

EQUITY STEERING COMMITTEE

Ledding Library Community Room

NOTES

AUG 24, 2023

- The meeting began at 6:03 p.m.
 - In attendance in person were Shian Gutierrez-Ege, Dennis Ward, Corey Hester, Liz Start, Cameron Ruen, Nikki Storm and Seyon Belai. Sara Vasquez was present on Zoom, along with Nicole Yates, Dave Keen and Annette Humm Keen from Keen Independent Research. Staff present included Gabriela Santoyo Gutierrez (Equity and Inclusion Coordinator, Emma Sagor (Assistant City Manager), and Ann Ober (City Manager)
- Gabriela Santoyo Gutierrez, the new Equity and Inclusion Manager, introduced herself to the committee and shared a bit about her background. Gabriela will serve as the staff liaison to the committee, supported by Ann and Emma. The committee then did a full round of introductions.
- Keen Independent Research provided a presentation of the diversity, equity, and inclusion assessment they recently completed for the City of Milwaukee. The presentation included background on the project, the methodology used, the findings of the research, and emerging recommendations for the city and the ESC to consider. Slides can be viewed [here](#).
 - ESC members asked the following questions throughout the presentation:
 - Liz asked how participants at the public workshop interpreted questions equitable street maintenance and services, and whether they were responding more about perceived fairness and concerns about their own streets.
 - Nicole noted that could be the case, but shared that the qualitative discussion on this topic also suggested that residents do not understand the process for *how* the city selects streets for maintenance activities, and reiterated the opportunity for better communication around how equity is embedded into these decision making practices.
 - Nikki asked what “other services” participants in the public workshop were asked about.

- Nicole explained it included library, utilities and policing.
- Nikki asked if we know the demographics of the respondents to the public workshops.
 - Nicole explained yes, that information is included in Appendix I. Emma said staff would share those appendices with the ESC.
- Shian asked who will be charged with implementing and evaluating strategies related to equity in employment. Cami also asked for clarification about whether all of these recommendations will advance as part of an implementation plan, if some have already started, or how they will be prioritized.
 - Ann explained that Brandi Leos, the City's HR Manager, has led the effort of selecting, implementing, and evaluating strategies to increase diversity in hiring. Ann also encouraged any ESC members who have ideas of other specific strategies that they have seen work to connect with her or Gabriela.
 - Ann and Emma explained the intent is to prioritize these recommendations and work with the ESC to pick what they most want to focus on. Staff will also advance other strategies at the same time, and several—specifically around employment—have already been started.
- Liz shared that she went to a training recently that illuminated that many consultant teams bring on MBE or WBE firms as sub-consultants, rather than primes, to earn certification points.
 - Ann and Emma shared the City has considered breaking contracts up into smaller pieces to address this concern, and this is something the group could choose to prioritize for looking into further.
- Liz asked if the Keen team has seen other communities of this size find grants and funding to build capacity to do this work, and how they recommend this committee support staff in enacting these recommendations.
 - Dave noted the importance of embedding the question of “how do we do this equitably” into all that the city does. He said they think the city is well positioned to do this as a normal course of business. He said his advice is to not try to do everything at once, but do it organically.
 - Liz said she felt that answer did not acknowledge the real need to build capacity to take on this additional work. While the end goal is to embed equity into everything, this change requires time, resources, staffing, and funding.

- Ann thanked Liz for her comments and said the committee helping staff prioritize what is most important to work on first is one way they can help ensure we make progress while we're building this capacity.
 - Emma noted this group has power, both to advise and inform administrative leadership but also to share their perspective and priorities with City Council as they consider legislative changes.
 - Cami said it is clear that many of these recommendations will require work to be done to get to this place. For example, putting out more information in multiple languages requires resources and contracts for translation. It would be helpful to have some of these recommendations unpacked before this group goes to Council.
 - Cami shared she felt the recommendations could be categorized in a different way. For example, several of these could be bucketed under relationship building, translation and accessibility.
 - Nikki asked what out of the recommendations do the Keen team see as foundational.
 - Nicole noted the Keen team had bolded what they felt would be most impactful in the report document. She also noted the group and city should prioritize what resonates most for them.
- The Committee then discussed what was rising up for them as priorities and key take-aways from this study.
 - Gabriela shared her key take-aways and suggested focus areas, which included employee recruiting, hiring, and retention; internal and external communication; accessibility of city and employee services; and equity in infrastructure and procurement.
 - Shian shared she needs more time to digest the information, but shared that if the city chooses to prioritize increased translation, this may not address the full barriers related to navigating government systems. She advised it is important to be intentional when thinking about accessibility strategies, including whether the agency can respond and follow up in another language if needed.
 - Liz shared that representation through employment is a priority. She also noted interest in helping the city better communicate about its processes.
 - Dennis shared that he is very excited about the renovation of Scott Park and believes projects like that bring the community together.
 - Nikki shared her experience in education makes her particularly interested in how the ESC can help the city reach into community and empower BIPOC

community members to get involved in civic work. She mentioned opportunities like serving on interview panels, committees, and internships as types of things it would be great to connect with community members—particularly youth—on.

- Corey shared that he recommends the group focus on the bolded recommendations in the assessment report and turn those into concrete goals for the committee. He also shared that he is drawn to the education-related recommendations, but noted the importance of using simple, clear, intentional, and specific language so all people know what we're talking about.
 - Cami shared she also wants to see the ESC develop specific, achievable, and realistic goals. She mentioned possible opportunities to collaborate with other city committees, such as the Arts Committee. : Want to be specific, goals, opportunities for converging with other committees—partnering with arts committee.
 - Seyon shared that she liked the four categories put forward by the Keen team: employment, procurement, services, and public engagement.
 - Sara shared she was particularly interested in what the committee could support related to equitable employment and community outreach.
- The committee concluded the meeting discussing next steps.
 - Emma and Gabriela noted staff and the Keen consultant team would be providing an update to Council during their September 5 regular session. ESC members are invited and encouraged to attend and provide comment.
 - Staff agreed to include a summary of the feedback provided at this meeting to Council as part of the staff report and presentation for September 5.
 - The ESC expressed interest in scheduling a retreat to allow adequate time to discuss and narrow down priorities for the group. Staff said they would follow up about scheduling.
 - Liz asked for captions to be provided at future hybrid meetings.
- The meeting concluded at 8:07 p.m.