

**ABA Criminal Justice Section
Racial Justice Improvement Project
2011 Fall Conference Pre-Conference Planning Form**

At the Racial Justice Improvement Project Fall Conference, each task force will be required to give two short presentations. On Friday, October 21st, each task force will be given about 10 minutes to give a brief summation of the work of your task force during the 2010-2011 year. On Saturday, October 22nd, each group will be required to give another short presentation on your proposed racial justice reform and implementation plan during the 2011-2012 period. Each group should select one person who will speak for the group at each of these presentations (it need not be the same person for both presentations). The 10 questions below are designed to focus your presentations by identifying the precise information we want you to address. Our grantor, the Bureau of Justice Assistance, will be attending our conference, as will other outside funding sources. These presentations will put your task force in the best possible position to secure additional funds to support the continued work of your task force beyond the ABA grant. Therefore, it is critical that your presentation clearly articulate the exact racial disparity your task force is addressing, the bottom-line results of any data that you collected to validate the disparity, and, most importantly, a solid plan of action on exactly what your task force proposes to do to address the disparity. You do not need to have a fully-developed and final reform proposal, but you should have a very clear idea of what you will need to do in order to implement the reform and a realistic assessment of what you can accomplish by Fall 2012. To illustrate the level of specificity and detail required for each question there is a sample answer in the footnotes to each question based on a hypothetical racial disparity involving arrest rates for African Americans for “fine only” offenses. It is expected that your task force will meet and discuss your answers to the questions prior to submission. If your group would like further guidance, please contact the Cynthia Jones.

The answers to the 10 questions below must be typed and submitted in a WORD document (not a PDF) to Salma Safiedine of the ABA at salma.safiedine@americanbar.org on or before October 10th, 2011.

1. What member of the task force will be the designated speaker ?

The presentation on Friday, October 21st? _____

The presentation on Saturday, October 22nd? _____

2. What is the specific racial disparity your task force has identified?¹

3. What is the proposed racial justice policy reform that your task force has developed to address this disparity?²

4. How do you plan to implement the reform?³

5. How do you plan to track and measure the effectiveness of your proposed racial justice policy reform?⁴

¹ This question requires a very specific answer. For example, “based on data from our criminal justice system in 2008 and 2009, we have determined that during pedestrian stop and frisk encounters African Americans with no prior criminal record are more 33% more likely to be arrested for very minor (“fine-only”) offenses than are similarly-situated White pedestrians.”

² For example: “Our task force has discussed the results of the study with the Chief of Police and the Prosecutor’s Office. The Chief is working with the Task Force to institute a new policy that limits the use of the arrest power for fine-only offenses. We hope to do special training sessions on implicit bias and bias free decision making for police officers. We will also be working on a way to capture the number of fine-only arrests (by race) in our automated criminal justice data base and generate regular reports to chart the progress of our efforts. We also plan to educate the community on this pro-active approach to better policing practices and generate some positive public relations from the fact that we are identified a problem and have instituted effective corrective measures.”

³ For example: “The task force plans to first get the Chief of Police to agree to either a limited arrest or “no arrest” policy for fine-only offenses. We plan to speak to the Chief of Police and propose that new departmental general orders memorialize the new policy on arrest for fine-only offenses. We plan to identify the police district(s) with the greatest fine-only arrest disparity and implement a training program on implicit bias and the new policy. Thereafter, we plan to do the training in each police precinct and track the data over the course of the next year.”

⁴ For example: “The task force plans to work with our criminal justice data agency to make modifications that will enable us to quickly and efficiently track (by race) the number of people arrested for fine-only offenses. With minor modifications to our existing system, we should be able to capture this information and easily generate reports. To make the necessary modifications to generate this data, we will expend some of our grant funds. The task force will then meet with Chief of Police to discuss the reports and make further changes as needed to reduce the racial disparity.”

6. Please identify (by name and job title) the specific people in your criminal justice system/jurisdiction that the task force will need to collaborate with in the coming year to successfully implement the proposed reform? Also, please explain what role these individuals will play in implementing the reform.⁵
7. What steps will the task force take to inform and educate the community and your criminal justice system about your proposed racial justice reform and garner support for the reform?⁶
8. How would you define “success” for your proposed racial justice reform?⁷
9. What obstacles can you anticipate that might prevent or delay the successful implementation of your proposed racial justice reform?⁸
10. What steps can you take during the next year to institutionalize your task force beyond the grant period and ensure that your work continues?⁹

⁵ For example: “(1) John Allen, the director of training for the police department, will need to develop a training module for police officers on the new fine-only arrest policy and on bias-free decision-making. (2) Barbara Smith, the police department data collection supervisor, will need to assist with the modifications to the police department automated arrest data software in order to generate the reports needed by the task force. (3) Professor Michele Coles, State University, a local and well-respected expert on implicit bias who is a dynamic speaker and trainer, will be asked to work with the task force to conduct training sessions. (4) Bob Smith of the local chapter of the NAACP, and Dave Johnson, the policy director of the ACLU, will be asked to work with the task force to disseminate information about the reform and participate in community meetings about the reform.”

⁶ For example: “We plan to reach out to numerous groups in our criminal justice system and in the community to educate them on the proposed reform prior to implementation. We also plan to join forces with community groups and do educational seminars on the new policy once it is implemented. We also plan to present the work of our task force to the criminal justice professionals in our jurisdiction and seek their input on the proposed policy and suggestions for effective implementation. For example, Judge Smith (a task force member) has arranged for the task force to speak at the Board of Judges meeting in December, we hope to make a request to do a panel presentation at the State Bar Association conference, and the task force has been invited to do a presentation for the public defender’s office.”

⁷ For example: “The proposal to restrict fine-only arrests should improve our criminal justice system by removing the discretion of officers to make arrests of all individuals for these extremely minor offenses, and prevent officers from exercising their discretionary authority in a manner that has a disparate impact on African Americans. Therefore, “success” would be the elimination or a significant and steady reduction in the racial disparity among those arrested for fine-only offenses after the policy is implemented.”

⁸ For example: “If the Chief of Police is not able to quickly implement the new policy and get the departmental general orders drafted and finalized, our reforms could be delayed. Also, given the other criminal justice data demands, there may be a delay in making the necessary modifications to the automated system to track and measure the effectiveness of the policy. We may also encounter resistance from police officers and the Fraternal Order of Police, but we are already planning to work with these groups and get “buy-in” prior to the implementation of the new policy.”

⁹ For example: “We can create an independent website for the project, start a regular eNewsletter to disseminate updates and information to the policy makers in the criminal justice system and to community groups. We can also seek additional grant funds to finance our work, and host events where we invite speakers to discuss racial bias in the criminal justice system.”