

Racial Equity Impact Tool

Hennepin County utilizes the Racial Equity Impact Tool (REIT) to ensure we are intentional and reflective of our residents' and community needs. This tool assists staff in refining practices, procedures and policies to produce equitable outcomes. The county's REIT is based on a toolkit and best practice model by the Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE), a national network of government jurisdictions committed to racial equity and adapted for Hennepin County purpose. Hennepin County adopted the REIT in 2019 and has been using it to guide our work in addressing disparities in our seven domains of connectivity, education, employment, health, housing, income and justice. REIT guides our employees and partners to proactively seek to eliminate racial inequities and help advance the county's commitment to disparity reduction.

About the tool

The Racial Equity Impact Tool is designed to integrate explicit consideration of racial equity in the decisions we make. The tool is a set of questions designed to elicit examination of how different racial and ethnic groups will likely be affected by a proposed action or decision, and to assist in uncovering where our choices are having disparate, adverse impact on some groups. Using a racial equity tool early means that individual decisions can be aligned with organizational priorities and desired outcomes.

Steps and questions in the Racial Equity Impact Tool

1. Set outcomes: What is the desired results and outcomes of the proposal?
2. Data: What does the data tell us?
3. Community engagement: What stakeholders have been engaged, and by what methods?
4. Strategies: Who will benefit? Who will be burdened? What are the strategies for equitable impact?
5. Implementation: What is the plan for implementing the strategies?
6. Accountability: What are the accountability mechanisms? How will results be evaluated and communicated?

"The cumulative impacts of many small choices can be as significant as the impacts of big decisions."
[RaceForward.org]

Benefits of using the tool

- Helps keep the focus of the decision on data and fact
- Provides a systematic way to engage voices of those who will be affected by the decision in question
- Can shed light on the unintended consequences of policy decisions before those decisions are made
- Can reveal a wider range of options for policy choices
- Fosters an environment of learning and continuous improvement

When to use the tool

- Program planning – what to change and prioritize in programs and workplans
- Budgeting – what items to prioritize, to add or change
- Workforce planning – who to hire, retain, promote, or develop as leaders
- Policy development – what to propose or modify
- Practices – routines and habits to continue, change, or cut

Too often, policies and practices are developed and implemented without thoughtful consideration of racial equity. When racial equity is not explicitly brought into operations and decision-making, racial inequities are likely to be perpetuated.

– Government Alliance on Race & Equity-



The Racial Equity Impact Tool is just one of the racial equity training and resources available to staff at Hennepin County. A shared understanding of this work is vital to building collaborations, enacting best practices and creating space for engagement of residents and communities. In doing so, it deepens our commitment to reducing disparities for our residents with county programs and services aimed to helping those residents.