Racial Equity in Planning:
Positive & Problematic Practices

POSITIVE PRACTICE	PROBLEMATIC PRACTICE
Including diverse perspectives (such as community members with lived experiences and agency staff who understand the data) on planning committees	Using only token "representation" in agenda-setting, question creation, governance, or IRB review
Building capacity for researchers, administrators, and community participants to work together on agenda-setting	Using deadlines or grant deliverables as an excuse to rush or avoid authentic community engagement
Researching, understanding, and disseminating the history of local policies, systems, and structures involved, including past harms and future opportunities	Using only historical administrative data to describe the problem, without a clear plan of action to improve outcomes
Building data literacy among organizations and community members, which could range from light engagement through public activities like data "gallery walks" to more intense involvement, such as community-based participatory action research	Failing to manage expectations around what the data are capable of telling or how long it will take to see marked changes in data, actions, and outcomes
Establishing a common language and agreed upon sources and methods for reporting on community-based indicators	Failing to revisit indicator and outcome metrics regularly and revise when necessary
Clearly discerning who decides how to frame the problem or determine what questions to ask	Relying on academic institutions to frame the problem and research questions while failing to engage community-based organizations
Planning that includes the use of an asset; creating a framework that aims to clarify how to improve policy, services, and outcomes	Planning that includes the use of a deficit; creating a framework to describe outcomes
Lifting up the research needs of community to funders; helping shape funding strategy with funders to support community-driven research	Accepting grant/philanthropic funding for a project that is not a community priority or need

Racial Equity in Data Collection:
Positive & Problematic Practices

POSITIVE PRACTICE	PROBLEMATIC PRACTICE
Adhering to data management best practices to secure data as they are collected—specifically, with carefully considered, role-based access	Assuming that programmatic staff (those most likely to collect data) have training in data management and data security
Including agency staff and community stakeholders in defining which data should be collected or reused	Inviting only researchers to identify data needs
Collaborating to develop a shared data collection agenda that is connected to practice, policy, and research	Collecting data that reinforces or confirms bias rather than informing practice and policy changes
Collaborating with agencies and community to generate a data development agenda—a plan for access and use of data that are needed to answer high-interest questions (e.g., expanding gender identity categories on a registration form; building support for digitizing eviction records)	Providing insufficient data labels (e.g., federal reporting in education has only seven race labels) or inconsistent categories across data sets (e.g., conflating race and ethnicity)
Working with staff to support equity-oriented data collection practices (e.g., programmatic staff to update a registration form, technical staff to update a "forced" field on a data entry platform)	Unwillingness to shift data collection practices based upon community feedback
Collecting only what is necessary to your context	Failing to consider which data carry an elevated risk of causing harm if redisclosed when determining which data to collect in your context (e.g., a housing program that collects resident HIV status)
Strong efforts to support metadata documentation, including key dimensions of metadata such as: ● description ● provenance ● technical specifications ● rights ● preservation ● citation	Failure to clearly identify, explain, and document data integrity issues, including data that are: ● inaccurate ● undocumented ● unavailable ● incomplete ● inconsistent
Including qualitative stories to contextualize quantitative data	Allowing quantitative data to "speak for itself" without context or discussion
Working with and developing flexible data systems that adapt to context, environment, or system changes	Working with and developing data systems that are static and offer limited access
Finding out why people "opt out" of providing data for surveys and other data collection efforts, and using their feedback to minimize harm in future data collection processes	Collecting data purely for surveilling groups marginalized by inequitable systems and BIPoC.

Racial Equity in Data Access:
Positive & Problematic Practices

POSITIVE PRACTICE	PROBLEMATIC PRACTICE
OPEN DATA	
Open data that have been identified as valuable through engagement with individuals represented within the data	Ongoing open data that is based upon problematic indexes or algorithms, with a history of discriminatory impact on communities (e.g., release of "teacher effectiveness scores" and "school report cards")
Clear data release schedules and information on where to go and how to access data once they are released	Releasing data that can be re-identified (e.g., data released by small geographies may be identifiable by local residents)
Clear processes for submitting a request to agency for making data open, including how requests will be evaluated	
RESTRICTED DATA	
Adhering to data management best practices for data access, e.g., secure transfer of data (encryption in transit and at rest); clear data destruction parameters, if applicable, following use	Assuming that data management best practices are being followed without explicit protocols and oversight in place
Utmost care given to de-identification and anonymization of data prior to release	Releasing data that can be re-identified (e.g., data that have not been properly anonymized or include aggregate or subgroup data without suppressing small cell sizes)
Accessible data request process with clear policies and procedures for submitting a request and how requests are evaluated	Unwillingness to release data, or limiting access to researchers or individuals with an "in"
Creating, using, and sharing high-quality metadata to inform requestors about what data are available	Putting the onus solely on requesters to know which data can be requested
Free or low cost for data request, with costs clearly communicated (e.g., based on hourly rate or a flat fee)	Significant or inconsistent costs associated with requests for data access
Supporting directory-level data sharing among agencies for referral coordination and to lessen administrative burden on clients	
UNAVAILABLE DATA	
Clear documentation of why data are unavailable (e.g., specific statute, legislation, data quality explanation, data are not digitized, undue burden in data preparation)	Refusal to release data when release is permissible and would not pose an undue burden
	Organizations are unable to access their own data as a result of third-party contractors owning or controlling the data

Racial Equity in Algorithms and Statistical Tools: Positive & Problematic Practices

POSITIVE PRACTICE	PROBLEMATIC PRACTICE
Involving diverse stakeholders, including specific community advisory boards, in early conversations about the purpose of an algorithm prior to development and implementation	Developing and implementing algorithms for human services without stakeholder involvement or alignment across multiple agencies
Determining responsibility for oversight of algorithm development and implementation, with clear communication channels for input	Inadequate opportunities for community feedback regarding algorithm development and implementation
Mandatory impact assessments that involve thoroughly thinking through potential intended and unintended consequences	Failure to think through intended and unintended outcomes
Clearly identifying and communicating potential benefits and risks to stakeholders	Implementing an algorithm with no clear benefit to individuals included in the data
Human-led algorithm use (i.e., human can override algorithm at any point in process)	Elevating algorithmic decision making over judgment of seasoned practitioners; no human involvement
Transparency regarding what data drive the algorithm and how, e.g., description of design and testing process, list of factors that the tool uses, thresholds used, outcome data used to develop and validate the tool, definitions of what an instrument forecasts and for what time period	Use of a "black box" or proprietary algorithm that does not allow for transparency or replication
Efforts to improve the quality of data included within the algorithm, including efforts to balance the use of risk and protective factors	Use of data with data integrity issues or "dirty" data that reflect bias in data collection (resulting in garbage in/garbage out)
Using "early warning" indicators to provide meaningful services and supports to clients	Using "early warning" indicators for increased surveillance, punitive action, monitoring, or "threat" amplification via a risk score
Using multiple measures of validity and fairness. e.g., testing of metrics that center racial equity such as false positives/negatives across race and gender	Use of biometric data (specifically facial recognition)

Racial Equity in Data Analysis:
Positive & Problematic Practices

POSITIVE PRACTICE	PROBLEMATIC PRACTICE
Using participatory research to bring multiple perspectives to the interpretation of the data	Describing outcomes without examining larger systems, policies, and social conditions that contribute to disparities in outcomes (e.g., poverty, housing segregation, access to education)
Engaging domain experts (e.g., agency staff, caseworkers) and methods experts (e.g., data scientists, statisticians) to ensure that the data model used is appropriate to examine the research questions in local context	Applying a "one size fits all" approach to analysis (i.e., what works in one place may not be appropriate elsewhere)
Correlating place to outcomes (e.g., overlaying redlining data to outcomes)	Leaving out the role of historical policies in the interpretation of findings
Using appropriate comparison groups to contextualize findings	Making default comparisons to White outcomes (e.g., assuming White outcomes are normative)
Employing mixed methods approaches when developing the analytic plan, including purposefully seeking out qualitative data (interviews, focus groups, narrative, long-form surveys) in conjunction with quantitative administrative data to better understand the lived experience of clients	Using one-dimensional data to propel an agenda (e.g., use of student test scores in isolation from contextual factors such as teacher turnover, school-level demographics)
Disaggregating data and analyzing intersectional experiences (e.g., looking at race by gender)	Disregarding the individual or community context in the method of analysis and interpretation of results
Empowering professionals and community members to use data to improve their work and their communities	Analyzing data with no intent to drive action or change that benefits those being served

Reporting on data work can include formal, written documents, infographics and data visualizations, website materials, press releases or news articles, and even speeches. Across all of these mediums, centering racial equity means paying attention to which data are highlighted and how they are framed, as well as the readability and accessibility of the communication method.

Racial Equity in Reporting and Dissemination: Positive & Problematic Practices

POSITIVE PRACTICE	PROBLEMATIC PRACTICE
Creating a range of products to communicate findings across a wide variety of audiences via both online and offline methods of dissemination	Creating one output that is inaccessible to general audiences (e.g., a 100-page static report, content behind a paywall)
Developing differentiated messaging for different audiences that considers the appropriate level of detail and technical jargon, language, length, format, etc.	Using intentionally dense language with low readability, especially for non-native language learners
Reporting data in an actionable form to improve the lives of those represented in the data (e.g., analyzing food purchase data to identify food deserts and guide development of grocery stores)	Reporting data that are not actionable or that are intended to be punitive (e.g., analyzing food purchase data to remove recipients from Temporary Assistance for Needy Families [TANF] or other benefits)
Providing public access to aggregate data (e.g., dashboards, routine reports)	Putting materials solely online, particularly behind a paywall
Acknowledging structural racism or other harms to communities that are embedded in the data	Attempting to describe individual experiences with aggregate or "whole population" data without analyzing disparate impact based on race, gender, and other intersections of identity
Including stories as a complement to quantitative findings in order to better contextualize the lived experience represented by the numbers	Allowing the data to "speak for itself" without context or discussion
Providing clear documentation of the data analysis process along with analytic files, so that others can reproduce the results	Obscuring the analytic approach used in a way that limits reproducibility
Conducting impact analyses multiple times during the project (e.g., at the beginning, middle, and end). Asking the core question: does this work mitigate, worsen, or ignore existing disparities?	Disregarding how findings will impact individuals or communities