

DENVER INSTITUTE FOR
RACE EQUITY, INCLUSION & RECONCILIATION
A CONCEPT PAPER: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK & PRACTICAL APPLICATION

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INTRODUCTION

The following is an overall proposal that advises on the justifications, merits, actionable framework, and the required pillars to establish the **Denver Institute for Race Equity, Inclusion and Reconciliation (DIREIR)**. The **objective** of DIREIR is to view systemic racism as a public health crisis resulting in the prevalence of racial bias, inequality, inequitable outcomes, and acts of violence against historically marginalized communities of color that include intersections of race/ethnicity and other areas of identity. Scientific, medical, and sociological research methodologies and inclusive practices will be utilized to identify, address and eliminate the root causes of systemic racism. The **mission** is to develop a leading research and practicum incubator that convenes, educates, and provides training and tools, with real-world application, to promote engagement in antiracist theory and inclusive practice. The Institute will operate, based on peer-reviewed data, as a think-tank and collaborative organizational nonprofit with the ultimate goal of serving as a national leader in the areas of racial equity, antiracist literature, and the practice of cultural relevance and inclusion. Based on the foundational tenants of knowledge development, the aim is to create a world-class, multi-disciplinary institute for scholarly research, training, professional development, and education on the impact of racial constructs and racism across traditional spaces of education, economics, employment, health, community and engagement. The Institute will deploy multi-tiered learning and sector-specific training within its think-tank role. It will provide the space for learning and development sessions to normalize, organize and operationalize diversity, equity and inclusion work. This includes education, industry and business, government, private and non-private organizations, among other entities. Furthermore, below is a more in-depth breakdown of the proposed **goals and strategies** for the Institute:

<p>GOAL #1: To declare systemic racism a public health crisis due to the lingering effects and disproportionate negative impacts on the quality of life and access to justice for people of color.</p>	<p>STRATEGY: (A) Collaborate with academia, local and national contributors to develop effective strategies and curricula to dismantle systemic racism and racial bias; (B) Build partnerships and systems that will set a path forward to address systemic racism and racial bias through shared measurable indicators; and (C) To develop inclusive policies and practices to eliminate institutional and structural racial inequities within systems.</p>
<p>GOAL #2: Develop strategies that dismantle systemic racism to combat racial bias and move towards growth and reconciliation through accountability and transparency.</p>	<p>STRATEGY: Convene strategic thought leaders and practitioners of equity, diversity, and inclusion; to align systems, organizations, and people to develop tools that alleviate the stress factors derived from racism and racial bias.</p>
<p>GOAL #3: To be recognized as a leading resource and incubator for innovative and sustainable ideas that promote critical discussions about racism, racial bias, equity, inclusion, and reconciliation.</p>	<p>STRATEGY: Develop a research center to deploy the scientific findings around social determinants of health and sociological impacts of systemic racism that propel racial bias and the associated consequences.</p>
<p>GOAL #4: To develop and implement a progressive antiracism curriculum for public, private, nonprofit, and educational institutions with transferable competencies and tools to dismantle systemic racism and envision the creation of equitable systems.</p>	<p>STRATEGY: Deploy a multi-tiered learning and development program to provide sector-specific training that is interconnected to the larger ecosystem. To create an inclusive environment with transferable competencies and tools to dismantle systemic racism and envision equitable systems. The following three-tiered program approach sets the learning and development foundation for antiracism work</p> <p>Tier 1 – Normalize: Learning and development opportunities tailored to specific sectors.</p> <p>Tier 2 – Organize: Cross-sector learning cohort work (connecting different professional sectors, i.e., law enforcement, education,</p>

human resource officers, public sector leaders, health care, culture, finance, etc.). Tier 3 – Operationalize: Integrated learning to bolster shared measures and racial equity frameworks.

BACKGROUND & RATIONALE

Over the last couple of years, this nation has shared witness and formed a shared consciousness to the tragic killings of black and brown people leading to a series of protests and rallies for racial justice across the country -- in part due to the advancement of technology and the rapid dissemination of information through social media and video outlets. These tragic deaths exemplify the deep-rooted structural racism that continues to disproportionately impact people of color, including the threat of violence and discrimination, highlighting the deep racial polarization that still exists in our country. Alongside the racial violence and crisis, the pandemic has also exposed layers of public health racial inequities affecting BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) communities. According to the [Center for Disease Control](#) (CDC) groups and individuals from BIPOC communities are 2-3 times more likely to be hospitalized or die from COVID-19, than their white peers. The CDC makes clear that race and ethnicity are risk markers for other underlying conditions that affect health including socioeconomic status, access to health care, and exposure to the virus related to occupation (e.g., frontline, essential, and critical infrastructure workers).

From the nationwide sentiment of a politically driven divide to the challenges of COVID-19 and the increasing social awareness around policing structures in our communities, DIREIR will aim to provide the space needed to correct the wrongs of systemic oppression. Furthering technology-based awareness, national protests and marches continue to expose ways in which people of color are treated differently and are much more likely than their white counterparts to be targeted, making clear both the nation's racial polarization and the need to address racial injustice. Such practices and policies that continue to perpetuate inequities, and that have also caused great pain in communities of color and between communities, however, can also be intentionally dismantled with sufficient public will. This includes creating spaces to help increase awareness and have critical conversations focused on racial justice and ways cities and towns across the nation can be more responsive to racial inequities.

While the more recent 2020 killings that include George Floyd (MN), Breonna Taylor (KY), Rashard Brooks (GA), and Jacob Blake (WI) at the hands of police officers have grabbed the attention of this nation, other killings not committed by police officers have also contributed to the growing concern that this nation needs to do better by people of color, such as the racially motivated deaths of Ahmad Arbery (GA) and Aidan Ellison (OR). The racial unrest that has unfolded over the last year, dating back to the summer of 2020 following George Floyd's death, is not merely a result of an isolated case. Such unrest and heightened awareness about the continuous killings of people of color has been brewing for some time now, dating back to the killing of Travon Martin in 2012 at the hands of George Zimmerman, among many other African Americans, between 2012 and 2021, at the hands of police. African Americans killed over the last ten years by police that received national attention include Eric Garner (NY), Michael Brown (MO), Tamir Rice (OH), Walter Scott (SC), Cory Jones (FL), Alton Sterling (LA), Philando Castle (MN), and Stephone Clark (FL). In response to the racial unrest and call by organizers and activists to address the racial injustice and disparate treatment of people of color across the United States, community organizations and national leaders such as Black Lives Matter (BLM) have called for police reform, with many calling for our justice system to hold police accountable for the killings of people of color. Although, as a city, we believe in alternative solutions, it's essential to recognize that many have called for the defunding and or the abolition of police departments altogether. This has resulted in many companies, organizations, and government entities working and striving to achieve diversity, inclusion, and equity initiatives to address these issues and disparities that have festered in America for centuries.

FRAMEWORK: THEORETICAL & PRACTICAL

NEXT STEPS: BUILDING THE BUSINESS STRUCTURE

DIREIR will be established with a pivotal foundation rooted in reconciliation – the restoration of faith in our institutional structures and the alignment of our shared vision, language and understanding. The most important aspect to the institute will be the shared space used to elevate our human experience. As we all understand, any great vision must be backed by a solidified structure, strategic plan, and the resources to ensure stability, longevity and impact. Over the next quarter, the Business Working Group organized by the City and County of Denver will address and finalize the Business Structure for DIREIR through identifying potential investments, future revenue streams and a multitude of funding avenues that would pave way for the development, expansion and growth of DIREIR.