

Racial Equity Assessment Session: Questions and Answers

Respondent: Janine Hill, MPH

1. If we have another member of our team completing the assessment, do you recommend that we complete the assessment together or separately and then compare answers?

Janine's response: I suggest you complete it separately, and then compare responses. I would assume that multiple people from your organization would complete the assessment. I think a lot about bias, and you can run into bias and peer pressure, and influence each other's responses if you do it together.

2. The pre-work section, is that a conversation with a smaller group of people?

Janine's response: Pre-work likely is done with a smaller group of people, and done separately from the assessment. You might do it just with your senior leadership or with staff and a few board members. Then talk about those results and plan how you want to do the assessment and with whom.

3. If we plan to start a racial equity taskforce, should we start this with a smaller group? I don't think our participants know of all our work. Who should be assessed first?

Janine's response: I helped one organization put together a four-stage assessment process. There were 2 quantitative (survey) phases – one with staff and Board; another with external partners; and 2 qualitative (interview) phases. You always want to start with those closest to you (staff and Board; you'll learn a lot and then potentially amend the assessment tools as a result), and then move outward to other partners.

4. How much might we know about what an action plan would look like so we can be authentic in what we communicate to our stakeholders?

Janine's response: You need to be comfortable with ambiguity. We are using this assessment tool to create a plan. We don't know what the action plan will look like, at the time of assessment, and we need to clearly communicate that. If we did, we wouldn't need to do the assessment. Part of this is uncomfortable. Racial equity work is inherently a change management strategy.

5. When you look at race/equity, if an organization is specifically focused on one cultural group, we may be very good at working with that group, but how do we assess our work with other groups?

Janine's response: Is your goal to reach other races? Also, even with one group, this group is probably not a monolith. If you develop an assessment that asks about demographics, such as race/ethnicity, you can stratify the responses and then

understand how different racial/ethnic groups respond to your questions, and if there are meaningful differences there.

6. What advice would you give us on pushback from parents on critical race theory in schools?

Janine's response: Critical race theory has now become a slogan. It is a loaded term, and many people do not even know what it means. I would not focus on the term critical race theory – it is an intellectual movement and a framework of legal analysis that focuses on how US laws have historically and systematically disenfranchised people of color. What is taught in schools is really the origins and effects of systemic racism and racial inequalities. I would talk about acknowledging that there are populations that have been historically and systematically marginalized. For example, we did a land acknowledgement at the beginning of this session. It is really talking about history, and acknowledging that in our American history there has been a lot of marginalization. It doesn't mean we don't love this country or that it isn't great. For more information, please see [What Is Critical Race Theory, and Why Is Everyone Talking About It? | Columbia News](#), or [Critical race theory in the classroom: Understanding the debate - ABC News \(go.com\)](#).

7. What do you recommend if there are a few “don't know's” or even one “don't know?”

Janine's response: “Don't know” is a response – it reveals a communication or a knowledge gap in your respondents. You might look for patterns... are there certain types of groups (given your demographic data) that tend to use this response more often?

8. How should we adapt this tool? Could we massage the language or leave questions out? The challenge I see is that people may not interpret this as our mission. How frame this tool for an organization? One organization may be focused on housing, one on healthcare... the challenge is that people may not see this (Race equity) as their mission.

Janine's response: We chose and refined this tool so that it could be customizable to you. This is your tool -- there is not going to be any central repository of results (i.e., you will not submit your results to me or to the Community Memorial Foundation). If there is a clearer way to ask the questions for your population – then please adapt this tool. You have to figure out how to say the questions so that all respondents interpret the questions in the same way.

9. Regarding the “Beginning: Organizational Readiness Reflection” questions - do you recommend sending to the whole group that will take the survey, or to a smaller group?

Janine's response: Pre-work would likely go to a smaller group (such as senior staff or Board of Directors).

9. Are you getting good response rates to demographic questions? Especially if it is a small organization, you could have a situation where one person is the only person in that demographic.

Janine's response: It is sometimes difficult to get people to answer the demographic question on race and sometimes on sexual orientation... because this can be identifying, if there are not many people in that demographic at the organization. It is really important to analyze and stratify your results to the best of your abilities. I would recommend making demographic questions required questions to answer- BUT add an option of "prefer not to answer." And it is important then to analyze your "prefer not to answer" responses. Prefer not to answer responses are typically more disgruntled. It is important to analyze these.

10. How do I define "organization?"

Janine's response: It might be important to have a glossary that goes out with the assessment tool where you define terms that might cause confusion/be interpreted differently by different people, like... when we say "organization," here is what we mean...this will be different for every group.

11. For race, what if we modified the racial identity answers to instead say "I identify as a person of color or racial ethnic minority"?

Janine's response: I prefer to use the terms used by the US Census, and to be as specific as possible. I would ask separate questions for race and ethnicity. You can combine groups in your analysis if you like, but if you do not ask specific information from the onset, then you don't know exactly which groups are responding one way or another.