

Q&A for Webinar Orientation to TBF Racial Equity Capacity Builders Directory, January 14, 2021

Questions about Race and Racism (*throughout this document we use the term “racism = systemic racism”)

We want to acknowledge the thoughtful, important questions we got about race and racism. Rather than venture to provide brief answers to complex questions we recommend several resources:

Resources: Beatriz Meza Valencia, a Capacity Builder who was in the webinar, recommended and we agreed with this recommendation of I. Kendi and other of our recommendations follow:

- Ibram X. Kendi, *So You Want to Be an Antiracist*. We also recommended:
- Ijeoma Oluo, *So You Want to Talk about Race*.
- Jay Smooth, on YouTube
- Robin Di Angelo, White Fragility

There are many, many other amazing resources on race and racism. This is just a start. Email us and let us know resources you have found helpful: Curdina Hill: dinajh3@gmail.com or Molly Mead molly@praxiscg.com

Audience questions and comments on race and racism generated in the webinar:

- Is the assumption of the presenters that most of the audience is white? And, about everyone being racists, many experts would frame it as everyone being biased and prejudiced but to be racist requires power of another.
- In a training I took by the People's Institute for Undoing Racism, they describe racism as a power dynamic and the only folks that can be racist therefor are white folks, whether they want to exercise it or not. I'm still trying to sit with this.
- I think it is important to differentiate intentional systematic racism like, Redlining from being caught up in a system that existed prior to an individual being a part of that system, and perpetuating the status quo like reporting the news.
- It helps me to make a distinction between “race” as a social construct and how it is divisive versus “racism” which is pernicious and virulent and critical to name and address.
- I would like to know your opinion concerning the idea that only the "white" people can be racist.

Responding to these questions is a complex enterprise because it relates to understandings of the systemic nature of racial equity and assumptions implied, purpose, level of context.

For example,

Response to Questions related to Race, Racism, and Racial Disparities

Yes, we assumed that a significant a number of the audience would be white but in addition, we estimated that a significant number of Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC)

would be represented at the webinar; this assumption was based on our awareness of the racial and ethnic composition of potential webinar participants--the leadership and program staff of many nonprofits and similarly, the composition of the directory capacity builders both individual and firms in the Greater Boston area and the region.

On the idea that only white people can be racist.

We live in a racialized country, and therefore, most people of **all** racial and ethnic groups residing in this society are touched by or exposed to racist ideas or constructs and experiences in a myriad of ways through the media--commercial and social media, through personal and group treatment and attitudes, and through personal, group and organizational experience, through social and political behavior contributing to the creation of a racial hierarchy and its impact. We understand that all people have biases including racial biases that is part of our humanness; however, systemic and structural racism goes beyond individual bias and bigotry, and encompasses the multi-level systematic process of creating institutional policies and practices that maintain the power of the white dominant group and limit the access to the rewards and benefits, and diminish the life chances of Blacks, Indigenous and other people of color.

Directory Questions

How did you identify folks to send the survey to? Or how did they find out about the survey if you didn't send to folks directly?

In the **first edition** of the Directory we used our knowledge of consultants and trainers who do racial equity work, and sent them a link to the survey. The New England Chapter of the Alliance for Nonprofit Management has held a number of workshops on racial equity, led by Curdina Hill and Judy Freiwirth. We sent the more than 100 participants in those workshops a survey links as well. There are several capacity building organizations in the Greater Boston area and we sent it to those organizations, such as Nonprofit Consultants Network, Third Sector New England, Boston Facilitators Roundtable and also People of Color Consultants whom we informally identified. In the **second edition** the Boston Foundation announced on their website that consultants and trainers who were not in the directory and thought they should be would have an opportunity to submit an entry.

Were there standards that you used for including names of coaches and consultants? Did you ask whether they were associated with a professional designation or other?

Our standard was twofold: sending the survey to consultants and trainers whose work we respected and reading the answers that were submitted to see if there were red flags. We did not ask for professional credentials because there aren't yet well-established credentials for racial equity capacity building.

I'm wondering if there is a plan for the directory to include some sort of self-assessment rubric or worksheet to help organizations work through these considerations as they're building these strategies?

What a good idea, and there is no plan for this. This would be an entirely other project if done well.

How does the Directory address disability awareness and/or access?

We asked everyone in the directory to indicate the populations that they have significant experience working with. Disability awareness was one.

Organizational and Project Development Questions

Can you discuss the types of projects that a racial equity consultant might work on? Could be helpful for the audience to think about the possible services to try to better identify the needs of their orgs.

Racial Equity capacity-building work can be done in two broad kinds of ways: The first is carrying out racial equity work related to the primary practice area of the consultant or capacity builder such as strategic planning, fund development, or leadership development; and the second, is a dedicated approach where the work is entirely focused on racial equity. In this approach, the consultant might determine their racial equity needs and based on these needs develop racial equity goals for capacity building, or conduct preliminary racial equity work by designing and completing a racial equity assessment project, or plan and conduct a training geared to key groups or board members in the nonprofit organization. Kerri Ratcliffe, a webinar participant, suggested the following: a good resource to see how a nonprofit went through an antiracist transformation/ work is the East Harlem Tutorial Project. They post the timeline of their work, their processes and approach online at <https://www.ehtp.org/ourantiracismwork>. This could be helpful to see as an example of one approach/timeline, and outcomes.

Q&C: Our leadership does not want to acknowledge the conflict coming up around the job title for hiring the DEI position and wants to just move forward. This is a red flag and seems to call for a consultant.

We are an organization thinking of hiring for a permanent DEI position, but even the process of preparing this job description (even after a year and a half of doing racial equity work) has been fraught... which makes us think perhaps a shorter-term consultant might be a better first step. Any thoughts? At this point, we as webinar presenters don't have sufficient information to respond adequately.

Acknowledging that we don't know the specifics: Working with a short-term consultant is often a good first step to facilitate understanding the issues involved in the upcoming conflict. In this case the consultant could help your organization develop the job description and use that as a basis for understanding the broader conflict and tension areas or underlying causes of the conflict. Also, the conflict about job title can be a red flag, and the short-term consultant could design and engage in a discovery process with the organization.

Often the white folks in an organization have a much different sense of where the organization is (thinking there is more progress than there is) compared with the BIPOC folks. How do you suggest doing this assessment in a way that reckons with possible large differences in perception? And without creating more labor for BIPOC staff members? *Thanks for your recognition of the compounding of an issue and tension points where there are differences in perceptions within a racial/ethnically diverse group.*

When you are interviewing consultants ask them how they would approach this.

What do you think when your organization insist they do not have the money for this work they say they want but the expectation is that this work should be added to your role as extra work?

Racial Equity work takes time and, often, money. It is never a good idea to simply add the work to someone's already full plate. And it also not ideal to expect the BIPOC staff to shoulder the responsibility. If the organization genuinely doesn't have the financial resources to get started, maybe ask for some of your other responsibilities to be given to another staff so you have the time to focus on your racial equity responsibilities, or make suggestions to address possible funding, resource or collaborative alternatives.

Building on that - re staff and Board being in different places... what if the DEI team and Senior staff are in different places? Power dynamics being at play as they generally are not in senior executive positions...

Good racial equity consultants will have seen this dynamic before and will have strategies to address the differing priorities and different access to power.

Questions on Language and Building Shared Understanding:

DEI= diversity, equity and inclusion. There is also the term REDI: which adds race. I have a question about language: while language is important, you also don't want to spend all the time 'perfecting language' and let that get in the way of actually doing the work? How do you see this?

There are many terms that get used: DEI; JEDI, REI, Racial Equity. And language does matter. Still, the most important thing for an organization to do is reflect on your desired focus or purpose, and the terms you use and why.

Another issue is the response to the move towards concepts of belonging and othering... I as a webinar presenter am supportive of a move to use of these terms, but I am concerned that this gives white people an out in terms of looking directly at the issues of racism that are prevalent and core to *"un-named and unacknowledged injustice"* that is perpetrated in the non-profit sector.

Certainly, whatever terms are used should not allow people in an organization to avoid addressing the racial equity issues.

Questions related to Hiring, Screening and Selecting A Consultant

Thematically, what would you say are the hard lines/big differentiating factors between consultant approaches? For example, I have found many of equity consultants are skilled at the sociology and concepts, but know less about organizational development. What are would be the flags to watch out for if you are looking for more than a training?

Racial Equity work almost always requires an organization to change. It is important to hire a consultant who knows about organizational development AND is knowledgeable about race, racism and racial equity, and white dominant culture.

Many non-profits have lots of projects separated from each other. What is the best way to integrate anti-racism practices into the daily work? How can it be done in a way that it becomes normalized?

This would be a good question to ask when you are interviewing consultants.

Is it important to get positive references from past clients? Is it reasonable to expect these before hiring?

Yes, this is very important to assess the consultant's strengths and capacities, and whether they are a "fit" for your organization.

I see that this is geared for non-profits, but I am interested in how to build capacity in a municipality. Does that lead to a separate set of consultants, or is this list equally relevant for cities/towns?

Many nonprofit consultants also work with cities and towns and even state government. When you put out a call for consultants make clear you are looking for someone with that level of government experience.