



# Oregon Economic Justice Roundtable (OEJR) Equity Guidelines

## Engaging Dominant Institutions in BIPOC-led Work

December 2022

OEJR's goal is to carry our work forward in ways that **disrupt and re-distribute power and resources in bold and transformative ways**. From its origins, OEJR was designed as a space that centers community. Representatives of dominant institutions,<sup>1\*</sup> especially funders, were intentionally invited to participate because we<sup>2</sup> believe that advancing racial and economic justice takes all of us.

### OEJR History

*The Oregon Economic Justice Roundtable (OEJR) was co-created in 2020 as a shared table of funders, advocates, and other nonprofit organizations working to advance collective, sustained action for racial and economic justice.*

### \*Dominant Institution Definition

*Dominant institutions are institutions or organizations (e.g., government, universities, for-profit businesses, and some non-profit organizations) that maintain, support, or aim to reproduce dominant political, social, cultural, and economic realities. These institutions are often, but not exclusively, led by and employ predominantly white people.*

We acknowledge that our current relationships, institutional structures, funding mechanisms, and power dynamics are rooted in historical and contemporary forms of intersectional oppression,<sup>3</sup> including racism, sexism, exploitative capitalism, ableism, and much more. Dominant institutions benefit from the way society is structured, so although all OEJR members can benefit from reflecting on these guidelines, **we expect representatives of dominant institutions to interrogate their positionality and come to the table prepared to further equitable engagement**. This requires an openness

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<sup>1</sup> See text box for working definition of dominant institutions. For more context about the role of dominant institutions in creating and maintaining the racial wealth gap in Oregon and beyond, see: Mohsini, M., Msibi, K, & Lopez, A. (2022). [Addressing the Racial Wealth Gap](#), Coalition of Communities of Color, Portland, OR.

<sup>2</sup> In this document, "we" refers to the [OEJR steering committee members](#) in Fall 2022.

<sup>3</sup> For the intellectual roots and/or explanations of intersectional oppression, see: [this short excerpt](#) from Collins, P. H. (1990). *Black feminist thought in the matrix of domination*. *Black feminist thought: Knowledge, consciousness, and the politics of empowerment*, 138(1990), 221-238; Crenshaw, K. W. (2017). *On intersectionality: Essential writings*. *The New Press*; Young, I. M. (1990). *Justice and the Politics of Difference*. *Princeton University Press*.



to experimenting with new ways of working that **de-center whiteness and challenge white supremacy culture.**

This is the first time we are experimenting with creating written guidelines for members. In Spring 2022, OEJR members engaged in conversations with the Oregon TANF Equity Alliance about joining forces to advance shared policy goals related to direct cash. This led to a series of intentional conversations about the original purpose of the roundtable, the guiding principles and structure developed in 2021, the role of dominant institutions in a BIPOC-led social change space, and the group's natural growth into an action-oriented group of committed leaders. The OEJR steering committee created this document in response to the unique policy opportunity to join forces with the TANF Equity Alliance to advance transformational direct cash policies in Oregon in the near-term. We also commit to engaging in ongoing dialogue in 2023 about longer-term changes we can make related to outreach, networks, engagement, and relational equity to avoid maintaining and reproducing harmful, racist patterns.

### **OEJR Structure**

*As of Fall 2022, the Roundtable is comprised of a 7-member steering committee and three active working committees: policy, narratives, and base building. Members are invited to meet quarterly and participate actively in committees and in their own change work in between.*

***We welcome all newcomers to this table who agree to engage with the following OEJR guiding principles, practices, and critical questions.***

### **OEJR Guiding Principles**

***I agree to embody these principles to the best of my ability and educate myself outside of the OEJR space about these principles.***

*Equity and Racial Justice – boldly and intentionally dismantle racism and white supremacy that lead to inequitable outcomes.*

*Intersectionality – analysis and action of how other forms of oppression intersect with race for better targeted strategies to address racial inequities.*

*Community-Driven Solutions – solutions are closest to those impacted, thus solutions, policy and narratives should be co-created and community-centered with Black, Indigenous and other CoC.*

*Systems and Policy Solutions – equity centered approach on the creation, transfer, and redistribution of wealth and power.*

*Collective Action – organized, collective, and sustained action supporting racial and economic justice movement is needed to reach our vision.*



**OEJR Dominant Institution Member Practices (A living document as of December 2022)**

***I agree to act through practices that center BIPOC leaders, advance equity, and uplift collective well-being.***

**1. Center race equity**

- *Work to surface assumptions by preparing for, reflecting on, and engaging with colleagues about the role of race and racism in your life and work*
- *Center communities most impacted by racial and economic injustices by listening to BIPOC members first, ceding physical space and resources, or following the lead of BIPOC members instead of leading yourself (only lead when asked to lead)*

**2. Relational work**

- *Set up and participate in at least three 1:1s in your first year of OEJR to form personal connections with and learn what motivates other OEJR members*
- *Share so that OEJR members can get to know you holistically, and not just in narrow professional ways, so that you can foster and grow authentic relationships*

**3. Accept discomfort**

- *Regularly examine your intent in the OEJR space, and be open to feedback related to the accountability of these principles or your actions*
- *Be willing to leave decision-making dialogues and other conversations open, and expect and accept non-closure*
- *Understand that this work can feel slow, repetitive, and ongoing*

**4. Education (self and others)**

- *Read [Addressing the Racial Wealth Gap](#) and [Balance and Belonging](#) so that you are informed about the roots of racial and economic injustices in Oregon*
- *Practice educating others: create an elevator speech to educate a neighbor or acquaintance about 3 specific ways that today's racial and economic injustices were structured through policy in Oregon*

**5. BIPOC-led collective decision-making**

- *Although all members (including dominant institution actors) can provide perspectives on OEJR topics, cede decision-making to BIPOC-led community-based organizations and community-embedded BIPOC actors.*



## **6. Power shifting**

- *As dominant institution representatives, cede power and share insights, resources, information, and connections whenever possible to shift power to BIPOC community leaders and organizations*
- *Interrogate your own dominant institutional practices, notice how they show up at OEJR, and take steps within yourself and your own organization to align with new, more equitable practices*

## **7. Action / commitment**

- *Show up in various ways for this work, including taking on small but significant roles that you may not traditionally hold at your dominant institution (e.g., take notes, set up meetings, offer to pick up food, give someone a ride to a meeting, speak at a community meeting, write a letter to the editor, etc.)*
- *Do not sit passively at this table. Actively look for opportunities to remove burdens or shift tasks off BIPOC leaders' plates (offer, and then follow through if asked to take something on)*

### **OEJR Dominant Institution Member Critical Questions**

***I agree to interrogate my own assumptions (starting with the questions below), think critically, and learn with and from others.***

1. *How does my personal and professional positionality affect my relationship with power inside and outside of this space? How can I leverage, shift, and redistribute power?*
2. *How are racial and economic justice linked in my community?*
3. *In what ways has white supremacist culture influenced my understanding of “work”?*
4. *What can I do, in my area of influence and drawing on my positionality, to advance racial and economic justice WITHOUT reinforcing harmful status-quo policies, narratives, and relations?*



### **General OEJR Member Commitment**

***I agree to act by providing resources and support to advance racial and economic justice in Oregon.***

### **Our Vision for an Economically Just Oregon**

*We seek to root a culture and community in Oregon that nourishes a sense of belonging, respect and dignity among and between communities and people. We seek to create an environment and systems of abundance by and for Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian, and all communities of color so that all Oregonians live beyond the basics of safety and security, and into the freedom to actualize dreams, and the power of communities to control their own financial and economic destiny.*

### **Contact**

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