



National Institute of Food and Agriculture  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE



# THE FOOD JUSTICE FRAMEWORK



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# THE FOOD JUSTICE FRAMEWORK (FJF)

This section exists to answer basic questions about this tool: who made it, what is it, when was it created, where was it made, and why does it exist?



The **Food Justice Framework<sup>1</sup> (FJF)** is a free online tool and guide developed by **Green Village Initiative (GVI)**: an urban agriculture and food justice nonprofit working to grow food, knowledge, leadership, and community, through urban farming and gardening, to create a more just food system in Bridgeport, CT. You can check out our website and learn more about our work at [goGVI.org](http://goGVI.org). **As you read, check out the glossary linked on our website or the endnotes of this document to see key definitions.**

**What is food justice? Food justice is when communities are able to exercise “their right to grow, sell, and eat healthy food. Healthy food is fresh, nutritious, affordable, culturally-appropriate, and grown locally with care for the well-being of the land, workers, and animals. The Food Justice Movement is inspired by grassroots and organizing movements before it, including the Civil Rights Movement and Environmental Justice Movement.” (JUST FOOD)**

Food justice can be defined in many different ways—in fact, later in this Framework, you will be creating your own definition of food justice in the context of your organization or group. Find more resources about defining food justice on page 17.

GVI created This Framework (also called “the FJF”) to guide people who are interested in incorporating food justice and racial equity into their organizations’ work, and who don’t know where to start. The FJF will help users define food justice in relation to their unique roles and communities, prepare their team for conversations about big issues, and undergo a self-assessment to identify their strengths and opportunities for growth. Working through the FJF will help users build resilience in their organizations and communities. This Framework provides a foundation that addresses physical, mental, and spiritual needs of the user, with tools for grounding along the way. Finally, it provides recommendations for how any organization can shift its current practices and provide knowledge to its team members to create a more just, equitable, and liberated food system. The creation of the FJF was influenced and shaped by GVI’s own work to put food justice at the center of our mission, with the help of anti-racism and equity consultants, coaches, and therapists over several years. This Framework is a way to share the lessons we’ve learned along the way and help other organizations join us in putting food justice into action.

## Who?

This tool was created by Green Village Initiative (GVI) in collaboration<sup>2</sup> with SoulGrowth, LLC, the Bridgeport Farmers Market Collaborative (BFMC), Sacred Heart University (SHU), and other partners, thanks to multi-year funding from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

## What?

The FJF is a tool GVI developed to support other organizations in better understanding how to use their work to advance food justice, racial equity<sup>3</sup>, and liberation<sup>4</sup> in *their* communities and to inspire meaningful change.

We describe this document as a “Framework” because it is meant to be an adaptive container that can be interpreted differently to fit each user. We hope it will “frame” your “work” while allowing it to take on a unique life of its own as you work through it.

## When?

The Food Justice Framework was developed during the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic highlighted gaps and inequities in the food system and broader society and made the brokenness of these systems more obvious to people who hadn't been as aware of them before. This Framework will help those new to food justice and those who already have existing knowledge find connections to food justice in their work and communities.

## Where?

The Food Justice Framework was developed by individuals and organizations in and around Bridgeport, Connecticut. It will live online to be openly accessible and shareable.

Though most of our work as an organization is specific to Bridgeport, we believe that this Framework will spark questions, learning, and growth for organizations and individuals working towards food justice in *many* different places.

## Why?

***The Food Justice Framework is meant to be a resource for those who want to push their organization forward towards food justice, racial equity, and liberation, while sharing some guidance as to how to do so.***

Every organization is unique, each community<sup>5</sup> is unique, and each budget is unique. We wanted to create a Framework that kept these differences in mind and mapped out a possible path forward for everyone. This tool will offer you guiding questions, resources, and steps to incorporate food justice in your work, where you are (in your community and in your existing level of knowledge), with the resources that you have. Sharing resources and encouraging each other within our online ecosystem<sup>6</sup> can help each of us, individually and collectively, be stronger, better, and more equitable.



# WHY DO WE NEED FOOD JUSTICE?

This section explains why food justice is an important focus and gives context about the US food system.



The average US education curriculum does not address how our food system came to be. **The United States food system is rooted in exploitation<sup>7</sup>, oppression<sup>8</sup>, and racism.<sup>9</sup>** This food system was formed on land stolen from Indigenous people. US society was built by exploiting the labor<sup>10</sup> of enslaved African, Caribbean, Indigenous, and other non-white people who were abused under the system of chattel slavery and other systems used to enforce white supremacy.<sup>11</sup> Generations of blood, sweat, tears, and stolen knowledge fueled the creation of the US food system and go unacknowledged.

Today, many of the farmworkers who grow the US's food are underpaid immigrant and migrant<sup>12</sup> Latinx workers. Professionals who supply the food system widely earn less than a living wage<sup>13</sup> and are forced to work in unsafe conditions. **Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BI&POC)<sup>14</sup> and immigrants are the reason the food system functions and why everyone can eat today.** These people are regularly targeted with racist policies, acts of violence, and exploitative labor practices.

When food justice and racial equity work are separated from each other, it erases the dark history of the US food system and the ways that this history has led to injustice today. When you strive for justice without acknowledging racial equity, you create toxic situations where you are trying to find solutions while ignoring the core of the issues you are working on—racism, exploitation, and oppression. Entire systems of food production, distribution, and consumption<sup>15</sup> still operate in ways that privilege white people and accept the oppression of non-white people. By being silent or ignoring these systems, you can reinforce them!



Check out [this resource](#) from Soul Fire Farm to learn about the long history of resistance to the oppressive and exploitative US food system.

View [SFF's integrity guidelines](#) for using their materials.



# ASSUMPTIONS, INTENTIONS, DESIRED OUTCOMES\*

This section outlines what we assume about your approach to this Framework, states our purpose, priorities, and what we hope your end result will be. GVI uses the “AID” tool regularly for interpersonal team challenges, conflict management with community, and to work through challenges of all sizes and types!

## Assumptions<sup>17</sup>

We assume that our audience (you!) is made up of people who are interested in food justice and feel moved to align their work with racial equity, justice, and liberation, and are not sure where to start.

Those approaching this Framework might be a small business, a tight-knit team, or a branch of a bigger company. You might be asking yourself—“Was this tool created for me?” Regardless of who you are or how/where you want to apply this work, the answer is YES.

We assume that you understand—and will come to know more through reading—that this Framework **IS NOT THE FULL WORK!** It is a small component of a longer journey towards food justice and racial equity—a great starting point for your organization—not the “quick and easy” version.

## Intentions<sup>18</sup>

We assume that you’re approaching this Framework in relation to the United States food system. While food injustice is a global struggle, this Framework is situated in our knowledge and familiarity with the US food system.

We intend for this Framework to help you ask and answer questions of yourselves or your work team about where you stand in relation to food and food justice. We hope this tool helps you understand “where to start” to push yourself and your work towards equity and a more just future!

We have the guiding intention that this document is readable, easy to understand, and openly accessible online so that it can reach as many people as possible. **As you read, check the endnotes or the glossary linked on our website to see key definitions.**

## Desired Outcomes<sup>19</sup>

Our capacity to answer inquiries may be slow/limited, however, we want you to reach out with questions or suggestions: [info@goGVI.org](mailto:info@goGVI.org)

We hope that reading this Framework will inspire, motivate, and activate you to dive deeper into more comprehensive food justice and racial equity work. Food justice is a key part of racial justice, and we hope that using this Framework will lead you to push yourself and your organization to create a more justice-centered future for your community.

We hope that this Framework helps you make better decisions about practices in your workplace that can align your organization with food justice right now. You can get started right away!

\*“AID” Tool created by SoulGrowth, LLC



# USER RECOMMENDATIONS

In this section, we provide some strong, important recommendations that we urge you to consider and take some time reflecting on before moving onto the next section. These recommendations are meant to prepare you for taking action steps that really dig into the work.

**Without considering the impacts of what you are about to undertake in this Framework, your attempt to do this work might not be as effective, and could even result in unintentional harm to your team or community.** Taking action is not the only important thing suggested in this Framework—preparing yourself and your team and taking steps to set yourself up for success is equally important!

✓	Recommendation	Why?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Prepare yourself and your organization for transformation.</b>	<p>This work may expose issues that you weren't aware of. <b>It is messy—and worth it.</b> This Framework is not meant to place a band-aid over spots where you are contributing to injustice—it may lead to big changes in your work. You might feel discomfort when you start paying attention to how your organization neglects equity and justice—that's good! Transformation requires change, and discomfort is a symptom of change happening. Get ready.</p> <p>This work will be more authentic if your organization has already taken steps to be inclusive and fair. We suggest that before trying to change your organization's relationship with clients, customers, or your community, you start by undergoing DEI<sup>20</sup> training within your organization. Consider how you are making deep change to policies that impact the workers paid the least or who have been historically marginalized<sup>21</sup> and discriminated against in your workplace.</p> <p><b>WARNING: This work is transformational.</b></p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Hire an outside facilitator.</b> <sup>22</sup>	<p>Speaking the truth about power, injustice, and inequality is hard. Having leaders in your organization manage this work might discourage people from sharing openly and honestly because of fear that sharing will impact their employment in any way (and trying to verbally soothe these worries might not make them go away!). Hiring an outside facilitator ensures that you have someone who is professionally trained to lead organizations through this type of work, and prevents you from avoiding hard truths in the process. <b>Hiring Black, Indigenous, &amp; Leaders Of Color to do this work is our recommendation.</b></p> <p>Some of this work can be done individually, yet <b>most of this work can't. You should make hiring a facilitator a priority.</b> Yes, it requires an investment—yet if you're reading this, isn't your intention to make an investment that pushes your organization to be more equitable? (Note: see the <a href="#">appendix</a> for some consultant and coaching services!)</p>



✓	Recommendation	Why?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p><b>Figure out and record why exactly you're doing this.</b></p>	<p>Take a moment to reflect on <i>why</i> you are interested in this work in the first place. GVI stated our assumptions, intentions, and desired outcomes in creating this Framework above. <b>It may be helpful for you to write down what you are assuming, intending, and hoping will be the outcome when using this Framework!</b></p> <p>Writing down your reasoning is helpful for several reasons: First, it helps ensure that you are being authentic.<sup>23</sup> <b>This work needs to be rooted in genuine care for your community and a willingness and desire to improve conditions in your organization and the food system.</b> Second, writing out your reasoning provides you with a statement that you can return to in moments of doubt or when facing challenges. If at some point in the process you feel overwhelmed and find yourself wanting to give up or questioning why you're working through this Framework, direct your team back to your recorded reasoning to remind you why you started this journey in the first place.</p> <p>If someone else, like a supervisor or your Board of Directors, suggested this Framework to you and you aren't yet sure why it is relevant or important, spend time reflecting on the previous sections and try to name 3–5 reasons why working through this Framework could be beneficial for your organization and community, or what you hope you'll learn.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p><b>Assess if your budget is just.</b></p>	<p>Speaking of the importance of hiring an outside facilitator...</p> <p>A budget is about <i>accounting</i>. If your financiers, board, or organizational leaders are resistant to investing in DEI and food justice work, you may need to encourage them to answer: Who are we <i>accountable</i><sup>24</sup> to? If you still face resistance, try showing these leaders the <a href="#">cycle of change</a>—it may help provide a visual illustration to them that this work is difficult and brings up a lot of hard emotions and challenges that a facilitator can help you work through, preventing the challenges from sidelining work. <b>You need to intentionally fund this mission—whether you're a large organization or small business.</b></p> <p>Small organizations who see cost as a barrier can seek collaboration to overcome this challenge. Try combining resources with other small local groups who share an interest in food justice and racial equity work. You could organize workshops and sessions with a facilitator together to split the cost and boost budget potential. Another possibility is to trade, barter, or ask larger organizations to cost-share if you don't have a budget for an HR<sup>25</sup> person, much less a facilitator. Maybe a larger company will sponsor training for members of your team. Or a local anti-racism coordinator near you would be willing to reduce the cost of their services to trade some of your products for an hour of consulting.</p> <p><b>No matter what, make sure facilitators are fairly compensated—this itself is a crucial element of DEI work. Be creative and consider your options if affording a facilitator is a challenge for you.</b></p>



√	Recommendation	Why?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Assess if your budget is just. (continued)</b>	<b>Compensate those who provide valuable resources to you—even if advertised as “free.”</b> If you have the capacity, consider making donations to organizations who provide free materials that you find useful along the way. Time and effort were required to create those materials, and while it’s amazing that they may be at no cost to you to use, compensation may allow creators to continue to provide those useful resources for others, continuing the cycle of positive change and building collective knowledge. <sup>26</sup>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Recognize valuable tools others have developed.</b>	<p>This tool is not the beginning or end—look through other people’s resources. <b>Historically marginalized communities who have been organizing and advocating for justice and equity for a long time have lots of wisdom to offer, and you should seek their knowledge and leadership.</b> An important first lesson is that you will learn the most by centering people who have been affected by injustice and listening<sup>27</sup> to their first-person accounts.<sup>28</sup></p> <p>Remember—this work looks different for everyone and every organization. Everyone benefits from collective knowledge that grows over time. To give you a place to start, we’ve created a resource <a href="#">appendix</a> with resources from food justice organizations.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Go slow, and keep going.</b>	Working through this Framework will take time, and change won’t happen overnight. <b>Building your expectations is a first step and can be a place for rich conversations.</b> Discussing a timeline for the steps outlined in this Framework is an opportunity to encourage your organization to devote more time to this critical work. If you struggle with committing time during a busy season, find creative ways to integrate it into regularly recurring meetings (ex: GVI starts every weekly team meeting by reading our adapted Equity in Practice Guidelines and discussing Conflict at regular gatherings). You could kick off a meeting with a reflective question meant to get your team thinking and talking about food justice!
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Pull in beginners and ask for their input.</b>	<p><b>Beginner’s eyes are gifts.</b> Each time you explain your action plan to new team members, you might hear from them what is confusing or missing. Create space for this. It is harder for people who are closely involved in the work to see these trouble spots.</p> <p><b>Share what you write, create, or plan with new people as often as you can.</b> It will help you become better at talking about your plan, teaching others about food justice, and creating a mission and goals that are clear, easy to understand, and meaningful to a wider audience.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>You will need to come back to this tool again.</b>	You can (and should, and need to) come back to this tool again. <b>And again!</b> You can move through this tool many times and come to different understandings each time. <b>The work to move ourselves and each other towards liberation is lifelong.</b>

# STEP 1

## Informed and Enthusiastic Consent

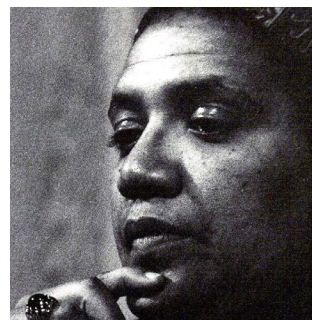


Before diving in, it is important to recognize that for some people on your team, working through this Framework may bring up trauma,<sup>29</sup> frustration, fear, guilt, shame, and sadness. Expecting others to dive into doing this work without asking if they **want and are prepared to be involved** can trap others in engagement. BI&POC deal with racism and oppression in their day-to-day lives, at work, and in navigating the food system. It is vital that BI&POC who participate in the conversations and work suggested in this Framework are not tokenized.<sup>30</sup> This means no one should be expected to represent an entire group of people based on their identity. Before expecting others to do this work with you, first establish **informed and enthusiastic consent** to participate in the work in this Framework and beyond, and respect all contributing BI&POC members' boundaries.

For white people working through this guide, hard and unexpected emotions might arise as well. They might confront white guilt,<sup>31</sup> question their role in hard conversations, and feel shame when realizing that they benefit from white supremacy culture.<sup>32</sup> These emotions are helpful! These emotions help people to collectively realize that **racism and injustice harm us all—a culture of oppression is good for no one**. For white people, questioning their role in this culture of oppression and finding ways to use their advantages to help others towards liberation is a productive way to process challenging feelings and use those feelings to motivate action.

**People are allowed to say no and move back and this should be made clear to your team.** Everyone should have a chance to provide feedback about what would make them feel safe, comfortable, and supported during your conversations and action. Always offer the option for others to move back. Have a plan for repairing harm and for conflict resolution. See GVI's working plan as an example below!

[FJF Version of GVI Addressing Conflict \[Working Plan\]](#)



“Guilt is not a response to anger; it is a response to one's own actions or lack of action. If it leads to change then it can be useful,

since it is then no longer guilt but the beginning of knowledge.

Yet all too often, guilt is just another name for impotence, for defensiveness destructive of communication; it becomes a device to protect ignorance and the continuation of things the way they are, the ultimate protection for changelessness.”

—Audre Lorde



## What is informed and enthusiastic consent?

- Getting consent from someone means that you have asked for and received their permission for something to happen.
- For consent to be informed, the person you are asking **should know the “Who? What? When? Where? Why?” of their agreement, and have the chance to ask questions about specifics.**
- For consent to be enthusiastic, it means that the consenting people are excited and willing to agree **without any outside pressure, fear of consequences, or judgment if they say “no.” Remember: if people are afraid of saying “no,” it is not consent.**

Consent should be...	What it looks like
NONCOERCIVE	→ <i>“How do you feel about engaging in this conversation today? <b>I want to remind you that I won’t be upset or disappointed if you choose not to join us.</b>”</i>
INFORMED	→ <i>“During this meeting, we will be talking about the past harm<sup>33</sup> our organization has done, have time to share personal reflections, and have Tom, Melissa, and Jayden join us. <b>Do all of those details sound okay to you?</b>”</i>
ONGOING	→ <i>“I’ve noticed that you aren’t speaking up as much today as you usually do. It is okay if you are just listening, and I want to check back in—<b>are you still okay with participating in this conversation?</b>”</i>
ENTHUSIASTIC	→ <i>“It seems as though you might be a bit hesitant when you tell me ‘yes.’ Feeling that way is okay! <b>Can we talk about anything that is making you feel unsure, and make sure that you are excited and willing to do this?</b>”</i>

This table is adapted from a [source](#) from Curious Parenting



How should you think about consent in relation to racial equity work, especially for BI&POC? What questions could you be asking to ensure involvement is consensual and equitable?

**Check out this great resource from Promise54:** [Ring the Alarm: When the “Burden Alert” Sounds, Think Informed Consent](#)

# STEP 2

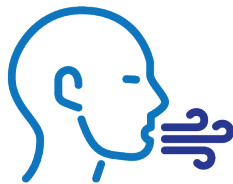
## Identify How You Stay Grounded<sup>34</sup>

You're here because you want to move toward food justice, and this can bring big emotions as well as resistance to the surface. Looking back at the harms you may have caused in the past as an organization and determining how to change current practices to align with food justice is a **very real challenge**. How do you hold space for the emotions that arise? Do individuals on this journey with you understand how to process and deal with big emotions? How will you respond if conflict comes up during this process?

During this first step, we encourage you to talk with your team about what an activated nervous system<sup>35</sup> looks like. It is important to remember that it will look different from person to person. Different methods for processing and responding to emotions may work for different people. **This is a good time to name what resources you have for people to get grounded, seek support when they need it, and regulate their emotional response when the work challenges them in surprising ways.**

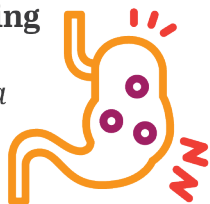


**Lightheaded/dizzy.** Result of our faster breathing. *It's ok—take a long, deep breath.*



**Breathing faster and shallower.** Body is trying to get more oxygen. *It's ok—take a long, deep breath into your belly and breath out slowly.*

**Tummy upset/churning.** Your body is redirecting blood flow to your muscles. *It's ok—take a long, deep breath and have a drink of water.*



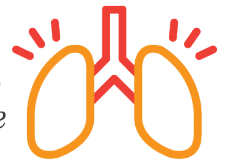
**Jelly legs or tingling in feet and hands.** Blood is going to larger muscles. *It's ok—use breathing to relax the body.*

**Racing thoughts—mind is going to worst case scenario.** *It's ok—your mind is looking out for threats and trying to help you prepare. Focus on your senses and your surroundings to calm your thoughts.*



### Fight or Flight Response

**Tight throat and chest.** Your body is tensing. *It's ok—use Progressive Muscle Relaxation to release tension in the body.*



**Heart rate increasing.** Body trying to pump blood to muscles. *It's ok—you are not in danger. Take long deep breaths.*

**Feeling hot/sweating.** Side effect of adrenaline response, body is trying to cool down. *It's ok—use breathing to relax the body.*







**What are some ways you, as individuals, notice feeling when your own nervous systems is activated?**

**RESPONSE:**



**How would you respond to this dysregulation<sup>36</sup> at home? How would you respond to it at work?**

**RESPONSE:**



**How does your workplace culture expect you to filter these responses while you are at work? How might these expectations differ for different groups?**

**RESPONSE:**



**How do you know when emotions are hard and challenging in positive, productive ways, versus when they become too heavy and affect your ability to be healthy and well in your work and personal life?**

**RESPONSE:**



**What are some tools that you, as an organization, have to offer when people need grounding or support? Do these tools reflect what your team really needs?**

*(Examples: A quiet, separate space for silence or meditation, discounts at a local gym to encourage wellness, open hours with a therapist to process emotions that arise during this work.)*

**RESPONSE:**

# STEP 3

## Build Your Community Agreements



You may each enter this process with different assumptions, views, and standards<sup>37</sup> from your team unless you take time to talk about what each person in your team or organization agree to. Community agreements help keep you all from defaulting into those personal assumptions, views, and standards.

**The agreements you create in this step are a tool that will provide expectations for how members of your team will communicate and work together in ways that are respectful, equitable, and caring.**

**You can try to limit the ways that assumptions and biases show up as you embark on this work together by stating the agreements you will use.** We encourage you to look at GVI’s “Equity in Practice” guidelines<sup>38</sup> (our name for our community agreements) in the [PDF linked here](#) and included on the following page.

Every version of community agreement guidelines has different wording and styles. **We encourage you to go through and define each of these guidelines as a team, rewording them so they are easy to remember and address the ways that these topics come up in your workplace to create your own unique version of these guidelines.**

Without these guidelines, you are operating from your individual viewpoint, and your biases might show up in your work. **These guidelines help you operate in a more conscious way, collectively.**

**Looking for a creative way to show your team what Community Agreements look like in practice? Try practicing through them in skits!**

- Divide your team into small groups and assign each group one of the guidelines or agreements to focus on.
- Give each group 5–10 minutes to create a plan for a skit that will display what it looks like to NOT practice the guideline and what it looks like to practice the guideline—these can be silly, can be acted out verbally or nonverbally, or made serious.
- Allow each group to present out at the end. Ask the team to guess which guideline each group was displaying in their skit.
- Remember that although these can be silly, you should refrain from using offensive language or behavior. To ensure no one feels personally attacked or embarrassed, make up names rather than using the names of people on your team.





Green Village Initiative

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## **Equity in Practice Guidelines**

Adapted by GVI Team Members, 2022

Source: *Equity in Practice Guidelines*

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### **Try On:**

We will keep an open mind, to better understand the world and one another.

### **Experience Discomfort:**

We will commit to being uncomfortable to grow; change doesn't happen where we're comfortable and complacent.

### **Move up, Move up:**

If you're speaking loudly and often, move up your listening and if you are more hesitant to share your voice, move up your verbal participation.

### **Be Aware of Intent and Impact:**

In cross-cultural interactions, take risks—exchange and receive honest feedback about our impact on others.

### **Practice Both/And Thinking:**

Put yourself in someone else's shoes; nothing is black and white. Accept that conflicting truths can exist at the same time.

### **Be Aware of the Room and Reactions:**

Pay attention to what you are saying and how you are saying it, and be mindful of how other people are reacting.

### **Practice Self Focus:**

When we find ourselves getting irritated with others, it's effective to focus inward by using I statements as opposed to placing blame or shame.

### **Expect and Accept Non-Closure:**

There is no easy "quick fix" solution and that's ok.

### **Safe/Brave Space:**

Are you unsafe or just uncomfortable? Be kind and take chances.

## Why do you need community agreements?

When you untangle each of your unique and complicated backgrounds of experience, you realize how differently each person has been taught and programmed to think about race, equity, and justice. Because we live in a racist and oppressive system, racist and oppressive ideas are present in our subconscious.<sup>39</sup> Even though you may think that you've trained yourself to look at the world through a lens that sees all people as equal, the many years of subconscious programming your brain has undergone still **shape your reactions**,

especially when they are quick, instinctual actions and judgements that you don't have time to think deeply about. This is called **implicit bias**.<sup>40</sup> **Creating community agreements includes finding ways to work together to prevent personal biases from hurting others.**

Implicit bias is often the result of messaging your brain receives from the media we consume and other people in our lives. Fill out the worksheet table below to see if you can identify ways you've received biased programming throughout your life.

Think about the books you read and shows or movies you watched as a child. <b><i>When thinking about the characters and plot, what stereotypes can you identify?</i></b>
Think about the most recent book you read or show or movie you watched. <b><i>What stereotypes were present?</i></b>
Think about the laws, policies, and enforcement of those rules in the political system in your country, state, or city. <b><i>Are they applied equally to all, or do they subtly (or obviously) target particular groups of people?</i></b>
Think about your family, friends, and teachers growing up. <b><i>Do you remember how they spoke or taught you about race, gender, class, or other identities?</i></b>
Think about your family, friends, bosses, mentors, and acquaintances now, and how each of them thinks, feels, and speaks about these topics. <b><i>Have any of their ideas changed the way you think, in negative or positive ways?</i></b>

Addressing our implicit biases is a lifelong journey. This takes a lot of individual introspection and work. If you are curious about implicit biases and which ones you might hold, check out this tool developed by researchers from Harvard University, which explains implicit biases and provides quizzes where to see how they show up in day-to-day situations. See the resource [appendix](#) (specifically the section of resources for individuals) for books, journals, and tools to address your personal biases.

**Project Implicit:** <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html>



# STEP 4

## Self Assessment

The first stage of beginning any project is to make a basic assessment of your organization or group so that you know exactly what you need to do and the resources you have to do it. **Without completing this type of assessment, it becomes much less likely that you'll reach your goals.**

We suggest that before diving into the next steps or making changes, you take time to do one of these assessments. Talk through the assessment with your team or facilitator to determine where you are now in your mission, vision, programs, or business plan<sup>41</sup> and consider your goals for using this Framework. If you don't know what your goals are yet, ask: **where does our organization stand in relation to food justice and racial equity?**

Here are a few useful ways that you can approach this kind of assessment! Choose a Tool and go for it!



### The SWOT Framework

- S Strengths**  
What is our organization really good at?  
What do we already accomplish effectively?
- W Weaknesses**  
Where does our organization have room to improve?  
Where do we struggle, fail, or receive negative feedback?
- O Opportunities**  
What skills and resources do we have to offer?  
Where is there a chance to apply our strengths?
- T Threats**  
What barriers do we face in accomplishing our goal?  
How might our weaknesses limit our ability to effectively accomplish our goal?



### The Outputs, Outcomes, and Impacts Framework



**Outputs**  
What does our organization provide to the community?  
What resources (time, money, workshops, events, products) do we share or deliver?



**Outcomes**  
What is the direct, visible result of our providing these outputs?  
How do we measure what we accomplish in our work (no. of people served, no. of products sold/donated, \$ amount raised)?



**Impacts**  
How do our outcomes align with, or stray from our mission or goal?  
How does our work contribute to change and progress?



### The Rainbow Framework from Better Evaluation

- Define**  
What goal are we trying to reach?
- Frame**  
How will we evaluate our work towards the goal?
- Describe**  
What have we already done in terms of the goal, and how did it work or fail?
- Understand**  
What outcomes or impacts do we want as a result?
- Synthesize**  
Combine the above steps to assess where we are now, and where we need to go.
- Report and Support**  
How will we share our goal, and what steps do we need to take now to achieve it?

### Extra tip:

Use your completed self-assessment, developed with the frameworks on the previous page, to create a guiding question related to your goal!



#### The SWOT Framework

- How can we use our (*strength*) to strive for (*opportunities*) while working on (*weakness*) to prevent (*threat*)?



#### The Outputs, Outcomes, and Impacts Framework

- How can we adjust our (*outputs*) to create (*outcome*), in a way that helps us achieve our goal (*impact*)?



#### The Rainbow Framework from Better Evaluation

- How does *defining, framing, and describing* our goal help us to *understand* and *synthesize* where we are now and what we need to do next so that we can *report and support our progress*?

### Our guiding question:

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# STEP 5

## Define Food Justice and How/Where It Connects to Your Work



At this stage in the Framework, you've completed a self-assessment of your organization, identified how you'll stay grounded throughout the process, gotten consent from your team, and created community agreements for conversations.

Great job!

Much of the Framework thus far has laid the groundwork for a successful approach to aligning your organization with food justice and racial equity. Before you get into hands-on work, **you need to be sure that everyone on your team fully understands what food justice is and how and where it connects to your work!**

Many terms in this Framework are defined in the glossary, like this step suggests, there is no one “right” definition—food justice itself can be defined in many different ways!

This is a great opportunity to reference the [appendix](#), talk to experts in your community, and spend time together to draft a definition that makes sense to your team, allowing you to see how food justice is connected to the work you do. The most important part of this step is to **go slowly**. When your team completes this step, each member should be very clear on definitions and ideas of how food justice relates to themselves, your organization, your programming or work, and your broader community.

Here are a few resources that provide a great introduction to food justice. Remember, the resources contained in this Framework are just a

small taste of the amazing work that is already out there! **Give yourself some time to explore and see what else you can find.**

### Introduction to Food Justice Resources

**Hey Social Good Cause Guide: Food Justice**  
<https://heysocialgood.com/cause-guide-food-justice/>

**Foodprint: Food Justice**  
<https://foodprint.org/issues/food-justice/>

**GrowNYC Food Justice Curriculum**  
<https://www.grownycdistancelearning.org/food-justice>

### What definition does GVI use? We agree with the JUST FOOD definition:

“Communities exercising their right to grow, sell, and eat healthy food. Healthy food is fresh, nutritious, affordable, culturally-appropriate, and grown locally with care for the well-being of the land, workers, and animals. The Food Justice Movement is inspired by grassroots and organizing movements before it, including the Civil Rights Movement and Environmental Justice Movement.”

## Don't know where to start? Here's an exercise that might be helpful.

Challenge your team to find 3–5 different definitions of “food justice” from sources in the resource [appendix](#) or by doing their own online search. Ask everyone to write 3–5 of their favorite definitions they find. Once everyone is done, ask them to underline important words or aspects of each definition. Allow a few minutes for individuals to share out loud to the rest of the team what words or terms they underlined. Copy some favorites into the table below.

Next, ask everyone to participate in a radical imagination<sup>42</sup> practice. Instruct them to do a 5–10 minute free write where they describe what the world could look like if the food system was just and everyone lived in liberation.

*Where do people get their food? What do those places look like? How does food production, distribution, and consumption look? Be creative and get as imaginary as you'd like! Remind them that they don't have to base this exercise in what the food system or society currently looks like. After 5–10 minutes, invite people on your team to share what they wrote. Copy some key ideas into the table below.*

Some key words or ideas in your <b>favorite definitions of food justice</b> were...	Some key features of the <b>world you imagined</b> were...
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Next, reflect on the quotes below. Ask the question: “How did this exercise change your understanding of food justice?”



“

**The goal of oppressors is to limit your imagination about what is possible without them, so you might never imagine more for yourself or the world you live in. Imagine something better. Get curious about what it actually takes to make it happen. Then fight for it every day.”**

—Ashley C. Ford



“

**Our radical imagination is a tool for decolonization, for reclaiming our right to shape our lived reality.”**

—adrienne maree brown



“

**You have to act as if it were possible to radically transform the world. And you have to do it all the time.”**

—Angela Davis



After you've spent some time defining food justice, **it's time to think critically about how food justice connects to the specific work your organization does.** For some, it will be obvious and clear! For others, it might take a little more thinking. Remember that each person who is able to access food eats each day. Get creative connecting Food Justice to your work.

Answering these questions will help identify where and how your organization interacts with food, and it allow you to start questioning if those interaction points are in line with food justice.

➔ **Example:** “We are an after-school teaching program, yet food is incorporated in our work through school-supplied snacks for children and my own allotted time to eat while leading this program.”

➔ **Example:** “While our work is office-based, we do supply catering contracts for meetings and have not asked ourselves where that food comes from or where it is going when it is not all consumed.”

*When do you provide food to employees or partners within your organization?*

*When do you provide food to community members?*

*When you purchase food, where do you get it from?*

*Do you know who grew/packaged/sold the food you purchased? If so, who?*

*How do you dispose of food waste? Where does it end up?*

# CHECK IN POINT: Take a Moment

Before you move on to the next step, we want to invite you to take a look back at the **User Recommendations section** and reflect on any challenges that have come up. Fill out the table below to assess how prepared you and your team are to transition the knowledge and tools you've gained so far into action, and to see what you might need to do differently.

*Are there any steps or suggestions in the User Recommendation section you didn't follow? If there are some that you skipped, how do you think it has affected your progress so far?*

*What challenges have come up so far as you've worked your way through this Framework? What could you do differently moving forward to address those challenges?*

*From 1–10, how prepared do you feel about your ability to explain what food justice is to a stranger? How would you describe to them how food justice is connected to your work?*

Make sure that you carve out time for rest, reflection, and taking a step back to review what you've already done. This will ensure you are making this effort from a place of deep, meaningful change. Working intentionally is an important part of food justice!

Don't jump right into action or try to find solutions at Step 4! This is a moment to push back against the pressure of urgency<sup>43</sup> (which is one way white supremacy culture shows up in the workplace). While it might seem counterintuitive, after completing Step 4, we ask that you as a team sit with your connection to Food Justice for a while and resist taking immediate action.

# STEP 6

## Building Resilience

Following the last step, you are more aware of how food justice connects to your work and are prepared with guidelines that will help shift your work towards equity. Maybe you've even started to think about actions your organization could take based on what you've discussed so far!

Now, you want to **start thinking at a deeper level about the best process for identifying what changes are necessary and making them.** Most importantly, **you want these shifts and changes to**

**provide resilience for you, your organization, your community, and the food system.** When thinking about resilience, try to not only think about the end goal for your organization's relationship with food justice—think about the support you can provide while you shift to doing things in a new way!

### What is resilience?

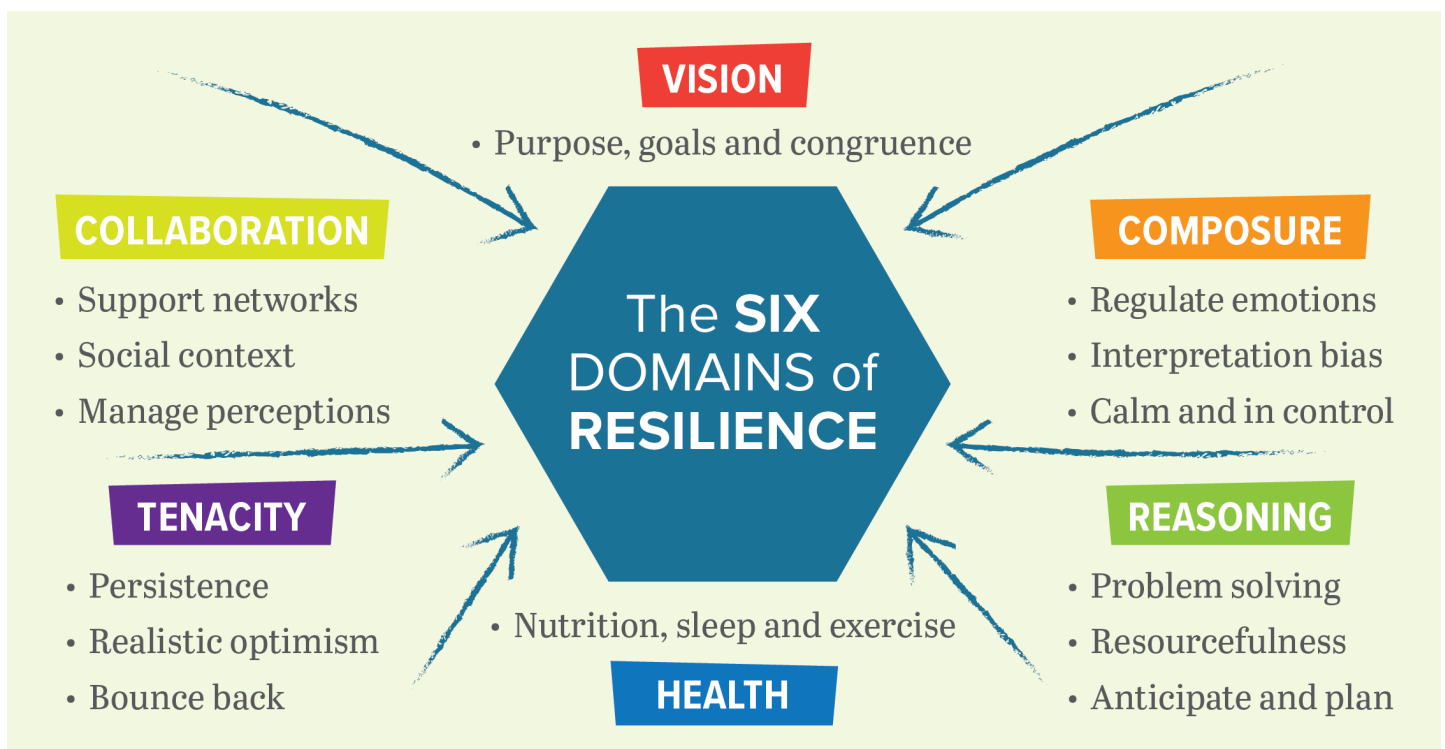
“Resilience is the process and outcome of successfully adapting to difficult or challenging life experiences, especially through mental, emotional, and behavioral flexibility<sup>44</sup> and adjustment to external and internal demands.”

A number of factors contribute to how well people adapt to adversities, predominant among them:

- The ways in which individuals view and engage with the world
- The availability and quality of social resources
- Specific coping strategies

“Psychological research demonstrates that the resources and skills associated with more positive adaptation (i.e., greater resilience) can be cultivated and practiced.”

*This definition is from the [American Psychological Association](#)*



This graphic adapted from [hellodriven.com](#)



## How does resilience relate to food justice and racial equity?

A big part of resilience is sustainability—not just environmental sustainability,<sup>45</sup> but social sustainability.<sup>46</sup> **The shifts you are making will set you up for long-term wellness, balance, and equity—for people *and* the planet.**

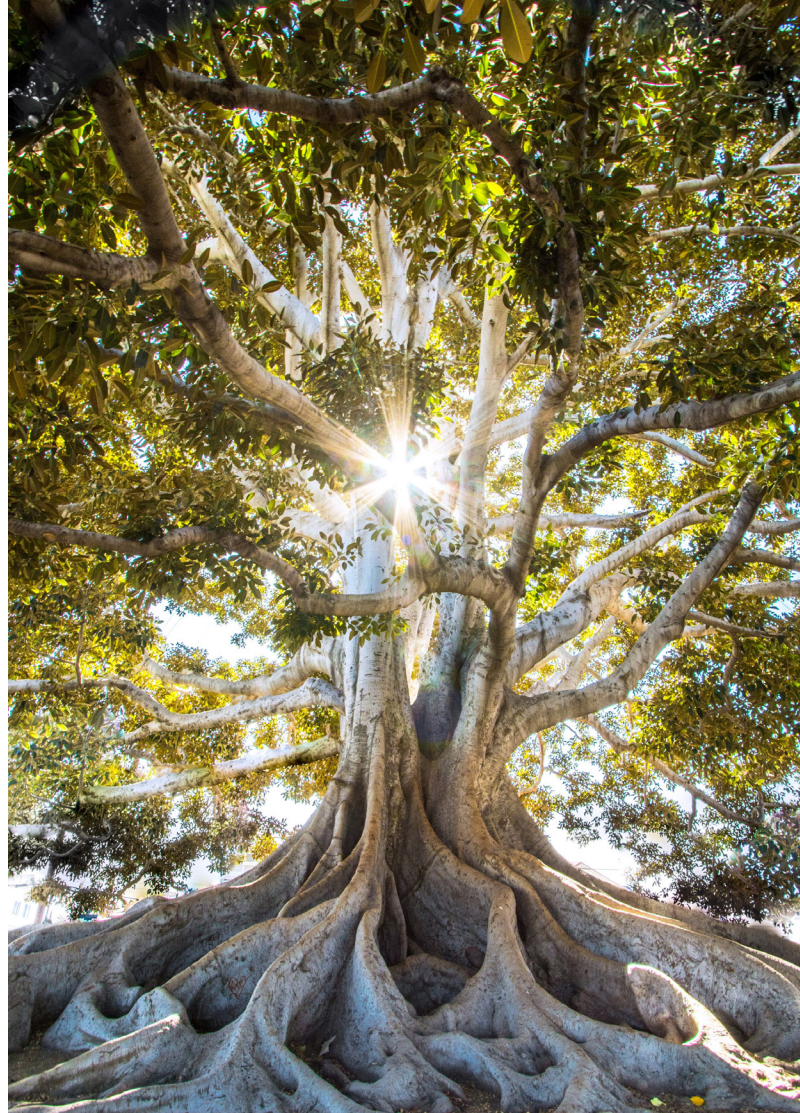
➔ **Example:** Your community is excited about a new project that will be placing 100 solar panels in a neighborhood nearby. However, the land that the city agreed to sell to the development company installing the panels was the site of a local community garden, where community members spend time in green space and grow food in garden beds. Although installing the solar panels may be a step forward in your community's focus on environmental sustainability (shifting from more polluting energy sources), it would not be socially sustainable, because it would remove a community gathering space that also served as a site for growing food.

Another piece of resilience is the ability to get back on track when you face challenges. Without asking questions about how you will respond when tough barriers, resistance, or problems come up, you may fall into crisis mode<sup>47</sup> when challenges arise.

### **Resilience takes flexibility and persistence.**

➔ **Example:** Your organization created a community refrigerator and pantry, where people can donate extra food and neighbors in need can pick it up anytime for free. However, a big storm came through your town. The electric wiring on the fridge was ruined, making it unusable, and food on the pantry shelves is contaminated. However, since your organization had a leader assigned to managing the project, a comprehensive plan for cleaning the site and dealing with waste, and printed lists of other local pantries available in multiple languages, you are ready. You can quickly adapt to this challenge and resolve the situation, while providing information on how community members can continue to access food while you repair the damages.

In the following two substeps, you'll explore building **internal** and **external** resilience. Devoting time to both aspects is important, because unaddressed internal issues can start to affect your relationship with your customers, community, and partners.



➔ **Example:** Your organization chose to switch to contracting with a local Black-owned catering company instead of the corporate caterer that usually provides food for your annual conference. However, a member of your team, feeling confused and frustrated by the process of researching new vendors, is protesting this decision. They say that they like the price and ease of the current caterer and don't understand the need to make changes. They become irritated, and because they have no other avenue to discuss their feelings with someone from your team, these feelings surface in a phone call with the new caterer. The team member asks them "why can't you offer the same low rates as X caterer that we previously worked with?" Now, the new caterer feels disrespected and is unsure about entering the contract.

# STEP 6A

## Internal Resilience

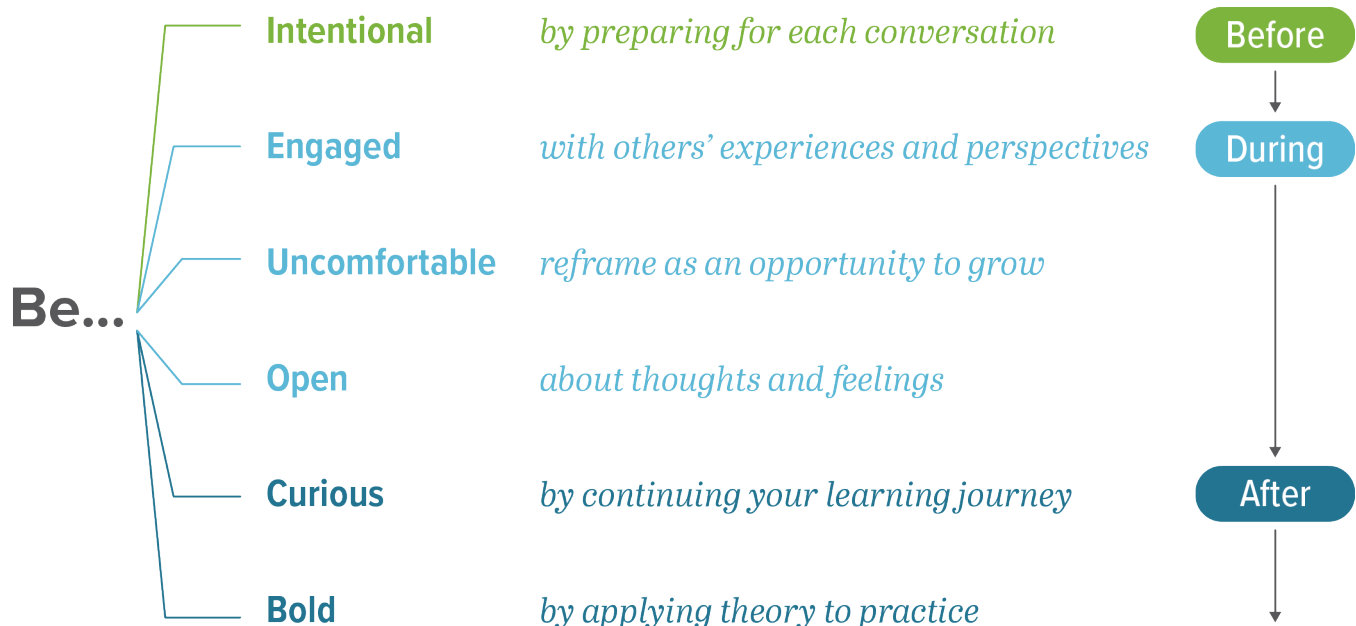
Many conversations you've had so far have taken place amongst your team. You have used a self-assessment to discuss how you approach food justice together, touched on personal implicit biases, created community agreements, and raised questions about how you communicate and work together.

This work may have illuminated places where you see inequity in your own organization. **If you fail to address these internal inequities, your team may struggle to stay motivated and continue providing enthusiastic consent to participate.** This work has set you up well to consider how you can build internal resilience and make organizational changes to be more in alignment with food justice and racial equity—and these conversations can be heavy.

The Community Agreements are a great tool to return to as barriers and challenges surface. Learning how to communicate in a deeper way about these challenges might take more practice so you can work together and resolve conflict in open, honest, and caring ways. One way to approach this is by having Courageous Conversations.

### What is a Courageous Conversation?

- A Courageous Conversation is a discussion that **intentionally opens space for you to talk about racial equity, social justice, and workplace challenges in a manner that is open, honest, and bold.** They encourage you to be open to having your viewpoints challenged and allow you to deeply listen to the reflections and experiences of others. Courageous Conversations allow you to consider how you can discuss tough subjects in the healthiest way possible.
- You can find a lot of resources on how to have Courageous Conversations online. [Here](#) is a great one from BetterUp, and [another](#) from the Ontario Leadership Framework.
- An important aspect of Courageous Conversations is awareness from all participants that the conversation will be confidential and free of punishment or consequences in the workplace.



This graphic adapted from from [Blue Beyond Consulting](#)

After learning how to have Courageous Conversations, it is useful if you develop a plan for addressing concerns and conflicts that come up as your organization undergoes changes. Fill out the worksheet below to create a guide for how you will process and address concerns, conflict, or ideas within your team.

***Who is the first person a team member should go to if they have a concern or are noticing a challenge? Is this first point of contact different if it's a more personal concern versus a more organization wide/systemic challenge?***

***Who is the next point of contact if the person bringing up the concern feels as though they still need more support or didn't find a resolution in their first conversation?***

***If there is a concern or conflict involving multiple team members, who will act as a mediator, and how will every side of the concern be heard?***

***What is your process for finding a solution to a conflict or problem? What tangible action steps will be taken?***

***Who makes decisions about organizational changes? Who is involved in this process at different levels, and how do you incorporate your team?***



Even if you are feeling confident about having a Courageous Conversation, it can be difficult to know what to say when internal resistance and doubt come up from your team. Check out this graph below, adapted from the Philanthropic Initiative for Racial Equity to help prepare scripts that can aid you in knowing *what* to say and how to say it in a gentle, brave, equitable way.

## RESISTANCE and RESPONSES

### Resistance

#### Claim or Subtext

#### Suggested Response

#### STRATEGIC

“But is this really our mission?”

- Let the data prove the point.
- Show examples from the field.
- Name and work through scenarios.
- Bring in foundation leaders who have gone through this process to share their stories.

#### TACTICAL

“Won’t that turn some people off?”

- Question assumptions about audience: Is it assumed to be white policymakers, partners, donors, impacted communities, or POC changemakers (and specific racial groups within those audiences).
- Recognize that supporters may not have the same access to foundation leadership as resisters do.

#### WORKLOAD

“When will we have time?”

- Recognize existing choice points, and that seemingly deracialized processes are a choice to preserve the status quo.
- Discuss what can be deprioritized.
- Discuss how the process may seem a lot at first, but with time will be integrated into ongoing work and feel less overwhelming.

#### FEAR OF DISPLACEMENT

“What does that mean for my area or role?”

- Provide space for honest discussion and exploration of concerns.
- Work to recognize and realign roles; provide opportunities for training, development, and repositioning.
- Recognize that transitioning staff or board members may be a necessary requirement if alignment can't be achieved.

#### FEAR OF RACIAL CONFLICT

“Will I get called out? Will I have to call someone out?”

- Conflict is a natural part of this process.
- Strengthen conflict-resolution muscles.
- Prepare through training and coaching.
- Build strong relationships with the racial justice field.
- Name and work through scenarios.
- Build individual confidence around talking about racial justice, and work toward normalizing the conversation within the organization by creating different opportunities.

## Brainstorming sheet: Internal changes and resilience

Focus area	Why do you want/need to make the change?	What will it look like when the change is implemented? How does this move you towards your food justice and equity goals?	How will you ensure the change is resilient?
<p><i>Is the leadership and decision making hierarchy in your organization just? To what extent are non-leaders involved in decisions about changes to your food practices?</i></p>			
<p><i>What is the culture and climate around food purchasing, sharing, eating, and disposal in your workplace?</i></p>			
<p><i>What are the guidelines for equitable communication and conflict resolution, especially surrounding courageous conversations? How are your equity in practice guidelines implemented (reference step 3)?</i></p>			
<p><i>What support mechanisms do you have in place for team members for their personal wellness and dealing with workplace stress or concerns?</i></p>			
<p><i>How do each of your team members understand food justice and how it is connected to your work (reference step 5)? How does your connection to food justice show up in your regular operations?</i></p>			

# STEP 6B

## External Resilience

This work has been setting you up to think about how your organization can better center food justice—and **food justice is at its core a community concern.**

Why? Because all of the food you eat has had many people involved in growing, harvesting, packaging, shipping, and preparing it. Depending on your organization's relationship with food, you might be fulfilling some of these steps to get food to your community too!

After discussing equity, food justice, and resilience at the internal level, **the next step is thinking about how to take these ideas and strive for greater equity in interactions with customers or community members.**

Just as internal resilience can be built by identifying places where barriers and resistance surface within your team and working to resolve them, you can build external resilience by addressing barriers within your community and the broader food system.

Building external resilience can take many forms, **this step is all about making sure that you are setting your team, your customers, and your community up with support systems to help everyone endure the changes you're making, and to understand why you're making them.**



Maybe your organization's approach to sourcing food for events is based on what the cheapest, easiest option is, and now you want to take steps to purchase food that is more nutritious, sustainably grown, and sourced locally. Maybe you've realized that you want to change your approach when seeking partnerships, and moving forward, you want to embed equity guidelines into agreements with vendors or partners. Maybe you've realized that you need to adjust your budget to reflect changes that you want to make in the long term, like hiring an anti-racism coordinator to consistently work with your team.

All of these ideas are examples of building external resilience!

**Because every community is unique, external resilience will look different for every organization!** However, looking at stories of how other organizations and communities build resilience can unearth valuable tools and ideas.

Check out the resources below and see what inspires you.

### Civil Eats:

[Our Best Food System Solutions Stories of 2021](#)

[14 Stories of Resiliency and Food Justice in Indigenous Communities](#)

**Nonprofit Risk Management Center and National Community Action Partnership:** [Toolkit for Building Organizational Resilience](#)

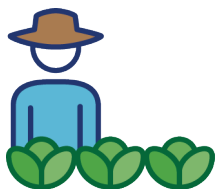
### Farmers Market Coalition:

The Anti-Racist Farmers Markets Toolkit  
(find the updated version on their [website](#))



Questions to help trace your organization's relationship with food at most steps in the supply chain:

### Production



- Who grew the food?
  - Do the growers work under fair labor conditions with fair compensation?
  - Are pesticides or chemicals used in the growing process?
  - Is the food grown locally?
- 

### Packaging



- What packaging materials does the food come in?
  - Is the packaging recyclable, compostable, or reusable?
  - What is the purpose of the packaging the food came in (protect it from damage, keep it fresh longer, etc.)?
- 

### Distribution



- Where does the food come from?
  - How does it get to you?
  - What means of transportation are used to get the food to you (shipped overseas, picked up by an employee who travels via car, etc.)?
- 

### Sourcing



- Where do you purchase the food?
  - Did the food come from a local seller in your community?
  - Was the food sourced from BI&POC food sellers?
  - What considerations do you make when choosing your food?
- 

### Consumption



- How is the food stored before preparation?
  - How is the food prepared?
  - How much do you want to/need to consume?
  - Does the food meet your nutritional needs?
  - Who do you share the food with?
- 

### Disposal



- What do you do with excess food?
- Is any food donated? If so, where?
- Is the food compostable?
- Who manages the disposal of your food?
- How do you decide what food to dispose of and when?

## Brainstorming sheet: External changes and resilience

Focus area	Why do you want/need to make the change?	What will it look like when the change is implemented? How does this move you towards your food justice and equity goals?	How will you ensure the change is resilient?
<p><i>What food products or food related services does your organization provide? How do you prioritize food justice when offering these products/services?</i></p>			
<p><i>How do you communicate with your customers and/or community about food justice?</i></p>			
<p><i>How do you choose where to source supplies and where to donate charitably, and how does this spending reflect your food justice goals?</i></p>			
<p><i>How do you put your equity in practice guidelines and connection to food justice in action when partnering or collaborating with other organizations?</i></p>			
<p><i>How do you express your mission in marketing, and how does this capture your commitment to food justice?</i></p>			
<p><i>What is your relationship with leaders and policy in your community, and how do you advance food justice and racial equity progress in these relationships?</i></p>			

# STEP 7

## Looking Back to Move Forward

This step will guide you through the process of looking back at the history of your organization and where you might have contributed to or benefited from oppression or oppressive systems in the past. Then, you will learn about and consider different ways of making reparations.

This is a tool intended to move your organization forward towards food justice. In order to truly embrace equity, **you also need to spend some time looking backwards to think about past harm your organization has done. Past harms are ways that your organization may have caused or contributed to injustice in the past.** Even if you are a new organization or business, the broader industry you operate within likely has a complicated past. If you struggle to think about past harm specific to your organization or your industry, there is plenty of room to consider the broader systems you live and operate in.

Looking back at the harmful past history of your organization is a difficult and emotional task, and you've already worked on building resilience, as well as practicing Courageous Conversations! Reference those skills and tools now and remind yourself that **you are equipped to approach this step.**

This process starts with looking back at the history of your organization and talking with leaders, employees, or community members who have worked for or interacted with your organization in the more distant past. You may need to look back at archived records or documents. Work forward from

the furthest history that you can uncover, tracing your organization's mission, vision, programs, and changes over time. **As often as possible, seek out first-person accounts of the past and past harm.** This is an important way to make sure you are centering affected communities and listening directly to the reflections and needs of those who experienced injustice directly. Be sure that you are getting consent from anyone who you ask to discuss past harm and fairly compensate them for their time. Communicate clearly that you are seeking to learn more so that you can pursue action to address this past harm.

After you've explored your organization's history, from as far back as you can find to the present, it's time for your team to **discuss how you will remember and talk about this history and past harm.** How would you respond if a community member asked you about an incident of past harm? Discuss what language you can use that **places your organization in a position of ownership and responsibility of past harm without trying to squirm out of the consequences or memory of these events.**

Next, discuss what actions your organization is going to take in response to past harms. **Acknowledgment without action is manipulation.**<sup>48</sup> It is impossible to go back and undo past harm, and in some cases, there is no way to make a wrong completely right. However, **you can take steps to demonstrate that you are committed to a future grounded in responsibility and equity by making reparations.**<sup>49</sup>

**Reparations are a way to acknowledge past harm and address the alternative world that this harm created.** Past harms can include ways that people in positions of power and privilege *benefited* from past discrimination and abuse of others, forever offsetting the possibilities of attaining wealth, freedom, and justice between the two groups.



## What could the process of looking back at history and making reparations look like?



Holly Farms, an organization that operates a Christmas tree farm, has been using the Food Justice Framework and is now on Step 7.

Looking back at past harm, Holly Farms leadership reviews the organization's history with their team. One employee shares that several years back, one of their co-workers quit due to microaggressions<sup>50</sup> in the workplace occurring during a past manager's leadership. They find and read documents from the exit interview when the employee left their organization.



They open old records and documents about the investments and activities of the organization. They find the deed for the purchase of the land the farm is on. Though it was bought and sold by a series of owners, the land was originally cared for by Indigenous peoples before they were driven off the property and their ability to care for and live on the land was stolen.

The leadership and team at Holly Farms has a long discussion about the past harms they've uncovered from the recent and distant past. They talk about how they will respond when community members ask about the incidents that occurred in the past so that they can take responsibility and how they will make reparations for these harms.



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### Together, the team decides to take the following steps:

- The team agrees to create a document that all employees will read during training that describes what microaggressions are, how they create a toxic workplace and enforce white supremacy, and state a zero tolerance policy. This document lays out how employees can report any microaggressions and how the organization will respond to these reports.
- Holly Farms writes a letter of apology and acknowledgement to the former employee who reported experiencing microaggressions in their exit interview, and offers to compensate them for their time if they would like to discuss their experience with current managers to inform the new microaggressions training and response policy.
- They create a land acknowledgement statement that will appear on their website and on signage at the property which recognizes the indigenous peoples who originally occupied and cared for the land their farm is on. They will share information about these peoples and acknowledge their dispossession on every tour they give to visitors at the farm.
- The Executive Director of Holly Farms writes a formal letter of acknowledgement and apology to the tribe that formerly stewarded the land that the farm is on and invites them to the farm for a meeting to discuss ways that the organization can address and honor their heritage and compensate them for the oppression they faced.
- Holly Farms commits a segment of their budget to open an annual scholarship program for youth from this tribe to access higher education programs, invites the tribe to host educational and cultural events and workshops on the farm, and commits to incorporating indigenous land management practices in their operations.

## What can reparations look like?

### Direct cash payments to affected communities or individuals

*Ex: Provide cash reparations to a local BI&POC owned and run community organization, reparations to ancestors of those harmed in the past.*

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### Acts of service to those affected by discrimination and oppression

*Ex: Provide needed materials to a BI&POC owned and run community organization, volunteering hours of service, provide your goods/services for free to specific individuals.*

---

### Programming targeted to affected communities

*Ex: Creating a fund specifically for BI&POC benefactors, directing a fundraising event and matching funds raised to benefit a BI&POC community organization.*

---

### Intentionally supporting BI&POC individuals and businesses

*Ex: Contracting a BI&POC owned catering company for an annual event, hiring a BI&POC designer, consultant, or coach for your organization's projects.*

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**\*Make sure that you're getting as close to the specific community that was harmed as possible!**

**Remember when you intentionally choose to source goods and services from BI&POC led organizations or individuals, you are pursuing a form of reparations ensuring that the money you pay for goods and services is routed to communities that have been historically abused, discriminated against, and prevented from accumulating wealth.** Corporations often keep prices low by exploiting underpaid BI&POC workers. White supremacy culture forces a mindset that profits are the only measure of an organization's efficiency, worth, and value rather than encouraging righting wrongs or directing money to communities that have been underserved and excluded in the past (and in many ways, still are in the present).

## Resources to think about past harm, reparations, and building a more just future

### **Community Food Funders**

[Recap: Funding a Racially Just Regenerative Regional Food System](#)

### **Soul Fire Farm**

[Action Steps and Policy Platform for Food Sovereignty](#)

(See their [Reparations](#) webpage and view [SFF's integrity guidelines](#) for using their materials.)

### **Be Bold LLC**

[A toolkit for municipalities working towards more sustainable, equitable, and inclusive communities](#)

### **Movement for Black Lives**

[Reparations Now Toolkit](#)

### **Coming to the Table**

[Reparations...the time is now](#)

### **Reparations 4 Slavery**

[Personal Partial Reparations](#) and [Institutional Reparations](#)

**Fill out this worksheet to guide your look back at past harm and make a plan for reparations.**

*How did you gain access or ownership to the land or property you operate on?  
Who were the original stewards of this land, and how were they dispossessed of it?*

*What was the original purpose and mission of your organization?  
How has this mission changed over time? Why did it change?*

*What communities have you served over time? What communities have you neglected?  
What communities have you discriminated against?*

*How have you benefited from or participated in harmful systems or forms of oppression?*

*When community members or customers have stopped interacting with or supporting your organization, what reasoning or feedback did they give? When former employees left your organization, what feedback or reasoning did they give?*

*How could you make reparations in a manner that best addresses the specifics of past harm we've caused or contributed to? What would be the best form for these reparations to take?*

*What impact do you intend the reparations to have, and how do you match that intention?*

*How do these specific plans for reparations connect to your food justice and racial equity goals?*

*What are the benefits and challenges of pursuing reparations in this case? How will you address these challenges?*



# STEP 8

## Appreciate & Celebrate



This work is meaningful. By now, you and your team have encountered difficult truths, grown through big conversations, and are shifting how your work impacts the world through the food justice principles you apply. **It's time to appreciate this moment!**

This process has likely stirred a lot of different feelings—there may have been times when you felt frustrated, upset, hopeless, or defeated. Hopefully,

there were also moments where you felt inspired, proud, and accomplished! The time is here to celebrate those rewarding and difficult experiences—and recognize that **without feeling them and working through them, you wouldn't be where you are! It's important to recognize the unique contributions and perspectives of everyone in your team who contributed to the conversations and work embedded in this Framework.**

### Ideas for Appreciation & Celebration

- **Do it with food!** Find a local, BI&POC owned catering company, restaurant, or bakery, and reward your team with a nourishing meal or treat to celebrate your progress.
- **Add a gratitude practice!** Write a note to each contributing member naming a quality or idea you learned from them, or reflect on how they contribute to making your community stronger.
- **Offer further training opportunities!** Look into sponsoring a workshop or fellowship program through one of the consultants and organizations suggested in the resource [appendix](#) to give your team members an opportunity for continued learning.
- **Give a meaningful gift** to your team members. Consider purchasing a book or journal related to food justice or racial equity for members of your organization who participated in the Framework steps. See the resource [appendix](#) for suggestions!
- **Share a reflection with your community!** Make a social media post, a blog post, or a newsletter message that describes what you have accomplished thus far. Invite anyone who may be interested to make a donation to a relevant local organization or someone who created a resource that was helpful to you in the process of learning about food justice.

# STEP 9

## Rinse and Repeat



This section will help you think about how you'll move forward after completing this Framework and continue working towards food justice in your organization and community.

This work is lifelong. All of the challenges and celebrations have made you, your team, and your community stronger, and if you continue to follow these steps, they will build.

***Can you repeat this process again, differently? What would you do next time that would bring you further or take you deeper?***

*Ex: Would you hire a facilitator for the entire process, incorporate different voices, create action steps that challenge you more, shift more resources to reparations, etc.?*

***How do you share this work in new relationships with vendors, partners, community groups, or new employees who weren't involved during the process?***

***How did you record what you learned and what came up along the way? Is there a record of this process that you can reference in the future?***



## Quotes for reflection on continued action and commitment



“  
**Revolution  
is not a  
one time  
event.”**

—Audre Lorde

“  
The moment we choose  
to love we begin to move  
against domination,  
against oppression.  
The moment we choose  
to love we begin to move  
towards freedom, to  
act in ways that liberate  
ourselves and others.”

—bell hooks



“Resilience and regeneration are not a given, they need to be purposefully nurtured. We therefore need to invest and facilitate the creation of distributive food systems based on local needs and capacities that assure a fair redistribution of value, knowledge and power across actors and territories to deliver sustainable food for all.”

— Ana Moragues-Faus



“The time has come to reclaim the stolen harvest and celebrate the growing and giving of good food as the highest gift and the most revolutionary act.”

—Vandava Shiva



“Action on behalf of life transforms. Because the relationship between self and the world is reciprocal, it is not a question of first getting enlightened or saved and then acting. As we work to heal the earth, the earth heals us.”

—Robin Wall Kimmerer



“  
Why should there be hunger  
and deprivation in any land,  
in any city, at any table, when  
man has the resources and the  
scientific know-how to provide  
all mankind with the basic  
necessities of life? There is no  
deficit in human resources.  
The deficit is in human will.”

—Martin Luther King Jr.







## GVI as a Case Study: Lessons Learned

When GVI began our shift towards food justice and racial equity work in 2015, we felt confident we could undergo the process of becoming a more just organization by doing occasional training with facilitators and by creating intentional conversation spaces among our team. To be fair to ourselves, we were learning as we went! We also had a much smaller budget for this work in those years because we hadn't yet understood how foundational and transformational it would be for every aspect of our organization. This type of thinking may have come from a good place, yet it was rooted in [White Supremacy Culture Traits](#), particularly having a sense of urgency, fear of open conflict, ideal of perfectionism, and an obsession with progress.

If we have learned anything from the past 5 years, it is that finding a facilitator who can work with you consistently and repeatedly to call out these characteristics as they arise is super important, perhaps critical. GVI has worked with a number of wonderful facilitators, and found it was most meaningful when we were able to pay one facilitator (SoulGrowth, LLC) to work with us consistently during

full-team sessions and one-on-one sessions outside of full-team sessions. This facilitator was a great fit for us because they were qualified to work with our team members in therapeutic work-related calls, as well as lead antiracism training. This provided a space for members of our team to talk through dysregulated nervous system responses, barriers that were coming up, and find healthy solutions to move forward.

We are so far from perfect. We are still making mistakes we can and can't see. We know that eventually, we will look back and see these as lessons—and we try to reflect on our imperfection often. Yet, we celebrate that our team is better informed of our end-goal, that we are taking steps forward from a place of trust, and that our team members have space to talk through big emotions with a facilitator who is a present member of our team. By doing this, we have prevented ourselves from repeating harm that we caused in the past. We have done this by prioritizing the well-being and support of our team members needs as best we can to effectively work on creating a more just and equitable world through our work in this organization and in our individual lives.

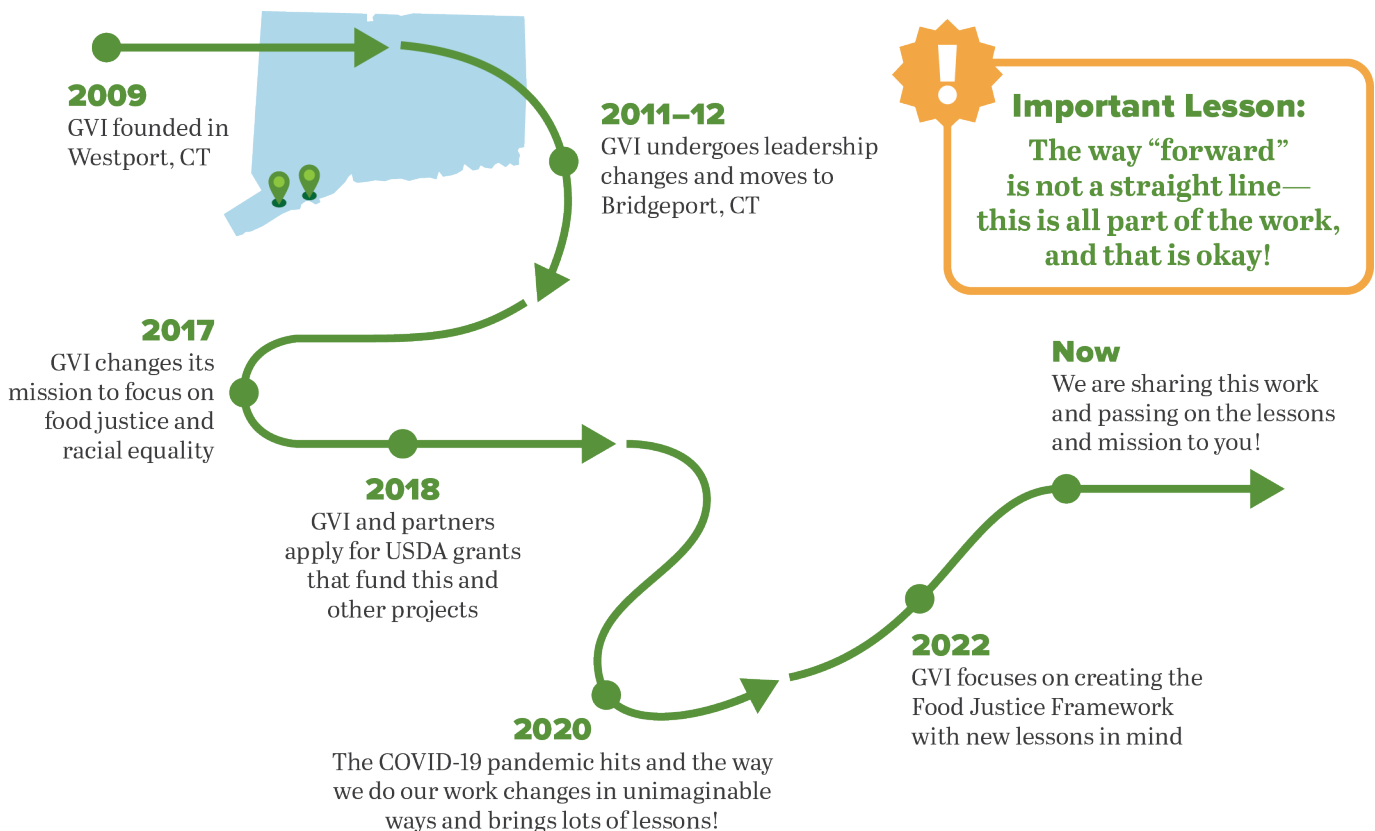
# GVI's Shift to Food Justice

GVI was founded in 2011 in Westport, CT and by 2015 had fully moved its base of operations and programs to focus on Bridgeport, CT. In 2015 GVI underwent a leadership change and shifted to paid staff after years of operating as a fully volunteer-run organization. In 2017 this new staff led GVI through a shift that incorporated values of racial equity and antiracism<sup>51</sup> into new goals, which became centered on food justice. This shift required a new mission, which is the mission you read above in the FJF blurb (on page 2).

During this time of growth and change in GVI's mission and programs, GVI lost some funders, partners, volunteers, and board members who did not support or agree with this change. This loss was unsettling, and it also made room for new growth. At the same time, GVI's community partners shared that they wanted to make similar changes to their own missions and asked GVI for advice on how they could incorporate food justice into their work. Many people told GVI that although they might not be a part of a business or organization that worked directly with food, they wanted their organizations to do better in relation to food justice and would like ideas on where to start.

Community Collaboration between GVI and group of other organizations allowed for the receipt of a USDA Local Food, Local Places grant<sup>52</sup> and then a USDA Community Food Projects grant in 2018 to make creating this Framework possible. One of our goals was to leverage our advantages—committed funding, administrative time, energy from our team, ability to hire and work with excellent facilitators, access to meeting space, and more assets to create a framework based on our experiences. We hope that by following this Framework, other groups can see our lessons, experiment with them, and integrate food justice into their own work to move all of us toward a more just future.

At GVI, the pandemic pushed us to learn many lessons that are relevant to the FJF: like the importance of accessibility (making every tool available online), different ways that we can care for each other (especially when we are distant), and how to support our team while they faced constant change, uncertainty, and growth. We discovered how beneficial it was to compensate a mental health professional in addition to an equity facilitator to support our team's wellness while we did this work.





# ENDNOTES

1. **Framework:** A guide, a set of ideas framing a topic.
2. **Collaboration:** Working together with other individuals or organizations on a common task.
3. **Equity:** “A condition or state of fair, inclusive, and respectful treatment of all people. Equity does not mean treating people the same without regard for individual differences.” (Canadian Race Relations Foundation)
4. **Liberation:** A state of freedom marked by rights and opportunities which are accessible to everyone and suited to their unique identities and needs.
5. **Community:** A community is usually understood as a group of people that live or gather together in one place, but communities can take many different forms. You can create or be a part of communities based on a shared identity, a mutual interest, or a common goal. Communities don’t have to be centered around a physical location.
6. **Online ecosystem:** A community where people share resources, thoughts, and goals on the internet for mutual support and benefit. Just like a physical ecosystem, it can be a place where you share resources with each other and work together (similar to how in a physical ecosystem, species share food and natural resources and find ways to work together when living in the same environment).
7. **Exploitation:** When someone is abused mistreated, or taken advantage of for the benefit of someone else.
8. **Oppression:** “The systematic subjugation of one social group by a more powerful social group for the social, economic, and political benefit of the more powerful social group.” (Dismantling Racism Works)
9. **Racism:** “A global system of race-based oppression and discrimination of Black Indigenous and people of color created by and for the benefit of White people. The combination of prejudice, privilege, and power is only held by White or White passing individuals.” (Rachel Ricketts)
10. **Labor:** The physical or mental work or effort a person provides, often as a part of a contract to receive payment in exchange. However, sometimes labor is forced and uncompensated, or compensated at a lower rate than the actual monetary value of what is produced or completed as a result of the labor.
11. **White supremacy:** The belief and system which emphasizes the idea that white people are better or more capable than other racial groups. This idea has been used to justify oppression, abuse, and exclusion of other racial groups to benefit and grant power to white people.
12. **Immigrant/migrant:** A person who has moved to a new location from another place, typically another country.
13. **Living wage:** Compensation for work that allows someone to comfortably cover the cost of all of the things they need to be safe, happy, and comfortable. It provides them with enough money to pay for a place to live, nutritious food for themselves and their families, and other things they need for physical wellness and enjoyment of their life, without pushing them into financial stress.
14. **BI&POC:** Black, Indigenous, and People of Color. This acronym is often used to describe shared experiences of non-white people. However, if you’re discussing an experience specific to one of the groups contained in this acronym, it is best to express that specificity and avoid using this term as a “catch all”.
15. **Production, distribution, and consumption:** The steps in the supply chain (or process of creating a product) that span from the creation, sale, and use of a product.



16. **Privilege:** “A special right, advantage, or immunity (often unearned) granted or available only to a particular person or group of people often to the detriment of others. Privilege can be based on race, gender identity, ability, sexual orientation, class, immigration status, language, nationality, religion, ethnicity, beauty, and more.” (Rachel Ricketts)
17. **Assumptions:** A guess or acceptance that something is true or accurate, even if it is not certain or proven.
18. **Intentions:** Purpose or motivation that shape an action.
19. **Desired outcome:** Hope or guess that a particular end result will happen.
20. **DEI:** Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. Organizations and institutions often have “DEI” departments that focus on creating and managing equitable practices and dealing with any issues of discrimination.
21. **Historically marginalized:** Term used to describe how certain groups of people have been treated as less important or subordinate, or abused and mistreated by a “dominant” (usually white or white-aligned) social group. This term places the burden and responsibility on the oppressor, rather than victimizing the group that has been oppressed.
22. **Facilitator:** Someone who leads, manages, or assists a project.
23. **Authentic:** Genuine, coming from a place of true care and interest; not performative or shallow.
24. **Accountable:** Responsible, committed; expected to report to or serve the interests of
25. **HR:** “Human Resources”—Typically a person or department within an organization that manages hiring employees and dealing with any personal or organizational conflict, discrimination, or problems.
26. **Collective knowledge:** Greater understanding that is gained over time by many people learning more about a topic or solution and sharing their experience and lessons with others.
27. **Listening:** An active, engaged practice of hearing what someone is saying, thinking about the implications of what they said, and expressing your attention to their words. Learn more about active listening [here](#).
28. **First-person accounts:** Stories told by people who experienced an event or action themselves; listening directly to a witness of a particular event in order to understand what happened and what the effects were.
29. **Trauma:** A challenging or distressing experience that deeply impacted and/or continues to impact the person who experienced it.
30. **Tokenized:** Including a person only as a symbolic effort. This is often done for the effort to appear diverse and inclusive while in reality, the tokenized person is being used and expected to act as a representative for their entire identity group without deeper efforts to truly represent those identities in the group or workplace.
31. **White guilt:** Shame and regretful responsibility felt by a white person regarding their participation or benefit from racism against non-white people.
32. **White supremacy culture:** “A form of racism centered upon the belief that white people are superior to people of other racial backgrounds and that whites should politically, economically, and socially dominate non-whites. While often associated with violence perpetrated by the KKK and other white supremacist groups, it also describes a political ideology and systemic oppression that perpetuates and maintains the social, political, historical and/or industrial white domination” (National Education Association). White supremacy manifests itself in small day-to-day behaviors that shape and impact interactions between people frequently. Learn more, read examples, and learn about ways to disrupt this culture [here](#).

33. **Past harm:** Ways that a person or organization may have participated in or benefited from oppression or oppressive systems. This could include big, obvious acts of discrimination and exploitation, micro-aggressions, or ignorance to inequalities and complacency.
34. **Grounded:** A state of being physically and emotionally balanced.
35. **Activated nervous system:** “Your sympathetic nervous system is a network of nerves that helps your body activate its ‘fight-or-flight’ response. This system’s activity increases when you’re stressed—effects include increasing your heart rate and breathing ability, improving your eyesight and slowing down processes like digestion.” (Cleveland Clinic)
36. **Dysregulation:** A state of feeling like emotions and physical responses are imbalanced or heightened.
37. **Standards:** Expectations, desired level of quality or outcome.
38. We adapted these to our team’s needs and priorities from a version made by the [RE-Center for Race and Equity in Education](#). They adapted their version from [VISIONS, Inc.](#)
39. **Subconscious:** “The part of your mind that notices and remembers information when you are not actively trying to do so, and influences your behavior even though you do not realize it.” (Cambridge dictionary)
40. **Implicit bias:** Attitudes or associations you have about people that inform your thoughts and actions as a result of your social programming and past experiences. They can be positive or negative and can operate in the subconscious even when someone is actively working to resist or reframe these biases.
41. **Mission, vision, goals, or business plan:** The way that an organization or individual communicates the purpose of their organization and plans to accomplish their aims to the public. These statements try to capture the identity of an organization and a description of their work.
42. **Radical imagination:** Creating a mental vision of what the future could look like beyond the systems and beliefs that define it in the present. This vision can be a tool for advancing and motivating changes to the current world to bring it more in alignment with this vision over time.
43. **Urgency:** Pressure to finish a task quickly or in a rushed manner.
44. **Flexibility:** Ability to adapt or change.
45. **Environmental sustainability:** Practices that ensure that the earth and its natural resources will be healthy and protected in the future.
46. **Social sustainability:** Practices that ensure that people and their culture will be healthy, happy, and protected in the future.
47. **Crisis mode:** A state of dysregulation, distress, and chaos.
48. **Manipulation:** Using, deceiving, or influencing someone, usually from a position of power over that person.
49. **Reparations:** Compensating a person or group of people for a wrong done in the past, either in a payment of money or by making other amends or services.
50. **Microaggressions:** “The everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slates, snubs, or insult, whether intentional or unintentional, which communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to target persons based solely upon their marginalized group membership.” (Rachel Ricketts)
51. **Antiracism:** Active, engaged opposition and resistance to racism.
52. **Grant:** A sum of money or donation that is given to a person or organization for a specific purpose. Grants often make up a large part of the way nonprofits fund their programs and operations.