

A RESOLUTION DIRECTING THE COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR TO IMPLEMENT  
THE POLICIES AND DIRECTIVES AS DESCRIBED IN THE WASHTENAW  
COUNTY EQUITY POLICY

WASHTENAW COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

SEPTEMBER 5, 2018

WHEREAS, Washtenaw County is one of the wealthiest in Michigan, with high incomes and high rankings as one of the most economically vibrant, educated, healthy, and best places to live in the state; and,

WHEREAS, there are also some stark disparities for Washtenaw County residents; and

WHEREAS, Washtenaw County is ranked 80 out of 83 Michigan counties for income inequality in the 2015 Robert Wood Johnson Foundation County Health Rankings; and

WHEREAS, life expectancy for white residents of Washtenaw County is thirteen years higher than for black residents; and

WHEREAS, without intentional intervention, inequitable outcomes linked to race, socio-economic status and other identities will persist; and

WHEREAS, equity is the fair and just distribution of the resources and opportunities needed to achieve equitable outcomes for everyone in a community; and

WHEREAS, equity is reached through the systemic implementation of policies, practices, attitudes and cultural messages that create and reinforce equitable outcomes for all people; and

WHEREAS, work to dismantle racial, economic and health inequity needs to occur on three distinct levels - individual, institutional and structural; and

WHEREAS, staff has also consulted with the Government Alliance on Racial Equity (GARE) for best practices from other local governments who have started changing their policies and practices to support equity in hiring and over-all decision-making; and

WHEREAS, while the County has shown strong efforts in moving forward with the One Community: Advancing Racial Equity in Washtenaw County initiative, there is clear need for a Policy to endorse the efforts and operationalize the commitment in all operations, services, budgets, policies and programs.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners approves an Equity Policy including an Equity Office.

# Washtenaw County Equity Policy

## Table of Contents

EQUITY POLICY	2
SECTION 1- DEFINITIONS	2
SECTION 2- PURPOSE	3
SECTION 3- INDIVIDUAL CHANGE	4
SECTION 4- INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE	4
SECTION 5- STRUCTURAL CHANGE	4
SECTION 6- EFFECTIVE DATE	4

## EQUITY POLICY

A POLICY in which the County declares its focus on issues of equity, particularly racial equity when considering the following (but not limited to) aspects of County government: services, policies and procedures, hiring and retention processes (i.e. recruitment, promotion), budgeting, training, and community engagement; to provide for the creation of a Racial Equity Office, who reports directly to the County Administrator; to spearhead the charge of the policy; to address inequities that exist within our County; to ultimately make the County an equitable place to live and work for all residents.

The Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners hereby ordains.

### SECTION 1- DEFINITIONS

- A. "Equity" means fair and just opportunities and outcomes for all people.
- B. "Inequity" means differences in well-being that disadvantage one group in favor of another. These differences are systematic, patterned and unfair, and can be changed. Inequities are not random; they are caused by past and current decisions, systems of power and privilege, policies and the implementation of those policies.
- C. "Race" a social construct that artificially divides people into distinct groups based on characteristics such as physical appearance (particularly color), ancestral heritage, cultural affiliation, cultural history, ethnic classification, and the social, economic and political needs of a society at a given period of time. Racial categories subsume ethnic groups (Kellogg Foundation Glossary)
- D. "Racial Equity" means the development of policies, practices, and strategic investments to reverse racial disparity trends, eliminate institutional racism, impact structural racism and ensure that outcome and opportunities for all people are no longer predictable by race.
- E. "Racial Equity Office" means an office whose responsibility is leading efforts throughout county government with regard to issues of equity, particularly racial equity, and fulfillment of the goal of the policy, utilizing racial equity frameworks and various tools (e.g., racial equity action plans) when warranted. This office will have adequate staff and resources to be able to advance equity work.
- F. "Racial Equity Action Plan" means a developed, comprehensive plan to incorporate and embed racial equity principles and strategies into operations, programs, service,

policies, and community engagement. Departmental Racial Equity Action Plans will be approved annually by the Board of Commissioners.

- G. “Racial Equity Framework” means a developed, comprehensive approach and understanding of racial equity principles and strategies that not only understands but articulates the differences and impacts between individual, institutional, and structural racism as well as implicit and explicit bias.
- H. “Individual Racism” means pre-judgment, bias, or discrimination by an individual based on race, can be both explicit and implicit.
- I. “Institutional Racism” means policies, practices, and procedures that work better for some members of a community (white residents) than others (communities of color).
- J. “Structural Racism” means the history and current reality of institutional racism across institutions, both public and private, which combine to create a system that negatively impacts communities of color.

## **SECTION 2- PURPOSE**

The purpose of this Policy is to declare that Washtenaw County will intentionally and purposely address issues of inequity within our institution and County. Many current inequities are sustained by historical legacies, structures, and systems that repeat patterns of exclusion. Without the intentionality stated in this Policy, inequitable outcomes linked to race, socio-economic status, and other identities will persist. The charge of the Policy is for all aspects of county government to address and implement strategies that target inequities that exist within the County organization and throughout our County, resulting in equitable outcomes for all residents. The Policy requires development of an evaluation process and accountability systems informed by reviewing metrics on an ongoing basis, and will include biennial reviews and evaluations of progress by a qualified outside entity (e.g., GARE). Further, this Policy creates a Racial Equity Office, whose purpose is to address these inequities and to work toward a more equitable County. This Office will utilize proven tools to do this work (e.g., strategic planning, budget analysis tools, results-based accountability). It is through the declaration of purpose and the creation of a Racial Equity Office that the County strives to achieve equity for all people.

## **SECTION 3- INDIVIDUAL CHANGE**

All County staff and officials have a responsibility in implementing this Equity Policy. In service of that goal, all current County employees as well as members of the Board of

Commissioners and members of County boards, commissions, and committees will participate in related racial equity-focused training. Training will be ongoing for all County staff and will be suggested for all newly elected and appointed commissioners and office holders, and required for board and committee members. In addition to training, individuals will be instructed to incorporate behavioral changes to reach the goal of equity. Finally, that incorporation can happen through, but not limited to, individual contracts and work plans.

#### **SECTION 4- INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE**

Each department shall establish a Racial Equity Action Plan which will serve as the template for said department to reach the ultimate goal of advancing equity both within the department but also through the department's work in the community. Those Racial Equity Action Plans will include short and long term goals and will be approved annually by the Board of Commissioners and made available to the public. Departments will engage in a review of existing policies, procedures, and budget allocations for their impact on equity, particularly racial equity. Additionally, working groups, teams, and affiliation groups will be developed in service of this work. Finally, a community engagement process that is co-created with the community will be developed to bridge the equity work of County government and the residents it serves. Accountability systems and transparency processes will be incorporated into county-wide policy and programming.

#### **SECTION 5- STRUCTURAL CHANGE**

Board of Commissioner's decisions and resolutions will include a racial equity review. (This is not necessary but may be very applicable for non-binding resolutions.) Additionally, all strategic planning, goal-setting and budgeting decisions must include an equity review and analysis. The County will continue to work on, develop, and implement a county-wide engagement strategy to support recruitment, growth and development of diverse boards and committees.

#### **SECTION 6- EFFECTIVE DATE**

This Policy shall become effective on the 5<sup>th</sup> day of September, 2018.