achieves its mission by regularly soliciting citizen views, amplifying those views and projecting them into the halls of power.¹⁹
- [Michigan League for Public Policy](#): The Michigan League for Public Policy is a nonpartisan policy institute dedicated to economic opportunity for all. It is the only state-level organization that addresses poverty in a comprehensive way. No other organization in the state examines state revenues and expenditures and their impact on low-income people. All the League’s work is done through a racial equity lens.²⁰
- [The W.K. Kellogg Foundation](#): Embedded deep within the fabric of its work, mission and vision, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation is committed to racial equity, to developing leaders and to engaging communities in solving their own problems through a racial equity lens.

Set Priorities for Policy and Program Change and Develop a Timeline

Your plans will work best if you lay out clear, measurable and attainable goals with specific indicators assigned to each goal in order to measure if it has been met. Many organizations utilize the Results-Based Accountability framework pioneered by Mark Friedman, which begins planning at the end stage and works backward to develop clear indicators for measuring progress on final goals.²¹

Example:

Measurement Indicators	Goal
1. Asthma rates for children ages 4-18	Eliminate health disparities among children of color and white children.
2. Number of children on free and reduced lunch	
3. Obesity rates for children ages 4-18	

¹⁹ The Center for Michigan, <http://thecenterformichigan.net/>.

²⁰ “Racial Equity.” *Michigan League for Public Policy*, <http://www.mlpp.org/our-work/race-equity>.

²¹ “What Is Results-Based Accountability?” *Clear Impact: Reach Your Peak*, 2016, <https://clearimpact.com/results-based-accountability/>.

The [All-In Cities Policy Toolkit](#) created by PolicyLink is a comprehensive example of strategies, key considerations and their assigned stakeholders based on different policy areas like housing, good jobs and economic security.

Establishing a clear timeline for collecting data will help you measure your progress in reaching your goals. Because many of the goals may take years to accomplish, developing a timeline may be one of the most challenging parts of the strategic planning process.

Determine Your Desired Inputs, Outputs and Outcomes and Establish Your Baseline

Once you have worked with residents and partner organizations and identified racial equity priorities, you will need to map your Racial Equity Strategic Plan. Though plans may differ from one community to the next, every strategic plan should include the following items:

- **Inputs:** What resources, funding and partners will you apply to reach your goal?
- **Measurement Indicators:** What are the measures you will use to know if you have reached your goal? Are these indicators changes in data points or changes in attitudes and participation rates?
- **Outputs:** What are the products resulting from your work?
- **Outcomes/Goals:** What changes or differences have resulted from the outputs?

Here are some examples of how this structure might look in your Racial Equity Strategic Plan:

Input	Measurement Indicator	Output	Outcome/Goal
Lead Organization: City of Jackson Health Department Funding: Michigan Healthy Children Grant	Asthma rates for children ages 4-18	Reduce asthma rates among children of color by 10 percentage points.	Eliminate health disparities among children of color and white children.

Baseline Data: Currently in Jackson, 25% of children of color between ages 4 and 18 have asthma while only ___% white children have asthma.

Input	Measurement Indicator	Output	Outcome/Goal
Lead Organization: Jackson City Council Resources: Participatory Planning Exercises	Responses to the question “Do you feel that you, as an individual, are included in community decision-making?”	Increase “agree” and “strongly agree” responses by 20 percentage points.	People of color in Jackson feel that they are included in community decision-making.

Baseline Data: Currently in Jackson, 15% of people of color responded either “agree” or “strongly agree” to the question, “Do you feel that you, as an individual, are included in community decision-making?” When asked the same question, ___% of whites responded either “agree” or “strongly agree.”

Remember, it is helpful to think first of what goals you would like to achieve and then work backwards to determine more specifically how you will reach them.

After creating your Strategic Plan, use the data you gathered in Step 2 to **Establish Your Baseline**. In other words, what is the starting point from which you will measure progress? This baseline can be a percentage or a raw number, but if you are using a raw number to measure progress, be careful to contextualize the number in a way that it is clear to those reading the report whether or not you have made significant progress.

Identify Budgetary and Staff Needs and Determine Who Will Champion Your Plan

Consider budgetary and staff needs. Depending on the number of needs and capacity of your staff to do the work, you may be able to outsource some parts of the plan. It is important to designate a team or senior manager/supervisor who will champion your plan and push it forward regardless of how many staff or how much money you allocate to your efforts.

Cities across the country have developed different solutions to determining who within their cities will lead racial equity work. In [Multnomah County, Oregon](#), the local government created an **Office of Diversity & Equity** which developed an Equity and Empowerment Lens by which to evaluate county policies.²² In [Seattle, Washington](#), each city department is required to submit a **Racial Equity Work Plan** to the mayor and city council and report regularly on their progress. In [St. Paul, Minnesota](#), city departments established **Racial Equity Change Teams** – groups of people within each department who are

²²“Equity and Empowerment Lens.” *Multnomah County*, 2016, <https://multco.us/diversity-equity/equity-and-empowerment-lens>.

responsible for carrying out racial equity work. Though each of these approaches to delegating and staffing are different, each approach clearly delineates the people responsible for carrying out the racial equity charge. At MDCR, both the executive director and equity officer have been designated to develop and further the work of racial equity internally and externally.

Anticipate Unintended Consequences

The final step in the planning process is to anticipate unintended consequences of your work and mitigate these challenges if possible. One unintended consequence may be pushback from different segments of the community.

Whatever the unintended consequence may be, it is your job as the champion of the strategic plan to articulate the importance of advancing racial equity in order to jettison deeply-held and often unconscious beliefs and structures that create and re-create systems of advantage.

STEP 4: Seek Plan Approval and Stewardship

Once you've drafted and reviewed your racial equity strategic plan, the plan will need to go through an approval process. Because of differences in the scope and extent of intergovernmental and multi-sector involvement, each approval process is unique. The leading government entity may employ executive powers and authority, or they may rely on non-executive methods (or possibly a combination of the two) as a procedural preface to implementing the strategic plan. Local government may exercise its executive power by creating a racial equity commission or issuing executive orders. Local government may take non-executive actions such as reorganizing the structure of departments to better align with its racial equity goals and to aid staff and leadership in transitioning towards a racial equity framework.

Have Strategic Plan Reviewed by Required Parties

Your plan should undergo a thorough approval process where entities, departments and or agencies take ownership of both shared and specific responsibilities. At this critical stage, the strategic plan should not undergo major changes since you risk losing support from vital stakeholders and delaying timelines.

To ensure transparency and accountability, the strategic plan should be made public so that all can provide vital feedback before it is approved and implemented.

Identify Potential Challenges to Implementation and Take Steps to Mitigate Risks

In seeking support for your strategic plan and its implementation, identify potential challenges from influential stakeholders, timing conflicts, competing policy concerns and anything else that could delay or obstruct implementation.

Analysis of Risks. Always consider conducting an analysis of potential risks. Be aware of the agenda, feelings, expectations and politics of those within and external to the leading governmental agency. Be knowledgeable of possible impediments as well as conditions that increase the likelihood that the approval process will go as smoothly as possible. You and your team should have mapped out stakeholders who may advocate for or against your plan.

Is the Risk Essential to Mitigate? Assess the level of risk for its ability to disrupt the implementation process. For instance, it could be that the lack of buy-in is a result of poor marketing or infrequent meetings with a city council member or different parts of the community. In that case, further explanation of the plan may alleviate this tension. If mitigating a risk jeopardizes the strategic plan itself, you must reassess to ensure that you have support from key stakeholders and that you are prepared to move forward.

Marketing and Promotion

Once your strategic plan is approved, it is vital to promote the plan internally and externally and unify both internal and external stakeholders on the strategy before you roll it out to the public.

For many people, racial equity is difficult to understand. Many may confuse it with similar sounding and related concepts like diversity, cultural competency and equal opportunity. **Some may perceive racial equity as the prioritization of one race over another rather than a process to resolve issues that keep communities of color from reaching similar levels of achievement as their white counterparts.** The topic of racial equity can easily overwhelm people who personally experience such disparities.

To get buy-in externally, communicate to evoke empathy and understanding. GARE recommends the following strategy:²³

1. **Affirm:** Start with the heart by expressing your concern for how a community is affected by a specific issue; focus on the "what" and why this matters to the work you are doing (or to you personally). Use simple language to explain how this issue came to be: "During four years of internment, Japanese Americans were forced to abandon their homes, businesses and jobs, leading to a generation of displaced skilled labor and many Japanese business districts that never fully recovered."
2. **Counter:** Explain "shared-fate" in racially-explicit terms; express that people of all races share similar goals, dreams and ambitions. Take on race directly; having access to neighborhoods that support success should not be determined by your race.
3. **Transform:** Reframe winners and losers; acknowledge pervasive **systemic** and **institutional racism** that results in inequitable outcomes which cannot be solely caused by person-to-person racism. End with a heart and a solution; encourage an individual to join a community dialogue session to learn more about the community and ways to volunteer with a nonprofit partner that is implementing part of the racial equity strategic plan.

Internally, to keep the work moving forward and keep everyone engaged, it is important to communicate with a sense of urgency. Racial equity overwhelms many who work in the field because it is a long-term goal that is unlikely to be achievable within a person's career or that of an administration. It may appear that you are working at a snail's pace when the work you are doing is essential in building toward intermediate and long-term outcomes.

²³ "Advancing Racial Equity and Transforming Government." *Government Alliance on Race and Equity*, https://www.racialequityalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/GARE-Resource_Guide.pdf

A sense of urgency is not just about acting to capitalize on a window of opportunity to start or sustain racial equity work. Communicating with urgency sustains motivation and inspiration in the collective effort of stakeholders toward reaching the strategic plan's long-term goals.²⁴

Since racial equity is unlikely to be achieved within a single administration, creating short-term wins are critical to sustaining this work. An example of a short-term win is producing an annual report measuring quantitative and qualitative progress and creating a periodic blog to highlight your collective work. These tools serve to share your work and demonstrate that you are successful in implementing your plan.

²⁴ Ibid, pg. 48. *Government Alliance on Race and Equity*, https://www.racialequityalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/GARE-Resource_Guide.pdf

STEP 5: Implement Your Strategic Plan

To successfully implement your strategic plan within the designated time frame, you must ensure that collaborators and funders remain engaged. You also need to apply a racial equity lens in every step of the decision-making process, to ensure you're weighing input from all stakeholders equitably.

Ensure Compliance and Progress

To track and ensure compliance and progress as you implement the strategic plan, keep in mind the following:

- Is the team meeting periodically with stakeholders and funders to update them on plan evaluation and progress?
- Are the staff members who are working on the project racially diverse?
- Are you engaging the community as planned in the initial phases prior to implementation?
- Are you giving enough attention to each step/action to be taken as part of the implementation?
- Are additional resources needed during the implementation? If so, what are you doing to obtain the needed resources so that there is no undue delay in implementation?
- Is the team of people working on the program flagging difficulties they encounter during implementation with enough urgency so they can be addressed as soon as possible?
- Is the team reporting on successes as the plan is being implemented?
- Are there actions that cannot be implemented due to unforeseen circumstances? Is there a problem that can be solved through implementing your backup plans? If not, what is the course of action and why?
- Are you recording or updating measures as actions are completed or changed?

Collect Data Concurrently With Implementation

Collecting data while implementing the program enables you to evaluate progress, update funders and other collaborators, and track results at a later stage. It is helpful to have a data collection plan that is simultaneously tied to project milestones. This may involve creating a database that tracks progress as you implement the plan, with a focus on the following:

- What is working and what is not working
- Remedial actions that help move implementation forward
- Financial updates
- Changes in partnership development
- Continuous feedback of your team and other stakeholders as they implement the plan
- Videos, photos and sound recordings as methods of simultaneous data collection

Mitigate and Address Unintended Consequences as They Emerge

Even a well-developed strategic plan faces challenges during the implementation phase. If the need arises, review the program/policy and partnership strategies and modify as needed. For example, if you realize during implementation that the program is over-burdening a particular group in the community, you may need to re-align your strategy to gain the support of that group, while also helping them to cope with the changing environment.

STEP 6:

Evaluate and Communicate Your Impact

Evaluating and communicating the impact of the policy/program/plan is vital to ensure accountability and transparency.

The key question is: “What has been the impact of the policy/program/plan within the organization and on the community?” Answering this question requires you to assess the following:

- Do your specific policy/program/plan outcomes meet your initial desired results?
- How much did you do?
- How well did you do it?
- Who is better off and to what extent?

Collect Data

Collecting data on the outcomes of the policy/program/plan helps develop better future strategies and promote racial equity more efficiently. To have a clear and concise idea about the impact of your plan, you will need both qualitative and quantitative data. There are various ways to collect data on outcomes, including through the use of survey questions and focus groups.

When designing survey questions and focus groups, make sure that you communicate the intent to your respondents and that they fully understand the purpose of the survey or focus group. Pay specific attention to cultural aspects that could impact the responses you receive. For instance, deciding whether or not the interviewer or moderator should be of the same racial background as the interviewee may depend on the issue and the community with whom you are working.

Devise Communication Strategies

Communicating how advancing racial equity can positively affect a community can be tedious and difficult to understand. It may be useful to use images and storytelling to contextualize the data and to make it more comprehensible.

Make sure that you craft messages to target specific audiences. See the [Talking about Race Toolkit](#) available from the Center for Social Inclusion as an example of how to craft targeted messages.

[Community Mapping](#) can serve as a powerful tool to visualize and display complex issues in an accessible manner to a broad audience of both experts and non-experts.

Gather Best Practices and Share Learning

It is worthwhile to determine what works and what does not, and to identify best practices that may be shared with partners, stakeholders and other organizations that may be embarking on similar projects. This process involves documenting lessons learned while devising and implementing the policy/program/plan, the do's and don'ts and the best ways to meet challenges. Best practices may be shared online, through interactive videos or in newsletters. Gathering best practices and sharing learning are ways in which we can create a racial equity networking coalition that benefits our state and helps promote collaboration in advancing racial equity work.

Working Together Toward an Equitable Michigan



MDCR has developed this racial equity toolkit to educate local jurisdictions on advancing racial equity. The toolkit provides a process cities and counties can use to begin doing racial equity work in Michigan. In taking a proactive approach, government has the potential to leverage significant change through adopting best practices, tools and resources in building and sustaining efforts to eliminate racial disparities at the institutional and structural levels.

MDCR Supports Local Government Leadership On Racial Equity

MDCR is committed to working toward an equitable Michigan where every individual can thrive. Local governments are essential in making that vision a reality. MDCR supports all municipalities that are committed to advancing racial equity regardless of their starting point and familiarity with racial equity.

MDCR envisions its role as a resource provider, connector and advocate. MDCR has gathered tools, resources and contacts from jurisdictions nationwide that have a record of successfully developing and advancing racial equity programs and initiatives. MDCR will continue to identify and provide resources like the toolkit, contacts, training opportunities and whatever else may aid local governments in this work.

To encourage local governments to coordinate, share best practices and collaborate with one another, MDCR will act as a connector, facilitating a platform for local government leaders to regularly convene in person and/or virtually. MDCR will be a staunch advocate for implementing a racial equity framework within MDCR and across all departments of state government, cities and counties. This effort will be structured in various ways, from incorporating racial equity objectives into job descriptions of state employees to budget planning.

To begin the work outlined in this toolkit, MDCR encourages those involved in racial equity to begin the process with a pledge of commitment and an honest assessment of where they currently stand before the transformation begins.

Commitment and Resources

MDCR commits to supporting local, government-led racial equity work through:

- Expanding and strengthening local and regional collaborations that are broadly inclusive and focused on achieving racial equity.
- Producing and distributing Michigan-specific guides, training materials and other resources on racial equity.
- Building pathways for new jurisdictions to begin doing racial equity work, including developing new cohorts of jurisdictions.
- Holding periodic convenings to facilitate discussions among local government leaders on developing racial equity programs and sharing ideas and progress.
- Providing technical assistance to cities and counties to establish and implement a racial equity framework and strategic plan.
- Building a state-wide network of local jurisdictions and counties to share information and best practices, including holding periodic meetings and an annual conference.

Final Thoughts

Dismantling systemic barriers to equity requires not only our capacity to think systemically, it demands strategies that move us away from historic practices that sustain patterns of advantage toward the intentional implementation of equitable procedures for change. This toolkit reminds us that race-neutral policies will preserve the status quo as well as the unintended impact of color blind efforts founded on good intentions. Ultimately, we must collectively acknowledge that a color conscious approach leads to the creation of inclusion because it commits time to racially-conscious strategies that anticipate the complex challenges ahead. We hope this toolkit serves as a guide to move away from conventional systems toward forward-thinking strategies that infuse organizations and communities with the innovation, creativity and broader perspectives that reside in diversity.

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