

Dear Building Cultural Proficiencies for Racial Equity Framework Task Force—

Thank you for inviting comments and feedback on the draft of “[Cultural Proficiencies For Racial Equity: A Framework](#).” The members of the Racial Justice Working Group of the [Data Curation Network \(DCN\)](#) as well as other DCN volunteers are writing today to submit our feedback on the framework as a whole, and would be delighted to engage in further conversations if that would be of interest to you.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment and reflect on the framework. Overall, we think this is a good first draft. Some very positive elements stood out: the organization of the framework is simple and digestible, and the sample tasks for engagement are direct and simple.

We, the authors of this letter, are a group of data stewardship professionals. We are white academics, many of whom identify as cisgender. We are not experts in racial justice, and preface our feedback with a request to consult expertise within library and information science, and pay for their labor.

Before we move to specific feedback, we have some general concerns about the shape and purpose of this document. After reading it closely, we were unsure what the framework is attempting to achieve. Is it a framework for cultural competencies for racial equity? If so, it does not accomplish that. Is it an argument for cultural competencies? If so, it partially accomplishes this while also muddying the waters. Is it a framework to guide the development of cultural competencies? If so, we are concerned about how the framing would hinder development.

It would be worth clarifying the intended audience, and, related to concerns expressed below, the position from which the document is written. Would racially marginalized library workers feel that this document has a coherent understanding of what it's like to work in an overwhelmingly white workforce whose standards of professionalism are derived from white cultural norms? *Or is a document like this another exemplar of those unmarked (i.e. white) professional norms?*

In order to improve the impact and effectiveness of the framework, we respectfully submit the following recommendations:

### **Power dynamics**

Acknowledge the potential power that this document has. Given the weight of the organizations involved, this document could be interpreted more as a checklist than a framework, potentially running contrary to the goals of your work. In order to address this, we suggest:

- Demonstrate the building blocks for this work, and how this framework builds on current standards and calls-to-action like the [ACRL Diversity Standards: Cultural Competency for Academic Libraries](#)
- Provide positionality statements for all of the authors
- Provide more evidence, in both citations and data, to showcase some of the issues, e.g., whiteness in libraries

- Clarify why some of the tactics are recommended and evidence of success. Without details and cited sources, there is room for interpretations and implementations that do not align with the stated goal.
  - In particular, our group wants to ensure these suggestions are impactful— if collecting and sharing data will be a meaningful motivator for change, it should be clearly explained and have appropriate citations.
- Add additional examples of work to be done for each framework - this document presents as comprehensive (cf. Addendum 1), but offers minimal examples
  - Solicit submissions from the community
  - We recommend [A Toolkit for Centering Racial Equity Within Data Integration](#) for good practice
  - We also recommend, if you have not already, looking into the recently released [Implementing Excellence in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: A Handbook for Academic Libraries](#)
- Address power and hierarchy specifically. Draw from work on [White supremacy culture \(specifically this one\)](#) and talk about the actual structures in place that create rigid hierarchies in libraries, how we reinforce those structures - we can become antiracist, but if we keep hierarchy models in place in libraries, “are we creating an alibi for white supremacy culture?”
- There are a lot of asks for labor here, particularly from marginalized individuals. Suggest that library administration give room for individuals to schedule time to build these recommendations into their work. The outcomes needed here are culture shifts that require time, space, and new definitions of valued labor.
  - What would it look like for a library to be committed to this? What resources are needed? Call out organizational level commitment in addition to individual efforts and make plans/outcomes as transparent as possible. Some examples:
    - [Texas Digital Library Anti Racism Action Plans](#)
    - [Oak Park Public Library Anti-Racism Strategic Plan](#)
    - [Boston Public Library Racial Equity and Commitment Action Plan](#)
    - [Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Anti-Racism, University of Washington Libraries](#)
    - And more, including great examples from non-libraries
  - A discussion on power requires a discussion on who and what is rewarded in an organization. Pay equity should be addressed.
- Discuss the power leaders and administration have in implementing change— or in serving as gatekeepers and upholders in white supremacy. In particular, Frame 4 might hold leaders accountable for their responsibility in antiracist leadership.
  - While individuals have a role in co-liberation efforts, as is evidenced in the [Matrix of Domination](#), action is required from individuals that hold power to affect meaningful and lasting change.

## Language

- The glossary is helpful, but it puts more burden on the reader. Could there be “keywords for this section” and a link to the glossary and more links through the document in general (Wikipedia style with a hover and snippet)?
- There is inconsistency in describing racialized people in the document - sometimes referred to as racialized, marginalized, and BIPOC. We are unsure if using the term BIPOC is appropriate given [criticism such as this](#).
  - The terms used will not be the best fit forever, therefore it could be nice to make the intentionality behind the terms very explicit in the introduction to help build trust in the overall document (We are using these words for these reasons, etc.)
- Provide an executive summary or more detailed table of contents; establishing the context for this document and its scope up front will help set expectations for what is (and isn't) included.
- Acknowledge that libraries and archives are not neutral
- Use language that identifies communities – words and phrases like “We” and “Ours” without clear definitions often mean those in power

Signees:

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