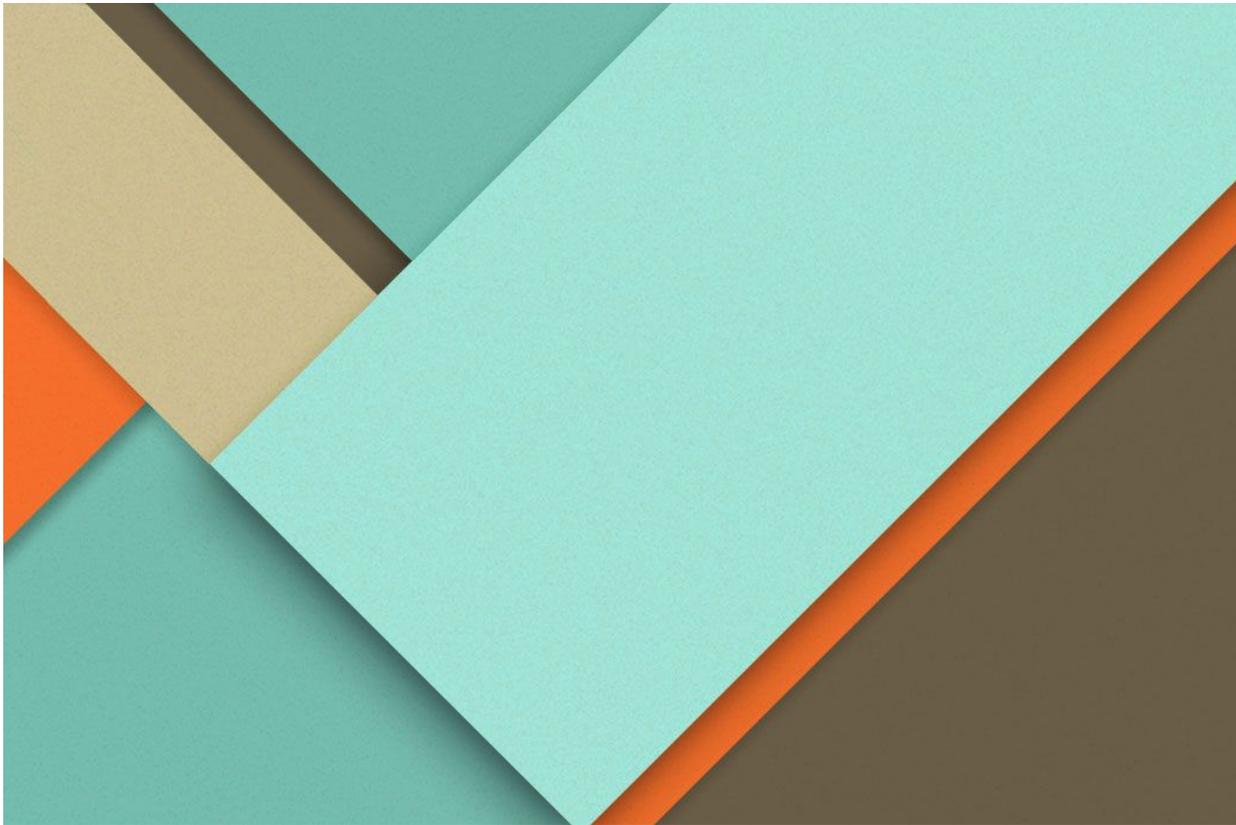

Farm to Early Care and Education Racial Equity Framework

The Food Trust

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AUTHORS

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The Food Trust



About The Food Trust

The Food Trust's mission is to ensure that everyone has access to healthy, affordable food and the information to lead healthy lives. The Food Trust works at both the community and public policy levels to address the complex issues that lead to food insecurity and diet-related diseases, such as childhood obesity. The agency is guided by four major strategic goals: 1) increase access to affordable, nutritious food in underserved areas; 2) improve the health of children, families and communities through education on healthy food choices; 3) spur community revitalization and job creation through programs that encourage the development of healthy food outlets; and 4) support regional farms and sustain the environment.

About Our Farm to Early Care Education Work

The Food Trust has been leading community-based programs at the intersection of early childhood and nutrition for over a decade. In recent years, we have significantly scaled up this approach through our Ready Set Grow farm to early care and education (farm to ECE) program. Ready Set Grow supports on-the-ground farm to ECE programming, in partnership with child care and early learning providers locally in Philadelphia and southern New Jersey. Ready Set Grow builds capacity using a train-the-trainer approach, which combines collaborative learning, technical assistance, and mini-grants to help ECE centers to assess and grow their farm to ECE practices.

With support from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, The Food Trust has launched a statewide farm to early care and education advocacy campaign to enhance public policy, systems and practices across Pennsylvania to benefit young children and families with low food access and boost the state's agricultural economy. Through the Ready Set Grow initiative, The Food Trust is collaborating with PA Head Start Association, Norris Square Community Alliance, and wide group of partners across the Commonwealth to advance statewide support for farm to ECE. The statewide initiative seeks to increase public understanding and support for farm to ECE and lay the foundation for policy change.

Introduction

As a part of its statewide Farm to ECE work, The Food Trust is developing a racial equity framework to evaluate planning, decision-making, and resource allocation through a racial equity lens. We believe that Farm to ECE can be a platform for advancing racial equity by working to make healthy, local foods and high-quality early learning environments accessible and affordable for children and families; supporting fair compensation, professional development and career pathways the early childhood workforce; and expanding market opportunities for underrepresented farmers and growers.

The Food Trust's Farm to ECE team began this work in the fall of 2016 under the leadership of Khari Graves, FAO Schwartz Foundation Fellow. After traveling to Atlanta, GA to attend Facing Race, a national, multiracial gathering on racial justice, Khari brought back an analysis that inspired the team to begin taking a critical look at issues related to racial equity. Khari's insights brought into focus the need to move racial equity from the periphery to the center of our work. With this impetus, the team started on the path of developing an equity framework.

The purpose of the equity framework is to serve as a tool and set of processes to analyze, influence, and improve decision-making that supports racial equity within our team and through our work. Through the use of the framework, we aim for more equitable institutional practices, program implementation, state-level policies, and ultimately child and community-level outcomes. The framework supports clearly stating goals regarding racial equity both internally as an organization and outwardly through stakeholder engagement and advocacy efforts.

The goals of this equity framework are to:

- Hold a mirror to ourselves individually and collectively; to apply a loving critique to examine how to we and our work can better support and reflect equity.
- Normalize applying racial equity to Farm to ECE program design, advocacy for early childhood and food systems policies, and stakeholder/ community engagement.
- Develop a methodology that supports embedding equity into programs and policies for Farm to ECE practitioners and advocates.
- Build capacity to advance racial equity in outcomes through systemic change.

What is Racial Equity?

- It is the **lens** through which we view the world to inform and guide the design of our strategies and activities. We apply racial equity when those most impacted by structural racial inequity lead in the creation and implementation of the institutional policies and practices that impact their lives.
- It is also a **mirror** through which we view ourselves and our work, examining our internal structures, culture, and policies and their impact on how the lens is applied and outcomes are achieved.

- Lastly it is the **outcome** we seek to achieve. It will exist when race no longer determines one's socioeconomic outcomes; when everyone has what they need to thrive, no matter where they live. All people, including people of color, are owners, planners, and decision-makers in the systems that govern their lives. We acknowledge and account for past and current inequities, and provide all people, particularly those most impacted by racial inequities, the infrastructure needed to thrive.

Why Racial Equity?

This work starts with racial equity as a point of departure for identifying multiple and intersecting forms of inequity. We foreground race because of the central role it, as a socially, politically and ideologically constructed concept, has occupied in the deepest and most persistent patterns of social inequity, marginalization and division in the U.S. society. While our focus on race is explicit, it is not exclusive. Acknowledging the deep interconnections and complex interactions between various forms of oppression, we seek to develop and apply a critical understanding of how children, farmers, families, ECE staff and others are differently situated according to race, ethnicity, place, socioeconomic status, immigration status, and language, and more. Using a targeted universalism framework, our Farm to ECE work has shared goals for all children & families, while recognizing the need for targeted strategies that take into account specific barriers to food access and economic viability faced by differently situated groups.

Understanding the Historical Roots of Racial Inequity

Farm to ECE exists at the intersection of two interrelated structures: the U.S. food system and early childhood education. As such it is important to understand the role these specific systems have played in creating and maintaining racial inequities. Armed with this knowledge, we will be better prepared to design equitable policies for the future.

Structural Racism Analysis

Understanding the persistence of racial disparities, requires recognizing the structural nature of racism. The U.S. is structured top-to-bottom by race. This can be seen in infant mortality rates, quality of educational opportunities, housing and employment discrimination, and so on. Even as overt racism, bigotry and bias may become less visible or transformed to "color-blind" forms, racial inequality and disparity continue to be embedded in American society, its structures and institutions. Acknowledging this helps us place our work in the context of dismantling larger systems of oppression, as well as the organizational policies and practices that perpetuate racialized outcomes.

Racial inequities are not natural. They are the result of costly, deeply racialized systems. As Julie Nelson of the Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE) states, "When we have systems and structures that are not working, they are fundamentally broken for all of us." Racial equity is about making systems and structures work for all because everyone benefits from more just, equitable systems.



Racial Equity Framework

VISION

Dignity and well-being for everyone. Resources and power are shared in ways that support realization of our full potential, and contribute to thriving, sustainable communities

VALUES

RACIAL JUSTICE: We work to dismantle racial inequities and oppression at all levels. Our racial justice stance pushes us to center people and communities of color.

EQUITY: We pursue just distribution of opportunities, power and resources to drive drive systemic equitable change.

LEARNING: We know that innovations are outgrowths of non-linear and iterative processes; we strive to learn from both our successes and our failures.

STANCES

Racial Justice is the systemic fair treatment of all people that results in equitable opportunities and outcomes for everyone

Self-determination, agency, and impacted leadership are essential to achieving equitable outcomes

STRATEGIES

Building partnerships based on interdependence and shared vision

Healing-centered engagement centering the leadership of those impacted by inequity

Working collaboratively to surface deep, foundational and rooted solutions



TRANSFORMATION TOWARD EQUITY

Focus on Equitable Systems Change

Systems change is the process of shifting narratives, relationships, and power in order to foster equity and self-determination

Strategic Compass

Centering the leadership of those impacted by inequity

Redistributing and rebalancing resources and power towards sparking equitable change

Decision Making Reflections

What does our purpose lead us to?

What will best take us towards the vision for the world we want?

How do we practice our values in this choice?



Operationalizing the Framework

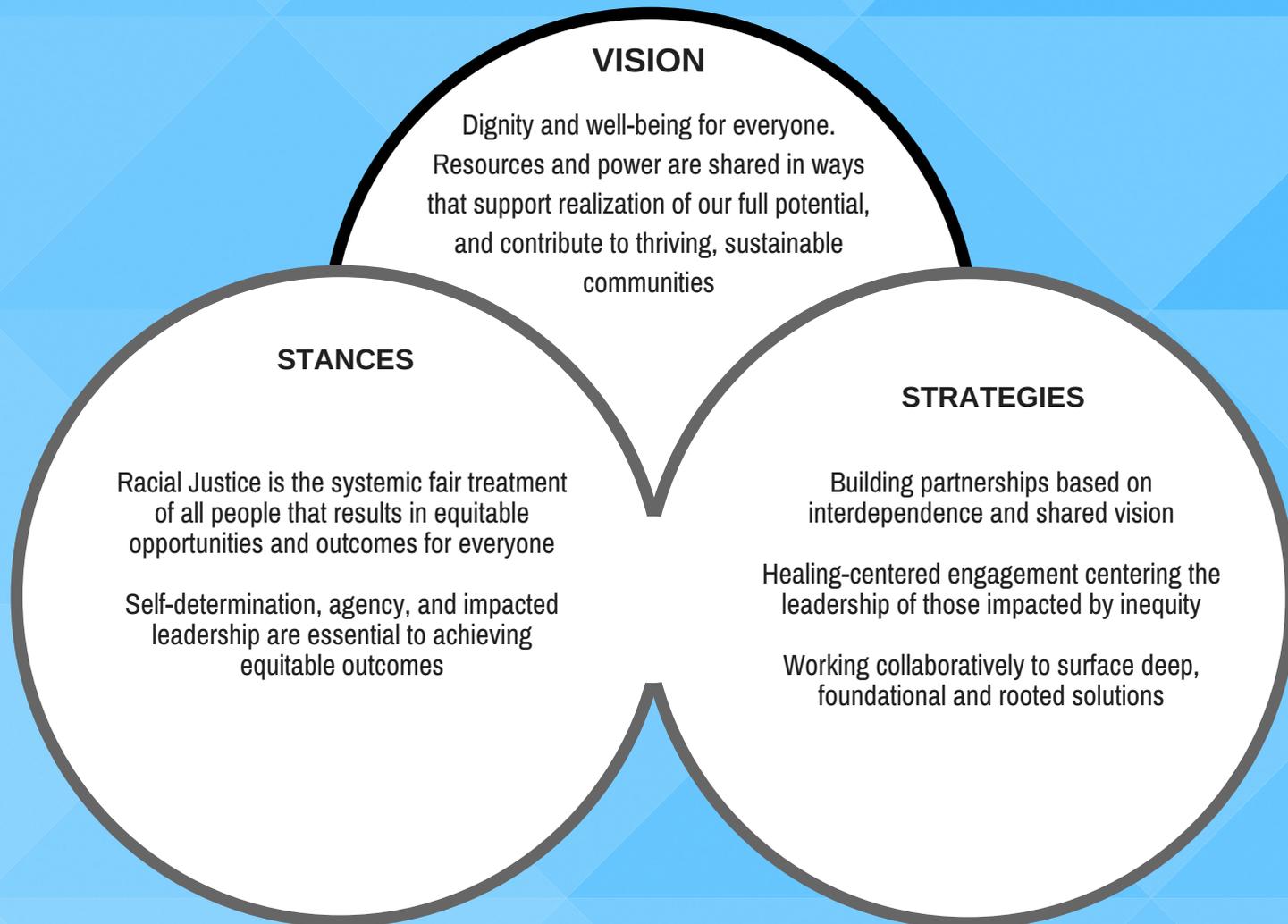
The Food Trust is currently in the process of operationalizing its racial equity framework. This will be done in partnership with a statewide Farm to ECE Advisory Board, made up individuals who have the experience, expertise and insights to lead the initiative from a theoretical framework that guides practice to racial equity practice that sparks equitable systems change.

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