



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	4/14/2026
Board Item Name	Wildfire Resilience
Department/Agency (Lead) If this is an inter-departmental initiative, please identify a lead	County Executive's Office
Contact Person(s) Completing Analysis	Yvonne Shu

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Planning / development |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Environment | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Food access and affordability | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Utilities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Government practices | <input type="checkbox"/> Workforce equity |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other Click or tap here to enter text. | |

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?)

b. To consider options for an organizing framework for wildfire resiliency that will result in better coordination within the County and with the community.

c. Optimized County coordination for resilience planning, communication and funding opportunities, and greater awareness of resilience projects and resources in the community.

d. There is no performance level data associated with any proposed organizing structure. However, any potential organizing structure should result in improved communication, awareness and coordination of wildfire resilience activities among County departments and agencies, followed by the same improvements with community-based organizations. Should an organizing structure be adopted, staff recommends an evaluation of its effectiveness after two years.

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?

The proposal's impacts will first affect County departments and agencies. With the County more in synch, coordination between the County and wildfire community-based organizations is expected to improve. This effort does not target a specific geographic area but rather the county as whole.

According to the "Housing Needs Data Report: Unincorporated Sonoma" report prepared by ABAG/MTC Staff and Baird + Driskell Community Planning on 4/2/21 for the 2023-2031 Housing Element, the population of Unincorporated Sonoma County in 2020 was estimated to be 138,523. This population makes up 28.1% of Sonoma County's overall population. According to this same report, the race/ethnicity demographics of Unincorporated Sonoma County's population in 2020 was 71.7% White, 0.7% African American, 2.2% Asian, and 20.9% Latinx. By comparison, according to the 2020 Census, the race/ethnicity demographics of all of Sonoma County's population in 2020 was 58.5% White, 1.5% African American, 4.5% Asian, 28.9% Latinx, 1.6% Native American/Other, and 5% multiracial.

The racial demographics vary between the five Supervisorial Districts, as well as within geographic areas of each District. The demographics of these areas can be accessed through Sonoma County's 2021 Redistricting online mapping tool.

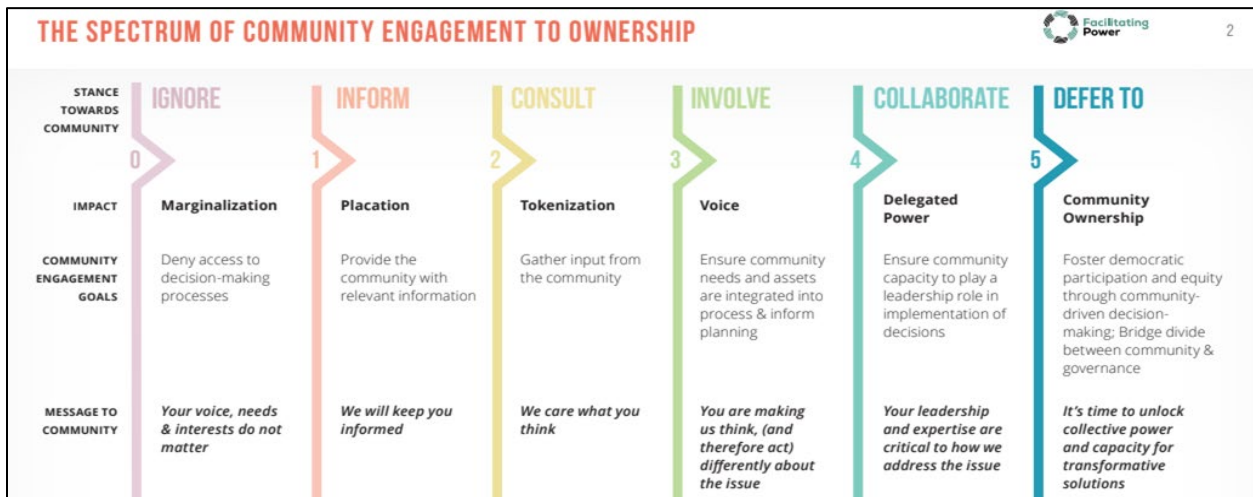
With a population of 489,000, Sonoma County is 58% White, 29% Latino, 5% Asian/Pacific Islander, and 2% Black. Analysis from the 2021 update of the Portrait of Sonoma reveals that the County's overall Human Development Index (HDI) score, comprised of health, education and earnings measures, is 6.19 out of a maximum total score of 10.00. The HDI score for the four largest racial/ethnic groups are as follows: White 6.74, Latino 4.93, Asian 6.86, and Black 3.99. Multiple factors, including access/affordability of housing, immigration status, racial discrimination, employment stability and wages, language barriers, access to health care, and access to education, can be attributed to the differences in these scores. Additionally, the County has experienced and continues to be impacted by multiple, devastating disasters, including the 2017 firestorm, Kincade, Walbridge and Glass fires, the 2019 flood, and the Covid pandemic.

According to the [Department of Health's website](#), residents of rural and geographically remote unincorporated areas of the County may experience social isolation and significant barriers in accessing basic services and supports such as transportation, health care, nutritious food and opportunities to socialize.

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?

Four focus groups were conducted as part of this project; these groups built on previous, related community engagement. The consultant worked with local CBO's, who helped to design, coordinate and facilitate each group. The groups and CBO partners were as follows:

1. Large landowners and agriculture; CBO partner: Gold Ridge RCD
2. Conservation and labor; CBO partner: Sonoma Ecology Center
3. Firewise communities, local fire safe councils, COPE groups; CBO partner: Fire Safe Sonoma
4. Underrepresented groups, access and function needs; CBO partner; Los Cien

There is a need to develop effective wildfire resilience through community buy-in and behavior change, which will require targeted, accessible education and outreach, especially for new homeowners, renters, the elderly and marginalized communities.

Focus group participants emphasized the importance of language justice and inclusive disaster planning in wildfire resilience efforts. They called for multilingual communication beyond English and Spanish, using diverse formats like text messages and radio, and urged the County to hire more staff to support translation and interpretation services. Additionally, they stressed the need to include families and undocumented communities in resilience planning, with systems in place to provide essential resources during disasters.

Previous, relevant community engagement pointed to themes around transparent communication and public involvement, as well as coordinated governance, as summarized in the following table:

Key themes from other community engagement

	Coordinated Governance	Clear Roles & Responsibilities	Diversified & Sustainable Funding Sources	Sustainable Workforce & Implementation Capacity	Transparent Communication & Public Involvement	Integrated Land & Resource Management
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PG&E Wildfire Settlement	x	x	x	x	x	x
Vital Lands Initiative	x		x		x	x
Sonoma County Resilient Lands Strategy	x	x	x		x	x
Sonoma Climate Mobilization Strategy	x		x	x	x	x
Sonoma County Community Wildfire Prevention Plan	x	x	x	x	x	
Sonoma County Regional Parks Climate Adaptation Plan					x	x
Sonoma Water Climate Adaptation Plan					x	x
DEM PSPS Plan	x				x	
DEM Community Warning and Alerts					x	
DEM Hazard Mitigation Plan	x				x	

Factors that may produce inequity related to this proposal are limited resources to consistently engage and communicate to the underrepresented, non-English speaking members of our community.

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?

- Any organizing structure that may be approved is intended to result in better communication and engagement with the community at large, starting with County departments and agencies first.
- A potential unintended consequence could be a misunderstanding of the purpose of any organizing structure.
- The potential organizing structure could highlight and build on the existing education and engagement that is happening through a variety of CBO's.
- It is anticipated that any organizing structure will have a positive impact and contribute to the outcomes defined above.

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:

Click or tap here to enter text.

Is this implementation plan:	Yes	No	I'm Not Sure
Realistic?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Adequately funded?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Adequately resourced with personnel?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Adequately resources with mechanisms to ensure successful implementation and enforcement?	<input 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 type="checkbox"/>

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

Staff will need to present feasible options, and the Board will provide direction and possibly also allocate resources.

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)

- Should an organizing structure be adopted, staff recommends an evaluation of its effectiveness after two years.
- Strategies will vary and will be dependent on what is prioritized by the potential organizing entity.
- There is an expectation that there will be ongoing community outreach and engagement as we progress toward greater community resilience overall.

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

While we all feel the effects of disasters, extreme weather, and wildfires, certain communities experience disproportionate exposure and longer-lasting effects of the of 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. A **coordinated, aligned, and equitable climate and wildfire response strategy**, between all levels, from County and government to community organizations and members, is critical for making sure that all Sonoma County communities are safe.

The CEO engaged a consultant to develop recommendations for this item, and the greatest identified need was to **strengthen alignment of climate and wildfire resilience efforts** in Sonoma County and **designate a coordinator** for these efforts. Their recommendations came from interviews with focus groups, subject matter experts, County department heads, Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and Resilience Coordination Team meetings, and leveraged previous work including the Berkeley Center for Law, Energy & Environment (CLEE) report, Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP), and the Climate Resilience Comprehensive Action Plan

Key Recommendations

The following OOE recommendations are additions to the ERG recommendations, designed to close identified equity gaps:

- 1. **Headline Recommendation #1) Centralize County coordination and alignment and strengthen equitable community engagement and participation across resilience efforts and actions taken in response to the ERG report.****

The OOE supports the ERG Consultants recommendation to strengthen alignment and integration of climate and wildfire resilience efforts throughout Sonoma County. Their report highlights the need for a better coordinated, cross-departmental approach that includes **county departments, community-based organizations, and front-line communities disproportionately impacted** by wildfire and climate risk.

We recommend co-designing a community engagement plan with local organizations, like the Sonoma County Communities Active in Disasters (COAD) and Nuestra Comunidad (NC), for meaningful community engagement with populations most affected, as these trusted local messengers can bridge many existing relationships within community groups. The [Sonoma County COAD](#) is a collaborative network that builds the capacity and coordination of local organizations to prepare for and respond to disasters, and they serve an active role in the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) during emergencies. [Nuestra Comunidad](#) seeks to build more resilient communities through community focused disaster preparedness.

Focus group participants stressed the need to **include families and undocumented communities in resilience planning**, with systems in place to provide essential resources during disasters. Embedding equity in this 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 vulnerability and barriers to participation—are **actively shaping resilience strategies**. For example, communities of color in Sonoma County are significantly more likely to be renters, and renters face structural barriers to implementing wildfire resilience measures, making them disproportionately vulnerable during wildfire events. Historical evidence, such as the Coffey Park fire, where roughly 40% of affected households were renters, demonstrates the need for renter-focused resilience strategies.

The community engagement conducted as part of this report was limited to a small sample size, so continued efforts with trusted messengers for communities of color, immigrant communities, and other marginalized populations, is needed to create a culturally competent plan for how communities will be thoughtfully engaged moving forward.

2. **Headline Recommendation #2) Support equitable and coordinated data collection, analysis, and reporting.**

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. Specific actions could include:

Building capacity to collect, compile, and analyze data using an equity lens to identify priority geographies where interventions are most needed. Prioritization criteria should include existing climate 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. One performance metric to consider is the number of Firewise USA communities in the county <https://www.readyforwildfire.org/prepare-for-wildfire/firewise-communities> Getting more communities to have established and maintained Firewise USA status could indicate the success of the program (getting baseline numbers of Firewise communities before the Optimized County coordination begins).

Implementing anti-racist and community-informed program monitoring and evaluation processes, like Anti-Racist Results Based Accountability (AR RBA), that track not only outcomes but also racial equity impacts—such as reductions in harm for communities previously at highest risk or increases in resources directed to underserved areas. Integrate renter-specific data into wildfire resilience planning, including renter density, race/ethnicity by tenure type, housing conditions, and historical impacts. Prioritize analysis of renter vulnerability because communities of color are more likely to rent and renters have limited ability to make home hardening or defensible space improvements. Past wildfire events here in Sonoma County (e.g., the 2017 Tubbs Fire, where an estimated [40% of affected households](#) were renters) illustrate the disproportionate impact on renters. 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.

Ensuring sufficient capacity with technical expertise in GIS, data analysis, and racial equity impact assessment to maintain the data hub and **integrate equity indicators into decision-**

making. The Office of Equity has collaborated extensively with the Department of Emergency Management and has been able to provide a critical voice for equitable disaster data collection and use, including the development and evolution of the Universal Disaster Intake Process (UDIP). Unfortunately, a limitation of that role is that it is a time limited role, which will leave a gap for this vital connection in the future. The UDIP data standards were initially created through with community groups through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) programs, and have been updated based on community feedback, so that the categories are more reflective of the diversity here in Sonoma County. The UDIP is already being used by the Human Services Department (HSD), including the Adult & Aging (A&A) and Employment & Training (E&T) divisions, and Department of Emergency Management (DEM), and it would be ideal for these **demographics to become standard across all county departments.** The 27 programs that made up the ARPA Community Resilience Programs have also utilized this demographic data set, so it has some community-based organization socialization.

Provide technical assistance to community organizations, tribal partners, and community members to support participation in the data hub. A lesson learned as part of the ARPA community groups was that community needed more technical assistance and support than we initially designed for. Assistance should address digital access barriers, language needs, and resource gaps that disproportionately affect communities of color.

3. Headline Recommendation #3) Resource consistent, culturally responsive wildfire messaging (prevention and during emergencies)

Focus group participants emphasized the importance of **language justice and inclusive disaster planning** in wildfire resilience efforts. They called for **multilingual communication** beyond English and Spanish, using **diverse formats** like text messages and radio, and urged the County to hire more staff to support **translation and interpretation services.** Previous, relevant community engagement also highlighted themes around **transparent communication and public involvement,** so including the COAD and 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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