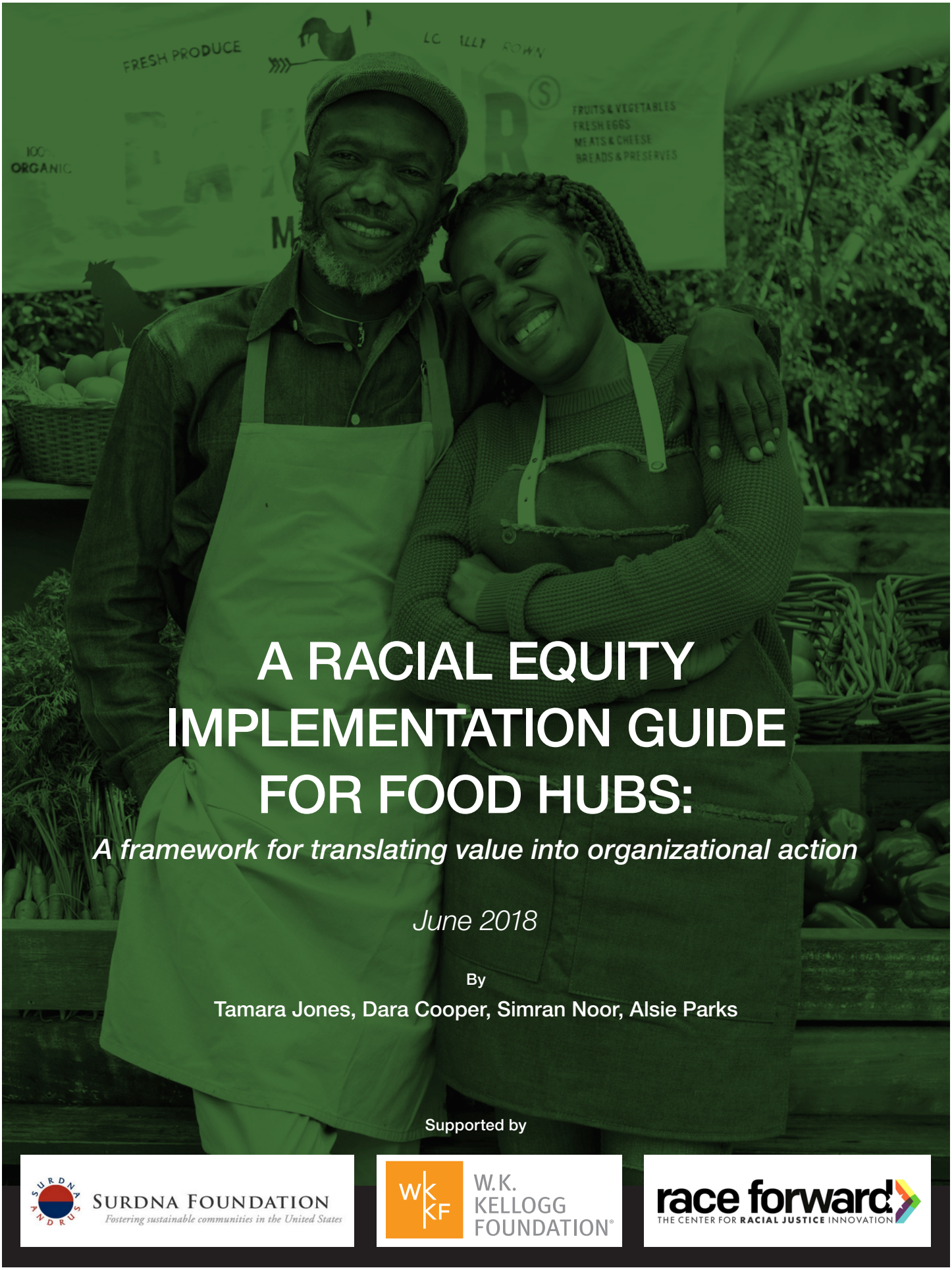


A RACIAL EQUITY IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE FOR FOOD HUBS:

A framework for translating value into organizational action

June 2018

By

Tamara Jones, Dara Cooper, Simran Noor, Alsie Parks

Supported by

SURDNA FOUNDATION
Fostering sustainable communities in the United States

W.K. KELLOGG FOUNDATION

race forward
THE CENTER FOR RACIAL JUSTICE INNOVATION

SURDNA FOUNDATION

Fostering sustainable communities in the United States

The Surdna Foundation seeks to foster sustainable communities in the United States – communities guided by principles of social justice and distinguished by healthy environments, strong local economies, and thriving cultures. The Surdna Foundation's commitment to social justice is grounded in, and has evolved from, the legacy of John E. Andrus and the Andrus family. In our mission, we have committed to using social justice as a compass, guiding the systemic change toward which we strive for. We believe that principles of social justice increase our impact and make us more effective.

The W.K. Kellogg Foundation (WKKF), founded in 1930 as an independent, private foundation by breakfast cereal pioneer, Will Keith Kellogg, is among the largest philanthropic foundations in the United States. Guided by the belief that all children should have an equal opportunity to thrive, WKKF works with communities to create conditions for vulnerable children so they can realize their full potential in school, work and life. The Kellogg Foundation is based in Battle Creek, Michigan, and works throughout the United States and internationally, as well as with sovereign tribes. Special emphasis is paid to priority places where there are high concentrations of poverty and where children face significant barriers to success. WKKF priority places in the U.S. are in Michigan, Mississippi, New Mexico and New Orleans; and internationally, are in Mexico and Haiti.

The new Race Forward advances racial justice through policy development, sector transformation, research, movement and capacity building, and narrative strategy. Race Forward is the result of a 2017 merger between Race Forward: The Center for Racial Justice Innovation and Center for Social Inclusion. This project was originally developed in partnership with the Center for Social Inclusion.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This project began in response to a webinar presentation of the "Findings of the 2015 National Food Hub Survey." We were struck by the relatively low percentage of food hubs reporting that "addressing racial disparities through access to healthy food" and "increasing minority producers'/ suppliers' access to markets" were "strongly related" to their mission and/or daily operations. Conversations with funders and food hub operators revealed that while many hubs generally shared a commitment to diversity and racial equity, they also struggled with how to translate those values into their daily operational decisions and activities.

Conversational partners quickly offered to fund this project to explore ways to help food hub operators and leaders begin these critical conversations and, hopefully, deepen their integration of racial equity into their business model, organizational culture, and community impacts. We are indebted to the leadership and financial support of the Surdna Foundation, W.K. Kellogg Foundation, and Race Forward (previously the Center for Social Inclusion). An invitation from the Sustainable Agriculture & Food Systems Funders (SAFSF) to participate in their 2017 annual convening made it possible to receive feedback from a large audience on an early draft of the framework. The standing room only audience size and subsequent requests for the finished report confirmed the need for this work.

Most importantly, the work of this guide was heavily informed by input from a dozen individuals who have largely been deeply engaged in the work of food aggregation and distribution that benefit producers of color. The project began with a focus on the question of how to motivate food hubs in the American South to act on the question of racial equity. Consequently, the majority of our content experts were based in that region. We also invited the expertise of Corbin Hill Food Project and Common Market, located in New York City and Philadelphia respectively, because of their deep experience working with farmers of color and food hub operations.

While many of them may not have historically called themselves "food hubs," these individuals and organizations have engaged in aggregation and distribution practices that speak to a long history of self-sustaining strategies made necessary by an exclusionary conventional food system that have limited the roles of producers and suppliers of color. Racial equity lies at the heart of their business models and we were fortunate to benefit from their insights.

This guide is the result of deep collaborations - including the sharing of resources, expertise, and relationships. Much work remains to be done to plumb the collective expertise and wisdom of those who have been engaging in this work over the years, and to formulate new equity strategies.

Bottom Row: *(left to right):* **Simran Noor,** *REIG project team and Race Forward (formerly Center for Social Inclusion);* **Alsie Parks,** *REIG Project Team (New Orleans, LA);* **Mayksha Tolbert,** *Surdna Foundation (New York, NY);* **Tamara Jones,** *REIG Project Team and Southeastern African American Farmers Organic Network (Decatur, GA).*

Second Row: *(left to right):* **Philip Barker,** *Operation Spring Plant (Oxford NC);* **Savanola "Savi" Horne,** *Land Loss Prevention Project (Durham, NC);* **Amber Bell,** *Southwest Georgia Project;* **Dara Cooper,** *REIG Project Team and National Black Food & Justice Alliance;* **Deidre Hunt,** *American Indian Mothers Inc. (Shannon, NC);* **Beverly Collins-Hall,** *American Indian Mothers Inc. (Shannon, NC).*

Third Row: *(left to right):* **Dorathy Barker,** *Operation Spring Plant (Oxford NC);* **Dennis Derryck,** *Corbin Hill Food Project (New York);* **Hannah Jo King,** *Common Market (Philadelphia, PA).*

Fourth Row: *(left to right):* **Charles Sherrod,** *Southwest Georgia Project and New Communities Inc.;* **Shirley Sherrod,** *Southwest Georgia Project and New Communities Inc., Albany GA;* **Daniel Teague,** *Indian Springs Co-op (Petal, MS);* **Ben Burkett,** *Indian Springs Co-op (Petal, MS).*

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Organizations sometimes struggle to incorporate values into their structures, policies, and practices. Racial equity is one such value. This guide provides a simple, accessible, and easy-to-read tool to foster conversations that can help food hubs to deepen their racial equity practices. This guide should not be read as a prescription or check list whose completion will guarantee a particular outcome. Food hubs vary enormously and there is no one-size-fits-all approach to implementing racial equity. We offer a framework that provides guiding principles and a series of key questions that we hope will further spur racial equity conversations into action across the breadth and depth of a food hub. We apply these principles and probing questions to each of the seven most common areas of food hub operations.

We envision this guide as a template for critical conversations not only with staff teams but also with food hub leadership, suppliers, strategic partners, and local communities that can help to identity which racial equity strategies will work best for each specific food hub.

We focus our attention at the level of organizational, rather than individual, behaviors. There is much work being done on recognizing and overcoming individual implicit biases, i.e. unconscious negative attitudes and beliefs about those who have identities that are different than one's own. While this is necessary work, we have chosen to focus on the lesser addressed areas of how food hubs engage in this work at the level of organizational culture, structure, and processes.

There is no quick or magical fix to the challenge of integrating racial inequality into the work of food hubs. It is an ongoing process of exploring and dismantling long-held beliefs and practices. This guide encourages readers to examine the multiple ways in which they have power and agency to disrupt "business as usual" and to exercise creativity in forming strategies to achieve greater equity in the work of food hubs.

INTRODUCTION

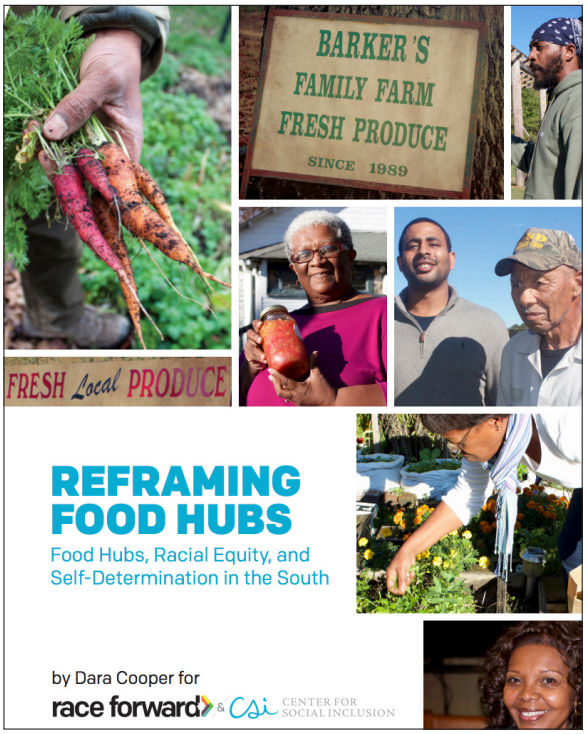
We have to stop pretending that our food system is not broken. It is broken, and it isn't just broken because of the threat of GMOs or people not knowing their farmers or where their food comes from. That is, indeed, part of it. But it is also broken because it has always reflected back to us the inequalities that exist in our society. To really reckon with that means that we have to consider how race, class, gender, sexuality, ability, etc. are not just individual experiences or identities. They are structures, often oppressive structures, that we cannot ignore. To treat them intersectionally is to consider how food is not separate from race, not separate from gender, not separate from ability, etc. and that where a person or community stands at these intersections means that they have radically different life chances and access to food.

- Ashanté Reese, Assistant Professor, Sociology and Anthropology, Spelman College

In 2015, Dara Cooper began a project in partnership with the Center for Social Inclusion (now Race Forward) to identify and to increase the visibility of southern based Black leaders in the food movement. Her observations over the course of many years had fueled her desire to honor those who were often not recognized for their longstanding efforts to help build viable food supply chains that benefitted Black farmers and their communities. Through the documentation of their work, she also hoped to create a resource to those seeking to understand how to implement racial equity as a practice. Her work culminated in the 2018 publication of *Reframing Food Hubs: Food Hubs, Racial Equity, and Self-Determination in the South.*

Also in 2015, the National Good Food Network Food Hub Collaboration and Michigan State University's Center for Regional Food Systems presented the findings of their second national food hub survey. The report benchmarked and provided much-needed insight into the developing world of food hubs - businesses that source food and food products from smaller-scale farmers and producers in order to distribute to large and diversified markets. We were particularly interested in the relatively low percent of hubs reporting that issues of racial equity were strongly related to their mission or daily operations. At the time, we interpreted these results to mean that food hub operators might not recognize how racial equity could be an asset to advance their business models and might also be struggling to translate racial equity from a value to a daily operational tool.

This guide was thus conceived from the dual desire to deepen research into racial equity implementation as undertaken by Black practitioners and to help food hub operators who might benefit from guidance on how to integrate racial equity into their business models. We believe that food hubs of all types–cooperatives, nonprofits, for-profits, public-private partnerships, and others–at all stages of development, from start-ups to mature organizations, will find that they can benefit from this guide.



Racial equity is a lens that can help us to realize a sustainable, value-based food chain that can serve as an essential alternative to the existing unjust food system. This guide is intended to help those who are interested in disrupting business as usual, and in creating new possibilities for our food system, our socio-political relationships within that system, and our business practices. When we focus on racial equity, we can envision people of color as leaders and key partners with hubs; we can reimagine and re-create ways to feed families and meet the needs of communities so that all who participate in the food system may benefit..

WHAT COUNTS AS A FOOD HUB?

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) defines a food hub as:

> *...a business or organization that actively manages the aggregation, distribution, and marketing of source-identified food products primarily from local and regional producers to strengthen their ability to satisfy wholesale, retail, and institutional demands."* (Barham et. al, p. 4).

While their legal and business structures vary, food hubs are united by a focus on ensuring that these functions ensure transparency along the value chain and increase the financial viability of their suppliers. Food hubs engage in the necessary work of creating infrastructure to engage buyers who would otherwise not take the time to procure goods from smaller-scaled farmers and producers.

While the term "food hub" has only relatively recently come into use, the act of connecting small producers to buyers has a long history. This has been particularly true among producers of color who were often shut out of mainstream markets and who therefore had to develop alternative markets for their products. Such work often took place within the structure of farmer cooperatives and was called by various names, including, most commonly, "food sheds." The food sheds often defined their purpose as not only selling but also as tackling injustices in the mainstream food system. In her book on the history of African American cooperatives, Dr. Jessica Gordon Nembhard details a long and rich history of Black communities engaging in cooperative work "in order to address market failure, asymmetric information, distrust of opportunism, excessive market power, and barriers to entry" (Nembhard, p. 11).

One contemporary example of this cooperative work is the Indian Springs Farmers Cooperative Association, formed in 1981. With approximately three dozen members located in six rural Mississippi counties, the Association coordinated their growers and built a distribution network to identify and pursue market opportunities. They amassed the resources necessary to build a $500,000 facility "where they could collectively sort, wash, package, and then ship fresh fruits and vegetables…. Most of the member-farmers concede that were it not for the cooperative, they would be out of business. Today the cooperative pumps $5,000-$10,000 per week into one of the poorest regions in the American south." (Shuman et al., 64).

Ben Burkett at the Indian Springs Farmers Cooperative Association at their packing shed in Petal, MS. The facility features a cooler, washing tubs, sorting tables and other equipment for processing the produce from co-op members.

FOOD HUBS AS CHANGE AGENTS

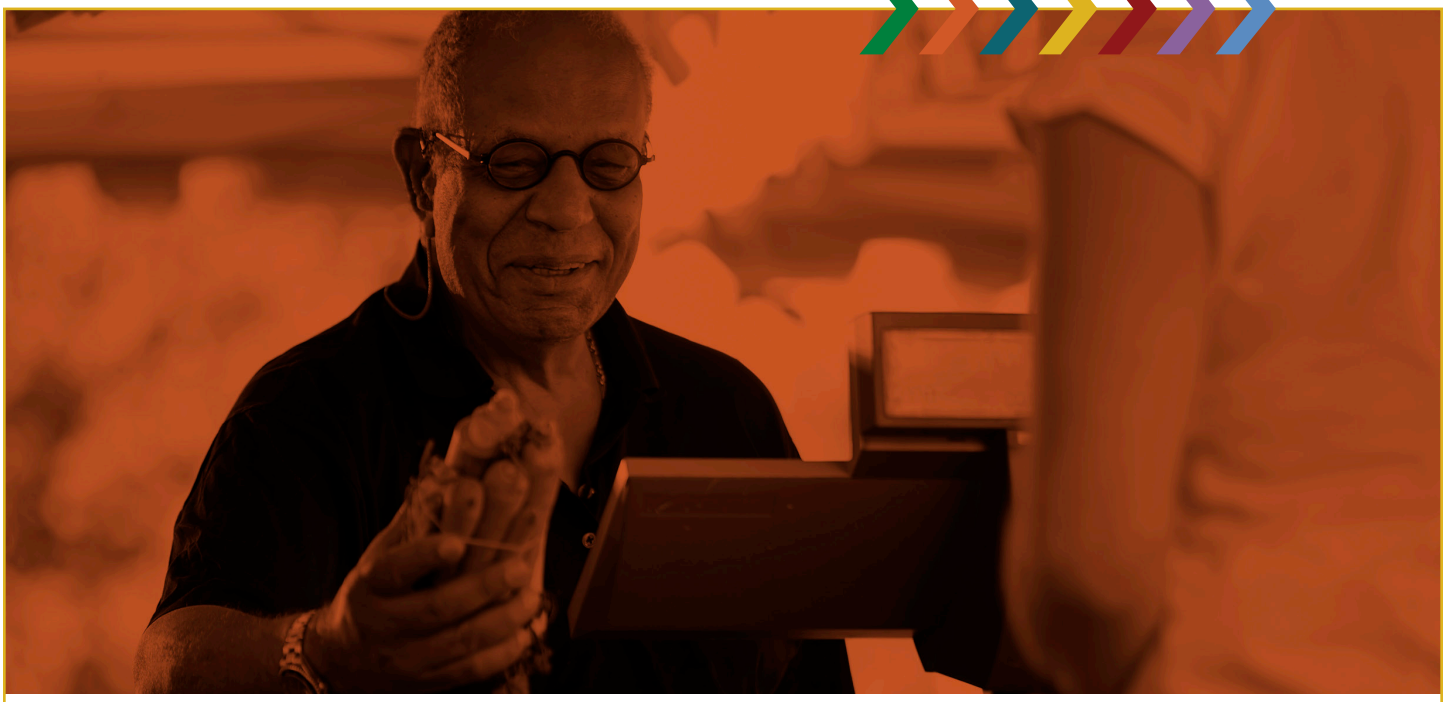
Many food system advocates place primary emphasis on the "local" value of food hubs, i.e. their ability to build a supply chain that is geographically focused. Indeed, 90% of food hubs report that they purchase from local suppliers located within 400 miles of the hub.1 We believe in the importance of building local food systems. Strengthening local food economies shifts resources and power away from an industrial agricultural system that increasingly perpetuates gross inequities both within their supply chains and in communities.

But while we affirm the value of building local food economies, we believe this is not enough to create a more just food system. A singular focus on "local" obscures both the historical and contemporary calls to transform dominant food systems so that they can overcome the many forms of explicit and implicit discrimination and exclusion which disempowers many people. This has been especially true for people of color who have been disproportionately harmed as frontline agricultural laborers. One cannot understand the history and future promise of agriculture in the United States without engaging the issue of race. Understanding the work of food hubs as primarily engaged in growing local supply chains, without a focus on racial equity, leaves the door open to recreating the injustices of the mainstream food system, albeit on a geographically intimate scale. Left unchecked, food systems based on industrialized agriculture mirror the inequities and racialized concentration of wealth and power that degrade our communities.

Local is important, but it is not sufficient to realize a vision of an affordable, healthy, environmentally sustainable food system that benefits everyone. A commitment to food justice requires moving beyond relationships that are filtered through market-based transactions or institutional settings to include true community engagement. This means having channels for everyday people to connect with food hubs in ways that go beyond the act of buying and selling of food products.

Food hub operators must embrace their identity not only as businesses but also as agents of social change. Some hub operators reject this claim, not seeing a place for social and political engagement in their business models. Others agree but have told us they think it necessary that their food hub first be profitable before they can engage fully with social justice issues like racial equity. We do not believe these to be sound arguments and hope that this guide will suggest how financial success and a commitment to racial equity can be mutually reinforcing. In doing so, hubs will find it necessary to expand the metrics they use to define and measure their own success. Incorporating the value of racial equity calls for considering impact metrics that address farmer/producer/supplier financial viability, professional knowledge and capacities within the supply chain, community health, environmental health, community self-determination and control, and community (re)investments, to name a few.

The failure to center racial equity and other progressive values in food hub business models invites the replication of the logic and damaging practices of the mainstream food system. We contend that it is both possible and necessary to correct the injustices of our current food system while building economically viable business models. In business terms, racial equity is not a liability, but rather an asset that can contribute to the financial viability of hubs.



KEY FINDINGS FROM NATIONAL FOOD HUB SURVEYS

The 2015 National Food Hub Survey identified that while fifty-five percent of hubs identified "addressing racial disparities through access to healthy food" as part of their mission, only nineteen percent reported that this was both strongly related to their mission and to their daily operations. This rate was largely unchanged in 2017, with twenty percent saying it was aligned with their mission (the 2017 survey did not ask how it was reflected in daily operations). In 2017, forty-four percent of responding hubs did not see "addressing racial disparities through access to healthy food" as at all related to their mission. This last finding suggests that almost half of hub operators may not embrace a role as advocates for social change as it relates to racial equity through their food hub work.

In 2015, twenty-two percent and twenty-three percent reported that "increasing minority producers'/suppliers' access to markets" was strongly related to their mission and daily operations, respectively. In 2017, twenty-three percent reported that it was strongly related to their mission. On average across both survey years, twenty eight percent of hubs did not see "increasing minority producers'/suppliers' access to markets" as at all related to their mission.

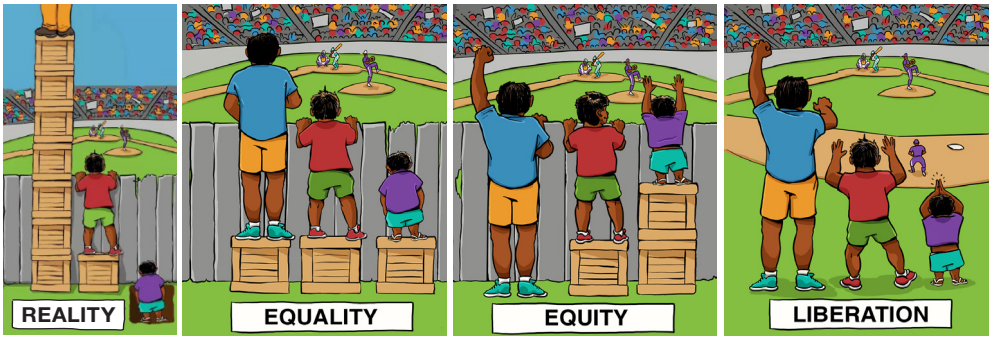
Relatedly, the survey reported a decline in the number of suppliers of color with whom food hubs engaged. In 2013, twenty-nine percent of hubs' producers and suppliers were owned or operated by people of color. This number had dropped to twenty percent by 2017. In that same year, four hubs stated that all of their producers and suppliers were owned by people of color, while nine hubs reported that they did not have a single producer or supplier of color.

These two questions – "addressing racial disparities" and "increasing minority producers/suppliers access" - were the lowest scoring among the eleven values polled in both survey years. Taken together, these data underscore the continuing need to elevate the importance of food hub operators as active advocates for racial equity in their sector

WHAT IS RACIAL EQUITY?

There has been long-standing attention to diversity within the local food movement. Much of that attention has focused on diversity understood as inclusion: increasing the presence of underrepresented groups within organizations. To be sure, inclusion is a necessary first step. However, inclusivity alone does not address ongoing practices and structures that limit the participation of those who have been invited in. This guide offers a framework for food hub organizations to take that crucial next step of constructive self-interrogation to more closely realize the promise of racial equity in the food hub sector.

It is important to understand the difference between equality and equity. Equality means treating everybody the same and giving everyone the same level of resources. Equity means providing resources based on the level of people's needs. Equality sees a "level playing field," while equity acknowledges that not everyone will even be standing on the same field.



Source: Interaction Institute for Social Change | Artist: Angus Maguire." interactioninstitute.org and madewithangus.com .

We see achieving equity as only a step towards the goal of liberation for all peoples through the creation of a new alternative food system based on truly progressive values, rather than making small adjustments to a currently flawed and unjust food system

Racial equity invites us to consider how being a person of color shapes their sense of agency and quality of life. Racial equity is the quality of fairness in systems that determine treatment, access, opportunities, and advancement of individuals or groups regardless of their racial identity or affiliation. Racial equity is achieved when "race is no longer a determinant of socio-economic outcomes and life opportunities" (Race Forward). This is an understanding of racial equity based on shifting more power to people of color (rather than simply including them) and that focuses on changes to decision-making, leadership and operational organization.

This guide begins with the observation that many of our food hubs are not racially equitable, as reflected in leadership, staffing, policies, business cases, and operational practices. Hubs that attempt to address racial equity tend to do so through the limited channel of marketing and providing food access to consumers of color. This limits the role of people of color as passive consumers rather than actively empowered agents located on both the supply and demand sides of the market.

Racial equity work focuses on outcomes as much as equitable processes to challenge unjust power structures within hub organizations. This focus on the structural level demands attention to "those practices, cultural norms, and institutional arrangements that are reflective of, and help to create and maintain, racialized outcomes in society, with communities of color faring worse than others in most situations."2 Thus racial equity requires a comprehensive approach to social transformation by increasing access and equitable sharing of power and resources. It is an invitation to examine who is represented within food hub organizations, how power works both inside and outside of food hubs, and the constraints and opportunities that exist.

A commitment to racial equity work requires more than the good intentions of individuals. Indeed, while many food hub operators might see themselves as proponents of racial justice, the national survey data tell a more dispiriting story about the extent to which the food hub sector is leading on this issue (see above).

THE REIG FRAMEWORK

We now present the basic elements of the Racial Equity Implementation Guide framework. This framework privileges racial equity at multiple levels of food hub operations. First, we identify general areas of food hub operations. Next, we introduce the core principles of a racial equity framework. Then we use the principles as a lens to examine each area of food hub operations. In so doing, we identify critical questions that can be used by food hubs to begin or deepen their racial equity work.

Areas of food hub operations

Food hubs come in many different forms, sizes, and legal structures (nonprofits, cooperatives, for-profits, b-corporations, buying clubs, etc.). However, most food hubs share many of the following core areas of operation:

- ***Supplier/Producer Relationships*** - By definition, food hubs serve to bridge the gap between food producers and consumers. Thus a significant part of the work of all food hubs entails engaging with growers and producers to secure products to sell. This might include providing training to strengthen the capacities and skills of growers and suppliers.
- ***Transportation & Distribution*** - Food hubs largely purchase from small and mid-sized farmers. Collecting and moving crops from the farm to markets or distribution centers is a key component of the work of many food hubs. This is true even for those hubs which serve only as brokers, never actually receiving or handling product themselves, but which must still ensure that farmers deliver to customers.
- ***Facility Management*** - For those hubs which actively aggregate and distribute products, an appropriately outfitted physical plant is critical to their work. They must have the space and equipment to store, process, pack, palletize, and perhaps host retail space to sell the food they collect. Hubs also need facilities for other functions, including administrative offices and event spaces.
- ***Marketing & Sales*** - One of the key benefits that many food hubs provide to smaller producers is identifying and securing qualified buyers. Hubs sell to a wide range of customers including wholesalers, institutions (hospitals, schools, etc.), restaurants, grocery stores, retail customers, and other food hubs with larger capacity.
- ***Governance & Business Management*** - An important management function of many hubs is coordinating supply chain logistics. Business management services can go beyond what is required for the hub's own operations, to include a variety of services, such as accounting and production planning, to external partner producers.
- ***Financing & Capital*** - Food hubs secure capital and financing from a diverse array of sources, including public and private grants, bank loans, personal contributions by founders/managers, and individual donations.
- ***Products & Services*** - Some food hubs go beyond selling produce as supplied by growers, to processing food to create value-added products which they then sell under their own brand. The types of products and services that a hub can offer are limited only by their imagination and the willingness of markets to pay

REIG Principles

We have argued for the benefits of seeing racial equity as a way to shift a greater share of power to communities of color in order to transform decision-making, leadership, and operational organization among food hubs. This approach is based on the following eleven principles:

1. ***Equitable access*** - considers how a food hub can use its distribution channels to increase the availability of healthy, affordable food to communities of color.
2. ***Equitable contracts*** - seeks to maximize opportunities to formally engage producers, suppliers, and businesses owned by people of color on terms that reflect fair and just principles.
3. ***Equitable decision-making*** - affirms the importance of having communities of color play some role in a hub's decision-making process, recognizing the many ways in which a hub's decisions and activities can impact communities.
4. ***Respectful land use*** – considers the impact of a food hub's land decisions on adjoining communities of color.
5. ***Equitable governance*** - uplifts people of color to formally serve on a food hub's governance body (Board of Directors, etc.) at a level that reflects their representation in the hub's service area.
6. ***Equitable ownership*** - looks to actively increase the number of people of color in the supply chain who are owners and financially viable.
7. ***Mutual growth*** - ensures that business owned by people of color scale up along with a hub's growth and success.
8. ***Fair and living wages*** - commits to economic justice by fighting against a "race to the bottom" when it comes to paying employees and suppliers, recognizing that the food and farm sector continues to have a disproportionately high percentage of people of color at the low and middle levels of its labor pool who are generally among the lowest paid.
9. ***Just working conditions*** - recognizes the need to overcome the systemic abuses that continue to define the experiences of many food and farm workers, including those within food hubs.
10. ***Regenerative investments*** - dedicates a portion of a hub's profits and capital to be (re)invested in local communities of color in ways that contribute to their economic, social, political, and cultural betterment.
11. ***Movement building*** - embraces the call for food hubs to be social change agents and seeks to connect with local, regional, and global efforts to transform the conventional food system and to shift power to benefit communities of color.

APPLYING THE REIG FRAMEWORK

Below, we offer questions related to each of the seven most common areas of good hub operations. They emerged from considering how each of the eleven REIG principles might be applied to the seven areas of hub operations. These questions are not intended to serve as a prescription that will guarantee specific outcomes. Rather they provide a starting point for generating critical conversations among stakeholders.

The questions allow each hub to identify the best ways to engage in racial equity work, given each hub's unique characteristics (the composition of local communities, scale of operations, etc.). Organizations seeking to address racial equity imbalances often jump to action without first taking the time to develop an analysis of unjust systems and to locate themselves within those systems. It is our hope that this framework will help food hubs to avoid that pitfall.

We believe it is useful and productive to ask open-ended questions when evaluating racial equity in food hubs. This approach invites robust participation from stakeholders, provides finely grained information for diagnosing problems, and supports creative and impactful response strategies.

As hubs engage in conversations about how to strengthen their racial equity practices, they will undoubtedly identify even more productive questions to add to what we have provided here. It is our hope that readers will share such questions so that we can collectively continue to build this toolkit.

We begin with questions that repeat across multiple areas of operation, including a brief overview of background issues. This section will be followed by questions that are more specific to individual operational functions of food hubs.

To what extent is your hub actively and intentionally pursuing contracts and partnerships with organizations and businesses of color?

The topic of contracting proved a complex one for our team of practitioners. Some producers prefer written contracts because they hold parties accountable to pre-approved standards and practices, and aid in more effective crop/business planning. Others (usually smaller sized farmers) find written contracts to be restrictive insofar as they can include terms that are difficult for family scale farmers to achieve. For example, some contracts require delivery volumes that favor larger scale growers over smaller ones or may have payment terms that make it difficult for smaller scale farmers to manage their cash flow. Smaller producers often prefer more flexibility, especially when they are not yet consistent with their production levels.

Despite these challenges, such farmers can benefit immensely from having guaranteed buyers. It is critical to engage in meaningful conversations with producers of color to ascertain their priorities and needs in relation to contract terms. Food hubs also benefit from this arrangement by diversifying their supply chains and growing the capacity of farmers who often prove to be loyal to these supportive relationships.

Our advice is that hubs focus on building strong personal relationships with their farmers of color rather than relying solely on legal contracts and formalistic standards. This may call for customizing contracts to be more responsive to individual grower needs.

How is racial equity reflected in your hub's criteria for selecting partners?

The success of a food hub's business model is often furthered by key partnerships with external stakeholders. In seeking out such partners, a hub must be both intentional and diligent in working to identify stakeholders of color. Often such stakeholders may be less visible than their peers but can offer assets, often unrecognized, that are beneficial to food hubs. For example, stakeholders of color can bring years of experience and a network of relationships to the partnership.

How are you providing and promoting a fair and living wage?

As both employers and social change agents, food hubs should be committed to providing salaries and compensation that will ensure a viable living standard. The lack of transparency associated with many hiring practices, coupled with implicit biases, can result in racial disparities in wage structures. Therefore, it is important to ask how

a hub can integrate equity more strongly into its hiring processes. Hubs can also conduct periodic salary reviews to discover imbalances that could result in employees of color disproportionately represented at the lower end of the compensation scale. Hubs are also well positioned to advocate for a fair and living wage for employees of stakeholders within their supply chain, especially when negotiating contracts and agreements with vendors and partners. This might mean pushing for fair and living wages down the supply chain, through requirements or incentives for suppliers to do so.

How are you providing and promoting just working conditions?

Just working conditions include considerations of physical safety, length of shifts, access to training and necessary equipment, paid sick leave, and guaranteed vacations. Food hubs need to be intentional in ensuring just working conditions within their own operations and by their vendors and partners. Supply chains that are riddled with exploitative practices undermine the commitment of food hubs to build a socially just food system.

How are you helping businesses of color to scale up and grow along with your hub's success?

Producers of color often report that while they are invited in during the start-up phase of food hubs, they are left behind when the food hubs grow in size and profitability. As food hubs become more successful and increase their market share, they begin to seek out producers that can provide higher volume. As a result, many smaller scale farmers of color get dropped because they cannot meet the new requirements for serving a larger market. Such practices, while seemingly neutral, perpetuate racial disparities in the food marketplace. When seen as social change agents, food hubs must commit to empowering community and economic partners as the food hub grows. They must see themselves as part of a collective effort to bring forth an alternative food system.

Beyond being an employer, how does your hub fit into the local geographic community in which it is located?

Food hubs need to make explicit the multiple roles they play within surrounding communities. For example, often the quest for affordable land and facilities leads food hubs to locate within poorer communities of color. This can worsen existing negative environmental conditions, such as noise pollution and bad air quality from delivery trucks. On the positive side, a food hub might be able to make its property open to a community after hours, or sponsor community events, thus investing in a community and serving its real needs as a visible and active partner in the life of the community.

How can you establish or strengthen your hub's relationship to local, regional, and global food movements?

Food hubs should seek to build relationships with social justice movements on the local, regional, and global levels. Those alliances may occur beyond the food justice movement. For example, one can envision a food hub working in solidarity with local living wage or immigrants' rights campaigns. It is important that food hubs support such efforts publicly, such as by speaking at public rallies, signing petitions, and lobbying public officials. Food hub visibility as social justice advocates serves to strengthen movement networks, increase trust in relationships with partners of color, and lend economic clout to system change efforts.

How can hubs maximize input from stakeholders of color into the hub's decisions and strategy development?

Hubs need to acquire data about the needs and objectives of local communities in order to inform the hub's decision-making process. This will open opportunities for maximizing alignment between the hub and its stakeholders. In talking with local organizations that serve communities who can better inform hubs about their needs, hubs can also find ways to survey individual community residents to get more direct grassroots input. Such data might reveal opportunities for new markets or producer relationships or partnerships that can directly benefit a hub's bottom line.

The questions in this next section are specific to each area of operation within a food hub. Again, we hope that they will serve to stimulate additional questions which will allow hub stakeholders to deepen their understanding of how racial equity is embedded in every aspect of the relationships and work of food hubs.

PRODUCER RELATIONSHIPS

- How can you help farmers of color overcome barriers to selling to your food hub?
- How can you facilitate access to land for your emerging growers? How are you seeding the pipeline?
- How can you incentivize farmers of color and create buying agreements that reflect the values of a healthy and empowered food system?
- How does your hub seek and support business partnerships and purchasing agreements with suppliers of color?
- Do you offer fair pricing to farmers and suppliers (not just always looking for the cheapest price)?
- How are you helping to strengthen ownership and financial sustainability of farmers of color?
- How can you help farmers of color access more markets and buyers?
- What can you do to help farmers of color access trainings and resources (e.g. food safety certifications, crop planning, recordkeeping, etc.) they need to become stronger partners with your hub? Can you provide improved contracts for those completing select training programs?
- How can you engage with all of your farmers and suppliers to ensure that they fairly treat farm workers (the majority of whom are people of color) and other employees/laborers?
- How can you implement more collaborative risk management strategies that balance the needs of the hub along with the needs of farmers and suppliers of color? For example, some buying agreements allow hubs to make last minute changes in order size without penalty. This leaves the farmer to absorb all of the costs often at a financial loss.

TRANSPORTATION & DISTRIBUTION

- How can your food hub work with under-resourced farmers of color to help find creative ways to get their goods to your markets? If your hub owns its own transportation vehicles, how can they be used to mitigate the transportation costs of farmers? If your hub doesn't own its own fleet, can it enter into transportation and logistics contracts that include people of color as primary agents?
- How can your food hub help to connect farmers of color with the distribution and transportation partners they need? What roles can suppliers of color play in distribution and transportation solutions between your hub and other food hubs?
- Are there people of color-owned companies with which your hub could contract for services? If so, does your hub pay them the same rates as it does white-owned companies?
- Do all transportation and distribution firms with whom you do business pay a living wage to their employees/subcontractors?
- Do all transportation and distribution firms with whom you do business support safe and just working conditions for its employees/subcontractors?
- How can your food hub help producers of color in keeping a consistent cold chain and leveraging your infrastructure to reach market channels?
- How is your food hub using its distribution networks to provide affordable food in underserved communities?
- How are you actively supporting people of color in your transportation and distribution network to scale up along with your hubs growth?

FACILITY DEVELOPMENT & MANAGEMENT

- Can your food hub sign a Community Benefits Agreement with local stakeholders to ensure mutually desired outcomes?
- How are your hubs investments and operational decisions related to land use and the built environment advancing healthier people of color communities?
- What are the environmental impacts of capital projects on nearby communities?
- What are the environmental impacts of your facilities' daily operations on nearby communities?
- Do neighboring communities need access to more community spaces? How could your hub meet some of those needs?
- How can you leverage your hub's facility or equipment to support the growth of mission-aligned partners?

MARKETING AND SALES

- Who do you identify as your primary markets? Do they include local underserved communities? Are you pursuing or achievability greater profitability at the expense of meeting the needs of lower-income communities?
- How is your food hub elevating and promoting the brands, stories and voices of producers of color in your supply chain?
- Is your food hub responsive to the variety of food products desired by both domestic and international people of color in your service area? Is the food that you procure culturally relevant or appropriate in your distribution geographies?
- Do you identify opportunities for your farmers of color to grow based on increased demand or niche markets?
- Does your hub create education and outreach materials in collaboration with partners of color, especially as it relates to reaching communities of color?
- Do you identify the most culturally appropriate market channels? What information and media sources do local communities of color most use?
- Do you help to grow your farmers' capacity to understand and to navigate traditional purchasing channels?
- What can your food hub do to help re-educate its consumer base so they can have equal appreciation and support for "grade A and B" products? Smaller scale farms are more likely to produce so called "grade B" products in alignment with the ways in which produce naturally grow.

GOVERNANCE & MANAGEMENT

- Does your hub's mission and/or strategic plan include an explicit commitment to racial equity? If so, how does the hub hold itself accountable to this commitment? To whom does it hold itself accountable?
- What metrics does the hub use to measure its racial equity impacts and progress?
- How does your food hub hold itself accountable for its racial equity values and commitments?
- What are the key performance indicators your hub uses to measure its impacts? To what extent do they reflect racial equity values?
- Do people of color have the opportunity to purchase ownership stake in the hub enterprise?
- How do you assess the level of representation and participation by people of color in the hub's governance structure?
- What roles do people of color play in making external hub decisions, i.e. affecting areas that do not fall within the traditional business scope of food hub activities?
- Does your food hub have a collaborative, consensus decision-making process?
- How can communities of color serve as planners and innovators to help solve business challenges?
- What feedback loops can you develop with the communities of color you serve to ensure informed partnerships? How often do you survey and/or convene your stakeholders of color? How can you increase their voices in the hub's conversations?
- Does your food hub have people of color representation on the Board of Directors and advisory groups?
- Do the demographic profile of your internal stakeholders (Staff, volunteers, Board) reflect that of your service area?
- Does your food hub provide clear opportunities for promotion and growth for all staff? How do the hub's staff of color assess the quality of the advancement opportunities provided?
- Does the hub's leadership team or governing body support building connections with social change efforts that are related to the hub's work in food and farm systems? Does the hub have a voice on matters related to improving the conditions of those who work within the food system as well as those who rely on it for they physical sustenance?

FINANCING & CAPITAL

- What are the hub's priorities and standards for reinvesting in local communities? Have you partnered with stakeholders of color to explore how community (re)investments might also further the hub's profitability or financial viability? Have you considered non-financial forms of investment currency that would also benefit communities of color (providing access to expert advice, free use of facility space, etc.)?
- Does your food hub choose to work with financial entities that are primarily located in local communities and who choose to invest in the same? For example, rather than establishing accounts with a national bank chain, can your hub work with a credit union or community development financial institutions (CDFI) who are required to provide credit and financial services to underserved markets and populations?
- Has the hub identified opportunities to work with social finance partners, sometimes called slow money investors, who share a commitment to both profit and social impact?
- What can your accounting office do to be more responsive to the needs of under-resourced farmers who tend to be more vulnerable to cash flow disruptions (issue timely payments, etc.)?
- What can your food hub do to help provide access to finance for producers of color who may face barriers to traditional lending institutions?
- How can your food hub use its financial and capital assets and resources to support and to strengthen local infrastructure of communities of color?
- Does the hub seek to hire contractors of color whenever possible for its capital projects?
- How might you make capital investment decisions that would support both the needs of the hub and the needs of small-scale producers and suppliers?

PRODUCTS & SERVICES

- Does your hub offer food products and services that reflect the cultural tastes of local communities?
- Does your hub offer, and educated consumers about the qualities of, Grade B products in order to be more responsive to the needs of small-scale farmers?
- Is your hub doing enough to ensure sourcing of products from suppliers of color?
- What more can your hub do to elevate the stories behind products that reflect people of color ownership and voices?

CONCLUSION

We hope this racial equity implementation framework will help food hubs to incorporate more effective racial equity approaches than those they have used thus far. Our aim is to help practitioners go beyond a superficial rhetoric of "diversity" to focus on practical ways to actualize a vision of a more just food system.

Food hubs can use this guide in multiple ways. We recommend working with qualified racial equity facilitators to guide hubs in using the framework offered here. Food hubs can use this guide to begin assessing their current performance on racial equity. This assessment can establish a baseline against which hubs can measure their future efforts to strengthen their racial equity practices. We hope this guide will inspire food hubs to (re)commit to playing a leading role in our larger collective movement for a safe, equitable, and healthier food system.

REFERENCES

ARTICLES and BOOKS

Gordon-Nembhard, Jessica. ***Collective Courage: A History of African American Cooperative Thought and Practice.*** The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2014.

Reese, Ashante. ***We will not perish; we're going to keep flourishing: Race, Food Access, and Geographies of Self-Reliance.*** Antipode, 2017.

Turshin, Julia. ***Dr. Ashanté Reese on the Loss of Grocery Stores and the Power of Choice.*** Epicurious, 2018. https://www.epicurious.com/expert-advice/ashante-reese-loss-of-grocery-stores-article

ASSESSMENTS

Keleher, Terry. ***Racial Equity Impact Assessment.*** Race Forward: The Center for Racial Justice Innovation, 2009. https://www.raceforward.org/sites/default/files/RacialJusticeImpactAssessment_v5.pdf

PRESENTATIONS

Keleher, Terry. ***An Introduction to Racial Equity Assessment Tools: Governing For Racial Equity***. Race Forward, 2014. https://racc.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/An-Introduction-to-Racial-Equity-Assessment-Tools.pdf

Racial Equity Strategy Guide. Portland's Partnership for Racial Equity. https://www.portlandoregon.gov/oni/article/505494

REPORTS

Ayazi, Hossein and Elsadig Elsheikh. ***The US Farm Bill: Corporate Power and Structural Racialization in the United States Food System***, Haas Institute for a Fair and Inclusive Society, 2016.

Colasanti, Kathryn, Jill Hardy, Jeff Farbman, Rich Pirog, John Fisk, and Michael Hamm. ***Findings of the 2017 National Food Hub Survey***. Michigan State University Center for Regional Food Systems & The Wallace Center at Winrock International, 2018. http://foodsystems.msu.edu/2017foodhubsurvey

Cooper, Dara. ***Reframing Food Hubs: Food Hubs, Racial Equity, and Self-Determination in the South***. Race Forward, 2018. https://www.centerforsocialinclusion.org/publication/reframing-food-hubs/

Giancatarino, Anthony and Simran Noor. ***Building the Case for Racial Equity in the Food System***. The Center for Social Inclusion, 2014. http://centerforsocialinclusion.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Building-the-Case-for-Racial-Equity-in-the-Food-System.pdf

Fischer, Micaela, Dr. Michael Hamm, Rich Pirog, John Fisk, Jeff Farbman and Stacia Kiraly. ***Findings of the 2013 National Food Hub Survey.*** Michigan State University Center for Regional Food Systems & The Wallace Center at Winrock International, 2013. http://www.canr.msu.edu/foodsystems/uploads/files/2013-food-hub-survey.pdf

Hardy, Jill, Michael Hamm, Rich Pirog, John Fisk, Jeff Farbman, and Micaela Fischer. ***Findings of the 2015 National Food Hub Survey***. Michigan State University Center for Regional Food Systems & The Wallace Center at Winrock International, 2016. http://foodsystems.msu.edu/resources/2015-food-hub-survey

Matson, James, Martha Sullins, and Chris Cook. ***The Role of Food Hubs in Local Food Marketing***. USDA Rural Development, 2013. https://www.rd.usda.gov/files/sr73.pdf

Shuman, Michael, Alissa Barron and Wendy Wasserman. ***Community Food Enterprise, Local Success in a Global Marketplace***. Wallace Center at Winrock International, 2009. http://ngfn.org/resources/ngfn-database/knowledge/CFE%20Book_view.pdf

Values-Based Tiered Buying Systems for Institutional and Wholesale Buyers. Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont, 2015. https://nofavt.org/sites/default/files/files/resources/values-based-tiered-buying-position-paper-august-2015.pdf

Zitcer, Andrew. Food Co-op and the Paradox of Exclusivity, Antipode Foundation, 2014.

RESOURCE GUIDES

Anderson, Andrea, Raymond Cordrington, Anne C. Kubisch, Keith Lawrence, Gretchen Susi, Stacey Sutton. ***Constructing A Racial Equity Theory of Change: A Practical Guide for Designing Strategies to Close Chronic Racial Outcome Gaps***. The Aspen Institute Roundtable on Community Change, 2009.

Barham, James, Debra Tropp, Kathleen Enterline, Jeff Farbman, John Fisk and Stacia Kiraly. ***Regional Food Hub Resource Guide***. U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, Agricultural Marketing Service, 2012. https://www.ams.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/Regional%20Food%20Hub%20Resource%20Guide.pdf

Fair Farmer Contract Standards. Domestic Fair Trade Association Policy Position. Adopted December 5, 2009 http://www.thedfta.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Fair-Farmer-Contract-Standards.pdf

Kang, Jessica. ***Let's Talk About Race: How Racially Explicit Messaging Can Advance Equity.*** Center for Social Inclusion, 2015. https://www.centerforsocialinclusion.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/Lets-Talk-About-Race.pdf

Lohrentz, Tim. ***Contracting For Equity: Best Local Government Practices That Advance Racial Equity in Government Contracting and Procurement***. Government Alliance on Race & Equity. https://racialequityalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/GARE-Contract_For_Equity.pdf

21-Day Racial Equity Habit Building Challenge. Food Solutions New England. http://www.foodsolutionsne.org/racial-equity-challenge-resources

Racial Equity Resource Guide. W.K. Kellogg Foundation. http://www.racialequityresourceguide.org/

TOOLKITS

Keleher, Terry. ***Racial Equity Impact Assessment Toolkit Race Forward***. Race Forward, 2015, www.raceforward.org/practice/tools/racial-equity-impact-assessment-toolkit.

Nelson, Julie and Lisa Brooks. ***Racial Equity Toolkit: An Opportunity to Operationalize Equity***. Government Alliance on Race & Equity, 2016. https://racialequityalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/GARE-Racial_Equity_Toolkit.pdf

Sanchez, Adrian, Carla Saporta. ***Racial Equity Toolkit: Implementing Greenlining's Racial Equity Framework***. The Greenlining Institute. Berkeley, CA

Equitable Development Toolkit: Equitable Food Hubs. PolicyLink, 2014. http://www.policylink.org/sites/default/files/equitable-food-hubs_0.pdf

Racial Equity Toolkit for Policies, Programs, and Budget. Race and Social Justice Initiative, 2010. https://www.seattle.gov/Documents/Departments/RSJI/RacialEquityToolkit_FINAL_August2012.pdf

Talking About Race Toolkit: Affirm, Counter, Transform (ACT). Center for Social Inclusion. https://www.centerforsocialinclusion.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/CSI-Talking-About-Race-Toolkit.pdf

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Tamara Jones currently serves as the Executive Director of the Southeastern African American Farmers Organic Network (SAAFON). SAAFON's members are Black farmers committed to ecologically sustainable growing methods. Members are located across the Southeastern United States in Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Florida, Maryland, Virginia and the US Virgin Islands. Prior to joining SAAFON, Tamara led an independent management consulting firm that focused on working with governmental agencies and non-profit organizations, many of which were in the sustainable agriculture sector. In 2011, she was honored as a 2011 White House Champion of Change for her efforts in guiding the work of community-based organizations in the South engaged in building local green economies. Ms. Jones holds a Master of Arts degree in Political Science from Yale University and a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science from Long Island University Brooklyn Campus.

Dara Cooper has over 15 years in food systems, racial and economic justice work in communities nationwide. She is a consultant and organizer with the National Black Food and Justice Alliance, an alliance of Black led organizations working towards national Black food and land justice and an anchor team member of HEAL (Health Environment Agriculture and Labor) Food Alliance. Dara is the former director of the WK Kellogg funded NYC Food and Fitness Partnership in Brooklyn, NY where she worked on creating and strengthening farmers markets for Black farmers, designing a community based local food hub (hyper local, "micro hub") and creating a farm to head start program in Brooklyn partnering with Corbin Hill Food Project, a local food hub. Prior to this work, Dara led the launch and expansion of Fresh Moves (Chicago), an award winning mobile produce market with community health programming, which quickly became a nationally recognized model for healthy food distribution and community based self-determination and empowerment.

Simran Noor is Senior Fellow at the new Race Forward. The new Race Forward is the union of two leading racial justice non-profit organizations: Race Forward and Center for Social Inclusion (CSI). Previously and during the writing of this toolkit, Simran served as CSI's Vice President of Policy & Programs, a key senior level manager who worked directly with the President and Senior Vice President, providing programmatic leadership through the management and coordination of all program staff, strategy development, program management, organizational networking, alliance building, and relationship management. Simran was a thought partner to the team on the project, supporting through her understanding of racial equity institutional change/organizational development and racial equity strategy development that informed the tool.

Alsie Parks is an Atlanta-native, that advocates and activates the use of food as an organizing tool for healing and liberation. a child of the south, she is the granddaughter of educators and sharecroppers from lincolnton, ga. she works as a network organizer in mississippi for the southeastern african american organic farmers network (saafon), loving on black farmers, sustaining family farms, black culture & black history and acts as the southern regional organizer for the national black food and justice alliance (NBFJA) approaching food sovereignty, land and self-determining food economies via the lens of healing, organizing and resistance against anti-blackness. she is also a grower, and dreams of and is building towards land-based black futures. she carries this work into her healing modality, "intimacy with food", facilitating community dialogue and wellness education that incorporates mindfulness practices, radical resistance, and honoring cultural traditions. sowing good seeds, she values storytelling and togetherness space to cultivate deep, intimate, and responsive relationships with and for the land and our people.