

Introduction



Portland Parks & Recreation’s (PP&R’s) five-year Racial Equity Plan provides a framework and future guidance for the implementation of racial equity goals adopted by City Council. This plan sets a direction for the bureau that is consistent not only with the Citywide racial equity goals, but with our 2020 vision and with the City’s vision outlined in the Portland Plan, which envisions that “everyone has access to opportunities necessary to satisfy their essential needs, advance their well-being and achieves their full potential.”

The following six goals are identified in this plan:

1. Change existing services within the bureau using racial equity best practices.
2. End disparities in City government hiring and promotions.
3. Strengthen outreach and public engagement for communities of color and refugee and immigrant communities.
4. Increase access to culturally and linguistically responsive services for communities of color and refugee and immigrant communities.
5. Provide equitable access to City services to all residents.
6. Meet or exceed Citywide contracting goals for Minority Business Enterprises (MBE).

The plan outlines the bureau strategy and key actions, with measurable performance measures and a timeline for completion of each strategy. Each strategy outlined has an identified champion and other bureau staff that will be responsible for its implementation.

PP&R is committed to the overall Citywide vision that race will have no detrimental effect on people of color or refugee and immigrant communities in accessing our parks and natural areas, or from the benefit of our services. This five-year Racial Equity Plan is focused primarily on building new structures and processes that proactively seek to achieve racial equity. Additionally, we also recognize the need to examine the impact that systems of oppression have on other protected

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class designations and to develop further actions to minimize discrimination related to religion, class, gender, sexual identity, disability and their related histories.

We recognize that achieving racial equity will take time, with dedicated leadership and commitment by managers and staff. This plan is a first step that will seek to achieve the following results:

- Ensure that our workforce racial diversity is reflective of the overall population of the city and promotes an internal culture of respect, inclusion and equity across the organization.
- Provide plain language around racial equity that staff at all levels can understand, and create a supportive environment for all employees.
- Lead by example. Bureau leadership and staff will model these values and goals.
- Each division will develop work plans that have racial equity incorporated, tailored to their division.
- Managers will take the time to consult, support and empower staff to create an environment of mutual respect and accountability toward meeting our racial equity goals.
- Provide ongoing training and implement racial equity tools that support the professional development of staff to improve the cultural responsiveness of the bureau.
- Use a racial equity lens to identify and respond to the needs of the community, evaluate the effectiveness and impacts of our programs and projects, and guide the allocation of resources in our budget process.
- Actively engage communities of color and refugee and immigrant communities to participate in our project committees and budget process.
- Craft a language access plan and marketing strategies that ensures effective communication with the entire community and forge ongoing connections to the resources and services provided by the bureau.
- Meet or exceed the Citywide social equity contracting goals and expand the MBE contracting opportunities throughout the bureau.

Planning Process



The process for the development of this plan began in July 2015 with the convening of city bureaus by the Office of Equity and Human Rights (OEHR). OEHR was charged with leading and coordinating with bureaus in the development of each bureau's five-year Racial Equity Plan. To assist bureaus, OEHR provided an organizational assessment tool called the Racial Equity Roadmap, comprised of 44 questions in six areas:

- Organizational Commitment
- Leadership and Management
- Workforce
- Community Access and Partnership
- Contracting
- Data, Metrics and Continuous Quality Improvement

Beginning in the summer of 2015, core teams were formed in each operating department to administer and analyze the results from the Racial Equity Roadmap. The initial tool consisted of 40 questions and was completed by each core team. After completing the tool, each team paired the Roadmap tool down to questions that were answered by more than 300 permanent and seasonal staff. The data from the Racial Equity Roadmap was reviewed and analyzed by each core team to identify key themes amongst the feedback provided by staff.

After completing the Racial Equity Roadmap assessment phase, approximately 100 staff from across the bureau were invited to participate in six focus groups covering the six areas outlined in the Roadmap. The purpose of the focus groups was to analyze the key themes received from staff during the assessment and identify key strategies and action steps the bureau should take moving forward.

The main themes and observations from the roadmap assessment and focus group were as follows:

1. Overall, staff reported that the assessment tool provided by OEHR to be non-user-friendly, and some staff commented that the questions were confusing. Despite its limitations, the results of the assessment highlighted gaps within the dimensions identified in the Racial Equity Roadmap framework.
2. Based on the comments received, there is a divergence and range of opinions regarding where the bureau is with respect to racial equity. On one end of the spectrum, staff observed that some within the organization have little understanding and familiarity with the concepts and equity framework adopted by the City. Thus it appears that there is an assumption that the problems associated with race are few, nonexistent, and of minimal importance. At the other end, several staff shared a very sophisticated understanding of the foundations of racial and social equity. The comments reflected clear articulation regarding the racial dynamics within the bureau respective to White privilege, implicit bias and the impacts of institutional racism on staff. Several staff commented on the efforts and the progress, or lack thereof, the bureau is making toward addressing the negative impacts racism has on staff and the community.

Other insights shared, especially from staff that have high contact with the public and are not in administrative or planning positions, was the difficulty in understanding how the questions within the Racial Equity Roadmap reflect on the day-to-day responsibility of their work. Many of the questions seemed more geared toward staff that work in particular departments, administration or management.

3. The bureau lacks a unifying vision for equity, thus this leads to a lack a common understanding of why addressing racial equity is important. A common theme across the focus groups amongst the participants was the importance of the Senior Management Team modeling effective leadership and holding staff accountable in working toward and achieving racial equity goals and outcomes.
4. Within the operating divisions, there was a divergence in the assessment results between staff that are located in the bureau's main office (13th floor) and staff assigned to locations within the community (community centers, Mt. Tabor Yard). In reviewing the scores from the Racial Equity Roadmap assessment, the widest range of results were between staff that are located at the Portland Building and staff that work in maintenance shops or Mt. Tabor Yard. The reasons for the differences noted by focus group participants and the core team were attributed to the work culture, resistance among staff, the differences in job functions and staff roles, and the lack of access to information, computers, workshops and training provided on racial equity for staff located at Mt. Tabor Yard.

Staff that participated in the focus groups located at Mt. Tabor yard observed that equity is not seen as a priority and is a “13th floor thing.”

5. The knowledge, relevance and application of racial equity practices vary across the bureau. Parts of the organization feel the importance of racial equity is very clear and the management and staff are actively integrating an equity lens or approach into the overall program practices. For instance, Community Gardens, Schools Uniting Neighborhoods (SUN), Greenspace Restoration and Urban Naturalist Team (GRUNT), and Teen Services and Community Involvement are some of the departments that are actively applying equity practices as central to the delivery of their services.

Other departments within the bureau are just beginning to explore how to infuse racial equity into their operations, while a few departments do not see equity as a priority.

6. There is a great need to provide ongoing training, coaching, mentoring and more tools for staff across the entire bureau relative to equity best practices. Access to education, training and materials on equity practices is uneven and in some areas, such as Mt. Tabor yard, very limited. Many staff do not have access to e-mail, do not check it regularly, or are in the field the entire day and their interactions with bureau leaders or the Equity and Inclusion Office is limited.

Moreover, staff expressed in the focus groups and Racial Equity Roadmap assessment a desire for racial equity tools in the form of a “racial equity tool kit” that managers and front-line staff can use when making project, program and policy decisions.

7. In both the Racial Equity Roadmap assessment and focus groups, staff observed that there is a lack of buy-in or support for equity in some parts of the bureau. Some work groups have a culture where staff of color expressed feeling marginalized and a perceived lack of follow-through by management to hold employees accountable for racially insensitive comments or actions. Participants expressed the need for the bureau to have a zero-tolerance policy for racial insensitivity and for managers to hold staff accountable for racial microaggressions and bias and certainly for overt forms of bias and racism.
8. Senior managers need to be versed in best practices regarding anti-racism practices and how to demonstrate leadership in addressing the negative impacts of institutional racism. There is a perception, especially from employees of color, that leadership of the bureau needs to model more proactive and consistent approaches to racial justice.

The results and input provided by staff in the focus groups and Racial Equity Roadmap assessment was synthesized and provides the overall framework for the goals, strategies and actions identified in this plan. We want to thank the many PP&R staff that assisted in the creation of this plan and for their time by serving on their department core teams, in one or more of the six focus groups, or in individual meetings providing insight and feedback. Their time and input was integral to the creation of this plan.

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