



Memorandum

TO: PUBLIC SAFETY, FINANCE
AND STRATEGIC SUPPORT
COMMITTEE

FROM: Zulma Maciel

SUBJECT: See Below

DATE: May 28, 2025

Approved

Date:

6/5/2025

COUNCIL DISTRICT: Citywide

SUBJECT: Advancing Racial and Social Equity Through Culture and Practice
Annual Report

RECOMMENDATION

Accept the annual report of the City Manager's Office of Racial and Social Equity's efforts toward advancing racial and social equity, inclusion, and belonging.

SUMMARY AND OUTCOME

The Advancing Racial and Social Equity through Culture and Practice Annual Report highlights the progress and impact of the Office of Racial and Social Equity (ORSE) across its three key portfolios: Racial and Social Equity, Inclusion and Belonging, and Disability Affairs. It also outlines current challenges and identifies forward-looking opportunities to deepen institutional accountability and alignment. The report serves to inform the Public Safety, Finance and Strategic Support Committee of the City's continued commitment to equity-centered governance and the concrete steps taken to embed equity into the City culture, operations, and service delivery.

BACKGROUND

Guided by its mission to embed an equity practice and embody a culture that sustains it, the Office of Racial and Social Equity (ORSE) has been instrumental in maintaining the City's strategic commitment to equity in all aspects of municipal operations, leadership, and culture. Rooted in a recognition of historical and current racial and social disparities, ORSE maintains a leadership framework through defined values, standards, and

accountability mechanisms. It emphasizes centering community voice, using disaggregated data, and building staff capacity to drive systemic change. ORSE plays a central role in supporting departments across three core portfolios—**Racial and Social Equity, Inclusion and Belonging, and Disability Affairs**—while fostering a culture of shared responsibility and continuous learning.

The memorandum highlights the ways in which ORSE has strengthened the City's capacity to assess the impacts of decisions and investments, with a focused effort on addressing the needs of residents who have historically faced the most significant barriers and adverse outcomes. In addition, the Attachment highlights the numerous strategies successfully implemented in Fiscal Year (FY) 2024-2025, as well as future efforts aimed at the following objectives:

Objective 1: Normalize and culturalize racial and social equity, inclusion, and belonging principles in the City Organization.

Objective 2: Establish and maintain infrastructure and organizational capacity to support the City's commitment to eliminate inequities.

Objective 3: Establish equity practices that create a welcoming, inclusive, and accessible environment that enables all people in San José to thrive.

Objective 4: Remove barriers, improve access, and strengthen engagement for and from immigrant communities, people with disabilities, women, and other underserved groups.

While the accomplishments are significant, opportunities remain to deepen and accelerate impact. National shifts in discourse and policy regarding diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) have posed both challenges and renewed urgency. Local implementation varies due to limited departmental resources, and the need for sustained leadership support is critical. Looking ahead, ORSE is poised to build upon a strong foundation to standardize practices, support deeper departmental integration, and ensure equitable outcomes for all residents.

ANALYSIS

Racial and Social Equity

The City continues to advance an equity-centered approach, marked by measurable progress in institutional practices and departmental engagement. Guided by the leadership of ORSE, the City has made meaningful progress in embedding equity principles into institutional practices, with all departments actively implementing Racial

and Social Equity Action Plans (RSEAPs). This year's implementation data underscores the breadth and momentum of this effort:

- 160 equity actions were completed over a two-year period for FY 2022-2024.
- 55 equity-related actions have already been completed for the FY 2024–2026 cycle (as of March 2025).
- 184 equity-related actions remain in progress across departments.

ORSE continued to support departments through structured engagement, including regular sessions with department leads. These sessions focused on enhancing staff capabilities in equity practice. Survey feedback highlights their impact:

- 100% of departments found the sessions a valuable use of their time.
- 88% gained new tools or skills applicable to their work.

To promote transparency and reinforce accountability, RSEAPs are now published alongside a public-facing dashboard aligned with the newly adopted Equity Values and Standards Policy and Racial and Social Equity Ordinance¹. This step marks a significant advancement in making departmental equity work visible and measurable to the public.

Capacity-building efforts also expanded this year in both scale and substance. Staff facilitated nine specialized workshops, engaging over 400 City staff in topics such as Inclusive Leadership, Inclusive Facilitation, and Equity Impact Analysis. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive:

- 84% of participants reported gaining new tools or strategies they plan to implement.
- The average training rating was 4.7 out of 5 for both quality and relevance.

The increased demand for advanced training reflects a cultural shift within the organization—one where equity is no longer a peripheral goal but a central framework shaping how the City administers, serves, and evolves. Together, these accomplishments reflect San José's firm and growing foundation for systemic change. Through data-informed planning, strategic engagement, and continuous learning, ORSE and City departments are collectively building an equity muscle and mindset that ultimately will benefit everyone.

¹ Racial and Social Equity Action Plans: <https://www.sanjoseca.gov/your-government/departments-offices/office-of-the-city-manager/racial-and-social-equity/racial-and-social-equity-action-plans>

Equity Values and Standards Policy:

<https://www.sanjoseca.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/114681/638627814182830000>

Racial and Social Equity Ordinance:

<https://www.sanjoseca.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/114683/638627814226770000>

Inclusion and Belonging

San José's commitment to inclusion continues to serve as both a moral imperative and a strategic advantage. As a Certified Welcoming City, designated in 2022, San José has led national and local efforts that elevate trust, safety, and participation among immigrant and historically marginalized communities. In FY 2024–2025, San José advanced its inclusion and belonging work through seven key areas of impact:

1. City Policies Reinforced Safety and Trust for Immigrant Communities.

To reinforce safety and public trust, the City adopted Council Resolution RES2025-19², formally reaffirming that City employees do not engage in the enforcement of federal immigration laws. This resolution not only ensured that all residents—regardless of immigration status—could safely seek assistance and report crimes but also promoted democratic participation by reducing fear within immigrant communities. In support of this commitment, *Safe Site Protocols* were distributed to all City departments, and 11 train-the-trainer sessions were conducted to equip staff with the tools necessary to uphold local protections and respond appropriately during potential immigration enforcement encounters.

2. Citywide Staff Training Builds Capacity to Foster Safe, Inclusive Spaces.

Recognizing the need to foster inclusive and safe environments across City services, the ORSE spearheaded the distribution of over 5,000 multilingual “Know Your Rights” cards and delivered trauma-informed de-escalation training to 194 frontline staff, alongside bystander intervention training for 40 employees. These efforts enhanced the City's ability to serve diverse communities with care and awareness.

3. San José Community Organizations and Volunteers Joined Together to Expand Access to Immigration Legal Services and Screenings for Vulnerable Populations.

Expanding access to legal support was another area of significant impact. The City partnered with Tahirih Legal Services, the Rapid Response Network, and a team of 38 volunteer immigration attorneys, including 24 who served pro bono, to provide legal screenings and consultations for more than 100 low-income immigrants, including asylum seekers and survivors of violence. In parallel, a naturalization clinic, hosted in collaboration with Project New Citizen, assisted 1,010 legal permanent residents from 73 countries—with the support of 141 community volunteers—in navigating the path to citizenship.

² City of San José Resolution No. RES2025-19: A Resolution of the Council of the City of San José Reaffirming the City's Commitment to Protecting the Rights and Safety of Immigrant Communities: <https://records.sanjoseca.gov/Resolutions/RES2025-19.pdf>

4. Workplace Protections and Legal Literacy Were Strengthened for Employers.

The City also worked to enhance understanding of immigrant worker rights. A training session for 48 local employers, co-hosted with the American Business Immigration Coalition and Santa Clara University School of Law's Alexander Community Law Center, addressed compliance with immigration-related labor laws, including potential I-9 audits, workplace raids, and worker shortages.

5. Civic Education Deepened Community Participation.

In support of long-term civic inclusion, ORSE launched the Civics Master Class, which engaged 351 residents, including 84 foreign-born participants, many of whom expressed increased confidence in engaging with local government. Additional programming, such as the *Conversations Across Cultures* series of five events held in collaboration with the San José Public Library, fostered connection and dialogue among San José's diverse populations by bringing together 71 long-term residents, immigrants, and other community members to address current challenges.

6. Development of Welcoming San José Plan 3.0 Centered Community and Staff Voice.

Planning efforts were guided by the development of the Welcoming San José Plan 3.0,³ shaped through six community focus groups, input from 24 organizations, and participation from 15 City departments. This inclusive process underscored the City's commitment to embedding immigrant priorities into City infrastructure and strategic direction.

7. San José Elevated Its Advocacy for Equity-Aligned State Policies.

Staff worked closely with the Intergovernmental Relations team to monitor and advocate for 17 state-level bills that support immigrant inclusion. Legislative priorities focused on expanding language access, legal aid, housing equity, healthcare, and protections against discrimination—reinforcing San José's role as a statewide leader in equity policy.

Together, these efforts demonstrate San José's continued leadership in shaping a city where all residents—regardless of immigration status, background, or ability—feel safe, valued, and connected. By embedding inclusion and belonging across policy, practice, and partnerships, San José strengthens the resilience and prosperity of the entire community.

³ Welcoming San José Plan 3.0 (2025-2030): <https://www.sanjoseca.gov/your-government/departments-offices/office-of-the-city-manager/racial-equity/immigrant-affairs>

Disability Affairs

The new Disability Affairs portfolio gained ground in operationalizing the [City's Disability Inclusion Equity Pledge](#)⁴ adopted by the City Council in June 2023. The pledge defines disability as an evolving concept shaped by attitudinal and environmental barriers. The City's approach this year was guided by five strategic priorities: cultivating proactive accessibility; building awareness through education; strengthening data collection; advancing policy and advocacy; and fostering partnerships with the community.

This approach facilitated ongoing efforts to foster equitable opportunities for people with disabilities, including other intersectional marginalized groups based on age, gender identity, immigration status, language, race, religion, and others that face systemic inequities. Staff collaboration across departments and with individuals with lived experience produced the following key accomplishments.

- Conducted 25 accessibility site visits involving 130 participants, during which staff explored best practices and resources related to disability and language access.
- Expanded a suite of disability inclusion tools on public and internal platforms, enhancing awareness and resources available citywide.
- In partnership with the City Manager's Office Customer Service Team, developed a set of training modules on disability fundamentals and digital accessibility.
- Helped launch the Accessibility Liaison Collaboration, a working group of 23 representatives from City departments and offices that meets regularly for training, shared learning, and guidance on accessibility and inclusive practices.
- Monitored implementation of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) grievance procedure and provided technical guidance on accessibility to departments, including Emergency Management, Housing, Police, Public Works, and others.
- Supported organizational learning with six pilot training sessions that were held on topics such as ableism and disability awareness, reaching more than 150 employees.
- In partnership with Council Districts 1 and 9, the County of Santa Clara, and the San Andreas Regional Center, the City co-hosted its 16th Annual Disability Awareness Day, drawing over 500 community members on October 10, 2024.
- In partnership with the Information Technology Department and City Manager's Office Communications Team, staff hosted a successful Employee Lunch-and-Learn session on digital accessibility titled "Empowering Inclusion: Unlocking Digital Accessibility" on May 15, 2025.

⁴ <https://www.sanjoseca.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/100121/638258629675330000>

Together, these efforts represent meaningful progress in operationalizing disability inclusion throughout the City. Staff have taken deliberate steps to normalize proactive accessibility, dismantle institutional barriers, and ensure that programs, services, and public spaces are equitable and inclusive for all San José residents—especially those with intersecting marginalized identities.

FY 2024-2025 CHALLENGES

Racial and Social Equity

The national landscape for equity work has become increasingly restrictive, with legislative and executive actions at the federal level rolling back support for DEI initiatives. These shifts undermine local momentum and morale, particularly for community partners reliant on federal aid. Budget cuts to programs such as housing vouchers and Medicare risk deepening local disparities and stretching already limited City resources. Locally, while all departments maintain active RSEAPs, progress varies due to limited staffing capacity and implementation risks becoming inconsistent and fragmented.

Inclusion and Belonging

Despite San José's Certified Welcoming designation, immigrant communities—especially undocumented and mixed-status families—face heightened fear, exacerbated by changing federal immigration policies. Language barriers, digital access limitations, and persistent misinformation further restrict their access to services. Additionally, overextended legal service networks and gaps in culturally competent health and housing support present structural barriers. In addition, there is a need for unified messaging, stronger interdepartmental coordination, and clear cross-sector collaboration.

Disability Affairs

The Disability Inclusion Equity Pledge affirms the City's commitment to accessibility; however, embedding disability equity into daily practice remains a gradual and complex process. Few departments have incorporated accessibility actions into their RSEAPs, and sustained change will require ongoing education, interdepartmental coordination, and accountability structures. Expanding disability equity across departments is essential to achieving inclusive outcomes for people with disabilities and other intersecting marginalized identities.

FY 2025-2026 OPPORTUNITIES

Racial and Social Equity

The City Council's unanimous adoption of the Racial and Social Equity Ordinance and Equity Values and Standards Council Policy establishes a strong organizational framework for equity. This formal mandate supports the standardization of practices across departments, builds accountability measures, and aligns departmental performance indicators with equity values and outcomes.

Since its inception, ORSE has focused on building internal capacity. In 2025, 86% of staff indicated they understand how racial equity, inclusion, accessibility, and intersectionality relate to their roles—up from 79% in 2022. Similarly, confidence in equity analysis continues to grow. In 2023, 13% of staff reported they were extremely knowledgeable in equity analysis; by 2025, that figure increased to 22%. Likewise, the percentage of staff reporting they were extremely confident in guiding staff in equity service implementation rose from 17% in 2024 to 28% in 2025.

These improvements underscore ORSE's continued commitment to advancing a culture and practice of equity across the organization. As expressed by a recent survey respondent, "Racial equity is [about] fixing the system, not the people." Through targeted training, technical support, and strategic guidance, ORSE will continue to equip departments with tools, resource, and knowledge that is necessary to embed equity into City services and deliver more inclusive outcomes for all San José residents.

Inclusion and Belonging

With the recent City Council approval of the *Welcoming San José Plan 3.0*, the path forward is clear: implementation in year one will require an integrated capital strategy, regional multi-sector alignment, a coordinated, citywide effort to demonstrate the City's commitment to continuing to advance its equity values and maintaining our Certified Welcoming status.

1. *Develop an Integrated Capital Strategy with the County and Private Sector.*
Achieving the long-term goals outlined in the *Welcoming San José Plan 3.0* requires more than programmatic efforts—it demands a cross-sector, integrated capital strategy that aligns financial investments with the City's equity and inclusion priorities. The last six months have only strengthened the relationships and coordination between the County and City staff, and the year ahead will enable focus on private sector partners, philanthropic institutions, and community stakeholders to ensure that resources are directed toward projects that close equity gaps and reflect the lived experiences of immigrant and historically underserved communities. By aligning local investments with the Plan's seven focus areas, San José can ensure that infrastructure investments reinforce a future where every resident—regardless of origin, ability, or income—can thrive and belong.

2. *Strengthen Regional Multi-Sector Alignment.*

As a regional leader in equity and inclusion, the City of San José is working with partners across the Bay Area on a proactive messaging strategy that will engage communities with timely, accurate information on local policies and immigrant protections—reinforcing safety, dignity, and trust. In coordination with the Immigrant Public Education Network (IPEN) and Bay Area jurisdictions, San José is also helping to lead a broader regional narrative strategy that moves beyond conventional “DEI” language toward a more powerful and unifying message of belonging and shared prosperity. This effort will develop actionable messaging that speaks to the lived experiences of diverse communities while addressing the region’s stark disparities in opportunity by geography, race, gender, and income. By investing in storytelling that reflects our collective values and affirms the humanity of all residents, San José is helping to shape a regional narrative that replaces fear with connection and division with possibility.

3. *Coordinate a Citywide Implementation Effort.*

While ORSE will lead the implementation process, success depends on active participation from every department, every partner, and every resident. This is a shared endeavor—rooted in collaboration, accountability, and a collective belief that San José is at its best when all communities are represented and heard. In the coming months, staff will work with internal teams and cross-sector stakeholders to disseminate the Plan and begin aligning departmental priorities—especially the RSEAPs, Accessibility efforts, and Welcoming initiatives. This first phase of implementation will be followed by continued technical support, training, and interdepartmental collaboration to integrate Welcoming strategies across City functions and to engage partners in realizing a more inclusive and connected San José.

4. *Begin Recertification as a Certified Welcoming City.*

To reinforce our commitment and maintain national recognition, staff will begin the recertification process with *Welcoming America*. This rigorous, third-party evaluation will help us assess the City’s progress, identify areas for growth, and ensure that our practices align with national standards for immigrant inclusion and equitable governance. The recertification process not only reinforces accountability but also signals to residents, partners, and prospective stakeholders that San José remains dedicated to being a place where all people—regardless of where they were born—are welcomed, supported, and able to thrive.

Disability Affairs

Looking ahead to FY 2025–2026 and beyond, the City of San José remains committed to deepening its work within the Disability Affairs portfolio by focusing on capacity building and systemic change. Key initiatives include a coordinated update to the City’s ADA Transition Plan, a comprehensive review and revision of internal policies to ensure

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accessibility and the development of standardized procedures that support the inclusion of people with disabilities. In addition, the City plans to roll out updated disability equity training modules organization-wide to enhance staff awareness and education.

In response to recent updates to federal accessibility standards, San José will also prioritize digital accessibility compliance and training, ensuring City systems align with new ADA technical requirements by the April 2026 deadline. Continued collaboration with City departments will remain central to advancing accessibility improvements in both infrastructure and services.

The integration of the Disability Affairs portfolio within ORSE reinforces an intersectional approach to disability—recognizing that individuals' experiences are shaped by multiple, overlapping social identities. Through this approach, the City aims to strengthen data collection, identify equity gaps, and develop policies and interventions that meaningfully improve outcomes for people with disabilities and other marginalized communities.

COORDINATION

This memorandum was coordinated with the City Attorney's Office.

/s/
ZULMA MACIEL
Director,
City Manager's Office of Racial and
Social Equity

For questions, please contact Andrea Truong, Racial and Social Equity Manager, at andrea.truong@sanjoseca.gov.

ATTACHMENT:

Office of Racial and Social Equity Work Plan, FY 2024-2025 Accomplishments



The Office of Racial and Social Equity's **Vision** is a City of San José in which all people in our community and organization thrive and where no racial and social disparities exist.

The Office of Racial and Social Equity's **Mission** is to support the City to embed a racial and social equity practice and embody a culture that sustains it.

We commit to being:

Courageous

Collaborative

Compassionate

Accountable

Inclusive



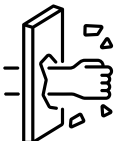
Objective 1: Normalize and culturalize racial and social equity, inclusion, and belonging principles in the City Organization.



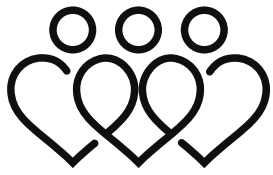
Objective 2: Establish and maintain infrastructure and organizational capacity to support the City's commitment to eliminate inequities.



Objective 3: Establish equity practices that create a welcoming, inclusive, and accessible environment that enables all people in San José to thrive.



Objective 4: Remove barriers, improve access and strengthen engagement for and from immigrant communities, people with disabilities, women, and other underserved groups.



Objective 1: Normalize and culturalize racial and social equity, inclusion, and belonging principles in the City Organization.

Outcome	Strategy	Notable Performance Measures & Outputs
Increased Knowledge, Skills, Engagement, Commitment, Application	Implement inclusive leadership program with Senior and Executive Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Participants rating of 4.4/5 rating of quality leadership training• 86% of participants rated themselves as confident in their ability to be an inclusive leader
Increased Knowledge	Provide trainings that reinforce foundational racial and social equity concepts and definitions, and incorporate disability fundamentals	86% participants reported that they understand how racial equity, inclusion, accessibility, and intersectionality relate to their role as a City employee
Increase Knowledge, Increased Skills	Provide trainings and develop modules to build disability inclusion awareness and proactive accessibility in design	100% of attendees noted they would use a training concept they learned into their work
Increased Engagement, Sense of Belonging	Host Building Belonging Conversations for City of San Jose Staff to build upon and strengthen trauma-informed culture, racial and social equity mindsets, and inclusive practices and provide staff space to feel heard, seen, and safe at CSJ	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 100% of attendees learned something new or broadened their perspective• 88% participants noted that this event can influence change within their Department



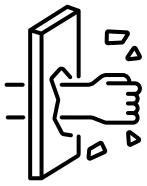
Objective 2: Establish and maintain infrastructure and organizational capacity to support the City's commitment to eliminate inequities.

Outcome	Strategy	Notable Performance Measures & Outputs
Increased Engagement, Skills, Application, Commitment	Support, Monitor, and Publish City Departmental Racial and Social Equity Action Plans (RSEAP) and Progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 22 Depts with Active Racial and Social Equity Action Plans• 55 Dept Actions have been completed• 100% of RSEAP coordinators note that ORSE's facilitated sessions are a good use of their time
Increased Engagement, Belonging, and Skills	Facilitate Citywide Racial Equity and Inclusion Group (REDI) and Departmental Equity Practitioners	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 10 meetings• 100% of attendees reported the REDI sessions were a good use of time• 87% of attendees experienced feelings of connections to their colleagues
Increased Engagement, Skills, and Commitment	Establish citywide working group of accessibility liaisons across departments to support disability access and language access per Language Access Audit	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 22 Departments with an Accessibility Liaisons• 5 Convenings• Participants rated 4.3/5 for quality of convenings
Increased Skills, Knowledge, Application	Implement training focused on operationalizing equity analysis in programs and departments	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 84% participants reported that they would use a tool they learned from the training into their work



Objective 3: Establish equity practices that create a welcoming, inclusive, and accessible environment that enables all people in San José to thrive.

Outcome	Strategy	Notable Performance Measures & Outputs
Increased Commitment, Application, Skills	Host Conversations across Cultures in community to foster meaningful connections between long-term residents, immigrant, and other communities to address current challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 89% of attendees identified as being born in a different country• 89% of attendees reported they learned something new or broadened their perspective• 5 sessions held, total of #71 attendees
Increased Engagement, Sense of Belonging	Collaborate with departments citywide on disability inclusion and accessibility improvements based on findings of pilot gap analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 100% Departments participants reported that they increased their awareness of available disability resources and tools
Increase Engagement, Sense of Belonging, Skills	Support and civically engage SJ4ALL members in City Priority Project Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 13 Meetings• 80% of SJ4ALL members reported SJ4ALL was effective in its mission• 4/5 rating among SJ4ALL members on facilitation satisfaction
Increased Commitment, Application, Skills	Conduct site visits across City departments with Language Access Manager to support equitable customer service; reinforce language and disability accessibility considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 25 Site visits to City Facilities



Objective 4: Remove barriers, improve access and strengthen engagement for and from immigrant communities, people with disabilities, women, and other underserved groups.

Outcome	Strategy	Notable Performance Measures & Outputs
Increase Skills, Knowledge, Engagement	Expand to promote more civic engagement: Implement, monitor, and measure the civics curriculum and impact of participation by all, with additional focus on immigrant community	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 98% respondents reported that after the Civic Master Class they had a understanding of different structures and responsibilities of U.S. Federal, State, and local government• 94% participants reported that they had the skills & confidence to engage and participate in public meetings and policy making at the City
Increase Sense of Belonging	Foster environment of community wellbeing, safety, and sense of belonging	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 81% of participants who attended a training on Rapid Response Network reported that they Agree/Strongly Agree that the City is a welcoming and inclusive place for all including refugees, asylees, and immigrants
Increased Commitment	Collaborate with County and community organizations to develop a coordinated welcoming network strategy for new arrivals	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 3 Legal Consultation Clinics completed• 96% of participants reported that they understood next steps & how to access resources
Increased Commitment	Develop Welcome San Jose 3.0 Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Welcoming Plan 3.0 (2025-2030) approved by Council• 6 Community Stakeholder Focus Groups• 65% who participated in Welcoming Plan identified that they were born in a different country