



Programs and Policy Racial and Social Equity Assessment Tool

This resource is intended to help the National Farm to School Network (NFSN) refine its racial and social equity priorities. In addition, this tool will help NFSN staff assess the implications of specific programming and policy advocacy on advancing racial and social equity, ensuring these opportunities are being maximized.

Context

This tool is meant to compliment the work that NFSN is already doing to define racial and social equity terms and to understand NFSN's work in the context of structural, institutional, and interpersonal racism. NFSN staff should reference [this document](#) to find NFSN's definition of racial and social equity terms. Staff should use the Racial and Social Equity Assessment Tool after they have referenced and understand these definitions.

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Guide for the Reader

The first section of this assessment, "Set Outcomes with Staff and Key Stakeholders," is meant for NFSN to use to clarify racial and social equity goals. This section should only be completed once by all staff members. The second section, "Food System Specific Questions," is meant to analyze the impact of specific program and policy proposals. The first table should be filled-out for all programs and policies. The second table should only be completed for NFSN-specific programs and policies. Finally, the Equity Programs and Policy Analysis should be completed for all programs and policy proposals.

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Set Outcomes with Staff and Key Stakeholders

While NFSN has made advancements in defining racial and social equity terms, this first activity is meant to clarify equity goals. NFSN staff members should complete this assessment together before moving to other parts of the tool.

“Big-Picture” Questions about Stakeholder Equity Engagement

These questions ensure that racially and socially disadvantaged populations are active in creating equitable program and policy solutions carried out by NFSN.

- 1A.** What does your conversations with stakeholders tell you about existing racial and social inequities that influence farm to school and NFSN’s scope of work?
- 1B.** How do you involve community members and key stakeholders, especially those most affected by racial and social inequities in the food system, in informing decisions about equity in NFSN’s programming and policy advocacy?
- 1C.** What other organizations or institutions are engaged in farm to school equity work or equity work that overlaps with the farm to school sector?
- 1D.** Which farm to school partner organizations are not engaged, and which stakeholders are missing from farm to school equity work? How can we engage these partners and stakeholders?

“Big-Picture” Questions about Staff and Network Priorities

This set of questions will hone NFSN’s understanding of its specific program and policy goals related to racial and social equity.

- 2A.** At this point in time, what are the most salient examples of racial and social inequities related to farm to school in general and more specifically to NFSN’s scope of work? Is there qualitative or quantitative data that further illustrates these inequities?
- 2B.** What are the root causes or factors creating these racial and social inequities?
Examples: Bias in process (e.g., implicit bias¹ in selecting which organizations become partners); lack of access or barriers (e.g., barriers to farm to school funding or staffing); lack of racially and socially inclusive engagement (e.g., lack of racially and socially diverse partners).
- 2C.** What do you believe are the most important racially and socially equitable outcomes that NFSN should strive to achieve related to farm to school?
- 2D.** How do you currently and how will you in the future seek to address racial and social inequities in the farm to school movement? What strategies address immediate impacts? What strategies address root causes of inequity?

Program strategies:

Policy strategies:

¹ Also known as unconscious or hidden bias, implicit biases are negative associations that people unknowingly hold. They are expressed automatically, without conscious awareness. Many studies have indicated that implicit biases affect individuals’ attitudes and actions, thus creating real-world implications, even though individuals may not even be aware that those biases exist within themselves. Notably, implicit biases have been shown to trump individuals’ stated commitments to equality and fairness, thereby producing behavior that diverges from the explicit attitudes that many people profess. The Implicit Association Test (IAT) is often used to measure implicit biases with regard to race, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion, and other topics.

Source: <https://www.racialequitytools.org/glossary#racial-equity>

Food System Specific Questions

These questions should be used to help NFSN staff further articulate the benefits of crafting and endorsing food-systems specific farm to school proposals in terms of racial and social equity. Filling out these tables should not take much time, but will help staff think through equity outcomes that could result from specific programming and policy advocacy. While the ultimate goal is for every answer in this assessment to be yes, the reality is that specific programs and policies will not address every type of inequity in the food system. However, given NFSN’s mission², vision³, and core values (Appendix A), we aim to maximize equity outcomes and hope that programs and policy proposals will maximize the number of yes versus no answers. In addition, we hope that staff will work to convert no answers to yes answers.

Questions for Endorsing Policies and Programs Carried Forward by Partners ⁴	Yes	No	How or Why?
Could this program or policy lead to greater production or distribution of healthy, affordable, and/or sustainably produced food in communities of color or socially disadvantaged communities?			
Could this program or policy lead to greater access to healthy, affordable, and/or sustainably produced food in communities of color or socially disadvantaged communities?			
If we create this program or achieve this policy, could it create lasting change in how the food system affects communities of color or socially disadvantaged communities? (Systems change would mean that the food system works differently than it does now, with the right incentives, disincentives, relationships, and decisions so we do not have to continue to fight the same problems as before.)			
Do people of color or socially disadvantaged individuals have a greater opportunity to remain or become small or medium-sized family farmers producing healthy food as a result of this program or policy?			
Will communities of color or socially disadvantaged communities eventually have greater access to capital across the food system as a result of this program or policy?			
Do communities of color or socially disadvantaged communities have greater and more meaningful opportunities to build wealth through the food system as a result of this program or policy?			
Do communities of color or socially disadvantaged communities have more stable, safe, and sustaining jobs in the food system as a result of this program or policy? Is this true regardless of immigration status?	Q1: Q2:	Q1: Q2:	
Will this program or policy increase wages for low-paying jobs in the food system that are disproportionately held by people of color?			
Does this program or policy allow Native communities to exert food sovereignty, and does this program or policy strengthen and support Native foodways?			
Are there components of this program or policy that may unintentionally further racial and social inequities (e.g., in the way partners are selected or funding is distributed)?			

² The National Farm to School Network increases access to local food and nutrition education to improve children’s health, strengthen family farms, and cultivate vibrant communities.

³ The National Farm to School Network envisions a nation in which farm to school programs are an essential component of strong and just local and regional food systems, ensuring the health of children, farms, the environment, the economy and communities.

⁴ Questions in this table are from the following source: Giancaterino, A., & Noor, S. (2014, July 17). Building the Case for Racial Equity in the Food System. New York, NY: The Center for Social Inclusion. Retrieved July, 2018, from <http://www.centerforsocialinclusion.org/publication/building-the-case-for-racial-equity-in-the-food-system/>.

Food System Specific Questions, Continued

Questions for NFSN Policies and Programs	Yes	No	How or Why?
Would this program or policy lead to greater access to school gardens for communities of color or socially disadvantaged communities?			
Would this program or policy lead to greater access to local foods for schools and early care and education sites serving communities of color or socially disadvantaged communities?			
Would this program or policy lead to greater access to cultural, ceremonial, and/or indigenous foods for schools and early care and education sites for the communities of color or socially disadvantaged communities being served or impacted by it?			
Would this program or policy lead to greater access to food and agriculture education for children in communities of color or socially disadvantaged communities?			
Does this program or policy lead to greater availability of local foods that are sustainably produced and processed in communities of color or socially disadvantaged communities?			
Does this program or policy connect children with local sources of food in communities of color or socially disadvantaged communities?			
Does this program or policy facilitate opportunities for marketing, value-addition, and distribution of food for those involved in the production, processing, packaging, distribution, and serving of school foods in communities of color or socially disadvantaged communities?			
Does this program or policy create living-wages and safe working conditions for those involved in the production, processing, packaging, distribution, and serving of school foods in communities of color or socially disadvantaged communities?			
Will this program or policy allow communities of color and socially disadvantaged communities flexibility by providing a "menu of options" for implementation?			
Was this program or policy developed through meaningful partnership and engagement with those most impacted by the program or policy?			
Have those most impacted by the program or policy been consulted for input?			

Equity Programs and Policy Analysis

These questions will help staff members think more critically about the intentions, impact, and long-term equity outcomes of specific program policy and proposals.

Determine Benefits and/or Burden of Program or Policy

This list of general questions is meant to assure that programs and policies are aligned with NFSN's equity priorities.

How will the program or policy advance or hinder racial and social equity:

- Are the impacts aligned with NFSN's desired outcomes (see outcomes activity on pg. 2 - Question 2C and 2D)?
- What specific issue(s) does this program or policy address, and what is the purpose of this program or policy (refer to Food System Specific Questions on pgs. 3-5)?
- What quantitative and qualitative evidence of inequity exists around the issue that this program or policy is intended to address?

Identify Policy "Holes"

These questions are meant to identify and address common shortcomings in developing racially and socially equitable policies.

- What adverse impacts or unintended consequences could result from this policy if enacted as written and how will you mitigate these unintended consequences?
- How would different racial and social groups be impacted (either positively or negatively) if this policy were enacted or implemented as written?
- What additional barriers might prevent individuals in certain racial/social groups from benefiting fully if this policy were implemented as written⁵?

Consider racial identity, language, gender, socio-economic status (SES), access to broadband, LGBTQIA status, (dis)ability, employment status, immigration status, education level, geography, environment, religious beliefs, culture, history of incarceration, etc.

⁵ Sanchez, A., & Saporta, C. (n.d.). Racial Equity Toolkit (Publication). Oakland, CA: The Greenlining Institute. Retrieved July, 2018, from <http://greenlining.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/GLI-REF-Toolkit.pdf>.

Equity Programs and Policy Analysis, Continued

Examine Sustainability and Accountability

These questions ensure that programs and policies proposed and endorsed are successful in creating meaningful long-term change and are accountable to racially and socially disadvantaged communities.

- Is this program or policy adequately funded to achieve its designed goals? Are mechanisms in place to ensure successful implementation and enforcement?⁶
- Are there clear markers of short-term and long-term success as well as timelines for meeting markers of success embedded within this program or policy?⁷ Have these been communicated clearly to those impacted by the or policy?
- Is there a process for those impacted by the program or policy to express grievances or satisfaction and to ensure that concerns are met?⁸
- Are there provisions to ensure ongoing stakeholder participation and public accountability of program or policy implementers and enforcers?⁹
- What partner organizations do/will endorse this program or policy? Why? Why not?
- How will you highlight the racial and social inequality related to this program or policy?

Acknowledgements

This tool draws from work and equity assessment tools including the following: The Center for Social Inclusion's [Building the Case for Racial Equity in the Food System](#) report, Dismantling Racism Works' [Taking Action for Racial Justice Toolkit](#), the Greenlining Institute's [Racial Equity Toolkit](#), and the Race and Social Justice Initiative's [Racial Equity Toolkit to Assess Policies, Initiatives, Programs, and Budget Issues](#).

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⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

Appendix A

National Farm to School Network Core Values

The National Farm to School Network is bound together by the vision that vibrant local and regional food systems are essential to the health of our children, farms, environment, economy and communities. The National Farm to School Network was established in the spirit of inclusivity and collaboration to promote farm to school programs by leveraging shared resources, ideas, and strategies, and engage in creative problem solving. In representing the National Farm to School Network, participating individuals and organizations share these core values:

1. Local and regional* food systems, which use environmentally sound, sustainable and just approaches to food production, processing, transportation and marketing, are an essential part of the efforts to create healthy schools, healthy foods, healthy economies and healthy communities.
2. Local foods, sustainably produced and processed, should be available in all schools to nourish every child, regardless of race and ethnicity, economic standing, or geographic location. In order for children to develop to their full potential, they need access to local and healthy foods, the opportunity to learn how to eat healthfully and to develop a connection to their source of food.
3. Those involved in the production, processing, packaging, distribution and serving of food deserve living wages, safe working conditions, equal opportunities for marketing, value addition and distribution, regardless of race and ethnicity, economic standing, size of operations, or geographic location.
4. Our goal is to strengthen the national farm to school movement, while keeping intact the unique flavor and diversity of individual farm to school program sites across the country. As such, the National Farm to School Network does not recommend, prescribe or impose a list of practices or products for farm to school. We recommend establishing relationships between local foods and school children by way of including, but not limited to:
 - Local products in school meals – breakfast, lunch, afterschool snacks
 - Local products in classrooms – snacks, taste tests, educational tools
 - Local foods related curriculum development and experiential learning opportunities through school gardens, farm tours, farmers in the classroom sessions, chefs in the classroom, culinary education, educational sessions for parents and community members, visits to farmers’ markets.
5. We strive to operate democratically in making decisions that affect our collective work. We seek to build mutual trust and respect for everyone within and outside the network.

* Individual programs define “local or regional” to fit their conditions for implementing a farm to school approach.