

Racial Equity Systems Self-Assessment for Community Foundations

Developed by CFON's Aligned Action Network, [NEON](#)



This is a living document; feedback is always welcome and revisions will be made periodically.

This tool was developed by the NEON cohort (Nexus for Equity + Opportunity Nationwide), an aligned-action network as part of CFON (Community Foundation Opportunity Network) as they explored the internal systems change needed to authentically engage in external systems work to dismantle structural and systemic racism and achieve economic and social mobility. Special thanks to Rishard Allen, Amy Daly-Donovan, and Tom Kelly for bringing the learning to life via this document.

For more information or for consulting/facilitation support in implementing RESSA in your organization, contact Amy Daly-Donovan, CFON Executive Director (amy@dalydonovan.com). This tool can also be accessed via CFON's website: cfon.org/RESSA

Use and Process Considerations

This assessment tool is intended for Community Foundations to measure their current state, progress, and aspirations around the internal systems changes needed to support their stated goals around equity, anti-racism (i.e., dismantling systemic racism), opportunity, and social and economic mobility. The value is in the experience of your analysis and deep dialogue around these elements. The items in the self-assessment were defined

and recommended by NEON community foundations as potential (and aspirational) elements of change needed - they do not all need to be present but can be considered as examples or evidence. There is not a "right or wrong" rating and users should discuss their different perspectives and assessments of the changes and evidence. There are many ways you might consider using this assessment:

WHO:

Consider various options for who should use this tool:

- **Option 1:** A group of diverse stakeholders (internal and external) from across the organization work together on the assessment and subsequent actions so that terms and phrases are mutually defined and understood.
- **Option 2:** A specific department or function assesses and creates actions for their area(s) of responsibility only.
- **Option 3:** Specific departments or functions complete the assessment for their area(s) of responsibility independently and then share/compare with other departments/functions, potentially aligning actions where appropriate.
- **Option 4:** Specific departments or functions complete the assessment in all categories independently and then share/compare with other departments/functions, learning from others and potentially aligning actions where appropriate.

Regardless of the selected option above, identify someone to be the "keeper of the info" and add the document to internal knowledge management systems so it is easily accessible.

HOW:

A category can be assessed on the continuum as a whole ("Category Rating"), or each point within a category can be rated - whichever works best and is most helpful for the group. The "Category Rating" is not intended to be an average of the ratings of each of the individual points, rather a general assessment of the category itself.

Individuals can complete their own assessment first before coming to the group conversation; assure that there is a safe environment that encourages difference of opinion and respectful dialogue.

Teams or the organization as a whole can check in on the progress of the created action on a regular basis (perhaps quarterly), and as a re-assessment done annually.

DOCUMENTATION:

In addition to documenting progress, it will be helpful to identify "tailwinds" (examples of what's helping movement in this area that can be tapped into or leveraged) and "headwinds" (challenges or specific examples that are "sticking points" that are preventing movement along the continuum) that can then be used to develop ongoing action plans.

Similarly, tracking "evidence of progress" will help keep track of efforts made for ongoing work in these areas, and as a continuous learning mechanism. When "evidence of impact" is available, it would be helpful to capture that as well. This documentation will be helpful in annual re-assessment activities.

ADDITIONAL VALUE:

This tool is an excellent companion piece with strategic planning efforts to ensure that the Community Foundation is elevating the importance of this internal work around equitable systems, which can inform specific strategic initiatives.

Each category includes links to additional resources that may be helpful in assessing processes, policies and practices in that category and/or creating action plans.

Organizational Commitment

At a high level, the foundation has demonstrated its commitment to anti-racism through the following actions:

Category Rating: _____

Rating scale: 1 = Maintaining business as usual
2 = Building awareness & demand for change
3 = Exploring new approaches & small scale changes
4 = Refining, coordinating, and increasing the impact of strategies
5 = Effective approaches are taking hold and transforming the foundation

	1	2	3	4	5	Tailwinds (Drivers)	Headwinds (Challenges)	Actions to Address Headwinds	Evidence of Progress	Evidence of Impact
An explicit and public-facing expression to be an organization committed to antiracism, racial equity, and/or dismantling systemic racism										
Written and adopted policies that codify the foundation's work around racial equity, therefore making them sustainable through leadership/staff turnover										
Planning documents that name racism and racial equity explicitly with specific actions to address it										
A meaningful portion of the endowment that is invested responsibly and annually assessed for accountability										
Ample and dedicated human and capital resources to drive, design, and implement projects and initiatives around racial equity										
Completion of an annual organizational equity assessment with specific actions for continuous improvement										
Vendor selection (being intentional about working with vendors/suppliers of color)										

RESOURCES:

- [Awake to Woke to Work: Building a Race Equity Culture](#) (Equity in the Center)
- [A Change Management & Deep Equity Primer: The What, Why, How & Nuance](#) (GEO & Movement Tapestries)

People & Culture

Foundation has commonly adopted a set of written policies and procedures for inclusive and equitable hiring, retention, growth, and development of the foundation's staff, including, but not limited to (depending on the number of staff in the foundation):

Category Rating: _____

Rating scale: 1 = Maintaining business as usual
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	1	2	3	4	5	Tailwinds (Drivers)	Headwinds (Challenges)	Actions to Address Headwinds	Evidence of Progress	Evidence of Impact
Equitable compensation (thriving wage)										
Widely distributed job postings with pay transparency										
Skills-based hiring practices										
Hiring practices require a diverse slate of candidates and a minimum number of POC on interview panels										
Consistent mentoring, coaching, professional development, and mental health support, especially for staff members with marginalized identities										
A clear roadmap for promotions, pay raises, bonuses, and leadership transitions										
A standardized 360 performance review and career check-in process										
Competitive benefits with minimal cost to staff										
Flexible scheduling and time-off policies that promote work-life balance										
Clear corrective action policies for microaggressions, macroaggressions, and any other manifestations of hate perpetuated against staff with marginalized identities										
Mandatory racial equity training for all staff with regular follow-up engagements										

RESOURCES:

- [Mind the Gap: Exploring the Role of Diversity and Racial Equity in Leanly Staffed Foundations](#) (Exponent Philanthropy)
 - [Advancing Racial Equity Inside Foundations — Lessons from the Field](#) (CEP)
- [The California Endowment's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Audit](#) (TCE)
 - [Transforming Organizational Culture Assessment](#) (MP Associates)

Board/Governance

The Board of Directors has demonstrated its commitment to diverse membership and equitable and anti-racist practices through the following actions:

Rating scale: 1 = Maintaining business as usual
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5 = Effective approaches are taking hold and transforming the foundation

	Category Rating: _____					Tailwinds (Drivers)	Headwinds (Challenges)	Actions to Address Headwinds	Evidence of Progress	Evidence of Impact
	1	2	3	4	5					
The foundation's mission statement includes a commitment to equity and is so recorded in the organization's bylaws										
Board members have knowledge of and are grounded in what's happening in the community and within the foundation										
Written Board recruitment strategies include those outside of the "status quo" (typically board members recruiting people from their own networks), and emphasizes representation from the community, non-profit organizations, and donors. In addition to a diversity of roles, these recruitment strategies are built on authentic relationships to ensure diversity of the community at large, including gender, race, religion, ethnicity, age, and socioeconomic status										
Board policies include a "code of conduct" that outlines an expectation of behaviors that support mutual respect and a sense of belonging for all board members										
The Board is committed to using equitable decision making processes and establishes rules and practices that encourage and welcome diversity of perspectives and consensus building										
The Board's policies do not require its members to contribute or raise resources at specific amounts or levels										
Board members participate in mandatory racial equity learning experiences										
The Board regularly challenges conventional thinking around spending rates										

RESOURCES:

- [How to Build an Anti-Racist Board of Directors: Your Guide to Equitable Nonprofit Governance](#) (Embracing Equity)
- [Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity within Boards](#) (BoardSource)
- [Awareness to Action: A Guide for Boards and Chief Executives on a Racial Equity Journey](#) (BoardSource)

- [Diversifying Foundation Boards](#) (Common Fund)
- [Diverse, Inclusive, and Equitable Boards](#) (AGB)
- [Five Year Reflection: Aligning Board and Staff](#) (Bush Foundation)

- [Alternatives to Robert's Rules of Order](#) (NCFP)
- [Purpose-Driven Board Leadership](#) (Board Source)

Grantmaking

Foundation has commonly adopted policies and procedures for inclusive and equitable grantmaking, including, but not limited to:

Category Rating: _____

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	1	2	3	4	5	Tailwinds (Drivers)	Headwinds (Challenges)	Actions to Address Headwinds	Evidence of Progress	Evidence of Impact
Free and on-going technical assistance for applicants										
Open and publicly accessible grant applications that are available in languages other than English										
Application questions that are clear (non-academic, without jargon) and relevant to decision-making										
Rubrics/criteria that prioritize BIPOC-led and serving organizations										
Evaluation criteria that account for historic inequities in funding to organizations led by and serving marginalized communities										
Unrestricted, multi-year, and capacity-building funding is available										
Funds are distributed in a timely manner and in a variety of formats (e.g., electronic, paper check, etc.)										
Non-burdensome reporting requirements that only ask for information that will be used										
Appropriate and respectful recognition of grantees with opportunities for them to own their narratives through impact storytelling and events										
An anti-hate policy that prohibits grants to known hate groups										
Designated funds to support marginalized communities										
Consideration is given to developing partnership relationships beyond financial support										

RESOURCES:

- [Grantmaking with a Racial Justice Lens](#) (PIRE)
 - [Trust-Based Philanthropy fundamentals](#)
 - [Strategies for Driving Equity in Grantmaking](#) (PEAK)
- [Reimagining Capacity Building: Navigating Culture, Systems & Power](#) (GEO)
 - [Centering Equity through Flexible, Reliable Funding](#) (GEO)

Community Engagement

Foundation has an explicit goal and intentional process for engaging in respectful and authentic partnership with community members and including their voices and perspectives in foundation strategy and decisions.

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	1	2	3	4	5	Tailwinds (Drivers)	Headwinds (Challenges)	Actions to Address Headwinds	Evidence of Progress	Evidence of Impact
Community voice is actively and intentionally sought and incorporated into grantmaking priorities and decisions										
Intentional relationship building with organizations serving, representing, and led by People of Color										
Community members are invited to participate and shape conversations around the foundation's goals and priorities										
An explicit commitment to doing "with" community as opposed to doing "to"										
Priority focus on addressing specific harms impacting Communities of Color										
Community members are financially compensated for their time and input when participating in foundation activities/ advisory groups										
Targeted time and attention to marginalized communities and disinvested neighborhoods										

RESOURCES:

- [Community-Led Continuum](#) (CUOC: Connecticut Urban Opportunity Collaborative)
 - [Principles of Equitable & Inclusive Civic Engagement](#) (Ohio State Kirwan Institute)
 - [Understanding Community Engagement: An Outsider-Turned-Insider's Perspective of Philanthropy](#) (GIH)
 - [Sharing Power with Communities: A field guide](#) (Community Wealth Partners)
- [Engaging the Power of Families and Community to Increase the Impact of Philanthropy: A Roadmap for Funders](#) (CCSI)
 - [Flipping the Script: White Privilege and Community Building](#) (MP Assoc)

Donors & Philanthropic Services

Foundation has commonly adopted policies and procedures for inclusive and equitable donor acquisition, engagement, and retention and distribution of donor-advised fund grants, including, but not limited to:

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	1	2	3	4	5	Tailwinds (Drivers)	Headwinds (Challenges)	Actions to Address Headwinds	Evidence of Progress	Evidence of Impact
A robust orientation on the community foundation's mission, vision, and values is provided to all donors										
Frequent and free opportunities for donors to participate in racial equity learning experiences										
Elimination of minimum giving requirements to open a DAF (or creative options such as contributions over time to reach a minimum)										
Targeted recruitment in BIPOC spaces										
Targeted co-investment strategies that encourage donors to align their giving with the Foundation's strategic direction and community priorities, especially around racial equity										
Socially responsible investment options available to donors who choose to endow their DAF										
An anti-hate policy that prohibits DAF grants to known hate groups										

RESOURCES:

- [Moving Toward Equitable Funding Practices: Findings from Research on Community Foundation Practices](#) (Community Wealth Partners) | [Lessons](#)
- [Values Aligned Philanthropy for Community Foundations](#) (COF)

Communications and Marketing

Foundation has adopted policies and procedures for inclusive, equitable storytelling and communication through print and media, including, but not limited to:

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	1	2	3	4	5	Tailwinds (Drivers)	Headwinds (Challenges)	Actions to Address Headwinds	Evidence of Progress	Evidence of Impact
A commitment to transparency and honesty										
A commitment to speak truth to power										
Adoption of an anti-racist storytelling framework										
Production of communication materials (online and in print) in multiple languages										
Implementation of a formal and frequent feedback mechanism with residents unaffiliated with the community foundation or a grantee partner										
A commitment to disrupting and challenging racist and dehumanizing narratives										

RESOURCES:

- [A Guide to Ethical and Anti-Racist Storytelling](#) (CFON)
- [Equity Communications Guide](#) (San Diego Foundation)
- [Telling Our Own Story: The Role of Narrative in Racial Healing](#) (American Values Institute)
- [Practical framing strategies](#) (Frameworks)

Data, Learning, & Evaluation

Foundation has adopted policies and procedures for inclusive and equitable data collection, data dissemination and storytelling, access to data, and data-informed-human-centered decision making, including, but not limited to:

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	Category Rating: _____					Tailwinds (Drivers)	Headwinds (Challenges)	Actions to Address Headwinds	Evidence of Progress	Evidence of Impact
	1	2	3	4	5					
Adoption of the Equitable Evaluation Framework principles										
Engagement with residents and other relevant stakeholders in metrics design										
Transparency around how data will be collected, used, and disseminated										
Free and user-friendly access to both raw and analyzed data, including in multiple languages										
A process for data validation that includes those who shared their information										
Implementation of key performance indicators related to the foundation's work on equity, both externally and internally										

Other Systems, Policies or Practices

Assessment, identification, and prioritization of public policy and advocacy that specifically addresses racial inequities and systemic racism										
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DATA, LEARNING, & EVALUATION RESOURCES:

- [Equitable Evaluation Initiative framework and principles](#)
- [Why am I always being researched? A guidebook](#) (Chicago BEYOND)
- Are You Missing the "E" In DEI?: Measuring Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (webinar [#1](#), [#2](#), [#3](#)) (Community Science)

OTHER SYSTEMS, POLICIES OR PRACTICES RESOURCES:

- [Getting Equity Advocacy Results \(GEAR\) toolkit](#) (PolicyLink)
- [Racial Equity Tools](#)
- [MP Associates racial equity tools and resources](#)