

## 2. BUILD ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY FOR RACIAL EQUITY

**INSTITUTIONS ARE DESIGNED**, by intention or via perpetuation of the status quo, to maintain racial equity. After the Civil Rights victories of the 1960s, instead of redesigning government to advance racial equity, the status quo remained and implicit bias and institutionalized racism were baked in even deeper. To advance racial equity, it is critical to build organizational capacity.

### Building capacity for racial equity work takes two important forms: training and infrastructure.

**Training increases understanding of institutional and structural racism and use of racial equity tools.** Training is designed not only for individual learning about institutional racism, but more importantly, training is focused on building skills to implement strategies that promote racial equity in employees' daily work. While some jurisdictions have required racial equity training for all employees, others have begun with a voluntary program, developing a core of natural allies to help grow buy-in across the jurisdiction. Some jurisdictions have found that training may be better received if framed as professional development rather than another mandatory training added to a long list of other trainings—such as customer service or workplace ethics—that employees are required to attend. Whether it is mandatory or voluntary, called training or professional development, investing in building a common understanding among employees about the jurisdiction's equity goals and analysis and its

key strategies to achieve them is critical.

In a review of various approaches to increasing workforce diversity, Kim et al. (2012) grouped diversity training in the category of “progressive programs that have failed to increase workforce diversity.” The diversity trainings reviewed by Kim et al. were noted as ineffective because they resulted in resistance from participants rather than encouragement to work toward the goal of workplace diversity. Kim et al. went on to describe programs that were effective at increasing workforce diversity, and included task forces that “engage managers from across the firm in seeking solutions to stubborn problems of recruitment, retention, and promotion.” Although this research focused on diversity and representation, the lessons learned are informative. Effective training must meet participants “where they're at” and engage people in developing solutions.

**Building infrastructure.** Capacity-building is critical to any large-scale organizational effort, regardless of sector or issue area (Eade, 1997). This is no different when considering how to implement a strategy to advance racial equity. Drawing insight from the literature on collective action, the collective impact model, and building management capacity, organizational infrastructure must be created that enables a diverse array of stakeholders to work toward a shared vision of equity. Change will not occur if just one person or department is assigned the duties of advancing equity. Staff teams within every department must be sufficiently knowledgeable, equipped with the necessary tools, and given responsibility for incorporat-

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ing racial equity policies and processes into their regular job duties if a jurisdiction is to advance its goals successfully.

The “tipping point” concept popularized by Malcolm Gladwell (2000) has been adopted by organizational change theorists to identify the conditions under which organization-wide change is possible. Dr. Andrea Shapiro, a scholar of behavioral decision making and founder of the consulting group Strategy Perspective, argues that organizations change when engaged employees recognize both why the change is needed and the potential of the proposed solution. She notes that whole-system change requires people who are powerful and vocal advocates for change ideas, interaction between advocates and others who are apathetic about the change, and an internal work environment that supports the change process and the change ideas (2003). Shapiro has identified seven “levers of change” that set employee engagement in motion and give it momentum. Each of the seven levers require attention and planning for successful change management.

The City of Seattle’s **Race and Social Justice Initiative (RSJI)** contracted with Dr. Shapiro to train racial equity leaders in “Creating Contagious Commitment” and demonstrate how capacity can be built through the development of organizational infrastructure to support change.

RSJI helped to create “change teams” in every city department. Change teams lead racial equity work in their department with the help of an Executive Sponsor and a liaison from RSJI. Each department has developed an annual work plan for racial equity since 2007, which can be found on the City of Seattle’s website. Although consistency has varied between departments, over the course of years, the overall quality has improved, with more meaningful actions being implemented. The way in which Seattle has used “tipping point” organizational change strategies provides a useful example, outlined below.

### Seven Levers of Change from Andrea Shapiro

The first two levers deal with making sure everyone knows about the change—they are

called **mass exposure** and **personal contact**.

Seattle implemented an RSJI e-newsletter and Introductory Racial Equity workshops for all employees. Using a “train-the-trainer” approach, Seattle sought to maximize contact between racial equity advocates and others so that employees had the opportunity to learn about racial equity from people who understood and valued it. These contacts built trust and offered opportunities to ask questions, raise concerns, to learn firsthand about advantages, and to hear about potential pitfalls.

The next two levers of change deal with **resistance and expertise**. Whatever is driving resistance should determine how to deal with it. When the topic is race, 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, I don’t know why we are talking about race?” These sorts of questions are often asked with good intent, and it is important to avoid assumptions and listen to concerns. Questions can also alert change leaders to issues that can be addressed before they develop into full-blown problems.

### Seattle developed ongoing strategies to deal with resistance, including a range of approaches to skill development and making sure to respond to frequently asked questions.

Expertise is a critical lever for advancing change. Identifying and/or developing internal advocates across functions and at varying levels of hierarchy is critical. Hiring expertise from outside is sometimes necessary, but it comes with the potential to alienate existing employees. Sometimes internal talent can be developed; other times, external expertise is needed. Recognize the potential side effects of bringing in experts and take steps to mitigate or compensate for these effects in advance, thus minimizing negative side effects.

For Seattle, internal expertise was developed with the occasional use of outside expertise. People’s Institute for Survival and Beyond, Crossroads, Western States, Race Forward,

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Center for Social Inclusion, and PolicyLink were all national organizations that helped to build Seattle’s internal expertise.

The final three levers of change deal with fostering an environment that supports the change. These are **investing in infrastructure**, such as tools and processes; **recognizing the role of leaders** in setting an example and expectations; and **rewarding and recognizing accomplishments**. Every change requires some form of infrastructure. Leaders who make the case for the change clear and integrate data from the change into their own decision making thereby signal that the change is important to the organization. Rewarding and recognizing employees’ efforts in implementing the change program is another way to make it clear that that the organization is serious.

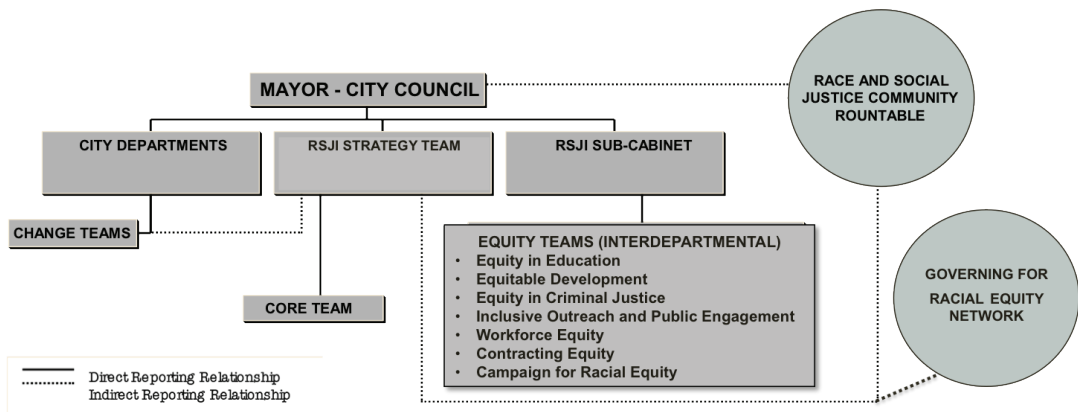
In Seattle, the development of annual Racial Equity work plans, use of a Racial Equity Tool (see section 3 for more detail), support from the Mayor and departmental directors in integrating racial equity into accountability agreements, and special events to recognize

accomplishments all helped foster an environment that is supportive of change.

Each of the seven levers of change is important, but it is the levers taken together that can be used to make racial equity sustainable within government (*strategyperspective.com*).

**WHILE THERE IS NO SINGLE MODEL** for what shape racial equity infrastructure takes, jurisdictions should carefully consider how they will build the capacity to take on ambitious equity goals effectively. In some jurisdictions, such as Multnomah County, Oregon and Alameda County, California, racial equity strategies have first taken hold in a particular agency, such as Public Health, and later grown into a government-wide initiative. The figures on the following page provide two examples of how jurisdictions have designed organizational infrastructure to advance racial equity goals.

## Capacity Building in Seattle Race and Social Justice Initiative Organizational Chart



### Working Groups

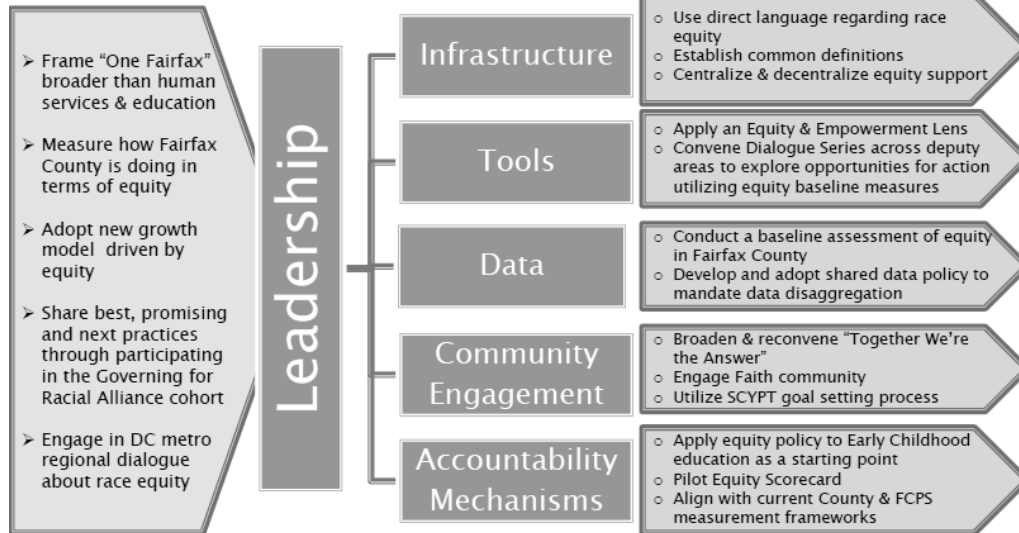
- RSJI Strategy Team** – The Initiative managing team from the Seattle Office of Civil Rights (SOCR)
- Change Team** – A group of employees in each department that help implement RSJI activities and work plans.
- Core Team** – A Citywide leadership development team of 25 people that work with IDT’s to implement RSJI activities.
- RSJI Sub-Cabinet** – Department Directors or deputies who advise and review RSJI activities.
- Interdepartmental Teams** – Convened by lead departments to develop and implement Citywide strategies and community partnerships to address racial inequity.
- RSJ Community Roundtable** – A coalition of 25 government and community based organizations working for racial equity in King County.
- Governing for Racial Equity Network** – A regional network of government agencies in Washington, Oregon and northern California working on issues of equity.

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# Capacity Building in Fairfax County Strategic Plan to Advance Opportunity and Achieve Racial Equity

September, 2014



## Citywide Racial Equity Goals & Strategies, City of Portland

### CITYWIDE RACIAL EQUITY GOALS & STRATEGIES



OFFICE of EQUITY  
and HUMAN RIGHTS  
CITY OF PORTLAND

#### EQUITY GOAL #1

**We will end racial disparities within city government, so there is fairness in hiring and promotions, greater opportunities in contracting, and equitable services to all residents.**

#### EQUITY GOAL #2

**We will strengthen outreach, public engagement, and access to City services for communities of color and immigrant and refugee communities, and support or change existing services using racial equity best practices.**

#### EQUITY GOAL #3

**We will collaborate with communities and institutions to eliminate racial inequity in all areas of government, including education, criminal justice, environmental justice, health, housing, transportation, and economic success.**

#### OVERALL STRATEGIES

- 1 Use a racial equity framework:**  
Use a racial equity framework that clearly articulates racial equity; implicit and explicit bias; and individual, institutional, and structural racism.
- 2 Build organizational capacity:**  
Commit to the breadth and depth of institutional transformation so that impacts are sustainable. While the leadership of electeds and officials is critical, changes take place on the ground, through building infrastructure that creates racial equity experts and teams throughout the city government.
- 3 Implement a racial equity lens:**  
Racial inequities are not random; they have been created and sustained over time. Inequities will not disappear on their own. It is essential to use a racial equity lens when changing the policies, programs, and practices that perpetuate inequities, and when developing 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. Using data in this manner is necessary for accountability.
- 5 Partner with other institutions and communities:**  
Government work on racial equity is necessary, but insufficient. To achieve racial equity in the community, government needs to work in partnership with communities and institutions to achieve meaningful results.
- 6 Operate with urgency and accountability:**  
When change is a priority, urgency is felt and change is embraced. Building in institutional accountability mechanisms using a clear plan of action will allow accountability. Collectively, we must create greater urgency and public commitment to achieve racial equity.

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