This workshop was held at the 2018 Equal Justice Conference in San Diego, California.

Title:

Walking Our Race Equity Talk Together

Presenters:

Kimberly Merchant, Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law, Chicago, IL
Diana Singleton, Washington State Access to Justice Board, Seattle, WA
Jennifer Werdell, JustLead Washington, Seattle, WA

As more legal advocates and organizations consider what it means to apply a race equity lens to their work, our equity and justice-focused community is increasingly seeking out promising practices and new strategies. In this highly interactive session we will highlight state and national efforts to prioritize race equity, offer examples of how organizations and coalitions are implementing wide-ranging changes to advance racial justice, and discuss ways that legal advocates and community partners can collaborate across organizations and coalitions to forge a way forward.
ENSURING ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT TO RACE EQUITY WORK

With each question below, select the number that best reflects the organization or program you are assessing. Use the rubric below to inform what each number means to complete the assessment:

(1) No work within this area; (2) Identified as an area for improvement but no plans/work yet; (3) Planning/implementation in process; (4) Implemented but not yet uniformly applied across organization; (5) Firmly established and able to model for other organizations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Circle a Choice</th>
<th>ENSURING ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT TO RACE EQUITY WORK</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do Not Know</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 The organization incorporates race equity into its mission, vision, and/or values statements.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>The organization has allocated financial and human resources toward internal and/or external race equity work. This may include assigning personnel or funding for coordination of work, development and implementation of plans, and/or monitoring and evaluation work.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do Not Know</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 For each of the following, there is an understanding of the impact of and need to address cultural, institutional, and structural racism and advance racial equity:</td>
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<td>DNK</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 Board</td>
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<td>DNK</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 Staff</td>
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<td>1 2 3 4 5 Organizational Partners/Allies</td>
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<td>DNK</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 Community Supporters/Local Donors</td>
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<tr>
<td>DNK</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 For each of the following, the group is diverse across demographics and perspectives and reflects the communities that are most impacted by its work:</td>
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<td>1 2 3 4 5 Board</td>
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<td>1 2 3 4 5 Community Supporters/Local Donors</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do Not Know</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 The organization communicates to its stakeholders and supporters its values and work around racial justice.</td>
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## Creating an Equitable Organizational Culture

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<th>Do Not Know</th>
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<td>The organization creates space for discussing issues of race and racism in ways that are relevant to the work.</td>
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<td>The organization encourages/makes racial competency trainings available on an ongoing basis to staff, board, and volunteers.</td>
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<td>Cultural “norms” of the organization, spoken or unspoken, allow for questions, issues, and concerns about racial dynamics internally to be openly discussed and addressed.</td>
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<td>Staff/leadership/volunteers who identify as people of color or with other marginalized groups feel they can bring their full identities to the workplace, if they choose, and feel recognized and respected with their input taken into account to shape organizational culture.</td>
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<td>The organization encourages ideas, strategies, initiatives, and feedback from all stakeholders of the organization (including frontline staff, volunteers, clients, not only those with positional authority). For each of the following, there is an understanding of the impact of and need to address cultural, institutional, and structural racism and advance racial equity:</td>
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<td>Board</td>
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<td>Community Supporters/Local Donors</td>
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## Recruiting, Hiring, & Retaining a Diverse Workforce

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<tr>
<td>The organization has internal hiring policies to address hiring inequities and promote outreach, recruitment, and retention of marginalized communities, specifically people of color.</td>
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<td>The organization acts on suggested equity practices in recruitment and hiring, including but not limited to posting salary ranges, considering “equivalent experience” as comparable to formal education, and/or “blind” reviews of applications.</td>
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<td>The organization has policies explicitly prohibiting discrimination and harassment of people of color as well as a mechanism in place to address issues raised regarding racial or other equity-related barriers for opportunity occurring in the workplace.</td>
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<td>The organization evaluates staff, volunteers, and leadership, during performance reviews or otherwise, on the development or application of anti-racism and pro-equity skills.</td>
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<td>The organization works to ensure that people of color and people of color-led organizations are robustly represented within its pipeline of leaders and decision-makers.</td>
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<td>Staff and volunteers of color play a meaningful role in identifying and participating in professional and leadership development opportunities.</td>
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### DEVELOPING ACCOUNTABILITY TO AND PARTNERSHIP WITH IMPACTED COMMUNITIES

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<td>The organization has benchmarks around the leadership and professional development and retention of staff and volunteers of color.</td>
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<th>Circle a Choice</th>
<th>DEVELOPING ACCOUNTABILITY TO AND PARTNERSHIP WITH IMPACTED COMMUNITIES</th>
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<tr>
<td>Do Not Know</td>
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<tr>
<td>The organization intentionally identifies and builds relationships with organizations and communities of color as key, relevant stakeholders.</td>
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<td>The organization practices community engagement in ways that allow voices, perspectives, and input from communities of color to drive the organization's decision-making.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The organization has accountable relationships with community partners, allowing them to be aware of and understand organizational decision-making as they are made.</td>
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<td>The organization has policies and practices in place that allows for responsiveness when community-based partners ask for immediate support and action.</td>
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<td>Do Not Know</td>
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<tr>
<td>The organization has policies and/or processes in place that allow organizational practices to be reviewed with community partner input and considered for change or elimination.</td>
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### APPLYING AN ANTI-RACISM LENS TO PROGRAMS, ADVOCACY, & DECISION-MAKING

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<th>Do Not Know</th>
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<td>The organization has explicit policies and/or practices in place to ensure that communities of color are a part of decision making on an ongoing basis during the design, implementation, and evaluation of programs.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The organization has explicit policies and/or practices in place ensuring that clients/communities most impacted by the organization's work are a part of decision making on an ongoing basis during the design, implementation, and evaluation of programs.</td>
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<td>The organization has policies in place that aims and prioritizes collecting, tracking, and analyzing data on racial demographics to inform program goals and advance racial equity (i.e. disaggregating client data by race).</td>
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<td>The organization consistently uses inclusive and culturally responsive language in both internal and external communications.</td>
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<td>When planning programs and events, the organization considers factors like language access/interpretation, accommodations, childcare, food, and proximity to transportation.</td>
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<td>The organization proactively and intentionally extends its reach to communities of color and understands and addresses the needs of clients of color.</td>
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<tr>
<td>In setting programmatic/advocacy/policy/case priorities, the organization considers how the decision will benefit or harm communities of color.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do Not Know</td>
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<tr>
<td>In setting programmatic/advocacy/policy/case priorities, the organization considers whether the decision will strengthen or undermine its goals around racial equity.</td>
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Now in its fourth year, the Racial Justice Training Institute is a groundbreaking national leadership program rooted in a commitment to racial equity as an integral and essential part of anti-poverty advocacy. RJTI puts race front and center in the fight for equal justice. We address the impact of structural racialization in housing, education, employment, healthcare and more, and ensure that race is considered foremost in our efforts to eradicate poverty in the communities we serve. The goals of the Institute are to strengthen advocacy capacity of both individual advocates and organizations and to build an ongoing national network of equal justice advocates who are committed to and skilled in advancing a coordinated racial justice advocacy agenda.

The RJTI works to accomplish these goals through two key initiatives: 1) an intensive six-month long training program; and, 2) an ongoing advocacy network that cohort members join once the formal training period ends.

In our first three years, 119 advocates from 62 organizations in 23 states plus the District of Columbia have participated in the RJTI. Each cohort is diverse with respect to members’ racial and ethnic backgrounds, prior legal experiences and positions within their organizations, the organizations in which they operate, and the communities they serve. Cohort members emerge from the program ready to help shape policies and build the future for a racially just society.

**The RJTI Model**

The RJTI’s intensive training program takes place over six months and uses a combination of online and onsite training activities structured into three parts. Cohort members participate in the training program as part of racial equity teams. Using an action learning model, and with support from skilled faculty and other cohort members, they apply new knowledge and skills to racial justice initiatives within their organizations and communities.

Faculty include experienced advocates from within the legal aid, public interest and civil rights communities who serve as presenters, facilitators and equity team coaches. Cohort members also bring a wide range of racial equity experience to the group and, as appropriate, also serve as presenters for selected onsite sessions and webinars. Our goal is to build a deep bench of racial justice advocates who can serve as faculty and coaches for future RJTI cohorts.
Ideas for equity team projects evolve over the course of the training program as team members refine their understanding of the systems and structures that contribute to racialized poverty and other inequities. For example, members of the first three cohorts worked on a range of issues from disproportionate representation of native children in foster care in Alaska to educational inequities in St. Louis County to racial profiling and mass incarceration in North Carolina. Using the RJTI Organizational Readiness Survey as a starting point, many teams also initiated internal organizational work groups to examine the efficacy of various structures – e.g., client intake protocols; case selection criteria; recruitment, hiring and retention of staff of color – necessary to support their organization’s capacity to engage successfully in racial justice advocacy. Almost all have undertaken racial equity training programs for in-house staff and the larger equal justice community.

### Training Program -- Part 1 – Online

**Part 1—Online** takes place over three weeks through the Shriver Center’s online campus. It includes a combination of independent learning and equity team activities that cohort members complete on their own schedules and “synchronous” live sessions that cohort members engage in together.

- **Weekly independent learning activities** provide individual participants with readings and other materials to learn about core racial justice concepts and practices. Through online discussion forums and live activities, participants share their reactions to and questions about these resources; they also begin to engage with other.

- **Weekly independent equity team activities** provide an initial forum through which team members begin to work together to apply racial justice concepts and skills to issues in their own organizations and communities. Team members submit weekly reports which are posted on the online course site for review by faculty and other cohort members. Faculty draw from these reports when engaging cohort members during online sessions; they also use these to assess team engagement and progress as the Institute progresses.

- **Weekly live activities** take place through the Adobe online forum over five hours each Wednesday during
each of the three online weeks. These sessions include both interactive large group presentations and facilitated small group discussions. Cohort members begin to get to know each other and build relationship through these initial small groups.

### Training Program - Part 2 - Onsite

**Part 2—Onsite** takes place over four days in Chicago and includes a combination of interactive presentations, small group discussions and exercises, and equity team planning sessions. These sessions provide participants with a deeper look at key concepts and practices in areas of social cognition and implicit bias, litigation, legislative and policy advocacy, framing and messaging, community engagement and coalition building and leadership and organizational change.

It also provides a critical opportunity for cohort members to develop relationships with each other – across equity teams, organizations and regions – and to lay the groundwork for the national advocacy network they are building.

### Training Program - Part 3- Online

**Part 3 Online** takes place over four months and includes a combination of bi-weekly live sessions, discussion forums, facilitated peer-support groups, strategic coaching and other activities to meet cohort members’ needs as they arise.

- **Bi-Weekly Live Sessions.** Cohort members meet twice each month for two-hour live interactive presentations and small group discussions on topics that build upon previously introduced racial equity tools and that respond to cohort members’ needs and interests. In 2016, these sessions included several presentations on the use of mapping tools to both uncover and document racial disparities as well as sessions on: Racially Equitable Policy Advocacy; Priming and Debiasing; Strategic Communication; and Leadership & Organizational Change.

- **Equity Team Projects & Faculty Coaches.** Working with assigned coaches, teams continue to work on their racial equity projects. At the end of each month, teams post updates on their progress and selected teams make presentations to other cohort members during each of the bi-weekly live sessions. This sharing of experience provides both inspiration and support to other teams and allows for joint projects to emerge.
Coaches meet as a group every other week to check in on equity team progress and to support each other in their coaching roles.

### RJTI Evaluation

The Shriver Center retained evaluation consultant Laurie Goldman of Tufts University to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the first RJTI; the purpose of the evaluation was to inform the Shriver Center and its RJTI Advisory Group in planning for the second year of the pilot phase of the RJTI and to guide continued inquiry to refine and further develop the program implementation and design.

Ms. Goldman conducted 16 individual and group interviews of cohort members and faculty/coaches. She also solicited additional input from all cohort members - through an online survey - about their RJTI experiences generally as well as regarding specific Institute components including cohort composition, curriculum and structure, equity teams and projects, capacity to engage in racial justice advocacy and suggestions for future cohort selection and curriculum design. By way of summary, the consultant found that:

- Every participant contacted expressed enthusiastic praise for the RJTI, the faculty, the curriculum, and the overall mission of launching a race-equity movement within the legal aid and public interest legal field. Most participants conveyed that the experience augmented their already high commitment to racial justice advocacy.

- They commended the three-part framework of the on-line introductory sessions on the race-equity framework, followed by the on-site gathering to meet the cohort and launch work on equity team projects, and the subsequent weeks alternating between on-line, live webinars on applying the race-equity skills and work on their projects.

- They reported that they significantly developed their understanding of structural racialization and felt they have begun to develop competencies in the tool kit of racial justice advocacy skills. Both novices to racial justice advocacy and participants with considerable prior experience said they learned even more than they anticipated. Most participants plan to use many of the skills in the near future and many report that they have already begun to do so.

- In general, most participants valued the opportunity to develop a project with their Equity Team partners. Even those who experienced challenges in developing their projects found the experience to be rewarding. Almost all teams said they benefited from guidance and support from coaches and other faculty. Cohort members offered a number of very useful suggestions for strengthening equity team projects which we implemented in the 2015 Institute.

“RJTI was an experience of a lifetime for me … A phenomenal amount of work went into it. It was such a gift and it will impact my work for the rest of my career, no doubt about that. I’m looking forward to continuing to be involved with the faculty and the other participants.”

(RJTI First Cohort participant)
Working with RJTI alumni, the Shriver Center, supports the RJTI Network, which provides a sustainable infrastructure that supports advocates’ capacities to continue to learn and take action together and also ensures the personal and collective resilience necessary to sustain this critical work over the long term. The RJTI Network consists of the following functions:

- **Joint Advocacy Projects** sponsors regular online meetings in which RJTI members can workshop specific racial equity cases or initiatives with the goal of receiving peer-support to help plan and develop strategies to advance advocacy; it also provides a forum for taking on joint projects across member organizations, states and regions and/or creating sub-networks dedicated to pursuing advocacy in specific areas.

- **Peer Support** provides support and accountability as members work to build and strengthen internal organizational structures necessary to engage in results-oriented racial justice advocacy.

- **Ongoing Learning & Educating Others Committee** sponsors interactive online training sessions and webinars to support both ongoing learning among RJTI network members as well as network members’ efforts to provide racial justice training to others within their organizations and external communities.

- **Shared Resources and Knowledge** is building a repository of shared legal, advocacy, and educational resources to enhance the network’s racial equity work.

- **Collaborative Media** supports the various communication and information sharing tools that help keep Network members connected to each other.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participating Organizations – Cohorts 1, 2 &amp; 3</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alaska Legal Services Corps.</td>
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<td>DNA People's Legal Services</td>
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<td>Arizona Legal Women and Youth Services</td>
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<td>Central CA Legal Services</td>
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<td>Community Legal Services of East Palo Alto</td>
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<td>Inner City Law Center</td>
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<td>Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles</td>
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<td>Legal Services of Northern California</td>
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<td>National Immigration Law Center</td>
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<td>Western Center on Law &amp; Poverty</td>
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<td>Connecticut Legal Services, Inc.</td>
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<td>Legal Aid Society of the District of Columbia</td>
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<td>Community Legal Services of Mid-Florida, Inc.</td>
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<td>Legal Services of Greater Miami, Inc.</td>
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<td>Florida Institutional Legal Services Project</td>
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<td>Iowa Legal Aid</td>
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<td>Chicago Lawyers Committee</td>
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<td>Legal Aid Foundation of Chicago</td>
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<td>Land of Lincoln Legal Assistance Foundation</td>
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<td>Loyola Law Fellows Program</td>
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<td>Prairie State Legal Services, Inc.</td>
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<td>Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law</td>
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<td>Massachusetts Law Reform Institute</td>
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<td>National Consumer Law Center</td>
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<td>Public Justice Center</td>
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<td>Mid-Minnesota Legal Aid</td>
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<td>Legal Services of Eastern Missouri</td>
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<td>Mississippi Center for Justice</td>
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<td>ACLU of Montana</td>
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<td>Montana Legal Services</td>
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• Reflect on how and whether we are walking our talk around equity and justice

• Generate motivation to work within and across organizations and with community partners to create a collaborative learning community to further racial justice.

• Create action steps and take-home strategies as well as relationships and resources for further learning and conversation.
YOU KEEP USING THAT WORD.
I DO NOT THINK IT MEANS WHAT YOU THINK IT MEANS.
**Racial Equity**

When race no longer determines one’s outcomes, requiring the elimination of policies, practices, attitudes and cultural messages that reinforce differential outcomes by race or fail to eliminate them.

**Racial Justice**

The proactive reinforcement of policies, practices, attitudes and actions that produce equitable power, access, opportunities, treatment, impacts and outcomes for all.

**Implicit Bias**

Attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner, activated involuntarily, or without awareness or intentional control.

**Structural Racialization**

Ways in which complex systems of organizations, institutions, individuals, processes, and policies interact to create and perpetuate social/economic/political arrangements that are harmful to people of color and to society as a whole.
EQUALITY VS. EQUITY
WHAT’S YOUR WHY?

The Golden Circle

WHAT
Every organization on the planet knows WHAT they do. These are the products they sell or the services they offer.

HOW
Some organizations know HOW they do it. These are the things that make them special or set them apart from their competition.

WHY
Very few organizations know WHY they do what they do. WHY is not about making money. That's a result. WHY is a purpose, cause or belief. It's the very reason your organization exists.
WASHINGTON STATE ACCESS TO JUSTICE BOARD
The Alliance for Equal Justice
THE “WHY” BEHIND OUR WORK

• 70% of Washington’s low-income households experience at least one civil legal problem each year.

• The top three: 1) health care; 2) consumer/finance; and 3) employment

• People of color disproportionately experience a greater number of legal problems

• Significant legal literacy problem

• Washington’s low-income households experience 9.3 legal problems per year
Over an 18-month period, 23 legal aid organizations from across the state worked nearly 1,000 hours to create the new State Plan.

The plan sets out five goals which are intended to reflect the universal commitment of the Alliance’s work over the next three years.
GOAL ONE: RACE EQUITY

• 2015 Civil Legal Needs Study Update tells us that people of color experience a substantially greater number of legal problems.

• Transform structures, policies, and practices that perpetuate disparate outcomes for communities of color.

• Raise organizational competency and capacity to advance race equity in our legal system and society.
JustLead is growing a sustainable network of legal and community leaders who can effectively and collaboratively work toward equity and justice throughout Washington State.
The Leadership Academy is a year-long, cohort-based training where Fellows ground their work in shared values and learn competencies that further leadership at the individual, interpersonal, organizational, community, and movement level.
WASHINGTON RACE EQUITY & JUSTICE INITIATIVE

REJI’s primary goal is to develop resources, tools, and infrastructure to support a highly collaborative, integrated, and coordinated network of legal and justice system partners in Washington State who can more effectively and collaboratively work toward eradicating racially biased policies, practices, and systems. REJI helps its partners:

• Share information and best practices that advance individual and organizational learning around race equity and structural racialization;

• Identify actions and strategies that can transcend traditional divisions between the civil, criminal, and juvenile justice systems, promote race equity, and eliminate structurally racialized systems and practices; and

• Build meaningful community partnerships to ensure that communities who are most affected by poverty and racial inequities are participatory in policies, actions and decisions that may impact them.
REJI PRIORITY WORK

- Organizational Equity Toolkit
  - Foundational Vocabulary
  - Organizational Readiness
  - Assessment
  - Strategies
  - Tools & Templates
- Training & Consulting
- Convening & Shared Learning
The Sargent Shriver Center National Center on Poverty Law provides national leadership in advancing laws and policies that secure justice to improve the lives and opportunities of people living in poverty.
No one can do this work alone.

We connect, inspire, and equip national networks—armies of lawyers, community organizers, activists, researchers, litigators, and funders from every state.

We build teams and develop leaders.

We hone advocates’ skills and connect them to each other and to the intelligence and information resource networks they need to be effective.
RJTI AS INSTITUTE, INCUBATOR AND INTERMEDIARY

Institute
learning

Incubator
launching projects

Intermediary
linking movement members & initiatives

project-based learning

ongoing learning

Joint problem solving and support
INSTITUTE GOALS

- Increase race equity advocate capacity
- Provide ongoing organizational alignment support
- Support explicit race-conscious advocacy with a community lawyering approach
- Provide a National Resource Center
- Develop a cadre of advocates into faculty & mentors
- Maintain State, Regional & National Networks
ACTION LEARNING: THEORY & METHOD

- Independent learning
- Interactive presentation
- Application in small groups
- Application in equity teams
- Reports & reflection
- Additional learning, application & reflection
INSTITUTE STRUCTURE

Part 1 – Online
Wk 1
Wk 2
Wk 3

Part 2 – Onsite
Chicago
Day 1
Day 2
Day 3
Day 4

Part 3 – Online: July - October
Live Sessions
Equity team work
Strategic Coaching
Cross-team peer support
Welcome from the Racial Justice Network Director Kim Merchant

We are excited to launch the new RJT Network site. Our network consists of over 200 members, including cohort members, faculty and coaches. We are excited to launch the new RJT Network site. Our network consists of over 200 members, including cohort members, faculty and coaches. We are excited to launch the new RJT Network site. Our network consists of over 200 members, including cohort members, faculty and coaches. We are excited to launch the new RJT Network site. Our network consists of over 200 members, including cohort members, faculty and coaches.

Get started by watching the Navigation Video below to learn about the sections and to find out how you can interact in various ways, such as starting a discussion, uploading a file to share, or commenting on a news article.

News from the Network

GRANT HELPS IOWA LEGAL AID SUPPORT RACE-EXPLOITED COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT

Brief summary of this story. Read the full story and other stories from the RJT Network on the News page.
RACIAL JUSTICE TRAINING INSTITUTE NETWORK

GRANT HELPS IOWA LEGAL AID SUPPORT RACE EXPLICIT COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT

Black and white America experienced two very different economic recoveries following the Great Recession. In Iowa, racial well-being indicators are some of the worst in the country, with the African American unemployment rate standing at 14.6 percent, the highest in the nation. This high rate is a result of the fact that Iowa’s 2016 unemployment rate for the population as a whole was only 3.6 percent - the 11th lowest among the states. African Americans are also 10 times more likely to be incarcerated than whites. These statistics suggest black Iowa’s are further away from the American dream than their white counterparts.

In response to these racial disparities, Racial Justice Institute, a program of the Shriver Center for Community Unity, has joined forces with Iowa Legal Aid’s effort to write a $50,000 grant to fund the Iowa Legal Aid (ILA) Race Equity Project. The grant funding comes from a U.S. Bank of America and (U) Justice settlement related to the nation’s foreclosures crisis. ILA will use the funds to address barriers to housing and gainful employment faced by formerly incarcerated in those communities showing the highest the disparities in incarceration rates, unemployment, and poverty for African Americans.

The statistics are bleak, but Alex and ILA used them to weave together a narrative explaining why four Iowa counties are fertile ground for two years of engagement and employment barrier reduction classes. “The community redevelopment grant application that is show an effect beyond just the individual. One of the most revolutionary things I learned about through RJI was racial impact statements,” said Alex. “I used the submission process as an opportunity to map the problem using a racial justice lens.”

ILA, which is a Legal Services Corporation-funded organization, will use these stories to increase chances for community lawyering partnerships, gather stakeholder data to better understand the nature of problems, and expand opportunities for potential impact litigation. The inaugural event was held June 10, 2017. Community site hosting partners will help expand and amplify their capacity to help those in need.

Congrats to Alex on the successful grant application.

TRUE FREEDOM DEMANDS RACE EQUITY

by Racial Justice Network Director Kimberly Merchant

On June 19 we commemorated Juneteenth, the day slavery was officially ended in the United States. Juneteenth is an opportunity to celebrate African American freedom and achievement, while reflecting on our ongoing struggle to secure racial justice. In particular, what is the relationship between race and poverty, and how can we move toward equity of opportunity for all? The racialized rhetoric and policies coming from federal lawmakers, including President Trump, have only raised the stakes of these pivotal questions.

Although race and poverty have been entwined throughout America’s history, the link between them has often been ignored. For example, in 1964, President Lyndon B. Johnson declared a War on Poverty designed “not only to relieve the symptoms of poverty, but to cure it and, above all, to end it.”
ORGANIZATIONAL ALIGNMENT WORKING GROUP

- Tuesday, June 19, 2 – 3:30 EST
- Affinity Groups: Seeds for Change
- Stay connected via our listserv
- rjtiorgalign@povertylaw.org
Thursday, June 28 – Friday, June 29
Loyola University Chicago School of Law
KEEP CALM AND STOP RACISM
THE POWER OF SOCIAL IMPACT NETWORKS

Connecting
Allowing people to easily exchange information

Aligning
Allowing people to create and share a common set of ideas, goals, and strategies

Producing
Fostering collective action by members to produce proposals, policies, strategies
OUTCOMES, BENEFITS, & CHALLENGES
LET'S TALK
Ideas to Action
1. What is one step you would like to take to further your individual learning and development around race equity?

2. Take a look at the organizational development continuum handed out. Where is your organization/network currently at? What is one step your organization can take to move to the next stage in the continuum?

3. Who else is, or should be, working to further racial justice in your community? What opportunities do you have to partner with them?

4. What resources, information, and support do you need to advance your racial justice work?
RESOURCES

Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law
Racial Justice Institute
http://www.povertylaw.org/networks/rjti
kmerchant@povertylaw.org

Washington Race Equity & Justice Initiative
http://waraceequityandjustice.wordpress.com
http://www.justleadwa.org
jenniferw@justleadwa.org

Washington State Access to Justice Board
http://www.allianceforequaljustice.org
dianas@wsba.org
INVITATION TO JOIN

We are people, communities and organizations working together for racial fairness and justice in the law, legal profession, and justice systems.

The Race Equity & Justice Initiative (REJI) is a call for action to all who understand that we need to work together to challenge the racial bias that has been built into our societal fabric. Tensions and fears from tragedies in Ferguson, Baltimore, Charleston, Flint, Pasco, and so many other places continue to increase due to recent contentious national events. As a result, many vulnerable communities, especially communities of color, are targeted and treated as less worthy. We ask those who are dedicated to equity and justice to join us by signing on to the following principles and commitments.

VISION

A fair and just society respects basic human rights and allows all people to thrive and reach their potential. We share a vision of a community free from bias, systemic unfairness and oppression, where everyone is treated with dignity and respect. Everyone deserves access to affordable, safe, and stable housing, quality education and health care, a legal system that delivers justice to all, a sustainable source of income, fair treatment by financial institutions, ample and nutritious food, clean water, and freedom from environmental hazards.

FRAMEWORK

There are many ways to think about and understand racial justice, but by sharing common language, we can gain greater strength and understanding. REJI uses Professor John A. Powell’s powerful tools for talking about race equity work, aiming for a society where everyone belongs within the Circle of Human Concern as full members of society, without exception. But, we recognize that our social, economic, legal, civic, and political structures reflect, produce and maintain racialized outcomes, meaning that the structures and systems we have created systematically bar certain racial groups from fully participating in society, target them for discrimination, and take away power and resources. Our work is about ending these historic patterns.
REJI ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

1. Policies, structures, and systems that deny people and communities of color what is necessary for a full and fair life exist in the United States and in our local communities. These structurally racialized systems have been built and are maintained by conscious and unconscious racial bias that pervades society, to the benefit of white people and to the disadvantage of people of color.

2. These racialized systems work to keep communities of color outside the Circle of Human Concern and perpetuate harm. Examples of how laws, rules, and norms operate today include disproportionately pulling members of communities of color into the civil, juvenile and criminal justice systems; zoning and forcing communities into substandard and unaffordable housing; denying adequate health care, education, and jobs; seizing familial and community land and wealth; threatening personal and physical safety; and, isolating communities of color from social, economic and political power.

3. Bias and structural oppression based on factors such as gender or gender identity, immigration status or nationality, age, disability, religion, poverty and social class, sexual orientation, membership in an indigenous (native) group or ethnicity are equally harmful to individuals, communities, and the notion of a just society. Further, the damaging effects of oppression are multiplied when race intersects with these other identity factors.

4. The effects of bias and structural racialization are especially damaging to the social fabric of our democracy when they are woven into the law, legal profession and justice system, where they can weaken the ability of these systems to safeguard equity and justice under the rule of law.

5. True justice cannot be achieved until the legal and justice systems and all who work in these systems are conscious of and able to counter the impact of racialized systems, racialized structures and bias. Doing so requires acknowledging that different groups are situated differently, and that targeted, intentional approaches may be needed to reach just and equitable outcomes.

6. Progress toward equity and justice has largely come from the wisdom and courage of people from communities most harmed by bias and systemic oppression. Thus, race equity work must be pursued in direct solidarity with, and guidance from, communities of color and community-based movements.

7. Structurally racialized systems take their most direct and immediate toll on communities of color. They are also damaging to white people, as white privilege is understood, whether consciously or not, to be unearned and gained through the stolen humanity of others. This means that white people and people of color have very different as well as common work to do to expose and dismantle racialized systems.
As signers and supporters of the Washington Race Equity & Justice Initiative, we commit to:

1. Work together with, take guidance from, be part of, and hold ourselves accountable to community-based movements in communities most affected by structural racialization and structurally racialized systems.

2. Change structures, policies, processes, and practices in the law, legal profession, and justice system that allow harm and disparate outcomes for communities of color to continue unabated.

3. Promote and support legal and policy reforms to advance race equity and racial justice, recognizing that differently situated groups may require different strategies to achieve more equitable outcomes.

4. Continuously examine whether we and the organizations we work with operate in ways that align with the race equity and justice values and goals we support. This commitment includes ensuring that race equity is reflected in policies and practices for recruitment and hiring, work acceptance, priority-setting, governance, organizational culture, and community partnerships and accountability, particularly with low-income communities of color.

5. Continually explore how race and poverty intersect to make worse the effects of racial discrimination.

6. Expand and strengthen the REJI alliance to include diverse partnerships and the sharing of our resources with anyone who is committed to dismantling structurally racialized systems.

7. Ensure our organizations invest in active, ongoing learning that will teach us to see, reveal, and transform structures that create racialized outcomes and push communities of color outside the Circle of Human Concern. This commitment requires that we help members of our organizations and communities to actively and expressly challenge the use of racist language and behaviors, openly listen when we ourselves are challenged, and learn techniques and tools for reducing and eliminating implicit and explicit bias.

Additional details, definitions, and examples can be found at the Race Equity & Justice Initiative’s website, http://waraceequityandjustice.wordpress.com. To request additional information or sign onto the REJI Acknowledgments and Commitments, please contact jenniferw@justleadwa.org.
Access to Justice Board
2018–2020 State Plan
for the Coordinated
Delivery of Civil Legal Aid
to Low Income People
Access to Justice Board 2018–2020 State Plan for the Coordinated Delivery of Civil Legal Aid to Low-Income People

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The purpose of the state plan is to expand access to our civil justice system and identify and eliminate barriers that perpetuate poverty and deny justice.

WHY

7 in 10 low-income households face at least one significant legal problem each year and many experience more than legal problems for which the vast majority will not get needed help.

HOW

OUR SHARED COMMITMENTS FOR CHANGE

GOAL 1: Race Equity
GOAL 2: Legal Education & Awareness
GOAL 3: Access for Underrepresented Communities
GOAL 4: Holistic Client-Centered Services
GOAL 5: Systemic Advocacy
This Plan is intended to guide the collective efforts of the **Alliance for Equal Justice** to expand access to our civil justice system and identify and eliminate barriers that perpetuate poverty and deny justice. We adopt this Plan as communities across Washington report increasing fear and anxiety about a changing political climate that once again targets those who have historically been most vulnerable to marginalization. We adopt this Plan with the belief that we must coordinate our collective efforts, using all the legal tools we are privileged to wield, and take direction from community leaders in pursuit of a just and equitable system. As set forth in our **Hallmarks**, the Alliance for Equal Justice ("the Alliance") exists to ensure that poverty is not an impediment to justice; that legal barriers which perpetuate poverty and inequality will be dismantled; and that our laws and our justice system will be open and equally effective for all who need their protection, especially those who have been placed on the margins of society due to their identities.

The severity of Washington’s justice gap and the inadequate funding of civil legal aid cannot be overstated. The **2015 Civil Legal Needs Study** tells us that the need is greater than ever. Seven in 10 low-income households face at least one significant legal problem each year and, on average, experience more than nine legal problems for which the vast majority will not get the help they need. The study tells us that low-income Washingtonians do not understand that the challenges they face have legal remedies. It tells us that the nature of their legal problems is changing and that the problems intersect and compound, with one legal problem left unaddressed building into multiple legal problems. The study tells us that 20 years after the adoption of Washington’s first state Plan, we are far from delivering on our vision of equitable justice and it challenges us to do better. Closing the justice gap will require major investments to double the number of state-funded civil legal aid attorneys, expand the level of volunteer attorney involvement in the delivery of civil legal aid services, and create statewide support infrastructure for the Alliance. Closing the justice gap will also require acknowledging and breaking down the artificial silos that we have created between the civil, criminal, and juvenile justice systems and identifying and challenging structurally racialized systems and practices that disproportionately affect minority clients and client communities.

Our **Hallmarks** call on us to maximize the impact of our limited resources through coordination and the delivery of effective and economical legal aid. Recognizing that we may never have the resources needed to give every low-income household access to legal representation, this Plan seeks to improve the way we work together—within whatever resources are available.

The Plan sets forth five goals that represent a universal commitment of all Alliance members, while recognizing the differences among programs and their abilities to implement. Goal number 1 identifies **race equity** as a lens to apply to all of our work. Goals 2-5 identify the focus of our work at each stage that an individual might encounter a legal need, starting with ensuring that low-income communities
and individuals understand their legal rights and responsibilities in goal 2. Once a legal problem has been identified and an individual desires legal help, goal 3 asks the Alliance to ensure that members of underserved and underrepresented communities will be able to obtain legal assistance regardless of their geographic and/or demographic circumstances. Once legal services have been engaged, goal 4 calls for holistic and client-centered approaches to address the complexity and breadth of legal needs and to help clients overcome demographic, systems-based, and other institutional barriers. And finally, goal 5 urges that in addition to the important work of seeking legal remedies for individuals, the Alliance continues to pursue systemic advocacy to effect structural reforms that maintain and defend progress and improve the well-being of communities and individuals and dismantle systems of institutional racism and other forms of oppression.

We expect that each Alliance organization will review the State Plan goals, strategies and implementation steps to determine, in collaboration with other Alliance members, the role[s] they should play in achieving these collective goals in the coming years. Specific strategies and implementation steps are intended as helpful guidance, but there is no substitute for the knowledge that individual organizations have about their own current and potential strengths and capabilities, the communities they serve, and the changing and evolving circumstances affecting clients, communities, and client service delivery.

The Plan also identifies measures of success for the purpose of better aligning organizational actions, providing feedback that leads to individual program and system improvements, and supporting Alliance accountability to the State Plan. The measures of success are intended to measure the progress of the Alliance as a whole. They are not intended to dictate strategic or funding decisions of any organization. Many performance measures are specifically embedded in the statements of strategy within the Plan. Other measures will require the collection and analysis of data. For those measures, we recommend that organizations/regions spend the first year of the Plan gathering baseline data, the second year establishing realistic targets, and the third year analyzing performance and implementing changes in support of the strategy. The Access to Justice Board’s Delivery System Committee should determine how to coordinate collection and distribution of performance measure data. It is expected that implementation of the Plan will be evaluated annually and course corrections made as needed.

**INTRODUCTION**

**Holistic Services**
Services that are provided in a manner that takes into account the entirety of a client’s barriers and goals, legal and nonlegal. This includes two primary components:
1. Helping clients identify legal and nonlegal problems and potential solutions for their legal problems; and
2. Working in collaboration with legal and nonlegal community partners to ensure that the client’s range of needs are addressed, whether through direct, unbundled, or referral services.

**Client-centered Services**
Services delivered in a manner that takes into account clients’ self-identified needs and designed to achieve the individual client’s goals.

**Systemic Advocacy**
Action that is designed to affect change in all parts of a local, regional, or statewide system that negatively affects low-income and marginalized people, and that takes into account the interrelationships and interdependencies among all of that system’s parts.

**Structural Racism**
Racial inequity perpetuated by a system of public policies, institutional practices, cultural representations, and other norms.

**Alliance Organizations**
Programs or organizations that participate in the Alliance for Equal Justice. Note that the Alliance describes a fluid network, rather than a specific set of organizations. There is no entity responsible for determining which organizations are considered to be a part of the Alliance.
As the coordinator of this effort, the Access to Justice Board is tasked with supporting and monitoring the implementation of this Plan. In many places throughout the document, the Access to Justice Board and its committees are identified to play the role of clearinghouse. That role may include collecting the relevant information, reviewing and assessing the information, and communicating back to the Alliance the sharing of best practices or recommended next steps.

Achieving a just and equitable system will require courage, collective vision, and agility to respond to changing needs, challenges, and opportunities. The State Plan offers a framework for the Alliance to work together to rise to the occasion and act with common commitment, focus, and collective determination. Through this State Plan we recommit to our values and our common commitments.
WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

As stated in the Washington Race Equity & Justice Initiative’s (REJI) Acknowledgements and Commitments, many vulnerable communities, especially communities of color, are targeted and treated as less worthy. REJI is a call to action to work together, across systems, to challenge the racial bias that has been built into our societal fabric. The 2015 Civil Legal Needs Study Update tells us that people of color experience a substantially greater number of legal problems, that they regularly experience discrimination and unfair treatment on the basis of legally protected characteristics such as race, and that low-income communities and people of color have little confidence in the justice system. Consistent with the REJI Acknowledgments and Commitments, this goal and its strategies call on the Alliance to transform structures, policies, and practices that perpetuate disparate outcomes for communities of color, including by assessing and strengthening our organizations’ own alignment with race equity and justice values and goals. This work must be done in collaboration with partners in the criminal, juvenile, and child welfare systems.

While this three-year Plan asks the Alliance to focus on race, we acknowledge that organizations are and should continue pursuing work to address the inequity that communities experience based on many other—often intersecting—identities.

STRATEGY 1

Engage in activities that create a shared awareness and understanding of what is needed to achieve race equity in our legal systems and society.

Alliance organizations can implement this strategy by:

- Identifying currently existing annual events focused on race equity, or with a substantial race equity focus, and engaging Alliance organizations, Access to Justice Board members, legal aid funders, community members, and officers of the broader justice system to attend those events.

- Identifying, coordinating, and collaborating with different groups including those across the civil, criminal, and juvenile justice systems that are already focused on race equity and utilizing social media and emerging technology to collaborate and share resources and tools to increase our understanding of race equity in order to achieve racial equity across systems.

Our vision of success is:

- Alliance organizations are using common language to demonstrate a shared understanding and awareness of the reforms needed to achieve race equity in our systems.
Indicators of success include:

- Alliance organizations are participating in an annual conference or events that focus on race equity.
- Alliance organizations report increased relationships, collaborations, and activities around advancing race equity.
- Alliance organizations are incorporating race equity language into their statements of mission, vision, and values, strategic plans, and other guiding documents.

**STRATEGY 2**

Increase the diversity of staff, boards, and volunteers.

Alliance organizations can implement this strategy by:

- Identifying and adopting existing tools (e.g., the Implicit Bias test from Harvard University, the City of Seattle Race Equity Tool Kit, and REJI’s Acknowledgements and Commitments) in order to conduct a race equity self-audit at all levels in their organizations.
- After conducting the self-audit, addressing and developing strategies to eliminate practices that operate as impediments to the recruitment and retention of a diverse staff, board, and volunteers.
- Developing capacity and technical resources to enable organizations to implement their strategies for race equity and diversity.

Our vision of success is:

- Alliance organizations that reflect the diversity of the communities we serve at all levels.

Indicators of success include:

- All Alliance organizations have completed a self-audit by the end of year one.
- All Alliance organizations will incorporate race equity awareness and provide individualized tools and resources as part of the orientation for all board, staff, and volunteers.
- An increase in staff, board, and volunteer diversity for Alliance organizations that is reflective of the clients they serve.

**STRATEGY 3**

Raise organizational competency and capacity to advance race equity in our legal system and society.

Alliance organizations can implement this strategy by:
• Identifying and adopting existing tools and trainings [e.g., the Implicit Bias test from Harvard University, the City of Seattle Race Equity Tool Kit, and REJI’s Acknowledgements and Commitments] to identify, evaluate, and build solutions for creating organizational and systemic racial equity.

• Employing a race equity lens in all aspects of its operations and the delivery of legal services.

• Identifying, coordinating, and collaborating with different groups including those across the civil, criminal, and juvenile justice systems that are already focused on race equity and utilizing social media and emerging technology to collaborate and share resources and tools to achieve racial equity across systems.

Our vision of success is:

• Alliance organization staff demonstrate increased awareness of the impacts of race and structurally racialized systems and practices on our society and the client communities we serve.

• Alliance organizations are participating in cross-systems dialogue about race.

An indicator of success will be:

• All Alliance organization staff have had training on how to talk to each other about race.

STRATEGY 4

Promote and raise the visibility of Alliance organizations’ and the legal community’s activities and successes in advancing race equity.

Alliance organizations can implement this strategy by:

• Collaborating with WSBA and local bar associations to nominate people for and promote existing awards [and, where none exist, to establish awards] recognizing legal aid organizations or individuals within organizations that make significant contributions to the advancement of race equity.

• Incorporating race equity topics into all communications channels, including through the Access to Justice Board’s Communications Committee and the Equal Justice Coalition.

Our vision of success is:

• The Alliance is viewed as an effective partner in advancing race equity.

An indicator of success will be:

• At least five earned media pieces related to Alliance organizations’ work to advance race equity each year.
WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

The 2015 Civil Legal Needs Study tells us that nearly 50 percent of low-income households are not aware that the problems they are facing have a legal component; and they do not seek legal help. This gap in understanding persists despite decades of effort to provide legal education to low-income people through websites like WashingtonLawHelp.com and through grassroots community outreach and engagement. This goal and suggested strategies call on Alliance organizations to take a critical look at our educational efforts and consider new approaches to empowering clients to understand the legal nature of the problems they experience and to make informed decisions about whether, when, and where to go for legal help.

STRATEGY 1

Conduct an assessment of the current educational activities, communication channels, resources, and tools, identify any gaps and needs for improvement, and develop and execute on plans and any necessary tools that will address those gaps and needs.

Alliance organizations can implement this strategy by:

• Conducting an inventory of educational activities and resources within their region(s) – within one year – identifying the gaps and need for improvements and communicating the results to the Access to Justice Board Delivery System Committee, which can serve as a clearinghouse.

• Addressing any identified gaps and needs for improvement, creating and executing plans to educate low-income persons about legal problems, rights, and responsibilities, and the availability of legal assistance, with a special emphasis on reaching underserved communities and breaking down the silos among the civil, criminal, and juvenile justice systems. These plans may be on an organizational and/or regional level based on need and resources. They should include developing and distributing educational resources through a variety of media and organizations and should incorporate best practices and common language. The Access to Justice Board’s Communications Committee can support these efforts as a clearinghouse.

The Access to Justice Board and its committees can implement this strategy by:

• Addressing any identified gaps and needs for improvement, creating tools and strategies to educate low-income persons about their legal rights and the services available to them within and outside the civil legal aid system,
and sharing them with Alliance organizations.

- Developing an interactive legal wellness tool – in collaboration with Alliance organizations, ATJ technology leaders, and the private sector – that will enable low-income people to describe the situations they are facing and gain an understanding of the legal rights implicated and the resources available to address them. Alliance organizations can determine how the tool can be used through their networks and communities and encourage its use.

Our vision of success is:

- An improvement in the ability of low-income people to understand the legal dimensions of the problems that they are experiencing and to make informed decisions about whether, when, and where to go for legal help.

Indicators of success include:

- An increase in the use and circulation of tools to help people identify their legal issues.

**STRATEGY 2**

Communicate with low-income communities in ways that are accessible to low-income persons regardless of limited literacy, limited English proficiency, disability, or limited access to technology.

The Access to Justice Board and its committees can implement this strategy by:

- Developing models for effective community-based outreach and education both on- and off-line and sharing them with all Alliance organizations

Our vision of success is:

- A rise in client satisfaction with their ability to obtain information about their legal rights and responsibilities and the availability of legal assistance.

An indicator of success will be:

- Increased contact with low-income persons, including those with limited literacy, limited English proficiency, disability, or limited access to technology.
WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?
Who you are matters. Federal and state legal aid funding restricts programs from serving certain groups of people, including those who are undocument-ed and incarcerated. Additionally, the 2015 Civil Legal Needs Study demonstrates that low-income people who identify as African American or Native American experience a greater prevalence of legal problems in nearly every substantive area explored by the study. The same is true for people with disabilities and young people. It shows that low-income people regularly experience discrimination and unfair treatment on the basis of immigration status, prior juvenile or criminal system involvement, and credit history, and that victims of domestic violence or sexual assault report nearly double the prevalence of problems across all legal problem areas with an average of 19.7 legal problems per person, per year. The LGBTQ Supplement to the 2015 Civil Legal Needs Study illustrates that the LGBTQ community experiences different legal problems than the general low-income population and substantially higher levels of problems associated with discrimination and unfair treatment. Additionally, access to legal aid in rural areas remains a persistent challenge. Consistent with our Hallmarks, this goal and its suggested strategies call on the Alliance to authentically engage with low-income communities, adapt our delivery systems to meet their needs, and focus our limited resources on meeting the civil justice needs of those who are most vulnerable and in need.

STRATEGY 1

Work with data, community-based partners, and communities to identify underserved and underrepresented communities on an ongoing basis and provide targeted legal assistance.

Alliance organizations can implement this strategy by:

- Working with community partners to identify the common needs of the underrepresented and underserved communities they work with in order to provide targeted legal assistance.

- Working with communities of color, Native American communities, religious minorities, and other underserved and underrepresented communities to identify needs and provide targeted legal assistance.

- Considering and pursuing opportunities to increase the amount of services in community places frequented by underserved populations (e.g., libraries, shelters, community centers, hospitals, schools, churches).

- Considering and pursuing opportunities to co-locate legal aid and other community services on a limited or permanent basis.

- Training community partners to identify legal needs and make effective referrals.
Our vision of success is:

- Community-based partners have an increased understanding of how to identify civil legal problems and help low-income and vulnerable people with whom they work to access legal aid.

- Legal aid providers’ strategy in reaching underserved and underrepresented populations is improved through partnership with community-based partners.

Indicators of success include:

- An increase in the provision of legal aid outside of traditional legal aid program offices by the end of year two.

- An increase in the number of community organizations collaborating with Alliance organizations as partners by the end of year three.

- An increase in the number of community-based partners trained by Alliance members to identify legal problems of persons they serve and make effective referrals by the end of year two.

- An increase in the number of targeted referrals that Alliance organizations receive from community-based partners by the end of year three.
Our vision of success is:

- Increased services to low-income clients regardless of geography or other barriers to accessing legal aid in traditional settings.

- A rise in volunteer retention and satisfaction for attorneys in attorney-rich areas who are providing services to underrepresented and underserved communities using technology and other means.

Alliance organizations and the Access to Justice Board can implement this strategy by convening an Alliance stakeholder group to assess and make recommendations on:

- The strategic role of centralized intake, advice, and referral services as a component of statewide intake services.

- Flexible and efficient models for regional or local intake systems that complement centralized intake and support a variety of intake strategies.

- Innovative intake and referral methods used outside the state of Washington that could be implemented within the state.

- Client-centered approaches to intake for underserved and underrepresented populations, including consultation with the broader community of providers of social and human services to low-income people.

Our vision of success is:

- More effective intake mechanisms, which may include reduced time between initial contact and initiation of services to clients.

- Increased services to communities identified as underrepresented and underserved regardless of any barriers to accessing legal aid through traditional intake mechanisms.
WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

The 2015 Civil Legal Needs Study revealed that, on average, low-income households will experience more than nine civil legal problems annually. Experience shows us that these problems are often intertwined, and that helping an individual to address and overcome the problems faced often requires legal and nonlegal solutions. If the interrelated nature of these problems is not addressed, clients will continue to need civil legal aid for recurring and unaddressed legal problems. We also understand from the Civil Legal Needs Study Update that low-income people of color experience substantially higher rates of legal problems and that issues relating to discrimination and unfair treatment cut across every substantive legal category. This goal and its strategies call on Alliance organizations to fully realize the values articulated in our Hallmarks around authentic client and client community engagement, ensuring the availability of a full range of legal aid, and building effective partnerships with legal and community based organizations.

GOAL 4

The Alliance will encourage the use of holistic and client-centered approaches to address the complexity and breadth of legal needs and to help clients overcome demographic, systems-based, and other institutional barriers.

STRATEGY 1

Work with clients to identify and prioritize legal and non-legal needs and to develop strategies to meet those needs.

Alliance organizations can implement this strategy by:

• Continuing to develop flexible models, tools, and resources to help clients identify and prioritize the breadth of their legal and non-legal needs. These tools should be shared with the Access to Justice Board’s Delivery System Committee as a clearinghouse.

• Developing and offering training to enable staff and volunteers to better identify clients’ legal and non-legal needs.

• Employing a race equity lens – consistent with Goal 1 – in identifying client needs, local and statewide client service priorities, and strategies to address the problems experienced by low-income racial, religious, and ethnic minorities and communities of color including, but not limited to, those who are not eligible for state and federally-funded services.

• Establishing client satisfaction surveys or other tools to secure input from clients with respect to the services that they receive and the manner in which they receive them. Such systems should include questions that measure how well the organization is identifying and developing strategies to address the needs prioritized by the client.

Our vision of success is:

• A measurable rise in client satisfaction related to Alliance organizations’
ability to help them identify the full range of their legal and nonlegal needs and helping them make informed decisions about whether and, if so, how to address them.

An indicator of success will be:

- A measurable increase in the number of and extent to which Alliance organizations are working with clients to help them make informed decisions about their goals, and to identify, prioritize and address their legal and nonlegal needs by the end of year two.

STRATEGY

Expand and strengthen partnerships and collaborations to improve each client’s ability to address legal and nonlegal needs.

Alliance organizations can implement this strategy by:

- Strategically and intentionally collaborating with community-based organizations, as appropriate to the circumstances, in helping clients address their needs.

- Regularly seeking and securing input from community-based organizations in assessing and meeting the needs of clients.

- Sharing information about legal and nonlegal resources in the region.

The Access to Justice Board and its committees can implement this strategy by:

- Facilitating the development of an improved model to ensure effective cross-referrals and collaboration among Alliance organizations. To the extent possible, clients should need only knock on one Alliance door to get the help they need.

Our vision of success is:

- Clients are better able to address their legal and non-legal needs.

An indicator of success will be:

- An increase in the quality and number of cross-referrals and collaborations to better serve the client.
STRATEGY 3
Develop and expand holistic service models to improve long-term outcomes for clients.

Alliance organizations can implement this strategy by:

- Identifying communities that would benefit the most from coordinated or holistic legal aid by the end of year one.
- Piloting or expanding holistic models with those populations.
- Assessing existing services to determine the feasibility of implementing a client-centered, holistic approach.
- Establishing client-centered systems to secure input from clients with respect to how well the organization is addressing the full range of clients’ needs.
- Collaborating with partners in the criminal and juvenile justice systems to identify opportunities to work together to provide access to civil legal aid services to those involved in or reentering from the criminal and juvenile justice systems.

The Access to Justice Board and its committees can implement this strategy by:

- Identifying and providing tools that will allow Alliance organizations to capture the depth of the services they are providing and the outcomes they are achieving for clients. Alliance organizations can utilize the tool[s] to assess and report the depth of services being provided.

Our vision of success is:

- An end to the revolving door of legal aid, with fewer people returning because their issues have been resolved as a result of coordinated or holistic services.

An indicator of success will be:

- An expanded number of coordinated or holistic models being implemented by the end of year two.
WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

Our Hallmarks call on us to identify and eliminate the systems that operate to deny justice to low-income members of racial, national, ethnic, and social minorities and other low-income persons who experience barriers due to explicit or implicit bias and other marginalizing dynamics. Despite many advocacy successes, the 2015 Civil Legal Needs Study reveals that low-income people of color, among other groups, experience substantially greater numbers of legal problems and regularly experience discrimination and unfair treatment on the basis of legally protected characteristics such as race. The study also tells us that low-income people have precious little confidence that the justice system can help people “like them” to enforce their rights. We know from various symposia sponsored by the Supreme Court’s Minority and Justice Commission, national and state-based research, and many years of experience that racialized systems and structures have developed that result in disparate treatment of people and communities of color and that drive disproportionate negative outcomes for members of these groups as well as other historically and currently marginalized groups. This goal and its strategies call on the Alliance to prioritize collaborative systemic advocacy designed to eliminate these systems, structures, and practices, and to root such advocacy in authentic engagement with client communities and partnerships with community-based organizations. This goal is not intended to de-emphasize the essential work of providing direct legal assistance to individuals, but to acknowledge that systemic change is needed if we are ever to truly achieve equity for all.

STRATEGY 1

Engage with client communities in order to inform and drive systemic advocacy.

Alliance organizations can implement this strategy by:

- Creating annual community engagement plans by organization, regional groups, and issue-specific task forces, as is helpful in each case, and distributing them to regional partners, stakeholders, and the Alliance.

- Revisiting, evaluating, and modifying their engagement plan annually based on results and distributing written results and modifications to regional partners, stakeholders, and the Alliance.

Our vision of success is:

- Alliance organizations will be able to demonstrate that community input is playing a role in helping identify systems, structures, and practices that result in disparate treatment or disproportionate negative outcomes for low-income people and communities, including but not limited to communities of color.
An indicator of success will be:

- Alliance organizations, any regional groups, and issue-specific task forces have client community engagement plans by the end of year two.

STRATEGY 2

Communicate and collaborate within the Alliance and with other allies — which may include those in the criminal and juvenile justice systems — in order to identify patterns within communities that point to the need for systemic change and identify opportunities for collaboration.

Alliance organizations can implement this strategy by:

- Engaging with one another and allies in existing statewide advocacy work by developing and supporting mechanisms for regular information sharing and for inviting participation, as appropriate, in regional and statewide advocacy activities.

- Developing and supporting mechanisms for regional input on systems, structures, and practices that result in disparate treatment and drive disproportionate negative outcomes for low-income and marginalized communities and considering the value of systemic change advocacy to address these.

- Convening a statewide stakeholder group at least biennially to revisit and refine statewide systemic reform work.

Our vision of success is:

- Alliance organizations are working together to effectively identify and develop statewide system reform strategies.

An indicator of success will be:

- Increased participation from a broad range of Alliance organizations in identifying statewide and regional advocacy priorities and in pursuing systemic change.

- Increased recruitment of and engagement with other allies, including community-based organizations and those in the criminal and juvenile justice systems, in identifying statewide and regional advocacy priorities and in pursuing systemic change.
STRATEGY 3

Partner with organizations external to the Alliance to develop resources and make strategic investments in the ability of Alliance organizations to engage in systemic advocacy.

Alliance organizations can implement this strategy by:

• Considering annually allocating specific resources for systemic change advocacy appropriate to their mission.

• Supporting community partners in their campaigns for systemic change.

The Access to Justice Board and its committees can implement this strategy by:

• Obtaining information annually from Alliance organizations on activities related to partnering with community-based organizations to develop resources for systemic change advocacy.

Our vision of success is:

• An increased focus on and support for advocacy that is intentionally focused on identifying and eliminating systems, structures, and practices that negatively affect low-income and marginalized communities and that result in disparate treatment and drive disparate outcomes for communities of color and other marginalized populations.

STRATEGY 4

Develop leaders that are skilled in systemic advocacy.

Alliance organizations can implement this strategy by:

• Having staff, board members, and volunteers participate in the Equal Justice Community Leadership Academy.

• Having staff, board members, and volunteers participate in and provide opportunities for community lawyer training across the state on an ongoing basis.

• Having staff, board members, and volunteers participating in and providing opportunities for race equity training across the state on an ongoing basis.
Our vision of success is:

- That **community lawyering** becomes a core component of each program’s strategic client service mix.

**Indicators of success include:**

- Every Alliance organization has multiple members who have graduated from the Leadership Academy.
- By 2019 every Alliance organization will have a majority of staff engaged in community advocacy who received community lawyering training.

The Alliance has long demonstrated an ability to respond effectively to changing circumstances. While this Plan is intended to guide the Alliance within available resources, the Alliance is committed to meeting any eventuality with courage, consistent with the Hallmarks and our core values, with the clients and client communities foremost in our minds.