MOVING BEYOND THE EQUITY PLATEAU

OPPORTUNITIES TO ADVANCE EQUITY IN THE HOMELESS RESPONSE SYSTEM

NIS National Innovation Service

Acknowledgements

NIS would like to thank Bill Block for his financial support for this effort and his intentional thought partnership in the spirit of advancing racial equity for unhoused people. NIS offers our gratitude to the communities who responded to this survey, offering their time and reflections for the interviews and willingness to learn together.   In addition, thank you to the national racial equity leadership, federal partners and technical assistance providers who offered their guidance as we prepared this document.

Table of Contents

Project Overview

I n recent years local homelessness response systems (Continuums of Care, or "CoCs") have responded to calls for racial equity by elevating and naming racial equity as a priority. Some have stated that they have adopted race equity tools or frameworks intended to address the effects of historic and structural racism and to have their operations and services advance the goal of a more equitable system. This study examines to what extent CoCs are taking meaningful action to advance racial equity, and whether those actions have in fact changed how the entities are operating. The study has limitations, discussed below, but its overriding conclusion is that while many CoCs have, in good faith and with best intentions, implemented several steps outlined in national frameworks proposed and promoted to advance equity, the steps do not in and of themselves result in operations and structural changes that promote system level changes, accountability, and meaningful power shifts. In order to continue to advance racial equity, national and local stakeholders must find ways to name and make concrete the ways we progress from seeing racial disparities to action-oriented changes in power and resource distribution.

Background

In June of 2020, communities across the nation responded to the deaths of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor with transformative community organizing and an expansive awakening to the violence and harm caused by centuries of structural racism and oppression in the United States. Within the backdrop of a global pandemic, there was increased visibility to the harms of anti-Black racism and a growing public discussion about how white supremacy culture permeates nearly all institutions and structures. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated existing inequities in housing for people of color and compounded the effects of structural racism while elevating the disproportionate impacts for Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and Asian communities. In response, communities publicly shared bold anti-racism accountability statements and intentions towards anti-racism and indicated their public commitment to advancing racial equity within local homeless response systems.

In their effort to implement national and community commitments to integrate equity aims in utilizing new and transformative federal funding opportunities resulting from the pandemic, groups have produced race and equity tools designed to create the shifts in power, resources and service delivery

necessary to advance equity. Although these community commitments to advancing racial equity are laudable, there is not yet a uniform approach, a shared understanding of the types of system strategies that communities are implementing, nor, most important, an understanding of whether and to what extent these strategies are effective in creating equitable system transformation. This project emerged as an opportunity to establish an understanding of where Continuums of Care (CoCs) have progressed to date in advancing system transformation toward racial equity, answering the following questions: Has any power shifted in communities? Are decisions being made differently? Are there meaningful changes in allocation of resources or form of service delivery? If not, what more is needed?

Approach

To explore answers to these questions, NIS applied a two-phased approach: an online survey followed by in-depth community interviews/conversations with a subset of CoCs who responded to the survey and demonstrated evidence of implementing strategies intended to advance equity. As the framework for the survey, NIS organized the survey question domains to align with the Equity Based Decision Making Framework developed by NIS and promoted through the Framework for an Equitable COVID-19 Response. The target audience for both the survey response and the community conversations was CoC leadership, with the intention to understand strategies CoC's applied to advance equity in the homeless response. Although this target audience limited opportunities to hear from diverse perspectives - especially from the people who

are most affected by systemic inequities - the focus on leadership was intentional, to solicit responses from the system leaders who had an asserted intent to advance equity across the homeless response system.

Community Survey to Identify Current Approaches to Racial Equity

The survey was designed to collect data about the strategies CoCs have employed to advance racial equity and how they have impacted equitable outcomes.

In general alignment with the Equity Based Decision Making Framework, the survey was designed around the following domains:
  • Racial Equity Strategies
  • Data
  • Accessibility & Transparency
  • Community Engagement
  • Implementation, Accountability, and Evaluation
  • Business Operations
  • Hiring Practice

Survey Response

The survey consisted of five initial gating questions that screened in any community who selected 'yes' for at least three to proceed with the full survey. The gating questions focused on basic indicators of racial equity effort:
  • In the last year has your CoC conducted disaggregated data analysis to better understand racial disparities in the homeless response system?
  • Does your COC have a statement committed to racial equity that is publicly available on the CoC website?
  • Does your CoC have a written racial equity plan?
  • Does your CoC have existing metrics to track progress toward racial equity?
  • Are there people with lived experience

involved in CoC decision-making roles? (For example, there are members of the CoC board, a Youth Action Board, or a lived experience board who are paid for their time.)

The survey was sent to all CoCs leads via the publicly available list available on the HUDExchange. Fifty unique communities responded to the survey request. Out of the 50 communities, 48 provided valid responses, and 29 communities made it through the gating questions and completed the full survey. All responding communities had an opportunity to identify examples of policies, tools or other resources they have been utilizing to advance equity within the homeless system.

Community In-Depth Interviews & Criteria

The NIS team created a basic scoring mechanism to determine which communities had demonstrated concrete and tangible strategies for theories of change and evidence for the advancement of equity. Community selection was based on diversity of community representation based on geography type (urban, rural, suburban, balance of state, tribal land), scale of community (large/coastal cities vs. smaller cities) and funding influence (higher % of federal funding vs. primary local funding influence) and overall score. NIS invited 16 communities to participate in in-depth interviews. Of the 16 communities asked to participate in in-depth interviews, 14 communities agreed, participated in interviews with the NIS team, and described their perspectives, activities and experiences in advancing racial equity strategies within their community. Although the CoC lead agency was the primary point of contact, each CoC was encouraged to invite other community members to participate in the interview who had direct experience with the

equity strategies, in an effort to provide varied perspectives. Although the majority of CoCs had only CoC collaborative/applicant agency staff participate in the interviews, a few did include other community staff and people with lived experience in the conversation.

Geographic categories for communities selected:
- Northeast
- Southeast
- Northwest
- Southwest
- Midwest
- Rural/Urban/Suburban

Interview questions focused on the self-reported evidence that CoCs' theories of change are being effective (or not) with regard to shifts in power, system performance, or service-delivery that were indicated in their survey responses. To dig deeper, the community interview protocol was designed to explore the areas where the particular community had indicated that they had been implementing system strategies, and centered on the following topics:
- Racial Equity Strategies
- Data
- Accessibility & Transparency
- Community Engagement with People with Lived Experience
- Process & Culture Shifts
- Accountability & CQI
- Technical Support Needs

Limitations

The study focused on operational shifts occurring within the homeless response system, and specifically targeted CoC leadership for responses on the theory that leadership would be most informed about operational shifts. Given this scope, the

study was not able or intended to assess the opinions, experiences or perspectives of other representatives who were not included in the interviews. Consequently, there is acknowledged probable bias in the responses, likely toward overemphasizing or inflating positive effects, and limited perspective because of this targeted focus.

As a further limitation, there were only 48 valid responses to the online survey, and these CoCs were neither representative of all CoCs, nor the only communities participating in racial equity work. It is therefore not possible to make a generalization about all CoC racial equity efforts across the country. Nonetheless, the findings here are consistent with the themes that have emerged through other community-efforts NIS has been involved with over the past several years, and other organizations doing similar racial equity work have told NIS that the themes also resonate with their experience doing community-based equity work in the homelessness sector.
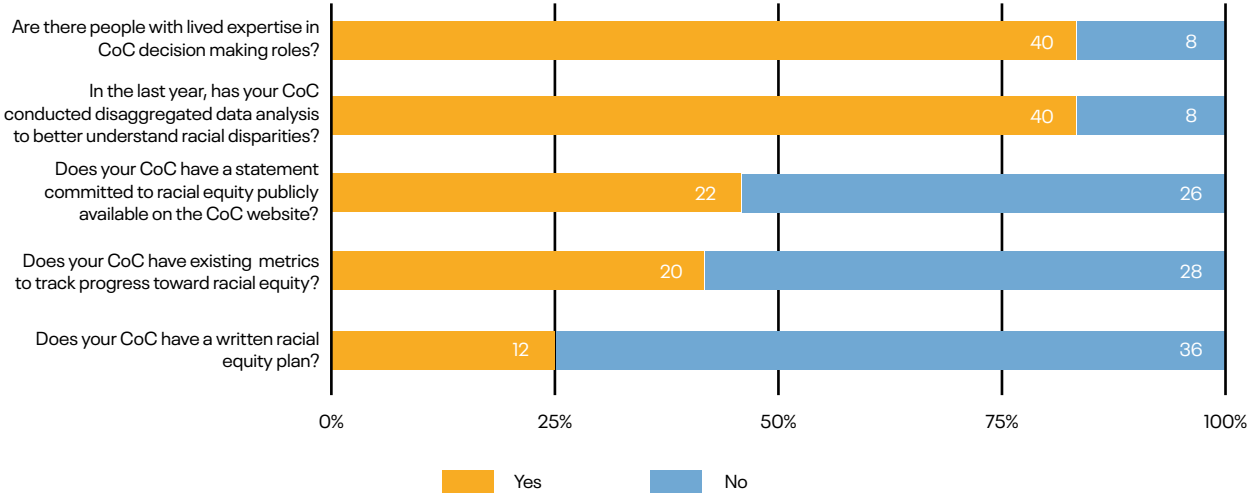
Even with these limitations, there is plenty to take into consideration for moving future racial equity efforts forward.
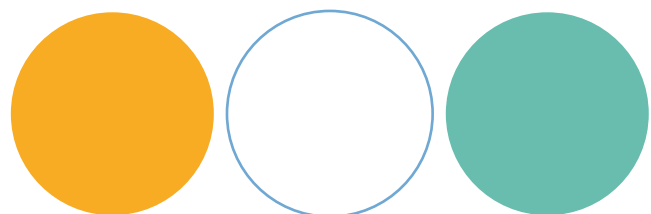
Key Findings

NIS first reviewed the data from the 48 valid responses to the online survey. A stark contrast immediately emerged in the communities' responses to the gating questions. Although an overwhelming number of communities (40) indicated that they have conducted disaggregated data analysis to better understand racial disparities and that there are people with lived experience in decision-making roles, only roughly half that number reported a public statement of commitment to racial equity, and metrics to track progress, and even fewer have a written racial equity plan.

Gating Question Survey Responses

| Question	Yes	No
Are there people with lived expertise in CoC decision making roles?	40	8
In the last year, has your CoC conducted disaggregated data analysis to better understand racial disparities?	40	8
Does your CoC have a statement committed to racial equity publicly available on the CoC website?	22	26
Does your CoC have existing metrics to track progress toward racial equity?	20	28
Does your CoC have a written racial equity plan?	12	36

Of the 29 communities who made it through the gating questions, NIS then reviewed the responses for differences in geography and scale of community. There was little difference across types of geography in section-by-section scores, although CoCs that identify as having a Balance of State geography tended to score slightly lower in all sections except data. CoCs that encompass urban or suburban geographies did not have overall higher scores compared to rural or Balance of State respondents. Communities who have participated in national racial equity initiatives (e.g. HUD Equity Demo; AWHA Grand Challenge; C4 SPARC) scored slightly higher in the areas of Implementation, Accountability & Evaluation.

Given the high number of communities with a response indicating that they were disaggregating their data and engaging community members with lived experience in decision-making, NIS looked for themes that emerged from the full survey and interviews in these domains. NIS then looked for themes in the communities' experience amongst the other domains in both the survey and the in-depth interviews.
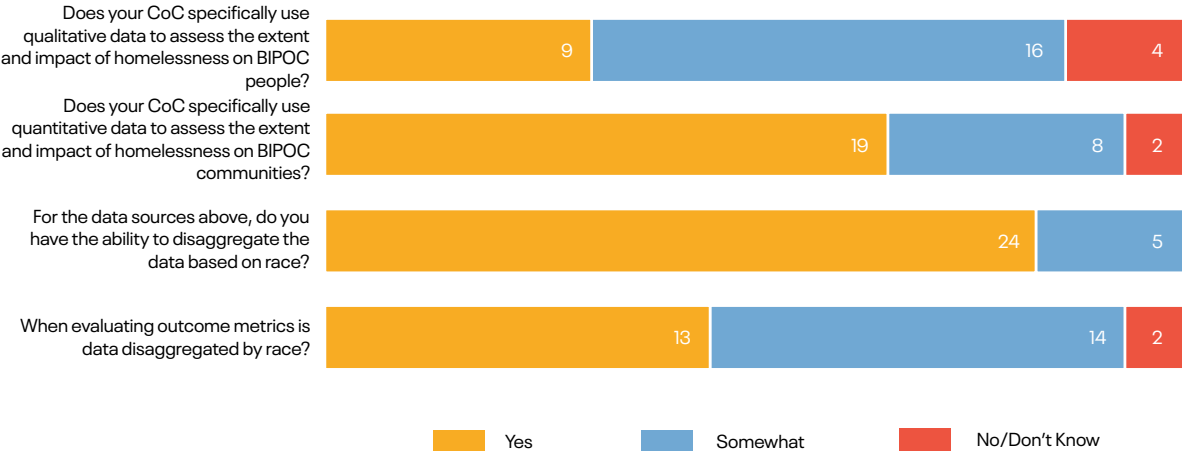
In this key finding section we discuss first the survey and interview themes specific to data disaggregation and community engagement, then discuss the themes that emerged in other domains that can help us understand where communities have faced challenges in achieving their equity goals. These themes emerged primarily during the in-depth interviews.
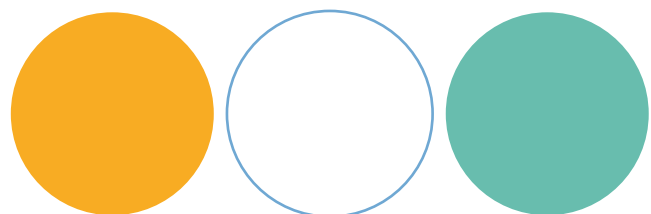
Data Themes

The majority of communities who responded to the survey named examples of operationalizing data to advance equity. Additionally, all CoCs who responded to the full survey indicated that they had the ability to disaggregate data based on race and ethnicity and all but two indicated they had at least somewhat of an ability to assess the extent and effect of homelessness on Black, Indigenous and other people of color.
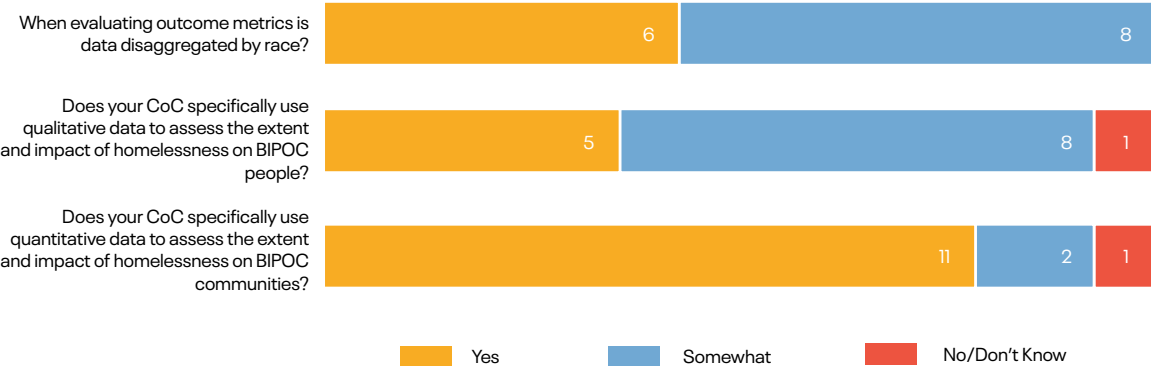
Survey Responses: Data

Question	Yes	Somewhat	No/Don't Know
Does your CoC specifically use qualitative data to assess the extent and impact of homelessness on BIPOC people?	9	16	4
Does your CoC specifically use quantitative data to assess the extent and impact of homelessness on BIPOC communities?	19	8	2
For the data sources above, do you have the ability to disaggregate the data based on race?	24	5	
When evaluating outcome metrics is data disaggregated by race?	13	14	2

Legend: Yes | Somewhat | No/Don't Know

Of those communities that participated in in-depth interviews, all were evaluating outcome data based on race, but fewer than half definitively indicated using qualitative methods.

Survey Responses: Data, Interviewed Communities Only

Question	Yes	Somewhat	No/Don't Know
When evaluating outcome metrics is data disaggregated by race?	6	8	
Does your CoC specifically use qualitative data to assess the extent and impact of homelessness on BIPOC people?	5	8	1
Does your CoC specifically use quantitative data to assess the extent and impact of homelessness on BIPOC communities?	11	2	1

Legend: Yes | Somewhat | No/Don't Know

Community Examples

An urban CoC in the Southwest mapped the steps to their coordinated entry processes and looked at the amount of time it took someone to work their way through the system to housing, disaggregating that data by race/ethnicity, exit types, and returns to homelessness. They were surprised to learn that disparities existed across each of these areas. They thought they were seeing the whole picture but have now used that information to focus on access and outreach, since that is where they think the disparities are originating.
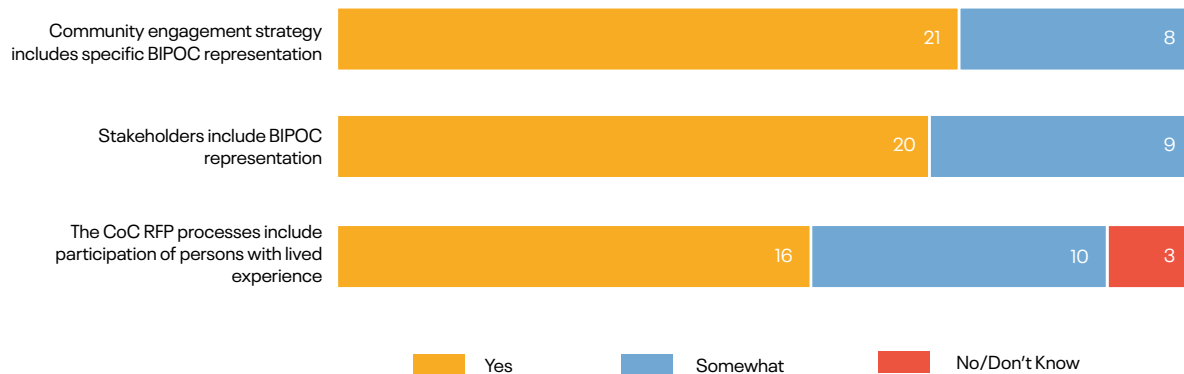
An urban CoC in the Northeast found through data analysis that they were under-serving the Latinx population in their community. They connected with Latinx agencies to better understand the issues and applied qualitative methods to learn more. Through this they identified that their coordinated entry access points were not accessible for the Latinx population. They changed their coordinated entry access to include mobile assessors with dual language skills, with targeted outreach to Latinx by/for community-based agencies. In this work, they also realized that many Latinx agencies do not offer homeless services, so they are working to build capacity among these agencies to offer housing and services.

A suburban CoC in the Northeast used data to identify zip codes where people are not being served. They then used this information to get funding resources to new Black and Latinx providers. They also dedicated in-house support on HMIS to new organizations and allowed those organizations to use 10% of their project amounts in administrative funding to help build capacity.

Themes Regarding Engaging People with Lived Experience

n the online survey, the majority of all CoCs who responded reported that they had people with lived experience of homelessness in decision making roles. When going deeper with CoCs that responded to the full survey, close to half engaged people with lived experience in the RFP process in their community- an example of community engagement.

Community Engagement Survey Responses

	Yes	Somewhat	No/Don't Know
Community engagement strategy includes specific BIPOC representation	21	8	
Stakeholders include BIPOC representation	20	9	
The CoC RFP processes include participation of persons with lived experience	16	10	3

Legend: Yes, Somewhat, No/Don't Know

Although this is laudable, most communities who participated in in-depth interviews disclosed that it was challenging to maintain authentic opportunities for engagement and have seen marked stagnation of engagement since the pandemic.

During the in-depth interviews, the following examples of engagement emerged, indicating the precariousness of the engagement and the ways engagement has fallen out of priority since the pandemic began.

Community Examples

An urban CoC in the Southwest shared the most impactful engagement with people with lived expertise was through youth homelessness planning (both YHDP and AWHA Grand Challenge were examples); however people who currently serve in CoC decision making roles are predominantly represented as person with lived experience, but have not experienced homelessness or experienced the local system. This community also acknowledges the disparity between pay rates between consultants with lived experience vs. typical consultants. Pay equity is a priority for the community, but has expressed limitations due to funding.

A large balance of state CoC in the Northwest had worked with young people with lived experience serving on a Youth Action Board to create an assessment tool for youth and aim to create a new Full Time Employment (FTE) position within the collaborative applicant that will be funded through general funds, but it has not been formalized yet. The community reflected this as a work in progress, but they have not been able to confirm the funding for ongoing support.

A suburban CoC in the Midwest shared their strategy with engaging people with lived experience and was limited to a youth advisory board connected to YHDP funding. While they provided examples of how the youth advisory board members participated in the system planning by providing feedback on coordinated entry processes, the community shared limitations to include more people with lived experience with their broader system planning efforts.

Themes that Emerged in Other Domains

When reviewing the full survey response data amongst the 28 CoCs, the majority of CoCs were implementing no more than a few racially explicit strategies in the other five domains. There were a couple of one-off strategies that emerged among a majority of CoCs (17 CoCs indicated including intentional outreach to BIPOC communities in hiring, and 22 CoCs indicated that advancing racial equity is part of their planning activities), but the domains on the whole lacked strategic take-up of the majority of indicators. In conducting the in-depth interviews, NIS wanted to dig deeper into why. The following themes emerged from those conversations.

White dominated leadership within the system and in traditional homeless-serving organizations create a barrier to authentically shifting power

Most of the communities who engaged in the interviews reflected concern and tension around the overrepresentation of white leadership as a key barrier to advance equity and authentically shift power and pivot from white dominant cultural norms. Even with this recognition, few could articulate what steps it would need to take to make changes that would result in the centering of the experiences of BIPOC and pivots toward something different. There were several indications of good intent to address the lack of diverse representation that would be more reflective of the population served by the system. Interviewees shared that there is often a more diverse representation of Black, Indigenous and other people of color in frontline or direct staff positions which are often lower paid and do not carry positional power. This white overrepresentation was reflected in CoC leadership as well amongst leadership of traditional homeless-serving organizations.

Community Examples

An urban CoC in the Midwest shared the most impactful engagement with people with lived expertise indicated that the lack of diversity in CoC leadership is in part due to a perceived lack of diversity in business leadership in the community. "Have heard chatter on the down low from white leaders being suspect of Black leadership - some concern about loss of power. CEOs of the largest corporations have been meeting for years, and there's almost no people of color. We all need diversity on the board. Don't send me another white guy or it's not gonna work - but a lot of orgs are not in that position, they don't have a surplus of interest. Need to figure out where the problem lies - it's a reflection of the lack of diversity in business."

A rural CoC in the Northeast "We've been looking at leadership and board capacity and haven't found any good goal planning around that - how to build diverse boards - what the best way to promote diversity in leadership positions."

A urban CoC in the Southeast notes that the people doing the work don't reflect the identities of those they serve. "There's not much diversity within the CoC or our Council. You may have lived experience, but you don't have much representation of people of color. The data committee showed that many of the people doing the work don't reflect the population we serve. There's an element that's missing when you don't have diversity at the table and that can present some issues that keep a few people from having to fill in gaps."

Addressing Bias within the Coordinated Entry Process

Many communities who participated in the in-depth interviews shared how the focus of their racial equity efforts has been centered on evaluating existing coordinated entry processes and outcomes. Specifically, a common strategy was evaluating assessment tools (e.g. VI-SPDAT) for racial bias, prioritization and housing placement outcomes. Communities expressed moving away from the VI-SPDAT all together and exploring a localized tool, but are also seeking guidance and any lessons learned from other communities who have made explicit changes to address equity issues within coordinated entry assessment tools. Communities also expressed the perceived fear of legal liability for infringing upon the Fair Housing Act as being a structural barrier to including racially explicit language within assessment and prioritization.

Community Examples

A suburban CoC in the Southeast notes the challenges with assessment. "In the assessment, questions themselves were causing disparity. Most notably the "do you have legal stuff" question. Black youth were not answering it in ways they would expect. It was the vagueness of the question."

A suburban CoC in the Southeast is moving away from using the VI-SPDAT to the full SPDAT (which could be more traumatizing to people who have to respond to it).

An urban CoC in the Southeast echoed other communities in wanting to understand what else is out there and how to get connected with other ideas.

Local Catalysts to Advancing Equity

The Covid-19 pandemic and the national movement for racial justice were common catalysts for recent changes in racial equity efforts. Several communities acknowledged key leaders who championed equity efforts but were often those who already held existing power. In the majority of communities interviewed, local grassroots advocacy was not given credit for catalyzing change within the homeless response systems.

Community Examples

An urban CoC in the Southwest indicated that the lead for the collaborative applicant has been a strong proponent of centering equity and that has made a difference. Additionally, they said that HUD asking about it in the CoC NOFA strengthened the movement.

An urban CoC in the Northeast stated that the Mayor has an executive order to look at equity. It provides a framework for contracting, hiring and infrastructure work, and guides workspace and office equity and training. The executive order helped get buy-in from other systems.

An urban CoC in the Southwest described their shift toward action. "Wasn't until last summer that the national dialogue was happening that pushed our community to take action."

An urban CoC in the Midwest shared that they had been talking about racial equity for some time, but the pandemic and the civil unrest elevated the issue and the need to address it. They also stated that the private funders in their community helped to bring the issue to the forefront.

An urban CoC in the Southwest indicated that COVID-19 was an impetus for bringing new partners to the table: "The city through COVID work is bringing in agencies that were never at the table. We are realizing that more flexible dollars need to be brought to the table to help bring them in and use the funds to target [specific racial] groups."

Making Meaning

This section discusses what we think the findings above indicate we should be asking and doing, both locally and nationally, to continue to advance racial justice efforts in the homeless response sector.

The Equity Plateau - Engaged CoCs have advanced equity strategies that align with national messaging, but have hit a plateau

Over the past few years, national sector leadership like HUD, the National Alliance to End Homelessness and other racial equity champions (e.g. C4, NIS, GARE) have prioritized messaging and created tools centered on several core strategies to begin advancing equity. These include, disaggregating data based on race and ethnicity to understand current disparities and seeking equitable representation that includes people with lived experience in decision making roles. It is clear that communities have responded to this directive and are indeed doing these two things, but have hit a plateau in moving beyond these activities. Although both of these strategies are critical to understanding the local population and building towards equitable decision making and planning, the sole focus on data and representation is not yet driving toward effective system change that is needed to significantly shift power, resources,

or service delivery to achieve equitable outcomes within the homeless response.

Based on the survey results and community conversations, communities who intend to advance racial equity within the homeless response system are making progress on these two strategies and have intention and desire to go further, but have hit a plateau on what to do next and how to advance more operational changes that require a deeper level of accountability. There is sentiment of stagnation and being overwhelmed and a desire for guidance on what to do next to operationalize equity.

Communities are, however, continuing to seek a "check box" solution in their quest to take the equity work to the next level, when the next level of work will require a focus on deeper relational and culture shifts. Although there are some existing tools and resources that suggest

other mechanical strategies to advancing equity (e.g. procurement guidance, building an equitable planning table, etc.), the current landscape of guidance and resources does not effectively account for the deeper relational transformation and explicit cultural shifts (e.g. pivoting from white dominant/supremacy cultural and structural norms) required to significantly change outcomes.

Common Barriers to Structural Shifts Towards Equity

White leadership power problems - To advance equity, and indeed to meaningfully take up the strategies that make up the other domains in the equity based decision-making framework, there must be intentional shifts in how power is operationalized - creating meaningful shifts to share both planning, prioritization and decision making with those who are most affected by the harm and inequity of racism and homelessness. This shift in how power functions within CoCs is stymied by the overwhelming, white-dominated leadership and white dominant cultural norms that are pervasive across homeless systems and the majority of non-profit organizations and government institutions that drive the homeless response system. White leaders tend to center themselves, their own experiences, and their own best-thinking or years of system experience in their processes and decisions, and have difficulty moving forward decisions that may be contrary to their instincts or their own experience working within a system. The survey results reflect that communities struggle to progress in areas that require operational changes and accountability. We pose the questions: Can systems - even those who strive to advance equity - create meaningful change without actually shifting power? And if those in positions of power are predominantly white and practice leadership rooted in white dominant cultural norms, is it possible to make deeper shifts towards equity without significant change in leadership itself?

Stagnation with Engaging People with Lived Experience - Communities also reported a marked stagnation and lack of sustainability with engaging and equitably compensating persons with lived experience. Although it was

common to have a person or a few persons participating in CoC leadership or decision-making boards, when discussed further it was reflected that many of the relationships with people engaged with lived experience were lacking authenticity and depth. Many were seen as an impediment to smooth operations, rather than adding value and richness for change in processes that are not working. Their perceptions and suggestions might be listened to, but not accepted. Where people with lived experience participated in the in-depth interviews, they expressed this concern of tokenization directly. In addition, most communities reflected challenges in identifying sustainable funding sources to equitably pay people for their time and expertise. Although some stipends or hourly pay is usually offered, it typically is significantly less than an equivalent consultant or full-time employee hourly rate of similar participation.

General Risk Aversion - One of the common examples elevated in the interviews with communities who are working on retooling coordinated entry to create more equitable outcomes is a sense of risk aversion to accounting for racially explicit impact. For example, in communities where Black transgender and gender non-conforming people are at greatest risk of death and harm while experiencing housing instability, they have indicated they are not able to explicitly prioritize individuals based on protected identities and have abandoned those efforts. Although there are legal considerations, are communities willing to take the risk of litigation to explore the legal grey area around who can be prioritized for services?

Real-time environmental pressure & vulnerability of what racial equity work requires - Communities are working through

unprecedented challenges - the recent extraordinary opportunity and influx of federal resources have exerted an urgency and expedition and has created additional administrative burdens. The expansive capacity needed to meet the demands of system leadership is not to be dismissed, however communities expressed a sense of isolation when it comes to the real-time struggles of trying to advance equity, experiencing situational fails and what it looks like to keep going. They indicated feeling like they were alone in struggling to meet their equity goals while being pressured to move quickly. When those promoting change can't show people what it looks like to keep trying - even when messy and imperfect - or how to give some cover for the need to balance urgency with the time consuming and relational investments needed to situate power differently - they will continue to stay at this plateau.

Looking Forward

As this report reflects, although several race/equity "tools" have been adopted, to date there has not been a significant shift in communities' structural strategies needed to create more equitable outcomes. There are, however, key insights for what both national partners and local communities can do to move beyond this plateau.

- There are communities that listen intently for direction on what to do next, but can use additional support and thought leadership to keep going.
- Even in the communities where leadership has seemingly good intentions to advance racial equity, there are individual and structural barriers that are impeding structural change.
- CoCs are not yet accountable to equitable housing outcomes for BIPOC and LGBTQ+ unhoused people.
- How people are in relationship with one another matters; because knowing what to do and being able to do it are two different things.

Our hope is that this report connects with leaders, community members, national partners and others as an opportunity and a point-in-time reflection. No community efforts to advance equity should be dismissed and this study reflects that there are indeed strategies and actions taking place. That said, the call to push beyond this equity plateau is critical if we as a sector - a large community of people representing different perspectives and experiences- are to advance the effort of preventing and ending homelessness for everyone. We are collectively learning what is working, what is not, and anticipate this to be ever evolving. We can expect a trajectory in which communities try, fail, and continue to try again to take strides in transforming deeply rooted systemic inequities. We need to embrace the tension, discomfort and extraordinarily human experience in what it means to transform systems- even beyond equity and toward justice.

The intention for this report is for communities to take this information and leverage it as an opportunity to convene community and facilitate conversations around these questions - not just as a report, but as an opportunity to reflect on how all of our internalized white dominant cultural norms and resistance to changing our own internal oppression is impeding racial equity efforts.

Appendix

Appendix A:
Tools and Resources

Advancing equity is not linear and nor a series of check boxes. Communities need support and tools to move this forward. Communities who have demonstrated progress identified additional support and tools that have been or could be helpful

Examples of what exists that has helped some communities advance equity

Several communities reflected the Framework for Equitable Response to COVID 19 and the other HUD supported COVID-19 Equity Resources & Toolkits have been helpful - especially the Equity and Procurement guide. Communities who were able to operationalize some equity outcomes shared they are contracting with specialized equity consultants for organizational trainings and capacity building

What other technical support requested to help advance equity:

Peer Learning - There is a desire to connect with other communities that are prioritizing racial equity work in order to learn from peers. Specifically around DEI committee structures and other accountability organizing strategies.

HMIS Updates - Communities provided concrete ideas for support and resources that could help them further their work on racial equity. Several communities asked for specific changes related to HMIS and data.
- Unlock the YHDP supplemental reporting tool as related to race and ethnicity, and suggested a change to the LSA/STELLA that would allow for a download of the full dataset. They also would like to see changes made by the HMIS vendors to allow disaggregation of race/ethnicity data in a more flexible manner in the reporting functionality.
- Help make racial equity reporting in the HMIS easier to do without custom reporting. Communities would like to see agencies be able to pull reports and self-monitor.

Equity Capacity Building Funding Opportunities
- Several communities noted the need for flexible funds to compensate people with lived experience.
- Equitable pay for people w/ lived experience - elevating from living wage to consultant fees.

National Messaging
- HUD and other national partners can help serve as a catalyst and resource to support communities in prioritizing and advancing equity efforts

- Asks for national partners to set the language and expected strategies to use. Provide examples of goals and shared language that could align the work.
- Technical support to understand how CoC's should address racial equity while staying within federal and state laws (e.g. Fair Housing Act). "We could do a much better job naming and dismantling white supremacy culture but politics and relationships block the internal work and often block it even with external work with providers."

NIS

Appendix B:
National Racial Equity Baseline Survey
Discussion Guide

Overview & Purpose

The purpose of this discussion guide is to offer questions for stakeholders to digest the information from the National Racial Equity Survey as a community, reflect on what resonates for your community and identify opportunities to push beyond current barriers to advancing equity.

Discussion Questions

Questions for Communities
- *There are communities that listen intently for direction on what to do next, but can use additional support and thought leadership to keep going.*
  - What additional resources do you need to support your local work to advance equity?
  - How have you been waiting for direction/a blessing? What can you do without that? How can you set priorities and fail forward?
  - How can national leaders best support local communities to advance equity?
    - When you have this support, how will you make it actionable?

- *Even in the communities where leadership has seemingly good intentions to advance racial equity, there are individual and structural barriers that are impeding structural change.*
  - How do white dominant culture norms create barriers to advancing policy and operational changes within your CoC?
    - Name specific, direct, actionable strategies to address these barriers
  - How do individuals create barriers?
    - What are the strategies to address them? Do these individuals hold positional power or personal power (or both)?
  - How do your policies and procedures create barriers?
    - What would it look like to action plans to change them?
  - What are the barriers to transparency around decisions?
    - Who holds the ability to transform transparency norms? What would it take for them to behave differently? If they won't change, what are other strategies?
    - What would transparency open up in terms of accountability? What might you be afraid of if it did? Is that creating a barrier?

- *CoCs are not yet accountable to equitable housing outcomes for BIPOC and LGBTQ+ unhoused people*
    - What is a concrete example/action to know that equity work is moving forward?
    - What type of opportunities does the CoC provide BIPOC and LGBTQ+ community members to inform and guide what accountability could look like for your CoC?
    - How can CoC leadership invest in accountability processes & structures to advance equity?

- *How people are in relationship with one another matters; because knowing what to do and being able to do it are two different things*
    - How have you deliberately established shared values and relational norms within the community? What is the accountability plan for revisiting these norms?
    - How can your CoC practice living into shared values (E.g. reviewing at CoC meetings, creating procedures to address conflict)?
    - Who is not at the table who needs to be, from which neighborhoods? Are there BIPOC people leading?
    - Do you have meaningful relationships and partnerships with people with lived expertise? How does that translate into decision-making?
        - Who is being centered in the meetings, agendas, and processes you have?
        - Is it people with lived expertise?
        - Is it BIPOC staff and leadership?

Questions for National Partners
- *There are communities that listen intently for direction on what to do next, but can use additional support and thought leadership to keep going.*
    - How can national leadership & funders elevate expectations around advancing equity across the homeless response?
    - What are the racial equity strategies to push forward beyond data and inclusion of people with lived experience?
    - What are the platforms you hold that can elevate the next set of racial equity strategies?

- Even in the communities where leadership has seemingly good intentions to advance racial equity, there are individual and structural barriers that are impeding structural change.
    - What would support look like for communities if it were not technical in nature?
        - What would it look like for national assistance efforts directed at communities to influence individual behavior change of decision-makers?
        - What would it look like to move current white leadership out of leadership positions?
    - What is a learning approach/change management process that shifts people in power?
        - How are we investing in BIPOC and lived-experience leaders and positioning new leaders?
        - Is there an approach that can change white leaders' behavior and norms?

- *CoCs are not yet accountable to equitable housing outcomes for BIPOC and LGBTQ+ unhoused people*
    - What does it mean to push forward a set of performance metrics to hold CoCs accountable if means they perpetuate harm in the service of performance?
    - How do performance measures that demonstrate equity become an opportunity for making meaning of shifts and leading accountability, instead of a criteria by which communities are judged on whether they have met a threshold of achievement?

- *How people are in relationship with one another matters; because knowing what to do and being able to do it are two different things*
    - What are ways to infuse more transformative organizing principles into the racial equity movement in the homelessness sector?
    - What is the way we move support for communities doing the work beyond a set of check-lists or activities that advance racial equity, but into the relational aspect of how racial equity priorities move from ideas to action?

Notes