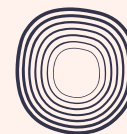


Learning Journey Resource



OPIOID LEARNING
AND RESPONSE
COLLABORATIVE

Racial Equity & Culturally Responsive Substance Use Prevention

Summary

This resource is designed to provide three self-guided learning journeys for organizations and professionals engaged in culturally responsive opioid response. Each journey maps a distinct phase of organizational development based on three phases: Beginning, Intermediate, and Advanced. Each phase offers curated resources and practical guidance for direct service providers and organizational leaders. A brief self-assessment quiz is included to help individuals and teams identify where they are on the journey.

Foundational Frameworks: Systems Thinking and Racial Equity

The learning resources here are **grounded in systems theory**, the understanding that racial disparities in opioid response are not isolated incidents or individual failures, but rather are predictable outcomes of interconnected structures, policies, practices, and beliefs that have accumulated over time. Donella Meadows describes **leverage points** as places within a system where a small shift can product big changes. This learning resource helps organizations find and act on those leverage points.

Racial equity work operates at every level of a system simultaneously: within individual practitioners (mindset and skill), within organizations (policy, culture, and decision-making), and across the broader environment (funding, policy, community power). These learning journeys address all three levels (both as they relate to the work internal to the organization and external in the organization's community-facing work) because lasting change requires movement in both domains at once.

How to Use This Resource

- Use the self-assessment quiz first to identify your organizational stage.
- Read the full description of your current stage to understand where you are and why it matters.
- Review the next stage to understand where you are heading and what growth looks like.
- Use the resource lists as a starting point, not a checklist.
- Revisit this resource at least annually as your organization grows.

ORGANIZATIONAL Racial Equity & Culturally Responsive Prevention

Racial Equity Learning Journey Self-Assessment Quiz

This assessment can be completed individually (to reflect your professional stage) or as a group (to assess your organization's current stage). There are no right or wrong answers.

Self-Assessment Instructions:

Read each question and mark the response that most honestly reflects your current reality and where you are today. Try not to answer the questions from the point of view of your aspirations or your plans. When completing as a team, discuss each question and aim for consensus. If there is significant disagreement, that itself is useful information about where your organization is.

After completing all questions, add up your responses using the scoring guide at the end to identify your current stage and recommended next steps.

Self-Assessments Questions:

Part A: Language, Awareness, & Shared Understanding

Question 1: How would you describe your organization's shared language around racial equity?

- A. We do not have shared language: staff use different terms and mean different things, and conversations about race feel uncomfortable or avoided.
- B. We are building shared language: leadership has introduced common terms and had some initial conversations, but understanding varies significantly across staff.
- C. We have shared language: most staff can articulate the difference between cultural competency and cultural humility, understand what systemic racism means, and use equity terms consistently and confidently.

Question 2: How does your organization approach training on cultural responsiveness?

- A. Training is occasional or has not happened, we may have done a one-time workshop or webinar, but it is not a regular part of professional development.
- B. Training is recurring, cultural responsiveness is part of our professional development calendar and new staff receive orientation on these topics, though depth and quality vary.
- C. Training is embedded and skill-based, we have a structured, ongoing curriculum that builds specific culturally responsive skills, is connected to supervision, and is evaluated for impact on practice.

Question 3: How aware are staff of the specific racial and ethnic communities in your service area and their distinct experiences with substance use and treatment?

- A. Awareness is limited; staff have general awareness that we serve diverse communities but limited knowledge of specific cultural contexts, community histories, or structural barriers.
- B. Awareness is developing; some staff have strong knowledge and skills; others are beginning to develop them; the organization is investing in building this capacity.
- C. Awareness is integrated; cultural knowledge and humility are standards of practice; staff regularly reflect on and update their understanding in supervision and peer consultation.

Part B: Organizational Strategy & Accountability**Question 4: What is the status of your organization's racial equity or DEI strategy?**

- A. We do not have a formal strategy, equity commitments may exist informally or in our mission, but there is no written plan with goals, timelines, and accountable owners.
- B. We have a strategy in development or early implementation; a formal plan exists or is being created, with designated owners and beginning accountability structures.
- C. We have a mature, evaluated strategy; our equity strategy has been in place for multiple years, has been formally evaluated, and has been revised based on evidence of what has and has not worked.

Question 5: Does your organization use a racial equity tool (such as a Racial Equity Impact Assessment) when making significant decisions about programs, policies, or budgets?

- A. No, we do not regularly apply a structured equity analysis to organizational decisions.
- B. Sometimes, we have used equity tools for some decisions, particularly around programs or grant applications, but this is not yet a standard practice.
- C. Yes, consistently, racial equity impact analysis is a standard component of significant decisions at program and leadership levels; leadership team members can apply it independently.

Question 6: How is racial equity represented in your organization's governance and leadership accountability structures?

- A. It is not formally represented, equity may be mentioned in board discussions but is not built into governance processes, board composition priorities, or executive evaluation criteria.
- B. It is emerging in governance; the board has begun discussing racial equity as a governance responsibility; there may be a DEI committee or equity-focused board member; executive leadership is beginning to be held accountable for equity outcomes.
- C. It is embedded in governance, board composition explicitly reflects diversity commitments; equity is a standing agenda item; executive leaders are evaluated on equity outcomes; the budget is analyzed through an equity lens annually.

Part C: Data & Evidence**Question 7: How does your organization collect and use race-disaggregated data?**

- A. We collect some demographic data but do not regularly disaggregate it by race to examine service patterns or outcomes.
- B. We are building data disaggregation capacity, we are beginning to analyze service data by race and have identified some disparities, though our analytical systems are still developing.
- C. We use race-disaggregated data systematically, key service metrics are regularly analyzed by race; findings are shared with staff, board, and community; and data drives specific equity strategies and program adjustments.

Question 8: How does your organization use data for public accountability on racial equity?

- A. We do not publish or publicly report on racial equity outcomes.
- B. We report some equity data to funders or in annual reports but have not yet built a comprehensive public accountability structure.
- C. We have a public-facing equity dashboard or report that is community-informed, tracks progress honestly (including gaps) and is used by community partners and funders to evaluate our performance.

PART D: Language Access & Cultural Infrastructure**Question 9: What is the status of language access in your organization?**

- A. Language access is handled informally, we rely on bilingual staff, Google Translate, or family members of clients to interpret, without a formal policy or quality standards.
- B. We have a language access policy and beginning infrastructure a written policy exists, interpretation services are available, and staff have been trained on how to access them, though implementation is inconsistent.
- C. Language access is fully implemented and monitored, we have a comprehensive language access plan, qualified interpreters are consistently used in clinical settings, key materials are translated, and we regularly assess implementation quality.

Question 10: How do your services address the CLAS (Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services) Standards?

- A. We are unfamiliar with or have not formally assessed our services against the CLAS Standards.
- B. We have reviewed the CLAS Standards and conducted an initial assessment, identifying some gaps and beginning to address them.
- C. We regularly assess and actively work to meet or exceed the CLAS Standards; they are part of our quality improvement process and community accountability framework.

PART E: Internal Organizational Culture

Question 11: How does your organization's workforce reflect the communities you serve?

- A. We have not formally examined the racial and ethnic composition of our workforce relative to our service community, or we know there is a significant gap but have not begun to address it.
- B. We have examined our workforce demographics and are actively working to increase representation of BIPOC staff, particularly in mid-level and leadership roles, through intentional recruitment, hiring, and retention strategies.
- C. Our workforce, including senior leadership and the board, meaningfully reflects the communities we serve; we have systems to support, advance, and retain staff of color; and we regularly evaluate whether our organizational culture is genuinely inclusive.

Question 12: How does your organization create psychological safety for staff to raise equity concerns?

- A. There is no formal mechanism, staff may raise concerns informally but there is no structured, protected process for doing so.
- B. We are building psychological safety, we have begun to create channels for raising equity concerns (staff surveys, open forums, an equity committee) and leadership has signaled that these concerns are welcome.
- C. Psychological safety is a cultural norm, staff at all levels regularly raise equity concerns without fear of retaliation; concerns lead to visible organizational responses; and staff of color report feeling genuinely heard and supported.

PART F: Community Partnerships & External Relationships

Question 13: How does your organization engage with BIPOC-led community organizations?

- A. We have limited or no formal relationships with BIPOC-led organizations, referral relationships may exist, but intentional partnership is not yet a priority.
- B. We have initiated formal partnerships with BIPOC-led organizations, relationships are developing, resources may be shared, and community input is being actively sought though co-design is still emerging.
- C. BIPOC-led community organizations are genuine co-designers of our programs and policies, we share resources, decision-making power, and credit; community organizations influence our organizational priorities and evaluate our performance.

Question 14: To what extent does your organization play a field-building role, sharing knowledge, advocating for systemic change, or building the equity capacity of peer organizations?

- A. We have limited or no formal relationships with BIPOC-led organizations, referral relationships may exist, but intentional partnership is not yet a priority.
- B. We have initiated formal partnerships with BIPOC-led organizations, relationships are developing, resources may be shared, and community input is being actively sought though co-design is still emerging.
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Racial Equity Learning Journey

Self-Assessment Scoring

SCORING GUIDE

Assign points for each response as follows:

- A responses = 1 point each
- B responses = 2 points each
- C responses = 3 points each

Total possible score: 42 points (14 questions x 3 points)

Score 14-23: Stage 1 Foundation (Beginner)

Your organization is at the Beginning stage of the racial equity journey. This is a critical and valuable place to be, the work you do here builds the foundation for everything that follows. Your primary focus should be on building shared language, conducting honest internal self-assessment, completing cultural humility foundational training, and addressing language access gaps. Do not rush this stage. The depth of your foundation determines the height of what you can build.

Score 24-33: Stage 2 Integration (Intermediate)

Your organization is at the Intermediate stage. You have built a foundation and are now in the harder, more complex work of structural change. Your energy should go into formalizing your DEI strategy with real accountability structures, building data infrastructure to track equity outcomes, applying racial equity tools consistently to major decisions, and deepening community partnerships. This is the stage where many organizations plateau, resist the temptation to mistake activity for transformation.

Score 34-42: Stage 3 Transformation (Advanced)

Your organization is at the Advanced stage of the racial equity journey. You have built something substantial and durable, and your role in the field extends beyond your own organization. Your focus should be on sustaining and deepening equity through leadership transitions and funding changes, generating and disseminating new knowledge, advocating for systemic policy change, and actively building the field capacity of peer organizations. The journey does not end here, it expands. The question is no longer what you are doing for your own organization, but what you are doing for the ecosystem.

Important Notes on Interpreting Scores

- No score is a judgment. Every stage represents important, meaningful work. The journey matters more than the stage.
- Scores may vary across domains. Review your responses by section (A-F) to identify where you are strongest and where you have the most growth opportunity.
- Individual and organizational scores often differ. A direct service provider may be at Stage 2 or 3 in their personal practice while working in a Stage 1 organization, or vice versa. Both are useful to know.
- Revisit annually. This is not a one-time assessment. The landscape of your work, your organization, and the communities you serve will change, and your score should too.
- Honesty is the only requirement. The value of this tool is entirely dependent on honest responses. If your team disagreed significantly on any question, that disagreement is worth a dedicated conversation.

Disclaimer

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