



RACIAL EQUITY ANALYSIS



In November 2020, the Board of Supervisors approved the use of the Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE) Racial Equity Analysis toolkit for significant Board items, which provides the questions listed here for your exploration. To eliminate racial inequities in our communities, the County of Sonoma continues to integrate intentional and explicit consideration of racial equity in decisions and in the development of policies, programs, and budgets, in alignment with legal principles. Racial equity analyses help staff understand key community metrics and opportunities to advance racial equity and prompt them to develop strategies and actions that improve success for all communities.

When should I do my Racial Equity Analysis?

Policies & Ordinances: In policy work, Racial Equity Analysis (REA) should be applied **right from the outset of policy development**. This ensures that racial equity considerations are integrated into the policy design process, helping to identify and address potential disparities before they become entrenched. In addition, policies and ordinances that are found to produce inequities should also be updated by applying an REA.

Program Development: For program development, it's crucial to employ the Racial Equity Analysis **from the inception of program planning**, as well as when updating program policies. This approach allows staff to incorporate equity principles throughout all phases, from program design to implementation and evaluation, resulting in programs that better serve the needs of communities that have been most negatively impacted by institutional racial inequities.

Budget: When it comes to budget work, the Racial Equity Analysis should be used **during the early stages of budget proposal development**, in addition to updating budget proposal items that have contributed to inequities. This enables decision-makers to allocate resources with key data metrics in mind to reduce disparate community outcomes, in alignment with their commitment to racial equity.

How do I complete this Racial Equity Analysis (REA)?

Review & Prepare: Visit our **CAO Racial Equity Analysis Teams Channel: [SON-Communications | CAO-Racial Equity Analysis | Microsoft Teams](#)** and begin with the tab called, "Start Here." There you will find introductory resources, including the OOE Racial Equity Toolkit Training slides and recordings, direction from County Executive Officer Christina Rivera, Significant Item Calendars, and [Roles and Responsibilities](#) for the REA process.

Next, you can visit the "Resources" tab to find the full GARE Racial Equity Toolkit with more information to guide your analysis, this fillable REA template, other toolkit examples, and the OOE guiding resources for [Community Engagement](#) and [Intergovernmental Relations with Native Nations](#). There are also "Analysis Examples" from County departments and other jurisdictions, and local "Data Sources" under their respective tabs.

Consult: Most importantly, **engage in a consultation process with the Office of Equity (OOE) from the beginning**, and your department's equity group or Core Team member(s) if you have them. The Office of Equity will reach out to those who have been identified to complete an REA to provide guidance, technical assistance, and key recommendations, which will be documented in this analysis. The OOE analysis review process must be completed **before your initial submittal deadline** into Legistar.



RACIAL EQUITY ANALYSIS



Use these questions as guiding considerations to explore what you know, what you don't know, and what you need to fill the gaps. This analysis is both a product and process. Answer each question to the best of your ability, and if there is a lack of data or information available, please note that.

Tips: Reference historical and current day **systemic and institutional barriers and advancements** to racial equity, use **clear, ethno-racial language** when relevant (Black/ African American, Latine/x, White, communities of color, etc.), and use **inclusive and accessible language** (ex. "systematically marginalized populations", "communities of color", "community members"), avoid terms like "vulnerable", "hard-to-reach populations", and "minorities."

Board Item Date	5/19/2026
Board Item Name	Annual Wildfire Preparedness Update
Department/Agency (Lead) If this is an inter-departmental initiative, please identify a lead	Department of Emergency Management
Contact Person(s) Completing Analysis	James Cooper

Step 1. Overview: Describe your program or policy and the desired results and outcomes?

- a. Who/what does this program, policy, or plan have an ability to impact?

<input type="checkbox"/> Children and youth	<input type="checkbox"/> Health
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Community engagement	<input type="checkbox"/> Housing
<input type="checkbox"/> Contracting equity	<input type="checkbox"/> Human services
<input type="checkbox"/> Criminal justice	<input type="checkbox"/> Jobs
<input type="checkbox"/> Economic development	<input type="checkbox"/> Parks and recreation
<input type="checkbox"/> Education	<input type="checkbox"/> Planning / development
<input type="checkbox"/> Environment	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation
<input type="checkbox"/> Food access and affordability	<input type="checkbox"/> Utilities
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Government practices	<input type="checkbox"/> Workforce equity
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other Emergency readiness	
- b. What is the program, policy, or plan?
- c. What are the desired results (in the **community**) and outcomes (within your own **organization**)?
- d. What are the **indicators/performances measures** that would show if you were achieving those desired results? (How would you know?)

The Annual Wildfire Preparedness Update is an informational presentation to the Board of Supervisors that provides a comprehensive overview of Sonoma County's readiness for the upcoming wildfire season. The update includes information on the severity and scope of the upcoming fire season, Operational Area coordination, staffing of fire resources, vegetation management efforts, alert and warning systems, Disaster Service Worker training, among

other topics.

The desired community results are increased awareness, preparedness, and resilience to wildfire and related hazards, including power shutoffs and extreme heat incidents. This includes improved access to timely, accurate, and culturally appropriate emergency information and resources.

Organizational outcomes include strengthened coordination across Operational Area partners, improved effectiveness of alert and warning systems, enhanced preparedness planning and training, and continued development of emergency response capabilities.

Step 2. Data Collection & Analysis: What's the data? What does the data tell us?

Local Data Sources to Consider: [Portrait of Sonoma](#), [Sonoma County Census Data](#), [County of Sonoma Human Resources Employee Demographic Dashboard](#), [the State of Black Housing in Sonoma County](#), [Sonoma County Queer Needs Assessment Report](#), [Sonoma County Youth Truth Survey Results](#), [National Equity Atlas: Policing in Sonoma County Schools](#), [Bay Area Equity Atlas](#), [California Communities Environmental Health Screening Tool](#)

- a. **Geographic Impact:** Will the program, policy, or plan have impacts in specific geographic areas (neighborhoods, areas, or regions)? What are the racial demographics of those living in the area? Who is the **most negatively impacted** in your analysis?
- b. **Community Insights:** What does **population level** (this is community level data) data, including quantitative (the numbers) and qualitative (the stories) data, tell you about existing racial inequities? What does it tell you about root causes or factors influencing racial inequities?
- c. **Program, Policy, Plan Insights:** What **performance level** data (this is your department's/County level data) do you have available for your program, policy, or plan? This should include data associated with existing programs or policies.
- d. **Data Gaps:** Are there **data gaps**? If so, how can you obtain better data? What additional data would help analyze the program, policy, or plan?

Wildfire risk exists countywide but disproportionately impacts residents in Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) areas, rural communities, and regions with limited evacuation routes. These areas include portions of Sonoma Valley, the Russian River corridor, and unincorporated north county. WUI is the zone of transition between unoccupied land and human development. It is the line, area or zone where structures and other human development meet or intermingle with undeveloped wildland or vegetative fuels.

Sonoma County's population is approximately 58% White, 29% Latino, 5% Asian/Pacific Islander, and 2% Black. Latino residents are disproportionately represented in lower-income households and in outdoor occupations such as agriculture and construction, increasing exposure to wildfire smoke and related hazards, including workforce displacement.

Data from recent disasters indicates that Latino, low-income, and linguistically isolated populations experience disproportionate impacts due to:

- Language barriers limiting access to emergency alerts and preparedness information

- Economic constraints affecting ability to prepare, evacuate, or recover
- Employment in outdoor or essential sectors with higher exposure to smoke and fire conditions
- Housing conditions that limit safe sheltering options

These disparities are driven by structural inequities, including income inequality, limited access to healthcare, and historical underrepresentation in emergency planning.

Available data includes after-action reports from prior wildfire events, alert and warning system usage metrics, evacuation data, and participation rates in preparedness programs.

Data gaps include limited disaggregated data on:

- Household-level preparedness
- Access to alert systems by language and disability status
- Evacuation behavior across demographic groups
- Agricultural worker participation and distribution

Improving data collection will require expanded use of tools such as the Universal Disaster Intake Process (UDIP), strengthened partnerships with community-based organizations, and voluntary, privacy-conscious data collection approaches. Collecting detailed employment or housing data may be burdensome without additional resources.

Step 3. Community Engagement: How have communities been engaged?

We often focus on the benefits of making decisions, but we don't always ask **who** benefits from those decisions. It is important to ask who benefits, and to identify if there is a pattern over time about who has benefited- and who has held most of the burden- from government decisions. Doing so can help you make informed choices in both the short and long term about policies, practices, procedures, and budgets when the goal is racially equitable outcomes.

The Office of Equity created two resources, the [OOE Community Engagement Guide](#) and [OOE Informational Brief on Intergovernmental Relations with Native Nations in Sonoma County](#) as guides and models for intentional community engagement.



Full Resource: [Spectrum of Community Engagement](#)

Based on the information gathered in Step 2, explore:

- a. Who are the **most affected community members** who are involved with or have lived experience related to this program, policy, or plan? How have you **involved these community members** in the development of this program, policy, or plan?
- b. What community engagement/strategic partnerships are **already underway** (departmental or organization-wide)? What was **learned from the past** community engagement/partnership processes?
- c. What has your engagement process told you about the **burdens or benefits** for different groups? (concerns, facts, potential impacts)
- d. What has your engagement process told you about the **root causes** that produce or perpetuate racial inequity related to this program, policy, or plan?
- e. What does the **community need to know** about this program, policy, or plan?
- f. What are ways to minimize any negative impacts (harm to communities of color, increased racial disparities, etc.) that may result? What opportunities exist for increasing racial equity?

The most affected community members include residents in high wildfire risk areas (particularly the Wildland-Urban Interface), farmworkers and agricultural operators, low-income households, older adults, individuals with disabilities, and linguistically isolated populations, particularly Spanish-speaking communities. These groups have lived experience with wildfire evacuations, smoke exposure, power shutoffs, and access barriers to emergency information and services.

These communities have been involved through ongoing engagement with Sonoma County Community Organizations Active in Disaster (COAD) and partnerships with community-based organizations such as La Familia Sana, Corazón Healdsburg, North Bay Organizing Project that work with rental households as they are limited in their ability to do wildfire mitigation around their rental housing unit. These partners provide direct feedback from impacted populations, inform outreach strategies, and participate in preparedness planning, trainings, and after-action discussions following emergency events.

The Department of Emergency Management maintains active partnerships with COAD, local jurisdictions, Tribal governments, special districts, and community-based organizations. Additional coordination occurs with state agencies such as Cal OES and CDSS, as well as local partners including Fire Safe Sonoma and public safety agencies.

Past engagement has demonstrated that trusted messengers and community-based organizations are essential for effective outreach, particularly in historically underserved communities. Engagement efforts have shown that bilingual, culturally relevant communication significantly increases participation and preparedness. Additionally, sustained relationships—rather than one-time outreach—are necessary to build trust and ensure effective information sharing before, during, and after emergencies.

Engagement has identified several burdens for disparately impacted populations, including limited access to culturally and linguistically appropriate emergency information, transportation constraints during evacuations, economic limitations affecting preparedness,

and distrust of government systems. Farmworkers and outdoor workers face additional risks due to occupational exposure to smoke and fire conditions.

Benefits identified include increased awareness and preparedness when information is delivered through trusted community partners, improved coordination between agencies and community organizations, and greater utilization of available resources such as alert systems and preparedness programs when outreach is accessible and relevant.

Engagement has highlighted several root causes of racial inequity, including language barriers, economic disparities, limited access to technology, and historical underrepresentation of communities of color in emergency planning processes. These systemic factors reduce access to preparedness resources, delay receipt of critical alerts, and limit the ability to respond and recover effectively during wildfire events.

Additionally, housing instability, employment in high-risk outdoor industries, and limited access to healthcare contribute to increased vulnerability among communities of color during disasters.

The community needs to understand the County's level of preparedness for the upcoming wildfire season, including available alert and warning systems, evacuation procedures, preparedness resources, and how to access support during emergencies. It is important that residents are aware of programs such as SoCoAlert and the Ag Pass program, as well as preparedness actions they can take to protect themselves and their families.

Information must be accessible, culturally relevant, and available in multiple languages to ensure all residents can understand and act on preparedness guidance.

Negative impacts can be minimized by ensuring equitable access to emergency information through multilingual, multi-platform communication strategies that include non-digital methods. Continued investment in partnerships with community-based organizations will help ensure outreach is trusted and effective.

Opportunities to increase racial equity include expanding culturally competent alert and warning systems, increasing funding and support for community-based preparedness efforts, improving accessibility of evacuation and sheltering resources, and incorporating community feedback into ongoing planning and decision-making.

Strengthening long-term partnerships, improving data collection on underserved populations, and embedding equity considerations into all aspects of emergency management will further advance equitable outcomes across Sonoma County.

Step 4. Analysis and Strategies: What are your strategies for advancing racial equity?

As reflected in the [Portrait of Sonoma](#) (pages 10-12, 35), racial inequities exist across every indicator for health, wealth, and well-being when disaggregated by race. This is why, when we are working towards the goal of racially equitable outcomes for all groups, we need to ask, "How might (a given decision) impact communities of color and other systematically

marginalized communities?" In addition, we also need to ask what unintended consequences a decision might have, so that we can try to prevent or further potential disparate outcomes.

- a. Given what you have learned from research and stakeholder involvement, how will your recommended actions **increase or decrease racial equity**? Who will benefit from or be burdened by your proposed strategies?
- b. What are **potential unintended consequences**? What are the ways in which your program, policy, or plan could be modified to **enhance positive impacts** or reduce negative impacts for impacted communities?
- 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? If not, what will you change in order to create alignment?

This informational item supports racial equity by reinforcing ongoing County efforts to improve inclusive preparedness, enhance alert and warning systems, and strengthen coordination. Disproportionately impacted populations—including Latino communities, farmworkers, and low-income residents—benefit from improved access to preparedness resources and emergency information.

No direct burdens are associated with this item; however, inequities may persist if improvements are not equitably implemented.

Potential unintended consequences include gaps in communication reach if messaging does not effectively reach non-English-speaking or isolated populations, and reliance on digital systems that may exclude some residents, especially where cell phone coverage is limited. These risks can be mitigated through multilingual, multi-platform communication strategies and continued investment in community partnerships.

Complementary strategies include expanding bilingual alert systems, increasing investment in community-based preparedness programs, strengthening the Ag Pass program, and enhancing coordination with Tribal governments and regional partners.

Partnerships with COAD and community organizations will continue to be strengthened through training, resource sharing, and formal agreements to support sustained engagement.

Yes. The strategies align with the goals of increasing preparedness, improving equitable access to emergency information, and strengthening community resilience.

Step 5. Implementation: What is your plan for implementation?

Now that you know what the unintended consequences, benefits, and impacts of the proposal and have developed strategies to mitigate unintended consequences or expand impact, it is important to focus on thoughtful implementation.

Describe your plan for implementation:

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Is this implementation plan:	Yes	No	I'm Not Sure
Realistic?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Adequately funded?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Adequately resourced with personnel?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Adequately resourced with mechanisms to ensure successful implementation and enforcement?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Adequately resourced to ensure on-going data collection, public reporting, and community engagement?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

If the answer to any of these questions is no or unsure, what resources or actions are needed?

The Department of Emergency Management will continue to coordinate with Operational Area partners, including County departments, cities, special districts, Tribal nations, and state agencies. Preparedness efforts include alert and warning enhancements, Disaster Service Worker training, and ongoing regional coordination.

Sustaining and expanding equitable preparedness efforts will require continued investment in staffing, technology, multilingual communication, and community partnerships. Additional resources may be needed to enhance data systems and improve disaggregated data collection.

Step 6. Accountability and Communication: How will you ensure accountability, communicate, and evaluate results?

Accountability entails putting processes, policies, and leadership in place to ensure that program plans, evaluation recommendations, and actions leading to the identification and elimination of root causes of inequities are implemented. Just as data is critical in analyzing potential impacts of the program or policy, data will be important in seeing whether the program or policy has worked. Developing mechanisms for collecting data and evaluating progress will help measure whether racial equity is being advanced. Evaluating results means that you will be able to make any adjustments to maximize impact.

- a. How will impacts be documented, evaluated, and shared? How will the public know whether you are achieving the anticipated outcomes? How will you report on community impacts?
- b. How will you continue to partner and deepen relationships with the communities most impacted to make sure your work to advance racial equity is working and sustainable for the long-haul? How and when will you check back in with community to share your findings and hear their feedback?
- c. What [communication strategies](#) will help advance racial equity? (Think of data narratives)

Whenever there is a wildfire incident which results in County activation, DEM will conduct an After Action to document and evaluate gaps and opportunities presented as a result of the response. When relevant, After Actions will incorporate Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) for their input.

DEM strives to integrate CBOs into our readiness and preparedness work wherever possible. For example, COAD representatives will attend this year's Operational Area Pre-Fire Season readiness meeting. COAD also has a seat in our Emergency Operations Center, to provide real time feedback on the needs they are hearing and seeing in the community. By partnering closely with the CBOs who work most closely with our most vulnerable communities before the disasters strike, DEM builds trust and maintains open lines of communication.

Multi-pronged communication strategies work best. No one method of communication will reach everyone. Though this project is specifically a presentation to our Board of Supervisors, DEM is constantly reaching out to marginalized communities, whether through our year-round preparedness program, or through public information messaging before, during, and after emergencies.

OFFICE OF EQUITY (OOE) SUMMARY



The Office of Equity completes this Summary page in collaboration with the department lead. It highlights effective practices that are helping to identify and narrow disparities and outlines key recommendations to further advance equitable community outcomes. This summary is intended to support tracking, implementation, and monitoring of racial equity priorities and community impact more effectively across the county.

Highlights & Key Actions

Sonoma County communities have experienced many devastating wildfires in recent years, and certain populations- communities of color, low-income households, rural communities, renters, farmworkers and immigrant communities- have experienced disproportionate exposure and longer-lasting effects of these crises. Communities that are marginalized often experience greater and wide-ranging impacts, due to past and current systemic marginalization and exclusion, and are often furthest from resources and recovery. Coordinated, aligned, and equitable climate and wildfire preparedness and response strategies, between all levels, from County and government to community organizations and members, are critical for making sure that all Sonoma County communities are safe.

The Department of Emergency Management (DEM) integrates Community Organizations Active in Disasters (COAD) directly into operational readiness, including COAD representatives at the Operational Area Pre-Fire Season meeting and dedicating a COAD seat in the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) for real-time community connection and feedback. DEM also incorporates CBO input into After Action reviews, when possible, ensuring lessons learned directly reflect impacts on marginalized communities.

Leveraging this partnership with the COAD and other community organizations who have trusted relationships with priority populations will be key to connecting community voice to County strategy.

Key Recommendations

The following OOE recommendations are designed to close identified potential equity gaps.

- 1. Headline Recommendation: Strengthen equitable and coordinated data collection, analysis, and reporting practices to continue identifying and mitigating disparities for disproportionately impacted populations.**

A racially equitable data strategy should **ensure communities most impacted by climate and wildfire hazards are centered** in how data is collected, interpreted, shared, and **used for decision-making**. The Office of Equity has collaborated extensively with the Department of Emergency Management and provides a critical voice for equitable disaster data collection and use, including the **development and evolution of the Universal Disaster Intake Process (UDIP)**. The UDIP data standards were initially created with community groups through the American Rescue Plan Act

(ARPA) programs, and have been updated based on community feedback, so that the demographic categories are reflective of and responsive to the diversity of Sonoma County.

Build capacity to collect, compile, and analyze data using an equity lens to identify priority communities and geographies where wildfire preparedness interventions are most needed. Prioritization criteria should include existing wildfire risk as well as historical underinvestment, racialized impacts, and community identified needs. **Explicitly capture equity indicators** such as racial demographics, housing insecurity, language access needs, access to transportation, disability status, and other determinants of disproportionate impact. **Utilize disaggregated data** to publicly **share findings with community partners** and **incorporate their feedback into next season's planning and decision-making**. The Office of Equity's Anti-Racist Results Based Accountability training, and its prerequisite, the Racial Equity Foundations training, are great resources for all those working on these efforts and they are accessible to county staff to continue building this important skillset.

2. Headline Recommendation: Expand equitable community engagement, collaboration, and co-design with frontline communities disproportionately impacted by wildfire.

Previous relevant community engagement stressed the need to **include families, farmworkers, renters, linguistically diverse, and undocumented communities in resilience planning, with the systems in place** to provide essential resources during disasters. Embedding equity in emergency management and disaster work is essential to **ensure resources, decision-making power, and benefits are distributed equitably**, and that communities of color and other marginalized communities—who often face higher risk and barriers to participation—are **actively shaping resilience strategies**.

DEM notes ongoing coordination with Tribal nations, alongside cities, counties, special districts, and state agencies—establishing foundations for more formalized, equity-centered government-to-government relationships. We recommend **leveraging and strengthening these vital relationships**, along with the [Sonoma County Communities Active in Disasters \(COAD\)](#) and [Nuestra Comunidad \(NC\)](#), to **co-design meaningful community preparedness efforts with the populations most affected**, as these trusted local messengers can bridge many existing relationships within community groups. This also means **balancing the need** for new community engagement strategies by coordinating with other County departments to share valuable information from similar focus group efforts with the same priority populations. There has been an **increase in community fatigue** as we continue to experience overlapping community crises, so any opportunity to **share data and community voice across departments** helps reduce community survey fatigue.

3. Headline Recommendation: Strengthen and resource multilingual and culturally responsive wildfire messaging (prevention, during, and after emergencies).

Previous relevant community engagement and lessons learned through our years of responding to wildfire crises, emphasized the importance of **language justice and inclusive disaster planning** in wildfire resilience efforts. This includes **multilingual communication** beyond English and Spanish, using **diverse formats** like text messages and radio, and urged the County to **hire more staff to support culturally responsive and asset-based translation and interpretation services. Expand language access across all alert systems**, not just public information materials, and ensure alerts are available through non-digital formats for communities with limited cell/internet connectivity.

To support transparent communication and community collaboration, it is vital to **include the COAD** and other community organizations **in the creation and dissemination of culturally responsive emergency messaging.**

Department Head has reviewed the analysis and the OOE Summary: Yes No

CAO Analyst has reviewed the analysis and the OOE Summary: Yes No

Core Team 2 Lead has reviewed the analysis and the OOE Summary: Yes No

Progress Updates: To be completed by the OOE 6-12 months after Board item.

Progress Updates

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