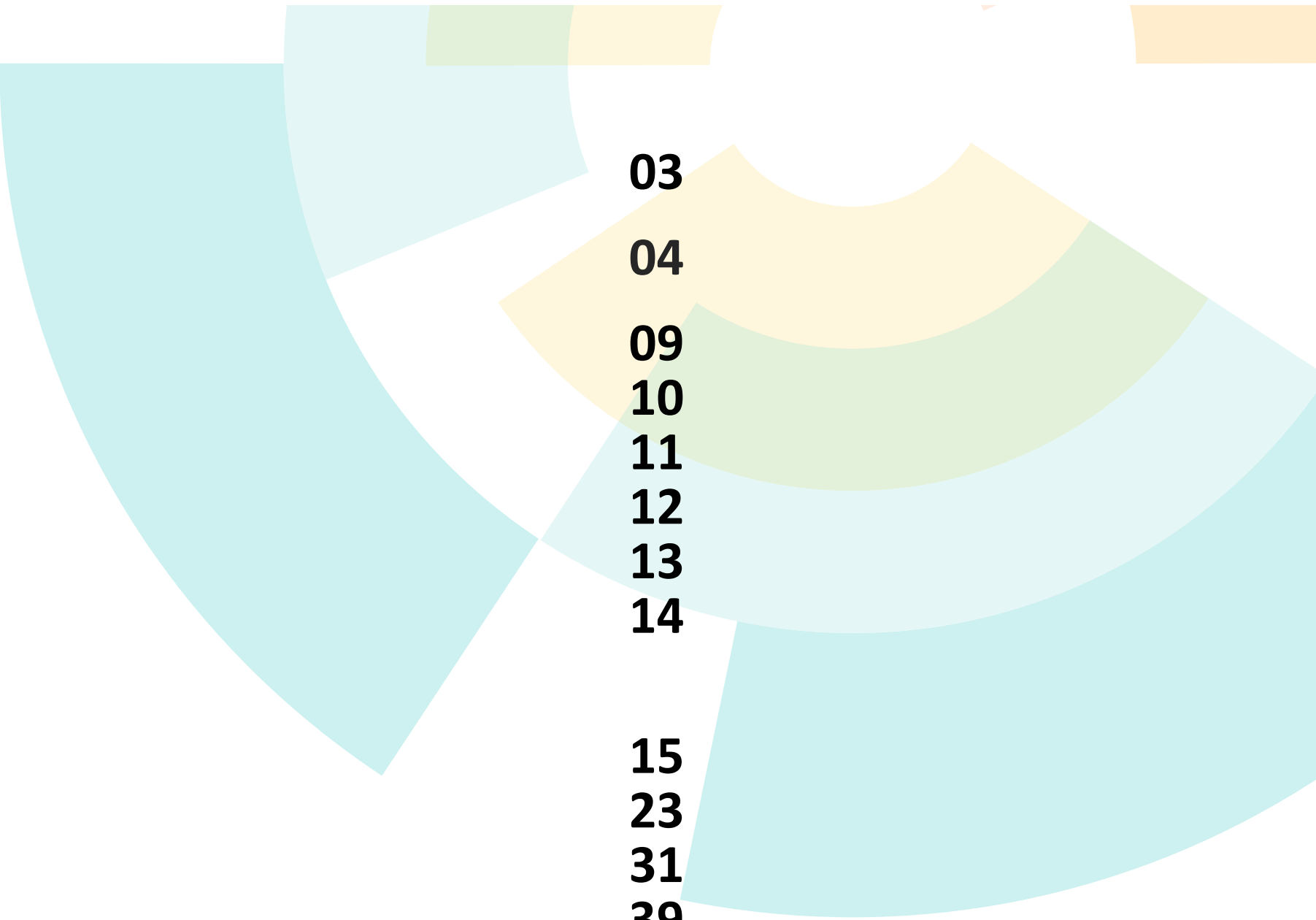


Self to Systems: Leading for Race Equity Impact

Table of Contents

About ProInspire	03
Introduction	04
The Leadership Model for Race Equity Impact	09
A. The Leadership Model	10
B. Windows of Leadership	11
C. Core Commitments	12
D. Corresponding Practices	13
E. Areas of Advancing Racial Equity	14
Core Commitments	15
A. Self: Exploring Identity	23
B. People: Centering Relationships	31
C. Organizations: Aligning Values	39
D. Systems: Collective Reimagining	47
Getting Started	49
The Model in Action: LIFT	52
What's Next	53
Acknowledgements	56
Appendices	58
A. History and Methodology	59
B. About our Language Choices	60
C. Glossary	61
D. Endnotes	
E. References	





About ProInspire

Founded in 2009, ProInspire activates leaders at all levels to accelerate equity. Recognizing that leadership and equity are the keys to systems change, we strive to impact change by designing and delivering workshops, facilitating racial equity change processes, convening communities of practice, and conducting research focused on equitable leadership practices in the social sector.

ProInspire has engaged with over 4,000 leaders at all levels across the social sector as we work towards our vision of a more equitable and just society. Our position is that centering the needs of Black people, Indigenous people, and People of Color (BIPOC), organizations will create lasting change that disrupts racism. Our values of equity, authenticity, collaboration, and courage are

essential to who we are and what we do, and we strive to embody these ideals in our lives and our work with leaders and organizations.

ProInspire was named by the Chronicle of Philanthropy as one of 7 Nonprofits to Watch in 2015, and as a Top-Rated Nonprofit from 2015 to 2018. In 2021, ProInspire moved to a shared leadership model, where Bianca Casanova Anderson was promoted to co-CEO serving alongside Founder and co-CEO Monisha Kapila. While we bring our knowledge and expertise to this work, it is only through our partnerships and the collective wisdom and actions of our community that we can achieve our mission and realize our shared vision. We are grateful for the leaders, organizations who have partnered with us.

Self to Systems: Leading for Race Equity Impact

Introduction

Social sector organizations exist to benefit society and create a more just world. In order to realize this vision, our work must positively impact both people and communities — particularly those whose lives are most directly affected by structural racism and systemic oppression. However, most social sector organizations inherently uphold characteristics of white supremacy culture through organizational norms, leadership expectations, and standards of professionalism. These norms, beliefs, and behaviors are often unacknowledged and unexamined, which has the potential to exacerbate structural inequities and perpetuate racism within the workplace. This Leadership Model for Race Equity Impact (the “Leadership Model”) helps to put into context and dismantle this unsettling and long-standing harm with a framework that encourages the adoption of practices that further racial equity.

Introduction (continued)

These practices highlight the ways that all leaders — across identities, roles, issue areas, and organizations — can interrupt racial inequities through their leadership. Demonstrating these practices and deepening one’s skill sets and mindsets does not correspond to years of experience, level of workplace hierarchy, positional authority, or job title. Our belief is that leaders at each and every level should work toward building inclusive and equitable workplaces that create a positive social impact for **Black people, Indigenous people, and People of Color (BIPOC)***.

This work calls on organizations and individuals to apply a racial equity analysis to their interpersonal interactions and role responsibilities, and this Leadership Model offers a way to build such an analysis, when core commitments and corresponding practices are adopted as elements of an individual’s leadership skills. We believe this is essential to shifting organizational culture to accelerate racial equity.

***BIPOC stands for Black, Indigenous and People of Color. This term centers the experiences of Black and Indigenous groups, signifies solidarity between communities of color, and explicitly names the people most impacted by racism and systemic oppression.**

See Appendix B and C for more information on our Language Choices and Definitions

Why This Leadership Model is for You

This Leadership Model is a tool to support individuals and organizations with core commitments, corresponding practices, and reflection questions that can create and sustain racially equitable experiences and outcomes within the social sector.

It is based on ProInspire's collective experience, research, and perspectives, and informed by our thought partners, advisors, and community. We will continue an iterative process to expand the model in a responsive and supportive way as our learnings evolve.

This Leadership Model is **most effective** for leaders who...

- 1** Understand that structural racism exists
- 2** Acknowledge the harm and violence structural racism perpetuates
- 3** Actively seek to advance racial equity in their daily practice

Developing the Leadership Model for Race Equity Impact

This Leadership Model has been built on shared knowledge and the wisdom of many. We are deeply grateful for the many partners who have contributed thus far and eagerly await valuable feedback to support this work in the future. We consider this Model to be a living document that will evolve and improve through input and new perspectives.

Throughout the current version shared in this guide, we attribute the source of the ideas, tools, and methods whenever possible. We are particularly appreciative for the knowledge shared directly by racial equity practitioners and research published about Emergent Strategy (adrienne marie brown), Race Equity Culture™ (Equity in the Center), Race to Lead (Building Movement Project), and White Supremacy Culture (Tema Okun).

Foundational Principles of the Model

One can operate as a leader from any position within an organization

Leaders within the social sector must prioritize the advancement of racial equity from self to systems

The process for individuals to advance racial equity includes committing to actively learning and unlearning, taking intentional action, and building processes for accountability

A Note on the Evolution of the Model

This Leadership Model for Race Equity Impact has evolved over the past five years, with input from a diverse range of voices and perspectives, and learnings from practical experience through our work with social sector organizations. Research and development of the Leadership Model occurred alongside ProInspire's internal racial equity work. It happened against a societal and political backdrop that further exposed the need for social sector leaders to build their capacity not just for leadership, but for leadership that creates and sustains racially equitable experiences and outcomes.

ProInspire's work to support leaders in the social sector dates to 2009, when the ProInspire Fellowship launched as a pathway to expand talent pipelines and increase diversity in the sector. As we extended our work to support managers, senior leaders, and organizations — and expanded our theory of change to the systems level — a recurring theme emerged around a lack of clarity on the skill sets, mindsets, and behaviors that leaders at all levels needed to create impact. With a clear alignment to our mission at the time (2016) and a belief that equity should be core to leadership, we set out to develop a competency model with an equity lens for the social sector. Through our research, the project evolved to this Leadership Model for Race Equity Impact.

(See Appendix 1 for more on the methodology and development of this Leadership Model)

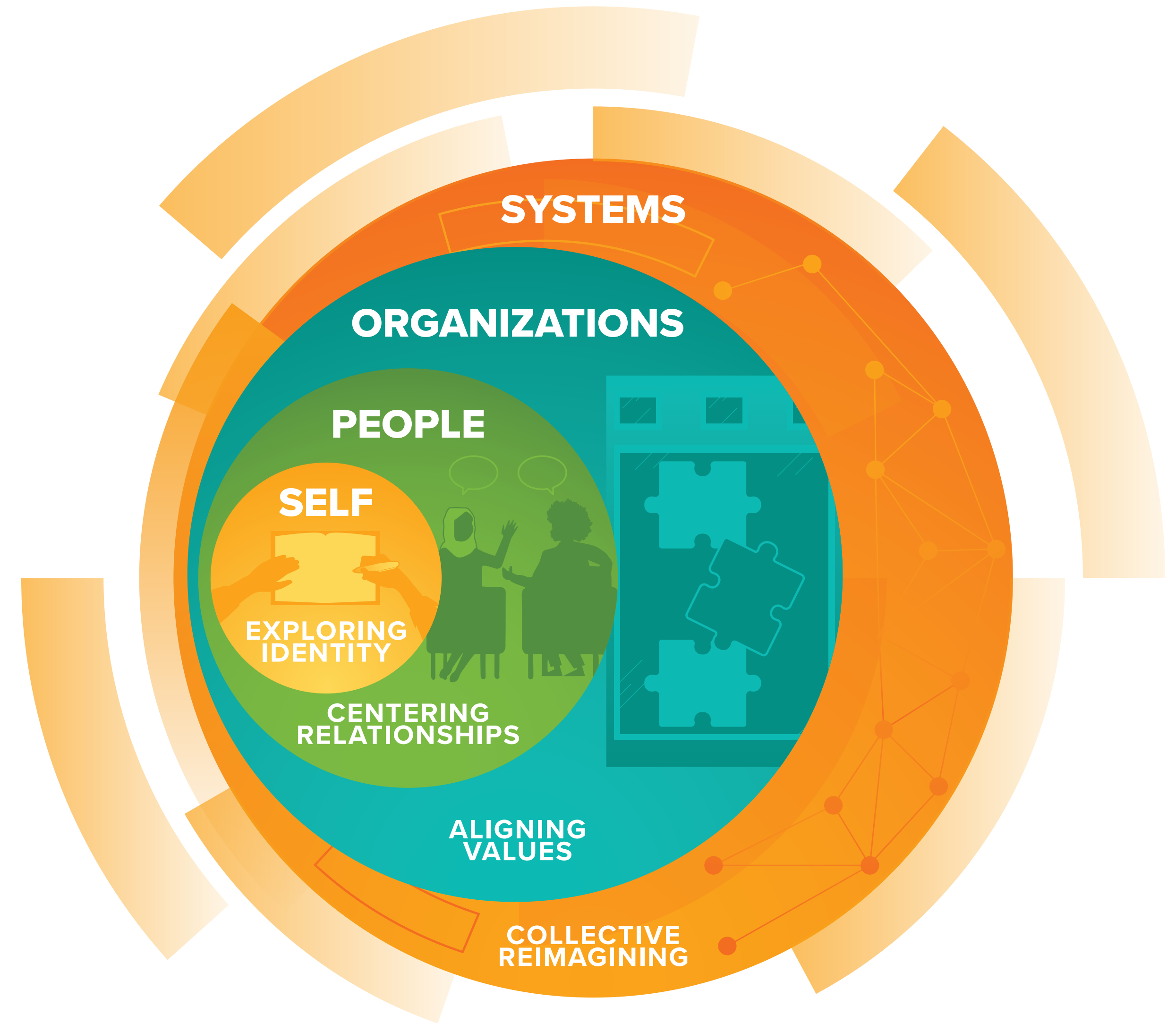


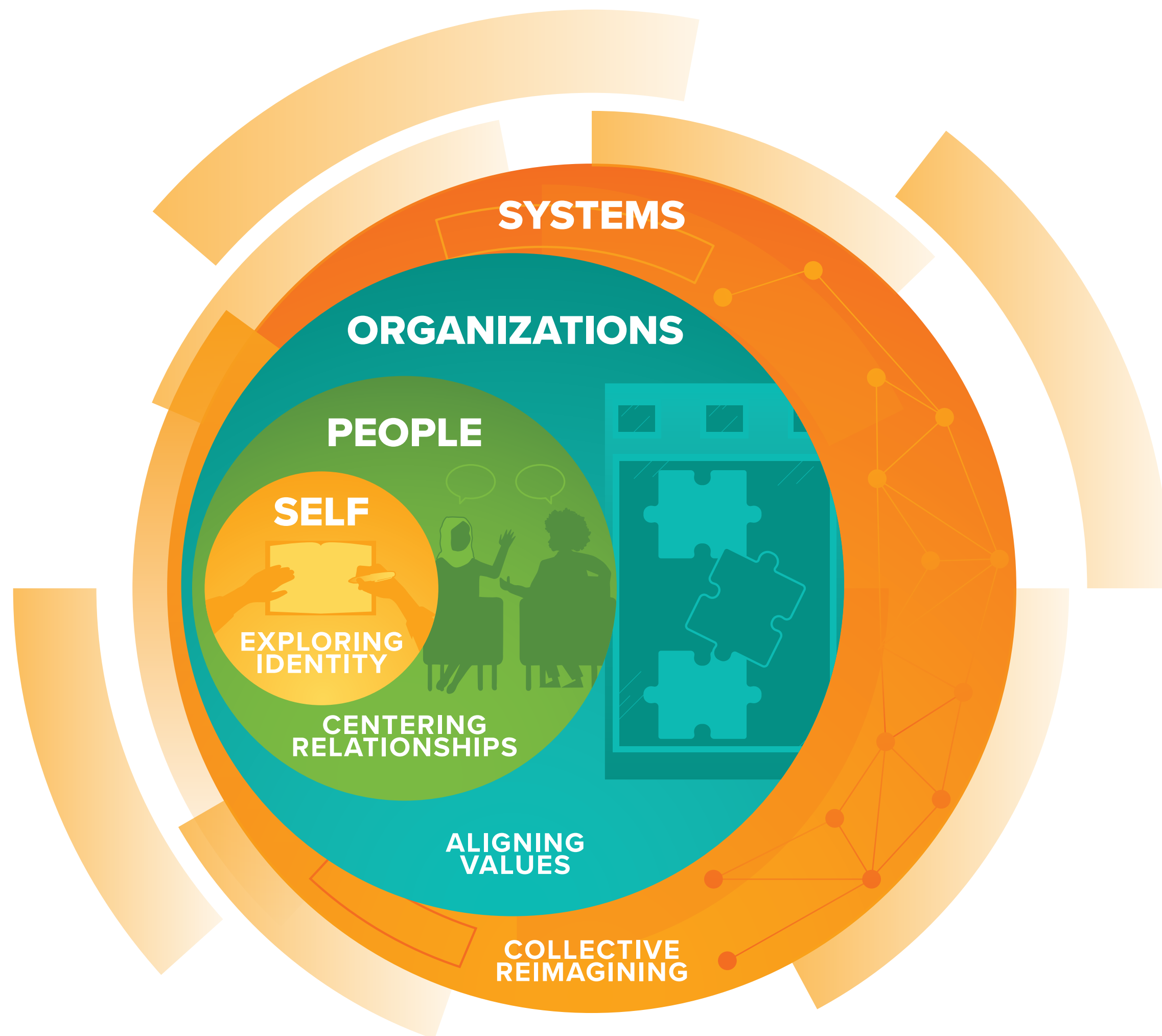
Introducing the Leadership Model for Race Equity Impact

Leadership Model for Race Equity Impact

When Leading for Race Equity Impact, you have Core Commitment in each Window of Leadership:

- When leading **Self** you commit to **Exploring Identity**
- When leading **People** you commit to **Centering Relationships**
- When leading **Organizations** you commit to **Aligning Values**
- When leading **Systems** you commit to **Collective Reimagining**





Windows of Leadership

Windows of Leadership is our term for the perspectives or levels from which leaders can create impact — namely leadership of **Self, People, Organizations, and Systems**.

- The windows provide both a view of **where you are leading** and a reflection of **how you are leading** to advance racial equity.
- These windows are interdependent; they do not work in isolation but instead connect to and support each other.

Accompanying each window is a **Core Commitment**, which captures the nature of the practices in each window.

- The core commitment is what leaders aspire to do when they engage in the practices within a window.
- When the work gets messy — and inevitably it will — leaders can remind themselves of the core commitment to connect with why they are adopting these practices, and why the work is worth doing.

Core Commitments

Exploring Identity

In the leadership of Self — we can disrupt internalized racism and internalized racial superiority by compassionately working to raise self-awareness and cultivate inner well-being

Centering Relationships

In the leadership of People — we can disrupt interpersonal racism and experiences of exclusion and bias by building trust across identities and navigating through friction, disagreement, and conflict with care

Aligning Values

In the leadership of Organizations — we can disrupt institutional racism and cultural norms and policies of white dominant culture by aligning stated values, beliefs, and mission statements at the organizational level

Collective Reimagining

In the leadership of Systems — we can disrupt systemic racism through individuals, organizations, and communities working together to challenge white dominant norms, shift outcomes, and create lasting change

Corresponding Practices

Under each of the Core Commitments are **Corresponding Practices** or ways of being and doing (mindsets, skills, and behaviors) that individuals adopt in their leadership to accelerate racial equity in each of the Windows of Leadership: Self, People, Organizations, Systems.

The practices are categorized using the Areas of Advancing Racial Equity Framework or the “3-As”. The 3-As are **active learning and unlearning, intentional action, and processes for accountability**. Together, the 3-As guide each core commitment’s development as individuals work on and demonstrate practices when leading in each of the Windows of Leadership (Self, People, Organizations, Systems).

A Note on the Practices

While our research highlights practices that all leaders can adopt, how you embody the practices will vary based on who you are – including your identities, lived experiences, and current sociocultural context.

Introducing The 3-As

The Areas of Advancing Racial Equity Framework (the “3-As”) is the structure for categorizing the practices under each of the core commitments.

Active Learning and Unlearning:

In these practices, leaders disrupt beliefs and mental models around hierarchies of human worth, in particular internalized superiority or inferiority

Intentional Action:

In these practices, leaders address individual behaviors and shift organizational policies, practices, and norms from ones that contribute to bias and exclusion to ones that cultivate belonging

Processes for Accountability:

In these practices, leaders and organizations maintain their commitment to advancing racial equity by developing ongoing processes to understand or evaluate outcomes and gather feedback from those who are directly impacted by the work

Introducing The **Self** Window

When leading Self you
commit to **Exploring Identity**



The **Self** Window: Exploring Identity

At the core of leading self is a commitment to exploring identity by devoting time to an ongoing practice rooted in self-awareness and self-compassion. It acknowledges the importance of understanding not just our own identity and lived experiences, but also identity as a social construct that shapes our beliefs about ourselves and others. Exploring identity allows us to disrupt harmful belief systems (e.g., internalized racism and internalized racial superiority), focus on inner well-being, build curiosity for other perspectives, and honor the full humanity of ourselves and others — all of which are essential to racial equity work and foundational to the Leadership Model.

“Our ongoing examination of who we are in our full humanity, embracing all of our identities, creates the possibility of building alliances that may ultimately free us all.”

- Dr. Beverly Daniel Tatum

Exploring Identity at the 3-As

The Areas of Advancing Racial Equity Framework (the “3-As”) is the structure for categorizing the Exploring Identity practices in the Self Window.

Active Learning and Unlearning Practices:

- Understanding your history
- Noticing and naming discomfort
- Recognizing that identities shape experiences and biases
- Prioritizing well-being
- Acknowledging intersectionality
- Connecting healing to identity exploration

Intentional Action Practices:

- Disrupting biases
- Demonstrating curiosity
- Cultivating inner well-being
- Developing emotional awareness
- Practicing vulnerability
- Checking in with yourself
- Developing self-care practices

Processes for Accountability Practices:

- Incorporating self-reflection
- Defining feedback structures
- Assessing how you mitigate biases
- Sharing identity learnings
- Creating space and accountability for self-care

Exploring Identity

Active Learning and Unlearning Practices

Understanding your history:

Realizing that who you are today and how you show up in the world is based on your lived experiences, the people and places that have shaped you, and surrounding social, economic, and historical contexts¹

Noticing and naming discomfort:

Being aware of and identifying discomfort or sensations that come from your heart and body, not just from your mind and reason

Recognizing that identities shape

experiences and biases:

Understanding different aspects of your identity as privileged and/or systematically excluded in society, and how that shapes your experiences and leadership, and informs your implicit and explicit biases

Prioritizing well-being:

Learning that caring for yourself allows you to better care for others and your community

Acknowledging intersectionality:

Understanding that identities— race, gender, sexuality, class, region, and other individual characteristics and experiences— intersect, connect, and overlap with one another²

Connecting healing to identity exploration:

Recognizing the importance of healing racial and generational trauma, and engaging with yourself in ways that promote compassionate self-awareness

Exploring Identity

Intentional Action Practices

Disrupting biases:

Intentionally and effectively developing strategies to mitigate and disrupt, internalized racial biases and prejudices

Demonstrating curiosity:

Seeking out and creating space for perspectives from people with identities different than your own and learning how their lived experiences have shaped them and their leadership

Cultivating inner well-being:

Committing time and energy to deepen your personal awareness with reflection and compassion

Developing emotional awareness:

Mindfully navigating your emotions so you can choose actions and behaviors that align with your values

Practicing vulnerability:

Sharing your own identities and acknowledging where dominant identities have provided advantages

Checking in with yourself:

Paying attention to how you're feeling or reacting as you explore your identity; grounding to recalibrate and process what thoughts, questions, and emotions come up and how it feels in your body

Developing self-care practices:

Regularly identifying and addressing your needs (e.g., taking water breaks, journaling, meditating, setting boundaries) so that you can show up fully

Exploring Identity

Processes for Accountability Practices

Incorporating self-reflection:

Building a practice to explore how identity informs your beliefs, decision-making, and actions (e.g., reflection questions, journaling, mindfulness)

Defining feedback structures:

Creating an external feedback mechanism (e.g., coaching, buddy system) to evaluate the way your identity shows up and has an impact on others in certain spaces or situations

Assessing how you mitigate biases:

Remaining alert to the existence of your biases; keeping track of the times when you are and are not disrupting those biases

Sharing identity learnings:

Sharing with others what you've learned about your own limiting or inaccurate beliefs and ideologies, with particular emphasis on how internalized beliefs influence your behavior and how you show up

Creating space and accountability for self-care:

Scheduling and dedicating time for self-care practices and asking colleagues, friends, and family to support you in meeting your goals

What messages have been sent to you about your identity, and did they confer messages about superiority or inferiority? Who did they come from?

Where do you have dominant and non-dominant group memberships? How do intersections of different dominant and non-dominant identities affect you?

How has your lived experience shaped your leadership?

What habits, rituals, or routines do you use to maintain well-being?

How does grounding help you work through issues or questions that might be emotionally challenging?

Exploring Identity

Reflection Questions

Exploring Identity with Mission Capital

Mission Capital is a nonprofit organization that supports, strengthens, and uplifts Central Texas nonprofits and their champions. In 2018, under the leadership of CEO Madge Vasquez, Mission Capital embarked on its own racial equity journey and publicly committed to centering racial equity in its work. The organization created racial affinity groups, hosted staff training, and began conversations with staff, board, and partners. Madge spent time reflecting on her own identity as a Latina woman and created space for discussions among her staff, describing it as a gift that led to heightened self-awareness as a leader. Madge was open in sharing her personal journey and how it connected to shifting organizational culture to more clearly advance racial equity with her colleagues and network. By sharing her identity journey, Madge modeled vulnerability and authenticity which created space for others in the organization to share about their identities as part of the organization's racial equity work.



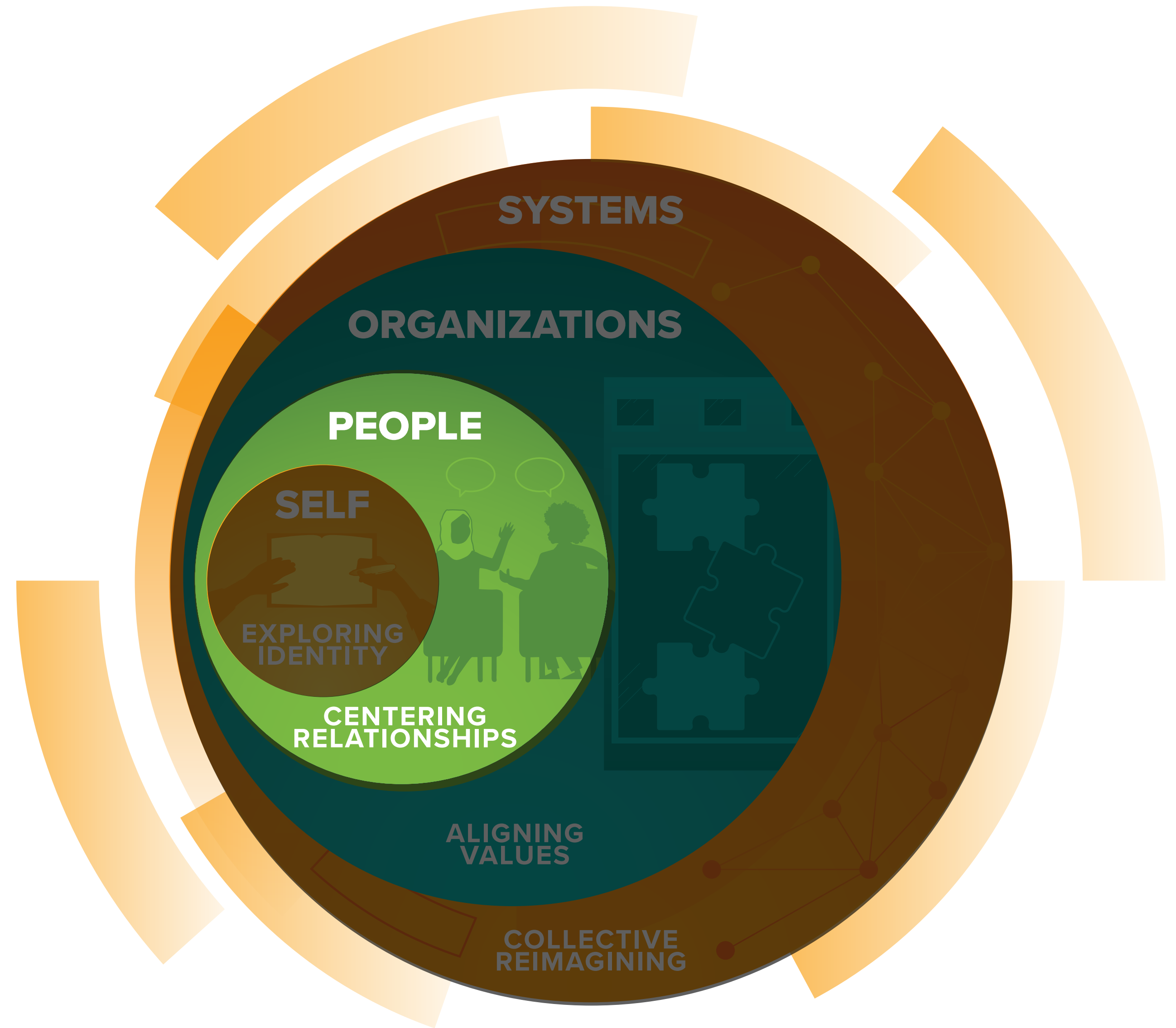
"I am well versed in white dominant culture, having navigated different institutions and roles for 25+ years. So I find that this work has allowed me to give myself permission to be courageous and to be bold and to also discern my way of expressing my authentic leadership. How do I call in when I see inequities? I often reflect on what that means for me as an individual leader and how that shapes and informs the organizational culture we are co-creating at Mission Capital."

- Madge Vasquez, CEO of Mission Capital



Introducing The **People** Window

When leading People you
commit to **Centering Relationships**



The **People** Window: Centering Relationships

At the core of leading people is a commitment to centering relationships by prioritizing people over productivity and cultivating a culture of belonging that supports authenticity. It requires building trust and honoring the experiences of others — especially BIPOC staff— to advance racial equity on an interpersonal level. Centering relationships means caring about the impact our words and behaviors have on people. It includes expanding our awareness of our communication, navigating healthy conflict, and restoring relationships. This commitment prioritizes a more frequent and supportive process of giving and receiving feedback, allowing us to address interactions that reinforce racial hierarchy, exclusion, and bias.

“Relationships are built at the speed of trust, and social change happens at the speed of relationships.”

– Mama Lila Cabbil, Rev. Jennifer Bailey of Faith Matters Network, adrienne marie brown and others

Centering Relationships at the 3-As

The Areas of Advancing Racial Equity Framework (the “3-As”) is the structure for categorizing the Centering Relationships practices in the People Window.

Active Learning and Unlearning Practices:

- Learning about others
- Distinguishing intent vs. impact
- Exploring restorative approaches
- Connecting identity to communication
- Utilizing affinity spaces
- Learning communication preferences
- Understanding cross-cultural communication

Intentional Action Practices:

- Building trust
- Practicing emotional agility
- Valuing lived experience
- Listening deeply and empathetically
- Centering care in feedback
- Taking and making space
- Setting and respecting boundaries

Processes for Accountability Practices:

- Attending to impact
- Navigating courageous conversations
- Creating space for ongoing communication
- Restoring relationships
- Implementing consistent feedback
- Creating supportive work structures
- Encouraging and modeling learning

Centering Relationships

Active Learning and Unlearning Practices

Learning about others:

Learning about colleagues' strengths, preferences, working styles, and what they need to bring their full selves to work; remaining open to being influenced by others as you learn about their identities and lived experiences

Distinguishing intent vs. impact:

Recognizing when your intent is not aligned with your impact and applying learning so that moving forward your impact will be more reflective of your intent

Exploring restorative approaches:

Prioritizing practices that repair harm and return wholeness instead of punitive practices, when addressing challenges or navigating conflict

Connecting identity to communication:

Learning how your identity, privilege, and power impact others, both as listener and speaker

Utilizing affinity spaces:

Creating spaces for staff who share similar racial or ethnic backgrounds where they can learn, be authentic, be vulnerable, and build community (e.g., employee resource and affinity groups)

Learning communication preferences:

Identifying the aspects of your culture that shape the way you interact with others and increasing awareness of how your biases and communication preferences are reflective of dominant ways of working

Understanding cross-cultural communication:

Strengthening knowledge and flexibility to communicate across diverse social identities and lived experiences

Centering Relationships

Intentional Action Practices

Building trust:

Devoting time and resources to building authentic relationships; working to build honesty, vulnerability, and trust through communication

Practicing emotional agility:

Creating space for a variety of emotions and honoring those feelings in yourself and others, paying particular attention to where there are race-based differences regarding who is allowed to express a range of emotions (e.g., misinterpreting 'passion' as 'anger')³

Valuing lived experience:

Honoring the unique histories, cultural backgrounds, and ways of being people bring to their work

Listening deeply and empathetically:

Actively engaging and understanding perspectives, particularly those of BIPOC colleagues' and those with less positional authority

Centering care in feedback:

Giving feedback that focuses on individual growth; requesting feedback and receiving it graciously

Taking and making space:

Balancing listening and sharing while considering power dynamics and privilege when communicating and identifying opportunities to continue learning

Setting and respecting boundaries:

Communicating boundaries clearly and respecting colleagues' boundaries with empathy; recognizing that the opportunity to set and maintain boundaries might be impacted by racial identity and/or positional authority

Centering Relationships

Processes for Accountability Practices

Attending to impact:

Apologizing when mistakes happen and when actions have a negative impact, while also incorporating that learning into future behavior

Navigating courageous conversations:

'Calling in' responsibly, raising difficult issues, and compassionately navigating through conflict in pursuit of greater impact (e.g., interrupting microaggressions)

Creating space for ongoing communication:

Checking in regularly through digital channels, one-on-one meetings, and team interactions.

Restoring relationships:

Creating and fostering intentional spaces for meaningful conflict resolution with a focus on repairing harm and accountability

Implementing consistent feedback:

Defining a regular and accessible way to offer and receive feedback; including opportunities for 360-degree feedback from yourself, supervisors, and colleagues

Creating supportive work structures:

Collectively building out processes that support everyone involved in the work (e.g., spacious timelines and inclusive decision-making)

Encouraging and modeling learning:

Being open to sharing your learnings, changing your behaviors and actions, and routinely following-up; recognizing that authentically sharing also creates space for others to practice vulnerability

Centering Relationships

Reflection

Questions

How does your racial identity inform how you navigate interpersonal dynamics with people at work?

How do you navigate through friction, disagreement, and conflict? How does your cultural upbringing influence that?

When communicating in groups, try the WAIT approach by asking “Why am I talking?” or “Why aren’t I talking?”

When you cause harm, what are some restorative ways you can apologize and make amends?

Where are you building trust with people across lines of difference?

Centering Relationships with Arabella Advisors

Arabella Advisors partnered with ProInspire to provide training on equitable management for 100+ people managers within their organization. This training series focused on building management practices that center relationships and demonstrate racial equity values. In addition, managers explored tools for reflecting on their racial identities, building awareness of their mental models, understanding trust preferences, and giving and receiving feedback.



Kim Walker, who led this work as Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion at Arabella, shared: “Focusing on equitable management helped us center relationships by bringing greater awareness to how people can build trust across differences. Building trust is a value that resonates with us, and as a result, we are prioritizing embedding trust-building principles at the heart of our people management practices.”

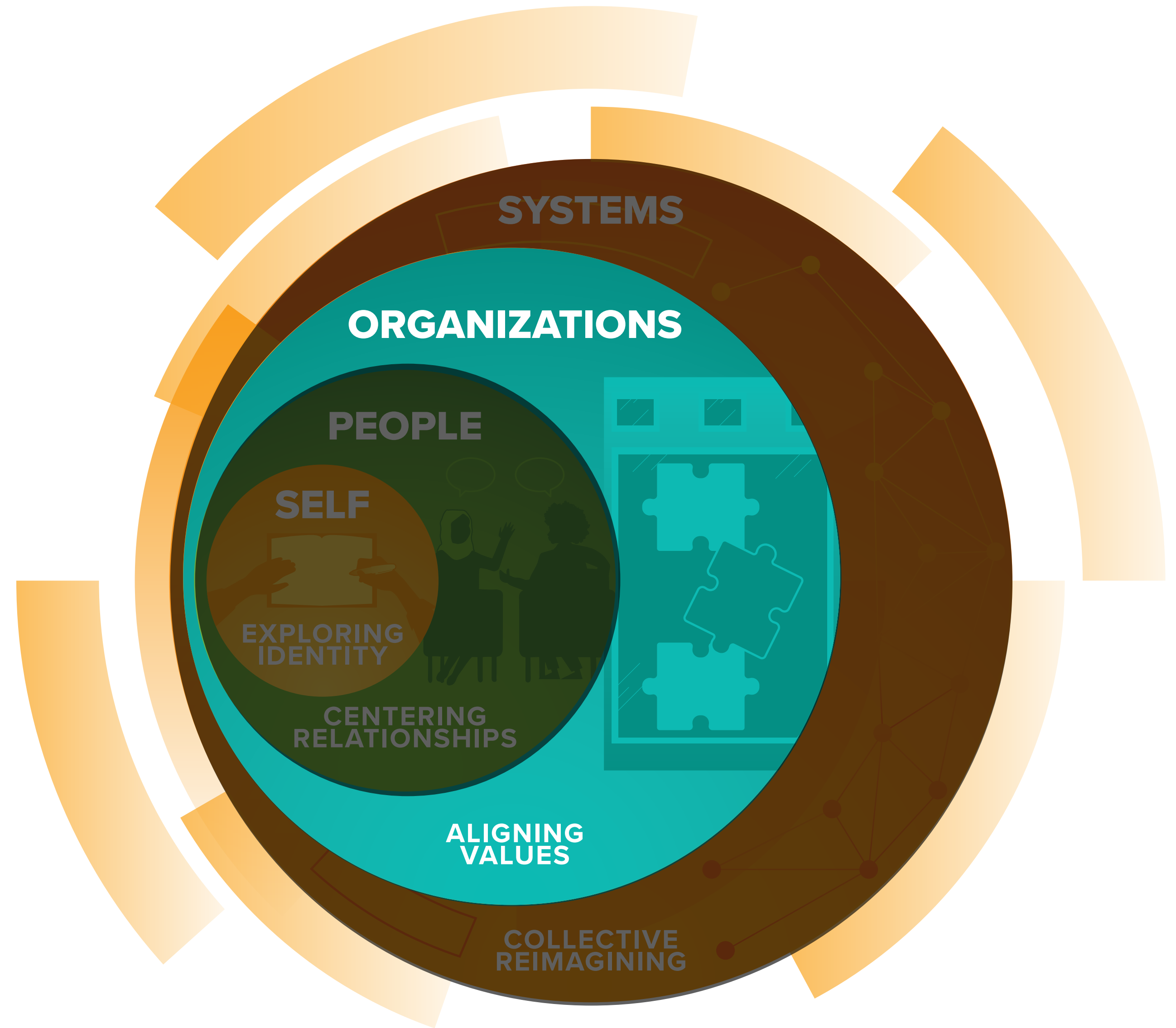


Hilary Cherner, Chief Strategy & Impact Officer at Arabella said, “Our people managers play such an important role in shaping the experience for team members. Training helped them to see their role in ensuring an equitable and inclusive experience for staff and also gave them concrete tools to develop their muscles to center relationships.”



Introducing The Organizations Window

When leading Organizations you commit to **Aligning Values**



The Organizations Window: Aligning Values

At the core of leading organizations is a commitment to aligning values by establishing congruence between stated racial equity beliefs and values and actual organizational policies and procedures. Aligning values sets the foundation to interrupt white dominant culture and establish organizational practices that integrate racial equity throughout the organization — from the culture to the operations across all departments. It also includes changing ways of working so that leaders at all levels, in particular BIPOC staff, are co-creating culture, sharing responsibility, and supporting strategic direction. When aligning values, leaders focus on people's experience within the organization, establish policies to sustain racially equitable outcomes, and compensate for the invisible, underpaid, or unacknowledged labor within the organization.

“Integrity is choosing courage over comfort; choosing what is right over what is fun, fast, or easy; and choosing to practice our values rather than simply professing them.”

- Brené Brown

Aligning Values at the 3-As

The Areas of Advancing Racial Equity Framework (the “3-As”) is the structure for categorizing the Aligning Values practices in the Organizations Window.

Active Learning and Unlearning Practices:

- Exploring internal outcomes
- Identifying your community
- Defining racial equity indicators
- Connecting racial equity to mission
- Revisiting ways of working
- Focusing on BIPOC career growth
- Interrogating white dominant culture

Intentional Action Practices:

- Committing to racial equity
- Sharing responsibility
- Supporting employee well-being
- Fostering a collaborative climate
- Clarifying strategy
- Intentionally adapting work
- Operationalizing racial equity
- Cultivating a culture of belonging

Processes for Accountability Practices:

- Assessing racial equity impact
- Implementing feedback structures
- Gathering community feedback
- Sharing commitments and learning
- Addressing pay equity gaps
- Evaluating employee well-being
- Changing performance and promotion processes

Aligning Values

Active Learning and Unlearning Practices

Exploring internal outcomes:

Understanding the racial equity impact of your current policies and procedures (e.g., board and leadership composition, compensation process, vendor procurement, and investment policy)

Identifying your community:

Understanding your organization's focus population, gathering sector-level input, and disaggregating data to understand disparities by race

Defining racial equity indicators:

Identifying how you will measure progress as you consider what changes you want to make within your organization

Connecting racial equity to mission:

Understanding how racial equity connects to your organization's mission and work

Revisiting ways of working:

Analyzing policies and procedures that may have a negative racial equity impact (e.g., knowing identities/impact of vendors)

Focusing on BIPOC career growth:

Understanding where BIPOC staff want to grow, paying attention to that, and providing intentional supports for growth

Interrogating white dominant culture:

Identifying and questioning organizational norms that maintain exclusion and racial hierarchy, such as traditional notions of efficiency and productivity

Aligning Values

Intentional Action Practices

Committing to racial equity:

Creating values and shared goals for what the organization believes around racial equity and an adaptable vision for how to get there

Sharing responsibility:

Changing policies, procedures, and norms to support shared responsibility for outcomes and experiences across the organization

Supporting employee well-being:

Developing accessible policies on how to access supports so all staff can care for themselves (e.g., time off, mental health support, wellness fund)

Fostering a collaborative climate:

Creating collaborative and inclusive processes to make decisions and changing ways of working so that all staff, in particular BIPOC staff, are engaged in meaningful ways that demonstrate they are valued by the organization

Clarifying strategy:

Defining long-term goals and actions across the organization and on every team to align with shared commitments of racial equity

Intentionally adapting work:

Adjusting and aligning individual and team work while navigating complex and changing environments internally and externally

Operationalizing racial equity:

Applying a racial equity analysis to day-to-day operations, HR policies, vendor procurement, marketing and communications, and more

Cultivating a culture of belonging:

Working to create an organizational culture where visible and invisible measures of diversity and individual strengths and work styles are valued and leveraged toward the organization's mission

Aligning Values

Processes for Accountability Practices

Assessing racial equity impact:

Conducting regular audits or assessments and disaggregating the data by race and other identities to evaluate racial equity impact both within your organization and within the organization's focus population

Implementing feedback structures:

Soliciting regular feedback about organizational culture and experience, paying particular attention to differences by race and seniority; identifying regular checkpoints to follow up and share changes to organizational policies and procedures based on feedback

Gathering community feedback:

Building mechanisms to engage community members for feedback, make responsive changes, and report back

Sharing learning and commitments:

Sharing the organization's racial equity values, goals, and learnings, internally and externally with staff, board, community, and partners

Addressing pay equity gaps:

Making changes to compensation structure to address pay equity gaps

Evaluating employee well-being:

Assessing whether staff feel supported to do their work by managers and team; evaluating well-being policies and procedures to ensure all staff have access to resources to care for themselves as individual and organizational needs evolve

Changing performance and promotion processes:

Implementing changes needed in performance and promotion processes to address racial equity gaps, and revisiting to whether changes have improved results

Aligning Values Reflection Questions

Does your organization have stated or promoted values of racial equity, diversity, and inclusion (REDI)? How is the organization operationalizing these values?

What opportunities are intentionally created and accessible for everyone to influence and design an organization's culture (i.e., focus groups, committees)?

Whose voices are most often included in key discussions and decisions within the organization? Whose are excluded?

How do you define and measure the goals of your organization's racial equity journey?

What support system do you have for racial equity work in your organization? Which policies and systems contribute to racial disparities in workplace experience and outcomes?

Aligning Values with Communities in Schools (CIS)

Communities in Schools (CIS) is a national organization working within public and charter schools in 25 states and the District of Columbia. In 2017, CIS began equity work at the national office and across the network. CIS created a cross-network committee, built out an extensive equity framework, and began working with its affiliates to implement it. They recognized the organization had to be adaptive in its approach to consider the needs and pace of the state and local offices in their internal equity journeys. As a result, “the national office made an intentional decision to lead by example and model what we wanted to see throughout our network,” said Steven

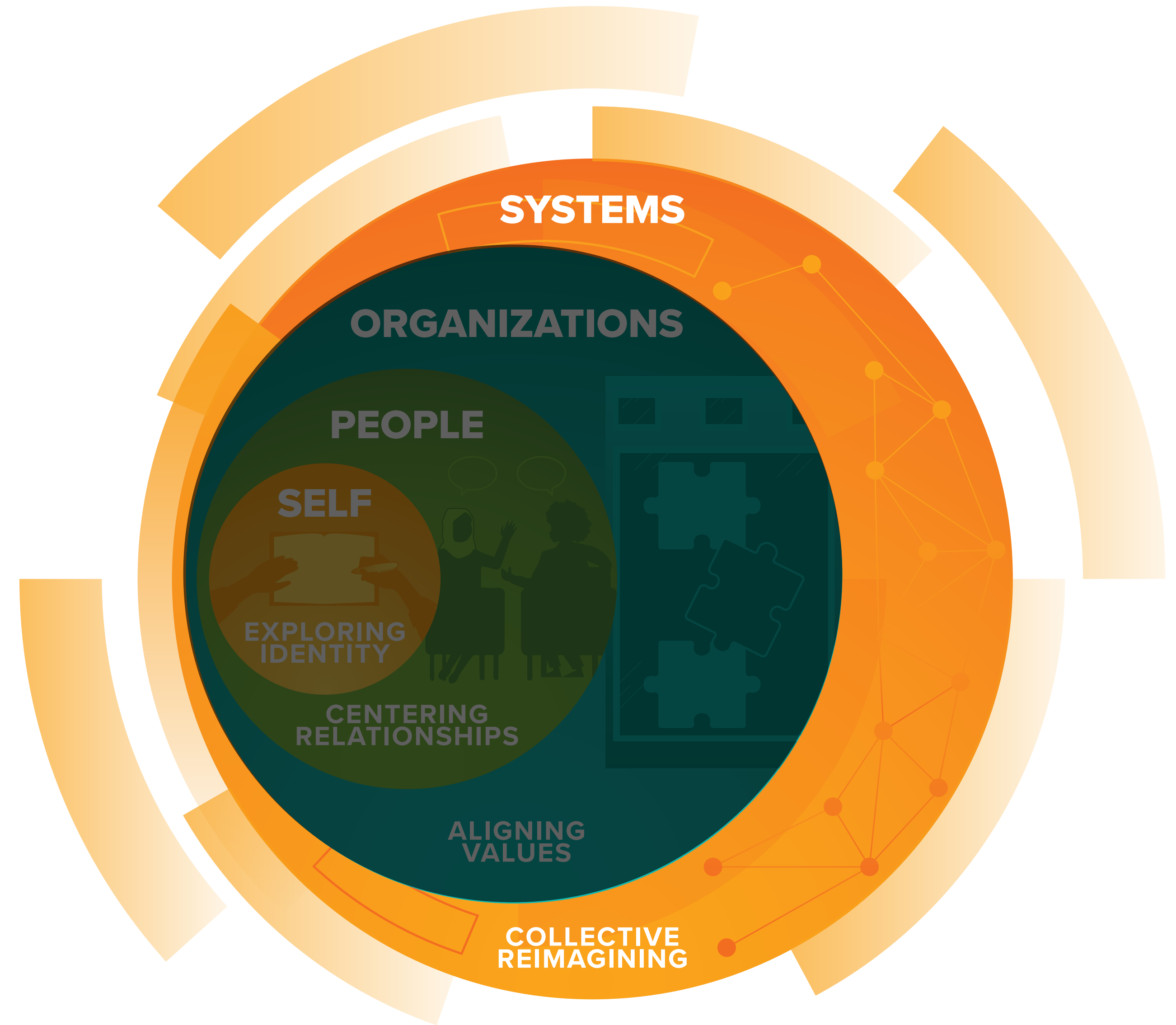
McCullough, Chief Operating and Equity Officer. CIS has lived into its value of sustaining equitable outcomes by integrating equity across its operations. This has included implementing calibration sessions to check for patterns of inequity in their hiring, retention, promotion, and vending practices. They created opportunities to include their alumni, who brought their lived experiences, to help shape the work and decisions made at the national level. They also shifted their branding and communications practices from a transactional approach to a relational model centered on the people and communities they serve.



“The national office made an intentional decision to lead by example and model what we wanted to see throughout our network,”
- Steven McCullough, Chief Operating and Equity Officer

Introducing The **Systems** Window

When leading Systems you
commit to **Collective Reimagining**



The **Systems** Window: Collective Reimagining

At the core of leading systems is a commitment to collective reimagining by taking the risk to envision and pursue together what is possible beyond what any one individual or organization knows or has experienced. It requires deeply understanding two primary truths: 1) that racial inequities are woven into the fabric of systems, and 2) individuals within systems can come together and change them. Collective reimagining invites individuals, organizations, and communities to work strategically to disrupt systemic racism and create lasting change. It requires an understanding of your ecosystems, your roles, and where you can influence change. It involves challenging assumptions, rethinking existing models, and finding creative solutions that address the root causes of racial inequities and lead to structural transformation.

“If you have come here to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together.”

- Lilla Watson and Aboriginal activists group, Queensland, 1970s

Collective Reimagining at the 3-As

The Areas of Advancing Racial Equity Framework (the “3-As”) is the structure for categorizing the Collective Reimagining practices in the Systems Window.

Active Learning and Unlearning Practices:

- Understanding ‘why race’
- Exploring multiple solutions
- Centering those most impacted
- Understanding interlocking inequities
- Recognizing your role in the system

Intentional Action Practices:

- Challenging the status quo
- Conducting root cause analyses
- Mapping people, power, and resources
- Building coalitions
- Disaggregating data
- Prioritizing collaboration over competition

Processes for Accountability Practices:

- Identifying impact
- Addressing dysfunction
- Redistributing resources and power
- Defining shared decision-making
- Creating feedback and learning loops

Collective Reimagining

Active Learning and Unlearning Practices

Understanding ‘why race:’

Recognizing that all outcomes are connected to race— we are all operating in a sector rooted in racial inequities, examining root causes, and investigating norms that perpetuate systems of oppression and white dominant culture

Exploring multiple solutions:

Recognizing that systematic change is complex and supporting multiple approaches to change such as organizing, advocacy, and political and corporate action

Centering those most impacted:

Focusing on those who are directly impacted by your work, by seeking their perspective, listening to understand, and following their leadership

Understanding interlocking inequities:

Learning about structural racism, connecting systems of oppression, and how policies and norms in one sector have implications for and can be reinforced by other sectors

Recognizing your role in the system:

Locating yourself in the interconnected system by identifying where your work sits in a broader network, understanding who is impacted by your work, and defining what role you can play in supporting change

Collective Reimagining

Intentional Action Practices

Challenging the status quo:

Taking time to examine assumptions that underlie how you are currently working; resetting any dynamics that are not serving you and your community; and intentionally looking for opportunities within one's work and organization to influence existing models and/or build new ones to strengthen the system

Conducting root cause analyses:

Analyzing disaggregated data, observing trends, and exploring factors that are impacting racial disparities to understand underlying causes of the problem⁴

Mapping people, power, and resources:

Identifying where you are now, (including the network of individuals and organizations linked to the issue) where power is currently held, and which resources are available in the network

Building coalitions:

Mobilizing collectively with others in your sector around a shared result, defining contributions toward it, and developing community agreements for how the work will be done

Disaggregating data:

Collecting and disaggregating qualitative and quantitative information to understand outcomes and experiences by race on a systemic level

Prioritizing collaboration over competition:

Releasing competition and embracing that overall impact is strengthened by collaborating and working in networks that honor relationships among people and organizations as infrastructure to support systems change

Collective Reimagining

Processes for Accountability Practices

Identifying impact:

Creating processes to assess real-world impact of your work, how you will measure it, and ways you will be held accountable

Addressing dysfunction:

Creatively challenging tensions that arise in partnerships by proactively addressing inequities and imbalances and creating structures that support others to do the same

Redistributing resources and power:

Examining and allocating resources so that those who are most impacted are sufficiently resourced to lead the work for social change

Creating feedback and learning loops:

Creating spaces to communicate transparently, share learnings, and collaboratively explore possibilities

Defining shared decision-making:

Creating processes that ensure those most impacted by decisions can influence or control those decisions; this includes creating mechanisms for sharing power between individuals, organizations, and communities

Collective Reimagining Reflection Questions

How are you creating spaces to gather and assessing who must be present in order to reimagine an equitable future?

What kind of power is showing up in your interactions? How can you shift toward shared responsibility and power?

Identify a key problem that you are trying to address in the social sector (e.g., hunger, medical access, voting rights). What are the possible root causes of the problem? How does the root cause relate to racial inequity?

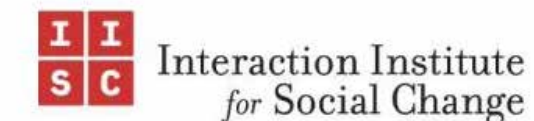
How can you map the network that already exists and strengthen it? What support is needed?

What types of feedback loops have you used that center input from all entities involved in the work?

Collective Reimagining among Capacity Builders

In 2018, Kresge Foundation and Community Wealth Partners brought together eight capacity building partners focused on racial equity and leadership: AchieveMission, Change Elemental, CompassPoint, Crossroads Antiracism Organizing & Training, Interaction Institute for Social Change, ProInspire, Rockwood Leadership Institute, and The Management Center. All of these organizations had been partners in Kresge's Fostering Urban and Equitable Leadership (FUEL) program, which supports training, coaching, and consulting for grantees of the Foundation. At this gathering, the capacity building partners began deepening relationships across their ecosystem. Over the course of two years, multiple staff from the partner organizations gathered virtually for regular check-ins to build relationships, share learnings, and navigate challenges. In 2020, all of these organizations were tested to new lengths with the COVID-19 pandemic and rising interest in racial justice work. Nearly all of the organizations had BIPOC leadership who were particularly impacted by the environment. The group began to meet more frequently to explore how they could

collectively reimagine the ecosystem, including how to refer work to each other, explore new approaches to virtual training, and share practices around internal operations. Each of the organizations was individually reaching out to foundation partners to seek support during this period, but the group decided to pursue a collective approach with the Kresge Foundation. The collective wrote a joint letter expressing needs they saw in this moment and the request for support to jointly navigate this challenging period. Two organizations signed the letter but didn't request the support because they didn't need it, recognizing their role in the system. Leaders from the different organizations met with the Kresge Foundation to request general operating support for each organization in the collective. Kresge had not received a request like that before, but recognized its role to support collective reimagining of the ecosystem and granted the six capacity builders general operating support. The capacity builders have continued meeting through 2021 and are now exploring other ways of supporting the ecosystem more broadly.



Getting Started

This Leadership Model is not intended as an exhaustive, one-size-fits-all tool. It is designed with flexibility and adaptation in mind. We offer the following suggestions for how to get started in building the core commitments and corresponding practices that can create and sustain racially equitable experiences and outcomes — in yourself, your relationships, your organizations, and your communities and systems.

Start with Self

We believe that developing an awareness of self is the essential work of racial equity. Have you reflected on your own identity, your own lived experience and how it has shaped you and your leadership? Identify the practices in the Self window that most resonate with you to explore your identity.

Practice Reflection

Use the reflection questions to identify your priorities and starting points. The set of questions that accompany each Window are a helpful tool for identifying the practices (and Windows) on which you want to focus your efforts. Set aside time to thoughtfully reflect and journal your responses. See what comes up for you (e.g., ideas, thoughts, emotions) and use that awareness to define your starting point and intended areas of focus.

Engage accountability tools

We suggest using a journal to capture your reflections and actions as you use this Leadership Model. It can also help to find an accountability partner to help you stay focused on the work.

Anchor in Commitment

Use the core commitments as a guiding light or anchor. The work of building practices to advance racial equity is nonlinear, and you might find yourself challenged, frustrated, or even lost in the work. We recommend using the core commitments as a reminder of what it is the practices are doing, and why they have value.



The Model in Action: LIFT

LIFT, a national nonprofit focused on investing in families to break the cycle of poverty, committed to its racial equity journey back in 2010. Since then the Board promoted Michelle Rhone-Collins, a Black woman, to CEO. Under Michelle's leadership, the organization named racial equity as a strategic goal and committed to training for all staff and board members. LIFT's experience highlights the ways that the practices explored through this Leadership Model can advance racial equity work.

“LIFT works predominantly with Black and Brown women across the United States. As a Black woman, I recognize that my racial identity supports how our constituents and diverse staff connect with me. I also recognize where I face barriers because of marginalization. I have been to the top schools and gotten the credentials that are expected in this job. But as I've moved into the CEO role, I realize that access to informal, intimate, and powerful donor networks is not just about education and credentials. Fortunately, I have had candid conversations about identity and privilege with my colleagues, board members, and white predecessor. This has enabled all of us to engage more mindfully given awareness about our identities, privilege, and systemic advantages.”

—Michelle Rhone-Collins, CEO of LIFT





How the Core Commitments can Advance Racial Equity Work

Exploring Identity: During their annual retreat, all staff reflected on their racial identities and practiced personal storytelling. The Board of Directors also began having more explicit conversations about their own racial identities. Araceli Lopez-Andrade, Program Director, says “We prioritize creating space to really bring in our true identity, our true self, our authentic self, to these conversations.”

Centering Relationships: LIFT formed a committee to focus on building a culture of trust and belonging among staff, including opportunities to share openly about identities, address biases, and learn from one another. Racial equity work also supported the Board to strengthen relationships among members. Dr. Arlene Ford, Board Member, shared, “The racial equity work is having impact internally in terms of relationships among board members, openness to having more conversations, and understanding what it means to support a CEO that is a woman of color.”

The LIFT logo is positioned in the top left corner of the image. It consists of the letters 'LIFT' in a bold, blue, sans-serif font. The letter 'I' has a small blue dot above it. The background of the image is a warm, golden-yellow color with a soft, out-of-focus background showing two women in conversation. One woman has curly hair and is wearing a denim jacket, while the other has straight hair and is wearing a dark top. The overall mood is professional and collaborative.

How the Core Commitments can Advance Racial Equity Work (continued)

Aligning Values: The organization is now implementing changes to operations and programs aligned with its racial equity values. The Board highlighted racial equity as critical in their new strategic plan. Araceli Lopez-Andrade, Program Director, says “we have centered racial equity in our work by being intentional about creating organization goals, department goals, regional goals, and individual goals. It’s part of our language, part of our discussions, part of our meetings, part of how we problem solve, and how we make decisions around the lives of people that we touch every day.”

Collective Reimagining: LIFT is engaging in discussions about collective reimagining and shifting from a focus on poverty to centering around race. This has led to discussions about how to reimagine their work as not only direct service, but also shaping policy to influence systems. Michelle said “LIFT is at an important moment of thinking about our model. We need to engage in policy work because of how inequity has shown up in the systems and policies of the people that are arriving at our doors every day.”



What's Next

Looking ahead, we are eager to:

- Continue iterating on this model based on our learning internally and with partners
- Develop tools to help you apply this framework, including a feedback guide and a 360 tool
- Explore how to have a more intersectional approach in the application of this model to account for nuances in experience among racial groups based on other identities (e.g., gender, sexuality, ability) that can compound forms of oppression

Our expectation is that this Leadership Model, and the tools that accompany it, will continue to evolve. We welcome your feedback on how it is supportive and where you see opportunities for more depth as you use it to build core commitments and corresponding practices that advance racial equity within the social sector. We appreciate all of those who have inspired us, pushed us, and supported us in the work to develop the Leadership Model for Race Equity Impact.

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Core Team, Key Contributors, Current and Former Board, Staff, and Consultants

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 Faith in Action
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 PolicyLink

Project for Pride in Living
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Appendix A: Methodology

While we have been eager to share this research over the past five years, we needed the time and space to pilot and evolve this Leadership Model. Our first step was to understand existing schools of thought and competency models in use. We engaged a pro bono team at the Advisory Board to conduct a landscape analysis of existing competency models drawn from the education, healthcare, and nonprofit sectors. The team synthesized information from over 30 models to identify the most common competencies in use. While some models named diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) as a stand-alone competency, none incorporated equity into all aspects of leadership.

Our own internal racial equity journey highlighted other shortcomings of existing models in connecting equity to leadership; models in use were based on standards of professionalism normalized by white dominant culture and omitted core behaviors and practices that promote racial equity. For example, we noticed that ‘strategic thinking’ was traditionally defined by competencies held by management consultants, not by equity behaviors such as engaging community members in strategic planning and designing an inclusive process. This analysis uncovered a key insight: instead of building a model from established research, we needed to create a model that emphasized a different set of knowledge, mindsets, and behaviors. **On the right side are the tenets that guided each iteration of this Leadership Model.**

We must center racial equity in leadership. Our initial research showed that DEI is often seen as a check-the-box activity and traditional DEI efforts have diminished the historical and structural impact that race has on everyday lived experiences. In this model, we are focusing on racial equity outcomes and experience as core for leadership, so racial equity, diversity and inclusion (REDI) becomes a standard practice of leadership.

We are learning as we go. Our work with social sector leaders and organizations has been our greatest teacher and source of awareness and insight on what is needed to cultivate leadership that creates and sustains racial equity experiences and outcomes. These needs have shifted over the past several years, and so has the Model in order to address them.

We are challenging and expanding standard notions of leadership and ways of working. The development of the Model has coincided with defining moments of the 21st century. Across the country, there is increased awareness for how racial inequities are perpetuated through police violence, health disparities, climate change, and more. There’s a clear case for leadership that creates and sustains racially equitable experiences and outcomes — and for tools to help develop it for the moment at hand and the moments and movements ahead.

Design Principles

The iterative process helped develop this Leadership Model's usability, wholeness, and embrace of racial equity as the foundation of equitable leadership in the social sector. We employed the following design principles in the Model's development and evolution:

Create a living model, not a static tool in a finished state. Each version represents where our thinking was at that time, and acknowledges that more changes will be required to meet the needs of leadership in an evolving landscape.

Engage stakeholders as design partners. Alumni, funders, program participants, advisors, and others embedded in this work provided us with some of the most important insights and raw material.

Use visuals to convey meaning and use of the model. This has been one of the more challenging aspects of the Model's development. Feedback from partners and the field helps us identify further refinements that add clarity to the visuals.

We created multiple avenues for input and feedback throughout the Model's development:

Interviews:

ProInspire staff and consultants conducted more than 20 interviews with thought partners in 2017 and 2018 to understand what elements were important to include in a competency model focused on equity

Team Working Sessions:

In 2018, we had multiple working sessions with the ProInspire staff to bring forth our own knowledge and experience; We are grateful for their contributions

Focus Groups:

In 2019, we hosted focus groups with ProInspire alumni, partner organizations, and funders to understand how this Model could be used

Internal Testing:

In 2019 we started to use the Model at ProInspire in our hiring and performance review processes, as well as in our client work

Project Leadership:

In 2020, Bianca Anderson joined ProInspire and took leadership of this work, bringing a focus on racial equity based on her own knowledge and experience from doing racial justice work in Dallas, Texas

Expanded Team:

In 2021, new ProInspire team members brought their knowledge and experience from academia, health equity, and social justice movements to help shape how we describe the leadership practices

Surveys:

In 2021, we surveyed 18 organizations engaged in their own racial equity journey around the core commitments outlined here

Appendix B:

About our Language Choices

In this publication, we are using the words that feel most resonant and reflective in the current context and recognize these may evolve over time. Here are some of the words that we made intentional choices around:

BIPOC, which stands for Black, Indigenous and People of Color, is currently the most descriptive term for those who have been systematically excluded in the United States of America. BIPOC centers the experiences of Black and Indigenous groups, signifies solidarity between communities of color, and explicitly names the people most impacted by racism and systemic oppression⁵. The term also allows for people of color to self-identify while acknowledging that not all people of color are impacted by racism in the same ways. Racial equity analysis requires developing clarity about the populations most impacted⁶. This means that BIPOC should not be used as a proxy term when the focus needs to be a specific racial or ethnic group⁷.

Dominant Identities: Dominant groups are people who belong to the group with more structural power, by virtue of their identity (may or may not be in the statistical majority). People with dominant identities carry privilege tied to historical inequities. In our current system of racial hierarchy, white is the dominant racial identity.

White Dominant Norms: Because white is the dominant racial identity, whiteness and Euro-centric standards have become the default norms in the United States. This means that many of our current standards about leadership, professionalism, and workplace expectations have been shaped by characteristics of white dominant culture. Beliefs that uphold whiteness as more valuable or normal often minimize and disregard additional ways of working that are more culturally expansive. Expanding our understanding of leadership expectations means shifting away from behaviors that uphold whiteness as the right way, and support multiple ways of working that are more inclusive and racially equitable.

Some of the white dominant norms that need to shift to behaviors that advance equity and justice include:

- Shifting from leadership by an individual toward leadership by the collective
- Shifting from a focus on productivity toward a focus on people
- Shifting from a focus on the “bottom line” toward alignment of equity values in organizational outcomes
- Shifting decision-making power from those who have historically held power toward those most impacted by the decision

Appendix C: Glossary

For a complete list of definitions, please see the [Leading for Race Equity Impact Glossary](#) on our website. If there are any other definitions that you are looking for, please check the [Racial Equity Tools Glossary](#)⁸ or search them online.

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