



“Government is one of the places where the community comes together and decides who it chooses to be as a people. Government is a key keeper of our values, and our policies and investments need to reflect that. Government has great opportunity to have an impact on the daily lives of all people and the power to shape policies that reduce our inequities.”

- Mayor Betsy Hodges, Mayor of Minneapolis

RESOURCE GUIDE

Advancing Racial Equity & Transforming Government

Government
Alliance on
Race and Equity

INTRODUCTION

ACROSS THE COUNTRY, more and more cities and counties are making commitments to achieve racial equity. The **Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE)** is a national network of government working to achieve racial equity and advance opportunity for all. When government focuses on the power and influence of their own institution and works in partnership with others, significant leverage and expansion opportunities emerge, setting the stage for the achievement of racial equity in our communities.

Over the past decade, a growing field of practice has emerged. This toolkit is based on the lessons learned from practitioners, as well as academic experts and national technical assistance providers. You may be participating in a structured workshop and using it as a part of the workshop; or you may be using it as a reference. It is a resource that will hopefully be informative, but more importantly, one that we hope will assist government leaders in operationalizing racial equity.

We know that is important for us to work together.

If your jurisdiction has already initiated work to achieve racial equity, join the cohort of jurisdictions at the forefront. Sharing best practices, peer-to-peer learning, and academic resources helps to strengthen work across jurisdictions.

If your jurisdiction is just getting started, consider joining one of the new cohorts GARE

is launching, focusing on jurisdictions at that initial stage. The cohort will be supported with a body of practice including racial equity training curricula, infrastructure models, tools, and sample policies.

If your jurisdiction needs assistance with racial equity training, racial equity tools, model policies, communications coaching or assistance with particular topic areas, such as criminal justice, jobs, housing, development, health or education, please contact GARE. If you are in a region where there are opportunities to build cross-jurisdictional partnerships with other institutions and communities, GARE can help build regional infrastructure for racial equity. **Together, we can make a difference.**

Why government?

From the inception of our country, government at the local, regional, state, and federal levels have played a role in creating and maintaining racial inequity, including everything from determining who is a citizen, who can vote, who can own property, who is property, and where one can live, to name but a few. Governmental laws, policies, and practices created a racial hierarchy and determined based on race who benefits and who is burdened. When Jefferson wrote, “all men are created equal,” he meant men, and not women; he meant whites and not people of color; and he meant people with property and not those without.

Abraham Lincoln’s aspirations in the Gettysburg Address were about the transformation

RESOURCE GUIDE

Advancing Racial Equity & Transforming Government

Government Alliance on Race and Equity

of government, and a “government of the people, by the people, and for people” is still on the table. For us to achieve racial equity, the fundamental transformation of government is necessary.

Current inequities are sustained by historical legacies, structures, and systems that repeat patterns of exclusion. The Civil Rights movement was led by communities, and government was frequently the target. One of the many successes of the Civil Rights movement was making racial discrimination illegal.

However, despite progress in addressing explicit discrimination, racial inequities continue to be deep, pervasive, and persistent across the country. Racial inequities exist across all indicators for success, including in education, criminal justice, jobs, housing, public infrastructure, and health, regardless of region. In 2010, for example, African Americans made up 13 percent of the population but had only 2.7 percent of the country’s wealth. Additionally, the median net worth for a white family was \$134,000, while the median net worth for a Hispanic family was \$14,000, and for an African American family it was \$11,000 (*Race Forward*).

Clearly, we have not achieved a “post-racial” society, and taking a “color-blind” approach simply perpetuates the status quo.

Unfortunately, what we have witnessed is the morphing of explicit bias into implicit bias, with implicit bias perpetuated by institutional policies and practices. These policies and practices replicate the same racially inequitable outcomes that previously existed.

Too often, government has focused on symptoms and not causes when attempting to work on racial equity. We will fund programs and services, that act as simple bandages rather than addressing the underlying drivers of inequities. While programs and services are often necessary, they will never be sufficient for achieving racial equity. We must focus on policy and institutional strategies that are driving the production of inequities.

We are now at a critical juncture where there

is a possible new role for government—to proactively advance racial equity.

Why race?

Race is complicated. It is a social construct, and yet many still think of it as biological. Racial categories have evolved over time, and yet many think of race as static. Race is often “on the table,” and yet fairly rarely discussed with shared understanding. More frequently, it is the elephant in the room.

Race, income, and wealth are closely connected in the United States. However, racial inequities are not just about income. When we hold income constant, there are still large inequities based on race across multiple indicators for success, including education, jobs, incarceration, and housing. For us to advance racial equity, it is vital that we are able to talk about race. We have to both normalize conversations about race, and operationalize strategies for advancing racial equity.

In addition, we must also address income and wealth inequality, and recognize the biases that exist based on gender, sexual orientation, ability and age, to name but a few. Focusing on race provides an opportunity to also address other ways in which groups of people are marginalized, providing the opportunity to introduce a framework, tools, and resources that can also be applied to other areas of marginalization. This is important, because to have maximum impact, focus and specificity are necessary. Strategies to achieve racial equity differ from those to achieve equity in other areas. “One-size-fits all” strategies are rarely successful.

A racial equity framework that is clear about the differences between individual, institutional, and structural racism, as well as the history and current reality of inequities, has applications for other marginalized groups.

Race can be an issue that keeps other marginalized communities from effectively coming together. An approach that recognizes the inter-connected ways in which marginalization takes place will help to achieve greater unity across communities.

Please note: In this Resource Guide, we include some data from reports that focused on whites and African Americans, but otherwise, provide data for all racial groups analyzed in the research. For consistency, we refer to African Americans and Latinos, although in some of the original research, these groups were referred to as Blacks and Hispanics.

RESOURCE GUIDE

Advancing Racial Equity & Transforming Government

Government Alliance on Race and Equity

Why now?

In addition to a moral imperative we may feel for righting wrongs, there is particular urgency in our current moment to integrate and incorporate racial equity frameworks and tools due to our country's changing racial demographics.

By 2060, people of color will represent approximately 57 percent of the US population, numbering 241.3 million out of a total population of 420.3 million (US Census Bureau, 2012). Latinos and Asians are driving the demographic growth. According to the Pew Research Center, the Latino population is on the rise due to a record number of US births, while immigration is the primary reason behind Asian American growth (Brown, 2014). Simultaneously, the white population will stay the same until 2040, at which point it will begin to decrease (US Census Bureau, 2012).

We are well on our way to becoming a multiracial, pluralistic nation, in which people of color will comprise the majority population.

These changes are visible around us already. In September 2014, the US Department of Education reported that the number of students of color surpassed the white student population in public schools for the first time (Krogstad and Fry, 2014; US Department of Education, 2014). Additionally, many counties and metropolitan areas have become multiracial jurisdictions already. As of 2013, the 10 largest metropolitan areas where the percentage of people of color was greater than 50 percent of the overall population included New York, Los Angeles, Houston, Miami, Dallas, the Washington DC-Maryland-Virginia area, Riverside, Atlanta, San Francisco, and San Diego.

Changes in migration flows are also responsible for these changes. In 1960, 75 percent of the immigrant population was from European countries. In 2010, the top five countries of birth for foreign-born residents in the United States were Mexico, China, India, the Philippines, and Vietnam (Grieco, 2012). Now, more than 80 percent of the foreign-born come from Latin America or Asia. The refugee populations from non-European countries are also on the

rise. In 2013, of the nearly 70,000 refugees admitted into the United States, 75 percent came from Iraq, Burma, Bhutan, and Somalia (Martin and Yankay, 2014).

As the racial landscape in the United States changes, it is also important to recognize that greater numbers do not equal greater power. That is, even as people of color become larger numerical populations, their daily lives will not change unless the systems and institutions that create barriers to opportunity undergo transformation. From housing to criminal justice to health access, people of color and immigrant communities face disproportionately unequal outcomes. These conditions will not automatically change with the increase in the populations of people of color—stakeholders must work together to correct course through thoughtful and inclusive programs and services.

What do we mean by “racial equity”?

GARE defines “racial equity” as when race can no longer be used to predict life outcomes and outcomes for all groups are improved.

Equality and equity are sometimes used interchangeably, but actually convey significantly different ideas. Equity is about fairness, while equality is about sameness. We are not interested in “closing the gaps” by equalizing sub-par results. When systems and structures are not working well, they are often not working well across the board. Many of the examples of strategies to advance racial equity are advantageous not only for people of color, but also for all communities, including whites. For more on this definition, see page 15. For definitions of other terms used in this guide, see the Glossary in the Appendix.

How does advancing racial equity improve our collective success?

Government focusing on racial equity is critically important to achieving different outcomes in our communities. However, the goal is not to just eliminate the gaps between whites and people of color, but to increase the success for all groups. To do so, we have to

RESOURCE GUIDE

Advancing Racial Equity & Transforming Government

Government Alliance on Race and Equity

develop strategies based on the experiences of those communities being served least well by existing institutions, systems, and structures.

Advancing racial equity moves us beyond just focusing on disparities. Deeply racialized systems are costly and depress outcomes and life chances for all groups. For instance, although there are a disproportionate number of African Americans, Latinos, and Native Americans who do not graduate from high school, there are also many white students who don't graduate. We have seen strategies that work for youth of color also work better for white youth.

Disproportionalities in the criminal justice system are devastating for communities of color, most specifically African American men, but are financially destructive and unsustainable for all of us. Dramatically reducing incarceration and recidivism rates and re-investing funds in education can work to our collective benefit.

When voting was/is constrained for communities of color, low-income white voters are also likely to be excluded. During the period of poll taxes and literacy tests, more eligible whites were prohibited from voting than African Americans.

Systems that are failing communities of color are failing all of us. Deeply racialized systems depress life chances and outcomes and are costly. Advancing racial equity will increase our collective success and be cost effective.

What are our strategies—what is our theory of change?

Across the country, we have seen the introduction of many policies and programmatic efforts to advance racial equity. These individual approaches are important, but are not enough. To achieve racial equity, implementation of a comprehensive strategy is necessary.

We have seen success with advancing racial equity and government transformation with the following six strategies:

1. **Use a racial equity framework.** Jurisdictions need to use a racial equity framework that clearly names the history of government and envisions and operationalizes a new role; and utilizes clear and easily understood definitions of racial equity and inequity, implicit and explicit bias, and individual, institutional, and structural racism.
2. **Build organizational capacity.** Jurisdictions need to be committed to the breadth (all functions) and depth (throughout hierarchy) of institutional transformation. While the leadership of elected members and top officials is critical, changes take place on the ground, and infrastructure that creates racial equity experts and teams throughout local and regional government is necessary.
3. **Implement racial equity tools.** Racial inequities are not random—they have been created and sustained over time. Inequities will not disappear on their own. Tools must be used to change the policies, programs, and practices that are perpetuating inequities, as well as used in the development of new policies and programs.
4. **Be data-driven.** Measurement must take place at two levels—first, to measure the success of specific programmatic and policy changes, and second, to develop baselines, set goals, and measure progress towards community goals.
5. **Partner with other institutions and communities.** The work of local and regional government on racial equity is necessary, but it is not sufficient. To achieve racial equity in the community, local and regional government must be working in partnership with communities and other institutions.
6. **Communicate and act with urgency.** While there is often a belief that change is hard and takes time, we have seen repeatedly, that when change is a priority and urgency is felt, change is embraced and can take place quickly. Building in institutional accountability mechanisms via a clear plan of action will allow accountability. Collectively, we must create greater urgency and public will to achieve racial equity.

The remainder of this **Resource Guide** provides additional information about each of these strategies. Why are they important? What is the theory? What is the practice? How does change happen? How can govern-

RESOURCE GUIDE

Advancing Racial Equity & Transforming Government

Government Alliance on Race and Equity

ment normalize conversations about race, operationalize new behaviors, and organize to achieve racially equitable outcomes? The toolkit shares the stories and lessons learned from local government leaders across the country who have built (and continue to build) racial equity strategies. We hope that by learning from others' experiences, we can all strengthen our ability to achieve racial equity.

**RESOURCE
GUIDE**

**Advancing
Racial Equity &
Transforming
Government**

Government
Alliance on
Race and Equity