



Strategic Plan for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice at Northeast SARE

adopted February 24, 2022

What Non-Negotiables must this plan address?

The following Non-Negotiables were developed by the Steering Committee to guide the DEIJ planning process. They build on what was created by the administrative council's DEIJ committee and the goals that were used for hiring ResourceFull Consulting as a DEIJ consultant. They are called "non-negotiables" because they are items that were identified as critical for the plan to address. They are:

1. How Northeast SARE will **be anti-racist, address systemic barriers, and center Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC)** and other historically under-resourced communities by transforming its:
 - a. Organizational culture, approaches to its work and actions;
 - b. Engagement and representation, including the makeup of staff, advisors and leaders across the organization;
 - c. Grantmaking, including the processes - from outreach & eligibility to review and selection - and outcomes; and
 - d. Education, training, materials and "products".
2. How Northeast SARE will recognize, value, and appreciate **other ways of knowing**, including Indigenous knowledge and lived experiences that don't fit neatly in white cultural norms or predominant methods of scientific understanding.
3. How and with whom Northeast SARE will **build and repair relationships with communities that have been marginalized** and enact their recommendations and follow their leadership.
4. What internal and external **goals** Northeast SARE will establish for its DEI efforts, how it defines these terms, is transparent about its limitations and how to address them, and how it will **measure and ensure strong public accountability** for whether these goals were achieved or not.
5. What the **decision-making and implementation framework** will be for Northeast SARE to use in centering and advancing racial equity throughout its activities and work.

Strategic Directions

Northeast SARE will pursue the following strategic directions through its DEIJ plan over the next five years:

Strategic Direction 1: Do the Internal Work at Northeast SARE to become a more anti-racist agency

a. Create an anti-racist organizational culture

- i. Address organizational and **grantmaking policies and practices** that perpetuate racism, including upfront payments, video/interview applications, review criteria, etc.
- ii. Explore and implement approaches that **enhance access to technical assistance for applicants.**
- iii. **Acknowledge the role of Northeast SARE** and its partners in perpetuating racism and its commitment to being anti-racist in communications
- iv. Deepen **partnerships between staff and BIPOC** agricultural practitioners
- v. Establish **expectations and practices for all SARE members** to be responsible for their power and using it to advance racial equity by establishing shared anti-racist values, deepening orientation and training, increasing frequency of AC meetings, etc.
- vi. Explore and reform the **Administrative Council meeting structure and culture.**
- vii. Provide **ongoing and regular training and forums** for discussion, reflection, and informed action around anti-racism across the organization

b. Establish BIPOC leadership and increase **BIPOC representation** across the agency

- i. Increase representation of BIPOC and other marginalized communities on staff and its leadership.
- ii. Establish leadership of the Administrative Council by representatives of BIPOC and other marginalized communities.
- iii. Increase BIPOC community representation and leadership in the **state coordinator program**
- iv. Increase BIPOC community representation on **Technical Committee** (reviewers)
- v. Establish a **Tribal Coordinators Program**
- vi. Establish a **Tribal Advisory Committee** and create multiple tribal seats on the AC
- vii. Explore additional steps to **recognize sovereign tribes** throughout NE SARE's processes

Strategic Direction 2: Shift Resources to BIPOC communities that have been excluded

- a. Provide greater **direct financial assistance to BIPOC people** and BIPOC-led organizations with a focus on access to capital and land
 - i. Establish a **special large grant program** that addresses and responds to the needs of BIPOC communities, perhaps through a subaward to a BIPOC institution
 - ii. **Prioritize funding for BIPOC communities within current grant programs** through funding prioritization strategies and changes to review criteria

- b. Leverage **Northeast SARE's power and relationships** to align partnerships behind its anti-racist goal
 - i. Use SARE grants to promote **anti-racist activities at 1862 and predominately white institutions (PWIs)**
 - ii. **Partner with philanthropic organizations** to leverage resources to support grants to BIPOC communities
 - iii. Ensure these plans are reflected in **annual NIFA cooperative agreements** for Northeast SARE
 - iv. **Provide input to NIFA prior to the 2027 host competition process** to strongly encourage participation by BIPOC-led organizations and to require the articulation of anti-racist values within Northeast SARE's host institution.

Key Priorities 2022-2024

The Northeast SARE staff and DEIJ consultants identified the following key priorities by year to implement this plan:

Key Priorities for 2022

1. Do the Internal Work

- a. Anti-Racist Organizational Culture
 - i. Articulate and align on a clear statement of **anti-racist values and guiding principles**
 - ii. Establish and formalize an **ongoing DEIJ Committee** of the AC and **other structures and practices**, including adjustments to the AC meeting schedule, frequency, and timing, to support the AC and staff in implementing this plan and shifting the cultural practices of the organization and its leadership toward anti-racism
 - iii. Develop and pilot a **DEIJ orientation and training curriculum** throughout the organization

- b. BIPOC Representation and Leadership
 - i. Prioritize adding representatives of BIPOC communities to fill **open positions** (staff, AC, reviewers, etc.)
 - ii. Strengthen practices and networks for **effective recruitment** of BIPOC candidates for these openings
 - iii. Develop position description for **full-time staff member** focused on BIPOC and under-represented communities

2. Shift Resources

- a. Direct Financial Assistance to BIPOC Communities and Organizations
 - i. Build **plans for grantmaking pause** and creation of special large BIPOC grant program in annual NIFA application submitted in fall 2022
- b. Leverage Northeast SARE's Power and Relationships
 - i. Require BIPOC community leadership in the preparation and design of each **state funding proposal** from state coordinators

Key Priorities for 2023

1. Do the Internal Work

- a. Anti-Racist Organizational Culture
 - i. During grantmaking pause, **redesign grantmaking processes** to be more anti-racist
 - ii. **Update communications** to reflect anti-racist values and acknowledge harms
- b. BIPOC Representation and Leadership
 - i. Continue to prioritize adding BIPOC community representation in **open positions** (staff, AC, reviewers, etc.)
 - ii. Develop and implement plans to **diversify technical committee (reviewers)**
 - iii. Establish a **Tribal Advisory Committee** of the Administrative Council and **dedicated AC seats** it nominates
 - iv. Hire a **full-time staff member** focused on BIPOC and under-represented communities

2. Shift Resources

- a. Direct Financial Assistance to BIPOC People and Organizations
 - i. Implement **grantmaking pause**
 - ii. **Adjust review criteria** to prioritize BIPOC grantees in grant programs
 - iii. Design and launch special **large BIPOC community grant program**
 - iv. **Expand access to technical assistance** for applicants

- b. Leverage Northeast SARE's Power and Relationships
 - i. **Build partnerships with other grantmaking institutions**

Key Priorities for 2024

1. Do the Internal Work

- a. Anti-Racist Organizational Culture
 - i. Implement ongoing **orientation, training, and grantmaking processes** to reflect anti-racism commitment
 - ii. Continue to implement **communications** to reflect anti-racist values
- b. BIPOC Representation and Leadership
 - i. Continue to prioritize adding BIPOC community representatives in **open positions, especially leadership**
 - ii. Establish a **Tribal Coordinators Program**

2. Shift Resources

- a. Direct Financial Assistance to BIPOC People and Organizations
 - i. Resume grantmaking **using adjusted review criteria**
- b. Leverage Northeast SARE's Power and Relationships
 - i. Continue to leverage partnerships with **other grantmaking institutions**
 - ii. Develop and implement other strategies to use SARE resources to **engage predominantly white institutions (PWIs) in anti-racist actions**
 - iii. **Inform NIFA host competition process** to prioritize anti-racism and BIPOC-led organizations

How do we ensure we have the capacity to do this?

To ensure Northeast SARE staff and Administrative Council have the capacity they need to make these shifts, this plan proposes ***pausing all new large grants and Partnership grants beginning in the spring of 2023 for one year.*** During this time, Northeast SARE will:

- **Design and launch a new special large grant program** specifically to address and respond to the needs of BIPOC communities through a subaward to a BIPOC-led institution.
- **Redesign its grantmaking processes and review criteria** to better center and respond to the needs of BIPOC individuals, communities and organizations.
- **Design and launch a Tribal Advisory Committee** and begin to develop a Tribal Coordinators Program.
- **Strengthen partnerships and communications** to reflect the goals of this plan.

Stakeholder Roles in Implementation

Key roles to support implementation include:

- **The Administrative Council and Executive Committee will** inform, review, and vote on proposals for strategies to advance the plan for implementation at each of its meetings, including changes to the structure, operating norms, and practices of the Administrative Council.
- **A DEIJ Steering Committee** will continue to advise on and support the implementation of this strategic plan, with membership recruited as necessary through the completion of this plan in 2026.
- **A Staff Member** will work with the steering committee, the AC/EC, and outside stakeholders as needed to develop specific proposals for implementing changes in the timeframe proposed, including a financial analysis and refined metrics, as needed. Each of these proposals will be informed, reviewed, and voted on by the Administrative Council during upcoming meetings
- **The Staff** will work collectively with members of the AC and EC to develop a proposal (for the AC summer 2022 meeting) to pause grant making between spring 2023 and spring 2024 in order to create the necessary capacity to implement the actions described in this plan.
- **ResourceFull Consulting** will continue to advise on and support implementation of the plan until 2024. This support includes guiding the development and implementation of training, providing technical assistance in fleshing out and implementing specific action plans with stakeholders, and facilitating a DEIJ vision and values-setting process with the Administrative Council and staff for the strategic plan.

Administrative Council 2022 DEIJ Actions

While detailed plans will be developed for the full implementation of this plan, it is anticipated that the Administrative Council will be asked to take key actions to advance the implementation of the plan during 2022, including:

February 2022:

- Discuss and Vote on the Plan

July 2022:

- Develop and vote on a set of anti-racist values and guiding principles
- Develop and vote on the structure for an ongoing DEIJ steering committee
- Review and discuss key metrics for monitoring implementation of the plan
- Review and vote on proposals for grantmaking pause and new large grant program
- Participate in additional DEIJ training
- Review progress on plan implementation (ongoingly and biannually)