

Metro | Meeting minutes

Meeting: Equity Strategy Advisory Committee
Date: Wednesday, Feb. 26, 2014
Time: 3 to 5 p.m.
Place: Metro Regional Center, Room 270, 600 NE Grand Ave, Portland, 97232
Purpose: Discussion and approval on definition of equity; update from Baseline Workgroup

Attendees

Equity strategy advisory committee	Rey España, Vice Chair; Philip Wu, Julia Meier, Ben Duncan, Virginia Nguyen, Betty Dominguez, Daniel Vázquez, Pam Treece
Metro	Molly Vogt, Pietro Ferrari, Pam Phan, Cassie Salinas, Valerie Cuevas
Guests	Meg Merrick, Portland State University; Cat Goughnour, Urban League of Portland; Andrew Riley, Center for Intercultural Organizing

Absent

Carl Talton, Chair; Sydney Webb, Kirsten Kilchenstein, Judi Martin, Joseph Berezinskiy

Welcome and announcements

Rey España called the meeting to order and welcomed guests from the baseline workgroup, Molly Vogt, Cat Goughnour, Andrew Riley and Meg Merrick.

Pietro Ferrari announced to the committee that the schedule presentation by the Equity Strategy Program at MPAC has been postponed from Feb. 26 to a future date to be determined.

Pietro also reported on a new initiative to organize a series of presentations by communities of color to Metro Council, senior leaders and staff in partnership with the Coalition of Communities of Color on the “Unsettling Profile” study on disparities in Multnomah County and engage in a dialog related to the Equity Strategy. The Advisory Committee will be invited to participate once the format, dates and times are established;

Pietro also talked about The 2014 Governing for Racial Equity Conference which will be held in Portland March 25-26. As part of this, Metro’s Equity program has organized a town hall conversation with Professor John Powell, one of the conference speakers, to talk about equity, Diversity and Inclusion with Metro’s staff, Council to which the Advisory Committee has been invited to join.

Equity draft definition discussion and approval

Background

Pietro Ferrari reviewed the participatory process the committee has gone through the last several months to arrive at the draft definition for committee vote today:

- Completed “Defining Equity: a Report on Best Practices and An Analysis of Common Themes” by Elizabeth Hooker, Oregon Fellow working for the Equity Strategy program. (Sept. 30, 2013)
 - 15 definitions studied
 - 5 Common themes: Everyone; Prosperity; Access; Barriers; Intentionality
 - 5 message frames: values, vision, challenge, opportunity and response
 - 4 Recommendations: draw from existing definitions; use unifying narrative; focus on institutional equity
- This report was presented to the Advisory Committee and the Senior Leadership team in September 2013.
- Approach and process defined (Oct. 28, 2013)
- Identified opportunities and challenges (Oct. 28, 2013)
- Defined values, vision, challenges, opportunity and response (Nov. 18, 2013)
- Selected preferred definitions of the Northwest Health Foundation and Coalition for Livable Futures as the basis. (Jan. 6, 2014)
- First working definition drafted by staff with additional academic feedback from *Dr. Larry Wallack*, PSU. (Jan. 29, 2014)
- Joint-subcommittee provided additional feedback and suggested edits to definition. (Feb. 10, 2014)
- Final working draft definition sent to Advisory Committee for approval. (Feb. 21, 2014)
- Approved definition and recommended to Martha Bennett. (Feb. 26, 2014)

Draft definition for committee consideration:

Our region is stronger when individuals and communities benefit from quality jobs, living wages, a strong economy, stable and affordable housing, safe and reliable transportation, a healthy environment, and resources that enhance our quality of life.

We recognize that we [as the regional government] have a shared responsibility as individuals within a community and communities within a region. Our future depends on the success of all, but avoidable inequities [disparities] [disproportionate impacts] in the distribution of resources and opportunities prevent everyone from realizing [pursuing] their full potential.

As the demographics of our region change and our population grows, Metro is well positioned with its programs, policies and services to create the conditions for everyone to participate and enjoy the benefits of making this a great place today and for generations to come.

The opening statement is to set a vision with specific aspirations that mirror the desired regional outcomes while being more specific than the term “vibrant communities” in ways that can be embraced region-wide. The problem statement portion reflects Metro language while accounting for individuals. The final paragraph is an invitation and collective call to action to established as the solution statement.

Discussion

Philip Wu opened committee discussion by asking for another word choice besides demographics, suggesting diversity instead. Demographics are a more academic and quantitative term and diversity is more qualitative and the committee should consider reader and general audience preference. Betty Dominguez replied that demographics actually guide policy decisions and would be stronger in this context; Daniel Vázquez agreed, adding that demographics indicate information that will require response.

Julia Meier agreed on the preference for the term demographics and also expressed concern over the sentence structure of the opening of the last paragraph as it incorrectly read that demographics drive Metro's position. Meg Merrick noted that demographics include population growth and Pietro Ferrari added that the sentence is meant to give a "seize the moment" feel because the region is changing so rapidly at this time. Ben Duncan agreed that change is a cause for Metro to reposition itself. Pam Treece suggested replacement language "as the population grows and changes". Julia Meier and other furthered the concept to make the first sentence of the third paragraph into two sentences to remedy the grammar implications.

Virginia Nguyen commented on the word choice presented in the second paragraph and reasoned in favor of "realizing" instead of "pursuing." Virginia Nguyen also called for stronger language to signal sharper intentionality of Metro in the last paragraph, offering up the word "committed" instead of "well positioned." Pam Treece called out Metro's role as a convener and charge to work with local jurisdictions suggesting verbiage be added to acknowledge that collaborative role. Rey España replied that he viewed this statement as relating to Metro's direct services and not Metro's collaborative responsibilities. Pam Treece responded that while Metro is involved in providing some direct services, there should also be a nod to Metro's success being tied to partnership with local communities. Pam Treece noted that the phrase in the last paragraph "the conditions" connoted an all-encompassing role that is beyond Metro's direct services and authority. At this suggestion and agreed by the committee, the word "the" was removed to avoid any sweeping implications beyond Metro's direct services or collaborative role with local jurisdictions.

The committee proceeded in editing the original statement on the spot to incorporate the suggestions of word choice the committee members made leading to a final working definition.

Consensus decision

The committee approved by unanimous consensus the following draft definition of equity:

Our region is stronger when individuals and communities benefit from quality jobs, living wages, a strong economy, stable and affordable housing, safe and reliable transportation, a healthy environment, and resources that enhance our quality of life.

We share a responsibility as individuals within a community and communities within a region. Our future depends on the success of all, but avoidable inequities in the distribution of resources and opportunities prevent us from realizing our full potential.

Our region's population is growing and changing. Metro is committed with its programs, policies and services to create conditions which allow everyone to participate and enjoy the benefits of making this a great place today and for generations to come.

Baseline Workgroup presentation and discussion

Pietro Ferrari stated the purpose for inviting the Baseline Workgroup was twofold: (1) to provide the advisory committee an update on the status of the work being done on equity indicators by representatives of the workgroup; and (2) to establish a direct relationship between both the advisory committee and workgroup.

Pam Phan introduced Cat Goughnour from Urban League of Portland, Andrew Riley from Center for Intercultural Organizing, and Meg Merrick who will lead Portland State University's technical assistance to the Baseline Workgroup.

Cat Goughnour and Andrew Riley shared with the committee the approach to selecting indicators. The Baseline Workgroup has been organizing indicators using the themes of the 5 desired regional outcomes: vibrant communities, economic prosperity, safe and reliable transportation, leadership on climate change, and clean air and water. So far, most conversations have been iterative in nature, discussing indicators for their problem solving orientation, weighing trade-offs, balancing quantitative and qualitative indicators, seeking meaningful/systemic/goal-oriented rather than merely measuring indicators, and considering how indicators may be aggregated.

Additionally, indicators have been evaluated through racial justice and social determinates of health lenses. The Baseline Workgroup sought guidance from the advisory committee on applying these lenses. Andrew Riley shared that the approach to use the racial justice and social determinates of health lenses has been a layered, storytelling process in effort to not have anything in silo and to acknowledge how indicators affect one another. The goal of the social determinates of health lens is to make sure policy affects people's health lives. Cat Goughnour noted the Coalition of Communities of Color's and King County's research that has been used as a resource around understanding and calling out institutional racism in the indicators. This approach seeks to put race into the indicator work in a productive and forward looking way but specific so as not to be superseded.

Andrew Riley offered poverty level versus income over last generation as indicators that were being considered alongside one another. While poverty level is a singular point in time tied to federally set standards, income over last generation is more narrative. Ben Duncan asked more about how these indicators would be measured with an eye to wanted them to be feasibly to be measured on an ongoing basis and possibly transferrable to other jurisdictions. Cat Goughnour offered median family income as an alternative, asking the committee for more suggestions. Betty Dominguez noted that a generational look would be difficult with newer and growing populations. Ben Duncan and Julia Meier voiced support for the narrative approach the Baseline Workgroup has taken.

Meg Merrick shared some technical challenges in selecting indicators based on data available and at what level, like neighborhood or county level, and considering what data can be aggregated or

disaggregated. In a region experiencing dramatic demographic and geographic change over time, it may be that it will be recommended to Metro to carry out some its own unique data collection.

Philip Wu advised that the workgroup needs to be transparent about what is not known and make recommendations to collect the right data in the future. Ben Duncan added that the report should include what resources it will take to get the right data as well.

Cat Goughnour asked the committee for feedback as the workgroup looks at areas of high opportunities. Betty Dominguez shared that in HUD's efforts to break up concentrations of poverty there was also intentional break up of ethnic communities, which is not agreeable; equity should be more about bringing in opportunities and not breaking up communities.

Philip Wu asked for an example of a transportation indicator and the process to marry the two lenses to each desired regional outcome. Cat Goughnour offered the interrelation of income, education and housing. Philip Wu replied that these 2 lenses are really operating more like approaches rather than filters. Julia Meier and Pam Treece agreed, noting that a lens functions more like criteria and these two lenses of racial justice and social determinates of health intersect. Betty Dominguez, Ben Duncan and others emphasized the importance of keeping in mind a regional perspective and expression of the indicators in non-Portland centric ways, acknowledging the different needs and preferences of different communities. Pam Phan shared that the understanding of vibrant communities is very broad within the workgroup so as to avoid any Portland-centric views.

Pietro Ferrari reminded the committee of the work plan timeline and that the indicator reporting period and regularity will be determined by the advisory committee at a later date. The committee will also make recommendations to Metro's role as related to the selected indicators. Virginia Nguyen noted that it will be important to measure Metro's impact over time through the indicators.

Rey España asked if any other lenses did not make the cut. Cat Goughnour replied that the workgroup also considered public health, human rights and cultural rights but though those fit into the racial justice and social determinates of health lenses selected.

Pietro Ferrari, prompted by Rey España, clarified that the bulk of community engagement will come after indicator selection. The Baseline Workgroup will do limited community engagement to gather feedback in order to write the Equity Baseline Report, scheduled to be published in August. Then relationship mapping and defining Metro's role will lead into larger community engagement to expand the conversation beyond the workgroup's networks, specifically seeking engagement with communities not represented by the workgroup such as youth, elder, Native American, Slavic and disability communities. Rey España cautioned Metro to take the necessary time to do this process right and not rush work or be limited by timelines or contract terms. Ben Duncan shared Rey España's concern for the timeline commenting that film and marketing campaigns, such as Metro has done in the past, does not constitute community engagement and that dollars spent on such marketing could be better spent.

Julia Meier would like more touch points with the workgroup in order to be more helpful in giving feedback and asked the workgroup for examples of a couple specific indicators and how they

flowed through the selection process thus far to provide more clarity to the committee so they can communicate and defend the indicators later in the work plan. Betty Dominguez shared enthusiasm for examples of indicators but cautioned the committee from micromanaging the workgroup.

Next steps

Staff will seek more connection points between the advisory committee, steering committee and Baseline Workgroup, including publishing the advisory committee meeting times to the Baseline Workgroup.

The Baseline Workgroup will post examples of indicators working through the selection process for the advisory committee.

Pietro Ferrari thanked Pam Phan for all her work on behalf of Metro. Pam Phan will resign her position at Metro effective March 1.

The draft definition of equity is scheduled to be presented by Martha Bennett at Metro Council Works Session, March 13.

The next advisory committee meeting is March 17, 3 to 5 p.m.

MEETING TOPIC

FROM

DATE