FACILITATOR'S GUIDE
for continuous improvement conversations with a Racial Equity Lens
WHO SHOULD USE THIS GUIDE

This guide has been designed to support facilitators and leaders to advance cross-sector conversations and efforts aimed at population-level impact. How might facilitators effectively use data? How might they ensure a racial equity focus? Often these conversations are unsuccessful. They stall for various reasons including the historical and prevailing culture of both funders and grantees that has focused on compliance rather than continuous improvement. We hope that the tools in this guide, developed through our own work and that of our grantees and partners can support you in having productive conversations and allow you and your diverse partners to achieve dramatically better results in your community. This guide is split into two main sections:

- Background and information on where to start when thinking about and agreeing on data, applying racial equity lens and adopting a continuous improvement approach work to achieve population changes
- Tools and resources that have been useful in communities who are at different stages of their Collective Impact and Racial Equity work.

This guide is a curation of various tools and resources we have used at Living Cities and is by no means exhaustive. We would love to hear any feedback on the tools in the guide as well as other tools you have used in your own conversations.
WHAT CHANGES ARE WE TALKING ABOUT?

When discussing Collective Impact and System Changes, we often miss the critical role that early programmatic success has in driving communities to achieve these larger and longer term changes. In the recent research commissioned by The Collective Impact Forum from ORS Impact and the Spark Policy Institute, the authors examined the implementation of the five collective impact conditions and the Principles of Practice, and the types of changes they are seeing:

**Early Changes:** Changes to the environment that lay the foundation for systems and policy changes, such as increased partnership quality, collaboration, and awareness of the issue.

**Systems Changes:** Changes to core institutions within the initiative’s geographic area that (1) may be formalized and likely to sustain or more informal experiments that could lay the groundwork for future formalized changes, and (2) may happen in a single organization, multiple organizations with a common purpose (both in terms of issue area and sector), or multiple organizations with multiple purposes.

**Population Changes:** Changes in the target population of the initiative, which may be specific people within specific systems, geographic areas, or with specific needs.

*To achieve large scale change through collective impact, you need to continuously use data for incremental improvement, to ensure that you are on the right path.*

DATA & COLLECTIVE IMPACT

In this section:

Using data towards shared result

Without continuously tracking and managing progress with data, it is highly unlikely that a collective impact initiative, or any large-scale change initiative, can achieve its goals. That’s why we created a Data and Collective Impact series to prioritize data-driven decision making when working within communities in service of results.

This series walked practitioners through the initial **five steps of identifying and using data toward achieving a collective impact shared result**, from agreeing upon which data is needed to facilitating probing conversations with partners about the data. This booklet builds on Step 4, providing you **tools to utilize when facilitating data conversations**, focusing on utilizing a racial equity lens for continuous improvement in service of population and systems change.

**Step 1:** Agree on Data – Agree with partners on population metrics that track to a shared result, as well as program-specific metrics to understand how programs are contributing to changes.

**Step 2:** Find the Data – If the data exist, figure out how to access them. If they don’t, figure out how to develop them.

**Step 3:** Present the Data – Take the data and make them digestible, understandable and actionable.

**Step 4:** Discuss the Data – The data will tell a story—determine what’s behind that story and, more importantly, what to do about it.

**Step 5:** Change Behavior and Share Responsibility – Make sure everyone in the collective impact initiative is actually changing behavior based on the data.
CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

In this section:
- What is continuous improvement
- Introduction to root cause analysis

As Jeff Raderstrong discusses in the blog series about Using Data for Collective Impact, the continuous improvement process is critical to achieving changes in behaviors and a shared responsibility across cross-sector tables.

Continuous Improvement is made up of incremental changes which are designed and implemented by people utilizing their authority. Continuous improvement opportunities happen in conversations among people. Using programmatic data, conversations about what is allowing you to achieve your targets and what is also getting in the way. Engaging the people who provide AND use the service/program is critical in these conversations.

Identify what incremental changes could be made in the “What” and “How” the service/program is being delivered, who has authority to make both levels of changes and commit to testing whether or not these changes impact the outputs and outcomes for a period of time (1-3 months for a small cohort typically not larger than 25 people) before returning to the conversation to make decisions.
**EMBEDDING A RACIAL EQUITY LENS**

In this section:
- What is a racial equity lens?
- Centering racial equity in continuous improvement conversations

Racial Equity and Inclusion is not just a goal, it is a daily practice. It means continuous reflections on how each of our decisions and actions can perpetuate the same inequities we are trying to address. Especially in our work to address systemic, population level changes, we have to continuously challenge our biases and identifying our blind spots.

This guide is only as good as the practice of reflection. It is not meant to be a comprehensive checklist. This guide is an working draft - as we continue to reflect and learn from our partners and communities, there will be additions and edits. What we're doing in the process is to build the muscle for continuous reflection on racial equity.

Racial equity and inclusion are integral to Collective Impact’s core principles. Partnerships must make a commitment to applying a racial equity and inclusion lens throughout its work, in order to achieve equitable change for all people they seek to serve.

For far too long, systems’ leaders have taken a universal look at problems and have applied universal solutions without considering the unique needs of different groups of people - particularly people of color. In doing this, we miss critical opportunities to make a real difference in people’s lives and build more effective systems.

Learn more about Living Cities’ perspective in this blog by our Managing Director for Performance and Results, JaNay Queen Nazaire.

Note on diversity, equity and inclusion, and intersectional practice: When we focus on racial equity, we are focusing on the ways and which race compounds and intersects with other issues that people of color face. Race intersects with other marginalized identities, which includes gender, sexual orientation, and disability, and we want to be sure to reflect on all of these different intersections in our work.

On the next page, you will find tools we have used that can help you ensure that racial equity is at the center of your continuous improvement conversations:
The Racial Equity Impact Assessment tool from Race Forward asks five simple questions:

- Are all racial/ethnic groups who are affected by the policy/practice/decision at the table?
- How will the proposed policy/practice/decision affect each group?
- How will the proposed policy/practice/decision be perceived by each group?
- Does the policy/practice/decision worsen or ignore existing disparities?
- Based on the above responses, what revisions are needed in the policy/practice/decision under discussion?

Government Alliance on Racial Equity (GARE) has a 6-step tool that walks you through a conversation about racial equity action plans. An important part of the conversation is to make sure that we include the questions:

- What questions cannot be answered by the available secondary data?
- What questions should you ask the communities affected by the disparities?
- How can you engage the community to answer these questions?
- Did any of the information you gathered from the community challenge any previous assumptions you had? Do you need to get and analyze more secondary data?
- Will the above policies, programs, and practices result in unintended consequences that could negatively impact the communities of color and the areas they live in?

At Living Cities, we have adapted some of these tools to create a continuous improvement checklist for our data conversations.
The point of using these questions is not to have the answers to them immediately, but rather to interrogate. It is to ensure that we are thinking about how to answer these questions even if we do not yet have the answers. Sometimes you may find that even asking these questions out loud shifts your decisions. The City of Austin, for example, have adapted these tools into a policy assessment tool to ensure that their policies are equitable.

Using these tools won’t automatically make any of your decisions equitable. However, the practice of continuously interrogating how a decision might be inequitable will help you uncover biases and blind spots that you did not notice before.

**UNDERSTANDING ASSUMPTIONS & ROOT CAUSES**

In this section:
- Addressing assumptions and bias
- Root cause analysis

Entering a discussion with multiple partners means you are going to confront a lot of assumptions. Your partners may hold assumptions (correct or not) about any number of things—from the cause of problems to how to solve those problems.

They may even have assumptions/disagreements about the definitions of seemingly simple terms.

Facilitating a conversation in which you can surface disagreement and build consensus about different metrics/measures can help improve your use of data at all steps in this process. Beyond these definitional assumptions, you should make sure any conversation about data involves a conversation about root causes of problems. If you don’t understand why certain problems exist, it’s unlikely that you can determine effective strategies for solving those problems.

**Root Cause Analysis** is a methodology we use at Living Cities to interrogate the factors behind the trends we see in our data. Is the unemployment rate in a city rising despite the presence of more job training programs? What are the underlying reasons for this? By asking "why?" five times, we often uncover systems-level factors that are impacting a population. This allows us to delve deeper than we might if we made more surface-level assumptions about trends that emerge.
FACILITATION WITH A RACIAL EQUITY LENS

In this section:
- Things to keep in mind
- Prevention and Intervention tactics

The most important part of the “discuss the data” stage is the discussion, not the data. The facilitator’s role is to help your partnership come to an agreement about what the data is saying and any breakdowns in data accessibility. The facilitator should understand how to shape a conversation about data so that all those in attendance understand what they are looking at and why that matters, as well as feel empowered to make their own conclusions.

This blog post by Juan Sebastian Arias, talks through Head, Hand, Heart Framework as one way to facilitate productive conversations on racial equity that can lead to effective action.

It is also important to ensure that a racial equity lens is embedded in all of your conversations, including when you are facilitating continuous improvement conversations. As the facilitator, we suggest that you familiarize yourself with racial equity concepts and think about how those things might show up in a meeting you’re facilitating.

Some things to keep in mind:

- Before a meeting does everyone in the team have the same information?
- In meetings, who is talking the most? Does everyone have a chance to speak?
- Does your team have a preference of certain type of data/evidence? Are you privileging a certain kind of data over another? Why?
  - Are you using clear, accessible language? Are you using language that people would use themselves?
  - Is there a regular space for feedback?
  - Are you using racial equity assessment tool for our decision making?
  - Is your data disaggregated?

Our meetings and conversations don't happen in a vacuum, and we cannot ignore how oppression in the world can be inadvertently replicated in our meetings. As a facilitator, having an understanding on how these might show up in your meetings will be helpful in ensuring that you can get everyone's perspective.
There might be times when you have to intervene when someone in a meeting says things that are hurtful to others. Remember that while it might not be someone’s intention to hurt, the impact still matters. It’s always a good idea to prepare for this in advance so that you can let set appropriate context and ground rules. This is especially true in conversations about root causes as biases are likely to surface.

Here are some tactics we have adapted from Interaction Institute for Social Change you can use.

**INTERVENTION TACTICS**

**Process Intervention: intervene by bringing group back to the process that was agreed upon**

**MAKE PROCESS COMMERCIALS**

We will discuss that in this section of the agenda/next meeting/after our site visit....

**BOOMERANG**

Return a question to the person who asked it or to the team.

**ASK/SAY “WHAT’S GOING ON?”**

Name something that isn’t working; get it out in the open so the group can deal with it.

**REINFORCE PROCESS AGREEMENTS**

Remind the team of a previous agreement.

**ACCEPT/LEGITIMIZE/DEAL WITH OR DEFER**

“I hear you....” “Thank you for saying that...”

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**Three tactics to ground your meeting:**

- Get agreement on what we are going to do together and how
- Community agreements
- Clarify process

**Questions to ground your intervention:**

Where are we? Where are folks in the room and where am I? What is happening? Where do we want to go? How do we get there?

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**TOOLKIT**

- Interrupting Microaggressions
- A Guide to Calling In
- Did you really just say that? How to confront microaggressions, whether you’re a target, bystander or perpetrator
- Love while challenging racist behaviors
- Affirm, Counter, Transform

**Content intervention: intervene by bringing in your knowledge on systemic, institutional and individual racism**

**USE WORKING DEFINITIONS**

“These are the working definitions we will be working with We will not spend time today to talk about the definitions....”

**USE FACTS OR DATA**

“Actually, the data says...”

**BRING UP PERSONAL EXPERIENCE AND OBSERVATIONS**

"In my experience..."

"I have seen this in my community...."

**STORYTELLING**

Use stories to counter problematic statements or narratives
**BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER**

In this booklet, we have shared various tools and resources for collecting and discussing data, and employing a rigorous racial equity lens and systems change frame. All of these tools are useful on their own and in collaboration with each other depending on where your local conversations are today and where they will be tomorrow. We believe these tools should be used regularly even when they aren’t seen as necessary. The more often we utilize these tools, the better we at using them and we will begin to normalize their use in the work in service of achieving results.

Learning from others who have been doing this work is also helpful. We have found that understanding the process that it took communities to embed continuous improvement and racial equity into their work has allowed us to refine our own processes. We thank **StriveTogether** for sharing their stories of the processes in the local communities they have been working in. Here are some additional case studies from StriveTogether which may be helpful:

- **Community Example: Moving to equity in Portland, OR**
- **Community Example: Six communities work to increase federal student aid applications**
- **Community Example: Advancing Racial Equity Essentials in Seattle, WA**
- **Community Example: Battling Bias in Racine, WA**

We hope these resources and tools have been helpful and ask you to share your journey and process as facilitators and any other tools and resources you are using with us so we can continue to learn together and strengthen our communities’ ability to achieve population changes and racial equity.
GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Collective Impact: is the commitment of a group of actors from different sectors to a common agenda for solving a specific social problem, using a structured form of collaboration.

To learn more about Collective Impact, check out the Collective Impact Forum: https://collectiveimpactforum.org/

Equity vs Equality: Equity and equality are two strategies we can use in an effort to produce fairness. Equity is giving everyone what they need to be successful. Equality is treating everyone the same. Equality aims to promote fairness, but it can only work if everyone starts from the same place and needs the same help.

Results Based Accountability (RBA): is a disciplined way of thinking and acting to improve entrenched and complex social problems. Communities use it to improve the lives of children, youth, families, adults. RBA is also used by organizations to improve the effectiveness of their programs.

For a glossary of terms around racial equity, check out Racial Equity Tools: https://www.racialequitytools.org/glossary
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