

A Race Equity Assessment for Westchester County

This report provides a brief overview of the enduring impact of racism in Westchester County and proposes a race equity assessment approach to guide government agencies and community organizations toward more equitable strategies that explicitly address racism and its intersections with other systems of oppression.

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Eight Steps to More
Equitable Strategies

Setting the Stage for Racial Equity

This document proposes a race equity assessment for Westchester County. Drawing from the work of the Local and Regional Government Alliance for Race and Equity (GARE) and other government and nonprofit organizations across the country, the proposed process helps organizations analyze how racism shows up in their work and develop strategies to produce more equitable outcomes. By applying a race equity assessment to their work, organizations actively engage an equity analysis to create a future where everyone is free and thriving.

The following report builds a case for race equity assessment in Westchester County by examining data at the national and local levels, introduces a race equity assessment tool, and concludes with recommendations for using the tool. The appendices provide additional resources to support implementation of a race equity assessment so that every user has a place to begin their assessment. By putting race equity assessments into practice in developing policies, programs, and projects, we can incrementally dismantle the racist structures that drive inequities and move toward a more equitable society.

To understand why a race equity assessment is an important tool in realizing equity, it is important to start at the root: the history of race and racism in the United States.

History of Race and Racism

Racism is baked into the very foundation of our nation. To establish this nation, the founders dispossessed the Indigenous people of their land and traded African people as property fit to work but not to earn the fruits of their labor. This was the beginning of a racialized caste system that has resounded through our history and is deeply embedded in the very fabric of contemporary society.

Societies use race to establish and justify systems of power, privilege, disenfranchisement, and oppression. While the scientific consensus is that race has no biological basis, racism is important and consequential. In a racialized society like the United States, *everyone* is assigned a race, whether or not they are aware of it, and that assignment affects every facet of their lives. Nearly all of our laws, narratives, and policies are rooted in a false hierarchy that assigns value on the basis of race. The effect is inequitable systems and practices that harm us all.

There are numerous historical policies and practices in the United States that have contributed to the embedding of racism in the experience of Black and Indigenous communities, and other communities of color. Some of the most significant include:

Slavery: The enslavement of Black people in the United States, which lasted for centuries, was a foundational policy that embedded racism into the fabric of American society. The legacy of slavery continues to impact Black people today through intergenerational trauma, economic disparities, and systemic discrimination.

The Removal Act of 1830: Native American tribes were forcibly removed from their land in Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and Florida by the US government. Thousands died in the journey and the experience is commonly referred to as the "Trail of Tears."

Jim Crow laws: Following the end of slavery, Southern states enacted a series of laws known as "Jim Crow" laws that enforced racial segregation and denied Black people access to education, housing, and voting rights. These laws were enforced until the civil rights movement of the 1960s.

Chinese Exclusion Act: The first significant restriction on immigration to the United States, the Chinese Exclusion Act banned immigration for people of Chinese descent from 1882 until 1943. It is the only law in US history to prevent immigration by a specific ethnic or national group.

Redlining: In the mid-20th century, the federal government implemented a policy of "redlining," which involved denying mortgage loans and other financial services to residents of certain neighborhoods based on their racial makeup. This policy effectively locked Black people out of many neighborhoods and contributed to a persistent wealth gap between Black and white families.

Mass incarceration: The War on Drugs, which began in the 1980s, led to a significant increase in the number of people incarcerated in the United States, with a disproportionate number of Black and brown people being targeted and imprisoned. This has had a devastating impact on families and communities of color, with many people being unable to access jobs, housing, and other opportunities after being released from prison.

The Patriot Act: Following the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, the Patriot Act was passed, expanding the powers of law enforcement and increasing their resources to "fight terrorism." Little checks and balances were built into the implementation of the law and it ended up increasing surveillance on Muslim people in the United States. It has served to reinforce Islamophobia and put Muslims at risk of state violence.

These are just a few examples of the historical policies and practices that have embedded racism into the American experience for Black, Indigenous and other communities of color. An understanding of historical policies and their enduring impact is critical to engaging in an equity assessment. Correcting the impact of these and other laws will require a sustained effort to acknowledge and redress past policies' harms and work towards greater equity and justice for all people.

The Levels of Racism

Racism is a complex system of discrimination that assigns value to human beings on the basis of arbitrary physical features, and structures a person's experience based on that assignment. It is broadly accepted that there are four levels of racism: individual (often called internalized), interpersonal, institutional, and structural. Figure 1 provides a definition of each of the four levels. While interpersonal racism is the easiest to see and understand, the most pernicious forms are institutional and structural.

At these levels, Black, Indigenous and other communities of color experience inequitable access to resources and opportunities on the basis of their race. It is at these institutional and structural levels where a race equity assessment intervenes to disrupt racist patterns and advance equity. These issues are the result of decisions made by individuals, therefore these systems need to be impacted, influenced and dismantled by individuals who believe these changes are necessary.

FIGURE 1. LEVELS OF RACISM¹

Individual racism includes internalized and interpersonal racism.



Internalized racism lies *within individuals*. These are private beliefs and biases about race that reside inside our own minds and bodies. For White people, this can be internalized privilege, entitlement, and superiority; for people of color, this can be internalized oppression. Examples: prejudice, xenophobia, conscious and unconscious bias about race, influenced by the white supremacy.



Interpersonal Racism occurs *between individuals*. Bias, bigotry, and discrimination based on race. Once we bring our private beliefs about race into our interactions with others, we are now in the interpersonal realm. Examples: public expressions of prejudice and hate, microaggressions, bias and bigotry between individuals.

Systemic Racism includes institutional and structural racism.



Institutional racism occurs *within institutions*. It involves unjust policies, practices, procedures, and outcomes that work better for White people than people of color, whether intentional or not. Example: A school district that concentrates students of color in the most overcrowded, under-funded schools with the least experienced teachers.



Structural racism is racial inequities *across institutions, policies, social structures, history, and culture*. Structural racism highlights how racism operates as a system of power with multiple interconnected, reinforcing, and self-perpetuating components which result in racial inequities across all indicators for success. Structural racism is the racial inequity that is deeply rooted and embedded in our history and culture and our economic, political, and legal systems. Examples: The “racial wealth gap,” where Whites have many times the wealth of people of color, resulting from the history and current reality of institutional racism in multiple systems.

Source: Race Forward

Recognizing Institutional and Structural Racism

Because racism at the institutional and structural levels operates through organizations, laws, policies, and culture, it can be difficult to recognize and address. For instance, it is difficult to find a present-day policy that specifically names a particular racial or ethnic group. Our laws are race-neutral. But we know by looking at the outcomes that even race-neutral laws and policies produce disparate outcomes. For

¹ “What Is Racial Equity?,” Race Forward, April 13, 2021, <https://www.raceforward.org/about/what-is-racial-equity-key-concepts>.

example, New York City’s “stop-and-frisk” law did not specifically name Black and Latino New Yorkers, yet the vast majority of people who were stopped were Black and Latino.² Because racism is deeply embedded in our laws, policies and institutions, it does not need to be explicit to be realized. In some cases, it does not even need actors to carry it out. This is the legacy of the founding of our nation. This nation began with theft of land and labor, with extraction and exploitation. The impact of that racist foundation endures in the outcomes we observe in Black, Indigenous and communities of color, across sectors and throughout the life course. It is a system that was created on purpose and so it must be dismantled on purpose to create a future where we all thrive. A race equity assessment is one way to recognize and address racism on purpose.

Race And...

While racism is at the root of inequities in the United States because of its primacy in the founding of the nation, we recognize that multiple systems of oppression linked to gender, ability, class, citizenship, and other social positions and identities are operating at all times. For this reason, we take a “race and...” approach in our equity analysis, probing where race intersects with other systems of oppression to create deeper marginalization and inequitable outcomes.

Westchester County

As discussed above, the signal of institutional and structural racism is in the outcomes. In Westchester County, New York, like many other areas in the United States, racial inequities can be observed in education, health, housing, food, and other sectors. Some of the specific issues identified in the county include:

- Disproportionate poverty rates: People of color in Westchester County are more likely to live in poverty than their white counterparts. This can significantly impact access to quality education, housing, healthcare, and other essential services.³
- Segregation in housing and education: Westchester County has a history of racial segregation in housing and education, with many communities of color concentrated in certain areas and limited access to high-quality schools.⁴

² “A Closer Look at Stop-and-Frisk in NYC | New York Civil Liberties Union | ACLU of New York,” December 12, 2022, <https://www.nyclu.org/en/closer-look-stop-and-frisk-nyc>.

³ Westchester County Department of Health, *Self-Reported Health Status of Westchester County Residents**, 2013-2014, Jiali Li, Renee Recchia, and Megan Cea. Westchester, New York: Westchester Department of Health, May 2015. Community Health Assessment, <https://health.westchestergov.com/images/stories/Data-Stats/CHA-HealthStatusResidents.pdf> (Accessed April 17, 2023).

⁴ Nikole Hannah-Jones, “Mapping Segregation in Westchester,” *ProPublica*, November 13, 2012, <https://www.propublica.org/article/mapping-segregation-in-westchester>.

- Disparities in healthcare: People of color in Westchester County have been found to have lower rates of health insurance coverage and higher rates of chronic diseases compared to white residents.⁵
- Disparities in employment: People of color in the county are more likely to be unemployed or to hold lower-paying jobs than their white counterparts.⁶ This can lead to further disparities in income and wealth.
- Criminal justice disparities: People of color in Westchester County are more likely to be incarcerated and receive longer sentences than white residents. This can significantly impact their employment prospects, access to housing, and overall quality of life.⁷

The following sections provide a deeper dive into disparities in poverty, health and education to demonstrate the need for a stronger race equity commitment across all sectors in the county.

Poverty

Our partners at the [United Way of Westchester and Putnam](#) created the [ALICE \(Asset, Limited, Income, Constrained, Employed\) report](#) during the COVID-19 crisis as a snapshot of the economic conditions across the state. Table 1 shows households within the metropolitan, urban, rural, and suburban areas within Westchester County who live below the ALICE threshold.

TABLE 1. HOUSEHOLDS BELOW ALICE THRESHOLD DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC⁸

County Subdivision	Total Households	% Below ALICE Threshold
Greenburgh, Westchester County, New York	33,266	27%
Mount Kisco, Westchester County, New York	4,036	43%

⁵ Westchester County Blue Ribbon Task Force for the Elimination of Health Disparities Among Blacks in Westchester, Health Disparities Among Blacks in Westchester: A Snapshot: A Report from County Executive Spano’s Blue Ribbon Task Force. Westchester, New York: Health Education and Information Division of the Westchester County Department of Health, May 2006. Research Report, https://health.westchestergov.com/images/stories/pdfs/BlueRibbonTaskForce_Marcho6.pdf (Accessed June 28, 2023).

⁶ Westchester County Department of Health, *Westchester County 2019 Community Health Assessment*, 2019, George Latimer and Sherlita Amler. Westchester, New York: Westchester Department of Health, 2019. Community Health Assessment, <https://health.westchestergov.com/images/stories/pdfs/chadatareportpopulation2019.pdf> (Accessed June 28, 2023).

⁷ Jesse Barber and Simon McCormack, “A Racial Disparity Across New York that is Truly Jarring,” *New York Civil Liberties Union*, December 16, 2022, <https://www.nyclu.org/en/news/racial-disparity-across-new-york-truly-jarring>.

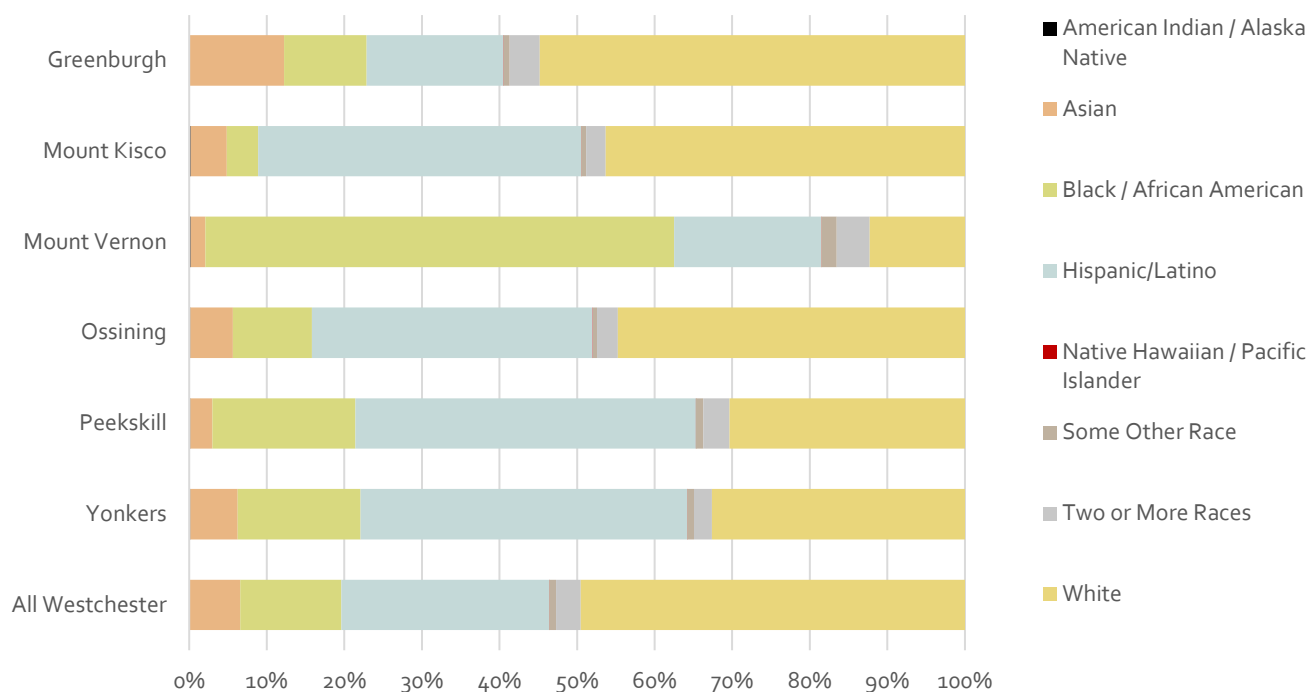
⁸ United Way of Westchester and Putnam, “ALICE IN WESTCHESTER: A FINANCIAL HARDSHIP STUDY” (Westchester, New York, 2020), https://bp4a68.p3cdn1.secureserver.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/2020ALICEReport_Westchester.pdf.

Mount Vernon, Westchester County, New York	25,248	57%
Ossining, Westchester County, New York	12,958	39%
Peekskill, Westchester County, New York	9,628	61%
Yonkers, Westchester County, New York	74,848	53%

The proportion of residents living below the ALICE threshold trends closely with the proportion of Black / African American or Hispanic/Latino residents in the area (Figure 2). Among the six areas shown in Table 1, the three with the highest proportion of households below the ALICE threshold are Mount Vernon, Yonkers and Peekskill. As shown in Table 2, these areas also have higher concentrations of Black / African American and Hispanic/Latino populations. By contrast, Greenburgh, which has the lowest Black / African American and Hispanic/Latino representation and highest White representation, also has the lowest proportion of households living below the ALICE threshold.

That poverty and race are linked is not accidental. It is the product of years of laws and policies that systemically excluded Black, Indigenous and other people of color in the United States from acquiring and growing wealth through education, homeownership, and business. These policies, which included redlining and divestment from neighborhoods where people of color reside have created structural barriers to wealth and perpetuated poverty in these communities. To change this, government, community organizations, and the private sector must work together to deliberately invest in and develop the communities that have been harmed by racist historical and contemporary policies.

FIGURE 2. RACIAL DISTRIBUTION IN SELECT WESTCHESTER COUNTY SUBDIVISIONS, 2020⁹



Source: US Census Bureau, 2020

Food Insecurity

Food insecurity refers to the lack of access to enough food for an active, healthy life. It is a major issue in Westchester County and across the United States, and it is especially prevalent among communities of color.

In Westchester County, data suggests that people of color are more likely to experience food insecurity than their white counterparts. For example, [Feeding Westchester](#) found that nearly one in four Westchester County residents is food insecure, and people of color are disproportionately affected by this issue.¹⁰ Additionally, data shows that low-income communities, often comprised of people of color, are more likely to experience food insecurity. For example, a report by the [Westchester County Department of Health](#) found that households with lower incomes were more likely to report that they did not have enough food to feed their families and that this was especially true for households with children.¹¹

⁹ US Census Bureau, “Decennial Census P.L. 94-171 Redistricting Data,” Census.gov, accessed April 17, 2023, <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial-census/about/rdo/summary-files.html>.

¹⁰ “Nourishing Our Neighbors in the Fight Against Hunger,” Annual Report (Feeding Westchester), accessed April 17, 2023, <https://feedingwestchester.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Feeding-Westchester-2021-Annual-Report.pdf>.

¹¹ Jiali Li, Renee Recchia, and Megan Cea, “Self-Reported Health Status of Westchester County Residents*, 2013-2014,” Community Health Assessment (Westchester, New York: Westchester County Department of Health, May 2015).

The reasons for these disparities are complex and multi-faceted, but they are often rooted in systemic racism and structural inequalities, such as poverty, unemployment, and limited access to healthy and affordable food. To address these issues, it is important for Westchester County to engage in ongoing efforts to promote food security and equity, including working with community-based organizations and government agencies to increase access to healthy and affordable food, support job training and employment opportunities, and reduce poverty and other forms of economic hardship. By doing so, Westchester County can work towards creating a more equitable and just community for all residents.

Educational Inequity

Educational inequity refers to disparities in access to and outcomes in education that result from systemic barriers and discrimination. In Westchester County and across the United States, educational inequity is a major issue affecting communities of color, low-income communities, and other marginalized groups.

In Westchester County, data shows that people of color and low-income communities face significant educational attainment and success barriers. For example, a study by the [Westchester Children's Association](#) found that students of color in Westchester County are more likely to attend high-poverty schools and have lower academic achievement than their white peers.¹² Additionally, these students are more likely to be suspended or expelled from school, which can have a negative impact on their educational outcomes.

Early childhood education has been shown to have enduring effects on a person, with exposure to quality ECE having long-term educational, economic, and health effects.^{13,14} In Westchester County, there are vast disparities in access to ECE. [Data from the Child Care Council of Westchester, Inc.](#) shows that the cost of child care is prohibitively high for many families.¹⁵ For people earning the minimum wage, even if both parents work, childcare can be as high as 36% of annual income for one child, and 63% of annual income for families with two children. Even subsidies fail to meet the need. For example, 73% of families eligible for Head Start are not served by the program. The lack of access to quality ECE can lead to poorer outcomes overall for people from low-income families.

Race Equity Assessments

At this point, we have discussed the history of race and racism, how institutional and structural racism create inequities, and demonstrated inequitable trends in Westchester County, all while naming race

¹² "2022 Edition of WCA Community Snapshots," Westchester Children's Association - WCA4kids, accessed April 17, 2023, https://wca4kids.org/our-work/interactive-data/communitysnapshots2022_free/.

¹³ "Early Childhood Education Research Brief - EJ-ROC Policy Hub | NYU Steinhardt," accessed April 17, 2023, <https://steinhardt.nyu.edu/metrocenter/ejroc/early-childhood-education>.

¹⁴ "Early Childhood Education| Health Impact in 5 Years | Health System Transformation | AD for Policy | CDC," January 11, 2023, <https://www.cdc.gov/policy/opaph/h15/earlychildhoodeducation/index.html>.

¹⁵ "Access to Child Care: The Key to Economic Recovery in Westchester County" (Child Care Council of Westchester, August 2021), https://www.childcarewestchester.org/pdf/Access_to_Child_Care_Key_to_Economic_Recovery_for_Westchester_County_9_16_21_FINAL.pdf.

equity assessments as a tool to help organizations address race inequities. But what exactly is a race equity assessment? Race equity assessments are used to examine how successfully a given policy, program, or legislation applies a racial equity lens in planning and implementation. In some instances, a race equity assessment is both a tool and a process that helps communities and organizations understand how to act to achieve and improve racially equitable outcomes. In recent years, there has been growing recognition of the importance of race equity assessments for organizations. These assessments help organizations understand how race is embedded with their policies, practices, and culture and identify areas where they can improve in terms of promoting racial equity and combating systemic racism. Westchester Center for Racial Equity presents this assessment as a tool for advancing race equity at the organizational, community, group, and potentially policymaking levels throughout the county.

Another reason race equity assessments are important is that they can help organizations identify areas where they can make positive changes to promote racial equity. For example, an assessment may reveal that an organization lacks diversity in leadership positions or that its policies and practices do not include people from different racial backgrounds. By identifying these areas, companies can make meaningful changes and improve their organizational culture and practices. These improvements in diversity and organizational culture then reach externally to communities served by enhancing organizations' ability to tailor their products, services, and outreach efforts to meet the needs of these communities.

Finally, racial equity assessments can also help organizations to be more accountable and transparent in their efforts to promote racial equity. By collecting data and conducting regular assessments, organizations can demonstrate their commitment to promoting racial equity and be held accountable for making progress in this area.

In conclusion, race equity assessments are important for organizations because they help organizations understand how racism shows up in their policies, practices, and culture and identify areas where they can combat systemic racism to promote racial equity. By conducting these assessments, companies can become more accountable, transparent, and responsive to the needs of employees, customers, and communities.

Summary

In order to effectively address the issues impeding the full economic mobility of Black Americans, we must address the following inequities:

- Widening the wealth gap: Inequities can exacerbate income and wealth disparities, leading to growing poverty and inequality. This can create a cycle of poverty and disadvantage that is difficult to break and can have long-lasting impacts on individuals and communities.
- Impeding social mobility: Inequities can make it more difficult for people to move up the socioeconomic ladder, limiting their opportunities for success and making it harder for them to achieve their full potential.

- Harming health: Inequities in access to health care, healthy food, and safe environments can lead to health disparities, including higher rates of chronic diseases, lower life expectancy, and lower quality of life.
- Undermining education: Inequities in access to quality education can limit educational attainment, making it more difficult for individuals to acquire the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in the workforce.
- Impeding economic growth: Inequities can limit economic growth by limiting the potential of large segments of the population, reducing the size of the workforce, and increasing the cost of social services.
- Eroding trust in institutions: Inequities can erode trust in institutions and government, as people may view these systems as unjust and unfair. This can lead to a breakdown in social cohesion and increased tensions within communities.
- Fueling discrimination and prejudice: Inequities can reinforce stereotypes, discrimination, and prejudice, leading to further marginalization and exclusion of already marginalized groups.

In addition, the complex interplay of social positions and conditions including gender, occupation, family structure, education, employment status, wages, incarceration, citizenship, and disability intersect with racism to exacerbate these outcomes. In short, racism has an enduring impact.

Despite current efforts to address inequities, in our county alone, the data demonstrates disproportionate burden in communities of color with regard to health care, food insecurity, employment, housing, and other necessities for living. Poverty rates were highest in Westchester County in 2016-20 among African American and Hispanic populations, at 15% and 13%, respectively, compared to Asian residents and white populations, both at 6%.¹⁶ According to the [Westchester County Index](#), these large and persistent disparities in poverty rates result from historical and current policies and practices that disadvantaged people of color.

Addressing these issues in the county will require a sustained effort by government agencies, community organizations, and businesses to work together to promote racial equity and combat systemic racism. Race equity assessments can illuminate some of these harms as part of the analysis and enable organizations and coalitions to address them as part of an equity strategy.

Methodology

To build organizational capacity to address racial inequities, we have proposed a race equity assessment process for Westchester County organizations. Our process is adapted from the GARE

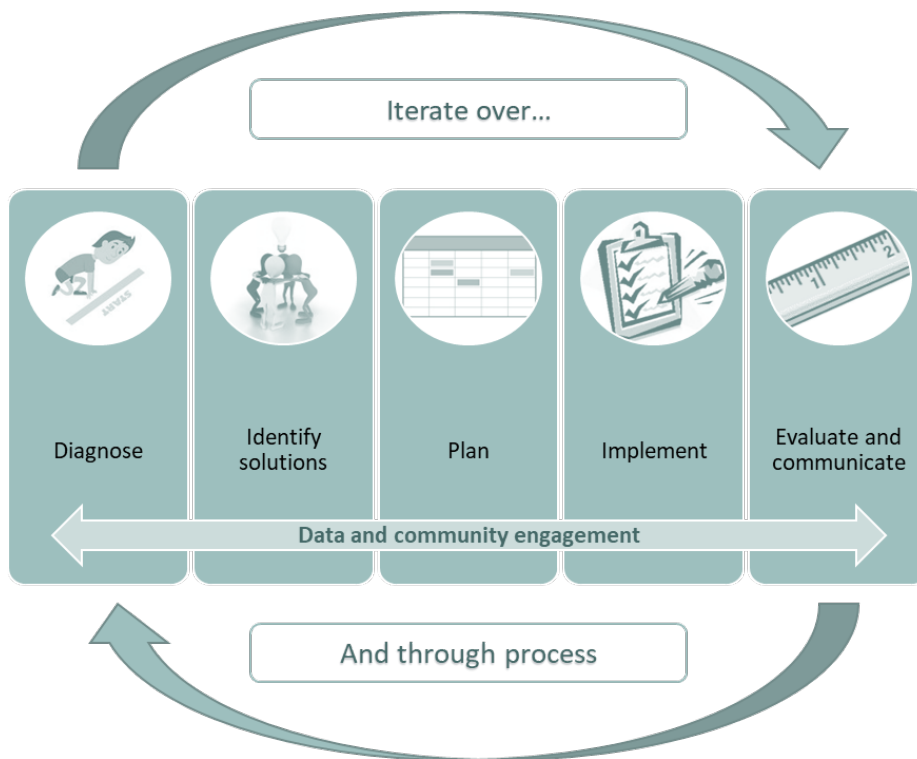
¹⁶ Kevin Smithwick, "Westchester Index," accessed April 17, 2023, <http://westchesterindex.org/>.

Racial Equity Toolkit¹⁷ and the City of Madison’s Racial Equity and Social Justice Initiative’s Comprehensive Racial Equity Analysis.¹⁸ Building on the work of those institutions, we offer a framework and analysis process that organizations can apply to develop more equitable solutions for the issues they address.

Framework

The framework for our race equity assessment has five iterative phases with data and community engagement embedded throughout (Figure 1). The first phase is to diagnose the problem. This includes identifying the problem, who is most impacted, and the root causes of the problem. The second phase is to identify and evaluate solutions. Strong solutions address the root causes of inequity, achieve intended results without causing unintended harm, and build community. The third phase is to plan for implementation. During planning, it is important to specify goals and objectives, define metrics for tracking progress, and ensure that the proposed solution is feasible. The next phase is implementation, where the focus is on resources, measuring progress, and maintaining community engagement. The fifth phase is to evaluate and communicate findings for accountability to key stakeholders, including the most impacted community, and to inform next steps.

FIGURE 3. A RACE EQUITY ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK



¹⁷ “Racial Equity Toolkit: An Opportunity to Operationalize Equity,” *Government Alliance on Race and Equity* (blog), accessed April 17, 2023, <https://www.racialequityalliance.org/resources/racial-equity-toolkit-opportunity-operationalize-equity/>.

¹⁸ “Analysis Tools | Civil Rights, City of Madison, Wisconsin,” accessed April 17, 2023, <https://www.cityofmadison.com/civil-rights/programs/racial-equity-social-justice-initiative/analysis-tools>.

Values

The framework holds the following values as central to effective application for race equity.

- Race at the center
 - We work with race at the center of the analysis, acknowledging that other systems of oppression intersect with race to deepen marginalization.
- Community voice and wisdom
 - When engaging marginalized communities, reciprocity is a core value (e.g., compensation for listening sessions)
 - Many community members have survived and some have even thrived through inequity, and they have still chosen to live in this municipality. That alone warrants their inclusion.
- Deep and sustained work over rapid work
 - A race equity assessment requires deep and sustained work for the greatest impact. The systems that create and perpetuate inequities we created and reinforced over time. Dismantling them requires careful analysis, intention and strategy that can only come through deep work.

Race Equity Assessment Process

The race equity assessment process that follows breaks the framework down into eight steps. Step 1 is to prepare for the analysis. Steps 2 through four help to diagnose. This builds the foundation for the following steps to identify solution (step 5), plan (step 6), implement (step 7), and evaluate and communicate (step 8). While this process is written in a stepwise fashion and follows a logical order, the steps are indeed iterative. Earlier steps can be revisited if findings of a later step in the process warrant it. As well, the final steps of the analysis should lead to an iteration over the entire process, whereby another problem might be identified and analyzed to produce a new proposal that addresses race inequity. In that way, there is iteration through (internal) and over (external) the entire process.

Step 1: Prepare

- Identify the team that will conduct the analysis.
- Plan to meet regularly to complete the process.
- Establish budget and other resources available.
- Identify any partners or others who may be consulted, kept informed, or provide approval. A project planning tool like MOCHA or RACI might be useful in completing this step.

Step 2: Define the problem

- What can you observe? What patterns or symptoms exist to demonstrate the problem?
- Articulate the problem statement.

Step 3: Specify the knowns and unknowns

- Who is impacted (or burdened) by the problem? Name specific communities or groups of people.
- Who benefits (or profits) from the problem?

- What did we learn from the communities most impacted?
- What factors associated with this problem contribute to disparate experiences for different communities? Consider historical and current policies (e.g., redlining, economic policies).
- What gaps are there in our understanding of the issue?
- What data can we consult to address data gaps?

Step 4: Conduct a root cause analysis

- Create a map of the sequence of events that lead to the problem by mapping from symptoms (observations) backward to root causes.
- What conditions allow the problem to occur at each stage?
- What surrounding problems contribute to the central problem or predecessors on the pathway?
- What historical and current policies or practices create or perpetuate the problems at any point in the pathway, but especially at the root?

Step 5: Propose and evaluate solutions

- What vision do we have for the world? What conditions do we want to create as we work to address the problem?
- How have others solved this problem?
- What solutions to address this problem exist in the communities most impacted?
- Describe the policy, program, practice, or other type of proposal that seeks to address the problem.
- How does the proposal address the problem?
- What are the intended outcomes and impact of the proposal?
- Who might benefit from the proposal? Who is burdened?
- What are some potential unintended consequences (or benefits) of the proposal?
- What impact would the proposal have on communities that are already most impacted?
- What sectors (health, education, housing, etc.) might the proposal impact?
- How does the proposal address historical or current root causes of inequities?
- What are some potential complementary strategies that can be implemented to strengthen the proposal?

Step 6: Plan

- How has the community been engaged through the planning process? If not at all, plan on how the community can be engaged and provide feedback before implementation and through it.
- Is the proposal feasible? What are the constraints? Consider a RAID (risk, assumptions, issues, dependencies).
- What partnerships exist to support implementation?
- What partnerships could be created or strengthened through this proposal to maximize impact?
- Who are the stakeholders in this process? How must they be engaged through the process?
- What are the time and resource constraints? How will they be addressed?
- Create a logic model: how does the proposal lead to the impact in the community via short-term, intermediate, and long-term outcomes?
- What are the specific goals and objectives of the proposal?

- What actions must be taken to achieve objectives and goals?
- Define metrics that will signal issues for course correction, and demonstrate progress and impact.
- Evaluate the implementation plan using SMARTIE (Strategic, Measurable, Ambitious, Realistic, Time-bound, Inclusive, and Equitable).¹⁹
- Establish a plan for communicating with stakeholders, including community, and intended audiences.

Step 7: Implement, engage and document

- Staff and resource the implementation of the solution.
- Collect data to monitor and evaluate the implementation.
- Continue to engage the community throughout the process.

Step 8: Evaluate and communicate for accountability

- Analyze data regularly to identify problems for course correction.
- Communicate outcomes and impact with the community.
- Give credit to the communities that contribute to the process.
- Document lessons learned.
- Continue to deepen relationships with communities.
- Apply lessons learned to ongoing efforts toward race equity.

RECOMMENDATIONS

We conclude this report with a few recommendations for conducting a race equity assessment. These assessments are challenging. They require time, dedication, and resources. Often organizations struggle to conduct them because the task can seem insurmountable. But much of the process is having the courage and to begin. Our recommendations provide some guidance for beginning and sustaining a race equity assessment, so that organizations can do the deep work required to dismantle racism and promote race equity for the communities they serve.

Begin Somewhere

One of the most common challenges organizations face when embarking on equity strategies is disorientation and uncertainty about where to begin. The same feelings often emerge when faced with the time, resources, effort, and deep work required by a race equity assessment. Ultimately, such fears lead to inaction, which does not change systems. Truly, the only way to begin is to begin somewhere.

To overcome fear and doubt about where to begin, organizations can start with a pilot. Select just one project that can implement the assessment. Give the project the time and resources necessary to complete the assessment. Monitor the pilot project and notice how their strategy evolves, the community relationships that are developed, and the outcomes of the project. Evaluate the pilot to understand how well the assessment worked.

¹⁹ The Management Center, [SMARTIE Goals Worksheet - The Management Center](#)

If it is difficult to identify a pilot program, then begin with the development of an equity strategy for the organization. Using the race equity assessment to develop an equity strategy is a great way to become familiar with the process while producing a product that will be crucial in the organization's equity efforts. The assessment itself will be foundational and indispensable to the equity strategy.

Appendix 1 offers some tools that to support organization in completing the steps in the analysis.

Commit to the Process

The inequities we observe today are the result of other people's design. They created these systems with intention. Dismantling these systems will require intention. That is what the race equity assessment does: it builds intention into problem-solving, decision-making, and planning, so that we can *intentionally* create a more equitable society. As a result, the proposed race equity assessment process is intensive. The assessment is intended to delve deeply into a problem to understand and intervene at its roots. This takes time, resources, and effort. Organizations implementing a race equity assessment as part of their equity strategy must commit to seeing the process through to see its impact. Skipping a phase will ultimately recreate the very systems such a process is intended to dismantle.

Develop Shared Language

A key component of a successful race equity assessment is the analysis brought to it by the team conducting it. For this reason, it is important that analysis teams develop a strong foundation of race equity concepts and history, and bring that to the assessment. To support this, we have included a glossary in Appendix 2 so that organizations can define key terms when having conversations about racism. But definitions are just a beginning. Having shared language also means developing a deep understanding of the history and impact of racism. For this larger undertaking, one place to begin is with the Westchester Center for Racial Equity's signature Racial Equity 101-103 series. In that course, participants gain an understanding of the history of race and racism, examine contemporary manifestations of racism and intersecting oppressions, and learn practical applications of an anti-racist commitment in decision-making at home, work, and in community. This deep dive helps participants develop empathy for others who endure oppressive systems and a commitment to anti-racism, which are necessary for implementing a race equity assessment.

Measure Early, Measure Often

One of the strengths of the proposed race equity assessment is the emphasis on measurement. Throughout, there are questions that require measurement, from understanding the landscape to assessing feasibility to finally implementing and evaluating the strategy. Measurement, both quantitative and qualitative, is crucial to developing a clear problem statement and understanding the impact of the proposed solution. It also serves the goals of community engagement and relationship-building by providing information with which the organization can be held accountable. Therefore, it is important that organizations implementing a race equity assessment measure early and measure often.

Measurement has many uses when completing a race equity assessment, but the most important is communication and accountability to community members. If resources permit, a dashboard that is available to the community and updated regularly is a great way to ensure communication and organizational accountability.

Tailor It...With Care

Application of the race equity assessment will yield lessons early on. Organizations will quickly identify what works for them, what doesn't, and where the process needs to be expanded and refined to best serve their mission. It is recommended that such lessons are cultivated and applied in tailoring to maximize effectiveness and impact. The key when tailoring is to focus on keeping the general framework and maintain a comprehensive analysis. Do not skip steps in the interest of a briefer tool. Brevity risks reinforcing the existing systems. The purpose of the assessment is to conduct a deep and thorough analysis that illuminates points of intervention to disrupt the *status quo*. To do anything else is pointless. So, tailor the tool, but be careful to maintain its integrity.

Appendix 1: Tools to Support Race Equity Assessment

Tool	What does it do?	Race Equity Assessment Step(s) where it might be useful	Source
Westchester County Index	An index with multiple equity metrics localized to Westchester County	Step 2 & 3	https://westchesterindex.org/
SWOT Analysis	Assesses the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities toward better strategy	Steps 3-5	https://www.mindtools.com/amtbj63/swot-analysis
MOCHA	A delegation tool that clarifies who owns different pieces of work (Manager, Owner, Consulted, Helper, Approver). Eliminates ambiguity so that the work keeps moving	Step 6 (can also support work planning throughout)	https://www.managementcenter.org/resources/assigning-responsibilities/
TOA Communications Toolkit	A toolkit with guidance on how to develop an equity-centered communications strategy	Step 8	https://opportunityagenda.org/our-tools/communications-toolkit/
NYC DOHMH Community Engagement Framework	A framework and accompanying tools for planning and implementing a community engagement strategy	Throughout	https://www.nyc.gov/assets/doh/downloads/pdf/che/community-engagement-framework.pdf

Appendix 2: Glossary

The following glossary is taken directly from Latrenda Sherrill's *Racial Equity Outcome Toolkit: A Six-Step Process for Your Organization*.²⁰ These definitions can be a foundation for beginning conversations about race and racism in your work.

Cultural representations: Language, images, narratives, frames and cognitive cues that form the public's conventional wisdom about race. Within the common perspective that these representations generate, white privilege and racial disparities are perceived as normal, disconnected from history and institutions, and largely explainable by individual and racial group characteristics.

Inclusion: The action or state of including or of being included within a group or structure. More than simply diversity and numerical representation, inclusion involves authentic and empowered participation and a true sense of belonging.

Internalized racism: The private racial beliefs held by and within individuals. The way we absorb social messages about race and adopt them as personal beliefs, biases and prejudices are all within the realm of internalized racism. For people of color, internalized oppression can involve believing in negative messages about oneself or one's racial group. For white people, internalized privilege can involve feeling a sense of superiority and entitlement, or holding negative beliefs about people of color.

Institutional racism: Racial inequity within institutions and systems of power, such as places of employment, government agencies and social services. It can take the form of unfair policies and practices, discriminatory treatment, or inequitable opportunities and outcomes. An example of institutional racism would be a school system that concentrates students of color in the most overcrowded and under-resourced schools with the least qualified teachers compared to the educational opportunities of white students.

Interpersonal racism: How our private beliefs about race become public when we interact with others. When we act upon our prejudices or unconscious bias — whether intentionally, visibly, verbally or not — we engage in interpersonal racism. Interpersonal racism also can be willful and overt, taking the form of bigotry, hate speech or racial violence.

Intersectionality: A particular way of understanding and identifying social location in terms of crisscrossing, or interwoven, systems of oppression. Specifically, intersectionality is an "analysis claiming that systems of race, social class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, nation and age form mutually constructing features of social organization." **Race:** A socially constructed system of categorizing humans largely based on observable physical features (phenotypes), such as skin color, and on ancestry. There is no scientific basis for, or discernible distinction between, racial categories. The ideology of race has become embedded in our identities, institutions and culture and is used as a basis for discrimination and domination. At the micro, or individual, level of racism are internalized and interpersonal forms of racism.

²⁰ LaTrenda Leonard Sherrill, "Racial Equity Outcome Toolkit: A Six-Step Process for Your Organization" (Pittsburgh, PA: The Heinz Endowments, n.d.).

At the macro level of racism, we look beyond the individuals to the broader dynamics, including institutional and structural forms of racism.

Racial equity: The condition that would be achieved if one's race or ethnic origin were no longer a determining factor in one's success. This concept focuses on achieving favorable outcomes that are comparable across racial and ethnic groups through the allocation of resources in ways designed to remedy disadvantages some people face through no fault of their own.

Racial justice: The systematic fair treatment of people of all races that results in equitable opportunities and outcomes for everyone. All people are able to achieve their full potential in life, regardless of race, ethnicity or the community in which they live. Racial justice — or racial equity — goes beyond "anti-racism." It's not just about what we are against, but also what we are for. A "racial justice" framework can move us from a reactive posture to a more powerful, proactive and even preventive approach.

Structural racism: The ways that history, culture, public policy, institutional practices and personal beliefs interact to maintain racial hierarchy and company norms.

Systematic equity: A complex combination of interrelated elements consciously designed to create, support and sustain social justice. It is a robust system and a dynamic process that reinforces and replicates equitable ideas, power, resources, strategies, conditions, habits and outcomes.

White culture: The dominant, unquestioned standards of behavior and ways of functioning embodied by the vast majority of institutions in the United States.