The City of Miami is shifting mindsets when looking at how to engage communities. Today, it is extremely important to look at ways that leaderships can re-imagine community engagement as a thoughtful tool for collaboration. As the largest city in Miami-Dade County and the second largest city in Florida, the City of Miami is home to a population of roughly 480,000 residents and more than 15 million yearly visitors. Miami enjoys a worldwide reputation for beautiful beaches, a thriving arts and culture scene, and a glamorous urban center of high rises, nightclubs, and emerging businesses. The City of Miami serves as one of the nation’s leading centers for trade, banking, finance, and tourism. While Miami is best known for its beauty, white sand beaches, and a place to vacation and dream, the fact remains that it is among the poorest cities of its size in the country, with 25.8 percent of residents living in poverty.
City Manager Dr. Emilio Gonzalez created the Department of Human Services. Historically, departments of Human Services are housed within regional or state governments. The City Manager noticed that prior to 2018, many human services and programs offered to residents were scattered throughout various departments. This idea of providing human services within municipal government will allow the city to streamline the delivery of resources to all residents. Approved by the City Commission on September 27, 2018, the Department of Human Services allows the city to be more strategic in offering services to all residents.

The City of Miami’s Department of Human Services recognizes that addressing equity and inclusion must be a part of every stage of its work for social change and community well-being. Heavily focused on the social determinants of health and well-being, the Department of Human Services aims to unify the collaborative efforts of the City Manager’s Office, City of Miami departments, and local community organizations to improve the delivery of human services to economically disadvantaged families and individuals. The department’s goal is to streamline efforts to promote awareness and access of available programs while increasing the overall delivery of services through the Department of Human Services. The department realized that organizations offering a variety of services were not making their way to low-income communities of color. This, coupled with a high rate of undocumented residents, have shown low-income communities of color to express overall distrust.

About This Series on Advancing Race Equity

Last year, APHSA incorporated a race equity lens into our Strategic Playbook—a five-year plan that guides our work and shows our commitment to advancing the potential and well-being of all people. Applying a race equity lens means at the core of our work we are actively seeking to illuminate disparate outcomes and paying disciplined attention to race and ethnicity while analyzing problems, looking for solutions, and defining success. This involves actively working to understand the environmental and structural root causes preventing social and economic mobility and health and well-being for all people. Within our national context and point in history, APHSA is committed to be an accountable actor and supportive ally in systematically eliminating racial inequity.

As part of our commitment, we will include a feature article in every issue of Policy & Practice this year showcasing communities working to apply a race equity lens to health and human services. If you have an inspiring story to tell, we would love to hear from you. Please contact Jessica Garon at jgaron@aphsa.org.

Check out the APHSA website for our full Call to Action for Human Services, which includes resources we will continue to add to throughout the year (https://aphsa.org/About/call_to_action.aspx).

Creating Synergies

The department creates synergistic opportunities between disciplines that result in an improved quality of life in our city. The department also partners with organizations to connect and provide resources to all residents within the City of Miami, with an emphasis on low-income neighborhoods and families. This includes health services and education, workforce development and placement, veterans affairs, homeless services, child care, and economic development for small businesses.

By creating synergies like these, and through advocacy, education, and service delivery, the city can create a great deal of positive impact in the community. This is just part of a wider goal to make Miami a more livable and sustainable city for everyone. In alignment with city administration and city officials, the Department of Human Services researches, develops, implements, manages, and evaluates initiatives, programs, and projects that create synergistic opportunities between disciplines that result in an improved quality of life for residents. By targeting root causes and social determinants of health, the Department of Human Services also identifies needed services within all five districts in the City of Miami. While the department is overcoming challenges to obtain community specific data, it still uses existing data while collecting information from community members to help identify their needs.

Community Liaison Framework

A Community Liaison Framework emphasizes the need for a systems change to increase community outreach, engagement, and strengthen community networks to positively affect and improve the resiliency, health, and overall well-being of community members. This framework helps build bridges between the city and the community, reducing working within silos and better addressing the community’s needs with a dual lens of equity and health and well-being. It has three main strategies: (1) build the capacity of
community leaders, (2) deepen relationships with stakeholders, and (3) integrate community members into the city’s decision-making processes. This framework centers community residents as activators and leaders of their own social change.

Community Liaisons (CLs) are residents who are hired and trained to be connectors that help community members better understand and access services, resources, and other opportunities provided by coalitions, initiatives, human services organizations, government, and other key agencies. They build sustained and meaningful engagement with community members and key stakeholders to promote community-driven sustainable change. They grow to become long-term champions for positive social change in their own communities. As a social justice strategy, CLs are paid for their time. One cannot assume or expect that individuals have the financial ability to volunteer their time. This professional and personal development opportunity should be available to everyone.

In 2017, the city worked with funders and community-based organizations to create the Community Liaison framework for Little Havana. Little Havana is a vibrant community serving as an entry point for many immigrants from Central and South America and the Caribbean, with 92 percent identifying as Hispanic and 55 percent speaking little to no English. There are nearly 49,000 family households and more than 11,421 households with children. Prior to the Affordable Care Act, 44 percent of residents carried no health insurance. Astoundingly, the median income in Little Havana is $15,213, well below the city average of $31,051 and a poverty level of 34 percent. As part of the city average of $31,051 and a poverty level of 34 percent. As part of the Little Havana needs assessment, a survey was conducted with more than 1,500 residents to gather their health information. This was very valuable because it helped us identify Little Havana’s census tracts with highest needs. There was also information about lack of trust with law enforcement, due to concerns about immigration status and racial equity.

The Process

Preparing the Community Liaison Framework: We met with key community members to understand areas of focus that should be prioritized to help address community engagement gaps and advance the goals of the city and Little Havana stakeholders.

Preparing to Foster the Community Liaison Framework: Every team member spoke Spanish fluently to communicate with the CLs and other community members and stakeholders. They attended Live Healthy Little Havana (LHLH) meetings monthly and provided reports of progress on the program.

Understanding the Community and Its Context: The issues that concerned residents the most were: physical activity, parks use, neighborhood safety, social cohesion, and transportation. As a result, community strengths, assets, key organizations, and community services were identified. Additionally, we reviewed data (by census tract) regarding demographics of Little Havana and indicators such as mental health, physical health, leisure-time activities, obesity, poverty, housing, and education. This was very valuable because it helped us identify Little Havana’s census tracts with highest needs. There was also information about lack of trust with law enforcement, due to concerns about immigration status and racial equity.

Group Project Results

- Four events (October 2018–January 2019)
- More than 220 residents and stakeholders participated
- 50 pre- and 34 post-surveys completed
- Pre- and Post-comparisons showed a significant positive change (p < 0.05) in “Strongly Agree” statements, pointing to a reliable positive effect from the Mano a Mano engagements.
- Post-evaluations were, on average, 98.4% positive (i.e., “Agree” and “Strongly Agree”).
- All survey items referring to the police’s character, reliability, protection, and overall community involvement showed at least 40 percent and up to 59 percent improvement because of participating in the event(s).
- Majority of participants who completed the post-assessment (after the events) were more confident that their voices were being heard (79%), that their participation was important (82%), that they could be part of changing perceptions and relations with the police (79%), and that events like this could be helpful and effective in this effort (74%).
- Participants who completed an open polling, known as Dotmocracy, prioritized (1) wanting to know more about the police’s public engagements and their (2) interest in learning more about the law and their rights as their top concerns.
- Although only two Mano a Mano engagements were planned in the beginning, due to their success, the police officers decided to have two additional events and continue implementing these events further in collaboration with the city and the CLs.
- The police committed to incorporating Mano a Mano into their community outreach strategies and requested continuing these monthly engagements. This shows better community policing in an area that is scared due to racial/immigration status.
- A report with recommendations and action steps was created in collaboration with the police officers. Some of these recommendations included developing a police Little Havana–specific social media account and formalizing a community liaison position to coordinate directly with the police.

See Race Equity on page 32
Developing a Workplan and Evaluation Plan: A workplan was developed focusing on the key outcomes of the CL Framework addressing individual and community capacity-building, as well as system changes in how Little Havana residents are engaged and integrated into the city’s work and strategic plan.

**Action Plan**

**Hiring Community Liaisons:** The city recruited and hired three CLs who were residents of Little Havana in April 2018. At orientation, CLs were given an overview of the program, the structure and partners, and their roles. They work an average of 30 hours each month.

**Leadership Development Training:** The CLs participated in a total of 17 training sessions that were conducted every other week. Every training session was evaluated by each CL at the end of the session.

**CL Group Project/Mano a Mano:** During the first four months of the program, the CLs participated in several community events throughout Little Havana and had the opportunity to talk with residents openly regarding their concerns and issues surrounding health and well-being in their community. They also conducted interviews with different stakeholders, including churches, schools, and business owners, among others. Based on information gathered from community members and other stakeholders, the most pressing community issue of concern was the relationship between the community and police, as well as enforcement, in general. Issues such as race, equity, social injustice, and immigration were identified as concerns.

Based on this information, the CLs designed the project Mano a Mano to improve this relationship and increase trust between residents and the police in Little Havana toward a shared vision of citizenship and community to improve health and well-being. The initial plan was co-designed with local police and included implementing two events to bring community and police together and further evaluate both of their concerns.
By Tracy Wareing Evans

We want every human being to live a happy, vibrant life. It’s at the heart of what we aspire to, and what brings so many leaders in the American Public Human Services Association (APHSA) network to share insights, spark new ideas, and work collectively together.

Last fall, at a gathering of our local leaders at the 10th annual Harvard Health and Human Services Summit, the call to action was clear—to advance our vision, we must commit not only to span the boundaries of human services, health, education, housing, and justice systems, but to get underneath the structural inequities and biases within these systems in order to achieve well-being for all people.
We must commit to working with families to lift up community-relevant strategies that build health and well-being and to taking a deep look at not only how parents and their children are impacted by poverty, housing, and lack of economic opportunity, but why our systems have disproportionately impacted race and ethnicity.

As one APHSA member warned, “we will never be the country that we pretend we are if we don’t get at race equity.” Another leader noted that if we cannot get underneath the levers that cause structural inequities, then we will continue to talk around the edges and be forever stuck in “managing side-shows” rather than building truly thriving communities.

The imperative is clear—and leaders in our network are asking how to take direct action and ensure we are advancing our work through a race equity lens. What is required in our agencies, in our own communities, in our state, and as a collective group of national leaders? What we know is that the answers to these questions are not singular nor simple.

The challenge before all of us is complex, dynamic, rooted in historical policy and practice, and bigger than our field. There is no silver bullet—no single approach. We must create platforms to learn from each other, share our insights and progress, and tackle the roadblocks together.

At APHSA, we are committed to supporting the deep and intentional work required to illuminate where structural inequities exist and why. We believe the work is both an urgent imperative for our field if we are to make strides in achieving real and sustainable race equity, and a marathon, for which we must be willing to adjust the pace to make it to the finish line.

Key insights from APHSA’s county and city leaders include focusing on the following factors that enable traction within health and human services agencies and at the community level.

**Leadership**

Top-level support, especially from elected external officials, can help bring equity to the forefront of the work and give it legitimacy.

Framing efforts as inclusive and positive can help create community as well as internal workforce buy-in.

The proactive and frequent presence of top public-sector leaders in the community, including directly participating in neighborhood and partner events, helps build trust and understanding of government’s role.

Addressing structural inequities (e.g., affordable housing) has more impact when neighboring jurisdictions or adjoining regions adopt common goals.

**Data Insights and Technology**

It takes intentionality and focused, routine analysis on data and practice to shine a spotlight on the roots of structural inequities.

Data that succinctly and clearly show the disparities and inequities (i.e., how big the gap is) can be a catalyst for community buy-in and necessary investments.

Leveraging data showing the socio-economic disparities and/or impact on child well-being can be a politically viable way to advance efforts.

Predictive risk modeling through data analytics can be a supportive tool in making decisions (not a decision-maker), and requires transparency with the data and algorithm.

Relevant and impactful data can be qualitative in nature too, especially from the authentic voice and perspective of people who have or are receiving services.

Showing the long-term economic burden to a community based on how we do business now, versus what it

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**Tracy Wareing Evans** is the President and CEO of the American Public Human Services Association.
Community Engagement

Proactively working with community-based organizations to understand where government supports (direct service or backbone) can help make current resources available for investment elsewhere helps the community understand government’s role and address unmet community needs.

Partnering with an anchor institution (such as a community-based organization or an academic institution) creates legitimacy and helps build trust.

Partnering with related sectors (e.g., schools, hospitals, community colleges) to provide access to primary prevention through place-based, trusted institutions helps build trust and advance equity goals.

Partnering with employers and businesses to make the business case can also help generate the political will from policymakers for necessary systems-level changes and upfront investments.

Inviting community partners to participate in training creates a shared learning platform that supports the broader workforce required to advance race equity.

Workforce Well-Being and Engagement

An inside-out strategy that begins with in-house conversations and training can provide foundational support and help normalize race conversations for the long-term focus this work requires.

Outside training supports from organizations like the Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE) and others can help ensure staff training that goes beyond the diversity and cultural competence trainings of the past.

Infusing specific training sessions on race equity with strategic vision anchors staff development in the mission and can create organic efforts led by staff to advance understanding of each other.

Strides can be made over time in workplace culture as people served in the system are employed at the agency.

As these insights make clear, we must be both internally focused to enhance our own workforces’ understanding and orientation of what it means to work through a race equity lens and be externally focused to co-create solutions with partners and communities. We are humbled and heartened to work alongside leaders who are heeding the Call to Action.2 If you are reading this post, we hope you will join us and share your own successes and challenges along the way so that we can all learn together.

Reference Notes
2. See https://aphsa.org/About/call_to_action.aspx
A CALL TO ACTION
"Let’s start where you are,” is a phrase heard often at Denver Human Services. We recognize that no matter who we are, we all need a little help sometimes. We’re human, after all.

Yet we know that asking for help may cause some of us to feel fear or shame. We might not even know what kind of help is available to meet our needs. The information may be complicated or unclear. We may not know where to start.

And in the middle of these unprecedented times, confronted with a global public health emergency and an economic recession that rivals the Great Depression in its magnitude, we know people may feel more uncertainty about where to turn.
At Denver Human Services, we believe that help should be available when and where you need it. This is a key goal that drives our strategic vision of a healthy community where every person is connected, supported, safe, and well—which we call Human Together. During the spring of 2020, this vision has proven more important than ever. It has been our north star, inspiring all of us to seize the opportunity within the crisis to do even better for our community.

The Foundations of Human Together

One in three people in Denver—about a quarter of a million people—receive support from Denver Human Services in the moments that matter most. In implementing Human Together, we are on our way toward co-creating, with our community, an ecosystem that helps us to continue to meet our mission of protecting those in harm's way and helping all people in need. Over time this helps us prevent more people from needing our services in the first place.

To communicate our vision and the direction of our work, we created the Denver Human Services Value Sphere. Our Executive Director, Don Mares, took the Human Services Value Curve (developed in collaboration by APHSA and Leadership for a Networked World at Harvard University, with input from human services leaders) and adapted it into a unique model for our department. It’s based on the framework that charts a path for human services organizations to transform from a “regulative” to a “generative” model but uses Denver-centric language that we believe is clear and empowering for our staff and partners. The Denver Human Services Value Sphere describes our aims to:

- Provide quality, timely essential services with integrity, kindness, and respect;
- Partner to build a network of opportunity that identifies root causes and responds to the needs of the whole person and whole family; and
- Support a healthy and connected community.

Flowing from our vision and Value Sphere, we developed five strategic goals that provide direction and guide our decision-making about the specific strategies and partnerships we are pursuing to achieve our vision. Our goals include:

- **Equity & Access**: Ensure every individual in Denver has access to the support they need to live a healthy and high-quality life;
- **Safety & Wellness**: Support and advance sustainable health, wellness, and safety outcomes for the community;
- **Connectivity**: Increase connectivity as a department to improve community partnerships, reduce internal silos, and work collaboratively with city and state partners;
- **Economic Resilience**: Strengthen economic well-being across the lifespan to increase access to opportunity; and
- **Denver Human Services Workforce**: Support a healthy and connected workforce that is equipped to strengthen the communities of Denver.

We developed Human Together with the input of our staff, customers, and diverse community partners, to better understand their needs, preferences, opportunities, and gaps in services. We heard from our community and our staff, many of whom have engaged with our services themselves at one point, that there is stigma associated with our services. So we recognized that in order to reach this healthy and connected community that we envision, we need to change the way
we are seen by and interact with our community now. We knew we needed to change the look and feel of our organization. So we created a brand campaign. It’s called #BeHuman. And it’s way more than a brand campaign. #BeHuman is as an intrinsic component of our service delivery model. Our #BeHuman campaign provides critical information about our services through uplifting stories about our real customers and staff, told in their own words. We’re deploying this campaign in many environments—through social media, in our offices, on the radio, and on billboards in the community. The campaign has also instilled an increased sense of pride in our work and organizational belonging.

**Using Human Together to Increase Equity and Access During the Pandemic**

Through our goal to increase “equity and access” in our service delivery, we strive to “ensure every individual in Denver has access to the support that they need to live a healthy and high-quality life.” In articulating our Human Together vision and creating an action plan to achieve it, we knew early on that we would need to move beyond the walls of our service delivery centers and out into the community. We knew we needed to rethink “business as usual” and move to increasingly bring our services and programs to the people and communities that need them, instead of always asking them to come to us. In recent years Denver Human Services had created an expectation from our community for in-person service. Through our Mayor’s Innovation Fund (iFund) award-winning project “Skip the Line,” we sought to shift this expectation through an enterprise-wide effort to transform our service delivery models. Our premise was that there are many online tools, like online banking tools, that serve primarily middle and higher income individuals. While we know that many (though not all) of our customers have smartphone or computer capabilities and utilize social media apps, our customers were less likely to utilize the state’s online application tools for public benefits and many of our local programs were still paper based. Through “Skip the Line,” we started creating tools that help decrease the amount of time people need to spend “in line” waiting for our services, and increase the ways they can access information and programs “online.”

So when the COVID-19 pandemic arrived in Denver, our team was poised to swiftly close our physical offices and continue to be fully operational for our community through remote options, new innovations, and community connections. In order to prevent the spread of the virus among our staff and our customers, within a matter of days we shifted our 1200-person workforce to a largely work-from-home operation that could maintain service delivery. Using our #BeHuman campaign as a guide, our team produced a video to show our community how to access our services online and by phone. Using our “Skip the Line” principles, our team quickly collaborated to create digital options for some programs that previously were only available in person. “Let’s start where you are” took on a new and quite literal meaning during the stay-at-home orders. Recognizing that some members of our community may not have adequate tools or Internet access to utilize online options, our team created a new “document runner” program to drop off and pick up benefits applications from the homes of callers who are new applicants, utilizing social distancing protocols. That program was also introduced to the community with its own #BeHuman video and with the help of Denver Mayor Michael B. Hancock through his regular public updates.

Now that everyone is more settled into working from home, we are engaged in ongoing evaluation, but we believe these remote methods are providing an improved experience for many of our customers and our staff at the same time. Despite an initial substantial increase in applications for benefits, our staff was able to provide a better experience and swifter response for our phone customers than before the pandemic, for example. As communities around the country are reopening, at Denver Human Services we are continuing to look to Human Together as our north star. We are working deliberately to ensure that we leverage all of the innovations our team has created and continue to be nimble in our service delivery to increase equity and access and meet the needs of our community. We recognize the growing research from across the country that points to a disparate impact of COVID-19 on people with low income and in communities of color, so we want to be deliberate as we continue to evaluate our service delivery model to minimize the ongoing potential for spread of the virus, particularly among those most at risk. To ensure that our decisions are user driven, we continue engaging our customers and community partners in our planning efforts as well.

Our Denver Human Services team, in collaboration with our partners, has gone above and beyond to continue to meet the needs of our community during these extraordinary times. We are grateful for this opportunity to publicly thank them for their selfless dedication to the work and their tireless efforts. It is because of all of you that, Together, we’ve still got this!
A CALL TO ACTION
Centering Racial Equity Across the Data Life Cycle

By Sharon Zanti, Matthew Katz, and Amy Hawn Nelson

Policymakers strive to make data-driven decisions that support the common good, and as a result, sharing and integrating administrative data are now commonplace across local, state, and federal agencies. Cross-sector data sharing and integration enable the transformation of individual-level information into actionable intelligence that can be used to understand urgent and long-term community needs; improve services, systems, and practices; develop innovative policies and interventions; and, ultimately, build stronger communities.¹ Yet, the way that cross-sector data are used can also reinforce legacies of racist policies and produce inequitable resource allocation, access, and outcomes.²,³
About This Series on Advancing Race Equity

Last year, APHSA incorporated a race equity lens into our Strategic Playbook—a five-year plan that guides our work and shows our commitment to advancing the potential and well-being of all people.

Applying a race equity lens means at the core of our work we are actively seeking to illuminate disparate outcomes and paying disciplined attention to race and ethnicity while analyzing problems, looking for solutions, and defining success. This involves actively working to understand the environmental and structural root causes preventing social and economic mobility and health and well-being for all people. Within our national context and point in history, APHSA is committed to be an accountable actor and supportive ally in systematically eliminating racial inequity.

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Check out the APHSA website for our full Call to Action for Human Services, which includes resources we will continue to add to throughout the year (https://aphsa.org/About/call_to_action.aspx).

We Discourage

- Broad access to individual-level linked data
- Data use for enforcement or investigation actions against residents
- Use of predictive algorithms without determining responsibility, explainability, accuracy, auditability, and fairness*
- Use of linked data across institutions that have patterns of institutional racism, specifically, law enforcement, which has demonstrated significant racialized harm without sufficient safeguards in place

*https://www.fatml.org/resources/principles-for-accountable-algorithms

Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) and/or people living in poverty are often over-represented within government agency data systems, and disparate representation can cause disparate impact. Laws, policies, business rules, and narratives are affected by structural racism, which is the root cause of the racial disparities evident in system outcomes. Such disparities demonstrate the consequences of structural racism: that, as a group, BIPOC in the United States have worse outcomes in many human services system measures regardless of socioeconomic status.

Since its inception in 2008, Actionable Intelligence for Social Policy (AISP) has developed extensive knowledge and best practices for shared data infrastructure to support reuse of administrative data for research, evaluation, and policy analysis. However, when sites sought guidance in using integrated data systems for equity, justice, and centering community voice, there were few resources to offer, nor exemplars to replicate. Since January 2019, AISP has led a diverse workgroup of civic data stakeholders with the overarching goal of better understanding and documenting best practices for administrative data reuse that centers on racial equity. The workgroup represented diverse perspectives across race, gender, and geography, and included community organizers, government administrators, and nonprofit staff from across the country and all levels of government. Over the course of 18 months, the workgroup developed research questions and a research framework, collected data, and, ultimately, co-created a toolkit for centering racial equity throughout human services data use and integration.

We Strongly Encourage

- Inclusive participatory governance around data access and use
- Social license for data access and use
- A developmental approach to data sharing and integration—start small and grow
The Toolkit for Centering Racial Equity Throughout Data Integration presents this framework of best practices, strategies, and suggested activities to center racial equity throughout the administrative data reuse life cycle. Additionally, the toolkit includes detailed examples of positive and problematic practice and site-based examples of current “Work in Action.” This process is ongoing as the toolkit is an evolving resource. The following sections highlight key recommendations and examples for centering racial equity at each stage of the data life cycle, including careful considerations of risk versus benefit.

### Racial Equity Across the Data Life Cycle

#### Racial Equity in Planning

Centering racial equity requires you to develop an understanding of the local racial, social, and historical context in which your effort is taking place. As part of that learning process, we recommend engaging diverse stakeholders early on in conversations about data-sharing goals, risks and benefits, and project plans.

#### Table 1: Positive and Problematic Practices, Planning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive Practices</th>
<th>Problematic Practices</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Including diverse perspectives (e.g., community members with lived experiences and agency staff who understand the data) on planning committees</td>
<td>Using only token “representation” in agenda-setting, question creation, governance, or institutional review board</td>
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<tr>
<td>Building capacity for researchers, administrators, and community participants to work together on setting agenda</td>
<td>Using deadlines or grant deliverables as an excuse to rush or avoid authentic community engagement</td>
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<td>Researching, understanding, and disseminating history of local policies, systems, and structures involved, including past harms and future opportunities</td>
<td>Using only historical administrative data to describe the problem, without a clear understanding of harmful policies and co-created plan of action to improve outcomes</td>
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<td>Lifting up research needs of the community to funders; helping shape funding strategy with funders to support community-driven research</td>
<td>Accepting grant/philanthropic funding for a project that is not a community priority or need</td>
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#### Work in Action: Broward County, FL demonstrates how using Participatory Action Research in planning can infuse racial equity throughout the data life cycle. Broward County’s data collaborative intentionally involves system participants in governance, research, evaluation, and solution creation to address racial, economic, and social/spatial gaps between predominantly White researchers and policymakers, and those using public services. In planning, Broward County is creating an integrated data system that supports sharing strengths-based stories about the community and using data to co-create system and policy improvements.

See Racial Equity on page 32
Racism Equity in Data Collection

Administrative data are typically collected for operational purposes, rather than for research or evaluation. Because of this, there are potential risks for reusing administrative data for research, evaluation, and policy analysis. These data are vulnerable to biases, inaccuracies, and incomplete or missing data, and often include individuals living in communities that are over-surveilled by government. An equity lens considers these inherent vulnerabilities in data collection and how they can be reduced or contextualized appropriately.

Table 2: Positive and Problematic Practices, Data Collection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive Practices</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adhering to data management best practices to secure data as they are collected—specifically, with carefully considered, role-based access</td>
<td>Assuming that programmatic staff collecting data have training in data management and data security.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Including agency staff and community stakeholders in defining which data should be collected or reused</td>
<td>Inviting only researchers to identify data needs</td>
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<td>Collecting only what is necessary to your context</td>
<td>Failing to consider which data carry an elevated risk of causing harm if redisclosed when determining which data to collect in your context (e.g., a housing program that collects resident HIV status)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strong efforts to support metadata documentation, including key dimensions of metadata such as: description, provenance, technical specifications, preservation, rights, citation</td>
<td>Failure to clearly identify, explain, and document data integrity issues, including data that are: inaccurate, undocumented, unavailable, incomplete, inconsistent</td>
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<tr>
<td>Including qualitative stories to contextualize quantitative data</td>
<td>Allowing quantitative data to “speak for itself” without context or discussion</td>
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Work in Action: The Allegheny County, PA initiative to collect sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression (SOGIE) data in child welfare validates an intersectional approach to centering equity in data collection. For this effort, the Department of Human Services had to address privacy and data security concerns surrounding youth SOGIE data, the implications of sharing these data with external stakeholders, and the complexities and costs of updating information technology (IT) systems. Additionally, the department engaged with IT staff to ensure they knew the importance of these changes in order to mitigate harm during the design process.
Critical assess which data can be used and viewed, by who, when, and for what purposes. Data access—including whether data are open, restricted, or unavailable—should be carefully considered based upon how the release of such data may disproportionately impact some individuals and communities more than others. Alternatively, not making certain data available, such as data that contextualizes community challenges, may also lead to disparate impacts.

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<tr>
<th>Positive Practices</th>
<th>Problematic Practices</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Open data</strong></td>
<td>Ongoing open data that is based upon problematic indexes or algorithms, with a history of discriminatory impact on communities (e.g., release of “teacher effectiveness scores” and “school report cards”)</td>
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<td>Open data that have been identified as valuable through engagement with individuals represented within the data</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clear data release schedules and information on where to go and how to access data once they are released</td>
<td>Releasing data that can be re-identified (e.g., data released by small geographies may be identifiable by local residents)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Restricted data</strong></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adhering to data management best practices for data access, including clear data destruction parameters (if applicable) following use</td>
<td>Assuming that data management best practices are being followed without explicit protocols and oversight in place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utmost care given to de-identification and anonymization of data prior to release</td>
<td>Releasing data that can be re-identified (e.g., data that have not been properly anonymized or include aggregate or subgroup data without suppressing small cell sizes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accessible data request process with clear policies and procedures for submitting a request and how requests are evaluated</td>
<td>Unwillingness to release data, or limiting access to researchers or individuals with an “in”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Unavailable data</strong></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clear documentation of why data are unavailable (e.g., specific statute, legislation, data quality explanation, data are not digitized, undue burden in data preparation)</td>
<td>Refusal to release data when release is permissible and would not pose an undue burden</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Work in Action:** The Birth through Eight Strategy for Tulsa (BEST) data collaborative in Tulsa, OK provides an example of balancing access to integrated data while protecting privacy and data security. The collaborative was formed to address race, equity, and service overlap challenges in the community, and brought together data from 32 programs across local government, nonprofit, private-sector, and philanthropic organizations to do so. BEST piloted a platform utilizing privacy-preserving record linkage that supported data integration while keeping individual and organizational data private and secure. The platform’s use of cryptographic technology allows researchers to integrate data more quickly, at lower cost, while enhancing privacy for individuals and organizations.
Racial Equity in Algorithms/Statistical Tools

Use of algorithmic tools by the government is becoming increasingly common. It is important to understand that no algorithms are race neutral as they reflect the biases of the data that feed them and the people who create them. To center racial equity, strategies and tools should be utilized to ensure transparency, assess bias, and determine the positive and negative consequences of using such statistical tools.

Table 4: Positive and Problematic Practices, Algorithms and Statistical Tools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive Practices</th>
<th>Problematic Practices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Involving diverse stakeholders in early conversations about the purpose of an algorithm prior to development and implementation</td>
<td>Developing and implementing algorithms for human services without stakeholder involvement or alignment across multiple agencies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clearly identifying and communicating potential benefits and risks to stakeholders</td>
<td>Implementing an algorithm with no clear benefit to individuals included in the data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human-led algorithm use (i.e., human can override algorithm at any point in process)</td>
<td>Elevating algorithmic decision making over judgment of seasoned practitioners; no human involvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using “early warning” indicators to provide meaningful services and supports to clients</td>
<td>Using “early warning” indicators for increased surveillance, punitive action, monitoring, or “threat” amplification via a risk score</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Work in Action: In May 2018, New York City convened a task force to assess the use and proliferation of automated decision systems (ADS) across city services. Prior to the task force’s first public forum, four graduate students built a website, Automating. NYC, designed to make ADS conversations more accessible to the community. They worked with city agencies to develop case studies across social services systems, adapted nontechnical activities to demonstrate algorithmic concepts, and incorporated individual stories to accompany technical explanations. The site also included practical action steps and allowed community members to ask informed questions about how ADS contribute to unjust systems, with the hope that future systems are built to benefit the community.

Racial Equity in Data Analysis

A racial equity lens during data analysis incorporates individual, community, political, and historical contexts of race to inform analyses, conclusions, and recommendations. Solely relying on statistical outputs will not necessarily lead to insights without careful consideration of data quality, disaggregation, and statistical power. However, disaggregation is also a series of tradeoffs. Without disaggregating data by subgroup, analyses can unintentionally gloss over inequity and lead to invisible experiences. Alternatively, creating a subgroup may shift the focus to a population that is already over-surveilled. Given the complex series of decisions inherently involved in centering racial equity within analysis, iterative work with strong participation from a variety of stakeholders is critical.

Table 5: Positive and Problematic Practices, Data Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive Practices</th>
<th>Problematic Practices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Using participatory research to bring multiple perspectives to the interpretation of the data</td>
<td>Describing outcomes without examining larger systems, policies, and social conditions that contribute to disparities in outcomes (e.g., poverty, housing segregation, access to education)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaging domain experts (e.g., agency staff, caseworkers) and methods experts (e.g., data scientists, statisticians) to ensure that the data model used is appropriate to examine the research questions in local context</td>
<td>Applying a “one size fits all” approach to analysis (i.e., what works in one place may not be appropriate elsewhere)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correlating place to outcomes (e.g., overlaying redlining data to outcomes)</td>
<td>Leaving out the role of historical policies in the interpretation of findings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using appropriate comparison groups to contextualize findings</td>
<td>Making default comparisons to White outcomes (e.g., assuming White outcomes are normative)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disaggregating data and analyzing intersectional experiences (e.g., looking at race by gender)</td>
<td>Disregarding the individual or community context in the method of analysis and interpretation of results</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Work in Action: #ChangeFocusNYC, a participatory action research project born out of a partnership between New York City’s Administration for Children’s Services (ACS) and Department of Education, aims to understand experiences of New York City youth involved with multiple city agencies and recommend policies that could benefit them. Fifteen youth were chosen to partner with academics to design and implement #ChangeFocusNYC. Youth investigators participated in all research phases and were essential contributors during development of the analytic plan. Collaboratively generated answers to research questions are helping ACS work toward a system in which young people are continuously engaged in shaping the institutions that impact their lives.
Racial Equity in Reporting and Dissemination

Ensure analyses and results are made available to the public in a variety of formats, avoiding jargon that is specific to internal staff or academic audiences. Pay particular attention to which data are highlighted, how they are framed, and the general readability and accessibility of communication. For some projects, it may even be possible to transform dissemination into an opportunity for community conversation, allowing you to supplement quantitative findings with informative qualitative feedback and lived experience.

Table 6: Positive and Problematic Practices, Reporting and Dissemination

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive Practices</th>
<th>Problematic Practices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Developing differentiated messaging for different audiences that considers the appropriate level of detail and technical jargon, language, length, format, etc.</td>
<td>Using intentionally dense language with low readability, especially for non-native language learners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reporting data in an actionable form to improve the lives of those represented in the data (e.g., analyzing food purchase data to identify food deserts and guide development of grocery stores)</td>
<td>Reporting data that are not actionable or that are intended to be punitive (e.g., analyzing food purchase data to remove recipients from Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) or other benefits)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledging structural racism or other harms to communities that are embedded in the data</td>
<td>Attempting to describe individual experiences with aggregate or “whole population” data without analyzing disparate impact based on race, gender, and other intersections of identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing clear documentation of the data analysis process along with analytic files, so that others can reproduce the results</td>
<td>Obscuring the analytic approach used in a way that limits reproducibility</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Work in Action: The City of Asheville, NC created a story map, “Mapping Equity in Asheville,” which links racial demographics over time to location. Major increases in population, tourism, and economic activity over the past decade have had unintended negative consequences for low-income residents and residents of color, leading to widespread gentrification and displacement. Publishing results of geospatial analyses online in a user-friendly format has allowed Asheville residents to better understand the connection between racialized policies and physical location, particularly with regard to redlining practices. The story map provides valuable information to government and community members to inform policy, programming, and resource allocation.

Conclusion

While centering racial equity throughout the data life cycle is a new consideration for many public agencies, there are actionable steps every site can take, right now, with whatever resources are available, to center racial equity. Perhaps the most promising finding that emerged through all stages of this project is that sites are eager to learn and improve their practices. The twelve “Work in Action” sites featured in the toolkit (see page 50) have worked toward more equitable power relations, the cocreation of innovative solutions, the healing of some harm, and made progress toward authentic communication across racialized hierarchies and segregated spaces.

All public-serving agencies are at a pivotal moment, one in which the use of data is accelerating in both exciting and concerning ways. We have access to greater amounts of data than at any other point in our history, but practice lags behind, placing BIPOC at the greatest risk of the “data-ification of injustice.”

Working toward racial equity is not an end goal, but a process, and there are countless places to begin across the data life cycle. Acknowledging history, harm, and the potentially negative implications of data integration for groups marginalized by inequitable systems is a key first step, but it is only a first step. To center racial equity, we must center the voices, stories, expertise, and knowledge of communities in decision making. With inclusive participatory governance around data access and use, administrative data reuse can support collective action with shared power to improve outcomes and harness data for social good. We must continue to build understanding and support for adopting positive practices by acknowledging the harm of current problematic practices throughout the data life cycle. To move these conversations forward and see positive equitable practices normed, resourced, and adopted, we must cultivate spaces where public data users can come together and debate these nuanced topics in good faith to ensure ethical administrative data reuse.

Acknowledgments

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We would also like to acknowledge the extensive contributions of the workgroup, including Niobi Armah, Bridget Blount, Angela Bluhm, Katy Collins, Sheila Dugan, Sue Gallagher, Laura Jones, Chris Kingsley, Ritika Sharma Kurup, Tamika Lewis, Rick Little, Tawana Pettry, Raintry Salk, and Michelle Shevin.

We are also indebted to the contributions of sites featured as Work in Action toward centering racial equity, including Allegheny County (PA), Department of Human Services, Office of Analytics, Technology, & Planning and Office of Equity & Inclusion; Automating. NYC, Birth through Eight Strategy for...
This focus on impact, known as the Human Services Value Curve, serves to remind us not to lose sight of our ultimate goal: sustained well-being of children and youth, healthier families and communities, opportunities for employment and economic independence, and fairness and equity across all the places we live.

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The Human Services Value Curve helped inform the National Imperative report, along with a strategy playbook developed earlier by the Alliance, to infuse research-based practices and values to guide CBOs in achieving excellence and last impact. The guidebook, “Commitments of High-Impact Nonprofit Organizations,” offered a framework and foundational direction that led to the north star solutions. When applied through the framework of the commitments, these north stars offer a clear road map and path forward for the human services ecosystem that can reshape the future of health and human services for the achievement of breakthrough results that can create a more healthy and equitable society.

The North Stars—Road Map to Transformational Solutions

The following provides a brief preview of the themes of each of the five north stars from the report and how they can help reshape the delivery of more equitable H/HS in a way that will not only adapt to the challenges and inequities of today’s pandemic but can prepare and guide us for future disruptive events.

Commitment to Outcomes

This pandemic, and the inequities and health disparities it has revealed, is forcing both public human services agencies and CBOs to reframe the way we lead and operate. This means shifting from a focus on services delivered (i.e., number of foster beds filled) to outcomes achieved (i.e., children successfully living with their families or children achieving other lasting permanency). This shift will enable more human services—sector participants—community-based organizations, public-sector partners, and funders—to invest in innovation and new capabilities.

It is not an easy shift to make. The long-standing systemic inequities illuminated by COVID-19, along with the growing understanding that health extends beyond health clinic care to include the social determinants, underscores the urgency for H/HS to partner more deeply to develop high-impact, equitable solutions that lead to long-term, positive outcomes in population health and well-being.

As we continue to seek ways to improve health outcomes during and after the pandemic, with an intent to move to a preventive system with upstream solutions, it is critical that public and private funders invest fully in human services as part of the community infrastructure that contributes to health and well-being. These investments must include resources that build the capacity for better outcome measurements.

Capacity for Innovation

The pandemic has demonstrated our ability to change dramatically in a matter of days and impact the context in which people live their lives. It has also revealed the consequences and challenges that arise when we implement strategies that lack a human-centered design approach, providing further support for the critical need for the human services ecosystem to invest in its capacity to innovate with community voice and lived experience at the center.

The scale of innovation that will be needed to address this challenge will require engaging all voices and focusing on community strengths that result in high-impact, sustainable solutions that further build community capacity and resiliency. Community-based human services organizations are uniquely positioned in proximity to people and communities. By increasing their capacity for innovation they can help to

Reference Notes
5. See note #3.
The New Jersey Department of Children and Families (NJDCF) believes that Black Lives Matter. We recognize that there is, and has always been, inequity in the child welfare system and that nationally—as well as in New Jersey—children of color are disproportionately placed in out-of-home care through child welfare and behavioral health systems. They also stay longer in out-of-home placement than their White and Latinx peers. And while there have been efforts in New Jersey through the years to address this inequity in the system, racial inequity remains pervasive and persistent.
This has been an ongoing issue for child welfare agencies across the country, even more so as racial and social justice movements are raising awareness about the impact of structural and systemic racism facing Black families. Early in 2018, New Jersey’s DCF included race equity as a core component in its 2019–2021 NJ DCF Strategic Plan (https://www.nj.gov/dcf/ about/strategic.html). These hard and uncomfortable discussions about race and equity are imperative for changes to be made and to take hold. And, the NJDCF is affirming its commitment to Black families and cultivating transparency and trust in a variety of ways.

The NJDCF mapped the geographic distribution of current child protection reports to historical geographic zones that were “redlined” by the Home Owners’ Loan Corporation in the 1930s and it gave us a compelling sense of how racist policies of the past continue to impact families and communities today. As a result, the NJDCF created a Race Equity Steering Committee to study department data and policies, as well as to research best practices and engage experts in the field—one of whom is renowned race equity and child welfare expert, Dr. Carol Spigner, Professor Emeritus of the University of Pennsylvania, who is working with leadership to identify, acknowledge, and rectify racial disparities.

Among the internal changes taking place, the department is examining racial disparity county by county through ChildStat, a continuous quality improvement approach that reviews county and local office data, including removals, short stays, and permanency. These reviews allow staff to monitor removals and placements, review related policies and procedures, and self-correct as necessary, to reflect the department’s values and priorities.

In addition, the department is working on revisions to policies regarding background checks for kinship caregivers to keep children connected to their biological families. Increasing kinship placement is also one of NJDCF’s transformation goals, and it ensures that if an out-of-home placement is necessary for the child’s safety, that they are placed in familiar surroundings, with a higher likelihood of reunification. And, the department is making steady progress in reducing the use of family separation as a tool in its child protection system—from more than 13,000 children in out-of-home placement at its peak in 2003 to just a few more than 4,000 children today, and year-over-year reductions in out-of-home placements continue, by 10 percent in 2018 and 20 percent in 2019.

The NJDCF has partnered with the Children in Court improvement committee and the Administrative Office of the Courts in New Jersey to engage in joint training and education opportunities regarding race equity, and to examine racial disparity in permanency outcomes. The department has created an Office of Family Voice that allows real-time feedback and guidance from people who have previously been unheard. An Office of Staff Health and Wellness has also been created that, among other services,
will provide emotional support to workers of color.

These responsive—and in some cases, long overdue—actions have increased meaningful dialogue among staff, program providers, stakeholders, families, and the public. This is made possible because New Jersey has a Governor and First Lady who support and encourage equity in all systems. Their personal and political commitment to parity has empowered state agency leaders to marshal resources that advance social justice initiatives.

From a messaging perspective, the department has a strong foundation of policy leadership from which to build its voice and speak about our principles as a department. The communications unit has played an important role in creating the themes, shaping the narratives, and informing and educating audiences.

Internal and external messaging has been shared with staff, legislators, provider partners, and New Jersey’s residents through email, all-staff calls, social media platforms, and videos. The department is using traditional platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, as well as less considered, but highly trafficked channels such as NextDoor and LinkedIn to reach unique audiences.

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It is important to remain accountable to the public and the families we serve on matters of race equity by declaring broadly our vision and the steps we are taking to realize it.

There was and is tension surrounding social justice in New Jersey—and across the country. The state’s work to correct the systemic racism that exists in every social and government structure is being watched closely and the department is doing its best to keep workers and families engaged in the process. To date, we have created a webpage that details what we’ve done and what’s happening with race equity in child welfare across the country. We’ve also included resources for staff and families to access related to anti-racism trainings and materials.

On multiple occasions, the NJDCF has publicly taken a stand for equity and inclusion, and against racism. First, because it is the right and value-centered thing to do. And, second, because it is the only way to change the narrative around our work and to gain the trust and respect of the families we serve. At a time when families need it most, we want to acknowledge their struggle and our country’s harsh history so that we can advance meaningful efforts toward healing and reconciliation.

For more information about the NJDCF’s race equity work, check out the website at https://www.nj.gov/dcf/equity.html.

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A CALL TO ACTION
Our country is reeling from the continued effect of an uncontained pandemic while coming to terms with the most recent plea from Black, Indigenous, and other communities of color to be treated as undeniably, unequivocally, unmistakably human. It is tempting to talk about what’s right “in this moment” and from there develop a linear action plan with hard metrics to show (or at least give the illusion of) progress toward a narrow set of goals. But what’s needed is not just a response to this moment. What’s needed right now is a boundary-spanning movement to co-create a future that operates on a fundamentally different set of premises: A movement that can meet this moment … and the next … and the next. What’s needed is a movement capable of spanning the boundaries between leaders in systems and leaders in communities to give everyone a fair shot at well-being. Enter the Wellbeing Blueprint.
Starting in April 2020, a group of leaders came together to put on paper a set of specific recommendations for structural shifts to increase well-being and sustain changes beyond the pandemic. From the beginning, this effort has been reflective of its co-created origin and based on values that lift the work of social change out of the usual silos. The Wellbeing Blueprint (from here just “the Blueprint”) incorporates:

- An explicit and implicit racial justice and equity lens
- A networked approach that enables unlikely alliances to function across boundaries
- Shifting power in system change efforts to center communities

The Blueprint is a set of six principles and more than 40 recommendations skewed toward long-term structural change. Structural problems demand structural solutions, so we need to change the rules to better align with people’s strengths and drive for well-being. Some of the recommendations are concrete policy changes. Others call for systems leaders and policymakers to think differently and consider different factors in making decisions and creating policies. We know that leaders across sectors, including human services, have been making and leading change that is meaningful and aligned with the Blueprint and what it calls for. The Blueprint brings together efforts already underway in many communities and systems across the country.

**Blueprint Principles:**
1. Start with what matters to people: well-being
2. Push against harms being concentrated in communities already facing the greatest adversity
3. Build on, instead of undermining, social connections and social capital in communities
4. Build financial security
5. Span boundaries
6. Set our default to sustaining changes beyond the pandemic

The Blueprint lays out a path that starts with people and well-being, not fields or problems. The recommendations focus on structural change and how we do our work, but generally don’t require new programs, staffing, or long-term appropriations. The reality of shrinking state and local budgets presents an opportunity to work across systems and in deep partnership with communities to utilize resources in different ways for greater impact.

As Blueprint signer Sandy Ambrozy, nonresident fellow at the Urban Institute, said at a recent Blueprint event, “People with means live their lives horizontally, while people without means who interact with the legal and social-sector systems (child welfare, affordable housing, etc.) live in the verticals of these systems where they are often tested and shamed as they try to access well-being supports.” That is, our systems treat the problems facing people as discrete and therefore expect discreet solutions to work. The human services field is at the forefront of complicating this narrative of discrete problem solving. With more and more attention being given to frameworks that cut across traditional service silos, as embodied in the American Public Human Services Association’s (APHSA’s) call to action for applying a race equity lens, leaders are even more hungry to connect with each other, roll up their sleeves, and work for real change. Since change won’t come just by focusing on one’s own system, we
December 2020  Policy & Practice

need to work at the intersections of systems and across the system/community boundary for change to take root.

Racial Justice and Equity in Blueprint

To transform and not just tinker around the edges, we must confront the racist roots of our systems. The Blueprint incorporates racial equity work both explicitly in the form of a number of specific recommendations, and implicitly in the way we approach the work.

Well-being—the needs and experiences required in combination and balance to have health and hope and to weather challenges—is not a static state. Well-being is acatchy word. For many, it evokes a state of contentment or happiness. Well-being goes deeper than that though. We all need to feel we belong and are safe. We need to experience some predictability to life, that we have some influence over what’s happening around us, and to experience purpose and growth. We need to meet our needs for food, shelter, and other basics without shame or danger. We are allhardwired for well-being and we all have a right to a fair shot at being able to meet these needs and have these experiences.

But our systems are intentionally designed to facilitate access to well-being for some (White people with means) while blocking access to well-being for others (BIPOC communities, people living in poverty, disabled people, and other marginalized groups). We need true transformational change and for that to happen we not only need to see and hear directly from communities most impacted, but also toact together on the solutions they have advocated for, sometimes for generations.

Shifting to Power-with

As leaders, we need to re-envision what community engagement looks like in order to make this transformation possible. Frequently, community engagement is largely transactional. Community members are invited to give input into a narrowly defined set of questions. Well-intentioned people working in systems craft surveys and host focus groups, they organize formal convenings and panels with community representation, all aimed at making the system work better. But these approaches keep the voice of community members within the guardrails of the systems they inform. Importantly, these approaches do not requirepower shifts for the system or its leaders.

The Blueprint calls for a different approach rooted in engagement that is primarily relational. With more than 65 signers from across the country, and composed of leaders from public, private, and nonprofit sectors, our growing community of Blueprint signers serves as a laboratory for embodying this change. Blueprint signers come together every other week for a call to build the new relationships and the trust required for collective action. In creating a space that doesn’t rely on the expertise or control of any one member or system, Blueprint signers are free to connect with each other on equal footing. These calls demonstrate a shift from a power-over mode (which focuses on maintaining control and decision-making authority) to a power-with mode (which focuses on leveraging the position and power of the system to act on solutions co-created with a community).

Meeting each other on a level playing field where power-with is the standard builds relationships across the lines of difference and power. Each person brings their unique experience, their perspective, and their expertise to the table. Note that these individuals have not been targeted to join merely because of their perspective and expertise. When people are given the space to make authentic connections across boundaries, powerful and unlikely alliances begin to develop.

Unlikely Alliances

When the Blueprint provides a scaffolding to hold the complexity of different agendas, powerful moments of perspective shift become possible. As one example, a signer of the Blueprint is dedicated to make visible the need for attention to the civil legal system. This system touches the lives of every person in the country, yet it largely flies under the radar in efforts for change. On one of our calls, a fellow signer, a leader in child welfare advocacy, had new insight into the vital role that access to civil justice has on a families’ well-being. They connected across the lines of field and a new partnership is emerging.

The community of Blueprint signers reaches beyond the narrow lanes of systems to incorporate people who do not normally get a seat at the table of systems change. For instance, the arts play a vital role in speaking across lines of difference and signaling inclusion in a community, but are often valued primarily as a therapeutic intervention. Several signers of the Blueprint are either individual artists or organizations whose work focuses on lifting up the arts as a lever for social change. Their involvement and perspectives are sparking new ideas for partnerships and projects with potential to reach people in ways and in places that are impossible for many systems.

Building a New Future Together

The Blueprint is not a final product, rather a living document made stronger by all of us working together. Signers of the Blueprint aren’t expected to agree with or act on every recommendation. Rather, the Wellbeing Blueprint acts as a sort of “docking station” for people working in diverse sectors and fields to connect. We know that many members of APHSA are already doing work to advance well-being in their fields and communities. To dive in deeper, there are several ways for you to engage with this growing movement:

• Use the Blueprint as an advocacy tool that reaches across boundaries.
• Contact with us at matthew@wellbeingblueprint.org to share how your work is aligned with and advancing the Blueprint.
• Sign on (as an individual or as an organization) and take your seat at the co-creation table to build a better future.

Join us at www.wellbeingblueprint.org.

Reference Note

1. For an overview of power and social change, we recommend the overview by The Grassroots Policy Project available online at https://grassrootspolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Powerv Social-Change.pdf