

# Embedding Equity in Farm to School

The National Farm to School Network issued a Call to Action that **100% of communities will hold power in a racially just food system**. Incorporating a racial equity lens into programs, policies, and other farm to school activities is essential for addressing the fundamental causes of racial and social inequalities. It serves as an upstream method to transform food systems. **Here are some ways to integrate an equity focus into your work:**

1

**PROGRAM EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT.** Design program evaluation that centers transparency, embraces complexity, and honors qualitative and storytelling opportunities as valid data sources. Use [NFSN's Racial and Social Equity Assessment Tool for Farm to School Programs and Policy](#) to identify gaps in your framework that can help you and your community strategize on what it means to foster an environment for equity.

2

**FOOD JUSTICE FRAMEWORK.** Challenge the concept that food choices exist only at the individual level of the [Social Ecological Model of Health](#) but rather, are influenced by external policy, economic, and other structural factors. Examine how social connections, institutional systems, and culture influence people's relationships with food and therefore, impact health outcomes.

Individual

Relationships

Community

Societal

Race/ethnicity and other demographic factors, genetics, knowledge, and skills.

Household size and income, food security, family values, and culture.

Schools, childcare programs, social services, land access, and residential location.

Larger systems such as government, public health care, agriculture, and food industries.

3

**VALUE-BASED COMMUNITY AGREEMENTS.** When working with groups of stakeholders, partners, and community members, ground yourselves in developing community agreements (also known as “group norms”). This practice allows for people in the space to balance operational and relational aspects of working together as well as cultivate trust and safety. [Value-based community agreements](#) may use an approach such as [Dynamic Governance](#), which is a consent-based decision making process that enables all voices to be heard.

4

**FOSTER SHARED LANGUAGE.** Ground collaboration, programs, and other farm to school efforts in shared language. Language is a powerful tool to communicate and create lasting impressions. Having shared language in equity work is essential in *calling in* biases that may exist in the space, promoting inclusivity, safety, and belonging, as well as understanding what it means to dismantle systems that have historically oppressed marginalized communities.

5

**CO-CREATION AND CO-LEARNING.** Re-imagine the way in which you work together and use a Cultural Humility framework to meet communities where they are at. [NFSN's Racial Equity Learning Lab](#) is a project that focuses on co-creation and collaborative learning while considering the historical and structural racism that exist in our food system.



“Centering equity and advancing racial justice is long-haul work that requires self-reflection, education, difficult conversations, and sustained action. It’s about making change; about learning; about growing as a movement; about shifting, and yes, it’s about dismantling systems of oppression that exist both within us and outside of us.”

—James Kwele, Vice President  
Organizational and Food Systems Equity at EcoTrust and  
NFSN Advisory Board Member

