CHANGING THE FUTURE:
The Work of Associated Black Charities…

Associated Black Charities is determined to change the future. We seek – through policy-related education and advocacy, collaborations, and incubation and testing of strategic intervention models – to strengthen Maryland’s economy by focusing on the economic growth, economic inclusion, and economic influence of African Americans.

In Maryland, ABC is a champion for economic transformation for African Americans and other marginalized communities in areas related to our organizational mission – to advocate and facilitate the creation of measurably healthier and more prosperous communities through responsible leadership and philanthropic investment throughout the State of Maryland.

Supporting good policy is an essential component of our work. Because policy is not “race neutral,” we work with policy makers, civic and institutional leaders, advocates, and others to build greater understanding of why using a racial equity lens matters and how to use it effectively in policy design. A shared understanding of this lens by Maryland leaders increases the potential for advancing policies that ensure that economic opportunities advance all Marylanders as we move into the 21st Century.

To contact Associated Black Charities about research or technical assistance regarding use of Policy Applications of a Racial Equity Lens, please contact A. Adar Ayira, Project Manager, in the Middle Initiative, aayira@abc-md.org, 443-334-7732.

A special thanks to Associated Black Charities’ Board of Directors.

Thanks to our partners Aspen Institute Roundtable on Community Change, Baltimore Aspen Workgroup, Baltimore Community Foundation, Baltimore Racial Justice Action, and to all who have informed this work.

www.abc-md.org
The City of Seattle introduced its Race and Social Justice Initiative in 2005. In doing so, it was the first city that had ever undertaken a specific initiative focused explicitly on improving community well-being by addressing institutional racism and eliminating racial inequity.

Public policy has played a pivotal role in both creating and dismantling the structural and institutional barriers that have disproportionately affected marginalized groups, including racial groups, in America. Although the most obvious racially discriminatory policies have been overturned or mitigated, factors that disadvantage communities of color—intended and unintended alike—continue to operate in American society and in public policy.

ABC and our partner organizations consistently receive questions from policy-makers and other leaders regarding practical applications of a racial equity framework in assessing the racial impacts of policies, practices, and programs. These questions represent a larger shared vision of fairness that is more likely to be achieved if we can increase effectiveness in evaluating the impact of policies on all groups of Maryland residents. This shared vision places Maryland firmly in the forefront of high-caliber policy development. Using a racial equity lens in developing policy puts Maryland at the forefront of states and cities that directly address racial equity. Removing structural and institutional barriers that have racially disproportionate impacts on residents increases Maryland’s reputation as a livable state and strengthens its economic vibrancy.

This pocket guide is a concrete educational tool for policy leaders and others wanting to translate their commitment to justice and equity to practical applications.

CHANGING THE FUTURE: Policy Applications of a Racial Equity Framework: Background

The UK’s Public Sector Equality Act of 2010 requires public authorities to have “due regard to equality considerations when exercising their functions.” Although not required by this law, the use of Equity Impact Assessments are strongly encouraged to assess certain policies regarding their potential impact on equality prior to their implementation. Analyzing the impact of policies on racial and other marginalized groups is not new, either nationally or internationally. The UK, for example, has frequently updated its “Equality Act,” including a “Public Sector Equality Duty and Equality Impact Assessment” which obligates public authorities to “due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity.”

Nationally, city governments are becoming more responsive to the calls of coalition groups (advocacy, business, community) for policy assessments that address racial (and other forms of) equity. Whether called Racial Equity Impact Assessments, Equity Impact Assessments, or Race and Social Justice Initiatives, cities and states across the country either have or are advocating for racial equity impact assessments as standard parts of the policy process:

- Seattle, WA’s process is regarded as a model in policy impact assessments. It has a concrete and far-reaching plan of action that incorporates internal outcomes in City government, public engagement and City services, as well as race-based disparities in Seattle communities.
- The state of Connecticut has a narrower focus, applying its racial equity assessment lens only to policies that affect prison populations. In 2009, its General Assembly created measures requiring its Office of Legislative Research to prepare racial and ethnic impact statements for all bills affecting prison population size, when requested by its Legislative Committees.
- Maryland’s state law requires the creation of a “Race and Social Justice Initiative” that studies and analyzes the discriminatory and beneficial impacts of policies in Montgomery and Prince George’s counties.

In these cases, each targeted effort moved from a seemingly “race neutral” decision-making perspective to one that supports legislators in more effectively addressing implicit biases and barriers in systems – and in the process, transforming them.

Ten Essential Questions for Policy Development, Review and Evaluation:

1. How is an equity lens incorporated within the policy?
2. Does the policy explicitly account for potential racially disparate outcomes? If so, how? If not, can it be incorporated?
3. How is an equity lens incorporated in tracking policy outcomes?
4. Will the policy increase access and opportunity for communities of color? How?
5. Will the policy have a positive impact on racial / ethnic equity, inclusion and full participation of all people (in the process, in implementation, in breadth of outreach and participation, in decision-making and culture of decision-making, etc.)?
6. Will the policy protect against racial violence, racial profiling and discrimination? How?
7. What are the mechanisms in place to ensure accountability (such as equity-focused benchmarks or indicators)?
8. Do the lens and tools for accountability incorporate a racial equity framework? How?
9. Are there changes that could be made to make the policy more equitable and inclusive?
10. What are the economic and social benefits of incorporating an equity lens in this policy?

The Work of Associated Black Charities . . .

The City of Madison established its Racial Equity and Social Justice Initiative in 2013, focusing on eliminating racial and social inequities in two main areas in municipal government: policies/budgets and city operations. Equity considerations are now integral to major decisions, with the focus on achieving equitable allocation of resources.

Policymakers in Seattle, Washington; Madison, Wisconsin; and other cities in the United States are on the forefront of taking action by simply asking questions with a racial equity lens when drafting, reviewing and before passing public policy.

Below are 10 essential questions that every policy-maker and civic leader involved in policy development, review and evaluation should use to identify the potential of unintended race-based disparities and, when appropriate, to inform policy decisions. While it may not always be possible to answer every question in detail, each should at least be asked and considered. Asking these questions is an acknowledgement that policy is not “universal” or “colorblind” and that incorporating an equity lens to policy increases the economic growth prospects for Maryland and all its residents.