

STATE OF CALIFORNIA

RACIAL EQUITY COMMISSION



BUILDING THE CALIFORNIA WE DESERVE:

A Framework to Advance Racial Equity
With Communities at the Heart

December 2025

A scenic coastal landscape featuring a waterfall cascading down a rocky cliff into a sandy beach. The ocean waves are crashing against the rocks, creating white foam. The sky is clear and blue. In the foreground, there are some tall, dry grasses. The text is overlaid on the upper right portion of the image.

“I learned that **racism**, like most systems of **oppression**, isn’t about bad people doing terrible things to people who are different from them, but instead is a way of **maintaining power** for certain groups in expense of others.

Alicia Garza | *The Purpose of Power*

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Acknowledgements

Dedication: This framework is dedicated to each person committed to advancing equity, being a voice for the most vulnerable, and working to ensure a California for all where every resident can live and thrive to their fullest potential.

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Executive Summary

Purpose and Vision

The *Racial Equity Framework* is a practical guide developed by the California Racial Equity Commission (the Commission) to help government entities advance racial equity across the state. Rooted in the belief that California thrives when all communities thrive, the Framework offers tools, strategies, and guiding principles to dismantle systemic racism and promote inclusive, equitable governance. It is designed for use by state government entities—including administrative, legislative, and judicial branches—as well as local governments and other sectors seeking to embed racial equity into their operations to build a place where everyone belongs. Throughout the structure of government, servant leaders work hard to support basic needs and increase access to supportive programs and services for communities throughout California. We aimed to design a Framework that acknowledges the existing efforts of government entities, meets them where they are in their equity journey, and provides tools and examples to help government entities continue the amazing work already in motion.¹ This Framework encourages servant leaders at all levels of government to center communities and see them as the heartbeat that maintains the well-being of our thriving state.

Commission's Guiding Values

The Commission's work is grounded in seven core values: equity and racial justice, community and lived experience, intentional collaboration, data-driven decision-making, transparency and accountability, prevention and repair of harm, and continuous learning. These values guide the Commission as it learns from community, engages with experts, and researches tools and strategies to advance racial equity.

Core Principles

Community-Centered and Data-Informed to Advance Opportunity for all:

The Framework emphasizes the importance of acknowledging historical and current racial inequities, using disaggregated data to inform decisions, acknowledging the breadth and depth of equity beyond and inclusive of race, and centering community voices and experiences in policy and program development.

1. The areas of law relevant to racial equity work are dynamic and subject to ongoing change. This report does not constitute legal advice and should not be relied upon as a substitute for consultation with your agency's legal counsel. Agencies and departments are strongly encouraged to seek independent legal guidance to ensure that all applicable federal, state, and administrative laws are appropriately considered in their decision-making.

Flexibility to Adapt to Needs: Recognizing the diversity of California's communities and government structures, the Framework avoids a one-size-fits-all approach and instead offers adaptable tools and strategies. The Commission is available to help explore how to adapt and apply tools and strategies presented in the Framework.

Fostering Trust and Accountability to Deliver Results for all: The Framework promotes informed decision-making between government and communities, fostering transparency, trust, and mutual accountability.

Key Components

1 | Community Engagement

- **Restorative Practices:** Encourages healing and trust-building through providing space and opportunity for dialogue and shared responsibility.
- **Spectrum of Community Engagement:** Moves organizations from informing to deferring to community leadership; the Framework outlines levels of engagement to deepen collaboration, ensure sustainability, and secure results.
- **Language and Accessibility:** Emphasizes plain language, language access services, in-person and virtual engagement, and inclusive communication to ensure all Californians can participate meaningfully.

2 | Data and Information use

- **Disaggregated Data:** Calls for breaking down data by race, ethnicity, age, gender, and other identities to uncover hidden disparities.
- **Storytelling:** Combines qualitative narratives with quantitative data to humanize and contextualize community experiences.
- **Equity Indices and Mapping:** Visualize disparities with tools like the National Equity Atlas and Los Angeles County's Equity Index to help inform equitable investments including programs and services.

3 | Budget Equity

- **Budget Equity Toolkit:** Provides standardized questions and case studies to assess the equity impact of budget proposals.
- **Understanding the Budget Process:** Promotes civic engagement and understanding opportunities to share the impacts of programs and services with policymakers.
- **Tracking Spending:** Encourages transparency in how public funds are allocated and their impact on communities.

4 | Organizational Infrastructure

- **Equity in Strategic Plans:** Weaves equity goals into strategic plans to support institutionalization of strategies.
- **Equity in Job Descriptions:** Recommends including equity responsibilities in employee duty statements.
- **Leadership and Coordination:** Proposes the establishment of an Office of Racial Equity and senior-level equity roles as a tool to ensure coordination and accountability.

5 | Evaluation and Continuous Improvement With Support From the Commission

- **Self-Evaluation Tools:** Provides tools and guidance for government entities to assess their readiness and progress in advancing equity.
- **Impact Indicators:** Monitoring key metrics and publishing annual reports with updates, more tools, and outcomes.
- **Technical Assistance:** Ongoing guidance to help government entities implement and evaluate equity strategies.



How did we do this?

The Framework was built upon countless miles and hours traveling throughout California to ensure communities, advocates, and subject matter experts had the opportunity to learn about the Commission and inform its efforts over the last 20 months:

- Over **50 hours of public Commission meetings**
- Nearly **160 hours of community meetings** with residents, advocates, and allies
- Nearly **1,000 community residents** have attended our meetings across the state

The Commission has gathered in places like the farmworker communities of Salinas, Yuba City, Imperial Valley, and Central Valley. They have engaged residents in urban and suburban areas like Fresno, Sacramento, Oakland, Martinez, Los Angeles, Riverside, and Antelope Valley. They've even traveled to the mouth of the Klamath River to learn from Tribal elders about the impacts of inequitable access and historical harm. The Commission remains committed to engaging communities throughout the state and helping other government entities build their capacity to listen, engage, and transform our government together.

Looking Ahead

The Framework is not a checklist but a call to action. It invites government entities to reflect, learn, and act with humility and purpose. With strategic balance and understanding, we can advance racial equity in government, in alignment with state and federal law. The Framework accounts for the complexity of who we are as individuals, family members, neighbors, and broader community members—people living with disabilities, aging with grace, learning and growing, building a livelihood, and safe communities. Through its charge in Executive Order N-16-22 ([toolbox 1.1](#)), the Commission will continue to provide technical assistance, gather community feedback, and add to the Framework to meet emerging needs of residents throughout California. Through collective efforts, California can become a model for a multi-racial democracy rooted in equity, justice, and belonging—with communities at the heart.



STATE OF CALIFORNIA

RACIAL EQUITY

COMMISSION



Introduction

The California Racial Equity Commission's (the Commission) efforts to build a Racial Equity Framework (Framework) in California comes at a unique moment in our country's history. During a time when many are experiencing unease and uncertainty, the Commission encourages us to focus on what Angela Glover Blackwell calls, "a radically inclusive, mutually accountable, multi-racial democracy in service of universal human flourishing." This is the true goal of California for All—centering community at the heart of society. California is primed to thrive holistically when all regions and communities are positioned to thrive. We must find ways to ensure all can benefit, define our challenges through data and stories of Californians, and ensure all are able to participate in solving the challenges that have led to only some benefitting while many others are burdened.

Government entities throughout California have worked tirelessly to address disparities and advance equity despite current and historical challenges. We are more than prepared to transform and serve as a model for others on how to use existing resources and apply tools and strategies to push toward an inclusive and fair society where the opportunities to thrive are endless for all. Inclusivity within our society calls for acknowledging the intersectionality of race across many different social identities such as gender identity, sexual orientation, ability/disability, religion or spiritual belief system, nationality/immigration status, language, age, income, education level, and geographic location. The concept of intersectionality, [coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw](#), describes the way people's social identities can overlap. Race is a compounding factor for the social identities we all carry. The Framework provides government entities with an opportunity to acknowledge intentional and unintentional policies and practices that have fallen short. It is an opportunity to truly align with our core values through shifting our norms and beliefs to ensure inclusion and belonging, while fortifying our programs and services to reach those in greatest need.

The Framework we present represents the Commission's engagement with community residents, subject matter experts, and deep research to find what is not only needed but also what works. The Commission has **defined the audience** for this Framework as state government, inclusive of administrative, legislative, and judicial branches, boards and commissions, while also in support of local government entities advancing racial equity. The Commission believes that others outside of government can use the tools and strategies in the Framework in their respective sectors to advance racial equity.

The purpose of the Framework is to provide guidance to inform action at the program, management, and leadership levels of government. The strategies outlined in the Framework are designed to guide government entities with tools and strategies that can be applied within an organization's context—steering away from the Framework being a

performative check list and acknowledging the uniqueness of the various elements of government that cumulatively impact the well-being of its constituents.² We know that “one size fits all” does not apply when it comes to the charge of government entities as well as the communities and populations we serve. We must be mindful of the context in which each is operating and be willing to be curious and dynamic in our efforts to transform not only how government operates but allowing ourselves to be race-conscious, data-informed, and community-centered.

Advancing racial equity will not be easy, but it is necessary for survival of our democracy and economic solvency. It requires self-reflection, difficult but required conversations, learning and re-learning, and growing as individuals, co-workers, and neighbors. We all have a vested interest.

To support the use of the Framework, the Commission offers the use of the following key terms to level set and ground us in a common language to help us do better and serve all Californians. These key terms and suggested definitions (Table 1) were researched by Vital Research, reviewed and refined by the Commission, and where feasible, intentionally written in plain language to support similar understanding.



2. The areas of law relevant to racial equity work are dynamic and subject to ongoing change. This report does not constitute legal advice and should not be relied upon as a substitute for consultation with your agency's legal counsel. Agencies and departments are strongly encouraged to seek independent legal guidance to ensure that all applicable federal, state, and administrative laws are appropriately considered in their decision-making.

Table 1: Key Terms and Suggested Definitions

KEY TERM	SUGGESTED DEFINITION
Data Disaggregation	Breaking big categories of information or data into smaller, more detailed parts so you can see differences that may be hidden in the overall numbers. For example, Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islanders (AANHPI) are often grouped together in data collection for different issues such as college degree attainment or health challenges. This often leads to missing the unique disparities and issues impacting those communities in both diasporas of Asia and the Pacific or Oceania and limits effective targeted solutions.
Diversity	The many identities and characteristics that make people different from one another. Aspects of diversity include race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, disability, national origin, immigration status, socioeconomic status, education, age, language, and more.
Equity	Equity means giving people the resources they need, rather than giving everyone the same thing, to reach similar life outcomes.
Ethnicity	A social group of people that share a common culture, customs, history, language, and/or values. For example, someone might be racially categorized as Asian but ethnically identify as Vietnamese.
Explicit Bias	Beliefs and stereotypes that people are aware of and will often express directly to others.
Implicit Bias	Beliefs and stereotypes that people are unaware of. These biases can influence how people behave and the actions they take toward others, even if they do not mean them to affect how they treat others.
Inclusion	Authentic representation of all groups in activities and decision-making processes. In particular, to make sure historically excluded communities can contribute and share power.

KEY TERM	SUGGESTED DEFINITION
Individual Racism	When a person's beliefs, biases or actions result in unfair treatment of others based on their race. This includes things like racial slurs or discrimination.
Institutional Racism	Policies and practices within institutions, such as schools, workplaces, or government agencies, that have disproportionately favored or served certain racial groups. The data suggest the most often favored have historically been white people.
Intersectionality	A way to look at how different types of identities interconnect to create unique experiences. Having many identities, like being Black, over 65 years old, and a woman, can mean experiencing different forms of discrimination at the same time. The mixing of these forms of discrimination, like racism and sexism, can sometimes make inequities worse.
Race	A social concept that groups people by physical features like skin color or where their family comes from. For example, in the U.S., people are often categorized as American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Black or African American, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, and white. Race is not based on biology, and categories for race have changed over time. People in power have historically used the concept of race to justify inequitably spreading power and resources across racial groups.
Racial Equity	Efforts to ensure race can no longer be used to predict life well-being, outcomes, and conditions for all groups. In other words, a heightened focus on groups experiencing disproportionate outcomes in order to address disparities in those outcomes and their experiences.
Racial Inequity	When race can be used to predict life outcomes. People of color are disproportionately more likely to experience negative life outcomes because of unfair systems.

KEY TERM	SUGGESTED DEFINITION
Racial Justice	To seek fair and ethical treatment and thriving life outcomes for people of all races. It requires reimagining and transforming society to address existing racial inequities perpetuated by systems. Finding ways to advance racial equity helps to move us toward a more racially just world.
Targeted Universalism	A policy strategy that identifies universal goals that can be achieved through targeted implementation strategies. This approach makes it clear that certain policy changes will benefit all people as well as address the particular needs of specific groups, recognizing that some people have faced disparate past or current barriers. This approach overcomes a zero-sum mindset.





PART 1: Building the Framework for Your Organization

PRIORITY 1: Working With *Community* to Better Serve all Californians: Keeping Communities at the Heart

Community engagement is essential for advancing racial equity because it ensures that the voices, experiences, and needs of all Californians are seen, heard, valued, and have the opportunity to be acted upon. Engaging with communities ensures that government services are grounded in real-world experience. It helps rebuild trust and credibility between government and community and shifts power toward those who have been historically marginalized. Community engagement builds civic leadership within communities and prevents unintentional harm that can perpetuate or worsen inequities. Community engagement strategies used by government entities must reflect reciprocity with community. For example, government employees are paid to gather data and information from community residents. Reciprocally, community residents should be compensated similarly to share their experiences with government. Community engagement is the foundation for the sustainable advancement of racial equity because it creates more inclusive systems, more responsive and efficient governance, and more just outcomes for all.

STRATEGY 1: Build Trust With Communities Through Existing Networks of Community Organizations

Building and restoring trust with community is foundational for government entities embarking on their racial equity journey. It is important to acknowledge that working with community requires listening first and understanding the experiences and historical and present-day impacts of discrimination and racism. Government entities should lean into or adopt restorative justice practices and strategies as a starting place to build trust with the community before moving into conversations around community ideas and ways to improve government services and programs.





TOOL: RESTORATIVE PRACTICES TO ADDRESS HARM, PROMOTE HEALING, AND STRENGTHEN TRUST

Restorative practices represent a transformative approach to addressing harm, navigating healing, and strengthening relational trust across institutions, communities, and public systems. When used consistently, restorative practices help government entities respond with care and support, particularly for historically underserved or marginalized communities (Darling-Hammond et al., 2022; Youth Law Center, 2023). For more information on how to integrate restorative practices, take a look at the restorative practices toolkit by Global Urban Strategies in [toolbox 1.2](#).

STRATEGY 2: Collaborating and Building Capacity With Community Organizations

Partnering and working with community organizations such as nonprofits, grassroots organizations, Tribal organizations, and local associations, are central to working with community. Building long-term relationships with community organizations takes time and intention. It builds capacity beyond event planning. It creates the relationship that allows for real-time engagement and guidance on resident outreach strategies, meeting needs on the ground, and building long-term strategy—leaning into goals like shared governance. There are existing networks of trusted community organizations that have been established over time that are poised to serve as great partners to begin to build or grow a government entity's community engagement strategy. These trusted community organizations are experts in connecting directly with residents and ensuring community voices are heard. Through connecting with these organizations, government entities can reach community residents throughout California who are eager to learn more about government and how they can help inform the development of programs and services. For example, the Commission visited with Black elders in Los Angeles who are members of the Sankofa Elders Project. Upon learning about the work of the Commission, the elders were eager for ongoing engagement with the Commission and to share their own wisdom and experience in support of advancing racial equity in California.



The [Office of Community Partnerships and Strategic Communications](#) (OCPSC) is charged with supporting the state's outreach and engagement with communities throughout California. OCPSC provides funding and tools to educate and engage communities on priority areas such as health care, mental health, food assistance, housing, emergency preparedness and disaster relief, legal and public safety, education, jobs and training, transportation, financial assistance, and climate. OCPSC also has a network of community-based organizations, faith leaders, businesses, elected officials, and community media throughout the state that serve as [Trusted Messengers](#) who support the Office's efforts to engage Californians and ensure messaging is timely, accurate, accessible, and culturally appropriate. This network was successful in supporting outreach and engagement during [Census 2020](#), [Vaccinate All 58](#), and [Extreme Heat](#) statewide campaigns.

Government entities should leverage existing networks of community organizations to advance community engagement efforts. OCPSC has hosted several "Trusted Messenger Learning Labs," which featured leaders from community-based organizations and other subject matter experts who shared their experiences on community engagement and outreach. Best practices on reaching urban communities, building and maintaining coalitions, community media, language and communication access, and more are captured in "Action Briefs"—available on [OCPSC's website](#).

Throughout the Commission's public meetings, several Commissioners have noted the importance of Tribal engagement. In a series of efforts by California, our collective Tribal engagement efforts have been strengthened and continue to grow through the [Office of Tribal Affairs](#) and the institutionalization of Tribal liaisons throughout state government entities. The Office of Tribal Affairs oversees and facilitates government-to-government consultation between the State Administration and California Tribes on issues that affect California Tribal communities, as well as provides resources to support state agencies with respectful and successful engagement. It also staffs the [California Truth and Healing Council](#) which was established to clarify the historical record through a variety of pathways including receiving California Native narratives in the "spirit of truth and healing." Tribal liaisons are an important partner for government entities to ensure the protection of Tribal spaces and resources. Tribal consultation is another way to honor Tribal Sovereignty. Tribal consultation through liaisons ensures Tribes are involved with decision-making and program development processes, while centering listening to and addressing culturally sensitive concerns. Government entities should include Tribal liaisons as their subject matter expertise is invaluable and necessary to advance racial equity and ensure the state is doing meaningful and respectful work in California.



TOOL: SPECTRUM OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The Commission has used the [Spectrum of Community Engagement](#) (González, Facilitating Power, 2019) Framework as a tool to inform and assess its community engagement efforts to deepen connections with communities (Figure 1). The Spectrum consists of five levels of community engagement: 1) inform, 2) consult, 3) involve, 4) collaborate, and 5) defer to. These levels can help identify where a government entity is and help set goals for their own community engagement efforts. As a tool, the Spectrum of Community Engagement details why it is important to move from engagement toward ownership and how the tool supports government by facilitating community participation in the development of solutions (e.g., programs or services) and decision-making.

The Commission has utilized levels 1–4 of this tool to inform its efforts in alignment with its charge to develop trusting, collaborative relationships with communities throughout the state. The Commission’s public meetings, community meet-n-greets, and listening sessions demonstrate levels 1–3 of the Spectrum spaces where the Commission engages community directly. The following is an example of how the Spectrum applies to the Commission’s engagement activities:

- **LEVEL 1—INFORM:** Staff provide an overview of the Commission, its charge and limitations;
- **LEVEL 2—CONSULT:** Attendees engage in an interactive activity that allows them to share input and feedback on topics and issues they care about;
- **LEVEL 3—INVOLVE:** The Commission engages trusted organizations and welcomes community feedback through storytelling;
- **LEVEL 4—COLLABORATE:** The Commission continues to collaborate with community-based organizations and is committed to returning to communities previously visited to report back how their perspectives and feedback have been reflected in the Framework, impacted Commission activities, and to continue conversations;
- **LEVEL 5—DEFER TO:** The Commission continues to hear from community residents, leaders, and advocates, building consensus around tools and strategies included within the Framework.

THE SPECTRUM

of Community Engagement to Ownership

STANCE TOWARDS COMMUNITY	IGNORE	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	DEFER TO
	0	1	2	3	4	5
IMPACT	Marginalization	Placation	Tokenization	Voice	Delegated Power	Community Ownership
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT GOALS	Deny access to decision-making processes	Provide the community with relevant information	Gather input from the community	Ensure community needs and assets are integrated into process & inform planning	Ensure community capacity to play a leadership role in implementation of decisions	Foster democratic participation and equity through community-driven decision-making; Bridge divide between community and governance
MESSAGE TO COMMUNITY	<i>Your voice, needs & interests do not matter</i>	<i>We will keep you informed</i>	<i>We care what you think</i>	<i>You are making us think, (and therefore act) differently about the issue</i>	<i>Your leadership and expertise are critical to how we address the issue</i>	<i>It's time to unlock collective power and capacity for transformative solutions</i>
ACTIVITIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Closed door meeting • Misinformation • Systematic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fact sheets • Open Houses • Presentations • Billboards • Videos 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Comment • Focus Groups • Community Forums • Surveys 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community organizing & advocacy • House meeting • Interactive workshops • Polling • Community forums 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MOU's with Community-based organizations • Community organizing • Citizen advisory committees • Open Planning Forums with Citizen Polling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community-driven planning • Consensus building • Participatory action research • Participatory budgeting • Cooperatives
RESOURCE ALLOCATION RATIOS	<p>100% Systems Admin</p> <p>10-30% Promotions and Publicity</p>	<p>70-90% Systems Admin</p> <p>20-40% Consultation Activities</p>	<p>60-80% Systems Admin</p>	<p>50-60% Systems Admin</p> <p>40-50% Community Involvement</p>	<p>20-50% Systems Admin</p> <p>50-70% Community Partners</p>	<p>80-100% Community partners and community-driven processes ideally generate new value and resources that can be invested in solutions</p>

Figure 1: Spectrum of Community Engagement to Ownership

STRATEGY 3: Establishing Philanthropic Partnerships to Support Community Participation

State law places significant limitations on the ability of government agencies from giving or lending public funds or resources to any individual or entity unless there is a clear public purpose, which may limit how government interprets their ability to engage with communities. Partnering with philanthropy and exploring opportunities with corporate community benefit or social responsibility (e.g., health care systems, financial institutions, large corporations, etc.) can help fund community engagement strategies and best practices.

One best practice the Commission has implemented is collaborating with philanthropy to support community engagement activities. In 2025, the Commission partnered with a fiscal sponsor to directly support community organizations and residents to attend community meet-n-greets and listening sessions. The philanthropic funds managed by the fiscal sponsor support expenses such as stipends, food and refreshments, transportation, and child care. The Commission serves as a capacity builder by helping community organizations build relationships with philanthropy and develop grant writing and reporting skills. Community-based organizations are directly connected to the fiscal sponsor for planning and coordination of the event and associated funding. The Commission covers the cost of the meeting location and translation services.



STRATEGY 4: Publicly Acknowledge Challenges and Work Toward Shared Governance

The Commission recognizes that racial equity work is not easy; there are various challenges that come with the implementation of government programs and services as individuals have diverse experiences, and government entities are at various levels in their journey to advance racial equity. Having ongoing, honest conversations with community is important. Sharing the challenges we experience regularly as public servants and servant leaders humanizes the work and helps create more understanding with community. It contributes to the concept of shared governance because more shared understanding can lead to shared action and accountability.

Shared governance is defined as co-ownership of decision-making, processes, and outcomes among different key informants, such as community members, leaders, and institutions. Within shared governance, all sides commit resources and must stay engaged throughout the process. Community residents shape the outcome. The first three levels on the Spectrum of Community Engagement (inform, consult, and involve) are the prerequisites for shared governance, because shared governance cannot exist without first building strong, respectful, and inclusive community engagement, which is foundational for collaboration between communities and government and shifting systems toward equity. An example of what shared governance looks like in government is the California State Water Resources Control Board's SAFER Advisory Group. The SAFER Advisory Group provides the State Water Board with constructive advice on feedback on the Safe and Affordable Drinking Water Fund Expenditure Plan.

Agencies and departments should also establish community advisory bodies for their community engagement work. For example, the California Department of Aging (CDA) has an Equity Advisory Committee on Aging and Disability (EACAD). The purpose of EACAD is to advise the Administration on the implementation of the [Master Plan for Aging](#) (MPA) initiatives and deliverables to achieve equity outcomes for older adults, people with disabilities, and family caregivers. Community advisory bodies can help create tools to ensure programs and services meet the needs of clients or consumers. To ensure accessibility, CDA provides their presenters with a tool that outlines best practices and rules for creating accessible documents such as formatting, plain language, and alternative text for images ([toolbox 1.3](#)).

Shared governance ensures decisions are not made by a single entity without engaging with those impacted by the decision. It guarantees the inclusion of diverse perspectives, which leads to more informed and relevant decisions. Shared governance leads to co-creation, which can result in sustainability and effective implementation. Shared governance builds trust between government and communities while strengthening civic engagement and social cohesion.

STRATEGY 5: Best Ways to Receive Information

To support community engagement, the Commission works closely with community partners to identify language needs of the region and coordinates interpretation services for every community engagement event, including public meetings. The average reading skills of U.S. adults is at the eighth-grade reading level (Center for Plain Language, 2017). The Commission is committed to providing information in plain and simple language. In a world where people have a variety of visible and invisible disabilities or may have limited English proficiency, documents written at no higher than an eighth-grade reading level may provide broader accessibility. Providing information at a reading level aligned with your audience can support a more comprehensive understanding of information across different audiences and makes translation into other languages a lot easier. If jargon or technical terms are used, they should be explained clearly. Plain language is also an accessibility standard that ensures information is accessible, reliable, and usable for all residents.

TOOL: PLAIN LANGUAGE CHECKLIST TO HELP INCREASE ACCESSIBILITY OF MATERIALS

The [Plain Language Equity Standard](#) in California calls for state agencies and departments to provide print and digital information to the public at an eighth-grade reading level or lower (Office of Data and Innovation, 2025). Vital Research created a plain language checklist to support government entities increase accessibility to its materials ([toolbox 1.4](#)).

TOOL: LANGUAGE ACCESS PLANS

The Dymally-Alatorre Bilingual Services Act (Stats. 1973, Ch. 1182) requires state and local agencies to provide language access services to individuals with limited English proficiency (LEP). In addition, California Government Code Section 11135 prohibits discrimination by state government and state-funded programs, which includes ensuring the provision of language access services to people with LEP. The California Civil Rights Department has clarified that offering services like interpretation and translated documents is necessary to ensure all individuals can access state services, regardless of language background.

Several state government entities have Language Access Plans that aim to address language barriers and ensure individuals with LEP have meaningful access to state services and programs. Plans should address four factors to determine steps to ensure meaningful access for individuals with LEP, including:

1. Number or proportion of LEP persons eligible to be served or likely to be encountered by the program or grantee;
2. Frequency with which LEP individuals come into contact with the program;

3. Nature and importance of the program, activity, or service provided by the recipient to its members; and
4. Resources available to the grantee/ recipient and the costs of interpretation/ translation services.

Government entities establishing a language access policy set minimum language access standards which include interpretation in sign language and any spoken language upon request and translation of vital documents or public website content into at least the top five threshold languages spoken by individuals with limited English proficiency in California. The top five threshold languages in California are Spanish, Tagalog, Chinese, Korean, and Vietnamese.

QUOTES FROM COMMUNITY RESIDENTS:

“If I don’t understand what is being shared with community in one language, I don’t trust what is being said to me if I don’t have interpretation.”

.....

“If it’s not in my language, I think you’re hiding something from me.”

STRATEGY 6: Focused Outreach and Engagement Strategies for Hard-to-Reach Groups and Communities

Through the Commission’s public meetings, we heard from commissioners, advocates, and members of the public about the need to ensure outreach and engagement with specific populations including those with lived experience, recipients of governmental services and programs, and communities who historically experience disproportionate disparities in access and outcomes with low civic and program engagement. The Commission is actively working to add to its engagement strategy to reach these specific groups.



TOOL: LEVERAGING COMMUNITY MEDIA TO ENGAGE THE DIVERSE POPULATIONS OF CALIFORNIA

Community media is a community engagement best practice and serves racial and ethnic minorities, immigrant communities, and Indigenous populations in the following ways:

- Provides news and information in many different languages and formats, including television, radio, newspapers, websites, and social media;
- Makes the news relevant to their diverse audiences by illustrating how current events are directly impacting their communities;
- Focuses on events and issues that are often overlooked by mainstream media; and
- Ensures underrepresented voices are part of the conversation.

State agencies and departments should leverage community media outlets to better serve Californians by reaching a wider audience, who are often more receptive to information via community media. In addition, community media outlets serve as trusted messengers and can help combat misinformation. In 2023, the Office of Community Partnerships and Strategic Communications (OCPSC) offered a training called [**“Speaking to Multicultural California: Ethnic Media as an Effective Channel”**](#) to help government entities learn about the role ethnic media outlets can play in their service delivery and programs.

When done intentionally, digital engagement is an effective community engagement strategy because it helps reach broader, more diverse audiences, removes barriers to participation, and creates ways to include community voice in decision-making. Digital engagement can reach underrepresented and often excluded voices such as youth and young adults, communities of color, immigrant communities, and other groups that traditional outreach might overlook or miss. Digital tools can also expand access to participation for those who are often excluded due to geographic distance, transportation barriers, child care needs, work schedules, or different abilities. The Commission recently partnered with a local community organization to host [**a listening session for the Mam speaking community from Guatemala**](#). Our partner organization uses a text and voice messaging service and videos to share information and promote events to the Mam speaking community. During our listening session we saw the importance of digital engagement in real time. The first portion of the listening session was broadcast live on social media. As we continued the listening session, additional families and community members showed up to participate. When asked what led them to come, many reflected that after seeing the conversation on social media, they wanted to learn more and they could see that the event space was safe place to gather, learn, and share their stories.



In addition, digital tools such as online surveys and polls, platforms with commentary, virtual listening sessions and workshops, and social media allow communities to provide input and feedback. These platforms also serve as a record so that individuals are aware of others' input, how their feedback is being used, and what decisions are being made. These tools help build trust and transparency between government and community. To be effective, digital engagement needs to be inclusive and accessible, culturally relevant, and supported by non-digital options for those without access to internet or digital literacy. It is important to note that some areas in California have limited to no access to broadband and cellular phone services. While digital engagement is a great strategy, it is important to use a variety of communication strategies to reach and engage communities.

TOOL: USING ONLINE PLATFORMS TO CONNECT WITH RESIDENTS IN REAL-TIME

One recently launched platform is [Engaged California](#). Engaged California is a virtual platform for communities to use their voice to shape their communities. It is currently being used to rebuild communities impacted by the 2025 Eaton and Palisades fires. Residents can share their ideas on rebuilding Altadena and the Palisades, weighing in on decisions that can guide the short- and long-term recovery process. The information collected by the state supports data-driven decisions through ongoing engagement and feedback. These feedback opportunities have allowed leaders at the state and local level to streamline the permit process, develop a mortgage assistance fund, and provide mental health support to impacted families. Moving forward, Engaged California can serve as a bridge between community and government, supporting community engagement and civic participation on a larger scale.

STRATEGY 7: Helping Communities Work With Decision-Makers

Helping communities work with decision-makers throughout government requires sharing knowledge, raising confidence, increasing access, and building power so that communities can help shape the decisions that affect their lives. By embarking on a community engagement strategy to inform their work, government entities build capacity to further the community's engagement with decision-makers. Their experiences with government entities build knowledge, confidence, access, and power.

Knowledge: To have influence, communities need to understand how government works and where decision-making points in its processes are. Civic education, understanding their rights, and understanding how to navigate public meetings are ways to help communities build their fluency in government processes.

Confidence: Advocacy skills such as providing comments in public meetings, engaging with elected officials, using social media for storytelling, or forming coalitions can build confidence and empower communities to work with government effectively.

Access: Communities can also work with government when they have access to the leaders who make decisions. Creating access can look like promoting community attendance at local or state public meetings or organizing community meetings and inviting elected officials or agency leaders to these spaces. Relationship-building is necessary to maintain community access to government spaces.

Power: In addition, communities must define their own priorities rather than government assuming what is important. Community input sessions can support the process of community identifying key issues they need government to address.

TOOL: CO-GOVERNANCE TOOL FOR A MULTI-RACIAL DEMOCRACY

In May 2025, Race Forward published "[Co-Governance Tool for a Multiracial Democracy](#)," which serves as a guide for cross-sector collaboration. Through participatory governance, communities can work with government by shifting and sharing power to drive transformative, equitable outcomes. The tool is a series of steps and considerations that community and government can work through together to help determine the best structures, agreements, and processes needed to support cross-sector collaboration. Government entities should explore how this model can be used and adapted within their context to support collaboration across sectors and with community.

Throughout every approach to help community work with government, equity must be prioritized. Communities can work with government best when language access resources are available; events provide stipends, child care, and food to community members in attendance; and trusted community leaders/groups are involved. We describe these strategies earlier in this section. When done right, shared governance can transform communities from passive recipients of decisions to powerful agents of change.

STEPS OF THE CO-GOVERNANCE TOOL

Pre-Step: Determine readiness for engaging in co-governance

Step 1: Align on the problem/opportunity

Step 2: Design participation and inclusion at the table

Step 3: Determine how decisions are made/the table functions

Step 4: Define success

Step 5: Build collective accountability

Final Step: Build a shared governing document

STRATEGY 8: Building a Community Engagement Strategy

Early in the Commission's history, it became clear that the Commission needed a cohesive strategy to ensure communities were engaged in the development of the Framework as required by Executive Order N-16-22. Commission staff began working with consultants to identify best practices in community engagement. This resulted in the development of a community engagement plan.



TOOL: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PLAN

The Commission's Community Engagement Plan ([toolbox 1.5](#)) was designed to serve as a model for outreach efforts to ensure communities throughout California have an opportunity to learn from, inform and collaborate with government. The goal of the Community Engagement Plan is to articulate how the Commission and its staff intend on establishing relationships with communities that build trust, support civic engagement, and provide an ongoing connection to government work.

After the Commission approved the plan, several government entities reached out to Commission staff to learn more about the strategies the Commission has used to engage community. In addition, Commissioners at our December 2024 meeting suggested the development of a toolkit to support not only the staff but other government entities with building their own community engagement strategy.



TOOL: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT TOOLKIT

Commission staff developed a community engagement toolkit to support intentional community engagement ([toolbox 1.6](#)). The toolkit serves as a tool to standardize the Commission's community engagement activities, model how to authentically and intentionally engage community, and promote transparency between government and public. The toolkit provides the Commission's process for planning and implementing a community meet-n-greet and/or community input session, which includes identifying region/location, community-based organizations to partner with, and commissioners to attend; coordinating logistics (date, time, venue, interpretation requests, fiscal sponsor, travel, etc.), promotion (flyers, newsletter, social media, etc.), and content/programming (agenda, slides, talking points, etc.); and post-event follow-up (event summary, website posting, etc.).

The toolkit also highlights how to center equity in engagement efforts such as language, disability, and geographic access. For example, the Commission aims to travel to and engage with a variety of communities. Going to communities rather than expecting communities to reach or find them. These efforts include reaching those who do not have easy access to government meetings by hosting events in the evening and in places that are less well known and accessible. We have traveled to the Central Valley, Imperial Valley, Antelope Valley, and along the Central and North Coast, rather than hosting meetings exclusively in major metropolitan areas such as Sacramento or Los Angeles. The Commission did this to reduce the travel burden on communities.

In partnership with community-based organizations, the Commission identifies language needs in the community, coordinates interpretation services, and collaborates with the community partner to translate materials. In addition, the toolkit includes samples of a visually accessible tool that the Commission has utilized during

meet-n-greets and input sessions. The Commission has contracted a graphic notetaker to travel throughout the state with the Commission to attend the meet-n-greets and input sessions. During these community meetings, the graphic notetaker listens to community stories, feedback, and questions, and illustrates the different themes and visually captures community voice in real time. Throughout the state, many community members have shared how much they enjoy seeing their thoughts and perspectives illustrated in the graphic notes. Community members have also shared that seeing the graphic notes during the meetings empowers and encourages them to participate in the dialogue. At the end of meet-n-greets and input sessions, many community members take photos of the graphic notes.



TOOL: ACKNOWLEDGING COMMUNITY CONTRIBUTIONS

The toolkit also provides an example of learning from community and integrating the learning into operations. In a community listening session in Antelope Valley, a resident noted the many contributions of the different communities that make up this nation. In response, the Commission developed a Community Acknowledgement statement that honors and acknowledges different contributions to building America and further amplifies contributions to the fabric of our country and the great state of California ([toolbox 1.7](#)).

Future Strategies for Community Engagement

There is a series of future tools and strategies the Commission will continue adding to its racial equity toolbox, including but not limited to public meetings and community compensation strategies. The [Bagley-Keene Open Meeting Act](#) (California Government Code §§ 11120–11132) was enacted to ensure transparency and public access in meetings of state boards and commissions. However, the law may unintentionally discourage or limit meaningful community engagement. The strict boundaries on outside conversations between officials may limit informal, human-centered conversations and shut down trust-building work with communities.

Exploring strategies to compensate community residents for their time and expertise is an approach that may support more Californians engaging with government. As discussed above state laws regarding public funding “gifts” may be interpreted by governments as prohibiting some community compensation strategies. The Commission is focused on strategies to ensure that especially those Californians who may not have the means or resources to participate or inform public processes have the opportunity to do so. State and local governments in Washington, Oregon, and California are implementing community compensation efforts in various ways. For example, Washington State has a [statewide Framework](#) for government compensation of community members, while Oregon’s Department of Transportation has a [policy](#) that seeks to remove barriers that have systematically prevented marginalized populations and others from participating in public engagement and

advisory activities with the department. State and local entities in California have also explored different approaches to compensating community members in the context of specific engagements. For example, the California Air Resources Board (CARB) has developed a consistent approach to its community engagement through the agency's [Community Engagement Model](#). CARB contracted with 19 community experts from various regions of California to inform the model. CARB's community experts have lived, professional, and leadership experiences uncommon to government bodies or the air quality industry. The model includes elements highlighted in the Commission's Framework including but not limited to language equity, building trust with communities, and evaluating engagement efforts. Another example is in Yolo County, where the new [Community Advisory Program](#) will compensate community members for their contributions to the County's Community Health Improvement Plan.

Over the last 12 months, the Commission has traveled throughout the state listening to residents share stories about what they love about their communities but also the challenges they experience (See [Part 3: Our Historic Journey With California](#) and [toolbox 3.1](#)). We have reflected their stories through briefs and graphic note renditions of the key themes. The Commission may consider adding a strategy to its Community Engagement Plan that focuses on how to share key themes or opportunities for action learned from the Commission events with government entities.

To ensure we are continuing to grow our relationship with communities we visit, commission staff are developing a survey to receive feedback from community on their experience and information on how to make the experience better and more meaningful. Staff anticipate launching the post-event survey in 2026.

Last Thoughts on Community Engagement

Community engagement is foundational to racial equity. Community engagement strategies ranging from collaboration to shared governance foster co-ownership and support more equitable and sustainable outcomes. The Commission has presented a range of tools and strategies to help build and strengthen your government organization's commitment to deliver equitable and adaptable community engagement. It is important to be curious, willing to listen, and open to making changes to not only how you engage the community, but also in the operation of programs and services within the context of its existing requirements and policy. We encourage government entities to take note of what you are already doing with community engagement and identify how you can strengthen those efforts through simple, no or low-cost changes. Making time for community will make our programs and services more accessible, efficient, and effective, helping us to achieve our desired outcomes and serving a California for All.

PRIORITY 2: Gathering and Using Information and *Data* to Serve all Californians Successfully

Information to guide government in the development, implementation, and evaluation of programs and services comes in different forms. It can come from a conversation with a resident or groups of residents, or through immersion by directly observing how communities live and the challenges they experience. Information can also be collected as numbers in a survey, recorded as the number of people using a program or service, or a specific indicator like high blood pressure, the number of electronic vehicles purchased in a month, or the number of individuals moving from transitional/temporary housing to permanent housing in a year. Data represents the experiences of residents with a variety systems and processes. Government entities should use data driven approaches to not only ensure they meet their respective missions but also to inform efforts to advance racial equity. Applying standards strategies and methodologies can further how we not only build innovative programs and services, but also how we make our legacy efforts more efficient and effective.

STRATEGY 1: Apply the use of Existing Information Categories to Organize Information

The [Office of Data and Innovation](#) has developed a set of strategies to support the standardization of data practices. The [Data Standards](#) provide a strategy to streamline data collection processes by coordinating data collection practices across state government entities (Office of Data Innovation, n.d.). They provide best practices for collecting demographic and geographic data. If applied consistently across government entities, data standards support a more comprehensive understanding of the needs of Californians and help with interagency understanding of complex issues impacting individuals, families, and communities while providing the foundation to collectively work toward addressing those needs across systems.

STRATEGY 2: Requiring Information to be More Specific (Data Disaggregation)

The use of data and data collection is critical to effectively advance equity efforts and inform equitable policies. Data disaggregation means breaking big categories of information into smaller, more detailed parts so you can see the difference that may be hidden in the overall numbers. When data are not properly disaggregated in the collection and analysis processes, the results collected will not accurately reflect disparities within diverse populations and cannot adequately inform programs and services to meet the needs of community. Not disaggregating data can lead to worsening the issue or creating new challenges like skewed data and missed outcomes unique to those communities. The level of granularity needed is often

experienced in balancing the depth of insight needed for a specific purpose, privacy protection, and resource limitations. It depends on the purpose of the data analysis and the question you are trying to answer using data.

We saw the impact of not adequately disaggregating data during the COVID-19 pandemic. COVID-19 data reflected that Pacific Islanders and Native Hawaiians had the highest COVID death rates in 14 states (Sy, Buhre, & Nagy, 2022). The response to support these specific groups was limited because the COVID-19 death data was initially combined with Asian groups who had relatively lower death rates to create an Asian and Pacific Islander category. In response to not having disaggregated data for Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders, the [Native Hawaiian Pacific Islander Data Policy Lab](#) increased access to disaggregated COVID-19 data providing clearer picture and understanding of what was happening among the Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander community (Morey, Peñaia, Tulua, Chang, Tanghal, Tran, & Ponce, 2024). This allowed for a more focused public health prevention response to support a community that was disproportionately impacted by COVID-19.

Data disaggregation for Asian and Pacific Islander demographics is required by law (**AB 1726, Ch. 607, Stats. 2016**). Data disaggregation supports better service delivery and community empowerment. It provides data access that more accurately reflects the conditions of a community and provides the opportunity to develop more equitable and intersectional solutions. It is important to move away from grouping and diluting unique inequities within differing demographic categories. We recognize the challenges that this can pose to ultimately protect the privacy of its clients or consumers, thus government entities must follow all associated federal and state data privacy laws and practices.

The [California Privacy Act \(Prop. 24, Ch. 735, Stats. 2020\)](#) sets forth that California residents have rights regarding their right to know how data will be used, collected, and with whom it will be shared. Maintaining protection protocols is critical for data collection. Staying within the laws of identity protection and setting identity parameters before collecting data ensures protection of personal information for the communities involved.

Lastly, make data collection and disaggregation a collaborative process between researchers and community; engage and build relationships with community members early on to begin trust building and acknowledge concerns. When exploring how your government entity can approach data disaggregation, be sure to engage individuals internal or external to your organization that hold data privacy and legal subject matter expertise.

QUOTE FROM A COMMUNITY RESIDENT:

“They change our identity [Mayan Mam]. They put us as Latinos and that is a problem...we are Indigenous. We are Native.”



TOOL: DATA DISAGGREGATION BEST PRACTICES AND CONSIDERATIONS

It is important in data collection to record the disparities and highlight the strengths or assets of community or an individual. It is important to highlight community assets to understand existing resources and capabilities as a form of empowerment. It also shows what currently works for that community while promoting sustainable engagement. A series of best practices and considerations for data disaggregation by Vital Research is available in [toolbox 1.8](#).

STRATEGY 3: Where People Live can Help With Understanding Inequities

To understand the cause of racial inequities, it is important to analyze the root causes. Understanding root causes can be difficult, however, it is often driven by complex systems that interact with each other to produce inequities. Understanding where people live, work, play, pray, and learn can be used to inform solutions to unique challenges and identify where successful programs and services may be duplicated in similar communities or geographic regions. Geography is an indicator for a community or individuals' level of access to quality education, transportation, or economic opportunity for chances of achieving upward mobility ([Harvard TH Chan School of Public Health, 2022](#)). Where we live can predict outcomes across sectors like education, civic engagement, health, child development, and economic self-sufficiency.

STRATEGY 4: Learning how to Tell Californians' Stories and Connecting Them to Data

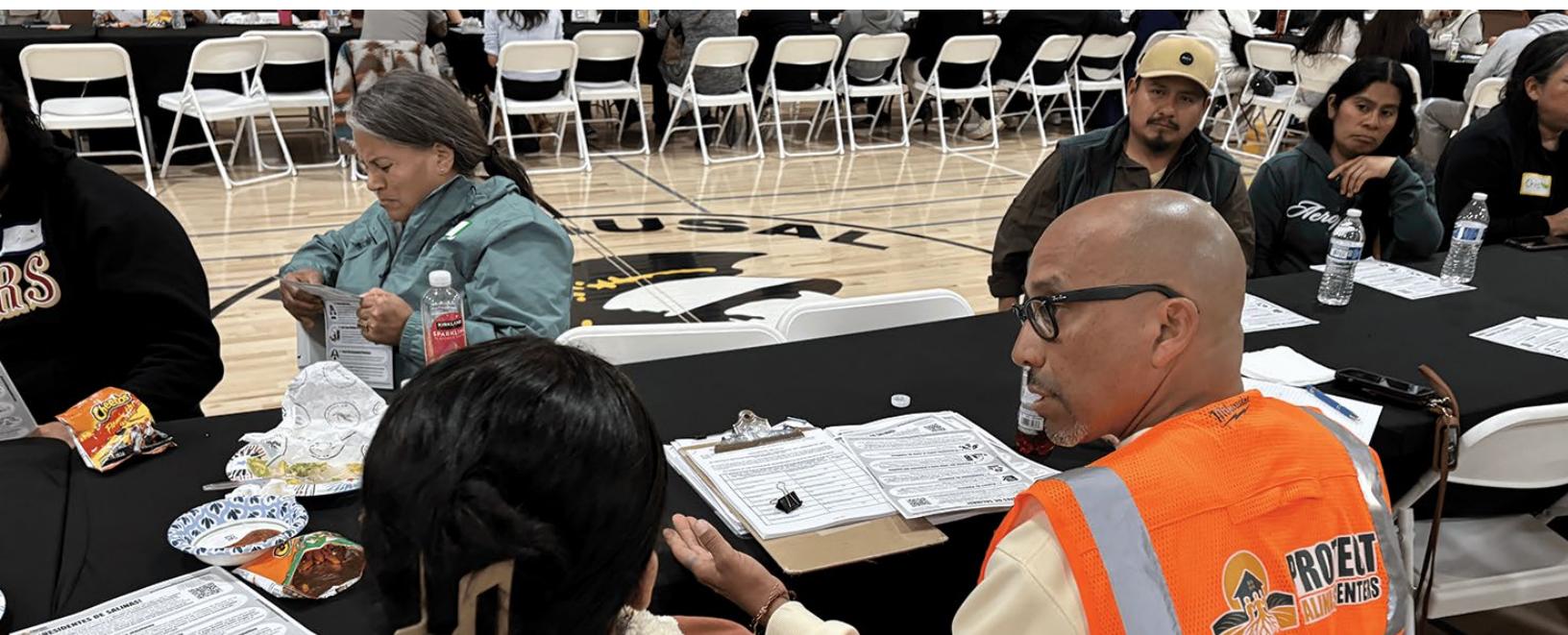
The power of storytelling provides more context to what traditional program or service data often reflects. Storytelling can come in the form of interviews, group discussions, or photographic images. Storytelling can dive deeper into racial disparities by articulating root causes and describe the challenges that are hidden behind the indicators that often represent a singular point in time and experience. Communities can listen to stories, walk through the data with subject matter experts, and have dialogue on what may be accurate or not as accurate with program and service indicators.

When incorporating simple data visuals, use images that connect back to the story the data are showing without perpetuating racial stereotypes but instead reflecting community. Also incorporate elements of storytelling that relate to the audience, describe the relevancy to the reader, and how these results inform racial equity strategies and solutions. The power of storytelling enhances data by providing more information and forming a picture of what the data mean. When sharing and describing data, it is also important to ensure it is written in plain and simple language so any reader can have a clear understanding. This also allows communities to better engage with government entities to discuss how programs and services work well and how they could be improved.

STRATEGY 5: Identify Different Types of Information to Spot Unfairness and Take Action to Make Things More Equal

The use of data is critical for the development and advancement of racial equity. Including information that reflects disparities within community informs policy decisions and supports the policymaking process. The use of different types of data information from qualitative and quantitative methods, data dashboards, infographics, and more can be used to better identify complexities within issues impacting diverse communities. Data visuals and mapping of data sets can support advancing racial equity strategies and program development.

An equity index combines both data and visuals to reflect demographic needs and disparities based on geography. The use of an equity index by agency, department, or program can be a tool to inform the distribution of resources to geographic communities experiencing disproportionate disparities and inequities. The purpose of creating an equity index is to show the concentrated disadvantage of specific communities. Applying an equity index informs government entities which communities face the greatest disparities, lack resources, and are impacted by specific factors. Communities with higher needs often require specific focus and programming. Through identifying these communities, government entities can take specific action. Over time, equity indices can help with monitoring progress over time through public facing, interactive charts and maps. An equity index should be used to inform the development of budget proposals for new funds and evaluating existing programs and services. Government entities should be clear on the purpose and framing question you are trying to answer with an equity index, keeping in mind the audience and how the information could be used.



The [National Equity Atlas](#) was designed to highlight racial and economic equity for data and to inform policy decisions (PolicyLink and USC Equity Research Institute, 2014). The Equity Atlas measures, tracks, and advocates for inclusive growth through data and analysis for communities. The Equity Atlas includes a series of different indicators for demographics including workforce, population growth, and more. The Atlas also contains indicators for different data collection elements on economic vitality, readiness, connectedness, and economic benefits.

THE EQUITY EXPLORER

The County of Los Angeles, led by the Chief Executive Office (CEO) Anti-racism, Diversity and Inclusion ([ARDI](#)) Initiative, developed the [Equity Explorer \(ARDI, 2022\)](#), a mapping tool for applying equity to programming, planning, and development. The Equity Explorer uses targeted outreach, locations, and service areas to support strategic planning and implementation in accompaniment of the Equity Action Plan. Through efforts led by District 2 Supervisor Holly Mitchell and from advocates from the Coalition for Equitable ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) Implementation, CEO-ARDI also created the COVID Vulnerability and Recovery formula to allocate ARPA dollars. The Funding Formula (Formula) distributed ARPA resources based on LA County's COVID-19 Vulnerability and Recovery Index (Index), which correlated risk, severity, and recovery needs for vulnerable communities to high-need ZIP codes. The indicators in the Index included factors related to Risk (e.g., overcrowded housing units), Severity (e.g. uninsured population), Recovery Need (e.g. essential workers), Hard to Count Populations, Non-Geographically Targeted Communities, and Department Identified Indicators.

Future Strategies for Data

There is a series of future tools and strategies the Commission will continue adding to its racial equity toolbox, including but not limited to deepening our application of race conscious strategies in program evaluation. Improving administrative data collection and analysis within government entities should complement demographic or outcome data and create new pathways to examine how persistent disparities might be exacerbated by program design. Program evaluation is necessary to address the effectiveness of equitable deliverables and identify solutions to reduce disparities impacting communities. The pursuit of racial equity is an ongoing practice and program evaluation can be a guiding tool to measure outcomes and support progressive systematic change that ensures government entities are seeking to continuously improve how they serve Californians.

Last Thoughts on Data

The use of data informs policy decisions, program practices, and services to better address issues and improve solutions. Government entities should understand their own data practices and standards and where they may be able to strengthen their own practices to more accurately reflect the experiences of Californians through disaggregation, storytelling, and geography. Identifying future measures and factors to affect policy and budget can include intersectional data collection, disaggregated data, equitable analysis or distribution of funds, and understanding the relationship between demographic data and geographic location of communities to racial disparities. These data practices can better inform policy decisions and program design to help achieve equity.



PRIORITY 3: Understanding *Budgets* and how They Impact Communities

Advancing equity within budgets requires leveraging tools and best practices that center data and community to inform investments, policies, services, and programs. Budget equity focuses on the allocation of public resources to ensure all communities have access to opportunities and services they need to thrive. The following strategies are part of the Commission's budget equity work and ensure access to opportunities that lead to widespread benefit.

STRATEGY 1: Questions to ask When Evaluating new Requests for Program Money and Current Program Reach

Standardized budget equity questions embedded within the state's budget change proposal (BCP) process would provide a structured way to inform internal assessment and evaluation. Standardized questions build upon existing guidance and provide the opportunity for further dialogue and reflection by program staff and government leaders. Additionally, leveraging data in the application of a budget equity worksheet during the budget process allows government entities to identify ways to improve resource strategies to be responsive to data regarding need and effectiveness. The application of equity questions within a budget process is critical at the state and local level to explore the benefits and/or burdens of budget decisions on communities and to ensure a fair and transparent budget process that focuses on meeting the needs of all taxpayers.

The incorporation of a series of standardized questions as part of the BCP by state government entities can inform the assessment of programs and initiatives under its authority. These questions encourage the use of data and community engagement to reflect the realities of communities throughout California. Embedding standardized questions into the BCP would provide decision-makers with the ability to better assess individual BCPs across the totality of requests. This drives success and learning through creating measurable indicators, outcomes, and impacts. Upholding budget equity demonstrates that government can advance programs that close gaps while maintaining efficient and effective government operations and fiscal solvency.

TOOL: BUDGET EQUITY WORKSHEET

Through the engagement of subject matter experts, the Commission helped design a series of standard budget equity questions that can be incorporated into the state's BCP as a Budget Equity Worksheet ([toolbox 1.9](#)). State government entities can respond to the questions in narrative form and should consult with program or equity subject matter experts on how to best respond to each question.

When gaps in service or disparities in access are identified through the BCP process or within other analyses, government entities should explore how to best close those gaps. This should include applying performance indicators to monitor after intervention and engaging in systematic community engagement or data collection to gather more information on the context that may contribute to the disparity. Trusted providers and community members can share information on why gaps persist, what programs or changes to existing programs are needed, and what additional investments can improve performance.



TOOL: BUDGET EQUITY TOOLKIT

The Commission developed a Budget Equity Toolkit ([toolbox 1.10](#)) support the use of a standardized budget tool. The tool provides sample responses to the questions as well as a case study on how a local jurisdiction applied a data-based Framework to inform specific programmatic funding. The case study included with the toolkit is meant to articulate where government entities can evolve by applying equity indices to inform fiscal allocations.

STRATEGY 2: Understanding the State Budget Through Tools That Promote Transparency and Accountability

The state budget represents more than dollars; it is a statement of the state government's values and priorities. Decisions on which programs and services get funded and how taxpayer dollars are spent impact all Californians. Budget equity means applying an equity lens to every stage of the state budget process, moving beyond "what's in the budget" to 'who benefits, who is left out, and how to fix it.' Without an equity lens or active participation, the process can unintentionally deepen racial disparities. Therefore, it is essential for state leaders to apply an equity lens to the state budget and for Californians to not only understand the state budget but also participate in the state budget process.



TOOL: PLAIN LANGUAGE OVERVIEW OF THE STATE BUDGET PROCESS

The development of a plain language one-pager would be a tool that explains the state budget process along with a brief timeline overview, resources, and public participation tips. The one-pager can help promote civic and community engagement in the budget process and boost public trust through increasing understanding of how funds are allocated and where to provide informed input. Increasing access to information on how the state budget process works is foundational for state government entities to begin engaging communities more intentionally to inform and support the alignment of budget investments with community needs.



TOOL: INTERACTIVE WEB-BASED TIMELINE OF THE STATE BUDGET PROCESS

A live timeline of the budget cycle, updated as changes occur, would provide additional transparency on the budget process. The establishment of a web-based interactive timeline on the budget process can help communities understand the real-time status of the budget process and visually see where they can better engage in the process.



TOOL: USER-FRIENDLY VISUALS BUDGET CHARTS

Many government entities have summary chapters that include categorized charts on how funds are allocated either through the initial proposal, modification, or final enactment. Categories include Transitional Kindergarten–12 Education, Higher Education, Climate Change and Environment, Health and Human Services, Housing and Homelessness, Criminal Justice and Judicial Branch, Labor and Workforce Development, and General Government and Statewide Issues. These static charts could be transformed into interactive charts or tables. In addition, including user-friendly visuals such as infographics or maps with the support of plain language explanations will promote civic engagement and understanding of a very complex policy process.

The Commission is committed to collaborating with budget experts across government entities to help develop accessible documents and interactive web-based tools to increasing transparency and engagement with the budget process.

STRATEGY 3: Exploring how to Best Track how Money is Spent in Community

Using equity indices to understand concentrated disadvantage and tracking how money is spent in those communities is essential to advancing racial equity. Budgets alone do not guarantee equitable outcomes; tracking spending builds accountability and ensures dollars reach the communities and programs they were intended for. In addition, tracking spending allows government to see if spending is closing disparities or reinforcing them. By tracking spending alongside results, government can measure improvements in access and outcomes. And when communities can see where funds are being spent (or not being spent), they can advocate for changes and participate in the budget process.

QUOTE FROM A COMMUNITY RESIDENT:

“We work, we pay taxes, but those tax dollars do not reach our community.”



TOOL: DATA-DRIVEN TOOLS TO TRACK SPENDING

Government entities can work toward developing these interactive tools like a web-based equity index or spending tracker. One state agency has created a public facing dashboard based on its efforts to be transparent in how transportation funds are spent in California: the California Department of Transportation's (Caltrans) "fix-it-first" program, known as the SHOPP (State Highway Operation and Protection Program). SHOPP project development begins with the identification of individual transportation needs which are bundled together into conceptual projects years before construction actually starts. This long-term process includes community and partner engagement prior to the completion of formal project planning and the fiscal commitment of funds by the California Transportation Commission. Through a [web-based platform](#), the public can see how projects are prioritized and the many parts that go into improving our state highway system.

In collaboration with community organizations, Catalyst California released the [Los Angeles City Equity Index](#), which aims to guide equitable investment by illustrating disparities in access and opportunity across different neighborhoods in Los Angeles—highlighting communities with higher levels of need. According to Catalyst California, the index is grounded in lived community experiences and was developed through surveys and facilitated discussions, emphasizing that any equity tool should remain rooted in community voices. The Los Angeles City Equity Index serves as a powerful tool for aligning budget allocations with community needs in the following ways:

1. Mapping zip codes by community needs or challenges (e.g., pedestrian fatalities, early childhood education, rent burden, voter turnout, grocery store access, etc.) helps identify opportunities areas for interventions.
2. Aligning spending by target area (e.g. safe environment, economic and opportunity, democracy and power, and longevity and vitality) to inform the interventions.
3. Using the index as a baseline helps track progress over time and assess indicators to see if community conditions have improved.
4. Keeping community input ongoing ensures work is community-centered, with feedback loops on implementation and outcomes from impacted residents.

Government entities interested in working toward building indices to inform programs and services should have a clear understanding of existing data sources. In addition, government entities should seek technical assistance on selecting indicators that are relevant to program goals, combining indicators into a composite measure, and validating the index is reflective of what happens in community.

Future Strategies for Budget Equity

There is a series of future tools and strategies the Commission will continue adding to its racial equity toolbox, including but not limited to making it easier to work with organizations and businesses that support community (equitable contracting and procurement). To strengthen existing procurement practices in California with an equity lens, it's essential to make contracting and procurement more accessible and supportive of community-based organizations and businesses within the limits of federal and state law. One key approach includes simplifying certification processes for small businesses under the Department of General Services Certification Programs. Many small community or grass-roots organizations face administrative barriers with limited staff and budget resources for consultants. Providing clear guidance, capacity building assistance, and outreach can help more small businesses get certified by the state and compete for contracts effectively.

Another critical area is improving access to capital. Small businesses often cannot meet upfront costs or bonding requirements, which may limit their participation or willingness to apply for contracts. By consistently offering upfront payments and helping with bonding and insurance, procurement practices can lower these financial barriers, enabling a broader range of small businesses to compete for state contracts. In a recent survey, [The Little Hoover Commission](#) recently learned that "upfront or advance payments, simplified application processes and reporting requirements, and higher indirect cost rates would 'enhance' the experience for nonprofits working with the state."

Developing standard practices in advance pay across state government entities is important to ensure all nonprofit government contractors have a consistent experience when working across state government. In 2023, Governor Newsom signed [AB 590](#) into law, which allows nonprofit government contracts to be eligible for advance payments from state agencies. This policy advances access and equity for nonprofit and state government partnerships. With advance pay, nonprofit organizations will not have to float significant expenses until reimbursement to implement programming, which removes a barrier particularly for nonprofit organizations in marginalized communities.

Once community residents have better access to information about government budget processes, one strategy to explore moving toward is participatory budgeting. Participatory budgeting, also a co-governance model, is a process in which community members directly decide how to spend a portion of a public budget. One place participatory budgeting is happening is [Vallejo](#) (California). Vallejo residents and community partners develop project proposals, residents vote on projects, and the list of projects that receive the most votes are submitted to Vallejo City Council for consideration. Other governmental entities that implement participatory budgeting include Rhode Island, the City of Grand Rapids (Michigan), and the City of Boston (Massachusetts).

Last Thoughts on Budget Equity

Budget equity strategies build upon community engagement and data tools, methodologies, and strategies described in previous sections of the Framework. These strategies support transparency, user-friendly, visually appealing information to understand how government entities invest taxpayer dollars back into communities. Working toward budget equity is crucial for fostering a fair, just, and thriving California. It ensures that all eligible Californians can contribute their fair share while benefiting from public programs and services. It requires helping communities understand government budget processes, which strengthens public trust; building tools to ensure that funds create impact as authorized or directed; and exploring different approaches that prevent disadvantaged communities from bearing the burden of economic downturns.



PRIORITY 4: *Infrastructure to Help Create a California Where all can Thrive*

A strong infrastructure is important to ensure the above tools, methodologies, and strategies are implemented with intention, flexibility, and consistency within and across government entities. Infrastructure ranges from specific “homes” for the work to subject matter experts. Infrastructure accounts for the foundational needs for state government entities to make racial equity real and transform our systems to be learning- and community-centered.

STRATEGY 1: A Statewide Office of Racial Equity

The establishment of a statewide Office of Racial Equity can provide the necessary structure to support the implementation of the Racial Equity Framework and the evaluation of the state’s progress in advancing racial equity and a California for All. In support of state government entities, an office would be a tool to support coordination across state government entities, build capacity through training and technical assistance, ensure alignment of state efforts with federal and state laws, and support self- and impact evaluation of racial equity efforts. The office should serve as a tool to connect equity efforts across state government entities. The Commission has heard from advocates on the importance of the office as a tool for increased coordination across programs and services. Advocates have emphasized an office could serve as a centralized structure that can research best practices and challenges experienced by government entities with offices.

STRATEGY 2: Working in and Across our Organizations

There are many efforts happening across government entities working toward creating a more efficient and effective government with an equity centered lens, including the state’s first Chief Equity Officer within the Government Operations Agency (Gov-Ops). The positioning of equity work within an organizational structure is critical to ensure that the work is fully embedded. There is an opportunity to strengthen the breadth of the role to ensure consistent implementation and understanding of collective impact of each government entity’s contribution to ensuring a California for All with a racial equity lens.

There is a need for stronger coordination to ensure consistent communication on policy and legal considerations within the bounds of existing state and federal laws, as well as coordinating across and within government entities to support shared learning. The programs and services offered across a variety of agencies and departments, including in departments under different constitutional officers, may contribute to one or several key impact indicators, and the only way to ensure government entities are moving in concert is the support and advancement of key equity indicators. To

support better coordination and collaboration across state government entities, a new or existing role could serve as a tool to address silos across government entities around coordinating and tracking racial equity activities and impact outcomes and streamlining communication.

To support better coordination within agencies and departments, executive leaders should consider establishing a team of subject matter experts with a deputy, director, or manager-level leader within their own structure. This leader would be responsible for coordinating equity efforts within their respective structure and ensuring consistent communication. This leader would also be responsible for representing the government entity in regular convenings by a cabinet-level or senior advisor leader. Executive and subject matter expert leaders should consider regular communication across their respective government entity on the importance and intersection of their organizational charge and equity. Clear and consistent demonstrations of leadership buy-in will actively promote the commitment to fulfilling Executive Order N-16-22 through existing and future efforts of organizational teams.

STRATEGY 3: Making Equity Everyone's job

One consideration is how we include equity as part of the culture of the state within the duty statements of state employees. Duty statements describe the tasks, functions and responsibilities of a position and are essential to ensuring the success of government employees. Duty statements set clear expectations for the employee and the supervisor/manager, while also articulating the core values of the state and its subsequent government entities. Embedding equity into everyone's duty statement is a methodology that will support everyone seeing their role in ensuring all eligible Californians are fairly served and the application of an equity lens in doing so.

ADDING EQUITY TO DUTY STATEMENTS

One way an agency embedded equity into each duty statement:

Dedicating 5% of an employee's time to participating in professional development trainings, as well as tasks and activities that support programmatic and workplace diversity, equity, and inclusion. Furthering their commitment, the agency emphasized its core values and commitment on each duty statement by reflecting:

"In all job functions, employees are responsible for creating an inclusive, safe and secure work environment that values diverse cultures, perspectives and experiences and is free from discrimination. Employees are expected to provide all members of the public equitable services and treatment, collaborate with underserved communities and Tribal governments and work toward improving outcomes for all."

STRATEGY 4: Moving From Ideas and Goals to Action

Executive Order N-16-22 required equity to be embedded into agency and department strategic plans through fiscal year 2025–26. Those strategic plans were to reflect the use of data and inclusive practices to advance equity and gather input from California communities that have been historically disadvantaged and underserved to inform the development or update of the plans. Embedding equity in strategic plans into the future is important to continue to advance a California for All. Advancing racial equity should be included within each agency and department thinking about their own strategy to center equity more broadly across its programs and services. We recognize, however, that each government entity is at a different place, and it is important to support grounding government entities in the Framework and tools to help them move their equity ideas and hopes into impactful actions. Government entities can use the strategies described throughout the Framework to inform their action plans and strategies to achieve the equity goals outlined in their strategic plans.

STRATEGIES TO EMBED EQUITY INTO YOUR STRATEGIC PLAN (ESRI, N.D.)

1. **Understand your audience or eligible Californians**, how they access programs and services, and key community organizations that can help you connect directly with customers/clients.
2. Acknowledge that “**one size does not fit all**” and that place can impact access.
3. Determine how you will **monitor the reach** of programs and services.
4. Identify indicators to **track impact and set benchmarks** to support your journey.



TOOL: TRAINING GOVERNMENT ENTITIES ON THE FRAMEWORK AND ADVANCING RACIAL EQUITY

One starting point to support is the establishment of a racial equity training or a primer for government entities. This could be developed by the Commission in partnership with subject matter experts. Some of the elements that should be included for a training or primer are (1) an introduction to the Racial Equity Framework, (2) the role of government in addressing racial equity including opportunities for capacity building and technical assistance, (3) key terms, (4) state and federal legal considerations, and (5) the use of data to support quality improvement.



TOOL: SELF-ASSESS YOUR GOVERNMENT ENTITY'S READINESS

Another way to support moving from ideas to action is for government entities to conduct an equity readiness assessment. An equity readiness assessment is intended

to help an organization self-identify where it is in its equity journey and articulate specific actions it can take to lead to improved outcomes among overburdened communities ([toolbox 1.11](#)). A readiness assessment tool helps understand your current culture, informs change management strategies that may be unique to your organization, builds buy-in and ownership, and increases the likelihood of success and sustainability. Having a baseline can encourage dialogue among organizations to lead to greater understanding and commitment, as well as facilitate the coordination of information and resources in alignment with its strategic plan and with current federal and state laws (Eliminating Disparities in Child & Youth Success Collaborative, October 2013).



STRATEGY 5: Understanding Impact of Proposed Actions

Part of advancing racial equity is to be willing to explore unintentional consequences that may be present in proposed policies, practices, programs, and fiscal decisions (Race Forward, n.d.). Race Forward has composed a [series of questions](#) that should be considered to “anticipate, assess, and prevent” potential unintentional consequences of proposed actions. We have adapted these questions to be used when evaluating proposed policies or programs, or to inform fiscal decisions.



TOOL: UNDERSTANDING RACIAL EQUITY IMPACT ON PROGRAMS, SERVICES AND POLICY

An impact assessment tool can be helpful for program staff to build scenarios to describe the potential impact if programs shift their scope or populations served. The tool should be used to help explore the impacts of proposed action. While questions like these may already be considered during the policymaking process, adapting a standard tool or series of questions will allow for a more consistent approach across decision-makers.

The policymaking process provides an important opportunity to explore the impacts of proposed and existing legislation. Individuals and government entities participating in the process should start with the racial equity impact analysis to develop, inform, and refine their decisions on policy proposals. It is also important to continue thinking through the questions included in the impact analysis throughout the policymaking process. The impact analysis questions should be applied as a worksheet for decision-makers. Introducing an impact analysis would give decision-makers a clearer picture of the impacts and ensure that the information was grounded in data and with community.



QUESTIONS TO ASK TO UNDERSTAND IMPACT OF PROPOSED ACTION

Identify and engage key informants

What groups may be most affected by and concerned with issues related to this proposal? Have those most adversely affected been informed, experienced meaningful engagement on the issue, and been authentically represented in the proposal's development and refinement? Who is missing and should be engaged?

Identify inequities and understand the causes

What groups are currently most advantaged and most disadvantaged? How are they affected differently? What data (qualitative or quantitative) documents the inequity? What information is missing or needed? What political, environmental, social, or technological factors may contribute to the inequities (e.g., PEST Analysis)? Does the proposal address root causes? If not, how could it?

Clarify the proposal purpose and consider adverse impacts

What does the proposal seek to accomplish? What impacts or unintended consequences could result from the policy or program? What groups could be negatively impacted and how could the negative impacts be prevented or minimized?

Advancing equitable impacts and alternatives

What positive impacts could result from this proposal? What groups could benefit? Are there other ways to maximize opportunities and positive impacts for all? Are there other ways to reduce inequity? What could be changed or added to ensure positive impacts that account for equitable impact?

Ensuring the proposal can become a reality and continue beyond the proposal

Is the proposal realistic and adequately funded to ensure successful implementation and evaluation? Does the proposal provide for ongoing evaluation, reporting, and community engagement? How will you know if it is successful and impactful?

In the [United Kingdom](#), all public authorities have a legal duty to assess proposed policies and practices on different groups and to take steps to advance equality and foster good community relationships using a systematic race equality impact assessment (Research Excellence Framework, 2025). The United Kingdom equality impact assessment is a systemic process for examining a policy, project, or service to determine if it could create disadvantages. If disadvantages could be created, changes would be recommended then implemented to ensure fairness and advance opportunity for all. In 2008, Iowa passed the first racial impact statement measure

([HF2393](#)), which allows policymakers to assess the racial impact of proposed changes to sentencing and parole policies within the criminal justice system. In 2021, Maine lawmakers authorized a racial impact statement policy ([LD 2](#)) requiring the state's legislative council to conduct a study to determine the best strategy to establish and implement a racial impact statement policy for legislation. Also in 2021, the California Assembly adopted [House Resolution 39](#) (Gipson), which committed the Assembly to “explore methods to integrate equity more formally into its daily activities, including the potential adoption of equity impact analysis into the existing committee and floor bill analysis process.”

Future Strategies for Organizational Infrastructure

There is a series of future tools and strategies the Commission will continue adding to its racial equity toolbox, including but not limited to funding equity within government entities and strengthening government workforce pathways that reflect California. One resourcing strategy to research is the “pooling” or “braiding” of funds and creating efficiencies to support racial equity efforts in state agencies and departments. Government entities may have flexibility within their operating and program budgets that can support a more sustainable funding source for equity efforts.



Last Thoughts on Organizational Infrastructure

The use of tools and methodologies without infrastructure creates risk for racial equity not being fully integrated into government systems. It must be considered to ensure successful implementation in our collective efforts to counteract systemic inequities.

Key Takeaways for Building the Framework for Your Organization

- **Center Community in Governance:** Build trust through reciprocal, ongoing engagement, and informed decision-making with historically marginalized communities.
- **Ensure Access and Accountability:** Use plain language, provide language access, and create tools that make government processes understandable and participatory for all Californians.
- **Use Data With Depth and Humanity:** Disaggregate data, pair it with storytelling, and apply equity mapping tools to uncover root causes and inform solutions.
- **Make Budgets Reflect Equity:** Apply budget equity tools, track spending outcomes, and ensure transparency so that public funds close gaps rather than widen them.
- **Build Inclusive Infrastructure:** Institutionalize equity through strategic plans, job descriptions, and leveraging a dedicated office and team to coordinate efforts and ensure sustainability.





PART 2: Delivering Real Results That Matter

PRIORITY 1: Helping Leaders Shift Mindsets, Behaviors, and Habits to Successfully Advance Racial Equity

Organizational culture change is most successful when there is demonstrated buy-in throughout an organization and especially from senior leadership. To prepare government entities for cultural shifts like using racial equity tools and embedding racial equity strategies, organizations must prepare their staff by clearly identifying the impact of racial inequity within the scope of their organization's programs and services. In addition, government entities must build awareness of why change is needed and the root causes of inequities. The more buy-in a government entity can achieve, the easier implementation of the tools and strategies will be. Building buy-in across an organization can take time and requires meeting employees where they are—including being willing to lean into difficult conversation and not have all the answers but always encouraging curiosity. Managing organizational change can be challenging as it is not a linear path, and there may be competing interests and priorities that must be balanced.

KEY ELEMENTS OF EFFECTIVE ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE TO ADVANCE EQUITY ACROSS GOVERNMENT ENTITIES

- Vision for change
- Readiness for change
- Implementing change
- Evaluating change

In a literature review ([toolbox 2.1](#)) developed for the Commission, the University of California, Berkeley Possibility Lab identified key elements of effective organizational change to advance equity across government entities.

In support of the key elements, clear communication on the purpose and urgency of the desired change is necessary. Executive Order N-16-22 lays out the purpose and urgency for advancing equity in California, however, government entities should be more explicit on how inequities impact those who use or receive their services and participate in their programs. Support for government employees getting ready to shift in a new direction with support from leadership requires safe spaces for learning and processes to understand the effectiveness of change.

STRATEGY 1: Figuring out Where to Start on Your Journey

It is critical for government entities to figure out where to start in their racial equity journey, not only to do the work effectively, but also due to the complex, highly visible spaces in which they operate. Public trust and use of public resources, as well as compliance with current state and federal laws, are important factors for government entities to consider when identifying a starting point to advance racial equity.



TOOL: UNDERSTANDING YOUR ORGANIZATION'S INFRASTRUCTURE TO ADVANCE EQUITY

Whether a government entity is just getting started or has been engaged in this work for several years, there are tools, strategies, and approaches for every level. One California agency developed a [Virtual Equity Toolkit](#) to support local jurisdictions with building out an equity infrastructure within their respective jurisdictions. The toolkit includes an [Annual Organizational Assessment for Equity Infrastructure](#), an overview of 12 competencies on equity infrastructure, with definitions, examples, resources, and spotlights for each competency. The goal of this toolkit is to help users identify the best-fit starting point, with the resources divided into the following phases for each competency—Early, Established, and Strong (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Scale for the Organizational Assessment for Equity Infrastructure

EARLY		ESTABLISHED			STRONG	
1	2	3	4	5	6	
Not yet, or learning stage	Planned but not started or in initial/pilot stages of implementation	Working toward this but not fully achieved	Fully achieved	In place with evidence of its use (e.g., policies, procedures, robust evaluation plan)	Practices are sustainable and ongoing and may be shared with others as “best practices”	

STRATEGY 2: Ensure People Feel Comfortable Speaking up, Sharing Ideas, Asking Questions or Admitting Mistakes

Psychological safety describes a [workplace] environment of low interpersonal fear and a shared expectation within a team that employees will not be shamed, rejected, or punished for sharing ideas, taking risks, asking questions, or seeking feedback. Psychological safety is a shared responsibility within agencies and departments, and between leaders and employees (CalHR, 2019). To create psychological safety in government entities may require the adaptation of restorative strategies previously described under community engagement that acknowledge the lived experience of employees, including cumulative and persistent discrimination.

PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

The CalHR **Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA)** Office has listed five best practices for psychological safety in the workplace.

- **Define Psychological Safety:** Define psychological safety in the organization. Create guidelines that align with organizational policies. Base meetings and workplace interactions on them.
- **Illustrate with Practical Examples:** Provide real examples. Encourage open communication, acknowledge mistakes without blame, and promote diverse perspectives without interpersonal labeling.
- **Prioritize Psychological Safety at Work:** Reinforce it to keep the staff aware.
- **Develop Core Competencies:** Employees can learn to foster safety. They can do this through practice and continuous improvement.
- **Train and Evaluate Leadership:** Conduct training on making and keeping psychological safety.

Many civil servants and servant leaders experience heaviness while working to make California a better place. Government organizations can also explore training and coaching that center concepts like [trauma stewardship](#), which can help employees understand how to manage work that can feel overwhelming and traumatic.

STRATEGY 3: Following the law, Protecting Against Discrimination, and Navigating the Unknown or the Unclear

Following federal and state laws is important to protect the programs and services government entities provide. There are often many questions on how current law impacts programs and services—specifically what you can and cannot do related to racial equity. There are three primary laws that we must pay attention to when advancing racial equity within government entities: California Proposition 209, the Equal Protection Clauses of the California and U.S. Constitutions, and the federal Civil Rights Act of 1964. Other California civil rights laws play a significant role as well, including the Fair Employment and Housing Act (Gov. Code, § 12900 et seq.), the Bias Free Government Funded State Services & Programs Law (Gov. Code, § 11135), and the Unruh Civil Rights Act (Civ. Code, § 51).

In 1996, California voters passed [Proposition 209](#). This law eliminated affirmative action programs in public education, public contracting, and employment to prohibit preferential treatment based on race, sex, color, nationality, or ethnicity.

The [Equal Protection Clause](#), within the 14th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, ensures that states cannot deny any person within their jurisdiction equal protection under the law. In other words, it says that government must treat people in similar situations the same way and that it cannot unfairly treat someone differently because of race, gender, sexual orientation, or religion. California's constitution mirrors these protections. The Equal Protection Clause is vital and serves as a cornerstone of civil rights and its principles—promoting equality and ensuring the promise of equal protection for all. The [Civil Rights Act](#) is a federal law that prohibits discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, or nationality in, among other things, employment and public accommodations (Civil Rights Act, 1964).

Advancing racial equity consistent with these laws requires implementing approaches and strategies that do not include racial classifications yet still address systemic inequities and disparities. Government entities interested in more specific strategies to address structural racism in sectors such as health, economic justice, and criminal justice should check out [The Structural Racism Remedies Repository](#) by the Othering and Belonging Institute. The repository features recommended strategies that are “race-neutral,” which can allow for a universal approach that benefits all.

During its public meetings, the Commission received guidance on Proposition 209 and race-neutral strategies from the UC Berkeley School of Law Dean Erwin Chemerinsky, Attorney and former California Reparations Taskforce Member Lisa Holder, and the Othering and Belonging Institute's [Stephen Menendian](#). These conversations underscored the opportunity demographic data provides to inform race-neutral strategies. The gathering, collection, organizing, analyzing, tracking, and monitoring of data involving race is not prohibited as there is not a benefit or burden to individuals

who are labeled based on race. Another strategy is process-based policies such as providing learning opportunities, including training or lectures to provide more information about root causes of inequities, as they do not use racial classifications. At our March 2024 commission meeting, Lisa Holder introduced a remedies cake to demonstrate opportunities to move racial equity efforts in iterative phases and allow for systematic review ([toolbox 2.2](#)).

STRATEGY 4: Making Sure Government is Improving and Sharing its Process and Progress

As state government entities move their racial equity work forward, it is critical to share progress toward their goals and objectives with policymakers, senior leadership, and communities or clients that benefit from programs and services. To achieve this, state agencies and departments must identify clear roles, measurable goals, a process for tracking progress and evaluation, and a plan for quality improvement and/or corrective action. In addition, state government entities must also have a system and process for sharing their plan, progress, and results. Government entities can do this with annual agency reports based on their current strategic plans or setting SMART goals (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound) that can measure change through existing data sources.



PRIORITY 2: Helping Staff Build Skills, Knowledge, and Experience

STRATEGY 1: Teaching Basics on the Framework and Racial Equity

The Framework contains different components to support government entities with the advancement or launching of racial equity tools, methodologies, and strategies. For racial equity to be woven into systems and organizational practices, the Framework will need to have an accompanying training to break down how to use the Framework as a guide when implementing racial equity initiatives and strategies. The training will position government entities to effectively institutionalize and operationalize racial equity while centering community.

Training can be a starting point for organizations to learn more about opportunities to advance racial equity. It can also help identify gaps or challenges to support systems change and organizational shifts. Training can be foundational or targeted with topics such as bias, understanding root causes, or cultural humility. It is important to pair learnings from training with the use of tools and implementation of strategies to continue ongoing commitment to systemizing and operationalizing racial equity. In addition to training, continuing to develop and improve racial equity tools and methodologies can respond to the needs of both government entities and community. When developing equity tools, it's important to keep community at the heart of technical assistance by including simple language and making the tool available and accessible for any audience to reference and understand. These tools can be helpful in making organizational shifts to embed equity into best practices.

STRATEGY 2: Building Best Practices and Lessons Learned Through Working Groups and Learning Communities

Identifying best practices to further develop racial equity strategies is required to make racial equity work sustainable and long-standing. Working groups provide opportunities to test, practice, and learn how to improve racial equity practices and to better inform proposals. Community or partner engagement spaces can also share lessons learned to improve efforts to effectively center community and their needs including securing interpretation for language support, translating meeting materials, writing documents or any public facing information in simple language, making information available for those with disabilities, ensuring events and location spaces are accessible and available, and more.

STRATEGY 3: Focusing on Communities Facing Multiple Challenges Helps Address Everyone's Challenges

Targeted Universalism is a powerful approach to advance racial equity because it combines a shared vision with tailored solutions, ensuring no one is left behind while everyone moves forward. Instead of one-size-fits-all policies and programs, Targeted Universalism designs universal goals that are achieved through targeted intervention strategies that address structural barriers disproportionately impacting specific communities. With Targeted Universalism, focusing on communities facing multiple, overlapping challenges not only improves outcomes, but it also often creates broader benefits that improve systems and outcomes for everyone (Othering & Belonging Institute, 2021). The Othering and Belonging Institute has shared an overview of Targeted Universalism with the Racial Equity Commission. The Targeted Universalism overview ([toolbox 2.3](#)) includes exercises for government entities to practice how to apply the approach in their sector.

Universal goals avoid the false narrative that helping one community takes away from another community, and by implementing targeted strategies for those facing multiple barriers, the deepest flaws in systems that ultimately affect everyone can be identified and addressed. With Targeted Universalism, everyone benefits. By focusing on those facing multiple, compounding challenges, targeted universalism addresses the root problems in systems, creating solutions that lift everyone.

FIVE STEPS TO “DO” TARGETED UNIVERSALISM

1. Establish a universal goal based upon a broadly shared recognition of a societal problem and collective aspirations.
2. Assess the general population performance relative to the universal goal.
3. Identify groups and places that are performing differently with respect to the goal and the overall population. Groups should be disaggregated.
4. Assess and understand the structures and conditions that support or impede each group or community from achieving the universal goal.
5. Develop and implement targeted strategies for each group to reach the universal goal.

STRATEGY 4: Finding Experts Around us to Help Build our Programs

Resourcing our own subject matter experts and staff is critical to supporting the advancement of racial equity within our systems to create a substantive impact. This should include establishing a “one-stop shop” for resources and facilitating connections to subject matter experts to provide individual and group coaching for government entities implementing the Framework. Identifying subject matter experts is critical to supporting implementation strategies for racial equity. Subject matter experts can be found in a range of different fields from academia, advocacy organizations, community spaces, equity experts, and more. Subject matter experts will have experience working and/or studying systems change, structural inequities, an understanding of how intersectionality is present in disparities, or be familiar with issues of discrimination. Subject matter experts can help identify and operationalize solutions or build programs to combat racial inequities through policy development, networking to support building partnerships with other subject matter experts, program designs, or creating racial equity initiatives.

THE CALIFORNIA STRATEGIC GROWTH COUNCIL (SGC) has a [racial equity resource library](#) that contains different tools and resources to support racial equity work. The resource library includes a Racial Equity Toolkit developed by the Government Alliance of Race and Equity (GARE) (Brooks and Nelson, December 2016) to help inform racial equity policies, practices, decisions, budgets, and programs. The Racial Equity Toolkit supports strategy development and actionable practices to mitigate racial inequities and in this way policies and programs are informed and implemented by racial equity.

Future Strategies on Delivering Results That Matter

There is a series of future tools and strategies the Commission will continue adding to its racial equity toolbox, including but not limited to building a technical assistance and training plan and launching a statewide equity summit to share best practices across government entities.

A technical assistance plan and training will be developed to support agencies implementing racial equity tools, methodologies, and strategies. Future training will guide users on how to use the Framework and either begin or start forming equity strategies. The technical assistance plan may include components of strategic planning support, impact analysis, and highlighting tools for institutionalizing racial equity.

Hosting a statewide equity summit could bring together champions and highlight best practices to implement and strategize racial equity for systems change. The summit could be annual and be a learning space for practitioners and learners to better understand how to implement and advance racial equity to address racial disparities and identify solutions to benefit everyone.

PRIORITY 3: Finding Ways to Make California Better for all Through Evaluation

Evaluation is essential to ensuring an efficient and effective government by providing systematic evidence on the performance of programs, policies, initiatives, and activities. Strong evaluation practices help identify opportunities for improvement, promote best practices, and support informed decision-making. This creates a culture of learning within a government that is committed to ensuring efficient, effective, and accessible programs and services.

To inform the development of the Framework, the Commission worked with the Possibility Lab at UC Berkeley to conduct an asset analysis of the current strategies being implemented by government entities ([toolbox 2.4](#)) and the State of Equity to identify case studies of equity work in state government ([toolbox 2.5](#)). Findings indicated that government entities need clear expectations and accountability mechanisms, and tailored support to implement equity measures effectively (Possibility Lab, 2025). Research further shows that public-facing Frameworks often lack robust evaluation plans, leading to inconsistent implementation and limited long-term impact ([American Evaluation Association](#), 2019). Without a structured evaluation strategy, the effectiveness of the Framework may be undermined. To ensure the Framework's success and sustainability, the Commission seeks to embed a cohesive evaluation strategy that will (1) measure what works and identify areas for improvement; (2) establish quality improvement mechanisms to track progress; and (3) provide government entities with clear implementation and evaluation guidelines to strengthen and sustain their equity efforts.

STRATEGY 1: Improving our Programs Through Information and Learning From Community

Self-evaluation is a mechanism to monitor internal performance, implement quality improvement strategies to improve effectiveness and efficiency, while also strengthening internal accountability, or being able to explain and own outcomes while also promoting public-facing information-sharing that is easy to understand. Providing space for government entities to self-evaluate and monitor their own progress is important to foster a learning environment that demonstrates a commitment to improving how government operates and its impact.

The Commission will develop a self-evaluation in partnership with an external evaluation team based on a systemic literature review of measures that help support organizational change with the implementation of the Framework while allowing state government entities the flexibility necessary to identify and monitor their own metrics of success. A cohort of key subject matter experts should be convened to discuss self-evaluation metrics and strategy with ongoing engagement to allow the Commission to review and refine the metrics or strategy as needed. The self-evaluation can build upon the community engagement strategies articulated above to ensure communities served are engaged and are benefiting from government programs and services. Government entities should pursue academic partnerships to support self-evaluation and ensure that evaluating progress is connected to existing reporting requirements and evaluation strategies.

STRATEGY 2: What is working in or missing from the Framework, and what can be better?

In partnership with an external evaluation team, the Commission will develop an evaluation strategy and conduct at least one round of evaluation of the impact of the implementation of the Framework. The evaluation will use both qualitative and quantitative methods to understand technical assistance needs—or what is working or needed to support advancing racial equity, assess effectiveness of the Framework, track adoption of tools and strategies, and understand progress made toward changes in policy, practice, and community. The evaluation of Framework impact will support the Commission in having a better understanding of how to support government entities on their racial equity journeys while also understanding how and where impact has been greatest.

STRATEGY 3: Tracking Impact Annually and Adding to our Toolbox

In partnership with an external evaluation team, the Commission will host workshops with subject matter experts and community to identify key impact indicators to track over time. Key indicators will come from existing data sources to support the monitoring of progress in advancing racial equity across government entities. The Commission is required to publish an annual report beginning in December 2026. The 2026 report will include an overview of key indicators, how the indicators were selected, and most current data. Communities throughout the state will be engaged on the impact indicators through the Commission's public meetings. The Commission will continue to identify and refine tools and strategies and add them to its annual report. In addition, the Commission will issue annual reports that track the selected indicators and learnings from communities throughout California.

Future Strategies for Evaluation

There is a series of future tools and strategies the Commission will continue adding to its racial equity toolbox, including looking at models like Results-Based Accountability, which encourages entities to strengthen their planning, managing, and measuring of programs and services by focusing on the end results. The organization [Equity and Results](#) has developed content on how to apply [Results-Based Accountability with a racial equity lens](#). In shifting focus from activities to outcomes, applying this model asks:

- How much are we doing? (e.g., people served, regions served, etc.)
- How well are we doing it? (e.g., quality of services and programs—were they timely, accessible, and responsive to needs.)
- Are Californians better off? (e.g., are the programs and services doing what they need to do to ensure a consumer or client is better off).

The Commission may look at agencies and departments already using the model and how it has supported success. The Commission may also look at how the Results-Based Accountability Framework could be adopted to better align with existing processes, metrics, and other system-wide goals and strategies that are regularly monitored.

Key Takeaways for Delivering Real Results That Matter

- **Leadership Commitment is Essential:** Organizational change starts with leaders who model equity, assess readiness, and create psychologically safe environments while staying within applicable legal boundaries.
- **Build Staff Capacity Through Learning:** Foundational training, peer learning spaces, and the use of Targeted Universalism help staff apply equity in their daily work.
- **Start Where you are, Grow Strategically:** Agencies should assess their current efforts and infrastructure to identify the best entry points for embedding racial equity.
- **Evaluate With Community and Purpose:** Use both data and lived experience to measure progress, identify gaps, and improve services through self-evaluation and external assessments.
- **Ensure Transparency and Accountability:** The Commission will track key equity indicators over time, publish annual reports, and maintain public trust.



PART 3: Our Historic Journey With California

Race and the Breadth of who we are

Disparities across racial and ethnic groups in lifespan, wealth, employment, education opportunities, health care, the legal system, and more are persistent in California. It is widely documented in communities' lived experience, data and research. Racial inequities have been woven into basic systems, beliefs, and organizations within our society. These inequities continue to produce harm even as progress has been made. The Commission is uplifting tools and strategies to help repair and/or fix government structures and systems that contribute to unfair results based on race because we believe this is necessary to create equity for communities throughout California. We must name the problem and challenges associated with racial inequities and disparities so we can address them.

Leading with the lens of race helps government entities better understand people's experiences and their outcomes. Intersectionality allows us to learn how our different and overlapping identities and experiences impact us as individuals and as communities. This is about recognizing the complexity of who we are as individuals and as communities and how we are, in fact, connected. To understand intersectionality, we must begin to see how age, gender, income, education level, language, ability/disability, place of birth or newcomer status, and more, when combined with race, can lead to disparate outcomes. Seeing our collective intersectionality is critical for the advancement of racial equity—allowing policy solutions to better address the complexities of inequities impacting the communities we serve.

Standing in the Light

The pathway to address historical wrongs has never been paved or straight. This moment calls for collective and resilient action. We must be willing to acknowledge and repair past harm, while making sure we do not cause further harm. We must be willing to choose differently—the choice to read this Framework as a whole or by sections is a small choice that can have significant impacts on the communities we serve throughout California. We have an opportunity to continue to learn from each other and strengthen our relationships with community—this benefits all. This year, our state has been leading from the front on the protection of civil and human rights. Working with your experts and legal counsel with an asset-focused mindset is necessary for this moment and securing our state's legacy moving forward. We are all called to stand in the light and move forward in the name of humanity and democracy.

How did we get here?

Advancing racial equity in California had a long journey to lead to the establishment of the Racial Equity Commission and this Framework, from the work of the [Health in All Policies Taskforce \(Executive Order S-04-10\)](#) to the widespread advocacy and foundational efforts of [Senate Bill 17 \(Pan\)](#). This also includes the restorative efforts of [AB 2710 \(Johnston\)](#), the [Truth and Healing Council \(Executive Order N-15-19\)](#), former Assemblymember and current California Secretary of State Dr. Shirley Weber and the [AB 3121 Reparations Taskforce](#). The Commission stands on the shoulders of social justice champions and advocates, policymakers, and communities committed to addressing historical wrongs against specific communities because of race or place of origin.

On Sept. 13, 2022, Governor Newsom solidified the state's commitment to a California for All through [Executive Order N-16-22](#) by directing state agencies to take action on equity and discrimination, and establishing the state's first Racial Equity Commission. Recognizing the need to drive cultural shifts and policy changes toward a just and equitable society, the Governor charged the Commission with producing a Racial Equity Framework that includes resources, tools, and strategies to advance racial equity and address structural racism. The 11-member commission is available to provide technical assistance to agencies and departments at the state and local level, as well as ensure community is part of the iterative process it will take to undo the disproportionate disparities that impact historically underserved and marginalized communities. Driving equity through policy and systems change will be a long journey, however the Framework presented in this document will build upon previous efforts and drive future transformation to ensure all Californians can reach their full potential and thrive.

Planning and executing meetings is never an easy task but it is an important one to ensure a transparent process as the Commission worked to develop the Framework. From day one, the Commission has been committed to meeting communities where they are and ensuring accessibility to public meetings and the opportunity to engage and inform the work of the Commission. Throughout this process, we learned a lot about language access, working with partners to ensure community was compensated for their time and sharing of their lived experiences. Many of the lessons learned confirmed best practices presented in this Framework.

The Commission hosted its inaugural meeting on Jan. 24, 2024, in Sacramento. Since then, the Commission has hosted public and community-centered meetings in Lamont, Delano, Los Angeles, Riverside, Oakland, Martinez, Yuba City, Fresno, Bakersfield, El Centro, Salinas, Brawley, and Klamath. In July and August 2025, staff returned to six communities previously visited to share back what was learned from community and detail how it was considered in the development of the Framework. The Commission

believes in developing ongoing relationships with every community it visits to ensure transparency, accountability, and that we are receiving community wisdom to help course correct efforts to advance racial equity.

What are communities saying?

The Commission has visited many different regions throughout the state and heard many stories from residents during community meet-n-greets and listening sessions. While the personal stories were unique, residents from different communities often shared similar concerns and challenges. Several common themes emerged from community input and feedback across California (Figure 3 and Figure 4).

Figure 3: Common Themes from Communities throughout California, 2024–2025



Across several regions throughout the state, community members raised concerns about unmet basic needs, particularly the lack of affordable, quality housing, health care access for marginalized groups, and transportation barriers in rural areas. Economic inequity was a recurring theme, with residents citing the high cost of living, low wages, limited job opportunities, and the need for targeted job training, especially for youth, women, and undocumented individuals. Education was seen as a pathway to equity and justice for many communities. Language barriers were identified as major obstacles to accessing health care, legal aid, and public benefits, prompting recommendations for plain-language policies and expanded translation services.

Community members also voiced frustration with underrepresentation in policymaking and called for participatory governance, civic education, and immigrant inclusion. Racism—especially against farmworkers, immigrants, and marginalized racial groups—was reported as pervasive in policing, education, and health systems, compounded by historical traumas and cultural inequities. Youth expressed a strong

desire for leadership pathways, safe spaces, and opportunities for peer advocacy, showing readiness to lead change. Faith-based institutions emerged as trusted hubs for healing and organizing, while storytelling was recognized as a powerful means of building solidarity and driving structural reform. Community members throughout the state continue to reaffirm many of the priorities identified in past engagements, with additional emphasis on addressing mental health. Language access remained a consistent need, with many residents relying on trusted organizations, community leaders, family, religious settings, and peers for information, alongside traditional outlets such as social media, news channels, and radio.

Returning to communities brought a sense of continuity to the efforts of the Commission; residents remembered the Commission's earlier visits and welcomed the opportunity to build on prior conversations. Community members across all locations emphasized their eagerness to participate in shaping solutions and their desire for stronger connections with government leaders. In Fresno, where interpretation was provided in five languages, a Hmong interpreter noted that in all their years of service they had never witnessed such a large and engaged gathering, underscoring both the deep commitment to be involved and the importance of maintaining open channels for community engagement. Their input will continue to inform the Commission's work. Summaries of our engagement with community are available in [toolbox 3.1](#).

Figure 4: State Summary Graphic Design for the 2025 Roadshow



What Values Guide our Commission and our Pathway for Success

The Commission's values (Figure 5) are intended to guide the priorities of its work as a public advisory body and inform each step of the process outlined in the Model for Transformation (Figure 6). The Commission approved these values in December 2024 after research and discussion on what elements were important to keep in mind as it responded to its charge articulated in Executive Order N-16-22.

Figure 5: California Racial Equity Commission Values



These seven values lie at the center of the Model for Transformation and provide a foundation for the Commission's actions. They are inspirational, aspirational, and operational. For example, as the Commission's staff has been charged to provide technical assistance to state agencies and local governments in a manner aligned with state and federal civil rights laws. This assistance can still be done well in a way that advances equity and racial justice, centers community and lived experiences, ensures intentional collaboration, encourages data-driven decision-making, and prevents and addresses historical wrongs.

To further guide the work of this commission and the state's implementation of the Framework, the Model for Transformation was developed by synthesizing existing racial equity work and through an iterative refinement process with the Commission and staff. The Commission's values, activities, and collaborative efforts have provided the foundation for government entities to use the tools and strategies in this Framework, strengthen relationships with community, receive support to advance equity, and ensure community voices are captured and reflected in ongoing engagement. It moves us to a collective vision, "A California for All, where every resident can live and thrive to their fullest potential."

The Model for Transformation is grounded in a set of guiding beliefs:

1. By aiming to shift the structural conditions that uphold racial inequities, the Commission can influence systems change. Impacting and transforming systems will take time and require persistent and ongoing efforts to sustain equity and racial justice for the long term.
2. Given that marginalized communities largely continue to be excluded from policy decision-making and other governmental practices, the Commission's charge is to explicitly engage community. The Commission's intention is that over time, power can be shifted to communities.
3. As the Commission does its work, being accountable to the public is important. Accountability and transparency will be spotlighted through public meetings and regular progress and annual reports.
4. Providing practical strategies for implementation is important so that Californians can see a real positive difference in their lives.

As an advisory body, the Commission is positioned to inform structural change through its development of the Racial Equity Framework, provision of technical assistance to state and local government entities, and ongoing community engagement. Its efforts to articulate tools, methodologies, and strategies to be implemented and embedded within existing government structures lay the groundwork for broader systemic transformation in California.

RACIAL EQUITY COMMISSION



Commission's Vision

A California for all, where every resident can live and thrive to their fullest potential.



The Racial Equity Framework

is used to advance racial equity, address structural racism, and shift power to communities.



Working Together to Make a California for All a Reality

Racial equity tools and approaches
are used and made part of agencies and organizations.



Agencies and organizations
strengthen community engagement efforts, so communities have a more active role informing decisions.



State agencies and local governments
are supported in applying the Racial Equity Framework.



Community voices
are included through the Commission's outreach and engagement.

Collaborate With Partners to Implement the Racial Equity Framework

Community Engagement | Budget Equity | Data | Organizational Infrastructure



Commission's Activities

Create a Racial Equity Framework for California by receiving community and partner input through public meetings and community-centered input and listening sessions; consult experts and those with lived experience; review and adapt best practices and research.



Commission's Values

Advance equity and racial justice, inclusion and belonging, prevent and address historical wrongs, intentional collaboration, center community and lived experiences, data-driving decision making, transparency and accountability.

Figure 6: California Racial Equity Commission Model for Transformation

Inequitable systems were not created by accident and will not be undone by chance.

New, liberating systems must be designed with conscious intention and a shared vision for a desired future state.

- National Equity Project



PART 4: A Hopeful Vision

The Importance of This Journey

The Framework we have presented here is one of many steps needed to challenge and resist what we are experiencing by those who benefit from existing power structures. The Framework aims to fix and strengthen systems that ensure equitable access to government programs and services for all Californians. The Framework intends to position government entities to take that first or next step to build upon their existing efforts. The Framework encourages curiosity, dialogue, and openness to learning. Everyone has a role in taking small steps forward through the Framework. Through our collective and strategic efforts, we will position California to adequately address persistent disparities and/or understand when to shift our strategy in the name of community, equity, and justice.

Advancing racial equity and addressing structural racism does not start nor stop with the development and use of tools. It will take time. We cannot simplify advancing racial equity into following instructions or a checklist. It requires relational change—relationships and connections within ourselves, with others, and especially with the communities that we serve. It is a journey—not a straightforward path but one with many ups and downs, curves and blind spots. It will involve challenging harmful narratives, constructing new narratives that center human dignity for all, and focusing on a collective vision for a just and equitable society.

Much of this journey is exploring the shifts necessary to center what it takes to achieve a California for All, where every resident can live and thrive to their fullest potential. Through deep community engagement and keeping community at the heart, the Framework challenges harmful narratives about community, promotes understanding, and builds public consensus for the changes necessary to help individuals, families, and communities in California thrive. A list of the resources that we used to inform the Framework is available in the toolbox.

What's Next for the Commission

Government entities can start implementing the tools and best practices and reviewing the resources shared throughout the Framework and the toolbox. In addition to developing the Framework, the Commission is also charged with helping government entities in the state and in local communities build and use tools and strategies to advance racial equity. The Commission is interested in building additional tools from this Framework that support its implementation but also continuing to be transparent and accountable with community by sharing its ongoing progress. The Commission

may build a short brief or brochure that outlines the Framework for community. The Commission may also build a training primer for government entities on the basics of the Framework, how it should be used, and opportunities to either jumpstart or take existing efforts to the next level. The Commission has also been charged with preparing an annual report beginning in 2026. The Commission reports will summarize feedback from community engagement efforts, provide data on racial inequities and disparities in the state, and recommend additional best practices, tools, methodologies, and opportunities to advance racial equity.

Over the next 12 months, the Commission will build a cohesive technical assistance strategy and evaluation strategy to support the use of the Framework among government entities. The Commission will review its bylaws and determine if any updates are necessary to support its ongoing function, including sunsetting and/or adopting new committees. The Commission will identify and prioritize additional tools and methodologies to expand the toolbox and grow the Framework. This may include refining existing content, as well building new or adapting tools that are outlined as future strategies in Part I and II of the Framework. The Commission will continue to engage communities on at least a quarterly basis through public meetings, community meet-n-greets, and input sessions.

The Commission is scheduled to sunset on June 30, 2030. The Commission is committed to providing tools, methodologies, strategies, and technical assistance through this date, ensuring that it provides guidance that centers community with intention, is sustainable and impactful. Advancing racial equity will be an ongoing journey that will help our state provide better and more responsive programs and services to ensure all Californians can thrive.





PART 5: Racial Equity Toolbox (Appendix)

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PART 1: Building the Framework for your Organization

1.1 Executive Order N-16-22

EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT
STATE OF CALIFORNIA

EXECUTIVE ORDER N-16-22

WHEREAS California is the largest and most diverse state in the nation, shaped by the contributions of all its residents, including California Native Americans, communities of color, immigrants, and descendants of immigrants who call our golden state home, and welcomes all people to pursue bold dreams and renews the California dream for every new generation; and

WHEREAS California has a strong history of fighting for freedom and civil rights for all people; and

WHEREAS California leads the nation in confronting the climate crisis and building community resilience through equity and opportunity, including supporting communities that experience the greatest social and health inequities from climate change; and

WHEREAS California continues to march towards equality and to address our nation's and our State's historical wrongs, including through recognition of gay marriage in San Francisco; placing a moratorium on the death penalty in California; advancing immigrant equity and inclusion; protecting access to reproductive health care; compensating survivors of state-sponsored sterilization; ending sub-minimum wage employment; and recently forming the Truth and Healing Council and the Reparations Task Force; and

WHEREAS California has also demonstrated a fundamental commitment to prosperity and opportunity for all, including, but not limited to, advancing policies around health care for all; historic financial investments to advance educational equity; age-friendly communities; actions to further gender equity with the leadership of the First Partner; and the creation of a State Chief Equity Officer to provide statewide leadership and consultation on diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility regarding state operations, procurement, information technology, and human resources; and

WHEREAS the State has invested to improve language access across the spectrum of health and human services programs, and to increase participation of Californians who are non-English or limited-English speakers in California's public hearings and meetings, and will continue to work with agencies and departments to improve the delivery of language access and accessibility; and

WHEREAS despite this progress, continued work remains to attain our shared goals of providing equal opportunity for all and addressing persistent disparities in outcomes; and

WHEREAS state government can take additional concrete steps to address existing disparities in opportunities and outcomes and advance equity by designing and delivering state services and programs, consistent with federal and state constitutional requirements, to address unequal starting points and drive equal outcomes so all Californians may reach their full potential and lead healthy and rewarding lives; and

WHEREAS agencies and departments within my Administration can and should take additional actions to embed explicit analysis of equity considerations in policies and practices, including by analyzing demographic

and geographic gaps in outcomes and access to funding and services, developing and consistently utilizing data analysis tools and practices to understand gaps in access to services and programs or outcomes from state programs, and reviewing community engagement strategies with a focus on Californians who reside in communities that have historically been underserved and marginalized; and

WHEREAS the Department of Finance is the State's chief advisor on fiscal policy and leads the annual budget process; and at my direction, the Department is requiring an analysis of equity considerations in budget change proposals through which all agencies and departments must obtain approval for changes in the level of service, and changes in funding sources for authorized activities or to propose new program activities not currently authorized, to improve the evaluation of any proposal's impact on Californians; and

WHEREAS a state workforce that reflects the diversity of the people of California is integral to our State's success in serving and responding to the needs of a diverse California population, and recent investments to ensure that positions in state government are attractive and available to Californians from all backgrounds will advance this goal; and

WHEREAS the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, passed by Congress and signed into law in 2021, provides an opportunity for partnership with California small businesses, disadvantaged business enterprises, Tribal governments, community-based organizations, and nonprofit organizations to support more investment in economically and socially disadvantaged communities from this federal funding to modernize crucial infrastructure and accelerate our clean transportation progress; and

WHEREAS the State can improve outcomes and deliver better services by making its procurement policies simpler, faster, and more human-centered for buyers and vendor partners; and

WHEREAS the Targeted Area Contract Preference Act (TACPA) is a tool designed to stimulate economic growth and opportunities in disadvantaged zones throughout the State, and raising awareness of its benefits will increase opportunities for California-based companies to operate eligible worksites in these disadvantaged zones and employ Californians experiencing high unemployment or poverty; and

WHEREAS California's Civil Rights Department is the state agency charged with enforcing the Fair Employment and Housing Act; Unruh Civil Rights Act; Disabled Persons Act; Ralph Civil Rights Act, and other civil rights laws; adopting regulations to implement civil rights laws; providing dispute resolution services to people who believe they are the victim of discrimination; and providing community conflict resolution around discriminatory practices; and

WHEREAS California has advanced critical investments to respond to increased hate violence including establishing the Commission on the State of Hate in the Civil Rights Department to study hate in California, develop anti-hate resources for law enforcement and others, and make recommendations to better protect civil rights; to fund the "California versus Hate Resource Line and Network" to support survivors of hate incidents and crimes with culturally competent resources and services; and to improve the State's ability to understand and act to address economic and health impacts of hate, including through community engagement and sharing of anti-hate resources; and

WHEREAS California's Civil Rights Department is charged with publishing an annual report of pay data provided by private employers of 100 or more employees with at least one employee in California, to encourage employers to self-assess and voluntarily address pay disparities among demographic groups and to allow the Department to effectively enforce equal pay and anti-discrimination laws; and

WHEREAS the Office of Data and Innovation was recently reorganized to empower all state agencies and departments to drive better services, decisions, and outcomes through the use of data, user-centered design, and technology; and

WHEREAS data-driven goals and indicators are vital for state agencies and departments to measure opportunities and outcomes for all communities and to support public engagement and accountability in an efficient, effective, secure, and responsible manner; and

WHEREAS accelerating these actions and investments, including many achieved in partnership with the Legislature, and ensuring that agencies and departments explicitly consider equity and adoption of inclusive practices when developing strategic plans will strengthen the State's service to Californians and further collective efforts to improve opportunity by addressing disparities for underserved and marginalized communities; and

WHEREAS state agencies and departments and other governmental entities can benefit from having access to expertise, data tools, methodologies, and practices as they review programs and practices to further racial equity and achieve more equitable outcomes.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, GAVIN NEWSOM, Governor of the State of California, in accordance with the authority vested in me by the State Constitution and statutes of the State of California do hereby issue the following Order to become effective immediately:

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED THAT:

1. All agencies and departments subject to my authority shall, for any strategic plans applicable during the 2023-24, 2024-25, and/or 2025-26 fiscal years:
 - a. develop or update the strategic plan to reflect the use of data analysis and inclusive practices to more effectively advance equity and to respond to identified disparities with changes to the organization's mission, vision, goals, data tools, policies, programs, operations, community engagement, tribal consultation policies and practices, and other actions as necessary to serve all Californians; and
 - b. as part of the development or updating of the strategic plans, engage and gather input from California communities that have been historically disadvantaged and underserved within the scope of policies or programs administered or implemented by the agency or department, and make the plans publicly available.
2. The Department of Human Resources (CalHR) shall undertake the following actions:
 - a. by July 1, 2023, report and analyze existing detailed state employee data and collect new data including race/ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, and number of employees with a disability; and

- b. by December 31, 2023, design, develop, test, and maintain an anonymous hiring system in the Examination and Certification Online System (ECOS) for job applicants; and
 - c. by December 31, 2023, collect hiring and vacancy data from agencies and departments subject to my authority, to identify critical hard-to-fill positions, and create new pathways and/or apprenticeship opportunities for new and existing employees to qualify for these positions.
3. By November 15, 2022, all agencies and departments subject to my authority shall, to the extent that they apply for federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA):
 - a. develop and submit to the State's Infrastructure Coordinator action plans to increase access to the grant or contract selection process for small business and disadvantaged business enterprises for all federal IIJA funded contracts; and
 - b. develop and submit to the State's Infrastructure Coordinator action plans to meaningfully engage with tribal governments, nonprofits, and other community organizations to increase access to IIJA funding opportunities.
4. With respect to the Target Area Contract Preference Act (TACPA):
 - a. by September 30, 2022, the Department of General Services shall develop a training module for all agencies, departments, boards, and offices on the effective implementation of TACPA; and
 - b. by December 31, 2022, relevant contracting and programmatic staff at all agencies and departments subject to my authority shall complete the training described in subparagraph a.
5. By September 30, 2023, the California Health and Human Services Agency and the Government Operations Agency shall develop recommendations to improve language and communications access to state government services and programs.
6. The Civil Rights Department shall:
 - a. by September 1, 2023, increase utilization of dispute resolution services by 20% and analyze available data of complaints making use of dispute resolution services; and
 - b. by January 1, 2023, implement a robust anti-hate strategy by:
 - i. launching community conflict resolution services funded by the 2022-2023 Budget Act; and
 - ii. establishing the CA v. Hate Resource Line and Network; and
 - iii. launching the Commission on the State of Hate; and
 - c. by February 1, 2023, review existing regulations implementing non-discrimination protections in state programs and activities and initiate rulemaking as appropriate based on that review; and
 - d. by June 1, 2023, expand upon its existing efforts to collect, analyze, disseminate, and enforce pay data reporting requirements by providing employers, when feasible, a graphical report of their pay data to facilitate self-assessment and correction of unjustified pay disparities, and conducting new analyses of collected pay data to identify disparities by job category, region, and industry.
7. By June 30, 2023, the Office of Data and Innovation, in consultation with agencies subject to my authority, shall develop a set of statewide data and service standards and practices to support agencies and departments to identify and address disparities in government operations and services, including but not limited to, standards for collecting and managing race and



ethnicity data, metrics for measuring and tracking equity in state services and programs, and service delivery standards to support equity. This will include best practices to address sensitivities around data collection.

8. The Governor's Office of Planning and Research (OPR) shall create a Racial Equity Commission (commission), as follows:
 - a. The commission shall consist of eleven members who are California residents. My Administration shall appoint seven of the commission members. Additionally, OPR shall request that the Senate Committee on Rules appoint two members and that the Speaker of the Assembly appoint two members; and
 - b. Members will be appointed for a term of two years. Vacancies shall be filled in the same manner that provided for the original appointment; and
 - c. My Administration shall appoint, and the other appointing authorities are requested to appoint, individuals who have demonstrated expertise and meet criteria in at least one of the following areas:
 - i. analyzing, implementing, or developing public policies that impact racial equity as it relates to at least one of the following areas: broadband, climate change, disability rights, education, food insecurity, housing, immigration, land use, employment, environment, economic security, public health, health care, wealth, policing, criminal justice, transportation, youth leadership, agriculture, the wealth gap, entrepreneurship, arts and culture, voting rights, and public safety that may have an impact on racial equity or racial disparities; and
 - ii. developing or using data or budget equity assessment tools; and
 - iii. providing technical assistance in developing and implementing strategies for racial equity, including, but not limited to, guidance on employee training and support, development of racial equity programming, and assistance to organizations and departments on changing policies and practices to improve racial equity outcomes; and/or
 - iv. being a member of or representing an equity-focused organization that works with an impacted community whose lived experience will inform the work of the commission, including, but not limited to, members of the disability, immigrant, women's, and LGBTQ communities; and
 - d. My Administration also shall consider, and the other appointing authorities are also requested to consider, the expertise of the other members of the commission and make appointments that reflect the cultural, ethnic, racial, linguistic, sexual orientation, gender identity, immigrant experience, socioeconomic, age, disability, and geographical diversity of California; and
 - e. Commission members shall serve without compensation, but they may be reimbursed for necessary, pre-approved expenses incurred in connection with their duties, consistent with Government Code section 11009; and
 - f. The commission shall be staffed by OPR; and
 - g. The commission shall have the authority to:
 - i. hold hearings and perform acts that may be necessary to carry out the commission's duties; and
 - ii. engage with advisers or advisory committees when the commission determines that the experience or expertise of advisers or advisory committees is needed for commission work; and

h. Relying upon publicly available information and data, the commission shall develop resources, best practices, and tools for advancing racial equity as follows:

- i. in consultation with private and public stakeholders, as appropriate, develop a statewide Racial Equity Framework. The Racial Equity Framework shall be approved by the commission, submitted to the Governor and the Legislature on or after December 1, 2024, but no later than April 1, 2025, and posted to the commission's internet website. The Racial Equity Framework shall set forth the following:
 1. methodologies and tools that can be employed in California to advance racial equity and address structural racism; and
 2. budget methodologies, including equity assessment tools, that entities can use to analyze how budget allocations benefit or burden communities of color; and
 3. processes for collecting and analyzing data effectively and safely, as appropriate and practicable, including disaggregation by race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and gender identity, disability, income, veteran status, or other key demographic variables and the use of proxies; and
 4. summaries of input and feedback from stakeholder engagements; and
- ii. upon request by a state agency, provide technical assistance on implementing strategies for racial equity consistent with the Racial Equity Framework; and
- iii. engage stakeholders and community members, including by holding quarterly stakeholder meetings, to seek input on the commission's work, as described; and
- iv. engage, collaborate, and consult with policy experts to conduct analyses and develop tools, including by building on and collaborating with existing bodies, as appropriate; and
- v. promote the ongoing, equitable delivery of benefits and opportunities by:
 1. providing technical assistance to local government entities engaging in racial equity programming, upon request from the local government; and
 2. encouraging the formation and implementation of racial equity initiatives by local government entities, including cities and counties; and

i. The commission shall prepare an annual report that summarizes feedback from public engagement with communities of color, provides data on racial inequities and disparities in the State, and recommends best practices on tools, methodologies, and opportunities to advance racial equity. The report shall be submitted to the Governor and the Legislature and shall be posted publicly on the commission's internet website. The first annual report shall be completed on or after December 1, 2025, but no later than April 1, 2026, and annually thereafter.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that, as soon as hereafter possible, this Order be filed in the Office of the Secretary of State and that widespread publicity and notice be given of this Order.

This Order is not intended to, and does not, create any rights or benefits, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or in equity, against the State of California, its agencies, departments, entities, officers, employees, or any other person.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF I have
hereunto set my hand and caused
the Great Seal of the State of
California to be affixed this 13th day
of September 2022.



GAVIN NEWSOM
Governor of California

ATTEST:

SHIRLEY N. WEBER, PH.D.
Secretary of State



PART 1: Building the Framework for your Organization

1.2 Restorative Justice Memo and Toolkit by Global Urban Strategies

This document was developed by Global Urban Strategies Inc. Its content does not necessarily reflect the views, positions, or opinions of the Racial Equity Commission, the Governor's Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation (LCI), or the Office of the Governor.

August, 2025

Integrating Restorative Practice as a Recommended Racial Equity Strategy in California

This brief was prepared by Global Urban Strategies, Inc. to inform the work of California's Racial Equity Commission. The opinions expressed in this brief reflect those of Global Urban Strategies and do not reflect the views of the Racial Equity Commission, Governor's Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation (LCI) or the Office of the Governor.



Introduction

This memo provides strategic recommendations for California State organizations and governmental entities to integrate and expand restorative practices across statewide systems. The recommendations presented are rooted in lived experience, trauma-informed research, and culturally specific frameworks that reflect the diversity of California's most impacted communities. This memo describes restorative practice as a foundational engagement system for building trust with communities (Darling-Hammond et al., 2022).

Restorative practices, at their core, endeavor to help people in conflict repair harm, rebuild relationships, and embrace a sense of community and accountability. They offer a more compassionate and welcoming approach to resolving historical and current conflicts, which can lead to positive long-term outcomes for the relationship, stronger bonds between groups, and increased understanding.

California has already taken several steps to incorporate restorative practice into the state's societal and legislative fabric. Examples include diversion programs, victim-offender dialogue (VOD) programs, community-based initiatives, and policy shifts such as Tribal affairs executive orders and apologies-Truth and Healing Council; [EO N-16-22](#), [AB 2590 \(2016\)](#), [Proposition 57 \(2016\)](#), and [AB 2167 \(2023\)](#). Yet, more remains to be done.

Why Restorative Practice Matters to Racial Equity in California

Restorative practice is a philosophy rooted in Indigenous traditions, emphasizing the repair of relationships and shared responsibility. In California, systemic racism has disproportionately harmed Black, Indigenous, Latinx, immigrant, and low-income communities. Restorative practice offers a meaningful alternative by promoting healing, inclusion, and participatory justice (U.S. Department of Education, 2016), rather than policies that have historically perpetuated harm.

Core Principles	
	Dignity Respect for all parties, regardless of their role in harm.
	Repair Identifying and addressing the damage to individuals and communities.
	Shared Responsibility Encouraging those responsible for harm to actively take responsibility.
	Voluntary Inclusion Engaging participants by choice through open and honest dialogue.
	Reintegration Supporting those who caused harm to join the community.
	Collaboration & Dialogue Building solutions collectively.
	Systemic Transformation Addressing the root causes of harm and shifting harmful institutional norms.

Source: (Evans & Vaandering, 2016)

The Connection Between Restorative Practice and Racial Equity

Restorative Practices offer a critical shift in how agencies rebuild public trust and foster real community relationships, moving toward relational, equity-centered approaches. In public meetings, community programs, or interdepartmental collaboration, these practices support agencies in acknowledging harm without blame, while strengthening our shared capacity to connect across barriers of race, class, and lived experience. As highlighted by the California Department of Education (CDE) and supported by national research, restorative frameworks are instrumental in reducing disparities and enhancing inclusion across sectors (CDE, 2023; Losen et al., 2015).

Restorative approaches create space for community members, government staff, and local leaders to navigate historical and present conflict with care and mutual responsibility. They center emotional honesty and ask the kinds of questions that move us beyond surface-level solutions: Who was impacted? What relationships need tending? What might heal look like? These questions shift the focus from blame to collaboration, opening doors to repair and genuine accountability. In agency community partnerships, this is especially powerful. When conflict arises around service delivery or policy decisions, restorative tools support meaningful dialogue and shared healing. As restorative frameworks are integrated into leadership development and government training, such as those at Seattle Children's and other public-serving institutions, they offer a path for staff to reflect, pause, and re-engage with community in ways that affirm dignity and rebuild trust from within (Schonberg, 2023; Darling-Hammond et al., 2022).

Understanding the Restorative Practice Continuum

Restorative practice sits on a continuum that ranges from informal, everyday interactions that build relational trust to formalized processes that are structured to address serious harm. Informal practices, such as affective statements or restorative questions, are simple yet powerful ways to affirm connections and redress low-level issues before they escalate. Mid-level responses, such as impromptu conferences or community circles, provide space to mitigate emerging tensions or minor conflicts through dialogue. Formal processes, such as structured restorative conferences or reconnection circles, help respond to significant incidents, facilitating accountability, healing, and rebuilding trust (International Institute for Restorative Practices [IIRP], 2020).

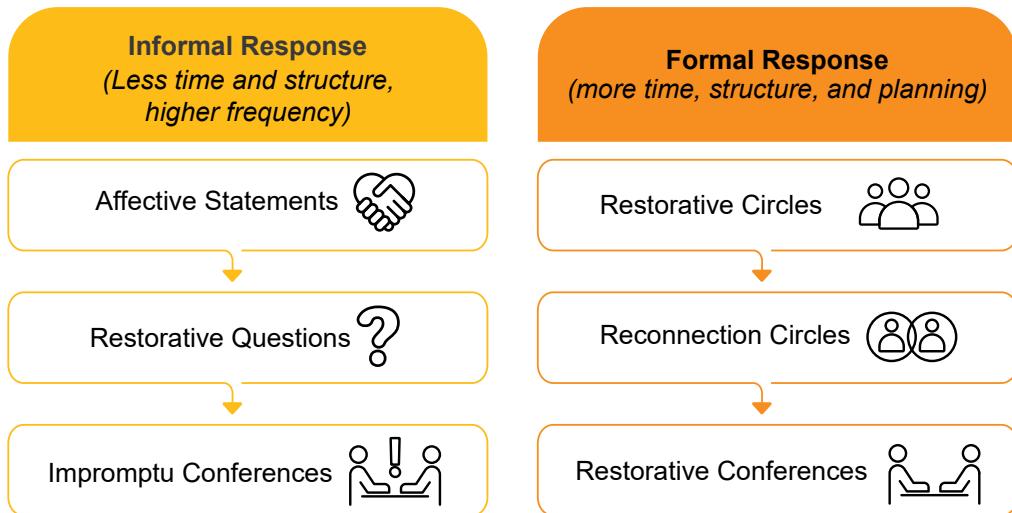
The continuum enables flexibility, supporting school staff, community leaders, public health workers, and justice system professionals in creating cultures of care and reflection that advance a system of shared responsibility.

Land acknowledgments and labor acknowledgments serve as a grounding practice, holding an important role in the restorative practice continuum. They are often situated at the beginning of community circles, conferences, and gatherings, offering a moment

of intentional recognition and respect. They reflect the Indigenous roots of the restorative practices and affirm our commitment to cultural context. Acknowledging the land and labor is not just ceremonial; it reinforces the continuum's deeper purpose, restoring relationships across time and our communities.

Land acknowledgments connect the present work to long-standing struggles for sovereignty and justice. When done with care and context, they help participants ground themselves in humanity and reinforce restorative values like dignity and inclusion.

Labor acknowledgement recognizes the often-invisible contributions of people whose work has built and sustained the spaces we currently occupy. The work of enslaved people, exploited workers, frontline staff, and caregivers, whose work faced many attempts to be erased, is also acknowledged. In healing spaces, acknowledging labor invites us to name and value contributions and challenge former social norms. Like land acknowledgement, this practice helps restore relationships across time and position, affirming the humanity and dignity of those who have shaped our institutions and communities.



Key Practices That Bring Restorative Practice to Life

Restorative practice is sustained through everyday practices and structured interventions predicated on connection, repair, and shared responsibility. Together, these core principles form the operational backbone of restorative practice. Each practice offers a method to restore or strengthen the relational fabric of a community. Success depends on thoughtful implementation, access to training, and consistent support from leadership across education, justice, and community-based systems.

 Affective Statements (Zehr, 2002; IIRP, 2020)	
<i>Core Features</i>	Personal expressions that reflect how someone's behavior has affected the speaker, shared in a calm, nonjudgmental tone.
<i>Guiding Example</i>	"I felt concerned when you raised your voice earlier. I want to make sure you're okay."
<i>Benefit</i>	Builds emotional literacy, de-escalates tension, models shared responsibility and respect.
<i>Application</i>	Use affective statements during day-to-day interactions with staff, residents, or community partners. This approach is especially helpful when addressing tension, misunderstandings, or emotional responses in the moment. It models respectful communication, reduces defensiveness, and supports a culture of emotional awareness.
 Restorative Questions (Evans & Vaandering, 2016; IIRP, 2020)	
<i>Core Features</i>	Open-ended prompts are used to reflect on actions and impacts.
<i>Guiding Example</i>	What happened? Who was affected and how? How were you affected? What needs to happen to make things right?
<i>Benefit</i>	Encourages empathy, clarifies harm, and promotes collaborative resolution.
<i>Application</i>	Use restorative questions following conflicts, complaints, or complex interactions. These questions can be incorporated into debriefs, supervision meetings, or dialogue with residents. They support reflection, empathy, and shared problem-solving without assigning blame.

	Impromptu Conferences (IIRP, 2020); U.S. Department of Education, 2016)
<i>Core Features</i>	Brief, real-time conversations to resolve minor incidents before they escalate.
<i>Guiding Example</i>	What happened? Who did it affect? What should be done now?
<i>Benefit</i>	Resolves conflict early, restores trust, and reinforces behavioral expectations.
<i>Application</i>	Impromptu conferences can be used immediately following low-level harm, misunderstandings, or tense moments, whether between colleagues, community members, or during public meetings. These brief conversations clarify intentions, reduce escalation, and restore trust before issues intensify.



 Restorative Circle (Zehr, 2002; Darling-Hammond et al., 2022; IIRP, 2020)	
<i>Core Features</i>	Structured group dialogues using a talking piece and shared agreements.
<i>Types</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community-Building Circles Strengthen relationships and shared values. • Problem-Solving Circles Collaborate on group challenges. • Dialogue Circles Explore diverse perspectives. • Healing Circles Process grief, trauma, or systemic harm. • Talk Stories Reflection and cross-cultural communication, multi generational communication. • Healing Circles Non-Hierarchical setting to share experiences, process grief or trauma and cultivate collective healing. • Yarning Circles Informal, fluid to share knowledge and pass on culture. • Navajo Peacemaking Grounded in the principles of harmony and kinship. Community members come together with a traditional peacemaker. • Palaver Tree/Model A public gathering emphasizing intergenerational communication, and collective decision-making. • Peace Circles Creating dialogue and breaking down hierarchy. • Shanti Assembly Share stories, process harm, rebuild trust and mutual understanding through dialogue.
<i>Benefit</i>	Builds trust, encourages inclusive participation, and supports group cohesion.
<i>Application</i>	Restorative Circles can be used to build or rebuild relationships, surface community concerns, or create a sense of shared direction. Agencies may use community-building circles with staff or advisory groups, dialogue circles to explore diverse viewpoints, and healing circles after difficult events. These spaces support inclusive participation and collective repair. Ensure that circle practices are culturally sensitive and context-specific. Different communities may hold distinct traditions of circle-keeping and storytelling. Whenever possible, co-create circle structures with community leaders, cultural liaisons, or staff affinity groups to ensure inclusivity.

 Reconnection Circles (Youth Law Center, 2023; IIRP, 2020)	
<i>Core Feature</i>	Structured support for individuals returning from suspension, expulsion, or extended absence.
<i>Guiding Example</i>	What support is needed for reintegration? What are the shared expectations? How can we contribute to success?
<i>Benefit</i>	Reinforces belonging, clarifies roles, and promotes shared responsibility.
<i>Application</i>	Use reconnection circles when individuals return to a shared space or work environment after an absence, period of disengagement, or a significant change. This practice clarifies expectations, ensures support, and rebuilds connection between individuals and the broader group.
 Restorative Conferences (Evans & Vaandering, 2016; California Department of Education, 2023)	
<i>Core Feature</i>	Formal, facilitated dialogue involving the responsible party, those affected, and supporters.
<i>Guiding Example</i>	Identify harm and root causes, share impact stories, and agree on repair plans.
<i>Benefit</i>	Supports trauma-informed healing, strengthens empathy, and prevents recurrence of harm.
<i>Application</i>	Restorative conferences are best used in response to more significant harm, such as public conflict, policy impacts, or service breakdowns. The structured format creates space for those affected and those responsible to speak honestly, acknowledge impact, and co-create a path toward repair and resolution.

Sustaining Restorative Practice: Training, Resources, and Partnerships

Launching a meaningful restorative practice discipline across California's public systems will require ongoing investments in training, capacity building, and community partnerships. Training must focus on techniques that inform a human-centric experience, emphasizing empathy, trust, and the lived realities of those most impacted by systemic harm. Effective restorative practice training must also be trauma-informed, culturally responsive, and grounded in equity-centered pedagogy. This includes providing practitioners, educators, facilitators, social workers, and system leaders with tools for deep listening, de-escalation, and holding safe spaces to overcome discomfort. Resources should focus on emotional safety, transparency, and mutual accountability, ensuring that restorative practice is implemented as a transformative mindset and relational process, rather than being reduced to a checklist of activities.



Restorative Practice Philosophy and Values

- **Historical context:** Understanding systemic racism, intergenerational trauma, and institutional harm—critical for practicing restorative work with integrity (California Department of Education, 2023).
- **Skill-building in facilitation:** managing conflict, guiding difficult conversations, and supporting emotional processing and regulation.
- **Circle practice protocols:** Honoring the “talking piece”—an artifact or object passed around the group, designating who has the right to speak. This ensures that every voice is respected and heard in turn. The talking piece helps to slow down the conversation, build intentionality, and affirm shared agreements about safety and participation.
- **Ongoing coaching and reflective practice:** Supporting continuous learning and emotional sustainability for practitioners.

Workshops and professional development should be co-hosted by community-based organizations (CBOs), that work with vulnerable and historically disadvantaged communities. These organizations bring critical and experiential perspectives in culturally specific healing, intergenerational knowledge, and the trust needed to engage authentically with local communities. Acting as a neutral convener, a CBO can help uphold shared agreements, erase power dynamics, create a space where back and forth dialogue and learning can take place with care.

Long-term sustainability also requires cross-sector partnerships. Strong collaborations with human resources, EEO Officers, management/leadership, unions, and other key informants create the conditions for restorative practice to be implemented holistically. These partnerships help position restorative practice as a proactive, values-based approach to building relationships and addressing harm across systems.

Ultimately, implementing restorative practice in California systems is not a one-time project; it is a continuous and reflective process. It demands collective commitment, deep humility, and alignment with the people most impacted by systemic inequities.

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RESTORATIVE PRACTICES TOOL KIT

Contact the Racial Equity Commission,
at RacialEquityCommission@lci.ca.gov

August, 2025

STATE OF CALIFORNIA
**RACIAL EQUITY
COMMISSION**


Restorative Practices Tool Kit

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01

Introduction & Purpose

This toolkit was developed to support the learning and integration of restorative practices. Rooted in Indigenous traditions of circle keeping and truth-telling, restorative practice offers a powerful alternative to exclusionary models of conflict resolution. Across California and the United States, Institutions are revolutionizing how they respond to harm and disengagement. In schools, government agencies, and neighborhood organizations, the use of affective language, restorative questions, and group activities, such as conferences and restorative circles, provides a relational framework for confronting harm, rebuilding connection, and sustaining inclusive cultures (California Department of Education, 2023; International Institute for Restorative Practices [IIRP], 2020).

Restorative Practices request that we take a pause or slow down and step into conversations with intention. They don't demand perfection but cultivation of culture where harm isn't ignored and people are not overlooked, and relationships are not disposable. As a facilitator or program staff member this work starts in your everyday operation; the tone you speak with in meetings, how you respond to tension and how you reestablish connection after things fall apart. This toolkit will not just offer activities it will provide the foundation of a mindset, language and infrastructure to help with care and build a path to connection.

During a period marked by deep social fractures and weakened ties between communities and their institutions, restorative practices depend less on individual leadership and more on shared purpose, humility, and steady commitment. Rather than serving as instant remedies, these methods establish intentional spaces where all parties can participate in honest dialogue, acknowledge impact, and collaboratively rebuild trust. By equipping staff, stakeholders, and community members with a common language and structures for repair, this toolkit affirms that restorative responsibility is about presence, participation, and honoring the humanity of all involved (Capeheart & Milovanovic, 2020).

1.1 What is Restorative Practice?

Restorative practice is a philosophy grounded in Indigenous traditions, which emphasizes relationship repair and shared responsibility. In California, systemic racism has disproportionately harmed Black, Indigenous, Latinx, immigrant, and low-income communities. Restorative practice offers a meaningful alternative by promoting healing, inclusion, and participatory justice (U.S. Department of Education, 2016) rather than policies that historically perpetuate harm.

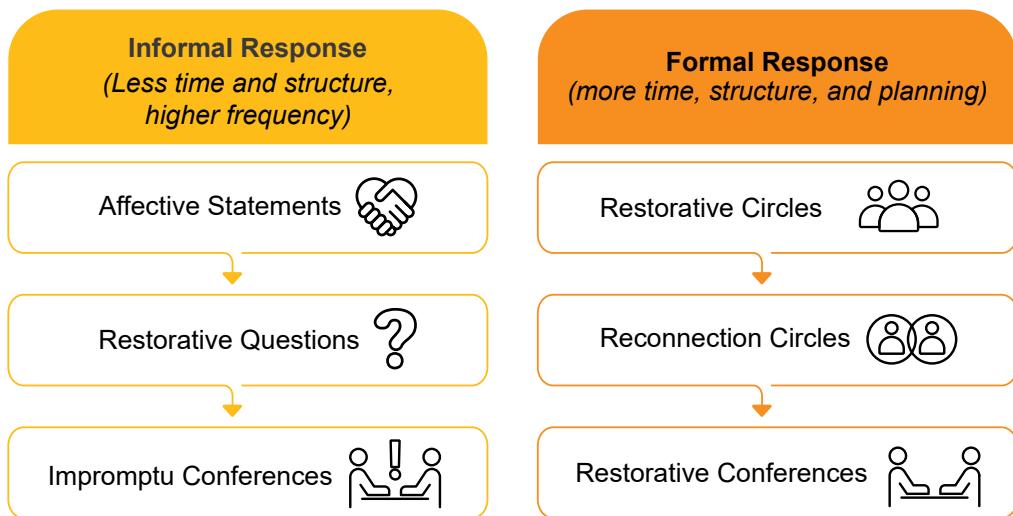
Core Principles	
	Dignity Respect for all parties, regardless of their role in harm.
	Repair Identifying and addressing the damage to individuals and communities.
	Shared Responsibility Encouraging those responsible for harm to actively take responsibility.
	Voluntary Inclusion Engaging participants by choice through open and honest dialogue.
	Reintegration Supporting those who caused harm to join the community.
	Collaboration & Dialogue Building solutions collectively.
	Systemic Transformation Addressing the root causes of harm and shifting harmful institutional norms.

Source: (Evans & Vaandering, 2016)

1.2 Understanding the Restorative Practices Continuum

Restorative practices sit on a continuum that ranges from informal, everyday interactions that build relational trust to formalized processes that are structured to address serious harm. Informal practices, such as affective statements or restorative questions, are simple yet powerful ways to affirm connections and redress low-level issues before they escalate. Mid-level responses, such as impromptu conferences or community circles, provide space to mitigate emerging tensions or minor conflicts through dialogue. Formal processes such as structured restorative conferences or reconnection circles help respond to significant incidents, facilitating shared responsibility, healing, and rebuilding trust (IIRP, 2020).

The continuum enables flexibility. It supports school staff, community leaders, public health workers, and justice system professionals in creating cultures of care and reflection advancing a system of shared responsibility.

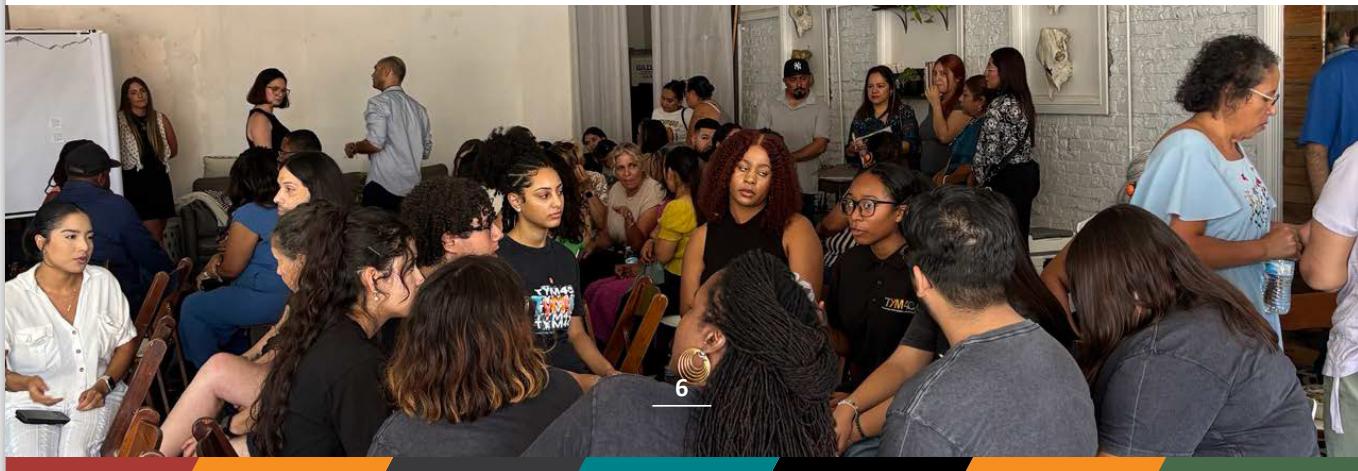


1.3 Key Practices That Bring Restorative Principles to Life

Restorative practice is sustained through everyday interactions and structured interventions grounded in connection, repair, and shared responsibility. Together, these core principles form the operational backbone of restorative practice. Each approach offers a method to restore or strengthen the relational fabric of a community. Success depends on thoughtful implementation, access to training, and consistent support from leadership across education, justice, and community-based systems.

 Affective Statements (Zehr, 2002; IIRP, 2020)	
<i>Core Features</i>	Personal expressions that reflect how someone's behavior has affected the speaker, shared in a calm, nonjudgmental tone.
<i>Guiding Example</i>	"I felt concerned when you raised your voice earlier. I want to make sure you're okay."
<i>Benefit</i>	Builds emotional literacy, de-escalates tension, models shared responsibility and respect.
<i>Application</i>	Use affective statements during day-to-day interactions with staff, residents, or community partners. This approach is especially helpful when addressing tension, misunderstandings, or emotional responses in the moment. It models respectful communication, reduces defensiveness, and supports a culture of emotional awareness.

 Restorative Questions (Evans & Vaandering, 2016; IIRP, 2020)	
Core Features	Open-ended prompts are used to reflect on actions and impacts.
Guiding Example	What happened? Who was affected and how? How were you affected? What needs to happen to make things right?
Benefit	Encourages empathy, clarifies harm, and promotes collaborative resolution.
Application	Use restorative questions following conflicts, complaints, or complex interactions. These questions can be incorporated into debriefs, supervision meetings, or dialogue with residents. They support reflection, empathy, and shared problem-solving without assigning blame.
 Impromptu Conferences (IIRP, 2020); U.S. Department of Education, 2016)	
Core Features	Brief, real-time conversations to resolve minor incidents before they escalate.
Guiding Example	What happened? Who did it affect? What should be done now?
Benefit	Resolves conflict early, restores trust, and reinforces behavioral expectations.
Application	Impromptu conferences can be used immediately following low-level harm, misunderstandings, or tense moments, whether between colleagues, community members, or during public meetings. These brief conversations clarify intentions, reduce escalation, and restore trust before issues intensify.



 Restorative Circle (Zehr, 2002; Darling-Hammond et al., 2022; IIRP, 2020)	
<i>Core Features</i>	Structured group dialogues using a talking piece and shared agreements.
<i>Types</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community-Building Circles Strengthen relationships and shared values. • Problem-Solving Circles Collaborate on group challenges. • Dialogue Circles Explore diverse perspectives. • Healing Circles Process grief, trauma, or systemic harm. • Talk Stories Reflection and cross-cultural communication, multi generational communication. • Healing Circles Non-Hierarchical setting to share experiences, process grief or trauma and cultivate collective healing. • Yarning Circles Informal, fluid to share knowledge and pass on culture. • Navajo Peacemaking Grounded in the principles of harmony and kinship. Community members come together with a traditional peacemaker. • Palaver Tree/Model A public gathering emphasizing intergenerational communication, and collective decision-making. • Peace Circles Creating dialogue and breaking down hierarchy. • Shanti Assembly Share stories, process harm, rebuild trust and mutual understanding through dialogue.
<i>Benefit</i>	Builds trust, encourages inclusive participation, and supports group cohesion.
<i>Application</i>	Restorative Circles can be used to build or rebuild relationships, surface community concerns, or create a sense of shared direction. Agencies may use community-building circles with staff or advisory groups, dialogue circles to explore diverse viewpoints, and healing circles after difficult events. These spaces support inclusive participation and collective repair. Ensure that circle practices are culturally sensitive and context-specific. Different communities may hold distinct traditions of circle-keeping and storytelling. Whenever possible, co-create circle structures with community leaders, cultural liaisons, or staff affinity groups to ensure inclusivity.

 Reconnection Circles (Youth Law Center, 2023; IIRP, 2020)	
<i>Core Feature</i>	Structured support for individuals returning from suspension, expulsion, or extended absence.
<i>Guiding Example</i>	What support is needed for reintegration? What are the shared expectations? How can we contribute to success?
<i>Benefit</i>	Reinforces belonging, clarifies roles, and promotes shared responsibility.
<i>Application</i>	Use reconnection circles when individuals return to a shared space or work environment after an absence, period of disengagement, or a significant change. This practice clarifies expectations, ensures support, and rebuilds connection between individuals and the broader group.
 Restorative Conferences (Evans & Vaandering, 2016; California Department of Education, 2023)	
<i>Core Feature</i>	Formal, facilitated dialogue involving the responsible party, those affected, and supporters.
<i>Guiding Example</i>	Identify harm and root causes, share impact stories, and agree on repair plans.
<i>Benefit</i>	Supports trauma-informed healing, strengthens empathy, and prevents recurrence of harm.
<i>Application</i>	Restorative conferences are best used in response to more significant harm, such as public conflict, policy impacts, or service breakdowns. The structured format creates space for those affected and those responsible to speak honestly, acknowledge impact, and co-create a path toward repair and resolution.

- End of Section -

02

Implementation Guide

Choosing the Right Restorative Practice

This chart serves as a situational decision-making aid for public agencies and community partners, providing a quick-reference tool to help staff, facilitators, and coalition members select the most appropriate restorative approach based on the nature of the harm, level of disruption, and interaction context.

Rather than prescribing one-size-fits-all solutions, this tool supports thoughtful responses that are proportionate, relational, and trauma-informed. Use it as a first step to determine which practice may best support connection or repair in the moment.

Scenario / Situation	Recommended Practice	Why This Practice Fits
An agency policy or action causes community mistrust or harm.	Affective Statement 	Identifies the emotion with real-time impact. Great for deescalation and emotional modeling.
A resident expresses frustration in a tense or disruptive manner (e.g., raising their voice, abruptly exiting).	Restorative Questions + Affective Statement 	Encourages reflection and opens dialogue without punishment. Unpacks behavior while honoring the person's experience.
A misunderstanding occurs between agency staff and a community stakeholder or resident.	Impromptu Conference 	A quick, intentional check-in that clarifies intent, prevents escalation, and strengthens the relationship.
A community member makes a racially insensitive or triggering comment during a forum or event.	Restorative Questions + Circle (if safe) 	Supports shared responsibility, reflection, and learning. If a broader impact is felt, a healing circle can engage more voices respectfully.

A community leader returns to engagement after a period of disconnection, conflict, or absence.	Reconnection Circles 	Reinforces reconnection, clear expectations, and mutual support. Honors history while setting a positive tone for the future.
A significant event causes tension or division between community groups (e.g., housing policy rollout, public safety incident).	Healing or Dialogue Circle 	Allows for truth-telling, emotional processing, and collective reflection in a safe and structured format.
You are onboarding a new coalition or rebuilding trust with community partners.	Community-Building Circle 	Builds shared norms, human connection, and a sense of "we" before focusing on outcomes. Useful in early and re-engagement phases.
A community partner makes a public comment that disrespects or marginalizes another group.	Restorative Conference or Impromptu + Circle 	If the impact is profound or widespread, a structured process ensures shared responsibility and collective repair.
You want to build a more restorative, inclusive culture across your agency or coalition.	Regular Community Circles + Affective Language 	Embeds restorative values into everyday work. Normalizes shared voice, emotional literacy, and reflection as culture — not crisis response.

References: International Institute for Restorative Practices, 2020, Evans and Vaandering, 2016

- End of Section -

03

Affective Language

Affective Statements Guide

What are affective statements?

Affective statements are simple, personal expressions that communicate how someone's behavior impacts you or others. They are not meant to shame them; they open the door to reflection and empathy.

- ▶ **Instead of saying:** "You are being rude."
- ▶ **Try:** "I felt dismissed when I was interrupted; I would really like to finish my thought."

They are especially useful for:

- De-escalating tension
- Naming emotions in the moment
- Modeling respectful communication
- Inviting connection and repair

Use the formula:

I Feel (Emotion ❤️)	When (Specific Behavior 🕒)	Because (Impact 💥)	I need/would like... (Need/Request 💬)
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Community Use (Neighbors, Organizers, Public Spaces)	
Scenario	Example
Community members express frustration about delays or inaction.	"We feel concerned when timelines shift without explanation. We know trust depends on transparency, and we want to keep communication open moving forward."
A speaker dominates the conversation during a public meeting.	"I felt discouraged when some voices did not get the chance to be heard. It is important to us that every community member feels included in the process."
Tensions rise between groups at a public event or town hall.	"We feel uneasy when conversations escalate; we want to make sure this space stays safe and respectful for everyone here."
Residents dismiss or mock another group's concerns during a planning session.	"It is disheartening when community concerns are minimized. We are here to uplift all voices and ensure everyone's experience is valued."
A neighborhood group distrusts the agency's outreach efforts.	"We hear the skepticism, and it matters. We feel concerned when people do not feel seen or included. We want to rebuild that trust together."

 **TIPS!**

- Stay grounded in your own feelings, not assumptions about the other person's intent.
- Speaking calmly and clearly matters as much as words.
- Use these statements as openers, not as endpoints. Leave space for dialogue.
- Avoid "you always..." or "you never..." stick to the moment and behavior.
- Practice in low-stakes situations to build comfort and consistency.



Affective Statements Practice Scenarios

Affective Statements Practice Scenarios Worksheet

Purpose: Use the following scenarios to practice rewriting reactive or judgmental responses into affective statements that reflect restorative values like dignity and empathy.

Read each scenario and write an affective statement that:

- Names how you feel.
- Describes the specific behavior.
- Explains the impact.
- States what you need or would like (optional).

Use the formula:			
I Feel (Emotion)	When (Specific Behavior)	Because (Impact)	I need/would like... (Need/Request)

Scenarios:

1. A community partner or stakeholder cuts you off in a meeting.

Write your affective statement:

2. A community organization does not follow up on shared responsibilities or leaves tasks incomplete.

Write your affective statement:

3. A participant walks out of a workshop or session without notice.

Write your affective statement:

4. An attendee makes a hurtful joke about another participant in a circle or training space.

Write your affective statement:

5. During a town hall or community meeting, someone dominates the discussion and interrupts others.

Write your affective statement:

- End of Section -

04

Restorative Questions

Restorative Questions Guide

Purpose: This activity helps participants practice using restorative questions to support reflective conversations following disruptions, conflicts, or harm. By role-playing common scenarios, participants learn how to create a space for empathy, shared responsibility, and relationship repair across various settings.

Instructions:

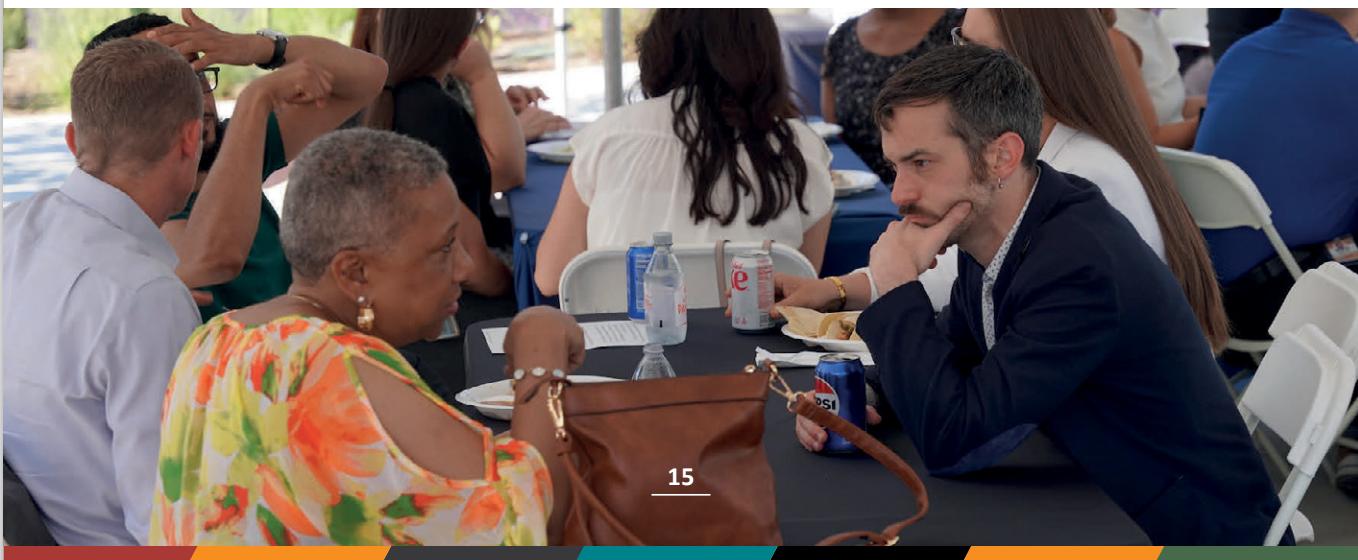
1. Choose a scenario below (or create your own).
2. Work in pairs:
 - One person asks the restorative questions as the facilitator
 - The second person acts as the one who caused harm or disruption, responding authentically.
3. After 5-7 minutes, debrief briefly, then switch roles and choose a new scenario.

 Sample Restorative Questions	 Reflection Questions
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What happened from your perspective?• Who was affected, and how?• What were you feeling at the time?• What do you think needs to happen to make things right?• How can we prevent this from happening again?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How did it feel to ask or answer these questions?• What would you change about your tone, timing, or wording?• What did you learn about building connections after conflict?

Scenarios:

- A Community member arrives at a public event and loudly disrupts the opening remarks while greeting friends.
- A community member mocks someone sharing during a listening session.
- A resident disengages and does not participate during a city-hosted workshop.
- A participant dominates a neighborhood planning session and cuts others off.
- A program participant makes sarcastic or harmful comments during a community dialogue.
- A resident arrives late to every meeting and often causes disruptions during transitions.
- A neighbor's loud gatherings disrupt rest and wellness in nearby homes.
- A youth consistently skips planned civic engagement sessions.
- A participant continually interrupts during a public forum.
- A community member makes an offensive joke during a cultural or healing event.
- A mural or shared garden space in the neighborhood is vandalized.
- A volunteer does not follow through on an agreed responsibility.
- A colleague repeatedly arrives late to internal agency meetings with disruptive entrances.
- A team member downplays someone's concern during an internal DEI conversation.
- An employee interrupts others during staff collaboration and disregards norms.
- A supervisor gives critical feedback publicly rather than privately.
- A coworker makes passive-aggressive remarks during a meeting.
- A staff member does not contribute to a group effort but accepts credit.

- End of Section -



05

Impromptu Conferences

Scenario Guide: When & How to Use

Quick, Grounded Conversations that Restore trust in the moment.

What is an Impromptu Conference?

Impromptu conferences are short, intentional conversations designed to quickly address lowlevel harm or tension before it escalates. These are not disciplinary moments; they are restorative check-ins that invite reflection, impact, and rebuilding connection.

They usually happen in the moment or shortly after an incident, ideally in a semi-private or quiet space. Whether it is a student disrupting class, a neighbor snapping during a meeting, or a coworker dismissing someone in a team chat, the impromptu conference brings the focus back to repair, not reprimand.

When to use this Practice:

- Minor disruptions or mistakes that affect others.
- Early signs of conflict or misunderstanding.
- When someone's behavior causes harm but does not require a formal process.
- To debrief a situation that did not sit right.

Steps for leading an Impromptu Conference:

1. Pause the conversation in the moment, or return to it shortly after.

“Can we step aside for a moment?”

2. Open with an affective statement

“I felt uneasy about what happened. I would like to check in with you. Is now a good time to talk?”

3. Ask restorative questions:

- What happened from your point of view?
- How do you think others might have felt?
- What was going on for you at that moment?
- What would help repair things going forward?
- Listen actively, without interrupting or correcting.

4. Name your own needs if appropriate and co-create a simple agreement.

“Moving forward, can we agree to let each other know if things get tense?”

5. Close with mutual clarity and a return to connection.

“Thanks for talking. Let us reset and move forward.”

Scenario 1: Dismissive Comment at a Community Listening Session

What happened:

During a public input meeting, a longtime community resident shares concerns about historical underinvestment in the area. Another participant, Raul, responds with laughter and says, “We have all had struggles—some people just need to let things go.”

How to address it:

Step aside with Raul after the session.

Facilitator (You):

“Raul, I wanted to check in. I felt uncomfortable when I heard you laugh earlier—it came across as dismissive, and I care about making sure this space feels respectful to everyone. Can we talk about what happened from your point of view?”

Ask restorative questions:

- “What were you thinking or feeling in that moment?”
- “How might your comment have impacted the person sharing their experience?”
- “What do you think respect and listening could look like moving forward in spaces like this?”

Possible agreement:

“Let us commit to hearing everyone out fully, even when we do not relate directly, and hold space for people’s truths before responding.”

Scenario 2: Public Criticism at a Town Hall

What happened:

During a community town hall, Sam, a passionate organizer, directly criticizes your agency’s staff in front of the whole group, naming names and accusing them of “never showing up” in their neighborhood.

How to address it:

Pull Sam aside privately after the session, away from the crowd.

Facilitator (You):

“Sam, I hear the frustration, and I want to take responsibility for what is not working. I did feel caught off guard when specific names were called out in front of the group; it made it harder for us to respond constructively. Can we talk through it?”

Ask restorative questions:

- “What were you hoping the room would hear or understand in that moment?”
- “How do you think it impacted staff and others present?”
- “What would help you feel heard and keep the space respectful moving forward?”

Possible agreement:

“Next time, let us work together ahead of the meeting on how concerns are named—we want the message to be heard without people feeling shut down.”

 **TIPS!**

- Keep it short (5–10 min) and focused on relationship repair.
- Do not expect a full resolution; aim for clarity instead.
- Offer grace but stay firm on shared values and expectations.
- Use a neutral tone and do not frame it as if you are “correcting” someone.

- End of Section -

06

Restorative Circles

A Guide to Leading Restorative Circles

A Practical Framework for Community Healing, Relationship Building, and Shared Responsibility.

What is a Restorative Circle?

A restorative circle is a structured, intentional space that invites people to come together on equal footing. Whether you are in a workplace, a neighborhood, a youth space, or a crosssector team, circles offer an opportunity to connect, share, reflect, and repair.

Rooted in Indigenous practices, circles emphasize equity, storytelling, and mutual respect. Everyone has a voice, no one dominates, and all experiences are welcome.

Circles are used for:

- Community-building
- Reflecting after harm
- Navigating conflict
- Celebrating milestones
- Processing shared challenges
- Bridging across differences

Roles and Structure

Role of the Circle Keeper

The keeper is not a boss, judge, or expert; they guide the process, protect the values of the circle, and ensure safety and flow. Their tone sets the tone.

- Introduces purpose and process.
- Upholds guidelines and shared agreements.
- Poses prompts or questions.
- Models vulnerability and respect.
- Participates as an equal.

Structure

1. Purpose

Clarify why the circle is being held. Examples:

- “To rebuild trust after a disagreement on our team.”
- “To hold space for community processing after a local tragedy.”
- “To build connection at the start of a new collaboration.”

TIPS!

- Keep it clear and honest. People engage more when they know the “why.”

2. Opening

Open with a grounding practice:

- A quote, short poem, or story
- A moment of breathing
- An intentional welcome statement

“We are here today to share space as equals. What we say matters, and what we hear matters too.”

3. Shared Guidelines & Values

Ask participants to help establish or reaffirm shared guidelines:

- Respect the talking piece.
- Speak from the heart.
- Listen with curiosity, not judgment.
- Honor confidentiality.
- The right to pass.
- You might add core values such as trust, courage, compassion, and honesty.

Write the shared guidelines and values on chart paper or cards visible in the room.

4. Talking Piece

- Choose a meaningful object to pass around. Only the person holding the talking piece may speak. Others listen.
- The object:
 - Symbolizes respect and attention.
 - Ensures equality; no one speaks over another.
 - Encourages deeper listening.

Examples: a shell, a small stone, a wooden spoon, a culturally meaningful item

5. Check-In Round

Begin with a light or grounding prompt:

- “How are you arriving today?”
- “Name a color or weather pattern that matches your mood.”
- “What is one thing on your mind today?”

Each person responds when the talking piece comes to them (or passes if they choose to do so).

6. Discussion Rounds

Ask 1–3 rounds of questions based on the circle’s purpose. Keep prompts open-ended, values-driven, and appropriate for the group.

Community Examples:

- “What does safety feel like for you in this space?”
- “When have you felt most connected to your neighborhood?”
- “What is something this community needs more of?”

Workplace Examples:

- “What is one thing that helps you feel respected on this team?”
- “What happens when we disagree on what works and what does not?”
- “What value do you want to bring more of into your work life?”

Optional: Complete multiple rounds using the same question or building on prior responses.

7. Check-Out Round

Bring closure with a final round:

“One word for how you are leaving the circle today?”

“What is one thing you are taking with you from this space?”

8. Closing

- Close the circle with intention:
 - A thank-you to the participants
 - A shared breath or silent pause
 - A quote, poem, or affirmation
 - A group gesture (e.g., placing hands over heart, a nod of acknowledgment)

“Thank you all for bringing your presence and your stories. This space only works because of you.”

Final Notes for Keepers

- Be flexible. Every circle is different. Trust your instinct and the group’s rhythm.
- Do not force disclosure. Give participants the option to pass, and let silence be okay.
- Hold space, and do not fix. Keepers are not there to rescue or solve, but to guide and reflect.
- Follow up if needed. Some topics may surface deeper needs. Be prepared to hold post-circle support or referrals

6.1 Reconnection Circles

What is a Reconnection Circle?

Reconnection Circles create space for individuals returning to a group, team, or community after an absence, conflict, or transition. That absence might be due to illness, leave, housing instability, suspension, grief, or interpersonal tension. These circles are not about judgment or evaluation; they are about connection, clarity, and care.

In government and civic settings, reconnection circles can be used:

- When a community partner returns after time away from a project or council
- After an agency staff member or youth finishes leave or completes a program
- When a participant returns to a public service program after an absence
- Following a suspension process
- After a neighborhood conflict that caused someone to withdraw

Purpose:

- Reaffirm belonging and shared values.
- Address concerns and support reintegration.
- Give space for all voices (returning and receiving).

Structure (can be adapted based on setting):

- Opening
"We are here to reconnect, acknowledge time away, and share what we each need moving forward."
- Guidelines
Use your standard shared agreements (respect, listening, no judgment, right to pass)
- Talking Piece
Choose something symbolic of care, return, or community.

Suggested Rounds:

1. Returning Person(s)
 - "What would you like the group to know about your return?"
 - "What kind of support do you need as you come back into this space?"
2. Group/Team/Community
 - "What has shifted or stayed the same during the time apart?"
 - "What helps us feel connected when someone rejoins our work or space?"
3. Closing Round
 - "Name one thing you are committing to as we move forward together."

Why it Matters

Reconnection Circles affirm dignity and reduce the stigma of being “out of step.” They signal that returning to a shared space is not just permitted, but valued. In government and community work, this approach strengthens cohesion, builds mutual respect, and makes longterm participation more sustainable for all.



Restorative Circle Quick Reference Card

(Use this as an at-a-glance guide when leading a circle.
Fill in the details that apply to your space and purpose.)

Purpose	
Opening (Quote, opening statement, etc.)	
Core Values	<i>Respect, Honesty, Growth</i>
Talking Piece	
Check In “One word for how you are feeling about this space today?”	
Round Two “What would support trust moving forward?”	
Check-Out “One thing you will take with you from this circle.”	
Closing	<i>Shared breath + gratitude from the keeper</i>

- End of Section -

07

Restorative Conferences

What is a Restorative Conference?

A Restorative Conference is a structured, facilitated process that brings together individuals from harmful situations, those who have caused harm, and those who have been impacted, along with supporters and community members. The goal is to explore what happened, discuss and acknowledge harm, and develop a shared path toward repair.

Unlike impromptu conversations or conferences, Restorative Conferences are used when:

- Harm is significant or repeated.
- Multiple people are affected.
- There is a need for clarity and rebuilding trust.
- Informal approaches have not resolved the issue.

When to use a Restorative Conference

- A staff member's actions harmed a colleague or partner group.
- A program participant caused harm affecting others.
- A community event, policy rollout, or meeting resulted in broken trust.
- There is a desire for truth-telling, resolution, and future commitment.
- Other attempts at repair (emails, apologies, 1-on-1s) were unsuccessful.

Who Should Be Involved?

- Facilitator (Neutral Party): Guides the process and holds structure.
- Person(s) Who Caused Harm: Invited to reflect and take responsibility.
- Person(s) Impacted: Shares the effects of the harm in their own words.
- Supports (Optional): May include HR, elders, mentors, community representatives.
- Observer or recorder (Optional): Helps document agreements (with consent).

1. Pre-Meetings (Preparation)

- Meet separately with each person involved.
- Explain the purpose, format, and expectations.
- Ensure everyone consents to participate voluntarily.
- Co-create agreements for emotional safety.



TIPS!

- Do not rush this step; trust-building starts here.

2. Opening the Space

- Welcome everyone and explain the purpose of the conference.
- Share the process, “We are here to understand what happened, name impact, and agree on how to move forward.”
- Review ground rules (respect, no interruptions, right to pass, confidentiality).
- Use a talking piece if appropriate.

3. Storytelling Round (Facilitated Dialogue)

Use restorative questions to guide this round:

To the Person Who Caused Harm:

- “What happened from your point of view?”
- “What were you thinking or feeling at the time?”
- “Who do you think has been affected and how?”

To the Person Impacted:

- “What happened from your perspective?”
- “How did it impact you emotionally, professionally, or otherwise?”
- “What do you need in order to feel heard or supported?”

4. Reflection & Mutual Understanding

- Allow each party to respond to what they heard.
- Guide toward shared understanding—not agreement, but acknowledgment.
- Hold space for silence, discomfort, and emotion.

5. Repair & Commitment Round

The facilitator will help the group co-create an agreement:

- “What needs to happen next for trust to be rebuilt?”
- “What actions will support repair or healing?”
- “What boundaries or communication practices will help prevent future harm?”

Document the Agreement, including:

- Any follow-up tasks or commitments
- Timeline or check-in dates
- Roles for shared responsibility

6. Closing

- Each person shares a brief reflection:
“How are you feeling leaving this space?” or “What are you taking with you?”
- Thank everyone for their courage and participation.
- Optionally close with a breath, gesture, or quote.

7.1 Sample Post-Conference Survey

This sample feedback survey is designed for agencies to administer after completing a restorative conference. It serves as a reflection tool and a data collection instrument to assess the impact of the process from multiple perspectives.

Agencies are encouraged to use, adapt, and administer this survey to:

- Document participant experience (affected parties, responsible parties, and support persons).
- Inform quality improvement and staff development.
- Measure community trust-building and relational outcomes.
- Support evaluation efforts and future funding proposals.

Implementation Tips

- Administer the survey immediately after the conference or within one week.
- Offer paper and digital formats when possible.
- Consider anonymous collection to support honest reflection.
- Aggregate responses for quarterly or annual reporting.
- Use trends to strengthen program design and advocate for long-term investment.





Date _____

Restorative Conference Experience Survey

Why this matters

Your feedback helps us understand what's working, where we can grow, and how to better serve people in future restorative conferences. It also helps us secure support to keep this work going.

Instructions

Complete the general section, then fill out the part that best describes your role. Your answers are confidential and help us improve the process.

Section 1: General Reflections

Place an X in the box that best matches your answer.

Please rate these items.	Strongly Disagree 	Disagree 	Not Sure 	Agree 	Strongly Agree
I felt respected throughout the process.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
The purpose of the conference was clear to me.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I felt heard and included in the process.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
The staff helped guide the process in a fair way.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I would share this process with someone who needs help.	<input type="checkbox"/>				

What was most helpful or meaningful during the process? (Open response)

Section 2: If You Were Harmed (Affected Party)

Place an X in the box that best matches your answer.

Please rate these items.	Strongly Disagree 😔	Disagree 😕	Not Sure 😐	Agree 😊	Strongly Agree 😃
I had a chance to say how I was harmed.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
The group listened to me and cared about what I needed.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I felt safe and supported at the conference.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
The person who caused harm admit what they did.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I believe some healing or repair happened.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I feel more at peace after being a part of this process.	<input type="checkbox"/>				



Section 2: If You Caused Harm (Responsible Party)

Place an X in the box that best matches your answer.

Please rate these items.	Strongly Disagree 	Disagree 	Not Sure 	Agree 	Strongly Agree 
I understand how my actions upset others.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I felt ready for the conference.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The group helped me through the process.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I took real steps to make things better.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
This helped me think about making better choices next time.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I feel more connected to my community.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Section 3: If You Supported Someone (Support Person)

Place an X in the box that best matches your answer.

Please rate these items.	Strongly Disagree 	Disagree 	Not Sure 	Agree 	Strongly Agree
The person I was there for felt safe and treated with respect.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
They had a chance to share their thoughts and feelings.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
The plan we made during the conference helped with the problem.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
They were able to speak honestly and help fix the problem.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I believe the process helped them move forward.	<input type="checkbox"/>				

What is your age group?

Young Person Young Adult Older Adult
 Teen Adult Prefer not to say

Adapted from the FY23 Restorative Justice Panel Survey – Essex Community Justice Center (Vermont Department of Corrections).

- End of Section -

Conclusion

Restorative practices are more than just a tool or a singular skill. They represent a shift in how we deal and interact with harm, power, and healing across systems. Whether working with a public agency or a local organization, this approach offers a path forward in dignity and relationship building. From affective language to circle processes, these strategies invite us to slow down, listen differently, and repair in ways that do not replicate control-based systems, as emphasized by the California Department of Education and others. Restorative approaches not only support equity but actively challenge models that often harm the very communities we are called to serve (California Department of Education, 2023; Losen et al., 2025).

This toolkit will not be the final word, but rather a starting point for further exploration. Implementing restorative practices will require ongoing reflection and intentional leadership with space for growth. Across workplaces and public institutions, research indicates that when restorative approaches are implemented with fidelity and cultural responsiveness, they yield stronger outcomes, greater trust, and more inclusive environments (Darling-Hammond et al., 2022; IIRP, 2020). We hope these tools empower you to build systems that center on voice, healing, and justice, seeing people for more than just the harm that occurred, but instead for their capacity to restore and lead.

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PART 1: Building the Framework for your Organization

1.3 Racial Equity Commission Community Engagement Plan

2024

Community Engagement Plan

JANUARY 2025 – DECEMBER 2025



Background

To date, the California Racial Equity Commission (Commission) and staff have hosted or participated in events for a variety of communities and sectors including but not limited to San Bernardino, Riverside, Los Angeles, Delano, Lamont, Oakland, Martinez, Sacramento, Indian Wells, Monterey, Bakersfield, El Centro, Fresno, and Yuba City. Through a series of conference panels, webinars, and other presentation opportunities, information about the Commission has been shared via regional, state, and national networks including but not limited to the Workforce, Child Welfare, Area Regional Centers (Individuals living with Special Abilities), Planners, Philanthropy, United Way Network, Behavioral Health Centers, and Academia.



Figure 1: Community Meet-n-Greet in Lamont, CA (2024)

Committee members received a brief outlining proposed best practices and recommendations for developing and implementing a community engagement plan at the September 17, 2024 Committee Meeting. The [brief was developed by Vital Research, \(LLC\)](#) in partnership with Commission staff. Committee members also received a "Community Engagement Brief" and "Community Engagement Plan" from the California Racial Equity Coalition (formerly known as the SB 17 Coalition).

Commission staff reviewed all documents and conducted additional research to develop the following Community Engagement Plan to implement with the purpose of engaging community to inform the development of the Racial Equity Framework. In the development of the plan, particular detail was paid to staff capacity, financial constraints, and feasibility for ensuring meaningful and intentional engagement. The following was approved by the Community Engagement Committee and the Full Commission on December 19, 2024.

Proposed Community Engagement Plan

Community Engagement Purpose

The purpose of the Community Engagement Plan is to guide the Commission and staff in its outreach efforts to ensure communities throughout California have an opportunity to learn about the efforts of the Commission and position those communities to inform the development of the Racial Equity Framework. The Commission is committed to building relationships with community that build trust, support civic engagement, and provide an ongoing connection to the work of the Commission. The plan may evolve and shift upon the development of the framework to further the model on how to authentically and intentionally engage community.

Spectrum of Community Engagement

The Commission will apply the Spectrum of Community Engagement framework to inform its efforts (Fig 2.). The Commission recognizes that the charge and scope of the Commission does not include Level 5 or “Defer to” and thus would not be applied in our efforts. The Community Engagement Plan centers the need to develop ongoing and recurring touch points with community and trusted organizations to build trust, communication and collaboration.



Figure 2 Spectrum of Community Engagement to Ownership

Community Engagement Strategy

**Phase I - Community Meet-n-Greets, Listening Sessions, Public Meetings
 (Inform, Consult, Involve)
 ONGOING**

Community Meet-n-Greets

The Commission will continue to host Community Meet-n-Greets, Listening Sessions, and Public Meetings throughout California. The Community Meet-n-Greets will be curated in partnership with local community organizations that directly engage residents. To identify community partners in the regions we travel to, we will work with the Administration’s External Affairs Office, Commissioners, and the Office of Community Partnerships and Strategic Communications. We will identify any language and accessibility needs to ensure that residents are able to attend and participate. Commission staff will work with the local community organization to determine the best outreach strategy for Commission-related events. Community Meet-n-Greets will take place

in the late afternoon and early evenings and will last no longer than two (2) hours. The Commission is currently exploring how partner organizations may be funded to ensure residents in attendance have access to stipends, childcare, refreshments, and other supports to ensure equitable participation in Commission events and activities.

The Meet-n-Greet program will continue to be developed in partnership with local community organizations. When available, no more than two (2) Commissioners will attend each event and Commissioners in attendance will be invited to provide brief reflections while Commission staff will provide an overview of the Commission's charge. The Meet-n-Greet will also feature local community program(s) with an equity focus and small and large group interactive discussions. Through the discussion, the Commission will learn more about the experiences of community including assets, challenges, and opportunities. We will have a detailed notetaker available to help capture the conversation. This visual translation of the event will allow participants to immediately see how their voices and experiences are captured. Experiences and wisdom shared by community will be noted in a summary report to be shared with the Commission and public. Commission staff will work diligently to reflect on the experiences of community to inform the development of the framework. Specifically, staff will explore and provide guidance on strategies that support agencies, departments, boards, and commissions with strengthening their respective engagement strategies to ensure their programs and initiatives are adequately informed by and developed in collaboration with community. Commission staff will work with subject matter experts and the Commissioners to make sure the wisdom and experiences of community inform strategies and opportunities to advance racial equity.

To date, our Community Meet-n-Greets have been well attended, with 75-100 attendees per Meet-n-Greet. We cultivate a participatory culture and engage with cultural humility. We have allowed ourselves flexibility in "reading the room" and "understanding the pulse" of what communities are experiencing and pivot the program and activities accordingly. For example, at a listening session this fall, the community wanted to speak about its challenges rather than its assets. We followed the cues of the community members in attendance and created space for what they wanted to talk about. While imperfect, the Commission and its staff have learned a lot to ensure events are inclusive and accessible. We self-evaluate our efforts internally and in partnership with community so that lessons learned can be applied in future programming.



Figure 3 Community Meet-n-Greet in Riverside, CA (2024)

STATE OF CALIFORNIA
**RACIAL EQUITY
COMMISSION**

Listening Sessions

We are currently exploring the use of Listening Sessions in partnership with other state or local government advisory bodies or councils who also engage diverse populations throughout California and have a similar interest and charge. These Listening Sessions will be similarly developed and implemented like the Community Meet-n-Greets. On October 22, 2024, the Commission partnered with the Commission on Asian and Pacific Islander American Affairs (CAPIAA) to host a Listening Session in Yuba City centering the Sikh Community. The Commission is in the process of planning another listening session in partnership with CAPIAA and the Commission on the State of Hate in Fresno on December 4, 2024.

Public Meetings



Figure 4 Commissioner Maldonado and Residents during a Community Meet-n-Greet in Los Angeles (2024)

The Commission and its staff are committed to traveling to diverse communities and regions throughout the state. To date, staff have engaged in events, meetings and activities including San Bernardino, Riverside, Los Angeles, Delano, Lamont, Oakland, Martinez, Sacramento, Indian Wells, Monterey, Bakersfield, El Centro, Fresno, and Yuba City. We are planning to travel to Imperial County, Monterey/Salinas, Klamath/Weed, and Sacramento for our full Commission meetings in 2025. When feasible, we will look to leverage the in-person locations for our virtual Commission meetings to host further Community Meet-n-Greets with additional communities throughout the

state, including but not limited to the Central Coast, East of the Sierras, San Diego region, and other regions.

All public meetings that are subject to the Bagley-Keene Act will be publicly posted no less than 10 days in advance of the meeting on our website and through public notice in our newsletter. Meetings subject to the Bagley-Keene Act will be livestreamed through Zoom and YouTube, and recordings will be available on YouTube and on our Commission Website. As noted previously, language access services will be offered for in-person and virtual participants as requested or as identified by local community partners.

Digital Engagement Strategy

To ensure our engagement is representative of the diversity within California, the Commission aims to hear from more community members beyond in-person events. The Commission staff will work with the Governor's Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation (LCI) External Affairs & Communications team to develop a communications plan to support outreach on social media

and through existing networks in each community the Commission visits. The communications plan will include a digital strategy that centers its outreach on the diverse audiences in California by leveraging new social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook and Snapchat which were previously not used by LCI. Expanding the platforms through which we conduct outreach allows us to meet people with digital access where they are at. In addition, the Commission will explore initial steps for developing surveys that will be distributed in-person at various Meet-n-Greets, Listening Sessions, and across social media platforms, to help develop best practices around engagement. To ensure the accessibility of engagement (in-person and online), the Commission will explore community compensation strategies for surveys and other outreach methods. The Commission will also explore finding a consultant/contractor to support with community engagement strategies as needed. To maintain that the Commission's engagement practices are accessible to communities on the other side of the digital divide, it will work in partnership with local community organizations to identify and utilize culturally appropriate forms of communication. This includes, but is not limited to, radio, television, newspaper, and SMS communications, etc.

Focused Outreach

The Commission is committed to ensuring adequate outreach and engagement of communities that are often not prioritized including but not limited to tribal and native, newcomer, varied ability, LGBTQIA+, bi-lingual and multi-lingual communities. The Commission staff will leverage data disaggregation practices to ensure marginalized communities are accounted for and not hidden because of how aggregation creates a false perspective of monolithic communities. This includes remaining mindful of the impact of immigration, affordability and gentrification have on populations who are disproportionately impacted by racism and discrimination. Furthermore, the Commission will work with trusted community organizations and leaders to identify the best practices to identify and engage these communities to inform the development of the racial equity framework and collaborate on ongoing engagement and efforts to advance racial equity in California.

***Phase II – Community Roadshow with Framework
(Inform, Consult, Involve, Collaborate)***
Summer 2025

Upon the development of an outline for the Racial Equity Framework, the Commission and staff will leverage planning and outreach strategies outlined in **Phase I** and return to communities to report back how their shared wisdom and experiences have been reflected in the framework. The Roadshow will allow community to participate in reflecting to the Commission if their perspectives were adequately captured. This may come in the form of publicly noticed in-person and virtual workshops or conversations with communities. As an interactive process, the Roadshow will provide the chance for Commissioners and staff to collaborate with community to explore together how the framework could be improved.

***Phase III – Public Comment Period
(Involve, Consult)
Fall 2025***

The Commission staff is proposing a 30-day Comment Period for community residents, organizations, and others with a vested interest to review and provide holistic comments on a fully drafted Racial Equity Framework. As part of that Public Comment period, the Commission would establish an evaluation tool to better understand what worked in engagement efforts and opportunities for improvement. The evaluation tool would measure the Commission's transition from community engagement related to informing the development of the framework, to ongoing community engagement that highlights efforts to implement the framework, stories of impact, and continuing to learn about the evolving needs of community.

***Phase IV – Ongoing Community Engagement
(Inform, Consult, Involve, Collaborate)
January 2026 – June 2030***

Upon the Commission's approval of the Racial Equity Framework, the Commission will continue to engage community on a quarterly basis. These engagements will help to ensure community is aware of the Framework and how it can be applied to advance racial equity and create opportunities for the Commission to continue learning from community. The final Framework will be shared with community, and it will emphasize how their wisdom and lived experiences were incorporated. The goal is to continue to help community identify and engage in public discourse on issues that are important to them. Upon the completion of the Framework, the Commission will establish an action plan to continue to build and sustain trust with key community organizations and residents throughout California. This action plan will integrate additional best practices, tools and methodologies for Community Engagement in alignment with the Framework. Ongoing feedback loops and evaluation opportunities will be integrated into this phase to allow for quality improvement on the Commission's efforts to engage communities effectively and with intention.

This plan was developed to ensure flexibility necessary to meet challenges such as logistical obstacles, language barriers, accessibility needs, staff constraints, and budget challenges. The Commission is very aware of the evolving socio-cultural context surrounding efforts with communities and is committed to ensuring the existing work in communities continues. Implementing the Spectrum in alignment with the Community Engagement plan creates a natural connection point for community organizations to reach out for technical assistance and guidance for connecting with existing state government initiatives and programming to support needs at the local level. In addition, the Commission staff is exploring strategies to connect local community organizations to fiscal sponsorship opportunities to mitigate and reduce the barriers experienced by community residents as they seek to participate in this civic engagement opportunity with the Commission.

Measurable Goals and Outcomes

- Host at least four (4) Community Meet-n-Greets and/or Listening Sessions in 2025.
- Return to at least 60 percent of communities visited from January 2024-June 2025 to share back what the Commission has learned and how it has been integrated or considered in the development of the Racial Equity Framework.
- Identify and develop recommendations to the Commission, through Committee meetings and regular reports, to address barriers to community participation in Commission activities and events.
- Develop an evaluation tool to evaluate the Commission's community engagement efforts and support continuous improvement.
- Develop and implement a Community Engagement action plan for the Commission in alignment with the Racial Equity Framework.
- Disseminate summaries from Community Meet-n-Greets and/or Listening Sessions through the Commission website and newsletter within 30 days of the event conclusion. Summaries shall detail the wisdom and experience of community, reach of the event, and partnership with local community organizations.
- Work with local community organizations to identify accessibility needs of community and inform the development of a community engagement strategy at least 30 days prior to each event or activity to ensure those needs for transportation, refreshments, childcare services, etc. are met.
- Assess and identify language translation services needed at least 21 days in advance of each Meet-n-Greet and/or Listening Session.
- Provide at least quarterly reports to the Community Engagement Committee.

Next Steps

Commission staff will execute the above plan January 2025 – December 2025, including providing updates at the May and September 2025 Committee meetings. Throughout the implementation of this plan, the Commission staff will document lessons learned and share with the Community Engagement Committee and Full Commission. Lessons learned will inform possible iterations of the plan or future community engagement efforts. Commission staff will follow up with Committee to discuss iterations to the plan as the Commission moves into the Racial Equity Framework implementation and dissemination phase, and to ensure compliance with its statutory requirement for ongoing Community Engagement. Commission staff will pursue additional fundraising and contracting opportunities to support additional Community Engagement activities.

PART 1: Building the Framework for your Organization

**1.4 Racial Equity Commission
Community Engagement Toolkit**

Community Engagement Toolkit

STATE OF CALIFORNIA
**RACIAL EQUITY
COMMISSION**

Overview

- The Community Engagement Plan was approved by the Community Engagement Committee and the Full Commission on December 19, 2024
- The Commission recommended the development of a Toolkit to support intentional and standard community engagement

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**RACIAL EQUITY
COMMISSION**

Community Engagement Plan

- The Commission is committed to building relationships with community, support civic engagement, and provide an ongoing connection to the work of the Commission
- The Commission is using the Spectrum of Community Engagement framework to guide its strategy

- Community Engagement Plan:



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RACIAL EQUITY
COMMISSION

Community Engagement Plan

Goals:

- Center equity in engagement (language access, attendance support, etc.)
- Increase meeting access, including ADA compliance
- Honor unique identities and lived experience
- Listen to community needs, answer questions, and receive feedback to inform the Framework

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Community Engagement Spectrum



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Community Meet-N-Greet / Listening Session Procedure

- 1 • Identify geographic location of meeting
- 2 • Identify and confirm community partners
- 3 • Confirm date, time, and location
- 4 • Connect community partner with fiscal sponsor
- 5 • Determine meeting logistics
- 6 • Confirm 1-2 Commissioners to attend
- 7 • Identify and confirm presenters/speakers
- 8 • Develop program/agenda

- 9 • Flyer design + review/approval
- 10 • Promotion
- 11 • Book travel
- 12 • Finalize tech needs
- 13 • Print event materials
- 14 • Day of meeting
- 15 • Thank you letters
- 16 • Draft Summary
- 17 • Post event materials on website

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COMMISSION

Interactive Activity / Discussion

Learning From Community

Questions to ask community members:

- What brings you joy?
- What positive things are you seeing in your community?
- If you could change one thing in your community, what would it be?
- What are your hopes and dreams for your community?

Collaborating with Community

Follow Up:

- Return to locations visited by the Commission
- Take lessons learned from meet-n-greet or listening session to inform the Framework
- Summarize community meet-n-greet and listening session in a write up

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Community Acknowledgement

We thank and honor the Indigenous nations of this land who contributed to the building of this country we recognize the forced and unpaid labor of California Indigenous peoples under Spanish, Mexican, and U.S. rule especially within the Mission system, where Native people were enslaved to build infrastructure, harvest food, and serve colonial institutions. Our ancestral lands, knowledge systems, and labor continue to shape the cultural and economic foundation of this state. Native Nations in California contribute to the arts, governance, land management, cultural revitalization, and health sovereignty.

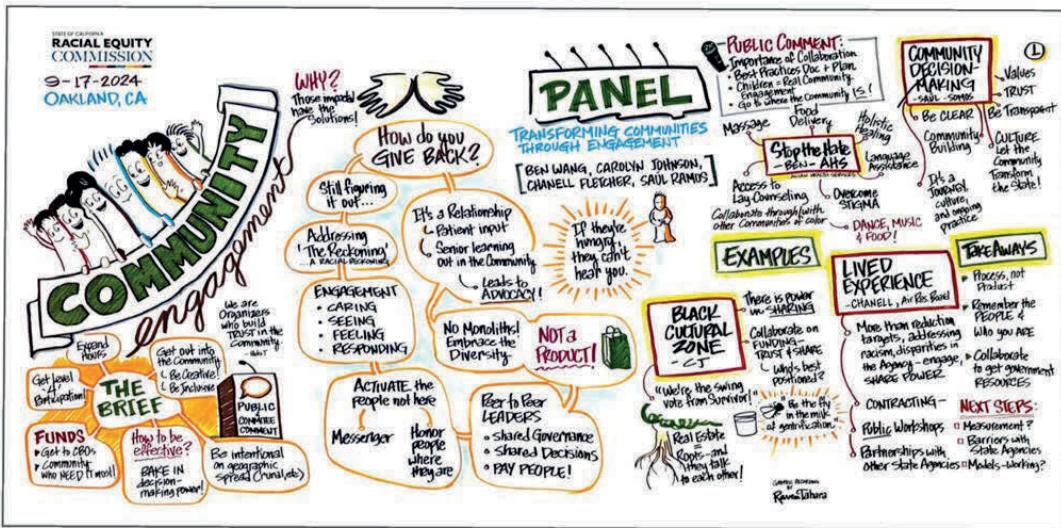
We acknowledge and thank the people of African ancestry who were stolen from their homelands and brought to this country and whose free labor played a major role in the formation and economic wealth of this country. We also honor the contributions of Black ancestral scientists, inventors, and entrepreneurs whose contributions were stolen or never acknowledged. We honor and will not forget the thousands upon thousands of lives lost at the hands of enslavers, vigilantes, law enforcement, and other forces of suppression in this country. We affirm and uplift those of African ancestry living in this country today, as a living testimony of the strength, love, faith, and fortitude of a resilient people.

We acknowledge the International and Global Immigrant contributions who shaped this country's economy and help build its infrastructure. We honor the contributions of Asian immigrant community including Chinese railroad workers, Japanese farmers, Filipino cannery workers and Fieldworkers, and other Asian workers.

We acknowledge Latinos and Mexican immigrants have been integral to shaping economic growth in the U.S. from building homes, filling roles of agricultural needs, and other service industries have been influential to providing everyday needs to fellow Americans. These communities have filled critical workforce gaps and enriched American society with different intersectionalities of culture and beliefs.

We recognize the impacts of U.S. militarism, colonial oppression, capitalistic tourism, appropriation of cultural heritage, and more have affected Pasifika and Oceanic people and island relations. We acknowledge the harms of climate change and environmental pollutants from global powers that are harming islands and destroying oceans. Thank you for your community's contributions in roles of service and public health, the teachings of reciprocity and how those lessons can be woven into societal structure serves as a model of hope and change for this country.

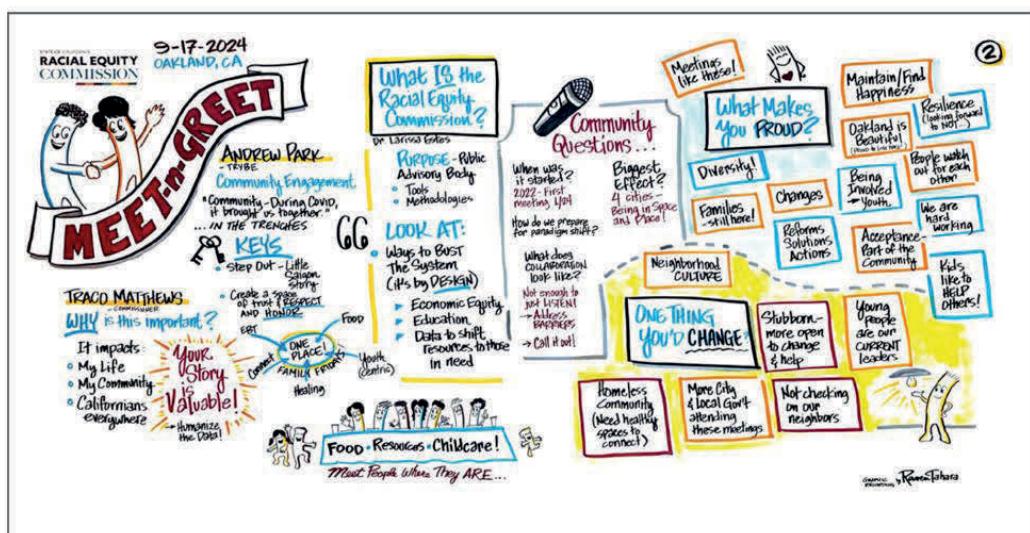
Graphic Notes from Community Engagement Events



Community Meet-n-Greet | Oakland, CA | September 2024

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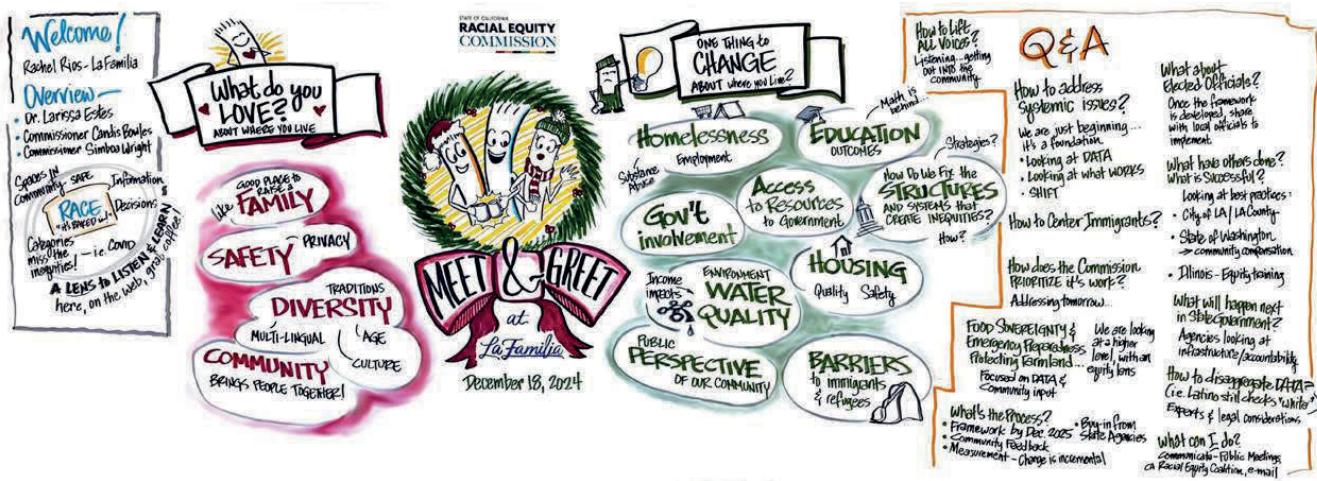
Graphic Notes from Community Engagement Events



Community Meet-n-Greet | Oakland, CA | September 2024

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Graphic Notes from Community Engagement Events



Community Meet-n-Greet | Sacramento, CA | December 2024

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Community Engagement Survey

The Community Engagement Survey will serve as a tool to learn about community thoughts on how to improve community engagement



Contact Us

 racialequity.lci.ca.gov

 RacialEquityCommission@opr.ca.gov

PART 1: Building the Framework for your Organization

1.5 Racial Equity Commission Community Acknowledgement

STATE OF CALIFORNIA

RACIAL EQUITY COMMISSION



Community Acknowledgement

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Prepared by Dylyn Turner-Keener, Senior Program Analyst
Approved by the Racial Equity Commission, June 26, 2025

PART 1: Building the Framework for your Organization

1.6 Disability General Best Practices and Rules for Creating and Accessible Document

This document was developed by Department of Aging, Equity Advisory Committee on Aging and Disability. Its content does not necessarily reflect the views, positions, or opinions of the Racial Equity Commission, the Governor's Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation (LCI), or the Office of the Governor.

Helpful Tips to Create Accessible Power Point

All state departments are responsible for ensuring that documents posted to their public websites align with accessibility standards and requirements. The California Department of Aging (CDA) posts all public meeting and webinar materials online. Prior to posting meeting materials to [CDA](#) or [California Health and Human Services Agency \(CalHHS\)](#) webpages, CDA staff review and remediate all meeting materials for accessibility compliance, including PowerPoint (PPT) slides submitted by guest presenters. Creating accessible documents from the outset is more efficient than having to remediate documents after creation.

CDA requests that presenters follow these seven basic accessibility tips when creating PPT slides to ensure your PPT presentation is accessible and ready for web posting:

- 1. Ensure color contrasts are compliant.** As a rule of thumb, pair dark colored text with a light background or light-colored text with a dark background. For example, yellow font on a white background is not accessible, but yellow font on dark blue background is accessible.

Not accessible:



Accessible:

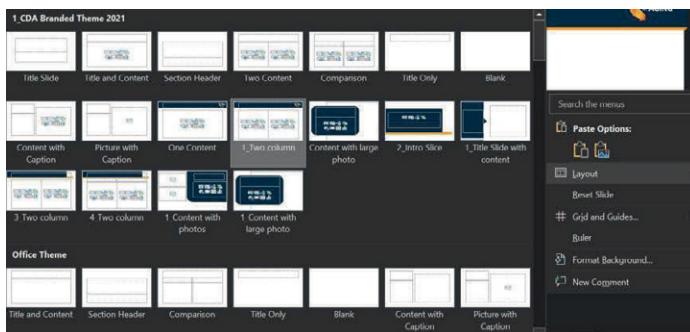


Using a color contrast analyzer can confirm that your color choices for background and font color are accessible. You can download a free color contrast analyzer at <https://www.tpgi.com/color-contrast-checker/>. (Note for when using the analyzer: Level AA contrast is required; Level AAA contrast is preferred).

- 2. Font type and size:** Sans-serif fonts (e.g.: Arial, Verdana) are recommended and for content, a minimum font size of 24 pt is preferred.
- 3. Avoid unnecessary shading and underlining to PPT slide text or images.**

Helpful Tips to Create Accessible Power Point

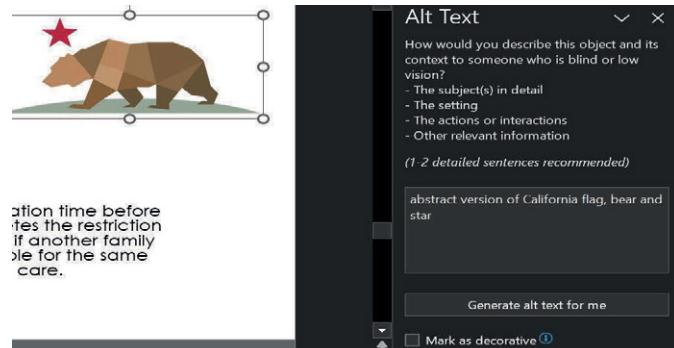
4. Do not use open bullet points because they read as the letter “O” when using a screen reader. Solid bullet points are acceptable.
 - Accessible
 - Not accessible (reads as “O”)
5. Do not insert “text boxes” into a PPT slide. Text in text boxes cannot be read by screen readers. Utilize PPT pre-built slide templates under the Layout or New Slide option that indicate place holders to add text/content directly on the slide.



6. Add appropriate alternative text (“Alt Text”) to all images/pictures to provide clarity and understanding.

To add alternative text to an image:

- Right click on the image.
- Click Edit Alt Text
- Type description in the box provided.



If the image is for decorative purposes only and does not require alternate text, simply check the “Mark as decorative” box.

Helpful Tips to Create Accessible Power Point

7. Create tables in PPT using the Table feature under the Insert tab. Do not cut and paste screen shots of tables created in other documents. Accessible tables are simple tables that:

- have the same number of rows and columns throughout the table;
- indicate a header row; and
- do not contain merged, split, or empty cells.

Visitors	Long-Term Care Facilities	Emergencies
Examples Include:	Examples Include:	Examples Include:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Friends• Family• Chosen Family• Health Care Workers Not Employed by a Long-Term Care Facility• Social Services or Other Services Providers• Ombudsmen, Patient Advocates, Surveyors, Regulators, Auditors, and Similar	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Skilled Nursing Facilities (SNFs)• Intermediate Care Facilities (ICFs)• Adult Residential Facilities (ARFs) and Other Adult Assisted Living Facilities Regulated by CDSS• Residential Care Facilities for the Elderly (RCFEs) and other Senior Assisted Living Facilities Regulated by CDSS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pandemics• Natural Disasters• Bioterrorism Emergencies• Chemical Emergencies• Radiation Emergencies• Other Agents, Diseases, and Threats• Power Surge Failures/Blackouts• Facility Infrastructure Breakdowns

For additional information and tips on ensuring your documents are accessible, check out the following resources:

- [Create Accessible Presentations | Section508.gov](#)
- [California Department of Rehabilitation How to Create Accessible Content](#)
- [US Health & Human Services - PPT Accessibility Reference](#)

PART 1: Building the Framework for your Organization

1.7 Plain Language Checklist by Vital Research

This document was developed by Vital Research for the Racial Equity Commission. Its content does not necessarily reflect the views, positions, or opinions of the Racial Equity Commission, the Governor's Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation (LCI), or the Office of the Governor.

Plain Language Checklist

September 2025



This tool was prepared by Vital Research, LLC for the California Racial Equity Commission's Racial Equity Framework. The opinions expressed in this tool reflect those of Vital Research and do not reflect the views of the Racial Equity Commission, Governor's Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation (GO-LCI), or the Office of the Governor.

Using plain language is critical to help your audience grasp key points. A clear sense of who will be reading your materials will help determine what reading level to use.

- According to the [California Plain Language Equity Standard](#), all California government entities should write materials for the public at an 8th grade reading level or lower.
- If you are writing for a specialized audience, like staff at government entities, researchers, or engineers, use familiar technical terms.

- Use active voice.
- Use topic sentences. Sometimes the last sentence is a great topic sentence that you can move to the beginning of the paragraph.
- Write short sentences. Sentences should have an average of 15-20 words.
- Write short paragraphs. Aim for paragraphs that are no more than 150 words long, about 3-8 sentences.
- Make sections to break up text. Organize information with informative headings. Use questions, statements, or topics for the headings.
- Replace complex words with common words. [Refer to this list](#) to see which words should be replaced.
- Use a [writing tool](#) to check your writing. The tool will help identify passive voice, complex language, and long sentences.
- Use pronouns, like “you” or “we,” to speak to your reader.
- Use examples to clarify complex concepts.
- Define technical terms and abbreviations. Use terms and abbreviations consistently.
- Avoid using Latin and French words and Latin abbreviations like (e.g.) and (i.e.). Use the phrases, “for example” and “such as” instead.
- Use lists to organize information. This will increase white space for the reader.

References

- Center for Plain Language. [Five Steps to Plain Language](#).
- National Adult Literacy Agency. [A plain English checklist for documents](#).
- Office of Data and Innovation. [Plain language equity standard](#).
- U.S. General Services Administration. [Federal plain language guidelines](#).

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PART 1: Building the Framework for your Organization

1.8 Data Disaggregation Brief by Vital Research

This document was developed by Vital Research for the Racial Equity Commission. Its content does not necessarily reflect the views, positions, or opinions of the Racial Equity Commission, the Governor's Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation (LCI), or the Office of the Governor.

Brief on Data Disaggregation

September 2025



This brief was prepared by Vital Research, LLC to provide information to the California Racial Equity Commission who is charged with developing a Racial Equity Framework, providing technical assistance, and reporting progress. The opinions expressed in this brief reflect those of Vital Research and do not reflect the views of the Racial Equity Commission, Governor's Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation (GO-LCI), or the Office of the Governor.

Advancing Racial Equity Through Data Disaggregation

Purpose: To share practical recommendations for how government entities can use data in ways that support racial equity. We focus on how disaggregated data can better reflect the real experiences of different communities. The Racial Equity Commission's asset analysis found that while many respondents used data to guide their work, they often needed more support to use data effectively for advancing racial equity. This memo covers:

- 1 Best practices for disaggregating data in ways that highlight community strengths
- 2 Common mishaps to avoid when working with data for racial equity

Why Disaggregated and Contextualized Data Matters

Disaggregated data enables government entities to deliver services more accurately and empowers communities to be truly seen and heard. Even when federal and state standards require the collection of granular data (Office of Data and Innovation, n.d.), government entities may struggle to follow through because they lack knowledge or resources. Clear implementation plans and resources are necessary to make sure government entities are able to adequately collect and analyze required data. In addition to disaggregating data, explaining the context behind it is crucial to present the full picture for why disparities persist. Without understanding how racial disparities were created, we risk blaming individuals and communities instead of addressing the systemic and structural root causes. To drive meaningful and lasting change, data must be presented with historical and systemic context.

Best Practices in Data Disaggregation

[California's Data Standards](#) provide a framework for consistent, ethical, and equitable data practices. Government entities should consider using these standards in all disaggregation efforts to make sure disaggregated data are collected and used in ways that are transparent, respectful, and consistent with statewide equity goals.

Clarify Data Needs

- Recognize that many government data systems use broad racial and ethnic categories that may not reflect how people actually identify. This can make some communities invisible in the data. By understanding these limits, government entities can plan from the start to collect or use data in ways that uncover disparities and reflect real community experiences. [Assembly Bill 1726](#) is an example of existing legislation that focused on improving disaggregated data collection (Chen, 2016). While originally focused on Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander populations, AB 1726 has the potential to be expanded to include other communities and support more inclusive data practices.

➡ **Ask:** Are the racial and ethnic categories we are using in our data systems truly reflective of how people in our communities identify?

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Clarify Data Needs (cont.)

- Decide whether new data collection is necessary, or if existing datasets can be appropriately disaggregated and contextualized to sufficiently meet the identified equity objectives. Government entities should review what data they already have and look for gaps in detail, accessibility, or relevance. This step is about being intentional: knowing what data you need, how you will use it to analyze and inform your work, and how to make sure it reflects the communities you serve.

➡ Ask: If existing data can be disaggregated in a thoughtful way, can it inform your work?

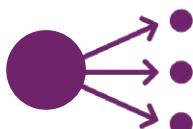
If new data are needed, it is important to:



Use asset-based approaches that highlight community strengths, not just disparities and challenges. For example, consider using asset mapping as a tool to identify existing community resources and strengths that could help to address challenges (Institute of Education Sciences, 2025).



Engage communities early to understand what data matters to them and how they want to be represented. Start with a representative group or partner with a government entity already engaging with the communities you serve. It is also important to work with community partners to ensure that communities learn about how data will be used and their privacy will be protected in plain language.



Plan for disaggregation from the start, including how data will be broken down by race, ethnicity, language, geography, and other factors, to avoid flattening diverse experiences.



Avoid over aggregation that masks inequities by treating large, diverse communities as monoliths which leads to miscalculations, misrepresentations, and misallocation of resources.



Have robust security systems and processes to manage data so that data are stored and accessed safely. Establish a standard data sharing agreement template between government entities to support sharing information and not producing additional burden on community.



Increase community knowledge and access to information by ensuring community partners' access to data pertaining to them through reports, public dashboards, and regular engagement with community.

Common Data Pitfalls to Avoid

Data Erasure

Data erasure means smaller or hard-to-count populations are often aggregated into categories or excluded from datasets. For example, the American Indian and Alaska Native population in the U.S. is frequently undercounted and datasets often lack high quality data for this population, which limits their use for statistical tests. Without accurate and detailed representations of these communities, necessary resources may not be equitably distributed. Therefore, proactive inclusion of these communities is essential for equity. Additionally, public access to data is often uneven. Due to privacy and statistical disclosure limitations, data about smaller demographic groups is often not available in public files and requesting it can be slow or expensive.

Denominator Distortion

Denominator distortion is when the way we define or classify population groups at the state or local level can shrink the apparent size of smaller racial or ethnic groups in official data. This can happen because of over aggregation, outdated or overly broad racial/ethnic classification rules, or data suppression by omitting small group data due to privacy or statistical reliability concerns. If the denominator is understated, it can inflate rates (like a small group appears to have higher rates of dropouts) and deflate funding (fewer people counted = less money allocated), thereby masking disparities that may exist (such as a group's needs appear less urgent or nonexistent). For example, aggregated achievement data may suggest that Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islanders, as a broad racial/ethnic category, is doing well, which can hide the struggles of smaller subgroups like Hmong or Samoan students. As a result, these subgroups may receive fewer resources for academic support tailored to their needs.

Assuming Data = Fact

Data are never absolute, can be interpreted in different ways, and always reflect inherent biases in collection, classification, and analysis. For instance, a community survey conducted exclusively online will exclude people who do not have access to digital devices or the internet. Data collection methods should be critically scrutinized to identify how certain perspectives may be systematically missing from the start. Further, quantitative data alone are often insufficient. Qualitative insights such as focus groups or listening sessions and informant interviews can provide nuanced stories to enhance the significance of the data and better represent the full picture. Analysis of data must be transparent about limitations and communicate findings in plain, accessible language. Government entities should note when they have to lump groups together to avoid disclosure risks or due to small sample sizes.

Community Involvement and Contextualizing Data Within Systems

Disaggregated data is a powerful tool, but only when it is contextualized and used with community trust. As government entities work to improve how they collect and use data, it is important to keep the focus on the people behind the data.

Acknowledge concerns, but center community trust and sharing information

Some people may worry that disaggregating data could divide communities, weaken collective advocacy, or raise privacy risks for smaller groups (Kader et al., 2022). These are valid concerns, especially for communities that have experienced being closely watched, monitored, or targeted by government systems in the past. That is why it is essential to work closely with trusted community organizations to explain why disaggregation matters, how privacy will be protected and how the data will be used. Government entities can use established methods to protect confidentiality and still ensure smaller groups are represented. When done thoughtfully, disaggregation strengthens, not weakens, our ability to advance equity.

Create feedback loops and build capacity within communities

Share data with communities, interpret it with them and use it to inform decisions alongside them. This means building feedback loops and not just reporting findings. This can also help ensure communities have access to their own data, when possible, so they feel empowered to advocate for change.

Avoid misrepresentation through contextualizing disaggregated data

Contextualizing disaggregated data will help to make sure it is not misunderstood or misused. Data should be paired with historical, structural, and systemic analysis to explain why disparities exist, not just that they do.

Plan for the long term to ensure successful system-wide implementation

System-wide changes to data processing are challenging to coordinate and require intentional, long-term planning. As one example, the City of San Jose published a [Citywide Data Strategy](#) in May 2025. The strategy outlines how they will enable data sharing across government entities and prioritize publicly sharing data to increase transparency and build trust with communities.

It is necessary to have policies in place that will safeguard against data misuse and violations of privacy. Following existing federal and state laws is critical to protecting the privacy of individuals who are providing their information. Assuring communities that their data will be kept secure and private is also important. Ultimately, using disaggregated data in equity work requires acknowledging the potential harms and misuses and addressing them to build community trust.

References

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PART 1: Building the Framework for your Organization

1.9 Racial Equity Commission Budget Equity Worksheet

Budget Change Proposal - Budget Equity Worksheet

The following Budget Equity Questions are included in the Budget Change Proposal based on recommendations from the California Racial Equity Commission (Executive Order N-16-22) to inform critical investments, policies, practices, and programs with the goal of ensuring access to opportunities that lead to widespread benefit. Agencies should discuss with subject matter experts how to best respond and include responses for each question that are 300 words or less.

BCP Narrative – Budget Equity Questions

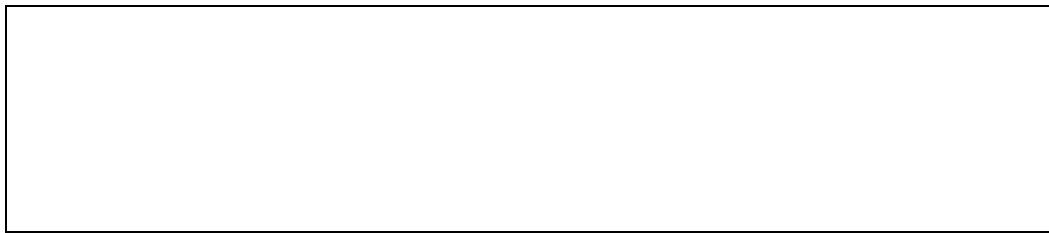
1. Proposal

- a. In what ways will this BCP request advance equity or support your agency/department's equity efforts for the next fiscal year?
- b. Are there historical inequities in access or outcomes to individuals or communities present in the underlying program that this BCP may address?



2. Data

- a. Based on your proposed BCP for the next fiscal year, describe the ways your department used data to identify the gaps in access or outcomes among impacted populations?
- b. Has the data been disaggregated to identify gaps or limitations? Data may be quantitative or qualitative.
- c. If more data is needed, how is this being addressed in a sustaining manner? What were the tools used to determine that programs were offered and delivered to consumers based on a degree of need?



3. Community

- a. How may the proposed BCP benefit or burden historically impacted communities?
- b. Who and what regions will be impacted, benefitted, and burdened by the allocation of funds, including indirect impacts and unintentional consequences?
- c. Did your department or agency actively seek public engagement from impacted groups or communities in the development of the proposal, and ongoing? If so, how have and/or will impacted communities be engaged?

4. Evaluation of Success and Impact

- a. Describe how your Agency or Department will measure the progress and impact of the requested funds and report to both internal and external stakeholders. What data/metrics will be used to evaluate the impacts?
- b. What is your public engagement plan? What is your plan to track and ensure the most impacted communities are reached? How do you track data about impact and services provided? How will that engagement be assessed and who will be a part of this evaluation process?
- c. How have or how will impacted communities be able to provide input to inform goal setting and decision making?

If you would like technical assistance on how to best approach the equity questions, please contact your agency/department subject matter expert, or the Racial Equity Commission at RacialEquityCommission@lci.ca.gov or racialequity.lci.ca.gov.

PART 1: Building the Framework for your Organization

**1.10 Racial Equity Commission
Budget Equity Toolkit**

Budget Equity Toolkit

STATE OF CALIFORNIA
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Overview

- The Racial Equity Commission is recommending budget equity tools and best practices that use data and community/stakeholder engagement to inform critical investments, policies, practices, and programs with the goal of ensuring access to opportunities that leads to widespread benefit
- The Budget Equity Toolkit includes standardized questions to include as part of the budget change proposal (BCP) process to support decision-makers and serve as a starting point for recommended budget tools

Elements for state agencies / departments to consider in responding to equity questions within a BCP

Public Engagement

- Explore opportunities to engage with and be accessible to all impacted communities to achieve meaningful results

Evaluation of Success and Impact

- Develop ways to evaluate if goals are met, or progress is being made.
- Evaluation methodologies will help agencies and departments adhere to their annual budget, ensure critical investments benefit all, and promote transparency and accountability.
- This may include outlining strategies in an agency/department's strategic plan and regularly reviewing the progress towards meeting goals.

Data

- Disaggregated data and spatial data are powerful to understand which geographic areas or populations may be most impacted by budgetary decisions
- Rigorous assessment of data allows agencies and departments to ensure programs and policies yield consistently fair treatment
- A statewide lens may help the Department of Finance assess investments across regions and populations

Budget Equity Toolkit



Standardized Budget Equity Questions

Budget Change Proposals (BCP)

Budget Equity Toolkit



Standardized Budget Equity Questions

The Racial Equity Commission would like to explore the addition of the following standardized budget equity questions to be embedded within the existing “statewide considerations” question or added as a separate series of questions for agencies to complete within the BCP.

These questions build upon existing language and guidance and provide the opportunity for dialogue and reflection.

The Commission is interested in offering technical assistance to support agency and department finance staff, and Department of Finance budget analysts on how to respond to these questions with intention and where appropriate, and what to look for in responses, respectively.

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Standardized Budget Equity Questions

1. **Proposal (300 words or less, describe the following)**

- a. In what ways will this BCP proposal advance equity or support your agency/department’s equity efforts for the next fiscal year?
- b. Are there historical inequities in access or outcomes to individuals or communities present in the underlying program that this BCP may address?

[Where to find information within agency/department – strategic plan, data, etc.]

Note: this could be a standard question for all BCPs and part of a cover letter.

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Standardized Budget Equity Questions

2. Data (300 words or less, describe the following)

- a. Based on your proposed BCP for the next fiscal year, describe the ways your Department used data to identify the gaps in access or outcomes among impacted populations?
- b. Has the data been disaggregated to identify gaps or limitations? Data may be quantitative or qualitative.
- c. If more data is needed, how is this being addressed in a sustaining manner? What were the tools used to determine that programs were offered and delivered to consumers based on a degree of need?

[Where to find information within agency/department – strategic plan, data, etc.]

Budget Equity Toolkit

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Standardized Budget Equity Questions

3. Community (300 words or less, describe the following)

- a. How may the proposed BCP benefit or burden historically impacted communities?
- b. Who and what regions will be impacted, benefitted, and burdened by the allocation of funds, including indirect impacts and unintentional consequences?
- c. Did your department or agency actively seek public engagement from impacted groups or communities in the development of the proposal, and ongoing? If so, how have and/or will impacted communities be engaged?

[Where to find information within agency/department – strategic plan, data, etc.]

Budget Equity Toolkit

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Standardized Budget Equity Questions

4. Evaluation of Success and Impact (300 words or less, describe the following)

- a. Describe how your Agency or Department will measure the progress and impact of the requested funds and report to both internal and external stakeholders. What data/metrics will be used to evaluate the impacts?
- b. What is your public engagement plan? What is your plan to track and ensure the most impacted communities are reached? How do you track data about impact and services provided? How will that engagement be assessed and who will be a part of this evaluation process?
- c. How have or how will impacted communities be able to provide input to inform goal setting and decision making?

[Where to find information within agency/department – strategic plan, data, etc.]

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Examples of Responses from an Agency/Department

Standardized Budget Equity Questions

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Example Response from an Agency/Department

1. **Proposal:** In what ways will this BCP advance equity for the next fiscal year? Are there historical inequities in access or outcomes to individuals or communities present in the underlying program that this BCP can address?

Examples of Responses from an Agency/Department:

We have developed our FY26 program budget to closely align our mission, vision, goals, and objectives, all of which seek to implement programs that meet the needs of residents. As part of the pre-planning process, we examined root causes and major drivers of inequities in our programs in reaching Californians to frame our budget change proposal and utilized data and community input to assess the program's role in addressing these drivers. This budget will allow our agency to build capacity across government by designing and scaling up trainings. Trainings will seek to ensure government initiatives, programs, and policies are co-created by and center residents who are most impacted. The proposed FY26 budget will also enable our program to develop a public-facing dashboard to track and address seven priority areas captured in our action plan. The dashboard and action will provide a close-to-real-time estimate of efforts to address where we're not successfully reaching Californians to better promote our goals of transparency and equity in governance.

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Example Response from an Agency/Department

2. **Data:** Based on your proposed BCP for the next fiscal year, describe the ways your department used data to identify the gaps in access or outcomes among impacted populations? Has the data been disaggregated to identify gaps or limitations? Data may be quantitative or qualitative. If more data is needed, how is this being addressed in a sustaining manner? What were the tools used to determine that programs were offered and delivered to consumers based on a degree of need?

Examples of Responses from an Agency/Department:

Our program used disaggregated data captured by numerous government agencies to identify trends that suggest major drivers of gaps in educational attainment, as well as the compounding impact geographic location. Additionally, our program conducted an internal survey which found approximately 25% of agencies are unaware of tools that can be used to assess our collective efforts to address educational attainment. Our program's FY26 request for funding is in response to these internal knowledge and capacity gaps, including the need to hire two (2) additional FTE to increase our capacity and reach, e.g., increasing the number of monthly trainings we can deliver on the tools and strategies to improve educational attainment. We will also work during FY26 to engage community through interviews or focus groups to understand the drivers of educational attainment and inform our program and the trainings we develop for staff. We hope to learn more about the community's opportunity to access resources that help close gaps on educational attainment. The timing of our focus groups may be a challenge to ensure we are able to track progress and where we can improve our efforts to deliver more efficient and effective programs to improve educational attainment.

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Example Response from an Agency/Department

3. **Community:** How may the proposed BCP benefit or burden historically impacted communities? Who and what regions will be impacted, benefitted, and burdened by the allocation of funds, including indirect impacts and unintentional consequences? Did your department or agency actively seek public engagement from impacted groups or communities in the development of the proposal, and ongoing? If so, how have and/or will impacted communities be engaged?

Examples of Responses from an Agency/Department:

Based on data available, we would use our requested allocation to develop and provide trainings for agencies to address the major drivers of educational attainment. As a specific example, the annual report outlines performance gaps in educational attainment which correlate to higher rates of poverty and higher rates of fair and poor health outcomes. The proposed enhancement would allow our program to engage and train leadership and staff on how to meaningfully engage communities to craft solutions that close performance gaps in ways that acknowledge and center students and families' lived experiences.

Training alone may not result in reducing the gaps in educational attainment and we need to ensure we are learning from communities through focus groups and shifting our program strategy to better deliver efficient services.

Budget Equity Toolkit



Example Response from an Agency/Department

4. **Evaluation of Success and Impact:** Describe how your agency or department will measure the progress and impact of the requested funds and report to both internal and external stakeholders. What data/metrics will be used to evaluate the impacts? What is your public engagement plan? What is your plan to track and ensure the most impacted communities are reached? How do you track data about impact and services provided? How will that engagement be assessed and who will be a part of this evaluation process? How have or how will impacted communities be able to provide input to inform goal setting and decision making?

Examples of Responses from an Agency/Department:

Our program will conduct pre and post surveys from training participants to assess a change in knowledge. In addition, our program will monitor key performance indicators and administrative data we receive from local school districts. Through community engagement process we use additional information to know if we are making progress in closing performance gaps in educational attainment. This proposed budget request is based on meaningful, ongoing conversations with community stakeholders who see the educational and economic impacts of educational attainment. Since 2021, our program has regularly met with three community-based organizations who have been impacted by or are aware of the impact of educational attainment. Our program participated in monthly meetings and listening sessions at the invitation of these community-based organizations to discuss local policies and our role in ensuring that programs and policies ensure opportunity and benefit all, including engaging residents in the development of training and future programs. Our program incorporated the input from the conversations and resident experiences into this budget proposal and reported back to the community partners on how their input was used.

Budget Equity Toolkit



Case Study: Applying a Data-Based Framework to Budget Allocation in Los Angeles County

Equity Funding Formula and COVID-19 Vulnerability & Recovery Index

Budget Equity Toolkit



Case Study: Applying a Data-Based Framework to Budget Allocation in Los Angeles County

At the Racial Equity Commission's Budget Equity Committee meeting on May 8, 2024, the Committee heard from Caroline Torosis, Senior Deputy for Economic and Workforce Development at the Office of Supervisor Holly Mitchell, Los Angeles (LA) County Second District, and Dr. D'Artagnan Scorza, Executive Director of Racial Equity at LA County. In collaboration with Supervisor Mitchell's Office and the Coalition for Equitable ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) Implementation, the LA County Chief Executive Office developed an equity index and formula to allocate ARPA dollars. The Equity Funding Formula (Formula) distributed ARPA resources based on [LA County's COVID-19 Vulnerability and Recovery Index](#), which correlated vulnerable communities high-need ZIP codes. Based on the Index, the Formula corresponded percentages of allocated resources, with higher Index need categories receiving higher percentages of ARPA funding. The indicators used in the Index were Risk (e.g. overcrowded housing units), Severity (e.g. uninsured population), Recovery Need (e.g. essential workers), Hard to Count Populations, Non-Geographically Targeted Communities, and Department Identified Indicators. These indicators were inspired by [Catalyst California's COVID-19: Statewide Vulnerability and Recovery Index](#) (Index) with consultation from Coalition for Equitable ARPA Implementation. The Formula allocated ARPA funding in quintiles, with 40-percent of ARPA funds to the Highest-need census tract, 35-percent to High, 20-percent to Moderate, 3-percent to Low, and 2-percent to Lowest-need.

Budget Equity Toolkit



Case Study – Applying a Data-Based Framework to Budget Allocation in Los Angeles County

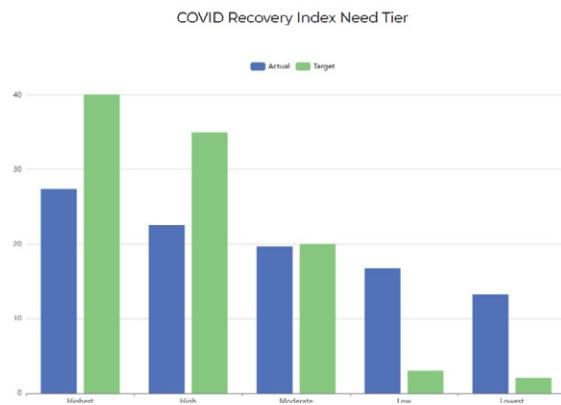


Figure 1. County of Los Angeles ARP Project Dashboard

These percentages were determined by aggregating the population levels of communities in ZIP codes that fall under each index need category and then applying a greater concentration of resources to higher need communities based on their disproportionate need.

With this formula, LA County developed a method to equitably allocate ARPA funds, with direct allocations by highest need. The Equity Funding Formula demonstrates that it is feasible to use a data-based budget allocation framework and that prioritizing data in budget allocation encourages deliberate fiduciary action. In applying this formula, LA County committed 75 percent of its first-round ARPA funding to neighborhoods hardest hit by the [COVID-19] pandemic, including funding for immigrant-serving programs and housing for people experiencing homelessness and extremely low-income people. These impacts can be viewed on the County's [Project Map](#).

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Case Study – Applying a Data-Based Framework to Budget Allocation in Los Angeles County

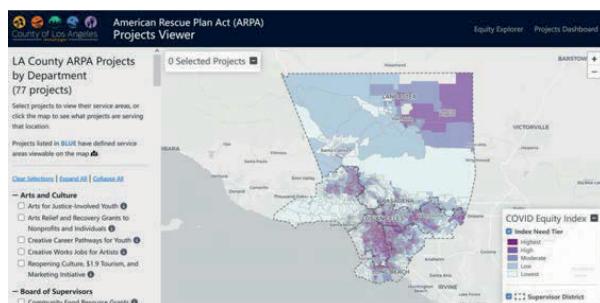


Figure 2. County of Los Angeles American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Projects Viewer

In Los Angeles, Catalyst California also created the Student Equity Need Index (SENI) for the LA County Unified School District (LAUSD). This index builds off the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) to use evidence-based indicators (e.g., school climate, school demographics, community indicators) to equitably distribute resources to highest-need schools. At the May 8, 2024, Budget Equity Committee Meeting, panelist Skyla Fuentes of InnerCity Struggle discussed the benefits of using the index to fund programs prioritizing the needs of marginalized students. The SENI also proves the success of applying a data-based framework to budget allocation.

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Next Steps

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Next Steps

- Explore training and technical assistance opportunities for Department of Finance (DoF) analysts, agency subject matter experts on equity, and agency budget analysts
- Determine formatting of the Budget Equity Worksheet and placement within the BCP form.
- Determine timeline with DoF on integration and rollout of the budget equity worksheet.

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For Technical Assistance

 racialequity.lci.ca.gov

 RacialEquityCommission@lci.ca.gov

PART 1: Building the Framework for your Organization

1.11 Readiness Assessment by Possibility Lab at UC Berkeley

This document was developed by Possibility Lab at UC Berkeley for the Racial Equity Commission. Its content does not necessarily reflect the views, positions, or opinions of the Racial Equity Commission, the Governor's Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation (LCI), or the Office of the Governor.

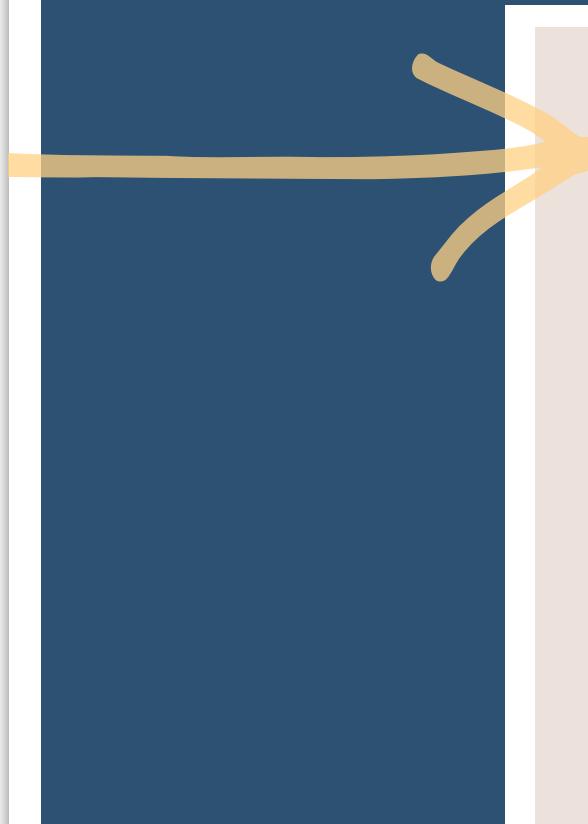
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RACIAL EQUITY FRAMEWORK READINESS ASSESSMENT



The purpose of the Tool is to

1. Help organizations gather baseline information in order to self-identify areas for organizational change and improvement, including specific actions that will lead to improved outcomes for communities throughout California with a focus on historically underserved communities.
2. Spur dialogue within organizations that leads to greater understanding and commitment to address issues of racial equity.
3. Facilitate the sharing of information, resources, mutual support, and improvement tools.
4. Build shared accountability within your organization.



This Tool was designed, informed, and adapted based on research by Julia Raven, an Asset Analysis conducted by the UC Berkeley Possibility Lab for the California Racial Equity Commission, and the [Eliminating Disparities in Child & Youth Success Collaborative](#) in Oregon.

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Instructions

1. Meet with your organization's equity lead or subject matter expert to discuss the process for completing the tool.
2. Complete the Assessment Tool beginning on page 4.
3. Complete one-page summary of results of the tool with your organization's strengths, challenges, and action areas on page 11.
4. Call upon the Racial Equity Commission with any questions or needed support throughout the process.
5. For additional support or questions, contact racialequitycommission@lci.ca.gov.



Who should complete the Tool within an organization?

To help facilitate a self-assessment that is representative of all racial equity efforts within each agency, department, or entity, we highly recommend that each organization's chief executive convene a cross-functional team within your organization to collectively complete this tool. This cross-functional team should ideally include, to the extent your organization is structured as such, one member of your Executive team, equity officer, program or policy staff, human resources or admin personnel, attorney, and others as you see fit.

Please note, however, that **the Tool is not intended as a mechanism for engaging all staff in a given organization**. Instead, a thoughtful process of staff engagement may be seen as one possible element of the action plan to be developed following the completion of the Tool.

Start Here

Directions: Fill in the blanks with the description that best summarizes where your organization is in relation to the organizational characteristics and workforce competencies listed below. Then look at the reflections section for recommendations about next steps.

		We haven't started work in this area yet.	We are in the planning phase.	This element is in place and we can share how we are doing it.	This is part of our routine, and we can help others do it too.
Organizational Characteristics	Institutional commitment to addressing/eliminating racial and ethnic inequities				
	Structure that supports authentic community partnerships that are empowering and more fluid than hierarchical				
	Supporting staff to address racial and ethnic inequities				
	Inclusive and culturally-responsive internal communications				
	Institutional support for innovation and quality improvement to better meet the organization's mission				
	Data and planning practices that are accessible to and, as appropriate, driven by community stakeholders, incorporating community narratives and experience				
	Effective and coordinated administrative processes				

		We haven't started work in this area yet.	We are in the planning phase.	This element is in place and we can share how we are doing it.	This is part of our routine, and we can help others do it too.
Workforce Competencies	Understanding of the social, environmental and structural determinants of racial and ethnic inequities				
	Knowledge of affected communities (can be developed by building and maintaining authentic relationships with communities, analysis of community-driven data, etc.)				
	Courageous leadership that is consistent around applying a racial equity lens and understanding of power and privilege				
	Problem-solving abilities				
	Cultural responsiveness and humility				

Reflections

How did it feel to be asked these questions? Are there questions you wish were asked? What are they, and how would you respond?

Going Deeper

Directions: Please answer the questions below. Put a “Y,” “N” or “?” in the blank box on the left to indicate yes, no, or I don’t know.

Part 1 – Building the Framework for Our Organization

Working with Community to Better Serve All Californians

Does our organization have formal partnerships with external organizations, including grassroots and community-based organizations?

Does our organization regularly review how it engages with the public and how race is considered in community engagement?

Does our organization provide language access services for people who speak languages other than English?

Gathering and Using Information and Data to Serve All Californians Successfully

Do we collect data on user/client satisfaction for individuals who use our organization’s programs or services?

When we make evidence-based decisions regarding services and programs, do we review the decision with the impacted community?

Does our organization make data accessible to the public?

Understanding Budgets and How it Impacts Communities

Does our organization allocate resources for engagement and outreach to communities?

Has our organization developed or adapted programs and services based on community engagement, or service use data?

Structures to Help Create a California Where All Can Thrive

Within our organization's strategic plan, do the equity related goals have clear actions, timelines, people responsible for each action, indicators?

Are racial equity, implicit/explicit bias, and cultural competency training and capacity building made available to our employees?

Has our organization taken steps to encourage staff involvement in its racial equity initiatives?

Part 2 – Delivering Results That Matter

Helping Organization Leaders Making Racial Equity Real

Has our organization made a commitment to racial equity through our strategic plan?

Have institutional structures been put in place to help support our organization's racial equity work?

Does our organization apply racial equity practices within internal staff structures?

Does our organization encourage or support difficult conversations about race in safe, confidential space?

Are our meetings conducted in a way that supports equity and inclusion, and values the diverse ways of speaking, thinking, debating, reflecting and making decisions?

Is our organization's physical space and/or website welcoming and accessible?

Helping Staff Build Skills, Knowledge, and Experience

Is it clear to our organization why the Racial Equity Commission Framework is needed?

Do we understand how the state's Racial Equity Framework will be effective in addressing inequities within our organization's work?

Should our organization reassess our goals to better incorporate the Racial Equity Framework?

Has our organization's leadership made a commitment to champion the Racial Equity Framework?

Has there been a consistent and unified message from all levels of leadership within our organization about adopting Racial Equity and the Racial Equity Framework?

Have we clearly identified which leader(s) in our organization are serving as champions of implementing the Racial Equity Framework?

If our organization has questions, is it clear who we should reach out to for help with our organization's Racial Equity Framework implementation plan?

Do our staff/employees have the information and skills necessary to successfully implement the Racial Equity Framework at this organization?

Are we clear as to how the Racial Equity Framework works within the bounds of Prop 209, Equal Protections, and the Civil Rights Act?

Has our organization identified measurable outcomes related to its racial equity work?



Bringing It All Together

Review your responses above. Are there any common themes? Are there themes you can address within the next 12 months?



Group Discussion Questions

How do you think the results of this Readiness Assessment can be used to improve your organization's racial equity work?

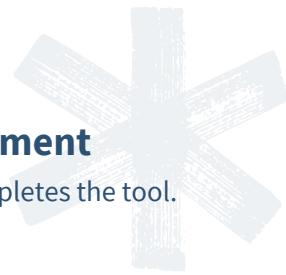
What are your biggest questions about the Framework? What are your plans for following up with the Commission for assistance?

What training or information does your organization need to implement change?

What are the biggest challenges to advancing this work?

Assessment & Accountability Tool Summary Document

This one-page summary should be filled out after your organization completes the tool.



I. Organizational Overview

Please provide a 5-10 sentence description of your organization.

II. Strengths (Based on the results of the Tool)

- A. Community Engagement
- B. Data
- C. Budget Equity
- D. Infrastructure

III. Gaps (Based on the results of the Tool)

- A. Community Engagement
- B. Data
- C. Budget Equity
- D. Infrastructure

IV. Possible Action Areas

Based on the results of the Tool, identify three actions your organization plans to take within the next 12 months.

V. Reflections

Based on the results of the Tool, provide feedback that can help your organization improve the Tool's usability for your group moving forward.



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PART 2: Delivering Real Results that Matter

2.1 Tools for Organizing Change (Literature Review) by Possibility Lab at UC Berkeley

This document was developed by Possibility Lab at UC Berkeley for the Racial Equity Commission. Its content does not necessarily reflect the views, positions, or opinions of the Racial Equity Commission, the Governor's Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation (LCI), or the Office of the Governor.

LITERATURE REVIEW

TOOLS FOR SUCCESSFUL ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE



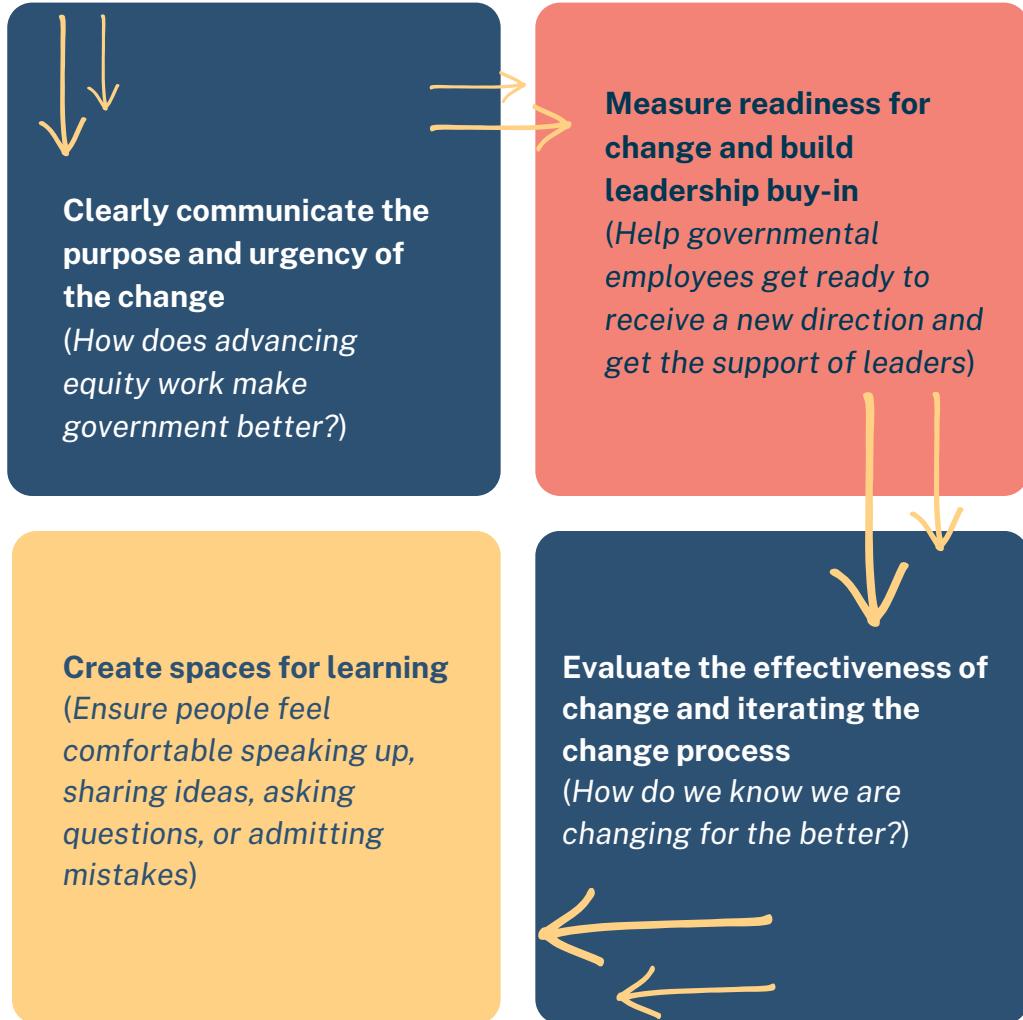
The California Racial Equity Commission has been tasked by Governor Gavin Newsom (Executive Order N-16-22) to develop a unifying framework to address the barriers to racial equity across the California state enterprise, with the goal of advancing justice, expanding access to state institutions, and improving the quality of services provided by state government. The Racial Equity Commission Framework has highlighted some of the steps that may support advancing equity across government entities, such as **adding language into duty statements** for state government jobs that emphasize equity as a clear goal and ensuring that **equity is embedded into organizational strategic plans**, among others. In order to fully serve the public of California, state agencies must be equitably fulfilling their missions. *This is the core goal of the Racial Equity Commission's work.*

DISCLAIMER

This review was prepared by the University of California, Berkeley Possibility Lab to provide information to the California Racial Equity Commission who is charged with developing a Racial Equity Framework, providing technical assistance, and reporting progress. The opinions expressed in this brief reflect those of the Possibility Lab and do not reflect the views of the Racial Equity Commission, Governor's Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation (LCI), or the Office of the Governor.

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We focus this section on the **key elements of effective organizational change** based on the literature, which include:



Change management can be complicated and difficult, especially in the public sector where there is a diverse array of interests and actors to keep in mind. By considering organizational and behavior change models, however, change can be impactful and long-lasting. The existing change management literature gives us insights into the best strategies and cadence through which change should happen, and key roadblocks to keep an eye out for on the path towards institutional change.

Organizational Change and Performance Management

Organizational change, or major shifts to personnel, goals, tools, or technologies across an organization or state to adapt to new challenges or meet new opportunities, is a cornerstone of successful growth and development in both the public and private sector. Despite its importance, however, organizational change is complicated and can be prone to failure. Part of this is due to the non-linear nature of change: after implementing change, individuals experience their organizations' social factors, technology, and other inputs that shape their commitment to change (Robertson and Seneviratne 1995). For example, if change is seen as unhelpful to their agency's goals or mid-level management signals a low commitment to change, individuals may feel less eager to change their existing behaviors.

The change management literature provides clear suggestions to overcome the biggest pitfalls to any organizational change effort: identify vision for change, measuring readiness for change, implementing change, and evaluating change. Change is not a linear path but a feedback loop: as you evaluate the success of change, new improvements and adaptations can be made. Understanding the timing of change can be just as important as correctly identifying the tools for successful change. For example, the more effort that is spent on clarifying the vision for change and how it will make outcomes better, the more likely actors will be to implement changes. The change feedback loop is captured in **Figure 1** below.

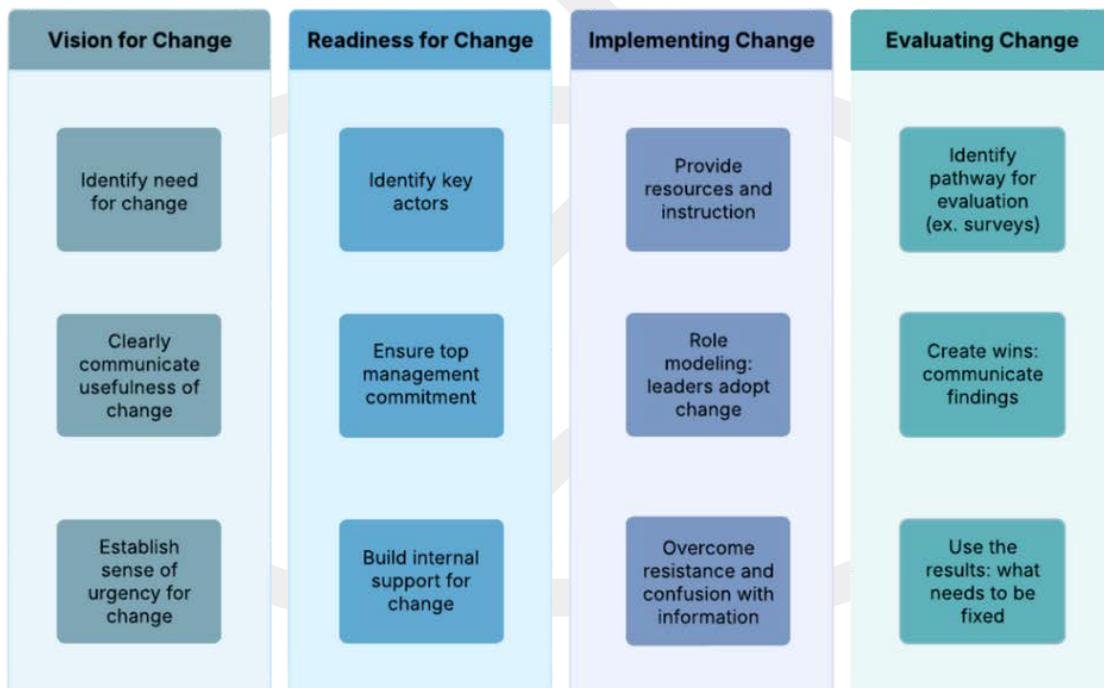


Figure 1: Change management process loop

Vision and Readiness for Change

A vital first step in effective change management is establishing and communicating the **urgency of change** (what shortfalls or needs will the Framework's new changes be addressing) and clearly communicate their **vision for the future** (Kotter 1995, Jones et al 2005, By et al 2008). Executive Order N-16-22 captures the urgency and vision for the broad need for change, to address historic inequities, to collect demographic data, analyze equity in new policy initiatives, and so on. The state's Racial Equity Framework should continue this vision-building by outlining how each factor (for example, collecting demographic data can yield better outcomes. A clear vision for change highlights how the change efforts will make actors' work better and can yield additional buy-in (Ostroff 2006, Cummings and Worley 2013).

Advancing racial equity in state governments is often “framed as a compromiser of efficiency” (Gooden 2014, 147), yet investments in racial equity see tangible, high-yield returns on investment (e.g., Anton and Temple 2007). For example, a study of at-risk youth in Minnesota produced estimated returns of \$14 for every dollar invested by the state due to fewer crimes, less absence from schools, and more (Anton and Temple 2007). The Racial Equity Framework's language around the importance of equity should be framed in plain language and as explicitly as possible to the specific roles state actors fulfill. This framing should emphasize that attention to racial equity is not optional, but a key component of the work state agencies do to fulfill their mission of serving a California for All.

Understanding the **readiness for change** provides information on 1) **the buy-in of actors for change** (whether they are prepared for the proposed change, see impending changes as integral to their jobs, etc.) and 2) **whether the actual tools and willingness for implementing change are present** (Cinite et al 2009). To gauge the broad readiness and ongoing activities for racial equity across the state, the Racial Equity Commission conducted an Asset Analysis in 2024. The Commission learned that 51 percent of respondents said their organization needed support in identifying specific racial inequities or disparities in the scope of their work. At the same time, 92 percent of respondents reported having some kind of organizational infrastructure in place to support racial equity work. Respondents also reported wanting the Racial Equity Framework to establish best practices for budget equity, set clear expectations and accountability mechanisms, establish cross-agency coordination, and other strategies to institutionalize racial equity.

Readiness assessments can be used as a tool to understand a government entities' unique constraints, communication needs, and needed tools to successfully implement the state's Racial Equity Framework. Some readiness assessment models are already actively used across state entities and can serve as a model for the Racial Equity Commission's Framework, such as the California Department of Technology's readiness assessment, which can be found in the Appendix, alongside others.

Implementing Change

Leading by example is a core component of success. Leaders – from mid-level management to the executive – are seen as sponsors of change, and the stronger their endorsement and participation, the more likely others are to participate (Schraeder et al 2005, Fernandez and Rainey 2013, Errida and Lofti 2021). The Racial Equity Commission should therefore make clear the importance for leadership to support the implementation of the Framework and work across governmental entities in promoting and communicating the need for change.

Heading off questions and creating channels for communication are critical for building and maintaining **psychological safety**. Psychological safety, per CalHR, includes the freedom to speak up, an inclusive environment, trust and support, a focus on well-being, and leadership committed to open communication and inclusivity. Making mistakes is part of the process and may lead to hidden solutions. One strategy to address this concern is to give implementers and subject matter experts ownership over new processes, with a focus on the systematic benefit of change (Clegg and Walsh 2004). For example, the Racial Equity Commission could explain how the new Framework will *embolden* existing efforts and the ability for individuals to do their jobs, not correct or be misaligned with them (Have et al 2019). The Framework can be framed as guidance for each California state entity to apply to their individual contexts and how future reports will support their work. The Framework should make clear who will be responsible for answering questions around implementation and providing information to head-off potential concerns, such as confusion over how Prop 209 or recent federal action applies in the context of racial equity efforts.



Developing an Office of Racial Equity at the state level could be a pathway to clarifying communication and streamlining implementation if it is seen as a channel for questions or source of information. It must be clear, however, what the precise roles of the Office are and how it differs from the role of the Commission in order for individuals from across state government to utilize its resources. For example, the Office could serve as a communication and coordinating hub for racial equity across government entities, answering questions with regards to the implementation of the Framework.

New York City can provide us an example of an Office and Commission coexisting. The NYC Commission on Racial Equity (established in 2022) acts as an oversight body, providing advice and analysis of progress, whereas the Mayor's Office of Equity engages more directly with stakeholders and develops new city planning. Similarly, an Office may provide a singular source of directives with clear authority to implement future policy expectations extended by the Administration or Legislature. If the purpose of an Office is not well-defined, government entities may not rely on it or indeed, it could inadvertently signal a commitment to racial equity in words only. Deciding the specific role of an Office of Racial Equity will also dictate what stage in the process it should be formed. If it is primarily used as a center for questions and communication, it may be vital to establish the office earlier. However, if its primary role is disseminating reports and evaluating success, it may not be a priority at this time.

Evaluating Change

Evaluation allows for the review of process, understanding of challenges, and identification of additional goals and metrics. By evaluating success of the Framework early and often, government entities can monitor and adjust strategies as implementation is happening instead of waiting for failures to appear (By 2005). Given its importance, what should evaluation look like and how might the information gathered be utilized? The Commission's Asset Analysis may offer some initial insights into the kinds of data that actors may most be interested in. One question asked how individual's organizations utilized data, the results of which highlight areas for better program evaluation, assistance in making decisions, and other metrics.

The results of any evaluation effort should be **actionable and accessible**, with regular reporting on progress. The Commission is charged with producing an annual report beginning in December 2026 which may support in sharing efforts for implementation and evaluation. Some action items may be easier to implement and yield short-term wins (Kotter 1996) and can help build momentum for change. For longer-term wins, it is important to develop clear metrics for tracking implementation and milestones for measuring the success of change (for example, when might a report be coming out with the collected data?) (Errida and Lofti 2005). It may take time for outcome data to reflect changes at the program-level, so it is important to effectively communicate expectations around a reasonable timeline for change.

Finally, evaluations can help develop clear criteria for who should be included in developing goals and strategies for achieving those goals across the state (what does community involvement look like? How can community provide feedback?). Evaluations serve as a way to gain information on organizational-level commitment to the Framework and tangible development of racial equity policies across the state. Once data are collected and conclusions are reached, they should be communicated clearly and frequently to communities throughout the state and those directly impacted by the government entity, with room for adaptation in strategies and acknowledgement of both lessons learned and progress. Previous steps may need to be revisited as their effectiveness and success are evaluated.



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Appendix

Common Pitfalls to Change Management

Change management literature has identified two primary pitfalls to organizational change: (1) failing to bring key actors on board and (2) under-preparing for roll out. The inability to bring key actors on board can be caused by a failure to identify the most important actors in the change process or an inability to effectively convince relevant actors that change is needed and good (Kickert 2014, By et al 2008). Leadership buy-in is particularly essential to build momentum for change (Checinski et al 2019, Basford and Schaninger 2016, Fernandez and Rainey 2019). If organizational leadership does not commit to change, they may unintentionally communicate a disinterest in the change process or a disbelief in the importance of change throughout the organization. Leaders must serve as the sponsors of change, fully endorsing change, modeling the strategies critical to success, and therefore validating its purpose (Errida and Lotfi 2021).

Meaningful organizational change can also be hampered by the change implementers falsely assuming it will be easy and therefore under-preparing (Jacobs et al 2013). For example, not having tools for implementation and evaluation ready before rolling out new programs (information pamphlets, videos, trainings, etc.), or not identifying the various actors who are going to be involved and building their understanding for success prior to implementation can seriously slow implementation or cause actors to lose faith in the process. Additional pitfalls may also arise, especially when implementing long-lasting change that requires continual buy-in and iteration across different levels of the organization. For example, not communicating results or showing how change has improved outcomes along the way can hamper long-term commitment to the improvement or change being attempted (Sackmann et al 2009).

Table 1: Pathways to Successful Organizational Change

	Checinski et al (2019)	Kotter (1995)	Mento et al (2002)	Fernandez and Rainey (2019)	Basford and Schaninger (2016)
Identifying need	Clear purpose and priorities	Establish sense of urgency	Identify need for change and define the change initiative	Ensure the need: Why is change essential?	Foster understanding and conviction
	Compelling communication	Create and communicate vision clearly	Evaluate climate for change and develop plan	Provide a plan: Give a road map to implementers	--
Identifying People	Committed leadership	Establish guiding coalition for change	Cultivate sponsors for change (identify key groups or individuals)	Build internal support for change and overcome resistance	Role models: see leaders adopt changes as example
	--	Empower others to act on the vision (get rid of obstacles)	Prepare target recipients for change	Ensure top management support and commitment; Build external support	Develop talent and skills
Identifying Process	Capability for change, cadence and coordination in delivery	Plan for visible short-term wins, reward employees involved	Create small wins, measure change effort, integrate lessons learned	Provide resources, institutionalize change	Reinforce formal mechanisms
Additional tools for successful change	--	Institutionalize new approaches	Create cultural fit to ensure changes last	Pursue comprehensive change	--

Table 2: Readiness Assessment Models

Source	Link to Assessment Tool
California Department of Technology	Readiness Assessment Tool
HeadStart	Readiness Assessment Tool
Race Forward	Readiness Assessment Tool
University of Waterloo	Readiness Assessment Tool
Building Movement	Readiness Assessment Tool
Canadian Medical Association	Readiness Assessment Tool
University of California, Berkeley	Readiness Assessment Tool
Texas Institute of Behavioral Research at TCU	Readiness Assessment Tool
Nebraska Social Determinants of Health COIN Team	Readiness Assessment Tool
Trauma Informed Oregon / Coalition of Communities of Color	Tool for Organizational Self-Assessment Related to Racial Equity

Lessons Learned from Public Sector Change Management: Case Analysis

While the literature review above provides an overview of strategies for effective change management, the Racial Equity Commission can also learn lessons from the models put forward through other states and initiatives. Several states, counties, and local governments across the United States and across the political spectrum have advanced racial equity through a commission, office, or other initiative. These efforts have resulted in differing levels of success. The remainder of this section briefly unpacks two cases of organizational change – California Tribal Consultation and Charleston, South Carolina Racial Equity Commission – and provides the lessons that can be learned for the Racial Equity Commission’s Framework implementation. A few additional examples can be found at the end of this appendix.

Case study 1: California tribal consultation executive orders

The California tribal consultation executive orders aimed to achieve greater inclusion of tribal communities within California and direct consultation with tribal communities on issues that might directly impact them. For example, environmental review of new water management systems. This organizational change was designed to fulfill a need across the state: how to ensure projects appropriately considered the needs of the community while giving formalized voice to tribal communities. The greatest success of the implementation of this new consultation strategy was the clear communication of the “why” for change: the ability to create better policy with greater buy-in and attention to community needs. The process of change was also well-identified with a new leadership position created to help manage this new relationship between policymakers and tribal communities. However, the implementation was not without its challenges. While the first steps in the consultation process were laid out, the full extent of the process was not thought through. A key challenge arose when disagreements between tribal authority and commissioners came up and there was no clear path as to what resolution would look like. (Calhoun et al 2024, Swanson et al 2024, Dadashi 2021)

Case study 2: Racial equity case study: The Special Commission on Equity, Inclusion, and Racial Conciliation in Charleston, South Carolina

In 2018, a special commission was formed on Equity, Inclusion, and Racial Conciliation in Charleston, South Carolina with the mandate to 1. create “measurable outcomes, promote greater accountability, and 2. coordinate community-wide efforts to achieve racial equity. A key goal of the commission was to require all departments within the city to collect demographic data, analyze policy outcomes, and other key measures of equity that would be collected and disseminated by the commission. The primary success of this commission was their ability to implement real change, with extensive research into more equitable policymaking across a number of areas, audit of all state monuments, and a resulting permanent Human Affairs and Racial Conciliation Commission to implement report findings. However, some challenges arose both internally due to shifting politics and a failure to garner long-term buy in on some initiatives. For example, some of the language used in the final report such as “critical race theory” garnered backlash from councilmembers, which in turn became a focus point rather than the commission’s actionable findings (Maasakkers and Wilson 2024).

Additional case studies for review

Large-scale change management:

- California Healthy Cities and Communities Program ([Kegler et al 2008](#))
- California education reform (implementation of new policy for assessment across California public schools (ex. [Chrispeels 1997](#))
- Self-evaluated climate commitments in California ([Bedsworth and Hanak 2013](#), [Dunning 2005](#))

Racial equity actions at the county or local level:

- Marin County ([participatory budgeting](#))
- San Mateo County ([Office of Racial and Social Justice](#))
- City of San Diego ([Department of Race and Equity](#))



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POSSIBILITY LAB

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA BERKELEY

PART 2: Delivering Real Results that Matter

2.2 Race-Conscious Remedies Cake by Lisa Holder

This document was developed by Lisa Holder for the Racial Equity Commission. Its content does not necessarily reflect the views, positions, or opinions of the Racial Equity Commission, the Governor's Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation (LCI), or the Office of the Governor.

race-conscious remedies cake recipe



Race-Conscious Remedies

- Prop 209 (public education, employment, and contracting)
- Federal equal protection

209 Exceptions

- Compelled by federal law
- Recent intentional discrimination by entity

Croson Line of Case Law

Race-conscious data tracking and disparity analysis:

• Anecdotal evidence	• Recent discrimination
• Statistics and patterns	• Good faith consideration of race neutral alternatives
• Implicit bias evidence	

Examples of Strong Policy Language

• Oakland	• Long Beach
• Stockton	• Culver City
• San Francisco	• Los Angeles
• Hayward	

Resources

- CA Reparations Report
- Repository of City Racial Equity Policies and Decisions
- Government Alliance on Race & Equity (GARE) Map
- Stanford's Basic Income Lab

Stay the Course

DO:

- Bring in equal protection experts to consult with agencies

DO NOT:

- Walk back your policy if you have the evidence

Groups Targeting Race-Conscious Programs in California

- Pacific Legal Foundation
- Alliance for Fair Board Recruitment
- Judicial Watch

Race Neutral Alternatives

- Test for three years to determine efficacy and remediation
- Use proxies (e.g., zip codes, socioeconomic status, disability and/or gender intersectionality)

E Q U A L J U S T I C E S O C I E T Y

PART 2: Delivering Real Results that Matter

2.3 Targeted Universalism Overview by the Othering and Belonging Institute at UC Berkeley

This document was developed by the Othering and Belonging Institute at UC Berkeley for the Racial Equity Commission. Its content does not necessarily reflect the views, positions, or opinions of the Racial Equity Commission, the Governor's Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation (LCI), or the Office of the Governor.



Understanding and Applying Targeted Universalism

DATE

October 17, 2024

PRESENTER

Stephen Menendian, Assistant
Director & Director of Research
Othering and Belonging Institute

AUTHORIAL SUPPORT

Overview of Targeted Universalism

Overview

- Goal Today: Explain the *benefits* and *process* of Targeted Universalism as a program/policy design framework.
- This presentation will:
 - Contrast T/U with universal and targeted programmatic approaches.
 - Walk through the Targeted Universalism design process (“doing T/U”).
 - Present examples of T/U.
- In the process, I will break you into small groups for two discussion prompts to check and deepen your understanding, and I will periodically pause to answer questions.

Caveat: Targeted Universalism is not a Magic Bullet

- The Targeted Universalism framework has enormous potential to unlock ideas, innovative processes, and collective action that can solve many of society’s most pressing problems without further dividing people or stoking backlash.
- But that doesn’t mean it is a magic bullet. Not every problem is amenable to a targeted universalistic intervention.
- Nor can every organization do T/U. It is difficult and challenging.
- To see the limits of Targeted Universalism clearly -- as well as its potential -- we need to understand how policy is developed.

Policy / Program Development

Generally speaking, societal interventions follow three steps:

1. First, there must be recognition of a social, economic, political, or environmental problem. e.g. poverty, gun violence, climate change)
2. Second, policymakers or other responsible authorities must decide that the problem requires *and* merits a policy response.
3. Third, policymakers must select an appropriate and effective policy response, and develop sufficient consensus to promulgate and implement it. This only can occur if the policymakers at issue have determined the first two steps affirmatively.

It is only at this step where a Targeted Universalism frameworks becomes operational. Targeted Universalism cannot resolve debates at the first or second steps. But it can be quite powerful at the third step.

Equity 2.0: Targeting within Universalism

- The problems we face seem daunting, the politics of solving them often feel more challenging. How can we build greater consensus on the path forward?
- Targeted Universalism is a way to design policy to meet the needs of our most disadvantaged while overcome the divisiveness that sometimes arises from targeted approaches or exacerbate the disparities of universal approaches.
- It is an approach that opens up policy pathways to equity.
- To understand this policy approach, we need to contrast it with universal and targeted strategies.

I. Universal Policies & Programs

- To understand T/U, we first need to understand the two dominant modes of policy and program development, starting with Universalism.
- Universal policies are those that aspire to serve everyone without regard to group membership, status, or class.
- Universal policies can appear in different forms. They can exist as benefits that are extended to all OR can appear as minimum protections, entitlements, or rights for all.
- The key to understanding whether a policy or program is universal is not how many people benefit or are protected, but the aim, purpose or aspiration of the policy or program.

Universal Policies: Examples

- Universal Policies in which all can benefit: Universal Public Education, Single-Payer or Universal Health Care systems, Universal Suffrage or Voting Systems.
- Universal policies that provide minimum protections, entitlements, or rights for all: minimum wage laws, fair labor standards laws, constitutional rights that apply to all “persons,” many (although not all) anti-discrimination laws.
- Whether people benefit or are protected is not the litmus test. Whether people could benefit or are intended to benefit is the key.

Example: The Poll Tax Amendment

- The 24th Amendment to the US Constitution says:
- “The right of citizens of the United States to vote in any primary or other election for President or Vice President, for electors for President or Vice President, or for Senator or Representative in Congress, shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or any State by reason of failure to pay poll tax or other tax.”
- Is this a “universal” policy?

How Universal is Universal?

- Consider “UBI” – or Universal Basic Income:
 - A UBI policy would pay benefits – a “freedom dividend, to take one example” – to everyone, including Elon Musk and Bill Gates. In practice, most “UBI” are income conditional.
 - In truth, pretty much every “universal” policy is limited in some way. Most commonly, by the jurisdictional reach of the legislating authority. But even other “universal” policies, like Universal Suffrage, have age and other restrictions.

Types of Universal Programs (Gradient)

TABLE 1
Types of Universal Programs

Type of Policy	Components	Examples
Truly universal	They apply to everyone within a national jurisdiction. No cost or fee. No age or income baseline or minimum. No activity required.	Universal basic income
Broadly universal	A universal policy with some minimal exceptions, based upon activity.	Universal suffrage
Conditionally universal	A policy that applies conditionally, but not based on inherent characteristics.	Social Security's unemployment insurance and old age benefits; minimum wage: requires working

The Advantages & Disadvantages of Universalism

- Universal policies have broad appeal in a diverse and pluralistic society. They give everyone "skin in the game." They tend to be more sustainable and harder to stigmatize or roll back.
- They also have many disadvantages.
 - Universal policies tend to be more expensive, even if they are cheaper per capita, because they serve more people. They are more easily labeled as unaffordable, overly ambitious, or unrealistic.
 - Universal policies can also exacerbate disparities, because they treat everyone the same, and can be inadequate to help those more in need.

II. Targeted Policies & Programs

- Targeted policies are those aimed at serving or providing benefits or protections for specific groups or discrete populations, generally to the exclusion of other social groups or people.
- The aim of targeted policies, in most cases, however, is not to exclude. Rather, targeted policies are based upon the presumption that the problem which they aim to address is unique to the target.
- For example, a rural assistance program aimed at helping rural residents may be based upon data showing a particular problem existing principally in rural communities. Thus, it is not that urban or suburban communities are disfavored so much as it is understood, in this example, that they are not suffer the problem that the policy is aimed at alleviating.

Targeted Policies: Examples

- The most commonly targeted groups tend to be those based upon low-income status, such as poverty or class, rural communities, veterans, the disabled, the elderly or aged, or children and parents, especially mothers.
- Among those, the most widely recognized forms of targeted policies, however, are based upon class, or income qualifications, such as welfare programs. Programs that are means tested or use income-based qualifications, often aiming at alleviating poverty, may be the largest class of targeted policies. Such policies are at least four centuries old.
 - The 1601, the English Poor Laws gave local governments the authority to levy taxes to build and maintain almshouses, provide indoor relief (such as cash or sustenance) to the elderly, disabled, and deserving poor, and furnish tools and materials to employ the unemployed.

Targeted or Universal? The Bloomberg Philanthropies Gift to Johns Hopkins

- The Bloomberg Philanthropies recently provided a \$1 billion gift to Johns Hopkins Medical School. The gift was intended to cover full tuition for medical students from families earning less than \$300,000, and living expenses and fees for students from families who earn up to \$175,000.
- The Philanthropies estimated that it would benefit about 2/3 of medical students into the future.
- Is that a targeted gift or a universal program?
 - Although serving most students, it is nonetheless targeted based upon income qualifications.

Targeted Policies: More Examples

- Not all targeted policies are based upon the premise of solving a problem experienced by a targeted group or community. Rather, in some cases, targeted policies are based upon the presumption that some groups are deserving of special privileges based upon public virtue or service.
 - The Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, also known as the GI Bill, may be one of the most successful targeted policies in American history, providing subsidized education, loans, and health care to veterans returning from World War II.
- Examples of targeted programs include policies like Medicaid, SNAP (the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or food stamps), the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), and the refundable (or low-income) component of the Child Tax Credit (CTC). Other targeted programs include Social Security's Old Age Benefits, Affirmative Action, Medicare (age), and Reparations.

The Advantages & Disadvantages of Targeting

- Targeted policies are generally more efficient and less expensive consider the so-called public option vs. Medicare For All'/ single-payer overall, because there are fewer beneficiaries.
- They also tend to be more egalitarian because they directly benefit the group or community that needs help.
- But by targeting a particular group, these approaches are often viewed as unfairly helping one group over another, seeding hostility and resentment or stigma. They are less popular.
- As a result, targeted policies tend to be more limited in duration (often sunsetting (like the Freedman's Bureau) or being rolled-back, like some welfare programs , and less sustainable.

Example of Challenged Targeted Policy

- In 2021, the Biden administration's attempted to provide nonwhite rural farmers with additional assistance from a \$4 billion federal fund. The intended beneficiaries were Black farmers.
- White farmers sued, arguing that the policy was discriminatory, and a federal court struck it down.



Group Activities and Overview of How to Do Targeted Universalism



Group Discussion # 1

- 1) Brainstorm and share a short list of policies you developed or supported in recent years, and try to identify whether they are universal or targeted.
- 2) If they are universal, what is the universal goal? If they are targeted, who is the targeted group?

You have 7 minutes.



III. Targeted Universalism

- Targeted Universalism is a policy framework that establishes universal goals pursued with targeted implementation processes.
 - Imagine, for example, that the goal is to reduce homelessness by 25% over the next five years. Instead of achieving that goal with a single intervention, such as an investment in funding shelters or affordable/ BMR housing units, a Targeted Universalism approach would entail several separate, but reinforcing or complementary implementation strategies, which might include those two ideas, but also possibly pair them with supportive services, health care, counseling, and the like.

Targeted Universalism Explained

- Although Targeted Universalism seeks most of the advantages of both approaches while avoiding their drawbacks, T/U is *not* really a mashup or hybrid because **it is categorically distinct from both**.
- Although the reach of a Targeted Universal policy is aspirationally universal, it differs from both traditional universal and targeted policies because it requires *multiple* supportive implementation pathways to reach that goal.
- **Both** traditional universal and targeted policies usually employ a one-size-fits-all means to achieve their goals. These approaches do not tailor their implementation efforts to the needs of different groups, except by design as in the case of targeted policies, whose aspirational reach is generally tailored to the needs of the targeted group or community .

How to "do" Targeted Universalism

- 5 Steps:
 1. Establish a universal goal based upon a broadly shared recognition of a societal problem and collective aspirations.
 2. Assess the general population performance relative to the universal goal.
 3. Identify groups / places that are performing differently with respect to the goal and the overall population. Groups should be disaggregated.
 4. Assess and understand the structures and conditions that support or impede each group or community from achieving the universal goal.
 5. Develop and implement targeted strategies for each group to reach the universal goal.

Step 1: Establishing the Universal Goal

- Most policies have a statement of goals or purposes. The goal should be framed in relation to the problem you wish to address.
- This seems simple, but is possibly the most difficult step in the process. It is time-intensive and requires tremendous collective effort.
- What is required here is to be as specific and explicit as possible. Ideally, it should follow SMART criteria: specific, measurable, actionable, realistic, and time bound.

Establishing the Universal Goal

- The articulation of the universal goal is the first step in a targeted universalism platform because it then serves as the basis for subsequent policy development.
 - Without reference to the universal goal, it becomes difficult, if not impossible, to assess progress and evaluate success.
- Defining the goal in terms of collective aspirations will require the input of many stakeholders, and can be a time-intensive process if done well.
 - It is partly a visioning process as well as an effort to get members of the institution or community to articulate a shared vision, much like vision and mission statements do for institutions.
 - This step requires bringing everyone affected or touched by the policy to be at the table: experts, community members, affected people, and everyone involved in implementation. It requires meaningful community engagement and involvement.

Reminder

- Remember our discussion at the top, that in some instances, there is a lack of political consensus that a social, economic, or environmental problem or need exists, or that a policy response is warranted. A targeted universalism process cannot resolve these policy disagreements.
- It can, however, forge a policy pathway forward where there is broad agreement that a problem exists and, furthermore, that the problem warrants a policy response, even if there is disagreement or uncertainty about what to do.

FAQ: Should the universal goal be realistic or aspirational?

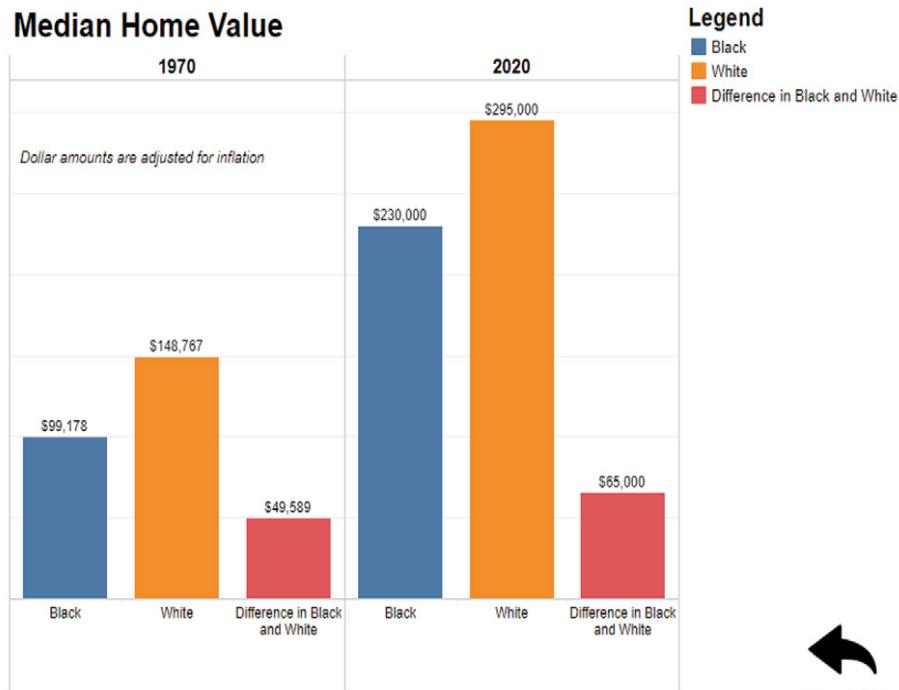
- It is important to make your goal realistic/achievable. If the universal goal is set so high that to reach it would be impossible for most or all groups, then those strategies are, narrowly defined, failures. Worse, it will engender cynicism among participants in the TU effort.
- On the other hand, the universal goal cannot be so anemic or weak that it requires little effort to achieve.
- One way to manage this tension is to set the universal goal in increments over time. So, for example, you might say that you want to get all groups to 50 percent within 5 years and 80 percent within 10 years.

FAQ: Can I focus on a specific group or aim to reduce a disparity for the universal goal?

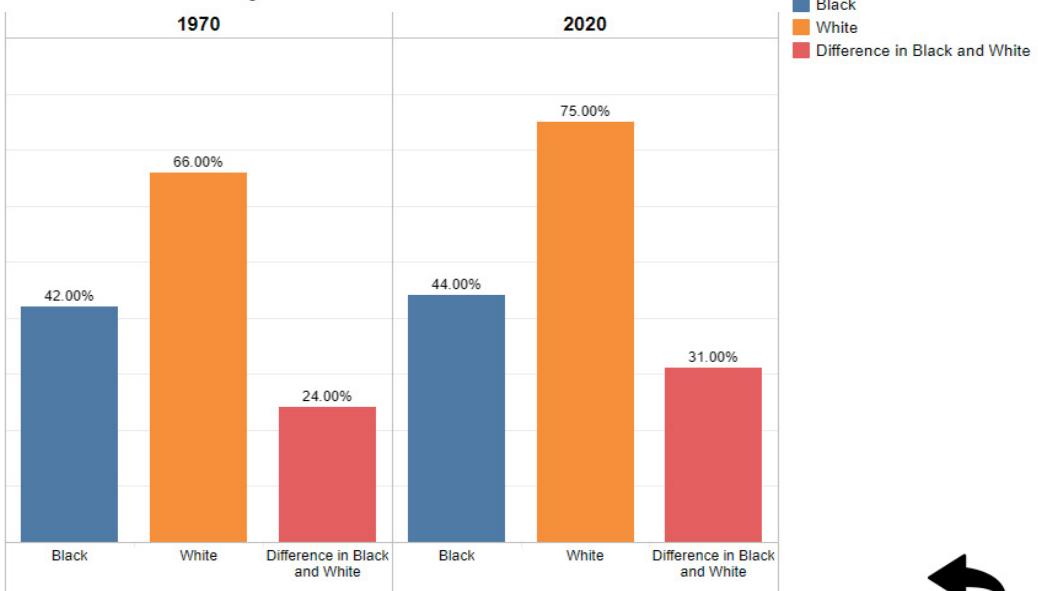
- Answer: No.
- In short, the universal goal should be independent of, and not reference specific groups. The Targeted Universalism process is NOT a license to engage in targeting in policy, programs or platforms in goal-setting. All targeted efforts should be designed in reference to the universal goal.
- Nor should the universal goal be framed with specific reference to reducing or closing disparities.

The Problems with a Disparities Focus

1. It triggers a Zero-Sum Mindset
2. Draws Attention to Groups Rather than Structures/Conditions
3. Implicitly Makes a Group the Norm
4. Closing a Disparities Doesn't = Fairness or Justice
5. Reducing Disparities Through Retrogression
6. Disparities Can Persist Even if Absolute Conditions Improve
T/U allows some degree of disparity, as long as all groups are at or above the universal goal.



Homeownership Rates



Data from the National Community Rehabilitation Coalition and The Federal Reserve

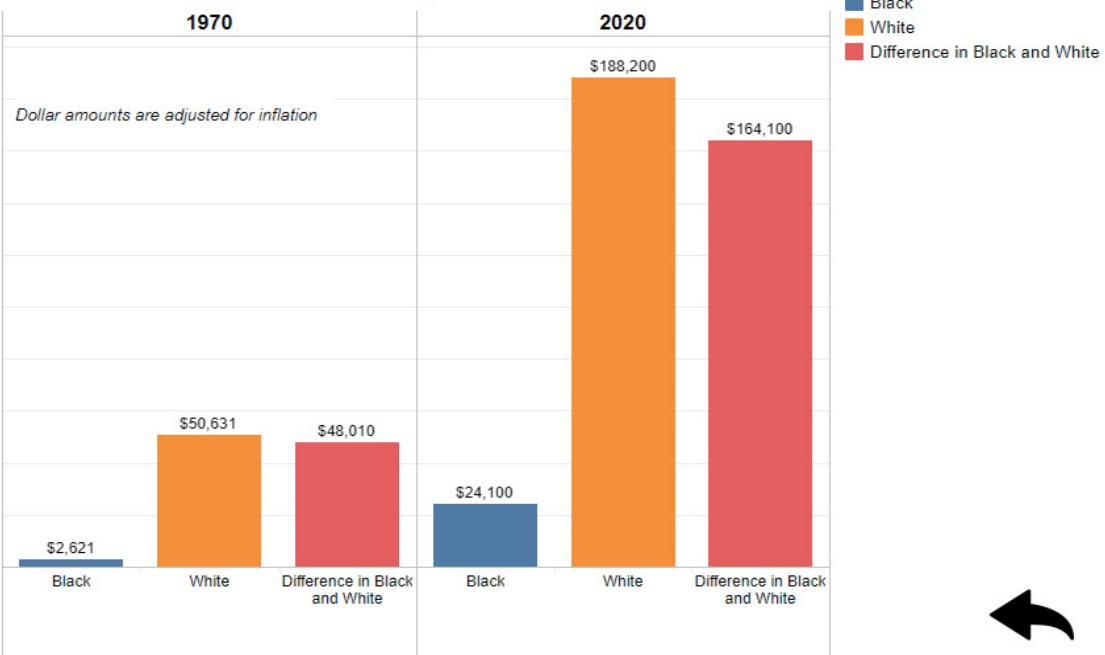
Legend

- Black
- White
- Difference in Black and White

[Return to List](#)



Median Racial Wealth Gap



Data from the Federal Reserve and Urban Institute

Legend

- Black
- White
- Difference in Black and White

[Return to List](#)



Racial Disparities Dashboard

PUBLICATION | JUNE 7, 2023 | UPDATED JUNE 16, 2025



The Othering & Belonging Institute is pleased to present the thoroughly revised Racial Disparities Dashboard, and our expanding snapshot. A racial disparity is defined as a persistent difference in outcomes or performance between racial groups.¹¹ An easily understood example is the racial wealth gap or the racial disparity in maternal mortality, noted below.

This project is designed to be an open resource repository on racial disparities in American society that are important, vital, and measurable. We have nearly 80 different indicators with measured disparities between Black and white Americans in our table below. We have included almost every disparity that we could find which is nationally reported, for which there is recent and apparently reliable data. Over time, we will add more data and disparity figures to this dashboard as we uncover and catalog it for your reference.



Examples of Universal Goals

- 1) All residents within a city should have access to, and reside within a half mile, of a park or city green space.
 - (Austin Parks & Rec Plan)
- 2) All 4-year old children should have access to safe, quality pre-K educational programming.
 - (NYC PreK for All)
- 3) All students in a school district should have access to vision care, including free eyeglasses, so that difficulty seeing (for non-blind students) is not an impediment to learning.
 - ("Vision for Baltimore")



Group Discussion #2

- 1) Identify universal goals you hope to achieve.
 - Articulate those goals in SMART terms.
 - List possible articulations of the Universal Goal(s).
- 2) Separately, specify what disparities or inequities you hope that achieving the universal goal will help solve.
 - Keep this separate from the universal goal articulation.



Step 2: Assess the General Population Performance relative to the universal goal.

- This is relatively straightforward: identify the difference between the universal goal and overall performance.

Example 1: Goal is 100% high school graduate rate. Suppose a school district's graduation rate is 92%.

Example 2: Goal is 100% health insurance coverage. California's insurance coverage rate is 92.7% We have 2.9 million uninsured people.



Step 3: Identify & Places that are performing *differently* with respect to the Goal and the General Population. Groups should be disaggregated.

- This is the step in which you look for group-based disparities.

Example: percentage of each group without health insurance in California is masked by the 7.3% uninsured figure:

- 12.3% of non-white Hispanics
- 5.8% of whites
- 5.8% African-Americans
- 5.5% Asian & Pacific Islander

Source: UCLA

Disaggregating the data creates a very different impression. We can begin to see the group that needs the most attention. If we disaggregate further, we would get an even stronger sense.



FAQ: How do you decide to disaggregate? Which groups do we examine?

- There is no prescribed formula. The answer is highly contextual.
- In each situation, different groups may perform differently.
- You may start by doing a disparities *analysis* to see if you can isolate groupings that are performing further from the goal.
- Look at 1) social identity groups, 2) geographies, 3) socio-economic circumstances, and 4) other conditions/circumstances.

Step 4: Assess and understand the structures and conditions that support or impede each group or community from achieving the universal goal.

- This is the *WHY* some groups are further from the universal goal. Diagnose the cause.
- To understand the why, engage all stakeholders.
 - E.g. To understand why a social group performs worse in a class, ask students, teachers, parents, counselors, and experts/researchers. Maybe it has to do with nutrition, sleep, undiagnosed vision or hearing problems, English language difficulties, or other issue

Step 5: Develop and implement targeted strategies for each group to reach the universal goal.

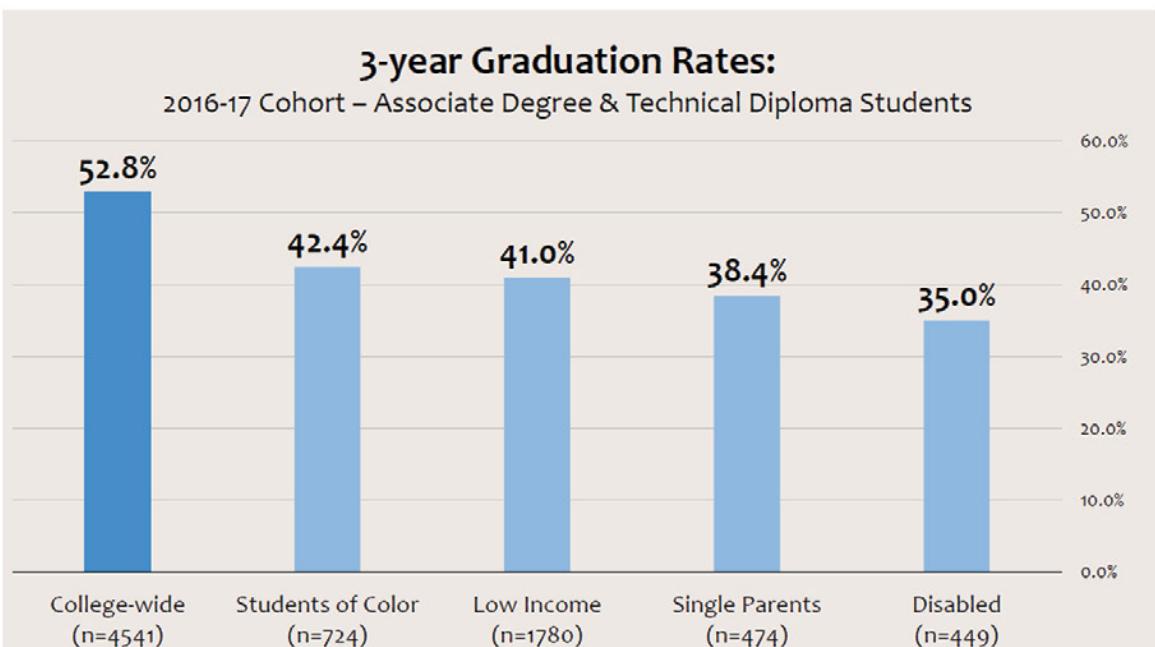
- Brainstorm, select, and implement specific strategies tailored to the barriers or resource needs you identified in step 4 for each group analyzed.
- Be aware that *different* implementation strategies may be required for different groups and/or institutions or systems you are targeting."
 - E.g. Students with learning disabilities may need a different set of supports than students who are food insecure.
- As a rule of thumb, a decent T/U process would include at least three different implementation strategies.

Building the Table & Evaluation

- As you can see, robust community and stakeholder input is required at most stages.
- You need input on framing the universal goal, assessing the reasons for disparities, and in designing implementation strategies.
- This means including 1 those most affected by the problem, 2 those involved in administering the solution, and 3 experts who have studied the problem.
- In addition, you need a strong evaluation process to measure progress, and a communications strategy to frame your plan.

Example for a Community College

- **Focus:** Graduation Rates within 3 years.
- **Step 1:** Let's say we want to set the goal of 60% graduation rates within 3 years.
- **Step 2:** What is the general performance?
- Answer: about 53%
- **Step 3:** Disaggregate into specific subgroups.



Targeted Universalism Strategies

- Step 4: Analyze why such disparities exist.
- Possible reasons:
 - Inability to afford tuition.
 - Unpaid bills.
 - Care responsibilities.
 - Unsure how to re-enroll.
 - Lack of supports.
 - Others?

Targeted Universalism Strategies

- Step 5: Brainstorm possible strategies *for each* group.
- E.g. for student-parents:
 - provide daycare services during class.
 - Provide housing that is family/children friendly.
- For students with disabilities:
 - Assess access issues on campus, from parking to classroom and building entrances.
- For low-income students:
 - Assess financial aid office's ability to serve students and counsel individually.

Additional Targeted Universalism resources

Summary: Targeted Universalism

- Targeted Universalism requires a *diversity of implementation strategies* rather than a one-size-fits-all solution. This requires a different kind of policymaking than the typical legislative victory. It requires monitoring and evaluation to ensure success.
- Although the targeted universalism framework supports a wide range of policy interventions, the process for deriving implementation strategies unlocks the potential for transformative change.
- By emphasizing the universal goal as a way of justifying a diversity of implementation strategies, transformative change possibilities can be envisioned, pursued, and aligned.



Summary: What you Need to Do T/U

- DATA: you can't do T/U unless you can measure performance for the general population and subgroups.
- Access to Stakeholders. You can't do T/U without ground truthing and buy-in.
- Capacity: You need to design and implement multiple interventions simultaneously.
- Patience: you need time to evaluate progress and make adjustments.

Learn More About Targeted Universalism

- Check out our resources page with our Primer and FAQ
- <https://belonging.berkeley.edu/faq-targeted-universalism>

The screenshot shows a webpage with a light green header and a white main content area. The header features the institute's logo and the text 'Targeted Universalism' in a large, bold, black font. Below the header, there are several sections with blue links: 'Policy & Practice Primer', 'Animated Video', 'Case Study: King County', 'Podcast Interview with John a. powell', and 'FAQ'. The main content area contains a yellow box with the title 'Targeted Universalism: Policy & Practice' and a sub-section 'by john a. powell, Stephen Menendian, Wendy Ake'. At the bottom of the page, there is a footer with the institute's logo and the text 'Targeted Universalism'.

FAQ: Targeted Universalism



- In simple terms, what is Targeted Universalism?
- Can I aim to reduce a disparity for the universal goal?
- Can I focus on a specific group for setting or calibrating the universal goal?
- How do we set the universal goal?
- Should the universal goal be realistic or aspirational?
- Do you have examples of the application of Targeted Universalism in practice?
- What's the difference between Targeted approaches and Targeted Universalism?
- Is Targeted Universalism a framework that justifies or legitimized targeted policy design or a remedial scheme?
- If a policy like minimum wage helps people of color more than white people, does that make it an example of Targeted Universalism?
- How does this relate to equity? Doesn't Targeted Universalism water down or de-emphasize racial equity?



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wgGcftWpwUQ>

Primer

- We are out of time, but if you want to read more about targeted universalism, please go to:
<https://belonging.berkeley.edu/targeteduniversalism>

You will find our primer and more resources, including our FAQ.

Othering & Belonging Institute at UC Berkeley

Primer May 2019

Targeted Universalism

Policy & Practice

by john a. powell, Stephen Menendian, Wendy Ake

belonging.berkeley.edu

PART 2: Delivering Real Results that Matter

2.4 Asset Analysis by Possibility Lab at UC Berkeley

This document was developed by Possibility Lab at UC Berkeley for the Racial Equity Commission. Its content does not necessarily reflect the views, positions, or opinions of the Racial Equity Commission, the Governor's Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation (LCI), or the Office of the Governor.

POSSIBILITY LAB

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA BERKELEY

Understanding the Breadth and Depth of Racial Equity Efforts in California State Government:

**An Asset Analysis for the
Racial Equity Commission**

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DISCLAIMER

This brief was prepared by the University of California, Berkeley Possibility Lab to provide information to the California Racial Equity Commission who is charged with developing a Racial Equity Framework, providing technical assistance, and reporting progress. The opinions expressed in this brief reflect those of the Possibility Lab and do not reflect the views of the Racial Equity Commission, Governor's Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation (LCI), or the Office of the Governor.

POSSIBILITY LAB
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA BERKELEY

Executive Summary

In the fall of 2024, the Racial Equity Commission initiated an asset analysis featuring a survey and set of in-depth interviews to better understand existing equity efforts among California State Government organizations.

Common Themes and Insights Embedding equity organization-wide is highly valued by respondents but there is significant variation between organizations represented in terms of:

- Readiness,
- Progress,
- Resources available, and
- How information is shared within, across, and external to government organizations.



Successes were widely attributed to:

- Active and supportive leaders** who communicate about efforts to advance equity
- Resources** to support infrastructure
- Opportunities** for outside capacity building, training, technical assistance

Sustaining the work will require:

- Buy-in and support** from all levels and teams of staff
- Specific tools, templates, and guidance** for all aspects of practice, including planning, resource allocation, program delivery and workforce development
- Training and technical assistance** for learning and implementing the work
- Accountability practices to support learning** from and doing the work, and identifying opportunities for improvement
- Staff spaces** such as communities of practice to support peer exchange and collaborating across agencies

Developing the Racial Equity Framework

Many aspects of what would be useful for the Commission to include in the Racial Equity Framework were highlighted in both the survey and interviews, including:

- Systemwide coordination** and approach to advancing equity,
- Sustaining the work into the future**, reiterating the need for specific tools, templates and guidance, as well as training, technical assistance and accountability practices,
- All things data**, including data collection, identifying disparities, developing measures and using data to inform practice.

Introduction

In September 2022, Governor Newsom's [Executive Order N-16-22](#) called for the creation of a Racial Equity Commission. The Racial Equity Commission is charged with developing a statewide Racial Equity Framework to include: (1) Methodologies, tools and promising practices that can help advance racial equity in state government, and (2) Processes for using data to inform racial equity work.

In support of the Racial Equity Commission, the Possibility Lab at UC Berkeley conducted a statewide survey. Findings from this study, detailed within this report, will be shared with the Racial Equity Commission and used to inform development of the Racial Equity Framework.

Study Objectives Our objective for this study was to gather information on the range of equity activities, and broader equity efforts, already completed and/or underway by state agencies related to advancing racial equity within their scope of practice. By engaging in this type of asset analysis, we set out to document promising practices that could be replicated and scaled within California. To achieve these objectives the survey was organized into six key themes:



1. Equity Infrastructure, including designated staff, meetings, communities of practice, trainings, and other formalized efforts to advance equity within each organization;
2. Community and External Engagement;
3. Data, Research, and Quality Improvement;
4. Strategy, Planning, and Initiatives;
5. Budget Equity; and
6. Opportunities and Lessons Learned.

To launch the survey, we also asked a set of more general introductory questions at the beginning of the survey to identify key focus areas, organizational goals, and how different organizations identify disparities. In total, we asked 40 questions, with some appearing only if respondents selected "yes" to an earlier question.

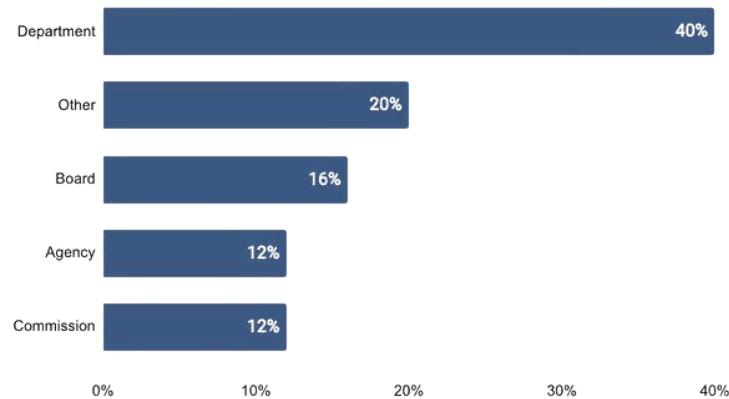
Methodology

Survey Administration

The survey ran for roughly 5 weeks in early fall of 2024. We invited a total of 145 entities within California's State Government to participate in the survey. Specifically, we sent out individualized survey links so that each responding entity could only submit a single response on behalf of their organization. In addition to initial notification messages sent by Commission staff, we sent email reminders through Qualtrics to encourage organizations to complete the survey, as well as a final reminder on the day before we closed the survey to responses.

Survey Response Details

We received completed survey responses from 50 total California state government organizations, with a response rate of 34%. The majority of responding organizations were departments, but we also received responses from the following types of organizations as well. Twenty-nine respondents (58%) reported that their organizations had previously participated in the [California Capitol Collaborative on Race & Ethnicity \(CCORE\)](#).



Note: Other above includes conservancies, councils, offices, and centers.

Each entity was asked to designate a team to respond to the survey, including but not limited to staff in roles such as:

EXECUTIVE TEAM
DESIGNATED STAFF
PROGRAM OR POLICY STAFF
HUMAN RESOURCES OR ADMIN PERSONNEL
ATTORNEY

Executive team participants were most represented across the 50 responding teams, with 86% of teams including a member from the organization's executive team. Designated staff appeared in 65% of teams; Human Resources personnel appeared in 63% of teams; Program or Policy Staff appeared in 59% of teams; and Attorneys appeared in 45% of teams.

Key Informant Interview Details

In addition to the survey, a team from the State of Equity at the Public Health Institute carried out a set of key informant interviews to gather qualitative data.

- Interviews were conducted over a five-week period.
- Interviewees included: Executives of Agency, Board, Departments, or Commissions; Dedicated personnel; Past/Participants of Capitol Collaborative on Race & Equity; others active in equity work.
- The State of Equity contacted 34 people to invite them to provide an interview.
- In total, the State of Equity conducted 24 total interviews.



Interviews were designed to gather qualitative information on work already completed and/or underway by state organizations related to advancing racial equity within the scope of their governmental organization and state law requirements. Interview questions were focused on:

- Organizational racial equity goals and integration of these goals into strategic plans and budgets
- Methodologies, tools, strategies, and best practices to advance racial equity and opportunity for all
- Developing internal resources and infrastructure to support and sustain racial equity initiatives
- Leveraging data and research to inform racial equity initiatives
- Successes, lessons learned, and opportunities to advance racial equity
- What interviewees would like to see advanced regarding racial equity in government, and what they would like included in a racial equity framework

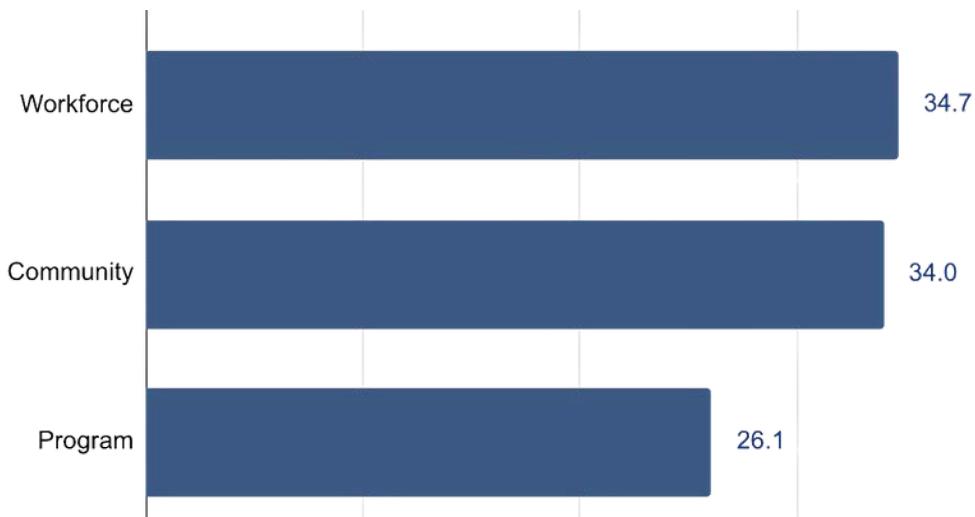
Results

Top areas of focus for racial equity efforts included:

- Workforce development** (training)
- Community** (community/external engagement)
- Programs** (strategic planning)

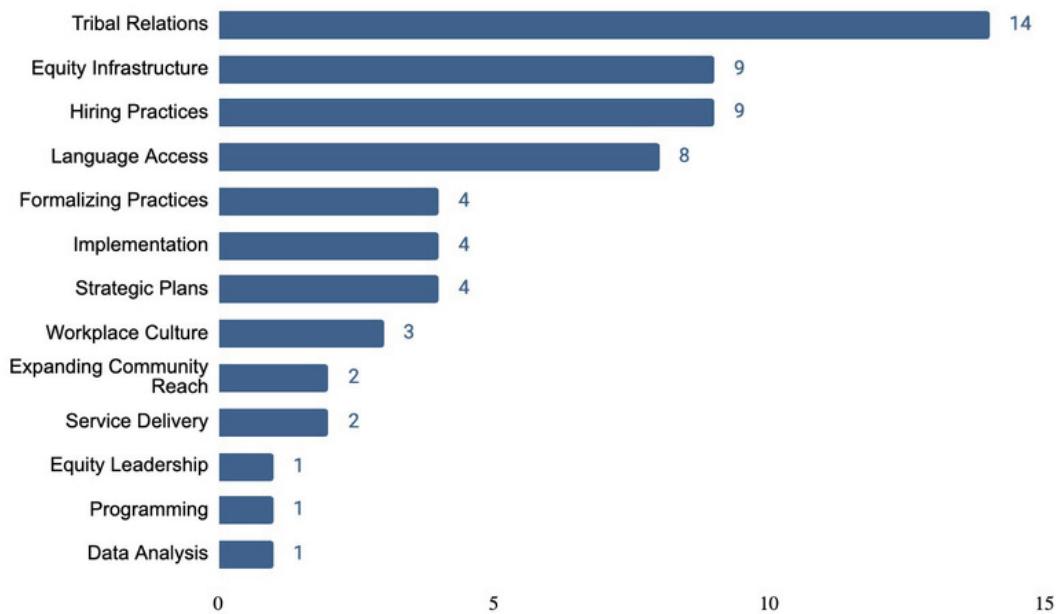


Figure 1. Into which of the following areas would you say your organization has integrated a focus on racial equity? *[select all that apply]*



Priority areas of focus included both internal- and external-facing practices, such as tribal relations, hiring practices, equity infrastructure, and language access.

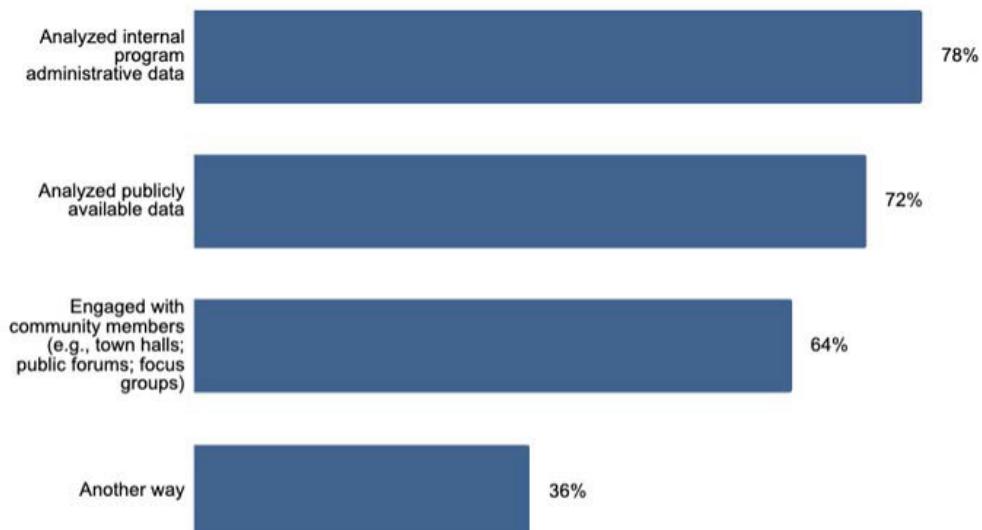
Figure 2. What key programs or areas of focus is your organization currently prioritizing, related to specific racial inequities or disparities? [open-ended responses]



Note: The bars above are counts of responses, not percentages.

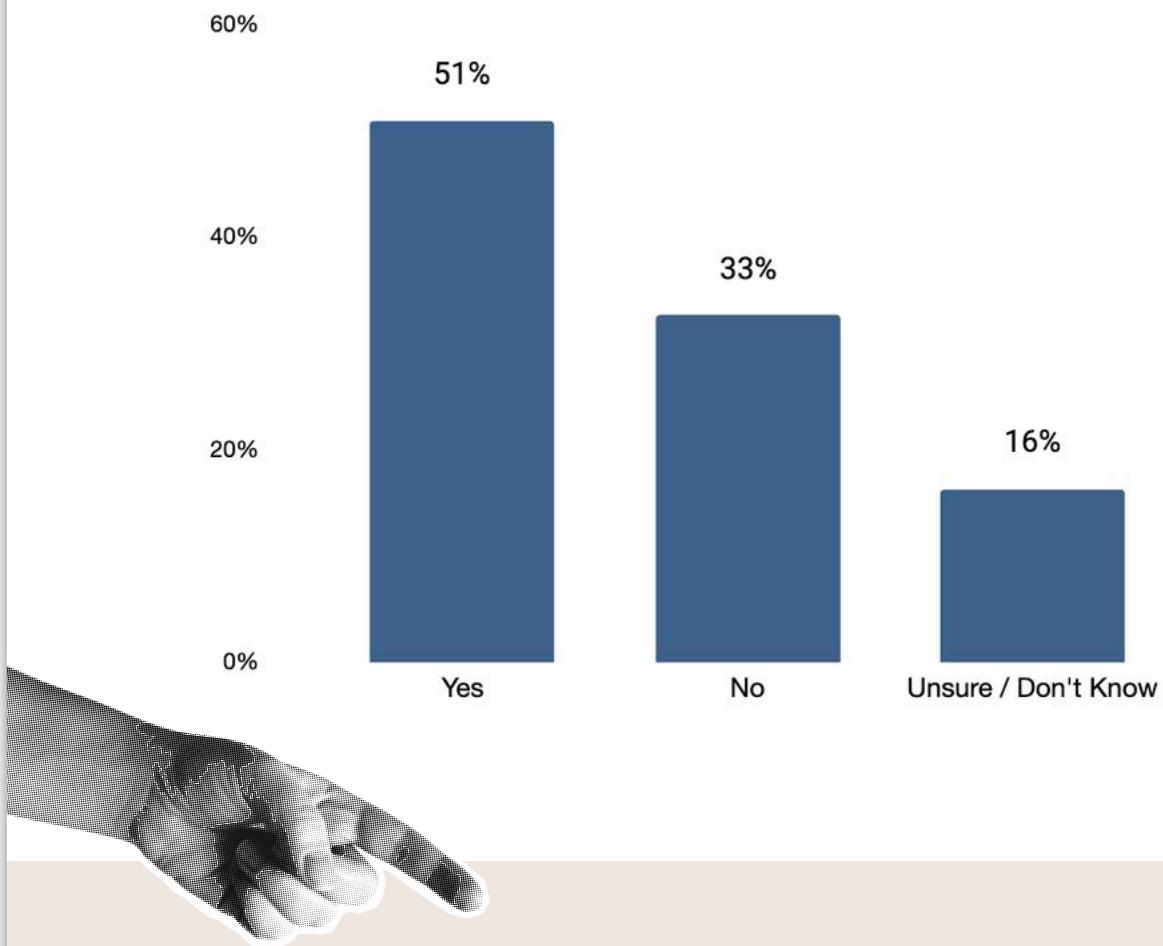
Analyzing data and **engaging with community members** were the two most common methods used to identify specific racial inequities, as reported by respondents.

Figure 3. How did your organization identify the specific racial inequities or disparities it is currently working to address? [select all that apply]



More than half of the respondents reported needing support to identify specific racial inequities, while an additional 16% reported being unsure if they needed this type of support.

Figure 4. Does your organization need support in identifying specific racial inequities or disparities related to its scope of practice? [single-option]

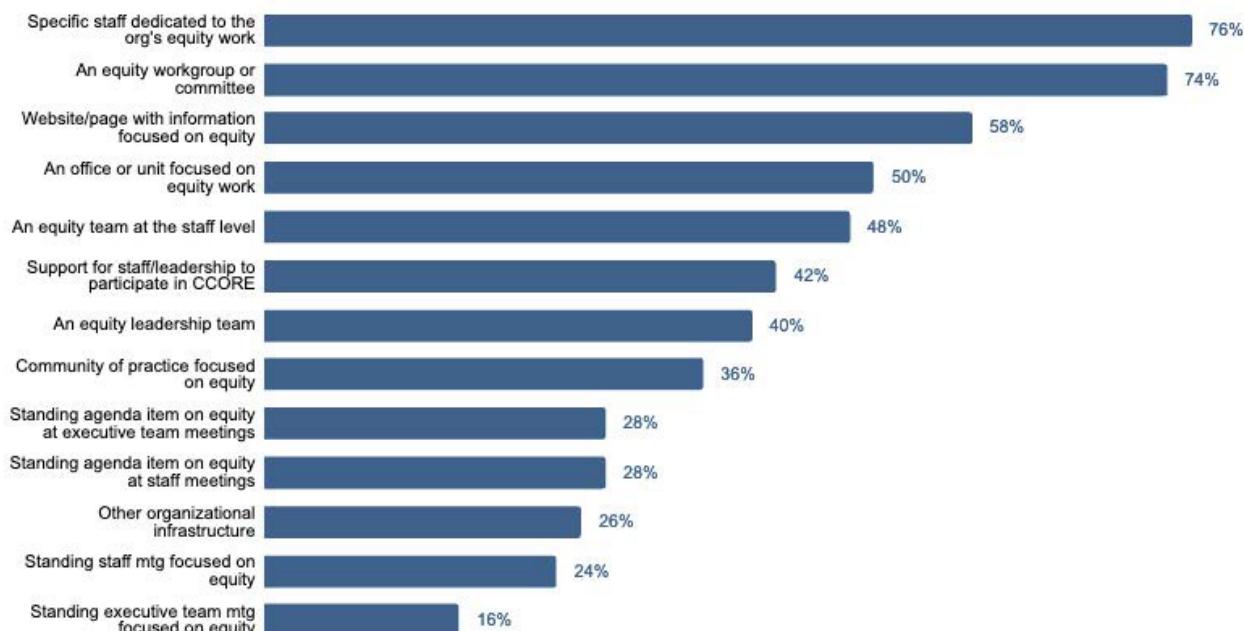


Interviewees described how sometimes, organizations can get stuck in the **symbolic nature** of equity initiatives, rather than actually building systems that lead to lasting improvements in our services and connections to meet the needs of California's residents. Interviewees also described how siloed structures—a **lack of coordination and communication** across different departments and agencies—can lead to fragmented efforts.

Equity Infrastructure

→ Fully 92% of respondents reported having put some kind of organizational infrastructure in place to support their equity work. The most common types of infrastructure put in place to support racial equity work included **dedicated staff, an equity workgroup or committee, and a website/webpage with equity-focused information**.

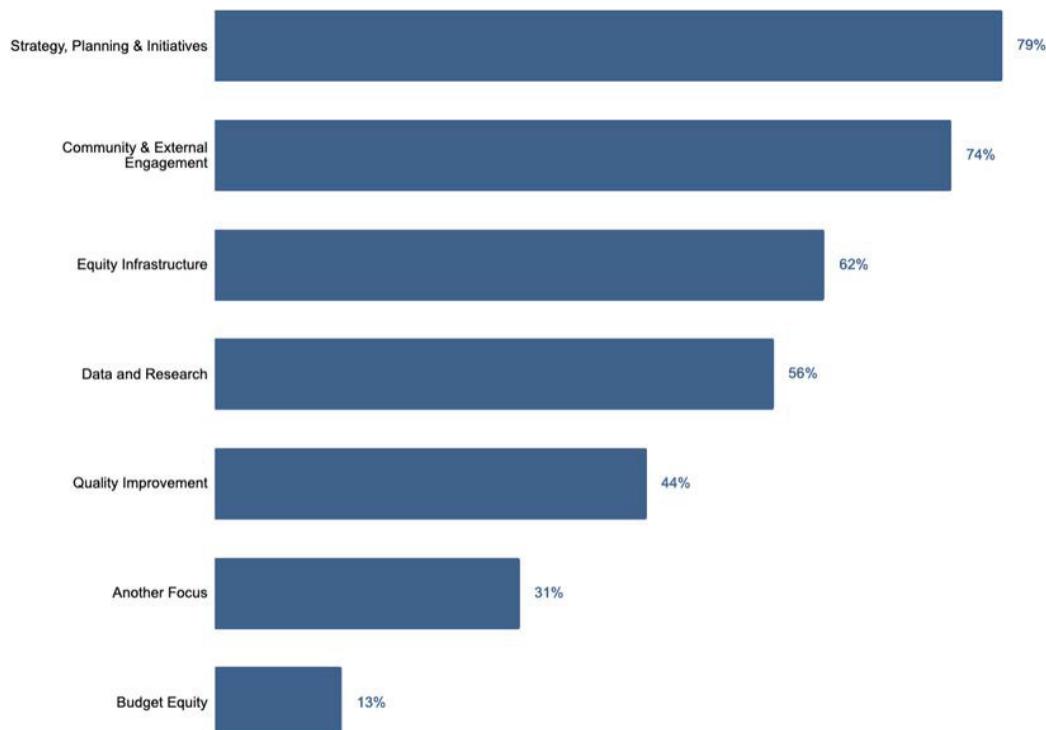
Figure 5. What infrastructure has your organization put in place to support advancing equity, inclusive of or specific to racial equity? [select all that apply]



Interviewees noted that staff involved in racial equity work can sometimes **lack the necessary authority and clarity** to implement change, and described the challenges of limited staffing, which makes it hard to sustain the amount of work and level of engagement.

Among those who reported having communities of practice or work groups related to racial equity, a majority focused their efforts on the organization's overall strategy, planning and initiatives, as well as their community and external engagement efforts.

Figure 6. What is the focus of the Community of Practice or Work Group related to racial equity? [select all that apply]



A Racial Equity Action Plan (REAP) is a strategic framework that outlines specific policies, programs, and accountability measures to address systemic disparities and promote equitable outcomes across state agencies and communities. REAPs must investigate—honestly—how the government's longstanding systems, policies, and practices, unintentionally or not, have created and continue to maintain racial inequity. REAPs can put a theory of change into action to achieve a collective vision of racial equity. Plans can drive institutional and structural change.

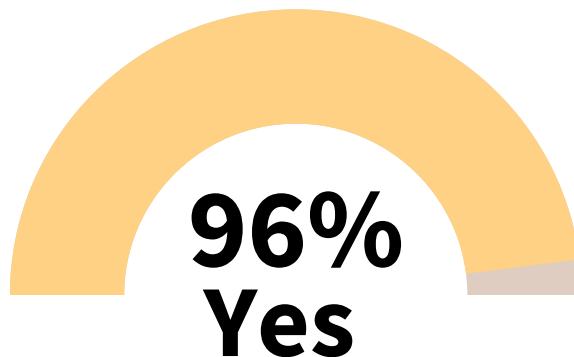
More than half (58%) of respondents reported having a Racial Equity Action Plan in place.



Training and Technical Assistance

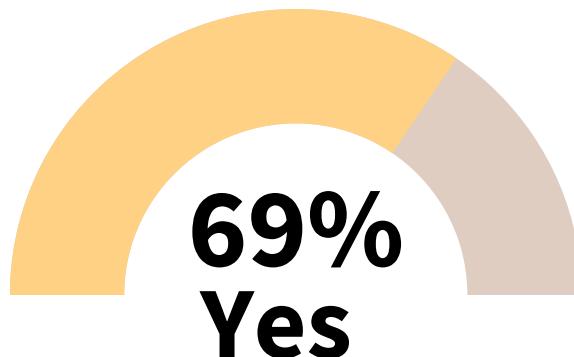
→ Nearly all organizations reported encouraging staff involvement in equity work. Slightly more than two-thirds also reported offering opportunities for staff to learn about and discuss their equity work.

Has your organization taken steps to encourage staff involvement in equity initiatives, inclusive of or specific to racial equity?



Respondents who indicated that their organization encouraged staff involvement in equity initiatives.

Does your organization offer work groups, learning labs, or other peer exchange spaces for staff to learn and discuss their work related to equity?



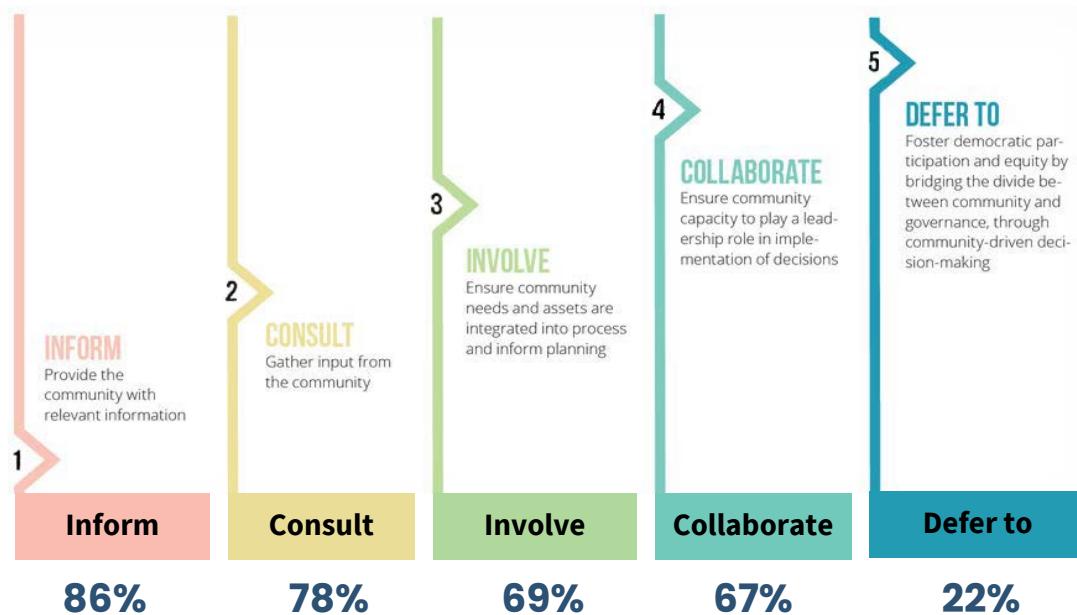
Respondents who reported offering work groups, learning labs, or other peer exchange spaces for staff to learn about and discuss their work related to equity.

Community and Internal Engagement

Community engagement can range from minimal, one-way communication to deep, collaborative partnerships where community members actively shape policies and decisions. At one end of the spectrum, agencies may simply inform the public, while at the other, they co-create solutions with residents through sustained dialogue, shared decision-making, and resource allocation.

→ **A sizable majority of organizations reported engaging with communities in at least some way, with nearly two-thirds engaging in meaningful collaboration.**

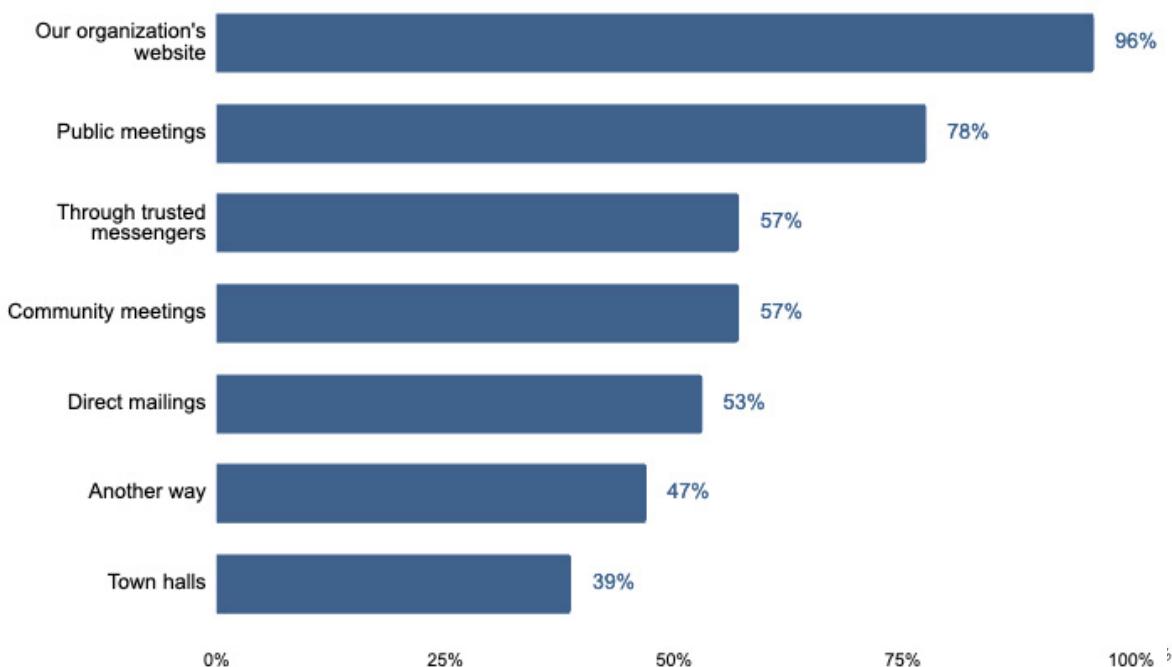
Figure 7. In which of the following ways would you say your organization is involved in community engagement? [select all that apply]



Moving towards a collaborative model of engagement:
Interviewees described the importance of being responsive and transparent in how public input is used.

→ The most common methods respondents reported using to share information intended for the public was through their organization's website, as well as through public meetings. About half reported engaging with "trusted messengers" to distribute public information, as well as community meetings and direct mail.

Figure 8. How does your organization distribute information intended for the public - for example, information on how to engage with the agency or about a newly available opportunity or resource? [select all that apply]



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Data, Research, and Quality Improvement

The top 3 ways respondents reported using data to inform their efforts to advance equity included:

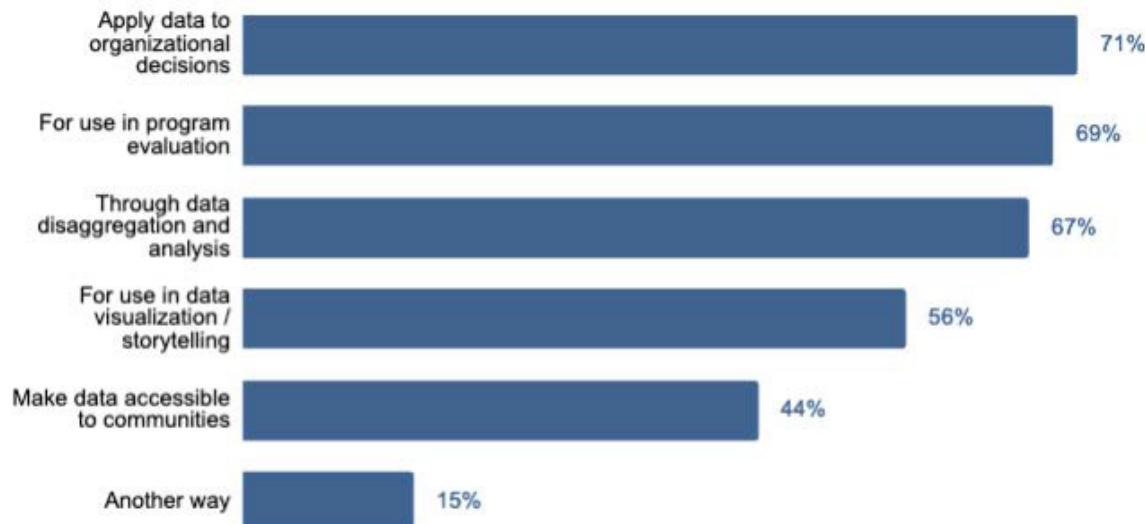
- Organizational decision-making
- Program evaluation
- Data disaggregation & analysis



Interviewees described challenges to collecting and disaggregating data, as well as a need for additional training so that staff can more effectively interpret data and inform program development.

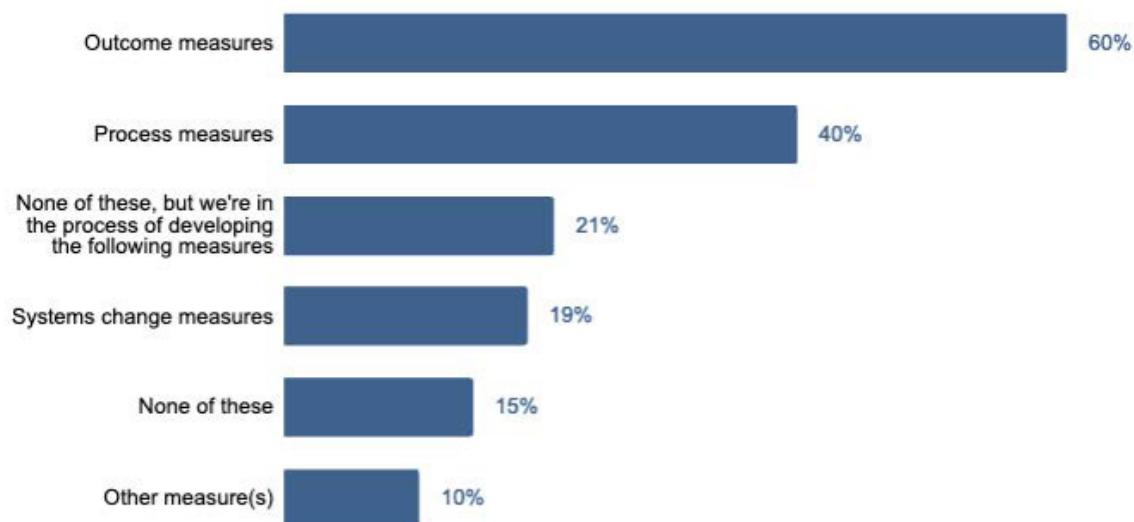


Figure 9. How does your organization currently utilize data to inform efforts aimed at advancing equity, inclusive of or specific to racial equity? [select all that apply]



→ The two most common tools respondents reported having developed to review their equity work included both outcome and process measures. Some organizations also reported having developed systems change measures (18%) or other measures (10%). About one-fifth of respondents reported that they did not currently use any of these measures, but were in the process of developing them.

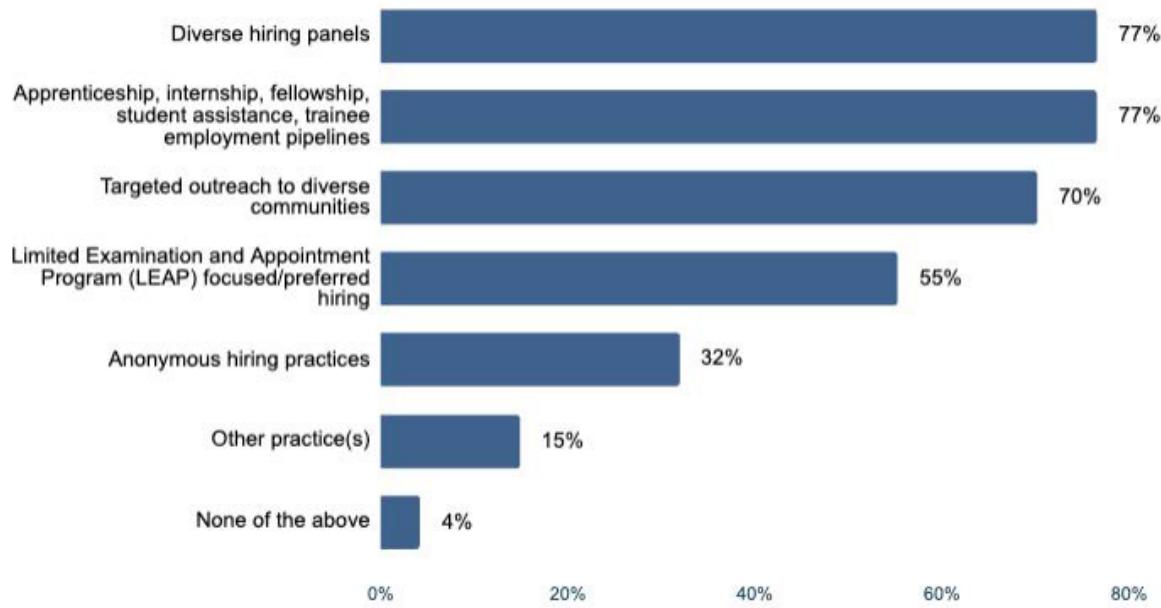
Figure 10. Which of the following measures, if any, has your organization developed to help your organization review its equity work, inclusive of or specific to racial equity? [select all that apply]



Strategy, Planning, and Initiatives

→ Diverse hiring panels and trainee employment pipelines (e.g., apprenticeships, internships) were the two most common methods respondents reported using to cultivate a more diverse workforce.

Figure 11. Which of the following hiring practices does your organization currently use to cultivate a more diverse workforce? [select all that apply]

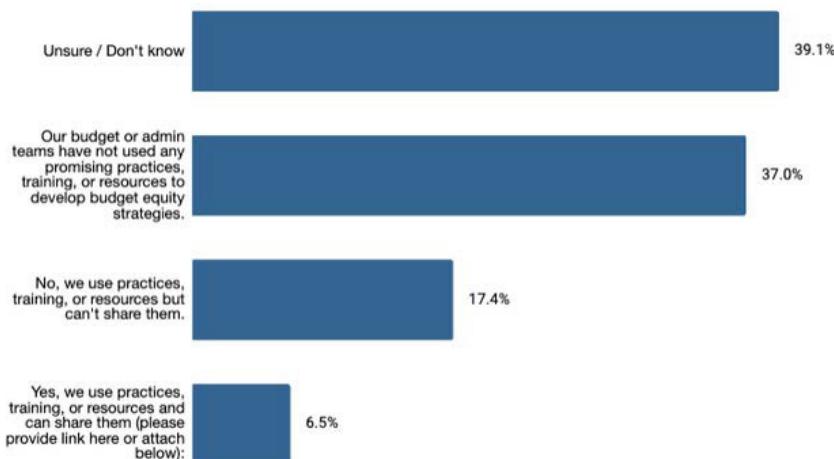


Budget Equity



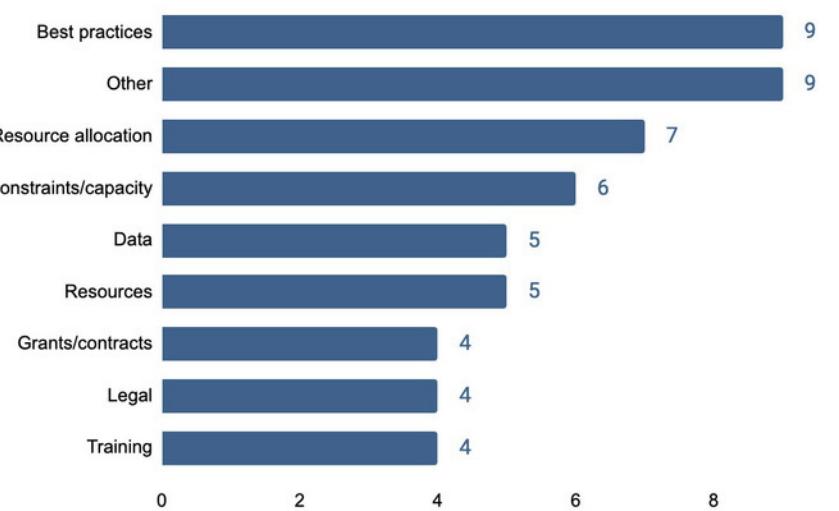
Only 6% of respondents reported using practices, training, or resources related to budget equity that they could share, and another 16% reported using but could not share these materials. More than one-third of respondents were unsure or did not know.

Figure 12. Are there any promising practices, training, or resources your budget or admin teams have leveraged to develop in-house expertise on budget equity strategies? [single-option]



Respondents were especially interested in learning about established best practices for budget equity.

Figure 13. What are you most hoping to learn as it relates to integrating racial equity as a consideration in budget development and resource allocation? [open-ended]



Note: The bars above are counts of responses, not percentages.

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Opportunities and Successes

→ In both the survey and interviews, respondents were asked how the Framework developed by the Racial Equity Commission could best support their organization in institutionalizing their work to advance equity - inclusive of or specific to racial equity.

Respondents provided a range of responses around the following topics:

- Clear expectations and accountability mechanisms, as well as support for creating organization-specific accountability measures
- Flexible requirements for small entities
- Defining a clear approach to equity work
- Cross-agency coordination and technical assistance
 - Including statewide budget equity assessment templates, performance measures, definitions, rationales, etc.
 - Opportunities for peer exchange and problem-solving among and between different units and organizations within government, as well as with governments in other places
- Training and capacity building
 - Guidance and support including offerings of trainings and technical assistance
- Best practices and tools
 - Guidance, tools, templates, and other support for racial equity practices related to workforce, budget, data, and other standard practices, endorsed by the central government entities that set policy or guide practices across state government.
- Mechanisms and strategies for community engagement
- Policy review and development
- Address legal and constitutional issues
- Zero tolerance policies
- Strategies for creating an internal equity infrastructure
- Long-term vision of equity
- Language access and accessibility





Interviewees described how the lack of a **common definition of equity** can create confusion and differing interpretations and practices.

Respondents were asked in both the survey and interviews what they are most proud of in their work related to equity in their organization, inclusive of or specific to racial equity.

Figure 14. Top themes related to what respondents were most proud of in their equity work

planning **openness** **change**
 use **improvement** **readiness**
infrastructure
engagement **community**
workforce





In particular, respondents reported the following successes related to racial equity:

- **Genuine** focus on funding projects that engage and directly benefit environmentally burdened communities
- **Relationships** developed with community partners through active outreach and design of work processes.
- **Completing** our REAP (and beginning its implementation), retraining our traditional project outreach processes to be very cognizant of equity concerns, and having a very strong relationship with the [redacted] Tribe
- Building a culture of inclusivity and collaboration. Protecting vulnerable communities
- **Continuing** to have equity be a consideration in all of our decision making. Being intentional about our investments
- **Making** meaningful connections and real change
- **Establishing** a culture of inclusion across community engagement and policy development that has nurtured ongoing participation of members/representatives of diverse communities throughout the State



In interviews, participants suggested that the success of future racial equity efforts will depend on:

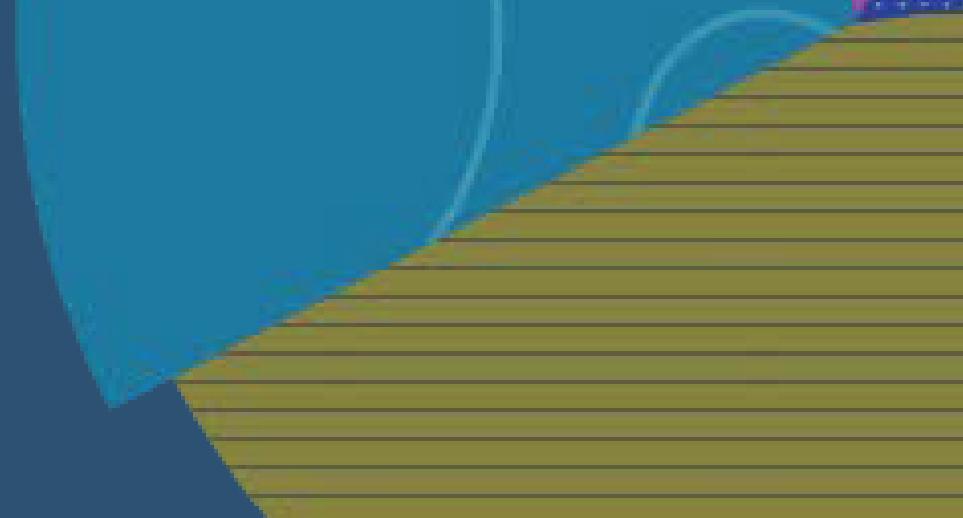
- Executive and leadership **buy-in** and **support**
- Resources such as **staff time, dedicated positions**, and **funding**
- **Accountability** measures
- **Tools**, guidance, and templates to support equity in strategic planning, budget, program delivery, grantmaking, community partnerships, workforce practices, data practices, and more
- **Outside training** and **technical assistance consultants** to **build capacity** within departments/ agencies and support creation and implementation of racial equity plans and related projects
- Contracting mechanisms **to facilitate hiring of qualified outside trainers** and TA providers
- **Community of practice space** to support peer exchange and collaborative learning between state organizations



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PART 2: Delivering Real Results that Matter

2.5 Case Studies by the State of Equity

This document was developed by State of Equity for the Racial Equity Commission. Its content does not necessarily reflect the views, positions, or opinions of the Racial Equity Commission, the Governor's Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation (LCI), or the Office of the Governor.



Racial Equity in Practice: Case Examples

A companion document to
Understanding the breadth and Depth of Racial Equity Efforts in California State Government: An Asset Analysis for the Racial Equity Commission

This document was developed by the State of Equity. Its content does not necessarily reflect the views, positions, or opinions of the Racial Equity Commission, the Governor's Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation (LCI) or the Office of the Governor.

Background

In September 2022, California Governor Gavin Newsom's [Executive Order N-16-22](#) established a state Racial Equity Commission (Commission). The Commission is charged with developing a Racial Equity Framework to: (1) provide methodologies, tools and best/promising practices that can help advance racial equity in state government, and (2) provide technical assistance to local government and state agencies/departments; and (3) ensure quarterly stakeholder/community engagement.

[State of Equity](#) (a program of the Public Health Institute) conducted key informant interviews as part of an asset analysis prepared for the Commission led by the University of California at Berkeley Possibility Lab. The objective for the asset analysis was to gather information on the range of activities already completed and/or underway by California state agencies to advance racial equity. The purpose is to document promising practices in California. Primary findings from the key informant interviews are included in the report titled *Understanding the Breadth and Depth of Racial Equity Efforts in California State Government: An Asset Analysis for the Racial Equity Commission*.

This collection of case examples provides additional insights into actionable steps already being taken by state government, which might be replicated in the future. Case examples are organized to include a summary of the racial equity issue being tackled, a list of practices that have been tried, and a list of lessons learned along the way which could inform future implementation.

State of Equity was uniquely qualified to conduct key informant interviews because of the organization's role fostering collaboration between government entities and bringing health, racial equity, and environmental sustainability to the forefront of public institutions in California. State of Equity co-founded California's Health in All Policies Task Force and leads the [Capitol Collaborative on Race & Equity](#) (CCORE), a community of California state government leaders integrating racial equity into institutional culture, policies, and practices, and is a trusted messenger to many equity leaders inside California state government.

For questions about these case examples, please contact stateofequity@phi.org.

Racial Equity Case Examples

Case Example 1: Language Access and Community Engagement

Summary

A State organization has made racial equity a key priority in their work. They have implemented language access and community engagement practices as part of their commitment to ensuring that all communities receive and understand important information, have access to services, and give input into community needs. Their efforts have focused on communities that have historically faced inequities in resource quality and services. This is integral to achieving their organizational mission.

Promising Practices

- **Translation and Interpretation of All Materials:** All materials and public meeting notices were produced in both English and Spanish, with additional languages based on community need as understood from population data review and inquiring with community partners. Interpretation services were also automatically provided at all meetings to ensure full accessibility.
- **Updated Meeting Models:** When in-person meetings were not possible during the COVID-19 pandemic, the organization partnered with community serving organizations to set up "meeting within a meeting" structures. This allowed remote participants to access interpretation services, receive important information, and provide feedback.
- **Bilingual Certification and Compensation:** The organization encourages and provides staff the opportunity to become certified as bilingual, providing a pay differential to compensate for this important skill. This longstanding best practice helps ensure organizations have the language capacity to effectively communicate with diverse communities, make sure bilingual speakers meet a certification standard, and mitigates the informal use of bilingual staff or community members who are tasked with additional responsibilities but are not compensated.
- **Organizational Language Access Guidance:** The organization developed a comprehensive language access guidance that outlined policies, procedures, and resources for translation, interpretation, and community outreach. This helped staff start to institutionalize language access and sound community engagement as comprehensive promising practices for the whole organization.
- **Stipends to task force/community members:** Another organization interviewed reported stipends were provided to task force members, many of whom are low-income community members with relevant lived experience and expertise, but who are not traditionally engaged in policy and project planning. The program staff worked with the organization's legal and legislative staff to implement stipends directly. This step to compensate task force members from California communities for their time and subject-matter and lived-experience expertise helped to make the processes and services more effective.

Lessons Learned

- It is important to educate an organization's staff attorneys and communication and external affairs staff about language access needs so they can provide effective legal guidance to support community engagement.
- Staff positions for community engagement and linguistic access are typically classified and compensated at a low level, which can make it difficult to retain staff who bring these specialized skill sets. Staff retention make it difficult to sustain language access and community engagement efforts, highlighting the need for strong leadership, resources, and institutional support to sustain language access and community engagement efforts over time.

Case Example 2: Budget Equity - Advance Payment

Summary

Advance payment is a mechanism that allows grant applicants, community experts, and other stakeholders to receive payments from the state in advance, rather than incurring the costs upfront themselves and submitting for reimbursement. Incorporating stipends and advance payment is an important strategy to ensure all California communities can meaningfully participate in and benefit from state programs. Since the standard reimbursement model is prohibitive for smaller organizations that do not have sufficient reserve funds to cover expenses up front, advance payment for services for community-based organization and community experts, including people with lived experience, is a way for state government to ensure that all communities in California are able to access the resources and services they need.

[Assembly Bill 590](#) authorizes a state agency administering a grant program or contract to provide advance payment to a recipient non-profit that qualifies under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. When allowing advance payment, the state organization must prioritize recipients and projects serving disadvantaged, low income, and under-resourced communities or organizations, and ensure the advance payment does not exceed 25 percent. The bill also allows grant recipients to provide funds from the advance payment to subrecipients. Additionally, the bill requires the grant recipient to meet specified minimum requirements and allows an advance payment audit.

Promising Practices

While advance payment is not a standard practice across state government, one state organization is working through their advance payment approach and their efforts can serve as an example to others:

- **Convene across agencies in state government:** Because advance pay is a priority for a wide range of government entities, the organization is organizing an interagency convening of employees that work on advance payment to exchange information about successes, challenges, and lessons learned and to understand system-wide practices and processes that could be helpful to implement this approach across a wide range of government institutions.

- **Grant management evaluation:** One of the organization's programs has planned to conduct grant management evaluation to understand the effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, and sustainability of grant management processes from pre-award to post-award, including advance payment.

Lessons Learned

- While organizations and programs at the state have taken steps to enable more flexible funding models, there are still significant hurdles to overcome including legislative restrictions and limited familiarity with advance pay approaches by contract staff.
- Organizations across the state may interpret advance pay legislation differently. Cross-agency coordination is helpful to understand legal and practical ways that advance pay can be implemented.
- There is no standard language to make advance payment and stipends more accessible to a wider range of grantees, particularly non-profits and federally recognized tribes.

Case Example 3: Organizational Infrastructure for Racial Equity

Summary

The state government entities that have had the most success implementing racial equity work have developed organizational infrastructure to support efforts ensuring the wellness of all Californians. They report that it has been necessary to have infrastructure that allows the space and time for many stakeholders to convene, plan for, and implement racial equity strategies. Staff within organizations must receive capacity building around racial equity, have the resources and tools they need to enact equity strategies, and have access to organizational leadership to be able to effectively integrate racial equity into their everyday in service of advancing the organization towards its overall mission and vision.

Promising Practices

One State organization shared the steps they have taken in this direction:

- **Subject matter experts responsible for coordinating equity throughout organizations:** The organization identified subject matter experts to oversee equity initiatives including using data and engaging community to ensure efficient and effective programming. The staff serve as internal partners to the whole organization by leading capacity-building efforts, facilitating training, and providing technical assistance to reinforce the organization's commitment to serving all Californians.
- **Implementation of organizational guidance structures and documents to embed equity:** The organization is clear on their equity framework and theory of change, has received legal guidance in alignment with state and federal law, has departmental and division-specific equity action plans, an advisory panel, and workgroups focused in part on equity considerations in data and community

engagement, for example. The organization is also working to ensure that all their bill analyses, tools, and resources have an equity lens built in.

- **Leadership supports and prioritizes equity efforts:** Leadership plays a crucial role in sustaining the organization's equity infrastructure, emphasizing that equity is a shared commitment across the whole organization.

Lessons Learned

- All employees need capacity building, such as training and technical assistance, to fully understand and integrate equity considerations to serve all Californians in their daily work.
- Achieving buy-in vertically and horizontally for racial equity takes effort, time, and a plan. The correct subject matter expert, message, and timing should be used at varying levels. There is not a one-size-fits-all solution.
- In an equity framework and in equity plans it is important to make sure to identify outcomes and key performance indicators. If not included, there is no clear way to ensure action.

Case Example 4: Data

Summary

Across California and the country, racial inequities exist across every indicator of success—including health, criminal justice, education, jobs, housing, just to name a few. Sound data collection and analysis is critical to ensure that the most impacted Californians get the services they need. Data improves awareness of issues and can help to identify their causes and impacts. Often across government, data infrastructure is limited and has led to limited data accessibility, inconsistencies in using the data, and duplication of work. This has also made it difficult to institutionalize data best practices across the state government apparatus and therefore difficult to ensure transparency in decision-making. Outdated data infrastructure may lead to efficient data extraction, analysis, and sharing.

Promising Practices

Despite the challenges listed above, one state organization has made significant strides to ensure sure data is open and accessible and has pushed for data transparency to drive meaningful data-driven change. Their efforts have empowered programs to use data-based decision-making as an everyday process.

- **Disaggregating data:** The types of data collected and how they are analyzed can affect government's ability to identify populations most impacted by certain issues, uncover disparities, and identify root causes that may have been masked by aggregate data - even data already broken down by racial categories. For example, many state organizations are disaggregating Asian and other racial data further into ethnicity and ancestry to gain nuanced clarity into specific populations.

- **Building internal data expertise and capacity:** The organization is specifically building capacity around community impact analysis to understand holistic and long-term impacts to the community. In years past, the organization lacked this expertise. With these new skills, the organization is better able to understand the impacts that programs and services are having on communities served.
- **Bringing in data expertise and resources to help more teams across an organization become capacitated:** The organization has implemented data coaching designed to enhance data competency across staff teams. Coaching helps teams understand how to use demographic data, integrate demographics with administrative data, and frame questions to find the data that can answer them.
- **Creation of guidance documents to embed data best practices:** The organization is now creating a handbook on data and equity. The handbook will mirror the teachings and learnings of their data coaching efforts and serve as a guide to existing and new employees around data practices including data implications, collection, usage, and analysis.
- **Consistent and continued support for newly learned skills and how to use them in practice:** The organization has said that it is important to provide training and iterative help for staff who are trying to integrate sound data practices. Adult learning takes time, and implementing newly acquired skills may take nuanced support and refinement as those skills are applied in real-work situations.
- **Implementation of efforts for data transparency:** The organization directs and collects vast amounts of data and information and has adopted an open data resolution to increase the focus on data management, accessibility, and transparency. The organization also has a data action plan that, when implemented, will improve the management and usage of data for both internal and external facing decisions.

Lessons Learned

- Outdated systems and limited data accessibility are not uncommon in state government. Staff spend considerable time manipulating and re-extracting data due to outdated systems.
- Building internal expertise is crucial—dedicated staff for data and racial equity ensures sustainability and reduces reliance on external consultants.
- Fostering an open and iterative approach to data use allows teams to experiment, learn, and refine their methodologies continuously.
- Open data practices not only enhance government accountability but also empower communities to engage with and input on decision-making processes.

Case Example 5: Workforce Planning

Summary

One state organization has undertaken a concerted effort to make sure all Californians can be represented in the workforce of the organization. With its leadership, the organization is planning and implementing a robust effort to advance racial and

gender equity. The organization is hopeful their efforts could provide the structure, resources, and accountability needed to accelerate progress. By leveraging executive power, sharing successes, and addressing common challenges the organization believes it can work to create more equitable workplaces that better serve all Californians. This multi-faceted initiative demonstrates the organization's commitment to embedding equity throughout its operations, culture, and engagement.

Promising Practices

- **Implementation of organizational guidance structures and documents to embed equity:** The organization is integrating equity strategies and practices into core policies and procedures, with all policy changes and revisions routed through an equity steering committee. This has allowed the organization to embed equity considerations into its day-to-day operations.
- **Increasing diversity in application pools:** The organization is focusing their efforts on recruitment and retention practices to improve workforce inclusion in traditional recruitment setting such as job fairs and non-traditional recruitment settings including cultural festivals and other similar events. The organization has also partnered with other initiatives to increase the representation of women in organizational roles.
- **Sharing staff demographics as part of transparency efforts:** Demographic data is available on the organization's website. Making this data available promotes transparency by publicly sharing staff demographic survey results, even when the data reveals significant gaps and areas for improvement. This accountability has helped build credibility with current and potential employees.
- **Engagement of executive leadership:** Executive leadership receives quarterly updates on equity and workforce planning, which has been important for the sustainability of equity efforts because there is a lack of dedicated funding. Executive leadership continues to prioritize this work even when budgets for the work are hard to secure.
- **Integrating equity, in big and small ways, across the organization:** Integrating equity considerations into agendas, trainings, and large initiatives helps to normalize conversations about equity across the organization and makes equity efforts visible across the organization.

Lessons Learned

- Shifting organization culture and normalizing conversations about equity can be challenging. Top-down messaging alone is no longer sufficient and the work calls for messaging from bottom to top and across the organization also.
- Limited resources and competing priorities for this work has challenged the depth and pace of progress to advance racial equity.
- It is important to address intersectionality of many group identities beyond just race and gender, such as the divide between staff classifications and socioeconomic classes that impact hiring and advancement.
- Building trust with employees is paramount. This has led the organization to rely more on anonymous surveys and focus group discussions.

- Because of the slow-to-change culture of the organization, there is a major need for external support, technical assistance, and opportunities for cross-departmental collaboration to supplement internal capacity and expertise.

PART 3: Our Historic Journey With California

3.1 Racial Equity Commission Meet-n-Greet Reports and Graphic Notes 2024–2025

Graphic notes were developed by Raven Tahara for the Racial Equity Commission. Its content does not necessarily reflect the views, positions, or opinions of the Racial Equity Commission, the Governor's Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation (LCI), or the Office of the Governor.



Governor's Office of Planning and Research

To: California Racial Equity Commissioners
From: Racial Equity Commission Staff
Re: Lamont, CA Community Meet-n-Greet Event Summary, March 20th, 2024
Date: July 17, 2024

On March 20th, 2024, Racial Equity Commission Staff, Office of Planning Research Staff, Commission Chair Dr. Luke Wood, and Commissioner Traco Matthews visited Lamont, CA for the first Community Meet-n-Greet. The evening event – cohosted by the Racial Equity Commission, Kern Health Systems and the Lamont Elementary School District – was held in the cafeteria of Myrtle Avenue Elementary School and drew over 80 community members. Commission Staff collaborated with Commissioner Matthews' Health Equity team in planning this community event with a focus on listening to community experiences and priorities. The event had Spanish translation services provided by Kern Health Systems.

Opening Remarks

Commissioner Matthews and Executive Director Dr. Larissa Estes provided an overview of the Commission and its role in addressing racial equity. Dr. Estes expressed that the role of the Commission is to listen to community experiences and translate what they learn into content and information that informs the development of a racial equity framework, especially in the areas of budget equity, data, and community engagement. Lamont Elementary School District staff shared a presentation describing Lamont's unique demographic makeup and experiences of students and families. They shared initial results from a new telehealth in school program that aims to increase attendance by administering telehealth appointments at the nurse's office.

In the time since the program's launch two weeks prior, absentee rates had decreased compared to the previous year.

A student reporter from the CSU Bakersfield's The Runner newspaper captured the Community Meet-n-Greet in [this article](#).

Lamont community experiences and priorities

Commissioner Matthews and Dr. Estes led a small group discussion activity prompting community members to share a wish they have for their community if money were not an issue. The small





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groups discussed, then shared out key themes to the full group. Below is a summary of key takeaways heard at the Meet-n-Greet in Lamont:

Housing

- Residents want affordable and well-maintained housing and greater opportunities for ownership.
- Residents shared their experiences being subject to changing rent amounts and expressed that they want stable rent amounts.

Investment in the Lamont community

- When Lamont youth reach adulthood, they move to the bigger cities nearby, such as Bakersfield, because of the economic opportunities there. Many residents want to see investments that support the creation of a community that makes those who grow up in Lamont want to stay and raise their own families. They want Lamont to be able to provide them with quality of life and economic opportunities like opportunities available in bigger cities such as Bakersfield.

Activities for young people and families

- Community members want more recreation options, especially for children. They want Lamont to have more after school programs for youth, including opening the local library open more frequently than its current two (2) days per week.
- Residents want to see the completion of community projects such as parks and infrastructure.



Education

- In two letters to the Commission, translated from Spanish, a Lamont parent expressed the importance of equality and equity among students within the school district. The parent shared that to them, equality and equity means universal access to quality education that meets the basic needs of students. If these does not exist, they said the results for students will be devastating.

Civic engagement

- Residents shared experiences of intimidation and retaliation when interacting with public systems.
- Residents shared their fears of the presence of law enforcement at public meetings. It was shared that for newcomers and those without status, their voices were limited in decisions that affect them.



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Keeping tax dollars in Lamont

- Lamont is an unincorporated community in Kern County, CA. Many community members expressed a desire to gain more control over the spending of their county tax dollars through becoming incorporated.
- Residents want more government programs, including incentives, that are accessible to all.

Considerations for the Commission

These community meet-n-greets serve as an opportunity to gather testimony about the lived experiences of communities who may not otherwise share their experiences at public meetings. As the Commission continues to engage in discussions and develop recommendations on topics including budget equity, community engagement, the experiences of the Lamont Community and many more throughout California should be considered.

Prepared by Ashley Gerrity, Senior Program Analyst



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To: California Racial Equity Commissioners
From: Racial Equity Commission Staff
Re: Los Angeles, CA Community Meet-n-Greet Event Summary, May 8th, 2024
Date: July 17th, 2024

On May 8th, 2024, Racial Equity Commission Staff cohosted a Community Meet-n-Greet at [Community Coalition](#) (CoCo) in South Central Los Angeles with the Youth Empowerment Commission and the Office of Community Partnerships and Strategic Communications (OCPSC). Commissioner Dr. Manuel Pastor attended for the first 30 minutes, after which Commissioner Gabriel Maldonado and Commissioner Simboa Wright joined. Around 100 community members attended. SEIU Local 721 donated dinner and CoCo provided Spanish translation.



CoCo, founded by Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass, is an organization with deep ties in the South Central Los Angeles community that "trains activists and organizers in order to support power building with Black, Brown, Indigenous, and people of color." The evening focused on engaging with and learning from CoCo's youth members and parents.



Opening remarks

Commissioner Pastor, a board member of CoCo, provided the night's opening remarks. He shared that the Racial Equity Commission is meant to take a view of racial equity and drive it through state government to make sure that state policies pay attention to racial disparities, correct racial inequities of the past, and ensure full participation by communities of color. The goal is to make sure that future decisions do not worsen disparities, but rather ameliorate them. Commissioner Pastor shared his belief that because California should be ensuring racial harmony for

future generations, it is important for the Commission to hear directly from young people. We also heard from CoCo President and CEO Alberto Retana, who spoke about the core visions of the organization and highlighted the meet-n-greet as an opportunity to openly talk about systemic racism in their communities and the ways they are impacted. He talked about the structural racism in the school systems, such as not having enough teachers and resources, poorly maintained and expensive housing, and racism experienced by communities from police. CoCo members are currently engaged in efforts to combat structural racism,



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including fighting to close motels and turn them into senior living centers, parks, housing centers, places of employment.

Benjamin Casar, Associate Director of Youth Programs, co-presented with Devin, a youth leader from Coco's [South Central Youth Empowered thru Action](#) (SCYEA), on the group's ongoing campaigns, which include:

- The Student Equity Needs Index (SENI) fund is a Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) equitable funding formula secured for the next two years that allocates more money to the schools that need it most. CoCo is advocating to the school board to continue SENI funding for the 2026-27 school year and beyond.
- [The Police Free LAUSD](#) coalition fights for their vision to remove police presence from schools and reinvest the police budget into programs that serve students.
- The [Black Student Achievement Plan](#) (BSAP) is a program created by Black students that provides "culturally responsive curriculum and instruction, partnerships with community-based organizations, and increased staffing to provide targeted supports for academic performance, social-emotional development, positive cultural identity formation, and a reimaged school safety".¹ SCYEA youth have continued to advocate for funding for BSAP, African American studies classes, and academic support tailored to Black students.
- Many SCYEA and CoCo youth participate in [Brothers, Sons, Selves](#), a coalition fighting against the criminalization of young men and boys of color in community and educational settings. They advocate for a positive school culture that makes these young men and boys feel safe, affirmed, seen, and respected.
- SCYEA has been meeting with Superintendent Carvalho to center equity, justice, and south central in decisions. Only 3% of LAUSD's \$18 billion dollar budget follows the equitable funding model, and SCYEA wants to 100% of funding equitable funding.

Interactive activity led by Youth Empowerment Commission and OCPSC

Thomisha Wallace, Executive Director of the Youth Empowerment Commission, co-led an activity with OCPSC's Executive Director Yumi Sera and Partnerships Deputy Director Aubrie Fong. The icebreaker activity included questions such as "TikTok or Instagram?" and "Taco Bell or Del Taco?" to prompt discussion. When asked the question, "What makes you feel connected to your community?", many responses cited CoCo's members and programs. Many attendees also shared that they feel connected to their community when they look past differences and find common experiences among one another. When asked, "What could be implemented to help deepen your connection to your community?", attendees shared that they would like to see more connection across racial groups and increased unity. They also want lower gas and food prices, lower taxes, better schools, and more places like CoCo that provide spaces to hold dialogues about community needs.

Following the icebreaker, attendees broke into five small groups to discuss the questions, "If financial barriers did not exist, what would you do to take care of yourself mentally and physically?" and "What could be implemented within your schools to enhance your educational experience?". Coco's community organizer, Enrique Gaspar, supported Staff in facilitating the small group discussion among Spanish-

¹ The Legacy of Brown v. Board Today - Community Coalition (cocosouthla.org)



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speaking attendees. For this activity, parents, community members, and youth came together to hold discussions with a broad range of perspectives.

Commissioner Maldonado facilitated the final portion of the activity: the share out. A representative from each group shared main points from their discussions. These are some common themes across groups:

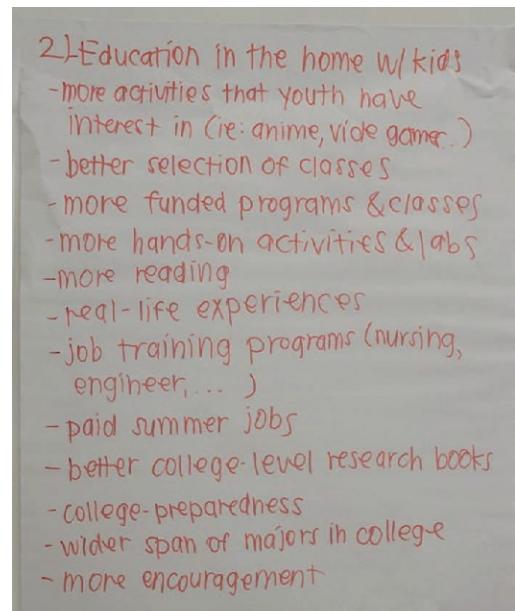
Question 1: If financial barriers did not exist, what would you do to take care of yourself mentally and physically?



- **Economic pressures relieved**
 - Parents shared that they would feel happier and less stressed because they would not have to worry about being able to afford bills and food.
- **Family and community**
 - Not having to worry about money for food and bills would allow community members to spend more time with the people who matter most to them.
- **More time and freedom to do what they enjoy**
 - Community members shared they would spend time on hobbies such as horseback riding, meditating, enjoying nature, travelling, and listening to music.
 - They would have more time to themselves.

Question 2: What could be implemented within your schools to enhance your educational experience?

- **Stronger support mechanisms provided by schools**
 - Parents want their children to have more guidance counselors who can provide mentorship, empathy, and motivation for student. They also want teachers and other faculty to be trained about mental health to gain skills for supporting students in crisis.
 - Parents want schools to be safe for students with special needs.
 - They want schools to have smaller classes, more teachers, and a wider selection of courses.
 - Parents want schools to provide students with skills such as auto shop, welding, carpentry, and money management.





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- Parents want their kids to have access to healthier and tastier school meals.
- Parents want schools to ask students what they would like to gain from their educational experience.
- **Parental involvement**
 - Parents want to bring back the Parent Teachers Association and other opportunities for parents and guardians to volunteer their time.
- **After school activities**
 - Parents want their children to have the option to participate in after school programs at all ages, including extracurricular activities that provide physical activity.

Considerations for the Commission

This community meet-n-greet gave Staff and Commissioners the opportunity to step into the CoCo community and learn about their passions and long history of advocacy. They have a strong drive to continue advocating for equity in their schools and turn to the Commission to make recommendations that transform the current system of government policies into one that supports them in their campaigns such as securing equitable school funding and embedding community priorities into decisions made by school leaders.

Prepared by Ashley Gerrity, Senior Program Analyst



Governor's Office of Planning and Research

To: California Racial Equity Commissioners
From: Racial Equity Commission Staff
Re: Riverside, CA Community Meet-n-Greet Event Summary, July 16th, 2024
Date: July 17th, 2024



On July 16th, 2024, Racial Equity Commission (Commission) Staff cohosted a Community Meet-n-Greet in Riverside in partnership with TruEvolution. Commissioner Gabriel Maldonado hosted the event and Commissioner Salas attended to represent the Commission. TruEvolution, founded by Commissioner Maldonado, is an organization with deep ties to the LGBTQ+ community that "fights for health equity and racial justice to advance the quality of life and human dignity of LGBTQ people." TruEvolution sponsored dinner and the

Racial Equity Commission provided Spanish and ASL translation. The evening focused on engaging with and learning from community members, including clients from [TruEvolution](#) in Riverside, CA.

Dinner and Meet-n-Greet

TruEvolution provided refreshments for the meet-n-greet. State staff got to meet and network with community members, TruEvolution clients and staff, and learn about Project Legacy. Founded in 2023, Project Legacy provides transitional supportive housing, a career center, and wrap around services focused on homeless LGBTQ+ youth on a one (1) acre campus. Project Legacy housing supports a variety of residents, off all ages, sexualities, and abilities. This allows for inter-generational housing where clients form diverse community.

Opening remarks

Commissioner Maldonado, CEO of TruEvolution, introduced his work at TruEvolution which he founded in 2007 as a safe space for LGBTQ+ and HIV positive community. We also heard from Jesse Melgar, the Vice Chair of the [Inland Empire Community Foundation](#) (IECF) and the former Communications Director and Press Secretary for Governor Newsom. His remarks focused on why racial equity is important in the Inland Empire. He emphasized the importance of intersectionality in his work as well the importance of finding an intersection of philanthropic, non-profit, and government dollars when funding a project. IECF

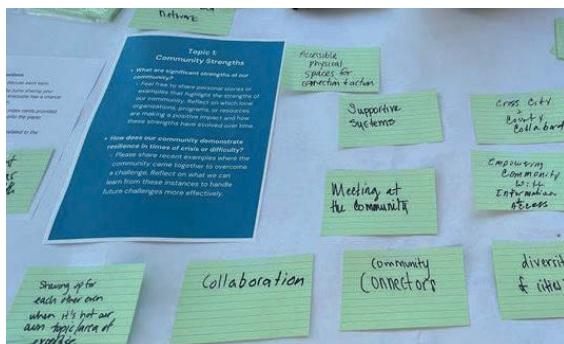




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helped sponsored Project Legacy through philanthropic funding. Sabrina Gonzalez, the Executive Director of the [Civil Rights Institute](#) delivered a presentation called "Civil Rights Institute – Living Enterprise based in History." Based in Riverside, the Inland Southern California Civil Rights Institute provides programming, exhibitions, and archives of civil rights efforts in the Inland Empire. Gonzalez emphasized the importance of storytelling in the Institute's exhibits and centering community. One of their current exhibits, "Working Coachella: Images of the farmworker community of the Coachella Valley," is now exhibited in Coachella, rather than Riverside, based on community feedback. Dr. Larissa Estes, Executive Director of the California Racial Equity Commission, provided closing remarks and reflections. Dr. Estes spoke on the importance of meeting community where they are at, as well as the importance of accessibility, such as the Spanish and ASL translation at the meet-n-greet. Dr. Estes also introduced the REC's Data Committee and spoke about standards of data, data disaggregation, and data mapping.

Interactive activity led by TruEvolution



Julianne Ballon, Development Assistant at TruEvolution, and Nicole Le Bail-Sanchez, Executive Assistant to CEO at TruEvolution, co-led the night's activity, along with Commissioner Maldonado and Jesse Melgar. Community members—including TruEvolution clients—State staff, and TruEvolution staff joined together for a visioning activity, with the goal of facilitating collaborative dialogue on key community topics. Attendees were split into three (3) groups, each with a different

topic to discuss for 15 minutes. At the end of the discussion, TruEvolution staff facilitated the final portion of the activity: the share out. A representative from each group shared main points from their tables.

Topic 1 – Community Strengths: What are specific strengths of our community? How does our community demonstrate resilience in times of crisis or difficulty?

- For this topic, a community member shared out the beauty of the ecosystem in the Inland Empire, such as the many academic institutions and civil rights organizations located in the region. Sabrina Gonzalez spoke on the community's value on accountability and the importance of calling in, rather than calling out.



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Topic 2 -- Community Challenges and Needs: What are the major challenges that our community faces today? What resources or support systems are currently missing that could help address these challenges? What barriers prevent community members from accessing necessary services?

- The community voiced their concerns about air quality in the Inland Empire, pollution, and high rates of asthma. The community was also concerned about rent prices, loss of income, and resulting homelessness and youth displacement. Community members also called out the problems created by warehouse expansion. An additional issue identified by TruEvolution staff is the need for Identification (ID) Cards for unhoused and undocumented people. Unhoused and undocumented people are unable to access vital social services, many of which can be accessed through TruEvolution, without ID cards. One of the solutions proposed was a mobile ID center which can be brought to unhoused residents.



Topic 3 -- Future Vision of the Inland Empire: What is your vision for the future of the Inland Empire over the next 5-10 years? How can the Racial Equity Commission (REC) and key stakeholders support the future vision of the IE? What role do you see for youth and future generations in shaping the Inland Empire's future?

- Table Three (3) discussed how to address the issues faced in the Inland Empire. They discussed education access, especially access for older adult and returning students. They also talked about the need for economic growth and investment in small businesses. TruEvolution staff also brought up affordable housing and the lack healthcare access in disinvested communities.

While attendees recognized many of the challenges in the Inland Empire, they also identified the many strengths of the region and solutions to overcome the challenges. During the share out, attendees chimed in with solutions they have identified to the problems voiced. When the need for a mobile ID network was shared, another attendee chimed in that another location in the Inland Empire was providing similar services. After the official share out, attendees organically came up to one another to further discuss the problems and solutions shared.

Closing Remarks

Commissioner Salas provided closing remarks. She began her speech with the statement that regional equity is racial equity, shining light on the disparities faced in the Inland Empire. Commissioner Salas summarized the points of the interactive activity starting with the strength of the Riverside community in centering land and home, centering people and relationships, and their ability to create good trouble. She also recognized the community's truthfulness about the challenges they face, while still maintaining a vision of collaboration.



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Considerations for the Commission

This community meet-n-greet gave Staff and Commissioners the opportunity to meet TruEvolution clients and community members from the Inland Empire. One key takeaway from the discussion was the critical need for identification cards for those looking to access supportive services provided by community and government systems. Community members brought to light the regional inequities to the Commission to make recommendations including bringing investment, housing, and health care access to the region.

Prepared by Camille Randolph, Program Analyst



To: California Racial Equity Commissioners
From: Racial Equity Commission Staff
Re: Community Meet-n-Greet Event Summary
Date: September 17, 2024

On September 17, 2024, Racial Equity Commission Staff, the Governor's Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation, Commissioners Matthews and Commissioner Hedrick visited Oakland, CA for the fourth Community Meet-n-Greet. The Meet-n-Greet was sponsored by Blue Shield of California Foundation.

took place at the Scottish Rite Center across from Lake Merrit. Trybe Inc. is a community-based non-profit rooted in Oakland's Eastlake/San Antonio/Fruitvale area, serving youth, young adults, and families in Oakland, Berkeley, Richmond, Hayward and the greater East Bay Area. Trybe provided refreshments, travel stipends, and childcare services during the Meet and Greet. Over 30 people were present and participated in the hybrid meeting. The meeting and meeting materials were translated into the following languages: Korean, Tagalog, Cambodian, Spanish, Vietnamese, Mandarin, and Cantonese.



Figure 1 above of attendees and residents of Oakland at the Committee Meeting

Opening Remarks

Commissioner Matthews presented opening remarks about his background and purpose of the Meet-n-Greet. Dr. Estes provided an overview of the Commission, its purpose and role in addressing racial equity. Dr. Estes explained the Commission purpose is to recommend opportunities and best practices to address racial disparities and inequities to better serve historically marginalized communities. The Commission is committed to developing community engagement and to better meet the needs of community. The community engaged with the Commissioners by asking a number of questions about the mission and vision of the Commission. Questions included: key outcomes of the Commission, defining collaboration with community, and preparing for the paradigm shift.

Below is a list of Key takeaways and their summaries from the Meet-n-Greet in Oakland.



Community Building Exercises

The attendees engaged in a community building exercise where they engaged in small Key themes heard were reflected in graphic notes by Raven Tahara.

When asked "**What makes you proud of/about your community?**" residents reflected on how proud they were of their community. One resident shared, "[I am] Proud to be in Oakland. Proud to be part of Trybe and to be able to offer what they have to help others. [I am] Proud that children want to come." A different resident recalled how "people watch out for each other" in response to the prompt. Another resident responded stating how they are "proud of their communities who are maintaining their happiness and trying to find it again." Another response from a resident described how the Oakland community "is hardworking and can figure out solutions".

Considerations for Change

The residents were also asked "**What do you want to change?**" so they brainstormed ideas for change. One of the residents discussed "the power of culture and the importance of how to lead with intention". Another resident "hoped for a time when people did not have to be resilient". A different resident shared the "value of learning how to be open to asking for help and accepting it". The next response came from a resident who described the "desire to have more city and local officials be a part of these conversations, so the officials know what to advocate for". The last response came from a resident who emphasized the "need to prepare young people now".

Considerations for the Commission

The Meet-n-Greets for communities serve as a tool of collaboration between the lived experiences of community members and as opportunity for the Racial Equity Commission to further invest in the communities they serve in the state of California. The Meet-n-Greet of the community in Oakland passed along knowledge of how to meet community where they are at instead of where they are expected to be. In addition, the Commission learned more about power of community connection and leading with intention. The Commission will continue to engage in community connections and practices to further expand on discussions and topics such as community engagement, the stories of Oakland's community and other areas throughout California will be considered.



Figure 2 above of attendees and residents of Oakland at the Community Meet-n-Greet

Prepared by Dylyn Turner-Keener, Senior Program Analyst

9-17-2024
OAKLAND, CA

RACIAL EQUITY
COMMISSION



What IS the Racial Equity Commission?

Dr. Larissa Estates

Purpose - Public
Advisory Body
• Talk
• Methodologies.

LOOK AT:

Ways to Bust
The System
(It's by DESIGN)

What does
collaboration
look like?

Not enough to
just LISTEN!
→ Allies
→ Empathize
→ Call it out!

→ Call it out!

→ Allies
→ Empathize
→ Call it out!

Community Questions...

Bigest
Effect?
4 cities -
Being in Space
and Place!

Neighborhood
culture

One THING
you'D CHANGE?

Young
people
are our
current
leaders

Not checking
on our
neighbors

More City
& local Govt
attending
these meetings

Homeless
community
(Need healthy
spaces to
connect)

More
collaboration
in our
neighborhoods

②



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Illustration



Meet People where They ARE...

Traco Matthews
= COMMUNICATOR
Why is this important?
It impacts:
• My Life
• My Community
• Californians
• everyone
Humanize
the Data.

ONE PLACE
Family
Food
Youth
(centric)
Healing

Food
Education
Data to shift
resources to those
in need

Economic Equity
Education
Data to shift
resources to those
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California Commission on
Asian & Pacific Islander
American Affairs

STATE OF CALIFORNIA
**RACIAL EQUITY
COMMISSION**

To: California Racial Equity Commissioners

From: Racial Equity Commission & California Commission on Asian & Pacific Islander American Affairs Staff

Re: Joint Listening Session with CAPIAA in Yuba City

Date: October 22, 2024



Figure 1 Group Photo of the Racial Equity Commission and the CA Commission on Asian and Pacific Islander American Affairs staff with Yuba City residents on October 22, 2024

On October 22, 2024, the Racial Equity Commission (Commission), in partnership with the California Commission on Asian & Pacific Islander American Affairs ([CAPIAA](#)), visited Yuba City to host a joint Listening Session.

CAPIAA assists the state in maintaining effective liaison and outreach with California's Asian and Pacific Islander American (APIAs) communities by examining issues of access, cultural and language sensitivity among state agencies, departments, and commissions. CAPIAA is dedicated to advancing the political, economic, and social issues of APIAs in California and represents over 6 million APIAs statewide.

In attendance were CAPIAA Commissioners Rajan Gill and David Yee, Executive Director of CAPIAA Khydeejah Alam, Executive Director of the Commission, Dr. Larissa Estes, Sutter County Supervisor Karm Bains and former Mayor of Yuba City and current Sutter County School Board Trustee, Kash Gill. Community partners included the Sikh American Legal Defense and Education Fund ([SALDEF](#)) and the [Punjabi American Heritage Society](#).



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STATE OF CALIFORNIA
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The purpose of visiting Yuba City was to engage with and learn from the experiences of the Sikh Punjabi community. Before the start of the listening session, members of the Commission and CAPIAA visited the [Gurdwara Sikh Temple](#) of Yuba City. The tour was led by Supervisor Bains and CAPIAA Commissioner Gill. They explained the purpose of [Guru Granth Sahib](#) and the celebration that will take place in early November. Guru Granth Sahib is a collection of [prayers, songs, and hymns](#) from Sikh Gurus. The temple was beautifully decorated with paintings that reflect Sikh history and values, and it is open to all members of the public. Upon entry, removing shoes and wearing a head covering is required for respect to the culture. There is an open space to pray and listen to elders read out prayers that echo throughout different spaces of the temple. When praying, it's customary to walk to the altar, and bow down in respect to the Guru Granth Sahib. The dining hall was filled with the aroma of Indian spices and food, inviting guests in. Supervisor Bains shared his family's legacy and their connection to the temple, and the stories of Sikh procession [Nagar Kirtan](#). Outside the dining hall, women prepped food for service and are gathered in a circle to share conversations and greet one another. Supervisor Bains and CAPIAA Commissioner Gill concluded the tour with a group photo and final messages about Nagar Kirtan.



Figure 2 Group Photo at the Gurdwara, the Sikh temple

Opening Remarks

Supervisor Bains provided opening remarks discussing [contributions from the Punjabi and Sikh community](#) such as agriculture, business, healthcare, and transportation. Supervisor Bains highlighted the case of [restricted landownership](#) towards Punjabi and Sikh farmers, cultural misrepresentation, stereotyping, and religious discrimination. Supervisor Bains echoed a call to action to meet demands of an accurate history reflecting Punjabi

and Sikh contributions to Yuba City and in California through education, representation, and combatting issues of discrimination. He said, "this is a moment of great opportunity. Racial equity is not just a goal, but a mission for the next generation."

Community Building Exercises or Breakout discussions

The attendees answered questions reflective of the challenges and opportunities faced by the Sikh and Punjabi communities in Yuba City. When asked, "**What are you proud of in your community?**" One attendee responded by describing how their children can see themselves in their own community and how the village provides them with more culture. Another attendee stated how they were "proud of their resilient community, but not proud of how [1 in 4 Sikh women](#) experience domestic violence." A different attendee mentioned the negative impact of trauma from the [1984 migration of the Sikh community](#) seeking asylum and the "translation of generational traumas within families." The next



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attendee's response was about how they are proud of the Gurdwara and the community presence. They love the closeness of community and are proud of the resources they make, the land, and access to travel.

Another question asked to the audience was, "***If you could improve one thing of your community to make it stronger, what would it be?***" In response, an attendee raised the issue of accessibility to more culturally relevant resources available in Punjabi and the establishment of a Sikh community center.

Considerations for Change

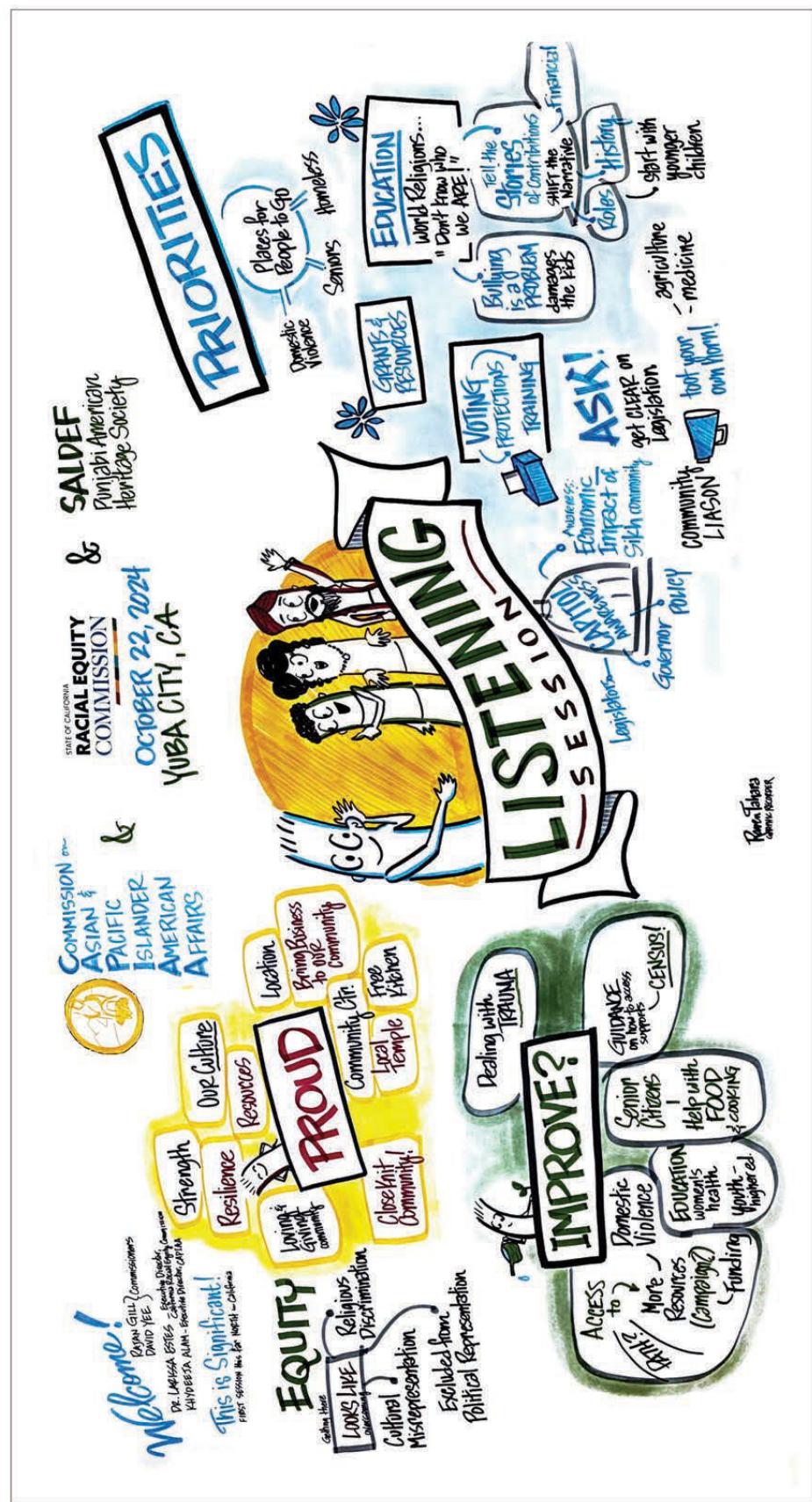
The final question centered on changes for the community, "***What are the top three (3) pressing priorities for the Punjabi community region and what {State} policies could better serve the needs of the Punjabi community?***" Different attendees highlighted several issues that connect back to the need for more resources and having a community center to organize and address the needs of the community. Some of these issues included: senior care, inclusive education, drug dependency and domestic violence support, women's health, financial grant support, the need for formal recognition of representation and economic acknowledgment in education.

Considerations for the Commission

The listening session in Yuba City was both the Commission and CAPIAA's first visit north of Sacramento. Lessons shared between the Sikh and Punjabi communities with the Commission will inform best practices of support and establish community relations through community engagement. The Commission learned of the strong presence of the Sikh and Punjabi community in Yuba City, highlighting their cultural presence, land and agricultural production, business involvement, and economic contributions. The stories shared from the Yuba City Listening session from the Sikh and Punjabi communities will be considered to inform the Commission of their continued work and efforts on building structural racial equity and community engagement.

CAPIAA plays an essential role in highlighting the diverse needs and voices of APIA communities statewide, ensuring APIA voices are integrated into broader racial equity frameworks and advocacy efforts. Strengthening the Commission's partnership with CAPIAA offers a vital opportunity to deepen its understanding and expand support for California's diverse populations. This ongoing collaboration will help establish culturally responsive practices by integrating insights from these listening sessions into statewide equity strategies and policies.

Prepared by Dylyn Turner-Keener, Senior Program Analyst, Racial Equity Commission & Yee Xiong, Manager of Communications & External Affairs, California Commission on Asian & Pacific Islander American Affairs





STATE OF CALIFORNIA
**RACIAL EQUITY
COMMISSION**

To: California Racial Equity Commission

From: Racial Equity Commission, California Commission on Asian & Pacific Islander American Affairs (CAPIAA), and Commission on the State of Hate

Re: Joint Listening Session in Fresno

Date: December 18, 2024



Figure 1 From Left to Right: CAPIAA's Executive Director Alam, State of Hate Commissioners Cuellar and Feiler, and Racial Equity Commission Commissioner Matthews, and Racial Equity Commission Executive Director Estes

On December 4, 2024 the Racial Equity Commission in partnership with the California Commission on Asian & Pacific Islander American Affairs ([CAPIAA](#)) and [Commission on the State of Hate](#) visited Fresno, CA to host a joint listening session centered on the needs and experiences of newcomer populations served by Fresno Interdenominational Refugee Ministries (FIRM).

In attendance¹ were Executive Director of the Commission Dr. Estes, Commissioner Traco Matthews, CAPIAA's Executive Director Khydeeja Alam, State of Hate Commissioners Regina Cuellar and Cece Feiler. Community partners included the Fresno Interdenominational Refugee Ministries ([FIRM](#)) for hosting and the James Irvine Foundation for supporting FIRM.

The purpose of the Commissions partnering to visit Fresno was to listen to and engage with community and learn about their lived experiences of community members, especially newcomers as it relates to

¹ In attendance was also Assembly Member Dr. Arambula



inequities. Before the listening session began Commissioners and staff received a tour of FIRM property and adjacent housing community to learn more about FIRM and their role in providing resources and translation services to refugees and other newcomers. The FIRM serves several populations including but not limited to Arabic, Armenian, Hmong, Cambodian, Indigenous populations from Mexico and Central America.



Figure 2 Commissioner Matthews at the Spanish and Mixteco Community Table

tables were organized with the following communities Spanish and Mixteco speaking (indigenous language from Oaxaca, Mexico), Hmong, Dari, Punjabi, and Cambodian. In attendance was also Assembly Member Dr. Arambula. The attendees were asked a set of questions from different Commissions before returning to a larger circle to share out. One of the questions asked by the Commissioner Matthews to his first table with Spanish and Mixteco speakers was, ***“what parts of your community make you happy and what do you like about where you live?”*** An attendee response described the feeling of safety, and the importance of treating everyone fairly and the same, so when this happens there can be more joy and happiness. Another response defined happiness as “being free and living here.” Another question that was presented was, ***“are there aspects of where you live you would like to see get better and what parts of your community are you proud of?”*** This question sparked a number of responses including the need for more language services. Such as when people are receiving medical, social and other services they are unable to get the support they need because of the language difference and lack of respect towards non-English speakers. A number of these responses included incidences of discrimination and the notion of people including their cases being passed along because services do not want to help them. The last question from the Commissioner Matthews was, ***“are there aspects of where you live you would like to see get better and what parts of your community are you proud of?”*** An attendee described how sometimes they have people who go off to develop their own foundations which can help connect their community to language support so they can get the help they need. Dr. Estes asked, ***“what comes to mind when you think of joy/happy and what do you like about where you live?”*** at her discussion table with Cambodian community members. One of the attendees raised up how welcoming FIRM is and how the FIRM welcomes everyone not just



Cambodians. Another attendee stated how the FIRM provides language support so they can fill out forms and translate letters from services like their doctor. However, more responses described challenges due to costs of living, limited income, and concern about their safety as members of the Asian diaspora.

Once the smaller discussion groups finished, it was time to return to the meeting and listen to remarks from the Commissions. The themes that emerged from the community-based discussions all overlapped with one another. For the Punjabi table many of them had been persecuted and urged others to remember what they had experienced post 9/11 from being targeted for their cultural garments to experiences of being attacked and targeting young people. The Cambodian, Hmong, and Punjabi tables had common themes such as the cost of living including utilities and rent. In addition, for the Spanish, Mixteco, and other community tables th



Figure 3 Commissioner Cuellar at the Hmong Community Table

Considerations for the Commission

The listening session in Fresno was informative for all the Commissions present. The Racial Equity Commission will take the lessons shared from all the communities present to inform the Racial Equity Framework and best practices to further support these communities and others in the state of California. The Racial Equity Commission learned about the bold and powerful presence of the Mixteco, Spanish, Hmong, Dhari, Punjabi,

Cambodian, and Lao people in Fresno and their commitment supporting inner community. The stories shared from the Fresno listening session will be considered to inform the Racial Equity Commission and their continued work on developing structural racial equity and pathways of community engagement.

Prepared by Dylyn Turner-Keener, Senior Program Analyst



To: California Racial Equity Commissioners
From: Racial Equity Commission Staff
Re: Community Meet-n-Greet Event Summary
Date: March 10, 2025



On March 10, 2025, the California Racial Equity Commission Executive Director Dr. Larissa Estes and Commissioner Traco Matthews visited Oakland, CA for a Community Meet-n-Greet. The evening event was co-hosted by St. Columba Catholic Church's Health Cabinet with over 30 community members in attendance. Commission Staff collaborated with St. Columba Health Cabinet in planning this faith-based community event with a focus on

sharing about the Commission, listening to community experiences and priorities, and engaging in dialogue centered on the intersection of faith and racial equity efforts.

Opening Remarks

Commissioner Matthews opened the evening with a prayer and a personal story about the importance of racial equity work. Executive Director Dr. Larissa Estes provided an overview of the Commission and its purpose in addressing racial equity (and inequities) in California. Dr. Estes expressed that the role of the Commission is to listen to community and translate their lived experiences into information that informs the development of a Racial Equity Framework that will offer best practices and tools for agencies to address racial disparities and inequities specifically in the areas of budget, data, and community engagement.

After Commissioner Matthews and Dr. Estes gave their opening remarks, community members engaged in dialogue for the remainder of the evening, taking turns to share their questions, concerns, and priorities. Several





community members shared personal stories, highlighting their shared lived experiences of racial inequities and discrimination experiences, particularly within the healthcare system. Below is a summary of key themes that emerged from the Meet-n-Greet in Oakland.



Community Dialogue

Attendees asked questions about the work of the Commission, how the Commission connects to other state-level work, and if there are any implications for the Commission to consider at the federal level. One community member asked, **“How does the Racial Equity Commission support local government?”** Dr. Estes explained that in addition to developing a Framework, another purpose of the Commission is to also provide technical assistance to government agencies, both at the state and local levels.

Community Power

Several attendees also shared the importance of education and communication. One attendee expressed, **“There is a need for efforts that don’t cost dollars – such as communication and education at the community level.”** Another community member suggested building career pathways for young people to get into the healthcare field because **“more representation [in healthcare careers] can help reduce disparities [in health outcomes].”**

Toolkits for community was also shared as a recommendation. The community member suggested these efforts start grassroots level, such as churches, and black fraternities and sororities, etc.

The Power of Storytelling

Storytelling played a key role in the dialogue throughout the evening. Attendees shared deeply personal stories, many of which were of their experiences related to racial discrimination in the healthcare system. While every story was unique, several members of the community shared similar trauma, pain, and desire for change.





One reoccurring theme between these stories was the need for advocacy in healthcare spaces, especially for Black women and mothers.

Additionally, one attendee named storytelling as "a way to change hearts", and another attendee shared that "**we need more civic media**" – media that promotes civic engagement.

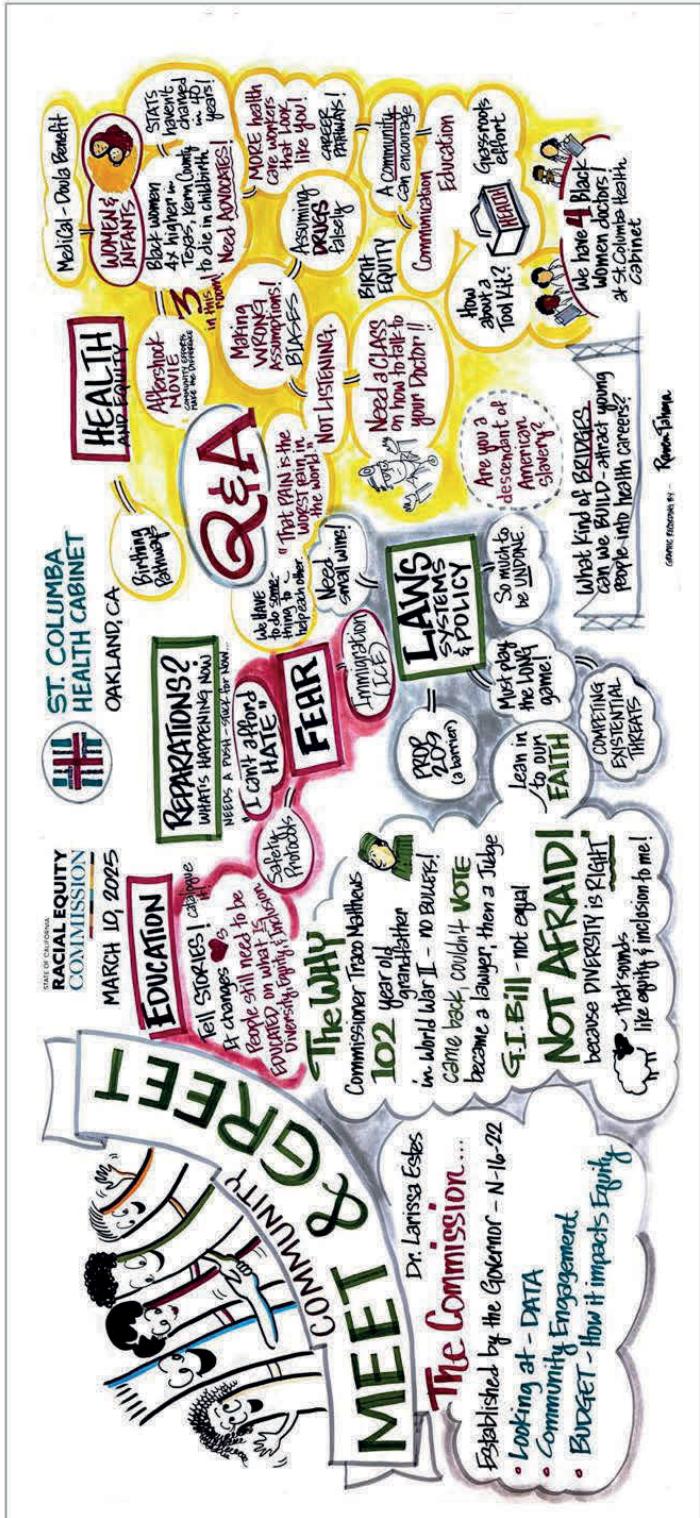
Considerations for the Commission

This Community Meet-n-Greet in Oakland was insightful and informative for both the community and the Commission. This event was a space for community to engage in courageous, vulnerable dialogue and share testimony about their lived experiences they may not otherwise share at public meetings, or in other spaces. The stories shared by this Oakland faith-based community will help inform the Commission's community engagement strategy, specifically with community engagement through the power of storytelling to gain insight into both similar and diverse lived experiences and needs of Californians throughout the state.

Prepared by Jourdan Ringgold, Senior Program Analyst



STATE OF CALIFORNIA
RACIAL EQUITY
COMMISSION





To: California Racial Equity Commissioners
From: Racial Equity Commission Staff
Re: Community Meet-n-Greet Event Summary
Date: March 20, 2025



Figure 1: Group photo of attendees at Imperial Valley College on March 19, 2025

n-Greet event for community to learn about each of the Commissions and for the Commissions to engage and listen to community members' experiences of living in the area.

Opening Remarks The Executive Director of Comite Civico del Valle (CCV), Luis Olmedo, opened the evening welcoming the Commissions and the community. The Executive Organizer of Imperial Valley Equity and Justice Coalition (IVEJ), Daniela Flores, also gave opening remarks, emphasizing the importance of community power and strength and also briefly shared about current local policy proposals that will impact many community members of Imperial Valley. Racial Equity Commissioner, Dr. Manuel Pastor explained his purpose for serving on the Racial Equity Commission and shared a personal story about the recent wildfires that impacted Los Angeles. In his closing, Commissioner Pastor expressed, **“racial equity is not a special interest, it is a public interest”**

On March 19, 2025, the [California Racial Equity Commission](#) and the [California Youth Empowerment Commission](#) co-hosted a Community Meet-n-Greet at Imperial Valley College in Imperial, California. The Commissions collaborated with two community-based organizations to plan and promote the event: Comite Civico del Valle and Imperial Valley Equity and Justice Coalition. Over 70 community members were in attendance, with about a third of the audience utilizing interpretation services. Both Commissions visited Imperial Valley to host a joint Meet-



Figure 2: Commission Pastor giving opening remarks at Imperial Valley College on March 19, 2025



Figure 3: photo of research presentation

Figure 4: group photo of UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center Staff, students, and Commissioner Pastor at Imperial Valley College on March 19, 2025

After the opening remarks, Director of the UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center, Dr. Veronica Terriquez, and several students from Imperial Valley College, UC San Diego, and UCLA presented their research findings that explored racial inequities, disparities, and youth needs in the Imperial Valley. The students' survey focused on job aspiration and training, air quality and health coverage, educational attainment, and civic engagement.

Their survey findings raised several key needs and a question: *How do we invest more in young people?* The youth residents need more pathways toward upward mobility and job access as well as tailored guidance in career-readiness, educational attainment and degree completion. Additionally, there is a need to make job training and access in certain industries more inclusive of young women and non-binary people in the Imperial Valley. At the end of the presentation, one recommendation to address the needs of youth was to make the research areas and survey findings priorities for local

improvements, which could provide opportunities for the local government to establish trust within communities and find solutions.

After the presentation, Executive Director of the Youth Empowerment Commission, Thomisha Wallace, shared an overview of the Youth Empowerment Commission and its purpose to listen, learn, and advocate for youth as well as to make recommendations to address pressing issues impacting California's youth. Director Wallace also shared the issue areas that the Youth Empowerment Commission will focus on, including education and career-readiness, mental health, homelessness and housing, juvenile justice and foster care, and climate crisis and civic engagement.

Senior Program Analyst of the Racial Equity Commission, Dylyn Turner-Keener, provided an overview of the Racial Equity Commission and its purpose to address racial inequities in California. She explained the role of the Commission is to listen to communities throughout the state and translate their lived experiences into information that informs



the development of a Racial Equity Framework. The Framework will offer best practices and tools for state and local government agencies to address racial disparities and inequities, specifically in the areas of budget, data, and community engagement.

Executive Director of the Racial Equity Commission, Dr. Larissa Estes transitioned the evening by inviting attendees to participate in a community dialogue. Attendees took turns speaking (in English and Spanish), sharing their experiences, concerns, and priorities in the Imperial Valley. Several community members shared personal stories and lived experiences of racial inequities and discrimination – particularly highlighting challenges unique to living on the border. Below is a summary of key themes that emerged from the Meet-n-Greet discussion in Imperial Valley.

Basic Needs and Access

Community members shared stories about the difficulties of having their basic needs met, specifically with housing, public restrooms near border crossings, disability services, and transportation. One attendee shared that in Calexico, trash cans and bathrooms were removed, and public facilities are not allowing people to use their restrooms, which results in “people having to use the bathroom in public (on the ground).” In addition, another attendee shared **there is a need for support and more access to resources for both invisible and visible disabilities**, especially for young adults who age out of existing programs.

Disparities in Outcomes

A few members of the community commented on **conditions and outcomes being “worse than ever” for residents of the Imperial Valley**. One attendee shared her experience in witnessing discrimination against women who were going through divorce and were not receiving appropriate language translation of legal documents or legal process, which has led to disparities in economic outcomes for divorced women in Imperial County.

Another attendee shared their experience as a farmworker and how his exposure to pesticides resulted in cancer, along with several of his peers. He shared that among his peers, he is the remaining survivor. This attendee's story illustrates the disparities in health outcomes for farmworkers in the Imperial Valley.



Civic engagement

Several attendees shared their desire for more civic engagement in the Imperial Valley. One attendee shared that he attended Imperial Valley College 55 years ago. He shared that **“we need our young people [who leave the Imperial Valley for higher education] to come back to their community.”** Another attendee shared that in Imperial County, voting turnout is one of the lowest in the state and emphasized the importance of voting for the low-income, labor class, and agriculture workforce in Imperial County.

After community dialogue, the Vice Chair and Commissioner of the Youth Empowerment Commission, Aidan Lin-Tostado, concluded the evening with closing remarks. Commissioner Aidan expressed his gratitude to the Imperial Valley community for sharing their stories and recognized the **intergenerational solidarity** in the room. He encouraged the community members to continue to have courageous dialogue, and to do it unapologetically.

Considerations for the Commission

The Community Meet-n-Greet in the Imperial Valley was informative and invigorating for both the community and the Commissions. Several attendees expressed their gratitude for both Commissions coming to the Imperial Valley to listen to their stories, questions, and feedback. The unique stories that were shared by community members of the Imperial Valley helps paint a clearer picture of the different lived experiences of Californians, which will inform the Framework, community engagement, and the work of both Commissions.

Prepared by Jourdan Ringgold, Senior Program Analyst



To: California Racial Equity Commissioners

From: Racial Equity Commission Staff

Re: Community Listening Session Summary

Date: April 16, 2025



Figure 1: Photo of attendees at Lancaster Public Library on April 16, 2025

On April 16, 2025, the [California Racial Equity Commission](#) partnered with the [County of Los Angeles Chief Executive Office Anti-Racism, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion \(ARDI\)](#) to co-host a Community Listening Session at Lancaster Public Library in Antelope Valley. This region of the County faces unique challenges with access to jobs, housing, transportation, education, and other needs. These disparities impact many Antelope Valley residents, who often feel left out of conversations and decisions for Los Angeles County. The Commission collaborated with ARDI to plan and host the event. Over 35 community members

were in attendance; both Spanish and American Sign Language interpretation were made available during the event. Previously, the Commission visited Community Coalition in South Central Los Angeles for a Meet-n-Greet event in May 2024.

Opening Remarks

The Executive Director of the County of Los Angeles Anti-Racism, Diversity, and Inclusion (ARDI), Dr. D'Artagnan Scorza, opened the evening welcoming the community. The Executive Director of the Racial Equity Commission, Dr. Larissa Estes, also provided opening remarks recognizing Antelope Valley is an often-forgotten region of Los Angeles County. Dr. Estes also shared the Commission's purpose for hosting community engagement events throughout the state: to listen to community, learn about their lived experiences, and gain an understanding of their community-specific priorities.

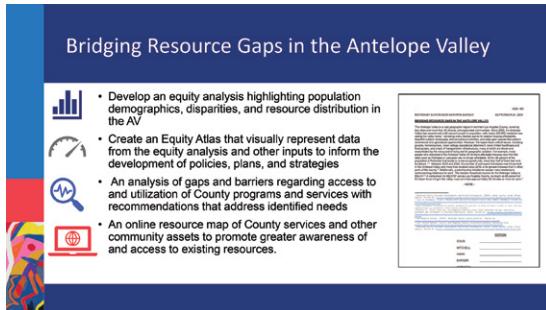


Figure 2: photo of ARDI's presentation

After the opening remarks, Dr. Scorza presented the work his team has been doing in the County, specifically the community engagement work ARDI has done in Antelope Valley. In their analysis of community listening sessions in Antelope Valley from 2022 to 2024, ARDI identified five areas of community priorities: children and family wellbeing; transportation and transit access; equitable regional investment; physical and mental health care access; and housing.

Dr. Scorza also highlighted ways to bridge resource gaps in Antelope Valley, including developing an equity analysis and creating an Equity Atlas. The Equity Atlas visually represents data from the equity analysis as well as an analysis of gaps and barriers regarding access to and utilization of County programs and services.

Dylyn Turner-Keener, a Senior Program Analyst for the Commission, provided an overview of the Commission and its purpose to address racial inequities in California. She explained the role of the Commission is to listen to communities throughout the state and translate their lived experiences into information that informs the development of a Racial Equity Framework. She further explained that the Framework will offer best practices and tools for state and local government agencies to address racial disparities and inequities, specifically in the areas of budget, data, and community engagement.

Before the ARDI team transitioned into the interactivity activity, a few community members had an opportunity to share questions and comments. One attendee emphasized the need to highlight Black Americans when addressing inequities and another attendee thanked the Commission for coming to Antelope Valley and shared that the main issue impacting Antelope Valley is how they are often forgotten and do not have a lot of opportunities to participate in processes like this.



For the Interactive Activity, attendees participated in a Gallery Walk to share feedback on priorities that ARDI and the Commission should consider in their work. Attendees were provided with post-it notes and pens to write their ideas and then go around the room to read others' ideas. Below is a summary of key themes that emerged from the Community Listening Session in Antelope Valley.

Access to Resources and Services

Several attendees shared their difficulties in accessing resources and services, such as education, healthcare, transportation, and affordable housing. One attendee shared that there is a **"lack of opportunities in Antelope Valley, especially for education."** He highlighted that in Antelope Valley, there are no two-year or four-year colleges, and that residents must go 'down south' [to more urban cities] to go to school. Other attendees shared that Antelope Valley needs services and support for the elderly, youth, domestic violence victims, and people with disabilities. A few attendees also expressed the need for **"attracting industry that would raise the economic base and create more jobs at higher salaries."**



Figure 3: community members participating in Interactive Activity

Racism, Discrimination, and Oppression

Several members of the community also commented on the racism they experience in Antelope Valley. One attendee described Antelope Valley as an "oppressed community" and another attendee said, **"Jim Crow never went away."** Other attendees shared their concerns and experiences with the persistent, systemic racism within local government, law enforcement, housing, education, transportation, and the justice system.

Considerations for the Commission

The Community Listening Session in Antelope Valley was informative for both the community and the Commission. The community concerns and priorities along with the work ARDI is doing provide the Commission with a data-informed snapshot of the community needs. By partnering with local government and community-based organizations to hold space for community, the Commission's work can be informed by both data and storytelling.

Prepared by Jourdan Ringgold, Senior Program Analyst



ANTELOPE VALLEY COMMUNITY LISTENING SESSION

APRIL 16, 2025 · LANCASTER

Welcome!

Dr. D'Artagnan Gourza
Los Angeles County Anti-Fascism,
Diversity, and Inclusion Initiative

Dr. Larissa Estes
"It's important to listen to communities
that are often forgotten!"
Our systems are often unfair. This is a
problem that needs to be fixed.

COMMUNITY NEEDS:

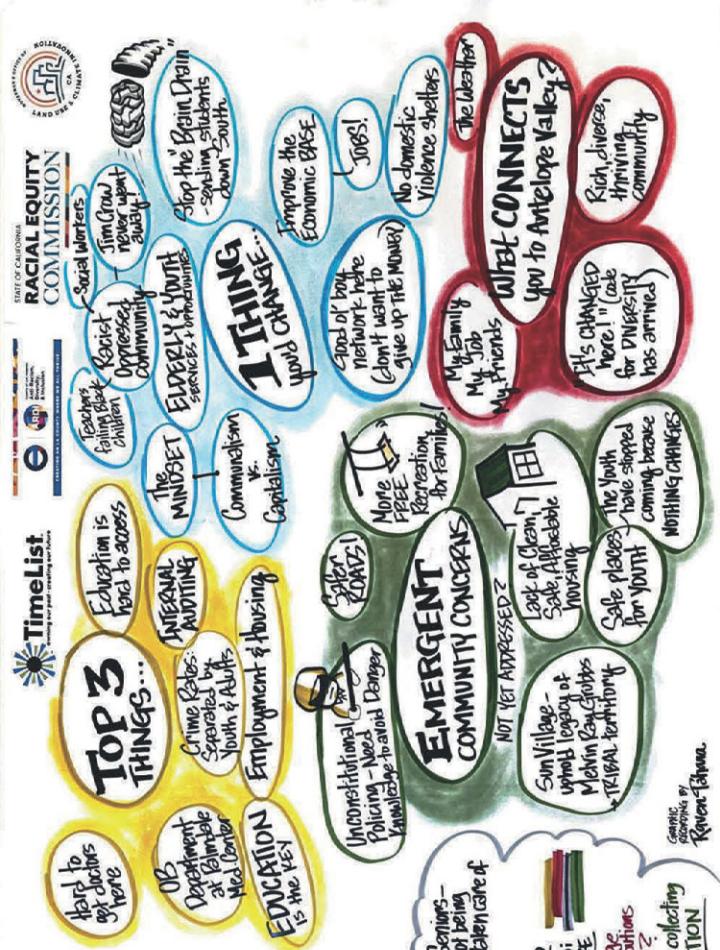
Jobs that match the cost of living –
why aren't they there?
Nothing we're doing here is
"illegal" – building community is our goal

more important than ever to advance Equity

Accountability Measures

Strategies → + Data

We want to listen, create a collaborative process, meet communities where they're at.





To: California Racial Equity Commissioners

From: Racial Equity Commission Staff

Re: Community Meet-n-Greet Summary

Date: June 21, 2025



Figure 1: Photo of attendees at Clinton Park on June 21, 2025. Credit: Katherine Nagasawa / El Tímpano.

On Saturday, June 21, 2025, the [California Racial Equity Commission](#) partnered with [El Tímpano](#) and [Trybe, Inc.](#) to co-host a Community Meet-n-Greet at Clinton Park in Oakland. In this region of the Bay Area, there is a large Mayan community that speaks Mam, an indigenous spoken language of Guatemala. For this Community Meet-n-

Greet, the Commission centered the Mam-speaking community by having the Meet-n-Greet spoken primarily in Mam.

Approximately 30 adult community members were in attendance, majority were Mam-speaking. A local media organization, Radio B'alam, was also in attendance to livestream the start of the Meet-n-Greet for Mam-speaking residents who were not able to attend in-person. There were also three local Mam interpreters in attendance who provided interpretation in Todos Santos Mam and English for Commission Staff and partners to be part of the conversation and to listen to community in their native language. The livestream led to additional residents coming later in the event to learn more about the Commission and share their voices.

Opening Remarks



El Tímpano's Mam Community Engagement Coordinator, Martha Calmo Ramirez, opened the morning welcoming community in Mam. The Racial Equity Commission's Executive Director, Dr. Larissa Estes shared the Commission's purpose for hosting community engagement events throughout the state: to listen to community, learn about their lived experiences, and gain an understanding of their community-specific priorities. The Commission's Senior Program Analyst, Jourdan Ringgold, provided an overview of the Commission and its [charge](#).



Figure 2: photo of attendees. Credit: Katherine Nagasawa / El Tímpano.

After the opening remarks, attendees formed a circle to engage in conversation. Martha led introductions with a prompt for the group: share your name and one word that describes your day. One attendee shared, ***"I am happy because I can hear people speaking my native language."*** Many of the attendees expressed gratitude and shared that they were curious about the event and came to learn and be in community.

Martha provided an overview of the interactive activity and facilitated the discussion with guiding questions. Below is a summary of key themes that emerged from the Mam-speaking Community Meet-n-Greet.

Access to Resources and Services

Several attendees shared the challenges they experience with accessing public benefits and services, as the Mam language is only spoken, not written. One community member said, ***"I wish there was more resources and support from the government for the Mam community."*** Community members shared the importance of having Mam speakers working within community-based organizations that help residents access resources and services, and how these organizations need funds to be able to hire more people who speak Mam and create materials inclusive of the different Mam dialects. Another attendee shared, ***"we work, we pay taxes, but those tax dollars don't reach our community."***

In addition, programs, resources, and services are often available in Spanish. Many attendees have experienced being labeled Guatemalan and/or Latino, which dismisses their Indigenous identity. One community member said, ***"I don't speak English***



or Spanish. I only speak Mam." Attendees also shared their experience of being left out of their children's education due to language barriers. In Oakland Unified School District (OUSD), Mayan Mam-speaking students are the largest newcomer group, yet there is very little support for these students and their families. One attendee shared, "**parents have no avenue to understand what is happening. Never invited to parent-teacher conferences because they never reserved resources. Oakland has a few Mam-speakers in the district...not every district has awareness or community support.**"

Access to jobs and living wages

A common concern that was shared during the Meet-n-Greet was access to jobs, specifically jobs that can pay for the high cost of living in the region. Attendees shared similar sentiments: "**we need to work, but there is no work...we can't live if we don't have a job...working two to three days [a week] is not enough to pay rent and buy groceries.**" Job insecurity creates fear and worries among community members, specifically for those who are undocumented – they are more likely to fall into crisis.



Figure 3: photo of attendees during interactive discussion. Credit: Katherine Nagasawa / El Tímpano.

Need for Adult Education

Many attendees also described the need for adult education to address poverty and limited capacity. One attendee shared that kids are sent to work at an early age and taken away from education [to help financially]. Another attendee shared her desire for adults in her community to learn English and Spanish as well as go back to school. She shared, "**the first thing we think about is to support our children, but we forget to support ourselves...if there is a school for adults it can help us with success.**" Other attendees shared the need for adult education and support for new arrivals.

Considerations for the Commission

The Community Meet-n-Greet in Oakland was informative for both the Mam-speaking community and the Commission. The concerns and priorities that were shared provide



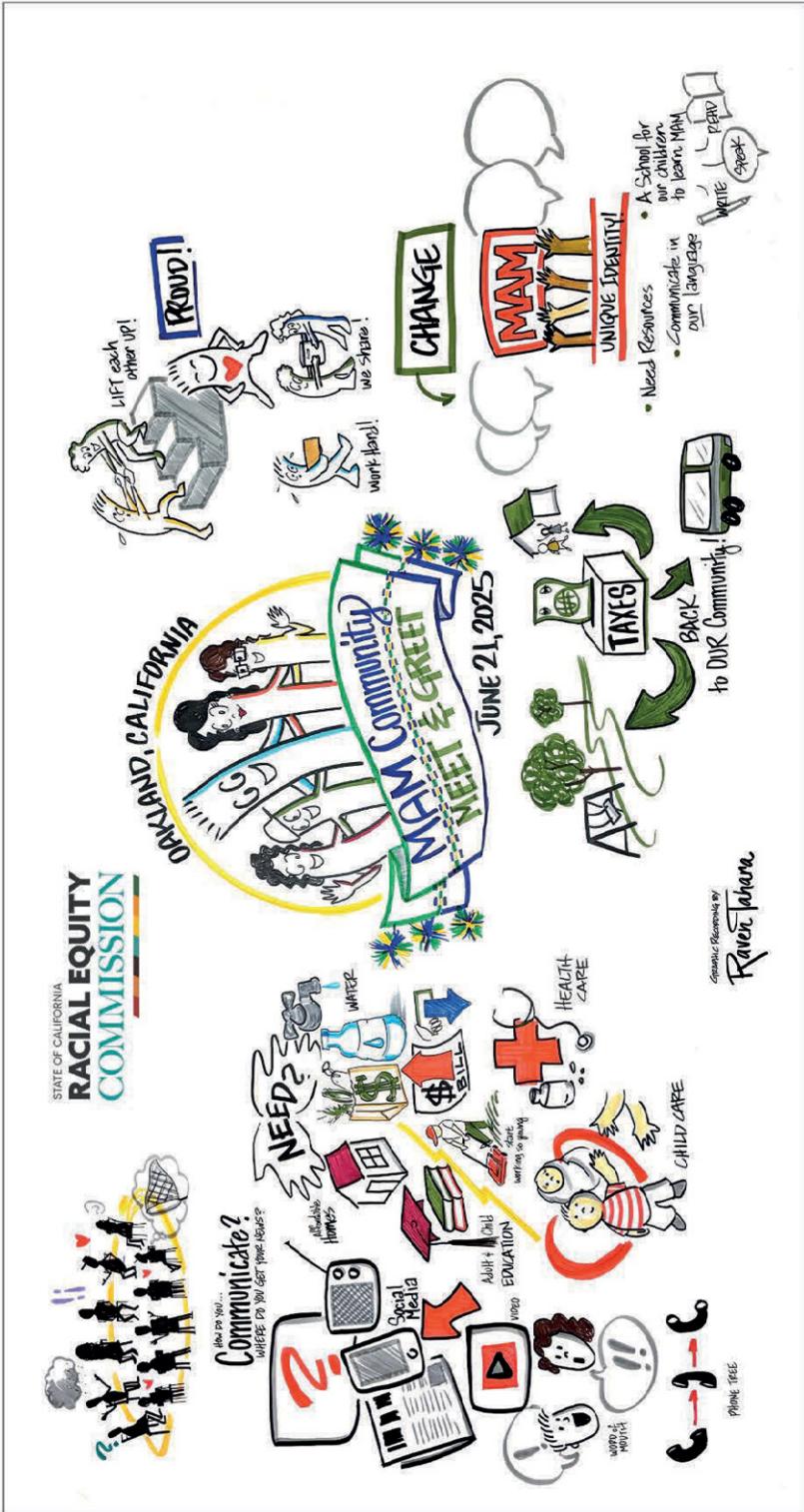
the Commission with a snapshot of the unique needs of the Mam-speaking community in Oakland. For additional insight on the event, the Commission's community partner, El Tímpano, published an [article](#) highlighting the Community Meet-n-Greet.

In addition, this Meet-n-Greet was the first time the Commission offered a community engagement event primarily in a language other than English. The Commission will continue to consider this approach in future community engagement efforts.

Prepared by Jourdan Ringgold, Senior Program Analyst



STATE OF CALIFORNIA
**RACIAL EQUITY
COMMISSION**





To: California Racial Equity Commissioners

From: Racial Equity Commission Staff

Re: Meet-N-Greet Summary

Date: June 25, 2025



Figure 1 Group photo of Racial Equity Commission staff, El Sausal Middle School staff, and Youth Empowerment Commission's Director on June 25, 2025

On June 25, 2025, the Racial Equity Commission (the Commission) visited Salinas to hold a Meet-N-Greet to learn from residents in the area. The Commission partnered with the [Center for Community Advocacy](#) (CCA) who hosted the Meet-N-Greet at [El Sausal Middle School](#). The Center for Community Advocacy helps farm workers build leadership within the community and advocates for their needs to improve living conditions, affordable housing, and access to health services and resources. In attendance was



Figure 2 Community members at El Sausal Middle School

Executive Director of the Center for Community Advocacy, Joel Hernandez Laguna and his team, as well as Staff from the Salinas Unified High School District including Dr. Carissa Purnell, Yvette Ramos, Monica Morales Bravo, Estella Cruz, and Maria de Jesus Cuentas.

The purpose of visiting Salinas was to listen to community voices and learn about their lived experiences to inform the development of the Framework. The Meet-N-Greet was conducted primarily in Spanish to be more inclusive and intentional about centering community. This was the

second Meet-N-Greet where the Commission conducted a meeting primarily in a language other than English.

Opening Remarks

The Principal of El Sausal Middle School, Francisco Huerta, provided opening remarks and thanked the community for attending. CCA's Executive Director Joel Hernandez Laguna welcomed community and thanked the Commission for coming to Salinas to hear from community and center their voices. The attendees also heard from one of the Commission's Senior Program Analysts, Dylyn Turner-Keener, who shared opening remarks and gave a brief overview of the Commission and its [charge](#).

Community Building Exercises or Breakout discussions

The attendees sat at tables and gathered in a smaller groups to begin the discussion activity. Commissioner Traco Matthews presented questions for community to discuss at their tables before sharing out their answers to the broader audience. The first question was **“What are you most proud of in your community?”** One attendee shared how they were glad to receive council’s approval of last year’s [rent stabilization](#) that was a collective effort between community and community-based organizations to improve rental costs. In addition, multiple members stated how proud they are of fellow community members who are farm workers, who work long days in the field from sunup until sundown from past generations to present day. Members also went on to say how much they love their community and how they “feel proud of the unity” and described themselves as a “hard working community...community of fighters.”



Considerations for Change

The final question centered on changes for the community, “**If there is one thing you could change to make your community better, what would it be?**” Numerous attendees highlighted several issues about the need to improve access to health and food support services, affordable housing, better public transportation, repairing sidewalks to be accessible for disabled people and children, more visibility to Indigenous Latin communities, and clear concise dissemination of information to the public. In addition, members of the community also shared issues of discrimination, rising costs of living, low wages, and a need for more support and protection efforts for farm workers.



Figure 3 Attendees discussing in small groups

Considerations for the Commission

The Meet-N-Greet in Salinas was important for the Commission to identify themes emerging in this community that are both unique to Salinas and similar to other areas around the State that the Commission has previously visited. Salinas community members raised concerns about similar issues that were shared by community in Imperial, such as farm workers’ safety and the need for higher salaries. Other similar themes that emerged in Salinas

include improving public transportation, high costs of living, more informed resources, and making local government meetings more accessible. One of the challenges that was unique to Salinas is protecting the coastal environment and preserving its natural beauty.

The Commission will take these lessons learned to inform the development of the Framework and best practices to conduct community engagement. The Racial Equity Commission learned about the vibrant community in Salinas who are proud of their culture, strong in their commitment to help farm workers, and support members of the community as a collective.

Prepared by Dylyn Turner-Keener, Senior Program Analyst



Figure 4 Graphic Note from Meet-N-Greet by Raven Tahara

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