

# ORGANIZATIONAL EQUITY PRACTICE (OEP)

A PROGRAM OF TRINITY BOSTON CONNECTS



youth • community • equity

## 2017 - 2021 REPORT

OUR THEORY OF CHANGE ON ITS FEET



ANALYSIS AND REPORT BY SEED IMPACT

# What We Do

Organizational Equity Practice (OEP) supports organizations and organizational leaders as they strive to incorporate racial equity, restorative justice, and trauma inclusion into the fabric of their respective organizational lives. Our approach allows individuals and teams to engage in the courageous conversations required for deep change work to take hold and sustain itself in organizational cultures.

OEP provides a space for creating relationships that allow people to take risks and be vulnerable with one another. This foundation of trust is essential for any organizational system committed to building and maintaining a race equity culture in the workplace. Authentic relationships based on trust are crucial elements that enable deeper learning.



## OUR HISTORY, IN BRIEF

OEP officially began in 2017, with Rebecca Jackson as the Director. Rebecca came to Trinity in 2012 and worked in the Trinity Boston Counseling Center, where she did individual clinical work and embedded clinical work with other youth-serving nonprofits. She also provided racial equity and trauma-focused consulting and training to organizations such as City Year.

The Racial Equity Learning Community (RELC) emerged as a quarterly event, under the leadership of Alicia Ridenour and Rebecca. The value was increasingly apparent in bringing people together to discuss challenges involved for organizations to become more equitable, and to share strengths and resources. Through RELC, Rebecca began to provide racial equity-focused consulting services to The Steppingstone Foundation.

All of this work became the basis for OEP's clinically-centered consultation services within organizations.



**Rebecca  
Jackson**

**Alicia  
Ridenour**

Over time, three Essential Community Practices (ECP's) were defined by Trinity Boston Connects, and became integral to OEP's approach:



**Racial  
Equity**



**Restorative  
Justice**



**Trauma  
Inclusion**

On March 13, 2020, as COVID-19 bore down upon us, OEP's first virtual learning session was conducted in lieu of a pre-scheduled, in-person, Senior Leaders Learning Circle—a signature offering. Amid many uncertainties, it became apparent to simply set up a Zoom link and continue scheduled programming. In that initial session, OEP learned that leaders appreciated the consistency provided by online gatherings. Participants valued the opportunity to come together, learn from and support one another, and center equity when it was tempting to abandon that quest. Learning and adapting over time, virtual programming continued through 2021.

## SUMMARY HIGHLIGHTS OF OUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- During our first five years OEP impacted 98 racial equity leaders.
- Ninety of these individual leaders have contributed to change efforts in their organizations or communities.
- In addition, we directly engaged 31 organizations serving more than 15,000 youth across Boston. Organizations engage with OEP over multiple years to achieve deep culture change.
- 68 annualized outcomes have been documented, as detailed in this report.

### OEP'S CENTRAL DESIGN PRINCIPLES:

#### Relationship Building

We prioritize relationship building in every level of our work, because it is one of the pillars of lasting change. Relational connectivity creates the energy and holds the tension that is often required for powerful work to take place.

#### Trust

A foundation of trust is necessary for sustainable impact in any organization that is interested in creating a more equitable culture. Indeed, culture change is proportional to the level of trust in organizations.

#### Systems Thinking

A systems thinking lens enables us to look below the surface and across all levels of an organization. We go beyond superficial interventions that don't consider the whole system (events and patterns), and design for solutions that address root causes (structures, mental models, and values).



# How We Develop and Evaluate Our Work

OEP begins with an assessment crafted with care to both understand and elicit more of an organization's strengths, challenges, hopes, and desires. We use the information gleaned to customize our interventions, tailored to each organization's unique profile.

The assessment is comprised of listening sessions and an online survey. The listening sessions provide a space for participants to share their hopes and concerns about this process. We also elicit their perspective on the current state of their organization through the lens of Trinity Boston Connects' Essential Community Practices (ECPs). To the best of our ability, we reduce the power dynamics in the room that may make it difficult for people to give honest feedback. We do this by separating participants into groups based on their position in the organization.

The online survey, asks a series of questions based on the elements that we believe are essential to building a healthy community. For example, the survey requests specific demographic data to provide us with a more complete picture of the various identity dynamics in the organization. Finally, we review the survey results to identify and report back on trends.

Additionally, our **Healthy Community Assessment** is an organizational evaluation tool that measures the cultural factors that hinder or support racial equity work. We consider the following domains:

**COMMUNITY  
VALUES**

**CHANNELS OF  
COMMUNICATION  
AND DECISION  
MAKING**

**COMMUNITY  
CULTURE  
AND WORK  
ENVIRONMENT**

**COMMUNITY  
PARTNERSHIP**

Our experience in various organizational settings has affirmed these factors as critical to identify these factors as critical, underlying forces that significantly impact an organization. Understanding how community members view these cultural forces helps us develop a customized plan to help build a healthier community.

The online assessment is paired with in-person (live or virtual) listening sessions, which allow us to talk to community members about organizational strengths and challenges and begin to observe interpersonal dynamics. We structure these listening sessions with an awareness of power dynamics, attempting to group people based upon roles and reporting relationships to create as egalitarian a space as possible.

Once the listening sessions and online survey are complete, our team combs through the results and develops recommendations. These are shared with the whole staff at the next available time. To ensure that the organization's leadership is prepared, we meet with the senior leadership team separately immediately before sharing the recommendations with the entire staff.



**Tea time has given me a space to share, be heard and know that I am not alone in how I am feeling, working in a predominately white space really makes it difficult and isolating to process things, and I'm grateful to have found a space that allows for that safe processing.**

*-Emerging Leader*

# Our Theory of Change

This report (2017 through 2021) illustrates how OEP is helping nonprofits become places of healing and equity for everyone, especially the most marginalized and vulnerable among us.

The data presented below were compiled using SEED Impact's Theory of Change on Its Feet™. This framework guides our visioning, goal-setting, and ongoing assessment of OEP impact.

We focus on our work with two outcome targets:

- **1. Racial Equity Leaders** - Senior and mid-level leaders who come together, form community, and deepen their identity as values-driven leaders to create and drive a vision for racial equity in their organizations.
- **2. Organizations** - Groups large and small, in Boston and beyond, working with OEP often over multiple years, building capacity to co-create and sustain healthy, safe, and supportive environments for their staff and the people they serve.

We track both the quantity and depth of our work each year.

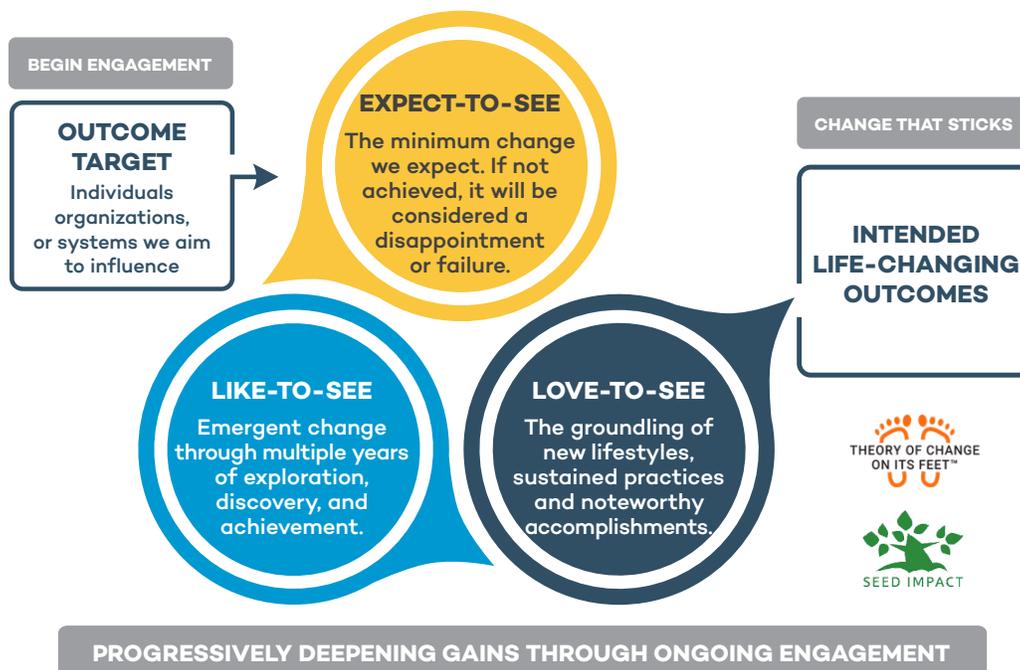
- Quantity is the number of leaders or organizations impacted that year.
- Depth reflects the intensity of work and their corresponding actions to promote racial healing.

Clear criteria are defined to capture three major threshold advances for each outcome target. We define these progressive levels of change as Expect-to-See to Like-to-See to Love-to-See.

**2 OUTCOME TARGETS:**

- 1 Racial Equity Leaders**
- 2 Organizations**

## Theory of Change on Its Feet™



Diligent attention to this framework ensures that day-to-day activities are aligned with our theory of change targeting our vision for long-term social impact.

# Results For Each Outcome Target

OEP encourages more leaders to engage with us at deeper levels, from year-to-year. This dramatically increases the likelihood that sustained, life-changing, and systems-changing results can be attained.

Below we provide annual and cumulative results for our two outcome targets:

## 1

### RACIAL EQUITY LEADER RESULTS

OEP facilitates peer learning and coaching spaces for leadership cohorts. Leaders come together as a peer learning community and deepen their identity as values-driven leaders who can create and drive a vision for racial equity in their respective organizations.

Senior-leader cohorts meet for ten monthly sessions. Mid-level leader cohorts meet for six monthly sessions.

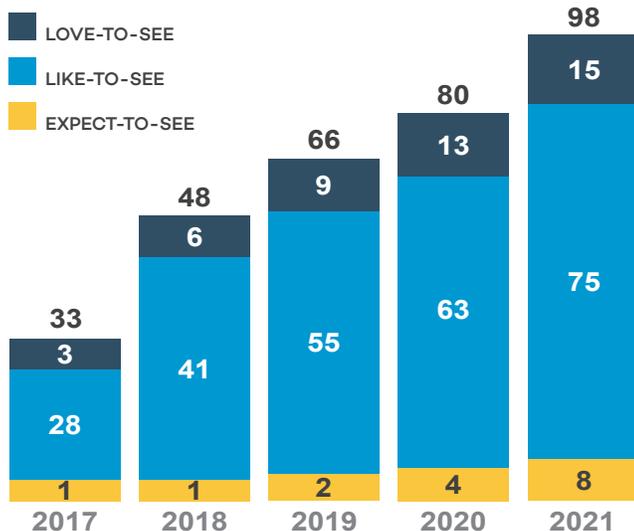
In 2021, 18 individuals participated in peer learning:

- **Four participants (22 percent)** were observed as early learners (expect-to-see)
- **12 leaders (67 percent)** led change with others in their organizations (like-to-see)
- **Two leaders (11 percent)** additionally modeled deep change and led cross-organizational initiatives (love-to-see).

### Theory of Change on Its Feet™



### CUMULATIVE OUTCOMES OEP Leaders



Over the five years, 2017-2021, OEP engaged 98 individuals in annual leadership circles or mentoring. By end 2021:

- **Eight individuals (8 percent)** were early learners (expect-to-see),
- **75 leaders (77 percent)** led change with others in their organizations (like-to-see)
- **15 (15 percent)** additionally modeled deep change and led cross-organizational initiatives (love-to-see)

**There was a 22 percent increase in cumulative outcomes from 2020 to 2021**, from 80 to 98, most notably at the like-to-see level.

# 2

## RESULTS FOR ORGANIZATIONS

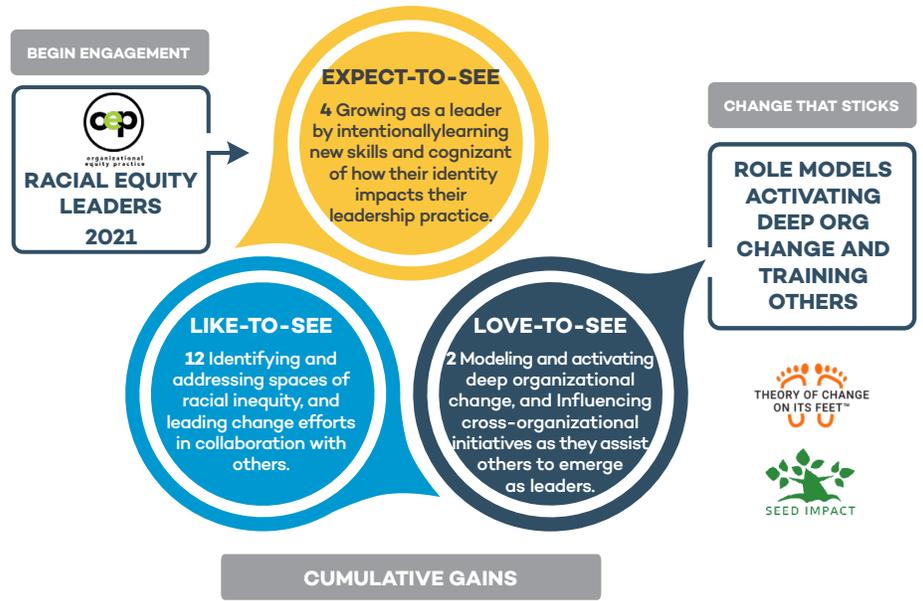
Ongoing relationships are maintained in alignment with capacity, as organizations strive to incorporate racial equity, restorative justice, and trauma inclusion into the fabric of their work.

Services offered by OEP include leadership coaching, equity and caucus team support, community building, capacity building, team building, consulting, and crisis responses.

In 2021, thirteen organizations regularly engaged with the OEP team. Of these, six were new and seven continuing with OEP from prior years:

- **Eight (62 percent)** learned new practices (expect-to-see)
- **Five (38 percent)** integrated new practice in their work culture (like-to-see)
- OEP's love-to-see outcome measure remains the north star for these organizations and others

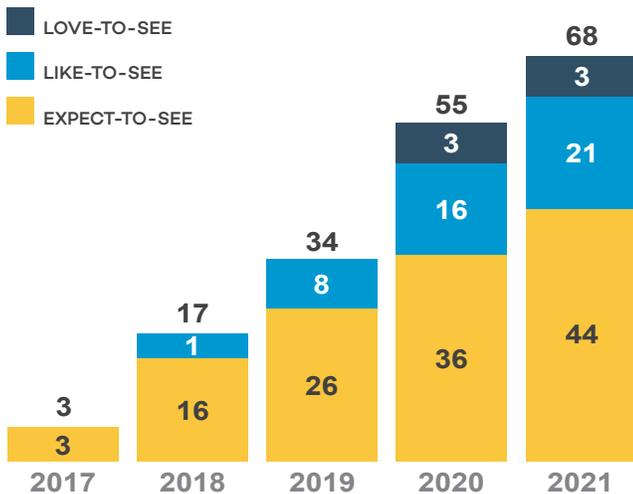
## Theory of Change on Its Feet™



**My sense of hope has shifted from idealistic hope that felt amorphous and abstract to a more realistic hope grounded in understanding of what needs to happen.**

*-Emerging Leader*

### CUMULATIVE OUTCOMES OEP Organizations



Over the five years, 2017-2021, OEP engaged 31 organizations in single-to-multi-year training, coaching, and consultations. By end of 2021:

- **44** organizations achieved expect-to-see learning
- **21** organizations integrated new practices in their work culture (like-to-see)
- **3** organizations were modeling the power... and sharing wisdom and learning throughout Boston and beyond

# Leaderful Voices



**Sharing openly with a group of people I've never met within an hour and on zoom wasn't hard, but it was stressful. It was a reminder of the power of vulnerability and the commitment I made a long time ago to always try to be a leader that models that and asks for it from their team.**

*-Leader in response to her first cohort session*



**I worked with a very patient, kind, persistent colleague, who really valued listening to everyone's perspective first and often had a different perspective from many people. She'd wait until everyone had voiced their opinions and been heard, and then would raise questions and share her perspective. I began to see how valuable her insights were and how much stronger she made our team and our work. I appreciate that she always looked for the best in me and in my colleagues who were too quick to rush ahead. Now, when I'm working with colleagues with different approaches and styles, I try really, really hard to do what this former colleague taught me, and be really patient and listen and value and see the best in everyone.**

*-Leader in response to her first cohort session*



Organizations committed to healing are resilient and able to learn from their mistakes. Their staff ask deeper questions, have an ability to recognize their own harmful practices, and quickly find ways to better address them. Those in positions of power are able to let go of the need for control, and staff can bring their whole selves to work.

Contact OEP to explore possibilities: Rebecca Jackson [rjackson@trinityconnects.org](mailto:rjackson@trinityconnects.org)

