Office of Social Equity and Innovation
Denver Human Services (DHS) Equity Action Plan

Start Date: January 1, 2021
Agency: Denver Human Services
Executive Sponsor: Patrice Hawkins
EDI Staff: Mary Whitehead, Ph.D.
Partner Staff: DHS Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Steering Committee and Community Impact Team
OSEI Staff: Jason Harrison

About Office of Social Equity and Innovation

Mission Statement

The Mayor’s Office of Social Equity and Innovation shall lead efforts to eliminate social inequity and race and social injustices by evaluating institutional and structural government systems, policies, and practices.

Citywide Goals

1. Denver will be an inclusive employer where city staff are valued, supported, and given the tools to advance social equity, race, and social justice.
2. Denver will be an inclusive city that integrates social equity, race and social justice into policies, practices, programs, and budgetary decisions to create equitable outcomes.
3. Denver will be an inclusive government that effectively engages the community to create equitable outcomes.
4. Denver will use nationally recognized research and data-driven practices to support the city’s progress toward social equity, race, and social justice.
Equity Values

- **Inclusion and Engagement**: We will promote racially inclusive environments to foster collaboration and engagement.
- **Equitable Programming and Policy**: We will develop and implement program and policy strategies to eliminate racial/ethnic social inequity.
- **Accountability and Transparency**: We will be data driven and accountable for producing tangible outcomes.
- **Learning and Development**: We will educate and equip city employees with knowledge and skills to address racial/ethnic disparities.
Strategy 1

In keeping with our vision of a healthy community where each person is connected, supported, safe, and well, DHS will build a strong infrastructure to ensure our workforce are fully equipped to strengthen our Denver community. This strategy includes assessing the existing internal landscape to include practices, protocols & policies through a trauma-informed and anti-oppressive lens. Use research-based practices to develop content and facilitate learning related to social equity, race and social justice. Identify and breakdown systemic barriers to full inclusion by embedding diversity and inclusion in policies and practices. While at the same time, equipping leaders with the ability to manage diversity and be accountable for the results. This strategy is internal facing and falls under goal #5 within DHS Human Together Strategic Plan.

Strategy Status

☐ Not Started
☒ In Progress
☐ Actualized
☐ Not Actualized

Start Date: June 2021

Target Completion Date: N/A

Current State

DHS has created various learning opportunities for the workforce regarding leadership, wellness, and community engagement. We have partnered with OSEI, OHR, city & county agencies and other organizations regarding professional development and continuous learning. EDI topics and conversations continuously surface throughout the agency. Denver Human Services is beginning work on breaking down actions, behaviors, and policies that perpetuate racial inequity, bias, and institutional racism. However, we have not
had an opportunity to bring agency-wide training to our staff to provide a culture of learning and agency-wide engagement. Beginning in 2020, DHS established various EDI focused committees, affinity groups and educational conversations throughout the agency. In 2019, Denver Human Services trained the entire organization on Bridges out of Poverty training, a nationally recognized training curriculum that aims to teach participants the perspective of classism and how to equitably build programs and services for those experiencing generational poverty. In 2021, DHS created the Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion Administrator position to aid in developing an EDI strategic plan that support the entire agency. This position strategically resides in Community Impact and Strategic Planning, where there is alignment with support for our workforce, and holistic and systemic approaches to equity, access, and health.

**Future State**

Foster a culture that encourages collaboration, flexibility, and fairness to enable all employees to contribute to their potential. DHS believes this in turn will increase retention rates. DHS’ workforce can engage in courageous conversations around Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) topics at work and will feel psychologically safe to do so. Workforce will be able to implement EDI strategies within their lane of work be that with internal or external customers. Standardize EDI training for the entire agency. Our intent is that this training will provide all staff a shared understanding and a shared language to enable all to engage in important conversations. A goal is eventually establishing a cadence of regular engagement with training and educational opportunities.

**City-Wide Goal**

Denver will use nationally recognized research and data-driven practices to support the city’s progress toward social Equity, race, and social justice.

Denver will be an inclusive employer where city staff are valued, supported, and given the tools to advance social Equity, race, and social justice.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action Steps/ Tactics</th>
<th>Timeframe</th>
<th>Person Responsible</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Creation of Equity, Diversity &amp; Inclusion Administrator position</td>
<td>January 2021</td>
<td>Patrice Hawkins</td>
<td>☐ In Progress ☒ Done</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruitment and Hire EDI Administrator</td>
<td>June 2021</td>
<td>Patrice Hawkins</td>
<td>☐ In Progress ☒ Done</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Together Focus Group and EDI questions</td>
<td>June 2021</td>
<td>Katie Ziegler &amp; Dr. Mary Whitehead</td>
<td>☐ In Progress ☒ Done</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDI Baseline Assessment and EDI Focus Groups</td>
<td>August - October 2021</td>
<td>Dr. Mary Whitehead</td>
<td>☒ In Progress ☐ Done</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agency-wide participation in the OSEI Race and Social Justice Academy</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Dr. Mary Whitehead</td>
<td>☒ In Progress ☐ Done</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creation of EDI Taskforce or Advisory Committee</td>
<td>January 2022</td>
<td>Dr. Mary Whitehead</td>
<td>☒ In Progress ☐ Done</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing process to audit DHS policies and practices through an EDI lens</td>
<td>June 2022</td>
<td>Dr. Mary Whitehead</td>
<td>☒ In Progress ☐ Done</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDI Administrator working with OHR to review hiring, promotion, and development of DHS workforce</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Dr. Mary Whitehead</td>
<td>☒ In Progress ☐ Done</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Measurement of Success**

The effectiveness and achievement of our goals for diversity and inclusion will be reviewed and reported on quarterly. The report will be provided to the Executive Director and the executive management team. The review will focus on the implementation of the actions, the progress made and successes. It will also identify any adjustments required to improve effectiveness.

The evaluation will include:
• A qualitative assessment of progress or achievement of the actions
• A quantitative assessment of the impact of the strategy on employee perceptions and experience of the culture of DHS

The outcome of the evaluation and review will guide the development of further action plans.

Success:

• Collecting data that can provided a foundational understanding of the DHS culture and developing goals around EDI implementation
• Entire agency is trained through the Racial and Social Justice Academy
• Develop divisional EDI advisory councils/committee that will utilize tools learned during the academy to implement new initiatives or audit current practices
Strategy 2:

Establish intentional community outreach efforts for the Denver community through the creation of the Community Impact Team. Establish proactive outreach strategies to increase awareness, enrollment in services, and protective factors. While at the same time, reducing the stigma associated with assistance programs. Strengthen community partnerships and coordination. Ensure community voice leads DHS’ work and create a feedback loop for continuous improvement. This is executed through continuous community conversations and cross-sector workgroups. These strategies are external facing and fall under goals #1, Equity & Access and #3, Connectivity within DHS Human Together Strategic Plan.

Strategy Status

☐ Not Started
☒ In Progress
☐ Actualized
☐ Not Actualized

Start Date: June 2020

Target Completion Date: June 2022

Current State:

Today, one in three people in Denver receive support from Denver Human Services. Given our strong position in the community, we have a tremendous opportunity to help those in need and perhaps even to prevent people from needing our services in the first place. Denver Human Services supports programs that aid in increasing food security, child welfare protection, and reduce barriers to employment, housing insecurity, and childcare. Denver residents and community-based organizations are struggling as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. DHS has begun making strategic investments in the Denver community. Prior to 2021, DHS did not
operate a community funding initiative. Beginning in 2021, DHS hosted 13 community conversations and met with stakeholders citywide, to better understand the needs of the community. In order to carry out our vision of a healthy community where everyone is connected, supported, safe, and well, we recognize we must co-create and implement solutions, outside of DHS’s traditional scope of work, along with our customers and stakeholders in a way that is participatory, responsive, and inclusive.

To date we have led four cross-sector work groups for mental health, food access, college student engagement and youth programming. These workgroups co-created solutions for funding, new partnerships, and our long-term vision for each initiative.

**Future State:**

DHS Goal #1: Equity & Access is to ensure every individual in Denver has access to the support that they need to live a healthy and high-quality life. DHS will make strategic investments in the Denver community via the Human Together Mini Grants and strategic initiatives that address the social determinants of health, equity, and access to social services, and utilizes data to assess disparities that impact health and wellness. The Community Impact division will be able to target support to under resourced neighborhoods utilizing the Human Service Index and support existing community assets, while also investing in building resiliency in historically under resourced communities. Additionally, DHS will incorporate the voice of the community to inform business process that meet community where they are, are culturally appropriate, and supportive. For example, Denver Human Services has continued hosting monthly Community Network Meetings as an opportunity for Community Partners to grow their understanding of DHS programs and services, showcase their own services to DHS staff and partners, and learn from and expand their resource knowledge by hearing from other community-based organizations and city agencies. These efforts have also included the prioritization of language equity and access with support from interpreters and translators in the dissemination of information.
City-Wide Goal:

- Denver will be an inclusive government that effectively engages the community to create equitable outcomes.
- Denver will use nationally recognized research and data-driven practices to support the city’s progress toward social equity, race, and social justice.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action Steps/ Tactics</th>
<th>Timeframe</th>
<th>Person Responsible</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Creation of Community Impact Team and expansion of Equity &amp; Access area</td>
<td>November 2020</td>
<td>Don Mares &amp; Patrice Hawkins</td>
<td>☐ In Progress ☒ Done</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Together Strategic Plan, Voice of the Community Collaborative Workgroup &amp; Community Conversations – analyzing community engagement efforts</td>
<td>March 2021</td>
<td>Annalise Yahne</td>
<td>☐ In Progress ☒ Done</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establish marketing and communications best practices through increased language access and equity efforts: Streamline translations and interpretations processes into existing and future multichannel campaigns (I.e., media outreach, meetings, documents, promotional materials)</td>
<td>March 2021</td>
<td>Adriana Lopez</td>
<td>☒ In Progress ☐ Done</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The agency awarded $359,939 to Denver-based non-profits through the Human Together Community grants</td>
<td>July 2021</td>
<td>Rachel Flank Goldberg</td>
<td>☐ In Progress ☒ Done</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building trust with the community: Changing perception of public charge legislation and looking for opportunities</td>
<td>August 2021</td>
<td>Adriana Lopez</td>
<td>☒ In Progress ☐ Done</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
to be present in the community, such as hosting a Movie in the Park event and developing a Public Services Announcement for Cabinet in the Community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
<th>Responsible</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Department is awarding $200,000 to nonprofits and community-based organizations to support food access initiatives, such as increasing food delivery options and increasing culturally relevant food options in food banks and food pantries</td>
<td>December 2021</td>
<td>Annalise Yahne</td>
<td>In Progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continue the Community Network Meetings as an opportunity to ‘pass the mic’ to our community partners and spotlight their work</td>
<td>December 2021</td>
<td>Katie Ziegler</td>
<td>In Progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Resource Engagement &amp; Prevention division will be housed under the Community Impact Team and will include the following programs:</td>
<td>January 2022</td>
<td>Don Mares &amp; Patrice Hawkins</td>
<td>In Progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Community Partner Outreach</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Complex Care Unit</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Donations and Drives</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Fatherhood and Parenthood Programs will consolidate (formerly in Child Welfare and Child Support Services, respectively)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• GIVE and Care Centers will consolidate some services under this division
• Partner Contract Management Prevention Services (formerly Child Welfare)
• Veterans Assistance

Supporting Human Together Strategic Plan through expansion of Community Impact Team and intentional impact on community partnerships.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Responsible Parties</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>January 2022</td>
<td>Patrice Hawkins</td>
<td>☒ In Progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Don Mares &amp; Patrice Hawkins</td>
<td>☒ In Progress</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Measurement of Success:**

The effectiveness and achievement of our goals for diversity and inclusion will be reviewed and reported on quarterly. The report will be provided to the Executive Director and the executive management team. The review will focus on the implementation of the actions, the progress made and successes. It will also identify any adjustments required to improve effectiveness.

The evaluation will include:

• A qualitative assessment of progress or achievement of the actions

• A quantitative assessment of the impact of the strategy on employee perceptions and experience of the culture of DHS

The outcome of the evaluation and review will guide the development of further action plans.
Success

- DHS organizational change to intentionally align with Human Together Strategic plan and increase support to the community
- Distribution of mini grants to 37 Denver-based community organizations with operating budgets under $1,000,000
- Distribution of $200,000 to community-based organizations for food access related initiatives, such as increasing food delivery options and increasing culturally relevant food options in food banks and food pantries
- Partnering and building relationships with organization we may not have in the past and in-turn supporting residents we may not already be connected to

Progress

- **January 2020**: Human Together Strategic Plan
- **November 2020**: Creation of Community Impact team
- **March 2021**: Hired DHS Marketing & Communication Director on Community Impact Team
- **June 2021**: Hired DHS Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Administrator on Community Impact Team
- **July 2021**: Human Together Community Mini grants
- **August 2021**: Human Together Food Access Funding Opportunity
- **August 2021**: Movie in the Park in West Bar Val Wood Park: Part of the Denver Days Festivities
References

AAMC Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Planning Toolkit

UC Berkeley Strategic Planning for Equity, Inclusion and Diversity


Michàlle E. Mor Barak (2015) Inclusion is the Key to Diversity Management, but What is Inclusion?, *Human Service Organizations: Management, Leadership & Governance, 39*(2), 83-88, DOI: 10.1080/23303131.2015.1035599

