

Washtenaw County Equity Policy

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EQUITY POLICY

A POLICY in which the County declares its focus on issues of equity, particularly racial equity when considering the following (but not limited to) aspects of County government: services, policies and procedures, hiring and retention processes (i.e. recruitment, promotion), budgeting, training, and community engagement; to provide for the creation of a Racial Equity Office, that reports directly to the County Administrator; to spearhead the charge of the policy; to address inequities that exist within our County; to ultimately make the County an equitable place to live and work for all residents.

The Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners hereby ordains.

SECTION 1- DEFINITIONS

1. “Equity” means fair and just opportunities and outcomes for all people.
2. “Inequity” means differences in well-being that disadvantage one group in favor of another, due to historical and current discriminatory practices and policies.
3. “Race” a social construct that artificially divides people into distinct groups based on characteristics such as physical appearance (particularly color), ancestral heritage, cultural affiliation, cultural history, ethnic classification, and the social, economic and political needs of a society at a given period of time. Racial categories subsume ethnic groups. [Kellogg Foundation Glossary]
4. “Racial Equity” means the development of policies, practices, and strategic investments to reverse racial disparity trends, eliminate institutional racism, impact structural racism and ensure that outcome and opportunities for all people are no longer predictable by race.

5. “Racial Equity Office” means an office whose responsibility is leading efforts throughout county government with regard to issues of equity, particularly racial equity, and fulfillment of the goal of the policy, utilizing racial equity frameworks and various tools (e.g., racial equity action plans) when warranted.
6. “Racial Equity Action Plan” means a developed, comprehensive plan to incorporate and embed racial equity principles and strategies into operations, programs, service, policies, and community engagement. Departmental Racial Equity Action Plans will be approved annually by the Board of Commissioners.
7. “Racial Equity Framework” means a developed, comprehensive approach and understanding of racial equity principles and strategies that not only understands but articulates the differences and impacts between individual, institutional, and structural racism as well as implicit and explicit bias.
8. “Individual Racism” means pre-judgment, bias, or discrimination by an individual based on race, which can be both explicit and implicit. [Government Alliance on Race & Equity]
9. “Institutional Racism” means policies, practices and procedures that work better for white people than for people of color, often unintentionally and inadvertently. [Government Alliance on Race & Equity]
10. “Structural Racism” means the history and current reality of institutional racism across institutions, both public and private, which combine to create a system that negatively impacts communities of color. [Government Alliance on Race & Equity]

SECTION 2- PURPOSE

The purpose of this Policy is to declare that Washtenaw County will intentionally and purposely address issues of inequity within our institution and County. Many current inequities are sustained by historical legacies, structures, and systems that repeat patterns of exclusion. Without the intentionality stated in this Policy, inequitable outcomes linked to race, socio-economic status, and other identities will persist. The charge of the Policy is for all aspects of county government to address and implement strategies that target inequities that exist within the County organization, inclusive of all its services, resulting in equitable outcomes for all residents. The Policy requires development of an evaluation process and accountability systems informed by reviewing metrics on an ongoing basis, and will include biennial reviews

and evaluations of progress by a qualified outside entity (e.g., GARE). Further, this Policy creates a Racial Equity Office, whose purpose is to address these inequities and to work toward a more equitable County. This Office will utilize proven tools to do this work (e.g., strategic planning, budget analysis tools, results-based accountability). It is through the declaration of purpose and the creation of a Racial Equity Office that the County strives to achieve equity for all people.

SECTION 3- INDIVIDUAL CHANGE

All County staff and officials have a responsibility in implementing this Equity Policy. In service of that goal, all current County employees as well as members of the Board of Commissioners and members of County boards, commissions, and committees will participate in related racial equity-focused training. Training will be ongoing for all County staff and will be suggested for all newly elected and appointed commissioners and office holders, and required for board and committee members. In addition to training, individuals will be instructed to incorporate behavioral changes to reach the goal of equity. Finally, that incorporation can happen through, but not limited to, individual contracts and work plans.

SECTION 4- INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE

Each department shall establish a Racial Equity Action Plan which will serve as the template for said department to reach the ultimate goal of advancing equity both within the department but also through the department's work in the community. Those Racial Equity Action Plans will include short and long term goals and will be approved annually by the Board of Commissioners and made available to the public. Departments will engage in a review of existing policies, procedures, and budget allocations for their impact on equity, particularly racial equity. Additionally, working groups, teams, and affiliation groups will be developed in service of this work. Finally, a community engagement process that is co-created with the community will be developed to bridge the equity work of County government and the residents it serves. Accountability systems and transparency processes will be incorporated into county-wide policy and programming, including at least two reports to the Board of Commissioners annually.

SECTION 5- STRUCTURAL CHANGE

Board of Commissioner's decisions and resolutions will include a racial equity review. (This is not necessary but may be very applicable for non-binding resolutions.) Additionally, all strategic planning, goal-setting and budgeting decisions must include an equity review and analysis. The County will continue to work on, develop, and implement a county-wide engagement strategy to support recruitment, growth and development of diverse boards and committees.

SECTION 6- EFFECTIVE DATE

The Racial Equity Office will be led by the Racial Equity Officer who will be appointed by Administration with approval by the Board of Commissioners. At least two, but no more than four, commissioners in addition to community members, will participate in the hiring process for the Officer. The Officer will hire their own staff and the Office will be adequately resourced. This Policy shall become effective on the 5th day of September, 2018.