

# RACIAL EQUITY ACTION PLAN

## PHASE 1 EVALUATION

### City Planning

## Observations and Recommendations for Progress Report

As a City, we are collectively and individually accountable for racial equity. This written feedback is intended to support your department in fulfilling that accountability as you continue to implement and update your plan, and as you reflect on change and obstacles in your next progress report.

Observations and recommendations for your department's Racial Equity Action Plan ("plan") are summarized below. This is a holistic view of the plan document submitted by the department in January 2021, taking into consideration the dimensions of **Spirit, Data, Roadmap, and Transformation**.

The Racial Equity Action Plan is a strategic document to baseline dignity, justice, access and belonging in your department. It reflects your department's intentions and next steps as documented on paper at only a single moment in time, and should be continuously revised and updated as your department grows. The implementation will not be one directional or linear, and will always be a work in progress.

### SPiRiT

The plan opens with a discussion of racial inequities that "continue to be deep, pervasive, and persistent in San Francisco." It describes in detail several indicators of current conditions for San Francisco residents, workers, and communities. The indicators are divided into two sets: those that are relevant to the department as a planning agency, such as housing costs and home ownership, and those that are relevant to the department as a workplace, such as job classifications.

The plan further acknowledges that, "Using the power of zoning and land use, the City, its Planning Commission ("Commission") and Department ("Department") and other government agencies, individuals, and private organizations have intentionally advanced policies aligned with white supremacy goals to segregate, displace, dispossess and extract wealth from American Indian, Black and other communities of color." The narrative includes some detailed historic examples, such as 19th century land use ordinances.

The plan also notes initiatives that the department has undertaken as a result of community leadership, and outlines a vision for the department to incorporate racial equity into its work. However, it describes the department's current role in creating racial inequity as "inaction or lack of intervention with regards to racial discrimination." Any plan to address racial equity must be grounded in truth and genuineness. In order to solve a problem, we must understand how we got there in the first place. **The department would benefit from naming the active ways in which it creates and upholds racism in its work and in its organization.** These are not yet fully acknowledged in the narrative. In the words of James Baldwin: "Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced."

## DATA

The plan illustrates job classes within the department by race/ethnicity. The highest paid job classes are majority white, and the lowest paid job classes are predominantly BIPOC. This pattern has not changed since the department issued its first racial equity survey five years ago. As of 2019, white staff accounted for 75% of senior management positions and 57% of the middle management roles; in contrast, BIPOC staff made up 82% of the support and administrative staff positions. However, the plan generally does not disaggregate “BIPOC” into more detailed race or ethnicity categories, and in the few places it does so, it groups Black, Pacific Islander, and Middle Eastern employees together as “Other.” It also does not include other workforce demographics, such as gender or employment type (e.g., PCS, PEX, TEX). **The department should further disaggregate its data and ensure its analysis of its workforce is intersectional. Race, gender, employment type, and other aspects of the workforce should all be included when discussing race-centered approaches to analyzing, implementing, and creating internal strategies to reduce disparities in the hiring, promotion, and retention of BIPOC employees.**

The plan includes overall findings from racial equity surveys that the department issued in 2017 and 2019. Some of the survey questions were identical so that results could be compared between years. In 2017, 65% of respondents were familiar with the department’s efforts to address racial disparities; in 2019, this increased to 90% of respondents. However, the average score of respondents who felt that addressing racial disparities was a priority for the department actually decreased slightly over this same period (3.85 in 2017 to 3.74 in 2019). Through the survey, staff also indicated that “certain managers engage in behaviors (intentional or unintentional) that reinforce racism and impact staff’s attitudes and ability to advance racial and social equity in their work.” In both years, senior management perceived the workplace as being more fair than other staff, and white staff perceived the workplace as more fair than BIPOC staff. The plan consistently identifies differences in responses between senior management and non-management staff, as well as between white and BIPOC staff, but does not otherwise disaggregate the findings. **As with the quantitative data, the department should analyze its qualitative data in more intersectional ways to inform the implementation steps.**

The plan mentions “compiling data” as an implementation step for many actions. **The plan should state what data will be used to create metrics and dashboards to measure performance and support decision-making on an ongoing basis. The implementation steps should also note processes that will be used to maintain, secure, analyze, and share quantitative and qualitative data on an ongoing basis.**

## ROADMAP

The department has set ten overarching goals for its plan. The goals are relevant to the context of the department. However, most of them are general and not quantified. **The goals should be measurable and baselined against existing data. Without measurable goals, it will be difficult to assess progress.**

The department created several new actions and sections, beyond the ones required by the Office of Racial Equity. However, many actions are also listed as “ongoing” or already in place. **For ongoing or completed actions, the plan should include steps to assess whether those actions have yielded their intended results.**

Most of the implementation steps focus on summarizing work to date. It is encouraging to see that work on many of the actions is well underway. **In addition to this, the implementation steps should describe how information that is used to implement each action will be shared and validated with staff who are most likely to be affected by**

decisions. Documenting this in the plan will support the department in making decision-making more transparent and accessible.

The timelines for most of the actions are very clear, to the quarter and year. Many of the actions are to be completed in 2021 or early to mid-2022. **In addition to tracking timelines for each action, the department should consider prioritizing the actions, especially if staff and budget resources change.**

The plan includes leads for each action. However, often many positions or teams are listed as the lead for a single action; at times, the team description is also vague (e.g., "Administration"). **The plan should clarify who is accountable for final decisions on each action as well as who will be called on to provide support.**

The staff hours and consultant resources required to complete each action are listed in detail throughout the plan. However, it is not always clear which resources are committed vs. still needed. Material resources and budget amounts are also not consistently listed. **It will be helpful to document all of the resources that are available vs. yet to be secured, in order to assist with prioritization. It is important to ensure that staff who are named in the plan as responsible are actually equipped with the resources and decision-making authority to successfully make change.**

Lastly, consider adding risk mitigation or contingencies to the plan. **Plan implementation could include steps for monitoring, avoiding, or mitigating identified and potential risks and unexpected issues that may arise from addressing racial inequities within the department.** For instance, besides resource and schedule needs, this may need to involve accounting for people's internal motivations, understanding external sociopolitical movements, and socializing new ideas and processes.

## TRANSFORMATION

Ultimately, the purpose of racial equity work is to move our City towards **Transformation**. While this was not an individual section of the Racial Equity Action Plan template, we offer these additional reflections to inform your department's continued work:

Several of the implementation steps in the plan are described as beginning a review or continuing an existing practice, without assessing whether those practices have been effective. There are very few employee-centered outcomes included in the implementation steps, and race is almost never mentioned. **The plan should name specific disparities experienced by BIPOC employees and commit to concrete steps to making them "net better off" in the workplace: financially; emotionally and mentally; relationally; physically; and purposefully. Every employee is a person, not only a worker.**

The implementation steps also dlt requires both intention and commitment to change the harmful and unequal distribution of power in our status quo systems. **The department should reflect on how to shift internal decision-making structures to repair trust and empower BIPOC employees. The people closest to the pain should be closest to the power, as they have the knowledge and expertise that is required to address the department's racial equity challenges.**

## CLOSING THOUGHTS

We appreciate that the department convened a team of 15 staff to develop this plan, and that this effort was led by its three Racial Equity Leads. We recognize that the department began this work several years ago and has updated its 2019 action plan as part of this process.

We were also encouraged to see the following outlined in your department's plan:

- Researching limitations and opportunities related to Proposition 209;
- Reviewing minimum qualifications and hiring practices to ensure mobility from Planner Tech to Planner I positions;
- Sharing racial equity training curriculums with sister agencies and outside jurisdictions;
- Requiring all staff to complete 12 hour of basic racial and social equity training, and incorporating training into new staff onboarding;
- Revising Performance Plan and Appraisal Reports for all staff to include applying the Racial and Social Equity Assessment Tool to their projects.

Along the continuum of becoming an anti-racist organization, the Racial Equity Action Plan indicates that the department is emerging into the “symbolic change” and “identity change” stages. As you continue implementing the Racial Equity Action Plan, we urge you to continuously measure and reflect on progress towards **transformation**:

- **How will you build on the department's extensive training initiatives to make tangible changes for BIPOC employees, especially Black, Pacific Islander, and American Indian employees?**
- **How will you revise your indicators to focus on actual outcomes for BIPOC employees, rather than quantity of activity in the department?**
- **How will you ensure all staff prioritize racial equity in their work, especially when doing so may conflict with other existing department policies or performance indicators?**
- **How will you resolve conflicting perceptions between management and non-management staff, and between white staff and BIPOC staff?**
- **How will you ensure your racial equity consultant is lifting up hard truths? How will you use this resource to hold your department accountable, rather than outsourcing and obscuring potential issues?**

We understand that the Racial Equity Action Plan can only capture what is planned at a moment in time. We know that over the last year your department has been implementing and adapting your plan. We look forward to learning more about the meaningful changes your department is making for employees, especially those who are Black, American Indian, and People of Color, in your March 2022 progress report. Thank you for your continued partnership in this transformational work.