

Racial Equity Framework



A racial equity lens brings into perspective the ways in which race and ethnicity shape outcomes and experience with power, public policy, and economic opportunity, both in the present and throughout history. By incorporating this lens, we hope to separate the symptoms of inequities from the root causes, uncover patterns of inequity and sharpen focus on the outcomes we'd like to see.

The purpose of this checklist is to assist researchers in the State Priorities Partnership in carrying out their work with a full-fledged racial equity lens. Specifically, this guide is designed to:

- Ensure that every research product takes a racial equity lens into account;
- Help analysts consider racial equity at every step of the research and paper-writing process;
- Give analysts concrete tools and resources necessary to make this happen; and
- Build long-term research capacity and 'muscle memory' around research with a racial equity lens.

Like the broader process of incorporating racial equity into all facets of the work as a team, this toolkit is a work in progress and a living document. The Center on Budget's State Policy Research Team is very much open to feedback about this document, and may periodically update it.

Regardless of policy area, final product, or research timeline, there are a few key questions every researcher should ask themselves before researching and writing even begin. These questions are designed to build in racial equity to the preliminary thinking and framing of your identification of the social problem, and the policy solutions you will prescribe to address it.

Questions for Various Stages of the Research Process

Stating the Policy Problem

- What is the problem this paper/product is addressing?
- What particular barriers do people of color face with regard to this problem? In what ways is the problem worse/exacerbated for people of color?
- What contributing or compounding factors are leading to the racial inequities, if they are present?

Literature Review & Expert Interviews

- Does your literature review or conversations with experts in the field include researchers who specifically address racial equity?
- Does your literature review include research institutions that focus on racial equity?
- Have racial justice organizations weighed in on this policy issue? If they have, what do they say?

Data Analysis (see flow chart in the appendix)

- Is there data available about your issue?
- Is the data broken down by race/ethnicity, particularly at the state level?
- Is the data you want to use the best available when disaggregated by race? For example, note small sample sizes of any groups (ex. Native American communities), collapsing several ethnic groups together (ex. various Asian American communities) and other issues.
- Can you think outside the box to figure out racial impact by region, or drill down to impacts in parts of a state? For example, you could look at a given indicator in counties with high populations of a given group.
- Are you correctly differentiating between income levels and/or social class and race, making sure not to conflate the two?
- Have you looked for unconventional data sources? Such as universities, research groups, academics, interest groups, advocates, etc.

Policy Solutions

- What policy solutions do you think will address the issue at hand?
- What assumptions are you making about race and/or class and the policy solutions you are proposing?
- Do those assumptions need to be challenged? For example, beware of “trickle-down liberalism” solutions that assume that race-neutral policies will automatically help people of color (such as healthcare for all or strengthening unions).
- Are there documented instances where color-blind policy solutions have been presented but haven’t advanced racial equity? Or exacerbated racial disparities?
- What about your solutions makes you believe that this intervention helps advance racial equity?
- Have you talked with colleagues about if and how racial equity will be improved with these solutions?
- Is there a way to track outcomes of this policy with a racial equity lens?
- Do the policy options you are recommending move beyond what you would have proposed anyway if you weren’t using a racial equity lens? If not, you may need to reconsider it.

Framing and Writing About the Problem

- Is there a racial equity lens that you can use to frame the problem?
- Why hasn't there been a racial equity lens to this problem or issue before?
 - Is it an organizational decision?
- Is this racial equity lens one that our partners use?
- Is this/should this be in your wheelhouse? How can we make it something that is associated with your organization?

Research Best Practices

Solicit feedback from other team-members and technical assistance from the Center: Especially in areas where your organization has not made racial equity a focus to date, seeking advice from team members and supervisors can provide guidance while also getting everyone on the same page. Reach out to colleagues in the network or post queries on the Loop. Engage with other staff in your organizations or within the Center on Budget’s state fiscal team who may have knowledge or connections who would be helpful.

Have a clear sense of your timeline: Doing racial equity ‘correctly’ can require time and resources (especially at the beginning), ensuring you have a timeline that allows for laying a strong foundation will help make for a strong product. If the timeline is shorter, do not jettison equity altogether, but instead think about practical ways that equity can be incorporated and potentially revisited in future pieces.

Thoughtfully discuss the pros and cons of analysis and solutions: Just as how you engage in conversations to determine your organization’s positions on other policy issues, the research team – and the leadership team – will need to determine where you stand on various policy solutions using a racial equity lens. Not only will you need to discuss solutions and/or analysis, but also language you’re comfortable with using (and asking why you are or aren’t comfortable with it).

Questions on Framing and Outreach

Messaging Considerations

- Have you worked closely with your communications staff to consider how to best message or frame this policy intervention? This could include thinking about:
 - Using inclusive, non-othering, language, to depict different populations (e.g. shifting from “minorities” to “people of color” (or black, Latinx, etc.) and from labels like “vulnerable populations” to “working people of color,” “striving Americans of all races”, etc.);
 - How opportunity, shared prosperity (or some other core public value) will be bolstered if policy improves in this area;
 - Documenting the systemic barriers that led to the problem(s) you’re describing;
 - Getting early and often to the idea of solutions and offering specific solutions;
- What audience are you writing for? What is their baseline understanding of the role of race in shaping outcomes in this issue area? Are you connecting the important dots to build their understanding? For base audiences, are you talking about the issue in ways that motivate them while also modeling for them how to communicate in ways that can influence persuadable audiences?
- How do advocates and/or organizers who focus on racial justice talk about this issue? Why are they similar or different? For issues or policy proposals that you’ve not written

about before, might it make sense to get feedback from one of these advocates/organizations before publishing?

Outreach Considerations

- Are there partners that represent people of color who should be consulted to inform the racial equity lens at the conception of the research product?
- How will organizations led by people of color use this data? Are these materials accessible and appealing to the communities you're seeking to help?
- Have you reached out to partners asking for feedback throughout the process to ensure that the paper is accessible and appealing to folks from relevant communities?
- What implications does this data have on the communities of color discussed in this research, and is there a need to supplement message guidance with talking points or pitfalls to avoid when referencing the data presented?
- Are you pitching the release to more than mainstream media outlets? Such as minority newspapers, radio stations, etc.
- Are there civil rights movements or initiatives that could be helped by the data presented? (This takes initiative and knowledge about what's relevant to communities of color.)

Network Resources by Policy Topic

Please see the appendix “Resources for Racial Equity Checklist” on the Loop for a more detailed list of reports, experts, and data sources regarding racial equity. Topics include Budgeting; Education; Health & Medicaid; Immigration; Jobs, Wages and the Economy; Taxes & Revenue; and Wealth & Inequality. It is sortable by Expert, Key Paper, Data Source, and Organization. The second tab, “Disaggregated Data,” has information on datasets available by both states and race.

Racial Equity Data Resources

- US Census – various tables depending on what you need; check using [American FactFinder](#)
- [Collegelnsight](#) by TICAS – higher education database with state-by-state information on affordability, diversity, and student success
- National Center of Education Statistics, [Status and Trends in the Education of Racial and Ethnic Groups](#)

- [PolicyMap](#) – mapping tool that can show racial and ethnic population distributions for a user-defined area
- Economic Policy Institute’s [data portal](#) – includes breakouts for many variables by gender and race (national only)
- [Brookings EITC interactive](#) (Tax Policy Center to update data going forward)
- PolicyLink [National Equity Atlas](#) – request source data from any graphic from the Program for Environmental and Regional Equity at USC by emailing Justin Scoggins, scogginj@dornsife.usc.edu

Suggestions if there is no data about individuals for your research question:

- **Check the literature** – there may be a graph or other metric in an academic study that would be sufficient to make your point.
- **Approximate using administrative boundaries** – For example if county-level data is available, you could use the Census to determine majority-Hispanic counties in a state and then analyze your variable(s) of interest.

Data analysis note: Disaggregating data by race (or another way) may lead to technical questions, such as small sample sizes or the need to do statistical testing. Please contact the Center on Budget’s State Policy Research Team to ensure that ensure results are significant and meet sample size requirements, especially if working with Census or similar data.

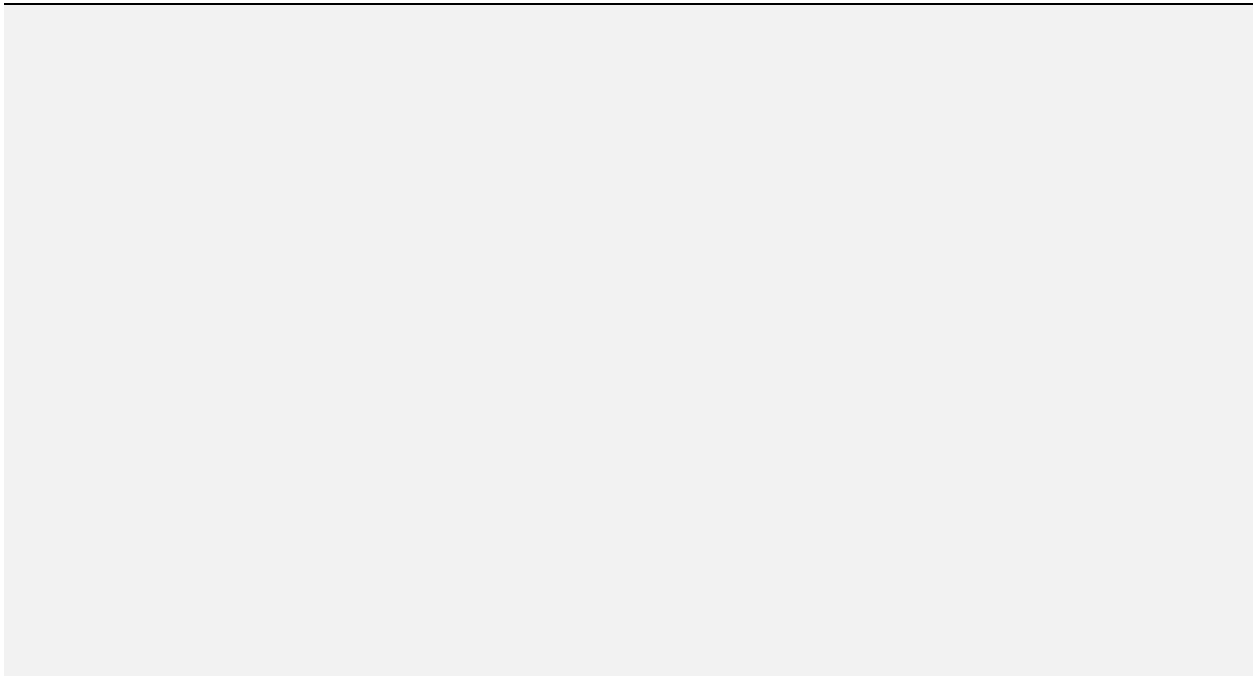
Question List

Now that you've walked through the guide, fill out the questions below.

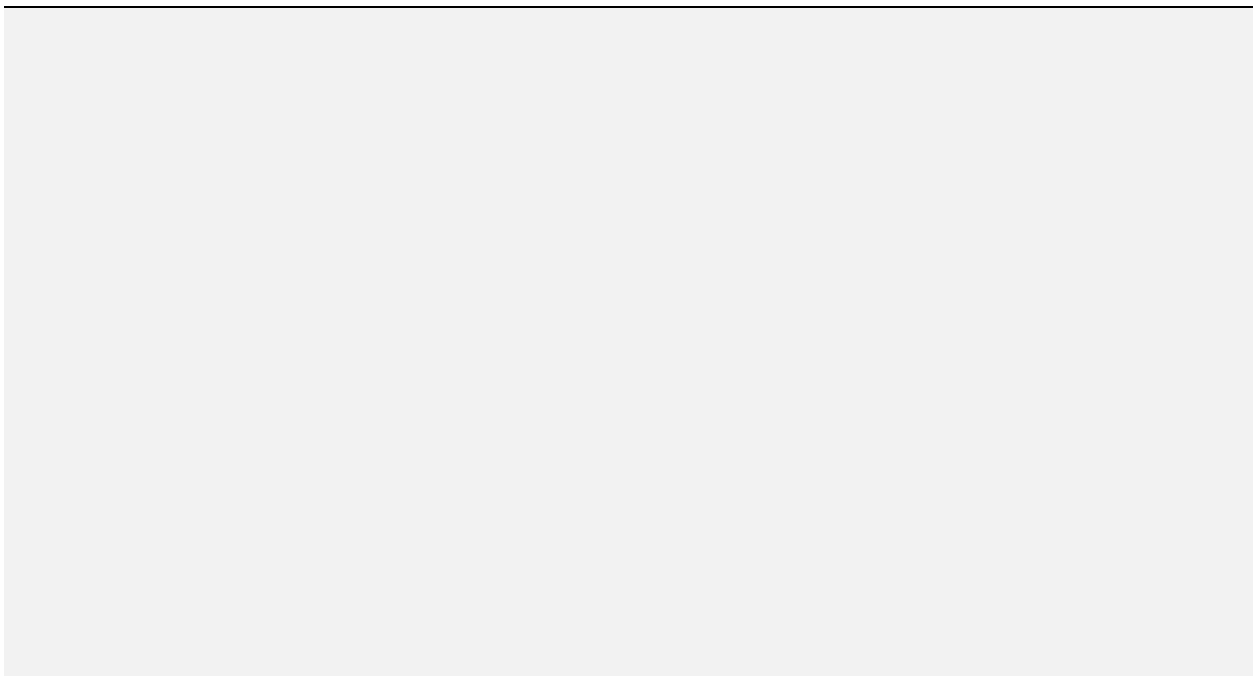
What is the policy issue at hand?

What are the race equity implications of this policy issue?

Who is your audience? How will it influence how you write this research product?



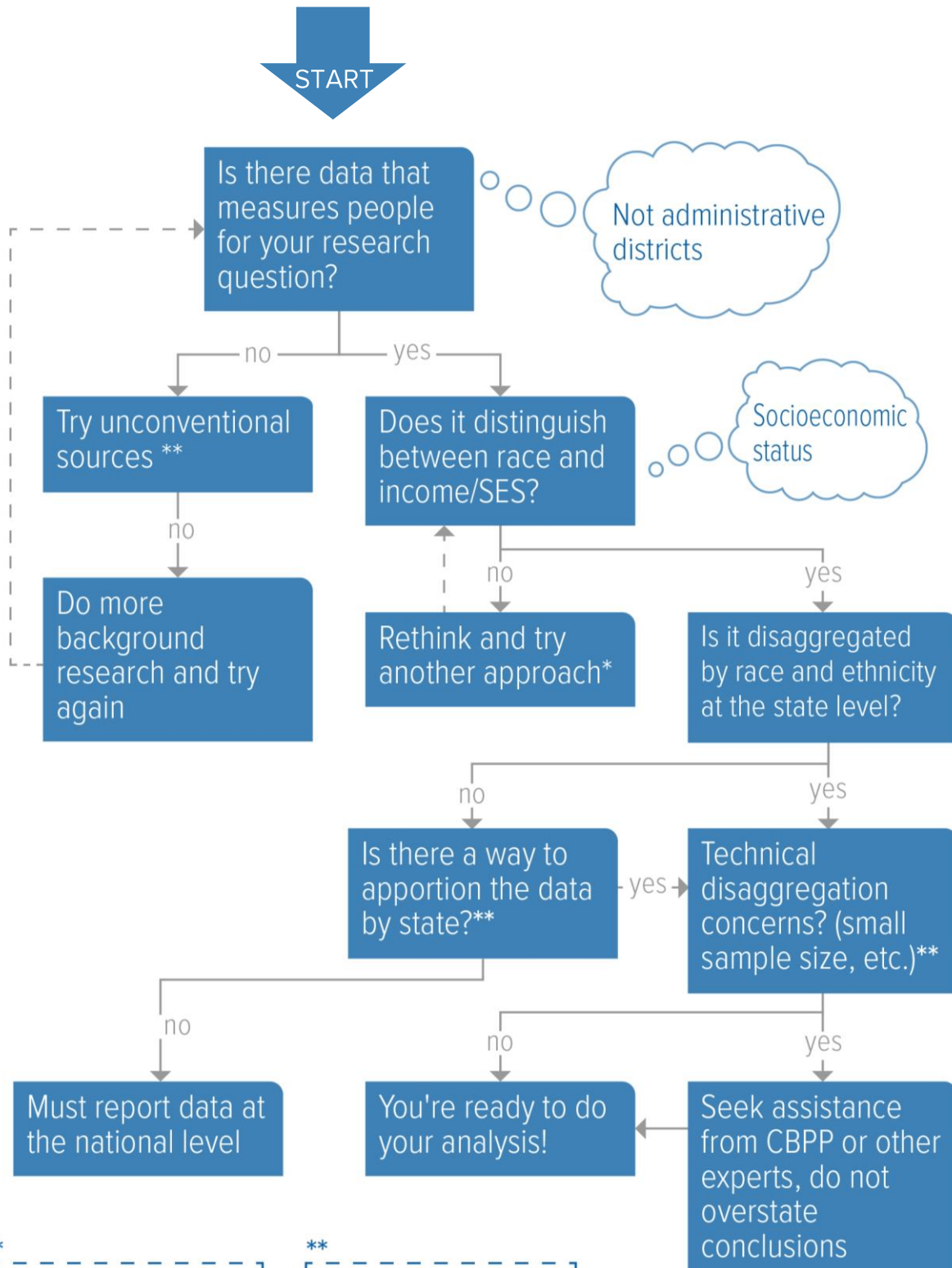
What contributing or compounding factors are leading to the racial inequities?



What data analysis will this report be using? What analysis will pertain explicitly to racial equity? (See Data Analysis appendix)

What policy solutions will be put forward in the paper?

Appendix: Data Analysis Decision Guide



* Is there a useable proxy in the literature?

** CBPP or other SPP groups may be able to advise