

PM

PUBLIC MANAGEMENT



Data-Driven
Equity Work **10**

Diversifying Your
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SheLeadsGov: Women
in the Profession **22**

ELEVATING YOUR EQUITY WORK

A close-up portrait of Dorla Bonner, a Black woman with a shaved head, smiling. She is wearing a colorful, patterned top and large hoop earrings.

Dorla Bonner
Diversity, Equity, and
Inclusion Director
Kalamazoo, Michigan

FEBRUARY 2022
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The Profession's Commitment to *Equity and Justice*

Is it **strong enough?** | BY MARTHA PEREGO, ICMA-CM

This profession is founded on the ethical principles of equity, fairness, integrity, political neutrality, and justice. The very first Code of Ethics, which laid the foundation for the profession, reinforced that “the city manager is the administrator for all the people, and in performing his duty he should serve without discrimination.” Advancing that obligation, the Code was amended in 1938 to note that the manager serves “all the people and handles each administrative problem without discrimination on the basis of principle and justice.” That ethical commitment to acting based on principle and justice remains part of the Code to this very day.

While notably silent about the rights of women, the Code was also amended in 1938 to address racial discrimination in employment practices: “The city manager handles all matters of personnel on the basis of merit. Political, religious, and racial considerations carry no weight in appointments, salary increases, promotions, and discipline in the municipal service.”

As the profession evolved, the principles were better defined and expanded. All members had an ethical obligation to “affirm the dignity and worth of the services rendered by government and maintain a constructive, creative, and practical attitude toward local government affairs and a deep sense of social responsibility as a trusted

public servant.” And to “recognize that the chief function of local government at all times is to serve the best interests of all the people.”

Espousing a principle though does not ensure that it will be practiced. The profession has logged enormous progress since its inception in 1914 in the areas of equitable and effective service delivery, fair and transparent practices, and eliminating those corrupt practices that interfere with good governance. Yet it's not hard to identify segments of our populations, neighborhoods, or entire communities that have not benefited from the principles we espouse. They have yet to see the tangible results of our aspirational goals. Perhaps this is due largely to the practices that prevail. Practices must be scrutinized and changed if they don't deliver on the values we aspire to.

We are not unique as a profession struggling to promote practices that align with and reinforce our principles. On an average day, it's not without its challenges. Indeed, for every profession, there will be that moment in time when a stunning event happens that sets us on our heels. A moment of such enormity that calls us to seriously re-evaluate our ethical principles, commitment, and the soundness of our practices. One such period for the local government profession was the late 1960s as the United States struggled with issues of



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ICMA

Creating and Supporting Thriving Communities

ICMA's vision is to be the leading association of local government professionals dedicated to creating and supporting thriving communities throughout the world. It does this by working with its more than 12,000 members to identify and speed the adoption of leading local government practices and improve the lives of residents. ICMA offers membership, professional development programs, research, publications, data and information, technical assistance, and training to thousands of city, town, and county chief administrative officers, their staffs, and other organizations throughout the world.

Public Management (PM) aims to inspire innovation, inform decision making, connect leading-edge thinking to everyday challenges, and serve ICMA members and local governments in creating and sustaining thriving communities throughout the world.

race and racial equity. Reflecting on the issues and the steps that ICMA took, ICMA President Graham Watts noted:

For too many years, we as public administrators were unmindful of the needs of minority citizens. In our professional activities, we were unwilling to share position and power with those who had been relegated to lowly positions and had been kept far from the seats of power. Yes, ours is an imperfect society, and our institutions reflect our imperfections, but as administrators with significant—and growing—public leadership responsibilities, reform and pursuit of progress are those responsibilities. We cannot pretend that problems of injustice and inequality do not exist.

Over the next decades, managers leading cities and counties did not ignore the issues. They stepped into leadership roles working with their staff to advance equity in their communities. Fast forward to 2020, as ICMA President Jane Brautigam and the Executive Board felt compelled to speak out and act following another stunning event—the murder of George Floyd. One of their six defined action steps included the directive to revisit our Code of Ethics to better integrate our ethical commitment

to racial justice and equity into the very fiber of the 12 tenets.

Revisiting the Code

The ICMA Committee on Professional Conduct (CPC) is taking the lead on the comprehensive review of the Code through the lens of racial justice and equity. This is in keeping with their oversight role in enforcing the Code and ensuring that it remains relevant to the profession. Indeed, it has been the CPC leading the comprehensive review of the Code launched back in 2013, which was paused at the beginning of the pandemic.

Consistent with past efforts to review the Code, member engagement and input is critical to informing any potential changes to the principles of the Code. As a reminder to all, changes to the tenets, which are the principles of the profession, require approval of the membership. The guidelines, which provide practical advice on implementing the principles, are approved by the ICMA Executive Board.

A first step in the review process was to engage a cross section of members in two focus groups to identify the most relevant principles or tenets which should be subjected to further discussion and review. It's arguable that the principles of equity and justice are so intertwined in the work that all 12 tenets should be assessed. But the consensus of the initial effort was to focus

on those primary, not ancillary, to the work. Those Tenets are 1, 4, 9, and 11. Here are the tenets with some context and questions to provide thoughts about strengthening the principles.

Tenet 1: We believe professional management is essential to efficient and democratic local government by elected officials.

Amended by the membership in 2019 to be more concise, the language of the tenet was also changed to replace “effective” with “efficient.” Given that the four pillars of public administration are economy, efficiency, effectiveness, and social equity, perhaps all four should be reflected in the tenet.

Tenet 4: Serve the best interests of the people.

This principle was added to the Code in 1952 as: “The city manager keeps the community informed on municipal affairs. He emphasizes friendly and courteous service to the public. He recognizes that the chief function of the local government at all times is to serve the best interests of all the people on a non-partisan basis.” It was revised in 1972 to read: “Recognize that the chief function of local government at all times is to serve the best interests of all of the people.” When evaluated by the membership in 2018, there was agreement to simplify the

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tenet language to “Serve the best interests of the people.” Two guidelines on inclusion and diversity were added by the Board.

Guidelines:

Impacts of Decisions. Members should inform their governing body of the anticipated effects of a decision on people in their jurisdictions, especially if specific groups may be disproportionately harmed or helped.

Inclusion. To ensure that all the people within their jurisdiction have the ability to actively engage with their local government, members should strive to eliminate barriers to public involvement in decisions, programs, and services.

How do we assess whether decisions are in the public’s best interests? Should this assessment be anchored by a commitment to equity? Is “the community” a more appropriate term than “the people”?

Tenet 9: Keep the community informed on local government affairs; encourage communication between the citizens and all local government officers; emphasize friendly and courteous service to the public; and seek to improve the quality and image of public service.

Added as a new statement in 1972, the tenet includes both principles and outcomes. Do we need to better define the desired outcome of keeping the community informed? Is it to enhance our image or to ensure that the public is fully engaged? Is “the people” a more appropriate term than “the community”? Is it “citizens” or “residents”?

Tenet 11: Handle all matters of personnel on the basis of merit so that fairness and impartiality govern a member’s decisions, pertaining to appointments, pay adjustments, promotions, and discipline.

Guideline:

Equal Opportunity. All decisions pertaining to appointments, pay adjustments, promotions, and discipline should prohibit discrimination because of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, sexual orientation, political affiliation, disability, age, or marital status.

It should be the members’ personal and professional responsibility to actively recruit and hire a diverse staff throughout their organizations.

Building on the principle introduced in the Code in 1938, the tenet has not deviated from the original intent. The guideline, which represents two distinct responsibilities, was added in 1972, when guidelines were first introduced to the Code. The emphasis on fairness and impartiality in making personnel decisions is important. Is there an obligation as well to consider diversity, equity, and inclusion? Would the principle be strengthened with this addition?

What’s Next?

Members will have the opportunity to provide their input via virtual focus groups and at the upcoming ICMA Regional Conferences. Some state associations have invited ICMA to conduct sessions at their conferences also. The member input will inform a survey to the membership in Spring 2022, designed to assess potential changes to the tenets and guidelines. **PM**



UPCOMING ICMA EVENTS

icma.org/events

THE 2022 ICMA REGIONAL CONFERENCES

Dates & Locations:

Southeast | Atlanta, GA | March 2-4

Mountain Plains | Irving, TX |
March 9-11

West Coast in conjunction with
WCMA | Stevenson, WA | March 15-18

Midwest | St. Louis, MO | March 23-25

Northeast | Boston, MA | April 6-8

Learn more and register today at icma.org/regionalconferences



ICMA CODE OF ETHICS REVIEW:

ICMA Members, We Want to Hear from You

Plan to attend any of the three virtual meetings open to all members to share feedback on how to better integrate the profession’s commitment to equity and social justice in the Code.

April 29 | 12:00-1:00 pm U.S. Eastern

More information, including meeting registration details, is available at icma.org/ethics-dei.

February 16: Webinar: Prioritizing ARPA Resources for Equity Initiatives

February 23: Webinar: Equitable Economic Mobility – Things to Consider for Local Government Leaders

February 28: Courageous Conversation: Leading While Black in Local Government

COURAGEOUS CONVERSATIONS

Recordings can be viewed at icma.org/living-history

- Equity Officers in Local Government
- Native and Indigenous Leaders Leading in Local Government
- A Life in Public Service: Three Stories of the Transition from the Military to Local Government
- Creating a Truly Inclusive Culture
- LGBTQIA+ Experience in Local Government
- Asian American Experience in Local Government Part 2: Trailblazers in our Hometowns (Asian-Pacific Heritage Month)
- Coming Out of the Darkness: Mental Health and Suicide Prevention
- Asian-American Experience in Local Government
- Women Pioneer Managers in the Profession
- A Conversation with Marc Ott, ICMA’s First Black Executive Director, and Sy Murray, ICMA’s First Black President



Driving Equity and Engagement in Cities, Counties, and Towns Through Structural Change

The new edition of the Model City Charter brings equity and civic engagement to the forefront.

**BY MARC OTT AND
DOUG LINKHART**

The term “social equity” is not new—it has been around for decades. But the significant gaps in equity laid bare over the past two years by the pandemic and by racial injustices, especially in public safety, have created a new sense of urgency for cities, counties, and towns.

Local government leaders have been attacking the equity and inclusion crisis on many fronts—for example, through policing reform, through modernization of election and voting practices, and through ordinances, policies, rules, and offices to advance equity. One overlooked tool that offers an opportunity for real change through structural reform is the local government’s charter.

Inequality and lack of public engagement undermines trust and community.

The heart of local governance structures, at least for most counties and municipalities, is the charter, the document that lays out the “rules of the game.” This is where fundamental reform can begin. ICMA and the National Civic League worked together over 100 years ago to reform local governance, creating a Model City Charter to help guide cities to a new era of professionalism and efficiency. It addressed some of the most pressing challenges facing cities in the 1900s—structural inefficiency, political corruption, and the need for a merit system for public employees.

As we step further into this new decade, a revised and updated edition

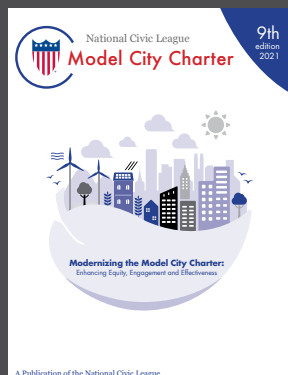
of the Model City Charter institutionalizes equity and civic engagement. Together with the National Civic League, ICMA, National League of Cities, and American Society for Public Administration worked with a Steering Committee of 22 national representatives and experts to produce the first full revision of the charter in a decade. ICMA members can access a free copy of the new edition of the Model City Charter at www.nationalcivicleague.org/resources/model-city-charter-8th-edition.

Including Equity as a Core Value

In addition to guiding local governments to become more efficient, ethical, professional, and accountable, the revised charter includes equity as one of these core values. ICMA Research Fellow Benoy Jacob, in his study, “Governing for Equity,” pointed out that “while

Key Changes in the Ninth Edition of the Model City Charter

- **Equity:** The model provides a guide for cities to use in incorporating equity into their own revisions and includes an appendix with further discussion on the need for equity measures and how cities they might be addressed.
- **Public Engagement:** The new edition stresses the importance of community engagement in local affairs, with an article describing principles for meaningful participation/engagement and how these principles can be reflected both in a city’s charter and in other operational structures.
- **Mayors:** The document emphasizes the important facilitative roles of the mayor in helping the city council and manager to work together to set goals and work toward implementation and in communicating with the public and other stakeholders.



- **City Councils:** The importance of the city council’s relationship to the city manager is emphasized, to include hiring and regular evaluation.
- **Elections:** The new edition encourages the direct election of mayors and discusses options for council elections for cities of different sizes and demographics. It also recommends local elections be in November of odd years, with discussion to allow for alternatives.
- **City Managers:** The introduction adds new commentary on the role of city managers as innovators and non-political facilitators of partnerships among city government, nonprofit groups, and community/resident groups, and underscores the accountability of the professional manager to the council and public.
- **City Attorneys:** The model seeks to clarify the role of the city attorney as the sole legal officer for the city as an organization and not to the council, manager, or agencies of the government as separate clients.

typically viewed as a national issue, the problems of inequity, whether social, economic, or otherwise, often manifest most clearly at the local level.”¹ Examples of charter changes that can drive lasting improvements in social equity include:

- Underscoring the manager’s role in promoting social equity throughout the organization.
- Specifying that departments, offices, and agencies adopt an equity lens to shape decisions and activities, including personnel, land use, development, and environmental planning.
- Emphasizing the importance of reflecting social equity in budgeting, performance assessments, and access to services.
- Stating that principles of justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion should guide the execution of public engagement activities.
- Ensuring that elected offices are fully representative of the community by establishing procedures and districts that encourage representation of all elements of a community.

Importantly, equity may be defined and implemented in a variety of ways based on the characteristics and interests of a community. Therefore, this work requires an inclusive community engagement process to gather insights and direction from the community itself.

Increasing Civic Engagement and Democratic Practices

The revised charter elevates the importance of just, inclusive, and equitable public engagement; the values of democratic professionalism and ethics; and community-centered governance and problem solving. These changes are driven by many forces, including:

The complexity of the challenges facing local governments. Leaders must negotiate tensions and tradeoffs among competing, underlying public values in collaboration with community members, through deliberative problem-solving, planning, and decision making, rather than solely through technical expertise or adversarial politics. In addition, community members have tremendous problem-solving capacities. Many public problems simply cannot be addressed without the support of large numbers of people.

Engaging your residents in revisiting your charter is one of the most important steps you can take in creating a thriving community that reflects its most fundamental and democratic values.

The need to bridge divides. More participatory and equitable practices have achieved success in building mutual understanding and establishing consensus across different groups of people.

Equity and engagement require one another. Making public engagement more inclusive and participatory will help produce more equitable outcomes for a wider range of people, as will engaging people in evaluating whether policy outcomes are in fact equitable.

The importance of civic health.

Strong, ongoing connections among community members, robust relationships between community members and public institutions, and positive attachments between people and the places where they live are highly correlated with a range of positive outcomes, from better physical health to higher employment rates to better resilience in the face of natural disasters.

Inclusive civic engagement is recommended for all charter sections involving public outreach and deliberation. For example, city departments and offices should include civic engagement in their planning and decision processes, elected positions should incorporate engagement in their processes, and the public should be considered a partner in all city affairs.

Producing a Lasting Change

It is not a coincidence that the public holds a higher level of trust for local government compared to federal and state governments—that was the

intention of the early authors of the model charter and the reason for the emphasis on professionalism and integrity. Inequality and lack of public engagement undermines trust and community. Unless we include the full community in decision making and to achieve equitable outcomes, local governments would lose not only the public’s trust, but its cooperation as well. Engaging your residents in revisiting your charter is one of the most important steps you can take in creating a thriving community that reflects its most fundamental and democratic values. **PM**

ENDNOTE

¹ <https://icma.org/governing-equity-implementing-equity-lens-local-government>



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is president of the National Civic League.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

May Be the Keys to Solving Your Employee Recruitment and Retention Issues | BY EMILY LEWIS

Your DEI efforts could be the missing piece of the employment puzzle that sets your organization apart.

Like many organizations, Charlotte County is addressing the challenges of twin priorities: employee recruitment and retention amid a labor shortage, along with meeting diversity, equity, and inclusion goals. But what if the two priorities were complementary, not competing?

In today's job market, many organizations are scraping by to simply fill the vacancies necessary to keep operations running. In such a competitive environment, how you position yourself as an employer may be the difference between having a highly engaged and productive workforce or pulling your hair out with constant complaints, employee turnover, and morale issues.

As leaders, it is our duty to ensure that our hiring practices eliminate biases and are reflective of our organizational values. Our approach to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) can be the missing piece of the employment puzzle that sets our organizations apart from our competitors in the labor market.

Becoming an employer of choice doesn't happen by accident. It takes strategic leadership and commitment to creating an organizational culture that celebrates the unique abilities and perspectives that a diverse workforce can provide. The same reasons you're implementing DEI policies—fostering creativity, raising productivity, and improving organizational performance—can be the push a recruit needs to choose you over other employers.

Diversity, equity, and inclusion starts at the top of strong organizations. We must understand the data of DEI and be prepared to take a critical look at our recruitment practices to see those blind spots in advertising, recruitment, interviewing, and training that are impairing our efforts to meet our DEI goals.

Even job advertisements can trip up your DEI plan right out of the gate. They often contain bureaucratic buzzwords instead of plain English and may contain education and job history requirements that candidates may not need to



EMILY LEWIS

is deputy county administrator of Charlotte County, Florida.

truly excel in the open position and be a valuable contributor to your organization. Reviewing advertisements and job specifications through the lens of DEI can be revealing and amending them to remove bias comes with big rewards.

Advertising and marketing open positions is critical in today's job market, but the traditional methods of posting are not sufficient to meet the current operational demands. Relying on one or two recruitment tools that don't filter out bias and buzzwords impedes your organization's progress in your DEI efforts. Try advertising in non-native language newspapers or magazines or untraditional publications, like church bulletins and culture-specific online blogs or e-zines. In Charlotte County, we are using nontraditional recruitment platforms such as TikTok to reach potential applicants. Our world is incredibly connected, and we should take advantage of this to reach the people who may not think that public service is an option for them.

Once we have the applicants, we need to focus on the interview. Gone are the days when we can rely on the standard interview questions. The interview process must identify the best fit candidates based on their merit and skills and this takes planning and hard work to achieve. Look at your interview questions through that same DEI lens. Ensure that

Creating an environment that is inclusive is key to remaining an employer of choice.

interview panels mirror the diversity of your community and interviewers are trained to eliminate implicit bias. Reviewing a sampling of the last few recruitment efforts may provide insight into how inclusive your efforts are or where you can eliminate conscious and unconscious bias in the process.

Finally, creating an environment that is inclusive is key to remaining an employer of choice. Employees are less likely to leave an organization where they feel valued, can bring their full selves to work without fear of judgement, and are appreciated for their contributions. In Charlotte County, we've focused on increasing the line of sight for employees, showing them how they each have a huge part to play in the overall success of our organization and the vision we have for our community. It is a strategic effort to create a sense of belonging at work, where employees are appreciated for their unique contributions, recognized for their accomplishments, supported in their career goals, and have a sense of connection to how they are positively impacting their community.

None of this is easy to accomplish, but if we want to recruit and retain a diverse, highly skilled, motivated workforce, we have to take this hard look at ourselves and adjust. Public service is a fantastic career, and we need to ensure it is equally available for all. **PM**

ICMA's Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Interactive Timeline *The Past, Present, and Future*

Explore this online ICMA timeline of our path to building a diverse and inclusive profession and association for professional local government managers, and how this impacts the communities we serve.

icma.org/resj-timeline



BRINGING DATA-DRIVEN EQUITY WORK TO YOUR LOCALITY

Using data to uncover disparities and advance inclusive growth can help your organization and your community thrive in incredible ways

BY JESSI ATCHESON

Can your organization achieve its goals and mission without including equity? If your answer is no, then equity considerations need to be woven into your organization's daily decision making.

While it may be easy to think of equity work as being more conceptual, that could not be further from the truth. Using data to uncover disparities and advance inclusive growth can help your organization reach new heights and your community achieve a more equitable distribution of well-being.

Equity work is not a cookie cutter task, and there is no "one size fits all" way to achieve equity across all fronts, which is why applying data tools to inform policy and priority setting will foster more equitable outcomes that are tailor-made to fit your community's unique needs. During the webinar, "Mapping Inequity: Partnering for Data-Informed Decision Making," ICMA hosted a panel of experts on data-driven equity from the University of Virginia—Michele Claibourn, Alissa Diamond, Siri Russell,

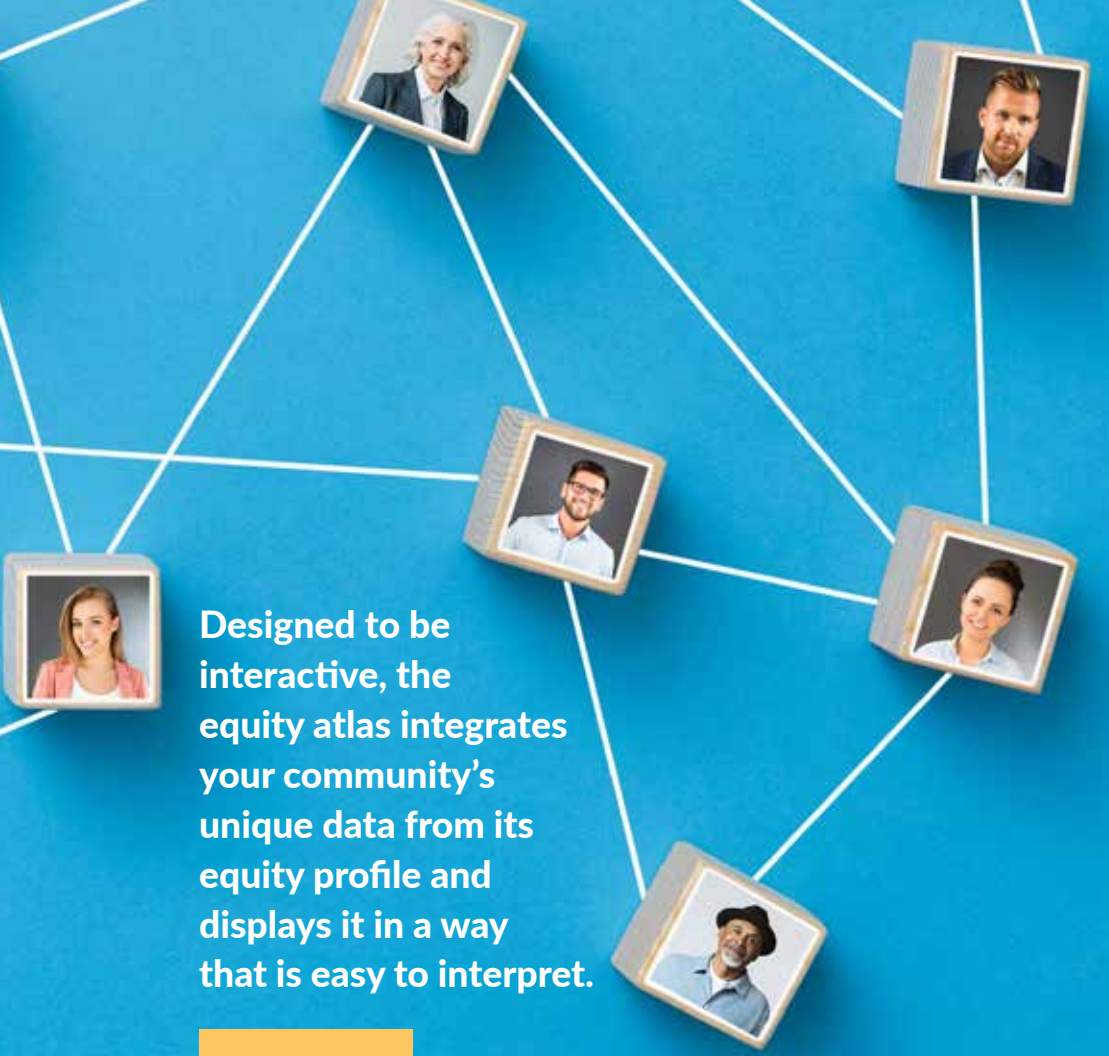
and Barbara Brown Wilson—who walked through creating an equity profile of your community, developing an equity atlas, and what positive outcomes can result from using data tools to fuel equity work within your own locality.

Equity Profile

Creating an equity profile of your community will help to build a shared understanding of where your community stands. Each community's unique equity profile analyzes several conditions



By creating an equity profile, you become a well of knowledge and understanding of your community's unique needs in order to execute equity-informed decision making.



Designed to be interactive, the equity atlas integrates your community's unique data from its equity profile and displays it in a way that is easy to interpret.

In this example, users can operate the interactive dashboard to visualize real data such as life expectancy, percentage of those with health insurance, graduation rate, poverty level, home ownership rate, and more as it relates to different races represented in the community. Thankfully, the Equity Center made replicable code available for you (<https://github.com/compasslab/equity-dashboard>) to create an equity atlas of your own locality. With the help of this tool, you will be able to identify disparities as they relate to different key indicators, putting a clear, irrefutable spotlight on what areas require the most attention in your community in order to achieve more equitable outcomes across all markers of success.

that contribute to overall well-being across both demographic groups and geographic areas. This report looks at various outcomes for those in your community based on race, gender, age, etc., and determines if those outcomes are equitable across different groups. This is done by using the American Human Development Index (AHDH), which evaluates health, access to knowledge, and living standards in local contexts to assess specific measures of well-being.¹ Applying this index to your community can uncover any geographic and racial/ethnic discrepancies in scores between neighborhoods, which indicate critical differences in access to your community's resources that promote well-being. Once these disparities are identified, this data can be

used as a compass to equitably distribute resources and narrow those gaps.

Your organization has an obligation to consider how it can promote wellbeing not just in some parts of the community, or for some residents, but for all residents in your locality. Your community's equity profile provides an opportunity for local government staff and community members to broaden understanding of how well-being is experienced throughout your community and serves as a benchmark for regularly assessing conditions throughout your community. By creating an equity profile, you become a well of knowledge and understanding of your community's unique needs in order to execute equity-informed decision making.

Equity Atlas

Once the community equity profile is complete, that data can be used to form an interactive equity atlas. An equity atlas is a data and policy tool for leaders and advocates, designed to advance a more equitable community and help residents hold decision makers accountable. This tool allows users to obtain an expanded definition of equity by making varying disparities more visible, tangible, and thus, easier to understand. Designed to be interactive, the equity atlas integrates your community's unique data from its equity profile and displays it in a way that is easy to interpret. An example of an active regional equity atlas² can be found through the University of Virginia's Equity Center, which focuses on the greater Charlottesville region.³

Getting Started in Your Locality

While analyzing community data with these easy-to-digest tools is essential to putting a much-needed spotlight on the precise impact of disparities that your locality is experiencing, this work should not allow you to lose sight of the importance of learning about the real lived experiences of those in your community. Data is important, but stories are far more impactful.

Before creating an equity profile and equity atlas within your locality, physically going out into your community to listen to people's lived experiences and stories will help you get an initial gauge on where your community stands and will act as a compass for your work moving forward. Assemble an equity working group by

going to different community events, shops, sporting events, markets, gas stations, etc., in both rural and urban areas within your locality to gather different folks who are willing to speak with you about their lived experiences within the community. Bringing these new and different voices to the table will give a well-balanced idea of where your community currently stands and will help guide your path to introducing more data-driven tools into your equity work. Once the equity profile and equity atlas have been created for your community, those data findings can then be compared to the different accounts of lived experiences that were originally shared during the equity working group phase.

This unignorable data will finally give equity work the seat at the table it has always deserved.

Outcomes of Equity Work

The ultimate goal and positive outcome that your community can enjoy as a result of this essential work is bringing equity into the conversation for all areas of community planning and decision making. With such a distinct magnifying glass being put on the disparities experienced throughout your community, the pressure will be on to do whatever it takes to close those gaps. This unignorable data will finally give equity work the seat at the table it has

always deserved. As an even greater argument for the use of these tools, although they are initially used for equity work, they can easily be taken and applied to other areas of interest within local government, like climate change, COVID-19, etc., resulting in even greater outcomes for your locality beyond equity.

Keep in mind that applying such tools to your locality is only the beginning and they are only meant to act as a guide toward future equity efforts. Once you have uncovered the disparaging gaps within your community, it is your job to continue the work in order to close those gaps. **PM**

MORE INFORMATION AND EQUITY RESOURCES

View the recorded presentation for “Mapping Inequity: Partnering for Data-Informed Decision Making” at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M1Trp6WK4WQ>.

Explore the University of Virginia Equity Center at <https://virginiaequitycenter.org/>.

Visit ICMA's resource hub for all things equity at <https://icma.org/race-equity-and-social-justice>.

ENDNOTES AND RESOURCES

¹ <https://measureofamerica.org/human-development/#american%20human%20development%20index>

² <https://commpaslab.shinyapps.io/cville-region/>

³ <https://virginiaequitycenter.org/>

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PROFILES OF LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT IN ACTION



“The ICMA Credentialed Manager designation has been an excellent statement to the citizens, elected officials, and organizations I have served. It shows commitment to professional management, life-long learning, and service to the community. More importantly, it has been a fantastic tool to facilitate my career development, and sharpen my skills to prepare me to help solve city challenges.”

Bryan D. Foster
Deputy City Manager
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Diversifying YOUR LEADERSHIP TEAM

● BY JOSE M.
● LEON JR.

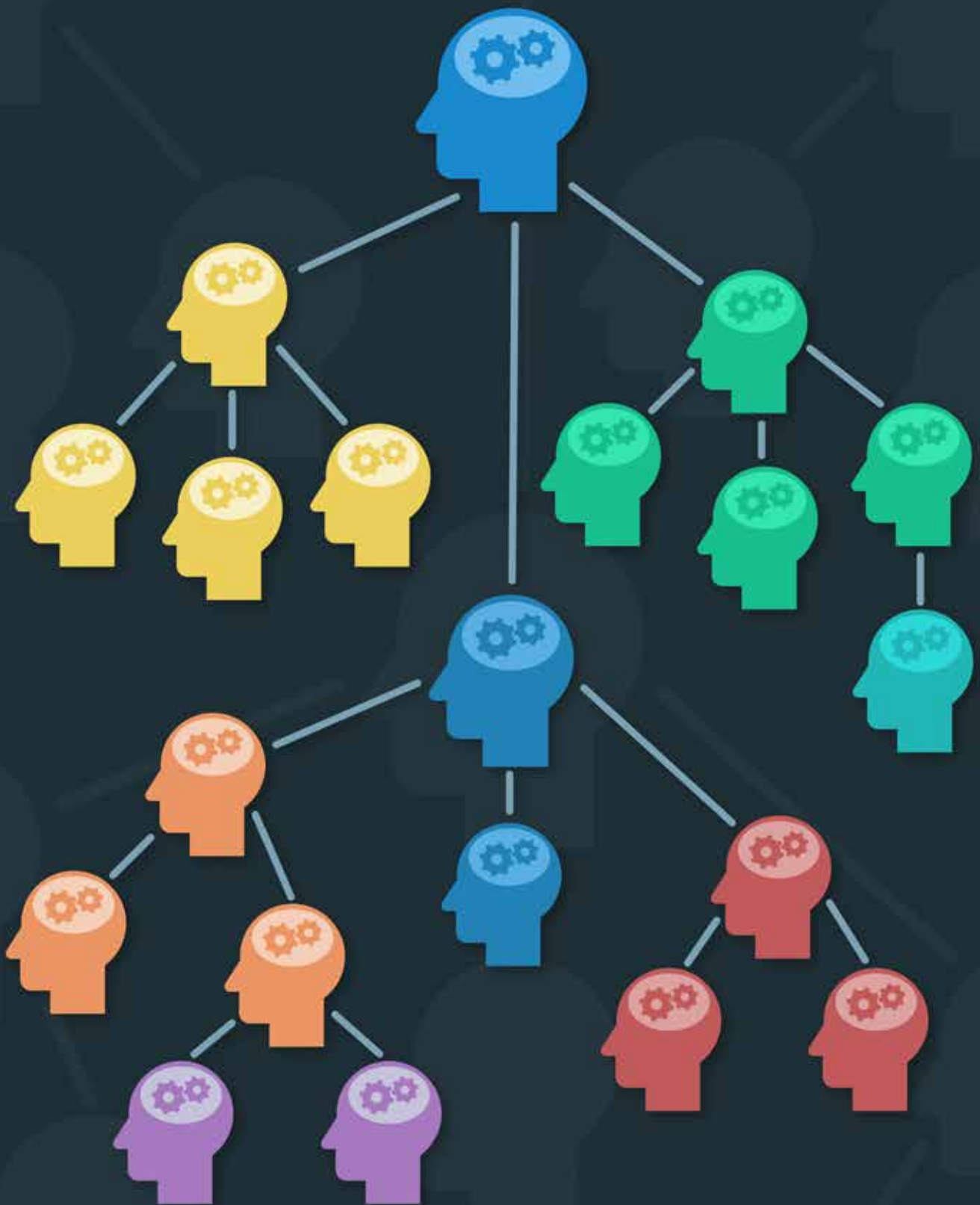
Seven thoughts to consider for recruiting, retaining, and promoting the best minority talent

As I have grown in my career as a public servant, I have watched communities fill their vacant positions. Many organizations are filled with high-quality professionals who are extremely experienced and educated. I have presented to full audiences of city/county managers and administrators, assistant/deputy city managers, and department heads. But every time I look around the room, there is one question I have started to ask myself a lot lately: where are the minorities?

In my first seven years of public service, I was a nonsupervisory, nonexempt engineering technician. I met several minorities from all walks of life in that position. Most of whom were in similar non-exempt, non-professional categories. The next seven years of my career I would work at a department-head level, and it became very apparent to me the limited number of minorities who I could call my peer. I have discussed this with a handful of people in city manager or assistant city manager positions, as these are the people who hire department heads.

Lately, I have felt my time for merely talking about this issue has ended, and I firmly believe it is time to do something about it. So, any chance I get, I am going to ask these individuals who manage and lead these wonderful organizations about their hiring, mentoring, and planning for minorities in department-head and executive-level positions. And I think we need to take a hard look at the make-up of professional organization boards as well.

A while back, in a class for my MPA program, we had a guest speaker from one of the top high-performing local government organizations in the Kansas City metropolitan area. This was a very respected individual who had a great career, and I was very honored to hear them speak. They spoke about the organizational restructuring they had ventured into over the last two to three years, including the new pillars of their organizational chart and how they planned for their organization's future. They started by explaining their organization's 2020 plan and how it helped make them the high-performing organization they are. Then they spoke about their new plan for 2040. It was a great presentation with



You must be intentional about changing something that needs changing. Great leaders are comfortable with becoming uncomfortable.

wonderful information about how to change the mindsets of people within an organization toward the future, but one thing stuck out to me. The only time I heard the word diversity was regarding diversification of housing. The community wanted diversification of neighborhoods and housing, or affordable housing. This is no doubt a great idea and a much-needed goal for many communities around the nation. However, I was interested in how they were going to create opportunities for minorities—in department-head level positions or higher—to be involved in this great change happening in their organization.

When it came time to ask a question, I raised my hand. “Thank you for the presentation. My experience has shown me that there is a true lack of diversity in the top management and executive levels of public organizations across the Kansas City metropolitan area. This has motivated me to continue my education and strive for these opportunities, hopefully all the way to the city manager’s office one day. I am curious how you all, as a high-performing organization, are diversifying your top management and executive positions so they can help you achieve your goals moving into the future.”

The speaker replied that they had been discussing diversity and inclusion in their office more, and had even contemplated creating a position for it within their

organization. They spoke about how they know it is an important thing to hire someone who does not look like themselves or the city manager of the city. They spoke about the lack of diverse applicants for their vacant positions, speculating that maybe it was because they are in a suburban community. They said that greater diversity was a goal of theirs, but they needed to do more. Then, they kind of turned it back to me and said, “You know, if you have any ideas on how we can do better, please give me some suggestions.”

This was a little hard to do with five minutes remaining in class and a room full of more questions. This situation did, however, make me understand that perhaps these individuals who clearly know how to manage a city may not know how to address this problem organically. Here are my top ideas on how to diversify your leadership.

1. Do Not Reinvent the Wheel.

I can’t tell you how many times I have heard executive-level professionals explain that one of their mentors, friends, or colleagues called them about a vacant position or future vacancy in their organization. I have also been told how individuals are referred to people for jobs. I’ve even been told by a few that someone put in a “good word” to the hiring manager about them. The relationship

assisted in getting them a job, or at a minimum, an interview. Though the relationship was not the only thing that helped, it seemed like a big reason that the opportunity became a reality. My guess is you know of someone who has experienced this, or perhaps you have over your career. If it has worked for you or someone you may know, why can’t it work for others? Be quick to help a minority local government professional on their career path along that wheel of success.

2. Inclusion and Diversity Should Be Actions, not just Words.

Diversity and inclusion managers/offices are an important step in helping move us forward with this issue. Guess what? Everyone is doing it! So, ask yourself or ask your leaders, what you are doing differently. Being a reactive organization does not make you a high-performing one. You took time and effort to think about the future of your organization, or the future of your city. Identifying the necessity to diversify your

organization is not only a Human Resources concern; it should be discussed with every department and every leader in your organization. It must be embedded within the culture of your leadership in your organization, not assigned to a single position within your organization or a single department. Your succession plan should include a list of people who look different, think differently, have different education backgrounds, and come from different socioeconomic communities. If we aren’t diversifying our organization’s leaders, what change are we really trying to create for our future?

3. Take a Chance on Someone.

I know you might hate the idea of risk. You’ve been trained and educated to avoid it. Diversifying your leadership team should not be a quick 90-degree turn in any one direction. You want to make sure you are placing people in the right position for them to be successful. Their success is your organization’s success, as well as your community’s success. Trust me, the last thing I want is for someone who would not usually be given an opportunity to get one “just because they’re the minority candidate” and be completely set up for failure. You want them to first have the necessary qualifications, education, and experience. We want the opportunity and don’t have all the experience or education you’re seeking sometimes, but we are working hard to get there.

Remember that our life experiences are different than yours. We cannot have experience in opportunities we’ve never received. For

One of the best questions I have ever been asked in an interview was “Tell us how your life experiences will help you make infrastructure decisions for the city.”

example, we may not have all the education requirements yet because we may have had a child as a teenager and had to immediately go into the workforce to provide for our family. Perhaps we started near the bottom of an organization and have been continuing our education to level-up one day, but no one has noticed. The point is that people sometimes have different life experiences that would have prevented them from being all you might need in a candidate. Interview them anyway! Don't focus on whether we have already done the job; focus on if we can. It may seem like a risk to hire us, but it's a risk that is worth investing time and energy into because the payoff is great when it is successful.

4. Recruit Local Talent.

There are many great public policy and public management programs at universities around the world. Seek out the public management faculty at your local universities and explain your organization's hiring needs. Have them help you identify minority talent who can help you close this gap. Having worked in the public sector for as long as I have, I see this done all the time with other community issues. Your local universities are a great resource with lots of talent. Don't let them escape to another metro area!

5. Become Uncomfortable.

Call people of color in our field—people with an upbringing different from yours who are working in this profession. Identify them, get to know them, meet them for lunch, and build relationships with them. This has worked for so many people, and it will

I encourage you to find a mentor who looks different, thinks differently, and speaks differently from you.

continue to work for others. People of color don't have a big selection of folks who look like them to call and talk to about city management experience here in the Kansas City metro area. We don't even have a vast list of people to call about department head experience. You must be intentional about changing something that needs changing. Great leaders are comfortable with becoming uncomfortable.

6. Ask Better Questions.

I do not want to place you against your human resources director, but the reality is your line of questioning may need to be changed to allow us to separate ourselves among your candidates. I get it. You want to know about our leadership, our experience, our qualifications—things that all organizations want to know about. However, try asking about our upbringing or motivations to change the world as we know it.

One of the best questions I have ever been asked in an interview was from my current organization: "Tell us how your life experiences will help you make infrastructure decisions for the city of Raytown." I got to talk about how growing up we walked many places, sometimes on sidewalks and

sometimes not. We would walk to family members' houses and walk to the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) location for groceries. My mother was always concerned with our safety and told us to "stay on the sidewalk" if it was there. This taught me the importance of sidewalks to a community's residents.

Our ability to tell you our story is sometimes limited by the straight and narrow questions asked in interviews. Many individuals have polished answers to fit these questions. We are different. Our grit, developed over years of economic and social mobility struggles, leads to strong mental capacity and the ability to overcome the many challenges brought forth by leading and managing a public organization. It is one thing for a person to sit in a classroom and hear about poverty, social mobility struggles, and things nearly all MPAs have learned. However, it is completely different to have lived it, overcome it, and relate to people living in that situation. You will never learn about this grit if you don't ask questions to help us tell our story. Be different, ask better questions, and let us help you make a difference.

7. Follow the Platinum Rule.

Everyone always says to follow the Golden Rule: "Treat others as you want to be treated." I say, let's rethink that! I believe that you should "Treat others the way that they want to be treated." Why? Because they may not have grown up like you. They probably did not have the same experiences or opportunities that you did. So how do you do this with employees, supervisors, and

colleagues? As I stated earlier, get to know them. Develop a relationship; find out who they are and how they want to be treated. Find out what their dreams are. What are their fears and their challenges? In the end, it might be that they want to be treated like you do, but you will not know that unless you take the time to reach out and get to know them.

Conclusion

One of the biggest reasons I am in the local government profession today is because someone did these seven things for me. Today, I proudly call them my mentor because they saw potential in me that I didn't know I even had. They believed in me, and it made me believe in myself. This was years ago, before I had even decided to study public administration. We must take time to encourage the next generation of minority public professionals. They are the future.

For my fellow minority local government professionals, we must continue to work hard with the highest integrity, continue our education, and maintain our professionalism to be invited to the table of opportunity. We represent our communities every single day in everything we do. I encourage you to find a mentor who looks different, thinks differently, and speaks differently from you. This has helped me tremendously in my career and I have zero doubt you will find it helpful as well. This issue is a "we" thing because only we can change the world together. **RM**

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ACHIEVING DIVERSITY ON CITIZEN ADVISORY COMMITTEES

By increasing diversity of thought on advisory committees, a local government can be more approachable to its residents, more socially and fiscally responsible, and increasingly accessible to a greater number of people.

BY MICHAEL WILLIAMS,
PHD, ICMA-CM

Local government depends upon citizen boards, commissions, committees, and task forces/advisory committees to advise the elected body and the administration. Advisory committees serve the crucial role of making recommendations on issues

relating to policies impacting the welfare and quality of life in the community. The volunteers serving on these committees provide an integral link between the residents of the community and its government.

The fundamental purposes for utilizing committees in support of county government are to:

1. Ensure full representation of residents of the



opinions, backgrounds, and social experiences to citizen advisory committees.

The Importance of Increasing Committee Diversity

Promoting diversity and inclusion should include the practice of recruiting people with different opinions, backgrounds, religious beliefs, political beliefs, sexual orientations, heritage, academic/professional backgrounds, and life experiences into local government. Importantly, a diverse committee brings people with different experiences, skills, perspectives, and insights together to consider and solve problems. Diversity increases innovation, creativity, and strategic thinking because teams of people who come from different backgrounds can draw upon their unique experiences and wider range of knowledge to spark new, innovative ideas and better decision-making.

There have been a number of best practices promoted to advise local governments about diversity, to promote becoming more welcoming communities, and to improve harmony within communities. These are very positive actions that can make our communities better places to live, work, and play. However, as local government administrators, we are often asked to examine our ordinances, processes, and procedures to be certain we are fostering equity and inclusion.

One active way to foster inclusion and bring new voices into your government is to consider changes to the appointment process and policies surrounding citizen advisory committees. Below are

some suggestions to increase diversity on your boards and committees.

Actions to Help Achieve Greater Diversity of Citizen Voices on Local Government Advisory Committees

Alter the Appointment Process

- Conduct a survey of current appointees to ascertain demographic data.
- Alter the committee application forms to allow applicants to self-identify by gender or as a member of a designated minority group and provide information that will help the appointing authority increase and maintain diversity on committees.
- Review the make-up of each committee annually before making appointments.

Whether an actual survey of appointees is conducted, or just an anecdotal review, you can create a description of appointees committee by committee and appointees in entirety. Developing new application forms can

allow applicants to submit information helpful to the appointing body in increasing diversity on committees. Prior to making an appointment to any advisory committee, the elected body can have knowledge of the known demographic data of current members in addition to access to previous applications of all current committee members.

Build Leadership Capacity within Committees

- Require each committee to alternate the committee chairs on an annual or semi-annual basis.
- Require each committee to select a vice-chair on an annual basis.
- Conduct committee training on procedures, Robert's Rules of Order, and committee rules of conduct.

Part of increasing the diversity of advisory committees includes developing the leadership capabilities within these committees. If the chair of a committee is always the same individual, that person can, knowingly or unknowingly, come to dominate or unintentionally bias the discussions of the committee. This can lead to diluting the viewpoints and representation of the other members of the committee.

Most county boards in Minnesota alternate the position of chair, and this has been very successful for the operation of Minnesota counties. While everyone who has served as chair has varying strengths, over time the best practices of each person holding the position have carried forward, creating a stronger, better operating board.

community, in its diversity, in government decision-making processes.

2. Ask residents to help define community standards and norms.
3. Provide technical expertise in certain areas.
4. Provide an independent sounding board for issues, ideas, and policy matters.
5. Make recommendations to the elected bodies and county staff.
6. Meet requirements of state law.

Elected bodies appoint individuals to advisory committees on a regular basis. Many governing bodies are considering methods to bring differing

Many governing bodies are considering methods to bring differing opinions, backgrounds, and social experiences to citizen advisory committees.

This same practice could increase the strength of committees. Members gain appreciation for the role of chair and its function, as well as learning how to work more collaboratively with the other members. Those members also are then better equipped to develop into other leadership or advocacy roles with the community.

Ensuring there is a vice-chair facilitates the transition of leadership. Annual training instills confidence in committee procedures and one's ability to provide committee leadership and facilitation.

Force Membership Turnover with the Use of Term Limits

If, for example, you have a three-term limit, then reduce term limits for appointees to two three-year terms. If upon meeting the term limit, a person can be reappointed after a waiting period, then eliminate the ability to be reappointed after a waiting period. Forcing turnover on committees will foster the elected body's ability to appoint more diverse members.

A city or county's mission and values cannot be fully achieved without the voices of all people being heard.



Expand the Membership of Committees

Expanding the number of members on advisory committees can offer immediate and long-term opportunity to appoint people with differing views and backgrounds.

Analyze the Requirement for Specified Criteria for Some Appointees

Some committee bylaws require appointees to be of a specific profession or establish other specific criteria for occupying a seat on the committee. These requirements might limit the ability to find diverse candidates. Perhaps the need for people of certain criteria is obsolete or unimportant when compared to the need for diversity. You can analyze these requirements and make suggestions for change.

Consider Diversity Targets when Making Appointments

While the governing body cannot know everything about potential appointees, when making appointments the board could consider diversity criteria and candidates with a wide variety of skills, experiences, and education. If

your committees have a lack of women, or young people, or people of color, then special attention and intentionality could be given to appointing more women, younger people, and people of color. Interested and qualified candidates representing the diversity of the community's population, as well as those voices that increase the diverse make-up of the specific committee, could be encouraged to be appointed based on targets. For example, aiming to have committee make-ups of 50% women by a certain date would be a reasonable target.

Consider Removing Governing Body Liaisons from Advisory Committees or Establishing Policies for Elected Official Behavior when Acting as a Liaison

There may be reasons to avoid having elected officials on citizen advisory committees or at least reminding the elected official of the role. The purpose of citizen advisory committees is to garner advice and opinions of non-elected officials with an interest or expertise in the policy area. When an elected official is a member of a citizen advisory committee, sometimes others on the committee will

look to them for leadership, which can result in diminishing the voices of others.

Conclusion

Hopefully, with the help of the suggestions mentioned in this article, your elected body will alter its recruitment efforts and find new candidate pipelines. Admittedly, some of these changes will require the governing body to be more active in finding appointees.

By increasing diversity of thought in advisory committees, a local government can be more approachable to its residents, more socially and fiscally responsible, and increasingly accessible to a greater number of people, including those seeking employment and county services. Diverse advisory boards can help mitigate challenges to engaging marginalized communities as well. A city or county's mission and values cannot be fully achieved without the voices of all people being heard. **PM**

MICHAEL WILLIAMS, PHD, ICMA-CM, is county administrator of Stearns County, Minnesota.



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SheLeadsGov:

ICMA's Continuing Dedication to Advancing Women in the Profession

Follow ICMA's ongoing efforts toward fostering an environment for women to flourish in leadership and management roles. ICMA is committed to moving the needle, now more than ever. BY JESSI ATCHESON | Photos taken at SheLeadsGov events at the 2021 ICMA Annual Conference in Portland, Oregon.

ICMA has put an emphasis on advancing women in the local government profession since the mid-1970s. From its very first Task Force on Women in the Profession to the ongoing equity efforts and resources available today, ICMA is committed to moving the needle, now more than ever. The status of women in the profession today directly reflects the positive impact of ICMA and other organizations' efforts, as well as the changing hearts and minds of those within local government and within communities who demand better representation from their governing boards and the professionals that serve them.

The Task Force That Started It All

Fostering an environment for women to flourish in leadership and management roles is critical work that takes buy-in from everyone. ICMA uses a multifaceted approach to help advance women in the local government profession through a combination of task forces, research, events, regularly released content, professional development opportunities, strategic partnerships, and other resources.

This work garnered sharper focus with ICMA's first Task Force on Women in the Profession in 1974.¹ This group evaluated the status of women in local government management and made

recommendations to the ICMA Executive Board on how ICMA could help open the profession to more women and equitably support the women already in local government management. The 1974 task force identified critical pre-entry and post-entry barriers that made both entering and advancing in local government management significantly more difficult for women.

The work of the original task force was then revisited in 2012 with the second installment of the Task Force on Women in the Profession.² ICMA's 99th president and second female president, Bonnie Svrcek, spearheaded the resurrection of the task force in an effort to give new life to the original task force's initiatives to remove barriers to the profession, advance women to senior-level roles, and provide greater equity to women already in these roles. To further drive the goals and recommendations of both task forces, ICMA continues to put a consistent priority on advancing women through a variety of avenues.

How ICMA Continues to Carry the Torch for Women

ICMA provides on-demand stories, updates, and resources on gender balance in the form of blogs, articles, podcasts, and webinars that both inspire and inform readers and listeners about the challenges and triumphs of women in local government

management and what necessary changes need to be made in order to see more women break through the proverbial glass ceiling. SheLeadsGov (icma.org/sheleadsgov), ICMA's resource hub for content dedicated to advancing gender balance in the profession, posts regular content to keep the conversation going. Topics like "The Path to Developing Women Chief Administrative Officers," "Women to Know: The Next Generation Is Already Leading the Way," "Leading While Female Q&A," and so much more provide an all-encompassing view of how to better understand and support gender equality efforts.



SheLeadsGov means to me that 'she' finally is recognized as an integral part of local government leadership and that ICMA has acted upon many of the recommendations made by the Task Force on Women in the Profession nearly a decade ago."

—Bonnie Svrcek, Former City Manager, Lynchburg, Virginia

ICMA both hosts and takes part in events where women can network, find crucial support, and learn about pathways to success directly from women who have broken through the inevitable barriers to entry and advancement. ICMA features SheLeadsGov-presented segments each year at the ICMA Annual Conference, hosts annual Women's Luncheons, sponsored the For the Greater Good Women's Summit,³ and sponsored a number of other powerful events geared toward women's success in local government management. ICMA is also careful to diversify its panels at all events in order to showcase an equitable mix of men, women, and individuals from underrepresented groups.

Filling the professional pipeline with more qualified female candidates is a critical part of contributing to the future of women in local government. While inspiring content and events keep the conversation alive, encouraging and enabling women to seek careers in local government management is what will really turn the tide for the next generation of leaders. This is why ICMA provides leadership development opportunities and sponsors scholarships that give women the tools to break into the profession with confidence. One of ICMA's most unique and direct ways it contributes to filling the local government pipeline is through its Local Government Management Fellowship, a career-development

opportunity for recent MPA/MPP graduates to be placed in full-time management-track local government positions. More than half of those chosen to participate in ICMA's competitive Local Government Management Fellowship program are women, ensuring that there is equal representation in this unique learning opportunity to ignite participants' careers.⁴

Equity work cannot be done alone, which is why ICMA has formed strategic partnerships with other organizations that are focused on fostering a more equitable future for women in the profession. The League of Women in Government, Women Leading Government, The Legacy Project, and the 16/50 Project are all organizations that ICMA works with directly to spearhead gender balance initiatives.



Knowing that the Michigan Municipal League's 16/50 Project, and similar programs around the country, are helping women attain higher professional thresholds is one of the greatest joys in my work."

—Summer Minnick, Director of External Relations,
Michigan Municipal League

While the multifaceted work being done is important, it is nothing without having the facts. ICMA puts an emphasis on knowing both the past and current state of women in the profession, so we have a better grasp on what needs to be done to continue making



improvements. The National Research Center and ICMA's survey on career advancement, "Near the Top: Understanding Gender Imbalance in Local Government," and ICMA's regularly released data on ICMA women in the profession are great sources of data gathered to help achieve a better understanding of where women stand in local government, both yesterday and today.

Let's Talk Numbers

Through the work of ICMA and other organizations, paired with an ongoing societal mind shift, the percentage of female CAOs is steadily increasing as the years go on. When ICMA began its efforts toward advancing women in the profession in the mid-70s, only one percent of CAOs were women. That percentage has steadily increased to 18.6 percent as of 2020, after experiencing a slight dip from 20.1 percent in 2009 and 19.8 percent in 2012. While it seems like these efforts have been slow-moving for local government, it is important to recognize that we are not alone in this struggle. All industries across the board are seeing gender equality seemingly move at a snail's pace. Globally, the percentage of women in senior management roles rose to 29 percent in 2019 and held that position in 2020, while the United States lagged behind with only 21 percent of women in C-Suite roles.⁵ While the gap may not be as wide for some industries, the disparities across the board are evident and cannot be ignored.



Knowledge is key, and you can't change opinions without data and facts. The SheLeadsGov and gender-balance initiatives help share vital records and data points that help start a conversation like, "Here's what we know..." and "This is how we can make it better..."

—Brooke Smith, MIS, CMC,
Chapter President, Utah Women Leading Gov

To dive deeper and gain a better understanding of the state of women in the profession, ICMA partnered with the National Research Center and the League of Women in Government to launch a Survey on Career Advancement in 2019. This research involved 1,870 local government professionals who gave their unique responses and perspectives on the state of women in local government management. The data gained from this 2019 survey is directly compared to 2013 research data taken during the beginning of ICMA's second installment of the Task Force on Women in the Profession. The key findings to be highlighted in this research are female participation in ICMA, the priority put on gender diversity, efforts surrounding gender diversity, communities with a history of female CAOs, gender bias both experienced and reported, gender disparities in leadership opportunities, and barriers to entry in leadership roles.



From 2013 to 2019, there was a 77-percent increase in female participation in ICMA, bringing ICMA's list of female professionals to 46 percent. This significant increase in equitable representation has resulted in more female-focused initiatives spearheaded by ICMA, which will trickle down into the communities that ICMA serves, naturally leading to more female representation in the profession as a whole.

Seven in 10 respondents noted that gender diversity is seen as either a high or medium priority in their communities, with only three in 10 regarding the priority as high. Diving even deeper, male respondents were more likely to feel that there are gender diversity efforts being executed in their communities than female respondents. While interesting, this data can be interpreted simply. Men, for one reason or another, are more likely to believe that gender diversity is a priority in their communities. This can be explained by the natural desire for one to see their community as fair and equitable, when that may not be the case. Men unfortunately have the luxury of not needing an accurate pulse on gender equality efforts that their community is (or isn't) engaging in, but those rose-colored glasses can be easily set aside for women since they are the ones who are directly impacted by their community's efforts, or lack thereof, to seek gender equality.

Arguably one of the most promising findings of this study is the increase in the number of respondents that reported having a female CAO at some point in their community, from 39 percent in 2013 to 54 percent in 2019. In addition, the percentage of female elected officials jumped from 26 to 36 percent, while the percentage of female senior managers hopped from 34 to 38. While seeing the numbers climb is something to be celebrated, women have continued to report two to three times more instances of bias than their male counterparts, with a significant increase in total reports as a whole. Arguably directly correlated to the bias women experience is the greater opportunity for advancement for men. Nineteen percent of female respondents still had not received a leadership/management position, while only nine percent of male respondents have yet to receive such a role. Male respondents were also twice as likely to turn down a leadership opportunity than their female counterparts. While the needle is most certainly moving, these are disparities that cannot be ignored.



Recognizing that communities are stronger when there is inclusive leadership of every demographic is critical to our collective leadership in communities throughout the world.”

—Bonnie Svrcek

The discrepancies covered in this study do not go unnoticed for both male and female respondents, though. Eighty-five percent of women and 58 percent of men agreed that there are significantly more barriers to career advancement in local government for women than that of men. Acknowledging the disparities can be the catalyst of real change, but where do we go from here?

Where Do We Go from Here?

Although significant progress has been made, there is still much work to be done for women to have equal representation in both local government, and other leadership roles as well. ICMA continues to make gender equality a priority, and the time has long passed for other local government organizations to follow suit.

To support these efforts and continue to close the gap, it is important to know the facts, start or continue the conversation, and provide support where it is needed most. Learn the facts by conducting research in your own organization and community, while staying up to date on research that other organizations like ICMA publishes. Start and continue the conversation by creating and sharing gender equality-focused content to keep people informed and open the floor for discussion. Finally, provide critical support where it is needed most by helping fill the pipeline with the next generation of female local government managers in your community through leading them to leadership development opportunities and acting as a coach or mentor. These are just a few of the many ways that you can help ICMA move the needle, and if you are not quite sure where to start, SheLeadsGov has a litany of on-demand resources at your disposal.



SheLeadsGov and gender-balance initiatives help open doors, fix broken rungs, and shatter the glass ceiling for future growth in local government. Together we are making a difference.”

—Brooke Smith

Equity work is a marathon, not a sprint, and can be taxing at times. While it can be frustrating to see the needle move slowly, that does not mean that we are not entitled to celebrate the wins. Local government is not alone in the struggle to achieve gender equality, but unlike other professions, local government has a unique perspective and ability to set the precedent for their respective communities to follow. Consider yourself a direct representation of the local government profession as a whole. If you make gender equality a top priority and show equal representation in your organization's leadership roles, then the community you serve will naturally follow suit. **PM**

ENDNOTES

¹ <https://icma.org/documents/report-icma-task-force-women-profession-1976>

² <https://icma.org/articles/member-news/icma-works-advance-women-profession>

³ <https://blogs.iu.edu/spealum/2019/10/29/oneill-womens-summit-the-start-of-a-new-era/>

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Local Government Management Fellowship program

<https://icma.org/local-government-management-fellowship>

The League of Women in Government

<https://www.leagueofwomeningovernment.org/>

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The 16/50 Project <https://1650project.org/>

The National Research Center

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“Near the Top: Understanding Gender Imbalance in Local Government”

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Catalyst.org Research on Women in Management

<https://www.catalyst.org/research/women-in-management/>

ICMA Coaching Program

<https://icma.org/icma-coaching-program>



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In Their Own Words— **DEFINING EQUITY** FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Dorla Bonner and other members of the ICMA Equity Officer Institute 2021–2022 cohort explain what diversity, equity, and inclusion mean to them and their communities, as well as the importance of this work.

Dorla Bonner

**Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Director
Kalamazoo, Michigan**

The city of Kalamazoo, Michigan, defines equity as the guarantee of fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement for all, while striving to identify and eliminate barriers that have prevented the full participation of some groups. The principle of equity acknowledges that there are historically under-served and under-represented populations. Addressing these unbalanced conditions is required to ensure the provision of adequate opportunities to all groups.

However, it is hard for me explain equity without including the concepts of diversity, inclusion, and belonging. These concepts complete the “full participation” requirement of the equity definition.



Dorla
Bonner

Diversity refers to the representation of different demographic groups with a range of differences, both seen and unseen, that make people unique. This asks the question who is in the room to receive this equitable treatment? While there are often under-represented groups, there is also often an over-represented group in the room.

Inclusion refers to the action of creating an environment that engages, respects, and values multiple perspectives, ideas, and individuals. This asks the question are those new folks in the room respected and engaged? Are their perspectives valued? If the answers to these questions are no, then why are they even in the room?

Belonging is the feeling of security and support when there is a sense of acceptance, inclusion, and identity for an individual within a group. When all three are present—diversity, equity, and inclusion—your organization exhibits high levels of belonging.

The easiest thing an organization can do is to focus on diversity and add the different folk to the room. But this alone doesn't equate to fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement. And even if those things do occur, if those persons experience a lack of psychological safety due to experiencing unconscious biases, microaggressions, gas lighting, etc., they are still prevented from full participation.

Unfortunately, organizations fail to realize how much they lose when they do not have *belonging for all* as their goal. When staff do not experience belonging, they are less

engaged, they don't bring their whole selves to work, and they are more likely to look for work elsewhere, which results in a loss of creative thought, productivity, and longevity. Creating an atmosphere of belonging is not easy but it's necessary for equity, diversity, and inclusion to be real and not just words. Creating this atmosphere takes strong leadership, patience, consistent effort, accountability, and awareness of what should change in the organization.

It takes the courage to not get caught in transactions such as creating a DEI position without providing that position the authority and funding to implement change, or hosting trainings without accountability that the training resulted in changed actions, or celebrating holidays but not respecting folks who are named in the holiday. The expectation of this work is that organizations will finally experience transformation, becoming workplaces where belonging is the norm for all.

Jason E. Stroud

**Assistant City Administrator
River Falls, Wisconsin**

Diversity is being invited to the party. Equity is being able to add your music to the playlist. Inclusion is being asked to dance. I realize that oversimplifies it, but maybe it's an easy way to introduce the concept of equity to some.

I've come to learn that equity involves identifying and removing barriers that have marginalized groups or prevented groups from full participation. It's ensuring fair treatment, access, and opportunity for all people—



Jason E. Stroud

and realizing that some groups have barriers that others don't.

Claudia María Menéndez

**Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Officer
Funcionaria de la oficina de Diversidad, Equidad e Inclusión
Fort Collins, Colorado**

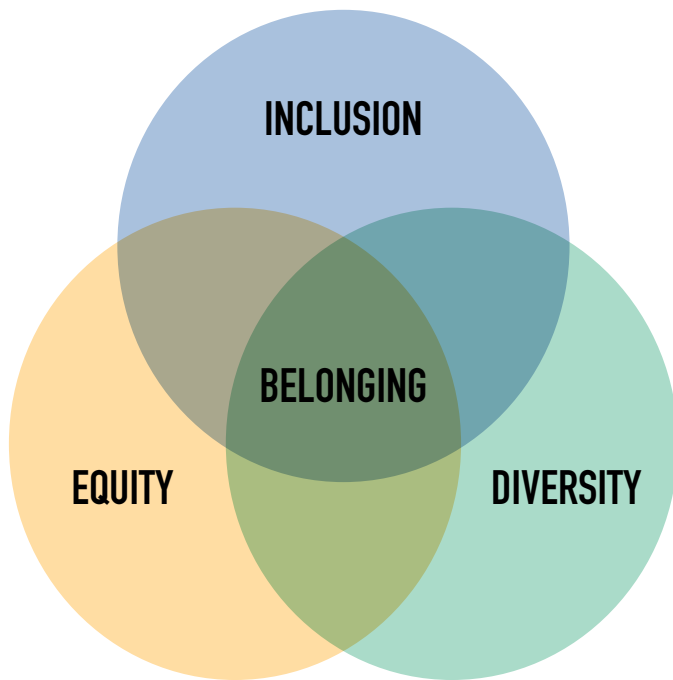
Equity for all, leading with race, is a multifaceted concept

and approach. To be clear, being race explicit is not race exclusive; we are working to achieve equity for all. There is no one-size-fits-all answer and that is the beauty of equity for all. As we think about our city's mission and how we work toward providing "exceptional service for an exceptional community," we are already thinking about equity.

Approaching our work with an equity lens means thinking about how socioeconomic



Claudia María Menéndez



Ashley Reynolds Marshall

status, gender, age, linguistic abilities, physical and mental abilities, and especially ethnicity and race intersect to influence an individual's ability to access and experience services, programs, and day-to-day life in Fort Collins in the best way possible. We all have equity needs and they shift and change throughout our life.

Our work and privilege as leaders in local government is to understand how certain intersections of social identities create disparity gaps, and with this knowledge we in turn develop policies and processes that result in equitable outcomes for our diverse community members.

Ashley Reynolds Marshall

**Deputy City Manager for Racial Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion
Charlottesville, Virginia**

I define *equity* as the work we



Tamara Miller

do to ensure every resident begins to run their race at the exact same starting line, at the exact same starting time, and with the exact same hurdles to jump. Equity work is getting everyone to that line before the starting bell, and then running in front of individuals who have artificial barriers in their lane. That does not mean that the race is smooth sailing, but it does mean that one person doesn't have more barriers than anyone else just because of their gender, race, religion, sexuality, ability, or age.

Tamara Miller

**Human Resources Training and Equity Manager
Lewisville, Texas**

Equity goes beyond equality. Equity is not simply everyone receiving the exact same treatment and the same resources. Equity takes into account everyone's individual needs and strives to meet those needs equitably. **PM**



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KEY TERMS OF RACE, EQUITY, AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

In your local government's efforts to elevate your community's equity work, you may come across a term that is unfamiliar to you. Review this glossary of terms. It's crucial that we all have a working knowledge of this terminology.

A

Ableism: Prejudiced thoughts and discriminatory actions based on differences in physical, mental and/or emotional ability; usually that of able-bodied/minded persons against people with illness, disabilities, or less developed skills.

Accountability: Refers to the ways in which individuals and communities hold themselves to their goals and actions, and acknowledge the values and groups to which they are responsible. Accountability requires some sense of urgency and becoming a true stakeholder in the outcome. Accountability can be externally imposed or internally applied.

To be accountable, one must be visible, with a transparent agenda and process. Invisibility defies examination; it is, in fact, employed in order to avoid detection and examination. Accountability demands commitment. It might be defined as "what kicks in when convenience runs out." Accountability can be externally imposed (legal or organizational requirements), or internally applied (moral, relational, faith-based, or recognized as some combination thereof) on a continuum from the institutional and organizational level to the individual level. From a relational point of view, accountability is not about doing it right; sometimes it's really about what happens after it's done wrong.

Active Racism: Actions which have as their stated or explicit goal the maintenance of the system of racism and the oppression of those in targeted racial groups.

Ally: Someone who makes the commitment and effort to recognize their privilege (based on gender, class, race, sexual identity, etc.) and work in solidarity with oppressed groups in the struggle for justice, understanding that it is in their own interest to end all forms of oppression, even those which they may benefit from in concrete ways.

Allies commit to reducing their own complicity or collusion in oppression of those groups and invest in strengthening their own knowledge and awareness of oppression.

Anglocentrism: Centered on or considered in terms of either England/Britain, or the English language. People who are Anglocentric may not see that language creates and carries culturally specific perspectives/world views and may assume that the world views produced through English are universal.

Anti-Semitism: The fear, hatred, or disparagement of Jews, Judaism, Jewish culture and related symbols.

Anti-Black: The Council for Democratizing Education defines anti-Blackness as being a two-part formation that both voids Blackness of value, while systematically marginalizing Black people and their issues.

The first form of anti-Blackness is overt racism.

This glossary is a tool for understanding expressions used in public discourse and does not necessarily reflect the views or opinions of ICMA membership, staff, or leadership. (Last revision date: May 2021)

Beneath this anti-Black racism is the covert structural and systemic racism which categorically predetermines the socioeconomic status of Blacks in this country. The structure is held in place by anti-Black policies, institutions, and ideologies.

The second form of anti-Blackness is the unethical disregard for Black institutions and policies. This disregard is the product of class, race, and/or gender privilege certain individuals experience due to anti-Black institutions and policies. This form of anti-Blackness is protected by the first form of overt racism.

Anti-Oppression: Strategies, theories, and actions that challenge social and historical inequalities and injustices that are systemic to our systems and institutions by policies and practices that allow certain groups to dominate other groups.

Anti-Racism: The active process of identifying and challenging racism, by changing systems, organizational structures, policies and practices, and attitudes, to redistribute power in an equitable manner.

Anti-Racist: An anti-racist is one supporting antiracist policy through their actions or expressing antiracist ideas. This includes the expression or ideas that racial groups are equals and do not need developing, and supporting policies that reduce racial inequity.

Appropriation: The claiming of rights to language, subject matter, and authority that are outside one's personal experience. The term

also refers to the process by which members of relatively privileged groups co-opt cultural elements of marginalized groups—abstracting cultural practices or artifacts from their historically specific contexts.

Assimilation: The full adoption by an individual or group of the culture, values, and patterns of a different social, religious, linguistic or national ethos, resulting in the diminution or elimination of attitudinal and behavioral affiliations from the original cultural group.

Assimilationist: One who is expressing the racist idea that a racial group is culturally or behaviorally inferior and is supporting cultural or behavioral enrichment programs to develop that racial group so that its members' cultural and behavioral expressions are in conformity with that of the allegedly superior group.

B
Becky: A slang term for a white woman who is ignorant of both her privilege and her prejudice. (The male version is called a Chad).

Bias: A subjective opinion, preference, prejudice, or inclination, often formed without reasonable justification, that influences the ability of an individual or group to evaluate a situation objectively or accurately.

Bigotry: Intolerant prejudice that glorifies one's own group and denigrates members of other groups.

Binary Thinking/Binarism: Conceiving or conceptualizing only in terms of oppositions, "either-or"; a form of denial or resistance (winner/loser).

Biphobia: The fear or hatred of persons perceived to be bisexual.

BIPOC: An acronym that stands for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color.

Black Lives Matter (Concept): The ideology that seeks to affirm and assert the value of Black lives, seeking equal treatment and justice for Black people, not to the exclusion of such for people of other races, but in response to the systematic absence or denial of equal treatment and justice for Black people across institutions and policies.

Black Lives Matter (Movement): A political movement to address systemic and state violence against African Americans. Per the Black Lives Matter organizers: In 2013, three radical Black organizers — Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors, and Opal Tometii — created a Black-centered political will- and movement-building project called #BlackLivesMatter in response to the acquittal of Trayvon Martin's murderer, George Zimmerman. The project is now a member-led global network of more than 40 chapters. Black Lives Matter members organize and build local power to intervene in violence inflicted on Black communities by the state and vigilantes.

Black Lives Matter is an ideological and political intervention in a world where Black lives are systematically and intentionally targeted for

demise. It is an affirmation of Black people's humanity, their contributions to [this] society, and their resilience in the face of deadly oppression."

C
Caucusing (Affinity Groups): White people and people of color each have work to do separately and together when seeking to address and correct racism. Caucuses provide spaces for people to work within their own racial/ethnic groups.

For white people, a caucus provides time and space to work explicitly on understanding white culture and white privilege, and to increase one's critical analysis around these concepts. A white caucus also puts the onus on white people to teach each other about these ideas, rather than relying on people of color to teach them (as often occurs in integrated spaces). For people of color, a caucus is a place to work with their peers on their experiences of internalized racism, for healing and to work on liberation.

Civil Disobedience: The nonviolent refusal to obey certain laws as an act of political protest.

Civil Unrest: Defined by law enforcement as a gathering of three or more people, in reaction to an event, with the intention of causing a public disturbance in violation of the law. Civil unrest typically involves damage to property or injury to other people. Peaceful demonstrations and protests that abide by the law do not constitute civil unrest.

Classism: The cultural, institutional, and individual set of practices and beliefs that assign value to people according to their socio-economic status. Classism also refers to the systematic oppression of poor and working-class people by those who control resources.

Also: Prejudiced thoughts and discriminatory actions based on differences in socio-economic status, income, class; usually by upper classes against lower classes.

Collusion: Thinking and acting in ways which support the system of racism. Both whites and People of Color can collude with racism through their attitudes, beliefs, and actions. When people act to perpetuate oppression or prevent others from working to eliminate oppression. Example: Able-bodied people who object to strategies for making buildings accessible because of the expense.

Colonization: Colonization can be defined as some form of invasion, dispossession, and subjugation of a people. The invasion need not be military; it can begin—or continue—as geographical intrusion in the form of agricultural, urban, or industrial encroachments. The result of such incursion is the dispossession of vast amounts of lands from the original inhabitants. This is often legalized after the fact. The long-term result of such massive dispossession is institutionalized inequality. The colonizer/colonized relationship is by nature an unequal one that benefits the colonizer at the expense of the colonized.

Ongoing and legacy Colonialism impact power

relations in most of the world today. For example, white supremacy as a philosophy was developed largely to justify European colonial exploitation of the Global South (including enslaving African peoples, extracting resources from much of Asia and Latin America, and enshrining cultural norms of whiteness as desirable both in colonizing and colonizer nations). See also: Decolonization.

Colorblind Racism: The belief that people should be regarded and treated as equally as possible, without regard to race or ethnicity. While a color-blind racial ideology may seem to be a pathway to achieve equity, in reality, it invalidates the importance of peoples' culture and ignores the manifestations of racist policies which preserve the ongoing processes that maintain racial and ethnic stratification in social institutions.

Color-Blindness/Color Evasion: The insistence that one does not notice/see skin color or race.

Colorism: The allocation of privilege and favor to lighter skin colors and disadvantage to darker skin colors. Colorism operates both within and across racial and ethnic groups.

Critical Consciousness: Learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions and to take actions against the oppressive elements of reality.

Critical Race Theory: Critical Race Theory recognizes that racism is

ingrained in the fabric and system of the American society. The individual racist need not exist to note that institutional racism is pervasive in the dominant culture.

The Critical Race Theory movement considers many of the same issues that conventional civil rights and ethnic studies take up, but places them in a broader perspective that includes economics, history, and even feelings and the unconscious. Unlike traditional civil rights, which embraces incrementalism and step by step progress, critical race theory questions the very foundations of the liberal order, including equality theory, legal reasoning, Enlightenment rationalism and principles of constitutional law.

Cultural Appropriation: Theft of cultural elements for one's own use, commodification, or profit—including symbols, art, language, customs, etc.—often without understanding, acknowledgement, or respect for its value in the original culture. Results from the assumption of a dominant (i.e., white) culture's right to take other cultural elements.

Cultural Competence: The ability to understand, appreciate and interact with people from cultures or belief systems different from one's own.

Cultural Humility: An interpersonal stance that is open to individuals and communities of varying cultures, in relation to aspects of the cultural identity most important to the person.

Cultural humility can include a life-long commitment to self-critique about differences in culture and a commitment to be aware of and actively mitigate power imbalances between cultures.

Cultural Misappropriation:

Cultural misappropriation distinguishes itself from the neutrality of cultural exchange, appreciation, and appropriation because of the instance of colonialism and capitalism; cultural misappropriation occurs when a cultural fixture of a marginalized culture/ community is copied, mimicked, or recreated by the dominant culture against the will of the original community and, above all else, commodified. One can understand the use of "misappropriation" as a distinguishing tool because it assumes that there are:

1. Instances of neutral appropriation.
2. The specifically referenced instance is non-neutral and problematic, even if benevolent in intention.
3. Some act of theft or dishonest attribution has taken place.
4. Moral judgement of the act of appropriation is subjective to the specific culture from which is being engaged.

Cultural Racism:

Cultural racism refers to representations, messages and stories conveying the idea that behaviors and values associated with white people or "whiteness" are automatically "better" or more "normal" than those associated with other racially defined groups.

Cultural racism shows up in advertising, movies, history books, definitions of patriotism, and in policies and laws. Cultural racism is also a powerful force in maintaining systems of internalized supremacy and internalized racism, which it does by influencing collective beliefs about what constitutes appropriate behavior, what is seen as beautiful, and the value placed on various forms of expression.

All of these cultural norms and values have explicitly or implicitly racialized ideals and assumptions (for example, what “nude” means as a color, which facial features and body types are considered beautiful, which child-rearing practices are considered appropriate.)

Those aspects of society that overtly and covertly attribute value and normality to white people and Whiteness, and devalue, stereotype, and label People of Color as “other,” different, less than, or render them invisible.

Cultural Representations:

Popular stereotypes, images, frames, and narratives that are socialized and reinforced by media, language and other forms of mass communication.

Cultural White Privilege:

A set of dominant cultural assumptions about what is good, normal or appropriate that reflects Western European white world views and dismisses or demonizes other world views.

Culture: The shared patterns of language, behaviors and interactions, cognitive constructs, and affective understanding that are learned through a process of socialization.

A social system of meaning and custom that is developed by a group of people to assure its adaptation and survival. These groups are distinguished by a set of unspoken rules that shape values, beliefs, habits, patterns of thinking, behaviors and styles of communication.



Damage Imagery:

Perpetuating stereotypes through the use of visuals, text/narratives, or data (e.g. statistics) to highlight inequities without the appropriate historical and sociopolitical context.

Decolonization: The meaningful and active resistance to the forces of colonialism that perpetuate the subjugation and/or exploitation of minds, bodies, and lands. Decolonization may be defined as the active resistance against colonial powers, and a shifting of power towards political, economic, educational, cultural, psychic independence and power that originate from a colonized nation's own indigenous culture. This process occurs politically and also applies to personal and societal psychic, cultural, political, agricultural, and educational deconstruction of colonial oppression.

Per Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang: “Decolonization doesn’t have a synonym”; it is not a substitute for ‘human rights’ or ‘social justice,’ though undoubtedly, they are connected in various ways. Decolonization demands an indigenous framework and a centering of indigenous land, indigenous sovereignty, and indigenous ways of thinking.

Deculturalization: The process by which indigenous people and people of color have been stripped of their language and culture through intentional schooling practices designed to enforce white supremacy.

Defund the Police:

Reallocating or redirecting funding away from the police department to other (more proactive) government agencies funded by the local municipality—to crucial and oft-neglected areas like education, public health, housing, and youth services. It also includes de-militarizing the police. Defunding the police is separate and distinct from abolishing the police.

Diaspora: The voluntary or forcible movement of peoples from their homelands into new regions...a common element in all forms of diaspora; these are people who live outside their natal (or imagined natal) territories and recognize that their traditional homelands are reflected deeply in the languages they speak, religions they adopt, and the cultures they produce. The term “diaspora” also refers to those individuals from a specific group that have been moved from their homelands, i.e. African Diaspora, Jewish Diaspora, etc.

Disaggregated Data:

Disaggregating data means breaking down information into smaller subpopulations. For instance, breaking data down into racial/ethnic categories.

Discrimination: Actions based on conscious or unconscious prejudice that favor one group over others

in the provision of goods, services or opportunities. The unequal treatment of members of various groups based on race, gender, social class, sexual orientation, physical ability, religion, and/or other categories.

In the United States, the law makes it illegal to discriminate against someone on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, or sex. The law also makes it illegal to retaliate against a person because the person complained about discrimination, filed a charge of discrimination, or participated in an employment discrimination investigation or lawsuit. The law also requires that employers reasonably accommodate applicants’ and employees’ sincerely held religious practices, unless doing so would impose an undue hardship on the operation of the employer’s business.

Diversity: Includes all the ways in which people differ and encompasses all the different characteristics that make one individual or group different from another. It is all-inclusive and recognizes everyone and every group as part of the diversity that should be valued.

A broad definition includes not only race, ethnicity, and gender—the groups that most often come to mind when the term “diversity” is used—but also age, national origin, religion, disability, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, education, marital status, language, and physical appearance. It also involves different ideas, perspectives, and values.

It is important to note that many activists and thinkers

critique diversity alone as a strategy. For instance, Baltimore Racial Justice Action states: “Diversity is silent on the subject of equity. In an anti-oppression context, therefore, the issue is not diversity, but rather equity. Often when people talk about diversity, they are thinking only of the “non-dominant” groups.”

Dominant Group: Not necessarily the majority, but the group within a society with the power, privilege, and social status to control and define societal resources and social, political, and economic systems and norms.

E
Equity: The guarantee of fair treatment, advancement, opportunity, and access for all individuals while striving to identify and eliminate barriers that have prevented the full participation of some groups and ensuring that all community members have access to community conditions and opportunities to reach their full potential and to experience optimal well-being and quality of life.

Ethnicity: The social characteristics that people may have in common, such as language, religion, regional background, culture, foods, etc.

A social construct that divides people into smaller social groups based on characteristics such as shared sense of group membership, values, behavioral patterns, language, political and economic interests, history and ancestral geographical base.

Examples of different ethnic groups are Cape

Verdean, Haitian, African American (Black); Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese (Asian); Cherokee, Mohawk, Navaho (Native American); Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican (Latino); Polish, Irish, and Swedish (white).

Ethnocentrism:

Characterized by or based on the attitude that one’s own group is superior.



Hate Crime: A crime motivated by the actual or perceived race, color, religion, national origin, ethnicity, gender, disability, or sexual orientation of the victim.

Heterosexism: Viewing the world only in heterosexual terms, thus denigrating other sexual orientations.

Historical Revisionism/Negationism: In historiography, historical revisionism is the reinterpretation of orthodox views on evidence, motivations, and decision-making processes surrounding a historical event. Though the word revisionism is sometimes used in a negative way, constant revision of history is part of the normal scholarly process of writing history. Historical revisionism is conducted to influence a target’s ideology and/or politics for a particular purpose.

Historical Trauma: The cumulative emotional and psychological wounds that can be carried across generations as a result of experiences shared by communities such as genocide, slavery, forced

relocation, and destruction of cultural practices.

Holocaust Denial:

Holocaust denial is any attempt to negate the established facts of the Nazi genocide of European Jews. Holocaust denial and distortion are forms of antisemitism, prejudice against or hatred of Jews. Holocaust denial and distortion generally claim that the Holocaust was invented or exaggerated by Jews as part of a plot to advance Jewish interests.

Homophobia: The fear or hatred of homosexuality (and other non-heterosexual identities) and persons perceived to have these identities.

Horizontal Prejudice: The result of people of targeted racial groups believing, acting on, or enforcing the dominant (white) system of racial discrimination and oppression. Horizontal racism can occur between members of the same racial group, or between members of different targeted racial groups.

Hypodescent: The social and legal practice of assigning a genetically mixed-race person to the race with less social power.



Implicit Bias: A mental process that stimulates negative attitudes about people who are not members of one’s own group which leads to discrimination.

Also known as unconscious or hidden bias, implicit biases are negative associations that people unknowingly hold. They are expressed

automatically, without conscious awareness. Many studies have indicated that implicit biases affect individuals’ attitudes and actions, thus creating real-world implications, even though individuals may not even be aware that those biases exist within themselves. Notably, implicit biases have been shown to trump individuals’ stated commitments to equality and fairness, thereby producing behavior that diverges from the explicit attitudes that many people profess. The Implicit Association Test (IAT) is often used to measure implicit biases with regard to race, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion, and other topics.

Imposter Syndrome:

Impostor syndrome (IP), coined by psychologists Pauline Clance and Suzanne Imes, is the belief that one’s academic/professional accomplishments are not due to their own capability, such as skill or intellect, but rather external factors, such as luck, effort, and receiving help from others. Thus, impostors paint themselves as intellectual frauds, and have fears that people will discover their underlying “lack of talent” and “phoniness.”

In-Group Bias: The tendency for groups to “favor” themselves by rewarding group members economically, socially, psychologically, and emotionally in order to uplift one group over another.

Inclusion: Authentically bringing traditionally excluded individuals and/or groups into processes, activities, and decision/policy making in a way that shares power.

Indigeneity: Indigenous populations are composed of the existing descendants of the peoples who inhabited the present territory of a country wholly or partially at the time when persons of a different culture or ethnic origin arrived there from other parts of the world, overcame them by conquest, settlement or other means, and reduced them to a non-dominant or colonial condition; who today live more in conformity with their particular social, economic and cultural customs and traditions than with the institutions of the country of which they now form part, under a state structure which incorporates mainly national, social and cultural characteristics of other segments of the population which are predominant.

Example: Maori in territory now defined as New Zealand; Mexicans in territory now defined as Texas, California, New Mexico, Arizona, Utah, Nevada and parts of Colorado, Wyoming, Kansas, and Oklahoma; Native American tribes in territory now defined as the United States.

Individual Racism:

Individual racism includes face-to-face or covert actions that intentionally express prejudice, hate or bias based on race.

Examples: Telling a racist joke, using a racial epithet, or believing in the inherent superiority of whites over other groups; avoiding people of color whom you do not know personally, but not whites whom you do not know personally (e.g., white people crossing the street to avoid a group of Latino/a young people; locking their

doors when they see African American families sitting on their doorsteps in a city neighborhood; or not hiring a person of color because “something doesn’t feel right”); accepting things as they are (a form of collusion).

Institutional Racism:

Institutional racism refers to the policies and practices within and across institutions that, intentionally or not, produce outcomes that chronically favor one racial group and/or put a racial group at a disadvantage. Institutional racism refers specifically to the ways in which institutional policies and practices create different outcomes for different racial groups. The institutional policies may never mention any racial group, but their effect is to create advantages for whites and oppression and disadvantage for people from groups classified as people of color.

Examples: Government policies that explicitly restricted the ability of people to get loans to buy or improve their homes in neighborhoods with high concentrations of African Americans (also known as “red-lining”).

City sanitation department policies that concentrate trash transfer stations and other environmental hazards disproportionately in communities of color.

Institutional White Privilege:

Policies, practices, and behaviors of institutions—such as schools, banks, nonprofits, or the Supreme Court—that have the effect of maintaining or increasing accumulated advantages for those groups currently defined as white,

and maintaining or increasing disadvantages for those racial or ethnic groups not defined as white.

Internalized Racism: The result of people of targeted racial groups believing, acting on, or enforcing the dominant system of beliefs about themselves and members of their own racial group.

Internalized racism is the phenomenon that occurs in a racist system when a racial group oppressed by racism supports the supremacy and dominance of the dominating group by maintaining or participating in the set of attitudes, behaviors, social structures and ideologies that undergird the dominating group’s power. It involves four essential and interconnected elements:

- *Decision-making*—Due to racism, people of color do not have the ultimate decision-making power over the decisions that control their lives and resources. As a result, on a personal level, they may think white people know more about what needs to be done for them than they do. On an interpersonal level, they may not support each other’s authority and power - especially if it is in opposition to the dominating racial group. Structurally, there is a system in place that rewards people of color who support white supremacy and power and coerces or punishes those who do not.
- *Resources*—Resources, broadly defined (e.g. money, time, etc), are unequally in the hands and under the control of white people. Internalized racism is the

system in place that makes it difficult for people of color to get access to resources for their own communities and to control the resources of their community.

They learn to believe that serving and using resources for ourselves and their particular community is not serving “everybody.”

- *Standards*—With internalized racism, the standards for what is appropriate or “normal” that people of color accept are “white” or Eurocentric standards. They have difficulty naming, communicating and living up to their deepest standards and values, and holding themselves and each other accountable to them.
- *Naming the problem*—There is a system in place that misnames the problem of racism as a problem of or caused by people of color and blames the disease - emotional, economic, political, etc. - on people of color. With internalized racism, people of color might, for example, believe they are more violent than white people and not consider state-sanctioned political violence or the hidden or privatized violence of white people and the systems they put in place and support.

Interpersonal White Privilege:

Behavior between people that consciously or unconsciously reflects white superiority or entitlement.

Intersectionality: Exposing [one’s] multiple identities can help clarify the ways in which a person can simultaneously experience privilege and

oppression. For example, a Black woman in America does not experience gender inequalities in exactly the same way as a white woman, nor racial oppression identical to that experienced by a Black man. Each race and gender intersection produces a qualitatively distinct life.

Per Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, “Intersectionality is simply a prism to see the interactive effects of various forms of discrimination and disempowerment. It looks at the way that racism, many times, interacts with patriarchy, heterosexism, classism, xenophobia — seeing that the overlapping vulnerabilities created by these systems actually create specific kinds of challenges. “Intersectionality 102,” then, is to say that these distinct problems create challenges for movements that are only organized around these problems as separate and individual. So when racial justice doesn’t have a critique of patriarchy and homophobia, the particular way that racism is experienced and exacerbated by heterosexism, classism etc., falls outside of our political organizing. It means that significant numbers of people in our communities aren’t being served by social justice frames because they don’t address the particular ways that they’re experiencing discrimination.”

Islamophobia: The fear, hatred, or disparagement of Muslims, Islam, Islamic culture, and related symbols.

K

Karen: Slang for a white woman who is extremely aware of her privilege and weaponizes it. (The male version is called a Ken.)

L

LGBTQ: LGBTQ is an acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer or questioning. These terms are used to describe a person’s sexual orientation or gender identity.

An extended variant on this acronym is LGBTQIA+, which includes I for intersex and A for asexual, with a + designation to acknowledge the existence of others whose identities reside outside of the indicated groups.

M

Marginalized: Excluded, ignored, or relegated to the outer edge of a group/society/community.

Microaggression: Everyday insults, indignities, and demeaning messages sent to historically marginalized groups by well-intentioned members of the majority group who are unaware of the hidden messages being sent.

Model Minority: A term created by sociologist William Peterson to describe the Japanese community, whom he saw as being able to overcome oppression because of their cultural values. In practice, this concept has been expanded to apply to other Asian communities.

While individuals employing the Model Minority trope may think

they are being complimentary, in fact the term is related to colorism and its root, anti-Blackness. The model minority myth creates an understanding of ethnic groups, including Asian Americans, as a monolith, or as a mass whose parts cannot be distinguished from each other. The model minority myth can be understood as a tool that white supremacy uses to pit people of color against each other in order to protect its status.

Movement Building:

Movement building is the effort of social change agents to engage power holders and the broader society in addressing a systemic problem or injustice while promoting an alternative vision or solution. Movement building requires a range of intersecting approaches through a set of distinct stages over a long-term period of time. Through movement building, organizers can:

- Propose solutions to the root causes of social problems.
- Enable people to exercise their collective power.
- Humanize groups that have been denied basic human rights and improve conditions for the groups affected.
- Create structural change by building something larger than a particular organization or campaign.
- Promote visions and values for society based on fairness, justice, and democracy

Multicultural Competency:

A process of learning about and becoming allies with people from other cultures, thereby broadening our own

understanding and ability to participate in a multicultural process. The key element to becoming more culturally competent is respect for the ways that others live in and organize the world and an openness to learn from them.

N

National Values: Behaviors and characteristics that members of a society/country are taught to value.

O

Oppression: Both the unjust or cruel exercise of authority or power and the effects of domination so attained. Oppression results from:

1. The use of institutional power and privilege where one person or group benefits at the expense of another.
2. The systematic subjugation of one social group by a more powerful social group for the social, economic, and political benefit of the more powerful social group.

Rita Hardiman and Bailey Jackson state that oppression exists when the following four conditions are found:

1. The oppressor group has the power to define reality for themselves and others.
2. The target groups take in and internalize the negative messages about them and end up cooperating with the oppressors (thinking and acting like them).
3. Genocide, harassment, and discrimination are systematic and institutionalized, so that individuals are not necessary to keep it going.

4. Members of both the oppressor and target groups are socialized to play their roles as normal and correct.

Oppression = Power +
Prejudice



Passive Racism: Beliefs, attitudes and actions that contribute to the maintenance of racism, without openly advocating violence or oppression.

People of Color: Often the preferred collective term for referring to non-white racial groups. Racial justice advocates have been using the term “people of color” (not to be confused with the pejorative “colored people”) since the late 1970s as an inclusive and unifying frame across different racial groups that are not white to address racial inequities.

While “people of color” can be a politically useful term, and describes people with their own attributes (as opposed to what they are not, e.g., “non-white”), it is also important whenever possible to identify people through their own racial/ethnic group, as each has its own distinct experience and meaning, and the more specific identifier may be more appropriate.

Political Unrest:

Public protest against the government, or where an uprising might take place in the form of a coup by the military in a country.

Post-Colonialism/

Post-Colonial Theory: The tensions and contradictions inherent in the relationship between colonizer and

colonized, oppressor and oppressed. In particular, how the colonized/oppressed internalize the ways and language of the colonizer/oppressor, in order to survive within extant social structures.

Power: Power may be understood as the ability to influence others and impose one’s beliefs. All power is relational, and the different relationships either reinforce or disrupt one another. The importance of the concept of power to anti-racism is clear: racism cannot be understood without understanding that power is not only an individual relationship but a cultural one, and that power relationships are shifting constantly. Power can be used malignantly and intentionally, but need not be, and individuals within a culture may benefit from power of which they are unaware.

Power is unequally distributed globally and in U.S. society; some individuals or groups wield greater power than others, thereby allowing them greater access and control over resources. Wealth, whiteness, citizenship, patriarchy, heterosexism, and education are a few key social mechanisms through which power operates. Although power is often conceptualized as power over other individuals or groups, other variations are power with (used in the context of building collective strength) and power within (which references an individual’s internal strength). Learning to “see” and understand relations of power is vital to organizing for progressive social change.

Prejudice: A preconceived judgment about a person or group of people, usually indicating negative bias. A pre-judgment or unjustifiable, and usually negative, attitude of one type of individual or groups toward another group and its members. Such negative attitudes are typically based on unsupported generalizations (or stereotypes) that deny the right of individual members of certain groups to be recognized and treated as individuals with individual characteristics.

Privilege: Unearned social power accorded by the formal and informal institutions of society to all members of a dominant group (e.g., white privilege, male privilege, etc.). Privilege is usually invisible to those who have it because we’re taught not to see it, but nevertheless it puts them at an advantage over those who do not have it.

Progress: The pattern in which advancement is made through the passage of legislation, court rulings, and other formal mechanisms that aim to promote equality.



Race: A social construct that artificially divides people into distinct groups based on certain characteristics such as physical appearance (particularly skin color), ancestral heritage, cultural affiliation, cultural history, ethnic classification. Racial categories subsume ethnic groups.

For many people, it comes as a surprise that racial categorization schemes

were invented by scientists to support worldviews that viewed some groups of people as superior and some as inferior. There are three important concepts linked to this fact:

1. Race is a made-up social construct, and not an actual biological fact.
2. Race designations have changed over time. Some groups that are considered “white” in the United States today were considered “non-white” in previous eras, in U.S. Census data and in mass media and popular culture (for example, Irish, Italian, and Jewish people).
3. The way in which racial categorizations are enforced (the shape of racism) has also changed over time. For example, the racial designation of Asian American and Pacific Islander changed four times in the 19th century. That is, they were defined at times as white and at other times as not white. Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, as designated groups, have been used by whites at different times in history to compete with African American labor.

Race Consciousness:

Explicit acknowledgment of the workings of race and racism in social contexts or in one’s personal life.

Racial and Ethnic Identity:

An individual’s awareness and experience of being a member of a racial and ethnic group; the racial and ethnic categories that an individual chooses to describe him or herself based on such factors as biological heritage, physical appearance, cultural affiliation,

early socialization, and personal experience.

Racial Equity: Brings about clear, simple, direct remedies for historic and present-day structural and policy barriers producing racial disparities and disparate impacts. It is not merely a value; equity is a systemic shift. Race equity is actualized fairness and justice; and is the condition that would be achieved if one's racial identity no longer predicted, in a statistical sense, how one fares.

When we use the term, we are thinking about racial equity as one part of racial justice, and thus we also include work to address root causes of inequities not just their manifestation. This includes elimination of policies, practices, attitudes, and cultural messages that reinforce differential outcomes by race or fail to eliminate them.

Racial Identity Development Theory:

A theory that discusses how people in various racial groups and with multiracial identities form their particular self-concept. It also describes some typical phases in remaking that identity based on learning and awareness of systems of privilege and structural racism, cultural and historical meanings attached to racial categories, and factors operating in the larger socio-historical level (e.g., globalization, technology, immigration, and increasing multiracial population).

Racial Inequity: Racial inequity is when two or more racial groups are not standing on approximately equal footing, such as

the percentages of each ethnic group in terms of dropout rates, single family home ownership, access to healthcare, educational opportunities, career mobility, etc.

Racial Justice: The systematic fair treatment of people of all races, resulting in equitable opportunities and outcomes for all. Racial justice [is defined] as the proactive reinforcement of policies, practices, attitudes and actions that produce equitable power, access, opportunities, treatment, impacts and outcomes for all.

Racial justice—or racial equity—goes beyond “anti-racism.” It is not just the absence of discrimination and inequities, but also the presence of deliberate systems and supports to achieve and sustain racial equity through proactive and preventative measures.

Racial Reconciliation:

Reconciliation involves three ideas:

1. It recognizes that racism is both systemic and institutionalized, with far-reaching effects on both political engagement and economic opportunities for minorities.
2. Reconciliation is engendered by empowering local communities through relationship-building and truth-telling.
3. Justice is the essential component of the reconciliatory process—justice that is best termed as restorative rather than retributive, while still maintaining its vital punitive character.

Racialization: Racialization is the very complex and contradictory process through which groups come to be designated as being of a particular “race” and on that basis subjected to differential and/or unequal treatment. Put simply, racialization [is] “the process of manufacturing and utilizing the notion of race in any capacity” (Dalal, 2002, p. 27).

While white people are also racialized, this process is often rendered invisible or normative to those designated as white. As a result, white people may not see themselves as part of a race but still maintain the authority to name and racialize “others.”

Racism: A doctrine or teaching, without scientific support, that does three things:

1. Claims to find racial differences in things like character and intelligence.
2. Asserts the superiority of one race over another or others.
3. Seeks to maintain that dominance through a complex system of beliefs, behaviors, use of language and policies.
 - Racism = race prejudice + social and institutional power.
 - Racism = a system of advantage based on race.
 - Racism = a system of oppression based on race.
 - Racism = a white supremacy system.

Racism is different from racial prejudice, hatred, or discrimination. Racism involves one group having the power to carry out systematic discrimination through the institutional policies and practices of the society and

by shaping the cultural beliefs and values that support those racist policies and practices.

Racist: One who is supporting a racist policy through their actions or interaction or expressing a racist idea.

Racist Ideas: A racist idea is any idea that suggests one racial group is inferior or superior to another racial group in any way.

Racist Policies: A racist policy is any measure that produces or sustains racial inequity between or among racial groups. Policies are written and unwritten laws, rules, procedures, processes, regulations, and guidelines that govern people.

There is no such thing as a nonracist or race-neutral policy. Every policy in every institution in every community in every nation is producing or sustaining either racial inequity or equity between racial groups. Racist policies are also expressed through other terms such as “structural racism” or “systemic racism.” Racism itself is institutional, structural, and systemic.

Reparations: States have a legal duty to acknowledge and address widespread or systematic human rights violations in cases where the state caused the violations or did not seriously try to prevent them. Reparations initiatives seek to address the harms caused by these violations. Reparations publicly affirm that victims are rights-holders entitled to redress.

Reparations can take the form of compensating for the losses suffered, which

helps overcome some of the consequences of abuse. They can also be future oriented—providing rehabilitation and a better life to victims—and help to change the underlying causes of abuse.

Restorative Justice:

A theory of justice that emphasizes repairing the harm caused by wrongful behavior. This can lead to transformation of people, relationships and communities.

Restorative justice is a theory of justice that emphasizes repairing the harm caused by crime and conflict. It places decisions in the hands of those who have been most affected by a wrongdoing, and gives equal concern to the victim, the offender, and the surrounding community. Restorative responses are meant to repair harm, heal broken relationships, and address the underlying reasons for the offense. Restorative justice emphasizes individual and collective accountability. Crime and conflict generate opportunities to build community and increase grassroots power when restorative practices are employed.

Retrenchment: The ways in which progress is very often challenged, neutralized, or undermined.

Rioting: The violent and uncontrolled behavior of a large group of people.

**Settler Colonialism:**

Settler colonialism refers to colonization in which colonizing powers create permanent or long-term

settlement on land owned and/or occupied by other peoples, often by force. This contrasts with colonialism where colonizer's focus only on extracting resources back to their countries of origin, for example. Settler colonialism typically includes oppressive governance, dismantling of indigenous cultural forms, and enforcement of codes of superiority (such as white supremacy).

Examples include white European occupations of land in what is now the United States, Spain's settlements throughout Latin America, and the Apartheid government established by white Europeans in South Africa.

Per Dino Gillio-Whitaker, "Settler colonialism may be said to be a structure, not an historic event, whose endgame is always the elimination of the natives in order to acquire their land, which it does in countless seen and unseen ways. These techniques are woven throughout the US's national discourse at all levels of society. Manifest Destiny—that is, the US's divinely sanctioned inevitability—is like a computer program always operating unnoticeably in the background. In this program, genocide and land dispossession are continually both justified and denied."

Sexism: Prejudiced thoughts and discriminatory actions based on difference in sex/gender, usually, but not always, by men against women.

Silencing: The conscious or unconscious processes by which the voice or participation of particular social identities is excluded, inhibited, or suppressed.

Social Justice: A process, not an outcome, which (1) seeks fair (re)distribution of resources, opportunities, and responsibilities; (2) challenges the roots of oppression and injustice; (3) empowers all people to exercise self-determination and realize their full potential; (4) and builds social solidarity and community capacity for collaborative action.

Stereotype: Blanket beliefs, unconscious associations, and expectations about members of certain groups that present an oversimplified opinion, prejudiced attitude, or uncritical judgment.

Structural Racialization:

Structural racialization connotes the dynamic process that creates cumulative and durable inequalities based on race. Interactions between individuals are shaped by and reflect underlying and often hidden structures that shape biases and create disparate outcomes even in the absence of racist actors or racist intentions. The presence of structural racialization is evidenced by consistent differences in outcomes in education attainment, family wealth and even life span.

Structural Racism: A system in which public policies, institutional practices, cultural representations, and other norms work in various, often reinforcing ways to perpetuate racial group inequity.

1. The normalization and legitimization of an array of dynamics – historical, cultural, institutional and interpersonal – that routinely advantage whites while producing cumulative and chronic adverse

outcomes for people of color. Structural racism encompasses the entire system of white domination, diffused and infused in all aspects of society including its history, culture, politics, economics, and the entire social fabric. Structural racism is more difficult to locate in a particular institution because it involves the reinforcing effects of multiple institutions and cultural norms, past and present, continually reproducing old and producing new forms of racism. Structural racism is the most profound and pervasive form of racism—all other forms of racism emerge from structural racism.

2. For example, we can see structural racism in the many institutional, cultural and structural factors that contribute to lower life expectancy for African American and Native American men, compared to white men. These include higher exposure to environmental toxins, dangerous jobs and unhealthy housing stock, higher exposure to and more lethal consequences for reacting to violence, stress and racism, lower rates of health care coverage, access and quality of care, and systematic refusal by the nation to fix these things.

Structural White

Privilege: A system of white domination that creates and maintains belief systems that make current racial advantages and disadvantages seem normal. The system includes powerful incentives for

maintaining white privilege and its consequences, and powerful negative consequences for trying to interrupt white privilege or reduce its consequences in meaningful ways.

System of Oppression:

Conscious and unconscious, nonrandom, and organized harassment, discrimination, exploitation, discrimination, prejudice, and other forms of unequal treatment that impact different groups.

Systemic Racism: See Structural Racism. If there is a difference between the terms, it can be said to exist in the fact that a structural racism analysis pays more attention to the historical, cultural and social psychological aspects of a currently racialized society.

T

Targeted Universalism:

Targeted universalism means setting universal goals pursued by targeted processes to achieve those goals. Within a targeted universalism framework, universal goals are established for all groups concerned. The strategies developed to achieve those goals are targeted, based upon how different groups are situated within structures, culture, and across geographies to obtain the universal goal.

Targeted universalism is goal oriented, and the processes are directed in service of the explicit, universal goal.

Transphobia: The fear or hatred of persons perceived to be transgender and/or transsexual.

W

White Fragility: A state in which even a minimum amount of racial stress becomes intolerable, triggering a range of defensive moves. These moves include the outward display of emotions such as anger, fear, and guilt, and behaviors such as argumentation, silence, and leaving the stress-inducing situation; these behaviors, in turn, function to reinstate white racial equilibrium.

White Privilege: The historical and contemporary benefits of access to resources and social rewards and the power to shape the norms and values of society which whites receive, unconsciously and consciously, by virtue of their skin color in a racist society. Its existence is often invisible to the person who has it.

Refers to the unquestioned and unearned set of advantages, entitlements, benefits and choices bestowed on people solely because they are white. Generally white people who experience such privilege do so without being conscious of it.

The accumulated and interrelated advantages and disadvantages of white privilege that are reflected in racial/ethnic inequities in life-expectancy and other health outcomes, income and wealth and other outcomes, in part through different access to opportunities and resources: these differences are maintained in part by denying that these advantages and disadvantages exist at the structural, institutional, cultural, interpersonal and individual levels and by refusing to redress them

or eliminate the systems, policies, practices, cultural norms and other behaviors and assumptions that maintain them.

1. *Structural White Privilege:* A system of white domination that creates and maintains belief systems that make current racial advantages and disadvantages seem normal. The system includes powerful incentives for maintaining white privilege and its consequences, and powerful negative consequences for trying to interrupt white privilege or reduce its consequences in meaningful ways. The system includes internal and external manifestations at the individual, interpersonal, cultural, and institutional levels.

2. *Interpersonal White Privilege:* Behavior between people that consciously or unconsciously reflects white superiority or entitlement.

3. *Cultural White Privilege:* A set of dominant cultural assumptions about what is good, normal, or appropriate that reflects Western European white world views and dismisses or demonizes other world views.

4. *Institutional White Privilege:* Policies, practices, and behaviors of institutions—such as schools, banks, nonprofits, or the Supreme Court—that have the effect of maintaining or increasing accumulated advantages for those groups currently defined as white, and maintaining or increasing disadvantages for those racial or ethnic groups not defined as white. The ability of institutions to survive and thrive even when

their policies, practices and behaviors maintain, expand, or fail to redress accumulated disadvantages and/or inequitable outcomes for people of color.

White Supremacy:

A historically based, institutionally perpetuated system of exploitation and oppression of continents, nations and peoples of color by white peoples and nations of the European continent; for the purpose of maintaining and defending a system of wealth, power and privilege.

The idea (ideology) that white people and the ideas, thoughts, beliefs, and actions of white people are superior to People of Color and their ideas, thoughts, beliefs, and actions. While most people associate white supremacy with extremist groups like the Ku Klux Klan and the neo-Nazis, white supremacy is ever present in our institutional and cultural assumptions that assign value, morality, goodness, and humanity to the white group while casting people and communities of color as worthless (“worth less”), immoral, bad, and inhuman and “undeserving.” Drawing from critical race theory, the term “white supremacy” also refers to a political or socio-economic system where white people enjoy structural advantage and rights that other racial and ethnic groups do not, both at a collective and an individual level.

White Supremacy Culture:

1. Refers to the dominant, unquestioned standards of behavior and ways of functioning embodied by the vast majority of

institutions in the United States. These standards may be seen as mainstream, dominant cultural practices; they have evolved from the United States' history of white supremacy. Because it is so normalized it can be hard to see, which only adds to its powerful hold. In many ways, it is indistinguishable from what we might call U.S. culture or norms—a focus on individuals over groups, for example, or an emphasis on the written word as a form of professional communication. But it operates in even more subtle ways, by actually defining what “normal” is—and likewise, what “professional,” “effective,” or even “good” is. In turn, white culture also defines what is not good, “at risk” or “unsustainable.” White culture values some ways—ways that are more familiar and come more naturally to those from a white, western tradition—of thinking, behaving, deciding, and knowing, while devaluing or rendering invisible other ways. And it does this without ever having to explicitly say so.

2. White supremacy culture is an artificial, historically constructed culture that expresses, justifies and binds together the United States white supremacy system. It is the glue that binds together white-controlled institutions into systems and white-controlled systems into the global white supremacy system.

Whiteness: The term “white,” referring to people, was created by Virginia slave

owners and colonial rules in the 17th century. It replaced terms like Christian and Englishman to distinguish European colonists from Africans and indigenous peoples. European colonial powers established whiteness as a legal concept after Bacon's Rebellion in 1676, during which indentured servants of European and African descent had united against the colonial elite. The legal distinction of white separated the servant class on the basis of skin color and continental origin. The creation of “whiteness” meant giving privileges to some, while denying them to others with the justification of biological and social inferiority.



Xenophobia: The fear or hatred of foreigners.

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Livingston Equity Project

A rural Montana community took action to pinpoint inclusion and equity gaps and revise practices and policies.

Livingston, Montana—2021 Recipient, Program Excellence Award, Community Equity and Inclusion (Under 10,000 Population)

Meaningful inclusion and equity are a challenge everywhere, but perhaps more so in communities that are not culturally diverse. Equity and inclusion in city services requires a self-examination of all the ways in which community members can be unintentionally excluded or marginalized.

Livingston, Montana, is a rural community with a population of 7,800, of whom only 8.6 percent identify as other than Caucasian. The city began its self-examination in response to community complaints about aged infrastructure and concerns in the wake of the tragic events in early 2020 that brought conversations about race and equity into every American community.

Livingston conducted a 205 Analysis, a process named for the part of Montana law concerning nondiscrimination requirements in access to and provision of local government services. The analysis became a blueprint for identifying inclusion and equity gaps and revising practices and policies.

All city departments participated in strategic planning that established three goals for the Livingston Equity Project:

1. Comprehensive educational programs for staff.

2. Addressing physical barriers.
3. Removing access barriers to city services.

With gaps in all areas, the challenge was to prioritize and remove barriers and plan for ongoing improvements. During 2020 and 2021, despite the COVID-19 pandemic, Livingston continued implementing the Equity Project through the following initiatives.

Employee Education

With in-person training suspended during the pandemic, Livingston contracted for cloud-based training in microaggressions, creating a welcoming work culture, trust and tribalism in the workplace, and bridging the millennial/boomer divide.

Livingston's police chief included additional training on ethics in law enforcement, implicit bias, anti-bias training, and de-escalation tactics. The officers, the union, and management requested and received a state-of-the-art body camera system.

Access to Buildings and City Infrastructure

Livingston developed and implemented an Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) transition plan to identify and

eliminate physical barriers to buildings and raise streets so that sidewalk transitions can be easily navigated by individuals with limited mobility. Departments in older buildings modified operations so that residents can receive services on the ground level. A new city hall facility purchased in 2020 is completely ADA compliant and co-locates frequently visited departments in a single downtown location on a bus route.

Removing Access Barriers to City Services

The city reviewed its operations, including commonly used forms, to identify unintentional barriers or extraneous questions. As a result, the city revised public documents, moved several transactions to an electronic platform for ease of use, and converted its website to be ADA compliant.

Demonstrating Inclusion and Equity

Proclamations delivered at city commission meetings codify the city's commitment to being a safe and welcoming community for people of color and of any religion, gender identity, or sexual orientation.

In 2020, Livingston became one of a handful of communities in Montana to recognize Indigenous People's Day. The city commission voted to convert all city contracts, documents, and ordinances to gender-neutral language and pronouns and change public communications.

Tangible results of the program include a reduction in ADA complaints for building access, reduced complaints against police officers, and increased collection rates on utility bills. In 2020, the city added questions relating to diversity and equity to its annual employee climate survey, and 82.4 percent of employees who responded answered that they believed people are treated fairly and equitably.

Through implementation, city leaders have come to realize that the work of inclusion and equity is never finished despite Livingston's impressive strides. The issues are complex and challenging, yet city leaders continue to work through them as colleagues committed to creating a better community that is safe, diverse, and inclusive and treats all its residents and visitors with fairness, dignity, and equity. **PM**

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Roger L. Kemp MPA, MBA, PhD
~ National Speaker ~

Dr. Kemp provides national professional speaking services on current government topics. Some of these topics include state-of-the-art practices in the following dynamic and evolving fields:

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- Elected Officials and Management Staff
- Strategic Planning
- Town-Gown Relations
- Working with Unions

Roger Kemp's background and professional skills are highlighted on his website. Dr. Kemp was a city manager in politically, economically, socially, and ethnically diverse communities.

He has written and edited books on these subjects, and can speak on them with knowledge of the national best practices in each field. Call or e-mail Roger for more information.

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Jonathan Butler, JD

Equity Manager
San Antonio, Texas
ICMA Member Since 2020

Equality vs. Equity

When we think about equality, we think about everyone starting at the same place, at the same time, with the same things. Well, you and I both know that's extremely rare in life. And so, equity, this idea of equipping people based on needs—serving people and delivering services based on their needs—is extraordinarily important.

The Economic Imperative

The moral imperative is obvious; we want to create environments that are fair for all people, period. The economic imperative is that we're going to have a more prosperous, thriving, and economically stable community if we support interventions, particularly in disinvested communities, communities of color, and low-income communities where there is need. We can be an extraordinarily high-performing city if we try to ensure that those residents have some mechanisms to compete fairly in the marketplace.

Should Equity Officer Positions Be Held Exclusively by BIPOC?

I think I would focus more on the skills and less specifically on race. I would focus more on their ability to innovate, build bridges, and be persuasive enough to create buy-in and foster relationships. I don't think, in this instance, race is the be-all and end-all for ensuring that you've got the right person in the position to move diversity, equity, and inclusion forward for your organization.

An Internal Approach

Many people look at both the internal and the external and they try to do it all at one time without the appropriate staff and without the amount of time necessary to build relationships both within and outside the institution. We've been very intentional about focusing on the city itself, as its own structural entity, before we think about our greater reach in the community.

When Hiring an Equity Officer

It's more helpful if there is some idea from leadership on what they hope to accomplish and the needs they want to focus on first. Then think about hiring a professional who can work with you on that, firm it up, build it out, and get some traction. You need a strategic thinker who can shape that into a plan for how to move forward.

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