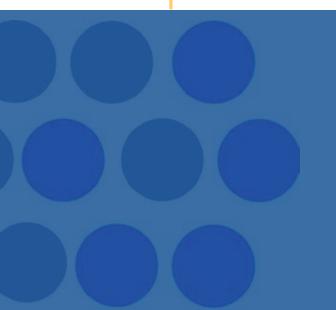


# COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH TO ADVANCING RACIAL EQUITY:

Strategies and Frameworks in California's Workforce Development System



### Prepared by:

California Workforce Association 925 Del Paso Blvd Sacramento, CA 95815 info@calworkforce.org 916-263-4298 As we dive into the Race and Equity Framework Report, we are reminded of the profound insights from our "Letter to the Community" written in June of 2020. This report is not just a document; it is a testament to our unwavering commitment to dismantle systemic racism and promote equity in every facet of our workforce. We've outlined



strategies targeting African American and Latinx communities, ensuring economic self-sufficiency and breaking cycles of poverty. Our comprehensive approach, from data analysis to legislative advocacy, aligns with our mission of creating a workforce environment where diversity and inclusion are more than ideals, but lived

experiences.

Our dedication goes beyond mere words; it is a call to action for systemic change, where every individual, regardless of their race or background, has equal opportunities to thrive.

We have initiated an action plan underpinned by seven foundational pillars, from data research to peer learning, all aimed at embedding racial equity in our work. Our phased training and technical assistance approach, and Race Forward's influence from the assessment tool, is designed to foster awareness, confront internal challenges, and strategize for impactful change. The Ready for Equity in Workforce Development: Racial Equity Readiness Assessment Tool is a critical component, guiding us in evaluating and improving our services.

In these turbulent times, marked by a collective outcry for social justice and racial equity, our mission has become ever more critical.

The California Workforce Association stands unwavering in its commitment to combat systemic inequities. We reaffirm our sentiments of solidarity, accountability, and action expressed in our letter. We recognize that quality jobs, high road partnerships, and career pathways must be underpinned by the fundamental principle of equity. Our dedication goes beyond mere words; it is a call to action for systemic change, where every individual, regardless of their race or background, has equal opportunities to thrive.

We confirm our commitment to these values and pledge to continue our work with renewed vigor and purpose. We stand together in the belief that through collective efforts, love, and understanding, we can build a more equitable and just society. Diversity strengthens us, and it is through our united efforts that we will prevail.

Bob Lanter, Executive Director

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# WHY RACE AND EQUITY?

The local workforce development system has historically served vulnerable populations through the Workforce Investment Act and Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA), though the term race and equity has only recently established a presence in the language and voices of those leading the industry. The term rose to fruition during the 2020 civil unrest caused by the systemic racism and intentional targeting of black and brown citizens by the country's justice system. The documented police brutality,

historic protests, and societies racial tension sparked a new meaning for how the workforce system addresses inequities in labor markets and targets how historically disenfranchised individuals access services. Through the leadership of the California Labor and Workforce Development Agency (LWDA), California Workforce Association California's (CWA), and Local Workforce Development Boards (CA LWDBs), race and equity has become an intentional priority in convenings, technical assistance, and legislation across the State's workforce development system.

Race and Equity has an intentional focus on race, particularly those of an African American or Latinx descent, and how those minority populations are provided with the opportunities to become economically self-sufficient and diminish generational cycles of poverty.

The term Race and Equity often gets categorized with a corresponding term Racial Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (REDI) but there is discrepancy amongst the two similar but different terms. Race and Equity has an intentional focus on race, particularly those of an African American or Latinx descent, and how those minority populations are provided with the opportunities to become economically self-sufficient and diminish generational cycles of poverty. The term Racial Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion reflects a broader targeted population serving individuals based on economic status, sexuality, accessibility, gender, and racial identity. Though both terms are similar and equally important, it is critical that the work for both of these efforts are mutually exclusive in order to create and sustain trends of upward mobility in these vulnerable communities.

# **HIGHLIGHTS OF CWA RACE AND EQUITY EFFORTS**

The California Workforce Association, which is the statewide non-profit membership association representing the forty-five local workforce development boards in California, made a statement to our membership in early 2020. The statement articulated how we, the workforce development system, can no longer allow the communities that are the most vulnerable to substance abuse, domestic violence, police brutality, and systemic racism to continue to be marginalized and segregated from the programs that the workforce system provides. With the statement to its membership and the initiative of the CWA staff, race and equity has become an integral element to the foundational pillars of CWA.

Training and technical assistance, capitalizing on strategic partnerships, and advocating for workforce and economic development legislation are the key pillars of CWA. When incorporating race and equity efforts, ensuring alignment with these pillars is critical. To assist with the implementation of the race and equity work, CWA staff solicited interest from our member-

...a Race and Equity Work group that included seven local workforce development boards with different demographic and geographic constructs.

ship to form a Race and Equity Work group that included seven local workforce development boards with different demographic and geographic constructs. The seven members included the local workforce development boards from the city of Richmond, Pacific Gateway (Long Beach), Foothill (Pasadena and surrounding cities), Merced, San Joaquin, San Bernardino, and Imperial Counties. These members, with the support of CWA staff, were tasked to:

Review and identify priorities from the 2020 Race and Equity Action Plan: In early 2020, amongst the social and civil unrest, CWA and its membership convened an emergency Race and Equity ad hoc committee to develop an action plan that would frame the work that CWA could adopt to ensure these efforts continue. Out of the discussions and participation from the ad hoc committee, an action plan was developed that included seven pillars: Research and Analyze Data, Provide Peer to Peer Learning Support, Provide Education and Information to the Workforce Community, Training and Technical Assistance to the Local System, Review and Make any Necessary Changes to CWA Structure, Support and Align State and Federal Legislation and Policy, and Develop a Plan to Fund Equity Work. From these seven pillars, deliverables and action items were identified that are used as a basis to accomplishing the pillars.

# **HIGHLIGHTS OF CWA RACE AND EQUITY EFFORTS**

Identify technical assistance needs and produce training: With the seven pillars identified as a foundation for the Race and Equity work of CWA and its membership, discussion arose around addressing priority items for the work group to achieve in an immediate time frame of 9-months. Given that training and technical assistance is a pillar of CWA, this item became a priority to move forward. The implementation of this pillar was structured strategically for the CWA membership based on their level of comfort and current engagement with their race and equity efforts.

The strategic structure provided to the membership was based on three phases of readiness:

# PHASE 1:

Foundational training and technical assistance to develop awareness, understand common language, conceptual frameworks, and enhance the ability to address equity, diversity, and inclusion challenges.

## PHASE 2:

Understanding and identifying present internal equity, diversity, and inclusion challenges, strengths, and priorities across employee experience.

## PHASE 3:

Developing a strategic plan to establish key action steps and metrics to advance equity, diversity, and inclusion goals in integration with organizational values, goals, and operations.

Ensure race and equity language was included in workforce and economic development legislation: This focus has allowed CWA and its membership to support or reject workforce and economic development legislation. Aligning this ability with the work of the race and equity efforts has allowed CWA and its members to have an integral influence on the language of legislation to ensure that race and equity is addressed.

Develop a Race and Equity Framework: Identifying and developing an all-encompassing strategy to guide CWA and its membership's Race and Equity efforts. The Race and Equity framework is established based on the foundational pillars of CWA that are built from the organization's mission, vision, and goals in the workforce development system.

### **CWA Race and Equity Mission Statement**



The CWA Race and Equity Mission Statement is an integral part of the framework, reinforcing the organization's commitment to support local workforce development boards and partners through strategic advocacy, partnership convening, and capacity building. This mission statement is in alignment with CWA's current mission and represents the goal of incorporating racial equity into the organizational mission.

This framework serves as a strategic guide for CWA's efforts, guiding the organization's commitment and actions, and setting the stage for equitable decision-making in workforce development. It is an evolving document that will be updated over time to reflect lessons learned in the journey to advance racial equity. Elements of the racial equity framework derive from approaches used by the Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE). GARE is a national network of State and local governments working together to achieve racial equity and advance opportunities for all. It also derives from the Annie E. Casey Race Matters Toolkit and the JustLead Washington, REJI Organizational Race Equity Toolkit. The Race and Equity Framework encompasses several key elements that include Race and Equity Working Agreements, the Race and Equity Mission Statement, Race and Equity Working Assumptions, and the Theory of Change.

# **Race and Equity Working Agreements**

One of the foundational components of the CWA Race and Equity Framework is the set of Race and Equity Working Agreements. These agreements serve as the backbone of racial literacy, personal transformation and as a guide for Local Workforce Development Boards. They go beyond typical group agreements, aiming to build trust and facilitate difficult conversations about race, which can often be uncomfortable. The Working Agreements provide an alternative approach to meetings, communication and collaboration, and creates an inclusive environment that encourages open, honest, and transformative discussions.

These working agreements lay the foundation for fostering open and productive dialogue around racial equity.:



Be Present: Encourages active listening and self-awareness during discussions.



**Speak Your Truth:** Emphasizes the importance of honesty and the willingness to take risks in expressing thoughts and opinions.



**Experience Discomfort:** Acknowledges the inevitable discomfort that arises when addressing racial issues.



**Consider Power Dynamics:** Promotes an awareness of the various perspectives and forms of power within the group.



**Intent vs. Impact:** Shifts focus from the intent to the impact on those affected when assessing actions.



**Respect Confidentiality:** Balances individual privacy with the sharing of ideas and content.



**No One Knows Everything Together We Know a Lot:** Encourages shared learning and humility.



**Move Up:** Encourages participants to adapt their speaking and listening roles as needed.



**Expect and Presume Welcome/Establish Brave Space:** Recognizes the value of discomfort in learning and encourages respectful and generous conversations.



**Expect and Accept Non-Closure:** Acknowledges that racial equity work is ongoing and may not always lead to resolution.

### **Race and Equity Working Assumptions**

The Race and Equity Working Assumptions form the basis for the framework, recognizing that racial disparities significantly affect various indicators of well-being. These disparities often result from institutionalized policies and practices that inadvertently create barriers to opportunity. The working assumptions are as follows:



**Race matters:** Most indicators of well-being reveal troubling disparities by race.

**Disparities are created and maintained:** Often unintentionally,
through institutionalized policies and
practices that create barriers to opportunity.

**Closing equity gaps:** Requires an intentional focus on racial disparities and their root causes.

**Equitable opportunities lead to equitable results:** Addressing disparities at the systemic level will result in equitable outcomes.

People will work toward racial equity: With the right message, analysis, and tools, individuals and organizations can be motivated to work toward racial equity.

These assumptions guide the understanding and approach to racial equity within CWA's workforce development initiatives.

### **Theory of Change**

The Theory of Change is an essential aspect of the CWA Race and Equity Framework, providing a strategic roadmap for advancing racial equity in workforce development. This theory outlines three key phases:



### **Normalize**

This phase involves creating a shared understanding of definitions related to implicit bias, institutional and structural racism.

Normalizing and prioritizing these efforts create urgency and lay the foundation for change. It includes action plans, timelines for accountability, and articulating a vision for racial equity. Collaboration with experts is a key part of this phase.



### **Organize**

In the organizing phase, CWA seeks to build capacity and infrastructure within the organization and in partnership with others. This includes staff training, identifying best practices, and aligning efforts both internally and externally.



### **Operationalize**

The operationalization phase emphasizes integrating racial equity into routine decision-making processes. This is achieved by using Racial Equity Tools and implementing measurable actions. Datadriven decision-making is a core aspect of this phase, ensuring that policies, programs, and practices that perpetuate inequities are addressed and changed.

The CWA Race and Equity Framework is a vital resource in CWA's ongoing commitment to promoting racial equity within workforce development. It establishes a strong foundation for open and honest dialogue, reinforces the organization's mission, provides essential assumptions for understanding racial disparities, and lays out a comprehensive theory of change. As the CWA continues its journey towards racial equity, the framework will serve as a valuable guide for internal efforts and as a resource for local workforce development boards and partners.

# READY FOR EQUITY IN WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT: RACIAL EQUITY READINESS ASSESSMENT TOOL

An essential element to the CWA Race and Equity Framework is strategic partnerships and internal assessments that advance operations related to race and equity within the LWDBs. CWA is utilizing and has adopted the Race Forward Ready for Equity in Workforce Development: Racial Equity Readiness Assessment Tool. Race Forward is a national racial justice organization that advances racial equity and inclusive democracy. The purpose of the assessment tool "is to provide workforce organizations with the information needed to advance racial equity more systemically, strategically, and successfully." There are five key areas examined in the tool:



**Mission, Values, and Culture:** Ensuring racial equity is a core part of the organizational mission and being intentional that people of color at all levels of our organization feel fully included, respected, represented, and valued.



**Customer Access to Services and Tracking Racial Disparities:** This area of the assessment is to ensure that there are no internal organizational barriers and biases that are preventing clients of color from accessing services.



**Curriculum:** Ensuring the clients of color that are served are involved in the decision-making process of curriculum development that cover substantive principles around racial equity frameworks.



**Leadership and Staff Morale:** The goal of this key area is to ensure that staff of color are proportionally represented throughout our staffing and leadership structure.



**External Relationships and Advocacy:** The last key area is to ensure that 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 that are served.

The five key areas described in the tool will help workforce organizations "normalize the practice of explicitly examining how their organization is addressing racism and advancing racial equity." "Understanding that racial equity is both a strategic and moral imperative can bring a level of sustainability and rigor to your team's work." - Race Forward Assessment Tool

Several CWA Board of Directors have adopted this tool to benchmark and advance equity. Currently three LWDBs are in the process of getting it approved by their Board of Directors and piloting the tool. In the months to come, CWA will work with all the 45 LWDBs in California to introduce the tool as a systemic practice.

### **DATA ANALYSIS PROJECT**

The Race and Equity Plan includes a high-level action item focused on Researching and Analyzing Current Data. The sub-action item involves reviewing State data and interpreting what it reflects. The project began by asking key questions: what are the current workforce indicators and results, what data is tracked, and the identification of missing data.

### **Workforce Indicators and Results**

An aspect of the project was the development of Workforce Race and Equity Indicators. These indicators are essential for tracking and promoting equitable results and outcomes. Discussion of workforce indicators was guided by the National Equity Atlas report card on racial and economic equity which includes data and strategies. Rather than selecting indicators for the Local Workforce Boards, a decision was made to provide the Report Card as a resource to the field with an understanding that LWDBs may have to abide by efforts in their jurisdiction. However, CWA is considering the promotion of "in an equitable economy, all workers should earn a family-sustaining wage that allows them to meet their basic needs, participate in the local economy, and plan for the future without systematic differences by race and gender" as our indicator.

Table 1. RBA Framework

How much did we do? How well did we do it? % common measures e.g. workload ratio, staff composition, # organizations/ % staff fully trained/culturally people served competent % services in language spoken, % activity-specific # activities measures (by type of % people completing activity) activity/training attendance rate, % correct and complete Is anyone better off? #/% skills/knowledge e.g. knowledge of how to start a small biz #/% attitude/opinion e.g. feel a sense of belonging in the organization #/% behavior .g. school attendance, residents included in decision-making #/% circumstance e.g. working, in stable housing

The project introduced the Results-Based Accountability (RBA) framework (Table 1), a process that starts with the end in mind and focuses on impact while considering root causes. The critical questions for evaluation and accountability within RBA include: How much did we do? How well did we do it? Is anyone better off?

The WIOA performance measures were incorporated into the RBA framework (Table 2) with credit to the Alameda County Workforce Development Board.

(City of Oakland, Race and Equity Implementation Guide)

### Table 2. WIOA Measures/RBA Framework

### **How much did we do?**

Number of New Enrollments
Number of Training Dollars Obligations
Number of OJT Enrollments
Number of ITA Enrollments

# How well did we do it?

Percentage of Work based Learning
Percentage of Training Leading
to a Credential
Percentage of Measurable Skills Gains
Percentage of Median Income Earnings

# Is anyone better off?

Number or percentage of Entered Employment

Number or percentage of Credential Attainment
Number or percentage of Job placements by Sector/Occupation

### **DATA ANALYSIS PROJECT**

### **Existing Race and Equity Data**

The project collected and reviewed data that is disaggregated by race from the Race and Equity Workgroup members. The following disaggregated data is available (**Table 3**):

From WIOA: Enrollments/Participation, Employed, Median Income Earnings
From the Census/American Community Survey (ACS): Monthly Income, Population, and Unemployed

The project also engaged with the California Employment Development Department's Workforce Services Branch regarding WIOA data to make them aware of the Race and Equity work and the Data Project. It was noted that tracking occupations required the use of the Supplemental Data report, which would necessitate LWDB staff to follow up with individuals after they are employed.

Table 3. Disaggregated Data by Race

Census/ACS	CalJOBS
Monthly Income	Employed
Population	Participation/Enrollment
Unemployed	Median Income Earnings
Race/Ethnicity	Race/Ethnicity
American Indian or Alaskan Native	American Indian
Asian	Asian
Black	Black/African American
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	Native Hawaiian
White	White
2 or more Races	More than one Race
White Non-Hispanic/White Hispanic	Hispanic /Latino

# **Missing Data and Measures**

One of the critical findings of the project is the absence of outcome data that is disaggregated by race. Moreover, it was noted that most of the WIOA performance measures are not currently disaggregated by race.

Beyond the limits of WIOA, the project is continuing to identify missing disaggregated data, which extends beyond the information available in CalJOBS and via the US Census. Some of the initial discussion has centered around layoffs, repeat customers, job retention, and livable wages. These areas, as well as others, require further attention and will be one of the priorities of the Race and Equity Committee moving forward.

### **NEXT STEPS**

CWA is committed to supporting Local Workforce Development Boards as they operationalize race and equity within California. This includes incorporating a new standing Race and Equity Committee to the existing CWA Board structure, continuing to analyze the pilot for the Ready for Equity in Workforce Development: Racial Equity Assessment Tool, the Data Analysis Project, focusing on deeper stakeholder partnerships, and training and technical assistance. All of these efforts in aggregate are positive steps toward providing California's LWDBs access to resources that drive systemic change.

### **Training and Technical Assistance**

A key element to addressing systemic racism and diminishing historical cycles of inequities in labor markets is to continue to provide training and technical assistance to the workforce development system in California. CWA is committed through our training, conference workshops, Executive Boot Camps, and technical assistance funded grants to ensure that there is a component of Race and Equity weaved into the curricula, programs, and deliverables of these initiatives. This commitment will allow LWDBs and their stakeholders, no matter where they sit on the spectrum of race and equity progression, to utilize CWA as a resource, tool, and thought partner to advance their race and equity work.

### **Race Forward Assessment Tool Pilot**

The willingness from the LWDBs in the Race and Equity Work Group to pilot the assessment has provided CWA with the opportunity to analyze this effort to see where there are successes, and needed modifications based on board construct, challenges, and lessons learned. With the support of the Race and Equity Committee, CWA will have the knowledge to scale this pilot statewide for LWDBs to use as an internal tool to assess their racial equity efforts.

### **Data Analysis Project**

The CWA Race and Equity Committee will continue identifying missing disaggregated data crucial for understanding racial inequities in workforce development. An element of this task is going beyond the limits of the WIOA and expanding our search to data sources beyond CalJOBS and the US Census. At the same time, we're conducting an ownership assessment to pinpoint the organizations or entities that might hold this missing data. Once identified, our goal is to develop a plan outlining the steps required to move forward with obtaining the missing data, including who is responsible depending upon who owns the data (local, state or federal government, private business, education institution, etc.) We are aware of the complexities in establishing clear agreements, legal frameworks, and data privacy considerations within partnerships to ensure responsible and secure data sharing. We are committed to advocating for and supporting policy and data collection changes when necessary to enhance the gathering of crucial disaggregated data pertaining to racial equity.

As the project advances, we will share findings with any collaborating partners and other stakeholders aligned with our mission. These stakeholders may hold the key to securing the missing data or have a vested interest in the identification of crucial disaggregated data that can shed light on racial inequities in workforce development. Ultimately, our findings will be shared widely among a diverse set of stakeholders such as government agencies, education institutions, private sector partners, philanthropic organizations, nonprofits, and labor unions. Additionally, we will provide recommendations to the LWDBs demonstrating how the data findings can be leveraged to enhance their local initiatives, policy development, program design and decision-making processes. We encourage local areas to establish and put into practice requisite data collection methods, and we will offer suggestions to assist in this endeavor.

### **NEXT STEPS**

Finally, we will introduce tools like the Racial Equity Impact Analysis, utilizing the Results-Based Accountability model to establish meaningful performance measures and systems for accountability. This analysis involves setting equitable results and outcomes, and gathering the right data to assess impacts. The findings from our project will provide a baseline for available disaggregated data and its readiness for the Racial Equity Impact Analysis. The findings from this project will also play a critical role in LWDBs implementing the Ready for Equity in Workforce Development: Racial Equity Assessment Tool, which involves assessing current data and identifying missing data for their own action plans.

### **CWA Race and Equity Committee**

The formal institutionalization of the CWA Race and Equity Committee was approved for motion during the CWA September 2023 Board meeting. The Race and Equity Committee is one of five CWA standing committee's in addition to the Executive Committee, Opportunities Committee, Legislative Committee, and Capacity Building Committee. It is designed to ensure that race, equity, diversity, and inclusion is an integral part of the workforce system. The committee sets out to address the inequities in labor markets and uplift historically marginalized populations through training and technical assistance, advocating for equity in legislation, and strategically partnering with organizations that have a vision of upward mobility for California's disenfranchised communities. The Race and Equity Committee is tasked with moving the Race and Equity framework forward, delivery of the 2020 Race and Equity action plan, and brainstorming strategies that CWA can implement to advance race and equity across the workforce development system.

### **Stakeholder Partnerships**

Formal and informal stakeholder partnerships are essential in advancing the work we have adopted. We are preparing to engage in formal partnerships with organizations that have expertise in the field of racial equality, providing training, best practices, resources, and tools for our ongoing activities. Notably, a partnership with Race Forward, whose influence has already shaped our initial actions in promoting racial equity will be explored. Moreover, we are exploring and encouraging local workforce development boards to explore potential membership with the Government Alliance on Racial Equity (GARE), thereby expanding our network of expertise and resources.

Additionally, we are preparing our engagement with the newly formed California Race and Equity Commission. Our plan includes introducing the CWA Race and Equity work to guide the development of the State's Racial Equity Framework, particularly as it relates to workforce development. The goal is to ensure that our actions are seamlessly aligned with broader state-level strategies for advancing racial equity. Furthermore, we will explore the potential for support from organizations such as the James Irvine Foundation, the California Wellness Foundation, the San Francisco Foundation, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, and others who share our commitment to advancing racial equity locally and Statewide. We will explore relationships with national organizations like Policy Link, the National Fund for Workforce Solutions, the National Equity Atlas, the Othering and Belonging Institute at the University of California Berkely, as well as local, State, and Federal government departments.

Finally, recognizing their key role, it is essential we provide our membership with resources that assist in engaging with community members who have directly experienced racial disparities. Inclusive engagement is a priority as racial disparities are addressed within workforce development to ensure their active and meaningful involvement in the efforts.





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