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# City of Austin Equity Assessment Tool (DRAFT)

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## CITY POLICY

This Equity Assessment Tool is a protocol that will systematically integrate purposeful consideration and consciousness of how our decisions as city government can have a positive or negative impact on racial equity in our community. This is particularly applicable when considering budget and programmatic decisions. The tool provides a structure for the City to operationalize equity in everything we do. The Equity Assessment Tool is a general set of questions to guide city departments in assessing how budgets and planning might burden communities of color. The use of an Equity Assessment Tool allows us to evaluate the equity and social impacts of budget requests to ensure programs, projects and other investments help reduce disparities, promote service level equity, and improve civic engagement.

## BACKGROUND

Like many cities in the south, Austin's history of racial inequity sparked by segregationist policies in the early 20th century have continued to negatively impact the city's communities of color into today. While Austin was most recently recognized by US News as the Best Place to Live in the U.S., the city consistently makes national lists as a city with severe inequality. In 1950, Austin was fourth in the country for the most income inequality. In 2015, the Martin Prosperity Institute listed Austin as the most economically segregated city in the country. Legacies of displacement by wealthier white Austinites and lack of access to opportunities for people of color has perpetuated racial inequity.

In an effort to address racial inequity in Austin, City Council passed Resolution No. 20150507-027, which directed the City Manager to evaluate the impact of existing city policies and practices on equity and develop an Equity Assessment Tool that can be used across City departments during the budget process in order to address equity challenges in the City. The Council's goal is to implement an Equity Assessment Tool and new policies to help identify and address the inequities that disproportionately impact the quality of life for low-income communities in Austin, which are disproportionately communities of color.

When fully implemented, the Equity Assessment Tool will aid City of Austin departments in:

- Focusing on human centered design and building institutional empathy
- Engaging residents in decision-making, especially those adversely affected by the current conditions
- Bringing conscious attention to racial inequities, potential externalities, and unintended outcomes before decisions are made
- Helping avoid or minimize adverse impacts and unintended consequences; and
- Affirming our commitment to equity, inclusion, and diversity

## SECTION ONE: BUDGET

1. Identify at least three ways in which your department organizes and plans around the consideration of equity in your base budget.
   A.
   B.
   C.

2. Identify a specific realignment in your department's base budget that can advance equity within communities of color.

3. Describe an unmet need within your budget that inhibits your department's achievement of its greatest equity priority.

4. How have you involved internal and external stakeholders, including communities of color, in your department's budget process? What amount and percentage of your department's budget is allocated towards this process?

5. Identify a way in which your department's budget may disproportionately benefit some communities over others.

6. Identify a way in which your department's budget may disportionately burden some communities over others.

## SECTION TWO: ENGAGEMENT

1. Describe how your department employs the following community engagement strategies and the amount and percentage of its budget allocated towards these strategies:

   A. My department allows residents multiple options to submit recommendations on programs, policies, and/or plans.
   - ❑ Strongly Agree
   - ❑ Agree
   - ❑ Neither Agree nor Disagree
   - ❑ Disagree
   - ❑ Strongly Disagree

   Funds allocated: _____

B. My department translates crucial public documents, notices, and hearings for limited English speaking and hearing impaired populations.

- ❑ Strongly Agree
- ❑ Agree
- ❑ Neither Agree nor Disagree
- ❑ Disagree
- ❑ Strongly Disagree

Funds allocated: _____

C. My department ensures that public documents, notices, and hearings are concise, understandable, and readily accessible to the public.

- ❑ Strongly Agree
- ❑ Agree
- ❑ Neither Agree nor Disagree
- ❑ Disagree
- ❑ Strongly Disagree

Funds allocated: _____

D. My department holds public meetings, as appropriate, for the purpose of fact-finding, receiving public comments, and conducting inquiries.

- ❑ Strongly Agree
- ❑ Agree
- ❑ Neither Agree nor Disagree
- ❑ Disagree
- ❑ Strongly Disagree

Funds allocated: _____

2. What other strategies does your department employ to ensure accountability to communities of color in its planning process? (e.g., improved leadership opportunities, advisory committees, commissions, targeted community meetings, stakeholder groups, increased outreach, etc.)

## SECTION THREE: ALIGNMENT (with Council's Six Priorities)

1. How does your department's budget and planning reflect the ability to impact Council's six priority outcomes which are as follows:

- Economic Opportunity and Affordability: Having economic opportunities and resources that enable us to lead sustainable lives in their community.
- Mobility: Getting where and when they want to go safely and cost-effectively
- Safety: Being safe in our home, at work, and in their community
- Health: Being able to maintain a healthy life both physically and mentally
- Cultural and Learning Opportunities: Being enriched by Austin's unique civic, cultural, ethnic, and learning opportunities
- Government that Works: Believing that city government works for everyone: that it is fair and equitable; serves as a good, continuously improving and innovating steward of its resources; recruits and retains a high performing, ethical workforce; effectively collaborates with the public; and delivers the results people expect and an experience they welcome.

2. Within Council's six priority outcomes, what racial/ethnic inequities can your department identify and of those, which do you have the opportunity to positively impact?

3. How does your department's budget demonstrate an action plan to address inequities within the six priority outcomes?

## Section FOUR: DEPARTMENTAL ANALYSIS

1. Racially inequitable outcomes are often produced unintentionally. What strategies does your department employ to help avoid and/or minimize adverse effects and unintended consequences to communities of color?

2. What strategies does your department currently employ to ensure diversity of your staff? What amount and percent of your department's budget is allocated towards affirmatively planning to expand these strategies?

3. What amount and percentage of your department's budget is allocated towards training opportunities for staff that focus on critical issues related to equity, diversity/inclusion, and/or institutional racism?

4. What amount and percentage of your department's budget is allocated towards capturing residents' satisfaction with its programming and services? Are these data broken down by race, ethnicity, national origin, and income level?

## Appendix A: History

To know where we are going, we must first know where we have been. Learning about past inequities and social justice issues in our community can shed light on not repeating the same mistakes

**Resources to Learning More about Austin's Racial History**

## Appendix B: Steps to Building Equity

The mission of the City of Austin Equity Office is to provide leadership, guidance, and insight on equity to improve the quality of life for Austinites and achieve the vision of making Austin the most livable city in the nation for all. We strive to build and sustain a culture of equity across our city to be embedded in everything we do by tackling tough issues within City government such as institutional racism and implicit bias. Creating a culture of equity will ensure that our city is engaged with all residents, meeting their needs effectively, and minimizing the unintended negative consequences of our decisions.

### Consider the following seven steps for focusing on equity within your budget:

1. **Know the History:** Consider historical events that have negatively impacted communities of color. Acknowledge them and create space for communities to share as to not repeat the same mistakes.

2. **Develop the Proposal:** What is the policy, program, practice or budget decision under consideration? What are the desired results and outcomes?

3. **Monitor Data:** What's the data? What does the data tell us?

4. **Engage the Community:** How have communities been engaged? Are there opportunities to expand engagement?

5. **Analysis and strategies:** Who will benefit from or be burdened by your proposal? What are your strategies for advancing racial equity or mitigating unintended consequences?

6. **Implementation:** What is your plan for implementation?

7. **Accountability and communication:** How will you ensure accountability, communicate, and evaluate results?

# 6 Austin City Council Priority Outcomes and Existing Disparities

## 1 Economic opportunity and affordability

**27%** Poverty rates for Asian (17%), Black (22%) and Hispanic (27%) Travis County residents are much higher than that of Whites (9%).

## 2 Mobility

**19 %** Residents in the two districts with the lowest median household income (Districts 3 & 4) spend 19% of their annual income on transportation.

Source: City Auditor Affordability Review, December 2016

## 3 Safety

**21 %** Blacks account for ~21% of jail bookings but comprise only 8% of the population.

Source: Travis County Sheriff's Office and the ACS 1-Yr population estimates

## 4 Health

**42%** In Travis County, 42% of Black adults are obese compared with 26% among Hispanics and 17% among White adults.

Source: 2011-2014, Austin Public Health

## 5 Cultural and Learning Opportunities

**25%** Less than 25% of Black and Hispanic adults in Travis County over 25 have a Bachelor's Degree or Higher as compared to almost 60% of Whites and 70% of Asians.

## 6 Trustworthy Government

**60%** Almost 60% of White Travis County residents participated in the 2012 Presidential election, as compared to roughly 40% of Blacks, 35% of Asians, and 30% of Hispanics.

Data Source: American Community Survey, 1 Year Estimates unless noted otherwise