Assessment and Prioritization Pilot Project

For years, communities have seen how assessment tools, prioritization processes, and general practices within coordinated entry systems (CES) exacerbate and create racial inequities in the housing and services needs of clients and do not prioritize clients for appropriate housing in a racially equitable way. Continuums of Care (CoCs) will work together to design more equitable CES processes, especially assessment and prioritization processes, to significantly improve the Homeless Response System experience and the housing stability outcomes for Black, Brown, Indigenous, and all people of color in Michigan.

Project Goals

In partnership with Black, Brown, Indigenous, and all people of color, as well as people with lived expertise of homelessness, the Planning and Design Team will select 5 CoCs to partner with the Arc4Justice Team to revise and refine the entire assessment and prioritization process in a manner that advances racial equity in the homeless response system. This includes laying the groundwork to develop a more effective assessment/prioritization tool that properly gauges the level of support each person requires. We center racial equity and the voices, brilliance, and gifts of those with lived experience. This pilot program aims to:

- Improve experiences for those who are disproportionately represented in the homeless response system by ensuring that people feel fully seen and respected, and the process is participant-led, trauma-informed, and unbiased.
- Improve housing access and housing stability for those who are disproportionately represented in the homeless response system.
- Document processes, tools, and resources that can be shared with other communities throughout the state to support the ongoing work of advancing a more equitable coordinated entry system.

Theory of Change

Overall Goal: To Improve the experience and housing outcomes for Black, Indigenous, and people of color.

We believe if communities:

- Use a racial equity lens (i.e., focus specifically on the lived experiences and perspectives of the racially diverse communities being served) to examine local data and context and identify racial inequities in their system
- Lay the groundwork by assembling, developing, and maintaining a core equity team.

- Bring BIPOC community members and people directly impacted by homelessness into roles that facilitate the co-design of new systems and processes
- Participate in supported group discussions centered in racial equity content
- Engage in improvement projects that test potential racially equitable strategies and processes

Then we believe that communities will:

- Learn how to integrate equitable principles and practices in the entire homelessness response system to dismantle systemic racism and other forms of systemic oppression (e.g., ableism, ageism, transphobia, etc.)
- Understand what skills and design structures are necessary to work towards a racially equitable system.
- Test and develop more racially equitable processes that respond to identified racial inequities and local conditions.
- Shift coordinated entry systems in the direction of racial equity.

What support will the selected communities receive from the Arc4Justice?

The Arc4Justice has identified members to walk alongside selected communities to offer guidance, support, coordination, and facilitation in pursuit of your community's racial equity goals. The Arc4Justice team will provide racial equity learning opportunities "knowledge bites" and lessons learned from other communities embarking on similar equity projects.

Communities can expect to receive the following resources and learning opportunities:

- Supportive coaching, including data support
- Three Knowledge Bite Sessions
    - Racial Equity 101
    - Power Sharing / Power Mapping
    - Data as a Tool of White Supremacy and/or Liberation
- Peer Sharing Opportunities via monthly cohort calls
- Additional one-on-one calls with community peers

Community Expectations

Building a Core Team

Communities will be expected to convene a Core Team. The Core Team established within each community will lead your community through identifying system disparities using local data, agreeing upon focus area(s), and engaging in rapid iteration to redesign projects to test racially equitable coordinated entry processes. We anticipate weekly meetings and action items between Core Team members, Arc4Justice team

members, and community partners. The Core Team should be comprised of a diverse group of people across race, ethnicity, age, gender, sexual orientation, and experience.

We recommend that, at a minimum, you include the following stakeholders on your Core Team:

- Black, Brown, Indigenous, and all people of color
- At least 2 people with lived expertise of homelessness
- HMIS/Data Lead
- CoC, HARA, and/or Coordinated Entry Staff Leads
- Frontline Staff familiar with the coordinated entry process

The function of Core Team is to:

1) Lead the design, implementation, and evaluation of equity redesign initiatives

2) Communicate performance data back to the community to build community will and support for change, and

3) Meet regularly to deep dive into community specific data and system needs.

To inform your decision regarding participation and core team members, we anticipate that your core team (5-8 people) will be dedicating about 2-3 hours per week over the next 3 months to participate in:

- Virtual kickoff meetings are anticipated to begin in June 2024
- Weekly Core Team meetings
- Three Knowledge Bites
- Ongoing work outside of meetings

Data Responsibilities

Selected communities must be able to share system-level data points. This data must be pulled from HMIS to be considered for participation. Arc4Justice team members will work with communities to collect and analyze race and ethnicity data related to system-level milestones such as: exits to permanent housing, returns to homelessness, average household length of time in the homeless response system, and more. The content of these quantitative inquiries is flexible and may vary by community.

Qualitative data analysis, focusing on the perceptions and experiences of individuals with lived experience, is crucial to this process. It can include questions around the data collection process, how accessible services are to them, and whether the people serving them and the types of interventions appropriately account for their racial and ethnic experience. CoCs will need to pair the quantitative and qualitative data to fully understand what is going on. Both aspects are critical to understanding whether there are racial disparities in the system and potential causes for those disparities. With that data, communities can then begin the effort of looking for solutions. Improvement will be measured by reviewing system-level data points and qualitative results if a community

chooses to measure qualitative data. Arc4Justice encourages communities to continue to include qualitative feedback to test as part of this system improvement process.

What we need from you

- Energy and openness to trying something new.
- Engagement with cohort communities in a peer sharing space.
- Ability for streamlined rapid testing (not stalled by long decision-making processes).
- **Ability to compensate all team members for their time if they are not already compensated through existing positions/roles.**
- Access to HMIS or other system-level dataset(s) that provide information relevant to racial equity analysis.
- A commitment to reporting system-level racial equity data.
- A commitment to testing and implementing qualitative data collection mechanisms that further racial equity.
- Willingness to explore and interrogate institutional and systemic racism along with dominant culture norms and inherent biases and prejudices.

The Arc4Justice team members have committed to the following team values to guide our thoughts and interactions.

- Center Black, Indigenous, and all people of color in all homeless response system processes.
- Center lived expertise and experience of homelessness.
- Foster relationships that recognize basic human dignity.
- Recognize and honor that Black, Indigenous, and all people of color have always had autonomy and agency over their own liberation.
- Commit to one another to heal internalized racial oppression, whether inferiority or superiority, by creating spaces for others to unpack.
- Do not stay quiet anymore; silence perpetuates suffering and oppression.
- Bring every single piece of ourselves into discussion spaces. "Take me all or leave me all." Openness and acceptance of full self.
- Confront white supremacy and system disparities.
- Address the way we perpetuate vs. dismantle systems that perpetuate racial inequities.
- We commit to course correction as a way of doing this work. We will not get everything right, so we will keep trying to do better, and publicly communicating that.
- Hold space for discomfort.

Communities will be invited to develop and establish team values that will guide their equity work.

Submission Process

To be considered for participation, communities will need to use the following link to submit an **[Expression of Interest](#)** that answers the following questions:

- Why is it urgent for your community to participate?
- What is the level of support from your CoC leadership, membership, and other stakeholders?
- What previous TA engagements has your community participated in?
- Do you have a core team of individuals meeting regularly to have racial equity conversations that include Black, Indigenous, and all people of color, and people with lived experience of homelessness?
- In what ways is your community willing to do transformational equity work to prioritize input and strategies from people with lived expertise and Black, Brown, Indigenous, and all people of color in ending homelessness, and how would you reimagine this for your community?
- Does your community have a plan and funding mechanisms to equitably compensate core members that have lived experience of homelessness at a rate of $50 per hour?
- How is your community prepared to start this work?

✓Submit only one Expression of Interest form for your CoC NO LATER THAN 12:00 PM ET on May 31st to racialequity@arc4justice.org

Communities will be selected and notified by June 6, 2024.