Advancing Racial Equity: The Role of Government

Funders Briefing
October 15, 2015
Today’s objectives

• Introduce national best practices for advancing racial equity and transforming government

• Share examples of successful implementation of models that advance racial equity and transform government.

• Strategize about immediate practical ways funders can engage with government, including innovative funding strategies
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Example: A bird in a cage

Examining one wire cannot explain why a bird cannot fly.

But **multiple wires**, arranged in specific ways, reinforce each other and trap the bird.
Structural Racialization

- Policies, practices, cultural norms, and institutional arrangements create and maintain racialized outcomes.
- Structural racialization addresses inter-institutional arrangements and interactions.
- Outcomes matter more than intent.
People are “differentially situated”

Not only are people situated differently with regard to institutions, people are situated differently with regard to infrastructure. People are impacted by the relationships between institutions and systems... but people also impact these relationships and can change the structure of the system.
Towards Targeted Universalism

A strategic framework that:

• Starts with identifying the universal goals for all
• Recognizes racial disparities and the importance of eradicating them
• Acknowledges racial inequities within a larger inequitable, institutional framework
• The current position of whites should not be normalized as the standard of success
Center for Social Inclusion

The Center for Social Inclusion’s mission is to catalyze grassroots community, government, and other institutions to dismantle structural racial inequity.

Glenn Harris, President
Late 1990’s - community pressure, some departments initiate racial equity efforts

2004 - Mayor Nickels launches City-wide initiative focused internally

2009 – Expanded partnerships with community; City Council legislation passes unanimously

2015 - new plan focusing on community outcomes
Seattle’s Race and Social Justice Initiative

- Trained 10,000 city employees on racial equity
- All departments develop annual racial equity work plans and have racial equity teams
- Use a Racial Equity Tool in budget, policy and program decisions
- Mayor incorporates racial equity into accountability agreements with department directors
Current Context of Race:
Why government?

• A critical (and necessary) leverage point for addressing structural racial equity

• Overall, 1 in 6 people work for government. Government is the largest employment sector for communities of color

• Post Civil Rights movement, provided access to middle-class jobs with good benefits for people of color
Government cutbacks – politicized/racialized

• Largest contraction of public sector jobs since 1945
• Government shed nearly 1 million employees since 2008
How race gets triggered in messages

**Implicit Bias:**
Unconscious bias developed through networks of association on race

**Symbolic Racism:**
The use of images, code words, and metaphors that implicitly signal race

Using symbols to trigger unconscious racism


Race meta-frames

- Personal Responsibility
- Limited Government
Advancing racial equity

Effective, inclusive democracy
Community and government: Opportunities and challenges of an inside-outside strategy

Maria Poblet, Executive Director
Causa Justa :: Just Cause
Government Alliance on Race and Equity

A national network of government working to achieve racial equity and advance opportunities for all.

Julie Nelson, Director
Values and realities

• All men are created equal
• With liberty and justice for all
• Government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth
History of government and race

Initially explicit

Government explicitly creates and maintains racial inequity.

Discrimination illegal, but “race-neutral” policies and practices perpetuate inequity.

Became implicit

Proactive policies, practices and procedures that advance racial equity.

Government for racial equity
GARE’s three prong approach

• **Expand leadership** – Support governmental jurisdictions that have adopted racial equity initiatives

• **Build base** – Develop “pathways” for new jurisdictions to launch racial equity initiatives

• **Center community** – Build cross-sector collaborations to achieve equity in our communities
National best practice

Normalize
- A shared analysis and definitions
- Urgency / prioritize

Operationalize
- Racial equity tools
- Data to develop strategies and drive results

Organize
- Internal infrastructure
- Partnerships
Normalizing
Equity? Equality?
What’s the difference?
Racial inequity in the U.S.

From infant mortality to life expectancy, race predicts how well you will do...
**Individual racism:**
- Pre-judgment, bias, or discrimination by an individual based on race.

**Institutional racism:**
- Policies, practices and procedures that work better for white people than for people of color, often unintentionally or inadvertently.

**Structural racism:**
- A history and current reality of institutional racism across all institutions, combining to create a system that negatively impacts communities of color.
Operationalizing
Race in governmental policies

Federal Housing Administration

Location of city facilities

DC Trash Transfer Stations

Streetlighting
What is a Racial Equity Tool?

Process

Product

Actively inserts racial equity into decision making processes
Who should use a Racial Equity Tool?

- Elected officials
- Government staff
- Community
Organizing
Seattle Race and Social Justice Structure

**Mayor - City Council**
- City Departments
- RSJI Strategy Team
- RSJI Sub-Cabinet

**Core Team**

**Change Teams**

**Interdepartmental Teams**
- Equity in Education
- Equitable Development
- Equity in Criminal Justice
- Inclusive Outreach and Public Engagement
- Workforce Equity
- Contracting Equity
- Campaign for Racial Equity

**Race and Social Justice Community Roundtable**

**Government Alliance on Race and Equity**

**Campaign for Racial Equity**

- Direct Reporting Relationship
- Indirect Reporting Relationship
Initial successes:

- Leadership cohort established and has grown to **15** jurisdictions
- Nearly **100** jurisdictions getting started
- **Events** - multiple convenings, workshops
- Sharing a **field of practice** - via on-line presence, webinars, enews
- National **relationships**, e.g., NLC, Local Progress, Mayor’s Innovation Project, Living Cities, NACCHO, NRPA, etc
Funding strategies
Leveraging the power of government

- **Normalizing** – Launching year-long learning cohort of jurisdictions in CA, including an “Advancing Racial Equity Speaker Series”
- **Organizing** – “Commitments to Take Action” / “Inclusive Democracy Campaign”
- **Operationalizing** – “Eliminating structural racism investment fund”
- **Infrastructure for GARE**