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UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA AT OMAHA
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A Data and Research Series for Community Impact

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Tips to Ensure Impact:

Using Data to Understand Root Causes to Detrimental Disparate Outcomes

Cammy Watkins

Executive Director

Inclusive Communities

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Guest Speakers:

Dr. Randal Pinkett, Founding and Managing Partner BCT Partners

Dr. Randal Pinkett has established himself as an entrepreneur, speaker, author and scholar, and as a leading voice for his generation in business and technology. He is the founder, chairman and CEO of his fifth venture, BCT Partners, a multimillion-dollar research, consulting, training, technology, and analytics firm headquartered in Newark, NJ.

Dr. Pinkett has received numerous awards for business and technology excellence including the Information Technology Senior Management Forum's Beacon Award, the National Society of Black Engineers' Entrepreneur of the Year Award, and the National Urban League's Business Excellence Award. He has been featured on nationally televised programs such as The Today Show, Fox Business News, MSNBC, and CNN. In 2009, he was named to New Jersey Governor Jon Corzine's official shortlist as a potential running mate for Lieutenant Governor of New Jersey.

Peter York, Principal BCT Partners

Pete York has dedicated his career to leveraging big data to create precision analytic models to help solve some of society's greatest challenges. He has used his expertise for over 20 years as a consultant and researcher to aid nonprofits, foundations and government agencies in improving their performance, and he also serves as a national spokesperson for social impact measurement.

Pete is the author of a critically acclaimed book on the topic of evaluation for philanthropists - "Funder's Guide to Evaluation: Leveraging Evaluation to Improve Nonprofit Effectiveness." In addition, he has authored numerous research papers, and articles for academic and professional journals and most recently, he coauthored a peer-reviewed book chapter and article on the application of precision analytics in juvenile justice and child welfare.

https://www.aecf.org/resources/a-toolkit-for-centering-racial-equity-within-data-integration

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A common misstep during civic data use involves using data to describe problems without interrogating causal factors and root causes of the problem at hand. Data does not speak for itself, and it is important to carefully and collaboratively identify causal factors and root causes for observed outcomes in administrative data.

> **causal factors:** conditions that contribute to an outcome.
>
> If causal factors are not present, the outcome would be different.
>
> **root cause:** primary factor that contributes to an outcome.
>
> If the root cause was not present, the outcome would not occur.

When a social problem is observed, we often move quickly to develop solutions. For example, a community grappling with low third-grade reading scores may rush to implement an intervention such as academic-based summer programming. Factor analysis aims to uncover instances in which chosen solutions could be addressing a misunderstood problem and may therefore be ineffective. It does this by guiding stakeholders in asking why they might be observing the outcomes they do, or in other words: what is the story behind the data?

Factor analysis of systemic issues supports stakeholders in using data and lived experience to uncover the causal factors behind an issue so that solutions can go deeper.[44] For example, factor analysis could lead a community to address low third-grade reading scores by addressing the inequitable distribution of resources to support early childhood development in feeder neighborhoods before investing in downstream interventions.

Toolkit Key Takeaways:

DELIBERATE EFFORTS TO ADDRESS STRUCTURAL RACISM, INSTITUTIONAL RACISM AND UNRECOGNIZED BIAS

In the push to increase data sharing and integration, agencies often gloss over the very real effects of racial bias in system design — with serious consequences for the populations they serve. But intentionally centering racial equity from the ground up can result in data integration that's both effective and ethical.

ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

In the data analysis stage, problematic practices include overlooking the impact of historical policies and using one-dimensional data to propel an agenda.

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