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Putting the care in student healthcare



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JUSTICE IN AGING
FIGHTING SENIOR POVERTY THROUGH LAW



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February 28, 2025

California Racial Equity Commission
1400 10th St # 100
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Commissioners,

We hope this letter finds each of you well and sourcing strength, resilience, and community. The California Racial Equity Coalition (“Coalition”) stands with you and is committed to ensuring our state stands boldly for justice and united for racial equity. We aim to support you to fulfill the Commission’s objectives and mandates.

California is capable of initiating and sustaining bold transformations for a just, equitable world. *We still lead the way and we will not back down under shock campaigns or threats of attacks.* Despite these and other historical challenges, such as Proposition 209, racial equity practitioners and state government found innovative ways to address disparities. In this [Proposition 209 Orientation](#) endorsed by the Equal Justice Society, the Coalition makes recommendations for the Commission’s work that still apply today. The Commission may make policy recommendations and provide frameworks and tools that analyze communities and the impacts of policies on them in the present, past and future. It may also make “race-conscious” recommendations for policies, programs, or initiatives that have a racial purpose, goal, or objective or is otherwise aware of racial context.

**CA Racial Equity
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As you develop the state's first racial equity framework (REF), we urge you to establish a powerful foundation for our state government to lead with and pursue racial equity in its decision-making processes, legislation, community engagement, distribution of resources, and policy outcomes.

Policy Recommendations to Embed within the Racial Equity Framework

To help inform your approach and process for drafting the racial equity framework, the Coalition's policy recommendations align with specific elements we anticipate will be included. These elements are the racial equity framework (as a whole), budget equity, community engagement, data equity, and framework implementation. We urge you to review and strongly consider embedding them within the REF draft.

Racial Equity Framework (REF)

In 2024, the Coalition provided the Commission with two briefs that outline recommendations for successful development and implementation of the Commission's mandates, the [CREC Framework Brief](#) and the [CREC Budget Tool Brief](#).

- **Build a Human-Centered Framework:** People from all agencies/departments, backgrounds and experiences use the REF to analyze and transform daily impacts of their work from inside institutions with direct impacts on the daily lives of our communities. Racism and white supremacy are learned ideologies to be unlearned and structurally dismantled. Therefore, it is essential to provide people across government with education, flexibility to iterate, and the capacity and support they need to do things differently. ¹
- **The REF should:**
 - Build anti-racist capacity and infrastructure, dedicate resources, establish lasting practices, in order to develop systems and entities that support thriving communities.
 - Build trusting, power-sharing relationships with communities and normalize full community participation that fosters meaningful collaboration and a continuous improvement environment for engagement processes and approaches.
 - Guide the implementation and creation of racial equity tools/assessments for policy/practice and prioritize equitable budgets.
 - Create processes for evaluating entities' impacts on communities and geographies
 - Build in requirements, standards, evaluation and accountability.
 - Prioritize and incentivize adherence to equity principles and practices
 - Offer staff structures for technical assistance, and inter- and intra-department/agency coordination and collaboration.
- **Expand Criteria Equity Outcomes & Indicators:** Go beyond one-dimensional equity goals. Use expansive equity outcomes and indicators into the REF that account for complex experiences, such as: Individual and community economic standing; Community and public safety; Digital equity and access; Early childhood development and education attainment, and foster system exposure; Education access; Food systems access and healthcare; Access to a healthy built and natural environment, neighborhood, parks and natural resources; Transportation accessibility, reliability, affordability, and safety; Access to housing, jobs and job training; Interactions with criminal legal systems.
- **Legislative Infrastructure:** The REF should pave the way for future legislation that ensures racial equity is a practiced function of government rather than a suggestion. Consider and recommend policies that can lead to legislation that builds long-term racial equity outcomes.

¹ Pieterse, A. L., Lewis, J. A., & Miller, M. J. (2023). Dismantling and eradicating anti-Blackness and systemic racism. *Journal of counseling psychology*, 70(3), 235.

- **Mapping:** Use the REF to map out infrastructure and capacity required for equity, e.g., [Forward Change’s evaluation of Los Angeles County](#). Consider Annual Equity Indicators Reports to determine baseline community needs (See City of Oakland).

Budget Equity

- **Normalize Budget Equity:** The Budget Equity Tool (BET) should ensure equitable budget processes are utilized, supported, institutionalized, and resourced, with time and capacity allocated to them. Communities should directly inform the policies and budgets that affect them; they guide analysis, performance metrics, and expected outcomes. Budget analysts and other government workers who use and evaluate budget equity adopt standard practices and receive ongoing training, technical assistance, and education. Budgets are not only analyzed for what they are investing in but also for the ways in which they extract, e.g., racialized wealth extraction through fines, fees and regressive taxation mechanisms.
- **Budget Equity Data Infrastructure:** Recommend appropriate budget equity infrastructure and tools, such as a statewide atlas or index, that are required for completing budget equity tool forms and for measuring the impact of government practices, policies, programs, and initiatives. See [LA City Equity Index](#) and [Catalyst California’s LA City Equity Index Blog](#).

Community Engagement

- **Shared Governance:** Set as a primary goal within the REF that state government will make policy and decisions with underserved communities in shared governance and create spaces for meaningful engagement from beginning, middle, to end. Community engagement will be treated as a continuous, transparent, two-way process, with a goal of having departments advance along the [Spectrum of Community Engagement](#)² to (at minimum) the “collaborate” level within 5 years.
- **Centralized Function:** Until an Office of Racial Equity (ORE) is established, a government entity, such as the Office of Community Partnerships and Strategic Communications (OCPSC), should be designated to centralize the oversight of community engagement for all government agencies, including communicating across departments on engagement efforts; partnering with CBOs; and providing resources like interpretation and translation services, transportation, food, stipends, childcare, etc.
- **Community Engagement Plans:** Embed guidance, templates, and tools for all government agencies and departments to incorporate annual Community Engagement (CE) Plans into their scope of work. Ensure the information is accessible to all ages and abilities, including people with sensory, mobility and cognitive impairments. The REF should clearly define the purpose, goals, and process for the CE Plans– the who, what, how, when, and where. Instructions should be included for these plans to be made publicly available with time provided for public input. The CE Plans should answer questions, such as:
 - **Who** are you reaching and who is most impacted by the policies/programs of your department/agency?
 - **What** is the purpose and goals for the CE Plans and how is it integrated into your agency’s work and objectives? What are the key questions that the CE Plans will address? What’s the timeline and process? What information do you hope to find/gather from communities?

² *The spectrum of community engagement to ownership*. Movement Strategy Center. (2024, December 2). <https://movementstrategy.org/resources/the-spectrum-of-community-engagement-to-ownership/>

- **How** are you addressing barriers to reach the most impacted populations? How are the CE Plans designed to ensure that community input leads to action and not extraction?
- **When** and for how long will the community be brought in before, during, and after drafting policy?
- **Where** will the engagement take place? Where are residents most likely to feel welcomed and included?
- **Tracking and Accountability:** An office, like an ORE or OCPSC, should be designated to review CE Plans and provide technical assistance to departments and agencies. This will include providing support for offices/agencies to build their own webpages to track and make public their CE Plans, progress toward stated goals, and opportunities for community input.
- **Community Engagement Specialists:** Stipulate within the REF that every department and agency must have community engagement specialists OR designate at least one employee whose responsibilities will include designing and implementing the CE Plans and coordinating with a designated office/agency, like the OCPSC or the ORE, on CE efforts. They will likewise be responsible for creating opportunities to gather feedback on the CE Plans, and to demonstrate how the feedback is being analyzed and integrated.
- **Dedicated Funding:** Recommend dedicated state funding for community engagement, or removal of restrictions for state entities to allocate their own funds towards enhancing public participation (i.e. childcare, transportation, stipends, food & refreshments, gift cards, etc.) to effectively engage communities most impacted by systemic racism and other structural burdens.

Data Equity

- **Data Accountability:** Recommend that our state government mandates data-driven accountability & transparency. This should include establishing the standard for how all government entities are collecting, disaggregating, and making demographic data public via online dashboards and periodic reports. We hope you consider accountability standards as seen in The Master Plan for Aging.³
- **Measuring Impact:** Incorporate guidelines and metrics for state agencies/departments to measure their policy and programming impact on communities over time and to be shared publicly through online dashboards and periodic reports.
- **Qualitative and Quantitative:** Elevate the value and the necessity to collect both qualitative and quantitative data to ensure that the data is contextualized and that recommendations based on that data integrates community voices. Refer to [Catalyst California's Data Storytelling Guide](#) on strategic ways to uplift communities in data products.
- **California Equity Index:** Call for the creation of a California Equity Index that maps out the intersection of various demographic groups (race, gender, gender identity, income, age, disability, tribal identity, etc.) with key disparity metrics (i.e. violent crime rates, homelessness, unemployment rate, low birth rates, etc.) to map out geographic regions that have the greatest needs for resources and opportunities. For example, [RACE COUNTS](#) maintains a comprehensive data tracking tool of racial disparities across the state and in different communities. Through cutting-edge, rigorous research and analysis, RACE COUNTS can help provide a roadmap of how we can unwind generations of racial oppression and make California a Golden State for everyone.

³ Master Plan for Aging Home Page, Master Plan for Aging (last visited October 17, 2024). <https://mpa.aging.ca.gov/StakeholderEngagement/>

- **Reinforce ODI:** Recommend to equip the Office of Data and Innovation (ODI) with more power, resources, and staffing to further expand and deepen state government's capacity to advance data equity and anchor the above recommendations.

Mechanism for Framework Implementation

- **Office of Racial Equity:** To ensure that the REF will be fully implemented and sustained beyond the life of the Commission, advocate within the framework to establish an ORE: the permanent body that drives the REF forward and operationalizes racial equity within state government. The ORE must be a resourced, dedicated office with the mission of coordinating across the enterprise building capacity, providing technical assistance, and ensuring continuity, accountability, and longevity. It must have the authority to ensure accountability and growth across the state enterprise. The ORE is critical for fulfilling the mandates of EO N-16-22, i.e. assisting agencies to complete and implement racial equity plans, maintaining alignment with the REF, actualize the necessary engagement facilitating community power in government, and building robust external partnerships with local government and philanthropy, and private organizations.

We hope these recommendations provide you with a strong baseline from which to draft the REF and are inspired by our collective vision for an authentically inclusive, equitable, and community-driven state government for all Californians. Please feel free to contact Elena Santamaria from NextGen CA at elena.santamaria@nextgenpolicy.org if you have any questions or need additional information.

In community and solidarity,

California Racial Equity Coalition Members