



LOCAL AND REGIONAL
GOVERNMENT ALLIANCE ON
RACE & EQUITY

Racial Equity: Getting to Results



by Erika Bernabei



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This resource guide 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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INTRODUCTION AND SUPPLEMENTAL TEXT

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INTRODUCTION

Currently across the country, regardless of region, racial inequities exist across every indicator for success—including health, criminal justice, education, jobs, housing, and beyond. We know these inequities are incongruent with our aspirations. The Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE), a joint project of the Haas Institute for a Fair and Inclusive Society at the University of California, Berkeley and Center for Social Inclusion, recognizes that we can and must do better. We know that government has a key role in advancing racial equity, and therefore are modeling at the local level how it is truly possible for government to advance racial equity and to develop into an inclusive and effective democracy.

We know change is possible with intentionality and focus. We must recognize that from the inception of our country, government at the local, regional, state, and federal level has played a role in creating and maintaining racial inequities. Though we've made many strides toward racial equity, policies and practices have created and still create disparate results—even if the intention to discriminate is not present. Despite progress in addressing explicit discrimination, racial inequities continue to be deep, pervasive, and persistent across the country. We are at a critical juncture with an exciting new role for government—to proactively work for racial equity.

Our goal goes beyond closing the gaps; we must improve overall outcomes by focusing efforts on those who are faring the worst. Deeply racialized systems are costly for us collectively and depress outcomes and life chances for communities of color. To advance racial equity, government must focus not only on individual programs, but also on policy and institutional strategies that create and maintain inequities. GARE uses a six-part strategic approach geared to address all levels of institutional change.

Normalize

1. Use a racial equity framework: Jurisdictions must use a racial equity framework that clearly articulates our vision for racial equity and the differences between individual, institutional, and structural racism—as well as implicit and explicit bias. It is important that staff—across the breadth and depth of a jurisdiction—develop a shared understanding of these concepts.

2. Operate with urgency and accountability: While it is often believed that change is hard and takes time, we have seen repeatedly that when we prioritize change and act with urgency, change is em-

Six-Part Strategic Approach to Institutional Change

Normalize

- Use a racial equity framework
- Operate with urgency and accountability

Organize

- Build organizational capacity
- Partner with other organizations and communities

Operationalize

- Implement racial equity tools
- Be data-driven

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braced and can occur quickly. The most effective path to accountability comes from creating clear action plans with built-in institutional accountability mechanisms. Collectively, we must create greater urgency and public will in order to achieve racial equity.

Organize

- 1. Build organizational capacity:** Jurisdictions need to be committed to the breadth and depth of institutional transformation so that impacts are sustainable. While elected leaders and other top officials are a critical part, change takes place on the ground. We must build infrastructure that creates racial equity experts and teams throughout local and regional government.
- 2. Partner with other institutions and communities:** The work of government on racial equity is necessary but not sufficient. To achieve racial equity, government must work in partnership with communities and other institutions to achieve meaningful results.

Operationalize

- 1. Implement racial equity tools:** Racial inequities are neither natural nor random—they have been created and sustained over time. Inequities will not disappear on their own; tools must be used to change the policies, programs, and practices that perpetuate inequities. Using this “Focusing on Racial Equity Results,” along with other tools, such as our **Racial Equity Tool**, will help us to achieve better results within our communities.
- 2. Be data-driven:** Measurement must take place at two levels—first, to measure the success of specific programmatic and policy changes, and second, to develop baselines, set goals, and measure progress towards goals. It is critical that jurisdictions use data in this manner for accountability.

Racial equity means that we no longer see disparities based on race and we improve results for all groups. We believe that in order to disrupt our nation's deep and pervasive inequality of opportunity and results, generate new possibilities for community ownership of government, and establish a new narrative for a truly inclusive democracy, it is essential to transform government. Indeed, in order to advance racial equity and success as a nation, we must transform government.

Prior to using this resource guide, you might want to familiarize yourself with some of GARE's other tools.

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