

Framing Data and Equity: Findings and Recommendations for the Data Funders Collaborative

Topos Partnership 2024



Dynamics at the intersection of data, government, and racial equity


How do we effectively reach audiences that might be indifferent or even hostile to efforts to help promote racial equity?

The Framing Data and Equity Report:

Identifies traps and opportunities for making the case that promoting greater racial equity requires an abundance of good data, and provides sample approaches/language to navigate to elicit broader support and less pushback.



Recommended Approach: “Knowing is better than NOT knowing.”

 Focus on the idea that good decisions and actions require knowing what's going on. Provide easy-to-understand, real-world examples of how good information can lead to positive outcomes.

EXAMPLES:

- Trusted helpers (nurses, teachers, social workers, etc.) want more information in order to do a better job.
- Institutions (schools, school boards, hospitals, etc.) can do a better job if they know what's going on.
- Different groups face different challenges where help is needed (based on age, health, location, and race), and we can only address these if we know about them.
- **All kinds of groups of people face challenges and require tailored solutions to address their specific needs. In this context race is not the only consideration, and helps audiences relate to the idea of a focus on the needs of different populations.**
- Community members know the most and should be active in gathering information and identify ways to use it.



Identified Key Challenges:

- ❌ **Data is abstract, distant:** Data feels far removed from people's lives and concerns — hard to achieve a positive and engaged conversation.
- ❌ **Data feels dehumanizing:** People can feel that “numbers” can't capture the truth, and that data ignores the real, human essence.
- ❌ **Data can be used against us:** People suspect that data will be used in ways that hurt rather than benefit them.
- ❌ **Society should be “colorblind” (race-related data is irrelevant):** Among “race-dismissive” audiences, attention to race is perceived as disingenuous, divisive, and to be avoided.
- ❌ **Skepticism about government:** People question the government's intentions and its competence to collect and use data.

About the Report

Framing Data and Equity: Findings and Recommendations for the Data Funders Collaborative was conducted by the Topos Partnership. The report and accompanying toolkit are intended to support paths for effective, community-driven data-related efforts, specifically toward the goal of increasing racial equity.

Links to the research:

[Framing Data and Equity: Findings and Recommendations for the Data Funders Collaborative](#)

[Framing Data and Equity: Executive Summary](#)

[Making the Case for “Data for Equity”: A Toolkit](#)