

# Equitable Development as a Tool to Advance Racial Equity



LOCAL AND REGIONAL  
GOVERNMENT ALLIANCE ON  
**RACE & EQUITY**



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This report is published by the  
Government Alliance on Race and Equity,  
a national network of government working to  
achieve racial equity and advance opportunities for all.

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# ABOUT THE GOVERNMENT ALLIANCE ON RACE & EQUITY



The Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE) is a national network of government working to achieve racial equity and advance opportunities for all. Across the country, governmental jurisdictions are:

- making a commitment to achieving racial equity;
- focusing on the power and influence of their own institutions; and
- working in partnership with others.

When this occurs, significant leverage and expansion opportunities emerge, setting the stage for the achievement of racial equity in our communities.

GARE provides a multi-layered approach for maximum impact by:

- supporting jurisdictions that are at the forefront of work to achieve racial equity. A few jurisdictions have already done substantive work and are poised to be a model for others. Supporting and providing best practices, tools, and resources is helping to build and sustain current efforts and build a national movement for racial equity.
- developing a “pathway for entry” into racial equity work for new jurisdictions from across the country. Many jurisdictions lack the leadership and/or infrastructure to address issues of racial inequity. Using the learnings and resources from jurisdictions at the forefront will create pathways for the increased engagement of more jurisdictions.
- supporting and building local and regional collaborations that are broadly inclusive and focused on achieving racial equity. To eliminate racial inequities in our communities, it is necessary to develop a “collective impact” approach firmly grounded in inclusion and equity. Government can play a key role in collaborations for achieving racial equity, centering community, and leveraging institutional partnerships.

To find out more about GARE, visit [www.racialequityalliance.org](http://www.racialequityalliance.org).

## REPORT

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*The Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE) is producing a series of briefing papers that support the work of jurisdictions committed to achieving racial equity. This paper provides a policy framework for implementation strategies that advance equitable development. It provides the historical context, current conditions, and some key data points that inform the framework. But first the document introduces some key definitions and a vision for the elimination of racial disparities and achievement of racial equity. Developing this vision is a critical step for all jurisdictions to take.*

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# Achieving Racial Equity

*Racial equity—when race can no longer be used to predict life outcomes, and life outcomes for all groups are improved.*

To achieve this vision requires the fair and just inclusion of all residents into a region’s economic, social, and political life—an essential component of planning for sustainable and thriving regions (PolicyLink). Prioritizing and working towards equity is work for the long haul and it begins with us—in our institutions—authentically listening to community, building an inclusive vision, and holding ourselves accountable for the strategies necessary to make that vision reality.

**Authentically listening and responding to community’s needs are new practices for government, challenging the status quo.** It can also bring us into spaces, figurative and literal, in which we are confronted with the historical and current injustices experienced by communities and the role of government institutions in creating and maintaining racial inequities. This can cause discomfort, fear, and frustration for us as representatives of institutions. GARE encourages you to embrace this part of the work as a normal and expected part of authentic listening to community—for it is only through authentic listening that we build the trust necessary to arrive at community owned visions, needs, and solutions.

**It also requires that government institutions make structural changes to address the history of inequality.** In the fullest sense, this would include amending public policies to ensure that they promote equity; prioritizing investments to best support those who need it most; and retooling processes to best do this work, including communication feedback loops that hold us accountable to community priorities. We will only achieve equity through authentic listening and responsive institutional actions rooted in community feedback.

## What is Equitable Development?

*Quality of life outcomes, such as affordable housing, quality education, living wage employment, healthy environments, and transportation are equitably experienced by the people currently living and working in a neighborhood, as well as for new people moving in. Public and private investments, programs, and policies in neighborhoods that meet the needs of residents, including communities of color, and reduce racial disparities, taking into account past history and current conditions.*

**When we achieve equitable development,** we increase the capacity of people of color to strengthen their communities and determine their own future and that of their neighborhoods. We distribute the benefits and burdens of growth equitably among people of all races, ethnic backgrounds, incomes, and geographies/neighborhoods. We encourage multicultural communities where tenured and newcomer residents can thrive. And we provide meaningful choices for the most impacted people of color to live, work, and define their own culture throughout all neighborhoods.

To achieve this ideal, we need a systemic approach that can create those kinds of outcomes. This requires coordinated and comprehensive investments, policies, and protections to prevent displacement of vulnerable residents, businesses, and community organizations. That approach should address the two major obstacles to achieving equitable outcomes related to development: 1) involuntary economic and cultural displacement of communities of color and 2) inequitable access for communities of color to the key determinants of social, physical, and economic well-being needed. A clear policy framework is helpful for developing, implementing, and measuring effective strategies.<sup>1</sup>

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Government Alliance on Race and Equity

1 City of Seattle Comprehensive Plan Race and Social Justice Resolution 31577, 2015