



CITY OF IOWA CITY MEMORANDUM

Date: July 23, 2020
To: Geoff Fruin, City Manager
From: Stefanie Bowers, Human Rights Coordinator & Equity Director
Re: Update on Racial Equity Toolkits

City Council Resolution 20-159 called for the continued use of the racial equity toolkit by City Departments and for expanded training on such tools for the City Council and business community. This memo provides a brief memo on the history of the City's use of a Racial Equity Toolkit (RET).

To date, all City departments and divisions have been introduced to utilizing a RET to review initiatives, policies, programs, and services with the specific intent on elevating opportunities, identifying issues and other considerations to better inform City services as it relates to racial equity.

Since 2017, departments have been receiving more individualized instruction from the Equity Director on how to better meet the needs of the community with the use of RET. This individualized instruction includes having each department use a RET on 2 current procedures, policies, program, or service, and 1 new (or potential new) procedure, policy, program, or service.

The RET utilized is adapted from The Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE) and King County (Seattle), Washington. The RET lays out a process and a set of questions to guide the development, implementation and evaluation of services, policies, initiatives, programs, and budget issues to address the impacts on communities of color. The RET has three stages.

Stage I What is the impact of the proposal on determinants of equity?
The aim of the first stage is to determine whether the proposal will have an impact on equity or not.

Stage II Assessment: Who is affected?
This stage identifies who is likely to be affected by the proposal.

Stage III Impact review: Opportunities for action

The third stage involves identifying the impacts of the proposal from an equity perspective. The goal is to develop a list of likely impacts and actions to ensure that negative impacts can be mitigated, and positive impacts enhanced.

City Council members, all Department Directors, and all Division Heads were first introduced to RET in November 2015, when the Government Alliance of Race and Equity (GARE) delivered an all-day training on Race Matters: Tools & Strategies for Eliminating Racial Inequity. The City became a member of GARE earlier that fall, the second city in the State of Iowa, and are to present. GARE is a national network of government working to achieve racial equity and advance opportunities for all. GARE provides a multi-layered approach for maximum impact by supporting a targeted cohort of jurisdictions and providing best practices, tools, and resources to help build and

sustain current efforts and build a national movement for racial equity. By developing a “collective impact” approach firmly grounded in inclusion, government can play a key role in collaborations for achieving racial equity, centering community, and leveraging institutional partnerships.

Example RET Outcomes:

- Elimination of late fees for books in the children's and teen collections at the library.
- Improved process for how employment opportunities are advertised and promoted to the community.
- Translations of core City documents in French African, Mandarin, Spanish, Swahili, and Arabic.
- Increased the number of participants in the Low-Income Utility Discount Program.
- Increased outreach to neighborhoods that have higher numbers of nuisance and discrimination complaints.
- Requirement of a Black, Indigenous, Persons of Color (BIPOC) impact statement as part of the Grants Management Policy.
- Creation of an online feedback form for the Police Department.

Racial Equity Training

To better assist City Department, Divisions and City Council operationalize around racial equity, supportive trainings have continued to be offered. In April of 2017, the City sponsored an all-day GARE training offered to all City staff and City Council members on Advancing Racial Equity: The Role of Government. Topics at the training included: Key Racial Equity Concepts, Operationalizing Around Racial Equity, Using a Racial Equity Toolkit, Race Out of Place: A Conversation about Race and Policing, Workforce Equity: The Public Sector as an Employer, and Mitigating Implicit Bias: Designing and Implementing A Comprehensive Professional Development Program.

More recently, to further assist City staff across all sectors in shifting real decision making power and equitable resources to those most harmed by the lingering legacy and reality of racism in our community, GARE delivered an all-day training on Advancing Racial Equity: Key Steps to Inclusive Public Engagement in March of 2019. All GARE trainings have been in addition to supplemental programming the City offers to staff on an ongoing basis on implicit/unconscious bias, cultural competency/proficiency, and other opportunities to review our work as City Staff on matters of racial equity.

To support City staff in normalizing concepts of racial equity, organizing staff to work together for transformational change, and operationalizing new practices, policies and procedures that result in more fair and just outcomes, the Equity Director continues to take advanced trainings based upon best practices across the country to better assist in advancing racial equity that is utilized in the individualized instructions to City departments and divisions with the practical goal of reducing racial disparities/disproportionately and, ultimately, achieving racial equity.

Looking Ahead

The Equity Director will continue to work with City staff from all departments to expand knowledge and use of the RET. Changes to policy and practices will be implemented by departments on an ongoing basis and when appropriate presented to the City Manager or City Council for approval. As an example, in the coming weeks staff will present proposed changes to the City’s utility billing practices that stem from an internal use of the RET.

Staff is currently working on related training opportunities for the general public and the business community. Opportunities for training have been offered throughout July from the City's Senior Center, Library and Office of Human Rights. This includes a July 22nd business community training that reached maximum capacity. These efforts will be expanded in the coming months to help advance the Council's racial equity objectives.