



# Memorandum

**TO:** NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES  
AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE

**FROM:** Zulma Maciel

**SUBJECT:** CITY INITIATIVES ROADMAP:  
ADVANCING EQUITY THROUGH  
CULTURE AND PRACTICE STATUS REPORT

**DATE:** May 23, 2023

Approved

Date

6/1/23

## **RECOMMENDATION**

Accept the status report on “Advancing Equity Through Culture and Practice” issued by the Office of Racial Equity.

## **SUMMARY AND OUTCOME**

The Neighborhood Services and Education Committee will be aware of significant efforts by the Office of Racial Equity to embed an equity mindset and practice in the organization as well activities that promote inclusion and belonging of immigrants in San Jose.

## **BACKGROUND**

The Office of Racial Equity (ORE) was established in June 2020 for the purpose of working across departments to operationalize equity by explicitly identifying ways to improve outcomes for historically underserved and under resourced communities, such as but not limited to, Chicano/Latino/a/x, Black, First Nation/Native American, Asian Native Hawai'ian /Pacific Islanders, immigrants, refugees, undocumented, LGBTQ+, formerly incarcerated, low-income, disabled, and unhoused people. This includes integrating the critical work outlined in the [Welcoming San José Plan 2.0 \(WSJ\)](#) which aims to deepen the inclusion and belonging work so that all people thrive. It is with this overarching vision that the ORE approaches the work within the City organization and San José community.

Last summer, the ORE Team crafted a vision and mission statement that reflects the aspiration and the strategic support role the Office has within the organization.

***Vision:** A San José in which all people in our community and organization thrive and where no racial disparities exist.*

***Mission:** To support the City of San José in embedding a racial equity practice and embody a culture that sustains it.*

The team also outlined a set of strategies that would propel the City towards operationalizing racial equity. Much of which is covered in the Attachment: *Office of Racial Equity Work Plan 2022-2024*

The City of San Jose remains committed to efforts that build the organization’s capacity to incorporate equity into decision-making, practices, and norms. It has made steady progress in critical equity analysis skill development, adoption of tools to facilitate efforts, incorporating data and lived expertise to inform decisions, and embodying an equity culture.

An endorsement of the value of equity was exemplified last fall when the majority of San Jose voters approved Measure I. A measure that will add a new section in the City’s Charter stating the following: *“The Mayor and City Council shall adopt and maintain a statement of values regarding racial and social equity, inclusion, and racial and social justice to provide guidance to City officers and employees in their conduct while discharging their public responsibilities, including development and implementation of decisions, policies, budgets, programs, standards, assessments, and practices of the City of San José”*. The implementation of this measure reinforces the need for the City organization to maintain its commitment and strengthen its capacity to advance equity.

## **ANALYSIS**

The City organization, along with many other public agencies, has adopted the Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE) framework: *normalizing, organizing, and operationalizing*.<sup>1</sup> The framework is designed to integrate explicit racial equity considerations in policies, practices, programs, and budgets. While the approach leads with race, it does not end with race, it considers intersectionality. Intersectionality is the acknowledgment that discrimination occurs among other marginalized identities and experiences such as having a disability, gender, sexual orientation, and many more.

As such, ORE’s Work Plan mirrors the framework and is focused on four main objectives:

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

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

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<sup>1</sup> GARE’s theory of change is based on: Normalize, Organize, and Operationalize. *Normalize* is the shared knowledge, terminology, and definitions. *Organize* refers to the sustainable, supported structure so that there is long-term resources to carry out racial equity work. *Operationalize* refers to the implementation of analysis and impact in policies, plans, that effect residents and staff.

**Objective 3:** Establish equity practices that create a welcoming and inclusive environment that allows immigrants, residents of color, and all people in San José to thrive.

**Objective 4:** Improve immigrant access to City information and services, and augment immigrant participation in civic life.

The ORE was mindful of integrating the four pillars of the *Welcoming San José plan* (Leadership and Communications, Access and Engagement, Educational and Economic Opportunity, and Safe Communities) into the overarching objectives outlined above. By focusing on broader themes of racial equity while including a lens on immigrant communities, ORE is better positioned to coordinate its efforts across City departments.

In general, the organization is making incremental progress on equity, inclusion and belonging, however, there is still much work to be done. City departments are at varied stages in level of understanding and implementation of the work. Some departments are at the “beginner” stage, while many are at “emerging,” and few are “advanced.” There is need for more regular training around basic concepts and definitions, as well as advanced training for those that are seeking to strengthen skills. As such, ORE has been nimble and adaptive at recognizing the varied needs across departments and has tailored opportunities to meet the organization’s readiness in operationalizing equity work.

### Highlights

- 1. Learning and Development** - The City of San José was the first large city to mandate a two-part foundational racial equity training for the City workforce. Over 5,000 City employees completed the training in the spring of 2022, and most new City staff are required to complete the training within 30 days of hire. The training was highly rated among staff, and ORE continues to see high compliance rate among employees. Post survey results showed that 40% of employees reported they felt equipped to have internal and external conversations about race and inequities. Normalizing and increasing comfortability about race and racial inequities are vital to advancing racial equity and will be an essential component to future work. In addition, staff organized 15 trainings/workshops focused on racial equity, inclusion and belonging for 410 employees.

In September 2022, in partnership with The Justice Collective, a racial equity training expert, staff organized a Council Study Session to both elected officials and senior staff. Additionally, ORE provided learning and development opportunities to both senior and executive staff centered around identity, equity, and leadership, and partnered with the Human Resources Department on *Trauma Informed and Resiliency Oriented Culture* and *Human Centered Design Learning Lab*.

- 2. Budgeting For Equity** - As a strategic support function to the organization, ORE continues to provide resources and tools that consider equity. For example, ORE and the Budget Office have worked with departments to complete Budgeting for Equity

worksheets during the past three budget development cycles. Many cities across the country participate in a similar budgeting for equity process and like San Jose, are learning and iterating every year. In the budgeting for equity process, departments are tasked to focus on a Core Service Area and submit a budget proposal that considers equity, through a series of questions and answers, and describes who will be impacted by any reductions and/or additions.

In FY 22-23, 100% of City departments submitted a budgeting for equity worksheet. While ORE has observed improvements in the quality of submissions, it has become clear that staff turnover is both a challenge for departments as well as ORE. With staff turnover, there is an annual need to retrain and set expectations with incoming staff. As such, ORE has limited the revisions to the worksheet and process to minimize disruption and maintain consistency.

- 3. Racial Equity Action Plans** - Eighteen (18) City departments have developed Racial Equity Action Plans (REAP) and have completed over 123 activities that advance equity; ranging from “normalizing” exercises to “operationalizing” practices. ORE has been an active partner in both reporting and monitoring the plans and providing technical assistance when needed. One of the challenges that departments face is the lack of resources and/or dedicated staff to amplify or implement the strategies outlined in their respective REAPs. With high vacancies and turnover, it often becomes burdensome for many staff, even for those that are highly committed to the work.
- 4. San Jose for All Advisory Group** - ORE is proud to have led a community co-created process to form an advisory group: *San José for All*. This group will provide a community perspective and feedback on projects identified by the group that centers the most vulnerable communities. ORE is applying the principles of effective and inclusive community engagement and will continuously evaluate and iterate *San José for All* to better meet the needs of the group and the City. The group will officially launch in the summer of 2023.
- 5. Certified Welcoming and Interactive** - San José became the second city in California to be *Certified Welcoming*.<sup>2</sup> This recognition is an endorsement of the City’s keen attention to the needs and aspirations of immigrants and by extension the significant role of local nonprofit organizations. While ORE saw many successes through its various welcoming and belonging events, ORE most recently co-hosted a global, 650+person conference in downtown San José: *Welcoming Interactive*.<sup>3</sup> As host city for the event, the City of San

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<sup>2</sup> The Certified Welcoming program assesses city and county governments on their efforts to welcome immigrants in all aspects of civic, social, and economic life. To become Certified Welcoming, the City of San José completed an intensive evaluation. Local policies and programs were compared to the comprehensive Welcoming Standard that covers community investments from education to economic development and policing.

<sup>3</sup> The Welcoming Interactive is an annual conference that highlights successful practices and inspiring stories about immigrant inclusion, programs, policies, and partnerships. From economic development, to civic engagement, government leadership, and beyond, the conference features presentations and interactive sessions from a diverse range of inclusion experts.

José and national non-profit, Welcoming America planned, coordinated, and implemented a three-day conference. The Interactive offered best practices in immigrant inclusion programming, policies, and partnerships, and it was an opportunity for the City of San Jose and its community partners to showcase successful local efforts.

- 6. Immigrant Civic Engagement** – ORE contracted with the nonprofit, Only in San José, to develop a curriculum and program encouraging civic engagement and participation tailored to immigrant communities. The curriculum includes a multilingual civics masterclass, including sections describing the various public meetings and City departments functions. The program is set to launch in July 2023.
- 7. Citizenship Day 2023** - In a continuing effort to encourage eligible lawful permanent residents to naturalize, ORE provided media support to the Citizenship Collaborative, a network of local nonprofits on the large-scale Citizenship Day workshop held on April 29. The collaborative prescreened and provided education to over 700 individuals, 160 individuals attended the event, and 108 completed applications. Naturalization has been shown to have considerable economic benefits at the individual, regional, and national levels, providing opportunity for newly naturalized citizens to earn higher wages, an increase in homeownership among naturalized residents, and an increase in tax revenues for the local economy.
- 8. Welcoming Migrants Response Plan** - With the recent end of Title 42<sup>4</sup> and the subsequent potential influx of migrants seeking asylum, it is important for the City to be prepared to provide support and assistance to migrants. As such, staff is working with the Office of Emergency Management and other City departments, alongside community partners and the County of Santa Clara, to plan, prepare, and mobilize if needed. Staff recognizes the impact on the City's current services around shelters, health care, food banks, and immigrant serving organizations may be stretched to capacity, however, the City is committed to the successful inclusion of asylum-seekers with care, compassion, and dignity.
- 9. Special Events** – ORE hosted delegation meetings with the United Nations High Commission for Refugees Filippo Grandi, Dublin, Ireland's Lord Mayor Caroline Conroy, and a delegation from Portugal and Spain. These events provided an opportunity to showcase the work of both the City of San Jose and partner organizations.

## **CONCLUSION**

In FY 22-23, over \$50 million in American Rescue Plan Act dollars were allocated for services primarily targeted to San José's most vulnerable community members during the COVID-19

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<sup>4</sup> On May 11, 2023 the Department of Homeland Security and Department of State ended the pandemic-era Title 42 public health order and re-instated long-standing Title 8 along with additional new measures for asylum seekers crossing the border. (<https://www.dhs.gov/news/2023/05/10/fact-sheet-additional-sweeping-measures-humanely-manage-border> )

pandemic. Additionally, the City ensured that those that were most impacted by COVID-19 were engaged and present in recovery and stabilization efforts. ORE is pleased to witness the organization's growth and continued commitment to historically underserved and marginalized communities and is excited to continue to partner with City departments to advance racial equity through innovation, risk-taking, and iteration.

The City acknowledges the balance of urgency and scaling racial equity, inclusion, and belonging within the organization at a sustainable and meaningful pace. As such, staff looks forward to expanding the eco-system of equity practitioners in the City so that the work becomes entrenched and sustained within departments, while continuing to serve as a strategic support partner across the organization.

### **COORDINATION**

This memorandum has been coordinated with the City Attorney's Office.

/s/  
ZULMA MACIEL  
Director, Office of Racial Equity

For questions, please contact Andrea Truong, Racial Equity Manager, at [andrea.truong@sanjoseca.gov](mailto:andrea.truong@sanjoseca.gov).

**Attachment:** *Office of Racial Equity Work Plan 2022-2024*