Racial Equity Analysis for Significant Board Items

Board Item Date	8/13/2024
Board Item Name	Racial Equity Action Plan Revisions
Department/Agency (Lead)	Office of Equity
If this is an inter-departmental initiative, please identify a lead above.	
Person(s) Completing Analysis	Melissa Valle and Dora Estrada

1. **Overview: Describe your program or policy and the desired results and outcomes?**
   a. What is the program or policy decision under consideration?
   b. What are the desired results (in the **community**) and outcomes (within your own **organization**)?
   c. What does this proposal have an ability to impact?

   ☐ Children and youth   ☐ Health
   ☐ Community engagement   ☐ Housing
   ☐ Contracting equity   ☐ Human services
   ☐ Criminal justice   ☐ Jobs
   ☐ Economic development   ☐ Parks and recreation
   ☐ Education   ☐ Planning / development
   ☐ Environment   ☐ Transportation
   ☐ Food access and affordability   ☐ Utilities
   ☒ Government practices   ☒ Workforce equity
   ☐ Other _____

The Board of Supervisors will be approving on consent the final Racial Equity Action Plan (Action Plan). On May 17th, 2024 they approved and directed staff to implement the following strategies.

Strategy 1: County creates capacity for equity work and expands pipelines for hiring and career advancement.

Strategy 2: County offers support and creates accountability for management at all levels to develop an understanding of racial equity principles and practices.

Strategy 3: County invests in data collection and reporting systems to drive change that is responsive to staff experiences.

The intended result is for all County staff, especially staff of color, to feel a sense of belonging and support to achieve their career goals within the County organization. The Racial Equity Action Plan recognizes that the County must focus on their employee experience first, in order to fulfill the directive of the County's Strategic Plan Racial Equity and Social Justice pillar to
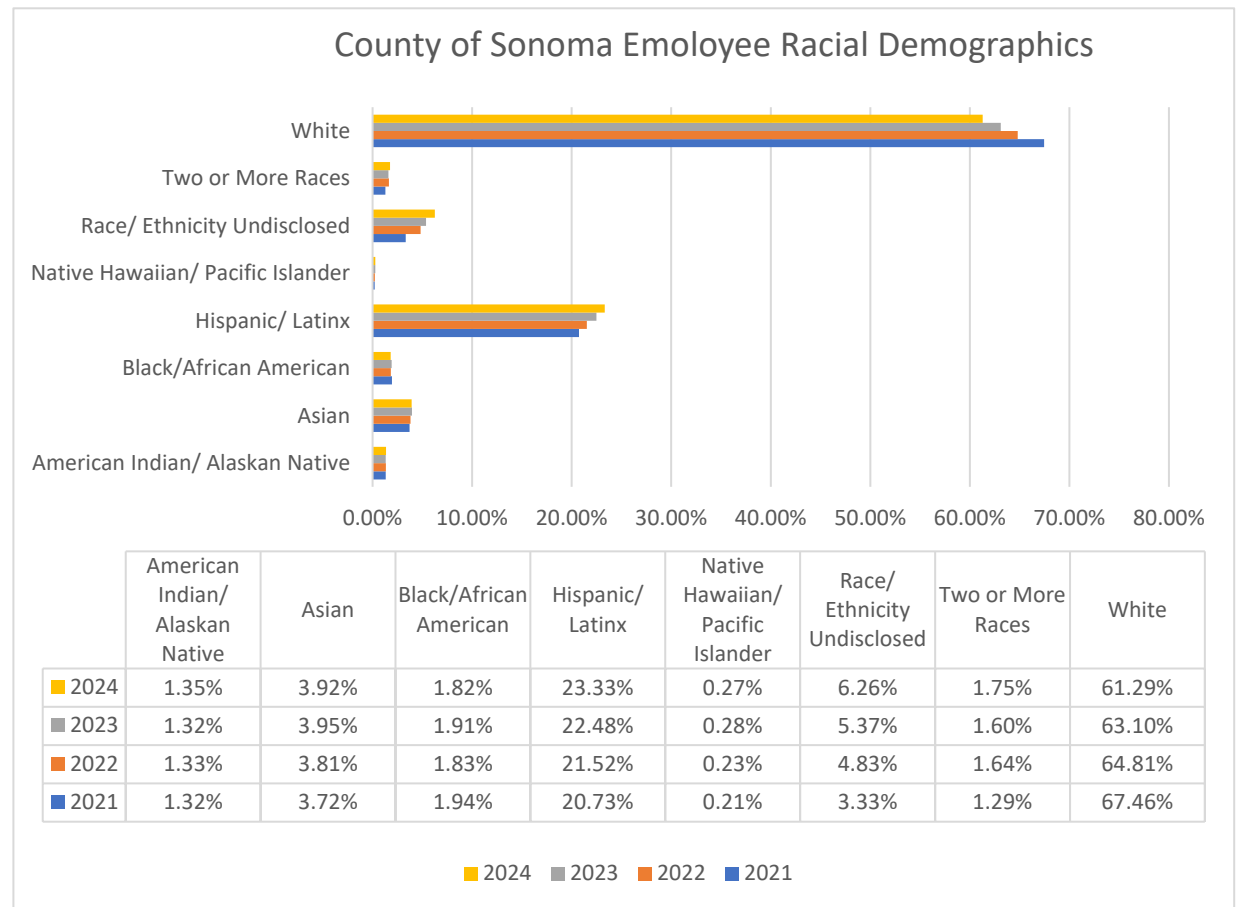
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> "achieve racial equity in County service provision and ensure a workforce reflective of the community we serve."
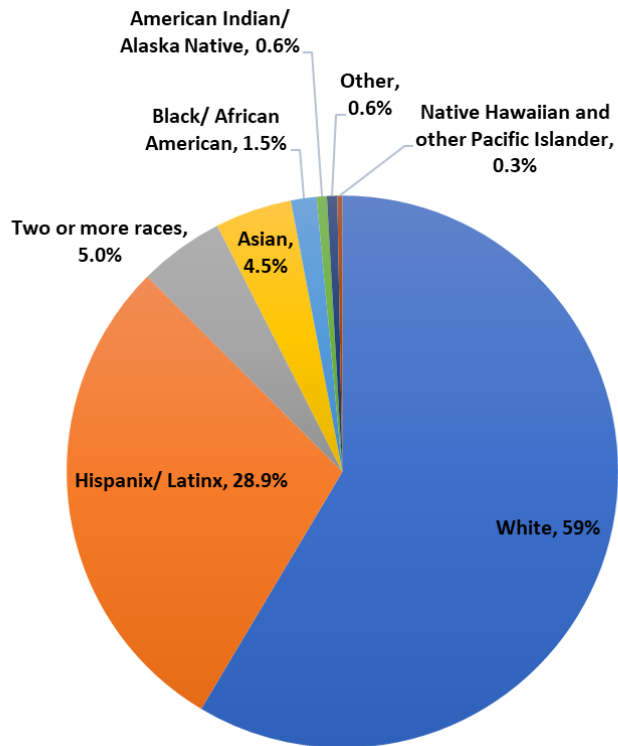
2. **Data: What's the data? What does the data tell us?**
   a. Will the proposal have impacts in specific geographic areas (neighborhoods, areas, or regions)? What are the racial demographics of those living in the area?
   b. What does population level data, including quantitative and qualitative data, tell you about existing racial inequities? What does it tell you about root causes or factors influencing racial inequities?
   c. What performance level data do you have available for your proposal? This should include data associated with existing programs or policies.
   d. Are there data gaps? What additional data would be helpful in analyzing the proposal? If so, how can you obtain better data?

The Action Plan directly impacts the County of Sonoma employees. Starting by taking an internal look at the operational challenges in the County workforce, the Action Plan recognizes that staff are integral members of the community, representing the broad spectrum of experiences and identities of the communities the County serves, and that when we foster employee wellbeing, our clients similarly benefit in their interactions with the County. The racial demographics of the County of Sonoma workforce can be seen below.

County of Sonoma Emoloyee Racial Demographics

	American Indian/ Alaskan Native	Asian	Black/African American	Hispanic/ Latinx	Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	Race/ Ethnicity Undisclosed	Two or More Races	White
2024	1.35%	3.92%	1.82%	23.33%	0.27%	6.26%	1.75%	61.29%
2023	1.32%	3.95%	1.91%	22.48%	0.28%	5.37%	1.60%	63.10%
2022	1.33%	3.81%	1.83%	21.52%	0.23%	4.83%	1.64%	64.81%
2021	1.32%	3.72%	1.94%	20.73%	0.21%	3.33%	1.29%	67.46%

2024 ■ 2023 ■ 2022 ■ 2021

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In addition to the disaggregated staff workforce data above, the relevant performance level data for this proposal would be at the Sonoma County level. Below is the most recent 2020 Census data on race and ethnicity in Sonoma County.

American Indian/ Alaska Native, 0.6%

Other, 0.6%

Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander, 0.3%

Black/ African American, 1.5%

Two or more races, 5.0%

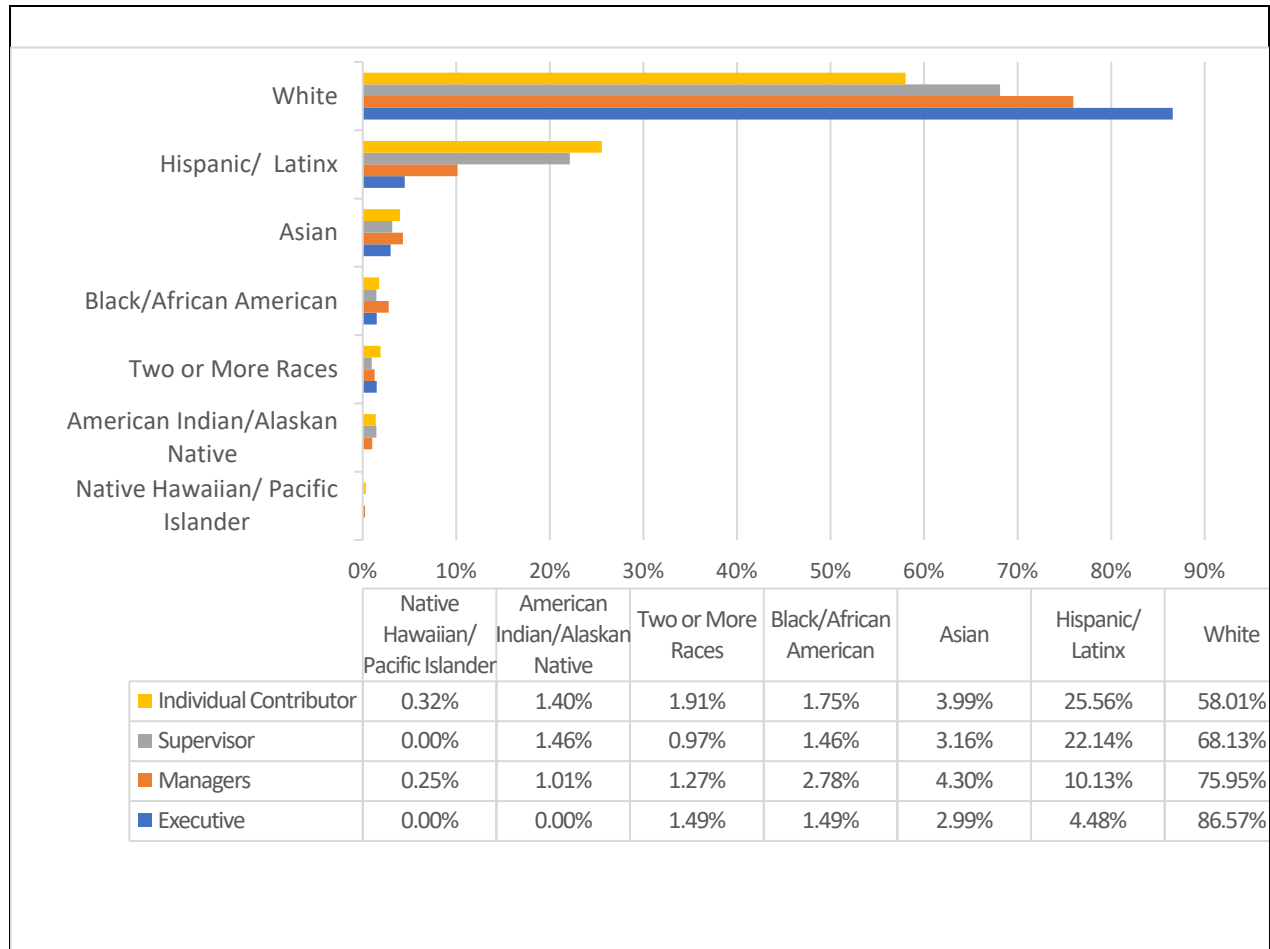**Asian, 4.5%**

Hispanix/ Latinx, 28.9%

White, 59%

Because the Racial Equity Action Plan is an internal plan, the OOE relied on internal County workforce indicators to conduct a root cause analysis.

Internal Indicator 1: County Management is not representative of the racial demographics of Sonoma County.

This indicator comes from the County of Sonoma Workforce Demographics Dashboard, which shows that while the general racial demographics of County staff mostly are in relative alignment with community racial demographics, White staff are overrepresented at all leadership levels in the County of Sonoma. This trend worsens the higher up the organizational hierarchy we look at, with the percentage of White people on staff rising at each leadership tier, and conversely, the percentage of people of color decreasing.

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	Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	American Indian/Alaskan Native	Two or More Races	Black/African American	Asian	Hispanic/ Latinx	White
Individual Contributor	0.32%	1.40%	1.91%	1.75%	3.99%	25.56%	58.01%
Supervisor	0.00%	1.46%	0.97%	1.46%	3.16%	22.14%	68.13%
Managers	0.25%	1.01%	1.27%	2.78%	4.30%	10.13%	75.95%
Executive	0.00%	0.00%	1.49%	1.49%	2.99%	4.48%	86.57%

(County Racial Demographics by Leadership Level 2024)

Internal Indicator 2: Staff of color disproportionately report dissatisfaction levels with management practices.

This internal indicator came from data gathered through the review of various staff surveys, which shared the theme that when it comes to management practices, satisfaction levels for staff of color are disproportionately lower compared to White staff. Staff of color disproportionately report considering leaving their departments and/or the County as a whole due to feeling undervalued, experiencing burnout (especially bilingual staff), having fewer opportunities for advancement, and in some cases experiencing racial microaggressions and overt racism. Survey participants shared that they did not see sufficient response from Departments or the County as a whole to these instances.

The OOE Steering Committee relied on the Anti-Racist Results-Based Accountability (AR-RBA) methodology to identify what are known as Hot Roots of inequities, which are (1) race-explicit levers, (2) within the purview of the County to shift, and that (3) if disrupted, could have an outsized impact on the County's structural dynamics and change racial outcomes for the better. Hot Roots can also be understood as the "why's" that help maintain the inequities

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highlighted by the Internal Indicators. The Racial Equity Action Plan addresses the three barriers listed below in relation to the two internal indicators previously identified.

- Internal Indicator 1: County Management is not representative of the racial demographics of Sonoma County

    o Why 1: There are few mechanisms supporting managers in hiring and promoting qualified staff members of color to leadership levels.

- Internal Indicator 2: Staff of color disproportionately report dissatisfaction levels with management practices.

    o Why 2: Management practices do not reflect sufficient capacity, skill sets, and/or interest to contribute to the empowerment of staff, especially staff of color.

    o Why 3: The County system values productivity over the impact that working conditions have on people, especially staff of color.

While some departments have conducted their own surveys about employee experience, there is currently no Countywide employee experience survey consistently administered to gather data on this topic for the County as a whole. The OOE has identified this as a data gap and included it as a strategy in the Action Plan. We will be working closely with our partners in the Human Resources department as they develop, administer, and assess the data from this survey.

3. **Community Engagement: How have communities been engaged? Are there opportunities to expand engagement?**
    a. Who are the most affected community members who are concerned with or have experience related to this proposal? How have you involved these community members in the development of this proposal?
    b. What has your engagement process told you about the burdens or benefits for different groups?
    c. What has your engagement process told you about the factors that produce or perpetuate racial inequity related to this proposal?

The most impacted community members are the County of Sonoma employees. Nonetheless, the OOE recognizes that the Action Plan has the potential to impact the way County clients experience services. We have engaged in the following ways.

Engagement Phase 1
Focus Groups with County Staff:

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In the fall of 2023, the Steering Committee conducted seven focus groups with County staff to present early Action Plan strategies and seek feedback. 60 staff members participated in this phase of engagement.

Relevant demographic information from focus group participants includes:

Percentage	Racial Identity
40.70%	Hispanic or Latine/x
30.00%	White
9.30%	Asian
9.30%	Prefer to self describe
7.40%	Native American/Indigenous Peoples/First Peoples (American Indian) or Alaska Native
7.40%	Black or African American
3.70%	Middle Eastern or North African
3.70%	Prefer not to say

Percentage	County Role
38.20%	Supervisor or Manager
30.90%	Front-facing staff, client facing (ex:front desk/ receptionist, social worker, eligibility worker, community health worker, community engagement person, etc.)
14.50%	Administrative Staff, non-client facing, non-managerial (ex: operations, financial, etc.)

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10.90%	Executive Leadership (Department Head, Division Manager within a Department)
5.50%	Prefer to self-describe

Focus Groups with Key Community Stakeholders:
The Steering Committee also conducted two focus groups, one in English and one Spanish, with community-based leaders. These were intended to gather external community perspectives about the draft of the Racial Equity Action Plan. Community-based leaders responded to content and questions that were adapted from what was shared during the focus groups with staff.

Engagement Phase 2
After the focus groups, the Steering Committee analyzed the data and adapted the draft strategies in response to the perspectives shared during the focus group process.

With a set of revised strategies, the Steering Community held reflection sessions with focus group participants in the Spring of 2024 to ensure that their feedback was accurately reflected and with the intention to understand what would be needed to set the Plan up for success. 33 participants joined the two reflection sessions offered.

Additionally, the Steering Committee also sought feedback on the Plan from the County Administrator, the Central Human Resources Director, and County Counsel. They also presented the Plan to the Safety Net Collaborative, the Department Head and Agency Association, and offered all Department Heads optional 1:1 meetings to discuss the Plan.

All of these steps have informed the Racial Equity Action Plan that is presented with this Board item.

The engagement process corroborated the data the Steering Committee analyzed and gave them a deeper understanding of why (hot roots) some inequities continue to be perpetuated by our system. This phase was also helpful in expanding our understanding of the quantitative data through qualitative accounts of the burdens faced by staff, especially staff of color, and which get in the way of achieving the result statement referenced in Step 1.

Because our approach assumes best intentions from staff, the Action Plan places the burden on systems and not on penalizing individuals' actions. Nonetheless, in alignment with the Racial Equity and Social Justice Strategic Plan Pilar, the Plan provides that all employees have a responsibility to develop their learning and skills in racial equity (as a key competency of public service) to stop the perpetuation of racial inequities.

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We learned that while laws and policies, such as California's Proposition 209, prevent the use of race as a decision-making criterion in public employment, data shows that internal processes can still result in racialized outcomes favoring White people within the organization. The engagement phases also reflected that both front-facing staff and management need support and a better understanding of how to apply antiracist principles in their work. This requires a thoughtful and intentional strategy, which is the Racial Equity Action Plan. However, in talking to department leaders, the Steering Committee also learned that while Department Heads generally expressed support for the Action Plan, some also expressed concerns over their current ability to fund and staff the implementation of the Plan in their departments, making it clear that funding limitations are an additional systemic barrier to overcome in the operationalization of equity work.

4. **Analysis and Strategies: What are your strategies for advancing racial equity?**
    a. Given what you have learned from research and stakeholder involvement, how will the proposal increase or decrease racial equity? Who would benefit from or be burdened by your proposal?
    b. What are potential unintended consequences? What are the ways in which your proposal could be modified to enhance positive impacts or reduce negative impacts?
    c. Are there complementary strategies that you can implement? What are ways in which existing partnerships could be strengthened to maximize impact in the community? How will you partner with stakeholders for long-term positive change?
    d. Are the impacts aligned with your community outcomes defined in Step #1?

The Action Plan will increase racial equity by working towards the following goal (result statement): All County staff, especially staff of color, feel a sense of belonging and are supported to achieve their career goals within the County organization. The Action Plan is designed to benefit all County employees by using a design to the margins approach. The Design-to-the-Margins framework recognizes that the people who are "closest to the problem are closest to the solution" (Martin, 2017) and that they are often furthest from institutional power (hooks, 1984). By placing focus on staff members experiencing racial inequities, this framework seeks to create equitable outcomes from which the broader workforce and community can benefit. The Sonoma County workforce as a whole is expected to benefit from this proposal.

It is too soon to know. However, the Racial Equity Action Plan is by definition a living document based on the recognition that our strategies may need revision. This recognition is tied to the reality that change initiatives like this one could result in unintended consequences that would need addressing. The ongoing review of our disaggregated performance metrics will be key to our understanding of where we are meeting our target outcomes, where we are falling short, and where the Plan may be creating unintended consequences. This commitment to ongoing review will help assess and determine which strategies are successful in driving change and which need to be reevaluated, reconsidered, or tweaked to correct any

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harmful outcomes. When a pivot becomes necessary, the Action Plan should continue to center the perspectives of staff members through a Design-to-the-Margins approach.

The Plan lists several strategy areas and sub-strategy "leads" in recognition that no one single stakeholder or strategy can create immediate institutional change alone. The Plan recommends the creation of a second Core Team cohort (Core Team 2.0) which will seek to maximize collaboration and resources across County departments and strengthen working relationships across the County. The Plan also sets forth implementation actions steps with a recommended timeline and short and long-term performance metrics (better-off measures), which will help us track short term progress as we work our way towards achieving the long-term goals. More information can be found on Attachment A - Part 5: Implementation Plan for the Action Plan.

Yes, and the performance metrics are directly connected to track our progress on achieving the result statement identified in the Plan: All County staff, especially staff of color, feel a sense of belonging and support to achieve their career goals within the County organization.

5. Implementation: What is your plan for implementation?

Describe your plan for implementation:
Proposed Implementation Charts can be found on Attachment A starting on page 22 - Part 5: Implementation Plan for the REAP.

Is this implementation plan:	Yes	No	I'm Not Sure
Realistic?	☒	☐	☐
Adequately funded?	☐	☐	☒
Adequately resourced with personnel?	☒	☐	☐
Adequately resources with mechanisms to ensure successful implementation and enforcement?	☒	☐	☐
Adequately resourced to ensure on-going data collection, public reporting, and community engagement?	☐	☐	☒

If the answer to any of these questions is no, what resources or actions are needed?
Although the Action Plan is created to stay within the span of control of the County, not every sub-strategy proposed is adequately funded across all departments. Some departments may have an easier time finding funding to support some of the strategies proposed, while others may need to seek funding from the Board or other sources. The Office of Equity is committed to helping departments coordinate and align efforts that will lead to maximizing funding sources and capacity towards the successful implementation of the Plan.

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6. **Accountability and Communication: How will you ensure accountability, communicate, and evaluate results?**
   a. How will impacts be documented and evaluated? Are you achieving the anticipated outcomes? Are you having impact in the community?
   b. What are your messages and communication strategies that will help advance racial equity?
   c. How will you continue to partner and deepen relationships with communities to make sure your work to advance racial equity is working and sustainable for the long-haul?

This Action Plan proposes yearly reports on implementation progress before the Board of Supervisors. The OOE will report on the sub-strategies, action steps, timeline, and performance measures listed on the proposed implementation plan for the Action Plan, found on Attachment A, page 22. These public reports will also serve as a communication mechanism to share about our progress and results.

The Core Team 2.0 will be a critical hub for departments and agencies to have a space to deepen relationships and develop cross-collaboration strategies towards the implementation of the Plan. The Office of Equity proposed the creation of a second Core Team cohort with the recognition that we cannot take on this charge alone, and that departments across the County will need a working space in which to receive critical support to launch the implementation of the Plan across their own service areas. Creating sustainable County-wide support, coordination, and alignment for the implementation of this Plan will be critical towards reaching the long-term goals of this effort.