Montgomery County Government

Racial Equity Action Plan
Guidance Manual

September 2025

The Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice would like to note that this guidance manual and resources provided are largely derived from the best practices developed and implemented by jurisdictions from across the country, as well as work conducted by the Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE)—specifically their Racial Equity Action Plans: A How-to Manual[i]. The themes and frameworks addressed in this manual are not unique to a single jurisdiction but are reflective of common principles and practices observed across multiple local and regional governmental systems. While some modifications and contextual adjustments have been made to meet the objectives and unique regulatory requirements of Montgomery County Government, the core structure and substantive content closely follow GARE's original work, which has broad alignment with and applicability to various jurisdictions.

Contents

Importance of Racial Equity Action Plans

A Racial Equity Action Plan (REAP) is a key tool for operationalizing racial equity and social justice. It is a comprehensive plan that incorporates and embeds racial equity and social justice principles and strategies into operations, programs, service policies, and community engagement.[ii] Specifically, REAPs are multi-year strategic plans articulating how a department will work to improve equitable outcomes in their core work (service-delivery, policy, programs, finance, HR, etc.).[iii] With targeted investments such as time, money, skills, and effort, REAPs can drive institutional and structural change. REAPs should create opportunities for reflection and learning while also striving to be ambitious and aspirational. The goal of the REAP is to bring about institutional change in order to eliminate racial disparities both inside government and in the community. REAPs will include clear outcomes and measurable actions to achieve them, with effective actions being specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and timely.[iv]

Legislative Background

In 2019, the Montgomery County, MD County Council established the [Racial Equity and Social Justice (RESJ) Act](#) to systemically apply an equity lens to government decision-making to advance RESJ in the County.[v] Through the RESJ Act and its amendments, each Montgomery County Government office and department is required to develop a Racial Equity Action Plan (REAP).

In 2022, the County Council enacted [Executive Regulation 15-21](#), Racial Equity and Social Justice Action Plan.[vi] This regulation articulates the nature of the work required for the County and its departments to meaningfully develop the capacities and processes necessary for applying a racial equity and social justice lens to the development and implementation of its policies, practices, and procedures. The regulations also outline how departments should advance racial equity by incorporating community engagement, data collection and analysis, and systems change work into policy development, resource decisions, and service delivery. The regulations also provide County departments and offices with guidelines in developing their own specific REAP, requiring the following:

1. By 2025, each department and office will develop an equity action plan which:
   o details specific targets and strategies for the improvement toward equity goals and
   o identifies the historical context and data for equity issues related to each office and department
2. **Goals must articulate the intended impact of each strategy.**
3. Community input must be sought by each department and office. In the establishment of the equity plan per the activities listed in A (2) above, including:
   o identifying the priorities of the local residents and businesses in the community and
   o determining the impact on those most impacted by the department and office.

4. The action plan must evaluate and analyze data related to equity. This audit should assess each department and office for:
    o cultural and organizational diversity;
    o degree of equity and inclusion in the department or office's culture, and worksite culture, when appropriate;
    o suggestions for improvements that support the diversity in composition and engagement;
    o disaggregated data of the demographic makeup of employees, vendors, contractors, and population of the community served (client base);
    o current equity strategies, including levels of engagement and budget allocations for these efforts; and
    o resources currently spent on expanding diversity, improving equity in services provided, and tracking community satisfaction.
5. The action plan must address policies and practices such as:
    o structuring racial equity programming;
    o gathering data;
    o modeling diversity and inclusiveness;
    o communicating consistently; and
    o exercising community leadership.
6. Racial equity and social justice action plans must be updated every two years.

Developing a Racial Equity Action Plan for Your Office or Department

Racial Equity Action Plans should be comprised of several sections outlining your department or office's intended goals, strategic steps you'll take to achieve stated goals, a timeline in which you plan to accomplish said goals, and accountability mechanisms to ensure you're on track, or how you plan to course-correct.

Who should be involved in developing a REAP?

As with most strategic planning efforts, developing a REAP will require the leadership and management of a point-person or committee (sometimes referred to as the Racial Equity Action team[vii]) as well as input from multiple stakeholders. It's important to bring different perspectives into REAP development, as well as the underlying analysis of the department's/office's current and desired racial equity and social justice initiatives. REAP stakeholders include, but are not limited to:

- department Racial Equity Core Team members and Team Leads,
- division or unit heads,
- budget staff,
- data and performance management staff,

- other county agency partners,
- frontline staff or non-profit partners working directly with residents, and
- residents (particularly current or prospective clients or beneficiaries).

Remember, the REAP includes not only what you plan on doing but also the resources involved and how progress will be measured. Different stakeholders will bring valued perspectives to each of these elements; cross-department collaboration is encouraged to ensure REAPs are specific, realistic, and actionable.

> **Racial Equity Action Team**
>
> Departments/offices are encouraged to form Racial Equity Action Teams to facilitate the work of developing their department's/office's REAP. These teams are small groups comprised of participants representing varying levels of departmental/office leadership charged with guiding a department/office through the entire process of developing their racial equity action plan. While Racial Equity Action Teams can include members of a department/office's Core team, you're encouraged to include additional departmental/office staff, specifically employees that may be responsible for completing identified action items or specific tasks outlined in the REAP.

Getting Started

Each department/office is at a different phase in its ability to identify and effectively address racial equity issues in the County, and the REAP development process will vary accordingly. If your department/office has established racial equity and social justice initiatives and/or has an existing REAP process underway, please feel free to move directly to the goal-setting and action-planning sections below. For departments/offices needing assistance in establishing a shared understanding of their current initiatives and context, please see Appendix A for a sample equity audit tool that you can use to get started.

Components of a Racial Equity Action Plan

Detailed below are the specific sections that should be included in your department's/office's REAP, explanations of these sections, and, in some instances, examples of what could be included in each particular section.

Overview of REAP Sections

- ✓ Equity Guiding Statement
- ✓ Departmental Context
- ✓ Goals
- ✓ Actions
- ✓ Stakeholders/Community Input
- ✓ Resources
- ✓ Responsible Parties
- ✓ Timeline
- ✓ Measuring Progress
- ✓ Impact
- ✓ Next Steps/Accountability

Departmental Equity Guiding Statement:

A simple statement that responds to your departmental/office context (see next section below) and population-level data can help guide your department/office throughout REAP development and implementation. Questions to consider when developing this statement:

- How does your department's/office's existing mission statement relate to racial equity?
- What is your department's unique role in Montgomery County's efforts to achieve racial equity?
- What principles or shared values are reflected in this guiding statement?

Examples:

- [Portland Bureau of Planning and Sustainability](#): Develop planning and sustainability solutions that eliminate racial disparities, thereby creating prosperous, resilient, healthy, and affordable communities for all Portlanders.
- [Seattle Race and Social Justice Initiative](#): Eliminate institutional racism and achieve racial equity in Seattle.

Departmental Context:

Historical context will enable departments and offices to define a problem specific to them and ultimately identify targeted goals they'd like to address, which will be outlined in their REAP. Some departments have included this historical context specific to their areas of work and how it has led to current disparities/inequities present in their work in previous responses to [ORESJ budget equity tools](#). In instances where departments have done this well, ORESJ encourages you to draw on that work.

For those who may need help in this area, ORESJ encourages you to view the following example:

[Montgomery County Office of Legislative Oversight Racial Equity Action Plan](#)

Goals:

Departments and offices should establish three to five feasible short- and/or long-term goals seeking to address a specific policy, practice, or process in the form of a goal statement. Please remember, as you create your goals, whether your department serves internal or external customers, your REAP should at a minimum address the following areas:

- Workforce Development
- Community Engagement
- Policy/Program Development and/or Use of Data

Example Goal Areas:

- Fostering an organizational culture that advances racial equity

- Addressing workforce equity
- Addressing inequities in procurement practices
- Understanding community interests and client needs by including these groups and other external stakeholders in the development of departmental programs
- Jurisdiction Workforce Demographics, Hiring, Retention, and Promotion
- Contracting Practices
- Jurisdictional Commitment, Leadership, and Management
- Community Relationship Building, Access, and Partnership
- Data, Metrics, and Ongoing Improvement

Example Goal Statement:

Foster an inclusive workplace culture where ALL employees are respected and supported.

Actions:

Specific steps departments or offices will take to get closer to their goal that addresses both root causes of an issue (structural/institutional factors) and/or their resulting symptoms (disparities/inequities).

Develop a clear action or set of actions to achieve each outcome. Facilitated action planning sessions with departments or divisions are a good way to source potential actions.

Questions to consider when developing actions include the following:

- Were any actionable solutions identified during the information-gathering phase of this process?
- Are there actions prioritized by BIPOC communities?
- What is a specific change in policy, practice, or procedure that could help produce more equitable outcomes?
- How will an action decrease racial disparities?
- Are there any unintended consequences? Can they be mitigated?
- What capacity is needed to successfully implement the action?
- How will an action be implemented and by whom?
- Is the action achievable within the lifetime of the plan?
- Is the action measurable, and how will it be measured?

After action items have been identified, departments/offices should refine their lists to ensure:

1. Priority issues are represented, and
2. Reasonable expectations regarding the ability to address stated actions have been established.

Ideally, the department's/office's Racial Equity Action Team would be best suited for this role.

Example Action Statement:

Survey and institutionalize a staff feedback process that allows for continuous learning.

Example Action Statements in the Field

- [Portland Bureau of Planning and Sustainability (BPS)](#): Develop a customized BPS project management approach that integrates the transformational values framework, equity tools, and community engagement.
- [Seattle Public Utilities](#): Implement an ongoing, sequential community engagement training and coaching process for all project managers.
- [Seattle, WA: Develop and implement a Racial Equity Fund](#)—provide funding to support institutional/community collaborations aimed at eliminating structural racism.

Stakeholders/Community Input:

Individuals, organizations, partners, and community members who need to be engaged to implement identified actions. This may include, but is not limited to, the stakeholders who participated in the development/planning of the stated action. Examples could include:

- Departmental leadership
- Frontline workers
- Local nonprofits
- BIPOC community with particular attention to intersectionality and vulnerable groups, including youth, single parenting households, seniors, and those who face multiple layers of marginalization due to various backgrounds and are directly or indirectly impacted by a stated program
- Youth or seniors

Resources:

Both existing and desired supports are needed to take/implement the identified action. Examples could include:

- Finances
- Additional staff
- Dedicated staff time
- Tools (new software, trainings, etc.)

Responsible Parties:

The person(s) responsible for initiating stated actions and reporting on progress. This work should be embedded into specific departmental/office workplans as opposed to a single individual. Examples could include:

- CORE Teams
- Departmental Division Chiefs
- Deputy Directors

- Departmental Directors
- Data Analysts
- Policy Analysts
- Program Managers

The responsibility for completing actions should be delegated to a position or body. Any community oversight body should also be identified.

Timeline:

The start and end date (month and year or quarter and year) for each action.

Each action should have a completion date (month/quarter/year) and performance measure(s) (discussed in a subsequent section). You may consider these questions as you develop a date and measures:

- What is your timeline?
- How will you evaluate and report progress over time?
- How will you know the action is complete?
- Can you retain stakeholder participation and ensure internal and public accountability?

Example: *We expect to administer the survey in May 2026 and conclude data analysis and reporting in September 2026*.

Examples of tangible results to measure include the following:

- Seattle Department of Human Services:
  - 900 youth/young adults of color participating in the Youth & Young Adult Program made academic progress by achieving at least one of the following: GED completion, grade progression, credit retrieval, passing HSPE scores, or on-time graduation.
  - By Q4, 100 percent of our Human Resources policies will have been evaluated and corrected as filtered through the racial equity toolkit.
- Dane County Racial Equity Framework: 75 percent of Dane County employees believe their department seeks input and assistance on decision making from communities of color.

Measuring Progress:

Each action should have a performance measure (or racial equity metric measuring either internal and/or external outcomes) enabling the department/office to track progress over time using disaggregated data. Departments/offices should also be able to use performance measures to

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What are Performance Measures

A quantifiable measure of how well an action is working. Different types of measures include:

- Quantity—How much did you do?
- Quality—How well did you do it?
- Impact—Is anyone better off?

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determine if there are any disparities or gaps in service provision for different stakeholders or disparities in department/office operations and procedures.

Examples of performance measures:

- Program attendance rate by race, gender, and age
- Staff morale disaggregated by race, age, gender, tenure, and position
- Percent of customers seen in their own language

Impact

Based on the proposed actions and subsequent outcomes captured through performance measures, departments/offices should be able to speak about the intended or actual long-term effects that their actions have had. The following are some examples of how departments can discuss the impact of their actions:

- **Process and Policy Changes**: Departments can discuss how internal or external procedures have been modified to advance racial equity and social justice.
- **Community and Stakeholder Feedback**: Departments can collect qualitative data from the communities they serve to better understand whether their actions are having the intended outcomes or making a difference.
- **Organizational Culture Shifts**: Departments can describe changes in workplace practices, staff training outcomes, leadership development, or internal policies that have resulted in a more inclusive environment.
- **Service Delivery Improvements**: Departments can explain how their actions have resulted in improved access, quality, or cultural responsiveness of services.

Departments should use both the quantitative data from their performance measures and additional narrative/qualitative data to provide additional context and explanations of what the impacts mean for the communities they serve or their internal departmental culture.

> **Outcome**: A future state of being resulting from a change at the jurisdiction, department/office, or program level. Strong outcomes articulate a clear improvement or define how much improvement will take place. Beginning outcomes with the words "increase" or "decrease" help with the latter.

Next Steps/Accountability:

Departments/offices should begin by identifying where they are in meeting their stated goals. If a goal has been met, how does your department/office intend to sustain this effort? If there is more work to be done in order to achieve the stated objective, how do you intend to course correct? Detail any barriers that have precluded the department/office thus far or any additional resources needed to achieve the stated goal or sustain efforts. Additional questions to consider while aiming to meet identified goals:

- How will your department/office hold itself accountable for meeting (or not meeting) the identified goals?
- What public and other reporting and/or engagement will your department/office carry out?
- What supporting and/or challenging factors do you anticipate affecting your next steps?
- What is your plan of succession (to ensure the work continues)?

Montgomery County Government Racial Equity Action Plan Template

As the template for Montgomery County Government REAPs is similar to that of varying jurisdictions from across the country (modeling best practice set forth by GARE), we encourage departments and offices to view examples of REAPs from similar departments in areas that have comparable racial equity and social justice initiatives. This includes:

- [One Fairfax: Equity Impact Plans](#)
- [Portland's Bureau Racial Equity Plans](#)
- [Chicago's Racial Equity Action Plans](#)

Montgomery County Department/Office of XYZ Racial Equity Action Plan

Bill #27-19 established the Racial Equity and Social Justice (RESJ) Act, which, in addition to systemically applying an equity lens to government decision-making to advance RESJ in the County, requires each Montgomery County Government office and department to develop a Racial Equity Action Plan (REAP). Executive Regulation 15-21 articulates the nature of the work required for the County and its departments to meaningfully develop the capacities and processes necessary for applying a racial equity and social justice lens to the development and implementation of its policies, practices, and procedures in part through the development of office- and department-specific REAPs. Initial iterations of office and departmental REAPs are to be completed by the end of the 2025 calendar year and are to be updated every two years going forward. This document details the [office or department name] plan to align with the County's objective of reducing and eliminating racial disparities and inequities in Montgomery County through a strategic racial equity action plan.

Department:	
Department Director:	
CORE Team Leads:	
REAP Author(s):	
Departmental Equity Guiding Statement:[1]	
Departmental Context:[2]	
Date:	

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[1] Could be the department or offices racial equity vision or mission statement.
[2] Historical context resulting in current inequities relevant to the office or department and the inclusion of a problem statement regarding where and why the office falls short in addressing these issues.

	Goal 1:							
Actions: Symptoms and/or Root Causes	Stakeholders/ Community Input: What external and internal partners will be engaged to develop and implement the action?	Resources: What's available and what is needed to carry out this action?	Responsible Parties: Who will be responsible for moving the work forward? (Should identify departmental titles, not just individuals)	Timeline: Feasible timeframe for carrying out the action (beginning and end dates)	Measuring Progress: What Performance Measures will you use to track progress on this action?	Impact: What is the desired outcome of this action?	Next Steps/Accountability: Where are you in the process, what's the plan to course correct, what is your plan of succession (to ensure the work continues)?
1a.							
1b.							
1c.							

	Goal 2:						
Actions:	Stakeholders/ Community Input:	Resources:	Responsible Parties:	Timeline:	Measuring Progress:	Impact:	Next Steps/Accountability:
2a.							
2b.							
2c.							

	Goal 3:						
Actions:	Stakeholders/ Community Input:	Resources:	Responsible Parties:	Timeline:	Measuring Progress:	Impact:	Next Steps/Accountability:
3a.							
3b.							
3c.							

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Department Director

Montgomery County Government Racial Equity Action Plan Sample

Montgomery County Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice Racial Equity Action Plan

Bill #27-19 established the Racial Equity and Social Justice (RESJ) Act, which, in addition to systemically applying an equity lens to government decision-making to advance RESJ in the County, requires each Montgomery County Government office and department to develop a Racial Equity Action Plan (REAP). Executive Regulation 15-21 articulates the nature of the work required for the County and its departments to meaningfully develop the capacities and processes necessary for applying a racial equity and social justice lens to the development and implementation of its policies, practices, and procedures in part through the development of office- and department-specific REAPs. Initial iterations of office and departmental REAPs are to be completed by the end of the 2025 calendar year and are to be updated every two years going forward. This document details the Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice's (ORESJ) plan to align with the County's objective of reducing and eliminating racial disparities and inequities in Montgomery County through a strategic racial equity action plan.

Department: Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice
Department Director: Tiffany Ward
CORE Team Leads: Jeanette Rojas
REAP Author(s): Rhiannon Reeves, Colette Tano
Departmental Equity Guiding Statement: The Mission of the Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice is to reduce and eliminate racial disparities and inequities in Montgomery County.
Departmental Context: The Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice (ORESJ) is a county-wide office focused on advancing racial equity and dismantling structural racism within County Government. After years of addressing disproportionate outcomes in a piecemeal way, the Montgomery County Council decided to look at disproportionate outcomes across county government with a racial equity lens. The ORESJ was created in December of 2019 by the Racial Equity and Social Justice Act to help reduce and ultimately eliminate racial and other disparities experienced by residents of color across Montgomery County. Informed by the Racial Equity in Decision Making: Lessons from the Field report, the County Council passed a resolution and eventually passed legislation that was informed by a community input process that asked members to tell County officials what they thought the most pressing issues of disproportionality were. The community also organized to influence the legislation itself. The MORE coalition, made up of several local non-profit organizations, including Impact Silver Spring, Jews United for Justice, and CASA, recommended amendments

to the bill that would make the ORESJ and elected officials accountable to the community. ORESJ recognizes that it will take transformational shifts within government to truly address disparities experienced by communities of color and low-income communities, and therefore, we focus our efforts on building capacity within the government to understand what it takes to advance racial equity within every County Department. Specifically, ORESJ does this work by supporting County Departments in normalizing conversations on race and other equity issues, organizing staff to work together for transformational change, and operationalizing new practices, policies, and procedures that are equity centered. We believe that equity is everyone's job, and our office provides training, technical assistance, and tools for all of our County Departments and the staff.

Date: XX/XX/2025

Racial Equity Action Plan (REAP) Guidance Manual

Goal 1: Foster a culture of learning around RESJ to better serve MCG employees							
Actions:	**Stakeholders/ Community Input:**	**Resources:**	**Responsible Parties:**	**Timeline:**	**Measuring Progress:**	**Impact:**	**Next Steps/Accountability:**
1a. Hold a monthly meeting where ORESJ staff share resources	Full Staff	Staff Time allowing for: • the conversation; • researching articles, podcasts/mixed media • attending conferences, convenings, webinars	All ORESJ staff	Monthly in perpetuity beginning the start of calendar year 2026 (January 2026)	Amount of articles, resources shared and utilized	More informed, highly skilled and trained staff	Core team lead follows up with staff and sets office expectations Report out what was attended and learned noting what was accomplished

Goal 2: Conduct full RESJ budget reviews for each County Department							
Actions:	**Stakeholders/ Community Input:**	**Resources:**	**Responsible Parties:**	**Timeline:**	**Measuring Progress:**	**Impact:**	**Next Steps/ Accountability:**
2a. Developing a schedule to complete the review	MCG Departments OMB RESJAC	Time (Appropriate ORESJ staff, OMB staff, departmental/office staff)	Policy team	On-going – would be conducted quarterly beginning FY27 (July 1, 2026)	How many departmental reviews are conducted annually	Better understanding of how the RESJ Act is being implemented by departments and how it's affecting them Reveals how the budget is being used to address RESJ within every department	The policy team will develop a timeline, seeking input from stakeholders

Goal 3: Increase the number of active Core teams							
Actions:	**Stakeholders/ Community Input:**	**Resources:**	**Responsible Parties:**	**Timeline:**	**Measuring Progress:**	**Impact:**	**Progress Report/Next Steps:**
3a. Define what it means to be	ORESJ	Staff time Trainings specifically for	ORESJ MCG Core teams	A full calendar year (January	Attendance keeping of Core teams	More involvement in the budget equity tool participation	ORESJ will check in with Core teams annually to gauge how many teams have been created and how many hours

an "active" Core team	Core teams throughout MCG	Core teams that count towards annual RESJ training requirements		2026 to December 2026)	Core team feedback	Increased training numbers	have been spent on Core team activities. This information will be shared with MCG Leadership (CEX and County Council)
						Greater knowledge base	
		In-person meeting opportunities (which would entail acquiring a physical space and providing participants with food)			Hours spent doing ORESJ activities	Increased involvement in leadership decisions	

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Department Director

Appendix A

To help departments/offices establish a baseline understanding of their current activities and results related to workforce, community engagement, and policy/data goal areas, use the tool below. First, you will evaluate and analyze data related to each category. The identified metrics will help you analyze the results of existing activities. Then, you should work with your racial equity action team to discuss and document current efforts in each goal area. As you discuss existing efforts, be sure to discuss existing resources currently dedicated to each goal area. Together with population-level data, you will be able to gain insights into existing and future work that can help to address racial disparities and inequities within your department's/office sphere of influence.

	Workforce		Community Engagement		Policy/Data	
	Category	Metric	Category	Metric	Category	Metric
Evaluate and analyze data related to...	Cultural and organizational diversity	Staff demographics disaggregated by race, gender, and grade level	Demographic makeup of vendors	% of vendors in the MDVB (or other procurement set aside programs) % of Spend with MDVB (or other procurement set aside programs)	Population-level data related to your area of service	Relevant data on disparities in the County (related to your service area). There are many sources for this information.
	Degree of equity and inclusion	Staff survey or focus groups to learn about office/worksite culture	Demographic makeup of client base	Disaggregated data for a sample of programs (could be from an existing annual report or other existing data collection)		
Describe...	Current efforts to increase diversity/composition and staff engagement		Current equitable community engagement practices		Current use of racial equity tools in policy, program development, and evaluation Current use of racial equity metrics	

Describe resources currently spent on... (could be staff, budget, or other resources)	Expanding diversity (or doing the things identified above)	Tracking community satisfaction (or other equitable community engagement practices	Improving equity in services (or other targeted initiatives)
Guides to support further assessment	http://racialequityalliance.org/newsite/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Public-Sector-Jobs-Final1.pdf	http://racialequityalliance.org/newsite/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/GARE-Contract_For_Equity.pdf	

Glossary

- **Bias** is prejudice toward one group and its members relative to another group.

- **Black, Indigenous, and People of Color** (BIPOC) is a term referring to "Black and/or Indigenous People of Color." While "POC" or People of Color is often used as well, BIPOC explicitly leads with Black and Indigenous identities, which helps to counter anti-Black racism and Native erasure.

- **Disaggregated data** is information—quantitative or qualitative—that gives insights into the particular experience and circumstances of specific population groups (by race, ethnicity, nativity, gender, disability, etc.). Disaggregating data can help identify and unpack dimensions of a specific inequity or inequitable outcome. When data is not disaggregated and viewed in its aggregate form, it can mask inequities.

- **Ethnicity** refers to a social group that shares a common and distinctive culture, religion, language, history, and customs. Throughout US history, different ethnic groups, as described above in the definition of "race", have been racialized as non-white, and therefore ethnicity within this context is commonly used in conjunction with race or is implied when describing disparities, disproportionalities, and other inequities.

- **Equity** is the guarantee of fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement while at the same time striving to identify and eliminate barriers that have prevented the full participation of some groups. The principle of equity acknowledges that there are historically underserved and underrepresented populations, and that fairness regarding these unbalanced conditions is needed to assist equality in the provision of effective opportunities to all groups.

- **Inclusion** is a qualitative measure of representation, participation, and engagement with diverse people, practices, and communities—fostering a sense of belonging and respect for the differences and uniqueness that all people bring with them.

- **Marginalized communities** are communities that have not had equal access to opportunity due to exclusion or harmful policies or practices, including discrimination or disinvestment, which have produced inequities by race and ethnicity and their intersection with gender, nativity, disability, and other identity groups. Terms like "underserved communities", "disinvested communities", "underrepresented communities", and disadvantaged communities" are similar and, depending on the context, may more appropriately describe communities that have historically and currently experienced inequities.

- **People of Color** refers to the political or social (not biological) identity among and across groups of people that are racialized as non-White. The term "people of color" is used to acknowledge that many races experience racism in the U.S., and the term includes but is not synonymous with Black people. Increasingly, the term BIPOC is used in place of "people of color".

- **Race** is a social and political construction, with no inherent genetic or biological basis, used by institutions to arbitrarily categorize and divide groups of individuals based on physical appearance (particularly skin color), ancestry, cultural history, and ethnic classification. The concept has been, and still is, used to justify the domination, exploitation, and violence against people who are racialized as non-White. Racial categories subsume ethnic groups.

- **Race Equity Lens** is the process of paying disciplined attention to race and ethnicity while analyzing problems, looking for solutions, and defining success. A race equity lens critiques a "color blind" approach, arguing that color blindness perpetuates systems of disadvantage in that it prevents structural racism from being acknowledged. The application of a race equity lens helps to illuminate disparate outcomes, patterns of disadvantage, and root causes.

- **Racial disparity** is an unequal outcome one or more racial or ethnic groups experience as compared to the outcome for another racial or ethnic group and their population relative overall population.

- **Racial disproportionality** is the underrepresentation or overrepresentation of a racial or ethnic group at a particular decision point, event, or circumstance, in comparison to the group's percentage in the total population.

- **Racial equity** is the condition that would be achieved if one's racial identity no longer predicts one's life outcomes. When we use the term, we are thinking about racial equity as one part of racial justice, and thus we also include work to address the root causes of inequities, not just their manifestation. This includes the elimination of policies, practices, attitudes, and cultural messages that reinforce differential outcomes by race or fail to eliminate them.

   Racial inequity Race is the number one predictor of life outcomes, e.g., disproportionality in education (high school graduation rates), jobs (unemployment rate), criminal justice (arrest and incarceration rates), life expectancy, etc.

- **Root causes** are systemic and historical factors that create unequal opportunities and outcomes for different racial groups, such as discriminatory policies, biased practices, and cultural norms that perpetuate disadvantage for certain racial groups.

- **Symptoms** are often rooted in discriminatory policies and practices and, as a result, are the negative consequences of root causes, such as unequal access to healthcare, education, and economic opportunities.

- **Systems thinking** can help people understand why changes in multiple sectors are necessary to make genuinely sustainable progress towards racial equity in particular spheres such as education, health, or economic security. It can thus help identify both entry points for change and links among those entry points.

- **Unintended Consequences** are the unexpected outcomes of an action. They occur when the intended goals or outcomes of a particular action or intervention are not fully realized or when unanticipated side effects emerge.

Endnotes

[i] Curren R., Nelson, J., Marsh, D.S., Noor, S., Liu, N. "Racial Equity Action Plans, A How-to Manual." Haas Institute for a Fair and Inclusive Society, University of California, Berkeley, 2016.

[ii] Montgomery County Government. *Bill No. 27-19*. 2019. Available at: https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/COUNCIL/Resources/Files/RacialEquity/Bill27-19.pdf

[iii] City of Chicago. *Racial Equity Action Plans*. 2023. Available at: https://www.chicago.gov/city/en/sites/office-of-equity-and-racial-justice/home/racial-equity-action-plans.html#:~:text=What%20is%20a%20Racial%20Equity,and%20consultation%20on%20implementation%20strategies.

[iv] Curren R., Nelson, J., Marsh, D.S., Noor, S., Liu, N. "Racial Equity Action Plans, A How-to Manual." Haas Institute for a Fair and Inclusive Society, University of California, Berkeley, 2016.

[v] Montgomery County Government. Bill No. 27-19. 2019. Available at: https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/COUNCIL/Resources/Files/RacialEquity/Bill27-19.pdf

[vi] Montgomery County Government. Montgomery County Regulation on Racial Equity and Social Justice Action Plan. 2022. Available at: https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/exec/Resources/Files/15-21(1).pdf

[vii] For more information on formulating a Racial Equity Action Team, please see page 10 and 11 of Racial Equity Toolkit: Racial Equity Action Plans. Government Alliance for Race and Equity.