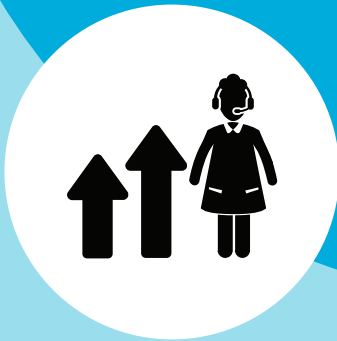




# READY FOR EQUITY IN WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Racial Equity Readiness  
Assessment Tool





**The new Race Forward** advances racial justice through policy development, sector transformation, research, movement and capacity building, and narrative strategy. Founded in 1981, the historic Race Forward brings systemic analysis and an innovative approach to complex race issues to help people take effective action toward racial equity. Founded in 2002, the historic CSI works with community, government, and other institutions to craft and apply strategies and tools to achieve racial equity. As one organization, we are dedicated to transforming institutions and empowering community in order to move policy, culture, and narrative for racial equity.

# Intro

**RACE FORWARD**, a national racial justice organization that advances racial equity and inclusive democracy, is excited to publish a new tool for the field of Workforce Development. The Workforce Development Racial Equity Readiness Assessment is designed as a guide for workforce development organizations and practitioners to evaluate their programs, operations, and culture in order to identify strength areas and growth opportunities. Practitioners can use this toolkit to familiarize themselves with various practices and policies that support institutional racial equity, evaluate their current efforts, and plan action steps.

Racial inequity is a critical barrier and outcome in the field of workforce development, as practitioners strive to provide quality and effective service for workers. In contrast to popular thought, racial bias is not simply an issue of individual animus, but instead a pattern that manifests in the policies, practices and then everyday operations of institutions. These patterns of racial inequity often occur without the intention or awareness of the staff and leadership. The impacts and negative outcomes on customers of color can be severe, leading to lower service access,

training quality and job placement. Ultimately, this means workforce development organizations that fail to address racial inequity within their institution fall short of their mission and vision.

Fortunately, there are practical solutions to make tangible and impactful gains within the workforce development field. Taking decades of racial justice research, training and consulting experience into account, our Race Forward Research team has developed the following readiness assessment criteria to provide a landscape of possible solutions for organizations to lean further into their racial equity practice.

# How to Use the Racial Equity Readiness Assessment

## 1. Clarify your purpose:

The purpose of this assessment tool is to provide you with the information you need to advance racial equity more systematically, strategically, and successfully. Getting clear about the specific benefits of making racial equity a priority for your organization will help make this work more purposeful. How does racial equity align with your mission, vision and values? How would operating with a racial equity framework improve your programs and service delivery? How will this benefit your community stakeholders? Understanding that racial equity is both a strategic and moral imperative can bring a level of sustainability and rigor to your team's work.

## 2. Create an Equity Team:

This tool can help you normalize the practice of explicitly examining how your organization is addressing racism and advancing racial equity. To do this well, it is important that you have different people with a variety of perspectives involved in the analysis and conversation. Be sure the composition of your team reflects the overall composition of your workforce and the community you serve, making sure it's inclusive across race, gender, and other important characteristics. It also helps to include people from different departments within your organization, and with different levels of leadership and experience, especially those with a strong commitment to racial equity and inclusion.

## 3. Review the entire tool:

Take a look at the entire tool before you start using it so you can become familiar with the assessment questions and example responses.

## 4. Complete the responses in stages:

First, go through the questions and answer as many as you can. This assessment tool examines several dimensions of your organization. For each area, you will decide an evaluation score (on a 1 to 5 scale that is provided) for each equity indicator. You will also be asked to provide a brief explanation for the score you chose. If there are questions that you don't have enough information to answer, you can either go with whatever knowledge you have or you can develop a plan for completing the assessment, once you have more information. Decide what information you still need, who will get it, and by when. Give yourselves time to do the needed research or data gathering. Then schedule a date for your team to come back together and complete the remaining questions. Some of the data you need may not exist. Don't let that hold you up from completing as much of the assessment as you can. You can make a plan for how you can collect any needed data in the future so that you will eventually be able to fully assess and address all aspects of your work.

## Guiding Principles

The following principles provide an overarching framework as you navigate the particular implications of racial equity work at your organization. You will see these principles throughout the toolkit.

### Stakeholder Engagement

People of color and those most adversely affected by relevant issues are engaged in feedback, planning and implementation with real decision-making power and leadership.

### Race-Explicit Strategy

Strategic improvements within the organization are framed with a racial lens including directly addressing disparities that affect specific communities of color.

### Outcome Oriented

Organizational and programmatic success is ultimately determined by the demonstrated benefit efforts have for clients and staff of color.

### Systemic Analysis

The systemic dynamics and root causes of racial disparities within the organization are sufficiently researched, identified and addressed.

### Culture of Practice

Efforts to address racial inequity within the organization are incorporated into the everyday functioning, core activities, and culture of the organization.

## Scoring Guide

Assess how well your organization or department is carrying out the given policy or practice using the rankings below.

- 1 = Inadequate/Not addressed/achieved
- 2 = Insufficiently addressed/achieved
- 3 = Sufficiently addressed/achieved
- 4 = Exemplary practice
- NA=Not applicable

## Key Areas Examined in Assessment

|  |            |
|--|------------|
| <b>Mission, Values, and Culture</b>          | <b>p6</b>  |
| <b>Tracking Racial Disparities</b>           | <b>p7</b>  |
| <b>Curriculum</b>                            | <b>p8</b>  |
| <b>Leadership and Staff Morale</b>           | <b>p9</b>  |
| <b>Racial Equity Competency and Advocacy</b> | <b>p10</b> |

Racial Justice is the systematic fair treatment of people of all races that results in equitable opportunities and outcomes for everyone.

# Mission, Values, and Culture

**GOAL:** Racial equity is a core part of our organizational mission. People of color at all levels of our organization feel fully included, respected, represented, and valued. Sufficient actions and interventions are undertaken, as needed and on an ongoing basis, in order to interrupt patterns of white domination and power in the day-to-day operations,

programs, policies and practices (sometimes referred to as “white supremacist culture,” when these normative patterns--whether intentional or not--have the impact of benefiting white people and disadvantaging or excluding people of color). We define our success based on criteria set by the people of color we serve and who make up our organization.

| <b>Core Principle</b><br>& Racial Equity Readiness Indicator  | <b>Score</b> | <b>Explanation</b> |
|---|--------------|--------------------|
| <b>Stakeholder Engagement</b><br>Does the organizational culture, programs and services reflect the culture of the community stakeholders? Is the culture welcoming, familiar and comfortable to the community, or must they conform to dominant (and white) cultural patterns? |              |                    |
| <b>Race-Explicit Strategy</b><br>Are staff of color explicitly invited to create and contribute to organizational culture and norms? Are there explicit acknowledgements of the patterns and impacts of white supremacy culture, and explicit strategies to address it?         |              |                    |
| <b>Outcomes Oriented</b><br>In planning for internal gatherings, is special attention paid to ensuring that location, childcare and food are equitable and accessible to all staff?   |              |                    |
| <b>Systems Analysis</b><br>Have we contributed time and organizational resources into analyzing the places in which white supremacy culture is rewarded and normalized? Have we crafted systemic solutions or interventions?  |              |                    |
| <b>Culture of Practice</b><br>Are the contributions of staff and community stakeholders of color regularly recognized as innovative and inherently valuable to the overarching strategy, mission and vision of our organization?  |              |                    |

# Customer Access to Services and Tracking Disparities

**GOAL:** There are no internal organizational barriers and biases that are preventing clients of color from accessing our services. We know this is true because the representation of clients of color fully accessing our services is proportional to, or exceeds, the racial percentage of that population in our service area.

| <b>Core Principle</b><br>& Racial Equity Readiness Indicator  | <b>Score</b> | <b>Explanation</b> |
|---|--------------|--------------------|
| <b>Stakeholder Engagement</b><br>Do you prioritize outreach materials and recruitment/referral outlets that specifically reach communities of color?  |              |                    |
| <b>Race-Explicit Strategy</b><br>How have you addressed structural barriers that might prevent clients of color from accessing your services (consider funding, required documentation, staff demographics)?  |              |                    |
| <b>Outcomes Oriented</b><br>To what extent do you ensure that any data revealing racial disparities in programs or internal operations is addressed concretely, sufficiently and in a timely manner?  |              |                    |
| <b>Systems Analysis</b><br>Have you conducted a detailed analysis of the various racial and ethnic populations in your service area? If POC clients are underrepresented in your programs, to what extent have you performed a racial equity impact analysis on your recruitment pipeline to better understand potential biases and barriers to entry or full engagement? |              |                    |
| <b>Culture of Practice</b><br>Have you created infrastructure that allows you to truly measure the positive or negative impact you are having on the lives of the clients of color you serve?   |              |                    |

# Curriculum and Client Services

**GOAL:** The clients of color we serve are involved in the decision-making process of curriculum development that cover substantive principles around racial equity frameworks. Clients of color receive preparation and achieve program matriculation at a rate proportional to, or that exceeds, the racial percentage of that population in our service area.

| <b>Core Principle</b><br>& Racial Equity Readiness Indicator  | <b>Score</b> | <b>Explanation</b> |
|---|--------------|--------------------|
| <b>Stakeholder Engagement</b><br>To what extent do clients of color have opportunities for input and decision-making in the curriculum and services that they need to succeed in greater job access and placement?                      |              |                    |
| <b>Race-Explicit Strategy</b><br>Do you analyze and address whether your staff racial demographics impact the organization's ability to adequately understand and fulfill client services for people of color?                          |              |                    |
| <b>Outcome Oriented</b><br>To what extent do you ensure that training and other provider settings are free from explicit or implicit racial bias/animus (this includes: between staff; between staff and clients; and between clients)? |              |                    |
| <b>Systems Analysis</b><br>How does your curriculum address the systemic racism that clients of color may face in the IT and/or Healthcare field?   |              |                    |
| <b>Culture of Practice</b><br>How do you prioritize supporting clients who may be experiencing institutional or interpersonal racism while accessing your services?   |              |                    |



# Leadership and Staffing

**GOAL:** Staff of color are proportionally represented throughout our staffing and leadership structure. They are fully equipped with decision-making power in order to best guide our organization toward a fully realized racial equity strategy.

| <b>Core Principle</b><br>& Racial Equity Readiness Indicator  | <b>Score</b> | <b>Explanation</b> |
|---|--------------|--------------------|
| <p><b>Race-Explicit Strategy</b><br/>What professional development, promotional pathways, and mentorship opportunities from staff of color in leadership are available to support staff of color to succeed in your organization?</p> |              |                    |
| <p><b>Outcome Oriented</b><br/>How do you value and compensate staff of color for any additional work they may absorb to better serve the organization's clients of color?</p>  |              |                    |
| <p><b>Systems Analysis</b><br/>Do you research whether or not staff of color become less represented at various departmental and positional levels due to recruitment, hiring or retention processes?</p>                             |              |                    |
| <p><b>Culture of Practice</b><br/>How do you support your staff from across the organization to build a foundational understanding around institutional racism and racial equity?</p>   |              |                    |

# External Relationships and Advocacy

**GOAL:** All leadership and staff are equipped with racial equity frameworks that inform internal and external work practices, decision-making capabilities, and advocacy efforts for the clients of color they serve.

| Core Principle<br>& Racial Equity Readiness Indicator  | Score | Explanation |
|--|-------|-------------|
| <p><b>Outcome Oriented</b><br/>How do you advocate with external organizations and employer partners to mitigate the effects of implicit bias on their job placement decisions?</p>        |       |             |
| <p><b>Systems Analysis</b><br/>To what extent do you take steps to proactively pursue funding streams that would expand your ability to better provide for clients of color?</p>           |       |             |
| <p><b>Culture of Practice</b><br/>To what extent do you consider the regular interactions you have with external partners as opportunities to introduce racial equity values or goals?</p> |       |             |

# Next Steps after Completing the Assessment

## Identify the key findings:

Once you have completed the assessment, your team can then engage in analysis to surface the key findings. Analyze each section of the Assessment, one at a time. Guiding questions for this analysis may include: What patterns or trends do you notice? Are there any glaring inequities? What is surprising or especially noteworthy? What can you learn and what are the key takeaways you want to highlight?

## Make recommendations for action and change:

For each section, make one or more recommendations for improved practice to advance equity. When developing these recommendations, this is a good opportunity to engage more stakeholders, both internal (within your organization) and external (community stakeholders).

## Prioritize what to work on.

You can't act upon all of the recommendations all at once, so you'll need to do some prioritizing and sequencing. What recommendation(s) do you need to focus on most in order to be in greater alignment with your mission, vision, and commitment to the values of equity and inclusion? Where do you currently have resources or opportunities to take initial action?

## Develop concrete goals:

Turn your priority recommendations into clear goals. Remember, the best goals are "SMART" goals—ones that are Specific, Measureable, Attainable, Realistic and Time-bound. Resist having too many goals and plans. Look for some easy opportunities— "low hanging fruit" —to start moving things forward.

## Develop and implement a realistic work plan:

Create a work plan for each goal, listing what needs to be done, who will do it, and by when? Try to engage a lot of different people in the equity work, to not only spread the workload, but also to give more people practice and investment in this work. Try to build a growing culture of learning and action on equity and inclusion.

## Evaluate your progress and celebrate success.

Develop a plan to track and document your progress and success. Share what you are learning, internally and externally. And make time to celebrate your successes, even the small ones.

## Continue to learn, build upon, and sustain your success.

For practices that prove to be worthwhile and successful, turn them into ongoing protocols and policies. Develop the infrastructure, communication channels, funding, staffing, and other supports to keep expanding and sustaining the equity work. By doing so, you will be "institutionalizing equity"—making equity both an aspirational and operational framework for your daily and ongoing work. By creating and modeling effective equity practices, you can help transform your organization, the workforce development field, and the lives of many more people who can gain additional benefits from your programs and services.

# Racial Equity Readiness Assessment Section Example

## Customer Access to Services and Tracking Disparities

**GOAL:** There are no internal organizational barriers and biases that are preventing clients of color from accessing our services. We know this is true because the representation of clients of color fully accessing our services is proportional to, or exceeds, the racial percentage of that population in our service area.

| Core Principle<br>& Racial Equity Readiness Indicator   | Score | Explanation   |
|---|-------|---|
| <p><b>Stakeholder Engagement</b><br/>Do you prioritize outreach materials and recruitment/referral outlets that specifically reach communities of color?</p>  | 4     | Though not all physical locations were evaluated in this assessment, the organization does a great job reaching communities of color through its outward facing advertisement and recruitment materials on its website and at physical locations. |
| <p><b>Race-Explicit Strategy</b><br/>How have you addressed structural barriers that might prevent clients of color from accessing your services (consider funding, required documentation, staff demographics)?</p>  | 3     | The organization does a remarkable job at ensuring program access for low-income customers. However, they could improve by further researching barriers that exist particularly for people of color.  |
| <p><b>Outcomes Oriented</b><br/>To what extent do you ensure that any data revealing racial disparities in programs or internal operations is addressed concretely, sufficiently and in a timely manner?</p>  | 3     | Though clients of color are represented, the organization has yet to perform a racial impact analysis on its recruitment pipeline to better understand barriers to entry.   |
| <p><b>Systems Analysis</b><br/>Have you conducted a detailed analysis of the various racial and ethnic populations in your service area? If POC clients are underrepresented in your programs, to what extent have you performed a racial equity impact analysis on your recruitment pipeline to better understand potential biases and barriers to entry of full engagement?</p> | 1     | There is no indication of a formalized system and infrastructure that measure impact.   |
| <p><b>Culture of Practice</b><br/>Have you created infrastructure that allows you to truly measure the positive or negative impact you are having on the lives of the clients of color you serve?</p>   | 1     | There is no indication of a formalized system and infrastructure that can reveal these data.  |

# Acknowledgments

## Funding and Partner Organizations

*Ready for Equity in Workforce Development: Racial Equity Readiness Tool* was made possible by the support of the following foundations: The generous support of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation and Moriah Fund.

Race Forward would also like to thank the organizations involved in collaborating to develop this tool, including Brighton Center, Per Scholas, and The Source. The content would not have been possible without their input, though any errors of fact or judgment found herein are ours alone.

For more information about these organizations, visit: Per Scholas [www.perscholas.org](http://www.perscholas.org) or email [info@perscholas.org](mailto:info@perscholas.org). Brighton Center [www.brightoncenter.com](http://www.brightoncenter.com). The Source [www.grsource.org](http://www.grsource.org).

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