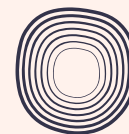


Self-Study Learning Guide



OPIOID LEARNING
AND RESPONSE
COLLABORATIVE

Advanced Racial Equity Response (Stage 3 Foundation: Transformation)

Your Organization in Stage 3

Organizations at the Advanced stage have moved beyond building equity infrastructure to leading systemic transformation, both within their own walls and across the broader ecosystem of opioid response organizations. This includes funders, policymakers, and community stakeholders. The work at this stage is defined by the depth of integration over every aspect of the organization.

This type of transformation invites organizations to generate new knowledge and share evidence of what works with other organizations in the larger substance use prevention field. Stage 3 organizations begin to contribute to the field's evolving understanding by creating new frameworks, developing resources, and defining what culturally responsive and racially equitable opioid response looks like in practice. And they are using their organizational credibility and relationships to advocate for systemic change in the funding, regulatory, and policy environments that shape what is possible for all organizations in this space.

The Systems Thinking Lens at Stage 3

Advanced organizations are working at the most powerful level of systems change leverage points by challenging the fundamental assumptions and mental models that have shaped opioid policy and treatment.

Typical Organizational Behaviors at Stage 3

- Racial equity is embedded in the board's governance structure, including composition, decision-making processes, and executive accountability frameworks.
- Budget decisions are made through an equity lens, with explicit analysis of how resources are allocated across communities with different levels of need and historical underinvestment.
- Community accountability mechanisms are genuine power-sharing structures where community members influence organizational priorities and evaluate organizational performance.
- The organization's workforce demographics at all levels, including leadership, reflect the communities served, and culturally grounded practice is a standard of care.
- The organization is producing and disseminating original knowledge: case studies, practice guides, data reports, and policy briefs grounded in its own equity work.
- Equity work has survived leadership transitions because racial equity is an institutional commitment rather than the personal commitment of an individual leader.

Why Stage 3 Matters

Advanced organizations demonstrate that deep, sustained racial equity work is possible in opioid response settings. They challenge the common belief that equity work is aspirational but not operationally feasible. By sharing their learnings, they model what accountability to community looks like. At Stage 3, an organization's progress creates the conditions that make it easier for other organizations to advance.

Primary Learning Goals for Stage 3

- **Embed Equity in Governance & Budget:** Racial equity analysis is standard in board governance, budget processes, executive evaluation, and strategic planning.
- **Lead Systems Redesign:** the organization is actively codesigning programs, partnerships, and processes with the community.
- **Build Community Accountability Structures:** Community voice shapes priorities and evaluates outcomes.
- **Generate & Disseminate Evidence:** The organization produces original knowledge and shares it with the field through publications, training, and advocacy.
- **Build Industry Capacity & Coalition:** The organization actively supports peer organizations in their equity journeys and advocates for systemic change in policy and funding environments.

Direct Service Providers: Professional Learning Path (Stage 3)

Experienced direct service providers have fundamentally transformed their practice identity and are co-designers of culturally responsive practice models. They function as internal equity consultants within their organizations and have significant capacity to educate peers and community advocates. This emerges from years of reflective practice.

[BOOK] Systems Thinking for Social Change Deep Application (Stroh)

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

At the Advanced stage, providers are applying it in community settings, facilitating systems mapping sessions with peer support networks and community coalitions. Providers who can facilitate these conversations act as a bridge between community knowledge and organizational strategy.

[BOOK] Culturally Responsive Substance Use Treatment, Training-the-Trainer Application (Jones)

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

At this stage, experienced providers are building the next generation of culturally responsive practitioners, one of the most powerful investments an organization can make.

[BOOK] Health Equity: A Solutions-Focused Approach, Curriculum Design Application

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

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

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

Providers contribute directly to the organization's data equity reports and community-facing accountability dashboards. This includes advocating for data elements that reflect community-defined outcomes since they understand data as a form of advocacy.

Executive Leaders: Organizational Leadership Path (Stage 3)

Executive leaders in Stage 3 understand that racial equity is an embodied leadership identity and not a strategic initiative to be managed. The Stage 3 leader advocates for policy change, shifts funder priorities, and works collaboratively with other organizations to address the systemic conditions that produce inequitable outcomes in opioid response in the first place.

[TOOLKIT] GARE Racial Equity Toolkit, Budget & Governance Integration

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

At the Advanced stage, the GARE framework is the lens through which all decisions are made. Leaders at this stage have embedded the GARE six-question framework into the budget cycle and analyze every major allocation for equity impact.

[DATA] Data-Driven DEI, Public Accountability & Dashboard Design

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

In Stage 3, leaders build public accountability structures and make their equity dashboards visible to funders, partners, and community members. This provides honest assessment of the organization's progress and acknowledges gaps where work must continue.

[ASSESSMENT] Racial Equity Impact Assessment, External Policy Advocacy Application

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

In Stage 3, leaders apply REIA externally to evaluate funding proposals, advocacy positions, and policy statements. This external application of equity tools is a form of systems leadership, using organizational influence to change the conditions that affect all organizations in the opioid response field.

Stage 3 Foundation Wrap-Up

Internal Organizational Focus (Stage 3)

Internal work at Stage 3 stage focuses on institutionalization and sustainability, ensuring that equity is embedded in organizational systems in ways that outlast any individual leader or initiative.

External Community-Facing Focus (Stage 3)

External work at Stage 3 centers on transformation within systems leadership and the broader field of substance use prevention/opioid response. Advanced organizations are working to change the ecosystem, advocating for integration of culturally responsive practices across the opioid response field. In Stage 3, community members are involved in setting organizational priorities, evaluating program quality, and holding leadership accountable for equity commitments.

Outcomes for Stage 3

- Racial equity embedded in governance, budget, executive accountability, and board composition.
- Public accountability dashboard with genuine community input on metrics and evaluation.
- BIPOC-led organization partnerships drive program co-design.
- Original knowledge is produced and disseminated to field through publications, training, and advocacy.
- Equity is sustained through at least one major leadership transition.
- Systems redesign led across funder landscape, changing conditions for peer organizations.

The most powerful leverage point in systems change is within the shared assumptions about why disparities exist and whose responsibility it is to address them. This stage requires a sustained posture of leadership and learning that embeds into the ethos of the organization and outlives any individual leader.

Disclaimer

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