



**August 24, 2020 ----  
2:30 to 3:30 pm (EDT)**

**A webinar featuring findings  
from a national qualitative  
research report**

**Sponsored by the MSU Center  
for Regional Food Systems, in  
cooperation with the Racial  
Equity in the Food System  
workgroup**

[Report Link](#)

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**Delivering More  
Than Food:  
Understanding  
and  
Operationalizing  
Racial Equity in  
Food Hubs**

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**Sarah Rodman-Alvarez**



**Roxana Rodriguez**

# Outline

- Background
- Methods
- Key Findings
- Next Steps

# Background

## **Research Questions**

- How are food hubs making a difference in racial equity?
- Is racial equity an institutionalized priority for food hub work?
- What are the perceived barriers to prioritizing racial equity?
- In what ways is racial equity operationalized to policies/programs/procurement?
- Which arenas are robust in terms of racial equity work and which are not?

# Methods

Research Questions

Advisory group meetings

Second interviewer



Interviews



# Methods

Research Questions

Advisory group meetings

Second interviewer



Interviews



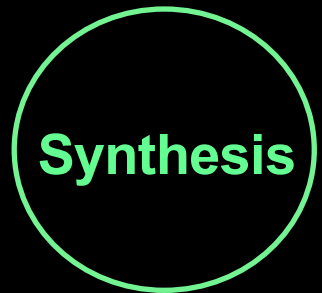
Revising Methodology

Increased Stipend

Narrative Ethics



Synthesis



# Overview of Facilitators for Advancing Racial Equity Work

**Organizational  
History**



**Leadership,  
staffing, and  
organizational  
culture**



**Financial  
structure**



**Inter-  
organizational  
dynamics**



**Meaningful  
engagement**





# Organizational history



*“There are the kind of organizations that actually do racial equity work very intentionally. They have it in their mission, they have it in their name, they are that...”*

*I don't necessarily think that we deserve any money for racial equity because that's not at the heart of what we are trying to do. It might be a *sometimes intentional and sometimes accidental* outcome.”*

*White Male, Food Hub Staff*

- Reason for being
- Mission

# Leadership, staffing, and organizational culture



- Leadership Pipeline
- Reliance on Personal Motivation
- Staffing Recruitment and Retention
- Decision-Making
- “With” vs “For” Approach

Without organizational commitment from leadership, racial equity becomes solely an **individual responsibility**.

# Financial structure



The top concern for most food hubs, regardless of legal model, was to **stay in business** and **continue operations**.

- The Margin versus the Mission
- Nonprofit food hubs
- For-profit hubs

# Inter-organizational dynamics



- Trust
- Personal Motivation of Staff at Partner Organizations
- Competition for Funding
- Financial Gatekeeping
- Maturity of the Local Food System/Movement
- Gentrification

Participants described several instances where funding was accumulated by **larger organizations**, which tended to have majority **White leadership**.

# Meaningful engagement

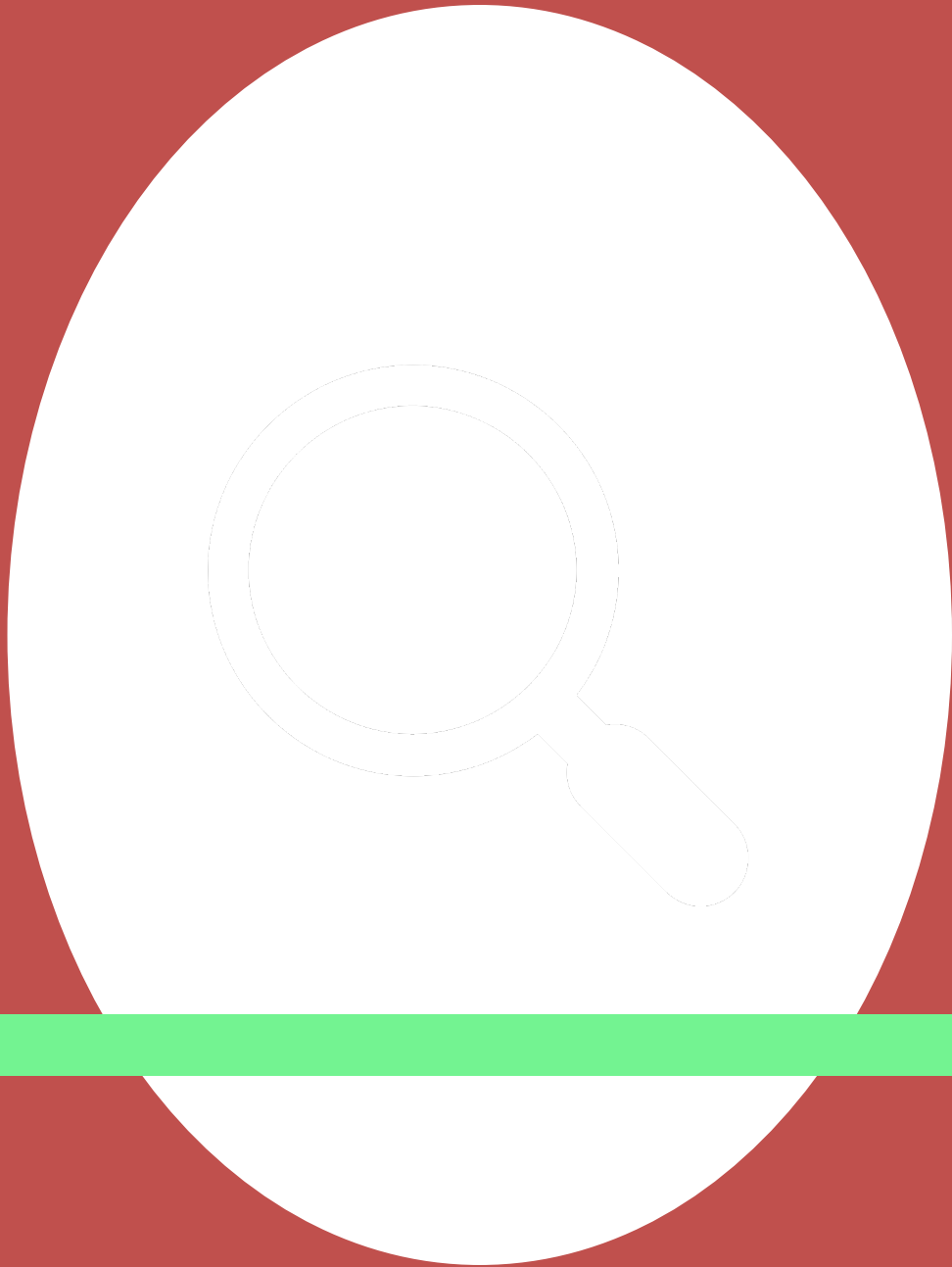


Authentic relationships, as defined by interviewees, existed between BIPOC and food hubs when there was some degree of **equitable partnership** established. Often, partnerships were made to advance a mutually beneficial goal.

- Labor
- Metrics and Data Collection
- Geographic Context
- Tokenization and Box-Checking

## Overview of Facilitators for Advancing Racial Equity Work In Food Hubs

THEME	FACILITATORS
<b>Organizational history</b>	Meaningful engagement of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) in: founding mission, initial planning, partnership formation, definition of racial equity work
<b>Leadership, staffing, and organizational culture</b>	Recruitment, hiring, and retention practices; leadership pipeline; decision making structures; feedback structures; inclusivity of organizational culture
<b>Financial structure</b>	Access to external funding for mission work; BIPOC ownership (individual or collective)
<b>Inter-organizational dynamics</b>	Context of racial power dynamics; trust between organizations; history between organizations; personal dedication to mission in partner organization staff
<b>Meaningful engagement</b>	Internal vs. external incentives for mission work; geographic demographics; depth of relationship with suppliers, staff, and customers; attention to labor conditions



# Theoretical Lenses

## **Food Sovereignty**

holds ownership and control of all aspects of food system as central elements to progress toward racial equity.

## **Universalism**

assumes that there are fundamental truths that have universal applicability.

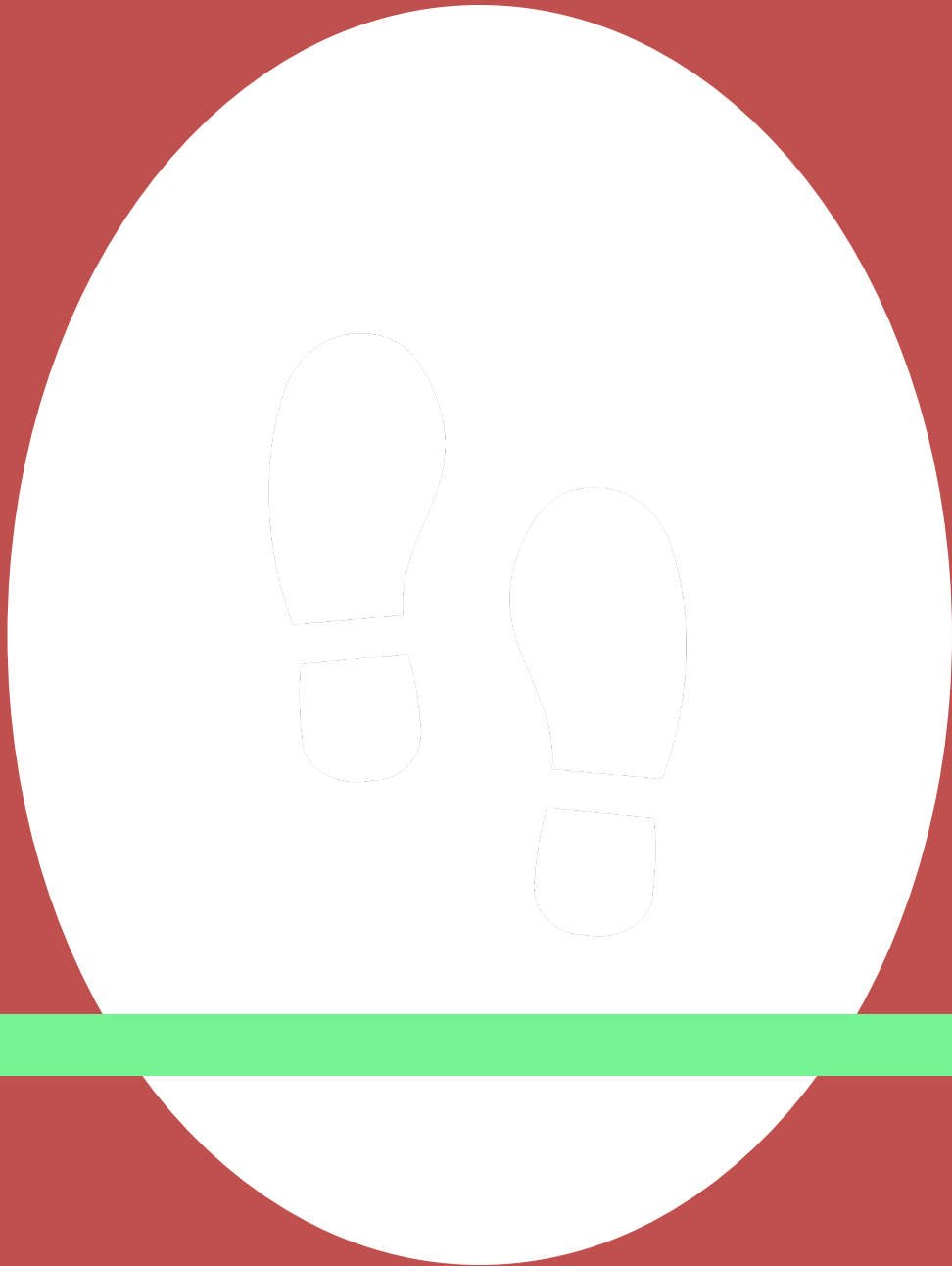
## **Intersectionality**

is how a person's identities (including but not limited to race/ethnicity, gender, class, faith, body size, sexuality and ability) combine to create unique experiences of discrimination or privilege.

## **Resilience**

maintain progress toward the goal of racial equity, "despite disturbances and shocks.





Next  
Steps  
for...



## **Non-Profits**

- Create space for your organization's definition of racial equity to expand to a plurality of definitions.
- Is the way you and your partners address racial equity advancing a White based universalist perspective?

## **Local, state, and federal government officials**

- Help create a new or empower an existing food policy council to have significant BIPOC membership and leadership that represents the community's population.

## **Food Hub Customers**

- Create a demand for racially equitable practices, including fair labor practices.
- Organize with others and leverage your buying power to create demand for racial equity practices in your local food hub.

## **Academics**

- When you write grants to do research and outreach in communities, make sure that the community-based organizations have commensurate financial resources and power in making project decisions.

## **Food Hubs**

Visit with managers of other food hubs who have operationalized equity into their operations. What are they doing that you can apply to your food hub operation?

## **Funders**

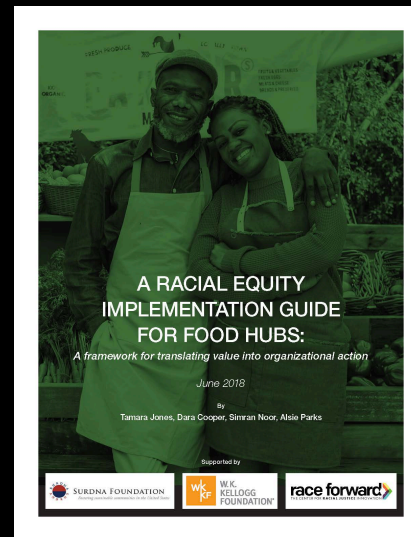
- Consider who is gatekeeping funds and power in the organizations you fund and the partners of the organizations you fund.

# Acknowledgements



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# Thank you!



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# Webinar Discussants

- **Insights** – on the report as food hub manager or co-author
- **Examples** of operationalizing equity in their food hub



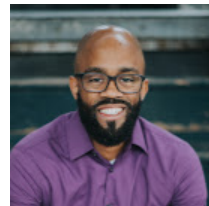
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The Common Market



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MSU CRFS and C4i



Phil Warsaw  
MSU CSUS

# Delivering More Than Food: Understanding and Operationalizing Racial Equity in Food Hubs

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- **Link to webinar recording, slides and report will be sent to all webinar registrants**
- **Funding support for this work comes in part from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation**
- **To learn more about the Racial Equity in the Food System workgroup, and related resources go to:**  
<https://www.canr.msu.edu/racial-equity-workgroup/resources>
- **Peace and health to you....**