

CITY OF AURORA MUNICIPAL INITIATIVES - RACIAL EQUITY AND INCLUSION

What policies or programs has your municipality implemented or considered implementing to support racial equity, diversity and inclusion within your organization?

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE OFFICE OF DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION

The Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) was created in January 2020 in order to lead the city of Aurora , in building, creating and maintaining a more equitable and inclusive city by systemically and strategically facilitating the integration of greater representation, fairness, belonging and care into our policies, procedures, and practices. This office reports directly to the City Manager, emphasizing an organizational focus on of creating a more equitable Aurora by enhancing equity, inclusion and cultural competence in our workplace and the provision of services to our citizens. In June 2020, the Community Relations division was moved from the Neighborhood Services department to the Office of DEI in order to broaden the focus of community relations and community engagement organization wide.

The Office of DEI is strategically leading the organization through several interconnected initiatives. Steps include assessing where we are as an organization and as a community – what are the perceptions vs. the reality; a review of current challenges; inclusive leadership, unconscious bias, explicit and implicit bias and micro-aggression training for upper management, managers and supervisors; attracting, retaining and advancing top talent from diverse backgrounds; and developing a Racial Equity Plan for the city which will examine city services and procedures through a racial equity lens.

At the onset of the DEI initiative, the city contracted with GARE (Government Alliance on Race and Equity), which is a national network of government entities working to achieve racial equity and advance opportunities for all. There are over 100+ members in 30 states and 150+ cities. GARE provides tools to put theory into action and provides networking opportunities and resources that the city utilizes in developing our DEI strategy.

Through the GARE partnership and utilizing their framework, several initiatives are in place:

ASSESSMENT OF THE CURRENT STATE OF DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION IN THE CITY OF AURORA – as a benefit of membership, GARE is working with us to conduct an all employee survey. Where are we as an organization – what are the issues, challenges, problems, successes as perceived by employees. They will collect and analyze the survey data and provide us with survey insights. The survey is scheduled to begin in September 2020.

EQUITY CHAMPIONS – This is the city’s racial equity core team, established in June 2020. They are the leadership team committed to equitable systemic change by designing, coordinating, and organizing racial equity plans and activities across the city of Aurora. Their role is to

champion and advocate for racial equity and model organizational values; represent departments at leadership meetings and communicate back to departments; provide leadership, facilitation and coaching to internal department teams and coordinate, track and report department racial equity plans, successes and improvements. Each city department has appointed 1 -2 Equity Champions to serve on this team, we meet every two weeks as a team. We are currently in the “Building a foundation, increasing the knowledge” phase including equity training, dialoguing about current issues in the city related to diversity, equity and inclusion and communicating with their respective departments about DEI issues.

DEI CITY WIDE KICKOFF

The July 28 Town Hall with Jim Twombly, City Manager focused on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. It was open and available to all city employees. The DEI Officer, Community Relations Manager, Human Resources Director, the City Manager and members of the Equity Champions Team presented and were available for an open and insightful discussion and dialogue about how systemic racism, racial equity and inclusivity impact all our lives. Employees learned more about our opportunities, as one Aurora team, to make meaningful change.

FALL LEADERSHIP FORUM

The city will host its annual Fall Leadership Forum in October 2020. It is a ½ day session for managers and supervisors. The topic for this forum is “Embodying Equity: Introduction to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and will be facilitated by a consulting group – Creative Strategies for Change.

CONSULTANT RFP

An RFP was issued in August 2020 by the city seeking assistance from an experienced consultant/consulting firm to partner in facilitating discussions associated to system racial equity. This work shall include meeting with management staff and equity champions from each department and meet with external community-based leaders and stakeholders. They should demonstrate leading large organizational change as it pertains to race, racial equity, diversity and inclusion with an emphasized focus on how racial equity can influence city decisions, organizational and individual behaviors. Proposals have been received and are being evaluated. The consultant is projected to be hired in October 2020.

RESOLUTIONS

A resolution was passed on May 5, 2020 by the City Council of Aurora, Colorado Condemning Hate Crime Acts and Anti-Asian Sentiments Against Asian Americans, Immigrants, and Refugees as Related to the COVID-19 Pandemic.

A resolution is being developed Affirming Aurora’s Commitment to Valuing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. It will be forwarded to City Council for their consideration in the fall.

AFFINITY GROUPS

Affinity groups – a group of people linked by a common interest or purpose. The Equity Champions are exploring best practices for establishing Affinity Groups, or Employee Resource Groups. There are currently two Affinity groups – BEFABA (Black Employees for a Better Aurora) and Women in Leadership. The formation of an LBGTQ group is being discussed.

DEPARTMENTAL AND OTHER PROGRAMS AND INITIATIVES

HUMAN RESOURCES RECRUITMENT EFFORTS

- New job descriptions utilize an unbiased approach – no gender coded words, requirements limited to core competencies, avoid unnecessary City speak or jargon.
- Recruiting has cultivated a bank of job sites and organizations to post and partner with to encourage diversity in the applicant pool.
- Enhanced focus on pre-planning to develop a recruitment and interview plan to support diversity throughout the process.
- Recruiter support developing inclusive supplemental screening questions.
- Guidelines on creating gender and ethnically diverse interview panels.
- Mandatory HR involvement on all interviews for supervisor & management positions.
- Recruiter support developing inclusive interview questions.

PREVENTING DISCRIMINATION AND HARASSMENT

MANDATORY BI-ANNUAL TRAINING – ONLINE ELEARNING COURSES

The City of Aurora strives for and is committed to providing a workplace free of discrimination and harassment. Supporting this important effort, along with the Human Resources (HR) Department is the City’s Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Office. DEI’s mission is to lead in creating a more equitable and inclusive workplace by strategically facilitating the integration of greater representation, fairness, belonging and care into City initiatives.

Discrimination and harassment prevention training is a critical practice in creating awareness and understanding. Further, training plays a key role in the City’s mission as each of us have a responsibility to protect our workplace from unwanted, unfair and illegal behavior. The City seeks cooperation from all employees to proactively create a workplace where equality of opportunity prevails.

Together the HR Department and DEI Office are disseminating a mandatory online training course for which completion will be required bi-annually for all employees. The courses below will be assigned accordingly to each employee through the Aurora Learning Management System (LMS) with the designated course titles listed below.

- **Preventing Discrimination and Harassment** (Employee 30-minutes)

To be assigned to non-supervisory employees.

- **Preventing Discrimination and Harassment** (Supervisor/Manager 60-minutes)
To be assigned to all supervisory employees.

Both courses require each employee to review the City's EEO policy and complete an acknowledgement, in addition to viewing and completing the assigned eLearning course. Employees and supervisors must successfully complete the course and acknowledgment between **July 29, 2020 through September 30, 2020.**

TELEWORKING POLICY

We're building language into our new teleworking policy to ensure there is not room for arbitrary decisions on the part of supervisors over who can and cannot telework. We're including standards that require objective, transparent reasons for why an employee is denied the opportunity to telework (or inversely, is not permitted to come to the office when others can).

COURT ADMINISTRATION ON-GOING REVIEW OF STAFFING

While we do not have an official program in place, one of the key components to our highly diverse Department is an on-going review of our staffing. Each division has unique needs and require different expertise. Candid conversations with my managers facilitate an open review of diversity and inclusive. That said, we still have challenges. For example: our Marshals' Division consists of 12 employees (11 males; 1 female). The racial/ethnic makeup is 6 Whites (1 female), 3 Blacks and 3 Latinos (2 Spanish-speaking). Discussions with the Chief Marshal typically centers around the issue of gender diversity; basically, the need to attract more female employees. Unfortunately, there is very little movement in staffing, therefore we need to consider different ways to increase our gender numbers. One suggestion has been volunteers while preparing them for future employment opportunities.

SMALL BUSINESS ENTERPRISE PROGRAM

Data gathering began in 2019 on contracts and sub-contracts awarded to small, minority and women-owned businesses to assess where we are as a city in these awards. The goal after analysis of this data is to determine where we go from here as a city. In 2019, the city Purchasing Department, in partnership with the SBDC (Small Business Development Corporation), hosted a Contractors Fair to reach out to the contracting community, vendors and subcontracting firms, on How to do Business with the City of Aurora, what contracting opportunities are available and upcoming, and onsite networking opportunities with departmental representatives who had current or upcoming projects.

DEPARTMENTAL FACILITATED DISCUSSIONS – The Equity Champions began leading discussions and training with departmental leadership on microaggressions, the importance of racial equity

in the departments and what it means for the department and employees. As an example, Aurora Water Equity Champions are meeting with senior leadership in their department and have a series of meetings with managers in the department for facilitated discussions on racial equity. The Police Department began with discussions facilitated by a consultant with the Chief's senior leadership team on Inclusive Leadership.

What policies or programs has your municipality implemented or considered implementing to support racial equity, diversity, and inclusion within your community?

COMMUNITY RELATIONS

1. Commitment to Care Program:
 - a. Neighbor to Neighbor at Dayton Street Opportunity Center: local families and people experiencing homelessness are provided with food and community resources.
 - b. Food for Thought: food distribution to Aurora Public Schools and Cherry Creek School District families where children are provided with food to feed their families over the weekend.
 - c. Immigrant & Refugee Food Pantry: provides culturally relevant foods, baby items, and community resources to immigrants and refugees. Support for people experiencing homelessness also available.
 - d. Aurora Day of Giving: once-a-month mobile food distribution event. Food for families along with pet food and baby supplies.
 - e. One Place Project: food and resource distribution event for victims of crime.
 - f. Senior Mobile Food Pantry: mobile food distribution event for seniors (55+).
 - g. Home for the Holidays: families are provided with resources to purchase food, hygiene products, and other household items.
 - h. Mobile Care Unit: mobilizing care in Aurora by responding to emerging COVID-19 & community needs via mobile pop-up events.
 - i. Aurora On-The-Go: providing fuel and/or Lyft credits to community members to remove transportation barriers.
 - j. Family Care Dignity Packs: providing dignity packs to families experiencing homelessness. Dignity Packs could include essential items like food, hygiene products, undergarments, gloves, hats, scarves, first aid kits, blankets, etc.
2. Safe Zones: community specific project (Safe Zones) designed for prevention, intervention and interruption to reduce youth violence, using the public health approach creating protective factor of increasing community engagement and connection.

These opportunities would come in the form of a series of “pop-up” type of events that will provide social and emotional support in building relationships with our youth in the communities, food, team building activities, peace circles, and Restorative Justice, organized and executed by collaboration of community-based organizations focused on youth violence prevention.

3. Keep the Lights On: The concept of Keep the Lights On is that it’s cheaper to keep the lights on in what is typically the largest building in every neighborhood, the local public school, and invite youth into the safe building versus burying another child, after losing them to violence. The KTLO program would create a safe haven for youth to congregate in Aurora. Upon startup, KTLO would be available Friday, Saturday and Sunday from 8pm – 2am. The facility gymnasium would be available along with select secured areas and classrooms. The possibilities are endless as to what programming can be offered at this site, however, proven preventive programs will be implemented at launch.
4. DEI Training (Incline): Diversity/Cultural Competency Training
5. Human Relations Commission: To promote a mutual understanding and respect among all people. Disseminate information and educational materials to eliminate prejudice, promote human relations, and investigate complaints of this nature.
6. Cesar Chavez/Dolores Huerta Community Celebration
7. LGBTQ+ Summit
8. ADA Awareness Summit
9. MLK, Jr. Commemoration Celebration
10. Lantern Festival (Asian American)
11. Proclamations: Recognizing community celebrations
12. Citywide Diversity Calendar
13. ReACT: Responding to Aurora’s Critical Topics is a group of community members who respond to rising community concerns and respond by developing awareness
14. AKCRT – Aurora Key Community Response Team – Serves as a resource to assist the community in addressing any potential explosive or confrontational incidents. AKCRT membership consists of volunteers from area businesses, law enforcement, fire, schools, clergy, city departments and local agencies.
15. ACOF – Aurora Community of Faith – a faith-based organization, not faith specific. The mission is to build a sense of community and common purpose throughout the city of Aurora and to enhance the spiritual, cultural, and social well-being of all city of Aurora residents.

GLOBALFEST – An annual celebration and community festival of Aurora’s diversity, coordinated by a team led by the Office of International and Immigrant Affairs.

AURORA PRIDEFEST – The city of Aurora was one of the sponsors of Aurora Pridefest, held at the Aurora Reservoir in 2019.