
II. C. ASSESSING YOUR COMMUNITY PART TWO: CREATING AND IMPLEMENTING AN ASSESSMENT PROCESS

As you gather information, consider the following:

Cast a wide net for information:

- Review existing plans, including ones that were never implemented, along with community data sets.
- Look at individual, organizational, community and regional level demographic trends using publicly available data, but note how current those data are and find ways to bring them up to date.
- Look at assets of various groups and your community as whole. Consider the pro's and con's of various assessment tools, including how participatory they are and which world views they privilege, intentionally or unintentionally.
- Investigate a very wide range of possible opportunities – community wide agenda around which groups are already organized and where people are passionate (to fix the schools, to improve economic conditions, the environment, an arts community) to see where you can have an influence towards racial equity and how your work can increase the likelihood that the results will benefit all groups.

Be critical about data:

- People have different perspectives about how the world works and why things are as they are. Those different perspectives have to be included in the information you gather.
- In addition, existing data has to be considered with a critical eye, since it will reflect prevailing power dynamics (that is, who is counted, what is considered success, what missing data are considered important or unimportant, etc.) If you accept information at face value, your group may unintentionally end up drawing conclusions that reproduce a mindset that reinforces racial inequities and structural racism. Or, more simply – use information but think about where it came from and how it has been used in the past, and do it differently and better.
- In sharing data, an important responsibility is making sure people who view the data understand an institutional/structural analysis of why these differences exist in your community and how they might be corrected. The reason this is so important is that, without a context for viewing the data, people will create their own explanations. Those explanations may or may not be based on facts.
- Ask different groups if “they see themselves” in your assessment findings – and take seriously their comments and recommendations for improving the accuracy of the picture your assessment draws, and its implications.
- Observe reactions to your assessment when you present them to different groups. Share information in single race groups and in mixed race groups, and in multi-generational, multi-

racial/ethnic and multi-class groups – each reaction will tell you something important about what you have found, what’s missing and how to present information to various groups.

Turn the corner from assessment (and planning) to action:

- Sometimes there is a fear of “what if we get it wrong – what harm may happen?” People sometimes feel that if they just gather enough information, they can control the outcome of their work. But things can go wrong, no matter how much information you have. Don’t let fear block the process. Allowing things to remain as they are is also an action, and one that maintains (or can worsen) the harm that is already happening.
- Set criteria to guide action, hold yourselves accountable to high quality implementation, do your homework, create a strong and knowledgeable group of supporters and messengers, continually assess your strategy and its impact, and take some risks.

Please review the following tip sheets:

- [Laying Out Your Assumptions: Understanding Your Theory of Change](#)
- [Understanding Strategies: Three Pathways of Race Relations and Racial Justice Work](#)