

### III. B. CREATING A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

As you sit down to write your plan, remember to build on the shoulders who have come before. Every community is different, and each situation is unique. However, there is still a lot to be learned from the work of others – in the United States and internationally. As you create and work on community change for racial equity and racial justice, consider some of the following insights and lessons from others:

#### ***Components***

The direct action part of a plan for racial equity is very likely to include at least some of the following components:

- Resident or other community **organizing** (or other ways of using the power of the residents to request or demand change);
- **Identification** of specific **issues or institutions that are targets for change**;
- **Identification** of specific **policies or practices** within those issue areas or institutions that need to change; and
- Several **complementary and phased strategies** to encourage or require the institutions to **make those changes** (advocacy, training, incentives, and sanctions, legislative, etc.).
- Communication strategies to motivate people and organizations or communities to act, and to influence broad community culture in ways that support movement of a particular kind.

These strategies are often supported by various kinds of **leadership development and training** (on issues of race and racism and others kinds of training). Many also employ strategies to gather and use **information**, including ways of tracking progress and documenting successes. There are also strategies to **raise funds** and other resources to support the work, to **manage** it and to **report back to the people who matter** and those you want to keep involved.

Is this daunting? It can be for one person. That is why **coalitions and collaborations, and large scale civic engagement** processes are also important strategies for community change. Those strategies are intended to share the work, the risks and responsibility for change in ways that are sustainable and effective.

#### ***Lessons from other communities***

There is no one right way to go.

- It is okay to start small, and to grow your effort. It's also okay to start big, and to get more precise and focused over time. There is no one right way to go, and many areas where experimentation is needed.

Community change usually has several phases – each with its own energy, opportunities and challenges.

- For example, the kinds of leadership that work when a group is organizing, learning more (assessment) and choosing strategies (planning) is often very different from what is needed when you are putting those plans into action (implementation) and trying to make sure they are deep enough, intense enough and long enough duration to achieve goals.
- The kinds of recruitment, training, supports and term limits you establish – part of your community change strategies, should fit the phase of work. This is also true for communication strategies-expectations established by your messages should fit the phase of your work, as should your organizing strategies, institutional change strategies and policy work. Mapping strategies by phases helps you see if this is so.

As you plan, refer to the findings from your assessment about how change happens in your community during these types of phases – at different levels (individual, collective, organizational and institutional and cultural).

- Look at changes where racial equity issues were an explicitly articulated part of the change, and those where it was not, and compare them. What combination of push and pull, inside and outside strategies, voluntary and mandatory actions or requirements, formal and informal relationships did it take to get the work done in the first place? To sustain important gains? To keep work moving past crises, major pushbacks, etc. To keep work moving when it looked like it was going well (so attention turned elsewhere)?

A variety of strategies are needed, at different times, for the same organizations and individuals. No one approach, or single training or workshop, is enough.

- Change is cumulative and you don't have to do everything at once. Map where people are, and be strategic about how much time you take up of any one person or group at any one time. Try to balance pushing for change with potential burn-out of those most invested and on whom you are asking the most, at every level of the work.
- Be persistent – it may take many legislative sessions to pass a bill, or many hours or months of negotiation with government to change the way people are assigned to key boards and commissions. Stories from Project Change and elsewhere suggest that some power brokers wait to see how persistent a group will be in its community change work, to decide if they need to pay attention or not. Make sure they need to pay attention.
- Celebrate your successes!!! Successful community change movements, across many ideological beliefs and issues, share some common characteristics. They thank the people involved often; they figure out short-term wins and make a lot of noise about them. [See [Some Thoughts About Public Will](#)]

If you can, as you develop your plan talk to your peers in other places, or people with a lot of experience on how many communities have made the same kinds of changes. Seek their lessons and insights. Find out how they knew an opportunity was “coming down the pike” before it was made public, and how they built on that knowledge. Ask them how they staffed the work. Ask about their crises (which they undoubtedly faced) and what strategies they used to make sure the crisis toughened their work rather than derailed it (or if they were stopped, what they would do differently next time). Those nitty gritty stories are what community change is all about. In exchange, please share your nitty gritty stories with them and us – too many of us tell the good news but don’t share the tough news – so we keep making the same mistakes others have made and learned from.

### ***Reflection questions***

When you have a plan, review it against the following questions (mentioned in other tipsheets and elsewhere):

- What assumptions are we building into the plan about how the world works? Whose worldview is being privileged, and what are the consequences for our work by choosing to put more weight on some worldviews than others?
- What are the consequences for various groups if our plan succeeds? What are the consequences for various groups if the plan does not succeed? Do these consequences fall equitably on various groups?
- What are the implications of our plan for community efforts, opportunities or agenda already going on? Do we compete, complement or get out of each other’s way?
- Have we fully considered the use of all potential strategies in our work – have we thought about change at the individual, intra and inter-groups, institutional, system and community levels?
- Do our plans and actions build and refresh leadership? Do they build capacity and put in place vehicles or methods to sustain the work?
- Do we have strategies to counter resistance and address retrenchment?
- Are we setting reasonable expectations for what our work can accomplish in a given time period, given what we know about what it takes to achieve racial equity goals? At the same time, are we holding ourselves to high standards for implementation, follow-through and sharing results – so that if we don’t succeed, we know that it’s not because we didn’t do the very best we could?