



SONOMA COUNTY  
FIVE-YEAR  
STRATEGIC PLAN  
**2021–2026**



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## Racial Equity & Social Justice

Downloadable status update of all RESJ objectives

1/26/23

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COUNTY OF  
**SONOMA**

## **Racial Equity & Social Justice**

Report Created On: Jan 26, 2023

**Pillar 4**

Racial Equity and Social Justice

**Goal 4.1**

Foster a County organizational culture that supports the commitment to achieving racial equity.

**Objective 4.1.1**

**RESJ1-1** - Establish an Equity Core Team by mid-2021 to advance equity initiatives across all departments in collaboration with the Office of Equity.

## Summary of Objective Implementation Status

With 3 FTE employees at the time of its establishment, the Office of Equity (OoE) relied on the Government Alliance on Race and Equity's (GARE) guidance to expand its operational capacity by launching the creation of a Core Team. As part of the selection process for the Core Team, the OoE conducted interviews with each applicant to better understand their role in advancing Racial Equity in their department, as well as supports needed from the newly-created OoE to continue this work. The OoE established the Sonoma County Equity Core Team in late Spring of 2021, with 76 members representing 25 County Departments. The Core Team learning community became the basis to expand the Office's capacity to begin its work in alignment with the Racial Equity and Social Justice pillar of the County's 5-year Strategic Plan .

The Office of Equity does not currently have funding or staff to continue to provide facilitated Affinity Spaces, to bring facilitation support to regularly convene the full Core Team in multiracial space, and to support the administrative work associated with coordinating and scheduling work for the group of 57 Core Team members.

## Key Milestone Update

Over the last 15 months of work (July 2021 - October 2022), Core Team members have reported more than 3,110 hours of training together. Unfortunately, while the Office has seen most Core Team members thrive and get more comfortable with their skills having and leading conversations about race, the Core Team has also lost 19 members. Some of the most common reasons for attrition in the Core Team include lack of capacity for participation, leaving the County for other employment, and retirement. Currently, the Core Team is made of 57 participants representing 15 County departments and agencies:

- Auditor-Controller-Treasurer- Tax Collector
- Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District
- Agriculture/Weights & Measures
- Board of Supervisors - District 3
- County Administrator's Office
- Child Support Services
- Community Development Commission
- Clerk-Recorder-Assessor-Registrar of Voters
- Emergency Management
- Health Services (DHS)
- Human Resources
- Human Services (HSD)
- Office of Equity
- Probation
- Sonoma County Regional Parks
- Sonoma Water

## Core Team Steering Committee and Racial Equity Action Plan

As the Office launched this phase of its work, staff recognized the need for a smaller guiding body of trained Core Team members to develop and coordinate the work of the Core Team in the form of a Steering Committee. The Core Team Steering Committee will act as a group of strategic leaders that will support relevant work such as the implementation of several goals and objectives of the Racial Equity and Social Justice (RESJ) Pillar of the County's Strategic Plan through the creation of a Racial Equity Action Plan (REAP). According to the Government Alliance on Race and

Equity (GARE), “Racial Equity Action Plans can lay out the approach to operationalizing” jurisdictions’ commitments toward racial equity. In this case, the REAP will create a roadmap to achieving “meaningful and measurable results” articulated in the RESJ pillar of the County’s Strategic Plan and will include other strategies identified by Steering Committee members.

The creation of a REAP, with the leadership of the Core Team Steering Committee and the support and involvement of all County departments, is critical to ensuring that the responsibilities to embed racial equity across our government process and actions is clearly articulated so as to ensure those responsibilities are shared across all departments to positively impact communities of color across County service provision and employment opportunities.

On February 1, 2022, the OOE received \$240,000 in Strategic Plan funding over 3 years for this effort and entered into an agreement with Equity First Consulting, LLC on June 13, 2022 to support the work needed to advance equity initiatives across all departments through the creation of a REAP.

Since then, the consultant has supported the OOE in designing a process to select Core Team Steering Committee members, who will be leading the creation of the Racial Equity Action Plan. Through an anti-racist approach, participants submitted applications sharing information about the level of support they receive in their department, the different skills and lived experiences relevant to this leadership role, learning experiences in the changing roles they have had as equity champions, as well as ideas to effectively embed racial equity across County service provision. The OOE relied on an Advisory Committee made up of Core Team members to provide recommendations as to the best configuration for this leadership group as they were making the selection. Ultimately, 13 members were selected for the Steering Committee presented below in alphabetical order:

- Anna Yip - County Administrator’s Office
- Audrianna Jones - Community Development Commission
- Christel Querijero - County Administrator’s Office
- Denia Candela - Department of Health Services
- Josephine McKay - Human Services Department
- Lauren Reed - Department of Health Services
- Leslie Lew - Ag and Open Space
- Michelle Revecho - Human Services Department
- Nora Mallonee-Brand - Department of Health Services
- Oscar Chavez - Human Services Department
- Ryan Pedrotti - Sonoma Water
- Shawntel Reece - Human Services Department
- Victoria Willard - Human Resources

Steering Committee members represent the Office of Equity, and demonstrate the curiosity, humility, and focus on healing necessary to successfully operationalize equity principles at the County. Steering Committee members will have a demonstrated commitment to and investment in equity work, the capacity to dedicate time to the work, and the ability to connect their role in the Steering Committee to the responsibilities of their day-to-day work in their departments.

The group will take part in hands-on professional development and leadership training opportunities where they will continue to learn, practice, and contribute to building an authentic community that is centered on anti-racism. Steering Committee members will serve for a minimum of 12 months, and can expect to spend 4 hours per week on work related to racial equity for the Core Team or Steering Committee. These leaders, supported by Equity First Consulting, will take the first steps towards the creation of the Racial Equity Action Plan, beginning in January 2023.

### **Coordination and Partnership Update**

This objective is grounded in collaboration and partnership across departments. It has a few intersections with Organizational Excellence and Healthy & Safe Communities. Collaboration could be facilitated through OoE/Core Team member engagement with those departments, department heads, and pillar leads through monthly meetings and the creation and utilization of an equity tool for introduction and use at the end of the training program (Summer 2023); however, currently the Office of Equity has no capacity to support this additional collaboration, as multiple

requests for staff have not been fulfilled. The Office has requested two Program, Planning, and Evaluation Analysts to support this and other partnerships with the Human Services Department's Upstream Investments, the Department of Health Services, and Health Action Together. The OoE currently has no capacity to coordinate work outside of the County or to engage in any external community engagement outside of the ARPA allocation process. With the ARPA-funded Community Engagement Plan, the OoE will bring both fiscal and substantive recommendations to the Board to support and strengthen County community engagement efforts.

### **Community, Equity, and Climate Update**

The expectations of Core Team members include deepening connections between their work and the communities they serve. In that way, Core Team members will be bringing the perspectives of the communities they serve into their daily work.

The Core Team was initially organized into racial affinity groups to facilitate Core Team members to be able to engage in the creation and maintenance of safe and brave spaces to support equity work; however, requests for support to continue facilitating and supporting racial affinity groups have not been fulfilled. The OoE is currently without resources to facilitate or support the full Core Team or its racial affinity groups.

The Core Team was designed to ensure that the full value of BIPOC staff and leadership is brought to the work of public service at the County of Sonoma. The Core Team was designed to disrupt traditional hierarchies; to acknowledge and celebrate the value of lived experience in our professional work; and to unlock this skillset for daily use in public service to transform and strengthen the sense of belonging of BIPOC staff and leadership and the communities we serve.

### **Funding Narrative**

The Office of Equity is funded completely by the General Fund.

Office of Equity staff salaries are fully funded within its approved budget, and the creation of the Core Team has not yet required additional funding. However, the creation of the Core Team was controversial and difficult. Many departments did not have unrestricted resources to support their staff's participation, and interested staff were not authorized to participate in Core Team membership. Ideally, equity work is embedded in everyone's job as a public servant in the County of Sonoma. Practically, many departments require additional resources to begin this work. For example, creating and funding dedicated equity analysts to serve each department would assist each department to have the support and resources inside of their departments while maintaining a central, coordinated hub.

Currently the Office of Equity has no capacity to seek external funds. We would need a grant writer to allow us to seek external funding to leverage County funds. (The State of California has funding for health equity work but almost no other places do.)

On February 1, 2022, the OOE received \$240,000 in Strategic Plan funding over 3 years for the Core Team Steering Committee and Racial Equity Plan (REAP) effort and entered into an agreement with Equity First Consulting, LLC on June 13, 2022 to support the work needed to advance equity initiatives across all departments through the creation of a REAP.

**Objective 4.1.2**

**RESJ1-2** - Invest in an ongoing and continually developing racial equity learning program, including understanding the distinction between institutional, structural, interpersonal, and individual racism, for County leadership and staff by end of 2021.

## Key Milestone Update

In initial Core Team interviews, many applicants mentioned needing and wanting equity training for themselves and for County leadership, and, thus, elevated the critical need for the Office of Equity to offer Racial Equity training within the organization. In alignment with GARE's Strategic Approach to Institutional Change, which identifies normalizing conversations about race equity and developing shared understanding of those concepts through foundational training as a requisite first step towards achieving equity, the Office of Equity entered into a contract with Equity and Results, LLC in June 2021, employing the consultant's support to launch a Racial Equity Learning Program for Core Team members.

The Racial Equity Learning Program, which has been first of its kind in the County organization, included the creation of affinity and learning spaces, as well as trainings for members of the Core Team to develop technical expertise in Anti-Racist Results-Based Accountability (AR RBA) and to develop facilitation expertise in conversations about race equity. The work began with the creation of a learning and healing community of Core Team members.

In designing for the Office of Equity's first training offerings, the Office centered the experiences of Black, Indigenous and people of color) BIPOC staff in the County and recognized the need for supported and safe spaces that could facilitate healing and community building. Organizing early race equity efforts in affinity groups is a widely used tool to support safety and community building. As stated in the Learning Program Assessment currently being finalized by our learning consultants, "Racial affinity work helps participants understand that the roles and responsibilities of BIPOC and White people are different in advancing racial equity, and mitigates predictable patterns of harm in racial equity learning spaces where learning for White participants often happens at the expense of BIPOC participants." Based on the advice of our training consultants' experience in other jurisdictions nationwide, the Office of Equity chose to offer the County's first Phase of its Learning Program in three Affinity Groups: Black, Non-Black People of Color, and White.

Beginning the Fall of 2021, facilitated Race Affinity Groups created spaces in which participants were able to listen, support, and build trust around each other, grounded in their shared experiences as employees of the County of Sonoma. While in Affinity, Core Team members also received Racial Equity foundational training and developed a common language and shared understanding of key equity concepts, an ability to identify and overcome predictable barriers in racial equity work, and an understanding of their shared responsibility to disrupt racial inequities as public servants. The Affinity and Foundational learning spaces, part of the first phase of learning, concluded after 12 weeks of work. The three Affinity groups came together in one final multiracial meeting before the start of the 2021 holiday season, where the Office of Equity presented options to further application of equity principles and concepts.

The feedback received at the end of the Affinity and Foundational training helped the Office of Equity understand the deep impact and critical need for facilitated affinity spaces for healing and continued learning. When asked about the most impactful part of this experience across all three Affinity Groups, the most common theme was having the ability to connect and discuss with others in similar learning or healing paths. The Office of Equity consistently surveys participants after training, and survey data demonstrates that the organization is experiencing positive impacts from these early efforts. Of the responses received, 74% of participants "agreed" or "strongly agreed" that their learning in the affinity sessions was applicable to their day-to-day work, and 70% of participants "agreed" or "strongly agreed" that they acquired skills and built relationships that helped them discuss and implement Racial Equity principles relevant to their work. There is still space for improvement and refinement of training content and manner of delivery, and the Core Team members will be continuing to work on developing a Race Equity 101 foundational training for all County staff as a result of their work and learning, currently expected to be completed by May, 2023.

Following the end of the Foundation Series, the OOE launched a series of different professional development offerings for Core Team members: an intensive facilitators training – "Train the Trainer" – and an Equity-Centered Results Based Accountability training series.

### Train the Trainer Sessions

This three-day intensive learning experience took place in June 2022 and was designed to expand Core Team members' toolbox of facilitative moves and to build greater muscle and practice to navigate and lead race conversations in groups.

A total of 20 Core Team members representing 9 departments participated in this training. Participating Departments include: Agriculture/Weights & Measures, Board of Supervisors (District 3), County Administrator's Office, Community Development Commission, Health Services, Human Services, Permit Sonoma, Sonoma Water, and the Office of Equity.

A common theme that arose in the feedback received included the importance of continuing to build a community of equity champions and the importance of developing hard skills to further equity in the County. Survey results of that training experience include that 88% of participants responding to the survey found the tools and methods shared during the training "applicable" or "very applicable" to their jobs, and 100% of participants responding to the survey reported being "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with the training.

After having received this training, trained Core Team facilitators participated in the creation and delivery of a Racial Equity Training for County Department Heads in October 2022. 19 Department Heads attended the day long training in which newly-trained facilitators showcased their skills and continued to expand their comfort in leading conversations and teaching concepts about race. 87.5% of Department Heads responding to our post-training survey found the content of the training “very relevant,” and 75% reported being “very” (5 -max score) satisfied with the overall training. County Core Team facilitators will continue to work together to deliver training to participating departments and key stakeholders as part of the creation of a County Racial Equity Action Plan (REAP), as well as to support implementation of equity tools through department-level training, training on conducting race equity impact analysis for program and policy Board recommendations, and supporting departments to identify other opportunities for equity work, to the extent feasible and allowed by their Departments.

The Affinity, Foundational, and Train the Trainer parts of the Racial Equity Learning Program were supported by the Office of Equity’s training consultants, Just Process, who have experience delivering race equity training in many jurisdictions nationwide. Just Process is currently finalizing its assessment of its time in Sonoma County and will provide an in-depth assessment of Sonoma County’s current stage in its equity journey with recommendations to continue this work in a positive and productive direction. As of FY 22-23, there is no ongoing funding to continue to provide facilitated spaces to support training development or coaching; however, the Office has again submitted requests for Strategic Plan funding (to be decided in the Spring of 2023).

#### Anti-Racist Results-based Accountability

Early in its visioning process, the Office of Equity identified an opportunity to both support and leverage the excellent work of Upstream Investments’ Results-Based Accountability work (<https://upstreaminvestments.org/>) by injecting a critical focus on race equity into these results driven methodology. By bridging the gap between a commitment to racial equity and the day-to-day work through this data-rich and rigorous seven step process, the County is able to move from intention to transformation and to achieve equitable outcomes. By focusing on addressing whether outcomes have improved for communities of color, this methodology begins by teaching participants to analyze the real impacts and harm of systemic racism on communities of color, and then backs into solutions that strategically address the roots of the inequities of most consequence. This iterative methodology requires people to ask whether Black, Indigenous and communities of color are better off in response to those solutions.

Following the close of the Foundational training, 31 Core Team members representing 12 Departments chose to participate in training and implementation of Anti-Racist Results-Based Accountability. Participating departments/agencies include: Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District, Board of Supervisors (District 3), County Administrator’s Office, Community Development Commission, Child Support Services, Emergency Management, Department of Health Services, Human Resources, Human Services, Probation, Sonoma Water, and the Office of Equity. This learning space is supported and facilitated by our lead consultant, Equity & Results. The consultant has worked with Core Team participants by helping to identify the roots of inequities pertaining to their departments and areas of expertise and to visualize strategic solutions to those inequities as critical pieces of a Countywide effort to establish accountability for the policies and programs that continue to perpetuate inequities among local communities of color.

This piece of the Racial Equity Learning Program is funded through December 2022. However, OOE’s ARPA-funded staff and the Human Services’ Upstream Investments team continue to work with Equity & Results to measure the impact of the distribution of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Funds to the communities most impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, and we hope to continue to support our partners at Upstream Investments in their work with the Safety Net departments currently implementing and expanding some aspects of the Anti-Racist Results-Based Accountability methodology. The Office of Equity has requested support from Strategic Plan funding to expand our capacity support Upstream Investments with ongoing race equity training, technical assistance, data analysis, to be determined in the Spring of 2023.

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Over the last 15 months of work (July 2021 - October 2022), Core Team members have reported more than 3,110 hours of training together. Unfortunately, while the Office has seen most Core Team members thrive and get more comfortable with their skills having and leading conversations about race, the Core Team has also lost 19 members. Some of the most common reasons for attrition in the Core Team include lack of capacity for participation, leaving the County for other employment, and retirement. Currently, the Core Team is made of 57 participants representing 15 County departments and agencies:

- Auditor-Controller-Treasurer- Tax Collector
- Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District

- Agriculture/Weights & Measures
- Board of Supervisors - District 3
- County Administrator's Office
- Child Support Services
- Community Development Commission
- Clerk-Recorder-Assessor-Registrar of Voters
- Emergency Management
- Health Services (DHS)
- Human Resources
- Human Services (HSD)
- Office of Equity
- Probation
- Sonoma County Regional Parks
- Sonoma Water

A total of 20 Core Team members representing 9 departments participated in the Train-the-Trainer program. Participating Departments include: Agriculture/Weights & Measures, Board of Supervisors (District 3), County Administrator's Office, Community Development Commission, Health Services, Human Services, Permit Sonoma, Sonoma Water, and the Office of Equity.

19 Department Heads attended the day long training in which newly-trained facilitators showcased their skills and continued to expand their comfort in leading conversations and teaching concepts about race.

Following the close of the Foundational training, 31 Core Team members representing 12 Departments chose to participate in training and implementation of Anti-Racist Results-Based Accountability. Participating departments/agencies include: Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District, Board of Supervisors (District 3), County Administrator's Office, Community Development Commission, Child Support Services, Emergency Management, Department of Health Services, Human Resources, Human Services, Probation, Sonoma Water, and the Office of Equity.

### **Coordination and Partnership Update**

The following pillars and their goals and objectives are connected to and have outcomes that are contingent upon having leadership and staff fully trained on principles and key concepts of race, racism, and equity.

The Learning Program was designed to be responsive to Sonoma County's history, current reality, and organizational needs. We used the Strategic Plan as the guiding document to ensure that our consultants' training content is directed to meeting the following goals and objectives.

#### Organizational Excellence

Goal 1: Strengthen operational effectiveness, fiscal reliability, and accountability

Objective 5: Align procurement and grant guidelines with strategic priorities and racial equity principles.

Goal 3: Become an employer of choice with a diverse workforce that reflects our community, and an employer with a positive work culture that builds engaged and developed employees.

Objective 1: Implement programs and identify opportunities to support employee work-life balance and a positive work environment, including a Telework Policy.

Objective 3: Support employee professional growth and retention by investing in high quality training, development, and leadership programs.

## Healthy & Safe Communities

Goal 1: Expand integrated system of care to address gaps in services to the County's most vulnerable.

Objective 2: Identify gaps in the Safety Net system of services and identify areas where departments can address those gaps directly, and seek guidance from the Board when additional resources and/or policy direction is needed.

Goal 2: Establish equitable and data-driven distribution of services

Objective 1: Safety Net departments will begin tracking data using results-based accountability (RBA) for key programs to establish common outcome measures, such as increased service access and utilization by communities of color, or decreased homelessness and poverty rates across the County.

Objective 3: Identify and eliminate data gaps for underrepresented groups, and collaborate with the community to implement measures to mitigate the negative impacts caused by the lack of access to services by racial and ethnic groups that are disproportionately under-served by 2026.

The Office of Equity was involved in the design and implementation of the American Rescue Plan Act funding allocation process, and in that capacity, formed community partnerships in the ARPA Equity Work Group to set priority areas and assist the County in its work to ensure that those community members most impacted by the pandemic are served through this equitable recovery effort. Outside of ARPA, the Office of Equity has no capacity to support leadership and staff to activate their learning and to deepen those connections in their daily work.

## Community, Equity, and Climate Update

N/A

## Funding Narrative

The Equity Learning Program is funded with General Fund dollars through FY 22-23. Human Resources received funding to support the production of the LMS video to be available to the County workforce and new hires. The estimated costs of that video are unknown at this time, but are unlikely to exceed \$30,000.

The expenditures to develop and deliver a two-Phase Racial Equity Learning Program for one cohort (Core Team staff) are one-time; however, departments have identified and requested ongoing support in the form of updates to training, facilitation, mediation, and strategic planning for ERG related to Race Equity & Social Justice.

Consistency in content, focus, and core values in a trainer/consultant is critical, and the Office of Equity is working to centralize and coordinate training efforts across departments. However, the Office of Equity staff are not trainers, and in order to support our forward motion, we need to continue to have the support of consultants and trainers who bring a regional, state-wide, and national perspective to our work in Sonoma County. These ongoing Professional Service Agreements will need continued support. Thus, there is a need for funding throughout the entirety of the Strategic Plan, which goes beyond FY 22-23 and through FY 25-26. The OoE has again put forth application for funds to support the Learning Program, Affinity facilitation, and full Core Team facilitation.

**Objective 4.1.3**

**RESJ1-3** - Conduct a baseline assessment by mid-2022 of racial equity awareness and understanding among County staff and develop a process to assess progress annually.

## Key Milestone Update

The training consultant is currently completing their assessment of the efficacy of the Core Team's Racial Equity Learning Program, as well as a countywide assessment regarding the County's stage in its journey towards racial equity. This will include recommendations to support success. This assessment is expected to be finalized by the middle of December, 2022.

There are also other baselines to be investigated and established in the Organizational Excellence pillar, including tracking progress of recruitment, hiring, retention, and promotion of BIPOC employees and managers.

The steps to determine the different baselines and assess progress include the following:

1. Consult with Core Team members and other departments to understand departmental-level baseline opportunities
2. Investigate assessment services and options, including pricing and scope
3. Select assessment service

Awareness and understanding of racial equity concepts can be reflected in many ways.

- The number of people who respond to a survey assessment tool
- The number of departments who engage in data/demographic analysis so as to create department baseline(s)
- The number of departments committed to tracking progress on racial equity goals
- The creation of new data sources
- Regularity in reporting and assessment

We have largely qualitative survey data regarding the OoE's Learning Program. We are currently working with Upstream Investments to strengthen the County's use of Anti-Racist Results Based Accountability to track progress on racial equity goals with our Community Based Organizational Partners, as well as on Departments whose Core Team members participated in the Anti-Racist Results Based Accountability training. 31 Core Team members representing 12 Departments chose to participate in training and implementation of Anti-Racist Results-Based Accountability. Participating departments/agencies include: Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District, Board of Supervisors (District 3), County Administrator's Office, Community Development Commission, Child Support Services, Emergency Management, Department of Health Services, Human Resources, Human Services, Probation, Sonoma Water, and the Office of Equity.

Assessments can take the form of staff and leadership surveys or data/demographic analyses. The Office of Equity recommends a staff and leadership survey assessment and a slightly different baseline assessment than identified in this Objective. The Office of Equity recommends assessing people's experiences with (not their knowledge of) race equity at the County of Sonoma. This assessment will pave a path for a clearer understanding of what is needed to support those best practices and to heal from negative experiences with either race equity trainings and/or conversations.

## Coordination and Partnership Update

Organizational Excellence

Goal 2: Increase information sharing and transparency and improve County and community engagement

Objective 2: Implement countywide strategies to recruit, hire, develop, promote and retain County employees of color, produce an annual report card assessing progress, and update strategies as needed.

We have a monthly check-in with HR to support their development of a demographic baseline and to track progress.

Goal 3: Become an employer of choice with a diverse workforce that reflects our community, and an employer with a positive work culture that builds engaged and developed employees.

- Objective 2: Conduct an employee engagement survey by mid-2022, and based on survey data, develop and implement strategies to incorporate survey outcomes into future operational planning.
- Objective 3: Support employee professional growth and retention by investing in high quality training, development, and leadership programs.

These goals also refer to employee survey and assessment tools to support the development of strategies and programs to support engagement in countywide training and professional development efforts.

### **Community, Equity, and Climate Update**

This goal focuses on internal County culture, and its success will be seen and felt in the way the County and its staff engages with underserved and underrepresented constituents.

### **Funding Narrative**

A countywide assessment tool or service is not currently funded, and is likely not a one-time expenditure. The “evergreen” or living nature of the assessment tool acknowledges the ways in which an assessment would need to grow and change to meet the changing status of the work.

Currently, the Office of Equity is supported through the General Fund, and we have no capacity to seek external funding at this time.

We have one Core Team member from the HR department. With the ARPA data analyst, we will have some limited-term support to begin gathering and analyzing existing internal and external County data. Over the long term, we are currently without staff support to fully implement this plan.

**Objective 4.1.4**

**RESJ1-4** - Develop a shared understanding of key racial equity concepts across the County and its leadership.

## Key Milestone Update

In initial Core Team interviews, many applicants mentioned needing and wanting equity training for themselves and for County leadership, and, thus, elevated the critical need for the Office of Equity to offer Racial Equity training within the organization. In alignment with GARE's Strategic Approach to Institutional Change, which identifies normalizing conversations about race equity and developing shared understanding of those concepts through foundational training as a requisite first step towards achieving equity, the Office of Equity entered into a contract with Equity and Results, LLC in June 2021, employing the consultant's support to launch a Racial Equity Learning Program for Core Team members.

The Racial Equity Learning Program, which has been first of its kind in the County organization, included the creation of affinity and learning spaces, as well as trainings for members of the Core Team to develop technical expertise in Anti-Racist Results-Based Accountability (AR RBA) and to develop facilitation expertise in conversations about race equity. The work began with the creation of a learning and healing community of Core Team members.

In designing for the Office of Equity's first training offerings, the Office centered the experiences of Black, Indigenous and people of color) BIPOC staff in the County and recognized the need for supported and safe spaces that could facilitate healing and community building. Organizing early race equity efforts in affinity groups is a widely used tool to support safety and community building. As stated in the Learning Program Assessment currently being finalized by our learning consultants, "Racial affinity work helps participants understand that the roles and responsibilities of BIPOC and White people are different in advancing racial equity, and mitigates predictable patterns of harm in racial equity learning spaces where learning for White participants often happens at the expense of BIPOC participants." Based on the advice of our training consultants' experience in other jurisdictions nationwide, the Office of Equity chose to offer the County's first Phase of its Learning Program in three Affinity Groups: Black, Non-Black People of Color, and White.

Beginning the Fall of 2021, facilitated Race Affinity Groups created spaces in which participants were able to listen, support, and build trust around each other, grounded in their shared experiences as employees of the County of Sonoma. While in Affinity, Core Team members also received Racial Equity foundational training and developed a common language and shared understanding of key equity concepts, an ability to identify and overcome predictable barriers in racial equity work, and an understanding of their shared responsibility to disrupt racial inequities as public servants. The Affinity and Foundational learning spaces, part of the first phase of learning, concluded after 12 weeks of work. The three Affinity groups came together in one final multiracial meeting before the start of the 2021 holiday season, where the Office of Equity presented options to further application of equity principles and concepts.

The feedback received at the end of the Affinity and Foundational training helped the Office of Equity understand the deep impact and critical need for facilitated affinity spaces for healing and continued learning. When asked about the most impactful part of this experience across all three Affinity Groups, the most common theme was having the ability to connect and discuss with others in similar learning or healing paths. The Office of Equity consistently surveys participants after training, and survey data demonstrates that the organization is experiencing positive impacts from these early efforts. Of the responses received, 74% of participants "agreed" or "strongly agreed" that their learning in the affinity sessions was applicable to their day-to-day work, and 70% of participants "agreed" or "strongly agreed" that they acquired skills and built relationships that helped them discuss and implement Racial Equity principles relevant to their work. There is still space for improvement and refinement of training content and manner of delivery, and the Core Team members will be continuing to work on developing a Race Equity 101 foundational training for all County staff as a result of their work and learning, currently expected to be completed by May, 2023.

Following the end of the Foundation Series, the OOE launched a series of different professional development offerings for Core Team members: an intensive facilitators training – "Train the Trainer" – and an Equity-Centered Results Based Accountability training series.

### Train the Trainer Sessions

This three-day intensive learning experience took place in June 2022 and was designed to expand Core Team members' toolbox of facilitative moves and to build greater muscle and practice to navigate and lead race conversations in groups.

A total of 20 Core Team members representing 9 departments participated in this training. Participating Departments include: Agriculture/Weights & Measures, Board of Supervisors (District 3), County Administrator's Office, Community Development Commission, Health Services, Human Services, Permit Sonoma, Sonoma Water, and the Office of Equity.

A common theme that arose in the feedback received included the importance of continuing to build a community of equity champions and the importance of developing hard skills to further equity in the County. Survey results of that training experience include that 88% of participants responding to the survey found the tools and methods shared during the training "applicable" or "very applicable" to their jobs, and 100% of participants responding to the survey reported being "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with the training.

After having received this training, trained Core Team facilitators participated in the creation and delivery of a Racial Equity Training for County Department Heads in October 2022. 19 Department Heads attended the day long training in which newly-trained facilitators showcased their skills and continued to expand their comfort in leading conversations and teaching concepts about race. 87.5% of Department Heads responding to our post-training survey found the content of the training “very relevant,” and 75% reported being “very” (5 -max score) satisfied with the overall training. County Core Team facilitators will continue to work together to deliver training to participating departments and key stakeholders as part of the creation of a County Racial Equity Action Plan (REAP), as well as to support implementation of equity tools through department-level training, training on conducting race equity impact analysis for program and policy Board recommendations, and supporting departments to identify other opportunities for equity work, to the extent feasible and allowed by their Departments.

The Affinity, Foundational, and Train the Trainer parts of the Racial Equity Learning Program were supported by the Office of Equity’s training consultants, Just Process, who have experience delivering race equity training in many jurisdictions nationwide. Just Process is currently finalizing its assessment of its time in Sonoma County and will provide an in-depth assessment of Sonoma County’s current stage in its equity journey with recommendations to continue this work in a positive and productive direction. As of FY 22-23, there is no ongoing funding to continue to provide facilitated spaces to support training development or coaching; however, the Office has again submitted requests for Strategic Plan funding (to be decided in the Spring of 2023).

#### Anti-Racist Results-based Accountability

Early in its visioning process, the Office of Equity identified an opportunity to both support and leverage the excellent work of Upstream Investments’ Results-Based Accountability work (<https://upstreaminvestments.org/>) by injecting a critical focus on race equity into these results driven methodology. By bridging the gap between a commitment to racial equity and the day-to-day work through this data-rich and rigorous seven step process, the County is able to move from intention to transformation and to achieve equitable outcomes. By focusing on addressing whether outcomes have improved for communities of color, this methodology begins by teaching participants to analyze the real impacts and harm of systemic racism on communities of color, and then backs into solutions that strategically address the roots of the inequities of most consequence. This iterative methodology requires people to ask whether Black, Indigenous and communities of color are better off in response to those solutions.

Following the close of the Foundational training, 31 Core Team members representing 12 Departments chose to participate in training and implementation of Anti-Racist Results-Based Accountability. Participating departments/agencies include: Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District, Board of Supervisors (District 3), County Administrator’s Office, Community Development Commission, Child Support Services, Emergency Management, Department of Health Services, Human Resources, Human Services, Probation, Sonoma Water, and the Office of Equity. This learning space is supported and facilitated by our lead consultant, Equity & Results. The consultant has worked with Core Team participants by helping to identify the roots of inequities pertaining to their departments and areas of expertise and to visualize strategic solutions to those inequities as critical pieces of a Countywide effort to establish accountability for the policies and programs that continue to perpetuate inequities among local communities of color.

This piece of the Racial Equity Learning Program is funded through December 2022. However, OOE’s ARPA-funded staff and the Human Services’ Upstream Investments team continue to work with Equity & Results to measure the impact of the distribution of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Funds to the communities most impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, and we hope to continue to support our partners at Upstream Investments in their work with the Safety Net departments currently implementing and expanding some aspects of the Anti-Racist Results-Based Accountability methodology. The Office of Equity has requested support from Strategic Plan funding to expand our capacity support Upstream Investments with ongoing race equity training, technical assistance, data analysis, to be determined in the Spring of 2023.

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Over the last 15 months of work (July 2021 - October 2022), Core Team members have reported more than 3,110 hours of training together. Unfortunately, while the Office has seen most Core Team members thrive and get more comfortable with their skills having and leading conversations about race, the Core Team has also lost 19 members. Some of the most common reasons for attrition in the Core Team include lack of capacity for participation, leaving the County for other employment, and retirement. Currently, the Core Team is made of 57 participants representing 15 County departments and agencies:

- Auditor-Controller-Treasurer- Tax Collector
- Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District

- Agriculture/Weights & Measures
- Board of Supervisors - District 3
- County Administrator's Office
- Child Support Services
- Community Development Commission
- Clerk-Recorder-Assessor-Registrar of Voters
- Emergency Management
- Health Services (DHS)
- Human Resources
- Human Services (HSD)
- Office of Equity
- Probation
- Sonoma County Regional Parks
- Sonoma Water

A total of 20 Core Team members representing 9 departments participated in the Train-the-Trainer program. Participating Departments include: Agriculture/Weights & Measures, Board of Supervisors (District 3), County Administrator's Office, Community Development Commission, Health Services, Human Services, Permit Sonoma, Sonoma Water, and the Office of Equity.

19 Department Heads attended the day long training in which newly-trained facilitators showcased their skills and continued to expand their comfort in leading conversations and teaching concepts about race.

Following the close of the Foundational training, 31 Core Team members representing 12 Departments chose to participate in training and implementation of Anti-Racist Results-Based Accountability. Participating departments/agencies include: Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District, Board of Supervisors (District 3), County Administrator's Office, Community Development Commission, Child Support Services, Emergency Management, Department of Health Services, Human Resources, Human Services, Probation, Sonoma Water, and the Office of Equity.

### **Coordination and Partnership Update**

The following pillars and their goals and objectives are connected to and have outcomes that are contingent upon having leadership and staff fully trained on principles and key concepts of race, racism, and equity.

The Learning Program was designed to be responsive to Sonoma County's history, current reality, and organizational needs. We used the Strategic Plan as the guiding document to ensure that our consultants' training content is directed to meeting the following goals and objectives.

#### Organizational Excellence

Goal 1: Strengthen operational effectiveness, fiscal reliability, and accountability

Objective 5: Align procurement and grant guidelines with strategic priorities and racial equity principles.

Goal 3: Become an employer of choice with a diverse workforce that reflects our community, and an employer with a positive work culture that builds engaged and developed employees.

Objective 1: Implement programs and identify opportunities to support employee work-life balance and a positive work environment, including a Telework Policy.

Objective 3: Support employee professional growth and retention by investing in high quality training, development, and leadership programs.

#### Healthy & Safe Communities

Goal 1: Expand integrated system of care to address gaps in services to the County's most vulnerable.

Objective 2: Identify gaps in the Safety Net system of services and identify areas where departments can address those gaps directly, and seek guidance from the Board when additional resources and/or policy direction is needed.

Goal 2: Establish equitable and data-driven distribution of services

Objective 1: Safety Net departments will begin tracking data using results-based accountability (RBA) for key programs to establish common outcome measures, such as increased service access and utilization by communities of color, or decreased homelessness and poverty rates across the County.

Objective 3: Identify and eliminate data gaps for underrepresented groups, and collaborate with the community to implement measures to mitigate the negative impacts caused by the lack of access to services by racial and ethnic groups that are disproportionately under-served by 2026.

The Office of Equity was involved in the design and implementation of the American Rescue Plan Act funding allocation process, and in that capacity, formed community partnerships in the ARPA Equity Work Group to set priority areas and assist the County in its work to ensure that those community members most impacted by the pandemic are served through this equitable recovery effort. Outside of ARPA, the Office of Equity has no capacity to support leadership and staff to activate their learning and to deepen those connections in their daily work.

### **Community, Equity, and Climate Update**

N/A

### **Funding Narrative**

The Equity Learning Program is funded with General Fund dollars through FY 22-23. Human Resources received funding to support the production of the LMS video to be available to the County workforce and new hires. The estimated costs of that video are unknown at this time, but are unlikely to exceed \$30,000.

The expenditures to develop and deliver a two-Phase Racial Equity Learning Program for one cohort (Core Team staff) are one-time; however, departments have identified and requested ongoing support in the form of updates to training, facilitation, mediation, and strategic planning for ERG related to Race Equity & Social Justice.

Consistency in content, focus, and core values in a trainer/consultant is critical, and the Office of Equity is working to centralize and coordinate training efforts across departments. However, the Office of Equity staff are not trainers, and in order to support our forward motion, we need to continue to have the support of consultants and trainers who bring a regional, state-wide, and national perspective to our work in Sonoma County. These ongoing Professional Service Agreements will need continued support. Thus, there is a need for funding throughout the entirety of the Strategic Plan, which goes beyond FY 22-23 and through FY 25-26. The OoE has again put forth application for funds to support the Learning Program, Affinity facilitation, and full Core Team facilitation.

## **Goal 4.2**

Implement strategies to make the County workforce reflect County demographic across all levels.

**Objective 4.2.1**

**RESJ2-1** - Identify opportunities to enhance recruitment, hiring, employee development, and promotional processes to reflect the value of having the perspectives of people of colour represented at all levels in the County workforce.

## Summary of Objective Implementation Status

Human Resources, in conjunction with the Office of Equity, continues to identify opportunities and implement strategies that support making the County workforce reflect the demographics of the community.

In Calendar Year 2022, efforts related to this goal were focused in several key areas:

- Human Resources worked with Departments to expand recruitment advertising at job boards and websites that focused on reaching qualified and diverse applicant pools.
- With the relaxation of COVID restrictions, Human Resources resumed attendance at in-person career fairs and community events, including Fiesta de Independencia, Sonoma County Pride, Wednesday Night Market, SSU career days and internship fairs, among others, which included the use of marketing materials in both English and Spanish.
- Through the continuation of virtual “Start Here” Trainings, Human Resources educated 108 members of the public on the County’s recruitment and hiring process.
- Human Resources worked with an Ad Hoc of the Civil Service Commission to review the Civil Service Ordinance in conjunction with the Civil Service Rule to ensure the Rules are aligned with the Ordinance and to determine what updates, if any, to the Ordinance were necessary. This work is foundational for the next phase in the process, which will include an evaluation of the Civil Service Rules, job class minimum qualifications, and examination processes to determine what processes should be changed to remove barriers that may be adversely impacting applicants and candidates in underrepresented demographic groups.
- The Office of Equity is continuing its work on developing and rolling out a Sonoma County Race Equity Learning Program, as outlined in RESJ 1-2.
- Human Resources has begun developing partnerships with local educational institutions and facilitating discussions between those institutions and departments to develop internship opportunities for local students.
- Human Resources developed and deployed phase one of the Employee Demographic Dashboard in December 2022, which provides point-in-time data of the make-up of the workforce, by race/ethnicity, gender, and age, organized and displayed for the organization as a whole and by individual departments. By having this information accessible to County employees, community partners and the public, it makes the County’s efforts to advance racial equity work more transparent and easier to track, thereby providing a way to hold the County accountable in this work.
- Starting in December 2021, Human Resources launched a monthly Countywide email called “Perspectives” which aims to provide employees with information and links to content to broaden awareness and understanding about various themes and content related to equity, diversity, inclusion, and belonging.
- Human Resources continued efforts of educating Departments and utilizing recruitment and selection best practices specifically focused on identifying and eliminating biases in hiring processes, which included: the reaction of candidate Personally Identifiable Information during Application Appraisal Examinations, ensuring that interview panelists are educated on interview biases and provided with the tools to eliminate them, and developing supplemental questions, recruitment exam processes, and interview questions designed around job related competencies.

## Key Milestone Update

- The evaluation of the Civil Service Ordinance began in February 2022 and was completed in October 2022. Phase two of the project, which will be focused on the Civil Service Rules will commence in early 2023.
- Phase One of the Employee Demographic Dashboard was released in December 2022. Further demographics will be added to the Dashboard and released within Calendar Year 2023.
- In May 2022, Human Resources relaunched the internship program and has begun developing partnerships with local education institutions for internship opportunities.
- The launch of the updated “Recruit. Select. Hire.” training was postponed from February 2022 to the first quarter of 2023 as the training required further development in light of the changing job market as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and “the great resignation.”
- The Office of Equity is continuing work on developing and delivering a Sonoma County Race Equity Learning Program, as outlined in RESJ 1-2.

- Human Resources continues to add vendor-available courses related to equity, diversity, inclusion, and belonging to the Learning Management System and make them accessible to employees as they are identified.

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As stated in the implementation plan, there are two types of data that Human Resources is utilizing to evaluate the County’s success in making the organization’s workforce reflect the demographics of the community: 1) Applicant Data and 2) Employee Data. This data is compared against the Community’s available labor force, which is defined as individuals between 20-64 years of age.

The following report shows the total population and percentage of the population, of Sonoma County’s available labor force, in each demographic category as collected in the US Census.

Community Available Labor Force (20-64 years old)\*

Race/Ethnicity	Total Population	% of Population
Hispanic	81,981	22%
White	175,629	48%
African American/Black	4,845	1%
American Indian	5,464	1%
Asian	15,111	4%
Pacific Islander	1,229	0%
Some Other Population	46,693	13%
Multiple Races (two plus races)	33,974	9%
	323,884	100%

\*Source: U.S. Census Bureau Esri forecasts for 2022

Race/Ethnicity data that is collected by the County from applicants and employees is in alignment with the demographics we are required to collect and report to the EEOC on a biannual basis. These categories include Hispanic, White, African American/Black, American Indian, Asian, Pacific Islander, Multiple Races, and Decline to State. As a result, the County does not collect and report out data regarding individuals who identify in the Census category of “some other population,” which creates inconsistency when trying to align data between various reports. Therefore, for purposes of evaluating the County’s success in making the workforce more reflective of the Community’s local labor force, comparisons can only be made in relation to the data the County collects.

The following table shows the race/ethnicity of individuals who applied for positions through the County’s applicant tracking system in calendar year 2020 compared to those who applied in calendar year 2022 (through November 15, 2022). The data indicates that 46% of the County’s applicants in 2022 are BIPOC, which represents a 3% increase over the number of BIPOC applicants in 2020 (43%). The number of Hispanic applicants for County positions has increased 5%, from 22% to 27%, during the last two years.

Applicant Data

Race/Ethnicity	CY 2020	CY 2022
Hispanic	22%	27%
White	51%	49%
African American/ Black	5%	4%
American Indian	1%	2%
Asian	7%	5%

Pacific Islander	1%	1%
Multiple Races (two plus races)	7%	7%
Decline to State	5%	5%

A review of employee data shows that the number of BIPOC employees has increased 3% over the past two years from 28% to 31%. During the same timeframe, the number of Hispanic County employees has increased 2% during the last two years, from 20% to 22%, while most other BIPOC demographic categories remained flat. The increase in Hispanic or Latin workforce, coupled with a 5% decrease in the number of white employees, is an indication that work performed by Human Resources and County departments related to this strategic plan pillar are effectuating change. In looking across all races/ethnicities, the demographics of the County’s overall workforce is largely reflective of the available labor force of our community.

**Employee Data**

Race/Ethnicity	July 1 2020	July 1, 2022
Hispanic	20%	22%
White	69%	64%
African American/Black	2%	2%
American Indian/ Alaska Native	1%	1%
Asian	4%	4%
Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	<1%	<1%
Multiple Races (two plus races)	1%	2%
Not Specified	3%	5%

**Coordination and Partnership Update**

The Countywide telework policy was completed in May 2022. The release of the employee engagement survey has been postponed until April 2024. The Human Resources Workforce Development Unit is currently developing a mid-management training program which is targeted for release in the first half of 2023.

**Community, Equity, and Climate Update**

N/A

**Funding Narrative**

To date, Human Resources requested and received \$50,000 in funding related to this strategic plan goal to develop the Employee Demographic Dashboard. As of December 2022, a portion of the funding has been utilized to purchase software and hire an extra-help employee to develop the dashboard. The project is within cost. At this time, it is not anticipated that additional funding will be needed related to this initiative. However, additional funding may be requested in future years as project plans are developed and if additional strategies are identified.



**Objective 4.2.2**

**RESJ2-2** - Implement countywide strategies to recruit, hire, develop, promote and retain County employees of colour, produce an annual report card assessing progress, and update strategies as needed.

## Summary of Objective Implementation Status

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In Calendar Year 2022, efforts related to this goal were focused in several key areas:

- Human Resources worked with Departments to expand recruitment advertising at job boards and websites that focused on reaching qualified and diverse applicant pools.
- With the relaxation of COVID restrictions, Human Resources resumed attendance at in-person career fairs and community events, including Fiesta de Independencia, Sonoma County Pride, Wednesday Night Market, SSU career days and internship fairs, among others, which included the use of marketing materials in both English and Spanish.
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- The Office of Equity is continuing its work on developing and rolling out a Sonoma County Race Equity Learning Program, as outlined in RESJ 1-2.
- Human Resources has begun developing partnerships with local educational institutions and facilitating discussions between those institutions and departments to develop internship opportunities for local students.
- Human Resources developed and deployed phase one of the Employee Demographic Dashboard in December 2022, which provides point-in-time data of the make-up of the workforce, by race/ethnicity, gender, and age, organized and displayed for the organization as a whole and by individual departments. By having this information accessible to County employees, community partners and the public, it makes the County’s efforts to advance racial equity work more transparent and easier to track, thereby providing a way to hold the County accountable in this work.
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## Key Milestone Update

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- The launch of the updated “Recruit. Select. Hire.” training was postponed from February 2022 to the first quarter of 2023 as the training required further development in light of the changing job market as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and “the great resignation.”
- The Office of Equity is continuing work on developing and delivering a Sonoma County Race Equity Learning Program, as outlined in RESJ 1-2.
- Human Resources continues to add vendor-available courses related to equity, diversity, inclusion, and belonging to the Learning Management System and make them accessible to employees as they are identified.

As stated in the implementation plan, there are two types of data that Human Resources is utilizing to evaluate the County's success in making the organization's workforce reflect the demographics of the community: 1) Applicant Data and 2) Employee Data. This data is compared against the Community's available labor force, which is defined as individuals between 20-64 years of age.

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**Employee Data**

Race/Ethnicity	July 1 2020	July 1, 2022
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Not Specified	3%	5%

**Coordination and Partnership Update**

The Countywide telework policy was completed in May 2022. The release of the employee engagement survey has been postponed until April 2024. The Human Resources Workforce Development Unit is currently developing a mid-management training program which is targeted for release in the first half of 2023.

**Community, Equity, and Climate Update**

N/A

**Funding Narrative**

To date, Human Resources requested and received \$50,000 in funding related to this strategic plan goal to develop the Employee Demographic Dashboard. As of December 2022, a portion of the funding has been utilized to purchase software and hire an extra-help employee to develop the dashboard. The project is within cost. At this time, it is not anticipated that additional funding will be needed related to this initiative. However, additional funding may be requested in future years as project plans are developed and if additional strategies are identified.



**Goal 4.3**

Ensure racial equity throughout all County policy decisions and service delivery.

**Objective 4.3.1**

**RESJ3-1** - Establish a racial equity analysis tool by 2022 for departments to use for internal decision-making, policy decisions and implementation, and service delivery.

## Summary of Objective Implementation Status

The Government Alliance on Race and Equity, or GARE, states that a racial equity tool shall:

- identify clear goals, objectives and measurable outcomes;
- engage community in decision-making processes;
- identify who will benefit or be burdened by a given decision, examine potential unintended consequences of a decision, and develop strategies to advance racial equity and mitigate unintended negative consequences; and
- develop mechanisms for successful implementation and evaluation of impact.

The Office of Equity has recommended the use of a basic race equity tool that asks the following questions when analyzing policy:

1. Proposal: What is the policy, program, practice or budget decision under consideration? What are the desired results and outcomes?
2. Data: What's the data? What does the data tell us?
3. Community engagement: How have communities been engaged? Are there opportunities to expand engagement?
4. Analysis and strategies: Who will benefit from or be burdened by your proposal? What are your strategies for advancing racial equity or mitigating unintended consequences?
5. Implementation: What is your plan for implementation?
6. Accountability and communication: How will you ensure accountability, communicate, and evaluate results?

Customization can take place if needed to ensure that it is most relevant to our local conditions, but

GARE cautions that there is a risk that there will be a significant investment of time, and potentially money, in a lengthy process of customization without experience. It is through the implementation and the experience of learning that leaders and staff will gain experience with use of a tool.

The OoE reviewed significant Board items in 2021 and 2022 and provided a recommendation on which should receive a race equity analysis; however, implementation of those recommendations was not tracked. It has not always been the case that departments have conducted the analysis, reached out during the course of their analysis, or included the results of the analysis in their Board items. The Office of Equity has not yet reviewed significant Board items proposed for 2023 to be able to recommend a race equity analysis on specific items.

It is the OoE's recommendation that, prior to the attempting to complete a race equity analysis on a significant Board item, staff should receive a foundational race equity training. As that offering is still in development, it may be premature to expect these analyses to be completed, unless there is significant support from a Core Team member who has received that foundational training to assist. In addition, the OoE currently lacks the capacity to support a department with race equity data assistance, though the OoE has a pending request for a Program, Planning, and Evaluation Analyst to support this work with selected departments.

Proposed implementation steps include:

1. Ensuring each CAO departmental analyst has received the Race Equity 101 training when it is available. (OoE)
2. Requiring the use of the race equity tool in each significant Board item. (CAO)
3. Securing Office of Equity support or Core Team members support in conducting the analysis. (CAO)
4. Monitoring the completion of the analysis. (CAO)
5. Ensuring the Office of Equity has engaged in a review. (CAO/OoE)
6. Including the analysis in the Board item summary. (CAO)
7. Preparing our Board to ask the simple racial equity tool questions, such as "How does this decision help or hinder racial equity?" or "Who benefits from or is burdened by this decision?" on a routine basis to put theory into action. (CAO/OoE)

## Key Milestone Update

The CAO has shared that six race equity analyses have been completed since November, 2020. The Office of Equity has requested to receive all 6 to analyze their consistency and to provide recommendations to support future efforts.

### **Coordination and Partnership Update**

The Equity Core Team currently includes the Upstream Investment team. The recent partnership between the Office of Equity and HSD to ensure equitable allocation of ARPA resources also supports the deepening the connections between the two departments. By using a race equity tool, applying anti-racist principles, and Results Based Accountability, this partnership provides an opportunity for a full and powerful application of a race equity tool in decision-making and measurement of effectiveness and reach of investments into disproportionately impacted communities of color. This work, however, is not supported outside of the ARPA process, and the Racial Equity and Social Justice Data Analyst and the Community Engagement Analyst are time-limited to June, 2025.

### **Community, Equity, and Climate Update**

By engaging anti-racist principles in data-driven decision making, we are embedding equity into the day to day work of the County of Sonoma.

The creation of the ARPA Equity Work Group and the application of Anti-Racist Results Based Accountability will also ensure community engagement in the process of equitable distribution of ARPA funds to community based organizations to serve disproportionately impacted communities of color.

### **Funding Narrative**

This ARPA implementation effort is fully funded; however, those two positions are time-limited and do not work outside of the Community Resilience Program to support longer-term County-wide efforts.

The recently formed Steering Committee will undertake the creation of a Racial Equity Action Plan. The Core Team Steering Committee will act as a group of strategic leaders that will support relevant work such as the implementation of several goals and objectives of the Racial Equity and Social Justice (RESJ) Pillar of the County's Strategic Plan through the creation of a Racial Equity Action Plan (REAP). According to the Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE) , "Racial Equity Action Plans can lay out the approach to operationalizing" jurisdictions' commitments toward racial equity. In this case, the REAP will create a roadmap to achieving "meaningful and measurable results" articulated in the RESJ pillar of the County's Strategic Plan and will include other strategies identified by Steering Committee members, including the use of a racial equity toolkit or impact analysis for significant policy or resource allocation decisions.

The creation of a REAP, with the leadership of the Core Team Steering Committee and the support and involvement of all County departments, is critical to ensuring that the responsibilities to embed racial equity across our government process and actions is clearly articulated so as to ensure those responsibilities are shared across all departments to positively impact communities of color across County service provision and employment opportunities.

On February 1, 2022, the OOE received \$240,000 in Strategic Plan funding over 3 years for this effort and entered into an agreement with Equity First Consulting, LLC on June 13, 2022 to support the work needed to advance equity initiatives across all departments through the creation of a REAP.

Since then, the consultant has supported the OOE in designing a process to select Core Team Steering Committee members, who will be leading the creation of the Racial Equity Action Plan. Through an anti-racist approach, participants submitted applications sharing information about the level of support they receive in their department, the different skills and lived experiences relevant to this leadership role, learning experiences in the changing roles they have had as equity champions, as well as ideas to effectively embed racial equity across County service provision. The OOE relied on an Advisory Committee made up of Core Team members to provide recommendations as to the best configuration for this leadership group as they were making the selection. Ultimately, 13 members were selected for the Steering Committee presented below in alphabetical order:

- Anna Yip - County Administrator's Office
- Audrianna Jones - Community Development Commission
- Christel Querijero - County Administrator's Office
- Denia Candela - Department of Health Services

- Josephine McKay - Human Services Department
- Lauren Reed - Department of Health Services
- Leslie Lew - Ag and Open Space
- Michelle Revecho - Human Services Department
- Nora Mallonee-Brand - Department of Health Services
- Oscar Chavez - Human Services Department
- Ryan Pedrotti - Sonoma Water
- Shawntel Reece - Human Services Department
- Victoria Willard - Human Resources

Steering Committee members represent the Office of Equity, and demonstrate the curiosity, humility, and focus on healing necessary to successfully operationalize equity principles at the County. Steering Committee members will have a demonstrated commitment to and investment in equity work, the capacity to dedicate time to the work, and the ability to connect their role in the Steering Committee to the responsibilities of their day-to-day work in their departments.

The group will take part in hands-on professional development and leadership training opportunities where they will continue to learn, practice, and contribute to building an authentic community that is centered on anti-racism. Steering Committee members will serve for a minimum of 12 months, and can expect to spend 4 hours per week on work related to racial equity for the Core Team or Steering Committee. These leaders, supported by Equity First Consulting, will take the first steps towards the creation of the Racial Equity Action Plan, beginning in January 2023.

**Objective 4.3.2**

**RESJ3-2** - Establish regular and publicly available reports on racial equity in County policies, programs, and services.

## Summary of Objective Implementation Status

In November, 2020, the Office of Equity supported the Board of Supervisors in adopting a template for actions prior to new or substantial revisions to policy, including consideration of equity impacts. The Racial Equity Toolkit offers six sets of questions that, when applied to early policy development, can assist to ensure that individual decisions are aligned with race equity goals and outcomes. They are the following:

1. Proposal: What is the policy, program, practice or budget decision under consideration? What are the desired results and outcomes?
2. Data: What's the data? What does the data tell us?
3. Community engagement: How have communities been engaged? Are there opportunities to expand engagement?
4. Analysis and strategies: Who will benefit from or be burdened by your proposal? What are your strategies for advancing racial equity or mitigating unintended consequences?
5. Implementation: What is your plan for implementation?
6. Accountability and communication: How will you ensure accountability, communicate, and evaluate results?

The adopted changes to the Board Rules of Procedures require departments to consult with the Office of Equity to review the analysis conducted and to ensure alignment with the Race Equity & Social Justice pillar's goals and objectives and with overarching County equity goals.

Since the adoption of the Board Rules of Procedures, the Office of Equity has had a limited number of consultations with departments adopting new or significant revisions to policy, including Department of Transportation and Public Works on the polystyrene ban, the Cannabis Equity Assessment, and the Agricultural Access Policy.

At the outset of 2021, the Office of Equity, working together with the County Administrator's Office (CAO) identified a number of significant Board items that would benefit from including an equity analysis. With the combination of the Board's updated Rules of Procedure with the Racial Equity Toolkit and the identification of the Board items with possible equity impacts, the County has the tools in place to support departments to undertake and present its equity analysis in each Board item. With the publication of the updated Portrait of Sonoma in November, 2021, as well as the data developed and utilized during the allocation of the American Rescue Plan Act funds, the County now has relevant and easily accessible data for departments to utilize as they undertake the requisite equity analyses.

The Office of Equity is also working to develop the equity skillset in the County's Core Team, and each department with a Core Team member now has embedded staff to support the development of equity analyses. In addition, the Office of Equity will work to train each CAO analyst to ensure that relevant Board items contain an equity analysis in the Summary Report once a Race Equity Foundational Training is finalized and available.

Finally, now that the Office of Equity has trained Department Heads and County Supervisors, County leadership and key staff have gone through the Race Equity Learning Program. At this point, the County has sufficient capacity to track the number of new policies and significant revisions that have gone through an equity analysis and decision-making process, as well as to create accountability mechanisms for each department and the County as a whole. The Office of Equity, however, does not have the capacity to track this work, as staff requests for this purpose have gone unfulfilled.

## Key Milestone Update

- The County Administrator's Significant Board Items list provide the overarching view of Board actions with equity impacts.
- The Office of Equity, working with the County Administrator's Office, developed a set of equity performance measures for use during Department Head performance evaluations. As each Department Head is now required to include a summary of their equity efforts in furtherance of the County's equity goals, the Board of Supervisors has the ability to create additional accountability mechanisms for key leaders in County government.
- The County's allocation of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds also provides a key opportunity to create a new accountability mechanism and reporting process around equity investments to address the impacts felt by disproportionately impacted communities and community members. Accountability metrics will be developed in partnership with the ARPA Equity Community Work Group, and will be tracked through the Human Services Department's Upstream Investments and additional equity considerations and data points in the County's Results Based Accountability process. This will likely be the first opportunity to undertake an equity evaluation of funding and investments, beginning in Spring of 2022 and continuing through FY '25-26.

The CAO is the appropriate data reporter for whether a significant Board item has engaged in a race equity impact analysis.

ARPA reports will begin to be run in Spring, 2023.

### **Coordination and Partnership Update**

The Office of Equity, the Department of Health Services, the Human Services Department, and the Economic Development Board worked closely beginning in Summer, 2021 to develop an equity-based allocation process for ARPA funds. This partnership includes cross-training, data collection, accountability metrics development, and, ultimately, allocation and evaluation of funding impacts.

The ARPA allocation process also includes the creation and development of the ARPA Community Equity Work Group, which intentionally focused on representation of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color in its membership, to ensure that there was connectivity to the lived and professional experiences of community members most impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. These 15 individuals representing all 5 Supervisorial Districts will also be central in the effort to build and nourish effective community partnerships rooted in racial equity to ensure broad access to ARPA funds.

### **Community, Equity, and Climate Update**

Working with the ARPA Community Equity Work Group, as well as in Upstream Investments' public data dashboard, the public will have access to the metrics and performance metrics of community-based organizational partners using these funds. Currently the Upstream Investments Portfolio only allows someone to search using the criteria of service area and age demographic, and the work that the Office of Equity is undertaking with Upstream Investments will result in additional criteria (e.g. racial and ethnic demographics) being added to the Portfolio's search capabilities.

While the ARPA allocation process marks the end of this iteration of the Work Group, one of the other areas of work currently on the Office of Equity's Work Plan is to develop the County's Community Engagement Plan. That Plan will elevate best practices from the Work Group as well as from the Equity (formerly Latinx) Health Work Group to inform its recommendations.

### **Funding Narrative**

We will need funding to continue to support our work with consultants Equity & Results who are assisting the Office of Equity and Upstream Investments with the creation of a Results Based Accountability + equity approach to ARPA funding allocations. This work is also developing with the 31 Core Team members representing 12 Departments who chose to participate in training and implementation of Anti-Racist Results-Based Accountability. Participating departments/agencies include: Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District, Board of Supervisors (District 3), County Administrator's Office, Community Development Commission, Child Support Services, Emergency Management, Department of Health Services, Human Resources, Human Services, Probation, Sonoma Water, and the Office of Equity.

This work, however, concludes in December, 2022, and the Office of Equity does not have the staff capacity to continue to support this work, as requests for staff for this purpose have gone unfulfilled.

## **Goal 4.4**

Engage community members and stakeholder groups to develop priorities and to advance racial equity.

**Objective 4.4.1**

**RESJ4-1** - Establish a process for engagement and collaboration with community members and stakeholder groups, and launch a community engagement strategy by the end of 2022 with a focus on racial equity.

### **Summary of Objective Implementation Status**

- Identify community members and stakeholder groups and/or build on ARPA work group's community partnerships
- Document lessons learned from fires and other projects
- Outline a process for engagement, starting with emergency response, by May 2022. This initial goal was shifted to include consideration of information collected during implementation of SB 160 with the Department of Emergency Management.
- Potentially use ARPA time-limited position to look at County community engagement efforts. The ARPA-funded Community Engagement Analyst was shifted away from the Community Resilience Program implementation to assist with the Community Engagement effort. In November, 2021, the Office of Equity, using largely existing funds, was approved for an additional allocation of a limited-term Department Analyst to support the implementation of this project.
- Identify and retain Consultant to work with the County Communications Team and the ARPA time-limited position to look at existing community engagement efforts, reviewing models for County community engagement and partnerships, and aiding in the development of a robust community engagement strategy for the County.
- Hire consultant in late 2022 with initial analysis, research, and community feedback gathering work projected to begin in early 2023. The project would be required to be completed and live to the public by the mid 2024, culminating with a cost and legal analysis presented to the Board of Supervisors for future steps or investments.

Initial timelines were pushed back by almost a year while the OoE was securing funding through the American Rescue Plan Act, as well as trying to secure staff capacity to conduct this work. Because earlier requests for staff were unfulfilled, initial timelines were not met. The OoE intends to hire a Department Analyst to manage this project in early February, 2023.

### **Key Milestone Update**

- Board-approved Community Engagement principles established (could be part of the framework).
- Community Engagement Framework including strategies, models and processes for inclusive engagement finalized and approved by Board.
- Community Engagement Framework Implementation Plan developed.
- Annual Community Engagement Plan to align with Significant Items developed (what does the year of community engagement efforts look like?)
- Gather existing data such as Portrait of Sonoma, community assessments, and other data to identify starting and goal indicators/measures.
- Data crucial to this work includes access to information, media availability to communities, engagement of members in the diverse communities, especially hardest-hit communities.
- Enlist community-based organizations to assist in gathering data where gaps exist.

In September, 2022, the OoE went to the Board for approval of a consultant to develop a Community Engagement Plan. That work will go through March, 2024, for presentation to the Board of both fiscal and substantive recommendations to support successful community engagement efforts by the County.

### **Coordination and Partnership Update**

- This goal and related objectives intersect primarily with objectives under the Organizational Excellence pillar, and objective leads in common from HR and CAO. Additionally, this objective intersects with the Healthy and Safe Communities pillar, objective 5.5 and the objective leads in common from CAO.
- Partnerships can be formed with local jurisdictions and community-based partners to leverage their contact with the public, especially in target communities. For example, the City of Santa Rosa has the Community Engagement initiatives, as do other jurisdictions. Many community-based partners focus their work in diverse geographic areas of the County, facilitating our need to reach all residents.
- Currently the Office of Equity does not have any staff capacity to support actual engagement efforts. It is likely that the Board item culminating in the presentation of the Community Engagement Plan will include a request for staff.

## **Community, Equity, and Climate Update**

- This goal and related objectives are focused on community and equity. The public will be engaged both virtually and in person through staff and community-based organizations.
- The success and effectiveness of the engagement approach and plans will be measured by subsequent community assessment surveys and by other methods including the Portrait of Sonoma, Los Cien Scorecard, etc.
- An equity lens will be applied in the development and implementation of the goals by centering community throughout the process and by including community-based organizations at all steps. Centering the community is essential at crucial steps of the process and the inclusion of community voices in the decision-making process.
- Vitaly important is to geographically identify partners in all areas so that the engagement and information is disseminated in the broadest manner possible.
- Where possible, we will ensure that climate impacts are considered in meetings and information sharing, including holding virtual meetings, limiting printing of collateral, and offering other ways of providing useful information.

## **Funding Narrative**

- \$300,000 received in Year 1 Strategic Plan funding to support all Goal 4 objectives, which includes funds to support translation and stipend costs in the development of the Community Engagement and Language Access Plans.

On September 20, 2022, the Board approved a contract with Equity First Consulting for a not-to exceed amount of \$450,000 for an 18-month term ending in March 2024 to support the creation of a Community Engagement Plan.

While the County recently expanded its Communications Office to support County departments, the CAO, the Board of Supervisors and the County in communicating with the public and the media, the community engagement function remains a County-wide challenge. Currently, many departments do not have the experience, capacity, or funding, to conduct culturally sensitive and responsive community engagement that results in equitable public participation in government processes and services. The recent disasters that residents of Sonoma County have faced including wildfires, floods, and the current pandemic, have deepened the already existing inequities, and highlight the imperative need to center communities, particularly those historically marginalized by governments, and their experiences in the way in which we deliver services and create policies. This work cannot be done without a clear roadmap of how to effectively and consistently eliminate institutional barriers that prevent communities of color and other historically marginalized communities from engaging with their local government processes.

Different from traditional one-way communications distributed through mainstream systems and methods, such as press releases and social media, a County-wide Community Engagement Plan will provide guidance and best practices for facilitating culturally responsive spaces for connection between and among County departments and the wisdom and lived experiences of community members, community-based organizational partners, and other institutions and sectors with whom we partner to dismantle racial inequities in Sonoma County.

The Community Engagement Consultant will support the creation of a Community Engagement Plan for Board of Supervisors' consideration to achieve equitable participation and access to County government services and resources for underserved communities of color and other communities that have traditionally experienced marginalization from government processes and services. The Consultant will do this through a three-phase process grounded in a culturally responsive approach that captures the expertise and responds to the lived experiences of the different communities for which Sonoma County is home.

The Community Engagement consultant will start by assessing the County's existing Community Engagement plans, processes, and capabilities through a series of focus groups with staff. The second phase will involve a series of focus groups and interviews with external key stakeholders and partner organizations servicing communities of focus to support further refinement of the County's capabilities and gaps in service delivery for communities of color and others marginalized from government systems. The consultant recognizes the importance of understanding the cultural nuances when communicating with local Black, Indigenous, and

other Communities of Color and will work with and compensate leaders of those communities to seek the feedback needed to understand the County's gaps in services while utilizing a trauma-informed approach and the familiarity of having a member of one's own community reach out to the communities of focus. The final phase of the project will include presenting the plan to the different internal stakeholders and members of the

communities of focus to seek further feedback and finalize a Community Engagement Plan that includes a set of standard community engagement operating guidelines or “best practices,” and resources that are culturally responsive and can be used by all County Departments to close gaps in services, with corresponding fiscal impacts for consideration by the Board of Supervisors.

**Objective 4.4.2**

**RESJ4-2** - Collaborate with community members and stakeholder groups to develop racial equity strategies for County emergency response, economic recovery and resiliency planning efforts.

### **Summary of Objective Implementation Status**

- Identify community members and stakeholder groups and/or build on ARPA work group's community partnerships
- Document lessons learned from fires and other projects
- Outline a process for engagement, starting with emergency response, by May 2022. This initial goal was shifted to include consideration of information collected during implementation of SB 160 with the Department of Emergency Management.
- Potentially use ARPA time-limited position to look at County community engagement efforts. The ARPA-funded Community Engagement Analyst was shifted away from the Community Resilience Program implementation to assist with the Community Engagement effort. In November, 2021, the Office of Equity, using largely existing funds, was approved for an additional allocation of a limited-term Department Analyst to support the implementation of this project.
- Identify and retain Consultant to work with the County Communications Team and the ARPA time-limited position to look at existing community engagement efforts, reviewing models for County community engagement and partnerships, and aiding in the development of a robust community engagement strategy for the County.
- Hire consultant in late 2022 with initial analysis, research, and community feedback gathering work projected to begin in early 2023. The project would be required to be completed and live to the public by the mid 2024, culminating with a cost and legal analysis presented to the Board of Supervisors for future steps or investments.

Initial timelines were pushed back by almost a year while the OoE was securing funding through the American Rescue Plan Act, as well as trying to secure staff capacity to conduct this work. Because earlier requests for staff were unfulfilled, initial timelines were not met. The OoE intends to hire a Department Analyst to manage this project in early February, 2023.

### **Key Milestone Update**

- Board-approved Community Engagement principles established (could be part of the framework).
- Community Engagement Framework including strategies, models and processes for inclusive engagement finalized and approved by Board.
- Community Engagement Framework Implementation Plan developed.
- Annual Community Engagement Plan to align with Significant Items developed (what does the year of community engagement efforts look like?)
- Gather existing data such as Portrait of Sonoma, community assessments, and other data to identify starting and goal indicators/measures.
- Data crucial to this work includes access to information, media availability to communities, engagement of members in the diverse communities, especially hardest-hit communities.
- Enlist community-based organizations to assist in gathering data where gaps exist.

In September, 2022, the OoE went to the Board for approval of a consultant to develop a Community Engagement Plan. That work will go through March, 2024, for presentation to the Board of both fiscal and substantive recommendations to support successful community engagement efforts by the County.

### **Coordination and Partnership Update**

- This goal and related objectives intersect primarily with objectives under the Organizational Excellence pillar, and objective leads in common from HR and CAO. Additionally, this objective intersects with the Healthy and Safe Communities pillar, objective 5.5 and the objective leads in common from CAO.
- Partnerships can be formed with local jurisdictions and community-based partners to leverage their contact with the public, especially in target communities. For example, the City of Santa Rosa has the Community Engagement initiatives, as do other jurisdictions. Many community-based partners focus their work in diverse geographic areas of the County, facilitating our need to reach all residents.
- Currently the Office of Equity does not have any staff capacity to support actual engagement efforts. It is likely that the Board item culminating in the presentation of the Community Engagement Plan will include a request for staff.

## **Community, Equity, and Climate Update**

- This goal and related objectives are focused on community and equity. The public will be engaged both virtually and in person through staff and community-based organizations.
- The success and effectiveness of the engagement approach and plans will be measured by subsequent community assessment surveys and by other methods including the Portrait of Sonoma, Los Cien Scorecard, etc.
- An equity lens will be applied in the development and implementation of the goals by centering community throughout the process and by including community-based organizations at all steps. Centering the community is essential at crucial steps of the process and the inclusion of community voices in the decision-making process.
- Vitaly important is to geographically identify partners in all areas so that the engagement and information is disseminated in the broadest manner possible.
- Where possible, we will ensure that climate impacts are considered in meetings and information sharing, including holding virtual meetings, limiting printing of collateral, and offering other ways of providing useful information.

## **Funding Narrative**

- \$300,000 received in Year 1 Strategic Plan funding to support all Goal 4 objectives, which includes funds to support translation and stipend costs in the development of the Community Engagement and Language Access Plans.

On September 20, 2022, the Board approved a contract with Equity First Consulting for a not-to exceed amount of \$450,000 for an 18-month term ending in March 2024 to support the creation of a Community Engagement Plan.

While the County recently expanded its Communications Office to support County departments, the CAO, the Board of Supervisors and the County in communicating with the public and the media, the community engagement function remains a County-wide challenge. Currently, many departments do not have the experience, capacity, or funding, to conduct culturally sensitive and responsive community engagement that results in equitable public participation in government processes and services. The recent disasters that residents of Sonoma County have faced including wildfires, floods, and the current pandemic, have deepened the already existing inequities, and highlight the imperative need to center communities, particularly those historically marginalized by governments, and their experiences in the way in which we deliver services and create policies. This work cannot be done without a clear roadmap of how to effectively and consistently eliminate institutional barriers that prevent communities of color and other historically marginalized communities from engaging with their local government processes.

Different from traditional one-way communications distributed through mainstream systems and methods, such as press releases and social media, a County-wide Community Engagement Plan will provide guidance and best practices for facilitating culturally responsive spaces for connection between and among County departments and the wisdom and lived experiences of community members, community-based organizational partners, and other institutions and sectors with whom we partner to dismantle racial inequities in Sonoma County.

The Community Engagement Consultant will support the creation of a Community Engagement Plan for Board of Supervisors' consideration to achieve equitable participation and access to County government services and resources for underserved communities of color and other communities that have traditionally experienced marginalization from government processes and services. The Consultant will do this through a three-phase process grounded in a culturally responsive approach that captures the expertise and responds to the lived experiences of the different communities for which Sonoma County is home.

The Community Engagement consultant will start by assessing the County's existing Community Engagement plans, processes, and capabilities through a series of focus groups with staff. The second phase will involve a series of focus groups and interviews with external key stakeholders and partner organizations servicing communities of focus to support further refinement of the County's capabilities and gaps in service delivery for communities of color and others marginalized from government systems. The consultant recognizes the importance of understanding the cultural nuances when communicating with local Black, Indigenous, and other Communities of Color and will work with and compensate leaders of those communities to seek the feedback needed to understand the County's gaps in services while utilizing a trauma-informed approach and the familiarity of having a member of one's own community reach out to the communities of focus. The final phase of the project will include presenting the plan to the different internal stakeholders and members of the communities of focus to seek further feedback and finalize a Community

Engagement Plan that includes a set of standard community engagement operating guidelines or “best practices,” and resources that are culturally responsive and can be used by all County Departments to close gaps in services, with corresponding fiscal impacts for consideration by the Board of Supervisors.

**Objective 4.4.3**

**RESJ4-3** - Begin implementing strategies for regular community engagement to guide racial equity efforts.

### **Summary of Objective Implementation Status**

- Identify community members and stakeholder groups and/or build on ARPA work group's community partnerships
- Document lessons learned from fires and other projects
- Outline a process for engagement, starting with emergency response, by May 2022. This initial goal was shifted to include consideration of information collected during implementation of SB 160 with the Department of Emergency Management.
- Potentially use ARPA time-limited position to look at County community engagement efforts. The ARPA-funded Community Engagement Analyst was shifted away from the Community Resilience Program implementation to assist with the Community Engagement effort. In November, 2021, the Office of Equity, using largely existing funds, was approved for an additional allocation of a limited-term Department Analyst to support the implementation of this project.
- Identify and retain Consultant to work with the County Communications Team and the ARPA time-limited position to look at existing community engagement efforts, reviewing models for County community engagement and partnerships, and aiding in the development of a robust community engagement strategy for the County.
- Hire consultant in late 2022 with initial analysis, research, and community feedback gathering work projected to begin in early 2023. The project would be required to be completed and live to the public by the mid 2024, culminating with a cost and legal analysis presented to the Board of Supervisors for future steps or investments.

Initial timelines were pushed back by almost a year while the OoE was securing funding through the American Rescue Plan Act, as well as trying to secure staff capacity to conduct this work. Because earlier requests for staff were unfulfilled, initial timelines were not met. The OoE intends to hire a Department Analyst to manage this project in early February, 2023.

### **Key Milestone Update**

- Board-approved Community Engagement principles established (could be part of the framework).
- Community Engagement Framework including strategies, models and processes for inclusive engagement finalized and approved by Board.
- Community Engagement Framework Implementation Plan developed.
- Annual Community Engagement Plan to align with Significant Items developed (what does the year of community engagement efforts look like?)
- Gather existing data such as Portrait of Sonoma, community assessments, and other data to identify starting and goal indicators/measures.
- Data crucial to this work includes access to information, media availability to communities, engagement of members in the diverse communities, especially hardest-hit communities.
- Enlist community-based organizations to assist in gathering data where gaps exist.

In September, 2022, the OoE went to the Board for approval of a consultant to develop a Community Engagement Plan. That work will go through March, 2024, for presentation to the Board of both fiscal and substantive recommendations to support successful community engagement efforts by the County.

### **Coordination and Partnership Update**

- This goal and related objectives intersect primarily with objectives under the Organizational Excellence pillar, and objective leads in common from HR and CAO. Additionally, this objective intersects with the Healthy and Safe Communities pillar, objective 5.5 and the objective leads in common from CAO.
- Partnerships can be formed with local jurisdictions and community-based partners to leverage their contact with the public, especially in target communities. For example, the City of Santa Rosa has the Community Engagement initiatives, as do other jurisdictions. Many community-based partners focus their work in diverse geographic areas of the County, facilitating our need to reach all residents.
- Currently the Office of Equity does not have any staff capacity to support actual engagement efforts. It is likely that the Board item culminating in the presentation of the Community Engagement Plan will include a request for staff.

## **Community, Equity, and Climate Update**

- This goal and related objectives are focused on community and equity. The public will be engaged both virtually and in person through staff and community-based organizations.
- The success and effectiveness of the engagement approach and plans will be measured by subsequent community assessment surveys and by other methods including the Portrait of Sonoma, Los Cien Scorecard, etc.
- An equity lens will be applied in the development and implementation of the goals by centering community throughout the process and by including community-based organizations at all steps. Centering the community is essential at crucial steps of the process and the inclusion of community voices in the decision-making process.
- Vitaly important is to geographically identify partners in all areas so that the engagement and information is disseminated in the broadest manner possible.
- Where possible, we will ensure that climate impacts are considered in meetings and information sharing, including holding virtual meetings, limiting printing of collateral, and offering other ways of providing useful information.

## **Funding Narrative**

- \$300,000 received in Year 1 Strategic Plan funding to support all Goal 4 objectives, which includes funds to support translation and stipend costs in the development of the Community Engagement and Language Access Plans.

On September 20, 2022, the Board approved a contract with Equity First Consulting for a not-to exceed amount of \$450,000 for an 18-month term ending in March 2024 to support the creation of a Community Engagement Plan.

While the County recently expanded its Communications Office to support County departments, the CAO, the Board of Supervisors and the County in communicating with the public and the media, the community engagement function remains a County-wide challenge. Currently, many departments do not have the experience, capacity, or funding, to conduct culturally sensitive and responsive community engagement that results in equitable public participation in government processes and services. The recent disasters that residents of Sonoma County have faced including wildfires, floods, and the current pandemic, have deepened the already existing inequities, and highlight the imperative need to center communities, particularly those historically marginalized by governments, and their experiences in the way in which we deliver services and create policies. This work cannot be done without a clear roadmap of how to effectively and consistently eliminate institutional barriers that prevent communities of color and other historically marginalized communities from engaging with their local government processes.

Different from traditional one-way communications distributed through mainstream systems and methods, such as press releases and social media, a County-wide Community Engagement Plan will provide guidance and best practices for facilitating culturally responsive spaces for connection between and among County departments and the wisdom and lived experiences of community members, community-based organizational partners, and other institutions and sectors with whom we partner to dismantle racial inequities in Sonoma County.

The Community Engagement Consultant will support the creation of a Community Engagement Plan for Board of Supervisors' consideration to achieve equitable participation and access to County government services and resources for underserved communities of color and other communities that have traditionally experienced marginalization from government processes and services. The Consultant will do this through a three-phase process grounded in a culturally responsive approach that captures the expertise and responds to the lived experiences of the different communities for which Sonoma County is home.

The Community Engagement consultant will start by assessing the County's existing Community Engagement plans, processes, and capabilities through a series of focus groups with staff. The second phase will involve a series of focus groups and interviews with external key stakeholders and partner organizations servicing communities of focus to support further refinement of the County's capabilities and gaps in service delivery for communities of color and others marginalized from government systems. The consultant recognizes the importance of understanding the cultural nuances when communicating with local Black, Indigenous, and other Communities of Color and will work with and compensate leaders of those communities to seek the feedback needed to understand the County's gaps in services while utilizing a trauma-informed approach and the familiarity of having a member of one's own community reach out to the communities of focus. The final phase of the project will include presenting the plan to the different internal stakeholders and members of the communities of focus to seek further feedback and finalize a Community

Engagement Plan that includes a set of standard community engagement operating guidelines or “best practices,” and resources that are culturally responsive and can be used by all County Departments to close gaps in services, with corresponding fiscal impacts for consideration by the Board of Supervisors.

**Objective 4.4.4**

**RESJ4-4** - Develop and establish a language access policy for the County of Sonoma by end of 2021.

## **Summary of Objective Implementation Status**

This project was identified as a priority early in the creation of the Office of Equity, with a proposed timeline of completion by end of 2021. However, the Office lacked capacity to address this critical need. A significant amount of research, a countywide department survey, and initial fiscal analysis have all been completed to date and will facilitate this work being done more quickly. In December, 2021, the Board awarded ARPA funds for this purpose, and on September, 2022 approved a contract with Nimdzi Insights, LLC for consulting services for a not-to-exceed amount of \$185,850 for a 14-month term, ending on November 30, 2023.

As a community struck by multiple natural and man-made disasters, we have learned that effective communication between local government agencies and residents, with thoughtful regard to the languages they speak, is absolutely critical to ensuring public safety and saving lives. Therefore, we must ensure that every community member with whom County staff cannot communicate directly in their primary language has access to accurate, timely and effective translation of documents and interpretation of relevant information in a way that is also responsive to their cultural identities. To address this, the Language Access Plan and recommended Policy consultant will conduct a 3-phase process to develop a culturally responsive County-Wide Language Access Plan and recommended Policy.

The first phase of this process examines the makeup of the Sonoma County community and the responsibilities of the County as a local government institution, looks at other local jurisdictions' services, and then looks inward. The consultant will create a demographic analysis of the linguistically diverse communities in Sonoma County and will look at Federal requirements and regulations around language access services for local jurisdictions to assess our responsibilities and liabilities. The Consultant will assess the Language Access Services provided by other local jurisdictions and evaluate their applicability to the County of Sonoma.

Additionally, the consultant will assess the County's existing capabilities, practices, resources, service gaps, opportunities, and costs through a series of focus groups with County staff.

During the second phase, the consultant will conduct focus groups with LD and deaf and hard of hearing community members and organizations serving these communities to validate the data with lived experience, and further assess the County's language service gaps and limitations from the perspective of the communities experiencing underservice. The consultant will use this knowledge to develop a set of recommendations to improve our existing capabilities and meet the needs for improvement identified by the local LD communities.

The last phase is the development of a Language Access Plan and recommended Policy grounded in the data gathered through internal and external engagements. The development of the plan will be an iterative process that involves feedback and input from County staff, leadership, and community through a series of workshops.

The plan and proposed policy options will include recommendations for oversight, accountability, infrastructure, staffing, budget, and other resources needed to ensure a successful implementation of what is outlined in the plan.

## **Key Milestone Update**

The Language Access Plan is anticipated to be presented in FY 2023-24.

## **Coordination and Partnership Update**

The Office of Equity is the implementation lead on the related objectives. While the Office of Equity currently enjoys vibrant community partnerships with the Spanish-speaking and indigenous language-speaking populations and the community organizations that serve those populations, there are other non-dominant language speakers in our community with whom we have not engaged in meaningful ways. This project facilitates deeper knowledge and cements a foundation for ongoing dialogue.

## **Community, Equity, and Climate Update**

A language access plan will ensure clarity and consistency in County communications and service delivery. It will also ensure that the County is effectively serving and is in dialogue with all of its residents. In past events, non-English speakers have been left behind.

Community engagement efforts will be geographically dispersed throughout each supervisorial district. We would work to include all communities who experience marginalization in county communication and service delivery. Stipends are a regularly used tool by CBOs to value the work of community members.

Supporting the creation of a language access plan will increase equitable access for families and communities trying to recover from the economic and health impacts of this Pandemic.

**Funding Narrative**

The Office of Equity received funding through an ARPA application.