

Metropolitan Council Equity Strategy and Framework

The Metropolitan Council is the regional policy making body, planning agency and provider of essential services for the seven county Twin Cities metropolitan area and is committed to be a leader for advancing equity in the region. The Metropolitan Council Equity Strategy provides an operational structure for the integration of Equity throughout all Council operations. Data provided by the American Community Survey shows the greatest disparities in our region exist along racial lines. Racial equity is an important component of the strategy to provide leadership and direction for reducing racial disparities experienced by people of color and indigenous people in our region. The Strategy is a result of and supports Thrive MSP 2040, the Council's Mission and Goals.

Thrive MSP 2040

Thrive MSP 2040 is the vision of our region over the next 30 years. It reflects our concerns and aspirations, anticipates future needs in the region, and addresses our responsibility to future generations. The desired outcomes of Thrive are:

- Stewardship
- Prosperity
- **Equity**
- Livability
- Sustainability

Council Mission

The Metropolitan Council's mission is to foster efficient and economic growth for a prosperous Metropolitan Region.

Council Priority Areas

- **Transportation:** Expand and improve our regional transportation system, offering safe, reliable and accessible transportation options for everyone that support our region's economic competitiveness.
- **Reducing racial disparities:** Make a measurable impact on reducing racial disparities experienced by people of color and indigenous people and who are historically underserved people through our work in the region.
- **Housing:** Become a region with a broader housing spectrum where all people can thrive.
- **Sustainability:** Build a resilient region that mitigates its adverse contribution to climate change, with a focus on degraded air and water quality, and meets the challenge of the climate crisis.

Equity Policy

"To the extent authorized or permitted by law, the Metropolitan Council will conduct its own operations and use its assets and authorities to equitably serve the needs of the metropolitan area."

Definitions

"**Equity** connects all residents to opportunity and creates viable housing, transportation, and recreation options for people of all races, ethnicities, incomes, and abilities so that all communities share the opportunities and challenges of growth and change. For our region to reach its full economic potential, all our residents must be able to access opportunity. Our region is stronger when all people live in communities that provide them access to opportunities for success, prosperity, and quality of life." (*Thrive MSP 2040*)

Racial Equity is achieved "when race can no longer be used to predict life outcomes and outcomes for all groups are improved." Racial equity and social justice are urgent moral and socioeconomic endeavors for our region. (*Government Alliance on Racial Equity*)

Equity Goals & Impact Areas

The Council has established equity-based goals to help guide the decisions that lead to equitable outcomes throughout all Council operations. Our progress towards achieving these goals will be measured over the next three years:

Equity Goals		
Workforce Equity	Community Engagement	Investments & Procurement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess hiring barriers and ensure bias is mitigated in all employment related practices and processes Attract, hire and retain highly skilled individuals within our workforce The diversity of our region is reflected in the Council's workforce at all levels and roles throughout the agency Adopt a policy that supports the hiring of people with disabilities All employees can contribute their best and feel valued The Council is seen as a leader for advancing equity and racial equity in the region 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outreach and engagement plans are adopted early in the process for all Council capital projects and large planning efforts The Council is viewed as a trusted partner in developing equitable solutions in the region Reflect the values and the collective needs of the community in all services, activities and benefits of Council operations, planning and investments Interests of residents and communities are included in decisions and people in the region feel heard Engagement at the Council reflects and responds effectively to racial, ethnic, cultural and linguistic experiences of people and communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase spend with MCUB businesses that provide goods, services, construction, engineering and consultant services Become a regional leader for reducing contracting disparities Council Resources are used to invest in historically underserved communities Barriers to Council procurements experienced by certified small business owners that have been historically underserved are mitigated Project Planners, Designers and Managers engage the Council's Office of Equal Opportunity (OEO) early in the scoping process Grow a multimodal transportation system that's accessible & supports economic growth in communities that have been historically underserved Increase the growth rate of home ownership for people of color and indigenous people across the region The Metropolitan Council is seen as a leader in the region for advancing equitable outcomes in community development and affordable housing

Implementation

The Metropolitan Council will work proactively to achieve equity throughout all Council divisions. Each Council division is accountable for using an Equity Lens to evaluate operations, planning, and investments in managing internal and external efforts to promote Equity Leadership & Institutional Commitment. Our efforts to ensure an Equity Lens is applied to all Council operations will include:

- Providing organizational and regional leadership to prioritize racial equity
- Imbedding equity in Council operations, planning, and investment decisions
- Advancing workforce equity
- Establishing and executing a process for prioritizing organizational change related to racial equity
- Evaluating and measuring performance
- Allocating resources to Council-wide equity work outlined in the Equity Strategy
- Fostering meaningful opportunities for collaborative problem-solving and decision-making among employees, underserved community members and Council members
- Intentional engagement with Council Advisory Committees that inform and impact the Equity Strategy

Evaluate & Measure

The Council's Office of Equal Opportunity (OEO) will work with leaders from OEO, Human Resources, Community Development, Environmental Services, Metropolitan Transportation Services and Metro Transit to create a Council-wide Equity Scorecard and Equity Scorecards for each Division/Operation within the Council. The Scorecards will:

- align with divisional workplans,
- assess the impact on people of color, indigenous people and people from underserved populations,
- include short- and long-term goals,
- measure the agency's progress towards our goals, and
- help the Council understand how decisions impact our ability to achieve equitable outcomes.

Change Process

The successful implementation of the Equity Strategy requires a change to some of the Council's processes. A project mapping process with individualized tools for each division to incorporate equity and related performance metrics into the Council's daily work will be utilized.¹

Roles & Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of all Metropolitan Council employees to contribute to the agency's culture of advancing equity. The Office of Equal Opportunity, Human Resources, Equity Change Teams, Standing Committees, content expert offices, Directors and managers have leadership roles for providing expertise, technical assistance and support to ensure it occurs.

Executive Leadership

Divisional leaders at the highest level are responsible and have committed to equitably serve the needs of the region within all council operations, planning and investments as it uses its assets and maintains formal authorities to direct resources. Each leader will establish divisional accountability, clarify roles, responsibilities, relationships and strengthen the processes and approaches to guide, direct and advance council-wide strategic equity efforts. Divisional executive leaders serve as the primary contact to OEO, Regional Administrative Offices, and Council Members regarding equity integration strategic guidance and operational expertise.

Office of Equal Opportunity (OEO)

OEO has the primary responsibility for assisting the organization in developing and implementing strategies that advance equity in all activities, services and Council operations. The Office will collaborate with all Divisions within the Council including, standing committees and coordinate all equity driven activities to ensure they align with the Council's Vision, Mission, Goals and the Equity Strategy and Framework. OEO will provide technical assistance, measure outcomes and progress towards Council goals, and identify successful strategies and best practices to be shared across Divisions, offices and ongoing activities. The effort to develop, implement and coordinate a Council-wide Equity Strategy that supports all divisions' responsibilities to evaluate operations, planning and investments for advancing and instilling equity in the Council's operations include the following activities:

- Coordinating Council-wide Equity initiatives and providing technical assistance, and collaboration with Council divisions to craft specific strategies for advancing Equity in the region.
- Develop, implement, and evaluate the effectiveness of the Council's Equity Strategy.
- Design implementation guidelines for use in providing technical assistance, change management, and coordination of equity project teams at divisional levels.

¹The Office of Equal Opportunity's Equity Implementation Unit recommends the Theory of Change (TOC) methodology. TOC defines and clarifies long-term equity actions, strategies and outcomes and maps backward to identify agreed upon strategies and actions for the Council and divisions to operationalize, invest in or influence.

Human Resources (HR)

Human Resources is responsible for leading organizational processes and system-wide efforts focused on workforce equity, which includes diversity and inclusion strategies that impact people of color, indigenous people and underserved groups. HR owns the Council's disaggregated workforce data that is essential to each division's ability to understand the data, plan, design and implement workforce equity strategies specific to the unique needs of those divisional operational functions. Additionally, HR will support and collaborate with OEO and divisions to advance workforce equity including, providing expertise, technical assistance, and the development and delivery of training.

Equity Advisory Committee (EAC)

The EAC was created in October of 2015 to advise the Metropolitan Council in its work to advance equity in the region and meet the Council's equity commitments in *Thrive MSP 2040*. The EAC provides the following roles:

- Engage in meaningful dialogue and action on equity initiatives
- Community engagement
- Provide input and recommendations relative to the implementation, progress and performance towards achieving the goals of the Equity Policy and Equity Strategy

Council Communications & Engagement

The Office of Equal Opportunity (OEO) has taken the initiative to engage Division Directors for departments with primary roles in the implementation of the Equity Strategy and Framework. The Office of Equal Opportunity will lead the effort of creating Council-wide awareness and engagement at all levels including, the Council's Executive Committee, Committee of the Whole and Change Teams. The Council Communications office will assist with the design and implementation of the framework communication plan. They will assist OEO to coordinate efforts and effectively communicate to all staff and external stakeholders the information they need to understand their roles and how to participate in implementing the Equity Strategy and Framework. The Communication department will also assist with community engagement and outreach efforts. The Communications Team will work in collaboration with OEO in all Council divisions and will assist and support the Council Equity Advisory Committee (EAC) in their efforts to convene community groups.