Section 2: Racial Equity in Government

THIS SECTION INCLUDES a framework and best practices for making structural changes within housing and planning agencies and across jurisdictions to shift the agencies' culture and behaviors and the housing field more broadly. These structural changes are designed to center racial equity in agencies' priority setting and bring equity practitioners together more intentionally.

KEY TERMS

Organizational capacity

The degree of effectiveness of an agency to manage its organizational change process and advance a racial equity initiative. Measures of capacity include budget dedicated, community partnerships, staff infrastructure, and the authority and skills of staff involved in an agency's racial equity initiative, to name a few.

Systemic capacity

The breadth and depth of a racial equity initiative across the whole of a field, supported by a network of structures across all organizations in the field. Measures of capacity include a well-positioned centralized coordination body, cross-organizational structures for collaboration, shared communication channels, and shared accountability measures including community impact measures.

(source: Race Forward)

Strong leadership, accountability mechanisms, and staff skill building are important supports to these structural changes. These topics are addressed in Section 1: Leadership, Section 3: Racial Equity in Housing and Planning Policy, and the Resource Library, respectively.
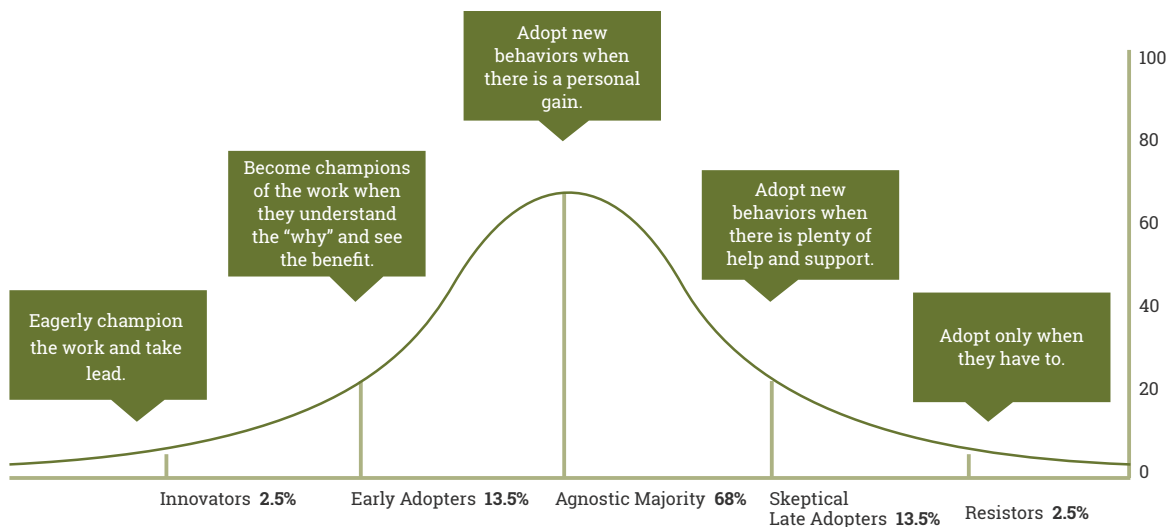
Organizational Capacity Within Agencies

A "whole of government" approach is needed to achieve racial equity. However, this toolbox is designed specifically for housing and planning agencies to play their part. The capacity building process for an individual planning and/or housing agency will be more successful if led in coordination by a centralized office stewarding a racial equity initiative across the whole of their local government toward a shared vision of racial equity.

Framework for building organizational capacity

Race Forward has found the ["Tipping Point"](#) framework popularized by Malcolm Gladwell and adopted by organizational change theorists to be a useful organizing construct to effect organization-wide change. It is an approach to building organizational capacity to operationalize new racial equity practices until a new organizational culture and infrastructure ensures these practices will continue and expand.

The graphic below illustrates a common distribution of staff's initial opinions of a racial equity initiative. Approximately 2/3 of staff are agnostic, adopting new behaviors when it benefits them. Another 14% of staff are slightly more skeptical and late to adopt, where an equal 14% are slightly more enthusiastic and eager when they understand the benefits of adoption. Around 2.5% of staff will be innovators, eagerly championing the work, and another 2.5% will resist the efforts and adopt them only when required.

Eagerly champion the work and take lead.

Become champions of the work when they understand the "why" and see the benefit.

Adopt new behaviors when there is a personal gain.

Adopt new behaviors when there is plenty of help and support.

Adopt only when they have to.

| Innovators **2.5%** | Early Adopters **13.5%** | Agnostic Majority **68%** | Skeptical Late Adopters **13.5%** | Resistors **2.5%** |

Credit: GARE's ["Organizing for Racial Equity Within the Federal Government"](#)

Achieving a critical mass of early leaders and adopters can build momentum to persuade the majority of staff who may be agnostic but will participate when they understand the opportunities for personal gain and types of support, they will receive to meet any new expectations of their work.

This starts by bringing people with racial equity expertise together who are strategic and vocal supporters. Identifying internal supporters across func-

tions and at varying levels of hierarchy is critical. Creating space for these early adopters of the agency's racial equity work allows them to build their skills together. They can then use their collective positional power to maintain the agency's attention on its commitments to racial equity.

Best Practices to Implement the Framework

1. Securing a mandate

A housing or planning agency's racial equity initiative can be initiated, deepened, and accelerated by a clear mandate from leadership. Mandates can establish the vision and guidance for agencies to implement changes unique to the local environment such as embedding racial equity priorities in strategic plans and major programs. They are also an opportunity to respond to the profound shift in public discourse driven by a historic movement for racial justice that has infused the urgent demand for racial equity into our society.

Federal civil rights mandates, anti-discrimination clauses, and requirements for social and environmental impact assessments can also be used to validate and resource an initiative. Local government legislation and executive orders can leverage these federal and state requirements to adopt a housing policy framework centering racial equity (See Section 3: Racial Equity in Housing and Planning Policy for example policy frameworks)

EXAMPLE MANDATE

A 2015 Seattle City Council resolution served as a mandate to advance racial and social equity through the City's planning and community development agencies. This progress was only possible after years of community organizing led to establishing the City's Race and Social Justice Initiative which provides capacity for departments to manage their own change processes. The legislation directed staff to work with community partners to embed race and social equity values and policies into the 20-year Comprehensive Plan and establish an Equitable Development Initiative (EDI) to lead implementation efforts. The EDI began as a program to invest development capital into community of color-led anti-displacement projects and capacity building funds in community organizations advancing equitable growth. In 2020 it was elevated to a division within the Office of Planning and Community Development. Its capital resources have deployed over $300 million to date and staff capacity now includes real estate strategists, inclusive engagement specialists, community planners, and policy analysts.

2. Resourcing capacity building

Relying on racial equity assignments that are "add-ons" to existing positions is not a sustainable model. Un- or under-resourced racial equity mandates that do not establish new staff structures set staff up for failure. Racial equity mandates must be accompanied by training, funding, and support from experts. Agency staff initially charged with launching the initiative should be supplemented by committed full-time staff and secure on-going funding. A professional development and training plan should be implemented to give staff the support they need to be successful.

See the Resource Library for more on trainings and research.

3. Form agency-specific Racial Equity Core Teams

While the leadership of top officials of the racial equity initiative is critical, changes take place on the ground. Infrastructure is needed to bring together racial equity practitioners within each agency. Racial Equity Core Teams are a primary leadership team often responsible for stewarding racial equity plans and coordinating equity activities across the agency. The Core Team serves as the engine for change, leading the way, and encouraging others along the organizational change journey.

GARE's resource "Racial Equity Core Teams" provides more detail on the breadth of Core Team composition and the depth of members' desired characteristics. In general, a diverse, representative, passionate, and visionary team leads the way forward. Having a diversity of members across the agency's functions and levels is important to weave the work throughout the agency. Members should have passion and energy to motivate others, strategic bridge building skills to work across differences, existing relationships within and outside of government to leverage and expand engagement, and humility to learn and grow new leadership.

While a Racial Equity Core Team should be officially authorized to play a leading role in operationalizing the agency's commitment to racial equity, it cannot be its responsibility alone. These teams help grow capacity by bringing in outside technical expertise and trainers, and by disseminating learning, skills, and tools for operationalizing equity. They play a role in coordinating the implementation of Racial Equity Action Plans by communicating their progress internally and externally, making course corrections, and celebrating successes. Their work will evolve over time as capacity increases and momentum builds. The City of Oakland's Race and Equity Change Process includes strategies for Core Teams at different stages of development.

Some practices for Core Teams that are just getting started include:

- Forming a team charter and group agreements including shared facilitation and transparency in decision-making.
- Team trainings and facilitated conversations to increase understanding of systemic racism and develop relationships.
- Working with department leadership to cultivate a shared vision and commitment to advancing equity in the agency.

TOOLBOX

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- Conducting an organizational assessment of strengths and weaknesses.
- Developing a team action plan including staff capacity building throughout the department.

Core Teams that are ready to implement change can expand their activities to include:

- Hosting agency-wide opportunities for learning about race and equity approaches.
- Developing a system for tracking progress on the racial equity plan.
- Introducing inclusive outreach and engagement practices for key projects and agency advisory committees or commissions.
- Supporting staff use of racial equity tools.
- Working with program staff to develop program-specific baseline data of disparities and targets for closing disparities.

Core Teams with a track record of success can build momentum by:

- Publishing a dashboard on the use of equity tools and inclusive engagement efforts.
- Measuring staff awareness of racial inequity.
- Collaborating with community members and others to evaluate the agency's equity work.
- Convening more racial equity practitioners to deepen the vision, practices, and commitment to racial equity in the agency.

An important responsibility of Core Teams at any stage is to continually culti-vate more leaders. Using a "train-the-trainer" approach can maximize contact between racial equity practitioners distributed throughout the agency and oth-ers so that employees can learn about racial equity from practitioners. These interactions also provide opportunities for others who are more ambivalent about the work to ask questions, raise concerns, and learn firsthand about the advantages of racial equity practices. FAQs, newsletters, office hours, and staff listening sessions are also common techniques for building staff trust, under-standing, and commitment more broadly.

Systemic Capacity Across Jurisdictions

Individual planning or housing agencies working for housing justice can significantly impact people's lives in the communities they serve, but it takes more than one agency to change the status quo. A network of structures across agencies and jurisdictions advancing racial equity can help build the institutional capacity to catalyze broader systems change. This section provides guidance on where to start building a network and strategies for leveraging the network to affect change. Read about example networks at the end of the section.

Framework to build systemic capacity

A **Collective Impact** framework provides a structured way for "a network of community members, organizations, and institutions to advance equity by learning together, aligning, and integrating their actions to achieve population and systems level change.[1]" It is a useful framework for agencies and their community partners to come together across the Bay Area to achieve more change together than any agency could alone. Centering racial equity in this framework requires designing both equitable processes and structures.[2]

This framework is implemented by a backbone organization convening a network of agencies to establish and nurture the conditions below. The composition and governance of the network should be designed to address power imbalances, so all participants are valued.

- Collaborative work toward a common agenda. This includes a vision for housing justice, strategies for systems change, and targeted solutions for those communities experiencing housing inequities, all which should emerge from shared learning and exchange that is diffused across the network.
- Shared measurement system. This includes using racially disaggregated data and qualitative data from the lived experience of communities experiencing housing injustice.
- Coordinated mutually reinforcing activities. Examples of these activities are described in the best practices below.
- Continuous communication and relationships across jurisdictions and with communities most impacted by housing injustice. Examples of this are described in Section 4 on community engagement.

Best Practices to Implement the Framework

1. Centralized support of a network of equity practitioners.

Cross-jurisdictional structures for racial equity are most effective when they are "network-centric," creating many points of connections with an emphasis on peer-to-peer learning and relationships. This ensures richly resourced

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1   Collective Impact Forum, 2022

2   Centering Equity in Collective Impact, John Kania, Junious Williams, Paul Schmitz, Sheri Brady, Mark Kramer & Jennifer Splansky Juster, 2022

equity practitioners can support one another and accelerates change through cross-pollination and the diffusion of ideas and approaches. Below are examples of "network-centric" structures:

- Inter-jurisdictional working group of liaisons from housing and planning agencies' Racial Equity Core Teams;
- Cohorts of practitioners managing similar projects, using racial equity toolkits, or developing housing justice accountability measures;
- Training cohorts of agency directors or specialists, such as legal counsel or communications; and
- Inter-jurisdictional working groups of staff serving in key roles to advance racial equity on a range of issues, such as equitable community partnerships, data collection, policy analysis, and project management.

2. Bring together and strengthen leading agencies and innovators.

Many housing and planning agencies oversee implementation of equity-focused legislation or other mandates to advance justice (e.g., Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the National Environmental Policy Act's (NEPA) social impact assessment and environmental justice analysis requirements, and Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH) requirements.

The staff and structures implementing this work offer substantial capacity for equity practitioners to tap into and build from. This work is often led by staff with deep experience and expertise in navigating barriers to equity and implementing change. Lifting up their work and connecting it to a broader network of racial equity practitioners can build early capacity for the long haul.

3. Lift up the work of high achieving agencies to raise regional standards.

Housing justice work involves uncertainty for agencies that do not know what actions will be highly regarded and rewarding. Replicating behaviors of similar agencies is one effective strategy for mitigating this uncertainty. Agencies that are further along in their process of transformation can serve as models and inspirations for agencies with lower capacity or that are earlier in their journey.

A coordinating body such as a regional Metropolitan Planning Organization can highlight visible and rewarding moments when early adopters' successes raise the ceiling of what is possible. Those promising practices can then be disseminated across the network to help raise the floor of what will become standard operating procedure. This "keeping up with the neighbors" dynamic can be enhanced by encouraging and resourcing agencies in similar stages of their journey to partner with one another and by encouraging more advanced agencies to be in relationship with those just getting started.

NETWORK EXAMPLES

PolicyLink's <u>All-In Cities Anti-Displacement Policy Network</u> (ADPN) was created in 2018 as a national network of more than 65 leaders from 11 cities to work together to develop anti-displacement strategies for their cities while building the power, voice, and capacity of communities directly impacted by displacement in defining challenges and advancing solutions. Resources provided included training for skill building, convenings for relationship building and best practice sharing, and technical assistance for policy solutions. Each city team had to include local elected officials, city staff, and community leaders from communities impacted by displacement.

The <u>Partnership for the Bay's Future issues Policy Grants</u> to support communities around the Bay Area to help accelerate policies that protect tenants and preserve and produce affordable housing. The 2022-24 Policy Grants support ten cities and counties, in addition to the Bay Area Housing Financial Authority (BAHFA). Each participating government entity is partnered with community organizations, which ensure community voices are represented in the policy process. A housing policy fellow is also embedded in each government entity to serve as a catalyst to advance policy innovation. In addition to funding for the fellows and grants for community organizations, participants have peer learning opportunities and receive technical assistance and training for skill building from a pool of consultants.

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Using the Toolbox

You can begin today building structures like a Racial Equity Core Team to grow your agency's organizational capacity. It all starts by bringing people together.

Much of what we know about effective Core Teams comes from jurisdictions in which agency leadership has authorized the formation of a team. However, the process is often more organic. If you do not yet have formal direction from leadership to form a Core Team then you can still start gathering informally. Invite colleagues who have a passion for housing justice and gauge their interest in elevating issues of racial equity and making change in your agency. Then facilitate some regular meetings with two major agenda items:

1. Get to know each other and build relationships.
When people know and understand each other, it can help get you through some of the difficult conversations and challenges that are an inevitable part of doing racial equity work. Sharing stories can go a long way towards humanizing each other and breaking down stereotypes. Sharing meals and spending some social time together are also ways to build cohesion. Some questions about early experiences with race are a good place to start getting to know each other.

- When and how did you first recognize that different races/ethnicities were treated differently in society? Who helped you make sense of the treatment, and how did they do so?

- How racially/ethnically diverse was the neighborhood you grew up in? What messages did you get about race/ethnicity from living there?

- When was the first time you had a teacher of a different race/ethnicity? How often was this occurrence?

2. Shared learning.
Do not assume people are on the same page when it comes to understanding racial equity. Some foundational facilitated conversations and training together—where, for example, you learn common terminology about structural racism —will help you have more constructive and productive conversations. Some resources for shared learning are found in the Resource Library. Two particularly relevant resources for starting a Core Team include:

- GARE's "Advancing Racial Equity and Transforming Government" resource guide provides the basic concepts, definitions, and strategies to normalize conversations about race, operationalize new policies and organizational cultures, and organize to achieve racial equity.
- GARE's "Racial Equity Core Teams: The Engines of Institutional Change" lays out the initial steps you can take to form an official Core Team and describes four jurisdictions' experience establishing a team.

Soon it will be time to identify an opportunity to formalize your group's role in the agency and have a broader impact. This could take many forms such as requesting and helping to host external experts to provide agency-wide training on racial equity and housing justice, submitting a proposal to leadership to form an official Core Team, or proposing an organizational racial equity assessment. Whichever opportunity you seize, remember to use it to open up the conversation so more staff can learn about racial equity from people who value it and provide ways to stay engaged.