

Based on our work with states to shape their responses to the immediate and long-term recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, CLASP developed the following framework that underscores the need for policymakers to be thoughtful and use racial equity as a central consideration when making decisions. This decision-making framework reflects the practical urgency and constraints states are experiencing along with the values we believe should be at the core of how states respond. It emerges from our relationships with state and community leaders, impacted people, and advocates.

Overarching Guidance

1. **Place racial equity front and center.** At a time when death, sickness, and economic ruin are disproportionately affecting people with low incomes—including communities of color, immigrant communities, and other groups that have been historically marginalized—states must ensure their responses prioritize those who are now dealing with the compounded impact of a pandemic crisis and persistent systemic disenfranchisement. A disparate response that does not acknowledge and address systemic racial disparities will likely exacerbate these disparities.
2. **Look across policy areas for solutions—to reflect the practical intersections of policy in people’s lives and to seize available policy opportunities.** Now more than ever, policymakers must know about and understand the many policies that could alleviate the distress of families, workers, students, and individuals with low incomes. Given the scale of the economic devastation, the enormous number of people losing work and economic security, and the depth of their need, no single policy response can address the overlapping crises they face. State leadership and agencies must communicate, collaborate, and coordinate to understand the breadth and complexity of the federal response and the many policy elements and opportunities to use federal resources to meet people’s needs.
3. **Deliver urgent help today while forging a path to more permanent, systemic solutions.** Families’ needs are urgent now—and they will likely have new urgent needs in three months and even more in six months. So, policymakers should seize an opportunity to solve today’s problem using solutions that will prepare the state for the months and years ahead.
4. **Pay attention to where the public health crisis and the economic crisis overlap AND to where they differ.** While the current twin crises are closely related, they are not the same. For example, some groups of people are deeply affected by one but not the other; the time frames are different (e.g., devastating economic effects will continue after the public health emergency ends); and the programmatic opportunities and constraints are different (e.g., jobs programs and child care centers may not be able to operate safely during the public health emergency but are a crucial part of the economic response).

Immediate Next Steps

5. **People need help NOW. Uncomplicate everything you can to get them help immediately.** Now is a good time to review eligibility policies, applications, verification and documentation

requirements, and processes to reduce obstructive eligibility practices and ensure that people who need cash and other resources get them as quickly as possible. Thinking across systems and using existing pathways—with an eye toward reaching those who have been historically left out—can make distribution faster and more direct.

6. **Don't leave federal funds on the table.** Pay attention to the timelines and allowable uses for federal funds becoming available at the state, county, and local level. Be strategic to maximize their impact, while using state and local funds for purposes federal funds can't cover. Take steps to expand eligibility, strengthen outreach, and understand all allowable uses of the funds that can help move the dollars quickly to those who most need them. Sequence effectively, with attention to state legislative and administrative requirements for using the funds to ensure dollars with the shortest timelines get used first.
7. **Actively look for ways to meet the needs of people who are systematically underserved and left out by existing service systems, yet are more likely to be negatively impacted by this crisis.** Policies and systems have frequently reached people inequitably, leaving out some people—by age, gender, race, ethnicity, income, geography, housing status, immigration status, sexual identity, religion, language, incarceration, and other characteristics. These same groups may be experiencing the impacts of this public health and economic crisis most profoundly. Therefore, policymakers must design effective solutions to reach those who have been left out.

Preparing for the Next Phase, and Beyond

8. **Sustain the crucial service delivery infrastructure so it will be there after the immediate health crisis, when the economy reopens.** Community-based organizations and institutions that serve people with low incomes—especially those in the most underserved communities—often operate precariously with very small financial margins. Policy and investment strategies must prioritize sustaining these essential community partners for the duration of the pandemic and support them through a strong recovery.
9. **Tell the stories—of failure, inequity, and success.** First, the pandemic is shining a light on underlying, pre-existing failures, such as discrimination in access to health care and to safe and healthy jobs. Explaining these failures can build toward future solutions. Second, where federal responses are insufficient to the needs, documenting and telling the story is a crucial part of building demand for a future response. And finally, when state and federal responses include powerful steps that have not been as central to past policy—paid leave and cash payments to people in need, for example—also provides a moment to lift up those successes and explain what has worked, to build toward sustaining the reforms into the future.
10. **Protect the advances through the state budget crises to come.** In the coming months and years, state governments are likely to face historic budget shortages. To protect recent policy advances and investments, states will need federal help to avoid devastating cuts and to ensure the state will be able to continue supporting those who need help the most.