

2023-2024 Race, Equity & Inclusion Working Group Meeting Summary

Friday, June 21, 2024 | 1:00 pm - 3:00 pm

Meeting recording available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wiX5QWZSfTU>

Working Group Outcomes:

- Build understanding and support among key stakeholders and Board members for SACOG's Racial Equity Action Plan implementation
- Develop regional equity indicators that SACOG will collect and report on a regular basis
- Better understand and define the key components of meaningful community engagement processes
- Provide recommendations to the SACOG board on assessing equity impacts of proposed policy decisions
- Based on REAP progress reports, make recommendations to the SACOG board of any updates to the REAP to increase its effectiveness and impact

Agenda Packet available at:

<https://sacog.primegov.com/Portal/Meeting?meetingTemplateId=5060>

Pre-reading: Race, Equity & Inclusion Working Group Member Feedback -- progress toward outcomes (attached); Racial Equity Action Plan Progress Report for June 2024 (attached); Presentation of regional equity indicators (attached); Tables of new regional equity indicators and full monitoring program (attached); Draft Funding Round Equity Framework (attached); Presentation on Funding Round (attached)

Meeting Attendees: Chair Rick Jennings, Aimee Barnes, Pamela Bulahan, Lakhvir Ghag, Jill Gayaldo, Maria Chacon Kniestedt, Marco Lizarraga, Raul Martinez, Michael Saragosa, William Walker

Absent: Woodrow Deloria, Rich Desmond, Martha Guerrero, Shon Harris, Elisa Herrera, Kendra Lewis, Darren Suen, Christine Tien

Meeting Summary

June 21, 2024, was the sixth meeting of the 2023-2024 Race, Equity, and Inclusion Working Group.

Chair Jennings led the working group in a review of their shared values and community agreements.

Review of Working Group Progress and Look Ahead

Kacey Lizon, SACOG staff, gave an overview of the day's meeting and the rest of the year. Lizon re-capped the origin of the REI Working Group in 2020, the creation and SACOG board's adoption of a racial equity statement of change and commitment and racial equity action plan.

The following also occurred after the working group's March meeting:

- SACOG staff surveyed working group to ask if they felt the group was making progress toward their five outcomes by the end of 2024. The survey responses showed that on average, working group members believe they are on track to achieving their outcomes by the end of the year.

Working group members asked whether survey comments were helpful, and staff reported that comments were indeed helpful and used to shape the agenda for this June meeting.

- An ad hoc group of three working group members met with SACOG staff after the March working group meeting to give more input on a community-based organization (CBO) outreach and engagement plan. The plan builds on the first phase of CBO outreach for SACOG's 2025 Blueprint update. Staff shared an outreach program in the style of an academy, that would build knowledge of SACOG's work and relationships with and among interested CBOs. Based on feedback from the ad hoc group that several CBO-engagement efforts are already underway, staff decided not to pursue an academy program next year. Rather, the next best time to launch the program could be at the beginning of the next Blueprint update.

Lizon previewed the focus of the last two working group meetings of the year:

- The September meeting will include a full review of two years of implementation progress of the Racial Equity Action Plan.
- The November meeting will include formation of recommendations to SACOG on what, if any, updates should be made to the Racial Equity Action Plan to increase its effectiveness and impact.

Report Out and Feedback on Regional Equity Indicators

A goal of the Racial Equity Action Plan is for "the SACOG board to maintain consistent engagement with the racial equity action plan implementation process." To accomplish this, the action plan includes an objective that "by September 2024, SACOG will formalize a process that the board will use to monitor regional racial equity indicators such as economic, demographic, land use, transportation, and housing outcomes in order to track the impact of the racial equity action plan." The working group is tasked with providing input and feedback on the development of regional racial equity indicators that SACOG will annually monitor and report. The working group initially provided input on regional equity indicators last year (June 2023), and then an ad hoc group met with SACOG staff to give feedback on a refined list of indicators.

Garett Ballard-Rosa, SACOG staff, reported back to the working group on indicators that can be tracked by race/ethnicity, income, and geography. Danielle DeRuiter-Williams, working group facilitator, asked the group whether the equity indicators are broad enough given the diversity across the region, and uniqueness of local context.

Raul Martinez, working group member who participated in the ad hoc group with staff, reported out from the ad hoc meeting with the following advice: link indicators to the racial equity action plan to keep us focused on the goals, test hypotheses, and ask questions; prioritize indicators we can actually track and align with the research questions; when collecting numeric data, resist the temptation to characterize the information, because indicators don't always tell you why something is happening; remember other organizations are also tracking indicators, so study their successes and challenges.

The working group had the following comments on the indicators:

- Apply a racial equity lens to help frame the steps of data gathering and analysis.

- Given that SACOG is thinking about moving large regional indicators—from the equity statement, “race will no longer be a predictor of life outcomes”—what are smaller indicators, or incremental measurements that could be tracked?
 - There are many. For example, in the field of workforce development, unemployment numbers, income, and homeownership by different groups are all ways of measuring progress.
- Look for disparities in the data to help identify gaps for different communities that might be underserved.
- Also look for data that can be used to track progress toward our vision.
- Both quantitative and qualitative data are important: quantitative data can very clearly show disparities or problems (e.g., when there is no change in an indicator over time); qualitative data (people’s experiences) can provide nuance that quantitative data can’t always show (e.g., maybe a community is meeting a standard for housing supply or transit access, but how do the residents feel about the quality of those things?)
- Could this working group create performance-measured goals, such as “by X date, achieve Y goal, as measured by Z indicators” to help keep focused on what and why we’re measuring indicators? Or could this group weigh in to shape the reporting of the data? Narrative information about the data also helps to illustrate what the data mean to real people.

Review of Draft Equity Framework for Regional Funding Program

The development of an equity framework for SACOG’s Regional Funding Program is a very early step toward two goals in the Racial Equity Action Plan: a program goal to “increase funding for programs and projects that prioritize REI and/or specifically engage underrepresented and underserved communities in the SACOG region” and a board practices goal that “the SACOG board includes racial equity impacts in its triple bottom line decisions.” The specific first step with this equity framework for the Regional Funding Program is to bring structural, procedural, and distributional equity into one of SACOG’s core programs, the Regional Funding Program.

Chris Dougherty, SACOG staff, presented an overview of the Regional Funding Program, including the federal and state requirements that govern the funding. Dougherty then walked through the intention and structure of the equity framework that is proposed for use in evaluating applications to the Regional Funding Program. Because this region is home to a diversity of communities, the equity framework includes the flexibility for agencies to define areas of equity if they do not currently exist in standard geographic definitions of disadvantaged communities. Staff asked the working group whether the framework leaves room for the local expertise and experience to shine.

Dougherty concluded by asking the working group whether the questions in the framework are the right ones to ask, and whether there are blind spots in the framework.

The working group members had the following comments on the equity framework:

- Appreciation for the thoughtful questions in the Community Engagement section.
- Appreciation for the questions in the Project Benefits & Impacts section, which are the ways to apply a racial equity lens.

- When it comes to community engagement, it must be structured differently depending on the outcomes you're looking for, so consider how customized it is when scoring or applying weighting to scores.
- Make sure the framework doesn't narrowly focus on where the concentrations of minority populations live because that alone does not solve an inequity. Geographic, social, economic context all matter. For example: homeownership is a path to generational wealth. Minorities have historically been excluded from that path. Concentrating resources into communities where minorities are concentrated, without considering that people may want to move to access greater opportunity, could be a disservice to the goal of getting more minorities on the path to homeownership.
- Provide examples to applicants of exemplary community engagement, inclusive communication, non-traditional partner organizations with community connections (this could be particularly important where there are not obvious CBOs serving a particular community).
- This framework encourages communities to examine how they are doing community engagement, which is an evolution.
- These are the same types of questions that federal and state granting agencies will be asking in their grant applications.

Closing

Working Group members shared announcements. Chair Jennings thanked all guest speakers, Working Group members, and staff for their contributions to the meeting and reminded the Working Group of the next meeting.

Next meeting dates in 2024 (all meetings will be in person):

September 20, 2024, 1:00 pm – 3:00 pm

November 1, 2024, 1:00 pm – 3:00 pm