



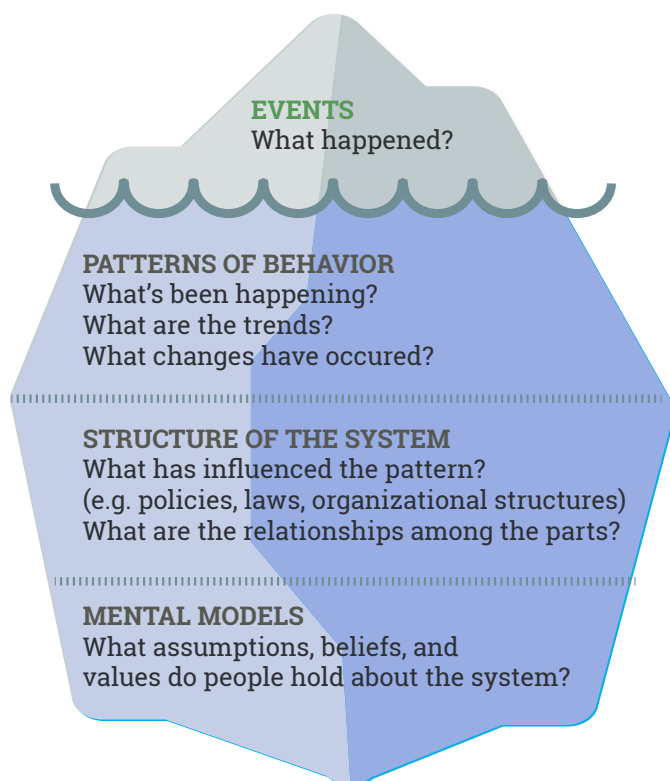
Section 1: Leadership

THIS SECTION INCLUDES materials for leaders of planning and housing agencies to lead racial equity conversations and manage change within their organizations including staff skepticism (see Section 4: Narrative and Communications for a discussion on community backlash).

Adaptive Leadership Framework for Housing Justice

Racial equity practitioners can help create and maintain their housing and planning agencies' commitments to housing justice. This change requires strong leadership looking at the relationships between their agency and all parts of the housing system rather than each in isolation, as well as an understanding of the beliefs, behaviors, and structures that lay beneath the surface of their agency's day-to-day operations.

The graphic below of an iceberg emerging from the water connects how patterns of behavior, organizational structures ("Structure of the System"), and the underlying beliefs or values of people ("Mental Models") form the layers that drive outcomes of a system but are unseen (under the surface). What actually happens ("Events") are all that is seen (above the surface).



Credit: Adapted from Systems Thinking in Schools, Waters Foundation, watersfoundation.org

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Systems change. While there are many leverage points to affect change, systems change efforts often focus on root causes or upstream drivers of the outcomes being targeted. Strategies to rearrange the rules, shift the goals (e.g., Housing Elements) and introduce positive housing narratives into the public consciousness will have the greatest impact on the system.

In [Leverage point: Places to Intervene in a System](#), Donella Meadows offers a framework for mapping a system and pressure points that can influence change. These are points of power, or places within a complex system where a small shift produces substantial changes.

Adaptive leadership. This is a framework for leaders doing systems change work that asks leaders to distinguish between technical problems and adaptive challenges.

Technical Problems and Fixes	Adaptive Challenges and Solutions
<p>We have encountered this before</p> <p>Easy to identify problem and a solution is apparent.</p> <p>We have experts or authority who can fix this.</p> <p>Requires small changes within one or a few places for short-term gains, but often leaves existing systems and structures in place.</p>	<p>Difficult to identify (easy to deny).</p> <p>Involve values, not just facts & logic.</p> <p>Requires a change in values, beliefs, or approaches to work; hearts not just minds.</p> <p>Requires changes across many places and organizational boundaries and structures.</p> <p>People resist acknowledging problem or trying a new way of working.</p> <p>Solutions address the root causes of inequities and change cultures and systems accordingly.</p>

Credit: Adapted from Heifetz, R., & Linsky, M. (2002). *Leadership on the line: Staying alive through the dangers of leading*. Boston, Mass.: Harvard Business School Press.

A set of adaptive leadership principles can help guide racial equity practitioners' everyday work of navigating adaptive challenges:

- Hold a shared vision for racial equity steady by consistently communicating the value of racial equity to the agency's mission and celebrate successes.

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- Step back to take a broad view of the housing system to observe patterns and structures that perpetuate the status quo and see the context for change or how to create one.
- Recognize and understand your adaptive challenges (vs. technical ones).
- Act strategically by finding allies, continue communicating with others, accepting responsibility, and acknowledging losses.
- Anticipate, manage, and regulate the inherent distress of a change process, including inevitable backlash.
- Surface and manage conflict that prevents people from dealing with adaptive issues.
- Continually cultivate more leaders by delegating work and coaching staff to help them recognize they have the solutions.

Leadership Tools

1. Developing a Vision and Plan for Housing Justice

A problem statement alone is not enough to inspire others and guide an organization. Leaders can guide a process to define a vision of a more equitable future, then work with staff and community partners to collectively define a pathway forward with strategies, milestones, and action plans; being sure to name race and keep considerations of race and racism at the top of the agenda throughout.

Results Based Accountability is a framework for organizing work around racial equity by first naming the racial equity conditions in housing sought for a community. What is the desired end result? Who specifically will benefit? What would housing justice look and feel like? Co-creating this vision of the desired results with representatives from impacted communities will increase ownership and ensure that the vision reflects community desired results. Adopting guiding principles, an action plan, and accountability mechanisms can then make the vision actionable and relevant to staff's day to day work. (See Section 3: Racial Equity in Housing and Planning Policy for using Results Based Accountability in policy analysis and accountability measurement)

The resulting vision should be racially explicit and name the specific communities of color currently facing the most disparate outcomes who stand to benefit while also communicating how achieving the racially equitable results will benefit all people. A vision can then guide the creation of an action plan.

2. Leveraging Positional Power

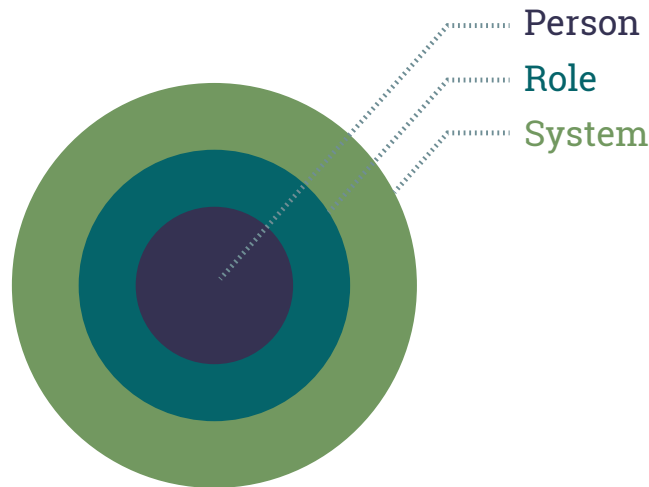
All staff can and should play a role in changing the housing system. Everyone has formal and/or discretionary power in their positions (positional power). This power is magnified by working in planning and housing agencies with the power to implement laws and distribute resources that shape the social and built environments (organizational power).

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The **Person-Role-System Framework** helps staff to better understand how to leverage their positional power and the role they play to accelerate change within the bounds of a public agency. Using the framework's reflective questions can surface the assumptions held by oneself, the system staff work in, and what role staff play in order to identify their strengths and opportunities to affect change. The bullseye graphic illustrates the three parts of this framework:



- **Person:** People's values, beliefs, assumptions, and attitudes are influenced by their experiences, culture, and identity.
- **Role:** The work role is the function associated with delegated authority, and can start with one's job title and description, but also encompasses both the formal and informal roles in a place of work. A racial equity practitioner may take on a lot of tasks and have influence over work that is well beyond their job title.
- **System:** These are the rules and structures that govern how people operate within the system, both stated and implicit or even unconscious. Staff are both influenced by it and can influence it.

While self-awareness enables you to be a better racial equity practitioner, changing organizational practices has the strongest influence on individual behavior of people in the organization, and the process of changing behaviors results in changing individual beliefs (rather than the other way around). The graphic below shows this directional change of practices to behaviors to beliefs.



Credit: Race Forward training materials

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Leaders in positions of formal authority (e.g., department heads, elected officials) are responsible for leveraging their positional power to change organizational practices. In consultation with their equity practitioners, they can strategically use their power by:

- Proposing stronger equity mandates be adopted, in strategic plans and major programs.
- Using regular communication channels to reinforce the urgency and importance of racial equity within the agency's programs, policies, and practices.
- Intervening to support staff in seizing opportunities or addressing questions.
- Ensuring staff have ongoing, sustainable funding for their capacity-building activities. Supportive leadership can identify strategic opportunities for funding sources and political support. For example, a dedicated budget line item for implementation of the agency's racial equity plans.
- Formalizing partnerships sought by racial equity practitioners (whether other agencies, community organizations, or philanthropy) and helping to identify other actions to expand engagement of the agency's racial equity work.
- Designing accountability mechanisms to focus attention and grow awareness of the racial equity work within and outside of the agency. Internal mechanisms can include staff work plans and performance evaluations prioritizing racial equity and rewarding skills and competencies.¹ Externally facing accountability mechanisms should measure and communicate an agency's progress in improving results in communities experiencing systemic racism.

(See more on these tactics in Section 2: Racial Equity in Government, Section 3: Racial Equity in Housing and Planning Policy, and Section 5: Community Partnership)

3. Leading Through Internal Resistance and Skepticism

Resistance to change that advances racial equity within a planning or housing agency is common. Resistance can slow momentum and distract attention away from the work of growing a critical mass of equity practitioners unless you are prepared to address it and learn from it.

Early, proactive communication describing the initiative is the best preventative measure for resistance. Equity practitioners can help an agency's communications team craft simple, explanatory materials for internal and external audiences. [GARE's Communications Guide](#) can help frame a racial equity narrative in ways proven to bring more people along. Materials should describe the initiative holistically and simply, including details on how it is organized as well as opportunities to engage. Some key messages to emphasize include:

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¹ [Public Sector Jobs: Opportunities for Advancing Racial Equity](#), GARE, 2015

- Racial equity is a part of good public service.
- Fulfilling the agency's mission requires addressing long-standing racial inequities built into housing policy and practice.
- Racial equity solutions for those experiencing the worst housing injustices leads to better outcomes for all people.
- The (Mayor, City Council, etc.) authorized this initiative (if this is true)

Leaders should be actively engaging staff in conversations about housing justice and the agency's role in dismantling systemic racism. This is an opportunity to document concerns and craft FAQs or other internally facing communication materials for leadership and staff. Local jurisdictions have found that in initial conversations with staff, there are many commonly asked questions, such as, "Isn't this just about income, why are we talking about race?" or "I just treat people like people, why are you bringing up race?" [GARE's Communications Guide](#) offers sample answers to many of these questions which are often asked with good intentions, making it important to respond to concerns. Questions can also alert equity practitioners to those concerns, so that they can be addressed before they develop into full-blown problems. Determining whether resistance is coming from a place of active opposition to the initiative or just reasonable skepticism will help refine your response.

On balance, it is more effective to prioritize resources and attention on cultivating willing staff to be champions over responding to every act of opposition. Not everyone must be on board to establish critical mass and momentum for organizational change.

Actively oppositional staff are unlikely to join the critical mass of staff the racial equity initiative is building toward. Addressing oppositional staff should not be the job of equity practitioners. Agency leadership and human resources staff have the appropriate tools and can exercise judgment about when and how to deploy these tools. Equity practitioners can advise on equity criteria for these tools but should not become default human resources officers. Some effective human resource tools are:

- Establishing new equity-focused agency codes of conduct.
- Including racial equity competencies in job descriptions.
- Integrating racial equity criteria into work plan expectations and performance evaluations, including ties to promotions, merit pay increases or additional paid time off.

Skeptical staff do need to be engaged and can become champions if they understand why the change is needed and the potential for new racial equity practices to improve their work. Far too many current practices used for making planning and housing decisions are ripe with incentives for choices that lead to inequitable outcomes. Practices ranging from analyzing existing conditions, developing zoning options, deploying affordable housing program funds, and even community engagement are often conducted with a "this is how it has always been done" mindset. New practices are needed to reorient staff with a racial equity lens (see more on racial equity tools in Section 3: Racial Equity in Housing and Planning Policy).

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To address resistance, it is important to recall that, as stated above, organizational practices dictate staff behavior, and that the process of changing behaviors results in changing beliefs (rather than the other way around). For example, planners may have never understood the depth of racial disparities or the history that produced them until they used a racial equity toolkit that required disaggregating data and researching the historical injustices related to zoning policy. Similarly, procurement staff may have never observed the structural barriers faced by Black-owned firms until they were required to conduct an inclusive procurement process that put them in direct relationship with those firms.

Using the Toolbox

Racial equity practitioners can use the resources in Section 1: Leadership and the Resource Library to facilitate conversations with their teams and peers about leadership strategies and their organization's role in housing justice. Start by sharing the frameworks and tools and convene others to answer the reflective questions below. Practitioners can also work individually, with a peer, or a coach to reflect on their own personal and professional work to align their values for housing justice with their actions.

Leadership questions:

- Who am I accountable to and with whom do I focus my time and energy?
- Do I spend more time with communities most impacted or with those with traditionally more access to power?
- What are the technical vs. adaptive challenges I face within the housing system? How can the adaptive leadership principles help navigate them?
- How does my leadership style center racial equity?

Organizational purpose questions:

- Why was our agency established?
- What is the government's purpose in planning and affordable housing?
- What has been our agency's role in producing benefits and burdens for different racial groups?
- What are the racially equitable results we aim to achieve through our work?

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- What assumptions about the private market guide our work?
- Can we fulfill the current agency mission without addressing racial inequities?

Personal professional questions:

- How does who I am influence how I approach my work?
- What roles do I play and what discretion or direct power do I have to influence decisions with equity impacts?
- How does the system I operate in function now to perpetuate racial inequities? Where do I fit in this system?
- Where are the choices in my professional life to align my values with my actions?
 - What to prioritize in our programs and work plans?
 - What budget items to prioritize, add or cut?
 - Who to hire, retain, promote, or develop as leaders?
 - What policy option to propose?
 - Which routines/habits to continue, change, or cut?

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