

2019 Annual Report

MULTNOMAH COUNTY  
**WORKFORCE  
EQUITY  
STRATEGIC  
PLAN**



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# Acknowledgments and Appreciations

## Honoring Native Lands and Indigenous Peoples

Every community owes its existence and strength to generations of ancestors who contributed to our hopes, dreams, and collective possibilities. Together, their history allows us to leave our own legacy of hope and justice. Our collective history is that of cultural resilience, (re)indigenization, adaptability, colonization, settlement, systemic violence, racism, and forced displacement. Acknowledging this truth helps build mutual respect and connection across diverse communities and lived experiences.

Multnomah County acknowledges that Indigenous peoples of North America were systematically killed in a colonial pogrom in order to make possible the United States. Those who were not killed were forcibly removed.

Multnomah County acknowledges the land which we occupy as residents is unceded Indigenous land. The Portland Metro area rests on traditional village sites of the Multnomah, Wasco, Cowlitz, Kathlamet, Clackamas, Bands of Chinook, Tualatin, Kalapuya, Molalla, and many other tribes who made their homes along the Columbia River creating both permanent communities and summer encampments. Due to the strategic and systemic efforts to annihilate Indigenous peoples from these lands and history, there are many other tribes and Nations who traditionally lived, hunted and fished in what is now Multnomah County and Oregon that are not collectively remembered.

Multnomah County also acknowledges the history of the Portland Metro area as a destination site for the Indian Relocation Act of 1956, which coerced many Native people to leave their homes on tribal land and assimilate into the dominant culture. Because of this history, Multnomah County is home to the ninth largest urban Indian population in the United States. We honor the enduring relationship that exists between Indigenous Peoples and this occupied land.

Settlers from across the globe come to Multnomah County seeking a better way of life.

And Multnomah County owes this opportunity to our Black and African siblings whose stolen lives and labor were used to build the city, county, and country that the people of Multnomah County call home. Multnomah County acknowledges that the enslavement of Black peoples is still used to work land stolen from Indigenous peoples, who care for, and protect the land, since time immemorial.

This acknowledgment serves to bring awareness to the past and current contributions of Indigenous and Black peoples and to highlight the ongoing resilience and solidarity between and among Indigenous and Black peoples. Multnomah County encourages you to think beyond this acknowledgment and consider how to work in solidarity to uplift the collective power, leadership, creativity, and wisdom of Indigenous and Black communities in Multnomah County and beyond. Please take a moment to offer respect and appreciation to the Indigenous peoples whose traditional homelands and hunting grounds are where residents of Multnomah County live, learn, work, play and pray.

## Thank you to the following people for authoring, editing and designing the report.

Alix Sanchez	Kimberly Melton
Andrea Coghlan	Marissa Madrigal
Andrea Damewood	Mary Li
Anna Plumb	Neisha Saxena
Aimeera Flint	Paul Park
Benjamin Duncan	Scotty Sherington
Brianna Bragg	Travis Graves
Chris Lenn	Workforce Equity Strategic Plan Committee
Diana Grappasonno	Inclusively Leading with Race Design Team
Heather Heater	Leadership Expectations and Accountability Plan Committee
Holly Calhoun	Shared Language Guide Workgroup
Hun Taing	Employee Resource Group Policy Committee
Janette Quan-Torres	
Julie Sullivan-Springhetti	

Deep appreciation to the formal and informal leaders of this work including the Workforce Equity Strategic Plan Committee, Multnomah County Employee Resource Groups, equity managers, Multnomah Idea Lab and the Board of County Commissioners.

Finally, we want to appreciate the community volunteers on the Community Budget Advisory Boards who championed workforce equity as a necessary and important budget priority. We thank you for seeing this work as vital to community resilience and equitable economic development.

# How to read this report

This section highlights how the report is formatted.

## Each Chapter Has A Title

The subtitle provides a plain-language summary of the information in the section.

Each Chapter Has a Heading

Subsections are below the underlined heading

*Additional content below subsection is in italics*

# Dedication to Dana Thompson



As we recognize and celebrate our progress towards advancing workforce equity, we also have the opportunity to reflect on what led us to this moment. The movement for workforce equity was driven by employees who experienced the most pain in our organization, felt the most excluded and othered, and yet saw the greatest possibility for what Multnomah County can be.

It is in this spirit that we dedicate this report to Dana Thompson, who we tragically lost this past year. Dana worked in the Health Department in the Office of the Director, but it was her leadership in Employees of Color Employee Resource Group that perhaps left the greatest mark on this organization.

In reflecting on Dana, what struck so many so deeply was that Dana described in positive terms her experience at Multnomah County. She felt supported by her colleagues and her manager. She was surrounded by employees who looked like her, and cared for her, and saw her incredible potential. And yet, Dana advocated

and stood alongside employees who didn't share that experience.

Dana modeled the importance of recognizing that each of us is tied to one another. This interconnectedness reminds us that when some of us are suffering, we all lose some of our humanity. This belief was a pillar of Dana's leadership and impact. In dedicating her time, energy, passion and wisdom, Dana reminded us that we each have a role in advancing workforce equity. Each of us can use our voice and our position to stand in solidarity with one another. If realized, solidarity will lead us towards Safety, Trust and Belonging.

This organization and this community is better off because of Dana's efforts, and we honor her legacy and contribution by following her lead: To be better to each other, to share in each others successes and hardships, and to recognize that our collective sense of belonging only is realized when we give to each other.

In her spirit and her honor, we dedicate this inaugural annual report to Dana Thompson.

In solidarity and with hope,

Ben Duncan  
Chief Diversity and Equity Officer



Tony Gaines, manager at the Health Department; Chair Deborah Kafoury; and James Sanders, program supervisor at the Division of Assessment, Recording and Taxation at the County's "Together Forward: Creating Safety, Building Trust, and Fostering Belonging" event.

## A message from Chair Deborah Kafoury

On the January day in 2019 when our Board of County Commissioners adopted the Workforce Equity Strategic Plan (WESP) implementation plan, our late colleague, Dana Thompson, foresaw the weight of the work ahead. Dana shared these words that have since become a steady drumbeat that pushes us onward:

"Together, we can get this work done. We can hold each other to the task and go through this plan if we stand by one another in a single voice from this point forward."

Systemic and institutional inequities did not simply appear out of thin air; they are the result of intentional choices and practices. They are insidious because those who aren't harmed by injustices choose to ignore or accept them, even as they harm their colleagues of color or other marginalized identities. Inequities can't be waived or wished away. Rather, the process of breaking down these systems and replacing them with a culture of equity requires choices and actions that are just as, if not more, decisive and deliberate as those that built them.

Together, Multnomah County agreed that we couldn't wait any longer. We committed to do the hard, intentional work of transforming our organization into a place that offers everyone access to Safety, Trust and Belonging. Based on this annual report, which details the accomplishments and lessons from the first year of implementing the WESP, I am confident that we are well-positioned to take on the substantial work ahead of us.

We would not be here without the courage and vulnerability of employees who have shared the pain and fear they and their peers experienced as a result of a workplace that professed to value each employee, but fell disappointingly short of walking the talk. I can only imagine the strength it took to begin to tell their stories to colleagues, supervisors and the public.

I want to personally thank every County employee who has been part of this work so far. The innovation, creativity and diligence they've brought to this critical work have laid the groundwork for meaningful and ongoing transformation that will make the County the best version of itself for everyone. And I appreciate my colleagues, Commissioners Sharon Meieran, Susheela Jayapal, Jessica Vega Pederson and Lori Stegmann, who have embraced this effort with passion and commitment.



The next year of work will ask a lot of all of us. But we must stay on the road together, even if the destination remains beyond the horizon.

I'm honored to work alongside each of you to build a workplace that offers Safety, Trust and Belonging to everyone. I am committed to supporting the strategies that will dismantle the systemic racism so woven into our history. That transformation is what our employees, our clients and our community deserve, and we will get there together.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Deborah Kafoury". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being more prominent than the last.

Deborah Kafoury  
Multnomah County Chair



## Executive summary

This inaugural Workforce Equity Strategic Plan Annual Report describes:

- What has been accomplished in Year 1 of the Workforce Equity Strategic Plan implementation
- How the work was completed
- How financial investments were applied to achieve 2019 targets
- What we learned in the initial phases of implementation
- How these lessons can be applied as we improve systems and infrastructure to meet 2020, 2021 and 2022 workforce equity performance measures

When the Workforce Equity Strategic Plan was first adopted, Multnomah County Chair Deborah Kafoury stated, “We are not immune to impacts of racism and other systems of oppression simply because of the important work we do or the values we espouse. But I know that these challenges our employees face are not inevitable. With investments and focused strategies, accountability and care, we can move these metrics.”

As an organization, Multnomah County is accountable to serving a diverse and changing population. We have committed to creating an organization that not only reflects the diversity of the communities we serve, but ensures that our employees who belong to these communities thrive in a culture of Safety, Trust and Belonging.

Safety, Trust and Belonging is the guiding framework for Multnomah County. It influences our decision-making, policy priorities, and the services Multnomah County provides. The County has a long legacy of prioritizing equity investments. But under the Workforce Equity Strategic Plan, we’ve focused our internal workforce equity efforts on creating a solid foundation upon which we can build transformational workforce equity practices and advance culture change.

Since the formal adoption of the Workforce Equity Strategic Plan on Jan. 31, 2019:

- Multnomah County successfully met 2019 Workforce Equity Strategic Plan deadlines.
- The \$2 million in investments in the FY 2019 budget are increasing organizational capacity and building coordinated systems and infrastructure to meet our strategic goals.
- The County has staffed key roles outlined in the Workforce Equity Strategic Plan, thereby increasing our ability to keep and sustain the promises our organization made.
- The Civil Rights Policy Unit is fully staffed.
- Disability justice is formally embedded in our workforce equity strategy.

- The Protected Class Complaints Unit is investigating employee discrimination complaints.
- Every department now has an equity manager, and equity teams.
- We are developing and evaluating new ways to increase employee engagement and cross-departmental partnerships.
- Every department in Multnomah County has a department-specific workforce equity plan.
- Non-departmental and elected offices are contributing to workforce equity strategies, ensuring an organization-wide commitment to creating a workplace that fosters Safety, Trust and Belonging.
- We are building data and evaluation infrastructure to increase our ability to report our progress and demonstrate responsible stewardship of public funding.

This annual report is an important opportunity to highlight the complex and iterative nature of organizational change in a transparent manner. In writing the report, we’ve attempted to demonstrate the values we espouse by:

- Honestly addressing areas where we need to try again (or work harder) while also celebrating our organizational achievements.
- Publicly demonstrating how we have used key investments to strengthen workforce equity.
- Deepening our understanding of how we’re all affected and influenced by systemic oppression, as well as the ways we can collectively contribute to cultural, behavioral and structural change.
- Describing how standardized practices and procedures and new infrastructure will be used to sustain cultural change and advance Safety, Trust and Belonging.

Employees throughout the organization were asked to bring their whole selves to our commitment to creating a culture of Safety, Trust and Belonging, and they did. As a result, this

report reflects diversity of opinion and perspective — progress to one person may feel like stagnation to another, and definitions of success may vary.

What can be agreed on is that the Workforce Equity Strategic Plan was created because our colleagues experienced discrimination, harm, mistrust and race-based exclusion within the organization. The stories our colleagues shared over several Board meetings throughout 2017 and 2018 reflect why, as an organization, Multnomah

County needs to confront the historical and current realities of racism and other forms of oppression that prevent our organization from reaching its full potential.

We hope that in reading this report you will take time to celebrate our accomplishments and offer gratitude to the many people who made this progress possible.



Chair Kafoury’s Chief of Staff Kim Melton (left) and Department of Community Services Interim Director Jamie Waltz at the County’s “Together Forward: Creating Safety, Building Trust, and Fostering Belonging” event.

# Workforce Equity Strategic Plan Timeline

This section provides a visual overview of the key 2019 milestones that have contributed to the work described in this report.



**July 2019**

Departments of County Management, Assets, Community Services, County Human Services, Health Department, Multnomah County Library, Joint Office of Homeless Services and the Sheriff's Office form equity and diversity teams for their respective departments. Employees in these departments also have training plans that include cultural responsiveness training.

**July - Aug. 2019**

The Office of Diversity and Equity and the Department of County Management's Evaluation and Research Unit hold "belonging" listening sessions for County employees.

**Sept. 2019**

Chair Kafoury announces new Personnel Rule increasing time allowed for Employee Resource Group participation.

**Oct. 2019**

Chair Kafoury encourages County workforce to complete Countywide Employee Survey, which includes questions on belonging.

**Nov. 2019**

"Together Forward: Creating Safety, Building Trust, and Fostering Belonging" County Management Conference.

**Nov. 2019**

Central Human Resources' Talent Development unit is restructured and renamed Organizational Learning.

**Nov. 2019**

Workforce Equity Strategic Plan Nov. 2019 Progress Report is issued.

**Dec. 2019**

County's internal Protected Class Complaint Investigation Unit is fully staffed and taking complaints.

# Progress updates

## This section provides an overview of the Workforce Equity Strategic Plan performance measures and minimum standards Multnomah County met between April 2018 and July 2019.

This work is rooted in a central framework that is both visionary and innately human: a framework of Safety, Trust and Belonging.

Progress measures and minimum standards were created to provide tangible steps to shifting cultural norms and practices, while building a more equitable infrastructure to sustain those changes.

To change our outcomes, we need to change our approach. All of us must continually ask ourselves the question: “How am I promoting safety, ensuring trust and fostering belonging in all of the work that I do?”

The outcomes shown in the following pages reflect the shared sense of responsibility employees throughout the organization feel in changing our work culture. The Workforce Equity Strategic Plan does not exist in isolation. The performance measures and minimum standards are connected to a broader context.

The outcomes highlighted here are even more important because they occurred at a time when our national discourse has been deeply divided and the Administration has advanced policies that harm communities of color, immigrant and refugee and LGBTQ+ communities, threatening the hard-earned and hard-won advances our nation has made to create Safety, Trust and Belonging in all the places we live, work, play and pray.

The investments highlighted in the following sections, and the outcomes achieved as a result of those and other long-term investments, also occurred as Multnomah County faced, and is facing, significant budget deficits.

The fact that the Board of County Commissioners

prioritized the Workforce Equity Strategic Plan signifies our most senior leaders’ commitment to advancing racial equity for employees and their diverse communities. The County’s slogan, “This Work Matters,” comes alive when we acknowledge that our County employees live and/or work in the same communities that they serve every day.

The Workforce Equity Strategic Plan was also launched on the heels of an organization-wide overhaul of our Enterprise Resource Planning systems (e.g., Tririga, Workday, Marketplace), which required substantial human and capital investments.



**This work is hard and there’s no textbook. But we all have to keep trying. We all have to keep learning from one another on a daily basis.**

**Holly Calhoun, Deputy Chief Human Resources Officer**

Finally, employees undertook these efforts while maintaining their responsibilities to our community. This includes ensuring healthy air and water, home visits for clients in need, restaurant and food cart inspections, policy development, emergency preparedness and response, bridge and road maintenance, SUN programs for children, support for seniors, veterans, people with disabilities and those experiencing homelessness, as well as primary healthcare, behavioral health and dental services.

In sum, the outcomes below are remarkable not only because we achieved them, but because they happened in a time of profound political, social and organizational change and while maintaining daily operations.

It takes a uniquely dedicated workforce to navigate this much change at once. The fact that we’ve met all our target performance measures (and so much more) in 2019 demonstrates the talent and dedication of every change agent, employee and leader involved in this effort.

## Overview of Focus Areas 1-5

Below are the five focus areas of the Workforce Equity Strategic Plan.

**Focus Area 1: Organizational Culture** — Increased awareness of power and privilege.

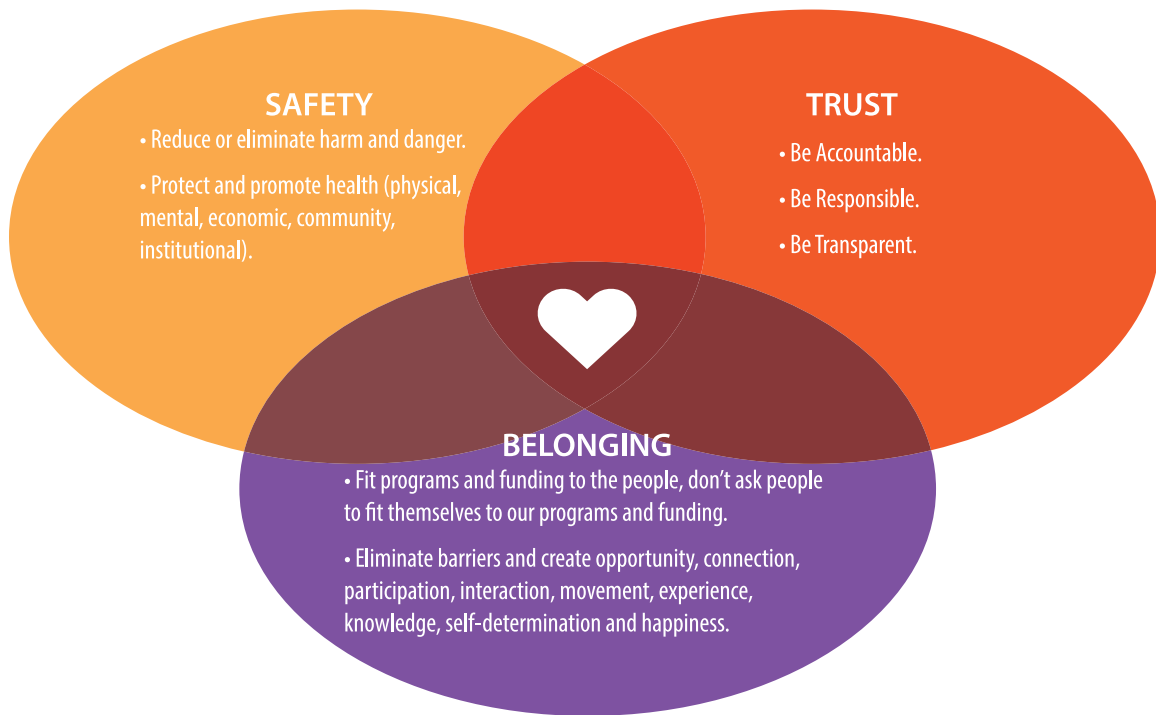
**Focus Area 2: Promotion and Professional Development** — Equitable opportunity and elimination of barriers to promotion and professional development.

**Focus Area 3: Retention** — Address disparities in retention based on race and non-dominant culture identities.

**Focus Area 4: Recruitment and Workforce Pipelines** — Consistently diverse candidate pools for positions at every level of the organization.

## **Focus Area 5: Strengthen Central Infrastructure and Accountability**

- Clarify and communicate our vision;
- Enact structural changes that support shifting practice and culture;
- Update the role, responsibility and authority of the Office of Diversity & Equity;
- Improve practices in organizational culture and retention; and
- Measure our impact and shifts in culture change.





## Progress Update: Focus Areas 1-4

All performance measures for Focus Areas 1- 4 were met by the July 2019 deadline (see Figure 1).

Check marks on green background indicate the performance measure is complete and in the implementation phase.

The cells with a yellow background labeled “in progress” indicate that work is in the implementation phase and that the size of the department required additional resources, structures and staffing to be allocated and/or they are piloting a department-specific approach that required additional infrastructure, capacity and training.

### **Figure 1**

#### **Focus Areas 1-4, 2019 Workforce Equity Strategic Plan Performance Measures Progress Update**

<b>Measures</b>			
<b>Departments</b>	<b>Equity and Diversity teams are created</b>	<b>Every employee has a training plan that includes a specific and intentional inclusion of cultural responsiveness training</b>	<b>Employee Resource Group participation established in policy</b>
County Management	✓	✓	✓
County Assets	✓	✓	✓
Community Services	✓	✓	✓
Community Justice	✓	✓	✓
Health	✓	✓	✓
Human Services	✓	✓	✓
Library	In progress	✓	✓
Joint Office of Homeless Services	✓	✓	✓
Sheriff's Office	✓	In progress	✓
District Attorney's Office	✓	In progress	✓

## Progress Update: Focus Area 5

In September 2017, Multnomah County Chair Deborah Kafoury directed Chief Operating Officer Marissa Madrigal to hire an external consulting firm with expertise in dismantling structural racism in the public sector to provide an independent assessment of the County's decentralized human resources structure and entire employment cycle, including policies and practices from hiring to termination and the complaint investigation process.

After releasing a Request for Intermediate Proposals in October 2017, the national consulting firm Jemmott Rollins Group, Inc. was hired to perform a detailed review and analysis of County Human Resources policies and practices, and provide specific recommendations.

In October 2018, the consultants presented their recommendations to the Board of Commissioners. The report included strategies to strengthen the County's Workforce Equity Strategic Plan. The recommendations outlined specific actions the County should take to successfully implement the Workforce Equity Strategic Plan, including creating an independent unit to investigate protected class complaints, increasing management accountability, improving workplace communication about workforce equity and clarifying expectations for staff.

Between Dec. 19, 2018 and Jan. 23, 2019, a Countywide engagement process asked employees to prioritize the Jemmott Rollins Group, Inc. recommendations. This process enabled the County to adapt the consultant's recommendations to meet the unique conditions of this organization while also strengthening the priorities that were previously identified by County employees and adopted by the Board of Commissioners. These adapted consultant recommendations became known as Focus Area 5 and were added as an addendum to the Workforce Equity Strategic Plan, which was re-adopted by the Board of Commissioners in January 2019.

The following prioritized Focus Area 5 recommendations were initiated or completed by July 2019 (see Figure 2).

Check marks on a green background indicate the work is complete and in the implementation phase.

The cells labeled "in progress" on a yellow background indicate that the work is in implementation phase and that it required additional resources, structures and staffing to be allocated and/or require a coordinated, multi-departmental approach with needs for more infrastructure, capacity or training.



Members of the Multnomah County Employees of Color Employee Resource Group support Health Department employee Dana Thompson as she shares her hopes for the County's equity work at the Jan. 31, 2019 board meeting. View our dedication to Dana Thompson on page 7 of this report.

**Figure 2**


**Focus Area 5 Progress Update**

<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>Status</b>
Develop clear Countywide communication that supports and deepens understanding of “Leading with Race.”	In progress
Better define and communicate about this overall effort by creating shared language glossary.	In progress
Developing an Equity Toolkit accessible to all County employees.	In progress
Create clearly defined and standardized roles, responsibilities and classifications for departmental equity manager positions that acknowledge their expertise and specialization with principles of equity and inclusion.	In progress
Conduct analysis of Countywide Employee Survey and identify opportunities to add indicators of belonging.	✓
Reorganize Talent Development and Talent Acquisition resources in Central Human Resources to build a new organizational development model that emphasizes the critical leadership skills needed to create an environment and culture of Safety, Trust and Belonging.	✓
Fully transfer responsibility of investigating protected class complaints from departmental Human Resources to a non-departmental unit reporting to the Chief Operating Officer, staffed by a diverse set of skilled investigators dedicated to investigating employee complaints of discrimination and harassment based on a protected class.	✓
Assign all departments an equity and diversity team consisting of stakeholders from diverse backgrounds and that represents front line staff, managers, supervisors and senior leadership.	✓

Figure 2 continued on page 20.

**Figure 2 (continued)**

**Focus Area 5 Progress Update**

<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>Status</b>
<p>The Office of Diversity &amp; Equity updated and created new job classifications and job descriptions to include the following new scopes of work:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review exempt hiring and promotional decisions, involuntary terminations, probationary terminations.</li><li>• Conduct analysis of exit interviews.</li><li>• Assisting with access, accommodation and centralized handling of Americans with Disabilities Act Accommodation requests and developing an implementation plan based on the conclusions of the Multnomah County <a href="#">Research on Equity and Accommodations for Employees with Disabilities</a> report.</li></ul>	
<p>The Office of Diversity &amp; Equity hired a Workforce Equity Strategic Plan project manager and a Civil Rights Administrator.</p>	
<p>Organizational Learning (formerly Talent Development) in Central Human Resources provided eight hours of training in the first-ever all managers conference, Together: Forward, held in November 2019.</p>	

# How we advance Safety, Trust and Belonging

This section describes examples of how Multnomah County has developed and implemented policy, practice and process that advances Safety, Trust and Belonging.

As we acknowledge what we were able to accomplish as an organization, it is just as important that we describe how we advance Safety, Trust and Belonging. It is only through deepening relationships and learning together that any of the progress described above has materialized.

The following examples highlight how we accomplished Focus Areas 1 through 5 by the July 2019 deadlines and features examples of employee-led innovation demonstrates the spirit and intention of our workforce equity efforts.

Every example of implementation was planned, staffed and initiated by people at all levels of this organization working cooperatively and courageously to make meaning of the 2019 performance measure targets. Even when the approach was prescribed within the Workforce Equity Strategic Plan — such as the formation of the departmental equity committees — individuals still had to invest time, energy and talent to actualize those goals.

In some of the following examples, no mandate for action was made, and yet employees saw a need, and used their collective skill to come up with solutions to meet that need.

## Focus Area 1-5 Implementation

This section describes how we achieved specific Workforce Equity Strategic Plan action items.

Focus Areas 1 through 4 and Focus Area 5 included specific activities and recommendations approved by the Board of Commissioners. Included in this section are highlights of processes and products that have uniquely contributed to our ability to meet 2019 Workforce Equity Strategic Plan deadlines and increase our understanding of what culture change looks and feels like.

### *The Workforce Equity Strategic Plan Committee*

The Workforce Equity Strategic Plan Committee supports the transformational change required to achieve the objectives of the Workforce Equity Strategic Plan. The group represents a shift in how we create a culture of shared accountability, provide oversight for organizational transformation, and increase representation and partnership across the organization.

The 36-person committee — sponsored by the County Chair, and facilitated and staffed by the Office of Diversity & Equity — has met seven times since January 2019. The committee includes representation from all County departments and non-departmental offices, including the Chair's Chief of Staff, the Chief Operating Officer, department directors, labor relations, Employee Resource Groups, and union leadership.

Exploring what facilitation approach works among such a large, diverse stakeholder body is a source of continuous learning and opportunity.

It's important to highlight that convening the Workforce Equity Strategic Plan Committee is a bold step in cultivating transparent and accountable workplace cultures and building our collective ability to acknowledge and wrestle with the diverse perspectives and priorities of committee members and the many stakeholder groups they represent.

As an organization, we are still learning how to find productive and healthy ways to disagree on strategy, while continuing to honor the humanity of all those involved in this work.

### *Employee Resource Groups Policy Change*

Multnomah County recognizes the need for



spaces where employees with shared lived experience can connect and build community. Updating the personnel policy to better support the values, vision and benefits of these affinity spaces for employees reflects a commitment to Employee Resource Groups as an important infrastructure investment.

In order to ensure that the voices of those most affected by the Employee Resource Groups policy were the drivers of policy change, a committee was convened by the Office of Diversity & Equity. The committee included representatives selected internally by their respective Employee Resource Groups.

The committee surveyed Employee Resource Group membership, examined which elements of the policy needed updating and created rationale for each specific change based on member priority and alignment with organizational values. The new policy also focused on strengthening and clarifying operational infrastructure to create accountability, oversight and shared partnership between Employee Resource Groups and the Office of Diversity & Equity.

After consultation with departmental leadership and review by the collective bargaining units across the County, [Personnel Rule 3-75](#) was

updated and approved in September 2019. The policy increases the number of paid staff hours employees can devote to Employee Resource Group activities to six per month for employees and eight for Employee Resource Group Leaders and develops processes to ensure represented staff have equitable opportunities to participate as well.

“ **Not having to sugarcoat my experience helps me in my job.**

**James McKenzie,  
QTPOC Co-Chair and  
Library Services Assistant**

### *Clarifying and Communicating our Shared Vision*

Focus Area 5: Objective 1 of the Workforce Equity Strategic Plan asks us to “Clarify and Communicate Our Vision” by developing Countywide communication that supports and deepens our collective understanding of “Leading with Race.” This objective calls on us to better define and communicate our overall efforts through the creation of shared language, a glossary, and education materials for the terms,

frames and concepts we use.

One workgroup was tasked with creating draft language and recommendations for how Multnomah County defines and describes Leading with Race. Another workgroup was charged with creating a draft shared language glossary. These two deliverables are important mechanisms to create a shared reality. The idea is that this common understanding of our history, experiences and values will inform how Multnomah County creates a culture of Safety, Trust and Belonging.

In April, the Department of County Human Services' Multnomah Idea Lab (MIL) was assigned the responsibility of facilitating a process to:

Define the term "Leading with Race."

- Define the term "Leading with Race."
- Express the rationale for why the County has made this commitment.
- Identify initial potential action steps to be taken in service to this commitment.
- Create a Shared Language Guide for use by the workforce in support of the Workforce Equity Strategic Plan.

### *Inclusively Leading with Race*

The Inclusively Leading with Race workgroup was developed using Equity and Human-Centered Collaborative Design practices. Equity and Human-Centered Collaborative Design (see Appendix for external resources on this topic) reflects the practice of approaching a topic without preconceived ideas, centering racial justice, and using collaborative tools in service to the co-creation of new approaches to identified challenges. The Multnomah Idea Lab believed that using these promising practices aligned with the spirit and goals of the Workforce Equity Strategic Plan.

The recruitment was designed to include self-selected representatives from every active Employee Resource Group, every department through their equity manager (or director), the Joint Office of Homeless Services, the Office of Diversity & Equity and County Communications.

In addition, several College to County interns participated throughout the process.

Employee Resource Groups were invited to identify two representatives and asked to ensure that their representative teams were racially/ethnically diverse. Departmental equity managers were invited to send a single representative, either themselves or another employee from their department. This resulted in a team whose membership was predominantly employees of color — practicing what it might look like to Lead with Race.

A series of 12 weekly, three-hour design sessions were planned to ensure that the deliverables would be met. With a 13th session added, the design team:

- Became oriented to the charge of the work and the basics of Equity and Human Centered Collaborative Design practices.
- Confirmed that the focus of the work was to be structural, not interpersonal or individual.
- Adopted the mindset of both skepticism and engagement with the work and process.
- Built relationships with each other, based in healing and the space to be fully present in all of our identities.
- Imagined the future state of the County when we are successful in the Workforce Equity Strategic Plan and Leading with Race, and how we might get there, including:
  - Who are the critical County people and positions that impact our racial justice work?
  - What is the current and future state of those people and positions — what do they see, think, feel, say, do?
  - How might those people and positions change as we succeed in the Workforce Equity Strategic Plan and Leading with Race to achieve our desired future state?
- Conducted a series of specific interviews with people who have lived expertise, employees in

various positions throughout the organization, and people who have expertise that aren't directly related to the County.

- Based on data from the interviews and a review of other definitions for Leading with Race from other jurisdictions and organizations, the design team found themes and insights and used them to draft the first version of the definition.
- Created the first and second drafts of the deliverables. All drafts were reviewed by the design team. The second draft was tested with many Employee Resource Groups, departments and some of those who participated in interviews. All feedback was documented, shared and discussed with the design team.

Through work on the intentional use of language, the decision was reached to rename this work to “Inclusively Leading with Race.” The addition of “Inclusively” is meant to address the realities of an intersectional analysis and calling in all identities shared by People of Color.

In addition, a preference to using the term Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) was established.

The team created a healing space for Black, Indigenous, People of Color employees to connect with each other to do this work and this was/is critical to the success of not only the process but to the individuals involved as they continue their participation and leadership with the Workforce Equity Strategic Plan.

Equity and Human Centered Collaborative Design practices were tested and established a precedent for promising practices that can be used by other workforce equity committees moving forward.

Following the 12th session, a Bridge Team was formed with the Multnomah Idea Lab and two members of the design team to create a third draft of the deliverables. That draft was presented to the design team at the 13th session.

Each of the three deliverables for Inclusively Leading with Race — the definition, the case and initial action steps — have been drafted. While there is a range of reactions to the draft



Multnomah County Sheriff's Office employee Wendy Lin-Kelly at an “Inclusively Leading with Race” Design Team meeting



statements, the team collectively agreed that further work and engagement with a larger number of people working on Workforce Equity is needed to arrive at a single version that can move into the next phase of work.

While the focus of the process was on structural change, the experience of healing that a participatory approach can offer — especially for Black, Indigenous and People of Color — spoke to the relationship of the work with Safety, Trust and Belonging. The focused engagement of individuals who are most impacted by a problem on the structures that produce that problem is a promising approach that other workforce equity committees can also use. The cost to Black, Indigenous and People of Color of doing this work is real and significant, and must be acknowledged and understood. Most importantly, it must be addressed both individually and organizationally as we continue.

Using Equity and Human-Centered Collaborative Design practices was an untried approach within the Workforce Equity Strategic Plan sub-committee process. The basic values of: engaging in co-creation, understanding history, offering humility, and building empathy with those most negatively impacted by racial injustice at the County were successful in discovering both a trauma-informed way to work and developing the resulting work itself.

Due to timing, there were a significant number of College to County interns who participated in the process. They brought a perspective and expertise that would not have been present without them, as they have firsthand experience to see how the County is engaged in racial justice work. The impact was significant in many positive ways.

Once a final version is drafted, the work to create an education and outreach plan to share the Inclusively Leading with Race content throughout the workforce is needed. The design team is ready to move their work into a Phase II that develops what that plan will entail, and how to implement it. There is interest and energy on the part of members to be fully engaged in this work.

## *Shared Language Guide*

Based on the recommendations, the Multnomah Idea Lab (MIL) was also assigned responsibility in April 2019 to facilitate a process to create a Shared Language Guide for use by the workforce in support of the Workforce Equity Strategic Plan.

Central to the Workforce Equity Strategic Plan are concepts such as Leading with Race, and Safety, Trust and Belonging. Yet, there isn't yet a unified understanding across the County for how we understand and use these terms. Instead, there are multiple and sometimes contradictory ways these terms are understood and used.

The workgroup is creating a guide with definitions for key terms that can provide a shared understanding for the County's work, and promote consistency across the County — recognizing that some terms have legal implications.

A workgroup with membership from Employee Resource Groups, Organizational Learning (formally Talent Development), County Communications, equity managers, Human Resources executives, Labor Relations and Departments convened in summer 2019. Some members of this workgroup are also members of other Workforce Equity Strategic Plan workgroups and subcommittees, providing some continuity among the different Workforce Equity Strategic Plan groups.

Given the scope of the task and context for this work, after careful review of the Workforce Equity Strategic Plan and other County documents (e.g. contracts, training materials from Human Resources, etc.) as a starting point, the workgroup selected 19 workforce equity terms as priority.

Revising the Shared Language Guide will be an ongoing effort because learning, language and meaning evolve. Feedback and suggestions for edits for the next version of the guide can start immediately following the release of this first version. The evolution of the guide will allow us to collect and incorporate feedback and continue to build with additional terms and definitions both now and into the future.

In the first phase of this work, members participated both online and in-person. Following an initial four meetings in July 2019, the group took a temporary pause to ensure the process and deliverables aligned with and enhanced the other Workforce Equity projects. The group met in December 2019 to complete its work.

In the second phase, a sprint approach — an intentionally time-limited work process — was combined with Equity and Human-Centered Collaborative Design practices. The group worked together to create the guide and its definitions as a group.

All 19 words have been defined with support materials that include an example of use, important contextual information, and reference and resource citations. The Shared Language Workgroup will perform final revision and review of the 1.0 version. Feedback will be documented using a newly created tracking system that will be one of the key resources for the annual revision of the guide.



**Our communities are dynamic, always changing. As public servants we are accountable for adapting to meet these changing needs.**

**Kory Murphy, Department of County Assets Equity & Inclusion Manager**

Once the final review is complete, the Multnomah Idea Lab will work with County Communications to format the guide itself and integrate rollout with other workforce equity processes.

### *Leadership Expectations and Accountability Plan*

Developing and strengthening the capacity of County leadership and managers is an organizational priority in the Workforce Equity Strategic Plan.

The [Leadership Expectations and Accountability](#)

[Plan](#)\* Committee was formed following the re-adoption of the Workforce Equity Strategic Plan and consisted of a blend of employees and managers from throughout the organization.

The goal of the committee was to design the framework for a leadership development and accountability model that emphasized leading with equity and included clear expectations, practices, supports and metrics to measure success. The priority was to increase self-accountability and awareness among managers. Transparency regarding management expectations and accountability reinforces the County's dedication to creating a workplace where all employees feel welcome and that they belong here.

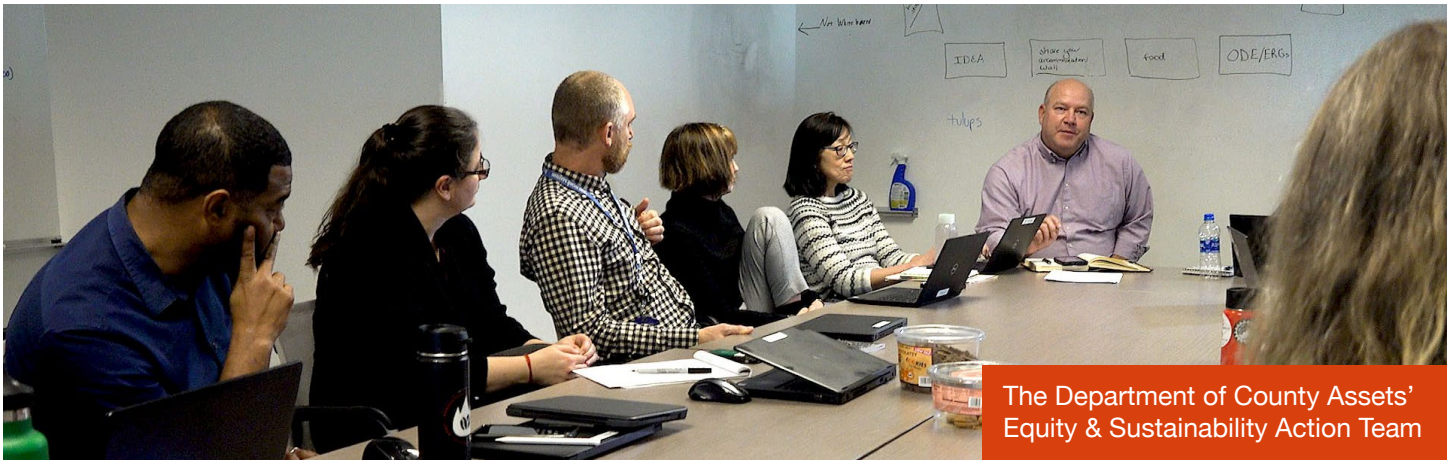
The committee began meeting in March 2019 and focused on identifying some of the key disparate experiences employees (particularly employees of color) faced in the organization as it relates to lack of promotion and retention, toxic work environments, and outright discrimination. The focus of the committee was to clarify the responsibility County leaders have in creating environments that uplifted Safety, Trust and Belonging for all employees.

Defining and setting expectations around what it means to be an equity-informed leader and how this shows up in the areas of recruitment, hiring, and retention were actions prioritized by the Leadership Expectations and Accountability Plan Committee.

In an effort to build on where we are as an organization, the committee also spent time looking at "current state accountability" for managers which included reviewing current personnel rules and best practices. Based on the results of that research, the committee crafted recommendations on how our organization can create more specific ways to measure and track accountability.

The Leadership Expectations and Accountability Plan recommendations will be finalized in 2020 and will provide an organizational definition for Equity-Informed Leadership as well as examples of how to create Equity-Informed

\*See Appendix B



The Department of County Assets' Equity & Sustainability Action Team

Leadership practices in the areas of recruitment, retention and performance management. Those recommendations will then be vetted with additional key stakeholders and subject matter experts to support sustained practice and policy reinforcement. The recommendations will also create a foundation of expectations that will be incorporated in the development of leadership resources and training.

Creating a committee made up of both represented staff and non-represented management to discuss leadership accountability presented opportunities to learn positive and constructive lessons.

The time it took to build trust among committee members and break down the barriers that positionality can cause is a critical part of the journey and cannot be minimized. This committee created a safe space where each member's identity (both personal and professional) was important and their voice a valid contribution to the process.

At times there was a desire to create "parallel" accountability mechanisms between represented staff and exempt management, which proved to be challenging. Additionally, creating concrete accountability measurements for a broad range of leadership classifications with unique work areas proved to be an unsustainable approach to defining accountability. The recommendations ultimately reflect a more holistic approach to setting clear performance expectations and place an emphasis on providing the training and support necessary for success.

### *Departmental equity teams*

As of July 2019, all departments had regularly meeting equity teams, facilitated or supported by the department's equity manager. Some departments have more than one equity team. For example, a team may be location-specific, or there may be smaller, sub-committees working on specific issues related to the Workforce Equity Strategic Plan, service delivery models or other issues prioritized by departmental staff. Most equity teams meet monthly.

It should also be noted that many departments' equity teams predate the Workforce Equity Strategic Plan. For example, Multnomah County Library has had an active management-level equity team for three years and is in the process of expanding implementation across the department to ensure access to front-line and represented staff.

While the Workforce Equity Strategic Plan does require that all departments have equity teams, it gives departments broad say over membership, structure, frequency of meetings, decision-making power or influence.

Department leadership have the goal of ensuring that equity teams include diverse representation across race, gender, sexual orientation, immigrant and refugee experience, age and job classification. In Figure 1, it is noted that some departments' efforts to build equity teams are labeled as "in progress." This is because they have not yet developed mechanisms to ensure all staff have equal opportunities to participate on their

equity teams, and those processes are still in development.

The focus of department equity teams differs, and most equity teams are working under the guidance and leadership of their respective equity managers. Most equity teams are connected to, or have explicit roles in, developing or monitoring their department's workforce equity plan, as well as developing strategies and transformational practices that create a safe space where employees feel a sense of belonging and are treated fairly.

While membership in committees fluctuates, across all departments, more than 200 County employees are volunteering to participate in their departmental equity teams.



**We cannot transform the organization if we, ourselves, have not been transformed. If we, ourselves, have not addressed the harm and trauma, particularly for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color.**

**Mary Li , Multnomah Idea Lab Director**

### *Protected Class Complaint Review*

A review of the County's process for investigating claims of workplace discrimination found the process to be inconsistent and lacking a central tracking mechanism to understand the volume and nature of complaints. A lack of documentation, uneven application of discipline and other corrective action for substantiated complaints were also highlighted as areas needing oversight and improvement.

Efforts to provide better oversight of discrimination complaints began in September 2017, when the chief operating officer launched an interim

complaints review process. The interim process established a central tracking system and put review of all protected class complaint investigations under the purview of the chief operating officer.

The goal of the interim process was to enact consistent investigative processes and consistent discipline in cases where discrimination complaints were substantiated. Most importantly, the interim process established that there was no wrong door for an employee to file a complaint.

The chief operating officer heard some complaints personally, and all managers and Human Resource staff were obligated to bring protected class issues forward to this office for consideration and guidance on how to move through the process.

To improve consistency and trust, the County Board of Commissioners approved FY 2020 funding for the non-departmental Complaint Investigation Unit on May 30, 2019. This unit is separate from Human Resources, reports directly to the chief operating officer, and is staffed with a specialized, diverse team of investigators. This investment and work is also part of Focus Area 5 priorities in the Workforce Equity Strategic Plan, and was the [top-ranked workforce equity implementation strategy](#) identified by County employees.

Recruitment for the Complaints Investigation Unit began in summer 2019. The unit began its work in November 2019, with a strong emphasis on a trauma-informed and culturally-competent approach to interactions with all parties involved. The unit consists of a working manager, three investigators, a management analyst and an administrative assistant. The Complaints Investigation Unit continues to operate with a "no wrong door" approach to complaints, allowing submission via a web form, email, phone, walk-in or through referrals by Human Resources or managers.

The unit is tracking protected class complaints made Countywide, as well as documenting allegations of [microaggressions](#).\* When

\*See Appendix B

a complaint does not rise to the need for a full investigation, the team may provide recommendations for mediation, restorative justice processes, team building or training.

Each department has a Protected Class Committee tasked with reviewing the outcome of investigations and determining appropriate and consistent corrective action for complaints. The Complaints Investigation Unit works with each department's Protected Class Committee, which includes the chief operating officer, County Attorney, Labor Relations, the department director and Human Resources manager, and a representative from the Office of Diversity & Equity. A legacy from the interim process, this committee meets to review completed investigations and determines appropriate discipline or other corrective actions as a result of these reports.

The new protected class complaint process is designed to provide consistent accountability

across the County to build trust with historically marginalized employees. It is, however, a response to behavior rather than a preventative approach. The complaint unit's capacity for accountability must be paired with other elements of the Workforce Equity Strategic Plan to improve the County's culture so that we prevent discrimination from happening in the first place by increasing awareness of implicit biases or by providing the training employees need to better resolve conflicts. The provision of adequate and consistent manager onboarding, implementing the Leadership Expectations and Accountability Plan, and sustaining stronger department-led practices of equity and inclusion are key to achieving the County's vision of a safe and inclusive workplace.



# Employee- and department-led innovation

This section describes how employees and departments are leading pilot projects to advance Safety, Trust and Belonging.

In addition to the structural and policy changes initiated under the Workforce Equity Strategic Plan, employees and departments are continuously expanding our ability to advance Safety, Trust and Belonging by taking healthy risks and advocating for change that brings meaning to the organization's values. These innovators are developing ways to build relationships and improve practice with new tools and approaches. The following are some of the employee- and department-led innovations that have occurred in parallel with Workforce Equity Strategic Plan implementation.

## Department of County Human Services' "Leading with Race" Conference

In 2019, the Department of County Human Services hosted a conference dedicated to "Leading with Race." Every step of the planning process was designed to center racial equity. This included creating two conference committees: one made up entirely of Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) and protected class employees who developed the content, theme, workshops and culture of the conference; and a second team that was responsible for the logistics.

Conference organizers aimed to create a feeling among Black, Indigenous, People of Color attendees that the conference was for them, and not another "education for White employees" type of diversity conference. From the African drumming and the keynote speaker, to panel discussions, workshops and final healing sessions, conference organizers wanted to show what it looked and felt like to Inclusively Lead with Race.

"Racial Identity Workshops" held during the conference were some of the largest (and possibly first) affinity groups of their kind the County has held. Leading up to the event, conference organizers were often told that they couldn't



From left: Department County Human Services (DCHS) Equity Manager Dion Jordan, Interim DCHS Director Mohammad Bader, keynote speaker Walidah Imarisha, and Interim Chief Operating Officer Peggy Brey at the DCHS "Leading with Race" conference

have groups that weren't open to all employees. However, sometimes Leading with Race means challenging the current culture's unspoken rules. As a result, conference organizers were able to foster the support and understanding needed to hold important racial identity groups that focused on healing.

Other accommodations and considerations aimed at creating a sense of Safety, Trust and Belonging at the conference included: designated healing spaces, a breastfeeding pod, "point people" to check in with, contacts for debriefing after the conference, and a quiet space for prayer and reflection.

### Digital Access Team

The Digital Access Team, housed in the Department of County Assets' Information Technology unit is not a Workforce Equity Strategic Plan-specific performance measure, but it is an example of how employee-led innovation helps to create minimum standards and cultural shifts in our organization.

The team is an example of an effort outside of the Workforce Equity Strategic Plan, that intersected with, and added to, equity and inclusion efforts around the County. In this case, the work of the Digital Access Team is relevant because its focus on Americans with Disability Act (ADA) accessibility, accommodation and disability justice as explicitly outlined in Focus Area 5 of the Workforce Equity Strategic Plan.

The IT Digital Accessibility Initiative began about two years ago with a group of IT employees meeting on a monthly basis to learn about accessibility. It has since grown into a small funded program. Employees outside of IT may not have heard about this effort yet because IT started off by creating a shared understanding within the unit about what the meaning of digital accessibility is.

Ultimately, the Digital Access Team and IT-at-large decided accessibility means providing digital services and tools that are designed to be usable by everyone. The long-term goal is to make sure that digital content is accessible to County

employees and residents, and that people have the tools they need to do their work.

Accessibility is the removal of physical and digital barriers, as well as the purposeful design of future structures and initiatives that seek to universally improve the Multnomah County experience for all.

What is essential for some is useful for all. The Digital Access Team wants to improve digital experiences for everyone.



**If inclusion is not active and intentional, then you are practicing exclusion.**

**Steve Joiner,  
Organizational Learning**

Milestones in increasing digital accessibility in Multnomah County include:

- Setting up an employee-led IT accessibility working group to lead the [Digital Accessibility Program](#).<sup>\*</sup> This group has become a resource for people who have digital accessibility questions. For example, the Workday team consulted the Digital Access Team when the opportunity to switch to a higher contrast color scheme was introduced.
- Setting up the Multnomah County Accessibility Learning Leaders group. This group meets monthly to learn and share, and advocate for digital accessibility. Currently, members are mostly IT staff. The group is learning about digital accessibility standards and what their roles are in ensuring those standards are met. The group hopes to expand Countywide at some point. All are welcome to attend the meetings.
- Convening an all-IT staff orientation in February 2019 to create a shared understanding of accessibility among IT staff, which creates a more ethical, equitable and efficient workforce. Plans are underway for a second edition for all IT staff in March 2020.

<sup>\*</sup>See Appendix B

- Made a plan to put digital accessibility in action through the [Digital Accessibility Program\\*](#) and learned that it's rather complex in the process.
- Published resources for IT and all County employees, including:
  - [Digital Accessibility and Communications Content Strategy\\*](#) for people who create content such as websites, documents and applications.
  - [Stories\\*](#) that show why it is important to people and how they use it. Lots of succinct one-minute videos.
  - A series of articles in the Wednesday Wire on [how to make accessible documents\\*](#), [how to caption videos\\*](#) and much more.
  - A compiled list of approved [accessibility and assistive technology tools\\*](#) for people who create accessible content and for people who have challenges and/or disabilities that might benefit from assistive technologies.
- Advised the Department of County Human Services on how to make their new employee onboarding documents accessible.
- Currently developing a new customized service to provide staff with the assistive technology they need. Staff who request technology receive service tailored to their specific needs.

## Library Equity Toolkit

The Library Equity Toolkit is designed to support and assist library staff in gaining cultural awareness and sensitivity. The toolkit contains four workbooks that can help guide library staff through this work.

The first three workbooks were developed for all staff. The fourth workbook is available in two versions — one for White staff and one for staff of color. These two versions focus on similar concepts, but include different activities based on different experiences and impacts. There is also an additional workbook for supervisors/managers.

People who are members of communities of color and other communities that have and continue to be marginalized may find that some of the activities do not resonate. They may choose not to complete those activities. The purpose of the toolkit is to look for opportunities to gain a deeper understanding of self identity, other communities who are being marginalized and intersectionality.



Multnomah County  
Library employee  
Eduardo Arizaga

Each workbook contains activities that can be done independently, in pairs and in small groups. Library staff work on these at their own pace and as their time allows. It is not necessary for staffers to share their work with anyone, but library employees may find it helpful to have conversations with peers and supervisors. The activities in this toolkit are designed to promote reflection. These activities are not about right or wrong — they provide library employees the opportunity to think about topics in a way that may be different than what staff is used to.

Cultural awareness and sensitivity is a life-long process and this toolkit is intended to be just one way to support library employees' journeys. It is important to know that no one is an expert and everyone will continue to make mistakes, no matter how much work each of us do. The key to this journey is increasing awareness from those mistakes and shifting to new ways of thinking and behaving.

\*See Appendix B



Library employees starting out with limited knowledge should not expect to have advanced knowledge once they complete the workbook. Instead, they should look for what improvement they made and think about how they would like to learn more. Movement from limited knowledge to less limited knowledge is learning. Employees are laying the foundation for learning, understanding and reflecting.

## Health Department Equity Leadership Program

As the largest County department, with more than 1,400 employees serving more than 63,000 residents each year, the Health Department has a critical stake in furthering our organization's workforce equity efforts.

The Health Department runs clinics like the Mid County Health Center, which serves clients in more than 80 languages. It offers culturally specific mental health services. Its programs include Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health, Future Generations Collaborative, Healthy Birth Initiative, and Nurse-Family Partnership. With that scope of impact, the Health Department has long recognized the role equity plays in reducing disparities and promoting health among County residents.

To ensure lasting credibility with a client base made up of 67 percent residents of color, it's crucial that the Health Department walk its talk. It is important that the department address the professional development gap faced by employees who belong to historically disenfranchised communities.

For this reason, the Health Department established its [Equity Leadership Program](#).<sup>\*</sup> Launched by the [Health Department's Office of Equity and Inclusion](#)<sup>\*</sup>, the program offers Health Department employees the opportunity to have a hand in shaping the future of the department while gaining valuable project management and leadership skills. This is the first departmental professional and leadership development program

focused on the advancement of historically disenfranchised employees. The departmental goals for this program are:

- To increase the number of equity leaders and build their capacity to achieve key equity goals in the department.
- Fill the gap for professional development for historically disenfranchised communities.
- Deepen leadership skills for future equity leaders.
- Achieve Workforce Equity Strategic Plan performance measures.

Equity Leadership Program participants:

- Learn, practice and hone skills to lead and build effective teams to achieve equity outcomes.
- Facilitate group processes and team meetings through an equity lens.
- Engage and navigate complex and sensitive equity issues.
- Receive coaching and mentoring from the Health Department's Office of Equity & Inclusion staff.
- Build relationships with key stakeholders.
- Learn and practice how to be more relational, relatable and relevant.

The Health Department's Office of Equity and Inclusion received 80 impressive Employee Leadership Program applications and nominations from diverse staff who have demonstrated passion and enthusiasm for equity. The Health Department Workforce Equity Strategic Plan Committee, consisting of members from historically disenfranchised communities, conducted the screening and interviews of applicants.

Beginning in February 2020 and over the following nine months, the Health Department's Office of Equity and Inclusion will work with Equity Leadership Fellows as they each lead a small cohort to achieve the goals and deadlines outlined

<sup>\*</sup>See Appendix B



Health Department Equity & Inclusion Manager Hun Taing (left) and Health Department Director Patricia Charles-Heathers, Ph.D.

in the County’s Workforce Equity Strategic Plan. Each team will work to research and create policy and/or process improvements in six specific equity areas including:

- Mentorship
- Manager onboarding and performance review
- Interview panels
- Position descriptions and job announcements
- Pathways to employment and recruitment
- American with Disability Act accommodations

In all, there were 29 participants chosen — 12 Equity Leadership Fellows and 17 Equity Leadership Cohort members from Mental Health and Addictions, Public Health, Integrated Clinical Services, Human Resources, Corrections Health, and Business Services.

Equity Leadership Program participants will research, engage stakeholders and create protocol and/or process improvements in the six specific equity areas in the Workforce Equity Strategic Plan. Together, the cohorts will develop workforce-driven coordinated strategies to create consistency and accountability for the Health Department’s very large, complex and distinct lines of business.

The Health Department’s Office of Equity and Inclusion envisions that in addition to developing and training new equity leaders, the process and solutions to meeting the Workforce Equity Strategic Plan performance measures will have a more meaningful, impactful and sustainable outcome.

# Key Investments

This section describes how Workforce Equity Strategic Plan investments were used and includes brief descriptions of the impact of those investments on Multnomah County’s ability to implement the Workforce Equity Strategic Plan.

“[The Board of County Commissioners] approved funding to further our workforce equity efforts. This significant investment — specifically in the areas of protected class complaints, leadership development and accountability, and civil rights — underscores just how committed we are to address the calls for real change throughout our organization.” (Chief Operating Officer Marissa Madrigal for Wednesday Wire, June 12, 2019).

The following investments in the Workforce Equity Strategic Plan have allowed for greater collaboration between centralized resources, most notably between the Office of Diversity & Equity and Central Human Resources’ Organizational Learning.

This partnership will continue to provide unique opportunities to:

- Build and revise structures and practice.
- Develop coordinated guidance and standards that will make implementation of the plan more consistent, thereby improving outcomes across the organization.

This collaboration also ensures that our organization has the mechanisms in place to coordinate lessons and apply department-piloted Workforce Equity Strategic Plan implementation best practices across our organization.

To maximize new and one-time-only investments in the Office of Diversity & Equity, Organizational Learning, and the Workforce Equity Strategic Plan Committee approved centralizing some key performance measures (see “Looking ahead —

2020 Performance Measures” for details on which performance measures will be centralized).

The goal is to:

- Focus on providing resources to departments.
- Ensure Countywide consistency and alignment of implementation of performance measures.
- Optimize resources Countywide, ultimately freeing up department directors and equity managers to (re-)focus their efforts on transformational culture change.

Along with continued investments in community-led strategies to advance racial equity, the commitment to allocating resources toward equitable workforce development translates to better service delivery and stronger external communities.

Commissioner Susheela Jayapal summarized the critical importance of an inside-outside strategy to how Multnomah County advances equity by saying: “Our ability to move toward equity for our community depends on doing the same within the County, and so I’m particularly supportive and proud of the investment we’re making in our internal equity work. It’s a significant investment, and it demonstrates the value we place on making the County a workplace where all our employees can thrive, and thereby do their best work to serve the community.”

## Complaints Investigations Unit

(5.0 new/ongoing FTE — Non-Departmental)

The creation of an independent Complaints Investigation Unit was the [top-ranked priority](#) in a survey of County employees on strategies to increase equity.

Following the survey, County leadership conducted an analysis of the average time spent for complaint cases received through the interim process over a 15-month period, starting in September 2017. The analysis, completed by the Department of County Management’s Evaluation and Research Unit, concluded that based on the hours it took Human Resource analysts to

complete protected class investigations, it would take between 3.5 and 5.5 FTE with no external contracting of investigations to complete the same amount of work.

It was determined that the unit would hire three investigators to do the investigative work, one manager, one Human Resources technician for tracking and administration, and one management analyst to serve as a liaison between the Chief Operating Officer's Office and the Complaints Investigation Unit.

Additionally, it was determined that the unit would need funds in cases where externally contracted investigators could be hired when caseloads reach peak levels or other scenarios involving complex factors presented themselves.

At the time of this report's creation, the unit consists of a working manager, three investigators, a management analyst, and a vacant Human Resources technician position.

## Civil Rights Policy Unit creation

(3.0 FTE: 1 pre-existing position and 2 new/ongoing FTE — Office of Diversity & Equity)

Funding supported the creation of the Civil Rights Policy Unit.

The Civil Rights Policy Unit was developed in 2019-2020 to ensure the County's legal compliance obligations under federal law, as well as workforce analytics and disability equity functions assigned to the Office of Diversity & Equity under the [Research on Equity and Accommodations for Employees with Disabilities report](#) and the [Workforce Equity Strategic Plan](#).

This unit consists of three positions:

- Civil rights administrator and manager of the Civil Rights Policy Unit
- Civil rights policy analyst
- Disability resource specialist



From left: Civil Rights Administrator, Neisha Saxena; Disability Resource Specialist, Ashley Carroll; and Civil Rights Policy Analyst, Veronica Cano, Ph.D.

Prior to the development of this unit, the County’s legal compliance obligations were met by the Affirmative Action/Equal Employment Opportunity Specialist in the Office of Diversity & Equity, and Central and departmental Human Resources, and was not as centralized, focused or aligned with other related priorities performed by Central Human Resources and/or the Complaints Investigation Unit.

In addition to the County’s legal obligations as a local government, the creation of the Civil Rights Policy Unit is a response to the Workforce Equity Strategic Plan and the Research on Equity and Accommodations for Employees with Disabilities report prepared by the Including Disability in Equity and Access (IDEA) Employee Resource Group, the Office of Diversity & Equity, and the Department of County Management’s Evaluation and Research Unit.

### ***Core Functions of the Civil Rights Policy Unit***

- Civil Rights Compliance Reporting: Legal compliance and demographic reporting, state and federal obligations under Affirmative Action, Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO), the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and Title VI (of the Civil Rights Act of 1964).
- Employee Accommodations and Disability Equity: Technical assistance for reasonable accommodations under the ADA, stakeholder engagement, disability equity, best practices and education.
- Workforce Equity Policy, Research and Analytics: In collaboration with the Evaluation and Research Unit and Central and departmental Human Resources, engaging in quantitative and qualitative analysis relating to hiring, promotions, terminations, exit interviews, workplace culture, employee satisfaction and other potential topics impacting workforce equity; data visualization.
- External Civil Rights Grievances: Facilitating informal resolution at the lowest possible level of disability, language and other access issues for County clients and members of the public under ADA Title II and Title VI.

- Special Projects in Civil Rights: Examining systemic issues arising out of external civil rights grievances or community need.

### **Workforce Equity Strategic Plan Project Manager**

(1.0 new/ongoing FTE — Office of Diversity & Equity)

The Workforce Equity Strategic Plan Project Manager is directly responsible for ensuring that all recommendations are moving forward within targeted timelines.

The rationale for placing the project manager within the Office of Diversity & Equity is that the office is ultimately responsible for Workforce Equity Strategic Plan implementation. The project manager reports directly to the Chief Diversity & Equity Officer and is responsible for:

- Developing and aligning project requirements, plans, timelines, and stakeholders across departments.
- Ensuring Countywide alignment and uniform performance standards are achieved.
- Developing project charters, timelines and deliverables of the Workforce Equity Strategic Plan subcommittees.
- Making recommendations, as needed, to develop strategies for implementing performance measures, monitoring processes and analyzing progress to impact culture change.
- Supports transparent communication pathways, allowing employees and community members to track Workforce Equity Strategic Plan’s progress and provide input.

### **Human Resources and Organizational Learning (formerly Talent Development)**

#### ***Organizational Learning Staffing***

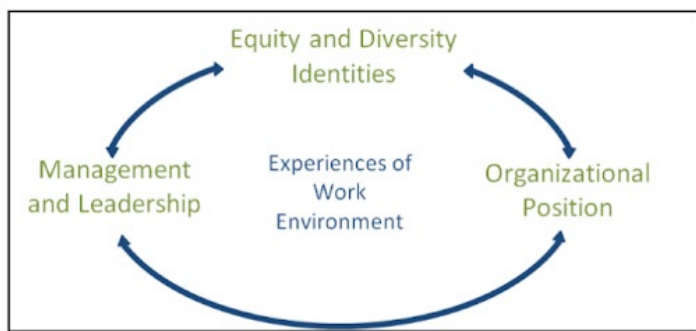
(3.0 FTE, one-time-only funding)

As identified in the [2017 Countywide Employee Survey](#), there are three aspects that have a

profound impact on employees' experiences in the workplace. Those three themes (Figure 3) are deeply interconnected and can directly impact an employee's sense of Safety, Trust and Belonging in the workplace.

The employee survey findings align with external research about the tremendous impact that a manager can have on the quality of engagement and empowerment of their direct reports. Figure 3: Identities, Position, and Leadership Impact Organizational Experience, describes the connection between our identities, our organizational position (or classification) and management and leadership as factors in how we experience our work environment.

**Figure 3:  
Identities, Position, and Leadership Impact  
Organizational Experience**



The minimum standards outlined in the Workforce Equity Strategic Plan provide actionable solutions

to address the areas identified in the Employee Survey as most negatively impacting employees' experiences in the workplace.

One such recommendation was to reorganize Talent Development and Talent Acquisition resources within Central Human Resources to best support the evolving needs of the Multnomah County workforce. Now known as Organizational Learning, the restructure of this unit included dedicating resources to creating a Leadership Development Program and increasing our organization's ability to offer more culturally responsive training.

With a workforce of nearly 6,000 employees (and approximately 600 managers), the request of additional investments within this unit was to increase its ability to respond to the priorities outlined in the Workforce Equity Strategic Plan.

In FY 2018, managers attended an average of less than four hours of management-specific training. The creation and implementation of a Leadership Development Program was highlighted as a key priority in the Workforce Equity Strategic Plan and was rated the second-highest priority in a Countywide survey on Workforce Equity implementation strategies. Components of this soon-to-be developed Leadership Development Program will align with the best practices and recommendations outlined in the Leadership Expectations and Accountability Plan.



Organizational Learning’s core purpose is to help Multnomah County thrive by advancing a workforce that is culturally and technologically adaptive, and equipped with the capabilities to meet the current and future needs of our community. While still in the early stages of this restructure (new members joined the team in fall of 2019), the unit has already led several organizational initiatives including the development of the first-ever Management Conference and the launch of a Core Competency branding and resource campaign.

Figure 4 provides a high-level overview of the core programs and services that this unit is focused on developing.

**Figure 4**



*\*Talent Acquisition capacity to be built in spring 2020*

While Organizational Learning has restructured its core focus areas, the unit is still at the beginning stages of developing several new bodies of work. Priorities for FY 2020 include:

- Beginning the development of more robust leadership development and accountability resources.
- Expanding culturally responsive learning offerings.
- Enhancing mediation and restorative practices services.
- Developing centralized resources for several of the Workforce Equity Strategic Plan minimum standards.
- Deepen the qualitative analysis of post-learning knowledge transfer and behavior change.

## Management Conference

(\$150,000 one-time-only funding)

Research (and the County’s internal data) shows that managers have a profound and lasting impact on the experience of their employees — including whether or not they stay, or advance in an organization. Internal analysis of the Countywide Employee Survey and the [Research on Accommodations for Employees with Disabilities report](#) informed the first-of-its-kind all-manager conference called *Together: Forward*.

The conference brought more than 500 managers together to set mutual expectations for manager performance and practice, build connections and provide resources for improving managers’ ability to create team cultures that promote Safety, Trust and Belonging.

The event was designed and facilitated by internal staff to model a “County-centric” approach, meaning workshop facilitators had a deep knowledge of the barriers and opportunities Multnomah County managers experience in creating equitable and racially just organizational cultures. Every workshop included tailored resources that aligned new leadership expectations with organizational values and specific policies and practices that serve to maintain and create a safe and healthy workplace for all.

A post-event evaluation found that the conference increased most attendees’ understanding of what the County expects from managers, how their role impacts organizational culture and steps they can take to foster an inclusive work culture. Attendees also said that they felt better prepared to support their team and create an inclusive work culture after the conference. Many people noted that they appreciated the opportunity to connect with other managers across the County. While feedback was generally positive, some people identified potential improvements in logistics, facilitation and overall messaging.

A portion of the survey went to all County managers, asking them about their general readiness to adapt to culture change, and their



“Together Forward: Creating Safety, Building Trust, and Fostering Belonging” conference attendees participate in a networking exercise led by Department of County Assets Director Bob Leek

perceived barriers and needed resources. The majority of respondents said they understand their responsibility to hold themselves accountable to inclusive workplace policies and are able to hold their employees accountable to these policies as well.

However, many managers also said they were unsure of how to work with employees who may be resistant to culture change, and asked for resources in this area. Other top barriers included feeling overburdened with current workloads and uncertainty on how to coach employees through the changes. Requested resources included more time for relationship-building, and help with coaching and facilitating difficult conversations.

***Competency Roll-Out***

(\$95,000 one-time-only funding)

An organization’s culture are the practices that embody people’s behaviors, attitudes, beliefs, values and norms. Prior to 2019, the County had more than 45 behavioral competencies with no clear guidance on how the competencies aligned with Multnomah County’s organizational vision, values and performance expectations.

In addition, there were limited ways in which language about workplace behavior was used to reinforce cultural norms and behaviors that advance Safety, Trust and Belonging, as well as

how members of the workforce are expected to engage with each other and the community.

A Countywide stakeholder engagement process led to the creation of 10 Core Competencies (see Appendix A). This enabled the County to create definitions for the behavioral competencies that are expected of all County employees and reinforced our organizational values. However, there were no resources dedicated to rolling out the new competencies.

This one-time-only investment helped create a suite of tools, training, resources and communications that both managers and employees can use to tie Core Competencies and organizational values to day-to-day work functions.

This was an important step in promoting the importance of being a values-based organization. The above-referenced resources are being promoted via a Competency Messaging Campaign that began in October 2019 and will last through the end of the fiscal year. These resources will also be available on Organizational Learning’s Commons page and incorporated into future curriculum.

**Equity Managers**

(2.0 new/ongoing FTE — Multnomah County Sheriff’s Office and Department of Community Services)



Equity managers provide critical expertise and support the overall infrastructure needed to advance racial equity in Multnomah County.

These leaders bring lived experience, talent, skills and vision to apply equity frameworks and practice cultural change. With commitment from departmental leadership and investments from the Board of County Commissioners over the last five years, Multnomah County now has equity managers in every department in the organization.

Equity managers wear many hats, but their primary role is to direct, manage and administer the equity and inclusion efforts of their departments. From executive coaching, to capacity building and policy change, to assessing business processes with an equity lens — equity managers hold diverse and distinct portfolios of work depending on their respective department's mission.

The Workforce Equity Strategic Plan added additional specific dimensions to the role of equity managers across the County, including convening departmental equity teams.

Equity teams are instrumental in moving departmental Workforce Equity Strategic Plan work forward, and represent a commitment to ensuring our organization advances policies and practices that support workforce equity. Equity teams function to ensure employees at every level of the organization — and particularly employees hurt most by inequitable practices and policies — have influence on approaches taken to address equity challenges. Equity managers are key conveners and facilitators in the design and execution of these teams' work.



Department of County Management Equity Manager Casey Layton (left) and the Joint Office of Homeless Services Equity Manager Joshua Bates

# What we've learned

This section describes the lessons learned from Year 1 of Workforce Equity Strategic Plan implementation.

As this organization makes progress on our performance measures, builds up new infrastructure and focuses on improving practices, opportunities to ensure quality improvement arise. In the first year of formally moving the work forward, there are a number of areas for future attention, process improvement and organizational reflection.

## Practicing intersectionality

Intersectionality is a term developed by Kimberlé Crenshaw, a professor of law at Columbia Law School and the University of California, Los Angeles to address the unique and pervasive ways that racism and misogyny affected the lives,

lived experience and opportunity of Black women in the United States.

Professor Crenshaw [describes intersectionality](#) “as a metaphor for understanding the ways that multiple forms of inequality or disadvantage sometimes compound themselves and create obstacles that are not understood within conventional ways of thinking about anti-racism or feminism.”

As Multnomah County continues to develop its equity strategies and develops a culture of Safety, Trust and Belonging, we will continue to be challenged in honoring the complexity that accompanies our increased understanding and practice of what it means to “Inclusively Lead with Race.”

Humans are wired to create simplified binaries out of complex problems. Issues are reduced to binaries like Black-White, man-woman, queer-straight, etc.

In reality, the human experience is more fluid and



complex, meaning that we experience the world based on social constructs of our race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, level of education, class and other socio-political identities. Our identities have complex and powerful implications for individual and group experiences.

This means we must resist efforts to oversimplify because the interactions and intersections of our identities shape the ways we experience power and positionality, political agency and social capital within our affinity groups, as well as outside of them.

Anyone who holds multiple, historically marginalized identities will experience compounded oppression. For example, a Black, cisgender, heterosexual woman who is college-educated and was born in the United States will have more access to power than a Black, transgender, heterosexual woman who is not college-educated and was born outside of the United States. Similarly, a White, gay, cisgender man will have more access to power and positionality than a White, gay, non-binary person.

Practicing intersectionality in how we think and act informs how we create equitable structures and policy. To practice intersectionality well, we are all required to intimately understand the ways that our identities compound our experience, both positively and negatively.

Decades of international research shows that when we focus resources and interventions on improving experiences and outcomes for people with multiple intersecting identities — the most marginalized — it improves experiences and outcomes for everyone.

### **Conflict resolution, restorative justice and healing spaces**

Recent workforce equity investments have increased organization-wide capacity to strengthen policy, standardize practice, build manager skills and abilities and independently investigate protected class complaints. Many of these resources are centralized under Organizational Learning to engage departmental

stakeholders in developing learning models and address needs defined in the Workforce Equity Strategic Plan.

While these investments are critical to filling known gaps, creating a culture of Safety, Trust and Belonging requires that our organization have the ability to respond to harm with both official policy and procedure, as well as relational and adaptive responses that encourage healing, repair, accountability and shared lessons so that harm is not repeated. As Multnomah County increases the expectation that employees name and address racism and other forms of oppression, we must also increase our collective ability to accountably address their impact.

Organizational Learning — in partnership with the Office of Diversity & Equity, the Complaints Investigation Unit and equity managers — is engaging in an intentional and strategic process to understand current restorative and relational conflict resolution practices departments are using. This will allow Organizational Learning to build on existing conflict resolution models to support consistent and equitable application of restorative and relational practices that advance trauma-informed and equitable workplace culture.

What we do know is that conflict resolution and restorative justice are not competencies that Multnomah County historically sought in its managers and supervisors, and while this is changing, many managers and supervisors are underprepared and have insufficient resources to address racialized harm and identity-based microaggressions in real-time. This lack of capacity often results in a missed opportunity to address and prevent further harm, minimize the risk of conflict escalation and appropriately shift team dynamics to increase trust, collectively engage in healthy conflict and address impact.

In the gap between what represented employees need and exempt employee's skill and capacity, equity managers are often tasked with addressing the ripple effect of hurt and harm, including assisting teams with integrating and responding to complaint investigation findings and recommendations, which limits their ability to

enact transformational change to prevent hurt and harm before it occurs.

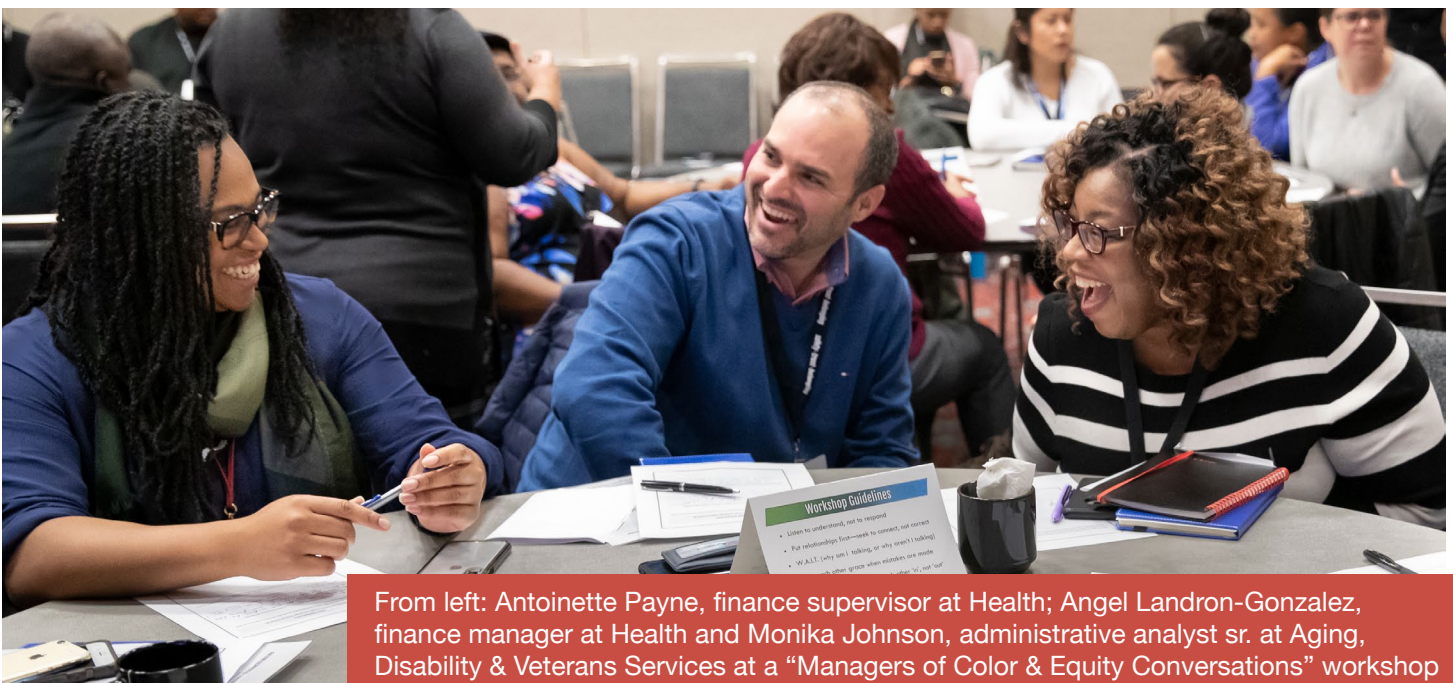
Conflict resolution and restorative justice are also critical to the function and health of departmental equity committees. The Workforce Equity Strategic Plan created an organizational imperative to democratize workforce equity strategy development through the mandate to create equity teams. As employees are tapped as volunteers in these cross-departmental teams, it also means that differences in readiness, perspectives, knowledge, skills and abilities can be amplified. Without intensive support in conflict resolution and restorative processes, team members can be left reeling from the effect of difficult conversations and their impact. This is a normal and expected component of organizational change, and we can do more to ensure staff are supported in navigating the complexity of co-creating across differences.

Similarly, as Multnomah County progresses toward a culture of Safety, Trust and Belonging, there is an increased recognition of the need for healing spaces — facilitated spaces of sanctuary and respite that allow individuals and groups to access professionals and peers trained in healing modalities such as art therapy, meditation and grief counseling.

Healing spaces differ from meetings, restorative justice circles and conflict resolution in that they are a practice and cultural shift more than a service. Healing spaces may be facilitated, but there is no desired outcome other than an individual or affinity group having an opportunity to reflect, restore and recalibrate mind and body after experiencing trauma, retraumatization and other forms of harm.

Employees who experience trauma on work time — whether as a result of peer-to-peer interaction, client-to-staff interaction or as a result of societal and community identify-based harms — often need to access healing spaces as part of their workday, too. Yet, creating and hosting healing spaces is more than any non-departmental office or department can hold alone. Access to, and resourcing of, healing spaces will require an organization-wide commitment to ensure coordinated and equitable access to this trauma-informed practice.

Questions about how to best host a healing space, how the organization resources staff time, how healing spaces are initiated and by whom, and under what circumstances they are initiated need to be answered holistically and in partnership with departments, Employee Resource Groups and central non-departmental units.



From left: Antoinette Payne, finance supervisor at Health; Angel Landron-Gonzalez, finance manager at Health and Monika Johnson, administrative analyst sr. at Aging, Disability & Veterans Services at a “Managers of Color & Equity Conversations” workshop

As we enter Year 2 of workforce equity implementation, it will be vital that we thoughtfully consider how to address these important organizational needs. Conflict resolution, restorative justice and healing spaces are part of how we shift cultural norms. While training, performance reviews, formal disciplinary processes and anti-harassment and anti-discrimination policies are essential, they are not sufficient to help employees reconcile the many truths, diverse experiences, spectrum of readiness and skill that they are navigating in this work.

We need to ensure that we care for the hearts and spirits of our staff, even as they take risks, fail, make mistakes and unintentionally cause harm in the very human process of learning.

### Adjusting process and timelines

During the first year of Workforce Equity Strategic Plan implementation, one of the most significant challenges we've faced so far is finding the balance between meeting deadlines to ensure accountability, and developing processes that allow us to create and practice new approaches to organizational progress.

As we continue to deploy resources and work to identify more opportunities for employees to provide input, we will continue to navigate the balance between product and process. Some of the key questions include:

- How do we create authentic engagement for employees belonging to the various workforce equity committees members as we strive to meet strategic plan deadlines?
- How do we ensure there is sufficient time, trust, and relationship-building among the staff volunteering to champion this work?
- As we build on the expectation that all County employees are responsible for advancing equity and inclusion in our organization, how do we make sure there is enough time in workgroups and committees to build capacity among those employees who are learning a new skill set or operating far outside their day-to-day role?

- What are the conditions in which power-sharing between committee members, workgroups and leadership feels credible, and input and decision-making processes are viewed as legitimate by staff volunteering to serve on committees?

*How we develop project plans, form subcommittees and engage stakeholders to advance workforce equity (process) is as important as what we do (product).*

It's no surprise that our organizational culture — like most institutions in this society— tends to value product over process, which is why we must remain steadfast in meeting our objectives and timelines, **and** flexible enough to ensure a high-quality process is developed.

This will require us to be both linear and iterative in our approaches, recognizing that everything our organization does — from hiring, to forming work teams, to rolling out policy and practice change — is an opportunity to investigate how our processes and products contribute to transformational culture change and increase Safety, Trust and Belonging. To ensure consistency and alignment of policy and practice across our departments, adjustments to implementation timelines may be necessary.

Each of the committees and workgroups described in this report found that developing a foundation of trust and transparency was critical to move the work forward. Every time a committee met, relationship-building and team connections were built into the time spent together. This created a more collaborative and trusting space but also meant that it took longer to come to shared agreements. As critical components to improving the overall quality and sustained implementation of recommendations, trust- and relationship-building must drive overall timelines.

To honor the complexity of the work and the people involved, all committees and workgroups made the difficult decision to pause meetings or slow the process at various intervals. A pause to evaluate the process was needed to gain deeper stakeholder buy-in and allow more time for other



Disability Resource Specialist and IDEA Employee Resource Group Co-Chair Ashley Carroll helps lead a workshop at the Department of County Human Services' "Leading with Race" conference.

components of the Workforce Equity Strategic Plan, including more coordinated infrastructure, to take shape.

Additionally, committees and workgroups have found that the intensity of the work, the emotional toll and learning involved, also required pause for personal or collective reflection, healing and restorative process, or more time for relationship- and trust-building.

In sum, traditional project management processes, with its emphasis on developing and producing timely products, will need to be amended in order to make this important work successful.

**Evaluation**

The Workforce Equity Strategic Plan includes over 27 unique evaluation categories and metrics. Building a comprehensive and aligned evaluation strategy is one of our more significant challenges — it requires coordination of multiple stakeholders, analyst capacity, data systems, and departments — and we first need to build systems to support this coordination.

Our first priority in evaluating the Workforce Equity Strategic Plan is simply to document our “outputs,” or the completion of specific projects, policies and actions across the organization. These outputs answer the question “Did we do what we said we would do by the date we said we would do it?” The good news is: in Year 1, we absolutely did.

Measuring the effect of those outputs on employee experience and cultural change, however, is a long-term, multi-year, resource-intensive effort that will require us to build a sophisticated evaluation plan and infrastructure to support that plan. We will need to be strategic about exploring effective and meaningful evaluative measures to help us understand the effects of specific investments and new practice shifts on organizational change. This will take time.

We have existing evaluation methods, such as the Countywide Employee Survey, to help us tell part of the story. The Countywide Employee Survey collects and assesses short-term shifts in staff experience. Because we have multiple years of data, we can see trends in employee experience that are happening year to year.

This data is incredibly important and is only one way to understand whether and how employee experience is shifting. The Countywide survey also helps us identify where we need deeper investigation or additional research. However, survey data alone cannot help us know whether and how our workforce equity strategies are changing culture and experience. For this reason, the Countywide Employee Survey needs to be one piece of a larger and coordinated evaluation effort.

**Quality improvement**

The County has a long-standing commitment to quality improvement, most commonly understood as Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) cycles — rapid or

short-term pilot projects where teams plan, do and study the effect of the pilot, and act on those lessons to improve future processes.

Every day County employees, teams and programs make innovative and informed adaptations to processes that get us closer to a culture of Safety, Trust and Belonging. Programs that work at the intersection of policy and community engagement have incredible expertise on trauma-informed and anti-racist facilitation and engagement practices.

Yet, our organization as a whole struggles to bring employee- and community-led innovation to scale — meaning it's difficult for our organization to take lessons from a small, controlled pilot and adapt those strategies on an organization-wide scale.

As we build infrastructure for Workforce Equity Strategic Plan implementation, we also need to create methods to share and scale real-time innovation. Our organization also needs to build our collective muscle for Plan-Do-Study-Act cycles and rapid process improvement, so that we can test ideas and learn from them, in real-time. This will help us improve the pace of implementation without losing our ability to

develop trauma-informed, anti-racist processes, or stalling our overall progress.

## Building systems and infrastructure

The Workforce Equity Strategic Plan is an organizational change effort that requires all departments and non-departmental units to simultaneously advance organizational learning on best-process and practice, while also responding to specific Workforce Equity Strategic Plan performance measures and centralized standards. To do this well, we also need to build systems that process, monitor, track and evaluate our impact and proactively communicate expectations and successes.

In an organization as large and diverse as Multnomah County, we will continually be challenged to meet the spectrum of learning needs of our employees. This includes tailoring training for those who are early in their learning journey, as well as those who are advanced and have unique lived-experience and identities to draw from. How we attend to the complexity of needs, experiences and readiness of our workforce is an important component to building



Multnomah Idea Lab Director Mary Li leads a workshop at the Department of County Human Services' "Leading with Race" conference.

infrastructure that will help us meet our Workforce Equity Strategic Plan goals.

One of the biggest lessons of Year 1 is how we sequence the launch of Workforce Equity Strategic Plan work in relation to the development of the systems to support the work. This hasn't worked perfectly — there are some examples of where content or expectations launched before we had methods to support implementation. With a change process this massive and resource-intensive, we are continually learning how to better sequence Workforce Equity Strategic Plan work in the future.

A significant part of our newly forming infrastructure is the engagement of employees at all levels of the organization in informing Workforce Equity Strategic Plan implementation at the departmental level and providing oversight. Departments are piloting and developing unique structures to support Workforce Equity Strategic Plan performance measures in a manner that fits the needs of their respective employees and departments.

As departments created equity teams, how teams defined outcomes shifted as the engagement process evolved.

Meeting the minimum standards is critical, and successfully attending to the complexity of collaboration, diversity of employee perspective and shifting operations to support increased employee participation (both in numbers and time commitment) also factored into outcomes.

The Workforce Equity Strategic Plan Committee is another example of infrastructure Multnomah County is building in real-time to amplify employee engagement. It has required ongoing learning, trial and error, and critical and honest feedback to continually improve process and practice. Process and policy teams, like the Inclusively Leading with Race workgroup, used a human-centered design approach that showcased that both the product and the process have important impacts on those that contribute and participate in the work, and offers opportunities for building more equitable and affirming practices into all of our work.

All of these committees require structural support for project management, facilitation, consistent engagement and tracking meeting outcomes and the teams' influence on organizational change, culture and accountability.

As an organization, we are on a steep learning curve of how to hold our many responsibilities and emerging needs while also building systems to support the change and engagement employees want, and deserve.

Finally, the Workforce Equity Strategic Plan is merely one piece of an ongoing, long-term commitment to investing in workforce equity and organizational culture transformation. Change is relentless and steeped in setbacks and steps forward. Transforming Multnomah County's culture to an environment where every employee brings their whole self and identity to work will take years. Many of us will not experience the effect of our collective efforts; we are doing this work today in the service of tomorrow's workforce.



## Looking ahead

This section describes what is next for Workforce Equity Strategic Plan implementation.

Multnomah County can take pride in the implementation progress documented in this report, and as we look forward to the performance measures for 2020, we have the opportunity to apply the lessons learned to ensure that the County continues to develop processes for meaningful engagement and oversight.

A primary goal in Year 2 of workforce equity implementation is developing strong and agile centralized systems to support consistent practice Countywide, as disparate application of policies negatively impacted employees' experiences, particularly Black, Indigenous, Employees of Color. Standardizing practices and expectations to prevent biased application of policies was a significant driver in the creation of the Workforce Equity Strategic Plan.

Centralized development of performance measures and minimum standards will ensure all managers are receiving the same information, expectations and resources regardless of what department they work in, with the aim of ensuring managers are fulfilling key roles and responsibilities with fidelity, and constantly applying legal, ethical and equity frameworks to employee engagement and workforce development.

Departments are encouraged to go “above and beyond” workforce equity minimum standards and there needs to be a minimum threshold for learning, performance, application and fidelity to County policy. By using centralized capacity and staffing to advance key 2020 minimum standards, our aim is to support departments in focusing on transformative change.

While the County develops a strong foundation centrally, it's important to acknowledge that improving practice is a collective responsibility, and we are all responsible for how well we apply shared learning to workforce equity as we advance the following 2020 Workforce Equity Performance Measures outlined in Figure 5.



Multnomah County Chief Diversity & Equity Officer Ben Duncan

**Figure 5****Workforce Equity 2020 Performance Measures, Central Human Resources Commitments and Deadlines**

<b>Focus Area</b>	<b>Performance Measure</b>	<b>Central Commitment</b>	<b>Deadline</b>
1.Organizational Culture	Departmental HR conduct quarterly stay interviews that reach 1% of staff annually	Central Human Resources – Organizational Learning commits to providing departments guiding criteria and best practices for implementation and tracking	July 1, 2020
2. Promotion and Professional Development	Performance Reviews are tracked at all levels with 100% of eligible employees receiving reviews on time	Central Human Resources – Provides Workday as a system for performance review and tracking; Organizational Learning provides tools to support departmental implementation	July 1, 2020
2. Promotion and Professional Development	All managers are receiving professional feedback from supervised staff	Central Human Resources – Organizational Learning provides tools as resources on 360° reviews	July 1, 2020
2. Promotion and Professional Development	Departments have an orientation process for new managers that includes information on organizational resources for managing performance, coaching, being a supportive manager, and preventative/disciplinary action expectations and processes	Central Human Resources – Organizational Learning to develop an orientation program for newly hired managers	July 1, 2020
2. Promotion and Professional Development	Interview panels are intentionally representative of the workforce and community and all departments have a list of employees with professional skill sets and/or are trained to serve on interview panels at all levels of the organization	Central Human Resources – Organizational Learning to develop an excellence in search and selection training and build reporting tools in Workday to track panel representation	July 1, 2020

Figure 5 continued on page 51.

**Figure 5 (continued)**

**Workforce Equity 2020 Performance Measures, Central Human Resources  
Commitments and Deadlines**

<b>Focus Area</b>	<b>Performance Measure</b>	<b>Central Commitment</b>	<b>Deadline</b>
2. Promotion and Professional Development	All management level hiring processes include questions around cultural responsiveness	Central Human Resources – Organizational Learning to provide a resources database of questions for the assessment of a candidate’s experience working with diverse employees and communities	July 1, 2020
3. Retention	All new employees are assigned a peer or support mentor to assist with orientation and onboarding	Central Human Resources – Organizational Learning provides guiding criteria and best practices for departmental implementation of mentors for new employees	July 1, 2020

# Workforce Equity Strategic Plan Committee members past and present

Mohammed Bader	Akilah Powell
Kim Peoples	Isreal Fin
Cessa Diaz	Katie Sawicki
Ebony Clarke	Zeenia Junkeer
Kim Garcia	Hannah Hollaway
Erika Pruitt	Micaela Shapiro Shellaby
Patty Blanchard	Dion Jordan
Patricia Rojas	Hun Taing
Jamila Williams	Kory Murphy
Travis Graves	Casey Layton
Percy Winters Jr.	Andrea Archuleta
Raymond DeSilva	Jamie Waltz
Leticia Sainz	Sonja Ervin
Irma Jiminez	Rebecca Stavenjord
Jill Jessee	Hayden Miller
Angel Harp	Katie Shriver
Steve Joiner	Kim Melton
Veronica Lopez Ericksen	Sara Ryan
Aron Goffin	Katherin Flower
Victoria Cross	Jacob Farkas
Jade Dodge	Holly Calhoun
Larry Turner	Mike Jaspin
Deandre Kenyanjui	Steve Herron

# Appendix

## Appendix A:

### Multnomah County's 10 Core Competencies

A competency is a behavioral description of what we value as an organization and of how we do things here. The 10 Core Competencies reinforce our organizational values of Safety, Trust and Belonging. A Competency Model also provides a common backbone for recruiting, planning development, and training.

They are not technical skills specific to a role or department. Instead, living the Core Competencies is an expectation of every County employee, regardless of role or department. Living the behaviors associated with each competency contributes to enhanced employee performance, and ultimately results in organizational success.



#### Building Relationships

Creates mutually beneficial relationships with coworkers, customers, community members, and/or clients based on understanding and respect. Is mindful of the feelings and expectations of others and uses tact and self-awareness to navigate conflict effectively and to foster social harmony.



#### Racially Just

Committed to specific actions aimed at promoting respect for racial differences and interrupting prejudice and implicit bias. Whenever possible acts as a champion and ally in racial justice work and strives to mitigate the impacts of white privilege in the workplace and the community. Is sensitive to subtle expressions of bias and discrimination (microaggressions) and interrupts them. Educates others when discrimination and bias are recognized.



#### Promoting Equity

Sustains policies and practices that advance equity. Deconstructs barriers to equity. Creates effective, responsive strategies to promote safety, belonging, and trust, both within the workforce and within communities. Cultivates work environments that value truth-telling, courage and vulnerability, space to think and reflect, community-mindedness, shared power, hope, and openness to difficult conversations.



#### Acting with Integrity

Acts in a manner that is consistently truthful, reliable, trustworthy and transparent in words and actions. Shows high regard for Multnomah County's Code of Ethics and the values that inform government service. Actively seeks consultation when resolving ethical dilemmas. Speaks candidly and honestly about complex ethical issues and makes tough decisions based on the best interests of the County and its community members.



#### Outcomes Oriented

Strives to fulfill commitments and responsibilities and holds self accountable for successful outcomes. Describes specific, measurable outcomes that indicate success and negotiates realistic time frames to complete work, projects, initiatives, and/or strategies. Keeps others informed and pro-actively negotiates timelines or outcomes if circumstances change.



#### Leadership

Demonstrates understanding of the culture, political nature and interpersonal relationships that drive success at the County. Leads by example and moves work forward through personal actions and collaboration. Provides meaningful feedback regarding the nature, design and intended outcomes of work in relation to the needs and demands of the County and the communities it serves. Shows respect and appreciation for others' contributions and offers

help willingly. Shows resilience, can bounce back from stressful challenges, and uses constructive outlets for tension and frustrations.



### **Communication**

Clearly and effectively shares information and encourages conversation with and information flow to employees, partners and community members. Provides timely information necessary for others to make informed decisions and to avoid surprises.



### **Creativity and Innovation**

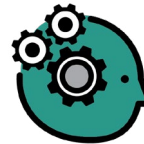
Seeks, advocates for, and implements improved methods, systems, and approaches to meet changing organizational needs.

Encourages a work environment of imagination, critical thinking, and innovation. Encourages new ideas and bold thinking and demonstrates a willingness to learn from mistakes. Understands industry best practices and champions efforts to continuously update and expand knowledge. Whenever possible, listens to and incorporates the voices and perspectives of service users and community members.



### **Navigating Change**

Adopts new competencies and techniques as needed to respond to a complex, uncertain, and sometimes volatile environment. Accepts change as an inevitable part of work and adapts plans as needed. Demonstrates self-awareness and emotional self-regulation under pressure and readily offers support and encouragement to others. Tolerates ambiguity and stress, takes appropriate care of self, and asks for help when needed.



### **Learning Agility**

Consistently shows an awareness of changing workplace trends and the ability and desire to adapt skills and knowledge, and encourages others to do the same, in order to stay current. Identifies issues and educates self and others regarding paths to problem resolution. Actively seeks additional knowledge for self or others in order to understand and obtain relevant information, and improve work outcomes.

## Appendix B:

Below are resources teams and departments can use to employ Equity and Human-Centered Collaborative Design. Thank you to Mary Li of the Multnomah Idea Lab in the Department of County Human Resources for compiling this list of resources.

**Creative Reaction Lab** <http://www.creativereactionlab.com/> has a model called Equity-Centered Community Design. They have a field guide that can be accessed on their site, and produce intensive training experiences around the country.

**OpenIdeo** <https://www.openideo.com/> regularly offers an on-line course on Intro to Human-Centered Design. It's a great beginning to collaborative design thinking and tools, and lacks any significant racial justice analysis.

**Stanford d.School** has developed a model they call Liberatory Design [https://dschool.stanford.edu/resources-collections/liberatory-design\\_](https://dschool.stanford.edu/resources-collections/liberatory-design_). Not as strong as the Creative Reaction Lab's work, and there's still some useful information here.

**\*Some material referenced in this report is on an internal Multnomah County website. For access to this material, please send a request to [communications@multco.us](mailto:communications@multco.us).**

