



**BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
AGENDA LETTER**

Agenda Number:

Clerk of the Board of Supervisors
105 E. Anapamu Street, Suite 407
Santa Barbara, CA 93101
(805) 568-2240

Department Name: Human Resources
County Executive
Office
Community Services

Department No.:
For Agenda Of: December 12, 2023

Placement:
Estimated Tme: 30 minutes

Continued Item: No

If Yes, date from:

Vote Required: Majority

TO: Board of Supervisors

FROM: Department Yvonne Torres, Human Resources, (805) 568-2800
Director(s) George Chapjian, Community Services, (805) 568-2467
Mona Miyasato, County Executive Officer, (805) 568-3400

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Yvonne Torres
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Contact Info: Lindsay Walter, Principal Management Analyst, (805) 568-3400

SUBJECT: Diversity Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Initiatives Update

County Counsel Concurrence:

As to form: N/A

Auditor-Controller Concurrence:

As to form: N/A

Other Concurrence:

As to form: N/A

Recommended Actions:

That the Board of Supervisors consider the following recommendations:

- a) Receive and file a status report on countywide initiatives to advance Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion within the County workforce and the services provided by County departments to the Santa Barbara community.
- b) Determine that the recommended actions do not constitute a project subject to environmental review under the California Environmental Quality Act ("CEQA") pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15378(b)(5), finding that the project is an organizational or administrative activity of governments that will not result in direct or indirect physical changes in the environment.

Summary Text:

This item is on the agenda to provide an update to the Board on countywide initiatives to advance Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. On January 26, 2021, the Board adopted a Statement of Commitment

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to equity and inclusion in the community and workplace. Today's update provides an overview of progress within the County, furthering this commitment.

The focus of today's presentation is on Human Resource's JOIN Action Plan and an overview of the recently begun County DEI Community Services and Engagement (DCSE) Plan, funded by American Rescue Plan Act, whose purpose is to identify service and engagement inequities and barriers to entry experienced by County residents and present actions for improvement. A brief review of the Equity Fund Grant program and other department activities is also included.

Background:

On December 1, 2020, following the murder of George Floyd and decades-long recognition of injustices towards members of our community, the Board held a special meeting and received a presentation on efforts to develop a systematic approach on advancing racial equity and inclusion in Santa Barbara County. On January 26, 2021, the Board approved a Statement of Commitment to equity and inclusion which commenced the County's journey of self-evaluation and reflection and commitment to organizational values, policies, practices, and service delivery which specifically and directly impacts countywide inequities and injustices.

During the Fiscal Year (FY) 2020-2021 Budget hearings, the Board set aside \$500,000 in one-time funding to advance and support equity within the County and continued the yearly set aside, first with Cannabis funding then transitioning to General Fund when Cannabis revenues declined. Over half (\$275,000) has been allocated to an Equity Grant Program for community projects, and the remaining mostly for Human Resource programs. Additionally, in response to COVID and needed community recovery efforts, the Board dedicated American Rescue Plan Act funding for the Health and Human Services Recovery Plan on October 18, 2021 to support expansion of language access and DEI initiatives.

Over the past years, departments have been working on these efforts. The Board received an initial update in July 2022 of the status of Human Resources' activities and supported the FY 22-23 Join Hands, Open Hearts and Minds, Ignite Action, and Navigate (JOIN) Action Plan and directed Community Services Department staff to continue activities with the equity set aside that included the Fund for Santa Barbara administration of the County's Racial Equity Grant Program. At that time, DEI activities were highlighted from Public Health and Community Services. Today's update highlights subsequent activities and those activities occurring with Human Resources and other departments and discusses next steps in our County DEI journey. The three areas of focus for this report include County workforce and culture, highlights of key departmental activities furthering DEI, and looking ahead utilizing the County DEI Community Services and Engagement Plan to create an Equity Action Plan framework and recommended County DEI organizational structure.

A. County Workforce and Culture

The County implemented Phases I through IV of the JOIN Action Plan for the organization over a two-year period (2020-2022) led by the Human Resources Department. The purpose of these four phases was to establish a shared vocabulary, create an open and continuous dialogue about race equity, engage and develop the workforce, and establish necessary tools to measure outcomes.

Having completed the four phases of the JOIN framework, staff presented the FY 22-23 JOIN Action Plan to the Board in July 2022. The key deliverables of the JOIN Plan were focused on four areas of impact (See Attachment A), each with specific action items aimed at improving DEI understanding and skills, investing in organizational processes to support and advance equity, preparing the workforce for

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the future, and increasing accountability. A few examples of the accomplishments achieved with the one-year plan include:

- Distribution of the Countywide Equity Survey,
- Development of the framework for Employee Resource Groups and DEI Speaker Series,
- Facilitation of monthly and quarterly DEI Advisory Council and External Diversity, Inclusion, Belonging and Equity (DIBE) group meetings; and
- Implementation of the first Regional DEI Conference.

The County continues to engage organizational members and critically question the ways in which the organization can more fully commit to DEI. To this end, a three-year plan has been developed to guide the County's ongoing journey with DEI and to expand its workforce and culture efforts for a more equitable, just, and inclusive organization. First quarter successes from the three-year plan include:

- Launch of *County Village Connect (CVC)* with creation of three employee driven resource groups including Beyond Abilities, Working Parents, and Hablemos for Spanish language skills,
- Introduction of *Village Voices* including a newsletter and on-line toolkit for all employees to access,
- Launch of the DEI Speaker Series for employees to learn about DEI topics and engage; and
- Development of a Workforce DEI Communication Plan.

B. Departmental Highlights of Key DEI Activities

Throughout the County, departments have initiated projects and committees which focus on DEI and improvements to their operations and the community services delivery. Examples of DEI initiatives include:

- The Behavioral Wellness Department who leads monthly meetings with their Cultural Competency and Diversity Action Team and hosted their first countywide Behavioral Health Equity Summit in July 2023 with over 150 attendees.
- The Office of Emergency Management is in the process of updating their Emergency Operations Plan. This is the County's primary emergency plan that outlines the structure for emergency coordination, and sets policies and protocols for County response to emergency incidents. As part of this update, they are collaborating with key partners and organizations that advocate and support vulnerable and under-represented members of our communities.
- Child Support Services is focusing on their personnel hiring and education. They have updated child support caseworker recruitment materials to attract diverse backgrounds and experience and developed a coaching program to help case managers address biases, stereotypes, and systemic barriers that impact marginalized communities. Additionally, they are facilitating DEI trainings, such as a "LGBTQ+ 101" presentation by Pacific Pride Foundation.
- The Agriculture, Weights and Measures Department is hosting meetings with Mixteco Indigena Community Organizing Project (MICOP), providing education and outreach events, developed bilingual brochures and Dog Team brochures, created the new Online Complaint Form for community member feedback, and utilizing ongoing social media engagement with County community members.

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- The Public Health Department DEI activities include the Santa Barbara County Public Health Department Staff Self-Assessment, Together Towards Health, Farmworker Vaccine Clinics, Latinx Indigenous Migrant COVID-19 Response Task Force and Community Conversations, Regional Language Access and Language Justice Workgroup, COVID-19 At Home Test Kit Distribution, Vaccine Equity Project, and a partnership with MICOP. These activities cover staff capacity to address health inequities and support the equitable health and wellness of County community members.

Additionally, utilizing the Equity set-aside, the expansion of community voices and engagement, led by the Community Services Department is described below:

Community Voices and Engagement

The Community Services Department (CSD) manages three initiatives to support community voices and engagement in partnership with other County departments and organizations. These initiatives were initially approved for funding by the Board on July 22, 2022.

The first initiative is the Equity Advisory and Outreach Committee (EA+OC) which was established by CSD's Sustainability Division to increase awareness, participation, guidance, and feedback on various planning efforts across the County. The EA+OC is now an official subcommittee of the Santa Barbara County Regional Climate Collaborative. The EA+OC meets bi-monthly and has provided advice and input on the Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment, 2030 Climate Action Plan, Environmental Justice Element, Active Transportation Plan as well as other projects and initiatives the County is involved in such as Uplift Central Coast. The Committee also serves as ambassadors, encouraging community participation in countywide planning efforts. Committee members who represent marginalized and vulnerable communities are eligible to receive compensation through a regular stipend of \$100 per hour of attended Committee meetings, and reported outreach deliverables. The Board previously allocated \$38,400 to cover the cost of these stipends and approximately \$11,000 has been expended as of August 2023. Staff expects EA+OC activities to continue to increase and anticipates there may be additional members that join the Committee. The second initiative is the Promotores Network Outreach.

CSD's Sustainability Division has partnered with the Planning & Development and Public Works Departments and the Tri-County Regional Energy Network (3C-REN), to conduct Spanish-language outreach through the Promotores Network of community-based outreach workers. The Promotores have conducted surveys for housing needs, climate adaptation and environmental justice issues; provided presentations on DIY sustainability toolkits for home energy and water efficiency and distributed kitchen pails for composting organic materials. The Promotores are currently conducting outreach for electric vehicle education and 3C-REN energy efficiency and electrification programs. No equity funds were requested for this initiative.

The third initiative is the County of Santa Barbara Racial Equity Grant Program Administration. CSD has contracted with The Fund for Santa Barbara to develop the Racial Equity Grant Program to invest in and strengthen organizations that address anti-racism through systems change strategies in Santa

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Barbara County. This program aims to affect the culture, policy and systems change necessary to advance racial equity and justice, and address the legacy of slavery and effects of racism in Santa Barbara County. The Fund for Santa Barbara has successfully administered two cycles of the program and with recent approval from the Board, will launch the third cycle before the end of 2023, providing \$820,800 in funding to local organizations (see Attachment B for details).

C. Looking Ahead to Advance Equity and Inclusion: Framework Alignment and DCSE Plan

In 2021, the County Executive Office reviewed key impacts in the Health and Human Services sectors resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, to ensure support of those immediately economically, socially, and emotionally impacted and address emerging recovery needs. Across the U.S., state, and County, COVID-19 disproportionately impacted low-wage essential workers, seniors, and substantively, those historically underserved and marginalized populations.

American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding was dedicated to Community Health and Wellbeing to promote equitable outcomes for our community residents. Three critical strategies were identified which are to:

- 1) Coordinate DEI among departments,
- 2) Enhance language access mechanisms; and
- 3) Expand County DEI and outreach initiatives, including Promotores.

ARPA's Community Health and Wellbeing Strategy, and the Renew "We Are" Campaign, focused on delivering exceptional services to County members. The County hired Transformgi LLC's principal consultant Dr. Vernita Perkins to guide the County's internal reflection on DEI in relation to community services and engagement and "The Platinum Rule" of "treat others as they would like to be treated." Dr. Perkins organizational development background, expertise in organizational leadership and management, and subject matter expertise in intersectionality-marginalized social identities, Equity, and reflection practices aligns with the County's commitment to internal reflection and departmental change.

County DCSE Plan and Equity Action Plans

The County DEI Community Services and Engagement Plan ("County DCSE Plan) evolved and developed as a result of the efforts to address the service and engagement inequities and barriers to entry experienced by County community members when accessing County services.

In August 2023, Dr. Perkins provided a preliminary assessment of known county-wide DEI activities, initiatives, and efforts, including community-facing services. The County DCSE Plan commenced with this initial assessment and review, including engagement with Human Resources DEI and recommendations for a comprehensive plan to address service and program gaps. A primary purpose is supporting departments in identifying service inequities and barriers to entry, prioritizing Equity understanding, community feedback mechanisms, achieving County DCSE Plan goals, and ongoing training to improve staff equity and community services delivery.

Throughout August and September 2023 during Phase One, the first wave of stakeholder departments—Public Health, Public Defender, and Agriculture Weights and Measures—were asked to identify inequities and barriers to entry within their departments. Each of the three departments provided specific

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responses with common themes emerging around unawareness of what Equity actually is, the need for equitable hiring, and language barriers, particularly Indigenous. In Phase Two, this process will be modeled and expanded county-wide to the remaining 18 departments.

By June 2024, Dr. Perkins will provide recommendations for a countywide structure, including organizational roles to sustain DEI activities in coordination with Human Resources. CSD requested that the Equity Set aside and Racial Equity Grant, which they currently oversee be reviewed in this process for possible reassignment of procurement, monitoring, and reporting duties associated with the program.

Initial Assessment Activities. Dr. Perkins' initial assessment involved reviewing the Statement of Commitment to Equity and Inclusion in the Community and Workplace, the Santa Barbara County Public Health Staff Equity Survey from March 2022, initial meetings with the three stakeholder department heads and their department first wave stakeholders to identify their DEI feedback, and attending the June 29, 2023 Central Coast Regional Equity Initiative's Community Action Convening hosted by the Fund for Santa Barbara. Following the initial assessment, Dr. Perkins began to identify specific service and engagement inequities and barriers to entry with the first wave stakeholder departments. Dr. Perkins reviewed the We Are Campaign, the 2023 Recovery Plan Performance Report, and the COVID-19 Health and Human Services Recovery and Resiliency Strategies 2021-2024; along with an intranet review of the Human Resources DEI Tool Kit resources and participated in DEI focused partnership meetings, such as the Public Health Alliance Leadership Council and Anchor Mission meetings with multiple Southern California counties.

Feedback and Recommendations. In October 2023, the County DCSE Plan Phase Two commenced, addressing the service and engagement inequities identified by the first wave stakeholder departments in Phase One and in alignment with the County DCSE Plan Framework which recommends 1) an Equity Baseline centralizing language and consolidating content for county-wide DEI activities, 2) an Equity Hub with online real-time information and resources, and the two centerpieces, a county-wide staff commitment to understanding Equity education, and a department stakeholder model to implement across the remaining 18 County departments.

Key inequities, barriers and themes across the first wave department stakeholders' feedback included:

- 1) Lack of awareness and understanding about what Equity actually is and how Equity can be practiced,
- 2) Language barriers (clarifying access to translator resources for improved communication and service delivery, and addition of Indigenous languages including unwritten languages),
- 3) Feedback barriers (the need for safe and responsive community feedback mechanisms); and
- 4) Payment barriers (the need for a centralized countywide payment system with a one-stop multiple transactions portal).

Overall, there are many DEI activities occurring, but there is a lack of coordination between departments and understanding among each department and individual work groups.

To address these issues, the Plan intends to dissolve DEI redundancies throughout the County and institute the centralized Equity Framework developed and recommended in Phase One, offering a central base for Equity information, resources, and communication customized for the County where

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departments collaborate, employees thrive, and County communities are “exceptionally served and engaged.” Regarding language barriers, progress has been made in this area over the last year.

Coordinated Communications and Language Access. In Fall 2022, General Services and the County Executive Office aimed to enhance language access with translation and interpretation services available to all departments through the creation of countywide contracts. In April 2023, master agreements were initiated with three vendors which include Homeland Language Services, Language Line, and Mixteco Indigena Community Project (MICOP). The County Communications Division has provided training to each department’s Public Information Officer on how to utilize these new agreements within their service continuum and ongoing technical assistance is available to onboard these services. In FY 23-24, a priority will be to ensure language access for those who speak Mixtec, as residents in the County have desperate abilities to access services in their unwritten Mixtec language. Additionally, American Sign Language is a difficult interpretation service to fill. General Services is researching vendor options with intent to procure a county-wide master agreement by end of FY 23-24. Additionally, these resources will be included in department staff onboarding with regular reminders for current department staff that these resources exist.

Further, community services for underserved unwritten languages, such as Mixtec, and other underserved Indigenous languages are exacerbated when community members are unclear what language translation resources are available. The County DCSE Plan guides department staff to identify specific communication and language inequities and/or barriers to entry within their community services, so the County can apply available resources as responsive solutions.

Future Phases of the Plan and Next Steps. The County DCSE Plan Phase Two and Phase Three will build in future capacity to enhance equitable community services and engagement, including centralized Equity training for County staff and Equity hires, so the County is prepared to maintain equitable community services and engagement; continue reducing service inequities and barriers to entry; anticipate, identify, and address future service and engagement inequities; and create healthy and meaningful experiences for community members.

During the upcoming year, each of these initiatives will progress and the Board will be updated on outcomes for both our internal-facing efforts through Human Resources and community-facing activities.

The County DCSE Plan will guide the first and second wave stakeholder departments in creating their Equity Department Plans for their community services and engagement. The County DCSE Plan Equity Framework will be expanded to the remaining 18 County departments following and evolving the practices established by the first wave department stakeholders in the Phase One model. There is currently ARPA funding allocated to continue this effort, and funding will be pursued in future years should it be needed to supplement dedicated staff resources.

Fiscal Impacts:

No fiscal impacts. Human Resource’s JOIN efforts have been resourced through the equity set-aside and dedicated staffing allocated to the department. The Equity Grant program is funded at \$275,000 and included in the current year budget. The County DCSE Plan is \$196,000, funded by ARPA funds as part of the COVID-19 Health and Human Services Recovery and Resiliency Plan, and included in the current year budget. The cost of future phases are not yet identified, but \$609,000 of additional ARPA funding for DEI activities is available.

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Attachments:

- A. JOIN Report
- B. Summary of Racial Equity Grant Program Allocations
- C. PowerPoint

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