



# Ten Essential Questions for Policy Development, Review and Evaluation

## CHANGING THE FUTURE: The Work of Associated Black Charities . . .

Associated Black Charities is determined to *change the future*. We seek – through policy-related education and advocacy, collaborations, and incubation and testing of strategic intervention models – to strengthen Maryland’s economy by focusing on the economic growth, economic inclusion, and economic influence of African Americans.

In Maryland, ABC is a champion for economic transformation for African Americans and other marginalized communities in areas related to our organizational mission – *to advocate and facilitate the creation of measurably healthier and more prosperous communities through responsible leadership and philanthropic investment throughout the State of Maryland.*

Supporting good policy is an essential component of our work. Because policy is not “race neutral,” we work with policy makers, civic and institutional leaders, advocates, and others to build greater understanding of why using a racial equity lens matters and how to use it effectively in policy design. A shared understanding of this lens by Maryland leaders increases the potential for advancing policies that ensure that economic opportunities advance all Marylanders as we move into the 21st Century.

To contact Associated Black Charities about research or technical assistance regarding use of Policy Applications of a Racial Equity Lens, please contact A. Adar Ayira, Project Manager, More in the Middle Initiative, [aayira@abc-md.org](mailto:aayira@abc-md.org), 443.524.7732.

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[www.abc-md.org](http://www.abc-md.org)

<sup>1</sup>Universalist: Universal policies assume a universal societal norm, which has historically been white, male, and able-bodied. Broadly conceived universal programs are more likely to exacerbate inequality than reducing it. SOURCE: john a. powell, “The Importance of Targeted Universalism”, Poverty and Race, March/April 2009.

<sup>2</sup>Turner, Ani. “The Business Case for Racial Equity.” Altarum Institute, October 2013.

<sup>3</sup>Keating, Daniel P. and Hertzman, Clyde (eds.). *Developmental Health and the Wealth of Nations: Social, Biological, and Educational Dynamics*. New York: Guilford Press, 1999; Berg, AG & Ostry, JD. 2011. “Inequality & Unsustainable Growth: Two Sides of the Same Coin?” International Monetary Fund. <http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/sdn/2011/sdn1108.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup>Racial Equity Framework / Lens. A racial equity framework / lens is an approach to the world that involves many components, including analyzing data and information about race and ethnicity; understanding disparities and learning why they exist; looking at problems and their root causes from a structural standpoint; and naming race explicitly when talking about problems and solutions resulting in strategies that include elimination of policies, practices, attitudes and cultural messages that reinforce differential outcomes by race or fail to eliminate them. SOURCES: Full Racial Equity Task Force Recommendations adopted by The Saint Paul Foundation and Minnesota Community Foundation Board, October 2013; [www.racialequitytools.org](http://www.racialequitytools.org); Race Forward; and other sources.

<sup>5</sup>Racial Equity Impact Assessment / Equity Impact Assessment. A tool that helps public authorities and others to systemically examine whether policy development and implementation achieve intended results. These tools systemically assess likely or actual racialized effects of policies on residents. Use of this tool minimizes and/or eliminates unanticipated negative policy consequences through analysis and refinement of proposed policies, institutional practices, programs, plans, and budgetary decisions. SOURCES: “*Racial Equity Impact Assessment Toolkit*,” Race Forward, 2014 and “*Equity Impact Assessment Quick-Start Guide*,” Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2010.

<sup>6</sup>Some of these cities and states include Seattle, WA; Boston, MA; Madison, WI; St. Paul, MN; Iowa City and Johnson County, IA; and the State of Connecticut.

<sup>7</sup>Questions are based on the work of many sources, including Race Forward and Seattle’s Racial and Social Justice Initiative.

# CHANGING THE FUTURE: Stepping Toward Equity...

*The City of Seattle introduced its Race and Social Justice Initiative in 2005. In doing so, it was the first city that had ever undertaken a specific initiative focused explicitly on improving community well-being by addressing institutional racism and eliminating racial inequity.*

Public policy has played a pivotal role in both creating and dismantling the structural and institutional barriers that have disproportionately affected marginalized groups, including racial groups, in America. Although the most obvious racially discriminatory policies have been overturned or mitigated, factors that disadvantage communities of color—intended and unintended alike—continue to operate in American society and in public policy.

ABC and our partner organizations consistently receive questions from policy-makers and other leaders regarding practical applications of a racial equity framework in assessing the racial impacts of policies, practices, and programs. These questions represent a larger shared vision of fairness that is far more likely to be achieved if we can increase effectiveness in evaluating the impact of policies on all groups of Maryland residents. This shared vision places Maryland firmly in the forefront of high caliber policy development. Using a racial equity lens in developing policy puts Maryland at the forefront of cities and states that directly address racial equity. Removing structural and institutional barriers that have racially disproportionate impacts on residents increases Maryland's reputation as a livable state and strengthens its economic vibrancy.

*This pocket guide is a concrete educational tool for policy leaders and others wanting to translate their commitment to justice and equity to practical applications.*

## The Challenge

Most policies are developed from a “universalist”<sup>1</sup> perspective that assumes everyone has equal access and opportunity. Such an approach, however, does not account for the structural and institutional barriers to opportunity that continue to operate in American society. Racialized barriers don't just hurt individual racial groups; they hurt our national economy, generating losses on our economic and material productivity. Developing a racial equity approach to policy can assist in changing that dynamic. For example, closing race-based earning gaps by 2030 would increase U.S. GDP by 16% -- more than \$5 trillion a year -- increasing corporate profits by more than \$450 billion and federal tax revenues by more than \$1 trillion.<sup>2</sup> As Maryland's population grows and changes, becoming more racially diverse, it is even more critical to examine how policy -- legislation, budget priorities, regulatory issues, judicial decisions, and other policy that affect opportunities, access, and day-to-day lives of residents -- is likely to impact the different groups in our society, especially those who have been historically cut off from fully benefiting from economic opportunity.

# CHANGING THE FUTURE: Policy Applications of a Racial Equity Framework: Background

*The UK's Public Sector Equality Act of 2010 requires public authorities to have “due regard to equality considerations when exercising their functions.” Although not required by this law, the use of Equity Impact Assessments are strongly encouraged to assess certain policies regarding their potential impact on equality prior to their implementation.*

Analyzing the impact of policies on racial and other marginalized groups is not new, either nationally or internationally. The UK, for example, has frequently updated its “Equality Act,” including a “Public Sector Equality Duty and Equality Impact Assessment” which obligates public authorities to give “due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity.”

Nationally, city governments are becoming more responsive to the calls of coalition groups (advocacy, business, community) for policy assessments that address racial (and other forms of) equity. Whether called Racial Equity Impact Assessments<sup>5</sup>, Equity Impact Assessments, or Race and Social Justice Initiatives, cities and states across the country<sup>6</sup> either have or are advocating for racial equity impact assessments as standard parts of the policy process:

- Seattle, WA's process is regarded as a model in policy impact assessments. It has a concrete and far-reaching plan of action that incorporates internal outcomes in City government, public engagement and City services, as well as race-based disparities in Seattle communities.
- The state of Connecticut has a narrower focus, applying its racial equity assessment lens only to policies that affect prison populations. In 2009, its General Assembly created measures requiring its Office of Legislative Research to prepare racial and ethnic impact statements for all bills affecting prison population size, when requested by its Legislative Committees.

In these cases, each targeted effort moved from a seemingly “race neutral” decision-making perspective to one that supports legislators in more effectively addressing implicit biases and barriers in systems -- and in the process, transforming them.

## Leading With Race . . .

Race has thus far maintained an intractable role in American society. Specifically addressing this issue -- not from a personal or interpersonal perspective, but from the often invisible structural and institutional perspective -- is essential.

As we developed this pocket guide we learned that some are concerned that use of an equity lens benefits some groups and not others. Research<sup>3</sup> has shown, though, that inequity is damaging to the economic well-being of communities, regions and nations alike. Using a framework that carefully acknowledges the detrimental economic and social impact of racism from a structural and institutional frame is not beneficial only to particular groups -- it benefits the entire state. By using a racial equity<sup>4</sup> framework, decision-makers signal that they recognize that challenges faced by some groups ultimately and adversely affect everyone. Intentional and consistent use of a racial equity framework prepares our state for the demographic changes to come by expanding pathways to opportunities that advance the overall interests of as many Maryland residents as possible.

# CHANGING THE FUTURE: Policy Applications of a Racial Equity Lens In Maryland . . .

*The City of Madison established its Racial Equity and Social Justice Initiative in 2013, focusing on eliminating racial and social inequities in two main areas in municipal government: policies/budgets and city operations. Equity considerations are now integral to major decisions, with the focus on achieving equitable allocation of resources.*

**Policy-makers in Seattle, Washington; Madison, Wisconsin; and other cities in the United States are on the front lines of taking action by simply asking questions with a racial equity lens when drafting, reviewing and before passing public policy.**

**Below are 10 essential questions that every policy-maker and civic leader involved in policy development, review and evaluation should use to identify the potential of unintended race-based disparities and, when appropriate, to inform policy decisions. While it may not always be possible to answer every question in detail, each should at least be asked and considered.** Asking these questions is an acknowledgement that policy is not “universal” or “colorblind” and that incorporating an equity lens to policy increases the economic growth prospects for Maryland and *all* its residents.

## Ten Essential Questions for Policy Development, Review and Evaluation:<sup>7</sup>

1. How is an equity lens incorporated within the policy?
2. Does the policy explicitly account for potential racially disparate outcomes? If so, how? If not, how can it be incorporated?
3. How is an equity lens incorporated in tracking policy outcomes?
4. Will the policy increase access and opportunity for communities of color? How?
5. Will the policy have a positive impact on racial / ethnic equity, inclusion and full participation of all people (in the process, in implementation, in breadth of outreach and participation, in decision-making and culture of decision-making, etc.)?
6. Will the policy protect against racial violence, racial profiling and discrimination? How?
7. What are the mechanisms in place to ensure accountability (such as equity-focused benchmarks or indicators)?
8. Do the lens and tools for accountability incorporate a racial equity framework? How?
9. Are there changes that could be made to make the policy more equitable and inclusive?
10. What are the economic and social benefits of incorporating an equity lens in this policy?