

Metro | *Meeting minutes*

Meeting: Equity Strategy Advisory Committee
Date: Monday, May 18, 2015
Time: 3 to 5 p.m.
Place: Metro Regional Center, Room 370 A&B, 600 NE Grand Ave., Portland

Attendees

Equity Strategy Advisory Committee: Carl Talton, Rey España, Irene Konev, Betty Dominguez, Julia Meier, Ben Duncan, Philip Wu

Absent: Virginia Nguyen, Pam Treece, Daniel Vázquez, Kirsten Kilchenstein

Guests:

Metro: Patty Unfred, Juan Carlos Ocaña-Chíu, Cassie Salinas, Nyla Moore, Martha Bennett

Welcome, introductions and agenda review

Carl motions to approve the meeting. Betty approves and Philip seconds that motion.

DEI Update

The hiring process for the equity strategy program analyst position is almost finished. 98 applications were narrowed down to 9 applicants for interviews. DEI staff are down to two finalists and completing background checks.

An RFP for consulting services to assist with preparing the framework for the equity strategy has been issued. The equity team is looking for someone who has experience in this field. The team reached out to three specific organizations: Government Alliance on Race & Equity, PolicyLink, Equity Matters NW and posted on ORPIN for all to see. Responses are due on May 26th.

Julia asked if they writing or framing the equity strategy report. Patty responded that it will be more of the framing and we will rely on internal staff for the writing. Juan Carlos further explained why we need help with the framing: to help identify national best practices, what is working in other jurisdictions, and put all that into a framework.

The Unconscious Bias kickoff trainings were held last week with presentations at the Senior Leadership Team meeting, an all-staff meeting and “high volume” hiring managers. Bill Tolbert is leading this work. The long term series of trainings on unconscious bias will include different kinds of learning opportunities over the next 18 months. The trainings helped to prepare the staff for

supporting the work we plan to do with the equity strategy. There's a survey out for the staff to provide feedback on the trainings.

Rey asked if there is a baseline for measuring change. Is there a result staff are measuring against? Patty responded that there is an internal survey called the Cultural Compass that happens every other year. We're scheduled to conduct the next one this Fall. In some categories, employee dissatisfaction rose and staff believe it is connected to increased awareness. This should begin to shift in a positive manner now that we have three years of diversity programming and training complete; but the next Cultural Compass survey should be a good measure. Ben Duncan cautioned that Metro should not expect a big change due to staff being trained on unconscious bias.

Regarding training and retention of diverse staff, Martha Bennett explained that Metro is trying to find the reason for drop off of staff of color as they move up the staffing levels. Bill is working with HR on this subject this summer and will prepare a report. Julia Meier suggested that ESAC should structure the time with Bill more effectively. During Bill's presentation in April there seemed to be a glossing over of the trending upward in staff of color drop-off. Bill should be more intentional in showing where things aren't positive and explore how ESAC can help change that trend.

Juan Carlos is presenting information on the equity strategy to MTAC and TPAC – staff level advisory committees. Patty is co-presenting with Emmett Wheatfall (Clackamas County) and Alexis Ball (Beaverton) to MPAC and JPACT more generally on diversity, equity and inclusion work around the region—on why this work matters and is important to all of us..

The equity team, in collaboration with Multi-Cultural Collaborative and Metro's Communications staff, will start holding the discussion groups in June. The Equity team will bring information back to ESAC mostly by email.

Equity video

Staff showed the equity video, which was produced by Momentum Alliance for Metro. ESAC members were asked to provide their reactions to the video. Julia appreciated the connectivity of the video. She liked how it comes back to the same themes, especially the interconnectedness of everything, and how some things break down or damage those connections.

Betty Dominguez liked how the video established connections and thought it was interesting that it revolved around transportation. Philip Wu indicated that he was reminded of the International Trails conference and that nature belongs to everyone, and all should have the opportunity to appreciate and benefit from it. The video also brought up the idea of accessibility.

Carl believes everyone in the region is able to contribute. This will define a culture where things get done and people have an equal opportunity to contribute. Irene believed it had barriers but they were subtle. The video left her with something to think about. She wondered "Who is the video for?" DEI staff replied that is for external partners but it has also been used for internal audiences. Rey asked if the people in the video had an opportunity to say how they would fix the issues they identified. There are strong messages there. Ben believes the youth in the video were very powerful and hopes this isn't the last time Metro speaks with them on this matter. There was some pain but also potential and opportunity.

Internal stakeholder engagement discussion and update

Juan Carlos presented on the ways that staff are considering conducting internal stakeholder engagement and using the racial equity assessment tool. Since the direction provided by Martha has been to focus on improving outcomes for people of color and people with low income, staff have been working on how to best adapt tools for both purposes, but there are no examples of jurisdictions using dual-focus tools. Ultimately Metro will need to decide whether to keep the dual focus or choose one or the other. Metro Council needs to weigh in on what Metro's focus for the equity strategy and action plan should be.

For the racial equity assessment tool, Metro has to identify a team of Metro staff to champion the efforts and gather the information by department and unit. Julia suggested Metro speak with other entities that have completed the tool. She believes this can be performed in the six-week suggested period. For example, the evaluation took Portland Public Schools, with 4000 employees, six weeks to complete.

Philip stated that the organizations going through The Interwine Alliance's equity cohort are using the tool but they spread out its completion over a longer period. It engenders so much discussion that it is hard to compress and move forward. It would be hard to not to have this assessment take longer.

Betty asked what does the tool tell you? Julia replied that it doesn't give you next steps. But does give you a snapshot of policies. Assessing your organization is a part of being culturally responsive. You can score yourself and it becomes clear where you might take your next steps. Betty gives an example from the work her organization has done. Similar percentages to others' findings. But you cannot make assumptions when not everyone completes that box. Ben adds that the numbers were proportional.

Irene asked if there is staff buy in? Martha explains that you cannot get ahead of the council. Race issues are great but we also want economic equity as well. Is it one or the other or both? One should not presume the work of the elected officials. Juan Carlos hopes to use the consultant to help with this decision.

Refocusing ESAC and enhancing trust

Background-

Juan Carlos connected one on one with ESAC members after he took on the new position. He discussed dynamics of the meetings and facilitation, which we have had some success with. There is an element of needing to refocus. The feeling that there is a little bit of trust missing.

The Joint subcommittee meetings have not happened on a regular basis as we had decided. We cemented the idea that the cohesiveness is missing. The meetings stray from the topics and need equal participation and unified purpose. The list shows what we could do to enhance the trust as we want members to feel the same level of value and participation.

Thoughts from the committee members-

Betty adds that she likes the idea of staff-less time to talk amongst themselves and bond (if trust is an issue). This gives us time to share what we are working on. Irene suggests having an orientation for new members. Juan Carlos believes the trust needs to build up. There is not a sense of comparison but more ways to develop trust. Not everyone's participation is valued.

Rey states that his understanding of Metro has not enhanced from being on the committee and does not feel the passion for equity throughout the agency. The agency seems to have a hard time with the subject. He is concerned about the time that it takes to get things done at Metro and the unusual length of time to do our work. The committee is underutilized and gets a lot of reports and updates but would rather make a contribution and find out how best to serve. They have a hard time feeling the reciprocity.

Ben wonders what he can bring to the table. He also does not really understand Metro and needs to focus the path on where we are going. He has feelings of disconnect. Philip explains that in the medical world trust is based on communication and that the committee needs a better structure and to be transparent. He believes Martha articulates very well a concept but not sure everyone else buys into it. The communication process isn't there. And the joint subcommittee not meeting is a part of that sentiment. Reporting and updates are not communicating. Irene wonders about responding to emails with emails being public record. Cassie explains that we originally thought the purpose of the emails would be to share best practices and contact information.

Julia suggests the committee needs relationship building within ESAC. They haven't had a lot of time to interact with Metro in that way (as with the first meeting with as ESAC). Ben would like to look at meeting in different locations. Pam, Betty, and Philip offered use of their spaces. Other suggestions include: Adjusting the agenda to help move the agency forward and being more explicit of ways we can be more substantive.

Recruitment of new members-

We should figure out a new process before new members are added. The current members need to be re-recruited before adding new members. The committee would like to see a poster of timeline to be reminded of the work we are moving towards. Metro should map out the next few months to use as a recruiting tool

The committee needs representation from Clackamas county, business and local government.

Meeting adjourned at 5:00pm

The next ESAC meeting will take place on Monday, June 15, 2015, 3 – 5 p.m., at the Metro Regional Center, Room 370A & B.

Meeting minutes prepared by Nyla Moore

