



Memorandum

TO: PUBLIC SAFETY, FINANCE, AND STRATEGIC SUPPORT COMMITTEE
FROM: Zulma Maciel

SUBJECT: Advancing Equity through Culture and Practice Annual Report
DATE: May 28, 2026

Approved

Date: June 3, 2026

RECOMMENDATION

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

BACKGROUND

The City Manager's Office of Racial and Social Equity (Office) supports the City's efforts to provide equitable, inclusive, and accessible services through coordinated work across its Racial and Social Equity, Inclusion and Belonging, and Disability Affairs units. Over the past year, the Office helped departments better incorporate equity considerations into policies, programs, and service delivery to respond to the needs of historically underserved communities.

While some institutions across the country scaled back or paused equity commitments, San José reaffirmed and deepened its promise to furthering equity as a core function of public service. The Racial and Social Equity Ordinance¹, unanimously adopted in 2024, continues to provide a strong framework for institutionalizing equity across City operations by guiding the implementation of departmental racial and social equity action plans, embedding equity considerations into memoranda and budget proposals, and strengthening staff capacity through ongoing training and accountability measures. Central to this work is the recognition that meaningful and sustained community engagement is essential to equitable governance and responsive decision-making. To support this effort, the Office developed and delivered a community engagement training for employees that included hands-on exercises focused on planning for and facilitating authentic, culturally responsive conversations with community members. In addition, staff welcomed a new cohort of the *San José for All* (SJ4All) Advisory Group, a

¹ <https://www.sanjoseca.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/114683/638627814226770000>

community-based body that advises the Office and helps ensure City policies and decisions are informed by the lived experiences of residents most impacted by inequities. Selected from more than 75 applicants, the cohort includes youth advocates, immigrants, long-time residents, and community leaders representing diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds, generations, and languages spoken, reinforcing the City's commitment to inclusive representation and shared decision-making.

This status report highlights work across portfolios within the Office, including coordinated efforts across teams and departments to better address the needs of the communities the City serves.

ANALYSIS

A. Institutionalizing Equity Across City Government

In Fiscal Year (FY) 2025-2026, the Office strengthened equity implementation across City operations, policies, and service delivery. Through trainings, technical assistance, and cross-department collaboration, the Office helped departments strengthen practices related to planning, budgeting, community engagement, accessibility, and organizational culture. This year's work focused on three key areas:

1. Leadership and Organizational Culture

The Office expanded leadership trainings, staff learning sessions, and peer collaboration opportunities focused on accessibility, accountability, and inclusive service delivery. In partnership with the Parks, Recreation, and Neighborhood Services Department and Human Resources, staff facilitated trainings focused on leadership accountability, accessibility, and operational inclusion.

The Office convened the Citywide Racial Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Group (REDI) and departmental Equity Practitioner sessions to support peer learning, cross-department collaboration, and consistent implementation practices. Participants reported greater confidence applying equity practices and stronger collaboration across departments. All participants reported feeling more connected to colleagues across departments, while Inclusive Leadership participants reported the training was directly applicable to their roles. Inclusive Leadership trainings provided City leaders with practical tools and strategies to embed equity, accessibility, inclusion, and belonging into workplace culture, team leadership, and organizational decision-making. Participants also reported an average score of 4.5 out of 5 in understanding how racial equity, inclusion, accessibility, and intersectionality relate to their role as City employees.

The Office presented the *Equity Leadership Playbook* to senior and executive staff to support more inclusive leadership practices across the organization. Through facilitated reflection activities, staff identified the importance of centering community voice, strengthening accessibility, fostering shared accountability, and

building workplace cultures grounded in empathy, collaboration, and continuous learning.

2. Budgeting and Operational Decision-Making

In accordance with the City's Equity Values and Standards Policy 0-22², the Office partnered with the Budget Office to incorporate equity considerations into budget development and fiscal planning through the Budgeting for Equity process. The Budget Office incorporated equity-centered questions into departmental budget development memo guidance, reinforcing expectations that equity analysis be incorporated throughout budget development rather than treated as a standalone exercise. As a result, 18 departments fully incorporated an *Applied Racial Equity Impact Assessment* (REIA) into their Budget Strategy Development Memos.

The Office expanded the REIA training and Budgeting for Equity support to strengthen the integration of equity considerations into budgeting, policy analysis, and operational decision-making across the organization. Trainings included department-specific learning sessions, a quarterly "train-the-trainer" model, and targeted workshops for Budget Office analysts connected to the City's Budgeting for Equity efforts.

The Office partnered with Budget Office staff to strengthen budget analysts' understanding of their role in identifying budgeting for equity impacts during budget memo review and development processes. Training emphasized consideration of community impacts, service access, underserved populations, and operational trade-offs before decisions are finalized. To support implementation, the Office also developed practical tools and technical assistance resources, including a REIA Budget Analyst Cheat Sheet and a question bank designed to support more consistent application of equity-informed analysis across departmental budget review processes.

The Office facilitated a Data Storytelling training for 70 City leaders focused on using equity-related data in programs, policies, and public communications. Participants reported a stronger understanding of how equity, inclusion, accessibility, and intersectionality relate to their roles as City employees. Building on these practices, the Environmental Services Department developed a Story Map project using outreach and compliance data to assess whether current small business outreach efforts were equitably serving communities and to identify where additional outreach and assistance may be needed. The Data Storytelling training strengthened departments' ability to incorporate community impact and accessibility considerations into operational and budget decision-making. Participants reported strong confidence in applying REIA concepts within their roles and identified the training as highly relevant to departmental planning and analysis. Post-session evaluations reflected strong operational relevance across

² <https://www.sanjoseca.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/114681/638627814182830000>

trainings, including a 4.8 out of 5 likelihood of participants applying REIA concepts directly to their work.

Departments increasingly incorporated demographic data, community impact analysis, and Equity Atlas tools into budget planning and memoranda.

Opportunities remain to better connect equity analysis to prioritization, resource allocation, and community impact.

3. Community Engagement and Implementation

The Office implemented the City's "Community Engagement: The CSJ Way" framework to improve coordination, accessibility, and resident engagement across departments. Training cohorts, technical assistance, and strategic partnerships supported departments in strengthening planning processes, reducing siloed outreach, and improving coordination.

Post-training survey results demonstrated strong operational relevance, with 67% of senior and executive staff reporting they were likely to apply the framework to existing departmental efforts. Participants also reported increased confidence in facilitating community engagement, while 94% said they expect to apply the skills gained in their work.

Staff partnered with the Planning, Building, and Code Enforcement Department to support community engagement for the General Plan Four-Year Review and updates to the City's disability reasonable accommodation request processes. The effort engaged more than 800 residents through targeted outreach, consultant support, and four Office-led focus groups.

The SJ4All Advisory Group continued serving as a community-informed advisory body supporting policy and operational planning across departments. SJ4All members worked with the Planning, Building, and Code Enforcement Department to improve the accessibility and framing of outreach materials and participated in the General Plan Four-Year Review process.

In partnership with the Parks, Recreation, and Neighborhood Services Department's Sports Fields team, SJ4All also helped strengthen outreach strategies focused on expanding access to City sports fields and supporting sports league development in historically underserved communities. All community recommendations developed through the advisory process were incorporated into the department's workplan.

These efforts improved community engagement, accessibility, and coordination across departments. Through partnerships, technical assistance, and community engagement, the Office supported more coordinated and responsive City practices.

B. Strengthening Inclusion for Immigrant Communities

The Office supported the City's commitment to welcoming and inclusive public services through training, emergency preparedness, legal services support, and community partnerships. As part of Year 1 implementation of the Welcoming San José Plan 3.0³, the Office strengthened citywide capacity to support immigrant communities while expanding partnerships, operational practices, and cross-sector coordination efforts that reinforce safety, belonging, and civic participation.

This year's work advanced in five key areas. These efforts supported Welcoming San José Plan priorities related to access, coordination, and community trust.

1. Citywide Coordination Strengthened Immigrant-Inclusive Practices Across Departments

Staff provided over 40 consultations across 15 City departments to support immigrant-inclusive practices, culturally responsive outreach, and implementation of Safe Site Protocols across City facilities. To strengthen operational consistency, the Office expanded virtual training opportunities and technical assistance for departments and Council Offices with public-facing staff. As a result, 100% of departments with public-facing operations confirmed staff training, distribution, and adherence to Safe Site Protocols this year.

2. San José Strengthened Its National Leadership as a Welcoming City

The City successfully renewed its Certified Welcoming designation at the 4-star level through Welcoming America's national certification program. The recertification process required extensive coordination across City departments and community partners, including documentation demonstrating compliance across 80 Welcoming criteria and participation from 37 internal and external stakeholders.

Maintaining this designation reflects the City's continued investment in inclusive governance, community engagement, equitable access, and public trust. The recertification process also supported Year 1 implementation of the City's 5-year Welcoming San José Plan 3.0 and the City's long-term commitment to fostering belonging across diverse communities by strengthening cross-department coordination, accountability, and alignment around shared welcoming goals.

The Office also partnered with the Intergovernmental Relations team to help elevate community-informed equity perspectives in the City's state legislative advocacy efforts related to immigrant inclusion, worker protections, disability justice, and equitable access to services.

³ <https://www.sanjoseca.gov/your-government/departments-offices/office-of-the-city-manager/racial-equity/immigrant-affairs/about-us>

3. Community Partnerships Expanded Public Engagement and Strengthened Belonging

Consistent with the Welcoming San José Plan's focus on belonging and civic participation, the Office worked with community and cultural partners to strengthen civic participation, reinforce welcoming narratives, and creating opportunities for residents across cultures and generations to connect with one another and City services.

The Office partnered with San Jose Jazz and local cultural organizations to coordinate a month-long series of Welcoming Month events and cultural activations in September, celebrating San José's diverse communities during a period of heightened national division. Activities included public art installations, performances, and community events that brought residents together across cultures and generations while reinforcing welcoming messaging and strengthening community partnerships.

The Office also collaborated with community organizations on the development of a strengths-based communications campaign designed in partnership with community organizations to counter harmful narratives about immigrant communities and reinforce shared values of inclusion, safety, and belonging. The campaign is scheduled to launch in June 2026.

The Office partnered with Project New Citizen and a broad coalition of community organizations, volunteers, and legal service providers to support one of the region's largest annual citizenship assistance events. In FY 2025-2026, the initiative virtually educated and prescreened more than 800 residents in 14 languages, helping hundreds of eligible participants move forward in the naturalization process. The event reflected the strong cross-sector collaboration and volunteer engagement that continue to strengthen civic participation and belonging across San José's immigrant communities.

4. Emergency Preparedness and Community Response Systems Were Strengthened

The Office worked closely with the Office of Emergency Management and departments across the organization to develop a *Framework for De-Escalation and Community Support*⁴. Consistent with the Welcoming San José Plan's emphasis on coordinated and community-centered response systems, the framework has now been integrated into Emergency Operations Center training and emergency preparedness planning to support coordinated response strategies during emergencies, major events, and evolving community situations.

⁴ <https://www.sanjoseca.gov/Home/Components/News/News/6995/5167>

This work improved coordination among City departments, community-based organizations, and regional partners during Super Bowl LX planning efforts and continues to guide preparations for FIFA World Cup activities.

The Office also supported departments in operationalizing Safe Site Protocols across public-facing facilities and programs, including coordination with Airport staff, cultural facilities, contract managers, and City-owned sites. These efforts improved preparedness, clarified operational procedures, and reinforced consistent communication practices across departments.

5. Regional Partnerships and Legal Service Infrastructure Continued to Expand

The Office served in leadership roles within the Immigrant Protection and Empowerment Network (IPEN), supporting coordination among local government agencies, philanthropy, legal service providers, and community organizations, helping strengthen trust in City services. This collaborative structure has improved regional coordination related to outreach, emergency response, legal services, and public information sharing during periods of heightened community concern.

During the FY 2025-2026 budget process, the City Council approved \$1 million in one-time funding to support immigrant legal services, outreach and education, and emergency response infrastructure. The investment aligned with the City's Welcoming San José framework and focused on expanding trusted, community-based capacity during a period of increased community need.

Strengthening Legal Supports

Funding expanded access to urgent legal consultations, affirmative immigration relief, legal navigation, and referrals to trusted providers. Highlights of this work through the first three quarters include:

- More than 560 unrepresented residents received legal navigation support through Amigos de Guadalupe's Self-Help Desk, including 131 referrals to vetted legal providers across Santa Clara County.
- The Santa Clara County Rapid Response Network provided more than 150 emergency legal consultations, while SIREN and Asian Law Alliance completed more than 64 affirmative immigration applications, including humanitarian protections, work authorization renewals, and family-based filings.
- The investment also expanded long-term legal services infrastructure by increasing pro bono attorney participation, legal clinic capacity, volunteer training, and community legal education efforts across the regional network.

- Providers also reported outcomes related to notario fraud prevention, successful correction of rejected court filings, release support through habeas advocacy, and family reunification efforts.

Expanding Outreach, Education, and Prevention

Funding supported multilingual outreach, Know Your Rights education, and community-based engagement through trusted local partners. Highlights include:

- Community partners delivered Know Your Rights education and outreach to more than 1,200 residents through multilingual workshops, neighborhood canvassing, and community house meetings.
- Outreach efforts expanded into underserved areas, including unhoused encampments and hard-to-reach immigrant communities, helping increase access to trusted information and family preparedness resources.

Providers consistently reported that misinformation, fear, and confusion tied to changing federal enforcement activity continued to drive demand for trusted, culturally responsive information and support.

Enhancing Emergency Response

Funding strengthened the Santa Clara County Rapid Response Network's emergency response coordination and hotline infrastructure. Highlights include:

- A 24/7 multilingual hotline responded to more than 4,150 calls in the first three quarters related to immigration enforcement concerns, legal referrals, family preparedness, and emergency response support. In the first quarter alone, call volume exceeded the City's original quarterly target by more than four times. The sustained call volume underscores the importance of maintaining trusted, community-based infrastructure capable of connecting residents to timely legal guidance, referrals, and emergency support during rapidly changing circumstances. Attorneys routinely provided legal triage within approximately 42 hours of detention events.
- The investment also strengthened regional preparedness and coordination ahead of major events, including Super Bowl LX and FIFA World Cup planning activities, through outreach and rights-based education for immigrant-owned small businesses, street vendors, and community members.

Through implementation of the City-funded legal services and emergency response network, community partners identified emerging trends that are expected to continue into FY 2026-2027. Providers reported increasing demand tied to changes in federal immigration policy affecting individuals with temporary

protections, work authorization, and long-standing legal residency pathways. Many residents seeking assistance have lived in the United States for decades and are now facing renewed legal uncertainty, resulting in increasingly complex and resource-intensive cases for legal service networks. These trends reinforced the importance of maintaining a coordinated legal, outreach, and emergency response infrastructure capable of adapting to evolving community needs.

C. Advancing Disability Inclusion and Accessibility

A new Disability Affairs Officer joined the team in September 2025.

Despite a leadership transition, the Office continued improving accessibility through staff training, digital accessibility work, and department coordination. These actions improved the City's capacity to provide more equitable access to information, programs, services, and public communications. Post-training survey results from seven digital accessibility trainings show strong learning outcomes, with 89% of participants gaining a new skill or topic, 72% reporting increased knowledge and skills, and 72% better understanding how accessibility relates to their role.

This year, staff concentrated its efforts on three key strategic areas:

1. Citywide Digital Accessibility Compliance Practices

In response to evolving Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Title II digital accessibility compliance requirements – originally effective April 24, 2026, and subsequently extended by the U.S. Department of Justice to April 26, 2027 – the Office supported departments in improving access to digital services and information. Throughout the year, the Office supported departments in improving accessibility across websites, documents, online tools, and social media. Key highlights include:

- Implemented a streamlined citywide process for document remediation to support departments in improving digital accessibility.
- Developed digital accessibility tools and resources, including self-paced trainings and practical, role-specific guidance to support staff in creating accessible content. Since its launch in November 2025, more than 1,400 staff have used these resources.
- Coordinated and delivered a series of live digital accessibility trainings covering key topics, engaging more than 400 staff and strengthening citywide capacity to create and maintain accessible digital content.

2. Disability Inclusion and Accessible City Services

The Disability Affairs Office continues to identify opportunities to advance disability inclusion and improve accessibility across City programs, services, and community engagement activities. This year's efforts focused on strengthening internal practices, supporting compliance and operational improvements, and expanding opportunities for staff and community awareness through trainings,

consultations, and inclusive engagement. These efforts improved accessibility across City programs, services, and engagement activities. Activities included:

- Conducted a comprehensive review of existing protocols, practices, and staff training, resulting in equity-focused recommendations to improve reasonable accommodation processes for unhoused individuals with disabilities during encampment abatements. This work also identified opportunities to strengthen data collection, reporting, outreach, communication, and training in coordination with the Homelessness Response Division, Beautify SJ, and the City's ADA Coordinator.
- Collaborated with multiple departments, including the Office of Economic Development and Cultural Affairs and the Department of Transportation, to ensure internal processes – such as community engagement and RFP development – were inclusive and accessible, and that the disability community was engaged from the outset. This included reinforcing departmental obligations and the importance of hosting inclusive events, as well as emphasizing the value of early and meaningful engagement with the disability community.

3. Strategic Planning and Framework Development

Looking ahead, the Disability Affairs Office has begun developing a multi-year strategic framework to guide the City's disability equity, inclusion, and justice efforts. The framework will translate commitments into clear, actionable strategies with measurable goals, defined timelines, and accountability measures. It will also strengthen coordination across departments to move beyond minimum compliance requirements and more intentionally align with the City's Disability Inclusion Equity Pledge.

Ongoing engagement with the disability community will remain central to shaping priorities and outcomes, especially for those who face multiple and overlapping barriers. Their lived experience will directly inform the development, implementation, and evaluation of the framework.

CONCLUSION

This work reflects the City's continued efforts to integrate equity, accessibility, and inclusion into planning, budgeting, engagement, and service delivery.

All 24 City departments now participate in the Racial Social Equity Action Plan (RSEAP) process, reflecting the City's One Team approach to coordinated governance. Departments continued incorporating equity considerations into operational planning, budgeting, accessibility coordination, community engagement, and service delivery. From FY 2022-2024, departments completed 160 equity action items. From FY 2024-2026, completed equity action items increased to 236, with 43 more underway through Q4 2026. Staff engagement remained strong, with 88% of participants reporting they

May 28, 2026

Subject: Advancing Equity through Culture and Practice Annual Report

Page 11

learned a new skill and 100% reporting technical advisory sessions were a valuable use of their time.

Staff also maintained the City's public-facing RSEAP dashboard to support transparency and allow community members to track departmental goals and implementation progress⁵.

In FY 2026–2027, priorities will include implementing the Welcoming San José Plan, developing the Disability Affairs strategic framework, strengthening data and performance measures, and improving how departments connect equity analysis to budgeting and operational decisions.

COORDINATION

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

/s/

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For questions, please contact Zulma Maciel, Director, City Manager's Office of Racial and Social Equity, at zulma.maciel@sanjoseca.gov.

ATTACHMENT: FY 2025-2026 Key Highlights (data reflects reporting through May 2026)

⁵ <https://www.sanjoseca.gov/your-government/departments-offices/office-of-the-city-manager/racial-and-social-equity/racial-and-social-equity-action-plans>