

FISCAL YEAR

2020

2023

EQUITY ACTION PLAN

Looking Back to Look Forward





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Letter from the County Manager

Dear Mecklenburg County Residents,

I present to you the Mecklenburg County Equity Action Plan. This will guide us in the work to achieve organizational success and sustainability which depends upon ensuring fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement for all employees and those we serve. It is about recognizing and addressing the unique challenges and barriers that individuals from diverse backgrounds may face and creating an environment where everyone can thrive.

Since the County began this work, we have prioritized and acknowledged that different individuals may require different resources and support to reach their full potential. By strategically broadening our practices to meet the specific needs of our employees, we create a more inclusive and supportive workplace. This will benefit our employees and also enhance our service to our residents.

We are committed to fostering a culture of trust and respect where employees see that our enterprise is dedicated to fairness and justice. We are responsible for contributing positively to the communities we serve, which includes addressing social, environmental, and economic inequalities. Our ongoing efforts help to build a more just and equitable society, which benefits Mecklenburg County and the residents we serve.

Our Equity Action Plan informs our strategic approach to equitable practices, connects people to opportunities, and empowers our teams to collaborate and respond to community needs. We will apply continuous improvement practices that includes listening to the community as this work evolves and explore opportunities to partner and engage in this vital commitment.

Warm regards,

Dena R. Diorio

Dena R. Diorio
Mecklenburg County Manager



Executive Summary

The Mecklenburg County Equity Action Plan (EAP) FY2020-2023 is the primary source for guiding all County Departments to assess current equity practices across the following six goal areas:

- 1) Infrastructure and Tools
- 2) Workforce Equity
- 3) Inclusive Engagement
- 4) Health Equity
- 5) Economic Opportunity
- 6) Criminal Justice.

This report is organized around the Goals and Strategies outlined as primary deliverables within the initial plan, and looking forward to the future of our work. Since the Fall of 2019, Mecklenburg County's County Manager's Office and Office of Equity and Inclusion (OEI) has worked with the Board of County Commissioners, County Executive Leadership, Department Directors, Department Equity Action Teams, the Equity Core Team, and many others to interview, review and assess the progress made since implementing the plan.

The County Manager's Office and OEI are committed to facilitating an environment where employees of all identities feel valued, respected, and supported in the County's mission of providing the most equitable and inclusive services possible to those who live, learn, work, and recreate in Mecklenburg County. With this plan, County leadership has continued its commitment to advancing racial equity and supporting the implementation of the actions specified in each goal area.

The EAP progress report includes an analysis of each County department's needs and outcomes, reviewing scholarly articles, peer reports, and industry-recognized research on best practices for reporting and advancing racial equity in the public sector. It also includes feedback from the employee climate survey and community pulse report. As the OEI department expanded its reach, so have the County's active listening tours and feedback sessions. The

responsive incorporation of this quantitative and qualitative data will inform future iterations of the EAP.

We also prioritized how this work can have a meaningful and sustainable impact. Our EAP goals acknowledge that true equity is achieved and sustained when organizations align their efforts to address social, environmental, and economic challenges through the justice lens. As the research around equity continues, the ideals of diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging rests on the nexus of a just society. A society where outcomes are not predicted based on identity, zip code, or languages spoken in the home, among many other identity considerations and factors, but instead on the notion that justice is achieved when fair and impartial treatment ensures equity and protection of rights in recognition of all biases and prejudices.

Finally, wherever possible, OEI has incorporated direct feedback from employees, community members/stakeholders, and our partners into reflections for this report and is developing responsive strategies to improve the process for input and updates in the future.

In Solidarity,

The Office of Equity and Inclusion
Mecklenburg County Manager's Office



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Meet the Team

- **LaShaun Carter**
- Chief Equity and Inclusion Officer



LaShaun K. Carter is the Chief Equity and Inclusion Officer for Mecklenburg County. He is responsible for developing efforts to advance a countywide equity and inclusion framework of normalizing, organizing, operationalizing, and improving internal policies, practices, and systems to eradicate any structural or institutional oppression in the County government. In this role, LaShaun oversees the Office of Equity and Inclusion and leads through community partnerships, policy analysis and development, training, data collection, and more robust accountability measures for County departments to achieve better outcomes.

In his prior role, Carter developed and created a first-of-its-kind department designed to collect, curate, and analyze data to inform service delivery and strategic alignment to close racial disproportionality gaps and disparities. Carter routinely partners with private corporations, human service organizations, educators, industry partners, and collective impact organizations across the country, seeking to innovate on ways to support the advancement of equity and social justice.

LaShaun is committed to service and has a long history of volunteerism and board service, currently serving on the Governing Boards of the African American Leadership Academy of Charlotte and GenerationNation.

Born and raised in Columbus, Ohio, LaShaun lives in Charlotte, N.C., with his wife, Cheree and their two children, LaDaia and Kross.

- **Amanda Joyner**
- Equity and Inclusion Consultant



Amanda Joyner is a consultant, educator, and change agent.

For almost 10 years, Amanda has partnered with and advised multiple organizations in the private and public sectors, ranging from Fortune 500 companies to rural community organizations.

Amanda's devotion to human rights and equitable and accessible opportunities for all underrepresented communities intertwine with her expertise in strategic alignment, executive portfolio development, and project and change management. Her specializations include identity development, executive coaching, developing and fostering affinity and employee resource groups.

She serves as the Senior Equity and Inclusion Consultant within the Office of Equity & Inclusion for Mecklenburg County, where she serves internal stakeholders by managing 22 department equity action teams (DEATs), the Equity Core Team, and County-wide initiatives and programs that promote equitable and inclusive experiences for employees and constituents.

- **Eboni Lewis**
- Equity and Inclusion Consultant



Eboni Lewis is the Equity and Inclusion Consultant for Mecklenburg County Government. Her current responsibilities include, but aren't limited to, supporting equity project teams, department leadership, and interdepartmental teams as well as helping partners in the delivery of equity policies, programs, and operations. She currently serves on the Latta Place Steering Committee and represents the County with local efforts for the Remembrance Project. Prior to her role at Mecklenburg County, she was the Program Director for Culture Blocks, a program managed by the Arts and Science Council, which is fully funded by Mecklenburg County Government. Eboni is a proud graduate of Howard University where she graduated with a BS in Health Science Management. While at Howard, she was a member of the Varsity Women's Tennis Team and became a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated. She is a Stevie Wonder superfan, wife and mom.

Mecklenburg County Mission, Vision, and Values

Equity Vision Statement:

*All people in Mecklenburg County will have an equitable opportunity to **thrive** in the workplace and in the community. (Adopted April 1, 2019)*

Equity Mission:

To build and sustain a culture of equity and inclusion across the County through understanding, analyzing, and eliminating the root causes of racial disparities and advancing equitable policies, practices, and procedures, creating a culture of equity to meet the needs of all residents.



Mecklenburg County Mission, Vision, and Values *(continued)*

Why do we lead with race?

The Equity and Inclusion work in Mecklenburg County leads with race because although the founding values of the United States are evident in statements such as “all men are created equal”, “with liberty and justice for all,” and “government of the people, by the people, for the people shall not perish from the earth,” those included and allowed to benefit from these values has changed over time. Who encompasses “all,” “all men,” or “the people” was exclusionary at the founding of this nation, and the legacy remains now.

Explicit examples of racial segregation and oppressive practices continue to exist in the United States. Over the history of this nation, government policy, practice, and procedures have evolved from explicitly creating and maintaining racism and race-based oppression through Indian removal, colonization, slavery, Jim Crow laws, Japanese internment, housing discrimination, employment discrimination, and more, to implicit racism and disenfranchisement through “race-neutral” policies once discrimination became illegal. Examples include red-lining practices by the Federal Housing Administration and ongoing collusion with insurance companies, real estate agents, and companies that supported government-subsidized wealth building for whites, which is still evident today. The Social Security Act of 1935 excluded agricultural and domestic workers from access to benefits. 65% of workers in these industries at that time were African Americans; therefore, by excluding workers in agriculture and domestics, the unintended or intended consequences were racialized.

Although the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Voting Rights Act of 1965 provided protections and opportunities for those facing discrimination, mostly African Americans, the legacy of discrimination, oppression, and explicit racism was deeply embedded in the fabric of the United States. Data reveals that facets of life in Mecklenburg County and all over the United States for people of color, especially African Americans, have been disproportionately and negatively impacted.

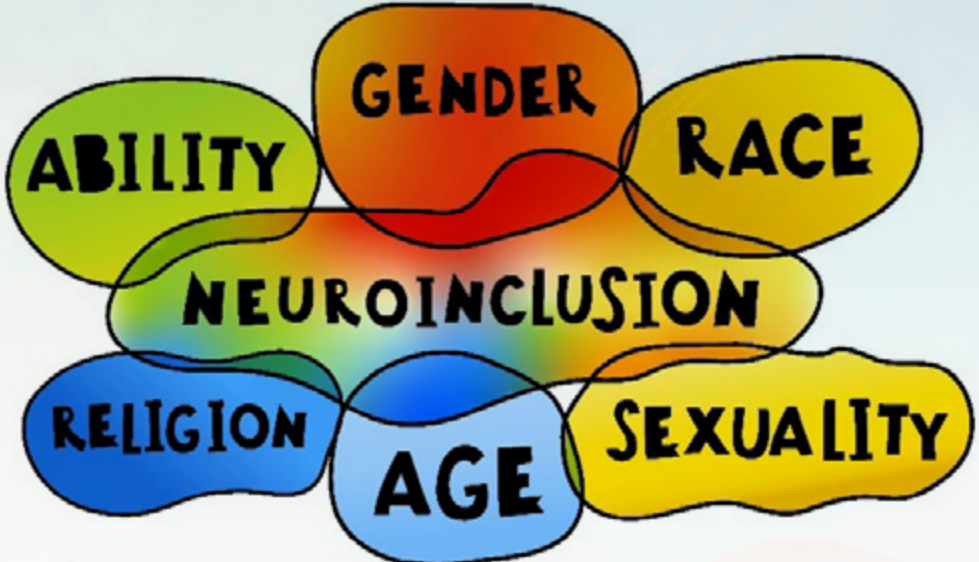
We lead with race because we haven’t gotten it right yet. We lead with race because other forms of oppression will be dealt with using a similarly focused framework once we make progress on dismantling institutional and structural racism.

Widening our lens of consideration

Although the prism through which we view our work passes through the filter of race, it also considers all other forms of difference as Mecklenburg County is becoming increasingly diverse and the collective lived experience equally dynamic. An example of this



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As we unpack the nuances of all the differences that make up Mecklenburg County, we allow more people to see themselves in our work.

filter is understanding our collective and individual intersectionality. Understanding intersectionality is crucial because it recognizes that individuals hold multiple identities beyond their race (such as gender, sexuality, and class) that intersect and interact, shaping their experiences and perspectives. Leveraging this understanding in all we do helps address complex social issues by acknowledging the interconnected nature of privilege and oppression, promoting more inclusive and equitable conversations and solutions.


As we unpack the nuances of all the differences that make up Mecklenburg County, we allow more people to see themselves in our work. We pay attention to not only race, but also things like gender, sexuality, class, neurodiversity, ethnicity, religion, immigration status, languages spoken, and all other forms of difference that influence us as employees as well as the people that make up the community we serve.



Background

In September 2016, a deadly officer-involved shooting sparked days of civil unrest within the Charlotte community; it inspired our County Manager and local government partners to center equity as a top priority. Since then, Mecklenburg County has continued to organize around the concept of equity in the planning, practices, and approaches to serving the residents of Mecklenburg County. In partnership with the Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE), Mecklenburg County began developing the EAP FY 2020-23, achieving approval in June 2019. Since then, the County has made intentional efforts to normalize, organize, and operationalize race equity as the core principle upon which this framework was built.

Six initial goals were identified in the County's Equity Action Plan:


- 


1. Infrastructure & Tools – Mecklenburg County employees and residents have the understanding of and ability to advance equity.
- 

2. Workforce Equity – Mecklenburg County is a model employer advancing racial equity.
- 

3. Inclusive Engagement – Mecklenburg County residents are engaged in the community where they live, learn, work, and recreate.
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4. Health Equity – All residents in Mecklenburg County are healthy.

- 

5. Economic Opportunity – Mecklenburg County's small businesses and non-profits share in the County's economic prosperity.
- 

6. Criminal Justice – All residents in Mecklenburg County live in a more just and equitable community.

With the COVID-19 global pandemic impacting the world, Mecklenburg County remained committed to our work and continuing our efforts. In June of 2020, the Board of County Commissioners (BoCC) declared racism a Public Health Crisis. This declaration is the result of the ongoing national conversation that focuses on the intentional systems and structures that perpetuate the system of oppression that is systemic racism rather than the dismissive understandings that place fault or blame on the victims of such a reality. The impacts of COVID-19 serve as a clear indicator of the vulnerabilities associated with this history. These realities put a laser-like focus on the racial disparities in County outcomes, paying particular attention to the health disparities related to the Social Drivers of Health and Black residents in Mecklenburg County.

Additionally, during the Summer of 2021, the BoCC formed the Equity Investments Ad Hoc Committee. Members of this Committee requested that the Spangler-Robinson Carolina Room of the Charlotte Mecklenburg Library produce a report that focuses on County-level government and addresses the history of systemic wrongdoing in four central themes aligned to aspects of the EAP. Those themes are:

- Politics
- Law Enforcement and Justice
- Education
- Infrastructure and Service Provision



In some circumstances, the results of the report fall out of the current scope of responsibilities of Mecklenburg County government but remain areas of great interest and concern to residents.

In FY23, the BoCC made addressing racial disparities a “cross-cutting” factor in their priorities. This ensures that investments by the County focus on closing racial and ethnic gaps so that race does not predict one's success while improving outcomes for all. Equity is interwoven into the Board Priorities through policies, practices, and procedures that seek to analyze and eliminate the root causes of racial disparities with the hope that all people in Mecklenburg County will have an equitable opportunity to thrive in the community.

Our work continues with the evolution of an updated Equity Action Plan FY24-FY26, continuing and sustaining some efforts while setting new goals and aligning the entire enterprise. The following is a summary of the initial implementation of the EAP 2020-23 and the path forward.

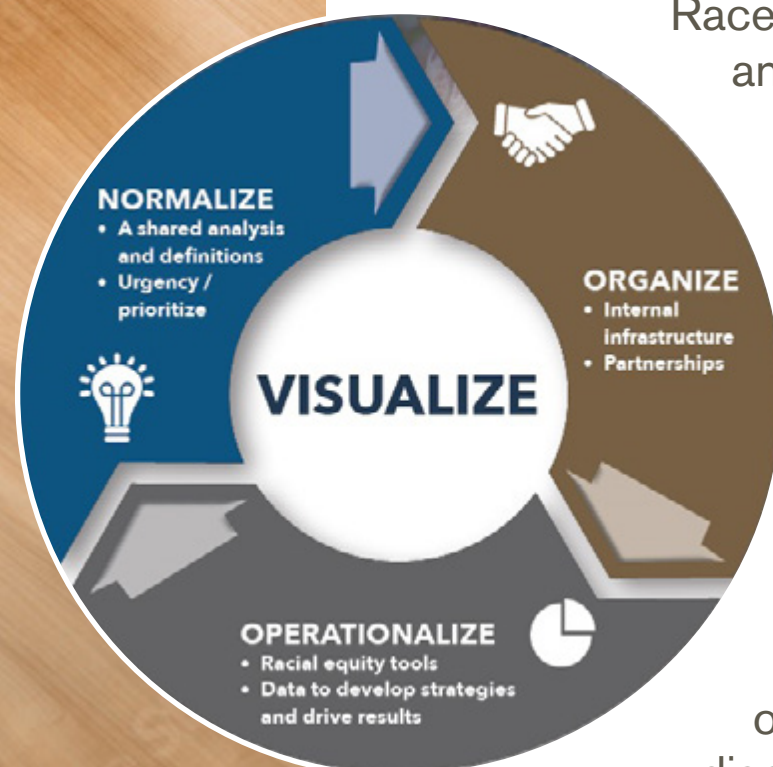


Update on EAP FY2020-2023

Embedding a lens for equity is a central component of strategic development. This understanding is especially significant with our focus on providing the best services to all in Mecklenburg County. In recent years, an explosion of research has uncovered the many disparities related to the lived experiences of Black, Brown, and historically marginalized residents throughout this country. The rise in inequality and inequity remain important areas of interest as government services historically lag behind other service-oriented institutions in implementing outcome measurement and strategy alignment where equity is a core value across all contexts. We are fortunate that in Mecklenburg County, we have been at the forefront of facing this challenge, and despite some unfortunate disruptions (i.e., COVID) in our momentum, the intention to prioritize this work remains.

We continue to partner with the Government Alliance on Race & Equity and peer jurisdictions across the country and state, advancing this body of work. We continue to follow and implement a framework that normalizes our equity efforts, organizes our approaches within the established goal framework, and operationalizes our work by leveraging department-specific strategies and expertise.

The understanding we share with our peers is the need for equity in our work to include self-reflection as a critical aspect of the path forward. This intentionality requires nuance and an enterprise-wide focus. The same intentionality behind the creation of systemic racism and structural barriers is required to dismantle it.



By being intentional in our efforts, we can develop an enterprise point of view that solves for three things specifically:

- 1. All residents can reach their full potential.** There are no differences in outcomes based on the factors for which an individual cannot be held responsible. (i.e., ability status, age, gender identity and expression, immigration status, languages spoken, race, religion, and sexual orientation, etc.)
- 2. An equal concern for the unique needs of each resident.** With responsive services as an upfront priority, we provide specific and necessary resources based on an individual's identified need.
- 3. The humanity with which we treat one another and provide our services to the community.** Our internal engagement and external services reflect each individual's unique needs regardless of racial and cultural identity.

The Process

The Equity Action Plan planning process prioritized identifying actions that will make our collective vision of achieving equity throughout our programs and services a reality. . This plan is the foundational document that serves as the bedrock for our institutional and structural change. As our equity work continues, it has been important for us to monitor our progress and make the necessary adjustments to evolve our approaches to service. The following section is an overview of the performance outcomes and highlights from the initial plan, which, in many ways, serves as a baseline for our ongoing equity efforts.



Goal 1 »

Infrastructure/Tools

Mecklenburg County employees and residents have the understanding of and ability to advance equity. (3 Strategies / 17 Actions)

Milestones Status

- Completed: 7 Actions
- Completed (Ongoing): 8 Actions
- In Progress: 2 Actions



Infrastructure and Tools are the backbone of any efficient equity-focused system or organization. For Mecklenburg County, this goal is the foundation for our operations, enabling tasks to be completed more effectively and through an equity lens. The Infrastructure and Tools approach is the platform for communicating our commitment, supporting our employees, developing the skills to do the work, and establishing the necessary community partnerships that sustain our efforts and ensure transparency and accountability. They also foster the environment for innovation and culture change. Ultimately, Infrastructure and Tools serve as the core mechanism for achieving all other equity actions and objectives.

Strategies

Strategy A: Implement infrastructure for Mecklenburg County employees to understand and commit to advance racial equity within the County government.

- Department directors have included Equity and Inclusion as one of the initiatives in their workplan.
- All departments have formed their Department Equity Action Teams (DEAT) to develop their specific department equity action plans. Each department plan is expected to adopt its plans by the summer of 2024.
- Demographic data has been prioritized to understand the makeup of the County workforce and community. An equity dashboard is in development, and current equity items in the Employee Climate Survey are disaggregated by question, race, gender, and age, accounting for confidentiality.

Strategy B: Develop skills for Mecklenburg County employees to understand and commit to advance racial equity within the County government.

- 95% of all Mecklenburg County have been trained over the initial phase of implementation. The Advancing Racial Equity (ARE) training has been properly baselined and calibrated for sustainability. All new staff will be trained in ARE within their first year of employment.
- Required Racial Equity Toolkit (RET) Training for Manager's Cabinet and Senior Managers. To date, we have trained 250 managers throughout the County. In the process of researching a sustaining strategy for RET.

Strategy C: Build community partnerships and residents' understanding of racial equity.

- The Office of Equity and Inclusion (OEI) is an active member of the NC GARE network and the national GARE Community of Practice. GARE has retooled its infrastructure for support to jurisdictions, and OEI staff remains engaged in the process to inform how that support evolves.
- The County has partnered with the City of Charlotte, Race Matters for Juvenile Justice, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, and the United Way in an ongoing community of practice to explore ways to educate and inform each other on the best practices of engaging the community and supporting staff on issues that advance equity.



Goal 1 »

Infrastructure/Tools



Community Indicator

Baseline data that has been collected through community survey:

- Perception of the population who believe Mecklenburg County Government is committed to advancing racial equity
- Perception of the population who view the County's programs and services are equitable

Over the last two years, we have seen perceptions of the County's equity work grow in the community. The chart to the right is data taken from the FY2023 Community Survey results. As standing questions in the community survey, we will be able to track this data over time to monitor and respond to community perspectives.

2023 Community Survey: Report to Departments

Office of Equity and Inclusion

Survey Question	FY22 Result	FY23 Result	FY23 (N)	Point Difference FY22 - FY23 ¹	Change FY22 - FY23
Please rate your level of agreement with the following statements about Mecklenburg County: (Results reflect % "Strongly Agree" + "Agree" responses)					
Mecklenburg County honors identity of individuals & treats them with dignity & respect	75%	76%	1,069	1%	↑
Mecklenburg County services & programs are racially equitable	61%	65%	1,069	4%	↑

1. Percentages displayed are rounded. The actual values are used to calculate the difference, which explains slight differences in the results from the rounded values.

Notes: The FY23(N) represents the total of completed surveys. These results represent a random sample of Mecklenburg County households and have a 95% confidence level with a precision of at least +/-3.0%. The survey was conducted from June 8 to July 14, 2023. Blanks or "-" in result columns indicate that a question was not asked in that year.

¹ From the 2023 Community Survey. Results not currently public. Scheduled to be made public October 2023.



Goal 2 »

Workforce Equity

Mecklenburg County is a model employer advancing racial equity. (3 Strategies / 16 Actions)

Milestones Status

- Completed: 8 Actions
- Completed (Ongoing): 4 Actions
- In Progress: N/A
- To Be Started: 4 Actions



In Mecklenburg County, Workforce Equity is crucial for fostering a fair and inclusive environment where everyone has what they need to thrive. We are focused on ensuring that all employees, regardless of race, gender, age, ethnicity, languages spoken, or any other known or unknown identifiers, have a sense of place and belonging within all County spaces. We are committed to doing the work to harness the full potential of our employees and facilitating experiences that produce innovation, productivity, and professional and personal achievement in the presence of our differences. Understanding and responding to the needs of our employees enhances culture and climate while also producing an environment that attracts the top talent from around our region and state.

As we continue to celebrate our diversity and equity efforts, Workforce Equity also supports inclusion and social cohesion among employees. Creating a sense of workplace connectedness contributes to our broader efforts to address the systemic and institutional inequities that undermine racial and social justice. Achieving workforce equity positions us to serve our customers, clients and communities well as we more closely reflect the diversity and needs of the communities we serve.

Strategies

Strategy A: Evaluate the recruitment and hiring process using racial equity lens.

- One of the community indicators within the Equity Action Plan was to better understand the makeup of Mecklenburg County employees across and within all salary plans as a reflection of the racial makeup of the community. Human Resources' action was to study livable wage compensation for all positions to align with the HRS Strategic Plan and develop and present policy and procedure change recommendations. In 2021, HRS began updating the classification and compensation system

to help provide consistency and equitable compensation to Mecklenburg County employees. By updating the system, we were able to meet the County's needs, address our employees' expectations, and align with the objectives of our total rewards philosophy.

Strategy B: Review and refine HR policies and procedures related to recruitment and hiring using racial equity tools.

- Use data to gather and evaluate the people, processes and technology involved in Talent Acquisition (TA) to identify challenges or barriers that perpetuate inequities. These inequities hinder progress toward inclusive TA goals.
- Choose initiatives that address the challenges and barriers uncovered in the people, process, and technology evaluation.
- Implement initiatives that align with the inclusive TA goals, as well as existing DEI goals.
- Review the estimated cost and effort associated with each initiative. Evaluate initiatives that require significant investments (e.g. new technology) based on the resources available and intended benefits. Note that many initiatives involve a higher amount of effort in the absence of TA technology such as an applicant tracking system (ATS).
- Be wary of placing additional burdens on employees from diverse groups when representation is low. For example, if there is one woman of color on the engineering team and she is asked to be involved in multiple interview panels for perceived representation.
- Adopting inclusive practices is a continuous journey, not a one-time exercise. Plan to evaluate progress and revisit this job aid to add new initiatives in the future. Align the evaluation of inclusive TA initiatives with the checkpoints to review the DEI strategy, if applicable.



Goal 2 »

Workforce Equity

Strategy C: Increase employee awareness and development opportunities across all salary plans.

The Human Resources Division of Learning and Organization Effectiveness' mission is to enhance organizational health to enable our human capital to thrive. Three new programs of note are:

- The Administrative Professionals Certificate, a 16-month program for administrative professionals who want to advance their skills. This program offers opportunities to add, develop, and enhance core skills and competencies.
- MeckEmerge, a leadership development program delivered over several months for high-potential frontline employees who aspire to move into a supervisory role. This program prepares those employees with the knowledge and skills needed to lead others effectively.
- MeckLEAD is a mandatory seven-week leadership development program for newly hired or promoted supervisors and managers. This program will provide new leaders with the knowledge, tools and skills to manage others effectively.

Community Indicator

Baseline data pulled from Employee Climate Survey FY2023*

- Over the last two years, the items below have been included in the Employee Climate Survey to understand employee perspectives on impact, understanding, actions, and support when engaging across differences, most specifically racial and cultural differences.

- This data will inform ongoing policy, strategy, and training development to foster a responsive and engaged working environment that advances racial equity.

Responses where higher values are better (see legend on left)						
Question	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2023 County Overall
I positively impact outcomes for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) through my work at the County.				93%	95%	95%
I have an understanding of how my role is important to advancing racial equity in Mecklenburg County.				91%	92%	92%
I feel I have the skills to take action when I see or experience discrimination (for example, racism or sexism) in the workplace.					92%	92%
I feel equipped to speak with colleagues about issues related to race.				85%	87%	87%
I feel supported by leadership to be responsive to the racial equity needs of my co-workers and the community I serve.					82%	82%
My supervisor/manager seeks my input regarding racial equity work, including questions regarding work climate and culture at least once a year.				61%	64%	64%
My co-workers talk candidly about how our racial biases affect our work.				57%	58%	58%



Goal 3 » Inclusive Engagement

Mecklenburg County residents are engaged in the community where they live, learn, work and recreate. (2 Strategies / 11 Actions)

Milestones Status

- Completed: 6 Actions
- Completed (Ongoing): 3 Actions
- In Progress: 1 Action
- To Be Started: 1 Action



Fostering environments where all stakeholders have a voice and are actively involved in decision-making processes is vitally important to an inclusive and engaging culture. Our equity actions are designed to create spaces where diverse perspectives and lived experiences are valued and considered, leading to improved outcomes and stronger bonds and relationships. We are actively engaging with a wide range of stakeholders that includes our employees, customers and clients, communities, and our partners and vendor organizations to enhance our ability to respond to the challenges we share and support each other in the ways that make a real difference. It has become evident that when our internal and external stakeholders can see themselves in the choices we make they are more likely to engage with us as we modify our services to the community and support our employees.

We continue to promote ways we can collaborate in the presence of our differences and bridge the divides that hinder our capacity to serve each other. Collaboration fosters understanding, empathy, and mutual respect, which in turn, lead to the development of more equitable and inclusive policies and practices that have been informed by all. By setting the conditions of this form of intentional collaboration we will build a stronger, more resilient, and compassionate community of mutual stakeholders.

Strategies

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Strategy A: Ensure Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) engagement opportunities are accessible to all residents.
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- We have purchased new advisory board software that supports more robust data collection and reporting, which will allow us to assess better where the gaps are. The software went live in the fall of 2023. The new software allows all board information and applications to be translated into multiple languages.

- The BOCC has implemented the following changes to enhance access and engagement with the community: Interpreters, live ASL translation, a dedicated live stream of all Board of County Commissioner meetings, and live closed captioning in Spanish and English.





Goal 3 »

Inclusive Engagement



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Strategy B: Develop the Countywide Inclusive Outreach and Community Engagement Framework

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- The Office of Equity and Inclusion and the Public Information Department have begun conversations related to publishing content and engaging the community around equity work. New content for the Equity and Inclusion page on MeckNC.gov is being updated and will continue to be updated throughout FY2024.
- Each year, Mecklenburg County develops an annual operating budget that reflects the priorities of the County Commission and the community. Since FY2023, the Office and Management and Budget has facilitated the participatory budgeting process.

PI launched the Community Stakeholders group in FY2023 and meets every month to share best practices, coordinate calendars, and explore collaboration and partnership opportunities.

Community Indicator

Community Survey results demonstrate that Mecklenburg County continues to receive positive community perceptions related to engagement, outreach, and County services. Some highlights include:

- Mecklenburg County received the highest percentage of being an excellent/good place to work (79%), as a place to live (70%), and having the highest overall quality of life in the County (69%).
- Three out of four respondents (75%) either “strongly agree” or “agree” with the statement that “Mecklenburg County honors the identity of individuals and treats them with dignity and respect.”
- The majority of respondents were either “very satisfied” or “satisfied” with the overall quality of services provided by the

County (50%) and the customer service provided by County employees (54%).

- Sixty-nine percent of respondents (69%) who contacted the County or visited the County’s website to ask a question or seek information about services indicated that they would either be “extremely likely” or “likely” to recommend services provided by the County to others.
- Two out of three respondents (66%) consider the Mecklenburg County government to be open and transparent with information about issues, services, and performance.
- Total ratings of “excellent” and “good” responses for County Park and Recreation sites visited by respondents in the past 12 months increased, with the highest ratings going to greenways (76%), recreation centers (76%), and nature preserves (74%).



Goal 4 » Health Equity

All residents in Mecklenburg County are healthy. (2 Strategies / 5 Actions)

Milestones Status

- Completed: 2 Actions
- Completed (Ongoing): 2 Actions
- In Progress: 1 Action



Achieving Health Equity ensures everyone has the opportunity to achieve and sustain their health goals. It includes addressing disparities in health outcomes and access to the healthcare services. These disparities are based on social drivers such as race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, geography. Promoting health equity suggests something can be done about the disparities in historically marginalized, underrepresented, or underestimated communities.

Furthermore, ensuring individuals have access to preventative care and timely treatment reduces the burden of chronic diseases and disabilities, which exacerbate disparity gaps, and contributes to the economic productivity of a community. This access to high-quality healthcare services and opportunities for prosocial health services helps to break the cycle of poverty and inequities that lead to more inclusive and prosperous communities.

Strategies

Strategy A: All residents receive effective, accessible and satisfactory health services at current and future Community Resource Centers (CRC).

- Individuals eligible for Medicaid for Pregnant Women and full Medicaid have coverage for transportation services to their medical appointments. The customer must call the Medicaid transportation number to schedule the appointment. Effective July 2019, the CRC Service Point automatically provides a referral for in-house Novant Health services to any customer presenting for Medicaid for Pregnant Women. Mecklenburg County's Department of Community Resources is working with Novant Health and the County's Department of Social Services-Medicaid team on additional strategies to address this need.
- Mecklenburg County has two fully operational Community Resource Centers. These centers house over 18 County services and 12 community partners.

- Services specific to health are:
 - Care Management for At-Risk Children (CMARC) which provides care management to support families with children ages birth to 5 years who need access to health care and social supports.
 - Care Management for High Risk Pregnancies (CMHRP) which provides care management services for high risk pregnant women.
 - Family Planning Services, which provides comprehensive family planning and reproductive health services.
 - Immunization Clinic, which provides routinely recommended vaccines for all age groups, as well as specific vaccines for high-risk groups.
 - Medicaid programs that provide support and subsidies for financial, food and nutrition, and medical support.

Strategy B: Increase capacity of CRC staff to address services through an equity lens.

- **Coordinated Social Services** provides access to social workers, counselors, and support groups to individuals and families facing various challenges such as housing instability, domestic violence, or mental health issues.
- **Education, Training, and Workforce Development** offers workshops, classes, and vocational training programs to enhance skills, increase employability, promote lifelong learning, and connect job seekers to local businesses.
- **Healthcare Access** aligns services between the Public Health Department and service providers to offer free or low-cost medical screenings, vaccinations, and wellness programs, especially in the communities surrounding the Valerie C. Woodard and Ella B. Scarborough Community Resource Centers.



Goal 4 »

Health Equity



- **Youth and Family Programs** provides quality-of-life-enhancing services, care coordination, and information about family-specific interventions and services.
- **Resource Referral** connects individuals with in-house local service providers, partnering agencies, and nonprofit organizations that can address specific needs such as food assistance, mental health support, workforce readiness, legal aid, or financial counseling.
- **Technology Access** provides computers, internet access, and digital literacy training to bridge the digital divide and empower individuals with technology skills for personal and professional growth.

Community Indicator

Health equity is a core component of the Equity Action Plan. It underscores the key principle of ensuring that all people have a fair opportunity to attain their highest level of health. This goal aims to eliminate disparities in health and healthcare access linked to social, economic, and environmental factors such as income, education, access to healthcare, and social support. Mecklenburg County aims to support equal health outcomes for all individuals, regardless of their background or circumstances. Our work continues to emphasize the importance of creating policies and initiatives that promote equal access to healthcare services and resources for all members of the County. The table to the right compares the baseline data between the 28208 ZIP code and Mecklenburg County captured in the fall of 2019 to the most recent capture of this data in 2021. We will continue to monitor these outcomes as our strategies and supports evolve.

Equity Action Plan Goal #4 Community Indicator 28208 Zip Code vs. Mecklenburg County						
2019 Baseline <i>Improve % of usage of prenatal care in zip code 28208 by race² (54% vs. 66%)</i>	28208			Mecklenburg County		
	White	34	6.1%	White	2,101	13.9%
	Black/African American	84	15.1%	Black/African American	1,301	8.6%
	Hispanic	49	8.8%	Hispanic	1,209	8.0%
	TOTAL	178	32.0%	TOTAL	5,027	33.4%
As of December 2021						
2019 Baseline <i>Decrease low birth weight rate by race in zip code 28208 (13.5% vs. 9.6%)</i>	28208			Mecklenburg County		
	White	5	0.9%	White	313	2.1%
	Black/African American	61	11.0%	Black/African American	672	4.5%
	Hispanic	17	3.1%	Hispanic	307	2.0%
	TOTAL	87	15.6%	TOTAL	1,429	9.5%
As of 2021						
2019 Baseline <i>Reduce the number of births by teens (15-19) in zip code 28208 (8.6% vs. 4.6%)</i>	28208			Mecklenburg County		
	TOTAL	45	8.1%	TOTAL	621	4.1%
As of 2021 ³						

² The way this indicator was calculated has changed since initial baselining.

³ Due to small numbers, teen births are not broken out by race/ethnicity to protect confidentiality.



Goal 5 »

Economic Opportunity

Mecklenburg County's small businesses and nonprofits share in the County's economic prosperity. (2 Strategies / 6 Actions)

Milestones Status

- Completed: 6 Actions
- Completed (Ongoing): 2 Actions



In 2014, Harvard researcher, Raj Chetty, with his colleagues and fellow researchers released a study that famously defined how where one grows up has a large degree of impact on shaping their economic prospects. This “Chetty Study” ranked the 50 largest cities in the United States for upward “economic mobility” and Charlotte was ranked 50th out of 50. Since then the study has been updated and Charlotte’s ranking moved from 50th to 46th. However, this doesn’t tell the full story of economic opportunity in Mecklenburg County. The County continues to foster opportunities for individual and societal prosperity by providing people with the services and resources that improve the financial and social well-being of vulnerable communities. As a social safety net we provide services that help individuals secure stable employment, earn a living wage, and support themselves and their families. Our Economic Opportunity efforts empower people to meet their basic needs, access essential services, and plan for the future in ways that isn’t mitigated by the realities of poverty and a diminished quality of life.

Additionally, Economic Opportunity means supporting and fueling innovation, productivity and entrepreneurship among historically underrepresented and underestimated communities. The Minority, Women-Owned, and Small-Businesses we support create an environment where diversity and equity is encouraged, minoritized communities can drive technological advancements, create new revenue generating possibilities, and generate wealth and prosperity for themselves, their families, and the communities in which they live. For Mecklenburg County, Economic Opportunity is not just about individual success but also about creating inclusive and thriving communities where everyone has the chance to contribute, prosper, and build a toward a future they can be proud of.

Strategies

Strategy A: Increase Minority/Women-Owned/Small Business Enterprise and Nonprofit businesses participation with Mecklenburg County Government.

- BDI engagement included connecting with 1,672 people. In addition to community/group engagements, OED was involved in one-on-one meetings via office visits, emails, and phone calls with 530 people. The combined number of people engaged is 2,202.
- In FY20, the County’s Disparity Study was conducted by Griffin & Strong, P.C.
- In FY21, the study was completed – eleven (11) recommendations were adopted by the Board of County Commissioners.
- In FY21 and FY22, OED worked to develop a multi-year implementation plan of the Disparity study recommendations, with Phase 1 beginning in FY23.
- FY21-22 BDI expanded staff capacity to support the growing initiatives and supportive services.
- Introduced bi-lingual (Spanish) services: client counseling, outreach information sessions, translated documents
- New staff are assigned specific project focus areas; this allows for cross-training and focused efforts to align with specific project and contractor types
- Hosted/Participated in 40 public-facing outreach efforts that resulted in over 1500 attendees
- Launched projects-at-a-glance (web posting of upcoming County forecasted project multi-year outlook)



Goal 5 » Economic Opportunity

- Spearheaded and led the Supplier Diversity Roundtable, which consists of about 20+ community partners (government, universities, civic organizations, diversity consultants) to navigate, understand, and be a resource for MWBE firms and to share information around barriers and best practices within our respective organizations and efforts in the community.

Strategy B: Increase access to capital for small businesses owned by people of color.

- A \$300,000 grant was awarded from CLT Host 2020, and the Business Launchpad Program was designed and implemented (provides the tools and guidance to empower MWBEs to be successful in government and institutional contracting).
- As of the end of FY22, the program graduated 33 participants from its first two cohorts. These 33 graduates reported being awarded 46 contracts valued at \$3,916,568 after graduating from the program.
- Business coaching/counseling, outreach events, networking activities, educational programming/seminars/workshops, technical assistance, supplier diversity-contract compliance, business resource/ecosystem partnerships
- Grant Funding Opportunities (partnerships with Prospera, LUESA...)

Community Indicator

Mecklenburg County is committed to providing minorities, women, and small businesses equal opportunity to participate in construction and professional services contracts. Through the Business Diversity and Inclusion (BDI) program, the County works to help minorities, women, and small businesses grow and be competitive for governmental purchasing.

Mecklenburg County's Office of Economic Development engaged Griffin & Strong, P.C (GSPC) to conduct a disparity study on the availability and utilization of minority and women-owned business enterprises and examine relevant evidence of race – or gender–based discrimination in the Finance/Procurement Division's contracting.

The following table was taken from the Disparity Study completed in 2020.

Finding 3: Overall MWBE Utilization

Mecklenburg County spent a total of \$1,069,359,644 in prime spending in the relevant market during the study period, and \$120,376,934 of this amount, or 11.26% of this amount was spent with MWBE firms as prime contractors. Non-Minority Female owned firms accounted for 9.62% of the total MWBE awards, while MBEs were 1.64% of the payments.

Table 2: Summary of Prime Utilization for FY2016-FY2019

By Dollars in the Relevant Markets
(Based upon the Master Payment File)
Mecklenburg County Disparity Study

Race/Ethnicity	Construction		Architecture & Engineering		Professional Services		Other Services		Goods & Supplies	
	\$	%	\$	%	\$	%	\$	%	\$	%
Black	\$1,666,536	0.28%	\$3,706,676	10.27%	\$691,087	0.57%	\$3,864,780	1.91%	\$94,869	0.08%
Asian American	\$333,213	0.06%	\$93,000	0.26%	\$34,275	0.03%	\$734,965	0.36%	\$81,163	0.07%
Hispanic American	\$1,339,589	0.22%	\$938,299	2.60%	\$33,306	0.03%	\$172,700	0.09%	\$6,930	0.01%
American Indian	\$1,632,170	0.27%	\$78,070	0.22%	\$108,963	0.09%	\$1,782,241	0.88%	\$57,906	0.05%
Total MBE	\$4,971,508	0.83%	\$4,816,045	13.35%	\$867,631	0.71%	\$6,554,686	3.25%	\$240,868	0.21%
Female	\$97,570,292	16.37%	\$317,825	0.88%	\$241,672	0.20%	\$3,593,693	1.78%	\$1,202,715	1.06%
Total MWBE	\$102,541,800	17.20%	\$5,133,870	14.23%	\$1,109,303	0.91%	\$10,148,379	5.03%	\$1,443,582	1.27%
Non-Minority	\$493,498,410	82.80%	\$30,946,853	85.77%	\$120,369,660	99.09%	\$191,794,669	94.97%	\$112,373,117	98.73%
Total	\$596,040,210	100.00%	\$36,080,723	100.00%	\$121,478,963	100.00%	\$201,943,048	100.00%	\$113,816,700	100.00%

Griffin & Strong, P.C. 2020



Goal 6 »

Criminal Justice

All residents in Mecklenburg County live in a more just and equitable community. (1 Strategy / 7 Actions)

Milestones Status

- Completed: 5 Actions
- Completed (Ongoing): 4 Actions
- In Progress: 2 Actions

For a very long time our Criminal Justice Services has worked hard to ensure equity is the lens through which they do their work. They work every day to ensure equity, impartiality, and fair treatment within the criminal justice system. They provide the necessary supports and resources that helps to address disparities and biases that have historically existed in the criminal justice system based on factors such as race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, gender, and other cultural identifiers and characteristics. Our team in CJS is a trusted source and service that has the confidence of those they serve amidst a legal system that continues to evolve and reform.

In our Equity Action Plan, our CJS strategies are working to address the systemic inequalities and social injustices that disproportionately affect historically marginalized communities. By placing intentional focus on disparities such as arrest rates, sentencing outcomes, and access to legal representation and resources, it helps to reduce the overrepresentation of those groups within the criminal justice system and promotes greater collaboration, fairness, and accountability.

Strategies

Strategy A: Reduce racial disparities and disproportionality within the Criminal Justice System.

- CJS has successfully completed and launched the 90-minute implicit bias training for criminal justice professionals, which has been made available to the public. In addition, staff are working with Learning and Development to make the training available to local criminal justice partner agencies through MeckEDU. For law enforcement agencies that have their own learning platform, CJS staff are working with agency representatives to make the curriculum available.
- The CJAG approved the Community Engagement Task Group's (CETG) strategic plan in January 2023. Since then, the CETG has held two community conversation events with others planned throughout the summer of 2023. This work will continue in FY 24.

Community Indicator

The community indicator for this goal was a reduction in disparate criminal justice outcomes between minority and majority populations within Mecklenburg County's Criminal Justice System. The data points in the Equity Action Plan are from a snapshot of the jail population when the plan was formed (Fall 2019). Criminal Justice Services generates a daily jail population report that provides a daily breakdown by demographics. Below you will find a comparison from where we were when finalizing the original EAP to where we are now (as of October 2023). Additionally, the CJS equity team is currently planning to update the 2020 RED data findings.

Equity Action Plan Goal #6 Community Indicator (Demographics)			
County Jail Population		General County Population	
2019	69.2% Black	33% Black	
	11.5% Hispanic/Latino	13.8% Hispanic/Latino	
	17.9% White	46.1% White	
2023	76.8% Black	2021 (most recent data) ⁴	31.7% Black
	8.2% Hispanic/Latino		14.1% Hispanic/Latino
	14% White		45.3% White

⁴ Source: USA Facts

Equity Needs Assessment and Recommendations for Impact

Equity impact refers to the effect or influence that something has on a system, entity, or situation. It can be positive, negative, or neutral, and it can be assessed in various domains, such as social, economic, environmental, or personal.⁵ The impact can be understood differently, depending on the context. Here are a few possible explanations of our equity impact:

- **Cause and effect:** Equity impact leads to the result of an action or event and describes the consequences that follow from a particular action. By increasing alignment between department strategic priorities and our equity actions, we can better understand the relationship between the actions we take and the outcomes we observe.
- **Change or transformation:** Equity impact also refers to the change or transformation process that occurs due to our strategies and actions. Working with the Board of County Commissioners, Executive Leadership, and departments like Human Resources Services, the impact of a new policy or law helps us better understand and anticipate the changes to behavior, attitudes, or outcomes internally and externally.

- **Influence or significance:** Equity impact also influences or explains the significance of our strategic objectives and priorities in a broader equity context. Our work to synthesize and disaggregate data can significantly impact our understanding of department outcomes, interpersonal relations, or the development of new strategies.
- **Intended outcomes:** In this case, equity impact refers to the intended outcomes or goals of our equity actions and department-specific interventions. It also informs the Board of County Commissioners of budgetary priorities that impact investments, social programs funding, and the broader focus on achieving specific social, environmental, or economic outcomes and measuring the impact of those efforts.
- **Stakeholder perspectives:** Our equity impact will continue to be assessed from the perspective of different stakeholders, such as internal staff, individual community members, community organizations, or the environment. Different stakeholders may perceive the impact of a decision or action differently, and understanding these perspectives can be important in evaluating our equity impact.



In summary, impact can be understood as the effect, change, or influence that result from an action or event, and it can be assessed in various ways depending on the context and perspective of the stakeholders involved. This can be assessed through community surveys, focus groups, and Equity Needs Assessments/Audits. We implement all of these strategies to continue to inform our EAP work and understand our equity impact as a fundamental approach to our implementation of this work. Embedded in the process of updating our Equity Action Plan, the County Executive Team, Department leaders, and a representative number of staff participated in the Equity Needs Assessment process. The

Equity Needs Assessment is a protocol organized across 6 domains with unique questions that assess internal perceptions. Those domains are:

1. Programs
2. People
3. Power Dynamics
4. Policies
5. Culture
6. Culture Engagement

⁵ Source: equityimpactcenter.org

Important things to note about the Equity Needs Assessment as reflective discourse⁶

- **It surfaces beliefs.** It serves as an opportunity to assess and reflect on our individual and collective beliefs regarding DEI best practices.
- **It engages beliefs.** Equity Needs Assessments are used as a basis for dialogue and as a part of a strategic change process.
- **It helps to implement change.** The ENA is a strengths-based model. As a safe and non-judgmental protocol, the ENA is a way to ensure the meaningful involvement of key stakeholders, from department/division leaders, managers, and individual contributors.
- **It enhances our practices.** The result of the ENA is used to inform our choices and aligns our equity work to our strategic priorities.
- **Further exploration to conduct ongoing monitoring.**
 - » Results can provide valuable insight into areas of strength and areas of opportunity for growth.
 - » ENA outcomes serve as the foundation for important ongoing discussion and action.

The aggregate result of the Equity Needs Assessment can be found in the addendum. The Equity Needs Assessment is a continuous process where all staff are able to participate. The individual and collective results will be frequently updated following an annual cadence and will be part of the standard EAP update.



⁶ Source: *Using Cyberspace to Promote Transformative Learning Experiences and Consequently Democracy in the Workplace*, William F. Ritke-Jones (Texas A&M University–Corpus Christi, USA) ©2008



The Path Forward – Innovations and Enhancements

Equity Model for Comprehensive Implementation

The Office of Equity and Inclusion is charged with operationalizing the Mecklenburg County Equity Action Planning process to support the development of goals, initiatives, and tactics that reinforce and expand equity and inclusion as a County priority. As the work of OEI continues, many influential frameworks have been vetted and provided with information on how this body of work will evolve. The American Council on Education’s Comprehensive Internationalization Framework⁷ serves as the model adapted for our work and the path ahead.

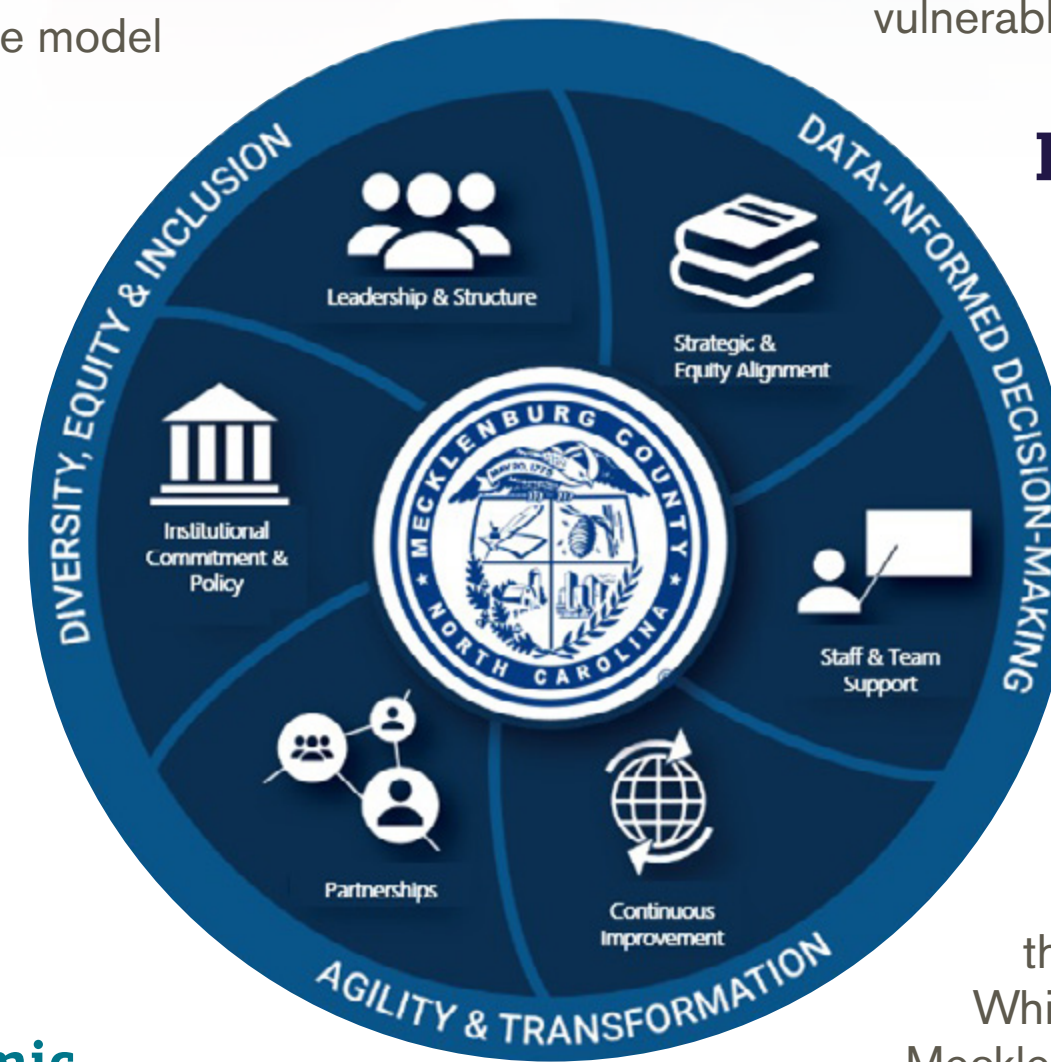
As reflected by the model, diversity, equity, and inclusion is one of three key elements supporting this framework’s structural integrity. The inclusion of DEI within this framework supports the assertion that the approach to this work is underpinned

• **The inclusion of diversity, equity, and inclusion within this framework supports the assertion that the approach to this work is underpinned by the importance of racial, economic, social, and environmental justice.**



⁷ <https://www.acenet.edu/Research-Insights/Pages/Internationalization/CIGE-Model-for-Comprehensive-Internationalization.aspx>

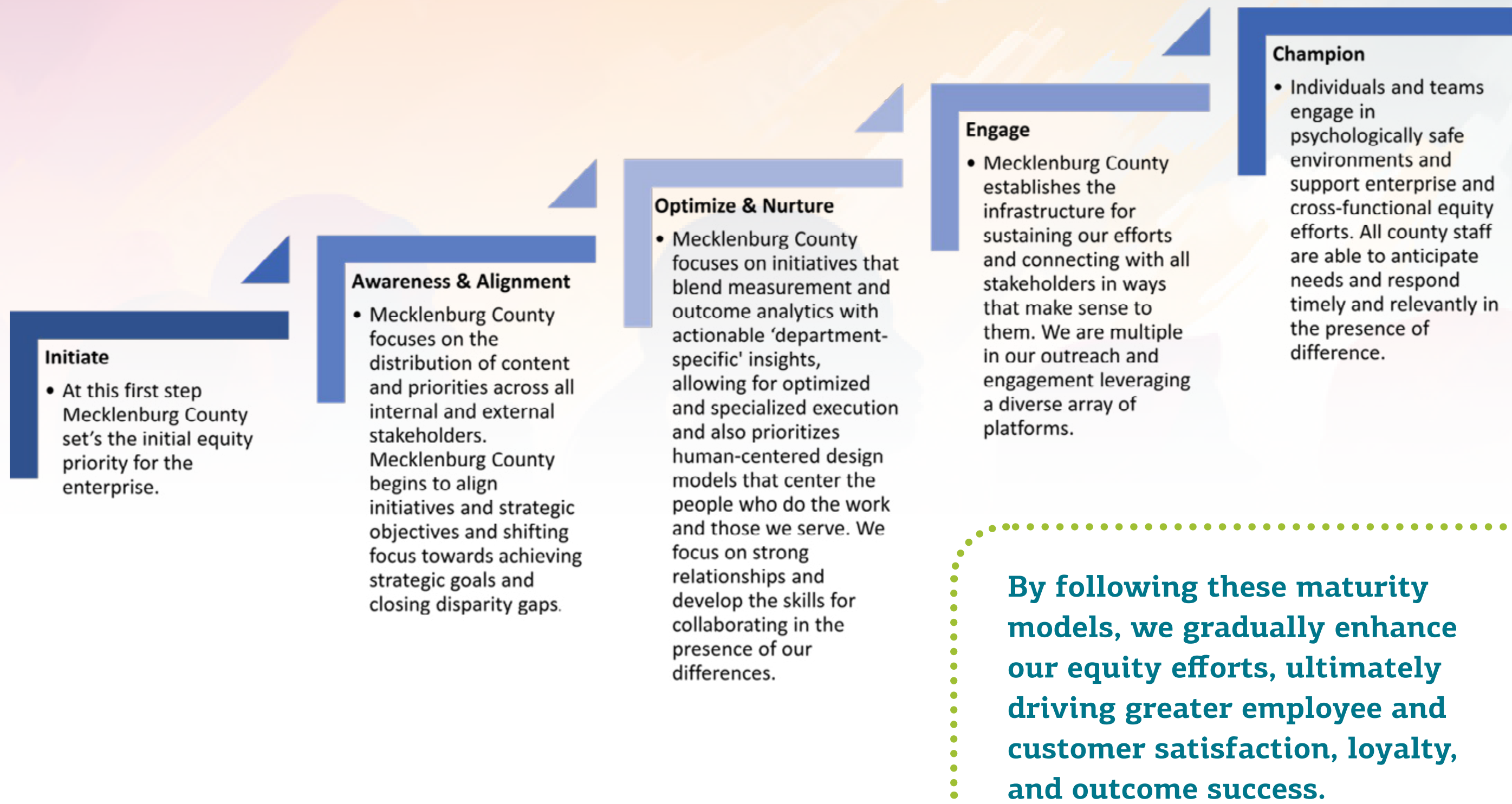
by the importance of racial, economic, social, and environmental justice. Utilizing this framework as a foundational model for the next iteration of our work ensures the validity of our approach. It stabilizes our work by utilizing evidence-based best practices in an increasingly complex environment. Mecklenburg County maintains a strong reputation as a leader in upholding the rigor of institutional strategy and reviewing and monitoring high-quality data to ensure outcomes are commensurate with our collective efforts. The fidelity to which we implement this framework underscores the importance of an infrastructure supporting the needs of our most vulnerable stakeholders.



Equity Experience Maturity Model

The Mecklenburg County Equity Experience Maturity Model is based on the research and practice models from the Customer Experience Professional Association (CXPA) and Customer Experience (CX) maturity model frameworks used by organizations to assess and improve their customer experience practices. These models typically outline different stages or levels of maturity that companies can progress through as they enhance their CX capabilities.

While specific details may vary, most the Mecklenburg County Equity Experience Maturity Model includes many of the same steps articulated through an equity lens:



Equity Experience Maturity Model *(cont'd)*

1. **Initiate:** At this first step Mecklenburg County sets the initial equity priority for the enterprise.
2. **Awareness & Alignment:** Mecklenburg County focuses on the distribution of content and priorities across all internal and external stakeholders. Mecklenburg County begins to align initiatives and strategic objectives and shifting focus towards achieving strategic goals and closing disparity gaps.
3. **Optimize & Nurture:** Mecklenburg County focuses on initiatives that blend measurement and outcome analytics with actionable 'department-specific' insights, allowing for optimized and specialized execution and also prioritizes human-centered design models that center the people who do the work and those we serve. We focus on strong relationships and develop the skills for collaborating in the presence of our differences.
4. **Engage:** Mecklenburg County establishes the infrastructure for sustaining our efforts and connecting with all stakeholders in ways that make sense to them. We are multiple in our outreach and engagement leveraging a diverse array of platforms.
5. **Champion:** Individuals and teams engage in psychologically safe environments and support enterprise and cross-functional equity efforts. All County staff are able to anticipate needs and respond timely and relevantly in the presence of difference.

Maturity models serve as a roadmap for us to assess our current equity capabilities, identify areas for improvement, and set goals for advancing to higher maturity levels. By following these models, we gradually enhance our equity efforts, ultimately driving greater employee and customer satisfaction, loyalty, and outcome success.



ARE 2.0 Trainings

Since 2020, County employees have completed Advancing Racial Equity training. The purpose of the training was to allow County employees to gain understanding of the role of government in relation to racial equity, develop a shared racial equity analysis, including definitions of key terminology, and to explore steps County departments and leaders can take to advance racial equity. Employees completing this training have requested more advanced racial equity trainings and learning opportunities on additional topics. In Fiscal Year 2025, additional trainings may be available for County employees to include, but not limited to, generational differences, LGBTQIA+ Identities and microaggressions.

Departmental Equity Action Teams (DEATs) and Equity Core Team

The Departmental Equity Action Team (DEAT) workforce will represent the County's premiere agents of equitable action and inclusive agency amongst the 22 departments within Mecklenburg County. DEATs will lead in the implementation of the goals of the Equity Action Plan within their departments and provide strategies that will inform all equitable and inclusive functions of Mecklenburg County Government.

DEATs will coalesce best practices for equity and inclusion, develop departmental EAP as well as influence agency policy, programs and initiatives throughout Mecklenburg County. The DEATs will provide resource, recommendation and advisory to Department management and teams while aligning to EAP and in guidance with the OEI.

The Equity Core Team (ECT) partners and supports the equity initiatives and programs of the Office of Equity & Inclusion. The ECT is composed of a council of employees that work alongside

the OEI to steer and strengthen our equity and inclusion networks. The ECT leverages our internal and external audience and dually serves as advisors and ambassadors for the practices and programs of the Office of Equity & Inclusion.

Retreats, Summits, and Equity Convening Needs Summary

As the needs of our residents have become more intense and specific, the range of lived experiences and perspectives that each of us is expected to understand and navigate is growing increasingly complex. Sometimes, engaging with colleagues and residents who see and experience the world differently can be challenging. We often speak different languages, see different things, and live in different realities. The constant need to find shared understanding can be overwhelming and emotionally draining. This is especially true as we work across difference in the service of others because there is so much at stake, and our need for real, humanizing understanding is so high.

Also, of note is that while striving to achieve equity in our work, we are mindful of the effects of vicarious trauma. We love our work, we love to serve, and the well-being of the people we serve is an incredibly important part of our lives. Because of that, the wellness of our staff and the community is incredibly important. Working to advance equity while living in a world where we must navigate the realities of an inequitable society takes a physical and emotional toll. While implementing our Equity Action Plan, we are also learning how to navigate our experiences in the presence of difference. We will be offering more tools to find ways to engage thoughtfully with those we work with and those we serve. These skills are valuable regardless of your race, age, gender, sexuality, and other cultures in our community and work. Yet, in a world of difference, our experiences and skills are critical to our ability to be good colleagues and serve others.

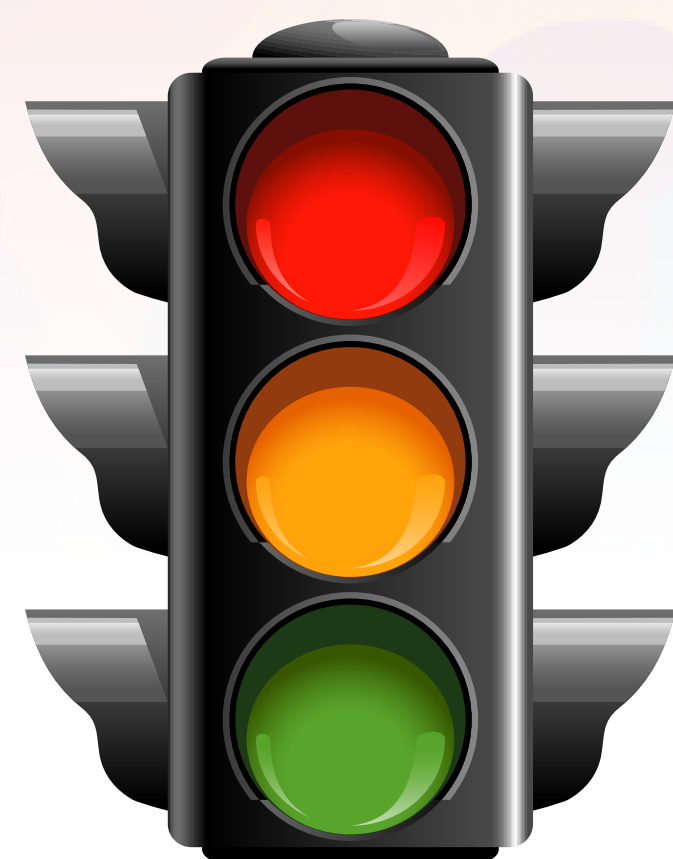


● **Equity is a vital principle for creating a more inclusive, just, and thriving society where everyone has equal opportunities to succeed and fulfill their potential. In Mecklenburg County we look forward to our future opportunities to engage, transform, and produce outcomes we can all be proud of.**

In summary, equity is important because it promotes fairness, social justice, economic growth, human rights, and social cohesion. It is a vital principle for creating a more inclusive, just, and thriving society where everyone has equal opportunities to succeed and fulfill their potential. In Mecklenburg County we look forward to our future opportunities to engage, transform, and produce outcomes we can all be proud of.

Addendum, Resources, and Tools

Mecklenburg County Equity Needs Assessment Results



The Equity Needs Assessment was organized under the simplified “stoplight” approach. Each participant was given 3 choices in response to each question:

Red – My division has not gone there.

Yellow – My division has started conversations about this or has taken first steps.

Green – My division is fully on board.

**To aggregate results the stoplight was assigned a mode scale from 1-3 with 3 = Green.*

People

	Red Light	Yellow Light	Green Light
1. Does your staff and board reflect the full spectrum of diversity within the county?			✗
2. Are all staff being supported and evaluated in deepening knowledge and building skills around issues of privilege, bias, and anti-discrimination organizing (DEAT) either within or outside the organization?		✗	
3. Does your department leadership have values-based relationships with leaders from all cultures in the county that work towards building long-term alliances?			✗
4. Are people from all cultures on staff supported in identifying and participating in leadership development opportunities?			✗
5. Are staff, board, and leadership provided organizational space, time, resources, and structure to discuss and respond to issues of equity within and outside your organization?		✗	

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Mecklenburg County Equity Needs Assessment Results (cont'd)

Program

	Red Light	Yellow Light	Green Light
1. Does the department analyze the comprehensive needs of people across ability status, age, gender identity and expression, immigration status, languages spoken, race, sexual orientation, etc. within the county as a part of programming assessment, planning, and implementation?		✘	
2. Do you have specific criteria for issue identification and strategy development that elevates equity and social justice issues?	✘		
3. Does the department set goals for equity across program areas that seek to name and address disparities and harms?		✘	
4. Does the department advocate and support the inclusion of equity issues when working across departments?			✘
5. Do you have metrics, benchmarks, and indicators for measuring the department's success in relation to equity?		✘	

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Power Dynamics

	Red Light	Yellow Light	Green Light
1. Does the department have authentic and accountable relationships with individuals within the department and outside organizations within the county that provide input into your programs and advocacy?		✘	
2. Does the department have people from all cultures as a part of the department leadership team (Director, Asst. Directors, and Supervisors)?			✘
3. Are benchmarks around equity incorporated into annual evaluations for all staff?	✘		
4. Does the department ensure a pipeline that seeks the leadership of people of all cultures to become decision-makers?		✘	
5. Does the department allocate adequate resources for its equity work?		✘	

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Policies

	Red Light	Yellow Light	Green Light
1. Does the department/agency have anti-discrimination policies that explicitly prohibit harassment of people from all cultures of the organization?			✘
2. Are key agency terms defined in a way that supports all cultural norms, including those beyond "traditional" or "western" understandings?		✘	
3. Does the department use an equity approach in its hiring processes?			✘
4. Does the department have benchmarks around leadership development and retention of people from all cultures?	✘		
5. Do you periodically assess or review the disproportionate impact of organizational policies on staff and/or constituents from all cultures?	✘		

Culture

	Red Light	Yellow Light	Green Light
1. Are the full identities of staff no matter their ability status, age, gender identity and expression, immigration status, languages spoken, race, sexual orientation, etc. recognized, respected, and taken into consideration in the development of departmental culture?		✘	
2. Are the staff trained in interrupting discrimination in all forms at events and within the agency?	✘		
3. When your department plans activities and events do you consistently consider basic needs like childcare, interpretation, food, proximity to transit lines, or time of day?			✘
4. Are the dominate cultures treated as the norm? Are minorities expected to assimilate into the existing department culture? Or, is the culture of the department a sum of the diversity our county represents?		✘	
5. Do you consistently communicate to your team members, leaders, and external allies the equity values we hold as an enterprise and the work that you do to support all our customers?			✘

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Mecklenburg County Equity Needs Assessment Results *(cont'd)*

✦ Cultural Engagement

	Red Light	Yellow Light	Green Light
1. Does your department examine how people across many demographic groups may differ in how they identify problems, seek help and engage with the services provided by Mecklenburg County?		✘	
2. Does your department investigate the impact of acculturation, identity differences, and socialization and their confounding impact on intervention effectiveness or service delivery?	✘		
3. Are the department staff able to recognize and discuss how diverse clients perceive different segments of county services?		✘	
4. Are staff trained to understand how our customers perceive their experience with Mecklenburg County as culturally competent or how aware and respectful we are of the client's background, cultural beliefs and values?		✘	
5. Does the department have a strategy to support minority youth who offer a unique perspective from their own experiences interacting with us?	✘		

County Group Guidance

Thank you for being part of our community. To ensure the best possible experience for all members, we have established some basic guidelines for participation. By joining and using this community, you agree that you have read and will follow these rules and guidelines. You also agree to reserve discussions and shared files and content to that best suited to the medium. This is a great medium with which to solicit the advice of your peers, benefit from their experience, and participate in an ongoing conversation. Questions should be directed to our DEAT Liaison and Sr. Equity and Inclusion Consultant. Acquaint yourself with these important guidelines. If you have questions, contact the Office of Equity and Inclusion. In order to preserve an environment that encourages both civil and fruitful dialogue, we reserve the right to suspend or terminate membership in this community for anyone who violate these rules.

Guidelines

- Respect others. Focus on the content of posts and not on the people making them. Please extend the benefit of the doubt to newer guests and members; there's no such thing as a stupid question.
- Respect the purpose of the community. Use the community to share successes, challenges, constructive feedback, questions, and goals instead of products or services that you provide. If you've found a product or service helpful, please share your experience with the group in a respectful way.
- Use caution when discussing products. Information posted on the discussion groups and in the libraries is available for all to see, and comments are subject to libel, slander, and antitrust laws.
- All defamatory, abusive, profane, threatening, offensive, or illegal materials are strictly prohibited. Do not post anything that you would not want the world to see or that you would not want anyone to know came from you.
- Respect intellectual property. Post content that you have personally created or have permission to use and have properly attributed to the content creator.
- When posting items in our collaborative environment, please indicate if the item is not available for reuse. It's also advisable to contact the owner of any material if you would like to reuse it.
- Post your message or documents only to the most appropriate communities. This helps ensure all messages receive the best response by eliminating "noise."

Discussion Group Etiquette

- State concisely and clearly the topic of your comments in the subject line. This allows members to respond more appropriately to your posting and makes it easier for members to search the archives by subject.
- Send messages such as "thanks for the information" or "me, too" to individuals, not to the entire list. Do this by using the "Reply to Sender" link in every message.
- Do not send administrative messages, such as "remove me from the list," to the group. Instead, use the web interface to change your settings or to remove yourself from a list. If you are changing email addresses, you do not need to remove yourself from the list and rejoin under your new email address. Simply change your settings.



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