



SUMMARY REPORT

Agenda Date: 12/6/2022

To: Board of Supervisors

Department or Agency Name(s): Office of Equity

Staff Name and Phone Number: Alegría De La Cruz, 707-565-8980

Vote Requirement: Majority

Supervisory District(s): Countywide

Title:

Office of Equity Proposed Vision, Mission and Values, and Racial Equity Learning Program

Recommended Action:

- A) Approve Office of Equity Vision Mission, and Values
- B) Receive An Update on the Racial Equity Learning Program, Close of Phase 1 and Phase 2 Core Team Steering Committee work

Executive Summary:

Since its establishment in August 2020, the Office of Equity has worked to build County-wide capacity and equity skill sets through the creation and support of the Core Team and through provision of training and support in application of racial equity concepts to day-to-day County work. Through this work, the Office of Equity has heard expectations and needs from County staff and community members and has reflected those in its draft guiding statements, or Vision, Mission, and Values. Given the nascent stage of this new department, the Office of Equity presents here its draft Vision, Mission and Values statements for discussion and approval and an update of the first Phase of its capacity building work.

Discussion:

The Sonoma County Office of Equity (OOE) was established in August 2020 and is supported by a total of 6 full-time employees (FTE), of whom 3 are time-limited (through June 2025) and dedicated to American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) duties. The 3 permanent positions - the Office Director, an Administrative Aide, and a Program Manager (who supports the County-wide Racial Equity Learning Program) - are dedicated to the Office of Equity's principal charge of ensuring that County policies and programs result in greater positive outcomes for communities of color who have experienced underservice or underrepresentation and implementing the 12 objectives included in your Board's 5-Year Strategic Plan Racial Equity and Social Justice pillar.

For the first 6 months of its existence, your Board directed the Office of Equity to support the Department of Health Services' response to the compounding inequities on communities of color resulting from the COVID-19 Pandemic. When a Health Equity Manager was hired in December 2020, the OOE transitioned to its core work and began to develop a vision for the County's nascent work on Racial Equity.

With 3 FTE employees at the time, the OOE relied on the Government Alliance on Race and Equity's (GARE) guidance to expand its operational capacity by launching the creation of a Core Team <

<<https://www.racialequityalliance.org/resources/racial-equity-core-teams-the-engines-of-institutional-change/>>>. As part of the selection process for the Core Team, the Office of Equity (OOE) conducted

interviews with each applicant to better understand their role in advancing Racial Equity in their department, as well as supports needed from the newly created OOE to continue this work. The Office established the Sonoma County Equity Core Team in April of 2021, with 73 members representing 24 County departments and agencies. The Core Team learning community became the basis to expand the Office's capacity to begin its work in alignment with the Racial Equity and Social Justice pillar of the County's 5-year Strategic Plan <<https://socostrategicplan.org/>>.

Vision, Mission and Values

The Core Team's initial work included providing input and feedback on the Values and possibilities for the Office of Equity's Mission and Vision. At its inception, the Office of Equity did extensive research into other jurisdictions who have begun similar efforts to review foundational documents and statements and worked to bring those best aligned with the County of Sonoma to the Core Team for feedback for inclusion in future drafts. The Office of Equity also reviewed your Board's adopted Strategic Plan Values <<https://socostrategicplan.org/>> to ensure consistency and reflection of the County's articulation of its foundational principles. Through the development of the substantive work of the Office over its first 2 years of existence, the Office and the Core Team were able to develop and articulate the underlying concepts and ideas at the foundation of this work.

In February 2022, your Board created an Equity Ad Hoc with Supervisors Hopkins and Gore to guide the Office of Equity's work plan and to provide input and finalize recommendations on the OOE's Vision, Mission and Values. The Ad Hoc met for the first time in June 2022, and over four meetings, the Ad Hoc provided input on the development of Office's Vision, Mission and Values, as well as the limited outreach and engagement opportunities, given timing and capacity.

Those outreach and engagement efforts included participating in the Petaluma Blacks for Community Development's Annual Picnic and gathering high-level community feedback and input, two virtual Community Listening Sessions, as well as seeking feedback and input from the County's Department and Agency Heads Association on the draft Vision, Mission and Values statements of the Office.

In its presentations (included here as Attachment A), the Office set forth guidance in considering the purpose of an organization's Vision, Mission and Values, and asked for feedback in three areas: whether the statements resonated, whether they did not feel good (i.e. tokenizing, harmful, or not genuine), or whether something was missing. The guidance included the following:

- a Vision Statement sets forth a world in which the Office of Equity no longer needs to exist, it is expansive, clear, inclusive, and fearless, it is where we are going, but it is not what we are doing or how we are going to get there, it is not specific, and it aligns with mission and values;
- a Mission Statement sets forth the role we play in reaching the vision, it must be specific to the organization, it is specific, clear, accountable to the community, it is flexible enough to encapsulate a variety of goals and tactics which may change over time, and that it aligns with the vision and values; and
- Values reflect who we are, what we are committed to, and how we show up in our work, they guide the OOE's internal and external work, they do not change are non-negotiable, and they are demonstrable and measurable.

The Office gathered all feedback and input, analyzed it, and identified changes to the earlier drafts presented. Overall themes from the community feedback included questions about the County's racial focus in its equity work, questions about who is ultimately accountable for the County's equity work, and whether the language used is accessible and clear.

After considering feedback and input, the Office of Equity presents the following proposed Vision, Mission, and Values.

Vision:

A Sonoma County where power and resources are distributed equitably; where systems support every community member as they work together to cultivate wellbeing, agency, and liberation; and where people of all races and identities can live authentically, heal, and thrive.

Mission:

Our mission is to work in authentic and collaborative partnerships within County government; with Black, Indigenous, and communities of color; and with community members who are disproportionately impacted by systemic inequities to:

- Recognize and disrupt systemic harm.
- Redesign structures and direct resources towards healing, liberation, and belonging.
- Build transparency and accountability in County institutions, policies, and culture.

Values:**Anti-Racism**

We recognize anti-Blackness and anti-Indigeneity as the foundation of racial inequity, and we place loving focus on Black, Indigenous, Hispanic/ Latinx/e, Asian, Pacific Islanders, and all communities of color whose lives have been harmed by racism. Therefore, we practice Anti-Racism, which is the active process of identifying and eliminating racism so that power is redistributed and shared equitably.

Design to the Margins

We recognize that race is still the single biggest factor in determining an individual's health, wealth, and overall well-being, and that simultaneously, community members may experience systemic marginalization at the intersection of many identity markers, including disability, neurodiversity, gender, sexual orientation, documentation status, home language, and many additional social, cultural, or economic factors. Therefore, we use a design-to-the-margins lens to develop programs with and for Indigenous, Black, Hispanic/Latinx/e, Asian, Pacific Islander, communities of color, and community members who have historically and continue to experience harm within government systems.

Collective and Transformative Leadership

We recognize that our government systems have inherited and upheld racist institutions and structures, and that we have a shared responsibility to challenge and transform these systems, together. Therefore, we cultivate change and encourage leadership across County departments to normalize conversations about

racism and racial equity, create healing spaces, and build capacity and infrastructure, so that together we can implement practices, programs and policies that disrupt the perpetuation of inequities.

Authentic Collaboration

We recognize that the people who are closest to the challenges are also closest to the solutions. Therefore, we work to build trusting, reciprocal relationships with communities; to learn from, amplify, and operationalize their wisdom and experiences; and to resource them in the codesign process.

Healing Centered Practices

We recognize that government practices have created historical, intergenerational, and present-day trauma for many members of our community; and that these practices of fragmentation and othering harm us all, even as they do so in different and unequal ways.

Therefore, we utilize practices within the Office of Equity, within County government, and in our relationships with community members that center individual and collective healing and repair.

Strategic Community Investments

We recognize that the inequities folks in our community experience are, in part, the result of government disinvestment. Therefore, we collect and analyze local qualitative and quantitative data to determine which communities are most impacted by these inequities, so that we can support strategic investments in those communities.

Transparency & Accountability

We recognize that the distrust some communities have towards government is the direct result of governmental harm, and that moving forward, government is responsible for building and earning trust. Therefore, we hold ourselves accountable to community members for transforming the policies, practices, and programs that have led to racialized disproportionate outcomes; and we commit to communicating openly and bidirectionally with community members about our processes and practices.

These Vision, Mission, and Values for your Board's consideration are grounded in the powerful experiences that the Core Team and the Office of Equity have had together in the formation, design, and implementation of the Racial Equity Learning Program.

The Racial Equity Learning Program

PHASE 1

Core Team

In initial Core Team interviews, many applicants mentioned needing and wanting equity training for themselves and for County leadership, and, thus, elevated the critical need for the Office of Equity to offer Racial Equity training within the organization. In alignment with GARE's Strategic Approach to Institutional Change, which identifies normalizing conversations about race equity and developing shared understanding of those concepts through foundational training <

https://www.racialequityalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/GARE_GettingtoEquity_July2017_PUBLISH.pdf> as a requisite first step towards achieving equity, the Office of Equity entered into a contract with Equity and Results, LLC

[<https://sonoma-county.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=4969649&GUID=A6B37AB3-D783-4F86-B162-1413196B1204&Options=&Search](https://sonoma-county.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=4969649&GUID=A6B37AB3-D783-4F86-B162-1413196B1204&Options=&Search) [<https://sonoma-county.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=4969649&GUID=A6B37AB3-D783-4F86-B162-%201413196B1204&Options=&Search](https://sonoma-county.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=4969649&GUID=A6B37AB3-D783-4F86-B162-%201413196B1204&Options=&Search)> in June 2021, employing the consultant's support to launch a Racial Equity Learning Program for Core Team members.

The Racial Equity Learning Program, which has been first of its kind in the County organization, included the creation of affinity and learning spaces, as well as trainings for members of the Core Team to develop technical expertise in Anti-Racist Results-Based Accountability (AR RBA) and to develop facilitation expertise in conversations about race equity. The work began with the creation of a learning and healing community of Core Team members.

In designing for the Office of Equity's first training offerings, the Office centered the experiences of BIPOC staff in the County and recognized the need for supported and safe spaces that could facilitate healing and community building. Organizing early race equity efforts in affinity groups is a widely used tool to support safety and community building. As stated in the Learning Program Assessment currently being finalized by our learning consultants, "Racial affinity work helps participants understand that the roles & responsibilities of BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and people of color) & White people are different in advancing racial equity and mitigates predictable patterns of harm in racial equity learning spaces where learning for White participants often happens at the expense of BIPOC participants." Based on the advice of our training consultants' experience in other jurisdictions nationwide, the Office of Equity chose to offer the County's first Phase of its Learning Program in three Affinity Groups: Black, Non-Black People of Color, and White.

Beginning the Fall of 2021, facilitated Race Affinity Groups created spaces in which participants were able to listen, support, and build trust around each other grounded in their shared experiences as employees of the County of Sonoma. While in Affinity, Core Team members also received Racial Equity foundational training and developed a common language and shared understanding of key equity concepts, an ability to identify and overcome predictable barriers in racial equity work, and an understanding of their shared responsibility to disrupt racial inequities as public servants. The Affinity and Foundational learning spaces, part of the first phase of learning, concluded after 12 weeks of work. The three Affinity groups came together in one final multiracial meeting before the start of the 2021 holiday season, where the Office of Equity presented options to further application of equity principles and concepts.

The feedback received at the end of the Affinity and Foundational training helped the Office of Equity understand the deep impact and critical need for facilitated affinity spaces for healing and continued learning. When asked about the most impactful part of this experience across all three Affinity Groups, the most common theme was having the ability to connect and discuss with others in similar learning or healing paths:

"Being able to share intimate and personal experiences and making connections with others who shared an understanding of those experiences..."

"... becoming more comfortable with discussing systemic racism."

"Understanding what roles I have previously played in racial inequality."

"The sense of belonging and being able to share, relate and have meaningful discussions."

The Office of Equity consistently surveys participants after training, and survey data demonstrates that the organization is experiencing positive impacts from these early efforts. Of the responses received, 74% of participants “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that their learning in the affinity sessions was applicable to their day-to-day work, and 70% of participants “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that they acquired skills and built relationships that helped them discuss and implement Racial Equity principles relevant to their work. There is still space for improvement and refinement of training content and manner of delivery, and the Core Team members will be continuing to work on developing a Race Equity 101 foundational training for all County staff as a result of their work and learning, currently expected to be completed by May 2023.

Following the end of the Foundation Series, the OOE launched a series of different professional development offerings for Core Team members: an intensive facilitators training - “Train the Trainer” - and an Anti-Racist Results-Based Accountability training series.

Train the Trainer Sessions

This three-day intensive learning experience took place in June 2022 and was designed to expand Core Team member’s toolbox of facilitative moves and to build greater muscle and practice to navigate and lead race conversations in groups.

A total of 20 Core Team members representing 9 departments participated in this training. Participating departments and agencies include: Agriculture/Weights & Measures, Board of Supervisors (District 3), County Administrator’s Office, Community Development Commission, Health Services, Human Services, Permit Sonoma, Sonoma Water, and the Office of Equity.

A common theme that arose in the feedback received included the importance of continuing to build a community of equity champions and the importance of developing hard skills to further equity in the County:

“I learned more about myself, my agency, and transformational tools to address racism in work spaces. I learned how to have difficult and effective conversations about race. I also took with me a community that is working towards equity across the county.”

Survey results of that training experience include that 88% of participants responding to the survey found the tools and methods shared during the training “applicable” or “very applicable” to their jobs, and 100% of participants responding to the survey reported being “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with the training.

After having received this training, trained Core Team facilitators participated in the creation and delivery of a Racial Equity Training for County Department Heads in October 2022. Nineteen Department Heads attended the day long training in which newly trained facilitators showcased their skills and continued to expand their comfort in leading conversations and teaching concepts about race:

“(I) appreciated having members of the Core Team participate and share their experiences. They were insightful and did a terrific job leading us through the exercises...” - Department Head

87.5% of Department Heads responding to our post-training survey found the content of the training “very relevant,” and 75% reported being “very” (5 -max score) satisfied with the overall training. County Core Team

facilitators will continue to work together to deliver training to participating departments and key stakeholders as part of the creation of a County Racial Equity Action Plan (REAP), as well as to support implementation of equity tools through department-level training, training on conducting race equity impact analysis for program and policy Board recommendations, and supporting departments to identify other opportunities for equity work, to the extent feasible and allowed by their Departments.

The Affinity, Foundational, and Train the Trainer parts of the Racial Equity Learning Program were supported by the Office of Equity's training consultants, [Just Process, <https://www.maanavthakore.com/home>](https://www.maanavthakore.com/home) who have experience delivering race equity training in many jurisdictions nationwide. Just Process is currently finalizing its assessment of its time in Sonoma County and will provide an in-depth assessment of Sonoma County's current stage in its equity journey with recommendations to continue this work in a positive and productive direction. As of FY 22-23, there is no ongoing funding to continue to provide facilitated spaces to support training development or coaching; however, the Office has again submitted requests for Strategic Plan funding (to be decided in the Spring of 2023).

Anti-Racist Results-Based Accountability

Early in its visioning process, the Office of Equity identified an opportunity to both support and leverage the excellent work of Upstream Investments' Results-Based Accountability work ([<https://upstreaminvestments.org/>](https://upstreaminvestments.org/)) by injecting a critical focus on race equity into these results driven methodology. By bridging the gap between a commitment to racial equity and the day-to-day work through this data-rich and rigorous seven step process, the County is able to move from intention to transformation and to achieve equitable outcomes. By focusing on addressing whether outcomes have improved for communities of color, this methodology begins by teaching participants to analyze the real impacts and harm of systemic racism on communities of color, and then backs into solutions that strategically address the roots of the inequities of most consequence. This iterative methodology requires people to ask whether Black, Indigenous and communities of color are better off in response to those solutions.

Following the close of the Foundational training, 31 Core Team members representing 12 departments and agencies chose to participate in training and implementation of Anti-Racist Results-Based Accountability. Participating departments and agencies include: Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District, Board of Supervisors (District 3), County Administrator's Office, Community Development Commission, Child Support Services, Emergency Management, Department of Health Services, Human Resources, Human Services, Probation, Sonoma Water, and the Office of Equity. This learning space is supported and facilitated by our lead consultant, Equity & Results. The consultant has worked with Core Team participants by helping to identify the roots of inequities pertaining to their departments or agencies and areas of expertise and to visualize strategic solutions to those inequities as critical pieces of a Countywide effort to establish accountability for the policies and programs that continue to perpetuate inequities among local communities of color.

This piece of the Racial Equity Learning Program is funded through December 2022. However, OOE's ARPA-funded staff and the Human Services' Upstream Investments team continue to work with [Equity & Results <https://www.equityandresults.com/racial-equity-rba-1>](https://www.equityandresults.com/racial-equity-rba-1) to measure the impact of the distribution of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Funds to the communities most impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, and we hope to continue to support our partners at Upstream Investments in their work with the Safety Net

departments currently implementing and expanding some aspects of the Anti-Racist Results-Based Accountability methodology. The Office of Equity has requested support from Strategic Plan funding to expand our capacity to support Upstream Investments with ongoing race equity training, technical assistance, data analysis, to be determined in the Spring of 2023.

Current State and Future of the Core Team and Racial Equity Learning Program

Over the last 16 months of work (July 2021 - October 2022), Core Team members have reported more than 3,110 hours of training together. Unfortunately, while the Office has seen most Core Team members thrive and get more comfortable with their skills having and leading conversations about race, the Core Team has also lost 19 members. Some of the most common reasons for attrition in the Core Team include lack of capacity for participation, leaving the County for other employment, and retirement. Currently, the Core Team is made of 54 participants representing 17 County departments and agencies:

- Auditor-Controller-Treasurer- Tax Collector
- Agricultural preservation and Open Space District
- Agriculture/Weights & Measures
- Board of Supervisors - District 3
- County Administrator's Office
- Child Support Services
- Community Development Commission
- Clerk-Recorder-Assessor-Registrar of Voters
- Emergency Management
- Health Services (DHS)
- Human Resources
- Human Services (HSD)
- Office of Equity
- Probation
- Public Defender
- Sonoma County Regional Parks
- Sonoma Water

The Office of Equity does not currently have funding or staff to continue to provide facilitated Affinity Spaces, to bring facilitation support to regularly convene the full Core Team in multiracial space, and to support the administrative work associated with coordinating and scheduling work for the group of 54 Core Team members.

PHASE 2

Core Team Steering Committee and Racial Equity Action Plan

As the Office launched this phase of its work, staff recognized the need for a smaller guiding body of trained Core Team members to develop and coordinate the work of the Core Team in the form of a Steering Committee. The Core Team Steering Committee will act as a group of strategic leaders that will support relevant work such as the implementation of several goals and objectives of the Racial Equity and Social Justice (RESJ) Pillar of the County's Strategic Plan through the creation of a Racial Equity Action Plan (REAP). According to the Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE) <

<https://www.racialequityalliance.org/resources/racial-equity-action-plans-manual/>> , “Racial Equity Action Plans can lay out the approach to operationalizing” jurisdictions’ commitments toward racial equity. In this case, the REAP will create a roadmap to achieving “meaningful and measurable results” articulated in the RESJ pillar of the County’s Strategic Plan and will include other strategies identified by Steering Committee members.

The creation of a REAP, with the leadership of the Core Team Steering Committee and the support and involvement of all County departments and agencies, is critical to ensuring that the responsibilities to embed racial equity across our government process and actions is clearly articulated so as to ensure those responsibilities are shared across all departments and agencies to positively impact communities of color across County service provision and employment opportunities.

On February 1, 2022, the OOE received \$240,000 in Strategic Plan funding over 3 years for this effort and entered into an agreement with Equity First Consulting, LLC on June 13, 2022 to support the work needed to advance equity initiatives across all departments and agencies through the creation of a REAP.

Since then, the consultant has supported the OOE in designing a process to select Core Team Steering Committee members, who will be leading the creation of the Racial Equity Action Plan. Through an anti-racist approach, participants submitted applications sharing information about the level of support they receive in their department, the different skills and lived experiences relevant to this leadership role, learning experiences in the changing roles they have had as equity champions, as well as ideas to effectively embed racial equity across County service provision. The OOE relied on an Advisory Committee made up of Core Team members to provide recommendations as to the best configuration for this leadership group as they were making the selection. Ultimately, 13 members were selected for the Steering Committee presented below in alphabetical order:

- Anna Yip - County Administrator’s Office
- Audrianna Jones - Community Development Commission
- Christel Querijero - County Administrator’s Office
- Denia Candela - Department of Health Services
- Josephine McKay - Human Services Department
- Lauren Reed - Department of Health Services
- Leslie Lew - Ag and Open Space
- Michelle Revecho - Human Services Department
- Nora Mallonee-Brand - Department of Health Services
- Oscar Chavez - Human Services Department
- Ryan Pedrotti - Sonoma Water
- Shawntel Reece - Human Services Department
- Victoria Willard - Human Resources

Steering Committee members represent the Office of Equity, and demonstrate the curiosity, humility, and focus on healing necessary to successfully operationalize equity principles at the County. Steering Committee members have a demonstrated commitment to and investment in equity work, the capacity to dedicate time to the work, and the ability to connect their role in the Steering Committee to the responsibilities of their day-to-day work in their departments.

The group will take part in hands-on professional development and leadership training opportunities where they will continue to learn, practice, and contribute to building an authentic community that is centered on anti-racism. Steering Committee members will serve for a minimum of 12 months and can expect to spend 4 hours per week on work related to racial equity for the Core Team or Steering Committee. These leaders, supported by Equity First Consulting and the OOE, will take the first steps towards the creation of the Racial Equity Action Plan, beginning in February 2023.

Strategic Plan:

This item directly supports the County's Five-year Strategic Plan and is aligned with the following pillar, goal, and objective.

Pillar: Racial Equity and Social Justice

Goal: Goal 1: Foster a County organizational culture that supports the commitment to achieving racial equity.

Objective: Objective 2: Invest in an ongoing and continually developing racial equity learning program, including understanding the distinction between institutional, structural, interpersonal, and individual racism, for County leadership and staff by end of 2021.

Pillar: Racial Equity and Social Justice

Goal: Goal 1: Foster a County organizational culture that supports the commitment to achieving racial equity.

Objective: Objective 3: Conduct a baseline assessment by mid-2022 of racial equity awareness and understanding among County staff and develop a process to assess progress annually.

Pillar: Racial Equity and Social Justice

Goal: Goal 4: Engage community members and stakeholder groups to develop priorities and to advance racial equity.

Objective: Objective 3: Begin implementing strategies for regular community engagement to guide racial equity efforts.

Prior Board Actions:

N/A

FISCAL SUMMARY

Expenditures	FY 22-23 Adopted	FY23-24 Projected	FY 24-25 Projected
Budgeted Expenses			
Additional Appropriation Requested			
Total Expenditures			
Funding Sources			
General Fund/WA GF			

Agenda Date: 12/6/2022

State/Federal			
Fees/Other			
Use of Fund Balance			
Contingencies			
Total Sources			

Narrative Explanation of Fiscal Impacts:

N/A

Staffing Impacts:			
Position Title (Payroll Classification)	Monthly Salary Range (A-I Step)	Additions (Number)	Deletions (Number)

Narrative Explanation of Staffing Impacts (If Required):

N/A

Attachments:

A: PowerPoint Presentation on Vision, Mission and Values for Community Engagement

B: PowerPoint Presentation

Related Items “On File” with the Clerk of the Board:

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