

# Three-year Equity Report

2020-2023





The purpose of this report is to look back at the last three years of Washington County's equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) initiative. This journey began when Washington County's Board of Commissioners acknowledged the need to infuse equity and inclusion principles and values into all of the organization's policies, practices and service delivery.

The Board of County Commissioners worked with both internal and external stakeholders to develop a comprehensive document that laid out a clear expectation to guide the organization's ongoing equity efforts. That culminated in the February 25, 2020, Board approval of the Equity Resolution to eliminate barriers and create opportunities to ensure that Washington County delivered equitable outcomes for its employees and community. The newly created Office of Equity, Inclusion and Community Engagement (OEICE) is unifying the County's equity work through a strategic action plan, currently being updated in three-year increments.

# Table of Contents

<b>FEBRUARY 2020 EQUITY RESOLUTION</b> .....	6
<b>SEVEN COMMITMENTS OF THE 2020 EQUITY RESOLUTION</b>	
<b>STRENGTHENING EQUITY:</b> Enhancing Existing County Programs and Policies .....	8-10
<b>LEARNING:</b> Understanding Inequity in County Programs and Policies.....	11
<b>LEADERSHIP:</b> Continuing to make the County More Equitable to Marginalized Groups .....	16-20
<b>SPENDING PUBLIC MONEY:</b> Procurement Equity .....	21-22
<b>CREATING AN EQUITY OFFICE:</b> Office of Equity, Inclusion and Community Engagement .....	23-24
<b>EQUITABLE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT:</b> Creating Equitable Workforce Development Programs in the community and in County Career Advancement .....	25-26
<b>STRUCTURING FOR OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE:</b> Forging Equitable Organizational Models and Approaches .....	27-28
<b>CONCLUSION</b> .....	29



# INTRODUCTION: JOURNEY TO A RESOLUTION



This report highlights the priorities and commitments over the last three years to deliver more equitable outcomes for our diverse community, while also noting actions taken on this equity journey. While much work is still to be done, this provides a moment in time look at progress to date.

The County's<sup>1</sup> equity journey began in earnest with the Board's unanimous adoption of the 2020 Equity Resolution but the journey to the resolution was several years in the making.

In 2018, Washington County provided funding for the [Coalition of Communities of Color's report](#) *Leading with Race: Research Justice in Washington County*. This report represented the culmination of two years of research, engagement and relationship building in Washington County. Among other things, the report found that residents of color, on average, experience higher rates of poverty and unemployment, and have lower median incomes than the county's white, non-Hispanic residents.

In 2019, the Washington County Board of Commissioners – Chair Kathryn Harrington, District 1 Commissioner Dick Schouten, District 2 Commissioner Pam Treece, District 3 Commissioner Roy Rogers and District 4 Commissioner Jerry Willey – hired Espousal Strategies, a local minority-owned firm leading EDI work, to provide the coaching, assessment and technical assistance needed to address the racial disparities and inequities that were highlighted in *Leading with Race*. An intensive, multi-year process to support this goal included internal strategic work and external stakeholder engagement.

The stakeholder engagement process coalesced among the Board and key leaders within the community during six Work Sessions and Roundtable discussions. During these meetings the Board discussed Espousal Strategies' findings, themes and input. Community input was derived from two in-person public forums with leaders of culturally specific, community-based organizations, along with an online survey that was open for feedback for four weeks. As a result of this preliminary work, several elements of the resolution began to form in the fall of 2019. Following this, the Board adopted the final version of the Equity Resolution in February 2020.

This foundational document marks a significant commitment of the County to strengthen equity in its programs, practices and policies. It directed the County administrator to create an Office of Equity, stand up an internal leadership council, appoint an external advisory council, improve purchasing and procurement policies and develop a workforce pipeline to improve opportunities for communities of color.

This report outlines the commitments of the Equity Resolution and documents actions and efforts to date. Like any organization wishing to pursue a more equitable approach to its practices, Washington County's journey is in its early stages. This journey will have no true ending point but will require ongoing commitment in order to achieve measurable milestones toward more equitable outcomes for the community.

<sup>1</sup> From this point forward, use of the term "County" refers to the Washington County government. Other references used will be explicit, such as the Washington County community or the county territory.

# SHARED STATE-COUNTY SERVICES

Serving the Citizens of Oregon

## HUMAN SERVICES

Child Protection  
State Hospital

Behavioral Health Services  
Civil Commitment  
Child & Family Services  
Disability Services  
Early Learning  
Environmental Health  
Foster Care  
Healthcare  
Housing Services  
Mental Health Services  
Public Health Services  
Senior Services  
Substance Abuse Prevention  
Substance Abuse Treatment

## PUBLIC SAFETY

Appellate Courts  
Department of Justice  
State Police  
State Prisons

Community Corrections  
County Law Libraries  
Court Security  
District Attorney Services  
Drug Policy  
Emergency Services  
Juvenile Services  
Marine Patrol Services  
Medical Examiner  
Trial and Specialty Courts

## NATURAL RESOURCES

State Lands  
State Parks  
Water Regulation  
Wildlife Regulation

Agriculture  
County Forest Trust Lands  
County Parks  
Endangered Species  
Federal Land Policy  
Land Use (resource lands)  
Ocean & Coastal Policy  
Pesticide Control  
Predator Control  
Private & State Forests  
Watermaster  
Weed Control  
Wetlands  
Wildfires

## TRANSPORTATION & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

State Fair  
State Highways  
State Parks

Broadband  
Building Code & Inspections  
County Fairs  
Energy Development  
Engineering  
Highway & Road System  
Infrastructure Development  
Land Use (non resource lands)  
Ports  
Railroads  
Telecommunications  
Transit  
Workforce Development

## GOVERNANCE & REVENUE

Administrative Services  
Contracting & Procurement

Economic Development  
Elections  
Extension Service  
Fees  
Finance & Investment  
Insurance & Liability  
Labor Relations  
PERS  
Public Records & Meetings  
Revenue & Taxation  
Veteran Services

## STATE-PROVIDED SERVICES

## STATE/COUNTY-SHARED SERVICES

## COUNTY-PROVIDED SERVICES

County Road System  
Recycling  
Solid Waste Management  
Surveying

County Parks  
County Property  
Soil & Water Conservation  
Vector Control

Animal Control  
County Jails  
Justice Courts  
Search & Rescue  
Sheriff Patrol

Administrative Services  
County Library  
County Museums  
County Service Districts  
County Governance  
Document Recording

Disclaimer: Please note this list is not all inclusive.

| Last updated August 2022

# FEBRUARY 2020 EQUITY RESOLUTION

The February 2020 Equity Resolution acknowledges the county's diverse population, and the barriers that exist for many to fully participate in the region's economic and cultural prosperity. It affirms the County government's commitment to dismantling long-standing systems, programs, policies and practices that have adversely impacted people of color and other marginalized groups. The resolution defines equity, from a public-sector point of view, as follows:

**Equity:** The result of fairness and justice in the creation and delivery of public policy. Equity in Washington County will exist when every county resident participates fully in the region's economic vitality, has access to the County's services and other resources, and has the opportunity to reach their full potential.

This report focuses on the seven commitments of the equity resolution and actions the County is taking to fulfill these commitments as they guide the organization's work. Additional details are included in this report. Here is a brief overview:

## **1** **STRENGTHENING EQUITY:** **Enhancing Existing County Programs and Policies**

The first commitment is to foster, support and strengthen equity in the County government's programs, practices and procedures.

## **2** **LEARNING:** **Understanding Inequity in County Programs and Policies**

The second commitment is to continue to develop understanding of inequities that County government policies, programs and practices may cause.

## **3** **LEADERSHIP:** **Continuing to make the County More Equitable to Marginalized Groups**

The third commitment is to continue to provide leadership to make Washington County government more equitable and inclusive to all marginalized groups.



## 4 SPENDING PUBLIC MONEY: Procurement Equity

The fourth commitment is to ensure that public dollars are spent in a way that maximizes benefit for the community and provides equitable access for all County government utilized suppliers and contractors.

## 5 CREATING AN EQUITY OFFICE: Office of Equity, Inclusion and Community Engagement

The fifth commitment is to allocate and provide the resources needed to advance equity, diversity and inclusion in Washington County government services and ensure the County's new Office of Equity, Inclusion and Community Engagement has resources to achieve the goals of this resolution.

## 6 EQUITABLE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT: Providing Economic Empowerment and Career Advancement

The sixth commitment is to develop workforce training programs that provide economic empowerment and career advancement opportunities for County government employees and the community.

## 7 STRUCTURING FOR OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE: Forging Equitable Organizational Models and Approaches

The seventh commitment is to structure the County government organization to model services, practices and engagement approaches that equitably meets the needs of all residents.



# SEVEN COMMITMENTS OF THE 2020 EQUITY RESOLUTION



## 1 STRENGTHENING EQUITY: Enhancing Existing County Programs and Policies

Washington County's equity efforts date back to the early 1990s in many forms: departmental diversity committees, a bilingual pay policy and federal compliance for grant funding. Building on that foundation, the Equity Resolution demonstrated the County's full commitment to strengthen equity in all its policies and practices going forward. Below are examples of how these existing programs and policies have been strengthened in the last three years.

### **Title VI of the Civil Rights Act: Assessment and Improving of Policies**

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act provides that no person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance.

With the formation and funding of the Office of Equity, Inclusion and Community Engagement, one of its first priorities was to assess efforts and create cohesive countywide Title VI compliance. Below are three policies adopted by the Board over the last three years to improve Title VI compliance and three ways since the Equity Resolution where departments have taken the initiative to remove barriers to participation in county services.



## Board-adopted Policies

- [Limited English Assistance Policy](#) (adopted 11/17/2020). This policy codified efforts to prioritize multi-lingual inclusion. This includes making interpretation services available to community members at Board meetings in any language upon request. The Board has proactively provided live interpretation in both Spanish and American Sign Language (ASL) at each of its Town Hall meetings.
- [Equitable Community Engagement Policy](#) (adopted 09/20/2022). This policy establishes a foundation for best practices in equitable community engagement when working with the public to assist them in participating in local decision-making.
- [Fair Treatment, Equal Protection and Nondiscrimination Policy](#) (adopted 06/27/2023). This policy codified efforts in these areas and directed county staff to create procedures for filing complaints.
- [Access for People with Disabilities Policy](#) (adopted 06/27/2023). This policy set the priority of improving access to county services for residents with disabilities and directed staff to create procedures for filing complaints.

## Departmental Initiatives

- Washington County Cooperative Library Service (WCCLS) embraced this policy by expanding access to materials in multiple languages.
- The Department of Housing Services expanded language accessibility services and culturally responsive programming for community-based organizations serving Black, Indigenous, Latino/a/x, immigrants and refugees and other people of color.
- The Facilities, Fleet and Parks Department installed Washington County campus-wide signage informing the public of language access resources and ways to report Title VI issues.



## Internal Equity Groups

Internal departmental diversity and inclusion groups have existed at Washington County since at least the early 1990s. Following the 2020 Equity Resolution adoption, the approach to these internal groups and committees was made more formal and coordinated across the entire County organization. These groups – which are organized under the Equity Leadership Council (ELC) – have been charged to assess all existing County internal policies and to build additional organizational capacity to ensure that the County is serving its diverse workforce using best practices. Board and County Administrator consideration of the ELC’s recommendations is the last step in this process so that the organization can carry forward the seven commitments of the Equity Resolution, including the positive impact that this internal-focused equity work can have externally to benefit the entire community. The County is making these improvements as swiftly as possible while also delivering services in real-time to a growing and diverse population.

### Equity-specific Work Groups

Washington County has a long track record of creating workgroups to advance equity work, from its initial bilingual pay deferential committee in 1996, to the Board’s recognition by way of proclamations of cultural and heritage months and holidays. Below are some examples of equity work groups.

- **Reimagine Oregon Workgroup**

Reimagine Oregon is a community-led organization that emerged following the murder of George Floyd and others due to police use of force. The group demands that the Black community see meaningful change, better outcomes and accountability for past promises not delivered. The Equity Office established a Black-centered internal workgroup in 2021 to best inform the County Board as the Board considered responding to the demands of Reimagine Oregon.

- **Cultural Heritage Month Proclamations and Celebrations**

Internal heritage month workgroups were organized to create learning opportunities for staff by organizing activities to highlight multi-cultural communities and employees and to highlight their diversity.

- **Culturally Specific Learning Opportunities**

Washington County has provided learning opportunities for employees including:

- Five Oaks Museum’s This Is Kalapuyan Land presentation from Steph Littlebird Fogel of the Grand Ronde, Kalapuya.
- Israel Pastrana’s five-part series on the History of Latinos in Washington County
- Bi-weekly Spanish conversation lunches
- Courageous Conversations book discussion group
- Women’s Networking Group’s Educational Speakers



## 2 LEARNING: Understanding Inequity in County Programs and Policies

Washington County values being a learning organization. Building a leading-edge, mission-focused organization that better serves the community is the aim of an internal initiative called [Design the Future](#). This effort recognizes that one of the most important aspects of excellence in service delivery is integrating equity principles into the decision-making process. Below are some recent examples of actions taken based on those learnings.

### Data Equity

Understanding and tracking inequity is difficult without comprehensive program and population data related to access, quality of services and outcomes. The County continues to improve data collection, and in turn, is using that expanded research to implement solutions. This includes:

- **Equal Opportunity Employment Plan and Workforce Secession Data Update:** The combined efforts of the Human Resources Department and Office of Equity, Inclusion and Community Engagement identified a significant gap in Asian American hiring compared to the potentially available job pool in the community based on U.S. Census Bureau population data. Informed by these disparities, Human Resources and the Office of Equity are working in partnership with all departments within the organization to pursue goals set out in the County's Equal Opportunity Employment Plan. The plan calls for improving employment opportunity systems, establishing diversity recruitment best practices, establishing diversity retention best practices and connecting workforce development to the equal employment opportunity. In addition to these efforts, the County is also forging the organization's new Affirmative Action Plan to close gaps in hiring based on race and ethnicity.
- **Data Equity Project:** This project is creating a comprehensive organization-wide data standardization and collection practice. It supports consistent approaches toward data gathering and analysis, and provides a venue for bringing equity considerations forward and informing the County's equity work.



## Budget Equity Tool

For the last two years, Washington County has been explicitly assessing equity considerations across its entire annual budget. Using a model developed nationally by the Government Alliance on Racial Equity (GARE), the County is following a set of equity-focused strategies and questions – called the Budget Equity Tool (BET) – to drive informed and targeted decision-making about the allocation of resources. The BET helps departments consider equity in the formulation of budget proposals by prompting responses to a set of questions about investments that improve equitable access to county services. All departments were provided training and technical assistance to use the BET. The resulting Budget Equity Analysis has helped inform the Board and County departments during the budget process. Examples of how centering equity in this way include:

- **Library Services:** The tool was used by Washington County Cooperative Library Services (WCCLS) to prioritize access for community members. The budget equity analysis also allowed for prioritization of these equity-focused projects during the organization-wide process of identifying potential budget cuts in 2023.
- **Land Use and Transportation:** This department hired an equity policy analyst to help ensure that investments and projects matched equity priorities.

## Legislative Equity Tool

The Equity Office and the Government Relations Team worked together to create a Legislative Equity Tool to ensure that equity is at the forefront of the County's legislative agenda development. The tool helps analyze the proposed agenda so that it centers equity before being brought to the Board for consideration.

## Equity and Inclusion Trainings

Foundational change requires continued training and attention to affect real and lasting impact. Equity trainings help the Board, leadership and staff learn about systematic racism and structural inequities and how such realities affect the world around them. The County has invested in training that highlights the importance of equity in service delivery. Examples include:

- **Technology of Participation (ToP) consensus-building facilitation trainings** for Equity Leadership Council members. ToP is a powerful collection of structured facilitation methods that transform the way groups think, talk and work together. They enable highly energized, inclusive and meaningful group collaboration that leads to successful outcomes.
- **21-Day Racial Equity Habit-Building Challenge<sup>®</sup>** for Black History Month. Employees were invited to select from a list of articles, videos and podcasts, curated by the American Bar Association for the premier of the Challenge, about becoming more aware, compassionate, constructive and engaged people in the quest for racial equity. Over a three-week period – roughly the amount of time it takes for adults to form a new habit – participating employees were asked to share their observations and reflections in a digital chat room. Originally developed by diversity expert Dr. Eddie Moore, Jr., the Challenge sought to increase awareness within the County of the impacts of structural racism.
- **The Sheriff's Office** engaged in equity trainings and discussions in 2021 and contracted with local equity specialists to create new trainings starting in 2022.

## EDI Educational Opportunities

Engaging with community partners strengthens and expands education and training opportunities. Washington County offers memberships for staff in organizations such as Government Alliance on Racial Equity (GARE) and Oregon Latinos in Local Government. By accessing nationally recognized organizations and interacting with other local government experts, County employees are forging a better understanding and appreciation of their role in the organization's equity work.

- **Land Acknowledgement Workgroup**

- The County convened a diverse workgroup of Indigenous and Native American community partners to help develop a Land Acknowledgement statement. This effort resulted in the adoption of the county [Land Acknowledgement statement](#) (01/04/2022). The Office of Equity, Inclusion and Community Engagement is in the process of developing an implementation plan for appropriate use of the land acknowledgement statement that considers recommendations from the Indigenous workgroup and provides training and guidance for staff. Currently, the Land Acknowledgement is read at the beginning of Board sponsored Town Hall meetings, among other settings.



## Culturally Specific Partnerships and Networks

Expanding direct engagement with communities of color and those facing barriers to services, provides learning that leads to program changes across County operations. These partnerships help to ensure staff and the services they provide are culturally responsive. County departments are working with the Office of Equity to improve and expand relationships with culturally specific community-based organizations to learn about barriers to participation and are taking action. Some examples include:

- **Solid Waste and Recycling:**
  - Realigning the Garbage and Recycling Advisory Council to include more diverse membership.
  - Strengthening relationships with community-based organizations on policy and service.
- **Washington County Cooperative Library Services (WCCLS):**
  - Hired a community relations manager to build relationships with community-based organizations to prioritize.
  - Expanding services for communities of color and other marginalized groups.
- **Housing Services:**
  - Collaborating with community-based providers to improve (or expand) culturally specific counseling services.
- **Health and Human Services:**
  - Recruiting and contracting for culturally specific mental health and substance use disorder services and peer communities.
- **Land Use and Transportation:**
  - Hiring a department-wide community outreach coordinator to facilitate equitable community engagement.





▪ **Facilities, Fleet and Parks:**

- Working with community-based organizations to create programming for underserved communities at Scoggins Valley Park. Four free-admission outdoor programs near Hagg Lake have been hosted to date.

▪ **Sheriff's Office:**

- Consulting with its Latino Advisory Commission to surface equity considerations in developing policy and updates to law enforcement and jail-related procedures.
- Hosting several conversations with local groups serving underrepresented community members. These conversations are being held at locations preferred by historically marginalized community members, fostering trust and relationship building as a result.

▪ **Juvenile Services:**

- Expanding contracts with culturally specific providers such as the Latino Network and Portland Opportunities Industrialization Center (POIC) to enhance service delivery for historically underserved communities.
- Contracting with Latino Network mentor services to best support at-risk youth.

▪ **Community Corrections:**

- Creating an Afrocentric caseload with culturally specific Parole and Probation Officers, mentors and service providers. Community Corrections is pursuing this program in partnership with the Coalition of Communities of Color.

## 3 LEADERSHIP: Continuing to make the County More Equitable to Marginalized Groups

Being a leader in equity means that all levels of public involvement must reflect the community Washington County serves. Having more diversity of voices participate in policy making facilitates more access and better service delivery. The County is removing barriers to accessing appointments to its boards, commissions and Community Participation Organizations. The County has also increased the frequency and offerings of its [Civic Leaders courses](#). By partnering with Adelante Mujeres, participants from communities of color and other underrepresented groups are invited to complete a hands-on leadership training, equipping them to actively participate in the decision-making process. Through culturally specific leadership programs, the County seeks to ensure it is reflecting the diversity of the community. The County is committed to operationalizing equity so everyone can participate through meaningful community engagement.

### Boards and Commissions

Washington County is working to ensure that the demographics of those appointed to its 36 boards and commissions reflect its diverse population. Here are some of the ways the County is creating space for all community voices to be heard:

- **Applicant Demographic Reporting**
  - Since 2021, the County has increased and improved applicant demographic reporting through policy changes. These data help measure progress toward making advisory boards more inclusive and reflective of the full community.
- **Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Training for Boards and Commissions**
  - The Washington County Planning Commission engaged in inclusivity trainings over the last three years to help bring greater understanding around the importance of pursuing equity in land use planning practices. These trainings have augmented the work of the commission in its advisory role to the Board.
  - The County has supported advisory committees to recruit from communities who have been historically marginalized. Community partners have been vital to the recruitment processes for a variety of advisory committees.

### Community Engagement

Washington County's community engagement team works to facilitate equity and access to county governance and services. The team is dedicated to building relationships with residents, businesses, stakeholders, community-based organizations and other leaders. The feedback these relationships garner helped the Board and County administration center equity with decisions that better reflect community need. Here are some specific engagement efforts undertaken in this equity journey:





## ▪ Equitable-based Community Engagement Policy

- In September 2022, the Board adopted the Equitable Community Engagement Policy with the goal of creating countywide alignment on equitable community engagement. This work will build towards equitable outcomes by engaging with diverse community stakeholders. County departments have embraced this work, including:
  - Land Use and Transportation
    - Major Streets Transportation Improvement Program (MSTIP) – Worked with Espousal Strategies to develop an Equity Framework for Community Engagement used in summer 2022 for the MSTIP that included an equity-focused mapping tool and more equity-focused criteria to guide future funding allocations and for the Middle Housing code updates.
    - Urban Road Maintenance District (URMD) – This county service district provides preventive road maintenance for about 430 miles of neighborhood streets in the urban unincorporated area of Washington County. All proposed pedestrian and biking improvement projects for this district are assessed for a cumulative equity score factoring in safety, environment, population density, proximity to transit, proximity to schools and density of historically underrepresented communities. Proposed projects are ranked according to this score and are incorporated into staff recommendations for Board consideration.
    - URMD is investing \$1.1 million in accessibility ramp replacements throughout the urban unincorporated territory.
    - The district has invested \$200,000 in a sidewalk repair and replacement grant program to assist homeowners facing financial challenges that may serve as a barrier to these services.
  - Information Technology Services
    - Completed an equitable community engagement process ahead of the County’s website redesign project.
  - Health and Human Services
    - Used equitable community engagement for the Department of Health and Human Services’ health improvement planning projects.

## Reapportionment Project

Reapportionment is the redrawing of commissioner districts due to one or more districts growing out of balance with the population of the other districts. The requirements for redrawing commissioner districts is laid out in the Washington County Charter. After a 10-month process of gathering public input and researching proposals, the Board adopted new commissioner district boundary lines where:

- The redrawn districts achieve the goal of approximately equal population distribution while minimizing disparities over time as population increases continue,
- The boundaries generally are easily recognizable and logical,
- The division of communities of common interest is minimized, recognizing that it is not practicable to avoid all divisions; and
- Voting strength by race and ethnicity is preserved.
- A variety of means, including methods for including input from communities who have historically been underrepresented, was used during this reapportionment process.

### ▪ **Civic Leaders Program**

Washington County recognized the need to invest in culturally specific community leadership when creating its Civic Leaders Program in 2018. This ongoing program seeks to empower underrepresented members of the community. Participants in the program are assisted by Adelante Mujeres, a culturally specific community-based organization, with language-appropriate training that centers their lived experiences and empowers them to use their voice in community discussions with their county decisionmakers. Over the last three years the program has expanded and responded to changing community needs, while facilitating new participants in civic engagement. One exciting development has been the first-ever Spanish-speaking-only Civic Leaders cohort that started summer 2023.

## **COVID Recovery Programs**

The COVID-19 pandemic hit the same month as the Board of County Commissioners adopted the 2020 Equity Resolution. The County's COVID-19 response provided an opportunity to provide community leadership by using an equity lens to deliver federal funds and public health resources to minority and low-income individuals and families who were especially impacted. The 2020 Equity Resolution's priorities and principles influenced how funding was allocated from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act and the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). The U.S. Department of Treasury disbursed funding authorized by these two federal laws through the Coronavirus Relief Fund (CRF) and, more recently, the State and Local Fiscal Recovery Fund (SLFRF). For Washington County, this included:

### ▪ **CARES Act**

- Providing grants to small businesses, especially businesses that served as the primary source of family income and those owned by Black, Indigenous, Latino/a/x, immigrants, refugees and other people of color.
- Prioritizing child care and distance learning support, especially for underserved families. Nearly 300 grantees received funding to keep their licensed child care practices going through the early months of the pandemic. A disproportionate share of these grant recipients identified as Asian or Hispanic/Latino/a/x when compared with statewide demographics. A similar approach was taken with distance learning support where children of vulnerable communities, essential workers or families of four earning below \$73,800 annually were all prioritized.
- Providing stable housing assistance for vulnerable populations at risk of facing eviction. Priority was placed on households with incomes that were lower than 80% of federal poverty guidelines, which is lower than \$44,280 annually for a family of four.
- Targeting fundings to community partners who support work with minority populations and culturally specific organizations, including low-income, seniors and health-impacted communities.
- Producing an ad campaign about self-protective health measures with an equity focus message delivered in 12 different languages. The ad generated three million impressions across social media, web, cable television and Spanish-language radio in the summer of 2020. The ad was repeated regionally in the fall of 2020, resulting in 17.4 million impressions.



### ▪ ARPA Response - Recovery - Resilience

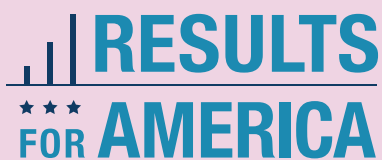
- The American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) allocated federal funds to respond to public health and economic impacts of the pandemic, with special attention on addressing disproportionate impacts to marginalized populations. Implementation of these efforts by the County revealed the opportunities where the County departments would benefit from identifying and mapping the services they provide as mandated or enabled by the federal or state governments. The County took a thoughtful and strategic approach in developing an investment framework that balanced specific community needs. The Public Health Division of the Department of Health and Human Services worked with community-based organizations to inform the County's response.
- ARPA funds supported the full spectrum of public health response during this phase, including 359 mobile vaccination events and 90 clinics hosted with the help of community-based organizations. Public Health also investigated over 700 COVID-19 outbreaks and distributed 36,000 at-home test kits to historically underserved community members. These response activities were informed by the overarching goal of addressing the disproportionate impact the pandemic was having on historically underserved and marginalized communities.
- ARPA funds also supported efforts to stabilize pandemic-impacted communities through nutrition, family health, mental health and housing stability resources. This culturally specific support removed language barriers for those preferring Spanish, Somali, Arabic, Vietnamese and other languages widely used throughout the community. This was work beyond that provided by the State of Oregon, as the County was dedicated to best serve its community members.
- The County worked with local organizations in the launch of the Small Business Support Network, which focused on providing job opportunities for historically underserved cultural and ethnic community members.
- Washington County launched its first [Economic Development Program](#) to develop plans, programs and services to promote economic prosperity. The new program centered equity as it focused on creating jobs, supporting small businesses and investing in the availability of broadband.
- Providing guidance and notifications in a range of non-English languages resulted in broad access to vaccination sites and other pandemic-related support. This work was particularly effective when conducted in partnership with trusted community organizations who helped remove language and cultural barriers to enable better access to services and resources.



### ▪ Resilience

The County prioritized investments in community-wide economic resilience with ARPA funding. The federal Economic Development Administration defines economic resilience as the ability of local or regional economies to anticipate, withstand and bounce back from any type of disruption, be it a pandemic, wildfire or some other shock to the community. In June 2023, the Board approved the final allocation of ARPA funds that are required to be utilized by 2026. The investments and projects identified allocate the remainder of funds aimed at strengthening systems and securing long-term resiliency.

The County's comprehensive approach to the economic impact of the pandemic with a priority on equity and inclusion was recognized by Results for America. The national nonprofit recognized the County twice for its approach to ARPA planning that took a thoughtful, strategic approach to community-wide recovery decision making.



Results for America is a national nonprofit organization focused on the use of evidence to help solve challenging problems. In scoring local governments nationwide on approaches to ARPA investments, Results for America ranked Washington County among the top five counties in 2022, and, in 2023, placed the County among the top two counties receiving a perfect score across those practices. There are over 3,100 counties in the U.S.A., so being a top county is significant.

## 4 SPENDING PUBLIC MONEY: Procurement Equity

The County is committed to spending public dollars that maximizes benefit for the community and provides equitable access for all suppliers and contractors. Centering equity includes the County's work to create opportunities to change procurement and contracting priorities for minority and women-owned businesses, helping these diverse firms fully participate in government programs and projects.

### Supplier Equity Best Practices

The purpose of identifying and embracing supplier equity best practices is intended to improve purchasing policies to create more opportunities for minority and women-owned firms to contract with the County. The equity procurement team has worked diligently to create relationships with local businesses while improving internal systems. Below outlines some of the work the team has achieved to date:

- [Construction Career Pathways](#): In November 2021, the Board adopted the Construction Career Pathways Program to facilitate and encourage the use of pre-apprentices in County construction contracting and procurement. This allows entry-level, skill-building capacity and training for our young and ever-diversifying population. A program coordinator was hired to implement this work and further develop relationships with external stakeholders working to build regional construction trades capacity.
- Emphasized Certification Office for Business Inclusion and Diversity (COBID) and Minority, Women-owned, Emerging Small Business (MWESB) information as utilized in County programs and contracts. This work provides a foundation to better understand how these firms are currently used so that improvements can be measured going forward.





- Identified procurement tracking challenges and limitations of the County’s current enterprise resource planning (ERP) system, which includes all contracting, procurement and financial accountability systems. The current ERP utilizes old technology that hampers the ability to track data in ways that can be helpful in tracking priorities, including progress in its equity commitment.
- Facilitated and invested in relationship development with local trade organizations and minority businesses through partnerships, hosting events and supporting these organization through membership fees. These relationship development efforts have the long-term goal of increasing County contracts with COBID and MWESB firms, some hosted or attended events included:
  - Annual Westside Open House in partnership with City of Hillsboro
  - Columbia Chapter National Institute of Governmental Purchasing Reverse Vendor Trade Show
  - Best HQ Business Expo West
  - Bi-Weekly Friday Oregon Association of Minority Entrepreneurs (OAME) Meetings and Annual Tradeshow
  - Latino Built Quarterly Meetings
  - Professional Business Development Group (PBDG) Monthly Meetings
  - National Association of Minority Contractors (NAMC) Monthly Meetings
  - Business Diversity Institute Quarterly Summits and Annual Minority Enterprise Development Week
  - First Construction Manager/General Contractor RFP Meet and Greet for the Washington County Law Enforcement Center (LEC) HVAC Infrastructure Upgrade projects
- Established the Housing Department’s Vendor Pre-Qualification work.
- Centered equity in the Department of Health and Human Services Congregate Meals Request for Proposal process.
- Helped establish a Department of Housing Services goal of awarding at least 20% of construction contract amounts to Minority, Women-owned or Emerging Small Businesses for the Metro Affordable Housing Bond projects, as well as Housing Authority independent projects and state-funded Project Turnkey projects.

## 5 CREATING AN EQUITY OFFICE: Office of Equity, Inclusion and Community Engagement

The 2020 Equity Resolution included a commitment to fully resource an equity office to achieve the goals of the resolution. Within the first year, the County delivered on its promise by funding five positions to lead this work. Additional positions were added as the County leveraged federal funds to augment the initial staffing levels; and other adjustments were made to positions as needed.

The office reports to the highest level of the organization's appointed leadership – the County Administrator – demonstrating the importance of the equity portfolio, ensuring access to leadership and tracking progress on its commitment to equity.

The Office of Equity, Inclusion and Community Engagement (OEICE) is unifying the County's equity work through a [strategic action plan](#), currently being updated in three-year increments. The OEICE provides quarterly reports to the Board marking progress toward implementation of the Equity Resolution and the organization's ongoing work in equity, diversity and inclusion. Actions to date include:

- **Establishing the Office of Equity, Inclusion and Community Engagement**
  - Creating and hiring a Chief Equity and Inclusion Officer
  - Creating the following positions:
    - Civil Rights Officer
      - This position compiles and reports federal data related to the County's compliance with Title VI and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act.
    - Equity Data Coordinator
      - This position compiles and analyzes data related to the implementation and success of the County's equity, diversity and inclusion initiatives and related activities.
    - Equity Policy Manager
      - This position helps train and educate County employees and supports the formation and coordination of employee resource groups.
    - Supplier Diversity Coordinator
      - This position enriches and monitors the County's Certification Office of Business Inclusion and Diversity (COBID) and other activities to increase the diversity of the County's contractors, suppliers and consultants.



- Appointing members of the internal Equity Leadership Council
  - Co-chaired by the County Administrator and a member of the Board of Commissioners, the council is tasked with fostering interdepartmental coordination and assisting with the equity, diversity and inclusion strategic plan and action plans; contracting and purchasing plans; hiring and recruitment strategies; training and education plans; and facilitating employee resource groups.
- Appointing members of the Advisory Council on Racial Equity
  - Comprised primarily of county residents and community partners with lived experience of racial and/or ethnic inequity, this panel is supported by the Office of Equity and tasked with advising the Board on equity considerations of County policies and program investments.







## 6 **EQUITABLE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT:** Creating Equitable Workforce Development Programs in the community and in County Career Advancement

The Equity Resolution includes a commitment to further develop a workforce pipeline and training program that promotes recruitment, employment, hiring, training and retention opportunities for communities of color and other disparate communities. Funds from the American Rescue Plan Act for pandemic recovery provided an unprecedented opportunity for investment in the community.

Centering equity also includes investing in workforce development and helping diverse businesses fully participate in government programs and projects. These workforce development investments are also feeding into the County's internally focused "Design the Future" initiative to build a leading-edge, mission-focused organization that can better serve the community now and in the years ahead. These process and systems improvements are moving the organization closer to the vision of a "One Washington County" organization working seamlessly across departments, systems and partners in order to better serve the community.

The County's work toward creating equitable workforce programs includes looking for opportunities to change procurement and contracting priorities for minority and women-owned businesses, improving County recruitment processes and updating how we recruit and compensate our employees.

### **Developing a more equitable workforce in the community**

The County's workforce development goals are centered on providing equitable access to training programs and services, and wraparound support activities focusing on positive career outcomes for culturally specific populations, including Black, Indigenous, Latino/a/x, immigrants and refugees and other people of color.

Examples of the County's programs and services that launched toward this goal include:

- To help remove barriers to access workforce programs, the County has established a new child care program called "[Westside Works](#)" to help Beaverton-area preschools and child care centers recover from the pandemic. For a limited time, Westside Works is paying students to work in this field in an effort to bring more workers into this industry. Child care has long been in high demand, and industry demographics show the impact on women and people of color. The U.S. Department of Labor reports that 93% of child care providers are women and 45% are Black, Asian or Latino/a/x. Nearly 60% of the nation's child care businesses – about half minority owned – were forced to shut down during the pandemic. Westside Works is just one of the County efforts focused on expanding child care options.
- Investing ARPA dollars to connect businesses with resources including coaching, technical assistance, pandemic relief loans and grants navigation in culturally specific business resource centers.
- Launching a career pilot program to recruit more Black, Indigenous, people of color, and LGBTQIA+ individuals into housing department careers.
- Investing in QuickStart chip manufacturing trainings with Portland Community College to facilitate careers for minority and women workers in great-paying local careers.
- With funding from the nonprofit Worksystems, Inc., the County's [Driving Diversity program](#) trains minority and women to enter solid waste careers which tend to offer steady family wage jobs, with good benefits that transcend the natural ebb and flow of the economy.

## Internal County Workforce Best Practices

Another way the County is working toward its commitment to develop best practices in recruitment and compensation for its employees includes:

- Through its recruitment processes, the County has been intentional about attracting a diverse pool of candidates to build a more diverse leadership team. As of July 2023, this effort has resulted in hiring five people of color to leadership positions in the last nine recruitments.
- Updating the Bilingual Pay Policy that addresses eligibility, management, quality control and compensation. This Civil Rights compliance work helps the organization better serve our linguistically diverse community.

Not updated since 2012, the Bilingual Pay Policy was adjusted in 2022 that resulted in an interim increase to employees qualifying for this benefit. A comprehensive policy update is nearing completion that involves robust employee engagement.

# 7 STRUCTURING FOR OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE: Forging Equitable Organizational Models and Approaches

Washington County continually looks for ways to rethink service delivery to improve outcomes. From changing how advisory councils are structured, to embedding equity experts directly into departments, the culture in the organization is infusing equity throughout its operations.

The County's mission requires the delivery of public services, practices and engagement approaches that equitably meet the needs of all residents; if this does not happen, changes in structure must take place. Some examples of structural change in action include:

- **Building a Culture of Equity:** Infused equity into operations and works to achieve excellence in service delivery.
- **Embedding Equity Staff positions in many departments, including:**
  - Supportive Housing Services (SHS) Housing equity position
  - Health and Human Services (HHS) Equity Liaison
  - Land Use and Transportation (LUT) Equity Policy Analyst
- **Implementing “One Washington County” as a vision for a collaborative organizational culture.**
- **Working on change management:**
  - Continuing to manage organizational expectations through communication and training programs to help all employees embrace the model of continuous improvement in public service.
- **Infusing equity in the “Design the Future” initiative to promote clarity, flow of information and collaboration throughout the organization.**
- **Increasing Bilingual designated positions:**
  - These positions increased from 203 in September 2020 to 248 in August 2023. Most of these dedicated bilingual positions are intended to improve access to services for the Spanish-speaking community. The County is committed to fulfilling service needs across the full spectrum of languages – beyond just the Spanish-speaking community – where English amounts to a barrier to accessing service.
- **Improving advisory committees to include more geographic and cultural diversity.**



## PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT: **Recycle+**

In 2021, Ridwell, Inc., began operating its recycling collection service in unincorporated Washington County without proper approvals or authority. Although the goal of removing florescent light bulbs, plastic film and other hard-to-recycle items from landfills was commendable, no regulatory framework was in place to ensure an equitable, safe and transparent approach. In April 2022, the Board approved a new program called Recycle+, serving the urban unincorporated area of Washington County. County-regulated garbage and recycling collection service providers now offer to collect these hard-to-recycle items. Recycle+ has since expanded into King City, Durham, Beaverton, Sherwood, Tigard and North Plains.

The program ensures safety and fairness, incorporates equity considerations, establishes accountability and transparency in how materials are managed, ensures that recycling markets can accept what is collected and, most importantly, ensures that capturing certain items for recycling benefits our environment. The program has grown to 1,300 households, saving close to eight tons of recyclable material from entering the waste stream. A companion service to Recycle+ has also captured over 13 tons of batteries.



## PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT: **Flavored Tobacco Ban**

In November 2021, the Board took a step toward reducing poor health outcomes that disproportionately affect marginalized communities through a countywide ban on flavored tobacco products. The approved ordinance made Washington County the first in the state to end the sale of flavored tobacco products.

As Board Chair Kathryn Harrington said at the time, “The Board heard compelling evidence that restricting access of flavored products results in fewer young people using addictive tobacco and nicotine substances as well as higher quit rates.” Research has shown that the tobacco industry aggressively markets to Black, Latino and LGBTQ youth, as well as to other marginalized and low-income communities, and has been successful at getting kids hooked on these addictive products. After an industry-sponsored petition drive put the ordinance on the ballot, 76% of Washington County voters upheld the ordinance. Although a Washington County Circuit Court ruling in September 2022 blocked the ordinance from taking effect, the County is appealing that ruling.



# CONCLUSION

This report provides a comprehensive overview of Washington County's work to date in tackling systemic racism and inequity in its policy, programs and practices since the approval of the February 2020 Equity Resolution. The report demonstrates the Board of County Commissioner's commitment to removing barriers to creating paths to a more equitable community. Progress can be found in each of the seven Equity Resolution commitments detailed in this report.

Centering equity requires diligence, dedication and continued engagement with staff, partners, community-based organizations and other key leaders. There is no ending point, but rather a continual commitment to removing barriers to an equitable outcome. Centering equity means applying these principles and practices in all of the County's work delivering services to the community.

The County is proud to be a learning organization, committed to advancing equity in all its work. Community partnerships and feedback are encouraged and welcome. As noted, work is in progress and there remains much to do to dismantle long-standing structural racism and eliminate barriers to opportunity.

Please join us as we continue to work towards a more equitable Washington County. With public involvement and feedback, we are better together.



