

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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SPR is a research, evaluation and technical assistance firm located in Oakland, Calif. with expertise in the areas of philanthropy, youth development, education, health, workforce development and other human service programs. Its Philanthropy, Equity, and Youth Division evaluates the role of philanthropic and public-sector investments in policies and programs designed to improve outcomes for diverse populations across the country and support change strategies focused on racial, gender and place-based equity. For more information about SPR or this report, contact **Traci Endo Inouye**, vice president and director of the Philanthropy, Equity, and Youth Division.

The Colorado Trust is a foundation dedicated to ensuring all Coloradans have the opportunity to thrive. The Colorado Trust partners with people and organizations across Colorado that are working to make positive changes in their communities. For more information about the HEA strategy or advocacy grantmaking at The Colorado Trust, contact **Noelle Dorward**, advocacy & policy partner; or **Felisa Gonzales, PhD, MPH**, evaluation & learning manager.

» INTRODUCTION

In 2014, The Colorado Trust launched the **Health Equity Advocacy (HEA)** strategy, a grantee-driven, multiyear investment designed to build a robust field of organizations that advance policy solutions to address health equity and improve the health and well-being of all Coloradans. Early into their work together, and after wrestling with how best to meet this charge, particularly for those that face the greatest barriers to achieving health equity, the 18 grantee organizations that make up the HEA Cohort (the “Cohort”) made an explicit commitment to center racial equity in their field-building efforts. It was an enormous undertaking that proved both challenging and deeply rewarding.

In January 2019, The Colorado Trust (The Trust) and its evaluation and learning partner, Social Policy Research Associates (SPR), released a learning paper that recounts the story of the Cohort’s efforts to put racial equity at the center of its work. *Centering Race in Health Equity Advocacy: Lessons Learned* describes the rationale for centering race in health equity, the Cohort’s vision for racial equity capacity building, the multilevel capacity-building strategies the Cohort employed, the progress made within these levels, and the challenges and lessons that emerged over the course of the work. Since the release of that paper, the Cohort has continued its efforts to build the racial equity capacity of the field at multiple levels, incorporating some of the learnings that surfaced in their previous efforts as they endeavored to provide more opportunities to more people and organizations across Colorado.

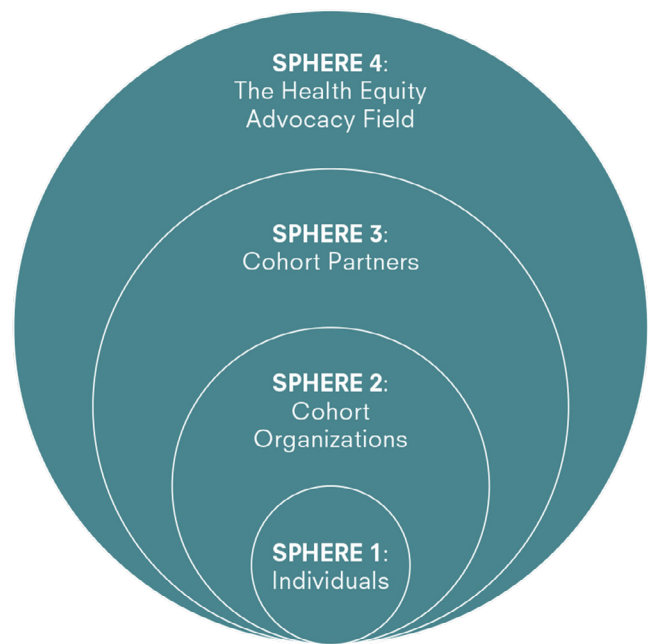
This paper captures those continued efforts and serves as an addendum to the previous learning paper. It is informed by (1) a survey (offered in English and Spanish) of second-round racial caucusing participants (racial caucusing is described on the next page); (2) a document review (meeting notes, event evaluations, consultant reports); and (3) select data and findings from **SPR’s HEA Phase 3 final evaluation report**. The remainder of this paper will include a re-articulation of the Cohort’s vision and a multilevel framework for racial equity capacity building, followed by updated findings at each level of the framework. The paper concludes with some reflections about the Cohort’s capacity-building efforts and how it supports efforts towards a more equitable Colorado.

» HEALTH EQUITY ADVOCACY COHORT RACIAL EQUITY VISION AND FRAMEWORK

The HEA Cohort’s Racial Equity Team (RE Team), a subset of organizations empowered to support the Cohort in its racial equity capacity-building efforts, developed a vision and framework to guide the team’s efforts. Informed by feedback it gathered from the Cohort and SPR about racial equity capacity-building needs among the Cohort and across the health equity advocacy field, the Cohort’s multilevel framework encompasses four “spheres of influence,” wherein simultaneous investments in capacity building could strengthen a field of health equity advocates working towards a vision of health equity for all Coloradans (see textbox to the right):

Vision: The Racial Equity Team will work to lay the foundation for an anti-racist movement for equity in which white communities and communities of color have a shared sense of belonging and understand racism to be a common enemy and actively work to dismantle it and build an equitable Colorado.

- **Sphere 1** is made up of individuals from Cohort organizations that consistently participate in the leadership and engagement work of the HEA Cohort.
- **Sphere 2** is made up of the individuals and the policies, practices and procedures at each Cohort organization.
- **Sphere 3** is made up of the individuals and organizations with whom Cohort organizations partner in service of their health equity work.
- **Sphere 4** is the health equity advocacy field in Colorado.



The Cohort envisioned these spheres as being nested inside each other such that the strengthening of the racial equity capacity of one sphere would ultimately have a radiating impact on the spheres beyond it. Moreover, the RE Team endeavored to maximize impact by investing simultaneously in strengthening all spheres. The following sections describe the second round of work within each sphere in more detail, including descriptions of key capacity-building strategies and information on participation and outcomes.

» **SPHERE 1: BUILDING THE RACIAL EQUITY CAPACITY OF INDIVIDUALS**

Racial identity caucusing, facilitated by Transformative Alliances (a Denver-based consultant), has been the Cohort’s primary strategy for building the racial equity capacity of individuals. Racial caucuses are spaces for white people and people of color to explore how they have internalized systems of white supremacy and oppression and how those identity dynamics operate in different contexts to perpetuate systemic racism. Understanding how identity dynamics operate in different contexts provides a foundation for people to create strategies to overcome barriers of oppression caused or reinforced by those same contexts. In Transformative Alliances’ model, racial caucusing happens in separate spaces in order to create safe spaces for deep exploration and vulnerability. In the second round of racial caucusing, a facilitator of color supported a caucus space specifically for people of color (POC), and a white facilitator supported a caucus space specifically for white people. A separate “third-space” caucus was also created for participants who identify as people of color but who are perceived as white (also known as “white passing”). This caucus was facilitated by the POC caucus facilitator. Third-space participants often also choose to participate in either the POC or white caucus in addition to the third-space caucus.

ROUND 2 IMPLEMENTATION

Since the publication of the learning paper, the RE Team engaged Transformative Alliances for a second round of caucusing to provide opportunities for more Cohort members and their network partnersⁱ to benefit from the caucusing experience. For the second round of caucusing, Transformative Alliances made several shifts to its model to honor feedback and learnings that emerged in the first round, to meet the needs of a new round of participants as well as first-round participants who desired continued engagement, and to accommodate facilitator capacity. These shifts included holding a longer, more comprehensive kickoff session to assure that participants were all on the same page with their understandings of core concepts so they could, as one facilitator shared, “dive right in,” having less frequent but longer sessions for the white caucus to accommodate geographic spread and capacity constraints,ⁱⁱ and no longer holding caucusing sessions during Cohort convenings. Because there were more third-space caucus participants in the second round of caucusing, all of whom were located in the Denver metro region, Transformative Alliances was also able to conduct in-person caucusing with this group.ⁱⁱⁱ

In this second round of caucusing support, Transformative Alliances was also able to create a space for first-round caucus participants to continue, though in a modified format. This modified model included engaging in facilitated caucusing every other month (instead of monthly), with Cohort member-led affinity groups (with coaching from Transformative Alliances) occurring in the months between caucusing. It should be noted that while this model was initially adopted by both the continuing POC and white caucuses, it ultimately did not work well for the POC caucus. Many POC caucus members were already leading racial equity capacity-building work in their own organizations and felt further strained by the responsibility of facilitating this same type of work within their Cohort affinity group. This caucus also included members that spoke different languages, which was embraced, but which also made facilitation by Cohort members more complicated. It became clear that having POC caucus members hold the responsibility of facilitating within this complex space reinforced the common practice of overburdening people of color in racial equity spaces and thus limiting the opportunities for people of color to receive full benefit from those spaces. The continuing first-round POC caucusers thus made the decision to halt the affinity group and just continue caucusing every other month.

Ultimately, 42 individuals completed the second round of caucusing, representing 15 Cohort organizations and six network partners. Fifteen participated in the POC caucus, 23 participated in the white caucus, and four participated in the third-space caucus. Twenty-six participants from the first round of caucusing continued their efforts in the second round, through the modified caucus/affinity group model. These participants included 13 who identified as people of color and 13 who identified as white. The table in Exhibit 1 provides an overview of information about participants in the second round of caucusing.

Exhibit 1. Round 2 Participants by Type

Participant Type	Second-Round Caucusing (2019)	Continuing First-Round Caucus Participants (2019)
Total Participants	42 participants	26 participants
Caucus/Affinity Group Type	15 POC, 23 white, 4 third space	13 POC, 13 white
Cohort Organizations	15	10
Network Partners	6	N/A
Executive Directors	3	5
Survey Responses	27 (64%) (10 POC, 14 white, 3 third space)	No survey ^{iv}

INDIVIDUAL-LEVEL PROGRESS

By offering another round of racial identity caucusing and adjusting their model to meet various needs and capacity constraints, the RE Team and Transformative Alliances were able to expand access to caucusing to more people. This included not only more staff and leaders of Cohort organizations, but also of other partner organizations. In total, 73 people participated across both rounds of caucusing (28 POC, 39 white, 6 third space).^v

To understand what they gained from their experience, the RE Team asked second-round participants to respond to the same survey taken by first-round participants. This survey focused on three learning domains that are tied to caucusing goals: participants' understanding of race and racism; reflections on resistance, agency and power; and participants' understanding of and ability to confront systems of oppression. Respondents answered survey questions within each domain, using a five-point scale (1= not at all, 2 = slightly, 3 = moderately, 4 = substantially, 5 = extremely).

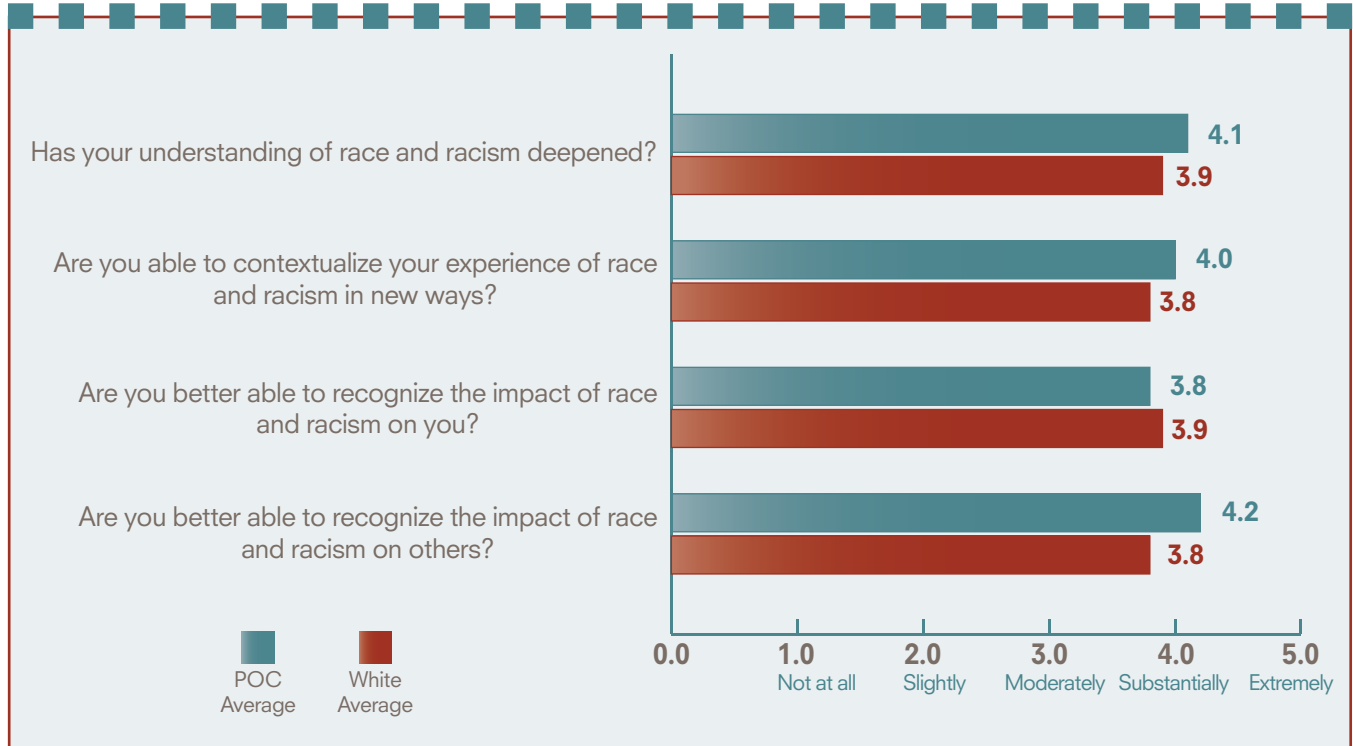
Before reviewing the results, there are a few factors to note that place some limits on interpretation. First, the response rate was much lower in the second round of caucusing (64%) than in the first round (87%). Second, because SPR did not conduct interviews during this round of caucusing, the evaluation team is only able to report on survey patterns and is limited in its ability to make robust meaning of them. The following sections provide an overview of survey responses from the second round of caucusing, broken down by learning domain and caucus type.

The **understanding race and racism** learning domain included four questions focused on the extent to which respondents had a deeper and more contextualized understanding of race and racism, as well as the extent to which they could recognize the impact of race and racism on themselves and others (see Exhibit 2). Overall, responses seemed to indicate strong progress in this domain across all caucuses. Average ratings across all questions in this domain hovered between “moderately” and “substantially,” though in general they leaned more towards “substantially,” with no average rating lower than 3.7 out of a possible 5. Highest average ratings came from the POC caucus, in response to the question: “Are you better able to recognize the impact of race and racism on others?” (4.2). In general, the POC caucus results indicated stronger progress than the white caucus in this domain, with ratings from only one question not meeting the “substantial” mark: “Are you able to recognize the impact of race and racism on you?” By contrast, for the white caucus, none of the average ratings for questions in this domain quite met the “substantial” mark. This reflects an opposite pattern from the first round of caucusing, wherein ratings from the white caucus were higher than the POC caucus in this domain.

“ For us to do this work, it begins with us discovering, understanding, reflecting on our individual relationship with race and racism—and being provided a space to have these conversations. In a sense, I think this is a necessary foundation to progress our work forward in the health equity movement.”

~ POC caucus participant

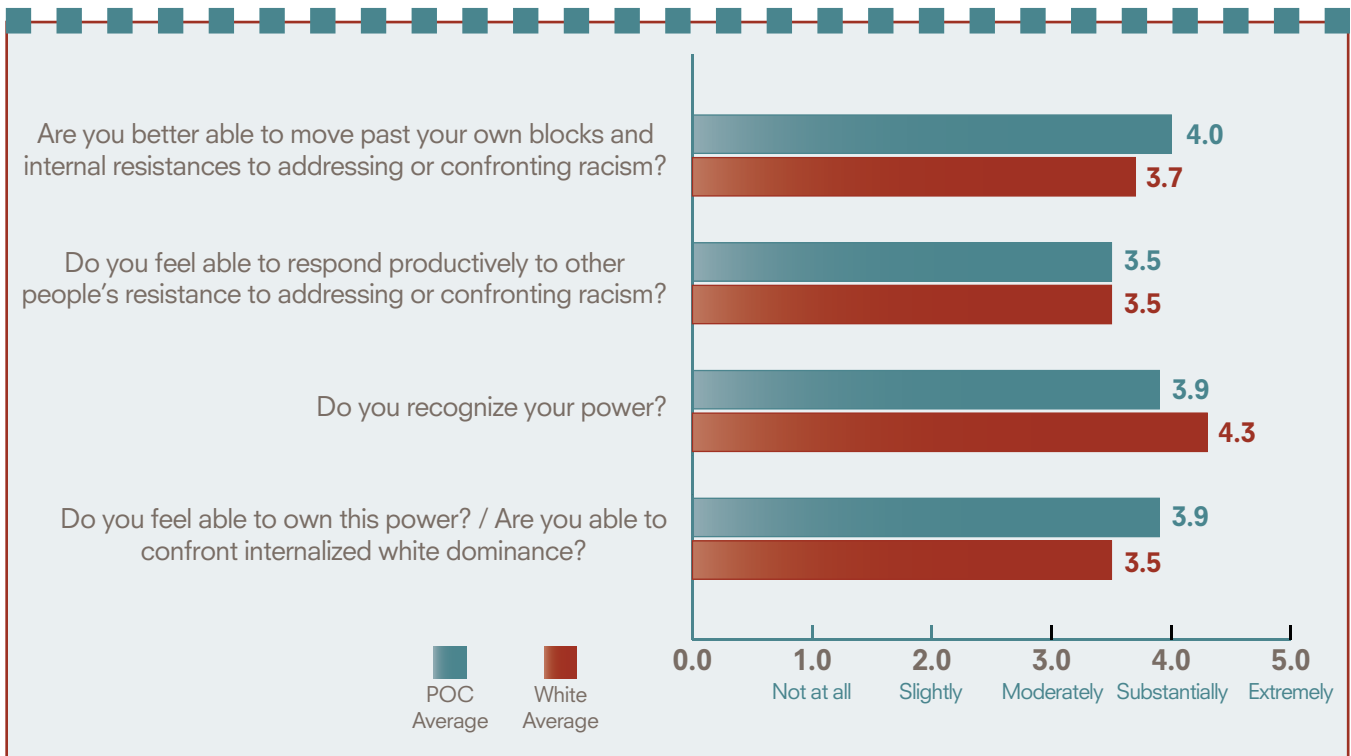
Exhibit 2. Round 2 Individual Progress in Understanding Race and Racism (n=24)



The **reflecting on resistance, agency and power** learning domain included four questions focused on the extent to which respondents were able to respond productively when faced with resistance (their own or from others) to addressing or confronting racism, and the extent to which they could recognize and act on their power^{vi} (see Exhibit 3). Average overall ratings across all questions in this domain also fell between “moderately” and “substantially,” though they were generally lower compared to the first domain. The results varied by caucus. Average ratings for the POC caucus only hit the “substantial” mark in response to one question: “Are you better able to move past your own blocks and internal resistances to addressing or confronting racism?” (4.0).

“ I have never really examined identity with other mixed folks. To have three other women whose experiences were so similar to mine was healing, refreshing and informative. I truly will remember what I learned in the third-space caucus for a lifetime.”
 ~ Third-space caucus participant

Exhibit 3. Round 2 Individual Progress in Reflecting on Resistance, Agency and Power (n=24)

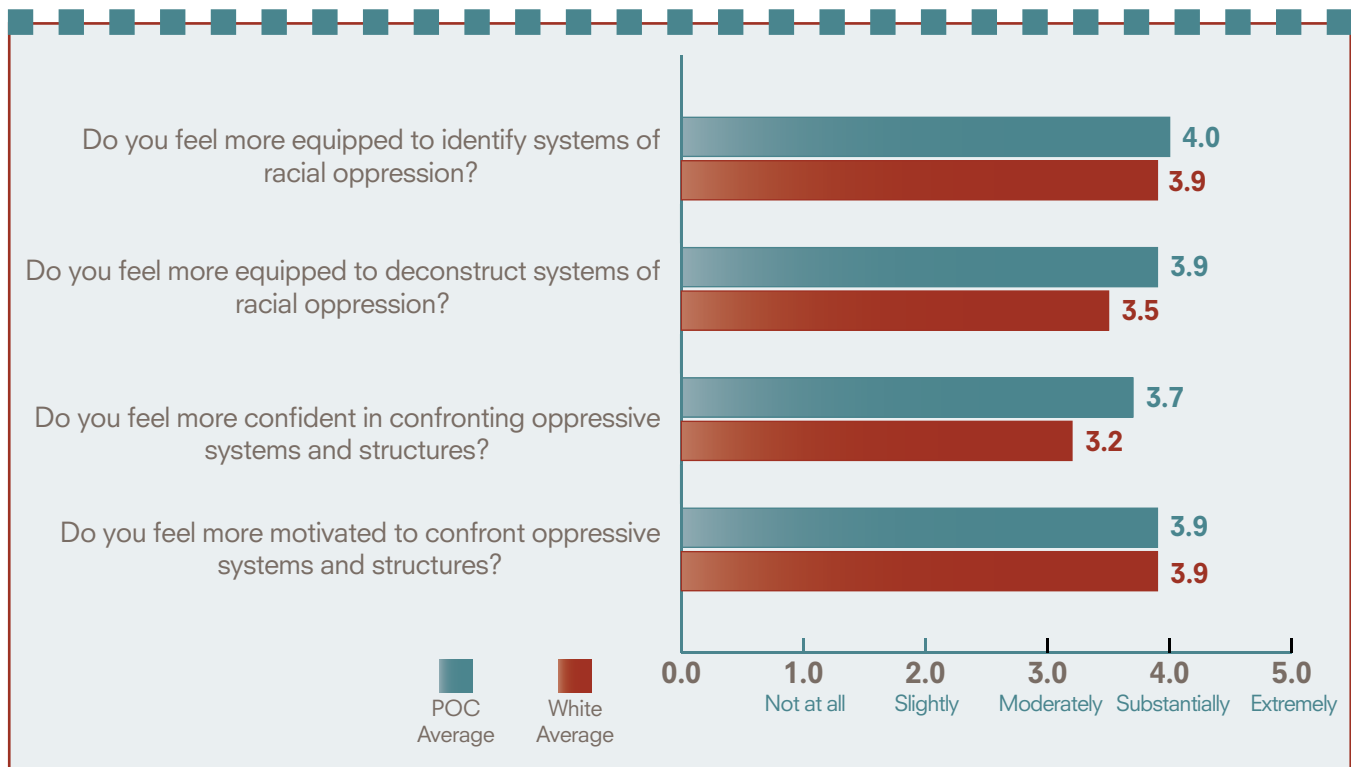


Notably, while POC respondents’ highest average rating in this domain is in response to their ability to address their own internal resistance to addressing or confronting racism, their lowest average rating is in response to their ability to respond to other people’s resistance to it (3.5). By contrast, the white caucus’ highest average rating was on a different question. “Do you recognize your power?” received an average rating of 4.3 from the white caucus, which was not only the highest average rating from any caucus for a question in this domain, it was also the highest average rating from the white caucus for any question across all domains.

As with the first domain, the overall pattern of response in this domain, in this round, is the opposite of the first round. In the first round, average ratings between the white caucus and the POC caucus in this domain were very close to one another, though the white caucus ratings were slightly higher than those of the POC caucus for all questions. In the second round of caucusing, there was more noticeable variation across most questions, and average ratings from the white caucus exceeded those of the POC caucus in response to only one question: “Do you recognize your power?”

The third domain, focused on **understanding and confronting systems of oppression**, included questions focused on the extent to which respondents felt equipped to identify and deconstruct systems of racial oppression and the extent to which they felt more confident and motivated to confront them (see Exhibit 4). In this domain, the questions that received the highest and lowest average ratings were the same across caucuses. The question in this domain that received the highest average rating^{vii} from all caucuses was: “Do you feel more equipped to identify systems of racial oppression?” The question in the domain that received the lowest average rating from all caucuses was: “Do you feel more confident in confronting oppressive systems and structures?” This was the question that received the lowest average rating from the white caucus (3.2) across all domains. Notably, in this domain, ratings from the POC caucus only hit the “substantial” mark in response to one question, and the white caucus did not hit the “substantial” mark in response to any question. In this domain, there were no striking differences in the overall pattern of responses when compared to the first round of caucusing.

Exhibit 4. Round 2 Individual Progress in Understanding and Confronting Systems of Oppression (n=24)



Notable Findings from the Third-Space Caucus

The third-space caucus was a unique space designed specifically for people to explore not only the racial identity(ies) they claim for themselves, but those ascribed to them by others. Given the uniqueness of this space, the numbers of participants (six) and survey respondents (three) were much smaller than those of the other two caucuses, and therefore not comparable. Moreover, two of those three survey respondents also participated in one of the other two caucuses. This means that their survey results were also influenced by more hours of caucusing support than those who participated only in the POC or white caucus.

Despite the incomparability of data and small response size, SPR felt it was important to honor their data and share key findings specific to this caucus.

- In the **Understanding Race and Racism** domain, the question that received the highest average rating was: “Are you able to contextualize your experience of race and racism in new ways?” (4.3).
- In the **Progress in Reflecting on Resistance, Agency and Power** domain, the question that received the highest average rating was also the only question in this domain where third-space responses reached the “substantial” level: “Do you feel able to respond productively to other people’s resistance to addressing or confronting racism?” (4.0).
- In the **Understanding and Confronting Systems of Oppression** domain, the question that received the highest average rating was: “Do you feel more equipped to identify systems of racial oppression?” (4.7). This was not only the highest rating in this domain, but across all domains.
- The question that received the lowest average rating across all domains was: “Do you feel more confident in confronting oppressive systems and structures?” (3.0).

In general, survey results indicated that, as a result of participating in racial identity caucusing, all participants grew in their understanding of race and racism, were better equipped to address resistance and leverage their own agency and power, and had a better understanding of systems of oppression and an increased sense of motivation around confronting those systems. It is also important to note, however, that while responses to questions focused on understanding or recognizing racism and power dynamics had fairly strong ratings, ratings for questions that were more clearly tied to confronting these issues were not as strong. Indeed, in open-ended responses, POC caucus participants shared that one of the most challenging aspects of caucusing was confronting past pain and harm; for white participants, it was confronting their own racism and role as an oppressor. The challenge of confrontation is perhaps unsurprising, as it can be much more difficult to confront a problem than it is to understand it, but it also serves as a good indicator of where people might benefit from more support in their individual racial equity journeys.

“Caucusing strengthens our resiliency, deepens our ability to recognize and dismantle systems of oppression, and provides the context and historical lens we need to do anti-racism work.”
~ White caucus participant

» SPHERE 2: BUILDING THE RACIAL EQUITY CAPACITY OF COHORT ORGANIZATIONS

As anchor organizations in the effort to build a field of health equity advocates, building the capacity of Cohort organizations to understand, articulate and live into their values around racial equity was essential. The RE Team's primary strategy for supporting racial equity capacity building at the organizational level was to engage CIRCLE, a Denver-based consultant, to help Cohort organizations meet their unique needs. As reported in the learning paper, 15 of the 18 Cohort organizations initially took advantage of CIRCLE's services. Some Cohort organizations were already working with a consultant to support organizational racial equity capacity building, so these organizations did not utilize CIRCLE's services. Most of the support involved coaching across a wide variety of topics, including (but not limited to) staff and board recruitment; hiring and retention practices; workplace communications; and mission, vision and values review. During the first year of organizational capacity-building support, CIRCLE also provided customized trainings to eight Cohort organizations across a range of topics.

ROUND 2 IMPLEMENTATION

Since the publication of the learning paper, the RE Team extended their contract with CIRCLE so that Cohort organizations could continue to have a consultant to provide tailored organizational capacity support as needed. This enabled CIRCLE to go deeper with the Cohort organizations they worked with in its first year of support. CIRCLE noted in its final report to The Trust that, having spent time building relationships with Cohort organizations during its first year of engagement, CIRCLE's practitioners had a better understanding of the unique cultures of the organizations they served. With this as an "essential foundation," CIRCLE practitioners then conducted surveys and/or interviews with each organization to develop more detailed and individualized plans for these organizations. According to CIRCLE's final report, its practitioners provided organizational capacity support to at least 13 organizations in their second year of engagement, which took the form of coaching support, staff and board development sessions, and internal policy reviews and trainings. These covered a range of topics such as incorporating diversity, equity and inclusion practices into staff and board recruitment processes; reviewing and updating mission statements to reflect racial equity commitments; and reviewing and updating organizational communications to remove stigmatizing or "othering" language.

Over the course of their work with Cohort organizations, CIRCLE noticed patterns in the types of resources that were being requested across organizations. Recognizing an opportunity to create a useful resource that could be shared with the field, the RE Team requested that CIRCLE create an online space where the Cohort and other members of the field could access resources to support their racial equity capacity-building efforts. In response to this request, CIRCLE collaborated with the Cohort to create a *biblioteca*, an online resource library containing articles, toolkits and trainings focused on the topics of education, organizational development and training, rural resources and systemic oppression.

ORGANIZATION-LEVEL PROGRESS

CIRCLE's final report shared a variety of examples of the ways in which its capacity-building supports helped Cohort organizations to develop products, processes and structures that reflect or support equity goals. These are captured in the textbox to the right.

Whether supported through CIRCLE or other capacity-building supports, since the publication of the learning paper, Cohort organizations continued to be persistent in their efforts to strengthen their capacity to articulate and embody equity-focused goals, resulting in tangible changes to their organizations. As shared in the [HEA Phase 3 final evaluation report](#), 78% of Cohort organizations reported that they had grown substantially in their ability to integrate racial equity into organizational policies, procedures and processes. Indeed, at the close of 2019, Cohort organizations reported institutionalizing equity principles into internal organization processes, with nine organizations reporting activities such as adding equity questions to their hiring protocols, creating health and racial equity trainings for new staff and board members, embedding racial healing into organizational culture, and having staff add personal equity goals to their yearly professional development plans. Several Cohort organizations have also taken steps to visibly institutionalize racial equity in their respective organizations. For example, seven Cohort organizations reported that they updated their mission and vision statements, adopted a racial equity statement to encompass more inclusive language and/or explicitly called out the role of racism in the creation and persistence of inequitable outcomes, and made an explicit commitment to health and racial equity. Three Cohort organizations actually changed their names in order to better reflect their commitment to equity. These examples illustrate the powerful ways in which organizations are demonstrating a greater capacity for incorporating racial equity into all aspects of their work.

Examples of Organizational Capacity-Building Results

- Hiring and onboarding procedures and employee qualifications were adapted to reflect a commitment to racial equity.
- Recruitment and retention policies were enhanced to promote racial equity.
- Wellness programs were designed and implemented to increase employee well-being and reduce compassion fatigue.
- Board recruitment and onboarding strategies came to reflect a commitment to racial equity.
- Organizations revised their mission statements to reflect their commitment to racial equity.
- Equity teams were formed that had a clear understanding of roles, resources and power to affect change within the organization.
- Communications teams moved away from using potentially "othering" and stigmatizing language in their grants, reports, blogs, etc.
- Organizations invested more time in forming relationships with and between staff, beyond just typical workplace interaction, in order to develop trust and more positive interactions.

» SPHERES 3 AND 4: BUILDING CAPACITY AT THE PARTNER AND FIELD LEVELS

For spheres 3 and 4, capacity-building efforts focused on building the capacity of individuals and organizations across the field to engage in sensitive (and often difficult) community-level conversations about equity in general and racial equity in particular. To support this effort, the team engaged Elemental Partners, a San Francisco-based firm with extensive experience with equity-focused initiatives and whose team includes skilled facilitators who are also trained racial healing practitioners. As shared in the learning paper, when they began this work in late 2017, Elemental Partners collaborated with the Cohort to host community conversations followed by trainings to support racial equity understanding. The majority of these conversations took place in rural mountain communities where residents typically have greater challenges accessing these kinds of supports. In that first round of support, approximately 460^{viii} participants participated in 10 sessions that included community conversations and trainings across six locations, including in the Denver metro area and Grand, Lake, Montrose and Routt counties.

ROUND 2 IMPLEMENTATION

The overwhelming response to the first round of trainings and community conversations was an expressed desire for more trainings and community conversations generally, and in more places, and more opportunities to “go deeper” with trainings. Moreover, as the end of the HEA initiative drew closer, Cohort members and their network partners voiced a desire to build training capacity, particularly in rural communities, so that they could continue to hold trainings and community conversations without having to rely on outside consultants for support. Elemental Partners thus collaborated with the RE Team to develop a year-long workplan that met those expressed desires. Between November 2018 and November 2019, Elemental Partners held 30 sessions of community conversations and trainings, serving 502 participants across eight locations (including San Miguel and Summit counties, in addition to the six locations served in the first effort). These sessions focused on building individual and institutional cultural capacity, understanding and dismantling personal and structural bias, engaging in courageous and respectful confrontation, and recognizing and transforming white privilege. Exhibit 5 on page 14 provides an overview of the second round of capacity-building supports offered by Elemental Partners in 2018-19, reflecting new activities since the publication of the learning paper.

As shown in Exhibit 5, in addition to providing more Second Circle community conversations and Transcultural Bridge trainings (which were also offered in the first round of support), Elemental Partners added what its practitioners referred to as “201-level trainings.” Those included trainings focused on building skills for respectfully engaging in difficult conversations and trainings on how to support organizations in identifying, talking about and intervening to address white privilege and its consequences. In response to participant feedback, one important shift that Elemental Partners made when designing sessions during this round was to take more time to “ground” participants in racial equity concepts, particularly if they were new to these types of conversations or

“ I’m excited about having some new tools, especially some that are more in the heart/physical space. [My] main takeaway is that conflict needs to be solved in more than just the head space. ”

~ White participant,
Respectful Confrontations training

trainings. Additionally, in response to Cohort members' desire to not just hold more sessions but to extend the capacity for facilitating community conversations, Elemental Partners developed "train the trainer" sessions so that Colorado leaders could continue facilitating these conversations past the sunset of the HEA strategy.

Exhibit 5. Elemental Partners' Round 2 Community Conversations and Trainings

Offering	Participants	Locations
<p>The Second Circle (2-hour gatherings, also offered in Spanish)</p> <p>Community gatherings focused on community healing through sharing stories and experiences across difference</p>	205	Aurora, Denver, Granby, Leadville, Montrose, Naturita, Steamboat Springs, Telluride
<p>Transcultural Bridge (half- and full-day trainings)</p> <p>Trainings focused on building individual capacity around othering and belonging, organizing for racial equity, and internalized racism</p>	120	Leadville, Montrose, Telluride
<p>Respectful Confrontations (2-day training)</p> <p>Trainings focused on gaining a deeper understanding of personal and relational power, and developing skills to approach difficult conversations</p>	98	Denver, Frisco, Montrose
<p>Transforming White Privilege (2-day training)</p> <p>Trainings focused on supporting organizations and communities to better identify, talk about and intervene to address white privilege and its consequences</p>	38	Aurora
<p>Transforming White Privilege - Assistant Facilitator Training (half-day training)</p>	6	Denver
<p>The Second Circle - Facilitator Training (2-day training and continued coaching/consultation)</p>	35	Denver, Hot Sulphur Springs, Kremmling, Montrose

PARTNER/FIELD-LEVEL PROGRESS

The Cohort and Elemental Partners were ultimately successful in providing more opportunities, for more people, in more places, to engage in conversations about racial equity. In this last round of support, Elemental Partners engaged several hundred more individuals across the state. As stated previously, they were also successful in expanding access to these supports to two more regions (San Miguel and Summit counties), ultimately providing support to people and organizations in eight counties across Colorado. Finally, perhaps one of the most important contributions of this strategy was the successful efforts to build the capacity to sustain this work past the sunset of the HEA strategy. Through train-the-trainer sessions, six individuals have been trained to assist in facilitating challenging conversations about transforming white privilege, and 35 individuals across four locations have been successfully trained to serve as Second Circle community conversation facilitators, several of whom have expressed a desire for support to continue honing their skills. At least 10 training participants noted in their evaluation forms that they wanted to practice facilitation, participate in coaching calls from Elemental Partners, and get connected to a network of trained facilitators.

“ This training has allowed me to have a clearer picture about privilege and its effects on different populations. ”

~ POC participant,
Transcultural Bridge training

Another notable aspect of this capacity-building effort is that three of the four regions that now have trained Second Circle facilitators are rural areas. Having trained facilitators in these regions is especially important, given that the community demographics in these regions (i.e., predominantly white and conservative) can make it challenging to start racial equity conversations. Moreover, a common challenge for organizations in rural areas is that they typically do not have a strong capacity-building infrastructure and, thus, rural-serving organizations are often forced to reach out to consultants outside their region when they need support. By investing in training organizational and community leaders to be facilitators, the Cohort and Elemental Partners have not only strengthened the capacity for continued racial equity conversations, but they also can be better assured that these conversations will be facilitated by people who have the skills to engage in difficult and sensitive conversations, as well as deep knowledge of community context and dynamics.

» CONCLUSION

The multilayered racial equity capacity-building plan that the Cohort’s RE Team so thoughtfully developed has not only strengthened the capacity of individuals and organizations to address overt and systemic racism, but it has also motivated Cohort members and their partners in the field to look more deeply into their personal and organizational values and to hold themselves accountable to actively changing their policies, practices and ways of engaging with others, to more accurately reflect the values they claim. As noted in the HEA Phase 3 final evaluation report, these changes were transformative for individual Cohort members and their organizations, providing a strong foundation for them to continue leaning into, sharing and growing their strengths. Indeed, multiple Cohort members acknowledged that there is still so much work to do to achieve their vision for racial equity. As one Cohort member put it, “the

work is not done now that the [HEA] strategy is over,” adding that “the work of dismantling white supremacy in ourselves and our organizations is generational work” and the progress they made through HEA was “just a part of that.”

Another important capacity that was built was the ability and willingness to simply have informed and respectful conversations about race and racism, not just at the personal and organizational levels, but at the community level. That capacity is ever more important now, when the ramifications of years of systemic, structural racism has become so visible in the disproportionately negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on people of color, particularly in terms of health, economic security, the workforce, the justice system and education. The urgency is also underscored in the waves of national protests for racial justice sparked by the recent killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and Ahmaud Arbery (in addition to the many before them). The Cohort’s foresight and its courage in centering race back in April 2016—and in sticking with this decision despite resistance faced by some Cohort members^{ix}—has helped to prepare numerous organizations and hundreds of individuals across Colorado to engage in this historic moment of reckoning, a moment that manifested in ways no one could have foreseen. While continued investments must be made to deepen and expand racial equity capacity across more individuals, organizations and communities across Colorado, the HEA Cohort’s efforts have resulted in a strong foundation of individuals and organizations with shared understanding, language, tools for addressing racism and a commitment to building a more equitable Colorado.

» ENDNOTES

- i Network partners are organizations that are connected to the HEA Cohort through its Network-Strengthening Partner strategy. This strategy was designed to expand the reach of the HEA Cohort by providing mini-grants to a range of organizations across the state, and sharing resources and access to convenings and capacity-building opportunities.
- ii While all of the POC caucus participants were from the Denver metro area, the white caucus participants were from the Denver metro region and rural mountain regions. The geographic spread posed challenges for the white caucus facilitator, who had to spread her time across two different regions to cover the needs of that caucus. Moreover, the caucusing period during the second round came at a time when the white caucus facilitator had limited capacity due to multiple other engagements. Transformative Alliances and the Cohort agreed that in order to accommodate the travel challenges and the capacity challenges, they would hold fewer sessions, but double their length.
- iii In the first round, because there were only two third-space caucus participants, with one living in the rural mountain region, third-space caucus support took place in an online environment. Both participants also participated in one of the other caucuses and were therefore able to have an in-person caucusing experience. In this round of caucusing, three of the four third-space caucusing participants also participated in either the POC or white caucus. The fourth decided to only participate in third-space caucusing after realizing that she could not meet the time demands of participation in two caucuses.
- iv The RE Team opted not to conduct a survey for continuing caucus and affinity group participants. The team wanted to focus on capturing the experiences of the new group of participants engaging in round 2. The caucusing experience and outcomes from the first round are shared in SPR's [learning paper](#).
- v The first round of caucusing served a total of 31 participants from 13 Cohort organizations—13 participated in the POC caucus, 16 participated in the white caucus, and two in the third-space caucus.
- vi For POC caucus participants, this was framed as “owning” their power, and for white caucus participants it was framed as “ability to confront internalized white dominance.” SPR was advised that third-space caucus respondents should only answer this question if they were also participating in one of the other caucuses. Thus, within this respondent pool, one third-space caucus participant received the same question as the POC caucus (“Do you feel able to own this power?”), one received the same question as the white caucus (“Are you able to confront internalized white dominance?”) and the other did not receive a question with this focus. SPR therefore eliminated the line of analysis for third-space caucus respondents for this particular question.
- vii The white caucus had a tie for questions that had the highest average rating in this domain. The other question that received the same average rating was “Do you feel motivated to confront oppressive systems and structures?”
- viii The learning paper reported approximately 300 participants, but this number has since been updated by Elemental Partners to 460.
- ix The challenges faced by Cohort members are highlighted on page 25 of SPR's [learning paper](#).



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