

Racial Equity in Communities (REIC)

# IMPACT REPORT

with highlights from Ripple Effects Mapping



United Community Services  
of Johnson County



## *Racial Equity in Communities (REIC)*

# ABOUT THE PROJECT

United Community Services of Johnson County (UCS) launched the Racial Equity in Communities pilot in April 2021. Racial Equity in Communities (REIC) is a six to eight-month program that provides a customized series of workshops to a community of practice that includes residents, staff, and elected officials from jurisdictions in Johnson County, KS.

The goal of REIC is to support implementation of culturally-responsive systems change in Johnson County jurisdictions that want to move beyond a symbolic awareness of racial equity towards substantive analysis, action, and accountability. REIC supports jurisdictions capacity to (a) learn—define key REI terms and concepts, (b) respond—address residents needs/call for action related to REI, and (c) govern—shape and adopt a policymaking framework that centers racial equity.

UCS engaged 45 residents, staff, and elected officials from five jurisdictions in the inaugural REIC community of practice. Those jurisdictions included Johnson County, Lenexa, Mission, Prairie Village and Roeland Park.

UCS convened a roundtable of Thought Partners including the University of Kansas' Public Management Center, Kansas Leadership Center, and Critical Social Change Project to assess the readiness of participating jurisdictions, design learning objectives and program activities, facilitate the workshops, and provide technical assistance to the jurisdictions.

The program was implemented over the course of six sessions facilitated by the Thought Partners roundtable. Facilitated session lasted for 4-5 hours and took place between September 2021 and March 2022. Each session built upon the prior session, and participants received intersession homework to support applied knowledge and sustainability of the learning that was happening in the workshops.

By the end of the pilot, each jurisdiction made a preliminary plan for next steps for racial equity systems change, including details of key participants, infrastructure, and activities. Equipped with the leadership competencies and content knowledge gained in the workshops, jurisdictions have begun to implement their plans with ongoing technical assistance from UCS and its partners.

# THEORY OF PRACTICE

(how and what we learn)

The REIC program was anchored in a Theory of Practice comprised of three core components:



**Cultural responsiveness** uses cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference and/or performance styles of diverse individuals' backgrounds to make learning and engagement more relevant and effective for them. Culturally responsive learning and development, explicitly connects REI to the work and roles of organizations to improve service equity and is essential to sustaining multi-level transformative systems change efforts.

**Leading adaptively** is done by creating true aspiration, cultivated through a shared vision, and generating commitment to work for the success of the organization. It requires curiosity, learning, and continuous experimentation to test possible solutions.

**Expertise in local government** involves understanding the functionality of governmental systems and how it is key to the implementation of REI transformational change. Utilizing evidence-based strategies through assessments and coaching brings awareness and focuses attention to areas (e.g., stakeholders, structure, policy, resources, etc.) that need strengthening and development.

## KEY LEARNING THEMES AND HIGHLIGHTS

- Brave Space vs. Safe Space
- Courageous Conversations
- Distinguishing Technical Work vs. Adaptive Leadership Work
- Learning as Cyclical Process
  - Exploring Privilege
  - Identity and Bias
  - Dominant Culture
- Dimensions of Diversity
- Change, Transition and Loss
- Culture and Climate in Jurisdictions
- Perspectives of Systems Level Change
  - Symbolic and Substantive Action
- Planning and Doing Systems Change
- Purpose to Practice Planning Process

## Racial Equity in Communities (REIC)

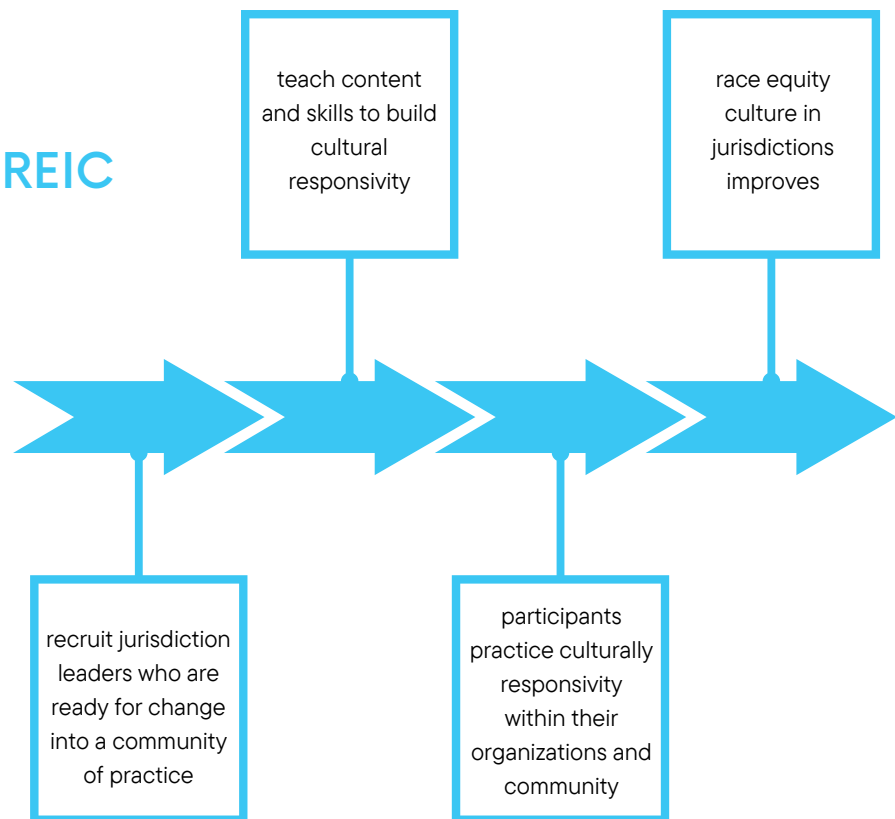
# INTENDED IMPACT

The intended impact of Racial Equity in Communities was to see evidence of an improved racial equity culture in the jurisdictions engaged in the program. We measure racial equity culture using a tool adapted from Equity in the Center, which provides guidance for evaluating culture at varying levels of leadership and organizational structure using qualitative and quantitative measures including beliefs and behaviors; policies and practices; and data.

Sample indicators of a race equity culture include:

- Leadership ranks hold a critical mass of People of Color;
- Staff, stakeholders, and leaders are skilled at talking about race, racism, and their implications;
- Programs are culturally responsive and explicit about race, racism, and race equity;
- Communities are treated as stakeholders, leaders, and assets to the work;
- Evaluation efforts incorporate disaggregation of data;
- Expenditures reflect organizational values and a commitment to race equity; and
- Continuous improvement in race equity work is prioritized.

## THE IMPACT OF REIC



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# RIPPLE EFFECTS MAPPING

Ripple Effects Mapping (REM) is a participatory evaluation process that engages program participants and other community stakeholders to reflect upon and visually map intended and unintended changes. The REM process documents impacts and offers a way to celebrate and re-energize program participants.

Ripple mapping emerged from Community Capitals Framework, which employs seven indicators of a community's "capital:" natural, cultural, human, social, political, financial, and built capitals. More information about the Community Capitals Framework can be found on [page xx](#).

There are four core elements or ingredients in Ripple Effects Mapping:



We chose this approach to evaluation so that REIC participants and their stakeholders could make sense of the impacts they see "rippling" through their systems. The methodology is participatory and has extra added benefits of helping to strengthen relationships and understanding between those who participated and other stakeholders within the jurisdiction. We conducted the REM gatherings approximately six months after the wrap of the pilot to provide adequate time for jurisdictions to activate their racial equity systems change plans.

The REM gatherings we designed and facilitated by UCS and Andy Huckaba, a leadership coach from KLC who also served as a facilitator and through partner for the REIC pilot.

# REM GATHERINGS



UCS hosted two REM gatherings in November 2022., eight months after the REIC pilot workshops concluded. The gatherings each lasted 3 hours. The agenda and process were the same for each gathering.

A total of 19 participants representing all five REIC pilot jurisdictions attended the sessions. Nine participants were not members of the original community of practice; they were intentionally invited by their colleagues to provide an alternative perspective on the systems change that had taken place since the pilot ended,

The gatherings began with a "gallery walk" to facilitate a retrospective review of the REIC experience. Learning highlights and key curriculum themes were displayed and participants had the opportunity to reflect on learnings or pose lingering questions about the content.

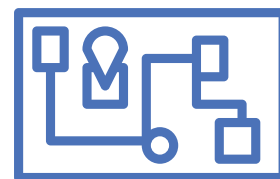
Following the gallery walk, participants were placed into dyads and asked to engage in a process of Appreciative Inquiry using the following prompts:

- What is a highlight, achievement, or success you had based on your involvement with these efforts? What did this achievement lead to?
- What unexpected things have happened as a result of your involvement in these efforts?
- How will your work grow or gain energy in the coming months and years?
- What resistance have you encountered in your efforts to carry out the racial equity work? How did you overcome this resistance?



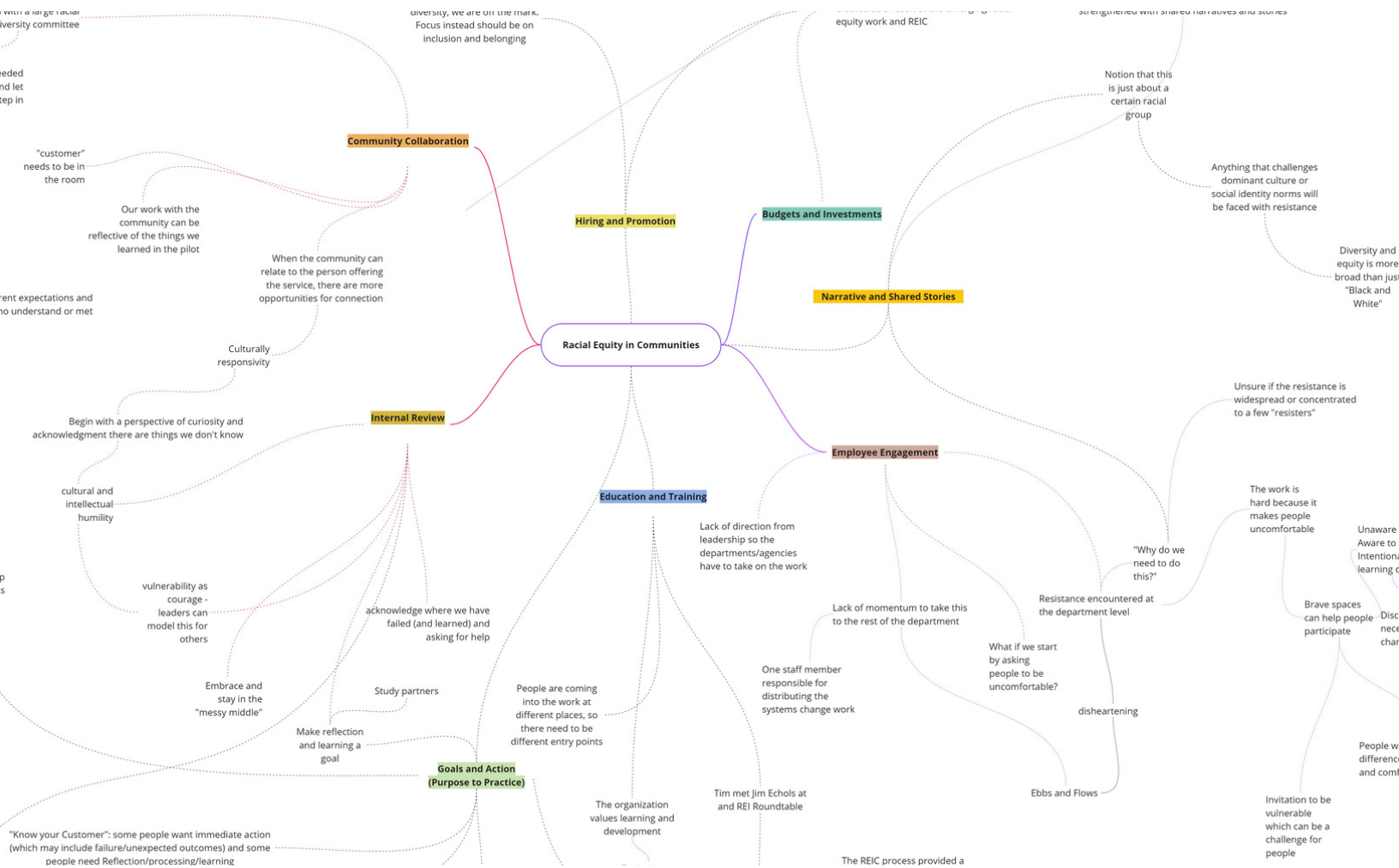
Large group interviewing and reflecting enabled participants to identify the most significant effects of the REIC experience.

IWe simplified indicators of Race Equity Culture into eight distinct themes, then mapped the outcomes according to these themes. As a result, we can visualize which indicators of a Race Equity Culture show up most frequently across the jurisdictions that participated in REIC. See the following page for a visualization of the ripples.



# Racial Equity in Communities (REIC)

## RIPPLE MAPS



## *Racial Equity in Communities (REIC)*

# PROGRAM IMPACTS

### **Narrative and Shared Stories**

Shared stories about REIC from participants to their jurisdictions include: talking about race has become more normalized; and the expectation that resistance is a normal element of change and that it can be overcome through dialogue and sharing stories with one another.

Shared stories about REIC that have emerged within participating jurisdictions include: the notion that the program is about resolving issues between "black people and white people"; skepticism about what has been accomplished as a result of the program; and a general resistance to change indicated by statements such as "why do we need to do this?"

### **Employee Engagement**

Participants identified two essential ingredients to broad employee engagement: clear direction/directives from organizational leadership *and* buy-in for people managers who distribute the systems change work at the departmental level.

Even for people managers who are champions of the work, there is a lack of momentum to distribute the work because of competing priorities and limited resources.

A common theme is that the engagement must be responsive to the needs of the many different types of employees (i.e.: part-time staff) and learning needs. It must also be consistent and continuous to account for turnover and other employee transitions.

### **Goals and Action**

Participating jurisdiction vary the intended impact of their racial equity systems change work. Some are seeking immediate action and tangible results, while others are seeking continued learning and development at the organizational level.

Relationships are critical for achieving racial equity goals. Due to the many jurisdiction priorities which can change with personnel/elected official changes, systems change leaders should focus on building social capital at all levels of the organization so that racial equity work can remain a priority.

While there is uncertainty about how the work will grow in the future, participants are patient and committed.

### **Education and Training**

Jurisdictions are making plans to share their content knowledge, skills, and competencies with others in the organization, but it is operationally challenging to implement. Stakeholders are starting in different places of knowledge, and participants acknowledge the need for "multiple entry points" to embed education and training throughout the organization.

Despite themes of energy building around organizational education and training, resources to widely distribute education and training are limited withing jurisdictions.



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# PROGRAM IMPACTS

### **Hiring and Promotion**

There is a growing focus on practices, culture and climate that promote inclusion and belonging, rather than just focusing on the diversity (number or percent) of jurisdiction staff.

Jurisdictions are taking action by auditing their hiring practices and ensuring their hiring systems do not have bias built in. Jurisdictions are also considering how onboarding of new employees can incorporate DEI training and principles.

In one case, a jurisdiction hired a person to address a very specific racial equity issue related to criminal justice disparities.

### **Community Collaboration**

Participants recognize the need for cultural responsiveness in working with the public and delivering jurisdiction services. When jurisdiction staff or elected officials encounter a member of the public who comes from a different cultural background, humility and curiosity are essential to meeting the constituent's needs.

An related challenge is that managers struggle to know how to protect jurisdiction staff from racialized behaviors or attacks from the public.

A common learning is that when engaging the community in committee work to advance racial equity, the purpose and expectations must be clear. If they are not, community members may disengage.

### **Internal Review**

REIC has strengthened the capacity of jurisdiction leaders to engage in a reflective learning cycle (observing, interpreting, intervening). However, this is not a common practice in jurisdiction settings. The capacity for regular reflection and discussion about racial equity systems change has not become part of the culture of these jurisdictions.

Internal work groups and committees can give people a structure to participate in and can help with maintaining a practice of internal review. However, in some cases, internal work groups have an unintended effect: people feel that they can not contribute to review of systems change if there is no committee (for example, they feel it is "not their place.")

### **Budgets and Investments**

Relative to the other areas, this areas gained the least amount of momentum.

Jurisdictions generally feel that their systems change efforts would be more robust if there was a budget dedicated to training and development, staff dedicated to coordinating the work, and other activities.

Without those investments, participants feel challenged to scale their plans (and the information they received during REC) to the organizational system level.

# COMMUNITY CAPITALS

The program impacts identified during Ripple Effects Mapping reveal opportunities for jurisdiction leaders to build capitals that will advance a race equity culture.

The Community Capitals Framework (Flora and Flora, 2008) offers a way to interpret the existing assets that jurisdictions can draw on, as well as potential strategic areas that can be leveraged to achieve a successful outcome of racial equity systems change. Community capitals reflect the elements require

Following the reporting of impacts during the Ripple Effects Mapping gathering, participants identified community capitals that could support each of the impact areas.

## Social



*What can we do together?* The connections among people and organizations can have the effects of building social cohesion and also bridging communities together across difference. Social capital can be leveraged to advance many aspects of race equity culture. Participants especially focused on the value of social capital in moving forward Goals and Action, as well as Narrative and Shared Stories.

## Human



*What can I do?* Human capital is about the skills and abilities of people which can be used to enhance resources. This includes things people with specific knowledge skills joining a task force to bring an important perspective. Human capital can be leveraged in many areas; for example, Employee Engagement and Internal Review initiatives might include inviting less engaged staff to contribute their technical expertise to an internal review task force.

## Cultural



*How do we think and act in our community?* Culture includes the way people “know the world” and how they act within it, as well as traditions and language. Culture is an extremely valuable asset and is shaped by many factors. REIC Participants named that cultural capital can be used to advance works in many areas of racial equity systems change work, especially in the areas Hiring and Promotion and Employee Engagement where there are opportunities to establish new cultural norms to promote inclusion and belonging. Narrative and Shared Stories also require building cultural capital since stories are reflective of how we think and act.

## Natural



*What does the land give us?* Natural assets may include geography, natural resources, amenities, and natural beauty. Participants identified that focusing on natural capital could advance work on Community Collaboration and Employee Engagement. For example, a jurisdiction's may take advantage of the natural ecosystem as gathering places for people.

## Built



*What is built on the land?* Assets include recreational facilities and parks, roads and bridges, and buildings like schools and libraries. Built capital can be leveraged as spaces where racial equity systems change activities take place. For example, a jurisdiction might use built capital such as civic centers and libraries to offer job fairs to advance racial equity-focused Hiring and Promotion initiatives. Budgets and Investments can prioritize built environment assets that address disparities in health and well-being between racial groups.

## Financial



*How do we pay for development now and in the future?* Financial resources can be used to develop the community through targeted investments that reflect the community's priorities. Financial capital can be leveraged to set jurisdiction Budgets and Investments that help jurisdictions achieve systems change. It is also important to have financial capital for Goals and Action, as well as Education and Training.

## Political



*What about our political activities?* Political capital is all about access to resources and powerbrokers. It also describes the ability of people to find their own voice and to engage in actions that contribute to the well-being of their community. All aspects of race equity culture require political capital because systems change requires everyone to use their voice and contribute to making the organization a better place for everyone. It also require sharing resources and power with others.

# Closing Page with Attributions

source REM guide

graphic records

Pilot Jurisdictions:



PRAIRIE VILLAGE  
THE STAR OF KANSAS



Thought Partners:

