

# Clackamas County Research Justice Study

## Frequently Asked Questions

### What is research justice?

A research approach that goes beyond extracting information and collecting a needs assessment of groups. It recognizes that those who are a part of underrepresented and marginalized communities are the experts in their lived experiences and have the strategies and solutions to ensure the well-being of their communities and environments. Research justice means that communities lead the projects, not the researchers. To accomplish this, researchers must build relationships with community members not only to gain their expertise but to establish trust. Marginalized communities have a long history of being exploited by researchers for their knowledge with little to no compensation, input in the process, or control over outcomes and data. Due to this, it is our primary objective to spend time building this trust and establishing a compensated community led steering committee to inform our work and ensure we do not repeat the same harmful practices.

### What do BIPOC, communities of color, and people of color mean? Why are we focusing on race?

Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC), communities of color, and people of color refer to those who belong to racial and ethnic groups and/or are citizens of sovereign Tribal nations. BIPOC can include members/citizens of Tribal Nations, but should not be conflated with the 9 Federally-recognized Tribes. Furthermore, those belonging to federally and non-federally recognized Tribal nations have ties to significant landmarks and places in Clackamas County, such as Mt. Hood and Willamette Falls. These lands, which Tribal nations were forcibly removed from, continue to hold significant spiritual importance to their communities. Additional communities we intend to center in this project include people from Asian, Pacific Islander, Native Hawaiian, Middle Eastern, Latinx, Slavic, Black, African American, African, immigrant, and refugee communities.

The reason why we are focusing on these groups is that they have experienced historical oppression, genocide, and other hardships due to how they have been

racialized in this country. These are also groups that are negatively impacted by racism and xenophobia, which systematically impacts their livelihoods. Due to this, racial and ethnic minorities disproportionately experience poverty, health issues and mortality, and divestment. Although white Western European descendants also experience many of these hardships, racial minorities experience such outcomes at greater proportions compared to white communities.

### **What does it mean to lead with race? What about gender, sexuality, class/income, religion, and ability?**

Leading with race means that the research project team and its aims recognize that racism, like other forms of oppression, is a systemic problem built into the laws, policies, and practices that shape our institutions. Because of this, the ongoing legacies of racist laws, policies, and practices influence all aspects of people's lives, like their jobs, education, housing, health, and safety. This is especially present for those who have another marginalized identity (e.g., sexuality, gender, or disability) and being a person of color. We want to have a Clackamas County where every person has full access and opportunities to succeed in all areas of life, health, jobs, schools, civic engagement, public safety, etc. We also know that there are many underserved/vulnerable populations in our County. Leading with race is not ignoring those factors; it is strategic. When all else is equal, race is the factor that points to inequities across all indicators for success. When we address inequities from that frame, we will also help to address other areas of marginalization. For more information on this, visit the [Government Alliance on Race Equity](#). ***Yet, we will not know how to address it unless we know who the communities of color are and the strengths, challenges, and needs within those communities.***

### **Who will be involved in this research?**

This research is a place- and people-based project, which means that it seeks to have a clear understanding of the experiences, needs, and desires of people based on their identities *and* where they live. We are collaborating with those who represent the different regions of Clackamas as well as different communities. Our collaborators include cities, CPOs, education systems, elected officials, private sectors, community members, and leaders throughout Clackamas County. The communities we are focusing on are people of color who live in or interact with urban, suburban, rural, and wild regions in Clackamas. We understand that the needs and experiences of someone living in a rural area are very different from someone living in an urban or suburban area. We want to be respectful of these differences and make sure we have representation from all community types, not just one.

## What are the goals of the project? How will we know we are successful?

The goal of this project is to better understand the experiences of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) Clackamas residents within city limits and outside of those jurisdictions to the surrounding areas and the region. To do so in any meaningful way, we must work together to study, learn, engage, and listen to our BIPOC communities. Previously, Clackamas County partnered with the Coalition of Communities of Color (CCC) to put together an initial environmental scan that provides a snapshot of the lived experiences of BIPOC communities in Clackamas County. In the next steps, we are digging deeper into the themes raised through the environmental scan. Currently, the Coalition of Communities of Color is beginning step 2 of the project. Clackamas County is asking community members to join us in this multi-year research justice project by participating in the process alongside us. This includes holding culturally specific community sessions and administering other research tools. Community engagement will also help to verify community data, draft the report, and develop a call to action. Afterward, we will present research findings and call to action when the report has been finalized. We will know that we are successful when we have:

- Representation from the different communities, and regions in Clackamas
- Confirmation from community members of the accuracy of our data
- Have disseminated the report in a format that is accessible to everyone
- Detail recommendations that can inform Clackamas' future decisions

## How is the project funded?

The Leading with Race project has funding from many institutions throughout Clackamas. Specifically, the funding for this project comes from County general fund dollars and from partners who have pledged financial commitments including cities, community colleges, regional governments and departments, and the private sector. We are excited and honored to have multiple cities and entities supporting the Leading with Race Research Project that represent the spectrum of urban, suburban, rural needs and experiences.

## How can I get involved?

If you are interested in participating or supporting our work we highly encourage you to:

1. **Engage** to better the experiences of BIPOC communities.
  - Participate in community engagement meetings
  - Disseminate information, surveys, and other useful data.
2. **Support**
  - Support the effort with community members, stakeholders, and other leaders in the County.

3. **Contact:** Office of Equity and Inclusion: Clackamas County.

***Thank you for your support and interest in this work!***