

# 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 have historically been denied opportunities because of their race. We seek – through the workforce ecosystem – to strengthen Maryland’s economy by focusing on the economic growth, inclusion, and influence of African Americans and other persons of color.

Supporting equitable workforce development practices is an essential component of our work. Because program development is not “race neutral”, we work with practitioners, non-profit leaders, employers, and advocates in the workforce development field to build a greater understanding of why using a racial equity lens matters. We also emphasize the importance a racial equity lens in all elements of program design. A shared understanding of this lens increases the potential for advancing more effective workforce strategies and programming. By working across industries, sectors, and government agencies, our combined efforts will ensure that economic opportunities advance all Marylanders as we move through the 21st Century.

To contact ABC about research or technical assistance regarding the use of a Racial Equity Lens for Workforce Development, please contact Clair Minson, Workforce Strategist, [cminson@abc-md.org](mailto:cminson@abc-md.org), 443-524-7727.

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## 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: 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; naming race explicitly when talking about problems; and developing solutions that reflect strategies to eliminate policies, practices, attitudes, and cultural messages that reinforce differential outcomes by race. 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.

## Resources

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<sup>1</sup>Racial Equity Tools, n.d. Retrieved from <http://www.racialequitytools.org/glossary#racial-equity>. para 37.

<sup>2</sup>Turner, 2013, page 3.

<sup>3</sup>Turner, 2013, page 4.

<sup>4</sup>Thompson, November 2013, pages 3 and 4.

<sup>5</sup>Executive Summary: Race-Explicit Strategies for Workforce Equity in Healthcare and IT, 2017.

<sup>6</sup>City of Seattle, 2012, page 5.

<sup>7</sup>City of Seattle, July 2016, para.1.

<sup>8</sup>Executive Summary: Race-Explicit Strategies for Workforce Equity in Healthcare and IT, 2017.

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# Ten Essential Questions for Workforce Development

## Racial Equity “...is the condition that would be achieved if one’s racial identity no longer predicted, in a statistical sense, how one fares.”<sup>1</sup>

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, children and youth of color will comprise the demographic majority in our nation by 2018, and, overall, people of color will surpass 50% of the U.S. population by 2043.<sup>2</sup> Our nation’s economic survival will depend upon the inclusion of people of color in all sectors of the economy and in all segments of the workforce. We must work together to eliminate the race-based policies, stereotyping, and negative cultural messaging that have truncated the prospects of so many deserving American citizens.

### CHANGING THE FUTURE: Stepping Toward Equity....

*The Business Case for Racial Equity*, a recent publication from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation and the Altarum Institute, found that if the average income of people of color were raised to the average income of whites, total U.S. earnings would increase by 12%, representing nearly \$1 trillion. The earnings gain would translate into \$180 billion in additional corporate profits, \$290 billion in additional federal tax revenues, and a potential reduction in the federal deficit of \$350 billion, or 2.3% of the GDP [in 2013’s dollars].<sup>3</sup> To unlock this potential, we need an on-going, intentional investment in entry-level, workers of color – including training efforts to build workers’ skills for career advancement. Without this commitment, the skills gap will continue to widen, leaving those with the fewest opportunities even more marginalized, and our economy at large will continue to suffer permanent losses. Simply put, intentionally increasing the opportunities for some – those most in need – will have huge benefits for ALL.

Removing the race-based systemic barriers that are limiting people of color is not a matter of social justice or morality, it is an economic necessity. To overcome the challenges of the digital economy, we need a workforce that is well-trained, ambitious, and free of demoralizing social hindrances. By building the capabilities of our most marginalized populations and expanding their career options, Maryland can lead the nation in launching a platform that will begin to solve the most serious workforce challenge of the 21st Century. We can also create conditions that allow everyone to flourish and contribute meaningfully to the economy.

### The Challenge

**Workforce Development** is a system of interconnected services and programs that are focused on preparing and placing workers in careers fit for the current economy.<sup>4</sup> Most workforce development programming is developed from a “universalist” 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 continues to operate in American society.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the labor market isn’t merely stratified at the macroeconomic level. It is segregated at almost every job level. Different races and ethnicities are clustered in different sectors. Latinx for example, only account for 15% of all job-holders. However, they make up about half of all farm workers and laborers, 44% of grounds maintenance workers, and 43% of maids and house cleaners. Blacks, who make up just 11% of the workforce, account for more than a third of home health aides and about 25% of both security guards and bus drivers. As evidenced by these statistics, both Blacks and Latinx are huddled in rather low paying jobs with limited options for economic advancement. Whites, on the other hand, make up more than 80 percent of the country’s workers. But they account for nearly all farm managers and ranchers (96 percent), construction managers (92 percent), carpenters (91 percent), and CEOs (90 percent).<sup>5</sup>

Without the dignity of jobs with livable wages, benefits, and equitable access to career paths, workers of color face a “catch 22” situation of disproportionate impact. They are expected to be good citizens, but they are denied access to the required skills, tools, and jobs needed to fulfill this commitment. ABC believes that the economic disparities between people of color and whites are the result of **broken systems, not broken people**. Driven by this belief, we continue to examine our workforce development system to identify the “broken” areas and create solutions to transform this system for the good of all.

ABC has been a strong advocate for racial and economic equity for over 30 years. Our mission is to *advocate for and facilitate the creation of measurably healthier and more prosperous communities throughout the State of Maryland through responsible leadership and philanthropic investment*. Throughout three decades of fomenting change to foster achieve economic equity, ABC has collected and analyzed evidence of racial disparities. We know and have demonstrated that that our nation must address the institutional and structural racial barriers that exist within our systems head on. With this focus, ABC views the workforce ecosystem as our “change lever.” This document provides the guidance workforce practitioners need to design, implement, and evaluate workforce programming that addresses issues of race and promotes inclusion – **at ABC, we refer to this practice as applying a racial equity lens to workforce practices.**

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

Cities and states across the country have been developing racial equity tools that pertain to workforce development since the early 2010s. In 2012, the Race and Social Justice Initiative, launched by the City of Seattle, created an Equity Toolkit that lays out a process and set of questions to guide the process of addressing racial equity and social justice throughout various elements of society. One of the most important contributions to emerging workforce development practices from this initiative is the assessment worksheet that allows organizations to answer each of the six questions outlined in the toolkit and make it relevant to their program, policy, initiative or budget issue.<sup>6</sup>

In July 2016, the City of Seattle created a Workforce Equity Strategic Plan that proposes a definition of workforce equity that that serves as a critical tool for analyzing and comparing workforce equity strategies. The definition states “*Workforce equity is when the workforce is inclusive of people of color and other marginalized or under-represented groups at a rate representative of the greater Seattle area at all levels of City employment; where institutional and structural barriers impacting employee attraction, selection, participation and retention have been eliminated, enabling opportunity for employment success and career growth.*”<sup>7</sup> By creating a definition for workforce equity, the City of Seattle is recognizing that systemic barriers exist within its workforce ecosystem, and its public leaders are making the application of an equity lens a clear priority for the City’s entire workforce strategy moving forward.

In Baltimore, ABC is committed to codifying, promulgating and publicizing an equity framework to foment economic transformation within African American and other marginalized communities. To-

### Leading with Race

Despite the racial disparities and disproportionate challenges cited throughout this document, there is little evidence to suggest many workforce development agencies approach their work with an explicit eye towards racial equity. Effective workforce development approaches must center on an understanding of systemic-level racism in order to produce fair economic outcomes for people of all races.<sup>8</sup>

According to Race Forward, the Center for Social Innovation, remedies to inequity must include three aspects to be effective. The solutions must be:

- 1) **Systemic.** Effective solutions must address the root issues by transforming the way systems create and perpetuate racially inequitable outcomes;
- 2) **Race-explicit.** Being explicit about race and the impact of racial bias allows change agents to be specific and strategic about the types of solutions they are deploying. We must identify structural racism when it materializes and design solutions that mitigate this challenge head on;
- 3) **Outcome-oriented.** Though opportunities may seem equal, if disparate outcomes persist, it is likely that some barriers or bias will continue to exist. The racial equity lens approach that ABC advocates considers the wide-reaching impact that structural racism has on people’s lives and provides targeted support to rectify these challenges so that all people can succeed.

Equitable outcomes involve not only the absence of disparities, but also the presence of systems to sustain equity. By using a racial equity framework, decision-makers signal that they recognize that challenges faced by some groups adversely affect everyone. Intentional and consistent use of a racial equity framework will prepare our country for the demographic changes to come. Expanding pathways to career advancement and broader employment opportunities to the people who comprise the majority of Maryland’s burgeoning job force will advance the overall interests of as many Maryland residents as possible.

ward this end, we have developed a Workforce Development practice that has been influencing employment practices, in both the public and private sectors, for more than 10 years. We are shaping employment opportunities for people of color in Baltimore City and throughout the State of Maryland through policy-related education, advocacy, collaborations, and the incubation and testing of strategic intervention models.

### CHANGING THE FUTURE: Workforce Development Applications of a Racial Equity Lens in Maryland...

To change the possibilities and variety of economic outcomes for people of color in our State, we must first acknowledge the institutional and structural racialized barriers that exist. Then, we must take proactive steps to create, design, and implement workforce programs with a racial equity lens.

Below are ten essential questions that work toward the goal of establishing practices that will help stakeholders apply a racial equity lens to the workforce ecosystem’s inputs, implementation, and outcomes. At ABC, we view the ten essential questions as a vital workforce development tool that will benefit professionals in various roles in the field from human resource managers at Fortune 500 companies to employment readiness trainers at community colleges, to case managers at re-entry programs. It is our goal that every professional involved in workforce development will begin each aspect of his or her work by examining the ten essentials questions. While it may not always be possible to answer every question in detail, each should at least be considered. Asking these questions is an acknowledgement that workforce development programming is not “universal” or “colorblind” and that incorporating an equity lens into programming will increase growth prospects for Maryland and all its residents.

### TEN ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS FOR WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT, PROGRAM REVIEW, AND EVALUATION:

- 1) How is an equity lens incorporated within the program design including recruitment & outreach, training and curriculum design, and retention and tracking mechanisms?
- 2) Does the program design/training curriculum explicitly account for potentially racially disparate outcomes? If so, how? If not, how can it be incorporated?
- 3) Has the program considered the racially disparate impact that applicant selection criteria can have on applicants? (i.e. GED requirements, criminal background requirements?)
- 4) Will the program increase access and opportunities for communities of color? How?
- 5) Will the program 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 program’s policy (i.e. rules of participant engagement) protect against racial profiling and other forms of discrimination? How?
- 7) Are there changes that could be made to make the program/training curriculum more equitable and inclusive in addressing the structural challenges that negatively impact participants?
- 8) What are the economic and societal benefits of incorporating an equity lens in this program design?
- 9) How does an equity lens manifest in day to day operational functions, organizational and programmatic functions within the larger cultural context of the organization?
- 10) Does this program work with employer partners to create more inclusive and equitable hiring practices, employment practices and workplace culture?

Before examining these ideas with colleagues, ABC recommends that all stakeholders review the language presented in the glossary listed at the end of this guide.