

Equity as a Metric in City Performance Management System

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Context:

On January 13, 2020 Mayor John Cooper announced that his administration has created a Performance Management Team within the Mayor's Office to improve accountability and transparency at all levels of Metro Government. According to a press release issued by the Mayor's office, "The work of the Performance Management Team will serve as a bridge between budgeting and operational management by using performance information to support budget requests and measuring performance results for the sake of financial accountability."¹

In his role, the Director of the Office of Performance Management will be working closely with Metro department heads to develop a comprehensive set of system and department-specific level performance metrics and goals. There is currently no system in place that requires Metro departments to consider equity and equitable distribution of resources as success metrics.

Background information:

On October 1, 2019, Metro Council unanimously passed the Community Covenant Resolution (RS2019-31). This resolution represents the Council's commitment to economic equity to ensure that all Nashvillians benefit from our city's prosperity. The Community Covenant was developed through community engagement with support from the Metro Human Relations Commission. In order to further honor what Nashville constituents advocated for, it is important to take steps to make the aspirational goals of the Covenant actionable.

A solution that a number of cities and government agencies across the U.S. have started adopting to counteract the effects of systemic discrimination is called an "Equity Lens." An Equity Lens, when implemented with a racial justice focus, is a tool that can help ensure that decision-making and resource allocation are leading to more equitable policies, programs, and results. Applying such a lens in a meaningful way requires leadership to strongly prioritize the time, budget, and resources needed to create sustainable change.

The use of an Equity Lens to implement and actualize equitable goals was also recommended last year by Ashford Hughes, Former Chief Diversity Equity and Inclusion Officer for Metro Government of Nashville & Davidson County.²

¹ <https://www.nashville.gov/News-Media/News-Article/ID/9249/Mayor-John-Cooper-Creates-Performance-Management-Team-Appoints-Diego-Eguiarte-As-Director.aspx>

² <https://www.thevoicenashville.com/wp-content/uploads/DEI-Roadmap-1.pdf>

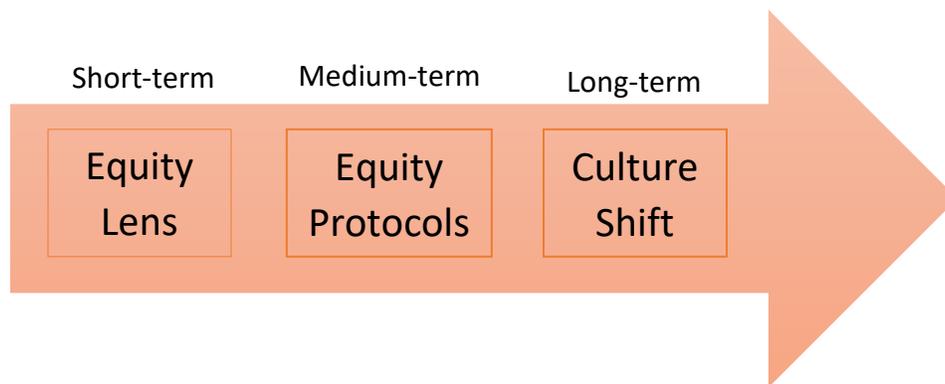
What is an Equity Lens?

An Equity Lens is a set of questions that one can ask when planning, developing and evaluating a policy, program or service. These questions help diagnose barriers and identify, measure, and evaluate best practices within access, equity and diversity. An equity lens helps to:

- To interrupt biases
- To increase transparency and accountability
- To shift historic institutional patterns

An equity lens serves as the beginning of a process towards an equitable culture:

3



Recommendation:

The Metro Human Relations Commission believes that if Metro is committed to principles of equity and promoting an equitable culture within and outside of Metro government, then incorporating an equity lens into the performance management system is an important step. What a City measures speaks volumes about the outcomes that have been defined as important. The Commission urges the Mayor's office and Metro Council ensure that all Metro departments are frequently and thoughtfully considering matters of equity when designing programs, implementing programs, distributing resources, and serving Nashville constituents. Employing an "equity lens" is a promising practice to accomplish these goals. The performance management system is an ideal opportunity to implement an equity lens.

³ <https://www.raceforward.org/>

Additional information:

It is important to be aware of what other counties, cities and states are doing well and then think about how we can learn from them, and further advance the work in our own communities. Below are some examples of how other cities have implemented an equity lens in various forms:

- Seattle: The City of Seattle developed the Racial and Social Justice Initiative (RSJI) and in 2014, the city's Mayor signed an executive order to affirm the city's commitment to this initiative. The goal of this program is to eliminate racial inequity in the city.⁴
- San Antonio: San Antonio examined historical discriminatory practices and, as a result, created an Equity Impact Assessment for budget decisions to justly distribute resources throughout council districts in an equitable way. In the 2018 proposed budget, San Antonio made decisions through an equity lens, which was used to allocate resources and set priorities to meet the needs of San Antonio residents. The city believes that allocating funds through an equity lens is an effective way to address years of historical housing segregation in certain districts.⁵
- Austin: Austin's Office of Equity has developed an assessment tool to create equitable policies. The Equity Assessment tool is provided to each department to assess the burden and benefit the department's policies place on communities of color to best meet the needs of communities with historic disinvestment. The tool has been applied by 12 departments in their decision-making processes, which represented more than half of the city's departments.⁶
- Minneapolis, Minnesota: The Minneapolis Parks and Recreation Board (MPRB) has been developing an approach to racial equity, inclusion and diversity over the past decade. Their Racial Equity Action Plan, designed to be updated on a regular basis, establishes timelines, accountability and performance measures for each action.⁷

Conclusion:

MHRC recommends that the Mayor's office and City Council incorporate equity as a metric in the Performance Management System to ensure that all Metro departments are considering matters of equity and inequity - historical and present - when designing and implementing programs, distributing resources, and serving Nashville constituents. The Commission would like to work closely with the Mayor's office and lend its support and expertise in the development of equity metrics in the Metro Performance Management System.

⁴ <http://www.seattle.gov/Documents/Departments/FinanceDepartment/16adoptedbudget/RSJI.pdf>

⁵ <https://www.tpr.org/post/san-antonios-2018-budget-uses-equity-lens-allocate-funds>

⁶ <http://www.austintexas.gov/edims/document.cfm?id=309466>

⁷ https://www.minneapolisparcs.org/about_us/racial_equity/