Racial Equity Analysis

Racial Equity Analysis of the Development of the Community Engagement Plan

May 07, 2024

1. **How does your Program align with or leverage other Countywide initiatives to advance racial equity?**

In March 2021, the Board of Supervisors approved a 5-year Strategic Plan, which includes a Racial Equity and Social Justice (RESJ) pillar <https://socostrategicplan.org/racial-equity-and-social-justice/>.
Through the Community Engagement Plan, the Office of Equity will have an actionable roadmap to launch the development and implementation of two Strategic Plan Objectives (Goal 4/Objectives 1, 3) as follows:

> Pillar: Racial Equity and Social Justice
> Goal 4: Engage community members and stakeholder groups to develop priorities and advance racial equity.
>
> > Objective 1: Establish a process for engagement and collaboration with community members and stakeholder groups and launch a community engagement strategy by the end of 2022 with a focus on racial equity.
> >
> > Objective 3: Begin implementing strategies for regular community engagement to guide racial equity efforts.

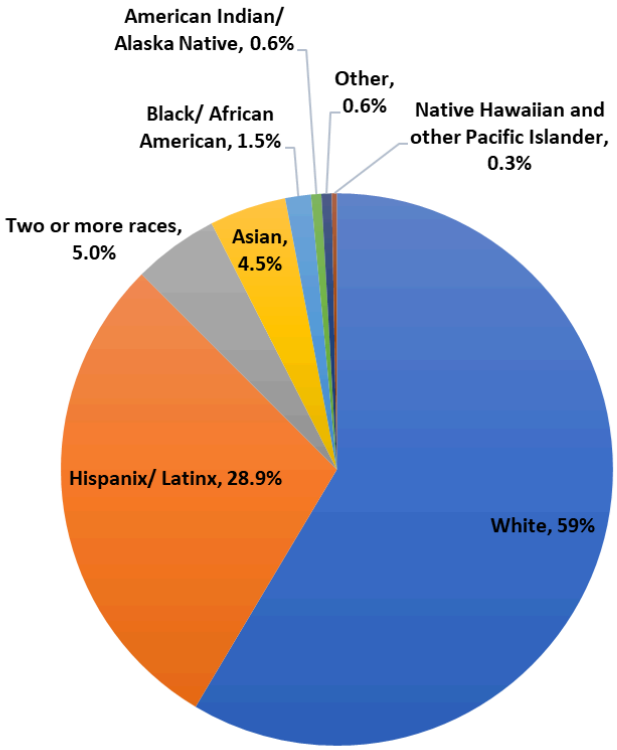
2. **What specific racial and/or economic inequities in Sonoma County does this Program intend to address/reduce?**

The Plan is informed by community, staff, and County leadership's input to provide guidance and best practices for engaging in a culturally responsive manner between County departments and community members and to break down barriers to meaningful engagement in Sonoma County. The development of the plan focused on communities who have experienced underservice and underrepresentation from government processes and services.

The county's total population is currently estimated by the U.S. Census Bureau to be 482,650 (US Census Bureau, 2022). Sonoma County is home to five federally-recognized Native American Tribes: Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria, Kashia Band of Pomo Indians of the Stewarts Point Rancheria, Dry Creek Rancheria Band of Pomo Indians, Cloverdale Rancheria of Pomo Indians, and Lytton Rancheria Band of Pomo Indians (Vol. 87 Federal Register Page 4636). The County also has tribal communities who are not currently federally recognized, such as the Mishewal Wappo Tribe.

Sonoma County's population is less diverse than that of California as a whole. However, this is changing. For example, Sonoma County's Latine/a/o population grew from 25.6% in 2010 to 28.9% in 2022. Below is the most recent 2020 Census data on race and ethnicity in Sonoma County.

Sonoma County Demographics

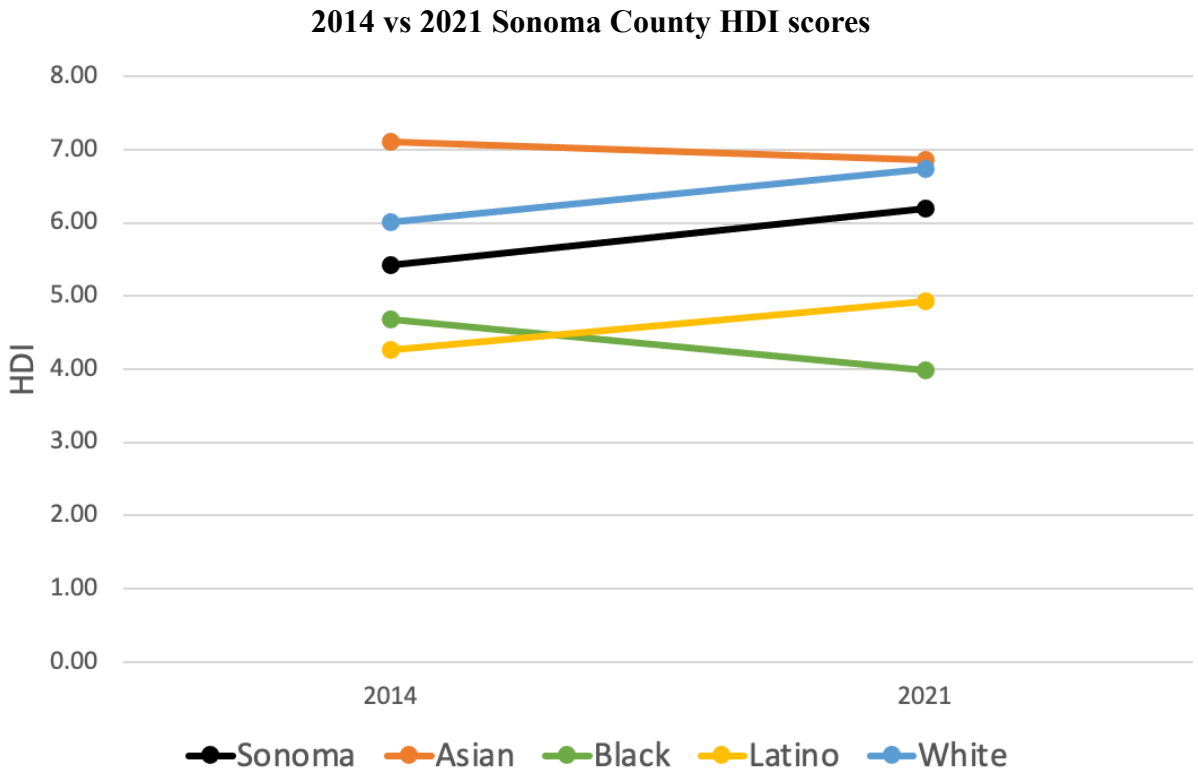


Additionally, while home-ownership rates, median home values, educational attainment rates, and both household and individual income levels are higher in Sonoma County than in California as a whole, when disaggregated by race or ethnicity, inequities within Sonoma County become evident. Additional disparities exist when looking at lifespan, lack of housing, rent burden, and documentation status.

As documented in the Portrait of Sonoma County 2021 Update and by the Sonoma County Department of Health Services, the inequities highlighted below are an important snapshot, but not the complete picture, of the lived experiences of the community members that community engagement efforts need to prioritize.

Black and Native American people are overrepresented among Sonoma County residents who experience houselessness. Black residents are about 1.5% of Sonoma's population, yet 6% of the houseless population; Native Americans make up less than 1% of Sonoma's population, yet 9% of the houseless population. LGBTQIA2S+ residents, too, are disproportionately likely to experience houselessness. 16% of Sonoma County residents who are unhoused identified as LGBTQIA2S+. (Lewis, 2021)	Disparities in homeownership and home values in Sonoma County translate into a significant wealth gap between Asian and White[1] residents and Black, Latine/a/o, and Native American residents. 34% of Black households own their home as compared to 66% of White and Asian households; the median home value for Black homeowners is $100,000 less than that of White homeowners. Black renters face the highest housing burden in the County at 68% followed by Latine/a/o renters at 59%. (Lewis, 2021)
The lifespan of Black residents in Sonoma County is ten years shorter than any other race and ethnic group in the County. (Lewis, 2021)	Sonoma County is home to significant Indigenous farmworker populations, who face additional challenges over and above what other undocumented, low-wage workers experience in Sonoma. (Lewis, 2021)
11.8% of the total population of Sonoma County are "linguistically isolated," meaning that they speak a language other than English at home and speak English less than "very well" (U.S. Census Bureau, 2021b). An estimated 8% of the Sonoma County population in 2013 was undocumented immigrants. (Katz, 2017)	Latine/a/o, Native American, and Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander (NHOPI) residents of Sonoma County have the lowest median personal earnings, about $29,000, $29,000, and $26,000, respectively, compared to $44,131 for White residents. (Lewis, 2021) 61% of White community members had annual household incomes above $75,000, whereas only 54% of Latine/a/o community members did. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2021a)

[1]



According to the Portrait of Sonoma 2021 update, we can clearly see from the steep decline above, that the Black Sonoma County community is experiencing the gravest outcomes, based on the Human Development Index (HDI), which measures income, education, and life expectancy. The data on this community (3.99 HDI) falls well below national (5.33 HDI), state (5.85 HDI), and county (6.19 HDI) average and reflects the institutional and systemic racism that particularly affects the Black community in this county and is a serious challenge that deserves to be addressed with intention and urgency and in collaboration with those most impacted.

3. **Will the Program have impacts in specific geographic areas (neighborhoods, areas, or regions)? What are the racial demographics of those living in the area?**

All community members are expected to benefit from the implementation of the Community Engagement Plan (CE), especially underserved communities of color and other communities that have traditionally experienced marginalization from government processes and services. The demographic breakdown and other identifiers collected from focus group and interview participants can be found in the appendix.

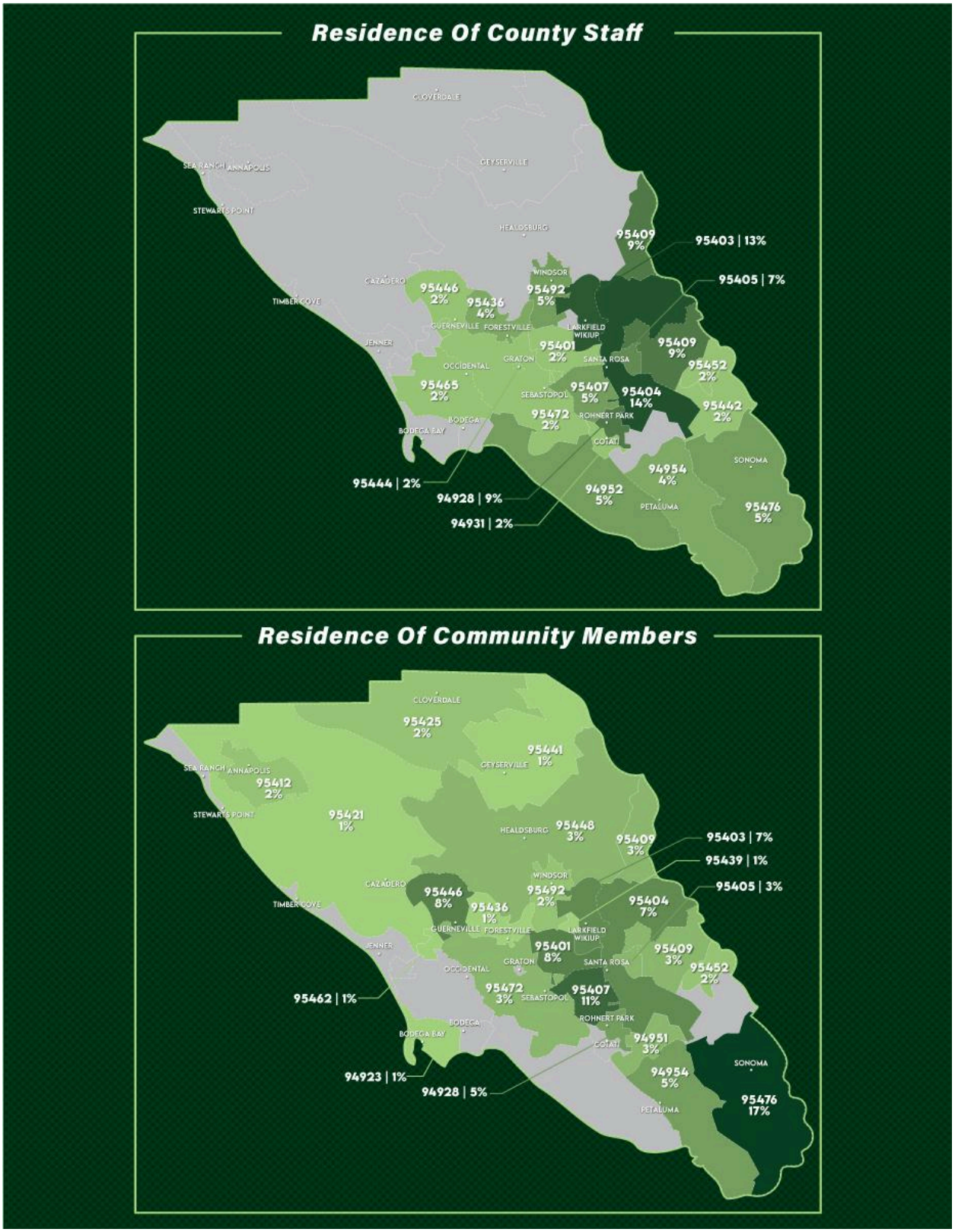
Additionally, the breakdown of the geographic locations of all participants is outlined in the maps below. The 4 under 4 census tracts according to the Portrait of Sonoma have also been

outlined below along with the percentage of participants per zip code (This does not include a group of 15 external community focus group participants, who did not complete demographic surveys, all of whom were experiencing unsheltered houselessness or housing instability. Additionally, Comstock and Bicentennial Park hold the same zip code and the percentage for that zip code is represented but not broken down by census tract.)

4 under 4 Census Tracts vs percentage of community engagement participants

City	Zip Code	Percentage of Community Engagement Participants
Roseland	95407	11%
Comstock / Bicentennial Park	95403	7%
Rohnert Park B/C/R	94928	5%

Community Engagement Participant's Residence per Zip Code
Source: Report, County of Sonoma Office of Equity Community Engagement Findings



4. **Who are the most affected community members who are concerned with or have experience related to this issue/program? How will you involve these community members in the development and implementation of this program?**

The most affected populations as part of this Plan include communities of color and other communities that have historically experienced marginalization from government processes and services (See Appendix for Demographic breakdown of Focus Groups and interviews). Several strategies are being proposed for Board consideration to ensure that communities most affected are included in the implementation of this program (see summary report of the item).

The outline below was taken directly from the Report, County of Sonoma Office of Equity Community Engagement Findings, which explains how the most affected community members were involved in the development of the community engagement Plan.

Phase 2b: Engagement with community members and Community-Based Organizations

To prioritize trust and relationship building, Equity First designed this Community Engagement plan around a "Community-Based Leader" (CBL) model, centering the wisdom of trusted community leaders on the ground throughout the entire process.

Embedding transparency, follow through, and intentionality into every step of the process (from onboarding to capacity building to implementation) helped to build and maintain that trust throughout. In this form of partnership, CBLs become the project spokespeople, outreach leads, co-creators and facilitators, having increasing ownership over core aspects of project implementation. This shift towards community ownership of the work and the narrative is the most important result of this approach to the work.

Community member engagement activities were led primarily by CBLs with support from members of Equity First. Recruitment of CBLs involved personal outreach to trusted community leaders within communities of focus to solicit nominations of people deeply involved and connected with their communities, but who are not already engaged with local government. A CBL team reflective of a wide range of lived experiences was selected through personal one-on-one conversations with Equity First, so that authentic relationships could be established, each party could get to know each other, have questions answered, and begin to build trust, before moving into the deliverables phase of work. In April, Equity First and CBLs gathered in an intentional way that prioritized building relationships and trust first so as to do this work in a healing manner. During that meeting, community agreements were developed based on core project values: that relationships come first, that the engagement experience needs to be healing and not extractive, and that the wisdom of communities of focus will be trusted and amplified. Equity First adapted meetings every 2-3 weeks to CBL availability and provided dinner, stipends, and created intentional opportunities to build individual and collective relationships. Communications, materials, and meetings all provided in both Spanish and English, were adapted based on CBL suggestions and changing needs. The Office of Equity and Equity First

facilitated the onboarding process and ongoing work in a co-creative way with the CBLs, including soliciting and incorporating feedback on focus group, interview and demographic survey questions. Equity First provided training on outreach and facilitation and maintained ongoing support for each CBL based on individual communication preferences.

Once a strong foundation of trust was established, CBLs took the lead to plan, outreach, and conduct focus groups and interviews, averaging 1-2 focus groups per CBL and 2-3 interviews each. Equity First supported logistics, translation of materials to additional languages, and data analysis as well as prioritizing flexibility and adapting the project timeline to center the humanity of CBLs and the reality of complex lives.

Overall, Community-Based Leaders (CBLs), with support from Equity First, conducted 10 focus groups with community members. These included group sessions with a total of 89 people, representing a cross-section of Sonoma County residents, through a design-to-the-margins lens. Additionally, a total of 24 community members participated in 16 stakeholder interviews conducted by CBLs and Equity First. Finally, Equity First conducted seven partner interviews with 8 representatives of Community-Based Organizations (CBOs). In total, 121 community members participated in external engagement activities.

CBLs were also invited to participate in a focus group themselves to share their own experiences, perspectives and wisdom around engagement. In September, the team gathered to celebrate the completion of the focus groups and interviews, and paused to reflect on lessons learned from this process to inform the development of the community engagement plan, as well as the weight of responsibility taken on by conducting this outreach and the resulting importance of designing systems of accountability to the community members who trusted that change would happen and thus were willing to share their wisdom with the County. This closing meeting, six months after the first, made it clear: engagement does not happen without trust, and the extent of follow-through around next steps will be critical to maintain the threads of trust woven through this project.

Phase 3: Reflection Sessions with community members and County staff
Equity First conducted Reflection Sessions to further engage participants in the process of data analysis, refinement of findings and recommendations, and ultimately in a co-design process around Community Engagement Plan development.

Three Reflection Sessions with community members were held, with options to join in Spanish, English, In-Person, or on Zoom. A total of 25 community members participated. One Reflection Session was conducted with County staff and County leaders via zoom, with five breakout rooms organized by job types so that staff members could feel safe[r] to speak freely without their supervisors present. A total of 35 staff across all roles participated. In all, a total of 60 people participated in the Reflection Session process.

Intergovernmental Tribal Relations
The Office of Equity and Equity First recognize that the County of Sonoma holds a political and legal relationship with sovereign and Federally Recognized Tribes, which is distinct from the history and relationship that the County has with non-native Black, Indigenous, and People of

Color (BIPOC) communities. With guidance from a CBL, the County of Sonoma and Equity First reached out to Tribal Nations who share geography with Sonoma County, as well as consulted with community members who identify as California Indian, American Indian or Native American and County staff on the topic of government-to-government relations with Tribal Nations. One interview was conducted with a Native nation and five were conducted with members of Native communities and County staff. The methodology and learnings about intergovernmental consultation are detailed in the Intergovernmental Relations section of the report, County of Sonoma, Office of Equity Community Engagement Findings (Attachment 3 of the Board item). In order to respect the critical legal and political relationships among local government and leaders and members of sovereign nations, the related findings and recommendations will be detailed in a separate report in June.

5. **Does the estimated Program budget and timeline include sufficient resources and time to ensure accessibility, i.e. translation, interpretation, outreach, etc.?**

A fiscal analysis and timeline will be presented in the Community Engagement Plan presentation in June for the Boards' consideration. The Plan will strategically leverage the Language Access Plan to support the successful implementation of the Community Engagement Plan as it relates to translation and interpretation needs. For a full list of recommended strategies please review the summary report of this Board item.

6. **How will the Program document and evaluate the Program's impact on communities of color and low-income communities?**

The Plan will apply the existing Racial Equity Impact Analysis policy to assess the impact of County community engagement on communities most impacted by systemic inequities.

7. **What additional disaggregated demographic data will your Program need to collect, track, and evaluate to inform future decisions, and/or develop mitigation practices to respond to unintended impacts of the project in communities of color?**

In addition to applying the existing Racial Equity Impact Analysis policy, the strategies below will be presented for Board consideration, to help inform future community engagement decisions.

- Evaluate impact of each year of Community Engagement plan implementation (Community Engagement manager, CBLs)
- Integrate Racial Equity Impact Analysis results into continued Community Engagement implementation work
- Create and resource a community- accountability body to measure the impact of community engagement on communities

For a full list of recommended strategies please review the summary report of this Board item.

Appendix

In the following table, you will find demographic data gathered from focus groups and interviews with County staff and members from Sonoma County communities. All data was collected between the dates of April through July 2023.
Source: Report, County of Sonoma Office of Equity Community Engagement Findings

Race/Ethnicity/Culture

	County Staff			**Sonoma County Communities**
	Front facing or prefer to self-describe (field rep, admin, program manager) (n=13)	Supervisor or Manager (n=18)	Leadership (n=24)	
Asian	8%	6%	0%	8%
Black and/or African American	15%	6%	4%	7%
Hispanic, Latina/e/o/x, and/or Spanish Origin	62%	33%	13%	66%
Middle Eastern and/or North African	0%	6%	0%	2%
Native American Indigenous Peoples, First Peoples (American Indian), and/or Alaska Native	0%	6%	0%	4%
Native Hawaiian and/or Pacific Islander	0%	0%	0%	10%
White	23%	61%	79%	1%
Prefer Not to Say	0%	6%	8%	1%
Prefer to Self-Describe	0%	0%	0%	1%

Survey Data Tables

Community Education, Knowledge, and Skills (Informal Education)

County Staff		Sonoma County Communities	
14%	Apprenticeships	16%	Apprenticeships
62%	Community learning/Education	55%	Community learning/Education
38%	Community organizing	57%	Community organizing
29%	Cultural/Traditional knowledge (Ex: attending or participating in ceremonies, speaking your native language, cultural/tribal social gatherings, traditional plants and medicine, cultural/traditional healing practices, cultural arts)	47%	Cultural/Traditional knowledge (Ex: attending or participating in ceremonies, speaking your native language, cultural/tribal social gatherings, traditional plants and medicine, cultural/traditional healing practices, cultural arts)
24%	Entrepreneurial skills	16%	Entrepreneurial skills
16%	Faith-based learning/Education	25%	Faith-based learning/Education
52%	Lived experience	51%	Lived experience
43%	Mentor/Mentee	22%	Mentor/Mentee
28%	Storytelling/Oral history	21%	Storytelling/Oral history
7%	Prefer not to say	1%	Prefer not to say
3%	Prefer to self-describe (college, training members of the public)	3%	Prefer to self-describe (animal welfare, governance and funding measures)

Gender Identity

County Staff		Sonoma County Communities	
60%	Female	77%	Female
38%	Male	20%	Male
3%	Non-binary	0%	Non-binary
2%	Transgender	0%	Transgender

2%	Prefer not to say	1%	Prefer not to say
2%	Prefer to self-describe (genderqueer)	2%	Prefer to self-describe (neutrois)

Sexual Orientation

County Staff		Sonoma County Communities	
7%	Bisexual	3%	Bisexual
7%	Gay or Lesbian	7%	Gay or Lesbian
79%	Heterosexual	80%	Heterosexual
3%	Queer	5%	Queer
2%	Unsure/Questioning	0%	Unsure/Questioning
3%	Prefer not to say	5%	Prefer not to say
0%	Prefer to self-describe	4%	Prefer to self-describe (did not provide description)

Experience of Participation in County programs

County Staff		Sonoma County Communities	
28%	Very positive	27%	Very positive
10%	Somewhat positive	20%	Somewhat positive
17%	Neutral	27%	Neutral
5%	Somewhat negative	8%	Somewhat negative
0%	Very negative	2%	Very negative
38%	Not applicable; have never participated in County programs	18%	Not applicable; have never participated in County programs
2%	Prefer not to say	0%	Prefer not to say

Other Identity Groups

County Staff	Sonoma County Communities

4%	Current or former participation in a 12-step recovery program	9%	Current or former participation in a 12-step recovery program
5%	Disabled, differently-abled, and/or neurodiverse communities	2%	Disabled, differently-abled, and/or neurodiverse communities
14%	Immigrant and/or undocumented communities	65%	Immigrant and/or undocumented communities
2%	Impacted by the foster care and/or child protective systems	1%	Impacted by the foster care and/or child protective systems
80%	None of the above	29%	None of the above
0%	Prefer to self-describe	2%	Prefer to self-describe an additional identity (Settler, Transgender)