

Audit at a glance



City Equity Program and Practices

AUGUST 2022

ABOUT | The Mayor's Office of Social Equity and Innovation was established as a city agency through a mayoral executive order in July 2020.

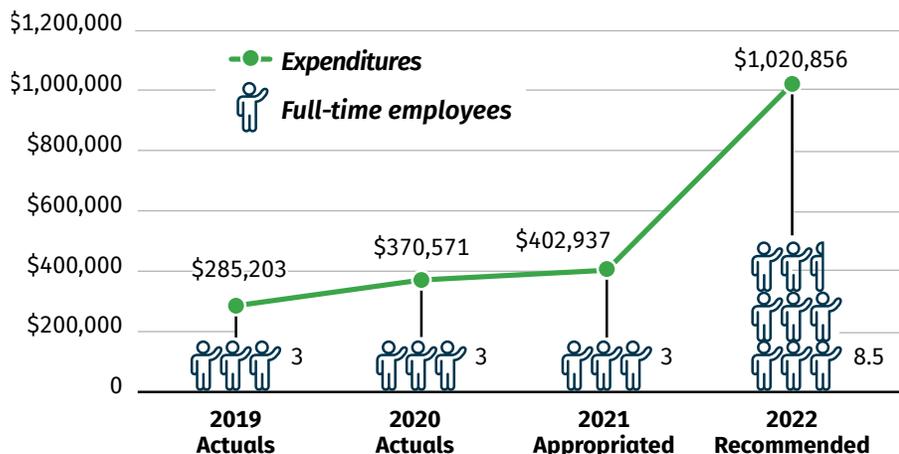
The office oversees the city's efforts to evaluate Denver's systems, policies, and practices to help "increase social equity and to minimize institutional, structural, and systemic racism in City government."

In the report

FINDING: The Mayor's Office of Social Equity and Innovation Lacks a Detailed Strategic Plan and Other Foundations for Effective Governance

- Previous leaders of the Mayor's Office of Social Equity and Innovation did not adequately set the office up for success when it was established two years ago.
- They failed to document key steps in building the program, and they did not develop a strategic plan with defined metrics to track progress.
- Social Equity and Innovation staff do not have clear guidance on their roles and responsibilities. Nor do employees of other agencies' equity, diversity, and inclusion teams who are meant to guide agency-specific efforts.
- Without a proper setup that includes detailed strategies, policies, and procedures and without adequate support, the Mayor's Office of Social Equity and Innovation cannot successfully fulfill its mission of eliminating social inequities and unjust practices in city government.

Office of Social Equity and Innovation Staffing and Budget, 2019–2022



Note: In 2019 and part of 2020, the office was a division in the agency for Human Rights and Community Partnerships.

Source: Auditor's Office graphic based on information from the city's 2021 and 2022 annual budgets.

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FINDING: The Executive Order Establishing the Mayor’s Office of Social Equity and Innovation Provides Insufficient Clarity to Empower Staff

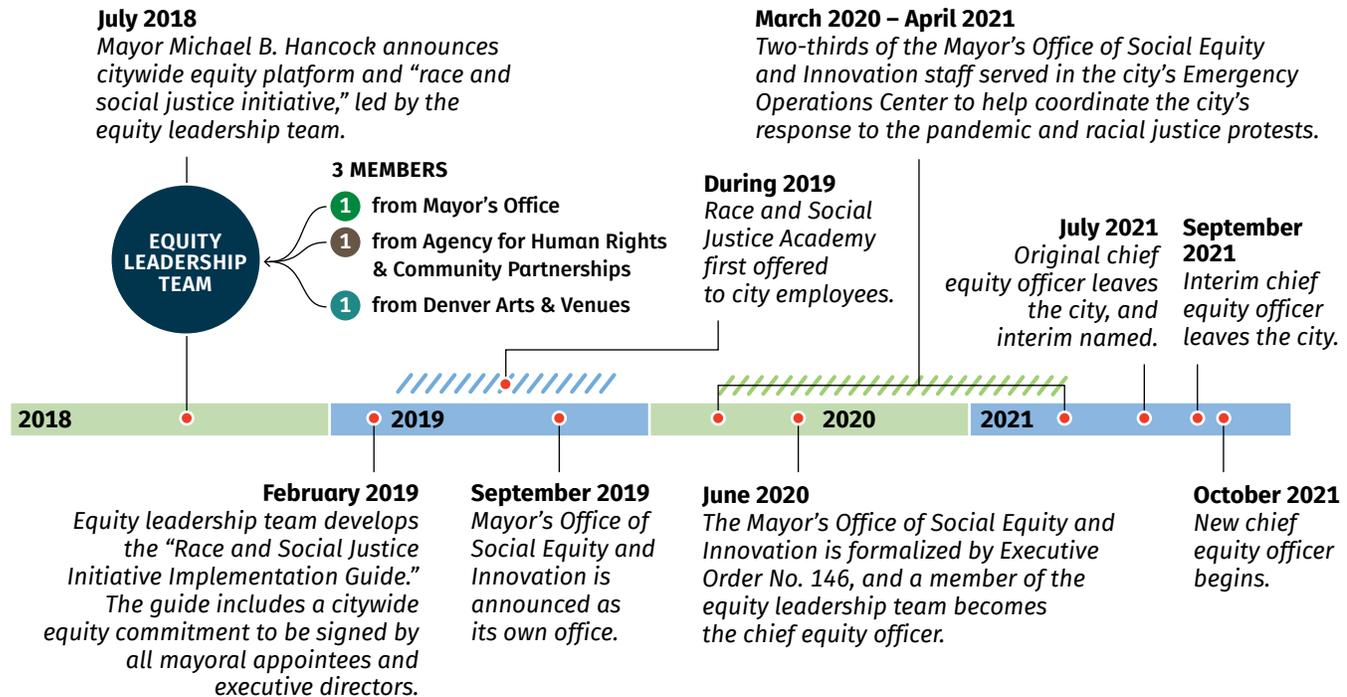
- Executive Order No. 146 — which formalized the Mayor’s Office of Social Equity and Innovation as a city agency — is unclear in many significant areas.
- For example, it does not clearly define the office’s or city agencies’ roles in the budget equity process, and it does not define what the required “citywide equity scans” are.
- Because of this lack of clarity and because of a lack of ongoing support, the office does not have authority to enforce requirements on other city agencies.
- For example, Social Equity and Innovation staff expressed hesitancy about compelling city employees to attend trainings on race and social justice.
- Without sufficient enforcement authority, the office cannot ensure agencies will comply with the mayor’s equity initiatives.

- The longevity of these citywide equity initiatives are also at risk because executive orders can be revoked by future mayors. Other cities have codified these efforts in ordinance, which carries more permanence for long-term change.

FINDING: The Mayor’s Office of Social Equity and Innovation Does Not Have a Plan to Ensure Clear, Consistent Communication with Other City Agencies

- The office has yet to formalize a communication plan to ensure other city agencies have a clear and consistent understanding of the office and their role in supporting citywide equity initiatives.
- This absence of a formal communication strategy could impact how effective the office is in increasing social equity and minimizing institutional, structural, and systemic racism across city government, in line with the executive order.

Timeline of the Office of Social Equity and Innovation’s Organizational Development



Source: Auditor’s Office graphic based on information from interviews and city documents.

