



Racial Equity Lens and Empowerment Tool

WHY WE NEED A RACIAL EQUITY LENS

This is a tool of guiding questions for Portland Parks and Recreation (PP&R) to help bring about more equitable outcomes for all communities. Applying an equity lens to our work helps the bureau reflect on how our decisions may disproportionately burden communities, such as BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color), people living with disabilities, people living with low-income, Immigrant and Refugee, and unsheltered communities. By centering the people most impacted by systemic racism, everyone benefits.

A Racial Equity Lens can also help us:

- Build a welcoming, safer, and inclusive workplace culture.
- Increase our awareness, respect, and empathy of each other.
- Develop a consistent bureau-wide approach to address inequities and improve outcomes.
- Create a more inclusive perspective, drawing attention to how decisions may affect underserved groups.

A **Racial Equity Lens** is a critical thinking approach to undoing institutional and structural racism, which evaluates burdens, benefits, and outcomes to underserved communities. (OEHR)

HOW TO APPLY A RACIAL EQUITY LENS

The Racial Equity Lens and Empowerment Tool should be used to intentionally create equitable outcomes in our actions and decision-making processes. For example, for planning, program design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, or facilitating discussions at staff meetings. All employees have a role in this work. To be effective, this tool should be used by people with varied lived experiences and diverse backgrounds.

The following questions are intended to begin conversations, while considering issues and decisions from multiple perspectives. They will support you to shift your thinking toward centering racial equity, diversity, and inclusion internally (PP&R team) and externally (community).

The seven steps may be repeated and are not always in the order presented. Some of the questions may be more relevant than others depending on your daily work, initiatives, and experience. After continually using this tool in your day-to-day work, and through robust engagement with community and co-workers, you may need to create additional questions that will help you create more inclusive programs, practices, and policies.

RACIAL EQUITY LENS (7 STEPS):

Step 1. Think about the Desired Result

- a. What is the desired equitable outcome you want to achieve?
- b. How will the decision(s) influence racial equity and center underserved communities?
- c. Are there unintended consequences of the decision(s)?

Step 2. Engage Internal and External Stakeholders

- a. Which underserved and impacted people will be involved in your process?
- b. How will you meaningfully engage them?
- c. How will your decision(s) build long term relationships and trust?

Step 3. Gather Data

- a. Will the decision(s) prioritize specific neighborhoods or geographic areas?
- b. What demographics may be impacted by the decision(s)? (Consider race, income level, disability, gender, and more).
- c. What data will inform your decision(s)?
(Consider diverse perspectives, sources, lived experience).

Step 4. Determine Who Benefits and/or Who is Burdened

- a. What positive and/or negative changes may result from the decision(s)?
- b. How will you reduce disparities?
- c. How will the decision(s) disrupt and/or reinforce systemic racism?

Step 5. Diminish Harm and Develop Opportunities

- a. How will you share power and decision-making with those most affected by systemic racism?
- b. How will you elevate the voices of BIPOC, refugee, immigrant, and multilingual communities and staff?
- c. What barriers may you encounter in making changes related to racial equity and racial justice?
- d. How could bias affect the decision(s) or process?

Step 6. Evaluate and be Accountable

- a. How will you measure success and know anyone is better off?
- b. How will you track outcomes?
- c. How will you improve the equitable outcomes of your decision(s) or process?
- d. What work still needs to be done?

Step 7. Communicate

- a. How will you share information, opportunities, and data with those most impacted?
- b. How will you effectively communicate the needs expressed by underserved communities?
- c. How will you advance racial equity in your messaging?

KEY TERMS

Racial Equity

When race does not determine or predict the distribution of resources, opportunities, and burdens for group members in society.

Diversity

The collection of differences within a group. Diversity includes not only race, ethnicity, and gender, but also age, national origin, religion, (dis)ability, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, education, and language. Diversity also encompasses cultural values, ideas, and perspectives.

Inclusion

The authentic engagement of underserved or excluded groups into activities and policy/decision-making. Inclusion can also mean creating an environment where all can show up as their authentic selves.

COMMUNITY BRIDGE BUILDING BEST PRACTICES

- Do research about community and organization before reaching out to new communities.
- Cultivate relationships with community leaders - ask how to make programs welcoming, inclusive, and culturally/linguistically sensitive and responsive.
- Build mutual, authentic, non-transactional partnerships - this takes time and resources.
- Be honest and communicate clear expectations about what PP&R and your program can and cannot provide community.
- Follow up to build trust and cultivate relationships, don't always call with a request.
- Ask community what success looks like to them, develop metrics in partnership to know if you've been successful or not.
- When talking with community leaders, provide hope, explain why they might want to get involved (e.g. healthy activity, opportunity to connect to other programs and communities, build community connections, learn about jobs).

Underserved and Impacted People

- Black people
- Native and Indigenous people
- People of Color
- Immigrants and Refugees
- People Living in Poverty
- People with Disabilities
- LGBT2SQIA+ people
- Older Adults
- Minority Religious Groups
- Women
- Youth
- **Who Else?**

WHAT IS RACISM?

In order to understand racism, it is first important to understand that race is a social construct that artificially divides people into distinct groups based on characteristics such as physical appearance (particularly color), ancestral heritage, cultural affiliation, and racial classification to suit the social and economic interests of the dominant group at that time. The U.S. census provides information on how racial designations have changed over time, with white, the socially dominant group, staying constant throughout.

Racism thus refers to a system that provides privileges to those who are in the dominant group over those in the non-dominant group based on race. These privileges result in increased power and are reinforced through racial prejudice.

Source: Western States Center

WHAT IS ANTI-RACISM?

Anti-racism is the identification and elimination of racism by changing oppressive systems, structures, policies, practices, and attitudes so that historic, current, and future harm can be eliminated for people of color. PP&R strives to become an antiracist organization.

An antiracist organization is an organization that:

1. Has restructured all aspects of institutional life to ensure full participation of people of color, including their worldview and culture; and the full participation of white people as allies in eliminating racism;
2. Has the ability to diagnose and address different types of racism within the organization in a manner that builds strength, community, and trust;
3. Implements structures, policies, and practices with inclusive decision-making and other forms of power-sharing throughout the institution;
4. Commits to the struggle to dismantle racism in the wider community;
5. Builds clear lines of accountability to racially oppressed communities.

Source: Crossroads Antiracism

Results-Based Accountability™ (RBA) Methodology

Another tool for racial equity is RBA. This framework uses a community-centered, racial equity lens as the foundation for results work – a condition of well-being for community. It is a transparent, data-informed, decision-making tool that uses an “ends to means” approach – i.e., you start at the end to determine what you want to achieve (desired outcomes) and work backwards to the means by which you do it (strategies/actions).

RBA utilizes three key questions to determine the effectiveness of initiatives, programs, services, and systems:

- How much did we do?
- How well did we do it?
- Is anyone better off?

These three questions are key measurement principles that show how well a program or service is working and are commonly known as performance measures.