

Racial Equity Action Plan

PRATT CENTER FOR
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

December 2019

Introduction

In the Spring of 2018, Pratt Center for Community Development engaged in a series of racial equity (RE) workshops, which were facilitated by Daniel Lim Consulting, and included topics such as institutional racism, implicit bias, and white privilege. Pratt Center staff facilitated discussions in between workshops to advance the conversation.

The purpose of this process was to:

- (1) Evaluate Pratt Center's commitment and values with respect to racial justice;
- (2) Establish a shared vocabulary and basic foundational knowledge around racial justice issues (key topics explored included defining race, structural racism, implicit bias, white fragility, whiteness, etc.);
- (3) Open a continuous dialogue about race equity work;
- (4) Incorporate lessons and suggested actions into a strategic framework.

Over the Summer of 2019, Pratt Center staff collaborated to review actions taken independently by staff since the 2018 process to incorporate RE. This document synthesizes findings from the review and builds off Pratt Center's 2018 Racial Justice Strategic Planning Framework by developing recommendations for how to apply a RE lens to our operations, decision-making, program and project evaluation, and interaction with colleagues and outside partners.

Racial justice is the proactive reinforcement of policies, practices, attitudes and actions that produce equitable power, access, opportunities, treatment, impacts and outcomes for all.

Applied Research Center & The Philanthropic Initiative For Racial Equity,
"Catalytic Change: Lessons Learned from the Racial Justice Grantmaking Assessment"

Racial justice is the systematic fair treatment of people of all races, resulting in equitable opportunities and outcomes for all. It goes beyond “anti-racism.” It is not just the absence of discrimination and inequities, but also the presence of deliberate systems and supports to achieve and sustain racial equity through proactive and preventative measures.

Race Forward, “Race Reporting Guide”

A Note on Racial Equity Practice

There is no standard beginning, middle, and ending to this process. Once exposed to concepts of racial equity, each person will evolve in their own understanding, capacity and knowledge of racial equity as conversations continue, plans are made and various strategies are implemented.

What is necessary for the successful evolution of each individual and of our organization is the expectation and understanding that periodic self-reflection on one’s values and how they manifest in perceptions, attitudes, and judgments—prejudicial or not—is essential to our mission.

Pursuing racial equity means we will be uncomfortable and make mistakes along the way. Success happens when, working through these mistakes and missteps, we gain the competencies, skills and language to engage in honest, thoughtful conversations with one another. Pratt Center must commit to building in the systems and processes to facilitate this self-reflection.

Actions Taken Since 2018

1. Hiring

Staff across program and project areas reported speaking about Pratt Center's work through a racial equity lens. In particular, staff incorporated questions around racial equity during interviews with prospective candidates and graduate fellows. Additionally, staff incorporated race as one equity factor when considering a firm to implement our rebranding process.

Summary of Actions:

- Incorporated questions around how candidates define racial justice and how they incorporate it into their work into the following searches:
 - Interns and Graduate Fellowship interviews
 - Hiring for Made in NYC manager
 - Operations Manager
 - Director of Policy and Planning interviews
- Process resulted in net increase of POC staff
- Implementation of a survey for incoming graduate fellow to evaluate RJ knowledge, vocabulary and cultural competency to understand what gaps exist and to address these gaps over the course of their fellowship
- Hired POC-led design firm to develop Pratt Center's new visual identity

2. Senior leadership

Senior staff convened "Friends of Pratt Center" – a group of allies that will assist Pratt Center in developing a clear mission, scope and strategy to ensure staff is accountable to the communities we serve, to further an inclusive work place culture and collaborative decision-making process. At this time, the racial composition of the advisory group include one Black advisor and two White advisors, therefore goals for diversifying the advisory board and intentional outreach is needed to develop a group that is truly reflective of the communities we serve.

Over the spring and summer 2019, Pratt Center began conversations with several private planning, architecture, and engineering firms to better understand their interests and perspectives on the issue of "diversifying the planning field." This work was a direct result of the internal racial equity work conducted in 2018 that identified the lack of racial representation for Black, Indigenous and POC in the planning field. Pratt Center then convened these firms on Nov 1, 2019 to talk about strategies for "diversifying the urban planning field."

Summary of Actions:

- Convened Friends of Pratt Center advisory board to hold our organization accountable to the communities we serve
- Interviewed 8 private planning firms over the summer to understand their practices around RE
- Launched a convening on Nov 1, 2019 with the same 8 firms interviewed
- Senior leadership has had initial conversations with the Institute about desired qualities and characteristics of an eventual new director of Pratt Center as it pertains to RE.

3. Programs, projects and publications

In 2018 a Racial Justice workshop for our Graduate Student Fellows was introduced so that our fellows would have the same vocabulary and starting point to RJ as our staff.

Pratt Center launched a research project around understanding minority and women business enterprise (MWBE) for manufacturers to understand the specific needs and challenges to manufacturing businesses. The purpose of the research is to inform Made in NYC programming.

Made in NYC also implemented RE criteria by prioritizing POC members when implementing programming opportunities such as working with BRIC to launch a 2 min marketing video that costs thousands of dollars to produce but is offered free to participants. Additionally, Made in NYC focused monthly campaigns to uplift POC members during Black + Hispanic History Month.

Staff received a Taconic Fellowship and launched the Future Cities Fellowship, with Diversity Committee of the American Planning Association (DivComm) and the Octavia Project, to work with young women and gender non-conforming (GNC) POC youth to teach them about urban planning and work with these young people to produce games + activities to engage their peers in urban planning topics. Young people will run their game with high school students in Octavia Project's Summer Program in 2020. The purpose of the project is to introduce POC youth to the concept

of urban planning as a means to diversify the planning field. The fellowship is a paid stipend opportunity for young people.

EnergyFit staff identified POC-led CBOs that work on energy efficiency to consider partnership once EnergyFit (EF) kicks off and with the purpose of providing access to monetary resources for EF work.

Pratt Center Policy Publications (Flawed Findings 1,2, and Public Action, Public Value) incorporated explicit language describing racial dimension of the problems in the current system and how the solutions proposed must incorporate a racial justice lens.

Summary of Actions:

- RJ Workshop for Graduate Student Fellows
- Made in NYC research on MWBEs to inform programming
- Prioritized POC members in Made in NYC opportunities that provide free resources to members
- Future Cities Fellowship – paid 5 women/ GNC youth of color to participate
- Intentional partnerships with POC led CBOs for EF work
- Heightened and explicit focus on racial justice and impacts of policy reports
- Monthly program develop. timeslot set aside for RE equity discussion

Actions We're Taking in 2020

The following actions are based on best practices gleaned from an extensive review of resources, some of which are listed on page 8. The management team will support in the implementation of these actions:

1. Implement a racial equity and organizational culture assessment

Launch a mandatory, anonymous survey to all full-time and part-time staff, to get a sense of our strengths and needs as we work towards building a staff that is competent in applying a RE lens to our work.

The survey should assess:

- Organizational commitment to racial equity work
- Organizational Culture
- Recruitment, hiring and retention of a diverse staff
- Accountability to and partnership with communities of color
- Ability to apply an anti-racist lens to programs, policy, advocacy and decision making

Findings from this assessment should inform further RE actions, and be used by senior leadership to identify racial competency trainings for the entire staff.

2. Develop a hiring protocol

A hiring protocol that centers racial equity could include:

- **Standardization of interview process** ensuring uniformity in screening procedures, interviews, exercises and questions—for every job candidate is a key way to ensure equity and fairness throughout all hiring processes
- **Guidance on how to communicate the process / expected timeline to staff members** so everyone understands the process as well as Pratt Institute requirements.

- Develop a checklist / guiding document with respect to process for hiring and timeline.
- Build in time for staff to provide input on the language for job descriptions
- Build in explicit ask for staff to share with their networks and personal contacts, provide template email they can build off of as well as social media templates.
- **A standard description** of our racial equity values and racial equity requirements that are embedded in job descriptions
- **Require that at least 50% of candidates** in the first round of interviews are POC / racially diverse candidates
- **A list of vetted job boards & contacts** for POC-led nonprofits and CBOs we would contact directly to share job description

3. Create an assessment process for projects and programs

Assessment would include a series of questions and a guided process for launch, ongoing evaluation and close out of projects, policy reports and programming. It would also include a process checklist that operationalizes collaboration through discussion at key points in a project's lifespan. The assessment could include the following components:

- **Project launch** - Invite all staff to an open meeting to present project, communicate goals, discuss challenges and gather input on racial equity objectives (with guided set of questions)
- **Metrics / data development** – build into the process a period for researching how to measure impact of work for particular project/issue area (consider tapping into fellows for support)
- **Template documents** – to support evaluation of projects that include stakeholder analysis, systems analysis, decision-making analysis and RE impact analysis, etc.

Racial Equity Resources

Extensive research was conducted on best practices around institutionalizing racial equity in organizations. Some (but not all) of the Racial Equity resources reviewed are listed below.

Organizational Development

Racial Equity Transformation (RET) [Link >>](#)
by Demos

Demos is a public policy org. the report provides helpful narrative on their process and lessons learned on their RET. The four components in their process were foundational analysis, organizational assessment, learning, and implementation.

Racial Equity Toolkit [Link >>](#)
by Seattle Race and Social Justice Initiative

This toolkit lays out a process and set of questions to guide development of policies, initiatives, programs, etc. and impact on racial equity.

Organizational Race Equity Toolkit [Link >>](#)
by Washington Race, Equity, & Justice Initiative

A comprehensive document to guide legal aid organizations in incorporating racial equity. Page 114 includes an extensive racial equity resource list.

Programs and Policies

Race Equity and Inclusion Action Guide [Link >>](#)
by The Annie E. Casey Foundation

Provides a detail guide on 7 steps to evaluate policy and program development.

Racial Equity Impact Assessment Guide [Link >>](#)
by Race Forward

Provides sample questions to use to anticipate, assess and prevent potential adverse consequences on proposed actions.

2015 Equity Impact Review Process Overview [Link >>](#)
by Kings County

A 5-phase evaluation process to ensure that equity impacts are rigorously and holistically considered and advanced in the design and implementation of the proposed action.

Organizational Assessment Tools

Racial Justice Organizational Assessment [Link >>](#)
by Western States Center

A tool for assessing the degree of an organization's engagement with racial equality. This is a good example we may consider the green / red / yellow light rating approach for our assessment coupled with the questions provided in RJ Assessment Tool by Western State.

Organizational Race Equity Assessment [Link >>](#)
by Washington Race Equity & Justice Initiative

Race Matters: Organizational Self-Assessment [Link >>](#)
by the Annie E. Casey Foundation

An example of an organizational assessment on stage competencies and organizational operations.

Culture

White Dominant Culture and Something Different [Link >>](#)

A worksheet adapted from "White Supremacy Culture"
By Tema Okun and Kenneth Jones

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