



Advancing Equity: Recommendations from the EAG

Equity Advisory Group



CITY OF CLEVELAND
Mayor Justin M. Bibb

Developed by:
The Division of Health Equity & Social Justice, Department of Health
The Office of Equal Opportunity

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Mayor Justin Bibb’s 2022 Transition Report identified the need to operationalize equity. The Equity Advisory Group (EAG) responds to this call to action and is necessary for creating a workplace that is fair and inclusive for everyone.

The EAG identifies and supports Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) efforts within the City of Cleveland government. It focuses on supporting people, community, and infrastructure to achieve change over time.

Background

In June of 2020, the City of Cleveland adopted Resolution 296-2020 declaring Racism a Public Health Crisis. The declaration authorized the creation of the Racism as a Public Health Crisis Working Group, tasked with creating a path forward with the Health, Human Services, and Arts (HHS) Committee of Cleveland City Council. The working group eventually evolved into the Racism as a Public Health Crisis Coalition (RAPHCC), a coalition of partners leading the community-based response to Racism as a Public Health Crisis in tandem with the City.

By March of 2021, Ordinance No. 843-2020 established the Division of Health Equity & Social Justice (HESJ) at the Cleveland Department of Public Health (CDPH). The Division of HESJ’s mission is to improve health outcomes and the overall quality of life and to remove barriers to resources in order to create thriving neighborhoods and a thriving city.

In December 2022, HESJ and the Office of Equal Opportunity (OEO) launched the Interdepartmental Equity Team (IET) with the goal of creating a strategic plan to address equity within the city of Cleveland using the Social Determinants of Health as a framework.

In November 2023, the City of Cleveland launched the Equity Advisory Group (EAG) where city leadership and decision makers identify strategies to improve Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion efforts across city government.

Framing Equity Strategies

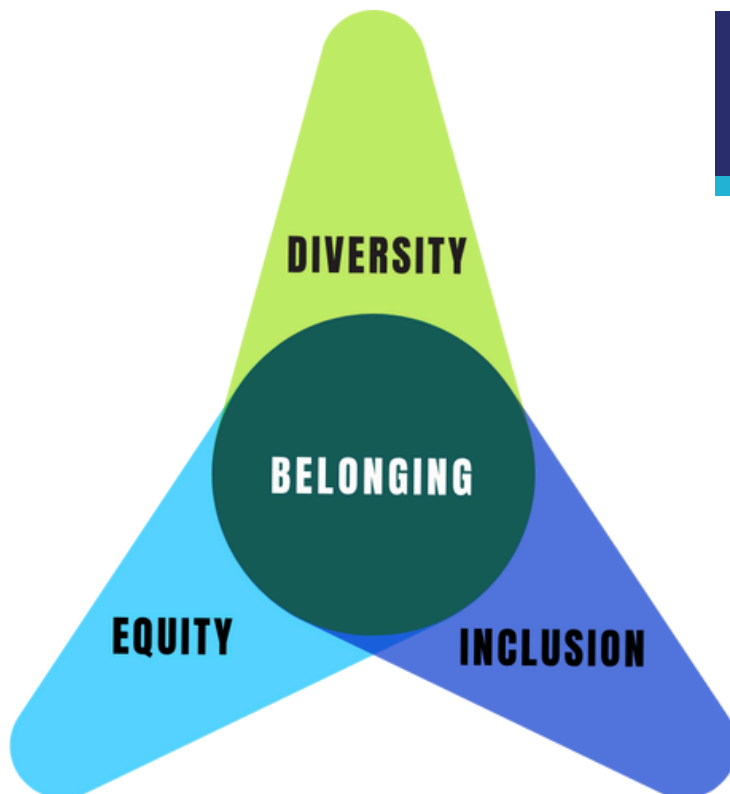
The building blocks of these recommendations come from core concepts in equity and DEI work. To ensure that all readers are starting with the same information, important terms are defined below. Models and language for DEI continue to evolve as the work expands.

Diversity - Having different types of people from a wide range of identities with different perspectives, experiences, etc.

Equity - Removing the predictability of success or failure that correlates with any social or cultural factor (such as race), examining biases, and creating inclusive environments refers to fairness and equality in outcomes, not just support and opportunity.

Inclusion - Putting diversity into action by creating an environment of involvement, respect, and connection - where the richness of ideas, backgrounds, and perspectives are harnessed to create value.

Belonging - The feeling of security and support when there is a sense of acceptance, inclusion, and identity for a member of a certain group (Cornell University).



A graphic depicting how diversity, equity, and inclusion creates belonging.

Structure of the Equity Advisory Group

EAG Meeting Schedule

These recommendations were created over a series of in-person and virtual meetings:

Nov 2023 Meet and Greet

Jan 2024 Choosing Small Groups

Feb 2024 Brainstorming Strategies

Mar 2024 Organizing by Timeframe

Mar 2024 Finalizing Strategies

Apr 2024 Discussing EAG Representation

Jun 2024 Generating Survey Questions

Sep 2024 Drafting the Recommendations

Equity Advisory Group Representatives

The EAG recruited representatives from city departments, offices, commissions, and boards. Members were chosen based on experience in their field and in-depth knowledge of the day-to-day operations impacting equity and DEI. While not every department or office was represented in the creation of these recommendations, there is room to expand and grow through the next phase.

- Director David Margolius, Health
- Director Mary McNamara, Aging
- Director Tyson Mitchell, Equal Opportunity
- Director Angela Schute-Woodson, Community Relations
- Director Matthew Cole, Human Resources
- Commissioner Lita Wills, Health
- Raafeeq Ali, Director of Minority Health, Health
- Chia-Min Chen, Asian Liaison
- Christopher Martinez, Hispanic Liaison
- Angela Cecys, Senior Strategist for Public Safety & Health
- Kevin Schmotzer, LGBTQ+ Liaison
- Lydia Hill, Project Coordinator, Health
- Brett Grosel, Assistant Administrator, Health
- Patrick Lang, L&D Specialist, Human Resources
- Ricardo Reinoso, Digital Equity & Inclusion Manager, Finance
- Marvin Jr. Owens, Strategist, Mayor's Office

Creating the Recommendations

Process

Meeting and Feedback Sessions

The Equity Advisory Group (EAG) held consistent meetings to assess DEI initiatives in Cleveland, promoting open dialogue to identify areas for improvement.

Shared Objectives and Principles

The EAG established shared objectives and understanding of DEI principles, creating a unified approach to equity in the city, guiding the next steps.

Creation of Three Workgroups

Members were split into three groups:

- **People** - Focused on equity as it relates to individuals such as city employees, residents, and stakeholders. Their work centered on workforce diversity, equitable hiring practices, and integrating DEI principles into people-focused policies and programs.
- **Community** - Concentrated on implementing equity in Cleveland's neighborhoods and broader community initiatives. They assessed how city policies, resource access, and community engagement practices impacted various communities.
- **Physical Infrastructure** - Addressed the city's physical structures like public buildings, transportation, and infrastructure projects. They evaluated if infrastructure development equally benefited all areas and addressed disparities in access to city services.

Evaluation of Conditions and Needs

Each workgroup reviewed ongoing efforts in the city and identified areas for improvement.

Members formulated strategies to improve DEI and categorized them based on their expected implementation timeframe: 3-6 months, 6-12 months, or over 12 months.

Reading the Report

The recommendations in this report are organized first by timeframe and then by the equity strategy they fall under. Each category is important and deserves equal attention to achieve DEI across the city.

Equity Recommendations

Short Term

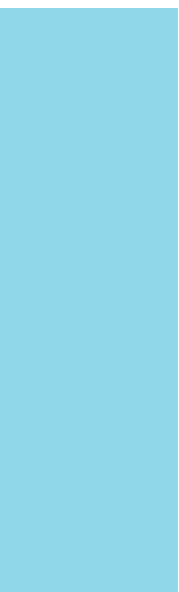
Intermediate

Long Term





Short Term Recommendations (3 – 6 Months)



People Strategies

1. Regularly update and distribute the all-staff directory electronically.
2. Standardize customer service training across departments.
3. Establish a consistent schedule for all-staff communications and updates.
4. Compile a list of staff language skills and identify common languages spoken in Cleveland.
5. Review DEI metrics to assess staff representation.
6. Review current onboarding requirements and incorporate DEI training through Biz Library.



Community Strategies

1. Create a recruitment and hiring process for bilingual staff, focusing on emergency services.
2. Prioritize website accessibility, adding features for individuals with hearing and sight impairments to all city websites.



Physical Infrastructure Strategies

1. Improve and maintain signage using universal symbols for entrances, wheelchair access, and buttons.
2. Check and fix any immediate issues with water fountains and restroom accessibility, such as the Gender Inclusive Restroom in City Hall.
3. Make AEDs and naloxone boxes more visible and available.



Intermediate Recommendations (6 -12 Months)

People Strategies

1. Create translation recommendations.

Community Strategies

1. Develop an inventory of community engagement resources and assets across all city departments and offices.
2. Establish partnerships with local organizations to provide translation services and expand access to city services.
3. Enhance DEI education and recognition through city-sponsored events that engage both the East and West sides.

Physical Infrastructure Strategies

1. Increase the number of gender-inclusive restrooms in city buildings.
2. Upgrade parking signs and other way finding signs for clearer guidance.
3. Create and regularly update a city-wide online calendar of cultural events.
4. Strengthen the online presence of the Equity Advisory Group.
5. Install EV charging stations and start additional eco-friendly projects.



Long Term Recommendations (12+ Months)

People Strategies

1. Establish a city division for translation and interpretation services, including ASL.
2. Develop protocols for using translation and interpretation services, such as the language line.
3. Establish protocols for equity assessments.
4. Provide ongoing DEI training for all staff
5. Introduce training on age sensitivity, Equal Employment, Social Determinants of Health (SDOH), and communication literacy.
6. Establish DEI affinity groups and liaisons (ex. LGBTQ+) with incentives for participation.
7. Address barriers to employee promotion and salary increases.
8. Consider compensation strategies for translators and interpreters.
9. Regularly collect employee feedback through surveys.
10. Provide networking opportunities for interdepartmental collaboration.

Community Strategies

1. Implement community-based kiosk services to improve accessibility and convenience for city residents.
2. Prioritize outreach to populations that the city struggles to engage with through specific initiatives.

Physical Infrastructure Strategies

1. Improve accessibility by prioritizing ADA compliance with ramps, proper lighting, and elevators in all city buildings.

Future of the EAG

Moving into implementation, the EAG will continue to meet on a regular basis. The large group will meet quarterly, while workgroups will meet on a monthly basis to work on implementing equity strategies in their area. Membership and commitment will be determined annually to ensure that new members are introduced and represented as old members conclude their participation.

In the future, EAG members will continue to focus on identifying and supporting DEI strategies in the City of Cleveland government and advocating for the overall importance of this work.

Updates and Annual Reports

Each year, the EAG will produce an annual report of results that identifies:

- EAG meetings, attendance, and representation.
- Status updates on recommendations.
- Number of equity strategies implemented.
- Outcomes and performance management data

The annual report shall be shared with city leadership and made available to the public.

Glossary of Terms



Bias - A predisposition or preconceived opinion that affects judgment, often unfairly. Bias can be conscious (explicit) or unconscious (implicit).

Microaggressions - Every day, subtle, intentional, or unintentional interactions or behaviors that communicate some sort of bias toward historically marginalized groups.

Intersectionality - The interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, gender, and class and how these intersect to create overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage.

Allyship - The practice of using one's position of privilege to support and advocate for marginalized groups.

Cultural Competence - The ability to understand, communicate, and effectively interact with people across cultures.

Gender Identity - A person's internal understanding of their gender, whether male or female, is a blend of both, neither, or something else.

Privilege - Unearned advantages granted to individuals based on their membership in dominant social groups (e.g., race, gender, sexual orientation).

Marginalized Groups - Communities historically disadvantaged or excluded from certain opportunities due to systemic inequalities.

Anti-Racism - The active process of identifying and eliminating racism by changing systems, structures, policies, and attitudes to redistribute power equitably among all groups.

Neurodiversity - The concept that neurological differences, such as autism, ADHD, and dyslexia, are natural variations of the human brain.

People of Color (POC) - A broad term used to describe individuals who are not white, though it is important to recognize that each racial group within this term has its own distinct identity and experience.

Glossary of Terms



BIPOC - Black, Indigenous, and People of Color. This term is used to highlight the unique experiences of Black and Indigenous communities within broader conversations about people of color.

LGBTQ+ - An acronym that stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning, and other sexual or gender minorities.

Cisgender - A term used to describe individuals whose gender identity matches the sex they were assigned at birth.

Disability Justice - A movement focused on the rights, inclusion, and equity of individuals with disabilities, emphasizing that disability intersects with other marginalized identities.

Tokenism - The practice of making a perfunctory or symbolic effort to include members of underrepresented groups without giving them substantive roles or influence.