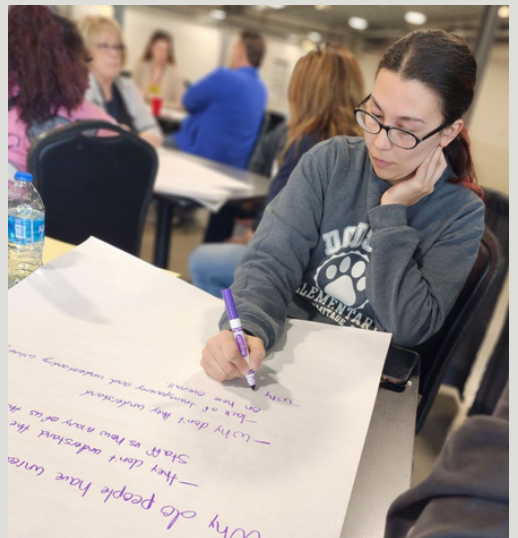


ANNUAL REPORT

METROPOLITAN GOVERNMENT OF NASHVILLE AND DAVIDSON COUNTY
FINANCE DEPARTMENT
OFFICE OF DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

20
23



YEAR IN REVIEW



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Year in Review

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MEET THE TEAM



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Sneh Patel

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Manager*



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Research Analyst*

[!\[\]\(a8f9309f944226d1420f5fed22e2b6e6_img.jpg\) View our team's bios](#)

A MESSAGE FROM OUR CHIEF DEI OFFICER

"We are to serve as a guidepost to a more humane, democratic, freedom-loving future." - Dr. Vincent Harding

History shows that real change requires bold thinking. Over a decade ago, I trained and led a team of oral historians, capturing and documenting history and voices of hundreds of Nashvillians. One of those projects include the award-winning [Civil Rights Oral History Project](#). In addition to documenting and preserving Nashville's school desegregation history and Nashville's role during the pivotal student-led movement of the 1960s, our goal was to capture and trace the heroic struggle for equality here in our city. We documented Nashville's response to the Brown v. Board decision; we interviewed parents and school administrators that shared memories from September 1957- the moment in time when Nashville desegregated its public schools. We interviewed dozens of Freedom Riders, members of the Congress of Racial Equity (CORE), organizers for the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and the Southern Student Organizing Committee (SSOC). We interviewed those that were responsible for Nashville being known as, according to Reverend James Lawson, the "principal training ground for some of the nation's most influential leaders in civil rights."

We listened and we listened. For a decade we were cultural preservationists.

Our intent was to utilize history at the core of engagement about otherness, and that somehow the conversations would aid in developing those virtues that are important in a more humane, just, and equitable society. We listened. We also inquired. We asked unconventional questions about gains and losses, progress and peril, history and now-story.

Those conversations developed virtues and continued to amplify civic voice and vision. After the murder of George Floyd in 2020, our city's minority caucus believed Nashville needed a source of accountability and legislated for an Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. In life's full circle of events, last summer we were a part of a convening in Minneapolis and sojourned to George Floyd Square.

We listened. We gleaned. We questioned.

This two-year compilation is more of that listening, gleaned, questioning, capturing, challenging, cultivating, and preserving. It's a glimpse into a process of dismantling systems. It's a snapshot of methodologies that not only push for behavior changes and ways of thinking but call for transformative systems. This report reminds us that equity work is greater than history, it's more than undoing wrongs, and it's more complicated than simple annual goals.

This is the work which requires us to serve as guideposts and not gatekeepers.

— *Andrea Blackman*



AS GUIDEPOSTS, WE...

are committed to addressing historic harms by taking action against harmful policies and practices and encouraging anti-racist and anti-oppressive structural changes. How do we align our work with this commitment? We...

01

Build Communities of Practice

Convene space to celebrate wins, unpack challenges, practice practicing, and build relationships across the collective with those who are dedicated to institutional transformation. We aim to be a leader in the field and push practices to advance racial and economic equity.

02

Lead with Data

Amplify equitable practices with qualitative data, while leading departments in developing targeted and data-driven strategies and practices that can promote racial and economic equity and improve service performance for all communities.

03

Operate with an Equity Lens

Advance a lens which requires a fundamental reorientation of operations and services. We aim to deconstruct what is not working around racial equity; and reconstruct and support what is working.

04

Advance Accountability

Probe bias and subjectivity in institutional operations, including hiring and retention, while guiding leaders across the continuum of normalizing difference, valuing difference, and seeking difference.



WHY HERE?

The Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion was established in 2021 as a direct result of the Metro Nashville Council and Minority Caucus advocating for a new Chief Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion position in the year prior. These actions were taken to commit Metro Government as a whole to addressing known and unknown disparities within Metro Government and the City.

By establishing the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion within the Finance Department, the Council and Minority Caucus wanted to ensure that our office can, successfully and without disruption, align with and dedicate itself to the City's responsibilities of long-term DEI success, stability, accountability, and sustainability. Upon entering the Finance Department, our office received immediate support from Finance Leadership, which has allowed us to successfully establish our office as a respected and authoritative entity.

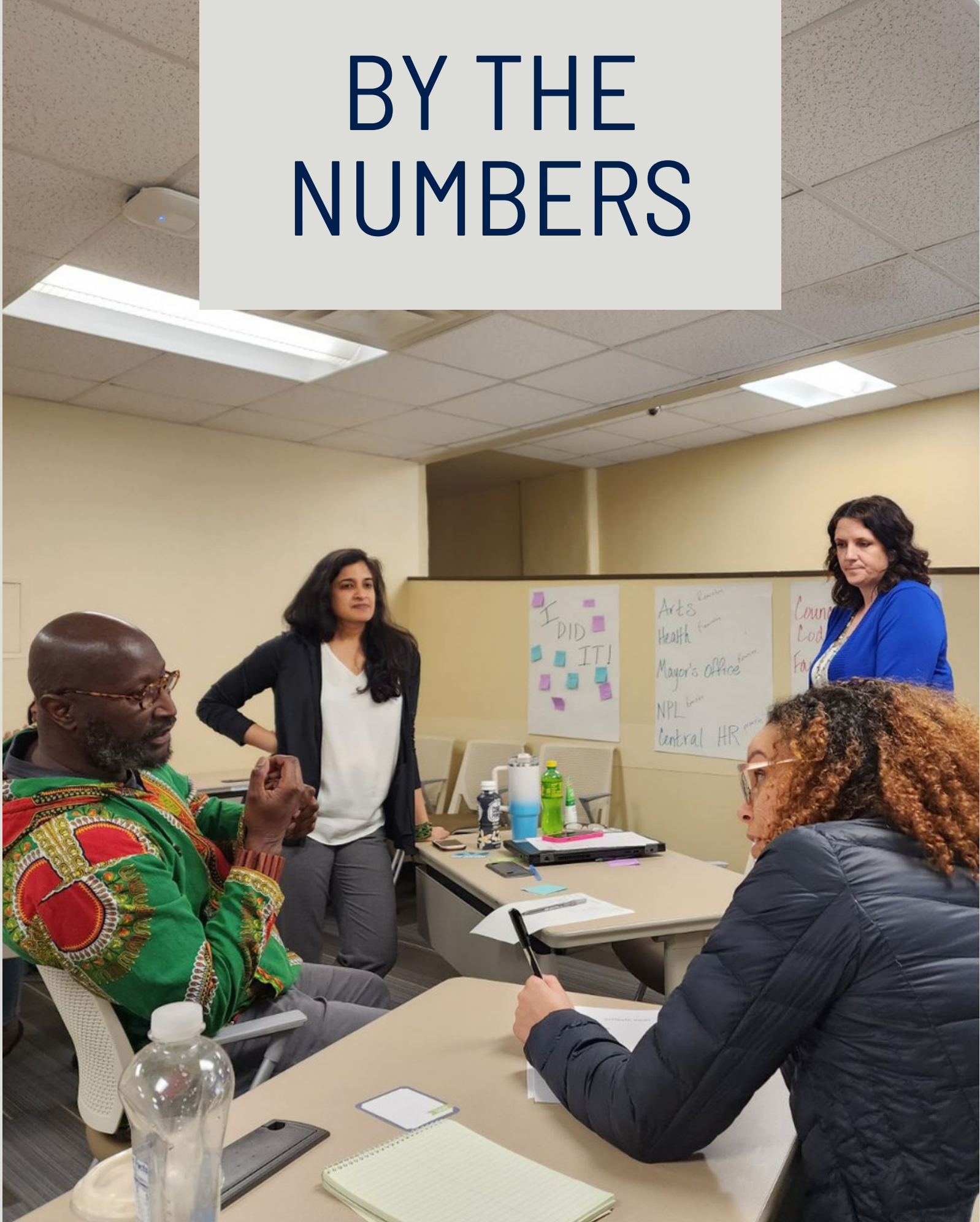
WHY NOW?

The murder of George Floyd ignited a nationwide move towards in-depth examination of the inequities within organizations, particularly in the government sector. Governments hold a major, undeniable historical role in creating and maintaining those very inequities. Nashville was among the many municipalities who recognized the need for investing in sustainable Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion practices.

As municipalities established DEI offices and staff began their work, the benefits of DEI began to reveal themselves. Organizations were realizing that not only is DEI work a necessity, but it is also a good business practice.

DEI work is, more importantly, a good moral practice because it is simply the right thing to do. Municipal DEI work can positively impact residents in many ways, like fostering a city-wide atmosphere of trust, appreciation, and belonging. This outcome, however, is ultimately up to government leaders, who need to explicitly and whole-heartedly stand behind the work.

BY THE NUMBERS



EMBEDDING EQUITY INTO THE BUDGET

Process, Procedures, and System Change

2022 marked the [inaugural year of Metro Nashville's Budget Equity Tool \(BET\)](#). This new addition was integrated seamlessly into the budget process through a key partnership with the Office of Management and Budget, a division of the Finance Department that coordinates most of Metro's budget preparation. The tool was designed to determine whether budget allocations advance equitable outcomes for residents and Metro employees, measure the impact of budget decisions in terms of burdens or benefits specific communities might experience, and overall improve performance and service delivery for each department.

Creation and Conception

Budget Equity Tools are a common best practice utilized by municipalities across the country. Our office began working on our own version of the tool in December 2021. We worked with cities such as San Antonio and Houston to learn about the process of developing, implementing, and updating budget tools. We also analyzed and compared different iterations of Budget Equity Tools from other cities.

Our office identified three strategies to guide Metro's budget equity process: adopt an equity lens, be data-driven, and promote assessment and accountability. Each strategy included three separate questions, nine questions in all. These questions asked each department to consider how their investment requests, in terms of both additional funds and/or staff, would support equity. Additionally, these questions asked departments to detail current or planned policies, programs, and initiatives that would address inequities faced by Metro residents. The responses we received provided insight into the ways each department conceived of equity and what role they saw their department taking in combating inequities within the city.

Fiscal Year 2023

In early January, department heads and elected officials received a memo from the Director of the Finance Department regarding the Fiscal Year 2023 budget submission process. The Departments were tasked with engaging in equity in two distinct ways. First, departments would submit a complete BET to our office.

Second, at the direction of the Mayor's Office, departments needed to state how each individual investment request would further equity within the budget submission portal, NORBeRT. Each of the departments' proposed budget modifications were accompanied by a justification explaining how the proposed budget would further equity within Davidson County. These justifications were separate from the questions in the BET. However, our office did offer guidance to departments in this aspect of the NORBeRT system. The BET focused on more holistic or programmatic approaches to equity rather than a line-by-line evaluation.

Delivery of the Tool

Our office emailed each department head as well as members of their staff involved in the budget preparation and submission process with links to the BET and its associated training materials as well as information with basic instructions on how to complete and submit the tool. Select members of our staff were also available to assist departments with their BET response and conversed with many departments via email, phone, and virtual meetings. In total, we met with 22 departments over the course of two weeks. Departments were able to submit the BET through a submission portal or by email. 48 departments submitted a complete BET, including departments that did not make any budget requests for Fiscal Year 2023.



Assessment

Members of our office read each of the submitted BETs and summarized our overall impressions in a standardized assessment document. Each department received their assessment a week or more before their department’s budget discussion meeting. These assessments were an opportunity for our office to give our general assessment of the BET responses, note areas where we had questions or needed clarification, identify specific areas of collaboration between our office and other departments, and determine next steps for executing each departments’ equity goals.

Budget Meetings

Each department presented their budget summaries to the Mayor’s Office, members of the Finance Department, as well as representatives from Metro Human Resources, General Services, and ITS. During these meetings, our office was able to ask equity related questions to department representatives about their budget requests and BET responses. These meetings took place from March to April and amounted to over 50 meetings in all.

Year Two

Year one of the BET provided a framework to understand the general landscape of diversity, equity, and inclusion work within Metro. Based on feedback from departments and our [own analysis of the tool responses](#), we revised the tool to focus on the upcoming fiscal year’s budget requests. Year two’s tool changed from nine questions to four while still asking departments to consider the same three equity strategies (adopt an equity lens, be data-driven, and promote assessment and accountability). [This year’s tool](#) marked an increase in the number of departments that completed the tool, increasing our response rate from 94 percent to 96 percent.



96%

Budget Equity Tool response rate increased in 2023!

DELVING DEEP INTO DATA

Understanding Equity in Davidson County

Data visualizations are powerful tools to understand how and where inequities are prominent. In the past year, our office has developed two projects to measure and visualize social, racial, and economic data so that government agencies, community groups, and local NGOs might target specific programs and resources to meet the needs of those populations. The first project is the Davidson County Demographic Atlas, a series of maps that display the distribution of specific population indicators that relate to equity. The second project is the Equity Dashboards, which looks at similar information as the Demographic Atlas but displays the information in a different way. Both tools are meant to be interactive and regularly updated, allowing users to explore equity within Davidson County both spatially and relationally. These resources can be accessed through our website and were included in the BET training materials sent to departments during the 2022 and 2023 budget processes.

Davidson County Demographic Atlas

The Davidson County Demographic Atlas began as a collaboration between our office, the Mayor's Office of Performance Management, and Metro's Information Technology Services. The maps were created using the ArcGIS platform, which allows users to explore different indicators and geographic areas within Davidson County. Nine different indicators were selected for the first iteration of the atlas. These indicators represent different entry points to understand the physical locations of both inequities and opportunities.

The maps use a combination of data from both the American Community Survey 5-year estimates and the 2020 Decennial Census. The data is displayed by census tract, which is a small permanent subdivision of the county.

With annual releases of population updates from the US Census Bureau, the map will continue to evolve and act as a resource to improve civil and political practices and policies.

Equity Dashboards

Additionally, our office wanted to understand how the relationships between different indicators were displayed in the Demographic Atlas. To examine these relationships, we created four dashboards with the goal of giving users the opportunity to explore intersections between different indicators and how they might relate to specific issues within Davidson County such as affordability. For example, we included a chart that showcased the relationship between educational attainment and the unemployment rate in the past year. Similarly, under affordability, we included a visualization that displays how wages have grown over time for our highest, median, and lowest wage earners in Davidson County to highlight the growing income inequality within Metro and how the rising cost of living has a disparate impact on different sectors of the population.


The dashboards utilize data from several sources including the US Census Bureau, National Equity Atlas, the Center for Neighborhood Technology, the MIT living wage calculator, and the Davidson County Demographic Atlas. As with the Demographic Atlas, we will continually update and edit this resource.

EXPLORE THE DATA

 [Davidson County Demographic Atlas](#)

 [ODEI Equity Dashboards](#)

 [US Census Bureau](#)

 [National Equity Atlas](#)

 [The Center for Neighborhood Technology](#)

 [The MIT Living Wage Calculator](#)

Council Districts



Capital Project Points

- Community Safety
- Education
- Infrastructure
- Neighborhoods
- Other
- <all other values>

Capital Project Lines

- Community Safety
- Education
- Infrastructure
- Neighborhoods
- Other
- <all other values>

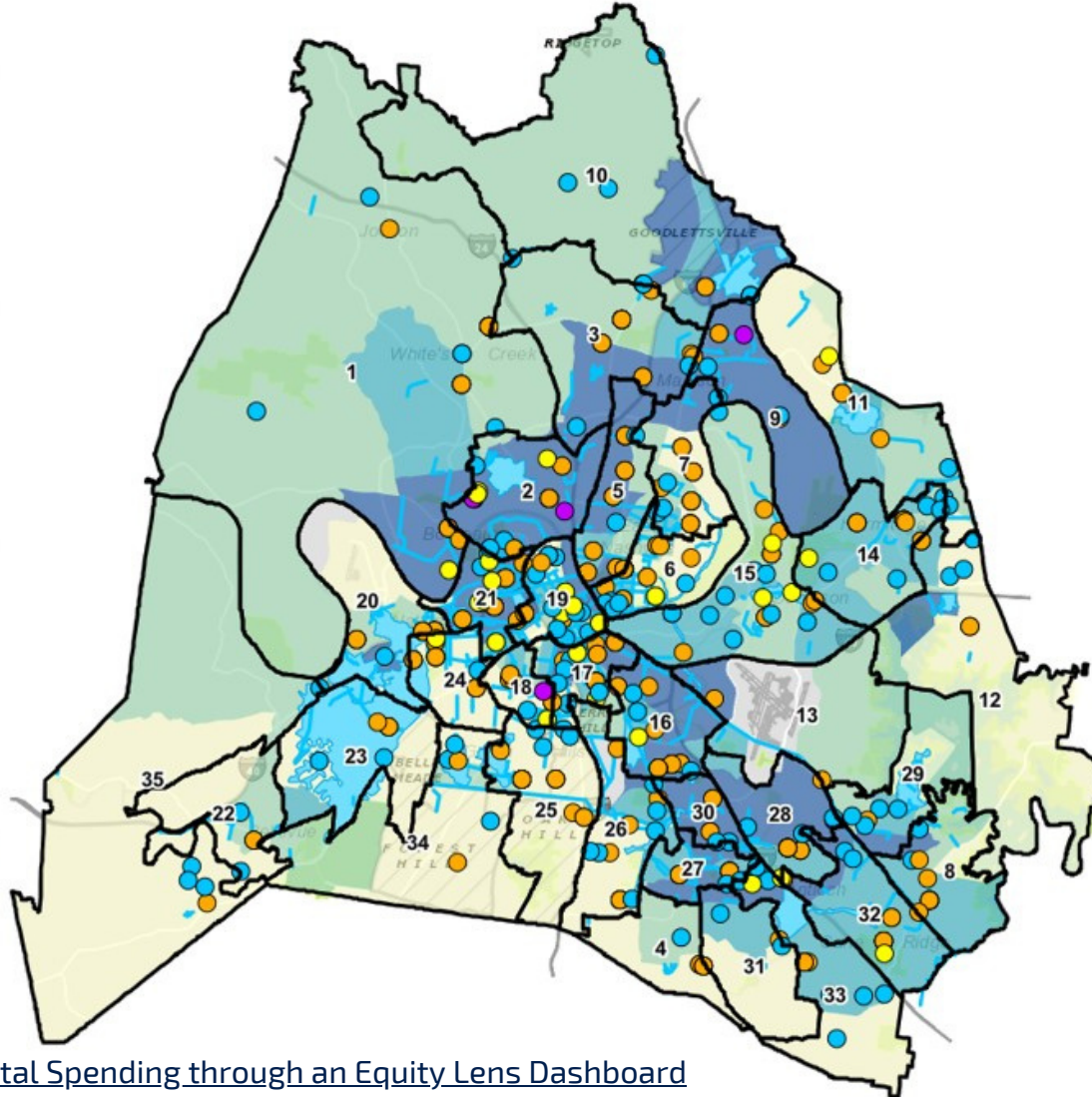
Capital Project Polygons

- ▭ Community Safety
- ▭ Education
- ▭ Infrastructure
- ▭ Neighborhoods
- ▭ Other
- ▭ <all other values>

CDC/ATSDR Social Vulnerability Index 2020 USA

Overall SVI

- SVI2020_US_tract
- ▭ 0.7501 - 1.0000
 - ▭ 0.5001 - 0.7500
 - ▭ 0.2501 - 0.5000
 - ▭ 0.0000 - 0.2500



[Capital Spending through an Equity Lens Dashboard](#)

Capital Spending Plan

Fiscal Year 2023 marked the first year that departments’ operating budget requests were screened and evaluated for their equity impact on both Davidson County residents and employees. Our office built on this landmark achievement by working to incorporate an equity lens to the Capital Spending Plan. Working with the Planning Department and the Office of Performance Management, our office endorsed the use of the Social Vulnerability Index (SVI) developed by the Agency for Toxic Substance and Disease Registry and Centers for Disease Control in aiding this decision-making process. In alignment with our other efforts to bring an equity lens to the budget process, this equity lens served as a reliable proxy for other measurements of access related to opportunity and equity and will facilitate more targeted investment that can address inequities within Metro. As with the operating budget, we were an active discussant in all Capital Spending departmental meetings.

[Fund Balance Policy](#)

Embedding Equity into Policies

In Fiscal Year 2023, the Finance Department engaged consultants from the Government Finance Officers Association for several projects, one of which was the establishment of a financial reserve policy. The consultants assisted the Finance Department in drafting legislation to establish a fund balance policy. Simply put, this policy is meant to allow Metro to remain in good credit standing by keeping sufficient cash reserves on hand and also stipulates various processes to utilize and replenish these funds. Our office participated in the drafting process by incorporating language that would position equity as a guiding principle. The final policy includes a list of objectives, one of which is “To promote equity for all Metro residents”. The policy goes on to state, “Prior to the allocation of any remaining fund balance... each proposed allocation will be submitted for an equity analysis utilizing tools developed by the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.” The fund balance policy was approved by Metro Council in early 2023.

**DATA CAN BE USED TO REVEAL THE STORY
BEHIND THE SYSTEMS OF INEQUITY AND POWER.
THE ORIGINS OF THESE SYSTEMS CAN BE
PARTICULARLY IMPORTANT FOR UNDERSTANDING
HOW AND WHY THEY FUNCTION AS THEY DO**



ENGAGING AND EMPOWERING



LEARNING IN ACTION



*“The heart of justice is truth telling, seeing ourselves and the world the way it is rather than the way we want it to be. More than ever before we, as a society, need to renew a commitment to truth telling.”
— bell hooks*

Last fall Metro employees, department heads, council members, and community members, along with subject matter experts Andrea Blackman, Tasneem Grace, Timothy Hughes, Razel Jones, and Sneh Patel, tuned in for our office’s first Community of Practice convening. We began to examine key elements of systems change and center the need to deepen personal capacity for racial analysis and healing in our city. Cities cannot address racial disparities without first understanding the historical, social, and political meaning of race in America.

For decades, and across the country, organizations have been having these types of gatherings and conversations around inequities as a problem in society—the number of us who were having these conversations with a robust interrogation of the impact of racial and economic inequity within our organizations was somewhat smaller. But it was the larger conversations that set us on a course to radically reconfigure the way our organizations work. Over the course of the last 18 months, our office began that interrogation and radical reformation.

In the Community of Practice convening, Andrea Blackman asked 3 framing questions: is an equitable and thriving city possible; can they co-exist and if so, what needs to be buried and raised; and do we have the capacity to change social norms within Metro and our city.

We seek to normalize convenings like this and intentionally foster a Community of Practice. As a community, we know that we must welcome hard truths and change as crucial parts of our work. Looking ahead, these convenings will also give us space to break down institutional norms of politeness and silence; they help us name existing power dynamics and structures that were, even if unintentionally, preserving such norms and perpetuating inequities within our walls.

We rely on our Community of Practice to be active contributors in our mission to make Nashville a more equitable city. For two of the participants in our Community of Practice, this means promoting the **practice of community change** and reintroducing **DEI as a resource rather than a threat**.

THE PRACTICE OF COMMUNITY CHANGE

Tasneem Ansariyah Grace

Many of us have believed that communities of practice need to first focus on community issues in order to be effective. We've been convinced that analysis and attention are the precursors to transformation.

After countless sessions of sharing stories of woe and strategies of passion, many of us acknowledge an alternate route to collective impact, one that begins and ends with the practice of developing a practice.

No litany of shared aches nor archive of historical wrongs alone can root resistance or revolution.

Instead, as students of the social movements, we learn the value of communities gathering first to decide how to practice the healthy habit of mindset shifts and, eventually, life shifts.

Before we arouse solidarity with the purpose of conversation and convening, we examine methods for consistent, creative and flexible preemptive effort.

What can we do now - before we smell smoke - to be attentive to cyclical chaos and required growth?

What will we do beyond talk?

What comes after the march is marched and the petitions are signed and the offender is ousted?

What will we do in the quiet, untelevised moments that help us evolve from situational reactivity to daily self-reflection?

We begin the practice with **seven steps to take before conversations and debates begin.**

Finally, we fortify our practice by owning the wealth of the word "community." While evaluating how injustice shows up in all life spaces, we invite others to practice together for accountability and vulnerability. We learn how to speak truth safely, and consistently.

We also practice together for strength.

Inevitably, we will be called to repeat old habits and reconsider old beliefs. A community that practices contemplative and transformative behaviors together can also exercise the values of transparency, forgiveness and resilience.

Seven Steps to Take Before Conversations and Debates Begin:



Tasneem Ansariyah Grace
Vice President
Mosaic Changemakers

RESOURCE VS. THREAT

Razel Jones

In year two as Metro's HR Workforce Diversity Manager, I have been pleased to work with individuals from various parts of Metro. As we continue our journey of enhancing DEI in our 55+ departments, it is always an interesting people-study to observe the varied responses to the presence of a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) professional coming to work with a department or individual.

Just this morning as I entered a space, the individual greeting me stated, "Oh man, we must be in trouble; they've sent the heavy-hitters in..." While this was playfully presented, it reflects a regular and recurring reality as we enter different spaces to advance the work of DEI... People often don't know what it means for us to be there. Did something happen? Am I in trouble? They're coming for me... Uh oh... I must have done something wrong.

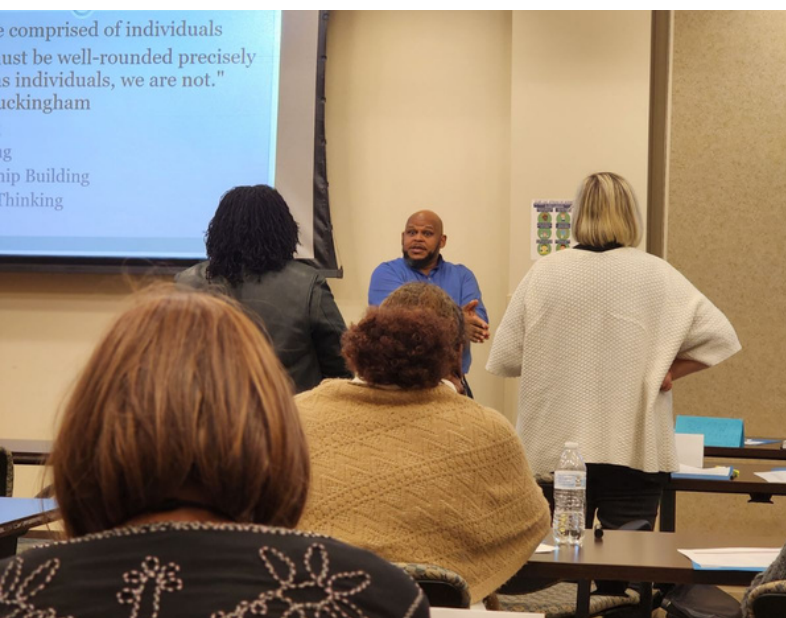
Why do people react this way? There are many possible responses to this question. I would like to discuss two of them below.

1. Something really did happen (reactive)...

In a combined meeting with ODEI and Workforce Diversity teams earlier this year, I had the assignment of telling newer staff members how our offices were introduced to the departments we had engaged. In providing that context it became evident that most of our paths into department work were either fully, or at least somewhat, in response to some triggering event, article, or issue. While we dream of proactive invitations, we wake up and realize that there is usually something that happened that has led to the invitation.

This is an important reality for us to contemplate. DEI-related issues happen frequently in almost every workplace. While I wish we could always be ahead of presented, it reflects a regular and recurring reality as we enter different spaces to advance the work of DEI... People often don't know what it means for us to be there. Did something happen? Am I in trouble? They're coming for me... Uh oh... I must have done something wrong.

DEI methodologies and tools are effective in helping to better navigate and manage those potential difficulties, and with committed work can turn conflicting differences into complementary partnerships.



2.

Many people have had a negative experience with DEI work (trauma)...

Another possible reason for the nervousness that comes with the presence of a DEI professional is that some have had bad experiences with DEI 'professionals' in the past. Organizational DEI work is a relatively new field of practice in the professional world, and the recent formation of the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in the Finance Department and Workforce Diversity in Human Resources are brand new iterations of the organizational work at Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County. There is an evolution of the work happening on the micro and macro levels.

In the early iterations of DEI work (big picture – beyond and before Metro), most organizations focused on compliance = staying out of trouble. Sometimes, this led DEI training and work to be wielded as a weapon. In many cases this work was placed in the hands of employees with great passion for DEI and lived experience on the side of being mistreated in the very organizations they served. These newly knighted DEI workers were empowered to create and convey a set of rules for employees to STOP doing certain things and START doing other things. We all know what people tend to do with rules – break them quickly and wildly. Or, to at least get as close as possible to breaking them without crossing the threshold.

Unfortunately, many people experienced DEI as a time when DEI trainers would come in the room and berate certain attendees, attacking certain demographic groups, telling them how bad they are and how bad they've made it for other people. This approach has left side-effects in the advancing workplace. Some individuals enter current DEI experiences with flashbacks to those approaches and feel like it is going to be a threatening experience.



As we move forward with the DEI growth, it is critical for any effective DEI professional to establish oneself as a resource rather than a threat. Convey how DEI helps organizations and individuals reach performance goals, have healthier environments, and achieve better results. Understanding and embracing DEI helps you be a better leader and to have a better organization.

Innovation. Complementary partnerships. Greater connectivity to your markets. All of this, while at the same time helping you stay out of trouble and treat people well. We are here to help as we grow into being a better Metro for all. Our request of you as we continue in this work is this... Relax. We're here to be resources for you on your DEI journey. Let's dream together. What could be? What can we build together to forward DEI at Metro. The only way forward is together. Let's grow!



Razel Jones

Workforce Diversity Manager
Metro Nashville Central HR



LIVING CITIES PARTNERSHIP

Living Cities, a collaboration of the world's largest foundations and financial institutions, fosters transformational relationships across sectors to connect those who are willing to do the hard work of closing racial income and wealth gaps. The organization partners with cross-sector leaders in cities across the country to imagine and create an America in which all people are economically secure, building wealth, and living abundant, dignified, and connected lives. Its mission is to harness "the collective power of philanthropy, financial institutions and local governments to close racial income and wealth gaps in American cities."

Our office's relationship with Living Cities began in 2022 when we [joined 20 other cities](#) in a 10 year commitment to transform homeownership and small business ecosystems to better support the success of People of Color. Known as the [Closing the Gaps Network](#), Living Cities brings government leaders together to collectively reimagine what an anti-society might look like through the transformation of government policies, practices, and operations.



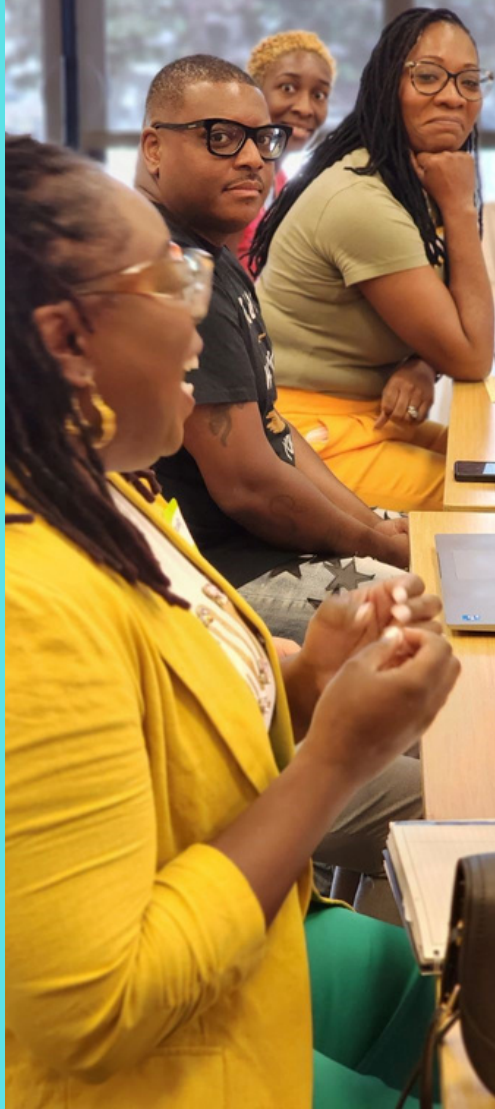
OUR VISION FOR THE COHORT

Partner with Nashville's BIPOC business community to develop a work plan that addresses systemic barriers preventing business owners of color from starting, preserving, and/or growing their businesses.

Breaking Barriers to Business for Black and Brown Entrepreneurs

In 2023, we expanded our relationship with Living Cities by participating as a pilot city for the [Where It Starts: Breaking Barriers to Business \(B3\)](#) cohort. This 36-month cohort offers technical assistance and grant funding to strengthen small businesses and open career pathways for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities across the U.S. Through partnering with Nashville's BIPOC business community during this cohort, our office aims to:

- 1** Remove barriers to growth and create accessible pathways to economic opportunity for all.
- 2** Tackle systemic, perpetual inequity by taking a whole-person approach.



B3 Cohort Kick-off

In June 2023, our office hosted a cohort kick-off event to welcome our grantors to Nashville. The two-day event consisted of a bus tour of three major BIPOC commercial corridors within the Metro Nashville area as well as community engagement listening sessions with BIPOC entrepreneurs from each corridor.

The journey began at the Matthew Walker Comprehensive Health Center.

Local Black and Brown business owners joined these sessions to share their story and give the grantors a better sense of who Nashville's BIPOC business community is, what they need, the challenges they face, and their vision for the future.

During this cohort, we will focus on three of Nashville's predominately BIPOC commercial corridors that have both historic significance and historic harm that has spanned generations and impacted culture, community, and wealth building opportunities for the BIPOC community.

These wealth disparities were exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, further disconnecting the BIPOC community from opportunities to preserve and grow their businesses. By focusing on predominately BIPOC commercial corridors, our office aims to begin correcting historic harms and wealth inequities to bring about long-term growth and easier pathways to success for business owners of color.



“

Our office acknowledges the historical harms of the Black and Brown business community and the role government and public policy has played in those harms. We hope this grant will signify.... Although we cannot change the past, we view this grant as a transformative step in the right direction for our government to help correct the harm it caused the BIPOC business community through public policy. By centering BIPOC voices, we will tackle the historic and systemic harms that have perpetuated the racialized economic inequity in Nashville.

”

– Andrea Blackman, Chief DEI Officer

LISTENING, LEARNING, LEADING



EXTENDING OUR REACH

While our office routinely and successfully collaborates and partners with several Metro offices and departments, we also value perspectives outside of Metro Nashville. Since our office's inception, we have sought opportunities to learn and exchange ideas with municipalities throughout the nation because we know DEI work must be sustainable in order to bring about real change. Here are some cross sector partnerships and collaborations we have participated in:



**Harvard
Business
School**

**Young American
Leaders Program**

Harvard Business School Young American Leaders Program

In 2021, 130 young leaders from 13 U.S. cities gathered virtually at the Harvard Business School to consider how to best help their communities prosper. This gathering, the Young American Leaders Program, included a 10-person team from Nashville. Andrea Blackman was part of that team.

The program was launched to develop leaders who understand cross-sector collaborations for shared prosperity and economic resiliency and can implement them more effectively and spread them more rapidly than in the past.



Hunt Institute DEI State Officers Network

At the beginning of 2023, Andrea Blackman joined the Hunt Institute's Inaugural DEI State Officers Network in Washington, DC. The Hunt Institute is committed to convening people and resources to inspire and inform elected officials and policymakers from both sides of the aisle. This year's convening was meant to 1) create a shared space that provided a bipartisan environment to discuss equity and how to create buy-in from key stakeholders and 2) develop a pipeline for future DEI leadership across the nation.

**BLOOMBERG
HARVARD**
City Leadership
Initiative

Bloomberg Harvard City Leadership Data Track Program

Throughout 2022, Andrea Blackman and other city leaders participated in Bloomberg Harvard's City Leadership Data Track program. The program's sessions were designed to build skills, internalize lessons learned, and identify how to overcome barriers on each step of our journey to becoming a more data-informed city. The sessions gave program attendees research-based frameworks and practical tools for data-driven equity approaches to local government.

Bloomberg Harvard City Leadership Leading City Procurement Reform

Last year, in partnership with Metro's Procurement division, our office participated in the Bloomberg Harvard Leading City Procurement Reform program, a multi-year cohort designed to assist governments in innovating their procurement processes and push procurement practices to be more efficient, results-driven, and equitable. Through the program, the Metro team developed a multi-year plan to promote a culture of vendor performance management that will improve the procurement process from the beginning stages to the final resulting service, ultimately leading Metro Nashville towards better service delivery for its residents and more opportunities for its vendors to improve and grow as a business.

METRO-WIDE COLLABORATIONS

Procurement Collaboration

Our office is working alongside Metro Procurement's Business Assistance Office to gain transparency in and monitor internal processes. To identify and understand potential challenges or opportunities, our office reviews Equal Business Opportunity reports as well as methodologies of how Diverse Business Enterprises are utilized.

Leading with Conscious Inclusion

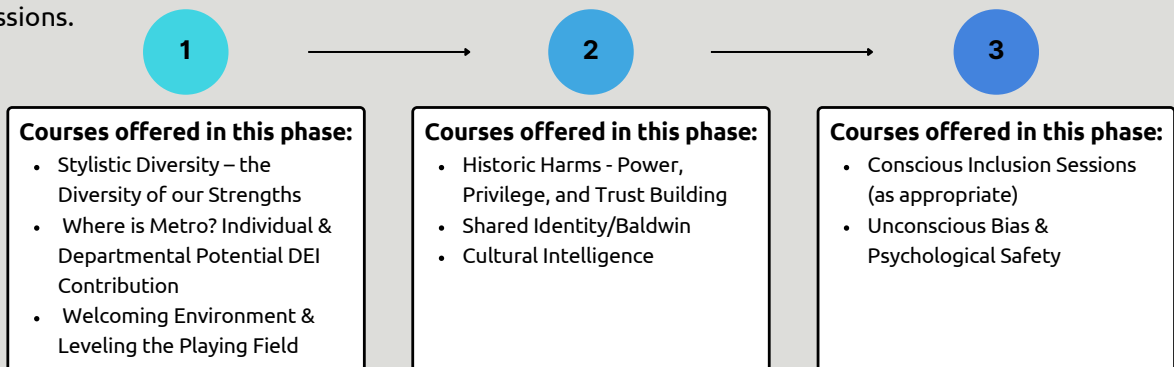
In the summer of 2023, Metro Human Resources' Workforce Diversity team launched the Leading with Conscious Inclusion series. Members of our office were asked to help lead this series, and as a result, were trained as both certified facilitators and facilitator trainers. The Conscious Inclusion series was designed by the Kaleidoscope Group in response to previous work with Metro employees. The series aims to generate discussion and introspection around topics key to navigating difference, bias, and equity in the workplace.

The initial sessions invited Metro's senior leaders to participate in two sessions that covered managing bias in the workplace. The Conscious Inclusion team recently expanded the series to include managers and supervisors. Altogether, **391** department leaders, supervisors, and managers have participated in the Leading with Conscious Inclusion series! Other Metro employees will participate in the Foundations of Conscious Inclusion series, which is expected to launch later this year.

Departmental DEI sessions

As we lead departments in direct employee engagement sessions, we focus on moving people forward in ways that build relationships and trust. We're consistently working to avoid reactive responses by leading departments in framework building so that our office can truly fulfill our values instead of just "PR-ing" them. Equity work is not an initiative you put in place. It is outcomes and impact, and we regularly revisit our [Inclusion Continuum](#) to assess Metro's overall progress.

These engagement sessions are more than just training courses. In partnership with Metro Human Resources' Workforce Diversity office, we offer courses in a 3-phase approach. In total, our offices have engaged 20 departments in these sessions.



We also tailor sessions to meet the specific needs of each department, which includes holding leadership-only training and vice versa. After the final phase, our offices assess and provide recommendations to departmental leadership. To ensure accountability, we regularly hold check-ins with department leadership and staff. In total, our offices have engaged 20 departments in these sessions.

While we do strive to work proactively, Metro has over 55 departments, so reactionary work is inevitable. On several occasions, our offices have been called upon to advise and address concerns in several departments. This is what we call our informal departmental work, which is a mix of the engagement sessions mentioned above as well as additional sessions like Root Cause Analysis and Corrective Action Planning.

Our DEI engagement sessions have helped departments to **navigate through complexities**, realize **the benefits of committing to DEI**, and **share experiences** across sectors and organizations.

NAVIGATING THROUGH THE COMPLEXITIES

“MPHD took bold action to address chronic problems afflicting its leadership team and organization that stemmed from a constellation of forces. Metro DEI leaders Andrea Blackman and Razel Jones helped navigate us through courageous conversations and root causes acknowledging varying complexities, how solutions can be elusive, and acknowledging intransigence even when we espoused a need to change. Their leadership has guided us to a workplace more conducive for greater success.”

**-Dr. Melva Black, Deputy Director,
Metro Nashville Public Health Department**

Pictured: members of the Metro Public Health Department staff participating in a DEI session led by the ODEI



THE BENEFITS OF COMMITTING TO DE&I

“ Attracting top talent can be a challenge when it comes to building a successful organization, and then you have to retain it. Part of holding onto your staff is ensuring your employees feel valued, welcome, and respected, and one way to do this is through a strong commitment to DE&I. I’d also add “B” to that acronym for belonging. These are absolutely our goals at Metro Parks. Andrea, Razel and the DEI team have helped us start the formal process of becoming aware of who we are and how we can most efficiently and effectively capitalize on our strengths for the benefit of our department and the people we serve. I have been quite impressed with the program delivery of what can be a weighty topic. I look forward to continuing our progress together. ”

**- Monique Odom, Director,
Metro Nashville Parks & Recreation Department**

Pictured: Monique Odom, Director of Metro Nashville Parks & Recreation Department participating in a DEI session led by the ODEI



SHARED EXPERIENCES

“ *The Association of Government Contact Center Professionals is a national non-profit focused on educating, supporting and uplifting our members with the goal of improving service delivery, enhancing workplace quality of life and strengthening the standards of our industry. We requested Andrea Blackman speak at our 21st annual conference hosted here in Nashville to help inform our members of the history of Nashville and to connect that history with the history in all the cities we serve and how we serve them. Diversity, equity and inclusion is not always the first thing that comes to mind when discussing government service provision and tracking, but Andrea painted a picture of Nashville’s history and helped us see the shared, carried trauma and its impact on the way that the people we serve perceive government today. It was chilling, moving and inspiring for our guests to learn more about the strength of the residents she spotlighted and to think about how their experiences would change the way they interact with local government. We received nothing but positive feedback and are grateful for Andrea’s time and expertise – she elevated our discussions and our conference in general.*

- Erin Williams, Director of hubNashville, Mayor’s Office ”

Pictured: Erin Williams and additional members of the Mayor’s Office staff participating in a DEI session led by the ODEI





INTERGENERATIONAL IMPACT

Since our office’s inception, we’ve done some important work, but in retrospect, as a collective we are still tinkering on the edges of what it means to really embed racial equity into our organizations and city. We have come to realize just how much the interpersonal and institutional are intertwined and symbolic in racial equity work. What we know with certainty is that we cannot do our jobs with any real accountability, let alone make progress closing racial and economic gaps, if we aren’t grounded in the deep understanding that personal growth, individual journeys, organizational reflection, and commitment by those with positional authority are critical components of our city’s success. This led us on a journey to embed intergenerational equity and social impact in our framework. We relied on the voices of college students, who were interns for the Mayor’s Office in 2022, to begin interrogating how our equity values align with the values and aspirations of different generations.

We asked them, **“What is your role in creating a more equitable and inclusive Nashville?”**

“

*The most succinct way I can express my role and commitment to this work is that **I have made a rigorous commitment to the internal and external actions it takes to transform myself and the world around me in a country that has been ravaged by white supremacy, believing that a more equitable world is possible and must be pursued at all costs.***

”

- Megan F.

“

*My role in making Nashville more equitable is to listen to people in marginalized communities when I am working on environmental projects. It is easy to get an objective in mind, but **I think keeping an open mind and listening to what those who have been left behind have to say without a pre-determinations will help to serve those interests and advance equity.***

”

- Daniel M.

“

*Growing up and operating in a predominately white private school could be seen as a great move for my educational journey, but it may have been a disservice as a young Black male. A disservice that might have also meant there was a danger of not knowing other possibilities besides that world. There are certain things that were said and done that I did not realize were subtly racist. I either did not realize it, or let it slide, because I was outnumbered physically and outnumbered in mindset as well. No one ever said or did anything to me directly, but there were some questionable occurrences that I witnessed or overheard- looking back on it now. **My role in promoting a more inclusive and equitable city is to speak up- speak up not only for myself, but for others who do not have the ability or do not see the issue.***

”

- Rian B.

EQUITY WORK IS NEITHER EXHAUSTIVE NOR COMPLETE. IT MUST BE AN ONGOING AND INTENTIONAL PART OF OUR WORK, BOTH NOW AND IN THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE.

WE WERE AWARDED **TOP DEI OFFICER** BY THE NASHVILLE BUSINESS JOURNAL.

WE ATTENDED **117 HOURS** OF RACIAL EQUITY TRAINING.

WE DESIGNED AND IMPLEMENTED THE CITY'S 1ST **BUDGET EQUITY TOOL**.

WE CREATED FOUR **EQUITY DASHBOARDS**.

WE ADDED AN **EQUITY LENS** TO THE CAPITAL SPENDING PLAN.

WE USED THE POWER OF THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS TO **EMBED EQUITY INTO POLICY CHANGES**.

WE LAUNCHED A **COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE** FOR DEI PRACTITIONERS AND CHAMPIONS.

WE WERE AWARDED A **COMMUNITY IMPACT GRANT** BY LIVING CITIES.

WE LED **20 DEPARTMENTS** IN EQUITY ENGAGEMENT SESSIONS.

WE COMPLETED AN **INCLUSION CONTINUUM ASSESSMENT** OF METRO DEPARTMENTS.

WE PARTICIPATED IN THE **BLOOMBERG LEADING CITY PROCUREMENT REFORM PROGRAM**.

WE WERE SELECTED TO JOIN THE **HUNT INSTITUTE'S INAUGURAL DEI OFFICERS NETWORK**.

WHAT'S NEXT?

**WHAT LISTENING, GLEANING, QUESTIONING,
CAPTURING, CHALLENGING, CULTIVATING,
AND PRESERVING HAVE WE YET TO DO?**



