

# WORKING CITIES CHALLENGE

## CONNECTICUT

### DEEP DIVE: RACIAL EQUITY

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## Overview

### Introduction

From its inception, Working Cities Challenge (WCC) intended to improve economic outcomes and quality of life for low- and moderate-income residents of small cities in New England. Often implicitly, these goals and values related closely to racial equity. Several WCC sites in early rounds focused on neighborhoods comprised predominantly of people of color or otherwise opened up discussions about racial equity in their work. When the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston (Boston Fed) expanded its WCC initiative to Connecticut (WCC CT), stakeholders saw an opportunity to focus more intentionally on racial equity and provide direct supports for the sites to strengthen related work. The WCC cities in Connecticut participated in trainings and received technical assistance to increase their capacity to apply a racial equity lens to their work. This deep dive report explores WCC CT's approach to providing guidance and support, sites' experience around implementing a racial equity lens to their work, and lessons to consider for similar future work.

### Racial equity in collective impact

The field's understanding of what it takes to solve complex social problems is evolving to reflect equity as a more explicit priority. In addition to the five conditions of collective impact, the Collective Impact Forum published principles of practice in 2016. The first principle is to "design and implement the initiative with a priority placed on equity," which includes ensuring "that an equity lens is prominent throughout ... governance, planning, implementation, and evaluation."<sup>1</sup> The principle

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<sup>1</sup> Collective Impact Principles of Practice, Collective Impact Forum

calls out the importance of disaggregating data and developing strategies that focus on improving outcomes for “affected populations.”

The shift to naming equity as a core value in collective impact is reflected broadly in the field. As part of this deep dive research, Mt. Auburn completed a literature scan to gain a better understanding of the approaches to prioritizing racial equity in collective impact. Often, initiatives frame racial equity as a “lens” or a “mirror” to the work, something embedded throughout rather than an add-on. These frameworks call for an increased examination around how racism is rooted in existing culture, systems, and organizations. Common existing themes to this work include:

- *An emphasis on diversity and inclusion.* This often presents as creating collaborative tables that are racially or ethnically representative of communities and by engaging the target population as a partner in the work. Notably, critics of the model suggest that an approach of representation or inclusion does not sufficiently share power in ways that could impact racial justice.<sup>2</sup>
- *The importance of being explicit in naming racism and prioritizing racial equity, especially in the shared result and from core leadership such as the backbone organization.*<sup>3</sup> Some relevant tools include self-assessments that examine organizations’ culture and practices.
- *Guidance around data, especially related to the importance of disaggregating data based on race to enhance understanding of inequitable outcomes.*

The literature scan revealed very little detail about the specific types of supports that sites need to undertake this work successfully. As the field and accompanying research continue to evolve, this area requires increased attention to understand what it means to approach this work in a way that genuinely prioritizes racial equity.

## Racial equity in the WCC model

### Evolution in earlier rounds

While WCC CT represents a more explicit focus and targeted support on racial equity, previous rounds also addressed the topic. In the earliest rounds of WCC in Massachusetts, discussions of racial equity primarily arose related to the core elements of community engagement, collaborative leadership, and data and learning. Boston Fed staff and consultants presented examples of where teams might apply a racial equity lens. WCC also encouraged teams to be more representative of the racial demographics of their communities, and the selection jury considered racial diversity in team composition during site selection. Generally, racial equity came up naturally as related to the core elements of WCC, but the Boston Fed did not provide supports specifically to improve the team's capacity to advance work related to racial equity. In WCC Rhode Island, however, the initiative did include some additional support related to racial equity.

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<sup>2</sup> Wolff, T. et al. [Collaborating for equity and justice: Moving beyond collective impact](https://nonprofitquarterly.org/collaborating-equity-justice-moving-beyond-collective-impact/). Nonprofit Quarterly (2017, January 9). Retrieved from <https://nonprofitquarterly.org/collaborating-equity-justice-moving-beyond-collective-impact/>

<sup>3</sup> Arias, Juan Sebastian and Sheri Brady. *3 Steps for Advancing Equity through Collective Impact*, Collective Impact Forum (2015, April 15). Retrieved from <https://www.collectiveimpactforum.org/blogs/11421/3-steps-advancing-equity-through-collective-impact>

## WCC Connecticut

In Connecticut, WCC initiative supports related to racial equity included the following:

***Design phase learning communities and early discussions around racial equity.*** Even before site selection, the WCC CT design phase incorporated an introduction to racial equity. At a learning community for the design phase sites, Boston Fed staff and consultants presented definitions around racial equity and introduced examples of how that might show up in the teams' work. In the initial stages of implementation, some WCC stakeholders, including WCC CT team members and those from other rounds, participated in discussions as the Boston Fed provided increased guidance around racial equity. In early documents, the Boston Fed defined racial equity as "the condition where one's racial identity has no influence on how one fares in society" and emphasized the importance of centering racial equity when thinking about impacting local system change.

The following table provides example text of how Boston Fed staff thought about racial equity applying to the core elements.

Racial equity in the core elements*	
Collaborative leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Team has a shared understanding and language of what racial equity is and isn't, including why it matters to the team's work.</li><li>Team recruits and supports racially/ethnically diverse membership.</li><li>Team partners are clear on their roles and responsibilities in advancing racial equity, both within the WCC team and at the partner's home organization.</li></ul>
Community engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>There is a shared understanding of how residents, including people of color, have in the past and are currently involved and engaged in local decision-making, for better or worse.</li><li>The team understands that people affected by disparities need support to engage as equals in decision-making.</li><li>Residents and leaders from diverse communities are involved in meaningful ways in decisions that impact the local WCC's shared result and the broader community.</li></ul>
Learning orientation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>The team understands the historical and current role of race in its community.</li><li>There is an understanding of local data and the stories behind the data around how economic well-being and other life outcomes may be different for people of color in the city.</li><li>There is progress on the community's shared result for the general population, including for local people of color.</li></ul>
System change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>The team knows how race shapes and contributes today to the local system(s) it wants to understand and impact.</li><li>The team is aware of how disparities in local institutions and processes are being disrupted and the system transformation that is occurring in light of the knowledge of these disparities and the need for leveling the playing field so all can live in a more just, equitable community.</li></ul>
*This content was part of a document meant to evolve over time and is included to provide context and enhance understanding.	

***A cross-site convening and training.*** In response to demand from the WCC implementation teams and the steering committee, the Boston Fed worked with consultants from Rosario and Associates to provide technical assistance to the Connecticut teams. As the first step in working with the consultants, the sites convened for a full-day session in November 2019 on racial and ethnic equity with Rosario and Associates, which focused on definitions or terms related to racial equity, histories of racism in the United States, and included time for team discussion and reflection.

***Racial and ethnic equity and inclusion (REEI) assessments.*** Rosario and Associates electronically disseminated an assessment tool tailored to workforce development to all WCC teams following the in-person convening. The tool's purpose was to help teams' identify their strengths, weaknesses, and priorities related to racial and ethnic equity. Rosario and Associates then hosted follow-up meetings with the teams to discuss the assessment and steps to move forward. The analysis identified the top five priorities of each site, which predominantly fell into the key area of "customer focus."<sup>4</sup> This area included priorities related to the target population, such as participation in decision-making, outreach and recruitment, and using data to understand biases, barriers, and inequitable outcomes for people of color. The REEI analysis also organized priorities by category. Out of the top five priorities of the cities, the majority related to understanding and changing systems as well as the teams' culture and practices related to racial and ethnic equity.

***Follow-up work with consultants.*** After the initial in-person cross-site convening with Rosario and Associates concerning racial equity in fall 2019, the sites each completed the REEI assessment. Shortly after, the initiative experienced disruptions related to staff turnover at the Boston Fed and the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. When teams did pick the work back up, the timing varied, as did the application of technical assistance. All WCC teams, except for Waterbury and East Hartford, participated in a general training series (12 hours total) with Rosario and Associates, although format and content may have varied.

## The work of the WCC CT teams

The work of the WCC CT teams related to racial equity unfolded in a unique context that likely both increased their interest and perhaps slowed the implementation of some of the learning. The design phase of WCC CT took place in 2017, and implementation ended in the early summer of 2021, spanning a time of increased racially inflammatory rhetoric from politicians nationally, the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the nation's increased awareness of the inequitable health impacts of racism, and the deaths of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor, among others. Many of these factors elevated national consciousness and dialogue around racial equity and heightened a sense of urgency to explore and address racial equity locally. At the same time, the pandemic brought a shift of attention in the early months of the crisis to immediate resident needs, changes in staffing and timelines, and a move to remote work that all contributed to alterations in work plans. In thinking about the impacts of supports the Boston Fed provided to the teams to apply a racial equity lens to their work, it is impossible to isolate this work from other influential factors.

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<sup>4</sup> The analysis identifies five priorities for most sites, but only four for DanburyWORKS, making the total number of identified priorities for the five sites 24.

The following table summarizes the application of supports the Boston Fed provided as well as work of the WCC sites directly related to racial equity.

Summary of work directly related to racial equity	
Danbury	DanburyWORKS supported the Greater Danbury Chamber of Commerce in hosting a series of trainings for members of Connecticut Young Professionals. The chamber director enacted changes at the organization to better engage employers around implicit bias, diversifying their workforce, and other issues related to racial equity. Additionally, the team's strategies incorporated work to increase trust in community institutions, including community engagement events that later evolved to introduce community discussions about dismantling racism. In the summer of 2021, the team hosted a series of similar trainings for local nonprofit organizations and planned to expand to employers in the fall.
East Hartford	East Hartford CONNects used the opportunity for training to impact the town of East Hartford. The initiative director collaborated with the mayor to bring a series of racial equity trainings to all of the department heads in the city, which impacted the personal growth of participants as well as several practice or policy shifts. Beyond the racial equity trainings, the team affected other work related to racial equity, including working with residents of color to build leadership and advocacy skills through community engagement, and creating and sharing a list of local Black-owned businesses as part of its workforce development strategies.
Hartford	Following the general convening and training with the consultants, the Hartford team moved forward by conducting a racial equity audit of three organizations involved in the WCC work: the city's Department of Families, Children, Youth and Recreation; Southside Institution Neighborhood Alliance (SINA); and Career Resources, Inc. In addition to the training, the Hartford team demonstrated racial equity as a value. The table included leadership largely racially and ethnically reflective of the city, including young leaders of color. The team engaged and empowered youth leadership as a principal component of its work with the Young Legends.
Middletown	MiddletownWORKS had a late start to any follow-up work with the racial equity consultants. The team had the largest turnout at the in-person convening and expressed enthusiasm in the work, but it did not identify a plan for continuing the work until the last few months of the WCC grant. Working with Rosario and Associates, the team decided to host a series of racial equity trainings and released an application for organizations in the community to participate. The majority of organizations that participated in the trainings had no affiliation with MiddletownWORKS. The initiative director reported it was an opportunity to build new relationships with potential collaborators in future work. In addition to the work with the consultants, MiddletownWORKS stakeholders communicated racial equity as a core value. The team had discussions concerning race and prioritized community engagement and resident leadership, especially among people of color.
Waterbury	Very few RIBA ASPIRA members attended the racial equity convening, and the team felt the support the Boston Fed provided was not the right fit to pursue additional training. Around the same time that the team interacted with the racial equity consultants, the city's board of aldermen was deciding whether to declare racism a public health issue. One alderman and one alderwoman sat at the RIBA ASPIRA table. Ultimately, the discussions around race and ethnicity were not productive for the team, and the team did not pursue further work with the consultants. Generally, Waterbury stakeholders reported that racial equity was central to their work because their target neighborhood included a majority-minority population.

# 2 Promising cases

This section more closely examines the work of two WCC CT teams to provide a clearer picture of themes and best practices.

## Danbury

**OVERVIEW:** DanburyWORKS was the only WCC CT team to name people of color, along with immigrants, explicitly in its shared result. The team's finalized 10-year goal was “to reduce the poverty rate of immigrants and people of color in Danbury by 5%.”<sup>5</sup> Strategies related to racial equity included the team's work to build trust through community engagement and a collaboration with the chamber of commerce to offer racial equity training to other stakeholders in the city.

### Racial equity strategies at the DanburyWORKS table: working to build trust

**Early on, the team recognized a need to repair and build trust with the target population, given histories of broken promises, biases, and discrimination.** The team saw building trust as a critical step to connecting with low-income people of color and immigrants and improving their employment outcomes. The team's strategies to impact trust included community engagement events, expressly Neighbor Nights and working with the Danbury Police Department.

**Neighbor Nights.** Open events based on Bill Traynor's model, Neighbor Nights incorporated table talks, where residents identified small group conversation topics, as well as a “marketplace,” where residents had the opportunity to ask for and share items, resources, and opportunities. The team hosted eight Neighbor Nights as of March 2021, either in person or virtually, and provided translation services for Spanish-speaking participants. The team's theory of change envisioned that building relationships and empowering community voices could impact system change at organizations that provide workforce and wraparound services, making them more responsive to community needs. In response to the community's desire to discuss race and equity in the summer of 2020, The Neighbor Nights' format pivoted in focus to host a series of community conversations about dismantling racism.

**Partnership with the police department.** Additionally, before the pandemic, DanburyWORKS hosted community events with the Danbury Police Department, including two Party on the Patio events that reached more than 600 community members. The events, which took place at police headquarters, were part of an effort to increase comfort and build trusting relationships between residents and the police. The police chief was an active stakeholder at the DanburyWORKS table and participated in a series of virtual community conversations hosted by DanburyWORKS in collaboration with other

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<sup>5</sup> The team initially identified a 30 percent reduction as its shared goal but adapted based on early progress and data limitations.

police departments in the region to discuss implicit bias and use of force to help police build trust with the community.

#### **Influence beyond the WCC table: collaborating with the Greater Danbury Chamber of Commerce**

***The team partnered with the leader of the Greater Danbury Chamber of Commerce, who leveraged WCC relationships and resources to engage business leaders in discussions around racial equity.***

Around the same time the WCC CT teams participated in the convening with Rosario and Associates, the chamber was embarking on work to increase engagement with employers around racial equity. The Danbury team introduced Rosario and Associates to the chamber to provide training to the Connecticut Young Professionals, a statewide organization supporting professionals between ages 21 and 40. The training provided support to participants to engage their own organizations in further conversations on race and ethnic equity to impact change. In addition to the training for the Young Professionals, the chamber representative reported working with the business community and other organizations involved in workforce development to advance conversations and action around racial and ethnic equity. Racial equity is a standing meeting agenda item for the chamber, and the chamber representative reported efforts to increase representation among people of color in its board and committee structure. In interviews, a chamber stakeholder indicated his goal is “to engage more businesses throughout the area to be willing to be a part of having some of these conversations around race and equity ... to make them more aware of some of the barriers that exist within their own companies.”

***The team has extended the conversation to other workforce development actors.*** In the summer of 2021, the team hosted a similar series of training sessions for local nonprofits, including stakeholders in workforce development and the DanburyWORKS career navigator as participants, reaching about 12 participants in total. The team reported plans to host a racial equity training for employers in collaboration with the chamber in the fall, demonstrating a continued commitment to having conversations with local organizations that can impact practice and system changes related to racial equity.

## East Hartford

**OVERVIEW:** East Hartford CONNects (EHC) supported residents of color to develop leadership skills and advocate for community change, including supporting local businesses owned by people of color. Beyond the work at the WCC table, the team used the racial equity supports from the Boston Fed as an opportunity to bring training to stakeholders in the town government to impact system change.

#### **Racial equity strategies at the East Hartford CONNects table: empowering leaders of color**

***The team supported a robust community outreach and engagement approach involving predominantly women of color.*** The team hired community consultants and developed a Resident Advisory Council (RAC) to build relationships and improve access to resources. The community consultants and RAC members participated in leadership and racial equity trainings as part of their roles. To facilitate engagement and community discussion, EHC hosted more than 50 events during implementation, including community dinners and virtual events.

***Following participation in diversity, equity, and inclusion workshops, EHC resident stakeholders developed a list of Black-owned small businesses.*** The town now keeps the list to help promote the businesses, especially during the winter holidays and Black History Month. The list was the first of its kind in East Hartford, and as residents worked to develop the list, they found broader issues related to lack of supports for Black-owned businesses. The residents partnered with the town's economic development office and several local and state organizations to provide a series of workshops for entrepreneurs of color.

#### **Influence beyond the WCC table: collaborating with the town of East Hartford**

***With leadership from the mayor, all of the town's department heads participated in a series of WCC-sponsored trainings on racial and ethnic equity.*** The training was similar to others that Rosario and Associates hosted in that the sessions totaled 12 hours and included content designed for personal reflection, building shared definitions and understanding of history, and time for group discussions and thinking about application. The mayor reported that components of the training were "eye-opening" for her, and she got a lot out of the experience personally. She expressed her commitment to changing the town's human resource policies to implement hiring practices to reach and attract a diverse pool of candidates.

***There are promising examples of practice changes in several city departments that the training catalyzed or impacted.*** For example, the fire department described plans to launch a new training program to support more youth of color to gain exposure to career opportunities. The program will be similar to a paid internship for middle school students. The program will train participants as emergency medical technicians, and students will receive compensation for the class and any books or materials. Participants will then have an opportunity to work part-time with an ambulance provider to see if they like the type of work. Upon graduating high school, participants will be eligible to receive compensation for attending paramedic school and then have an opportunity to participate in the recruit training program, leading to employment as a firefighter paramedic. A representative from the fire department stated that the program could potentially shift the department's landscape, presenting residents in the community with opportunities that they might not have otherwise been aware of or considered. Additionally, the fire department made some modifications to its recruitment policies, including changing its entry-level exam to be available online to reduce barriers.

***At least one state partner took action following WCC's racial equity training.*** Influenced by the Rosario and Associates training, the Connecticut Department of Labor offered racial equity training to all case managers who work directly with clients on Temporary Assistance for Needy Families and other social services. In addition, the Department of Labor hosted a training for all Jobs First Employment Services case managers in Connecticut in partnership with Soul Focused Group. They invited stakeholders from EHC to participate, stating that addressing racial equity became more of a priority following the training through WCC.

# 3 Insights and lessons

## Promising practices

### ✓ **Strike *where* the iron is hot.**

In instances where the WCC CT teams were most successful in engaging partners around racial equity, stakeholders did not have to convince partners to talk about race. Ultimately, the training deeply impacted many participants and organizations. But the participants who embraced this work most successfully already had reasons to engage. Some of these organizations were not core partners in the team's strategies related to their shared result but rather more distant community partners that could impact system change aligned with their work.

For example, DanburyWORKS leveraged partnerships with leaders positioned to impact system change who already were interested in relevant work. In interviews, DanburyWORKS stakeholders spoke about their partners at the police department and the chamber of commerce as significant community leaders who are bringing new ideas or practices to their organizations related to race and equity. Stakeholders from the chamber and the fire department recognized the advantages of collaborating with the team, such as connecting with residents via community engagement events and contributing to the shared result in the long term by impacting system change.

### ✓ **In providing supports for the teams, make room to be “wrong.”**

Several agents of change who stepped up as a result of the Boston Fed training expressed that they felt comfortable engaging in difficult conversations about race because of the tone set by the consultants. One participant explained the experience, saying, “Working Cities race, equity, and inclusion conversations made you realize that you could say something wrong, but you had to say something. And so you had to be genuine. And so we did a lot of that.” Most interviewees reported that conversations during the training sessions were difficult at times, but not tense or charged for the most part, and that the consultants did a good job of keeping the discussions productive even when they were challenging.

### ✓ **Buy-in from key leaders is essential.**

When asked what contributed to getting partners engaged in racial equity work, interviewees often indicated that leadership made the difference—either dynamic and inspiring leaders were the catalyst or that leaders set the tone by demonstrating that racial equity is significant and expecting others to follow suit. One interviewee summed it up, saying, “When your boss says it's important, it becomes important.” Among the organizations involved in WCC CT, collaboratives that stand out as deeply engaging in racial equity work (Greater Danbury Chamber of Commerce, Danbury Police Department, and the town of East Hartford and several of its departments) all had core leadership demonstrating that racial equity is a priority. In addition to setting the tone, having senior leadership buy-in positions teams to impact system change since decision-makers are already at the table. Reflecting on the training the Boston Fed provided, one participant shared, “There was the important piece about understanding your own identity, your own racial identity, your own lens in the world.

But often, in my experience, that's sort of where things stop. The four-part series included significant conversations on the role of leaders in the organization in changing the conversation, in supporting employees, in changing systems." East Hartford is a compelling case of leading by example and making changes. The mayor herself committed to 12-hours of training and brought in all of her department heads. She made it clear that racial equity is a priority and committed to implementing change in the city. As a result, several department heads made practice and policy changes themselves.

✓ **Supporting resident leaders of color to build advocacy, civic engagement, and other skills is a powerful component of the work of the WCC CT cities.**

To engage the community in their work, several teams included members of the target population at their governance table or as a subcommittee. Beyond participating at the table to contribute feedback or input, several teams worked with residents in a more collaborative, reciprocal way by providing opportunities to lead aspects of the work and participate in skill development training or activities. The East Hartford, Hartford, and Middletown teams all shared in the work with members of the target population and provided opportunities for residents to participate in trainings or step up as leaders in the work. In most cases, the expectation is that outcomes related to empowering residents will be long-term in nature, such as system change that may result from increased civic engagement. At the end of implementation, however, stakeholders from several teams noted seeing growth in residents participating in the work as equal partners, which also requires professional class stakeholders to grow in their own ability to create an inclusive environment and remove barriers to participation. Additionally, several residents became formal members of boards or committees that can potentially impact system change.

For example, EHC provided opportunities for residents of color to develop leadership skills and organize projects and campaigns. Beyond the training with the department heads, EHC worked with residents of color to build relationships and support leadership development, including building skills related to advocacy and civic engagement, as evidenced by a successful campaign to improve sidewalks and surrounding areas near the neighborhood elementary school to make a difference for families walking to school. Some residents are also more involved in local government and statewide initiatives, including the town council, town commissions, and Connecticut 2Gen advisory board.

## Considerations for prioritizing racial equity in collective impact efforts

✓ **Put racial equity front and center in the initiative from the outset and back it with coaching or technical support.**

Overwhelmingly, participants felt that the Boston Fed should have made priorities and expectations related to racial equity more explicit from the beginning of the WCC initiative. Sites reported feeling confused by expectations and suggested that the racial equity training created additional work rather than aligning with existing work as part of WCC. Setting expectations at the outset would allow for greater consistency of messaging for the sites and more time to dedicate to learning and applying racial equity principles. While the design phase introduced racial equity concepts and allowed for discussion, most interviewees saw the in-person racial equity training with Rosario and Associates as the beginning of Boston Fed support.

- ✓ **Sharpen the goal of introducing racial equity in the initiative. If the intent is to align racial equity with the WCC teams' specific goals, there should be better integration of racial equity learning with teams' strategies.**

There was a disconnect between much of the teams' racial equity work and their strategies to achieve their shared results.

At least partly because of timing and a lack of clarity of expectations, the sites, for the most part, launched new work in response to the support provided related to racial equity, rather than using the assistance to adapt or further develop existing strategies. It was not always clear if the racial equity support intended to increase capacity at the organizational level or for the collaborative as a whole. The REEI assessment used language that at times suggested respondents should have an organizational perspective, and the teams primarily provided training for organizations, organizations that often were not central to their strategies related to the shared result. If the Boston Fed intends to build teams' capacity to apply a racial equity lens to their work as a collaborative, there is likely a need for increased customization of the REEI assessment and clearer communication of expectations to the teams.

As discussed earlier, there was also often a strategic decision to work with organizations eager to discuss race and equity, rather than forcing it at the WCC table if it did not feel appropriate. However, there may be opportunities in future rounds of WCC, especially if there is support early on, to frame or tailor support so that it aligns more clearly with the core work of the teams.

For some teams, because the racial equity work felt like a separate add-on, the work felt burdensome and distracted them from reaching their goals. As funders think about what they want to achieve, they should consider what is realistic to expect of teams and how to provide assistance that supports teams to develop the capacity to apply a racial equity lens to their work as additive rather than as an add-on.

- ✓ **Consider more hands-on coaching for teams navigating adaptive challenges that arise in working to impact racial equity.**

In moving from theory to practice, some sites may benefit from more tactical support to respond to challenges in implementing strategies related to racial equity or more strategic support to identify implementation plans. Especially for teams that are further along in their understanding of racial equity, some teams may benefit from more tailored assistance to support strategy development, dealing with challenges related to uncomfortable or difficult conversations with partners and others.

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ➞ **Leadership matters.** For the WCC CT teams, it was powerful to have the benefit of having existing strong leaders to inspire and catalyze them and to have an opportunity to invest in empowering new leaders to participate in the work more fully. Both have the potential to impact systems to be more equitable and align with the teams to make progress on their shared results
- ➞ **Be explicit about racial equity as a priority from the beginning.** This takeaway applies both to funders and at the site level. At the initiative level, sites must understand expectations and have time to learn and act on supports provided related to racial equity. At the site level, identifying racial equity as a priority, especially from core leadership, influences the way partners understand and approach the work.
- ➞ **This work is complex and long-term. It is important to remain invested and engaged in learning over time.** Many stakeholders reported that their personal journey in understanding race and racism has evolved over time and that reinforcement of ideas is helpful for learning. That is true for personal reflection and WCC staff and the teams as they are, for good reason, further complicating their work to tackle complex social problems.