

Racial equity analysis and decision-support tool

Developing a racial equity analysis and decision-support tool is an important component of this Strategic Plan. This tool is intended to help the agency proactively filter out unconscious bias and institutional racism, and counteract policies and practices that inadvertently maintain inequity.

Unconscious Bias - Unconscious attitudes and stereotypes toward individuals and social groups that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions.

Government agencies working to advance racial equity use evaluation tools, often referred to as “equity lenses,” that are customized to meet their specific goals and needs. In some large agencies, such as the City of Seattle and the City of Portland, specific departments or programs have customized the equity lens for their own specific purposes.

Successful racial equity analysis and decision-support tools are used within the context of a larger racial equity strategy. Staff is trained on the appropriate way to use the tools. Facilitators are available to help staff utilize the tools and engage in the intentional dialogue on racial equity that the tools set up. Facilitators also assist staff in incorporating the findings made through the use of the tools into the agency’s policies, procedures, services and decisions to ensure that the needs of historically underserved populations are fully vetted and considered throughout the planning and implementation phases.

Engagement with the communities most impacted by the policies, procedures, services and decisions being analyzed is another important step in the correct utilization of these tools.

According to the Resource Guide for Advancing Racial Equity & Transforming Government⁵, there are four major components of an effective racial equity tool:

- It proactively seeks to eliminate inequities and advance equity.
- It has identified clear goals, objectives and measurable outcomes.
- It poses questions about who would benefit or be burdened by a given decision, the potential unintended consequences of the decision, and who has been involved with developing the proposal and will be involved with implementation.
- It develops mechanisms for successful implementation.

⁵ Government Alliance on Race and Equity. (2015) Advancing Racial Equity and Transforming Government: A resource guide to put ideas into action.

Used without the required training, facilitation and community engagement, however, the tools could become a simplistic exercise of answering a set of decontextualized questions without the proper support to implement the ideas and innovations that may come to light during the process.

In general, successful racial equity analysis and decision-support tools:

1. Promote a racially inclusive collaborative process.
2. Use data to set and monitor goals to achieve equity, and promote accountability and transparency.
3. Integrate program and policy strategies to implement resulting pro-equity actions.
4. Work across sectors, not just inside institutions, through partnerships to create lasting change.
5. Educate and communicate about racial equity to continuously raise racial equity awareness.

Metro's racial equity analysis and decision-support tool will include the three elements mentioned above: training and support for staff to successfully use the tool, the questionnaire that guides the incorporation of equity into the agency's activities, and community engagement to ensure that the people most affected by the agency's activities have the opportunity to shape those activities.

Training on the appropriate use of the racial equity analysis and decision-support tool will be included as part of the diversity, equity and inclusion curriculum created by DEI Program staff. Training for volunteer facilitators of the tool implementation will also be offered. DEI Program staff will coordinate the deployment of trained facilitators and help troubleshoot the customization and utilization of the tool by Metro staff. Training on the tool will be complemented by the unconscious bias training series that DEI Program staff will implement in 2016 for all Metro staff.

DEI Program staff has developed a draft 13-point questionnaire to guide the analysis of existing policies, procedures, programs and services to determine how well they advance or hinder the practice of racial equity in the agency. The 13-point questionnaire is also intended to help staff ensure that new policies, procedures, programs and services fully consider and incorporate racial equity. The questionnaire can be customized during the implementation phase of this Strategic Plan by individual departments, divisions, programs and venues to meet their specific needs.

The draft racial equity analysis and decision support tool includes the following questions:

1. Identify the established racial equity-related outcome desired by the policy/procedure/program/service/decision that will undergo the application of this tool.
2. Describe the policy/procedure/program/service/decision that will undergo the application of this tool.
3. Describe the existing data or information that will guide this policy/procedure/program/service/decision. If no relevant data is currently collected, describe the data that should be collected and identify ways to do so.
4. Describe the historic and current inequities and disparities related to this policy/procedure/program/service/decision.
5. Identify what individuals, groups or communities will benefit from this policy/procedure/program/service/decision.
6. Identify what individuals, groups or communities will be burdened by this policy/procedure/program/service/decision.
7. Identify the factors that may be causing and maintaining the benefits and burdens on the individuals, groups and communities identified above.
8. Engage the individuals, groups or communities that are most impacted by this policy/procedure/program/service/decision to learn from their lived experience and enhance value and impact of the application of this tool.
9. Describe the geographic distribution of public resources or investments associated with this policy/procedure/program/service/decision.
10. Identify how this policy/procedure/program/service/decision can mitigate its disproportionate burdens and enhance its positive benefits.

For decision-support applications of the tool:

11. Describe how the decision about this policy/procedure/program/service will be made, including:
 - a. Who will make the ultimate decision?
 - b. Who will be consulted about the decision?
 - c. Who could be missing in the decision-making process? And how can they be included in it?
12. Identify and describe the barriers that staff, community members and decision-makers may encounter to make changes in the policy/procedure/program/service to advance racial equity.
13. Describe the action plan to remove the barriers in decision-making to advance racial equity through this policy/procedure/program/service.

The customization of the questionnaire and the overall tool for each department and venue's specific needs will include additional participation of community members. They can inform and enrich the process by providing the perspective from their lived experience and particular expertise.

This racial equity analysis and decision-support tool will be most effective if it is first used in a few test cases within each department, division, program or venue. The results of the tool's application in those cases will then be vetted in a process led by DEI Program staff in order to make adjustments and changes to questionnaire, concurrently with the customization of the tool by each department. The continuous application and refinement of this frame will reinforce Metro's commitment to being a learning organization where continuous improvement and innovation are valued and practiced.