

# Local and Regional

# **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 opportunity for all. Across the country, we are seeing governmental jurisdictions make a commitment to achieving racial equity, focusing on the power and influence of their own institutions, and working in partnership across sectors and with the community to maximize impact.

**THE MOVEMENT OF GOVERNMENT WORKING FOR RACIAL EQUITY**

Government’s proactive work on racial equity has the potential to leverage significant change, setting the stage for the achievement of racial equity in our communities. GARE utilizes a three-prong approach to build the movement of government working for racial equity:

1. **We support jurisdictions that are at the forefront of work to achieve racial equity –** Some jurisdictions have already done substantive work and are poised to be a model for others. Organizing and supporting those jurisdictions and providing best practices, tools and resources is helping to build and sustain current efforts and build a national movement for racial equity.
2. **We offer pathways for new jurisdictions to begin doing racial equity work –**Many jurisdictions lack the leadership and/or infrastructure to address issues of racial inequity. Using the learning and resources from those at the forefront creates pathways for expansion.
3. **We support and build local and regional collaborations that are broadly inclusive and focused on achieving racial equity –** To eliminate racial inequities in our communities, developing a “collective impact” approach firmly grounded in inclusion and equity is necessary. Government can play a key role in collaborations for achieving racial equity, centering community and leveraging institutional partnerships.

**THE STRATEGY FOR GOVERNMENT**

Developing a network of government focusing on racial equity is critically important to getting to different outcomes in our communities. The goal must be beyond closing the gaps; we must lift up overall outcomes, focusing efforts those who are faring worst. Deeply racialized systems are costly and depress outcomes and life chances for us collectively. To advance equity, government must focus not only on programs that serve individuals, but also on policy and institutional strategies that leverage success.

GARE is utilizing an approach with jurisdictions that has demonstrated results – normalizing conversations about race, operationalizing new policies and organizational cultures, and organizing to maximize impact:

**Normalizing**

* **Use a racial equity framework:** Using a racial equity framework that clearly articulates the differences between individual, institutional and structural racism, as well as implicit and explicit bias, increases understanding of racial inequities and commitment to achieving racial equity.
* **Operate with urgency and accountability:** While there is often a belief that change is hard and takes time, we have seen repeatedly, that when change is a priority and urgency is felt, change is embraced and can take place quickly. Building in institutional accountability mechanisms via a clear plan of action will allow accountability. Collectively, we must create greater urgency and public will to achieve racial equity.

**Operationalizing**

* **Implement racial equity tools:** Racial inequities are not 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 are perpetuating inequities. New policies and programs must also be developed with a racial equity tool.
* **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. Use of data in this manner is necessary for accountability.

**Organizing**

* **Build organizational capacity:** Jurisdictions need to be committed to the breadth and depth of institutional transformation so that impacts are sustainable. While the leadership of electeds and top officials is critical, changes take place on the ground, and infrastructure that creates racial equity experts and teams throughout local and regional government is necessary.
* **Partner with other institutions and communities:** The work of local and regional government on racial equity is necessary, but it is not sufficient. To achieve racial equity in the community, local and regional government must be working in partnership with communities and other institutions to achieve meaningful results.

**THE ROLE OF GOVERNMENT**

From the inception of our country, government at the local, regional, state and federal level has played a role in creating and maintaining racial inequity, including who is considered a citizen, who can vote, who can own property, and where one can live, to name but a few.

The Civil Rights movement was led by communities with government frequently as the target. One of the many successes of the Civil Rights movement was to make racial discrimination illegal. However, despite progress in addressing explicit discrimination, racial inequities continue to be deep, pervasive and persistent across the country. Racial inequities exist across all indicators for success, including in education, criminal justice, jobs, housing, public infrastructure and health, regardless of region.

Unfortunately, what we have witnessed is the morphing of explicit bias into implicit bias, with implicit bias perpetuated by institutional policies and practices. These policies and practices replicate the same racially inequitable outcomes that previously existed. We are at a critical juncture where there is a possible new role for government – to proactively work for racial equity.

**NOW IS THE TIME TO TAKE ACTION**

Join the Government Alliance on Race and Equity. Sharing best practices, peer-to-peer learning, and academic resources helps to strengthen work across jurisdictions.

* If you are just getting started, join a new cohort that GARE is launching in 2016. The cohort will be supported with a body of practice including racial equity training curricula, infrastructure models, tools, and sample policies.
* If you need assistance with racial equity training, racial equity tools, model policies, communications coaching, or assistance with particular topic areas, such as criminal justice, jobs, housing, development, health or education, individualized assistance is available from GARE.
* If you are in a region where there are opportunities to build cross-jurisdictional partnerships with other institutions and communities, GARE can help build regional infrastructure necessary for racial equity.

**For more information, contact Government Alliance on Race and Equity Director, Julie Nelson – (206) 816-5104,** [**Jnelson@thecsi.org**](mailto:Jnelson@thecsi.org)**.**