

# Communicating with Data to Advance Racial Equity

Thursday afternoon 1:00 – 3:00 p.m.

NNIP's founding Partner organizations developed the concept of a local data intermediary because they saw that the availability of information about neighborhoods was limited and uneven. They recognized that residents and organizations could use data, which in the past had been used to disadvantage low-income communities, particularly communities of color, to gain a seat at the table to advocate for change and monitor progress.

NNIP Partners have often thought of themselves as neutral - providing impartial data and helping people use them to improve their communities. But everyone has implicit biases that affect how they interpret information. Data and the indicators we choose can inadvertently reinforce the very stereotypes and inequities that NNIP Partners are dedicated to addressing and harm the people and neighborhoods we are trying to support. To make greater progress, we need to consider how to adjust our methods, products, and services to more effectively further racial equity in our communities.

***The purpose of this session is to equip NNIP Partners with strategies on how to communicate with data and narrative to advance racial equity.***

The session will be moderated by Leah Hendey (Urban Institute), who will begin with a short introduction. The session will feature three sections: a framework for talking about racial equity, communications for racial equity, and application to data services. Each section will provide the opportunity for small group discussions. Julie Nelson, a senior vice president of Race Forward and the director of the Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE), will share insights from her organization's research and experience and guide us through the activities. Bernita Smith from Neighborhood Nexus in Atlanta and Rebecca Hefner from the City of Charlotte will also offer their local perspectives.

## **Part 1: Framework for talking about racial equity (25 minutes)**

- Julie will briefly guide us through key concepts related to racial equity.
- Activity: Pair-Share

## **Part 2: Communications for racial equity (45 minutes)**

- Julie will describe Race Forward / Center for Social Inclusion's *Talking About Race Toolkit* and communications messaging research.
- Bernita Smith will reflect on what this information means for work in Atlanta.
- Activity (10 minutes): In groups of 2-3, discuss examples of where you have or where you could tackle a dominant narrative. What strategies and formats have been or could be successful?

- Report out and discussion (10 minutes)

### **Part 3: Application to data services** (45 minutes)

- Julie will illustrate how we can apply lessons from their communications research.
- Rebecca Hefner will describe the City of Charlotte's engagement with GARE and interest in better utilizing the Quality of Life Explorer (<https://mcmap.org/qol/>) to advance racial equity.
- Activity (15 minutes): How could the data on the Quality of Life Explorer better support efforts for improving racial equity?
  - At your table, choose one of the indicators in the handouts provided and discuss how the data could advance or impede racial equity.
  - What narrative context could be added to the site?
  - What other products could supplement the website? (E.g. briefs, blogs, trainings, etc.)
  - What kinds of resources or organizations could the indicator page link to?
- Discussion (15 minutes)

### **Guest Speaker**

*Julie Nelson* is the Senior Vice President of the new Race Forward, which is the union of two leading racial justice nonprofit organizations: Race Forward and Center for Social Inclusion. She is also the Director of the Government Alliance on Race and Equity, a joint project of the new Race Forward and the Haas Institute for a Fair & Inclusive Society, where she serves as Senior Fellow. Julie is the former Director of the Seattle Office for Civil Rights where she provided vision and hands-on work to Seattle's Race and Social Justice Initiative. She also served in other government positions in housing and human services in the City of Seattle, and Community Services in Pima County, Arizona. Julie has a Master's Degree in Economics from the University of Washington. She is actively involved with community groups working for racial and social justice. Nelson is driven by her passion to realize equity and social justice.

### **Resources**

Talking About Race Toolkit: <http://www.centerforsocialinclusion.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/CSI-Talking-About-Race-Toolkit.pdf>

Let's Talk About Race: How Racially Explicit Messaging Can Advance Equity  
<https://www.centerforsocialinclusion.org/publication/lets-talk-about-race-how-racially-explicit-messaging-can-advance-equity/>

Advancing Better Outcomes for All Children: Reporting Data Using a Racial Equity Lens  
<http://www.aecf.org/resources/more-race-matters-occasional-updates-3/>