

Using a Racial Equity Scorecard for Policy and Programs

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People of color in the United States are more likely to experience hunger and poverty because of structural racism. The consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic reflect the impact of structural racism in our country.¹ These preexisting inequities have only been amplified by the pandemic, as people of color, particularly African Americans, are both more likely to become infected with the virus; more likely to die if they become ill; more likely to be in jobs considered essential that may require frequent contact with customers or other members of the public; and more likely to lose their jobs.^{2,3,4}

Fortunately, public policies can be designed in ways that can overcome these disproportionate impacts and reduce structural racism. Applying a “racial equity lens” is a concept and practice focused on achieving equal outcomes for people of color relative to their white counterparts.⁵ When this lens (which puts the needs and leadership of people of color at the center) is applied to policies and programs, the outcomes should be that progress is made toward eliminating racial inequities.

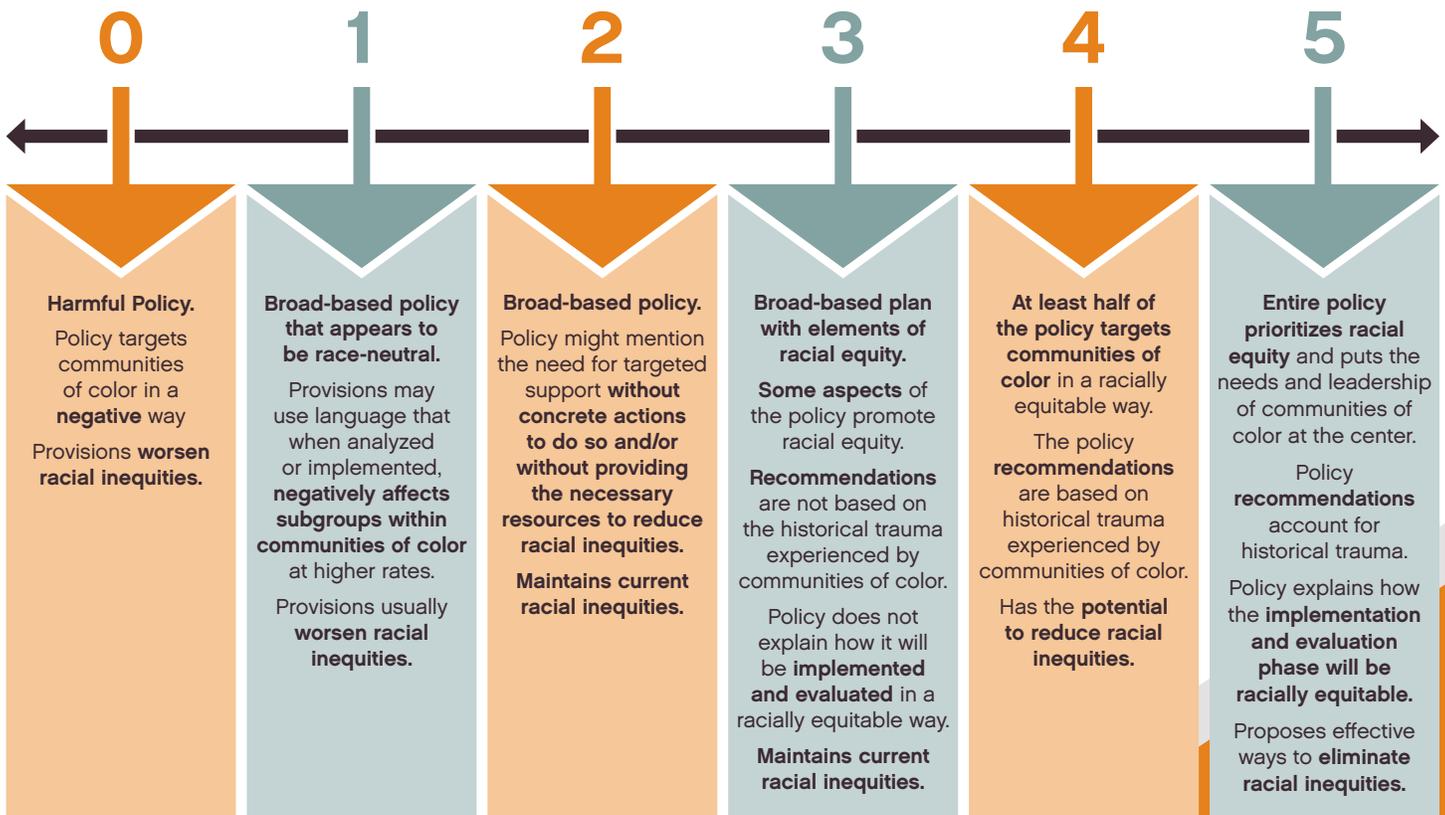


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What is the Racial Equity Scorecard?

The Racial Equity Scorecard is a way of assessing how successfully a given policy/program or legislation applies a racial equity lens. The policy can be scored on a scale of 0 (“harmful policy” capable of widening racial inequities) to 5 (“racially equitable” in each aspect).

Many broad-based policies could be made more racially equitable by (1) applying this practice to evaluate each part of the policy; and (2) basing recommendations on analysis of how best to address the deep origins of racial discrimination and historical trauma.



Note: The term “inequities” is used instead of “disparities” because “disparities” focuses on unequal outcomes alone, while “inequities” encompasses both unequal outcomes AND the structures that created them.

It is quite possible to achieve racial equity by taking intentional steps. Following are the five principles that should be applied when analyzing whether a new policy or program⁶ will move it closer to being more racially equitable—and achieving a 5—on the Racial Equity Scorecard:

- **Principle 1: Center the needs and leadership of communities of color first.** When an idea is first raised, before the policy or program design is complete, ask what the impact will be on people of color. Experts of color, including scholars, practitioners, and advocates in relevant subject areas, including individuals who have lived experience with the impact of racism on hunger, poverty, and intersecting areas, should be consulted. People from communities of color should be included as full partners in the policy design, implementation, and evaluation.
- **Principle 2: Name and consider each community of color individually, avoiding terms such as “minority.”** Each community of color has its own history, experiences, and challenges. It is essential to recognize that circumstances, and how they impact hunger and other problems, are often very different—both between various communities and within them. Name African Americans, Indigenous populations, Latino/as, and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islanders separately and identify how the particular policy or program proposal would impact members of each community. In addition, consider how factors such as age, gender, or socioeconomic status may raise different problems for people within each community. Avoid terms such as “minority” that not only lump people into artificial groups but may also encompass other communities that do not confront racism and/or experience higher rates of hunger and poverty.
- **Principle 3: Analyze the specific outcomes for each racial and ethnic group.** As just mentioned, the experiences and outcomes of each community of color are generally different. Here are four questions to ask at this stage:
 1. **How does each racial and ethnic group fare with each outcome that is being measured?** These outcomes will, of course, vary by the type of program, project, or policy. They are generally quantitative. Examples may include iron levels, food insecurity rates, rates of COVID-19 infection and mortality, and/or unemployment rates. They can also be qualitative—for example, experiencing discrimination during the implementation phase of a policy or program.
 2. **What are the reasons for the outcomes experienced by each racial and ethnic group?** As mentioned in Principle 2, each community of color has a different historical trauma (refer to text box for definition). Decisions about adopting solutions should be rooted in an understanding of *why* the various circumstances and outcomes have occurred. Otherwise, the solutions will not adequately address the impact of specific racial inequities on the problem.
 3. **What is the disaggregated racial and ethnic makeup of the population that this program or policy serves** (if you are working with an existing policy or program) or seeks to serve (if the policy or program is new)? Understanding the scope of the communities and individuals involved is important to identifying any gaps between the policies or programs you are working on and the actual needs of the community.
 4. **What is, or is expected to be, the impact of this program or policy on each participating racial and ethnic population?** While it may prove challenging to determine many details on these impacts, it is important to collect and synthesize as much disaggregated information as possible to help you understand whether the program or policy is having the same impact on each racial and ethnic group. Identifying if and when racial inequities begin to appear, as early as possible, can help decision makers understand which targeted community-specific changes need to be incorporated to help solve the problem and ensure equal outcomes for all communities.

WHAT IS HISTORICAL TRAUMA?

Each community of color has a different history, which includes individual and group experiences of racism in the United States. These histories and experiences are known collectively as historical trauma.

To reverse racial inequities, policy recommendations should be rooted in the historical trauma each community of color has experienced.



- **Principle 4: Set up policies and programs that are responsive in a way that is proportionate to the disparate impacts.** Not understanding why and how to do this is a common reason for why well-intentioned initiatives fail to promote greater racial equity. Most policies and programs treat all communities the same, regardless of the different starting points or barriers faced by specific racial and ethnic communities. Instead, responses should be community and circumstance specific. In Michigan, for example, 40 percent of those who have died from COVID-19 have been African American, but only 18 percent of state residents are African American.⁷ A broad-based approach would provide everyone in the state with the same level or type of support, while a racially equitable approach would provide targeted support to African Americans in Michigan that is aligned with their increased risk. The support should be proportionate to the disparate impacts and be deeply rooted in the specific community's history of discrimination. Disaggregating the data of each community of color, as explained in Principles 2 and 3, will help determine how much targeted support each community of color needs and how it should be provided.
- **Principle 5: Include a robust implementation and monitoring plan.** While policy design is important, it is equally important to evaluate that the targeted support is provided in a thoughtful, racially equitable way. Inviting experts of color in from the beginning, as discussed in Principle 1, will help inform how the implementation stage is formulated. Policies and programs must be sufficiently resourced for effective implementation and for enforcement of policies and program rules. Entities of color that directly serve their communities, and other experts of color with lived and/or scholarly expertise, should be assigned to co-lead the implementation process. Lastly, legislation, policies, or programs should outline a racially equitable implementation plan.

WANT MORE ON RACIAL EQUITY IN POLICIES?

Go to bread.org/racialequity for more tools and resources.

- **[Read our three-page Racial Equity Methodology Tool](#)**, which outlines a step-by-step process of applying a racial equity lens in program and policy design.
- **[Read our Racial Equity and Nutrition Report](#)**, which offers recommendations on how federal policies can promote racial equity in anti-hunger programs such as SNAP, WIC, and child nutrition programs.

Endnotes

- 1 Gamblin, Marlysa. Applying Racial Equity in U.S. Federal Policy. Bread for the World Institute. June 2019. <https://www.bread.org/racialequity>
- 2 Gamblin, Marlysa. Race, Hunger and COVID-19: Impact on the African American Community. Bread for the World. April 2020. <https://www.bread.org/blog/race-hunger-and-covid-19-impact-african-americans>
- 3 Gamblin, Marlysa. Race, Hunger and COVID-19: Impact on the Latino Community. Bread for the World. April 2020. <https://www.bread.org/blog/race-hunger-and-covid-19-impact-latinoa-communities>
- 4 Gamblin, Marlysa. Race, Hunger and COVID-19: Impact on the Indigenous Community. Bread for the World. April 2020. <https://www.bread.org/blog/race-hunger-and-covid-19-impact-indigenous-communities>
- 5 See endnote 1.
- 6 Gamblin, Marlysa. Racial Equity Methodology. Bread for the World Institute. February 2019. http://files.bread.org/institute/report/racial-equity/report-methodology.pdf?_ga=2.177060390.2010303807.1589397759-489764863.1534350347
- 7 Black People Make Up 40 Percent Of COVID-19 Deaths In Michigan. Essence Magazine. April 2020. <https://www.essence.com/news/michigan-black-people-coronavirus-covid-19/>

