Lutheran Services in America

Advancing Race Equity and Sustainability in the Social Sector

Key Insights from the Results Innovation Lab's Sustainability Toolkit

OVERVIEW

Lutheran Services in America (LSA) is proud to continue our practice of sharing successful and innovative approaches to advancing race equity with this summary of key insights from the new Family Stabilization Initiative (FSI) Sustainability Toolkit. The toolkit and this summary are important resources emerging from LSA's Results Innovation Lab (RIL).

Created in partnership with Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago, the FSI Sustainability Toolkit is a resource for social sector leaders interested in applying race equity and sustainability best practices to their collaborations and evidence-based programming.

The Sustainability Toolkit takes key lessons and methods from LSA's successful equity-focused FSI and offers frameworks, tools and resource guides to help any health and human services organization achieve similar success – **building sustainability infrastructure *and* equity infrastructure at the same time.**

"The FSI Sustainability Toolkit and this summary of its key insights are our latest resources aimed at supporting social sector organizations that are addressing the needs of all families they engage by decreasing disparities and promoting equitable support systems that endure over time."

- Renada Johnson, LSA's Senior Director of Children, Youth and Family Initiatives

This summary provides a synthesis of the Toolkit's key insights.
To download the entire Toolkit, scan the QR code, or visit
www.chapinhall.org/project/toolkit-centers-racial-equity-in-sustaining-family-stability

A TRANSFORMATIVE, SUSTAINABLE FOCUS ON RACE EQUITY

Building sustainability for race equity programming is about more than ensuring a program is funded. This is a key principle informing the FSI. By **broadening the view of sustainability, using LSA's signature learning collaborative model and centering race equity**, the FSI approach demonstrates that it is possible to infuse equity into leadership for program sustainability.

Doing so via the LSA learning collaborative model fuels ideas with a data-informed approach and ensures teams can maintain focus while working toward challenging objectives, sharing both successes and missteps. This collaboration, in turn, reinforces commitment to the work and creates an accountability network.

Finally, implementing a transformative, sustainable focus on race equity results in significant shifts in mindsets and paradigms. Here are just some of the shifts reported by the original FSI cohort as documented in the FSI Sustainability Toolkit.

Four Mindset Shifts of the FSI

	Current Mindset	Mindset Shift
Sustainability	Sustainability is all about money.	Sustainability is supported through interdependent organizational strategies and practices.
Race Equity Action	My [state / agency / community] doesn't support race equity efforts, therefore there isn't anything I can do.	You can operate in your sphere of influence to implement changes to support race equity.
Narrative Transformation	Our communities label certain families as hopeless, impacting service delivery.	Be the change agent that shifts the narrative to one where all families love their children.
Comprehensive Approach	My program already has stable funding, so how is sustainability relevant to me?	Sustainability requires a comprehensive, whole-person and whole-community approach.

HOW DID THIS HAPPEN? THREE COMPONENTS FOR SUCCESS

When decision makers talk about reducing racial disproportionality in a health and human services system, they frequently focus on the actions that should be taken to change the way services are delivered, the types of services that are provided and how the system and its resources should change to reduce structural inequities. But what if decision makers also centered issues of race in how services are implemented and sustained? This is the innovative approach guiding the FSI, one that is built on three foundations:

1. **Build a Learning Collaborative**
2. **Center Race Equity**
3. **Incorporate Equity-Centered Sustainability Components**

1. Build a Learning Collaborative

The learning collaborative model—bringing together peers and experts to learn together and apply improvements—is the cornerstone of LSA's mission to be a catalyst for change. It is based on one of LSA's key principles: bringing people and resources together to solve problems can impact communities in ways that go beyond what any one organization can achieve on its own.

The table below from the Sustainability Toolkit shows the variety of benefits that can come from participating in a learning collaborative.

Benefits of the FSI Learning Collaborative

Benefit	Summary of Service Provider Comments
Social Support	Learning with others provides a support system that can help learners overcome challenges and stay motivated. Cohort members can provide encouragement, share their experiences and help each other through difficult parts of the curriculum.
Diversity of Perspectives	Different learners bring unique experiences and perspectives to the group. This diversity can lead to deeper understanding and richer discussions, helping everyone to learn more effectively.
Peer Learning	Cohort members can learn from each other in addition to learning from instructors or course materials. This peer-to-peer learning can be especially valuable when cohort members have different levels of expertise or background knowledge.
Accountability	Being part of a cohort can help participants commit to their learnings and be accountable for their progress. Knowing that others are also working through the material can provide a sense of accountability and help participants stay engaged.
Networking	Learning cohorts often bring together individuals with shared interests. This can be a great opportunity to make connections that could be beneficial for future collaborations and professional partnerships.
Improved Outcomes	Literature shows that learning in cohorts can lead to better outcomes compared to individual learning. The combined effects of social support, diversity of perspectives, peer learning and accountability can contribute to deeper understanding and higher retention of knowledge obtained. (Thies et al. 2020)
Enhanced Emotional Experience	The camaraderie that often develops within a cohort can make the learning experience more enjoyable. This can enhance motivation and make the process feel less lonely or isolating.

2. Center Race Equity

The FSI approach to advancing race equity is driven by four guiding principles.

FSI's Four Guiding Principles for Advancing Race Equity

1

Directly addressing racial disparities

The FSI seeks to identify and tackle disparities head-on rather than shying away from them.

2

Changing organizational culture and practices

By creating inclusive culture and implementing equitable practices, the FSI hopes to promote race equity from within.

3

Uplifting voices with lived expertise

The FSI values the unique perspectives and experiences of those it serves and seeks to elevate their voices.

4

Mobilizing community assets

The FSI recognizes that communities have existing resources that can be utilized to support race equity and seeks to mobilize these assets.
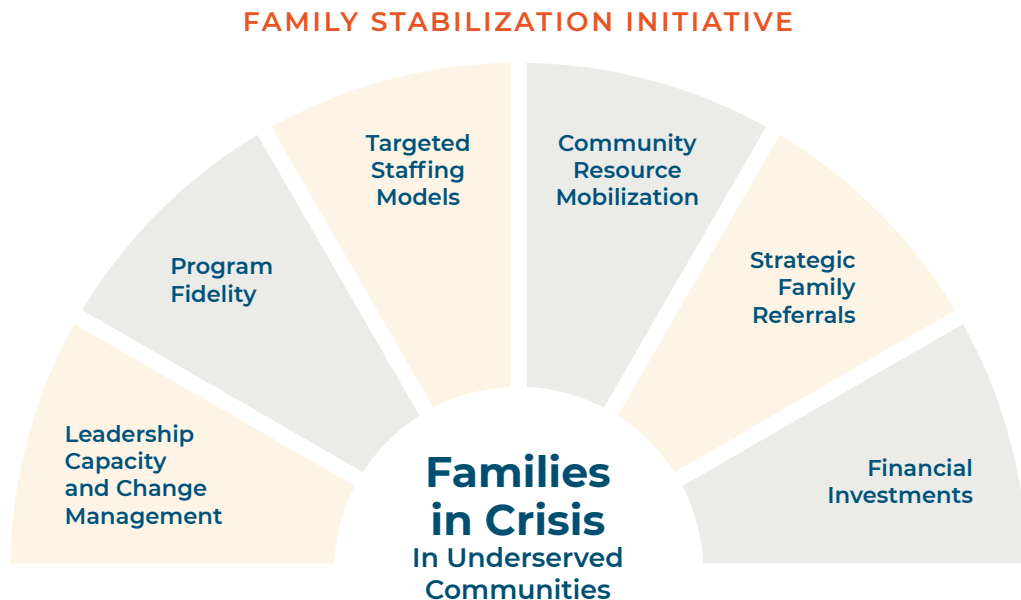
The Sustainability Toolkit shows how race equity supports each sustainability component (see below) and in doing so, creates an environment that actively recognizes and addresses systemic racial inequities. Intentionally weaving in race equity principles ensures that efforts are geared towards building culturally responsive and equitable approaches to programming and service delivery.

3. Incorporate Equity-Centered Sustainability Key Concepts

The learning collaborative and race equity-centered principles form the foundation of the FSI approach; six key sustainability components are its pillars.

The Results Innovation Lab and Family Stabilization Initiative's Transformative Focus on Race Equity

FAMILY STABILIZATION INITIATIVE

Targeted Staffing Models

Community Resource Mobilization

Program Fidelity

Strategic Family Referrals

Leadership Capacity and Change Management

Financial Investments

Families in Crisis
In Underserved Communities

Transformative Focus on Race Equity

See the full [Sustainability Toolkit](#) for examples of each of these key components and tips for implementing them. Here's an overview of the concepts.

Building Leadership Capacity and Change Management.
Support results-based work for leadership that builds core competencies, uses data to assess progress and brings groups together to move from stated intentions to effective action.

Community Engagement.
Build and expand a collaborative culture, engaging a range of stakeholders to work in a broader ecosystem to achieve equitable outcomes.

Strategic Family Referrals.
Target effective referrals through cross-program connections, education and outreach, promoting integration with both internal and external partners.

Targeted Staffing Models.
Hire from the community to better connect with the community; bring additional support for staff; learn from and incorporate staff's practical experience and real-world consequences to enhance change.

Fidelity to the Program Model.
Focus not only on fidelity to any service being provided via robust data analysis of what is working and for whom, but also on fidelity to the FSI approach itself.

Financial Investments.
Address financing from the beginning, taking into consideration the complex braiding of funding that is necessary to support both innovation and sustainability.

ABOUT LUTHERAN SERVICES IN AMERICA

Lutheran Services in America (LSA) is one of the nation's largest and most trusted national networks of health and human service providers with a mission to cultivate caring communities that advance health and opportunity for all. With 300 nonprofit organizations across 1,400 U.S. communities, and over $26 billion in combined annual services, LSA's network advances equitable outcomes for children, youth and families; improves independence and choice for older adults; champions meaningful services and support for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities; and strengthens stability and purpose for veterans, refugees, New Americans and other special populations. Formed in 1997, LSA brings together a network of leaders, partners and funders to catalyze innovation, strengthen organizational capacity and advance public policy.

ABOUT LSA'S RESULTS INNOVATION LAB AND THE FAMILY STABILIZATION INITIATIVE

Lutheran Services in America established and leads the Results Innovation Lab (RIL), a multi-year, collaborative learning community of change leaders committed to improving equity for 25,000+ children and their families. With more than 100 organizations across 43 states, the RIL network engages and empowers families before they are in crisis to create pathways for them to stay together. Pathways include crisis intervention, access to stable and safe housing, behavioral health, food and nutrition and other proactive interventions to improve equitable outcomes.

As part of the RIL, the Family Stabilization Initiative (FSI), an ongoing initiative launched by LSA in 2021, focuses on proactively reaching families to address disparities in child welfare systems and preventing a disproportionate number of black and brown children being removed from their families and homes. LSA invited four leading organizations in their network across six sites to participate in the initiative, providing grant funding and fostering collaborative learning that included technical assistance, coaching and a tailored curriculum.

Download the full Sustainability Toolkit, which includes examples, interactive tools and resource guides.

Sustainability Toolkit

For more information about the FSI Sustainability Toolkit, contact:

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