

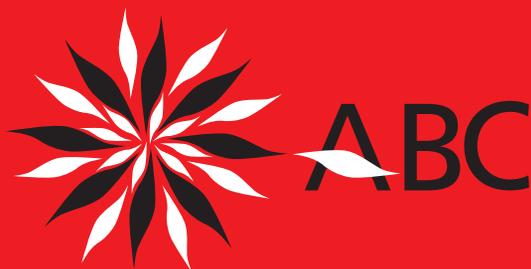
Ten

Applications
of a Racial
Equity Lens for
Employment
Institutions

Essential

Questions

for Employers,
Business Owners,
HR Professionals &
Hiring Managers



Workforce

Equity

is when the workforce is inclusive of people of color and other marginalized or underrepresented groups at a rate representative of the employer's local community; where institutional and structural barriers impacting employee attraction, selection, participation and retention have been eliminated, enabling opportunity for employment success and career growth.¹

1 City of Seattle, *Workforce Equity Strategic Plan*, July 2016.

The Challenge

The policies and practices of businesses and institutions has largely been shaped and molded by the influences of the larger society with many places of employment adopting policies and practices from a “universalist” or “race neutral” perspective which assumes that everyone has equal access and opportunity. Such an approach does not account for the structural and institutional barriers to opportunity that continue to operate in American society and in American Institutions.

Systemic biases remain as barriers to people of color in the labor market. In a well-known University of Chicago study, when the same resume was submitted to job postings under different names, “a call back for an interview was 50% more likely when the resume had a stereotypically White name instead of a stereotypically African American name.”² Racial injustice and frustration are perpetuated within [American] companies because [they] invest in diversity talks and employee affinity groups without empowering [their] hiring managers to pursue innovative strategies and systems for promoting concrete racial equity goals, beginning with the very systems that bring people into their organization – their hiring processes.³

Racialized policies 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 businesses, organizations, institutions and other places of employment can assist in changing that dynamic.**

Leading with Race

According to The Business Case for Racial Equity (2018) “a racially equitable society is one in which neither race nor ethnicity determines opportunity and life outcomes. It is a society in which all groups have the ability to participate, prosper, and reach their full potential.” If we have any hope of eliminating the racial and ethnic gaps that are pervasive and widening, we have to become “race-explicit” in our policies, practices and cultural messages. We have to be intentional about critically examining all employment policies and practices to ensure that they are not unintentionally perpetuating disparities and producing differential outcomes for communities of color while advantaging white communities.

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 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 framework, decision-makers recognize that challenges faced by some groups ultimately and adversely affect everyone. Intentional and consistent use of a racial equity framework prepares the state of Maryland for the demographic changes to come by expanding pathways to opportunities that advance the overall interests of as many Maryland residents as possible.

Participating in the work of racial equity in the United States is important because leaders of institutions of all kinds agree that diversity and inclusion are one of the preeminent drivers of their success. These institutions - where people spend the majority of their lives, are the best places to fully commit to the pursuit of racial equity.⁴

2 W.K. Kellogg Foundation, *The Business Case for Racial Equity: A Strategy for Growth*, 2018.

3 Conroy, C. (2016). *How White Hiring Managers Can Support Racial Equity at Work*, pt. 2/10.

4 Conroy, C. (2016). *How White Hiring Managers Can Support Racial Equity at Work*, pt. 2/10.

CHANGING THE **FUTURE**

Stepping Toward Equity...

Racial Equity is the systemic fair treatment of people of all races that results in equitable opportunities and outcomes for everyone.⁵ Achieving equity requires erasing racial disparities in opportunities and outcomes. Equity is not only a matter of social justice or morality: It is an economic necessity. By enabling the full creative and economic potential of all people, we can increase the size and skills of the workforce, increase productivity, improve our fiscal situation, and boost our long-term economic growth. Reducing occupational barriers for women and Blacks in the latter half of the 20th century was a major contributor to U.S. economic growth during that period. By the middle of the 21st century, more than half of U.S. workers and consumers will be people of color. Furthering the success of populations of color will not only serve an important social justice goal, it will be a major driver of our collective and economic well-being.⁶

Like the rest of the nation, Maryland's workforce is aging. In 2011, the first of Maryland's 1.55 million baby-boomers hit the traditional retirement age of 65 years. Although it's likely that many boomers will work beyond age 65, they will retire at some point and will need to be replaced. Finding replacements among the following generations of workers, is only one part of the challenge. Another part of the challenge is preventing "brain drain," a term which describes the loss of institutional knowledge that can occur when workers leave without passing along their important knowledge. Consequently, Maryland, along with the rest of the U.S. is presented with some large challenges and a short time frame to take action.⁷

In 2007, the Governor's Workforce Investment Board of Maryland released the statement above in a fact sheet aimed at "sounding the alarm" on the shifting workforce demographics that were soon to come. In 2018, we were faced with another shift in the workforce, this time it's a shift in race and ethnicity in addition to age, with people of color becoming the majority population in many states across the country including Maryland. **How we respond to this shift will dictate our place as a global player and leader for years to come.**

ABC has been a strong advocate for racial and economic equity for over 30 years. We envision an economy in Baltimore and throughout Maryland where structural and institutional racism is being dismantled and provides equitable opportunities for all people to work, advance and build financial security and generational wealth to benefit their families and communities. As we continue to sharpen our focus, we have become clearer that in order to achieve racial and economic equity, we have to address the racialized barriers that exist within our systems particularly those within our institutions of employment. With this focus, we educate workers, employers and civic leaders about the impact of race-based barriers in the workplace and how they can create policies that are more equitable.

5 Race Forward, 2017.

6 W.K. Kellogg Foundation, *The Business Case for Racial Equity: A Strategy for Growth*, 2018.

7 Maryland's Aging Workforce – Governor's Workforce Investment Board, 2007.

CHANGING THE **FUTURE**

The World of Work – Applications of a Racial Equity Framework: Background

Since the Wagner-Peyser Act of 1933, employment institutions have relied on a meritocracy framework⁸ which benefited white workers and actively excluded people of color through Jim Crow Laws and perpetuated the implications of racism in employment and hiring practices.⁹

Building upon existing exclusionary practices, the Social Security Act of 1935 which laid the groundwork for the nation's social safety net, excluded a third of all American workers, including farmworkers and domestic workers – who were predominantly people of color – from coverage under the legislation.¹⁰ In an attempt to correct these exclusionary policies, in 1961, President John F. Kennedy issued an executive order mandating government contractors to “take affirmative action to ensure that applicants are employed, and that employees are treated during employment, without regard to their race, creed, color, or national origin”. Furthermore, employers who contract with the government or who otherwise receive federal funds are required to document their affirmative action practices and metrics. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, created by Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, enforces a number of anti-discrimination laws including but not limited to the Equal Pay Act of 1963, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967, Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Titles I and V of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and the Civil Rights Act of 1991.¹¹

Racial disparities in the workplace continue to exist and are widening the racial wealth gap despite the passing of the above mentioned federal laws and policies designed to ban employment related discrimination.¹² It seems that the limitation of these policies to only employers receiving federal funds and/or federal contracts also limits the extent to which these policies were implemented in private sector companies. In fact, the standards of professionalism, according to American grassroots organizer-scholars Tema Okun and Keith Jones, are heavily defined by white supremacy culture – or the systemic, institutionalized centering of whiteness. In the workplace, white supremacy culture explicitly privileges whiteness and discriminates against non-Western and non-white professionalism standards related to dress code, speech, work style, and timeliness.¹³ Without careful examination of federal policies, private sector policies and current professionalism standards, racial inequities will continue to persist and the employment institutions will continue to be substantial perpetrators of current day inequities among employees of color.

8 Meritocracy Framework – a framework in which people are rewarded and advanced based on individual merit, talent, skill and ability without accounting for implicit and explicit biases or systematic and institutional barriers that create an uneven playing field.

9 Prosperity Now, *Workforce Development Manual*, 2019

10 Prosperity Now, *The Road to Zero Wealth*, 2017.

11 Cornell Law School, Legal Information Institute, https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/affirmative_action#targetText=Employers%20who%20contract%20with%20the,intentionally%20engaged%20in%20discriminatory%20practices.

12 McKinsey & Company, *The economic impact of closing the racial wealth gap*, 2019.

13 Gray, A. *The Bias of 'Professionalism' Standards*. Stanford Social Innovation Review, 2019

CHANGING THE FUTURE

Applications of a Racial Equity Lens for Employment Institutions in Maryland...

According to Adrienne Maree Brown, **“what we pay attention to grows.”** We must broaden our perspective to include but also go beyond typical discussions of employment discrimination focused on obvious issues, such as workplace microaggressions and discriminatory hiring and firing practices. We need to expand our attention toward addressing more subtle barriers, from using biased hiring metrics to the acceptance of some work styles over others. Only then will we begin to address the damage done by the biased forms of professionalism that dominate workplaces in the United States and other white-majority countries.¹⁴

The disparities that exist between white people and people of color in Baltimore and Maryland at-large are reflective of the deeper institutional practices, policies and programs that create different opportunities for whites, Blacks, and Latinx people. In order to change the economic outcomes for people of color, we have to acknowledge the institutional and structural racialized barriers that exist. We have to start changing the policies, practices and organizational culture that negatively impacts employee attraction, selection, participation, retention and advancement for workers of color.

When companies commit to seeking racial equity in their organization, they are holding themselves accountable to a set of standards that will transform their organization from top to bottom. Companies that engage in the work of racial equity will eventually be faced with the stark reality that it requires commitment. They will need to reexamine and change some of their core operations, their talent acquisition strategies, their HR management practices, and aspects of their workplace culture that have existed for decades.¹⁵

Here are 10 essential questions that every Employer, Business Owner, HR Professional and Hiring Manager should use to examine their internal policies, practices and organizational culture which may be producing and/or perpetuating race-based disparities. These questions should be used to inform changes to these policies, practices and the organization's culture. While it may not be possible to answer every question in detail, each question should at least be asked and considered. Asking these questions is an acknowledgement that our employment institutions are not “universal” or “colorblind” and that incorporating an equity lens to all organizational policies and practices increases the growth prospects for Maryland and **all** its residents.

14 Gray, A. *The Bias of 'Professionalism' Standards*. Stanford Social Innovation Review, 2019

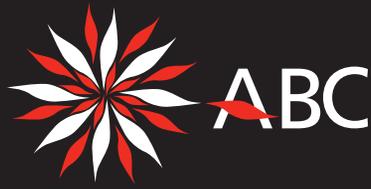
15 Conroy, C. (2016). *How White Hiring Managers Can Support Racial Equity at Work*, pt. 2/10.

DEFINITIONS

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.

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 the 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; Race Forward; and other sources.

Meritocracy Framework: A framework in which people are rewarded and advanced based on individual merit, talent, skill and ability without accounting for implicit and explicit biases or systematic and institutional barriers that create an uneven playing field.



Ten Essential Questions for Employers, Business Owners, HR Professionals and Hiring Managers

- 1** Does the company have equity and inclusion stated as a value? If so, how is this operationalized in the policies and practices of the company?
- 2** Does your recruitment, attraction, hiring and advancement criteria or policy explicitly account for potentially racially disparate outcomes? If so, how? If not, how can it be incorporated?
- 3** Does the company have mechanisms in place to ensure accountability for integration of a racial equity lens in organizational operational practices and policies (such as equity-focused benchmarks or indicators?)
- 4** What are the stated and lived values of the company and how do they impact opportunities for Black and other non-Black workers of color within the company?
- 5** Does the organizational culture support and encourage the upward mobility of Black and other non-Black workers of color? How?
- 6** Does the company disaggregate and analyze employee engagement data including but not limited to: employee attachment, employee turnover, employee wages, and employee advancement by race, ethnicity, gender and other demographic criteria?
- 7** Does the company's policies (i.e. SOP's and Handbook) protect against racial profiling and discrimination? How?
- 8** Does the employee makeup of the company reflect the racial and ethnic makeup of the community in which it is located and the market it serves? More specifically, does the company's leadership reflect the racial and ethnic makeup of the community in which it is located and the market it serves?
- 9** Does the company have racial equity and/or diversity goals for its procurement policies and practices?
- 10** What are the economic and social benefits of incorporating an equity lens into your operational policies and practices?

CHANGING THE FUTURE

The Work of Associated Black Charities...

Associated Black Charities is determined to change the economic landscape for all Marylanders with an intentional focus on those who are left behind. We seek – through the workforce and workforce ecosystem – 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 equity for African Americans and other marginalized communities in areas related to our organizational vision – ***an economy in Baltimore and throughout Maryland where structural and institutional racism is being dismantled and provides equitable opportunities for all people to work, advance, and build financial security and generational wealth to benefit their families and communities.***

Supporting equitable employment and business practices is an essential component of our work. Because the practices of the “world of work” are not “race neutral”, we work with employers, business owners, business leaders, HR professionals, hiring managers and civic/corporate leaders to build a greater understanding of why using a racial equity lens matters and how to use this lens effectively in their employment institutions. A shared understanding of this lens by Business leaders increases the potential for advancing workplace policies and practices that ensure that economic opportunities advance all Marylanders as we move into the 21st Century.

RESOURCES

Race Forward, 2017.

W.K. Kellogg Foundation, *The Business Case for Racial Equity: A Strategy for Growth*, 2018.

Maryland’s Aging Workforce – Governor’s Workforce Investment Board, 2007.

Conroy, C. *How White Hiring Managers Can Support Racial Equity at Work*, pt. 2/10. (2016)

Prosperity Now, *Workforce Development Manual*, 2019

Turner, Ani. “The Business case for Racial Equity”. Altarum Institute, October 2013.

Workforce Equity Strategic Plan - City of Seattle, Seattle Department of Human Resources, July 2016. <http://murray.seattle.gov/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Workforce-Equity-Strategic-Plan-July-2016.pdf>.

Prosperity Now, *The Road to Zero Wealth*, 2017.

Cornell Law School, Legal Information Institute, https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/affirmative_action#targetText=Employers%20who%20contract%20with%20the,intentionally%20engaged%20in%20discriminatory%20practices.

Gray, A. *The Bias of ‘Professionalism’ Standards*. Stanford Social Innovation Review, 2019

To contact Associated Black Charities about research or technical assistance regarding the use of a **Racial Equity Lens for Employers**, please contact Programs, programs@abc-md.org OR 410.659.1000.



Village of Cross Keys
2 Hamill Road, 272 North Quadrangle
Baltimore, MD 21210
410.659.0000
www.abc-md.org



A special thanks to Associated Black Charities’ Board of Directors and the staff who have provided invaluable input during the creation of this tool, specifically thanks to Clair Minson. In addition, thanks to all who have informed this work.
