

INTERNAL SCAN FINDINGS 2018

Staff Racial Equity and Inclusion Competency Survey Findings

On September 13, 2018 we administered our second annual Racial Equity and Inclusion competency survey to all staff to reflect on their individual competency as related to understanding and advancing racial equity. The survey was designed by Hafizah Omar, with feedback and input from Nadia Owusu and Ratna Gill. The questions from this survey were adapted from GARE's Employee Survey for Local Governments, D5 initiative's Field Survey, and additional best practices from the field.

The survey had 40 respondents, which is a 100% completion rate.

This was also the first year we asked for demographic data. This section of the survey is completely optional. 36 people responded to demographic data questions, with 4 people skipping. We are excited about how collecting demographic data allowed us to disaggregate the data from the survey by race and geography (DC and NYC offices).

As we analyzed the survey results – especially when looking at it as compared to the 2017 baseline – we had the following overarching takeaways:

- There has been significant movement and progress on many fronts in a year's time – a lot of time, energy, and effort has been invested by both leadership and staff at the person, role, and system levels. There is a lot to be proud of individually and organizationally
- Still, this is a daily practice and an ongoing journey. The survey results points to some specific recommendations for ongoing attention and improvement

We also identified some key themes that emerged from the survey surrounding existing staff competency, perceptions on importance of racial equity work, and comfort level with discussion of advancing racial equity in our work. Along with our analysis, we have included comments that staff members included in their survey responses. In reading through the survey responses, we noted that many of them focused on areas for growth and recommendations for how to improve our practice.

We felt that it was important to share these comments and also to celebrate some of the quantitative wins, including **that 96% of Living Cities staffers report feeling comfortable talking about race and 100% feel comfortable when others talk about race (up from 82% last year.)** Quite astoundingly, 78% of staff report having



taken risks to talk about race at work (up from just 32% last year). **And, 97% of staffers (up from 77%) state that they are actively embedding REI in their work.**

Our analysis is outlined in greater detail below:

Staff are going to more racial equity trainings, and found racial equity trainings to be useful

Starting October 27, all Living Cities staff are required to attend an anti-racism training. This year we saw an increase in staff members who have taken three or more trainings compared to last year.

Comments indicate that staff found Undoing Racism trainings to be useful in connecting foundational history to structural racism. Some also indicated that there needs to be space to debrief and *"strategize on how to operationalize based on the trainings so that it's not too theoretical."*

Staff also has attended optional trainings outside of Living Cities sponsored trainings. A list of these trainings that staff had recommended is provided at the end of the document:

Highlighted comments:

"Trainings that center anti-blackness and white supremacy have been the most transformative, personally and professionally."

"If we really want people to learn from these trainings we need to be willing to have the uncomfortable conversations in mixed groups so that people will become more comfortable having them and actually learn to move beyond the uncomfortability (sic) so as to move to the next step in this process."

"Gave me a shared understanding within the organization of really important concepts/terms like "racism," and also opened the door for me to understand conversations externally/in the field (and on social media, etc.) that were based on a that understanding of racism (e.g., as a



relationship between race and power). Helped build up my comfort with challenging conversations.

"These trainings are fundamental in preparing staff for effectively supporting peers and partners as they embark in their very personal journeys. As a staff member, and a regular facilitator, I can say that having the opportunity to develop/exercise these competencies is a value added as we collectively make efforts in services of addressing disparities and naming our personal responsibilities in perpetuating them."

A majority of staff still agree on the critical importance of discussing the impacts of race on our work. And, our tolerance for racial equity conversations and taking risks has increased.

85% of staff strongly agrees (and another 12 % agrees) that it is valuable to examine and discuss the impacts of race on our work at Living Cities. Multiple comments say that it is not only valuable but critical to Living Cities work to discuss impact on race. From the comments, some staff feel that while discussion is important, without continued action it can ring false.

Tolerance for racial equity conversations has also increased with 96% of respondents reporting feeling comfortable when talking about race and 100% feeling comfortable when others talk about race (both up from 82% last year).

84% of staff have set aside their own discomfort and fear of saying the wrong thing when talking about race at work.

78% of staff report having risked their reputation and position in order to talk about race at Living Cities (up from just 32% last year). We believe that this signals significant behavior and culture change in terms of normalizing conversations about race, growing racial equity and inclusion competencies, and redefining conflict as 'change trying to happen.' While we want to move to a place where talking about race does not feel risky in most cases, seeing staff willing to step in and take risks is encouraging.

Highlighted comments:



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"It's good to examine the impacts but if nothing will be changed on how we're moving past the negative impacts of what is currently instilled in how we are doing business what is the point? We need to live in the work we're doing and not just doing exercises with no resolution to what is currently not right. There might also be a lack of understanding about the ways in which internal work and external work are inextricably intertwined".

"It's a core competency... so, yup yup. Also, as leadership is white-top-heavy, continued conversation helps guide/mitigate impacts"

Generally, there is an increase in staff competency in understanding in interpersonal, institutional and structural racism. Most also feel that they have the tools to address interpersonal, institutional and structural racism.

68.5% of our staff in 2018, versus 58.07% of our staff in 2017 said, in our racial equity and inclusion competency survey, that they feel that they have the tools they need to address institutional racism.

Many tools and resources that were provided by our internal team dedicated to advancing racial equity among our staff, Colleagues Operationalizing Racial Equity (CORE), were highlighted by respondents, including Employee Resource Groups (ERGs), space to have difficult conversations, coaching.

As for addressing interpersonal racism, there are several comments about people being unsure about if they have the right tools and how to use them and about the missteps that still occur.

Highlighted comments:

"I'm not sure where I would apply the tools as I would want to work through them with people in a group setting. We don't work on these often enough in a group setting."

"I believe everyone is doing their best with the tools we have, but every misstep requires recovery - and I think that's a tool we could use/develop. A tool to address recovery. "Next steps" assumes a successful conversation and



encourages movement forward, but not all conversations reach that initially. Some need the time and space that LC can't/doesn't usually afford at the "person level"

"There are ways in which anti-blackness shows up in our work that makes it more difficult, as a black person, to engage in some conversations. For example, people often look to black people to define terms for all identities, to create spaces for everyone, to educate people, and to take risks when others don't as much. This can be exhausting. Microaggressions, such as being called 'angry' in jest, having personal experiences questioned, and being met with 'it's not only black people who deal with that' when sharing experiences make it that much harder."

There are early indications that the increased competencies and day-to-day operationalizing of racial equity are positively impacting decision-making at the role and systems levels.

There is a 20% jump (97% agreeing up from 77% in 2017) that they are actively embedding racial equity in their work. On the question of what staff would need to actively embed racial equity in their work, a third of respondents is satisfied with their current engagement, where as a third of respondents need more time and resources and a third need acknowledgement.

Request for training has gone down from last year, which speaks to the value of the mandated trainings from Living Cities. While some are unclear on how to use Racial Equity Impact Assessment Tool in their day to day work, most staff using and adapting it. A list of tools that respondents offered is at the end of this document.

Living Cities is getting clearer on what structures we are working on in a targeted way as an organization.

There is a huge jump from last year in terms of staff understanding structural racism. However, the fact that people feel more competent in identifying structural racism as opposed to institutional racism could point to deepen staffers' understanding of how interpersonal, institutional, and structural racism are interconnected (i.e. people



make choices, people's choices become institutional policy, systems are made up of people in relationship).

Highlighted comments:

"We're working on it -- we are all gaining a shared understanding of structural racism, have a powerful platform and a collective action orientation -- but these are huge, thorny issues. Just feels like a reach to claim that we have all the tools necessary to address structural racism."

"Yes with respect to the external impact and results we are seeking to achieve. Somewhat on the fence with respect to the internal impacts/results we are seeking to achieve. In this case I would say it depends on what aspect of our internal work we are trying to apply the racial equity and inclusion lens. I see where we can get distracted when we are too focused on the internal application of race to our work. We need to pace ourselves."

Still, pacing and right-sizing the ambition/portfolio is a challenge.

Multiple survey respondents noted that Living Cities' pace of work and heavy workload are not conducive to doing effective racial equity work.. This could speak to an element of white institutional culture that is alive in the system.

- **Less is more.** Doing far less work is critical for two reasons: first, personally for staff, doing this work takes up a lot of capacity (emotional, intellectual, relational, behavioral, just to name a few. Secondly, focusing on fewer but deeper things would allow us to really focus on the racial structures and systems, rather than doing things on the margins that don't ultimately turn into any systemic changes.

Highlighted comments:

"I feel like the pace and volume of our work perpetuates white institutional culture and keeps me from advancing racial equity because doing so takes time, requires relationships to develop, trust to be built, etc. and a fast paced/high volume works against all of those."



Perception of leadership's commitment to racial equity remain largely the same as last year, and is in line with how leaders of the membership team assessed their own commitment. And, there were some questions and comments raised by survey respondents about how equitable shared power/leadership is/isn't manifesting in the day-to-day work.

Compared to last year, more Living Cities staffers think that LC leadership participates in REI conversations. More staffers also feel that Living Cities' leadership is equipped to participate in internal and external conversations around race. Some recommendations for the future included:

- ***True distributed leadership.*** Explore what do we really mean by "distributed leadership" and what that looks like at all levels of the organization beyond Ben relinquishing his power. Those holding top positions, even if R&R is distributed, there is still hierarchy for Chiefs/C-Suite. What does it look like for white folks in the C-Suite to step aside and allow Black leaders in the organizations to step into those roles.
- A comment also noted on lack of diversity on the board as well as disproportionate white leadership at the most senior levels.

An inconsistent and sometimes inequitable application of policies and practices remains a challenge

In terms of inequitable policies the following themes emerged: compensation, the inequitable application of policies such as PTO and work from home, and the burdening people of color with additional work.

A couple of comments mentioned the commitment made at the December 2017 retreat to do a disparity analysis on our compensation system. Although this was completed by an external third party and no statistically significant correlations by race and/or gender were found, it was clear that not all staffers felt up to date on the results of the analysis. This speaks to a need for clearer and more consistent communications around policies, particularly as they relate to REI.

In responding to the statement *Living Cities creates an environment where everyone has equal opportunities to advance*, there is a decrease, from last year, in staffers



who agree. It's unclear whether this is because more inequities exist and/or because awareness – and the competence to identify such inequities – has increased.

Highlighted comments:

In general, there is not a shared knowledge among leadership and staff as to what our policies are, and thus creating a breeding space for inequities to thrive. Practices consistently deviate from policy. If that is the intention in order to eliminate inequities then it should be explicitly stated as part of each and every policy.

In general, I think Living Cities need to think about how we're communicating our policies & practices to staff. Thinking about how policies are made, and how it's actually being practiced and implemented across the organization. Two examples come to mind: I think Living Cities need to be clear and transparent about our compensation system and what the process is. If there is a non-negotiation policy, that needs to be announced org-wide. The same way with our policies around working from home, and flexible time - I think leadership/HR/Talent needs to be clear that this is our practice and culture, and that EVERYONE should be able to take advantage of it. I feel like some folks are policed more around these than others.



Staff Vision for Living Cities' work in Racial Equity

(25 people or 62.5% of staffers) responded to the question, ***in your own words, what do you think a focus on racial equity and inclusion should mean for our mission and how we work? What should we do more / less of? What would we need to change?***

Some recommendations that emerged from this conversation were:

- **Partner differently.** Living Cities should explore different ways to look at how we partner and our current partnerships
- **Transparency.** There needs to be more transparency on our medium and long-term strategy for influencing our members, particularly the financial institutions.
- **Focus on our results.** We need to continue to build our individual and collective competencies around setting and measuring racial equity outcomes, goals, and performance measures; and around centering humanity and community, particularly in our work in places and our internal policies, practices, and operations.
- **Bold efforts that result in concrete actions** that land in places and can be spread with support of our members and networks. We need to look at the amount of work and financial resources required to reverse the results and encourage adoption strategies for communities that have entrenched racist policies and social norms that have created generational poverty.
- **True community input.** More low-income people of color in the design phase of our strategic planning. More work where we are supporting or co-designing strategy with racial justice partners/organizations led by people of color in collaboration with our members. More feedback from people of color (in community, business owners, etc)
- As an organization, we need to be specific in what we mean when we say People of Color. For example, ***if we are focusing on Black and Latinx populations as part of our strategy to close racial wealth gaps***, this needs to be communicated both internally and externally.



All of us should keep these recommendations in mind as we do our work. As a team, CORE will think through these recommendations as we plan out our future work. Below you will see how these survey results can inform all of our work moving forward.

Implications for our work

- Ongoing curriculum, trainings and competency building that address request, feedback and comments from the survey
- We must make connections between our internal operationalizing work with our external work.
- Curate tools and create spaces where staff can practice using the tools in their teams.
- Work on transparency on decision making and communicate decisions
- Analyze survey results that might produce new policies and practices
- Continue to build competency of our internal leadership group
- Follow up with staff on compensation study
- More communications on current policies and practices
- Ongoing education and partnership on identifying gaps on policies
- Create consistency across systems in policies and practices
- Work on diversity in hiring
- Bring back tools and stories from the people doing REI work in the field
- Connecting organizational journey to others in the field
- Continue to participate in our REI internal activities (ERGs, coaching, staff discussions etc.) and work to apply lessons learned to our work
- Share examples with CORE and Roadmap team on how you are operationalizing racial equity in your teams
- Support each other
- Hold ourselves and others accountable to our racial equity and inclusion value and norms
- Seek out and receive feedback from peers, project leads, and leadership
- Consider one's own self orientation: How am I stepping up or back? How am I listening to others? How am I being an ally to people of color?



Appendix

Trainings mentioned by respondents:

- Interaction Institute for Social Change Facilitation for Racial Justice Conversations
- Racial Equity Institute Groundwater Training
- Equity in the Center-ProInspire
- Be the Bridge
- Interrupting Racism: the role and responsibility of White Allies
- Racial Equity Institute's Phase One and Two
- 101 dismantling racism trainings
- Anti-racist RBA trainings,
- REI training for community organizers
- Race Matters

Respondents also mentioned tools that they use in their day-to-day work:

IMPACT ASSESSMENT / DECISION MAKING TOOLS:

- GARE model
- REI Assessment Tool,
- RBA with REI lens
- REI toolkit, especially appendix C
- Listening to communities impacted
- My self-taught learning and life experiences
- Focus on results
- REI learning Q report guidance
- 5 whys; the 5 questions from Race Matters; root cause analysis
- Equity Pauses
- SHRM, HR

REI CONCEPTS / HISTORY

- Checklist of white supremacy culture
- Liberatory design
- Steps to becoming anti-racist org doc



COMMUNICATIONS / FACILITATION TOOLS

- GARE Communications Guide
- Non-violent communication tools
- REI questions in the creative brief
- Community Organizing Tools
- "Ouch/Oops" when facilitating team conversations about decisions

COMMENTS

- I have consulted former colleagues and others internally and externally to embed racial equity in my decision-making
- I consciously choose vendors who are people of color and select the best qualified for the task at hand in this way.
- Our team maintains a degree of "flatness" so all members can be decision makers and project drivers - specifically, we use our own journeys and evidence points as we prioritize things on senior staff's calendars, raising REI dynamics above most
- More aware of who is in the room, who is speaking, valuing lived experience (am unsure if these count as "tools")

