



## Racial Equity and Advancing Cultural Humility (REACH) for Organizational Change Learning Collaborative

### Organizational Readiness Assessment

A culturally responsive organization is one that is dynamic, on a committed path to addressing power relationships and improving racial equity and is purposefully designed to be responsive to the interests of communities of color, customers of color, and staff of color. The Addiction Technology Transfer Center (ATTC) Network Coordinating Office (NCO), Prevention Technology Transfer Center (PTTC) NCO, and Mental Health Technology Transfer Center (MHTTC) NCO, developed a document to support the Technology Transfer Center (TTC) Network as we work separately within each of our Centers and collaboratively across networks to build cultural responsiveness and eliminate behavioral health disparities.<sup>1</sup>

The TTC Network defines racial equity as, “Just and fair inclusion into a society in which all people can participate, prosper, and reach their full potential. Said another way, a racially equitable society is one in which racial disparities in health, education, wealth, and other areas do not exist.”<sup>2</sup> TTCs must work across two fronts to advance racial equity as well as culturally and linguistically appropriate behavioral health services: (1) internally within our own Centers and networks and (2) externally in our public facing efforts.

At the New England MHTTC, we believe that agencies and organizations can benefit from applying a racial equity lens to their structure and activities. “A racial equity lens is a set of questions we ask ourselves when we are planning, developing or evaluating a policy, program or decision. It helps us assess if we are taking in the perspectives of the racially diverse people and communities we intend to serve, and whether our policies and programs are resulting in equitable or inequitable outcomes. An equity lens helps us see where challenges and opportunities exist, so that we can make intentional steps to ensure more equitable outcomes for all individuals and communities.”<sup>3</sup>

Asking meaningful questions is key. In order to compile the questions for consideration below, the TTC Network conducted a review of approximately 50 organizational and community assessment tools and resources available from the website, Racial Equity Tools ([racialequitytools.org](http://racialequitytools.org)).<sup>4</sup> We pulled and synthesized questions from these materials, as well as direct resources from the New England MHTTC, to determine questions most applicable for our work. By providing this resource, we are not signifying that this is a complete list of questions to consider in order to achieve racial equity. We aim to spur thinking and action among the agencies, organizations, and collaborators in our community and we acknowledge that this is just one step in a longer, more integrated and comprehensive process.

<sup>1</sup> We thank Laurie Krom, MS, for her leadership in creating this document on behalf of the TTC NCOs, and Deena Murphy, PhD, Van Wilson, MSW, MPH, Holly Hagle, PhD, Viannella Halsall, MPH, and Heather Gotham, PhD for their review.

<sup>2</sup> Blackwell, A. G., Kramer, M., Vaidyanathan, L., Iyer, L., Kirschenbaum, J. (2017). The competitive advantage of racial equity (p6). Retrieved June 29, 2000 from [https://www.policylink.org/sites/default/files/The%20Competitive%20Advantage%20of%20Racial%20Equity-final\\_0.pdf](https://www.policylink.org/sites/default/files/The%20Competitive%20Advantage%20of%20Racial%20Equity-final_0.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> The definition of a racial equity lens is taken verbatim from a resource developed by A Home for Everyone (<http://ahomeforeveryone.net/>). Retrieved (via the Racial Equity Tools website) on June 21, 2020 from

[https://static1.squarespace.com/static/566631e8c21b864679fff4de/t/580fd47af5e231fb340423ec/1477432443385/Racial\\_Equity\\_Lens.pdf](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/566631e8c21b864679fff4de/t/580fd47af5e231fb340423ec/1477432443385/Racial_Equity_Lens.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.racialequitytools.org/plan/informing-the-plan/organizational-assessment-tools-and-resources> and

<https://www.racialequitytools.org/plan/informing-the-plan/community-assessment-tools-and-resources> Retrieved (via the Racial Equity Tools website) June 20, 2020.



*Primary*

1. In what ways are your organization's budget allocations aligned with racial equity goals, plans, policies and/or values?
2. If your organization has an internal structure, e.g. an equity committee, responsible to addressing racial equity, please describe the structure including its scope of work and composition.
3. How is your organization's internal culture of inclusion and equity communicated? Practices may include noticing barriers to participation, planning that incorporates participation supports, public appreciation of "out loud" interrupting or naming of inequities, and encouragement when difficult topics are surfaced.
4. Does your organization have a mission statement that incorporates racial equity?
5. Does your organization meet with leaders from communities of color to get feedback about your organization? Do you have a method in place to assess the overall satisfaction of communities of color with your organization?
6. Does the organization have folks of color as board members and director-level staff?
7. How does your organization formally collaborate with community-based organizations of color to determine and address your organization's responsiveness to the needs of communities of color?
8. Are products and materials produced by your organization assessed for racial bias and reviewed to ensure reflection of your community's diversity?
9. How do you ensure that language services (translation/interpretation) are adequately aligned with community needs?
10. Are racial equity and cultural competency training and capacity building made available to your workforce?
11. Do staff at your organization have an understanding of the social, environmental and structural determinants of racial and ethnic inequities?
12. Does your organization have a racial equity policy?
13. How do you incorporate goals of service equity and culturally-appropriate service delivery? Provide a couple of examples of how this is codified in policy or implemented in practice.
14. If your organization has equity practices and policies, do you require your vendors, contractors, and consultants to adhere to the same practices and policies?
15. Does your organization have a written racial equity plan with clear actions, timelines, people responsible for each action, indicators of progress and processes for monitoring and evaluation?
16. Does the organization have a systematic review of racial equity? (Refers to a planned and periodic gathering of facts and governing body discussion with community participation regarding the implications of the facts for the organization).
17. Describe your organization's primary physical space and what it may communicate to diverse stakeholders. Is it welcoming and accessible? Consider the use of height, open spaces, natural or artificial light, art, signage and visual representations.
18. Does your organization have intentional procedures to increase the recruitment, retention and promotion of people of color within your organization's team?
19. Are racial justice knowledge, skills and practices incorporated into performance objectives (such as job descriptions and work plans) and appraisals/evaluations for staff?
20. Does your staff and board reflect the full spectrum of POC communities within the region?
21. Can you provide examples of how your organization's events are conducted in a manner that supports equity and inclusion, and values diverse ways of speaking, thinking, debating, reflecting and making decisions?

22. Do you collect data on your customers' satisfaction with your organization regarding racial equity? Do you have a plan for how your organization will use and learn from this data? Do you share the findings with communities of color?
23. Do you encourage or support difficult conversations about race in a safe, confidential, private space?

*Secondary*

1. Does your organization have a structure that supports authentic community partnerships that are empowering and more fluid than hierarchical?
2. Please provide a couple of examples of how your organizational meetings are conducted in a manner that supports equity and inclusion, and values diverse ways of speaking, thinking, debating, reflecting and making decisions.
3. Does your organization have courageous leadership that is consistent around applying a racial equity lens and understanding of power and privilege?
4. Do communities of color in your area participate in the development and evaluation of racial equity and/or cultural competency trainings available for your staff?
5. Does the organization have anti-discrimination policies that explicitly prohibit harassment of POC members of the organization?
6. Are the full identities of people of color (sexual and gender identity, immigration status, ability status, age, languages spoken, etc) acknowledged and respected?
7. Please list your organization's key priorities related to cultural and linguistic competencies for staff and leadership.
8. Please provide a couple of examples of how race and ethnicity data from within your organization has affected your services, investments or employment practices.
9. Please describe how your programs are evaluated in terms of their impact on communities of color and racial equity goals? You may include internal and external evaluation processes.
10. Are there visible signs of your organization's commitment to racial equity in your primary physical location, e.g. signage that states your commitment and/or physical representation of diverse communities?

# Assessing Your Agency/Organization's Readiness for Change

**Why should I consider this tool?** It's always good to have a baseline to start from - in conversations about organizational equity, diversity, and inclusion, and in identifying actions that may need to be taken toward those ends.

**What issues does it address?** This tool gives you a checklist of features that characterize organizations at different "places" in terms of how they focus on race/ethnicity, or not. It provides a shared starting place for envisioning how to do a better job in advancing a mission for ALL children, families, and communities.

### **What's needed in an organization in order for this tool to work?**

Anyone can use this tool at any time. But it is best when individuals within the organization use it in groups, whether formal or informal. It will open up conversations about what steps can be taken toward organizational equity, diversity, and inclusion. Units within organizations and organizations as a whole can use the tool annually to benchmark their progress toward being an organization that advances equity.

Below is the Continuum of Race-Focused Work developed by, and reprinted with permission, the Annie E. Casey Foundation (September 2009, revised in 2017) which presents where foundations and other organizations find themselves in terms of addressing equity, diversity, and inclusion.

## A Learning Continuum for Race-Focused Work



***Take the quiz to identify where your agency/organization is on this continuum.***

**STEP 1. The Quiz.** For all four places on Chart 1, place a check mark in all boxes that describe your organization.

**STEP 2. Scoring.** Count the number of items you checked in each "approach" box.

Equity-Focused Approach \_\_\_\_\_

Race-Tentative Approach \_\_\_\_\_

Diversity-Only Approach \_\_\_\_\_

Color-Blind Approach \_\_\_\_\_

## Chart 1. Institutional Assessment Quiz

### My organization:

- Understands and communicates that reducing racial inequities is mission-critical
- Routinely collects, disaggregates, and analyzes data by race/ethnicity in programmatic and operational work
- Proposes targeted strategies that have been put through a racial impact analysis
- Views diversity as a value-added feature of organizations, and Inquires about the cultural competence of staff and grantees to work with diverse groups
- Has mechanisms for management accountability for equity, diversity, and inclusion
- Has mechanisms for staff accountability for equity, diversity, and inclusion
- Supports the efforts of affinity groups working on issues of equity, diversity, and inclusion

**Race-Equity  
Approach**

### My organization:

- Has some recognition that closing racial gaps is important to its work
- Collects and disaggregates data by race/ethnicity in programmatic work but is not sure what to do with it
- May have gone through anti-racism training but is unclear about what to do next
- May not appreciate the distinctions between equity and diversity/inclusion
- Has no management accountability mechanisms for equity, diversity and inclusion
- Has no staff accountability mechanisms for equity, diversity and inclusion
- Has an affinity groups working on issues of equity, diversity, and inclusion

**Race-Tentative  
Approach**

### My organization:

- Does not collect, disaggregate, or analyze data by race/ethnicity in programmatic work
- Proposes “universal” strategies in grant making that are presumed to work for all people
- Invests in grantees who have racial/ethnic backgrounds similar to groups with whom they work
- Sees “diversity” as an important organizational consideration
- Has accountability mechanisms for diversity, but not for equity and inclusion
- Offers cultural competence training as well as opportunities for cross-cultural conversations and learning
- Supports the efforts of affinity groups working on issues of diversity and inclusion

**Diversity-Only  
Approach**

### My organization:

- Does not collect, disaggregate, or analyze data by race/ethnicity in programmatic or operational work
- Proposes “universal” strategies that are presumed to work for all people
- Presumes that all grantees can work with all groups
- Does not see “diversity” as an important organizational consideration
- Believes that lifting up issues of race/ethnicity will only create conflict
- Has no accountability mechanisms for equity, diversity, and inclusion
- Discourages the formation of racial/ethnic affinity groups

**Color-Blind  
Approach**

**STEP 3. What Now?** You can probably see the “place” your organization is in by looking at the highest number in your totals. **The specific items you did not check under the racial equity approach will tell you where your next steps might be to operationalize racial equity in your agency/organization's culture, mission, practices, and/or principles.** And, if you are using this quiz in a group, see if everyone's scores land your agency or organization in the same place.” If not, it is constructive to have a discussion about what your colleagues see differently, and why. These kinds of discussions can lead to change, i.e., in the sharing of information and perceptions. This quiz offers a useful way to benchmark your progress. Take the same quiz a year from now and see what's changed, in either direction.