

## ASSESSING RACIAL EQUITY

News from Community Science

[The Importance of Racial Equity and other news from Community](#)

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### More Conversations, But Still No Easy Answers

**For many communities, racial equity is a moving target**

Racial equity is a simple phrase, but a complex subject. For the purpose of discussion, it means, briefly, that racial identity no longer limits individuals and communities from achieving their full potential.

From public services to community attitudes, racial equity is challenging to assess, perplexing to measure, and difficult to achieve. When the term is used, racial equity begins to take on characteristics of racial justice, compelling evaluators to address root causes of inequities, not just their manifestation. This includes elimination of policies, practices, attitudes, and cultural messages that reinforce differential outcomes by race or fail to eliminate them.

Despite the complexities of racial equity, Community Science, along with its partners and clients, has found understanding and acknowledgement to be critical first steps towards getting closer to equity on the individual, community, and system and population levels.

Acknowledgement is a particular challenge in that equity, especially when it comes to race, is not a topic many wish to openly discuss -- much less recognize and try to correct. "Another issue is that some inequalities aren't even acknowledged because in those communities, the existing situation is considered 'normal,'" stated Kien Lee, Ph.D., Principal Associate, Community Science. "In all the work we do at Community Science, equity is always the context we're working in."

*"We're realistic - there is no magic bullet, no single answer that creates racial equity in a given situation. Neither is there a magic bullet for assessing and measuring racial equity.*

*But what we can achieve is getting communities to recognize the problem, discuss it openly, and identify signs, no matter how small they may be, that tell us we are helping to move the needle in the right direction."*

*-Kien Lee, Ph. D.*

Though inequities exist in many of the communities that Community Science works with, recognizing those inequities requires a close look at a number of factors. These include the power held by some groups of people, distribution of resources in a place, history and current events.

"We try to understand specifically how inequalities play out in the communities we serve, no matter the project," Dr. Lee explained. "It's why you hear 'cross-culturally competent' come up repeatedly in our work." In Community Science's work, cross-cultural competency means having the knowledge, skills and other abilities to understand how research, evaluation and other

capacity building assistance can affect the inequalities at play as well as accounting for measures of equality and equity in the research and evaluation design.

What Community Science hopes to do through the design of its research and evaluations is to shine a light on inequalities and share with communities the tools and information to develop solutions that work for their unique situations. In addition, active participation of the affected people is also necessary to move towards equity. It all comes together to set a starting point and define specific inequalities that can be measured and monitored over time and using multiple methods.

However, even that isn't without its challenges. The role of an evaluator often becomes that of conflict mediator when discussing the results of the research or evaluation where inequity is at play. "From beginning to end, we have to be very aware of the situation," Dr. Lee continued. "Who's talking to who, which stakeholders are on-board, and who we have to bring together. It's not our formal role as the "traditional" researcher or evaluator, but we often have to step up to move things along."

Fortunately, progress is being made. In a national conference in November 2012, Knowledge for Equity - designed, managed, and facilitated by Community Science with assistance from several national organizations and support from the Office of Minority Health, U.S. Department Health and Human Services, Community Science convened over 100 community-based organizations to discuss the role of data, generated through research and evaluation, in solutions for ending health disparities. Participants had the opportunity to attend workshops about data collection, interpretation, and use. They were also able to interact with federal agency representatives to discuss the availability and accessibility of public data.

More recently, in a workshop with the W.K. Kellogg Foundation grantees in Mississippi, Dr. Lee and Community Science Managing Associate LeKesha Perry discussed the signs of progress towards racial equity in the state as well as tools for recognizing, assessing, and monitoring racial inequities.

Community Science has another opportunity to address and evaluate efforts related to racial equity through its work with the Connecticut Health Foundation, which is striving to ensure health equity for all residents in Connecticut, regardless of their race and ethnicity. Through their evaluation of the Foundation's goal to support healthcare reform, they hope to learn more about what it takes to use evaluation to advance racial equity.

"In some cases, you'll need additional individual assessments, interviews and focus groups," Dr. Lee said. "But in many cases, the data - from graduation rates to health outcomes - is already out there."

To learn more about Community Science's work in racial equity, systems change, and cultural competency, click [here](#).

## COMMUNITY SCIENCE PROJECTS

[Click here to view our clients.](#)

Community Science is committed to advancing research, practice, and knowledge within various topic areas.

### Areas of Interest

**Community & Systems Change**

**Diversity & Inclusiveness**

**Health Promotion and Equity**

**Substance Abuse & Crime Prevention**

**Evaluation & Learning Capacity Building**

**Education & Youth Development**

## COMMUNITY SCIENCE PUBLICATIONS

*Note:* The following documents are in Adobe's .pdf format. To view or print .pdf files, you need to have Adobe Acrobat Reader installed on your computer. You can [download Acrobat Reader](#) for free.

### Areas of Interest

**Community & Systems Change**

**Diversity & Inclusiveness**

**Health Promotion & Equity**

**Substance Abuse & Crime Prevention**

**Evaluation & Learning Capacity Building**

**Education & Youth Development**

**Evaluation and Research Methods**

**Capacity Building Guides**

## OUR CAPACITIES

Our staff's collective knowledge, skills, experiences, and backgrounds enable us to use a wide range of strategies and methods in our work. For further information about the capacities of Community Science staff, see [Our Community](#).

### Research & Evaluation

Community Science is committed to making research and evaluation a participatory learning process that enhances the capacity of institutions to meet the needs and aspirations of community members. With our greatest strength the study of community and systems change, we also are committed to developing knowledge of how to address social problems in a way that will benefit all communities. Our methods for answering research and evaluation questions in various community contexts are state-of-the-art; to gather outcome and process data, we take both qualitative and quantitative approaches, including advanced statistical methods, case studies, surveys (by telephone, mail, Internet, or in-person), and ethnographic methods. Additionally, we employ the latest computer technology, as well as participatory research methods, and our staff members analyze archival data sets, including crime, census, and health data. Community Science is committed to the highest scientific standards and to making collected information both useful and accessible for various audiences.

### Evaluation Capacity Building & Learning Systems

Information, if shared and used, has the power to effect social and community change, making the ability to collect, share, and use data a critical capacity for all organizations. Community Science therefore focuses on helping organizations and participants learn to use data to plan, reflect, and take action in their communities, while also helping to establish new organizational norms and procedures for learning. We have helped local and national organizations and individuals (including program staff, evaluators, etc.) improve their capacity



to collect and use information effectively through *developing monitoring and learning systems, planning workshops, providing technical assistance, designing information systems, and establishing learning networks*. Current examples of these services include:

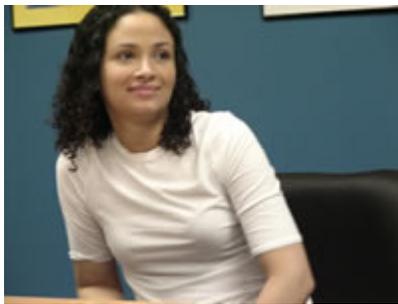
- Organizing and facilitating learning networks that enable participants, both locally and nationally, to support each other through peer learning and sharing resources; and
  - Convening or establishing neighborhood learning clusters for members of organizations working on common issues, national training and networking conferences, conference calls, listservs, and discussion boards—all with the purpose of creating the relationships needed to foster progressive change.

### Translating Research into Practice

Through extensive research, many principles for effective community development strategies and programs have emerged. Research findings, however, are not always accessible to or easily adaptable by organizations, community leaders, funders, or practitioners. A key aspect of community development work is *deriving the essential principles from prior research and guiding organizations to adapt models that other communities have used successfully*. At Community Science, therefore, we develop materials and tools appropriate to the language and perspective of end-users. See our [publications](#) for examples of our ability to translate research into practice.

## **Community Initiative Support System Design & Implementation**

Comprehensive community initiatives must develop an infrastructure that enables community institutions to support initiative goals. To engage a community at the level needed for



comprehensive change, organizations must have the capacity to address community needs and promote well-being. Community leaders, agency staff, and others need the knowledge, skills, resources, and relations to implement activities. National and local intermediary organizations are essential elements of the infrastructure needed to develop these local capacities to foster change. Intermediary organizations, in turn, must be mobilized and coordinated to provide multifaceted capacity-building supports such as workshops, technical assistance, peer learning/support networks, educational materials, resource

development, and public information. *Community Science facilitates the assessment, planning, and management of these support systems to help ensure that long-term capacity to make change is embedded in local communities*. Community Science also provides foundation and government agencies with technical assistance, evaluation, and program management assistance to support national and local community initiatives.

## **Valuing Diverse Cultures**

Because of our cultural competence, Community Science staff members have been able to work effectively with communities and organizations throughout Latin America, Africa, Canada, Italy, Russia, and Southeast Asia, in addition to different ethnic communities throughout the United States.

Community Science staff is fluent in several languages, including Spanish, Chinese, Malay, Italian, and French. Language proficiency, however, is not the most important element of our capacity to work across cultures. We spend a great deal of time learning about the social organization, customs, norms, and history of the groups with whom we work, enabling us to build upon the strengths of different cultures; for example, we currently support several national and regional initiatives that engage with immigrant communities to increase their participation in civic activities and their relations with other groups. Community Science also leads a national effort to increase the number of evaluators of color and their participation in evaluation opportunities. Our staff's own ethnic diversity is among our greatest capacities, providing us the opportunity to learn about, struggle with, and value our differences (and similarities).

## Conferences, Workshops, & Other Events

Community Science develops, coordinates, and facilitates workshops and other events. We have facilitated meetings of diverse groups, including practitioners, funders, community leaders, and scientists, both separately and together. We have conducted national and local meetings of foundation and government grantees. Community Science also has facilitated a variety of collaborative planning processes. We understand the importance of providing a comfortable environment for meetings, how to make the time both enjoyable and productive, and how to manage logistics—whether participants come from a single neighborhood or from across the country.



### Join Us!

If you are a motivated, conscientious professional who can help us take the practice of social change through science and capacity building to a higher level, Community Science wants to hear from you.

In fact, Community Science is currently recruiting for the following positions:

**Senior Associate in Community Change Research & Practice**  
(Washington, DC)

**Associate in Research and Capacity Building**  
(Washington, DC)

To learn more about each position, or apply now, visit the Community Science [CAREERS](#) page.

## **Evaluation methods for leadership and infrastructure**

I'm designing a program where the outcome indicator the funder is interested in is improved leadership and infrastructure. This is very vague, I realize, but that's all the guidance I have been given so far. What literature should I consult, or methods I should look into, related to improved leadership and organizational infrastructure to support a program? Thanks for the guidance and ideas!

[http://www.linkedin.com/groupItem?view=&srctype=discussedNews&gid=1021707&item=236923903&type=member&trk=eml-anet\\_dig-b\\_pd-ttl-cn&ut=11LaEK5oto0RM1&\\_mSplash=1](http://www.linkedin.com/groupItem?view=&srctype=discussedNews&gid=1021707&item=236923903&type=member&trk=eml-anet_dig-b_pd-ttl-cn&ut=11LaEK5oto0RM1&_mSplash=1)

**Melanie Chase, Ph.D.** • Heidi, for "improved infrastructure," let the program goals and infrastructure input-throughput-output (process) details be your guide for defining that aspect. For "improved leadership," again, connect to your program goals to define specific leadership competencies (knowledge/skills/behaviors) that support program delivery and outcomes. Doing a broad literature search with key words will give you some perspective, then narrow from there based on program goals and population/audience served. Keep in mind what will your funders and eval. audience will accept as proof to guide you with the research design or types of methods you would be using (and of course your evaluation budget). Hope that helps! Best, Melanie

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**Tricia Willis** • In terms of defining the content of the required skills and behaviours related to strong organizational governance and administration, I hope that a product we developed here in Ontario, Canada for the public health sector may be of value. The "Ontario Public Health Organizational Standards" were published in 2011 and are available through this

link:<http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/orgstandards/default.aspx>

These standards are now mandatory for local public health agencies in Ontario as part of the accountability expectations of the provincial government, which is a major funder. The standards were built through a review of literature, guidance documents and accreditation standards, so you should see items repeating once you begin your own lit review.

We too have struggled with how to measure the implementation of the standards in a way that goes beyond "the organization has this process in place", which only tells you certain tasks have been completed but does not tell you the quality or value of the experience for the organization. In place of compliance measures, we are now developing a risk monitoring framework for public

health units to complete annually so that we have some transparency around the organizations' demonstrating their own organizational awareness of the risks they are facing in all the content areas of the Organizational Standards.

mel tremper • I recently learned of this site which may have leads for tools you could use once you have done the initial assessment of what is really needed. ++Resources for Evaluating Community Organizing (RECO) is a compendium of resources related to evaluating community organizing. RECO is designed to help organizers, funders, and evaluators quickly and easily find the resources to help them learn what is working and what is not.

<http://bolderadvocacy.org/tools-for-effective-advocacy/reco>

Boyce Byerly • Leadership is always tough. I've done similar projects in the past. If the leaders all have some common goal, you could measure how many widgets you sold, or something like that, but that's very seldom the case. My instinct is to go after the "HR metrics" -- retention (both of leaders and direct reports), promotion rates, bonus and merit pay, and that sort of thing.

A good guide that covers multiple levels of measurement and applies to your case is "The Leadership Scorecard" by Jack Phillips and Lynn Schmidt.

Katherine Divine, Ph.D. • This is a very interesting discussion and everyone has hit on the primary question about what constitutes "leadership" in the minds of the organization's decision makers. Are they referring to a set of general leadership dimensions such as those found in Goleman's article in HBR (2004) on "What Makes A Leader" or more specific operational skills in management, fund raising, and resource allocations? If you are fortunate enough to have those leadership dimensions expressed in the form of a model then a 360 instrument can be very helpful in gathering feedback from multiple constituents about their perceptions of the current leaders' success in those various dimensions.