



## Metro | Memo

Date: Monday, June 6, 2016  
To: Metro Council members  
From: Martha Bennett, Metro Chief Operating Officer  
Subject: Recommendation to approve the Strategic Plan to Advance Racial Equity, Diversity and Inclusion  
Cc: Carl Talton, Equity Strategy Advisory Committee Chair; DEI Program staff

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I am pleased to transmit the final draft of Metro's Strategic Plan to Advance Racial Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (Strategic Plan) for your consideration.

This Strategic Plan is the product of a multi-year process that Metro Council began in 2010 by adopting the six desired regional outcomes, which included equity. To better understand how well we were doing as an agency, staff completed the Metro Equity Inventory Report in 2012. The inventory found Metro departments and venues were implementing a number of important equity-related programs and services, but these efforts lacked a unified, strategic direction. After discussing the Inventory's findings, the Metro Council launched the Equity Strategy project in the fall of 2012, directing the Chief Operating Officer to develop a draft strategy and action plan to bring focus to Metro's work. This draft Strategic Plan is the culmination of that Council-directed work.

In 2013, I appointed an Equity Strategy Advisory Committee (ESAC) to provide guidance, input, and community perspective to this work. ESAC is made up of community leaders from the non-profit, philanthropy, government and business sectors. One of the earliest products of ESAC's work was a working definition of equity – proposed by ESAC in February 2014 and adopted by Council in March 2014 – and this definition framed the development of the Strategic Plan

Also in 2013, six community-based organizations were selected to create a baseline to understand and measure Metro's equity work. In January 2015, the six organizations delivered the "Equity Baseline Report: A Framework for Regional Equity," which outlined the ten dimensions that every person needs to experience true equity. ESAC recommended that the strategy incorporate elements of the Framework, and I gave direction to staff that was based on those recommendations in April 2015.

With these recommendations and direction as a foundation, Metro staff developed the draft Strategic Plan using a multi-pronged, inclusive engagement and research approach. This twelve-month effort involved:

1. Extensive collaboration with local elected officials, government staff, and business and philanthropy leaders throughout the Portland region.
2. Three rounds of community discussions with culturally specific community-based organizations.
3. An agency-wide internal assessment and staff engagement process.
4. A cross-departmental, coordinated public input process.

5. A partnership with national and regional equity experts to uncover best practices and research to inform the plan.

Together, these extensive engagement and research efforts have shaped a strategy that will position Metro to equitably and more effectively serve all communities in the region.

In considering this draft Strategic Plan, a few themes stand out that I offer for your consideration as part of Council deliberations.

1. **Racial Equity:** In July 2015, Council directed staff to focus on eliminating the barriers that confront people of color of our region as part of this strategy. In providing this direction, Council recognized communities of color in our region face the most pervasive barriers in all areas of social well being. Many of the same barriers are shared by other groups such as the LGBTQ community, people with low incomes, young people, seniors, women and individuals with disabilities. At the same time, research shows that by addressing the most widespread barriers that keep communities of color from thriving, Metro will be addressing many of those same barriers that affect other marginalized groups.

Additionally, national, regional and local equity research reveals that regions that intentionally focus on improving economic, social, and civic outcomes for communities of color are more successful overall. In other words, everyone benefits in regions that reduce racial disparities. In Metro's case, we will better achieve all of the six desired regional outcomes for all of the region's people by focusing on communities of color. Moreover, the region's population is increasingly diverse, with communities of color representing an increasing share of our growing population. Including people of color in our decision making, in our workforce, and in our business relationships will make Metro more effective.

2. **Department-specific plans:** One considerable action item listed within the Strategic Plan is for each Metro department and venue to develop its own equity action plan in partnership with community. Directors and staff within each of Metro's departments are best positioned to identify actions within their programs, projects, services and plans. Guided by this Strategic Plan, department-specific plans will bring Metro programs into alignment with the Council's strategic focus. In the coming year, the Parks & Nature, Planning & Development, Property & Environmental Services departments and the Oregon Zoo will begin this work, in partnership with Council, DEI staff, and the community.
3. **Participatory evaluation:** I agree with the priority identified in the Strategic Plan to continuously assess and improve upon Metro's efforts to advance equity in the region. The use of performance measures and feedback loops is important to understanding impact and effectiveness. Additionally, the participatory design of the evaluation approach positions Metro to be a better community partner and increases its level of accountability to the public.

4. **Implementation tools:** The Strategic Plan provides a foundational set of tools that will assist staff in implementing the identified actions and advancing equity within their everyday work. In addition to tangible tools, such as the racial equity guidance questionnaire, the definitions and explanation within the Strategic Plan provide the building blocks that allow Metro staff to better understand racial equity and the language to begin the dialogue to advance this practice.
5. **Advisory Committee:** The Strategic Plan recommends that the Metro Council appoint new advisory committee to provide community oversight and guidance in the implementation of the Strategic Plan to Advance Racial Equity, Diversity and Inclusion. I recommend that the Council direct staff to proceed with this step immediately as a key component of community engagement and accountability.
6. **Co-Creation:** From my perspective, one of the key recommendations of this Strategic Plan is for Metro to continue to evolve the co-creation of programs and plans with communities of color. As Council is aware, Metro departments have been piloting this approach with programs that range from our Partners In Nature grants to public outreach on the Powell-Division Corridor project. The Strategic Plan recommends that we continue to partner with a diverse range of community-based organizations. The goal of this approach is to build capacity within Metro and the community and to ensure that our projects and programs meet the needs of specific communities in our region

Addressing the large disparities in our region requires bold action and Metro is taking a bold leadership step by adopting this plan. The process to implement the Strategic Plan will be complex and I fully expect that Metro staff and leadership will make mistakes as we take new risks in our effort to advance equity. I also know that because of Metro's long tradition of innovation we will learn from these mistakes, which will strengthen our work and improve the results. This work is unique to jurisdictions throughout the nation and I am certain that it will make Metro and our region economically, environmentally, and civically resilient.

Before I conclude, I want to recognize the herculean efforts of Metro's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion team: Patty Unfred, Juan Carlos Ocaña-Chiu, Cassie Salinas, Nyla Moore, Scotty Ellis, Bill Tolbert, Amy Croover, and past staffers Nuin-Tara Key, Pietro Ferrari, and Pam Phan. In addition, the leadership of Carl Talton and the current and past members of the Equity Strategy Advisory Committee has been essential to the success of this work.

I look forward to the Council's deliberations on this Strategic Plan and to moving into implementation.