

**To:** Cheryl Cobbs, the Executive Director of the Seattle Community Association  
**From:** FAR Consulting  
**Re:** Updating Seattle Community Association Anti-Racism Initiative  
**Date:** February 19, 2024

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## **BACKGROUND**

The Seattle Community Association (SCA) has successfully addressed many challenges affecting underprivileged communities. With the establishment of an Anti-Racism Committee, Undoing Institutional Racism Workshops for staff, and the adoption of new hiring practices SCA promoted diversity as part of their anti-racism initiative (ARI). The SCA has formulated strategies to improve service delivery for people of color raising awareness among staff and the broader community of institutional racism and poverty.

However, adverse outcomes surfaced during the initiative's implementation. For instance, some staff members felt uncomfortable discussing racism in the workplace. Others felt that the ARI was imposed and struggled to see its relevance to the SCA. Some staff members disagreed with the definition of racism presented in the workshops, while others believed classism was a more prevalent issue that warranted more attention. These differing viewpoints led to internal confusion and underscored the importance of establishing metrics for workshop comprehension and fostering an inclusive decision-making process within the agency. **Despite SCA's efforts to incorporate ARI, the lack of clear metrics assessing staff's workshop comprehension and management's inadequate communication channels has resulted in confusion, dissent, and diminished morale among employees, jeopardizing the SCA's ability to effectively fulfill its mission.**

## **RECOMENDATIONS**

**Recommendation 1:** Management must measure ARI performance by providing each employee with a biannual feedback survey. The survey results will be analyzed by management and used to create clear goals for the initiative. These goals will be used as benchmarks in a step-by-step plan that outlines the 2005 work plan for the ARI.

The employee surveys (Appendix B) will assess:

- Employees' preliminary understanding of racism and how it impacts their work.
- Employees' understanding of the ARI goals.
- How ARI trainings and policy changes impacted employee's work and their clients.
- How employees are incorporating ARI principles into their work.
- Employee satisfaction.

To ensure participation, the survey questions should reflect employees' understanding of workshops and avoid a sense of examination. The survey metrics must be attainable specifically laying out who is responsible for obtaining survey information and analysis while providing deadlines for each benchmark. Each staff member will receive a copy of the work plan to promote power sharing, organizational accountability, and transparency.

**Recommendation 2:** SCA must create a 2005 work plan that includes staff input in the development. Management should begin this process by holding an internal staff meeting to communicate the survey's intent and its integration into the 2005 work plan. The meeting should provide time for staff to address any additional questions and concerns. After the meeting and assessing survey results, the Anti-Racism Committee should ensure that management creates the 2005 work plan incorporating employee survey feedback (Appendix A). Considering employee

input will hold management accountable and demonstrate transparent communication to serve SCA's mission. This raises employee morale, trust, and responsiveness that ensures progressive steps towards the ARI and a cultural shift within the organization.

## **RISKS AND BENEFITS**

**Risks:** The recommendations carry risks that could affect the success of the ARI:

- Staff may continue to feel uncomfortable or resistant discussing anti-racism efforts.
  - Staff might not internalize the ARI and endanger the SCA's mission by unconsciously perpetuating racist behaviors that include distorting harmful client or employee information to a superior, favoring certain clients, and supporting certain employees' policies and actions associated with their own position.
- Management may neglect regular analysis of survey data and fail to update their work plan based on feedback.

If the SCA continues its current trajectory, employee tension and an unmeasured ARI guarantee that anti-racism will not be successfully integrated into the programs. Although risks exist, the benefits presented outweigh potential challenges because racism is internally addressed on a more systemic level.

**Benefits:** Updated ARI provides the following benefits:

- A specific process where employee feedback contributes to organizational goals will intrinsically motivate employees and they will contribute to fulfilling SCA's mission.
  - Considering employee feedback and integrating the recommended measures improves the current ARI processes and relieves employee frustration.
  - Biannual feedback surveys promote staff engagement in the ARI and increase employee mission commitment and dialogue.
  - Anti-Racism Committee oversight ensure management integrates survey feedback into the workplan promoting accountability.
- Employees will feel less discomfort when broaching racial equity issues and will better serve clients by understanding the intersection of racism and poverty.

## **CONCLUSION**

The SCA has made considerable progress in addressing the relationship between institutional racism and poverty through the ARI. However, the lack of communication regarding the perceived relevance and impact of the initiative between management and staff has resulted in internal conflict and employee dissatisfaction. This has highlighted the need for strategic enhancements in transparency, employee comprehension assessments, and a structural approach for gauging the initiative's success. The proposed recommendations and implementations of the biannual feedback surveys and facilitation of internal staff meetings, address staff concerns, promote transparency, and create more collaborative future work plans.

Despite the potential risks of lingering staff discomfort and management neglecting their new responsibilities, promoting an environment that encourages open communication, identifying the importance of staff voices, and assigning responsibilities to the Anti-Racism Committee can mitigate these concerns. These measures serve to align the ARI more closely with its intended purpose and contribute to the overall mission of the SCA by developing anti-racist direct service that prioritizes the diversity of the community.

## Appendix A


### ANTI-RACISM COMMITTEE WORK PLAN 2005

Mission Driven Work Plan Focus: Address internal processes and healthy culture


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|--|--------------------|------------|
| Goal 1: Continue to educate SCA staff about anti-racism principles, history, and concepts, including identifying and implementing models that we can use to undo racism at the SCA and in the broader community. |                    |            |
| Objectives:  | Who's Responsible: | Deadlines: |
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| Goal 2: Deploy guided group mentoring conversations along with structured curriculum customized to the needs of diverse talent to ensure purposeful connections & conversations.                                 |                    |            |
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| Goal 3: Gather stakeholder feedback to optimize anti-racism efforts. (Listen to Clients to identify barriers that will drive policy decisions and promote effective programs.)                                   |                    |            |
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| Goal 4: Deploy Employee Resource Group (ERGs) employees come together to support one another and to promote DEI within the workplace. (Provides a sense of community and support.)                               |                    |            |
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| Goal 5: Ensure transparency, agency and equity (create data base for client, employee information) Implementing new technologies to collect and display statistics.)   |                    |            |
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| Goal 6: Report, Iterate and Improve anti-racism Initiative Strategy  |                    |            |
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| Goal 7: Use feedback and data to create organizational policy and programmatic shifts  |                    |            |
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## Appendix B

|             |                |                                    |
|-------------|----------------|------------------------------------|
| Name: _____ | Program: _____ | Prior to Workshop<br>Post Workshop |
|-------------|----------------|------------------------------------|



The goal of this survey is to measure employees' understanding and thoughts on the material covered in the Undoing Institutional Racism training. Your feedback will be used to shape clear goals and benchmarks for our ARI, guiding us toward a more inclusive and effective organization.



"Creating a just and caring community free from poverty, prejudice, and neglect"

**1** How have the insights you've gained from the Undoing Institutional Racism workshop influenced your approach to your job duties?

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**2** Can you provide specific examples of how you can incorporate the principles learned in the workshop into your daily tasks?

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**3** In what ways do you see the topics covered in the workshop reflecting or supporting your program's mission?

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**4** How would you describe your understanding of the purpose of the Undoing Institutional Racism training conducted?

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**5** From your perspective, how do you feel the issues discussed in the training are relevant to the experiences and needs of the clients within your program?

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**6** Any additional comments or concerns you'd like to express?

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## **References**

### **Bolman Deal: Organizing Groups and Teams**

The article by Deal influenced how we developed recommendations for SCA to address internal processes surrounding the anti-racism initiative and culture within the organization. Deal mentions that a situation that is “ambiguous and fast-paced” can lead to a group's inability to make decisions without “centralized authority and tight scripts” or explicit goals and metrics. Although Cheryl presented a work plan for 2024, there was no communication of how the goals were created or as to deadlines relating to them. Even though Cheryl was the centralized authority, she lacked a plan to address the culture and responsiveness of the organization. The staff were predominately white, and many needed to take a step back in understanding the importance of anti-racism in their personal and work life before incorporating this into their program delivery. Deal mentions that morale and performance can suffer as a result, and this was true for Cheryl's implementation of the initiative. Deal also mentions that “careful consideration of pertinent variables may be vague are tough to access” but can be captured by asking questions such as: What is our goal? What actions are required? How do we determine success? Our recommendations regarding feedback surveys given to employees provide insight to management on how to create a work plan that reflects where the organization is internally so they can build organizational culture and trust.

### **Susan T. Gooden: Race and Social Equity a Nervous Area of Government**

This is from the first chapter of the book and outlines the impacts of discussing race within government. Gooden mentions that all measures to eradicate racial inequities cannot be effectively managed unless nervousness against racial equity is managed. She further elaborates that public sector organizations' racial discussions begin with high-intensity nervousness, but often results in low-intensity and disregard with ineffective management. The goal of broaching this issue is to have an organization that has medium-intensity nervousness to acknowledge racial inequities that are considered when providing services to the public. Gooden additionally mentions the consequences of a public servant who does not consider race inequities in their service and details potential negative consequences. The discussion of nervousness and the consequences were utilized to demonstrate what would happen if the ARI is ineffectively managed.

### **Poister: Identifying Real Outcomes and Other Performance Measures**

Poister emphasizes the critical role of data-driven decision-making and employing a systematic approach to enhance organizational performance and mitigate internal conflicts. Inspired by these principles, we have proposed the implementation of surveys to gather data enabling the organization's ability to conduct a thorough assessment of staff comprehension regarding the Undoing Institutional Racism Workshops. The intended purpose of these findings is to reflect and utilize the data collected to strengthen the SCA's anti-racism initiative and improve future work plans.