



RACIAL EQUITY COFFEE CHATS

For the past 18 months, Wallace Center has held biweekly Racial Equity Coffee Chats. These informal meetings are led by different staff members on a rotating, volunteer basis and have covered a range of topics related to racial equity. These informal but structured conversations are intended to create a conversational space for sharing personal experiences and expanding our collective understanding of how systemic racism has shaped our agriculture and food systems, and how anti-racist action is critical to the changes we seek.

As part of this process, we've developed a loose facilitation structure to guide the conversation. This structure means that anyone can easily step up to lead these conversations, without a significant amount of planning or pre-work. We've outlined that structure here and provided a [list of topics and resources](#) that we've discussed. We are not experts, but we have found this to be a very helpful tool and process for our own learning and engagement. We hope that this guide can be a useful tool for you and your colleagues as you educate yourselves and center anti-racism and racial equity in your programs, operations, and internal culture.

FACILITATION GUIDE

Facilitation Guidance:

- Set up a sheet for the meeting schedule and facilitation sign-up. Encourage staff members at all level of the organization to volunteer to facilitate throughout the year.
- Come as you are. Showing-up and being present is sufficient preparation. If you have not been able to do the reading beforehand, that is perfectly ok.
- Readings are used to stimulate conversation; aren't dissected during the chat.
- Keep the conversation actionable! Ask questions that challenge the group to reflect on their personal lives and work and generate ideas for tangible next steps.
- Coffee Chats follow a regular schedule. (We do ours bi-monthly.) Attendance is strongly encouraged but never mandatory.

Optional Pre-work:

- Send topical resources to stimulate conversation (could be a reading, video, podcast, song, poem, etc, - 4 resources max) to your organizational distribution list.
- Try to send the reading/prompt and a reminder about the upcoming meeting at least one week before the chat.

Agenda (45 min – 1 hour)

- Opening – give everyone the chance to talk, learn something about each other and get engaged. Some options:
 - One-word check-in
 - What are you most excited about in your work right now?
 - What are you reading?
- Reaffirm ground rules/group agreements. It can be helpful to re-iterate things like:
 - Confidentiality

- Honesty
- Listening
- Respect
- Sitting with ambiguity/we don't have to agree
- Initial question for the group – what has come up over the past two weeks in your personal or professional life? (you may also want to designate every fourth meeting or so specifically for this kind of discussion)
 - Before the main topic, open the floor for any insights, reflections, oops, a-ha moments to share with the team.
- Topic of the chat – choose from these questions to get the conversation going:
 - What stuck out for you?
 - How do you see yourself relating to this topic?
 - How do you see your organization relating to this topic?
 - Was there anything you could apply personally or professionally?
 - What was challenging about this topic?
 - What was affirming about this topic?
 - Etc etc!
- Closing:
 - Ask for any final thoughts
 - Include chance for people to share actions/next steps we can be accountable to
 - Conclude with 1-word checkout or ask folks to share appreciations/takeaways.
 - Open meeting schedule, ask for volunteers if there are upcoming gaps
- Follow-up:
 - Send a **brief** email back to staff with a quick recap of the topic discussed, any highlights of the conversation that stood out to you, a reminder of the next meeting, and encouragement to sign up for facilitation.

