RESJ PROJECT METHODOLOGY TOOL – SUPPLEMENT

PURPOSE

OLO's RESJ Core Team developed the **RESJ Project Methodology Tool** to help staff advance RESJ in all OLO projects. This supplement builds on the methodology tool to reflect the consensus of the office on **requirements** and **best practices** for applying a RESJ lens to every project. This tool is a living document and will be updated as needed as we continue to build our capacity to apply a RESJ lens to our reports, including in research design, co-creation methodologies, and sharing and dissemination of reports.

REQUIREMENTS

To apply a RESJ lens to projects, at a minimum, OLO staff must:

1. **Explain methodology for including Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color (BIPOC) stakeholders.** For projects that rely on interviews, reports must explain how the design of the interview process included (or did not include) BIPOC stakeholders. Strategies to consider include:

   - Reviewing the **Community Engagement for Racial Equity and Social Justice** report for best practices in racially equitable community engagement.
   - Asking colleagues for people and organizations they have contacted in the past.
   - Conducting an online search of BIPOC-led community organizations that focus on the policy area for your project.

2. **Present data on racial and ethnic disparities.** Reports must present and examine data disaggregated by race and ethnicity for the project's policy area. If disaggregated data is not available, an explanation must be included for why it was not available. If appropriate, you could consider including a recommendation in the report that disaggregated data should be collected and reported by the relevant agency, office or department. Key questions to consider include:

   - What are racial and ethnic disparities in outcomes within the given policy area?
   - Is there quantitative data disaggregated by race and ethnicity that demonstrates racial and ethnic disparities?
   - Is there qualitative data that demonstrates racial and ethnic disparities?

   Refer to **OLO Data for RESJ Tip Sheet** for best practices to include RESJ-related data in reports.

BEST PRACTICES

Best practices and instructions for applying a RESJ lens to projects are included in the Project Methodology Tool and other internal documents created by the RESJ Core Team. The best practices presented here are a snapshot of these resources and a place to list additional best practices developed by staff as we work to apply deeper RESJ analysis.

1. **State why we are including a RESJ lens in the report and how.** See 'Resources' for suggested text.

2. **Describe historic and contemporary racial inequities that drive the racial and ethnic disparities evident in the data.** Explicitly describing the racial and social inequities (determinants) that foster racial and social disparities (outcomes) is important for readers to understand RESJ impacts, no matter what level of understanding they may have. It is also essential to informing government decision making and dispelling myths that undermine RESJ. Helpful sources to start your research include:

   - **OLO RESJ Impact Statements (RESJIS)** and **ORESJ Racial Equity Impact Assessments (REIA)** that analyze bills, zoning text amendments, and supplementals in policy areas related to projects.
   - **OLO RESJ Policy Handbook: Housing, Land Use, and Economic Development**.

3. **For reports that rely on literature reviews, describe how the analysis included research sources that provide perspective on RESJ.** If RESJ research sources in the policy area were not available, describe the efforts made to search for such sources. OLO RESJISs and ORESJ REIAs that analyze bills and supplementals in similar policy areas are a good place to start. The following are also helpful sources: Brookings Institution; Vera Institute; Race Forward; Othering & Belonging Institute; Urban Institute; Pew Research; KFF (for health policy).

4. **If RESJ-focused analysis is included in the report, include a summary of the analysis in the findings section.** The summary should make clear how you arrived at the finding. Along with describing racial disparities (outcomes), the summary should also include the context of why they exist (i.e. due to racial inequities).

5. **Include at least one recommendation that is aimed towards advancing RESJ in the project area.** If included, staff should develop recommendations to advance RESJ in reports, rather than leaning on discussion items. If a RESJ-focused recommendation is included in the report, it must be made clear why OLO makes this recommendation. This means including context and explanations in the description of the recommendation. Some ways to do this include:

   - Explaining the historical and contemporary context of why racial disparities exist in this policy area in the body of the recommendation.
   - Explaining why the recommendation could decrease racial disparities and where the recommendation came from (i.e., County agency, nonprofit, community group, residents). It could come from multiple sources.

6. **Use racially equitable and just language for writing reports.** OLO staff attended trainings on the **Racial Equity and Justice Language Guide** and committed to working together to implement the following best practices reviewed during the trainings. These general writing practices may evolve and will be updated as needed.

   - **Use people-first language.** Historically, BIPOC have been described by their circumstances first, especially in research and government documents. Using people-first language reaffirms the humanity of BIPOC.

     Of note, language shifts and people within a community may have differing views on how they like to be identified. When in doubt, ask local groups that represent the community how they would like to be referred to in report. Further, including a definitions section or footnotes in the report to describe specific terms and the decision process for using is a good practice.

   - **Be specific and use racial qualifiers.** Being as specific as possible and always naming race avoids race from being interpreted out of the text.

- **Avoid grouping all communities of color together.** Separately naming each BIPOC community recognizes their unique historical trauma and affirms their identity separate and apart from Whiteness.

- **Capitalize "Black" and "Brown" and other groups of color.** Capitalizing racial groups humanizes racial identity and marks its importance.

- **Do not equate other social categories with race and racism.** This recognizes that race is the most consequential social construct for determining the trajectory of someone's life. It also recognizes that BIPOC experience the most harm within other oppressed groups because of the intersection of racism with other forms of oppression. Example: If you are specifically talking about data about Black people that are also individuals with low incomes, Instead of writing BIPOC and low-income populations, separate out the groups, I.e., "Black people who are a part of households with low incomes"

- **Avoid using deficit language and use language that honors.** Using deficit language can reinforce racism and White supremacy by perpetuating a narrative of BIPOC "lacking," "being deficient," and always being in a place of "need." Deficit language is countered by using asset language that amplifies the power, agency, and resilience of BIPOC individuals and communities. Honoring BIPOC leadership and expertise in our research and recommendations also counters deficit language.

RESOURCES

Suggested text for beginning of reports to describe applying a RESJ lens

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Applying a Racial Equity and Social Justice Lens to OLO Report [insert report #]

In 2019, the County Council established the Racial Equity and Social Justice Act. This law directs County departments and offices to apply a racial equity and social justice (RESJ) lens to their work. RESJ is a process that focuses on centering the needs, leadership, and power of Black, Indigenous, and other people of color (BIPOC). RESJ is also a goal of eliminating racial and social inequities. To apply an RESJ lens, OLO pays attention to race, ethnicity, and other social constructs when analyzing problems, looking for solutions, and defining success. We recognize this is necessary to fulfill our mission and advance RESJ in Montgomery County.

In this report, OLO is applying an RESJ lens in the following ways:

- Conducted one-on-one interviews and focus groups with BIPOC community members and community groups who are advocating for BIPOC to gather perspectives on [project topic] (see Chapter X)
- Presented data disaggregated by race, ethnicity, and income on [project topic] (see Chapter X)
- [other methods]