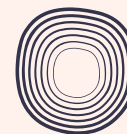


Self-Study Learning Guide



OPIOID LEARNING
AND RESPONSE
COLLABORATIVE

Intermediate Racial Equity Response (Stage 2 Foundation: Integration)

Your Organization in Stage 2

Organizations at the Intermediate stage have moved from asking whether racial equity matters in their work to actively building the structures and systems that advance it. The highlight of this stage is the transition from awareness to building infrastructure (knowledge to action). A formal DEI strategy is in development or has been adopted. Data disaggregated by race is being collected, analyzed, and used to inform decisions. Staff are expanding their skills for culturally responsive practice, being trained not just in awareness, but in specific skills for culturally responsive practice. The work is complex and may encourage resistance as the work is implemented. Resilience and agility are critical to building and sustaining the relational trust to navigate this stage without retreating.

The Systems Thinking Lens at Stage 2

In this stage, organizations are moving from awareness of the system to making the interconnections visible. The organization's behaviors that amplify or reproduce disparities become clearer and cycles can be adjusted to balance toward the goal of reducing those disparities. Understanding these dynamics helps organizations intervene at the right leverage points rather than applying generic solutions to structurally specific problems.

Typical Organizational Behaviors at Stage 2

- A formal DEI or racial equity strategy has been adopted, with specific goals, timelines, and designated owners, but implementation is uneven across departments or programs.
- Race-disaggregated data is being collected for at least some key metrics, but the organization is still building capacity to use it systematically.
- Language access infrastructure is in place (written policy, vendor relationships, staff training) but may not yet be consistently implemented or monitored.
- Staff training has moved beyond one-time events to recurring, integrated professional development, but may vary in quality.
- Leadership is beginning to apply racial equity frameworks to specific decisions, grant proposals, program design, budget allocation, but this is not yet an integrated practice across all major decisions.
- Early community partnership relationships have been initiated, but the organization is still primarily driving the agenda rather than co-creating it with community partners.

Why Stage 2 Matters

The Integration stage is where the gap between commitment and capacity becomes most visible, and where organizations either deepen their racial equity work or plateau. Many organizations get stuck here because there have not been structural changes to sustain the work long term. The risk here is that the work can become performative and feel like checking boxes rather than making any real change in the power structures, resources, or decisions that flow within the organization.

Primary Learning Goals for Stage 2

Formalize DEI Strategy: Move from informal commitments to a written strategy with specific goals, accountability structures, and resource allocation ideally integrated into the organization's Strategic Plan.

Engage Racial Equity Tools: Begin using tools like the Racial Equity Impact Assessment and GARE framework for operational decisions.

Build Data Infrastructure: Establish systems for disaggregating data by race and using it to identify and address disparities.

Apply Systems Thinking Frameworks: Learn to map systems, feedback loops, and identify leverage points within your organizational system.

Expand Language Access & Community Partnership Infrastructure: Implement and monitor language access plans; begin formalizing community partnership relationships.

Direct Service Providers: Professional Learning Path (Stage 2)

At the Intermediate stage, direct service providers are deepening their practice, moving from awareness of cultural difference to the application of specific, evidence-based approaches in their daily work. This includes learning how to conduct culturally adapted assessments, how to address treatment barriers that are rooted in structural inequity rather than individual client resistance, and how to think systemically about why some clients disengage from treatment. Providers at this stage are also beginning to function as organizational change agents, contributing their direct service knowledge to policy, program design, and training conversations.

[BOOK] Culturally Responsive Substance Use Treatment, Chapters 4-8 (Jones)

<https://www.routledge.com/Culturally-Responsive-Substance-Use-Treatment-A-Guide-for-Practitioners-Students-and-Organizations/Jones/p/book/9781032708799>

Most comprehensive practitioner guide for integrating cultural understanding and sensitivity into substance use treatment. Stage 2 practitioners should focus on how their own cultural background and assumptions show up in the therapeutic relationship.

[BOOK] Systems Thinking for Social Change (David Peter Stroh)

<https://www.chelseagreen.com/product/systems-thinking-for-social-change/>

This is the foundational systems thinking text for social change practitioners, and it becomes essential reading at the Intermediate stage.

[TOOL] Racial Equity Impact Assessment Toolkit (Race Forward)

<https://www.raceforward.org/resources/toolkits/racial-equity-impact-assessment-toolkit>

The Racial Equity Impact Assessment (REIA) is a structured analytical tool for examining how proposed decisions, policies, programs, practices, budget allocations, are likely to affect people of different racial and ethnic backgrounds.

[BOOK] Health Equity: A Solutions-Focused Approach (Springer Publishing)

<https://www.springerpub.com/health-equity-9780826149510.html>

This text takes an intersectional approach to health equity, examining how race interacts with gender, sexual orientation, disability, class, immigration status, and other identity dimensions to shape health experiences and outcomes.

[TOOLKIT] Guide to Developing a Language Access Plan (DHHS/CMS)

<https://www.cms.gov/about-cms/agency-information/omh/downloads/language-access-plan.pdf>

Intermediate stage providers move from using interpretation services reactively to actively contributing to their organization's language access infrastructure. This CMS guide provides the framework for a comprehensive language access plan.

Executive Leaders: Organizational Leadership Path (Stage 2)

Executive leaders move from building the case for racial equity to building the organizational infrastructure to sustain it. This is where equity work gets woven into the fabric of how the organization operates as a standard.

[TOOLKIT] GARE Racial Equity Toolkit (Government Alliance on Race and Equity)

<https://www.racialequityalliance.org/viewdocument/racial-equity-toolkit-an-opportuni-2>

The GARE Racial Equity Toolkit is the most widely used organizational tool for operationalizing racial equity across decisions, policies, practices, programs, and budgets. GARE is most valuable as a practice tool: using the six questions in leadership team meetings, applying them to budget proposals, and training practitioners to use the framework when designing or evaluating services.

[TOOL] Principles for Using Public Health Data to Drive Equity (CDC Foundation)

<https://www.cdcfoundation.org/data-equity-principles>

CDC Foundation framework principles for collecting data in ways that are ethical, community-informed, and action-oriented. Important in opioid response for disaggregating program data by race and ethnicity for key metrics that create accountability for improvement.

[BOOK] Data-Driven DEI (Dr. Randall Pinkett)

<https://www.oreilly.com/library/view/data-driven-dei/9781119856870/>

This resource provides both the conceptual framework and the practical methodology for measuring DEI strategy effectiveness using data.

[TOOLKIT] DEI Toolkit, Association Headquarters

<https://associationheadquarters.com/sites/default/files/docs/AH-22-DEI-Toolkit-Accessibility-Enabled.pdf>

This toolkit is particularly strong on governance structures, the board-level and organizational design dimensions of DEI work that are often unaddressed. This resource helps leaders examine how equity is represented in board composition, decision-making, and governance accountability structures.

Stage 2 Foundation Wrap-Up

Internal Organizational Focus (Stage 2)

Internal work at this stage focuses on structural and policy change, moving equity from values statements to actionable reality. The Racial Equity Impact Assessment becomes the standard tool for any significant internal decision. Critical systems thinking insight at this stage recognizes how internal inequities are maintained by feedback loops. Identifying and interrupting these loops requires the willingness to make structural changes.

External Community-Facing Focus (Stage 2)

External work at this stage advances genuine partnership development. Organizations formalize their language access plans and implement them systematically. They begin building intentional relationships with BIPOC-led community organizations as collaborators whose knowledge and community trust are understood as assets the organization does not possess on its own.

Outcomes for Stage 2

- Formal DEI strategy adopted with measurable goals, goal owners, and resource allocation.
- Racial equity impact assessments are used in organizational decisions.
- Data is collected, disaggregated by race, and analyzed for key metrics.
- Language access plan implemented organization-wide.
- Staff trained in systems thinking and equity application
- Community partnerships with BIPOC-led organizations formalized.

Disclaimer

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