

BRINGING THE PIECES TOGETHER

ACHIEVING RACIAL EQUITY involves not only each of the six components outlined in this **Resource Guide**, but also it requires integrating all components into a holistic approach that aims to transform government. Government must identify tangible outcomes, but it must also develop processes that are themselves transformative. Often issue-based efforts are limited to short-term gain for communities, but leave the existing structures that created barriers in the first place intact. By moving beyond transactional approaches towards transformation, jurisdictions can cut across multiple institutions and shift towards proactive solutions and long-term culture change. Building the capacity to approach problems transformationally requires change in values, beliefs, roles, relationships, and approaches to work.

One fundamental change in approach that transformation requires is that the people experiencing a problem are at the center of determining what the right solution is, rather than experts deciding for them.

Most traditional management systems were designed based on an assumption of a simple relationship between cause and effect. A more contemporary leadership model developed by David Snowden and Mary Boone (2007) suggests that leaders must carefully consider what type of environment they are navigating in order to determine the correct approach. Where situations are predictable based on past experience—“simple” contexts—leaders can rely on best practices to respond to problems. In “complicated” contexts, where the relationship

between cause and effect is direct but may not be easily apparent to all, leaders can rely on experts to determine the right answer by investigating several possible options. Many situations leaders find themselves in, though, are “complex.” That is, one right answer does not exist, and cannot be determined neither by best practices from past experience nor from the analysis of experts. Snowden and Boone offer an analogy of the difference between a Ferrari and the Brazilian rainforest:

“Ferraris are complicated machines, but an expert mechanic can take one apart and reassemble it without changing a thing. The car is static, and the whole is the sum of its parts. The rainforest, on the other hand, is in constant flux—a species becomes extinct, weather patterns change, an agricultural project reroutes a water source—and the whole is far more than the sum of its parts. This is the realm of “unknown unknowns,” and it is the domain to which much of contemporary business has shifted.”

Managing Change

“Managing change” requires strategic thinking and operations within a political context. Developing new major government initiatives can be a challenge, and even more so for a tension-ridden topic such as race. Maintaining support for change requires ongoing strategic decision-making about who to bring in, when, and how, in addition to providing the training nec-

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What does it mean to take a “transformational” approach?

<i>Transactional Approach</i>	<i>Transformational Approach</i>
Solves technical problems	Solves an adaptive problem
Problem is easy to identify	Problem is easy to deny (under the surface)
Routine solution using skills and experience readily available	Requires change in values, beliefs, roles, relationships, and structure of operations
Often solved by an authority or expert	People facing the problem are involved in the work of solving it
Requires change in just one or a few places, contained within organizational boundaries	Requires change across organizational boundaries
People tend to be receptive to the technical solution	People tend to avoid (or push back on) addressing the adaptive challenge
Solution can often be implemented quickly, sometimes by edict	Transformation requires experiments and new discoveries, takes a long time to implement, cannot be implemented by edict
Produces short-term gains for communities, but leaves the existing structure in place	Shifts cultural values and political will to create racial equity

For example:

<i>Technical Problems / Transaction</i>	<i>Adaptive Problem / Transformation</i>
Invite WMBE contractors to apply for contracts.	A package of policy changes, the cumulative impact of which is substantive, along with increased capacity for Women-Minority Business Enterprises to compete as primes and strengthened relationships between WMBEs and primes
Translate documents for limited English speaking public.	Strong and sustained relationships with immigrant and refugee communities, immigrant and refugee community members are hired as employees and programs and policies are shaped by those influences.
Pass “ban the box” legislation	Develop a criminal justice agenda that cuts across systems and structures and is inclusive of the community.

essary to build understanding of a shared analysis. Also, government agencies do not, generally, select their own leadership. At each election, there is a possibility that a champion for racial equity will be replaced by someone who must be brought up to speed and convinced that such initiatives should be supported.

The structure of governance in a particular jurisdiction can have a major impact on how racial equity work is developed and the challenges it may face. Cities with strong mayor governments who elect mayors committed to racial equity have an advantage in being able to use the power and voice of the executive to make racial equity a jurisdiction-wide priority. If cities have done a good job of building capacity and investment among city employees while under leadership of a mayoral champion for racial equity, when there is a transition, a new mayor will be more likely to continue

the work of a predecessor, as has happened in Seattle through several mayoral transitions.

By contrast, those cities and counties with a weak executive structure may have a harder time building a shared analysis and cross-departmental capacity in a decentralized government. Without a leader at the top who can continuously emphasize the importance of this work and make racial equity related policy decisions, it can be more difficult to communicate with urgency and build partnerships across units in a jurisdiction. In order to advance racial equity in the long term, jurisdictions will need to have the support of elected officials, departmental leadership and staff, and community partners, all aligned with a common vision.

Given the unpredictability and flux of most situations and decisions in contemporary or-

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ganizations, leaders must be willing to experiment in order to allow instructive patterns to emerge, patiently allowing the path forward to reveal itself. Leaders must “probe first, then sense, then respond.” Snowden and Boone offer the following tools for managing in a complex context.

Tools for Managing in a Complex Context

Given the ambiguities of the complex domain, how can leaders lead effectively?

OPEN UP THE DISCUSSION

Complex contexts require more interactive communication than any of the other domains.

SET BARRIERS

Barriers limit or delineate behavior. Once the barriers are set, the system can self-regulate within those boundaries.

STIMULATE ATTRACTORS

Attractors are phenomena that arise when small stimuli and probes—whether from leaders or others—resonate with people. As attractors gain momentum, they provide structure and coherence.

ENCOURAGE DISSENT AND DIVERSITY

Dissent and formal debate are valuable communication assets in complex contexts because they encourage the emergence of well-forged patterns and ideas.

MANAGE STARTING CONDITIONS AND MONITOR FOR EMERGENCE

Because outcomes are unpredictable in a complex context, leaders need to focus on creating an environment from which good things can emerge, rather than trying to bring about predetermined results and possibly missing opportunities that arise unexpectedly.

Given the reality that racial inequities are influenced by a multitude of factors and have morphed in shape and form, it is important to note these different approaches for navigating change strategies.

INSIDE/OUTSIDE STRATEGIES

Many jurisdictions have noted the importance of external pressure from community to raise the visibility of racial equity issues and motivate government leaders to act. While such

pressure does not exactly fit under the concept of “partnership,” the productive tension caused by community organizing and advocacy does have a relationship to the success and advancement of racial equity initiatives. Given that organizing usually takes the form of opposition to—rather than partnership with—government, it is critical for long-term strategies that are based on expanded levels of trust and commitment to be established.

GOING DEEP AFTER GOING BROAD

As jurisdictions that have several years or more under their belts in doing racial equity work are considering the next steps in deepening their strategies, several questions should be considered. For example, what is the right balance between building capacity across all employees to conduct racial equity assessments and relying on more specialized departments with the expertise and experience to do high quality, in-depth analysis with higher efficiency? For example, no one would expect someone without prior expertise to attend a four or eight hour training on environmental impact and come back to work prepared to start conducting Environmental Impact Statements for major development projects. Jurisdictions should consider investing in specialized expertise to conduct rigorous analysis for policies and projects that will have a significant impact on their residents, even while they continue to build broad—but necessarily thin—capacity across the jurisdiction to integrate racial equity concerns into their daily work.

Further, how can jurisdictions go beyond transactional change toward more profound transformation? As evaluation of racial equity work evolves, jurisdictions may consider asking questions not only about material changes in people’s lives (e.g. access to housing and transportation) but also about the more intangible factors that enable people to live fully. That is, do residents feel their racial or ethnic background is valued? Do they feel a sense of hope? Do all residents expect to be able to pursue a path that will lead to personal fulfillment? Jurisdictions that have laid the basic foundation for racial equity strategies and are looking toward the next stage of their work will need to consider what kinds of questions they are asking to evaluate depth of impact, in addition to breadth.

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CONCLUSION

ACROSS ALL GARE COHORT MEMBERS and across each of the concepts described in the sections of this Resource Guide, a theme emerged that this work is iterative. This is not a linear, step-by-step process that takes a jurisdiction from using a shared analysis, to building capacity, etc. No component of this framework is ever complete, each evolves over time and with expanding strategies. One's analysis of institutional and structural racism is never "complete." Every time new staff join a jurisdiction, more training is required. Those who have undergone training will want to deepen their development and do more advanced training to use tools with greater insight. New political leadership can impact structures within government and require rebuilding capacity. Each time a racial equity tool is implemented in a policy process, new lessons are learned to be incorporated next time around. An initial sense of urgency created by a single report or a new initiative must be renewed over time, continuously communicating with urgency to maintain motivation to pursue

the very ambitious, challenging, and long-term goal of racial equity.

While the challenges in achieving racial equity are great, so too are the opportunities. It is clear from the work of public managers and elected officials in GARE member jurisdictions –and many others who have not yet joined GARE—that momentum is building toward a future in which government works collectively with their communities to achieve racial equity. Positive change is already afoot in many parts of the country, as seen in the stories shared earlier. By learning from one another's experiences, GARE is strengthening strategies and increasing resolve to face the challenges ahead.

Thank you for being a part of this journey toward a brighter future for our communities.

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