



Anti-Racist Evaluation Strategies:

A GUIDE FOR EVALUATION TEAMS

2021

Evaluating programs, practices, and interventions¹ can help determine what is working well, what can be improved, and what the impact is on the communities served. Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) often participate in the programs being evaluated, but they are largely excluded from being actively involved in the evaluation process as partners or as members of the evaluation team. Institutions that fund and conduct evaluations are predominately White,² and often employ mainstream evaluation approaches, perspectives, and methods, which can perpetuate the racial biases and unequal power dynamics that exist in U.S. society.³ All of these factors can result in incomplete or inaccurate evaluation findings that can influence future funding opportunities and program improvement decisions — thus sometimes harming the very communities that the programs are designed to support.

WestEd developed this guide to help evaluation teams increase their awareness of racism in evaluation and to help them employ strategies to conduct anti-racist evaluations. While this guide specifically addresses anti-racist evaluation, the content is informed more broadly by literature on culturally responsive and equitable research and evaluation. This guide also incorporates the experiences of WestEd staff in developing and implementing anti-racist evaluation strategies.

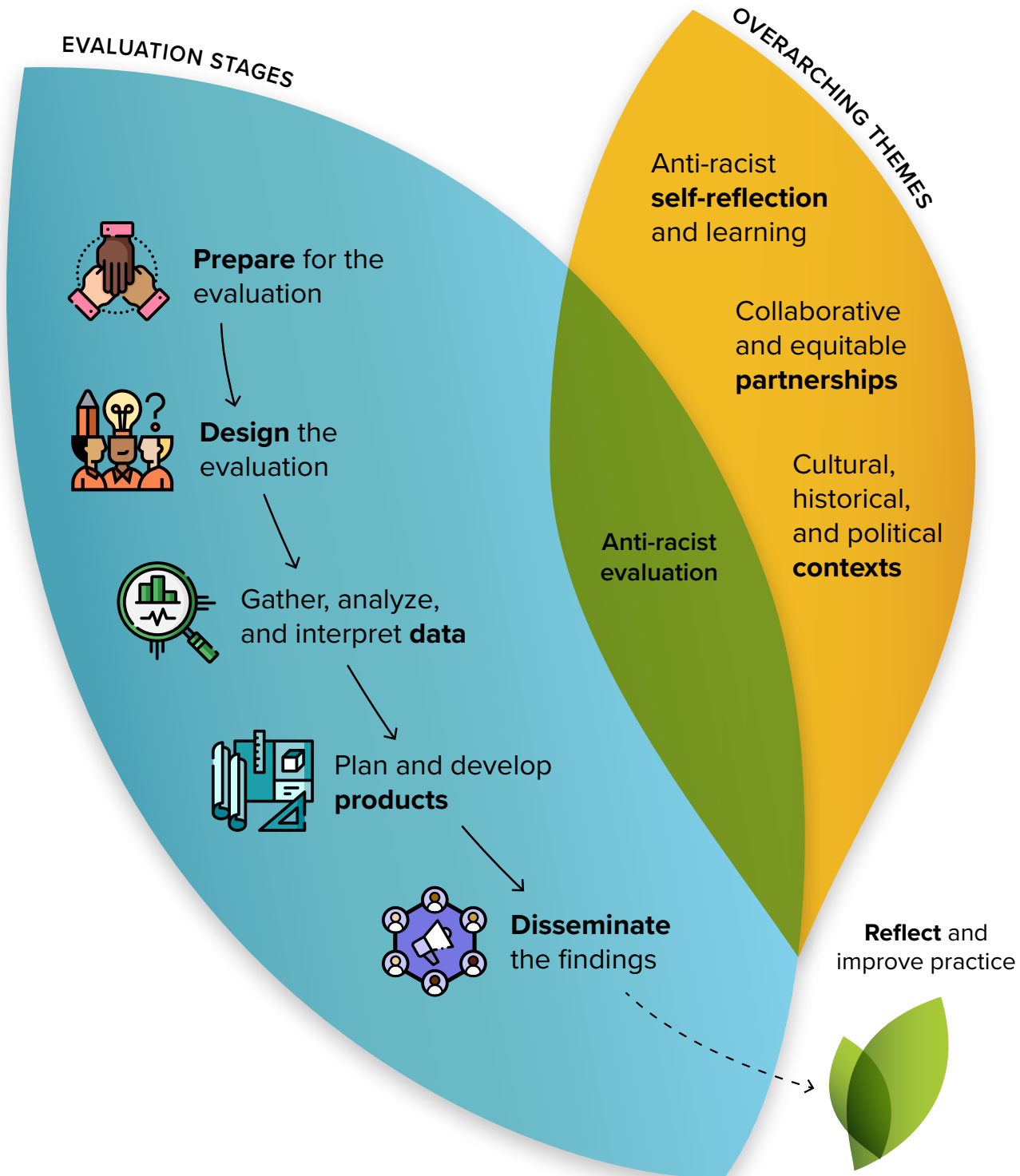
¹ Hereafter, this guide uses the term *program* to refer to all programs, practices, and interventions being evaluated.

² WestEd follows APA Style, which capitalizes the terms used to refer to racial and ethnic groups: <https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines/bias-free-language/racial-ethnic-minorities>.

³ Caldwell & Bledsoe, 2019; Hall, 2018; Leiderman, 2017; Public Policy Associates, 2015; Stanfield, 1999.



This guide is organized into the following five evaluation stages: preparing for the evaluation; designing the evaluation; gathering, analyzing, and interpreting data; planning and developing products; and disseminating the findings. For each of these stages, the guide presents specific anti-racist strategies for evaluation teams to use, along with questions that can guide them in employing these strategies. Overarching themes across these evaluation stages include engaging in anti-racist self-reflection and learning; forming collaborative and equitable partnerships; and considering cultural, historical, and political contexts.





Preparing for the Evaluation



Build an evaluation team that is representative of the program participants.

- Do team members share the background and/or experiences of the participants?

- Is the team, and are individual team members, educating themselves to gain a deeper understanding of
 - the historical, political, and cultural contexts of program participants and their communities?
 - participants' values, to ensure that they are included in each evaluation stage?

Create collaborative and equitable partnerships to ensure trust in the evaluation process, increase accuracy of findings, and strengthen partners' evaluation capacity.

- Is the evaluation team actively seeking to partner with community members, program staff and participants, and others who may be involved in or impacted by the evaluation?

- Do the evaluation partners include BIPOC members who represent the communities that participate in the program being evaluated?

- Are clear strategies in place with partners to communicate with them about the evaluation process, gain their input, substantiate their roles, and build their capacity?

- Are partners recognized and invited to participate in the evaluation as experts?

- Has the team identified the ways in which each partner can be involved at each stage?

- Is the team establishing rapport with the partners to gain their trust and ensure that they feel included in the process?

- Is the team identifying potential resistance to partner participation and strategies to address it?

Acknowledge the existence of racism in evaluation and implement strategies to address it.

- Is the evaluation team, and are the individual team members
 - identifying and addressing the individual and societal assumptions about racial/ethnic groups — including implicit biases — that can influence all stages of the evaluation process?
 - engaging in anti-racist self-reflection and learning?
 - discussing assumptions and implicit biases with partners to strengthen shared awareness and understanding?

Allocate adequate funding and time to include partners in the evaluation process when feasible and appropriate.

- Does the evaluation budget include costs associated with engaging with partners (e.g., staff time, translation services, facilities rental, childcare)?

- Is the level of partner engagement reasonable based on their other commitments?

- Will partners be compensated for their time?



Designing the Evaluation



Engage partners in designing the evaluation.

- Is the team collaborating with partners at every stage of the design (including developing the theory of change, logic model, and research questions, and identifying evaluation methods and tools)?
- Do the partners agree on how success and evidence are defined and measured?
- Is the team building the partners' capacity to design an anti-racist evaluation?

Frame the evaluation design within the relevant cultural, historical, and political community context.

- Does the design incorporate the relevant cultural, historical, and political context (including the existence of oppression and discrimination) of the participants and communities in the program being evaluated?
- Does the work of scholars of color inform the evaluation design?
- Is the team, and are individual team members, intentionally reconstructing their perception of evidence based on the cultural experiences of the participants?
- Do the theories of change and research questions take into account the root causes of racism that may influence the likelihood of the desired change?
- Do the theories of change and research questions avoid assigning responsibility for evaluation outcomes to individuals and communities of color?

Employ anti-racist evaluation methods, tools, and measures.

- Are the evaluation methods being selected to increase the relevance and accuracy of the data to be collected and analyzed?
- Is the team employing anti-racist participant recruitment strategies by ensuring that the population being studied is accurately represented, rather than relying on a sample of convenience or snowball sampling?
- Are partners helping to determine the most culturally appropriate methods for gathering information?
- Is the team considering employing multilevel analyses to account for the complex systems and contextual factors that influence the program's implementation and outcomes?
- Are partners helping design, provide feedback about, and test the validity and cultural appropriateness of qualitative and quantitative instruments and tools?
- Are the data-collection methods appropriate for the ways that communities construct and communicate information (e.g., using qualitative data collection for communities that prefer narrative and storytelling)?
- Do the variables accurately measure the outcomes that have been defined by the team and partners?
- Are data being disaggregated by race and ethnicity as defined by partners?
- Is the team addressing bias in data constructs?
- Is the team engaging in ongoing critical reflection on assumptions about what constitutes meaningful, reliable, and valid data, and how these data are derived?



Gathering, Analyzing, and Interpreting Data



Engage partners in gathering, analyzing, and interpreting data and evidence.

- Are partners who share the background and experiences of the program participants providing context for developing coding schemes and for interpreting data and evidence?

- Is the evaluation team engaging partners to help interpret the data and to understand how the interpretations of the findings impact the community?

- Are data being shared and interpreted with partners (e.g., through town hall meetings and focus groups) to test the validity of data interpretation and to ensure that racial biases are not being replicated?

Identify and address the assumptions, implicit biases, and power dynamics that influence the way the team gathers and interprets data.

- Are team members reflecting on how their own assumptions, biases, and experiences related to race and ethnicity influence data analysis and interpretation?

- Are the staff who conduct interviews or focus groups representative of the respondents? Are these staff being trained to understand verbal and nonverbal communication, content, and nuances?

Identify potential implications of data analysis and interpretation on the community.

- Are data being interpreted with consideration for the contextual, environmental, historical, and systemic issues related to communities of color?

- Is the team being sensitive, responsive, and thoughtful regarding the power dynamics in the community and their implications for the data analysis?

- Is the team identifying the intended and unintended consequences of findings on communities of color and ways to mitigate any negative consequences?



Planning and Developing Products

Examples of products include reports, briefs, blog posts, podcasts, videos, magazine/newspaper/journal articles, town halls/listening sessions, and infographics.



Engage partners in planning and developing evaluation products.

- Are all partners included as primary audiences for the products?
- Is the team working with partners to understand potential needs and concerns about how the results will be shared and what the impact of sharing will be on the partners and communities being evaluated?
- Are partners helping to identify the products to develop for each audience?
- Are partners providing feedback on draft products?
- Is the team building partners' capacity to plan and develop content for products that share evaluation findings?
- Are partners who make significant contributions to the work being acknowledged as coauthors when appropriate, and with their permission?

Develop a variety of products to ensure effective communication to all audiences.

- Are a variety of products being developed to allow greater access to communities of color?
- Are the products culturally appropriate and tailored/accessible to target audiences?
- Are products being developed in, or translated into, the audiences' primary languages?
- Do the products use inclusive, bias-free language (e.g., *students experiencing homelessness* rather than *homeless students*)?

Highlight racism when it exists and be intentional in how findings are reported.

- If evidence suggests that racism is a contributing factor in explaining the evaluation findings, is that clearly stated in the products?
- Are the findings presented in ways that provide adequate context and that avoid blaming individuals and communities of color for evaluation outcomes?
- Is the team naming race in the description of findings (e.g., disaggregating data by racial and ethnic groups, describing systemic reasons for outcome differentials)?

Provide context about the perspectives that are, and are not, included in the evaluation, and the role of partners in all evaluation stages.

- Is the evaluators' influence on the design, implementation, interpretation, and findings clearly described in the products?
- Are the roles of partners and the voices/perspectives/narratives they represent clearly described in the products?
- Are the most relevant BIPOC voices/perspectives/narratives that are missing from the evaluation clearly described in the products?
- Are the products describing a balanced perspective and providing a fair representation of different points of view?
- Are the social identities (e.g., race, gender, socioeconomic status) of the team identified to provide context for the audiences?



Planning and Developing Products (cont.)

Examples of products include reports, briefs, blog posts, podcasts, videos, magazine/newspaper/journal articles, town halls/listening sessions, and infographics.

Describe how statistics are calculated.

- Are subgroup analyses within major racial and ethnic categories being conducted?

- Are the details about the way that measures of race and ethnicity are derived (data sources, populations included and excluded) described in the products?

- Are the limitations of each measure used in the evaluation clearly described?

- Do the products include a description of the challenges faced in obtaining appropriate measures?

Provide recommendations that are anti-racist and identify the audiences to whom the recommendations are addressed.

- Do the products include recommendations that propose concrete actions, as appropriate, that promote anti-racism?

- Are the products' recommendations targeted to specific audiences?

- Do the recommendations focus on racial and ethnic diversity and inclusion (e.g., broadening access to resources for underserved populations, providing strategies to improve the cultural responsiveness of resources/services)?

- Do the recommendations acknowledge any systemic issues that may impede the proposed actions?

Select images, figures, and graphics that are not racist and do not promote racism.

- Are images representative of the research being included in the products?

- Do the images avoid perpetuating stereotypes?

- Are visuals being created that are culturally sensitive (e.g., all appropriate groups are represented, visuals reflect lived experiences)?





Disseminating the Findings



Engage partners in planning and implementing dissemination strategies.

- Are partners participating in developing the most culturally appropriate planning and dissemination strategies for each product and audience?
- Is the team identifying new partners (e.g., advocacy organizations, community groups, government entities, research firms) to help disseminate products and amplify findings?
- Is the team building partners' capacity to disseminate evaluation results?

Consider disseminating findings at various stages of the evaluation to introduce the work to new audiences and to engage and build trust with existing partners and audiences.

- Are evaluation processes and findings being disseminated to various audiences at multiple stages of the process, as appropriate?
- Are culturally appropriate dissemination strategies and modalities being planned for each product and audience (e.g., sharing through video and audio platforms; presenting at community meetings, theater performances, poetry readings, and music forums; sharing during community walks)?

Reflecting and Improving Practice

At the end of the evaluation, teams and individuals can strengthen their ability to conduct anti-racist evaluations by reflecting on the ways in which they were able to employ the strategies outlined in this guide. What worked well? What was challenging? Engaging in honest and direct conversations about the process will help the team continuously improve its anti-racist evaluation practices moving forward.

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Suggested citation: WestEd. (2021). *Anti-racist evaluation strategies: A guide for evaluation teams*.

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Acknowledgements: The WestEd team members who developed this guide are Kimkinyona Cully, Katie D’Silva, Lenay Dunn, Kylie Flynn, Tony Fong, Michelle Garcia, Ricky Herzog, Sylvia Kwon, Charlie Levin, Felisa Nobles, Rose Owens-West, Mary Rauner, Katie Salguero, Alexis Stern, and Jacquelyn Tran. The team is grateful to our WestEd colleagues Deb Benitez, Alicia Bowman, Becca Klarin, Susan Mundry, Anthony Petrosino, Jaclyn Tejwani, and Jenna Terrell, who strengthened the content of the guide through their careful review and helpful suggestions.