Equity Strategic Action Plan 2024

Mississippi Watershed Management Organization
Minneapolis, MN

Initiated by Lisa Tabor, CultureBrokers®

Completed by:

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Action Plan	**Senior Leadership Team**	
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I.   EQUITY FRAMEWORK
Adopted 8/25/2023

Organizational Profile

Mission
To lead, and to foster stewardship of the watershed with actions that promote civic ownership and responsibility and through measures that achieve *diverse* and functional ecosystems.

Equity Statement
At the Mississippi Watershed Management Organization, we believe everyone has the right to clean water and healthy ecosystems. We know that people who live in socially and economically disadvantaged areas[1] often live with more pollution and environmental issues. These problems can worsen the Mississippi River's health and its ecosystem. Therefore, our watershed's health is inseparable from the well-being of the people who live in it.

The communities in our watershed have been deeply impacted by the legacy of systemic *racism* and its imprint on contemporary land use and infrastructure patterns. These issues perpetuate social and economic injustice at a time when the impacts of climate change are making them worse. Those in Black, Indigenous, and communities of color bear the brunt of elevated pollution levels, degraded watershed conditions, infrastructure instability, the urban heat island effect, and heightened vulnerability to flooding.

We at the MWMO are committed to fulfilling our mission in ways that promote *equity* and eliminate *disparities* to benefit all communities socially, economically, and environmentally. We recognize that good public policy draws strength from the *diverse* viewpoints and experiences that inspire innovative solutions to watershed management and restoration challenges. We will partner with local communities to create projects that improve the health of the watershed and their own living conditions and distribute resources fairly and equitably.

Background
Since its inception, the Mississippi Watershed Management Organization (MWMO) has been committed to fostering an *inclusive* and *equitable* environment, internally and externally. From outreach, education, and grants to internal operations, planning, and project selection, our organization continues evolving to reflect and serve the DIVERSE communities that comprise the watershed.

So far, our initial *diversity*, *equity*, and *inclusion* (DEI) efforts have focused on increasing outreach into immigrant communities and other communities of color. Partnerships with the local Hmong and East African communities led to a deepened awareness of culturally specific

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[1] "Disadvantaged area" is a term used for a geographic location where there is a need to stimulate regeneration.

outreach strategies and a commitment to produce written communications in multiple languages and employ various modes of communication and connection.

In 2008, in partnership with the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, we launched the Mississippi River Green Team, a youth employment program focused on green career exploration. Made up of high school-age youth from underrepresented communities, the Green Team has been an essential way to introduce young people of color to environmental careers. It has provided job pathways that play a role in *diversifying* the green workforce. The subsequent additions of the Pathways Internship Program (2018) and the Green Infrastructure Inspection Team (2023) continue to build the pathway through our organization and solidify WORKFORCE development as a significant part of our DEI work.

Our grant programs continually seek ways of improving *equitable* access to MWMO project support and funding. All grant programs provide opportunities for shared growth and learning and opportunities for providing feedback on ways to strengthen MWMO's grants. In recent years, MWMO's Stewardship Fund Grant program aimed to be more *inclusive* by incorporating shifts and changes to be more *equitable* in its applications, the review process, and project frameworks. The program shifts included reconsidering and changing practices that prevented the *equitable* sharing of funds with community partners associated with grant projects, allowing for the distribution of funds to reflect the intended ripple effect of impact from our grant program.

Internally, we are trying to *diversify* our team by removing perceived barriers from position descriptions and qualifications. We are expanding our recruitment efforts, reaching out to BIPOC communities and networks to draw more *diverse* applicant pools. We adhere to the federal salary reporting requirements, ensuring our salaries meet or exceed industry standards. We also conduct regular salary surveys to identify and rectify pay *disparities* to ensure that all staff are compensated fairly.

Our planning efforts have increasingly emphasized Restorative Development, a systems model of urban redevelopment that *equitably* optimizes environmental, social, and economic outcomes. In embracing these principles, the MWMO has been working closely with partners in the public and private sectors to envision how MWMO projects can tie into larger restorative systems, ensuring that our work not only protects water quality and habitat but also advances social *equity* and economic *inclusivity* in communities where redevelopment is occurring.

The 2021-31 Watershed Management Plan acknowledges that the history of systemic *racism* coupled with continued present-day infrastructure and land use patterns have brought unresolved social, economic, and environmental issues to the forefront. Our plan states that with this in mind, the MWMO will develop an organizational DEI plan to promote the *equitable* delivery of projects and programs across the watershed.

Reflecting on our journey, we are proud of our progress in DEI. However, we are mindful that DEI improvement is not a destination but an ongoing journey. As we move forward, we recognize that DEI needs to permeate all our organizational processes, which will then improve the outcomes for our *Member Cities* and their *diverse* communities. The Equity Strategic Action Plan (ESAP) is our first step to installing the discipline we need to transform the MWMO's *culture* further.

Terms in italics are defined in the Glossary.

Key Constituents Profile

MWMO raises funds through an annual property tax levy from the jurisdictions of Columbia Heights, Fridley, Hilltop, Lauderdale, Minneapolis, Saint Anthony Village, Saint Paul, and the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board. They are our *member cities* and our first *key constituent* group.

MWMO's efforts affect 302,033 residents of these jurisdictions. They are our second *key constituent* group. Approximately 42% of these residents identify as Black, Indigenous, or people of color (*BIPOC*). We must ensure that every group receives full consideration, quality service, and positive *results* from our activities.

RESIDENTS by U.S. Census Race Category	Count	Percent
Total	302,033	**100%**
American Indian/Alaska Native	5,964	2%
Asian	20,396	7%
Black/African American	67,734	22%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	142	0%
White	164,805	55%
Some Other Race	19,616	6%
Two or More Races	23,376	8%
No response	0	0%

RESIDENTS by U.S. Census Ethnicity Category	Count	Percent
Total	302,033	**100%**
Hispanic or Latino	33,852	11%
Not Hispanic or Latino	268,181	89%

Workforce Profile

Almost 8% of MWMO's *workforce* identify as *people of color*, as shown below. We must ensure that every group receives full consideration, a quality work environment, and positive *results* from their relationship with us. Because our *workforce* is critical to MWMO's ability to meet its mission and deliver on all its goals, they are our third *key constituency*.

STAFF by U.S. Census Race Category	Count	Percent
Total		**100%**
American Indian/Alaska Native		0
Asian		7.69%
Black/African American		0
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander		0
White		92.31%
Some Other Race		0
Two or More Races		0
No response		0
Hispanic or Latino		0
Not Hispanic or Latino		100%

Terms in italics are defined in the Glossary.

STAFF by U.S. Census Ethnicity Category	Count	Percent
Total		**100%**
Hispanic or Latino		0
Not Hispanic or Latino		100%

Our Commitments

MWMO fully commits to the long-term work of becoming *culturally competent*, welcoming, and *inclusive* of all people both within and outside our organization, as well as in the range of issues we engage in and challenges we address. Our commitment includes (but is not limited to):

● Supporting, engaging, and including people with different *racial, cultural*, economic, age, religion, physical abilities, gender identities, and sexual orientations.

● Reaching beyond our traditional allies and *constituencies*.

● Entering *intercultural* relationships with humility, prepared to listen, learn, follow their lead, and adapt our methods and practices to achieve mutual benefit.

● Recruiting, hiring, retaining, and developing *culturally competent* staff whose demographics more closely mirror those of the watershed communities.

● Developing *culturally competent* board members who govern MWMO with DEI in mind.

● Recruiting, retaining, and developing *culturally competent* volunteers whose demographics more closely mirror those of our watershed communities.

● Supporting *Member Cities* as partners in accomplishing our DEI goals.

Our Results

MWMO provides an annual record of our progress in meeting our mission, goals, and objectives at https://www.mwmo.org/about/annual-activity-financial-reports/. This provides a snapshot or record of budgets and expenditures, current plan status, environmental data, activities, and future work plans. Our reports have never included data about our activities and their impact on our *BIPOC constituents*. As a function of our *ESAP* efforts, we will collect and report this information in the future.

Terms in italics are defined in the Glossary.

Key Principles

The following principles must be front and center when executing our *ESAP.*

Use Disaggregated Data and Information

One of the drivers of *disparity* is the inability or unwillingness to examine the *results* of policies and activities for segmented *racial*, *ethnic*, or *cultural* groups. Collect data segmented (at minimum) by census-based *racial* and *ethnic* categories and use that data to create options and make decisions.

Make Data-Driven Decisions

Another driver of *disparity* is the inability or unwillingness to use segmented data to make decisions that ensure parity. Consider *racial* and *ethnic* information as we work. Use segmented data, historical information, and quality comparisons. Compare *results* for each group against their presence in our service areas and against the *results* of the other groups. Provide these analyses when making recommendations.

Leverage Existing Assets

We have valuable assets: a knowledgeable *workforce*, board members, partners, community members, technical experts, professional services, state agencies, and more. Tap into these institutional resources at all phases of our work.

Use Existing Authority

Senior leaders, supervisors, other staff members, and the Board of Commissioners have individual powers within their jobs and roles. Explore and utilize these authorities as necessary to deliver on our *ESAP*.

Make Policy Changes

We have dozens of policies – those with an external focus and those with an internal focus. Uphold or strengthen policies that provide strong *equity results*. Be ready to change policies that create barriers.

Use Equity to Balance Decisions

Making decisions with *equity* in mind will ensure *people of color* get due consideration and that their interests are respected. Give *equity* sufficient weight in decision-making processes. Develop a method for considering *equity results* balanced against financial and other business *results*, such as using a decision matrix[2] or balanced scorecard[3].

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[2] http://asq.org/learn-about-quality/decision-making-tools/overview/decision-matrix.html
[3] http://asq.org/learn-about-quality/balanced-scorecard/overview/overview.html

Terms in italics are defined in the Glossary.

Glossary

Updated 8/18/2023.

This glossary sets down terms we use in the *ESAP* and our day-to-day business activities. It supports everyone, from members of the Board to our *workforce*, in all functions, from basic operations to big-picture thinking. It helps everyone understand the values and *culture* of the organization. It can even resonate with external stakeholders through branding and outreach.

Using the same language – with the same meanings – helps us all connect and understand each other, allowing us to collaborate. We will ensure our glossary is carefully conceived, governed, and kept up to date so that our systems will always be of high quality – and we will build trust in the organization.

MWMO developed this glossary as part of our first Equity Framework. We started with definitions from authorities such as standard dictionaries, AP Stylebook, and reputable organizations in the DEI field. Then, we adjusted those to reflect better our organizational mission/vision/values, industry, and current social sensibilities.

When in doubt about any term, MWMO policy is to defer to guidance from the most recent AP Stylebook.

MWMO shall review and update the glossary annually or as circumstances require.

Bias

(a.) A tendency or preference that inhibits impartial judgment, such as a bias toward or against a person or group. (b.) Concentrating on or interest in one area or subject, such as a bias toward action.

Bias occurs unconsciously (implicit) and consciously (explicit).

BIPOC (See also "People of Color")

BIPOC is the acronym for Black, Indigenous, and people of color. It is used to undo Native invisibility and anti-Blackness to dismantle white supremacy and advance racial justice. "Pronounced "bye-pock," this is a term specific to the United States, intended to center the experiences of Black and Indigenous groups and demonstrate solidarity between communities of color."[4]

MWMO may use the term as shorthand to describe a group of people who identify as a member(s) of at least one of the following racial and ethnic census categories: Black or African American, Asian, American Indian, Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian, and Other Pacific Islander, Some Other Race[5], and Hispanic or Latino[6]. **We recognize the problems inherent in using such a broad term and that some people to whom this term might find it objectionable. However, we use it to increase document readability.**

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[4] https://www.ywcaworks.org/blogs/ywca/fri-01152021-1332/why-we-use-bipoc

[5] U.S. Census. https://bit.ly/3D2GOIX

[6] https://www.census.gov/topics/population/hispanic-origin/about.html

Terms in italics are defined in the Glossary.

We use BIPOC because it seems to be the most widely-used term referring to a collective group of non-white people. Also, we believe it's important to elevate the experiences of Black and Indigenous persons.

MWMO shall always refer to a person or group in the way they prefer when that preference is known. We shall also be as specific as possible regarding people's *race*, *ethnicity*, nationality, tribe, and other *cultural* descriptions.

We may use BIPOC interchangeably with "*people of color.*"

Many online resources are available for additional insights, including The BIPOC Project[7] and the YWCA[8].

Constituent

A person or group who is (or could be) affected by the organization's actions, goals, and policies. MWMO has internal and external constituents segmented as follows (in no particular order):

Internal

- Board of Commissioners*
- Citizen Advisory Committee*
- *Workforce**
- Senior Leaders

External

- *Member Cities**
- Service area residents*
- Service area businesses and organizations
- Consultants/Contractors/Vendors
- Partners
- Grantees
- Elected Officials
- Program Participants
- State Agencies (Regulators)
- Service area visitors

*Indicates *key constituents*.

Culture

Culture is a social system. It includes a group's shared language, customs, beliefs, values, and institutions. It is passed down from generation to generation yet can evolve. Everyone has a culture, often multiple ones.

Culture affects our thoughts and actions, often without us even being aware.

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[7] https://www.thebipocproject.org/

[8] https://www.ywcaworks.org/blogs/ywca/fri-01152021-1332/why-we-use-bipoc

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Culturally Competent

The ability to interact *effectively* with people of different *cultures*. Building cultural competence is a lifelong pursuit at which one can never fully excel or perfect, as *culture* (like people) is many, various, and dynamic. Like any other type of competence, it includes levels of development that can increase over time as a person accumulates awareness, knowledge, skills, experiences, and feedback.

Personal cultural competence can be measured with instruments such as the Intercultural Development Inventory® or the Cultural Intelligence Assessment®.

Disparity

A condition of inequality in which benefits, assets, or services to one segment of the community, relative to other segments, are presumptively allocated, poorly provided, or inadequate in addressing underlying needs. Disparity also means these differences are unjustifiable based on identified needs, available agency resources, or other objective criteria. The effect is that the discrepancies may appear unnecessary, avoidable, unfair, or unjust.

Diverse/Diversity

The presence of variety in one place. For humans, variety is often measured quantitatively as differences in age, communication style, class, *culture*, disability, education, *ethnicity*, familial status, gender, intelligence, language, learning style, marital status, national origin, occupation, physical appearance, physical & mental health, politics, *race*, regional origin, religion, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, thinking style, viewpoints, etc. The benefit of diversity is in providing the components for adapting or constructing novel combinations; its value is in increased capacity to generate major innovations.

It is common to find people using the word "diversity" to describe a set of actions geared to accommodating variety (i.e., acknowledging, understanding, accepting, valuing, and celebrating differences). As the pool of knowledge and experience of diversity work continues to evolve, professionals increasingly differentiate between activities that increase variety (diversity) and behaviors that leverage variety to create belonging (*inclusion*).

Effective

How well a process or a measure addresses its intended purpose. Determining effectiveness requires (1) evaluating how well the process is aligned with the organization's needs and how well it is deployed or (2) evaluating the measure's outcome as an indicator of process or product performance.[9]

Equity/Equitable

(a.) Performance *results* that do not vary across meaningful socio-economic differences, particularly across *racial/ethnic* groups. These *results* are described by data around opportunity, accessibility, quality, fairness, outcomes, impact, repair, and restoration.

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[9] 2021-2022 Baldrige Excellence Framework

Terms in italics are defined in the Glossary.

(b.) Freedom from systemic *bias* or favoritism. Parity across differences.

ESAP

Acronym for Equity Strategic Action Plan, a CultureBrokers® deliverable. It lists the fewest, most impactful improvements and your organization's actions to achieve them. It follows a specific format that has proven *effective* in helping clients get measurable *results*.

Ethnicity

Describes a group of people who share a distinct *culture*, religion, language, or place of origin. It is a category independent of *race*. Therefore, in the U.S., people of the same ethnicity may be members of different *races*, such as Black Hispanics or Latinos (e.g., some people from Cuba, Puerto Rico, or the Dominican Republic).

Inclusion/Inclusive

Interactions between people and between people and objects (such as technology) that create opportunities for *diversity*, mutual learning, benefit, and growth. The advantage of inclusion is reciprocity; the value of inclusion is increased trust, cooperation, and *effectiveness*. Inclusion has generally been measured through surveys asking subjective questions about an individual's feelings of belonging, respect, support, and engagement. But inclusion can also be measured more objectively by observing the patterns of interaction and their *results*.

Intercultural

Occurring between or involving two or more cultures.[10]

Key

Major or most important, critical to achieving our intended outcome. "Key" is generally defined as around the most significant five items (e.g., around five key *constituents*).

Member Cities/Members

MWMO's Member Cities are a *key constituent* group that must be satisfied. They are the ultimate judges of our performance – if they leave, the organization will end[11].

Network

Interconnected relationships among people or organizations.

Formal Network: Interconnected relationships among people or organizations that are centralized, managed, and involve a process for engagement.

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[10] "Intercultural." Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, Merriam-Webster, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/intercultural. Accessed 18 Aug. 2023.

[11] State legislation requires cities in the seven-county metro area to join a watershed management organization (WMO). Cities can choose their WMO, but once joined, tend to be "captive" CONSTITUENTS because of the high cost (in terms of discomfort, effort, and/or money) involved in switching to another WMO. In particular, our smaller Member Cities rely heavily on MWMO expertise. MEMBER CITIES' power in ensuring MWMO EFFECTIVELY satisfies their needs lies in their role on the governing board.

Terms in italics are defined in the Glossary.

People of Color (See "BIPOC")

The term used in this plan as shorthand describes a person who identifies as a member of at least one of the following racial census categories: Black or African American, Asian, American Indian and Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, Some other *race*, and Hispanic. **We recognize the problems inherent in using such a broad term.** However, we use it only to increase plan readability.

Race

In the U.S., race is a construct that established various categories of people and a hierarchy of their value to society. In that worldview, people have, according to their physical characteristics, innate qualities that define them as different. Race has evolved to establish and perpetuate caste (superiority and dominance for the group at the top of the hierarchy. In the U.S., that group is the collection of people determined to be White)[12].

The U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) sets the standards on race, which guide the Census Bureau in classifying written responses to the race question. The main race categories are:

> White – A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa. It includes people who report race entries such as Irish, German, Italian, Lebanese, Arab, Moroccan, or Caucasian.

> Black or African American – A person having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa. It includes people who report entries such as Negro, African American, Kenyan, Nigerian, or Haitian.

> American Indian or Alaska Native – A person having origins in any of the original peoples of North and South America (including Central America) and who maintains tribal affiliation or community attachment. This category includes people who report entries such as Navajo, Blackfeet, Inupiat, Yupik, or Central American Indian groups or South American Indian groups.

> Asian – A person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent. It includes people who report other detailed Asian responses.

> Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander – A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Hawaii, Guam, Samoa, or other Pacific Islands. It includes people who report entries such as Chamorro and other detailed responses.

> Some Other Race - Includes all other responses not covered above.

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[12] Roediger, D. R. (n.d.). *Historical Foundations of Race*. National Museum of African American History & Culture. Retrieved July 31, 2023, from https://nmaahc.si.edu/learn/talking-about-race/topics/historical-foundations-race

Terms in italics are defined in the Glossary.

Racism is any act, practice, process, or policy that reinforces and maintains this dominance, whether or not the result is intentional.

Results

Outputs and outcomes achieved. Results should be evaluated based on current performance; performance relative to appropriate comparisons; the rate, breadth, and importance of performance improvements; and the relationship of results measures to *key* organizational performance requirements.

Senior Leaders

Kevin Reich, Executive Director

Nancy Stowe, Projects and Outreach Director

Workforce

All people actively supervised by our organization and involved in accomplishing our work, including paid employees, volunteers, and interns (paid or unpaid).

Terms in italics are defined in the Glossary.

II.   ACTION PLAN
Purpose

We Will Deliver Results

The main purpose of this Equity Strategic Action Plan (*ESAP*) is to help us measure and significantly improve our *results* with culturally *diverse constituents* – especially our board, *workforce*, and *Member City* residents. Such *results* include, but are not limited to, improvements in:

- • Budgeting and work planning for diversity, inclusion, and equity results

- • Staff diversity and cultural competency development

- • Board diversity and cultural competency development

- • Social network diversity and quality improvement

We have chosen two high-impact areas in which to make measurable improvements over the next year. Over this time, we will know what we are doing to achieve our goals, why we are doing those things, what the *results* should be, and how well we are doing compared to our own past *results* and the *results* of others. We will have processes in place to ensure our resources are sufficient and being appropriately applied to get results. Finally, we will analyze our new *results* and revise our plan as needed.

Development

This *ESAP* is the next logical step toward operationalizing our commitment to *diversity*, *inclusion*, and *equity*. It is based on results from the Diamond Inclusiveness™ Assessment (DIA), feedback, lessons learned over the last few years, and efforts of other organizations seeking to improve *diversity*, cultural *inclusiveness*, and *racial equity*.

We believe this plan shows careful consideration of high-impact actions, an understanding of individual and organizational capacities, a desire to authentically engage people from culturally *diverse* backgrounds as key assets, and a commitment to getting measurable results from our chosen activities.

Other Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Activities

Diversity and *inclusion* work are happening in many ways throughout the organization. This plan is not intended to restrict that work but rather identify our required minimum efforts necessary to achieve *key diversity* and *inclusion* goals over the next year. Leaders and managers are welcome to provide additional opportunities to deliver *equity* results as their resources allow if the enclosed strategic improvements are accomplished on time.

Terms in italics are defined in the Glossary.

Main Audience

This plan is written specifically to guide our *workforce* and board in:

- Deciding how to allocate organizational resources.

- Supervising others to ensure our plans are executed; and/or

- Supporting our *equity* work.

The target audience for this plan is senior leaders, supervisors, program managers, and special teams. If we fall into these groups, we will refer to this *ESAP* to decide where and how to assign people, money, materials, time, energy, and attention. We will also help hold our direct reports accountable for achieving our *ESAP* goals.

Other Audiences

For general transparency, this plan will be easily accessible to all *key constituents* so they know our path forward.

Management

ESAP Coordination

The *Senior Leaders* are responsible for managing this *ESAP*. They will model desirable behaviors, assure consistent application of this plan and its principles, and manage for *equity results*. They will also coordinate with any special teams and functional units. They will provide excellent leadership and support to others as they execute the plan.

Responsibilities include:

- Tracking work plan progress regularly.

- Celebrating accomplishments.

- Briefing staff, board, and other key stakeholders regularly on work plan progress.

- Coordinating regular meetings with designated individuals and teams who are "on point" for certain activities.

- Collectively making *ESAP* decisions.

- Providing regular internal communications to introduce this plan to the *workforce* and reporting its results.

- Identifying and addressing resource gaps in the plan, including working with those 'on point' to propose additional organizational resources where needed.

ESAP Oversight

The Executive Director ensures governance and *workforce* accountability to this *ESAP*.

Terms in italics are defined in the Glossary.

Strategic Improvements

1. **MWMO consistently spends its money to meet measurable goals that have been broken down by race, ethnicity, and other meaningful differences identified in the Equity Framework "Our Commitments" section.**

Guidance:

- Consider all the areas in which MWMO spends money (Capital projects, Grant Programs, CIP, Stewardship Grants, research/studies, internal operations, workforce, events, etc.)
- Plan for pre- and post-improvement data.
- This improvement has a wide scope. For the SMART Goal, feel free to reduce the scope to what you believe will be both high-impact and achievable for the first year.
- [Team may provide additional guidance or direction to leaders and implementers.]

Definitions:

Expense categories – All of the different ways the MWMO spends its money, including internally focused categories, such as administration & operation budgets, as well as externally focused categories, such as the different grant programs.

Equitable expenses –investment in businesses, organizations, and individuals of underrepresented *racial, cultural,* economic, age, religion, physical abilities, gender identities, and sexual orientations.

SMART[13] goal:

By December 20, 2024, the MWMO will have: (1) identified equitable expense baseline data for two expense categories, (2) established measurable goals by setting thresholds (ie, percentages) for equitable expenses in those two categories, (3) set draft policies to work toward those goals, and (4) implemented the policies organization-wide and tracked progress on the goals.

Affected Processes:

- Goal setting
- Financial reporting
- Accounting
- Review of vendors and contractors
- Procurement/Purchasing

Oversight for the Improvement:

Executive Director (Kevin Reich)

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[13] Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound. See https://asana.com/resources/smart-goals.

Terms in italics are defined in the Glossary.

Point Person for the Improvement:

Projects and Planning Specialist (Shawn James)

Key Projects:

- Research and understand funding programs and mechanisms and limitations to use of funds
- Identify, gather, and analyze baseline data about our current spending toward DEI goals
- Develop a DEI spending policy and decide on meaningful, measurable goals for two expense categories
- Apply the new policy and evaluate the results.

Benefits of achieving this goal:

- Improved understanding of our community
- Increased organizational awareness and accountability
- Creation of objective results
- Enhanced transparency and trust with our community
- Know how we are serving our community
- More effectively serve our community
- Increased reinvestment of MWMO funds in local communities

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PDCA Cycle[14]	Milestone	Responsible Person	Deadline	Resources Required
PLAN	1. Identify two key expense categories and a process for establishing baseline data, including identification of MWMO's level of control for each.	Adam Flett, *Communications and Outreach Specialist*	January, 2024	• Staff time • Financial staff time • Leadership approval
PLAN	2. Gather data on the two identified expense categories using 2023 data, and potentially more years of previous data, as time allows, to establish baselines.	Shawn James, *Projects and Planning Specialist*	January-February, 2024	• Staff time • Financial staff time
PLAN	3. Set criteria for equitable expenses.	Emily Resseger, *Monitoring, Assessment, and Research Program Manager*	January-February, 2024	• Staff time • Leadership approval

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[14] https://asana.com/resources/pdca-cycle.

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PDCA Cycle[14]	Milestone	Responsible Person	Deadline	Resources Required
PLAN	4. Analyze baseline data for the two expense categories against the identified equitable expense criteria.	Emily Resseger, *Monitoring, Assessment, and Research Program Manager*	March-April, 2024	• Staff time
PLAN	5. Establish robust accounting methods to budget, track, and measure equitable expenses.	Shawn James, *Projects and Planning Specialist*	April, 2024	• Staff time • Financial staff time
PLAN	6. Conduct research, interviews, and conversations with member cities to learn about their DEI spending policies that MWMO could help implement.	Mary Yang, *Community Outreach Specialist*	April-May, 2024	• Staff time • Member City staff time
PLAN	7. Conduct interviews with service providers listed on MWMO's retainer to learn about their DEI spending policies.	Adam Flett, *Communications and Outreach Specialist*	April-May, 2024	• Staff time • Service provider time

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1. MWMO consistently spends its money to meet measurable goals that have been broken down by race, ethnicity, and other meaningful differences identified in the Equity Framework "Our Commitments" section.

By December 20, 2024, the MWMO will have: (1) identified equitable expense baseline data for two expense categories, (2) established measurable goals by setting thresholds (ie, percentages) for equitable expenses in those two categories, (3) set draft policies to work toward those goals, and (4) implemented the policies organization-wide and tracked progress on the goals.

PDCA Cycle[14]	Milestone	Responsible Person	Deadline	Resources Required
PLAN	8. Identify clear and measurable diversity, inclusion, and equity goals for activities within the two key expense categories.	Emily Resseger, *Monitoring, Assessment, and Research Program Manager*	May-June, 2024	• Staff time • Leadership approval
PLAN	9. Create process to analyze results, including method to track and report quarterly results and spending for diversity, inclusion, and equity activities.	Mary Yang, *Community Outreach Specialist*	June, 2024	• Staff time
DO	10. Communicate the two categories and their equitable expense criteria to all MWMO staff. Suggest potential approaches to achieve equitable expense criteria, and discuss anticipated changes to work flows, if any, and process to use for evaluating and tracking spending.	Mary Yang, *Community Outreach Specialist*	Early July, 2024	• Staff time

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PDCA Cycle[14]	Milestone	Responsible Person	Deadline	Resources Required
DO	11. Incorporate feedback to develop approaches that best achieve the equitable expense criteria and apply this as pilot policy and practice.	Adam Flett, *Communications and Outreach Specialist*	July, 2024	• Staff time
DO	12. Track 2024 expenses for the two expense categories, according to pre-identified accounting methods. Document any accounting barriers or nuances.	Shawn James, *Projects and Planning Specialist*	August-December, 2024	• Staff time • Finance staff time
CHECK	13. Report results from pilot policy and practice.	Mary Yang, *Community Outreach Specialist*	January, 2025	• Staff time
CHECK	14. Evaluate pilot policy and practice and cross-reference them with the level of resource investment and with the results so far, including check-ins with staff doing the reporting and analysis.	Emily Resseger, *Monitoring, Assessment, and Research Program Manager*	January, 2025	• Staff time • Leadership time • Feedback from people involved and affected

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PDCA Cycle[14]	Milestone	Responsible Person	Deadline	Resources Required
CHECK	15. Identify our effective practices, benchmark/compare, and identify additional improvement opportunities. Consider alternative approaches to achieve desired results.	Mary Yang, *Community Outreach Specialist*	February, 2025	• Staff time
CHECK	16. Document the lessons learned from implementing the activities. Document our learning about the changed process – was it the best one to use? Is there some other process that might get us better results?	Adam Flett, *Communications and Outreach Specialist*	February, 2025	• Staff time
CHECK	17. Determine what's necessary to achieve desired results, and draft modified policy and practice.	Shawn James, *Projects and Planning Specialist*	February, 2025	• Staff time

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By December 20, 2024, the MWMO will have: (1) identified equitable expense baseline data for two expense categories, (2) established measurable goals by setting thresholds (ie, percentages) for equitable expenses in those two categories, (3) set draft policies to work toward those goals, and (4) implemented the policies organization-wide and tracked progress on the goals.

PDCA Cycle[14]	Milestone	Responsible Person	Deadline	Resources Required
ACT	18. Share results from the check phase with leadership and staff, propose modified policy and practice, get feedback, and make any changes.	Adam Flett, *Communications and Outreach Specialist*	March, 2025	• Staff time
ACT	19. Formally document/codify changes in policy, practice, and situations so our new behaviors will be institutionalized.	Shawn James, *Projects and Planning Specialist*	April-May, 2025	• Staff time • Leadership approval • Board approval
ACT	20. Follow up on any feedback from people involved and affected.	Adam Flett, *Communications and Outreach Specialist*	May, 2025	• Staff time
ACT	21. Share our learning with others outside our organization (peers, industry associations, etc.).	Mary Yang, *Community Outreach Specialist*	Q2-Q3, 2025	• Staff time • Staff time of outside organizations
ACT	22. Complete the next ESAP.	Emily Resseger, *Monitoring, Assessment, and Research Program Manager*	Q3, 2025	• Staff time

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2. MWMO conducts its work or services in locations that experience high interaction and connection among different cultures.

Guidance:

- Consider all the places and settings in which MWMO work is done. (Buildings, spaces, indoor, outdoor; owned, rented, planned; physical, virtual, etc.)
- Plan for pre- and post-improvement data.
- This improvement has a wide scope. For the SMART Goal, feel free to reduce the scope to what you believe will be both high-impact and achievable for the first year.
- "Different cultures" is not code for only people identifying as BIPOC. It includes all cultural groups. Everyone is a member of at least one cultural group.
- Consider how MWMO's activities with current and potential partners can affect our ability to improve this situation.

Definitions:

High Interaction: To be defined as milestone below.

SMART goal:

By the end of 2024, the MWMO will have a tested framework (recommendations, policy) for prioritizing built projects to be located in areas with high potential for interaction among different cultural groups.

Affected Processes:

- Projects and Planning
- Grants
- Financial

Oversight for the Improvement:

Nancy Stowe, Projects and Outreach Director

Responsible for the Improvement:

Nick Busse, Communications Principal

Key Projects:

1. Develop a method to view the watershed with areas of high potential for interaction and connection among different cultures.
2. Map current/past MWMO projects to evaluate how they fall relative to new info.
3. Develop guidance for project selection locations based on information gathered from steps 1 and 2.

Benefits of achieving this goal:

- Building closer connections to underserved communities.
- Better communication and transparency between leadership & governance, staff, customers, and community related to DEI work.

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- Institutionalized equity process.
- Able to provide a higher, better level of service to the community.
- High quality internal resource for siting projects
- Clearly defined strategy that defines the MWMO's equity process
- Clearly-defined strategy for the use of public funds

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2. MWMO conducts its work or services in locations that experience high interaction and connection among different cultures.

By the end of 2024, the MWMO will have a tested framework for prioritizing built projects to be located in areas with high potential for interaction among different cultural groups.

PDCA Cycle	Milestone	Responsible Person	Deadline	Resources Required
PLAN	1. Conduct a literature review focusing on multicultural interactions, urban diversity, and community engagement. Include review of MWMO member cities' DEI policies and those of other watersheds.	Abby Moore, Outreach Principal	Q1/2024	• Staff Time (Dan, Kevin) • Consultant Time & Budget
PLAN	2. Develop a preliminary definition of "high level of interaction and connection among different cultures."	Abby Moore, Outreach Principal	Q1/2024	• Staff Time (Dan, Kevin) • Consultant Time & Budget

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By the end of 2024, the MWMO will have a tested framework for prioritizing built projects to be located in areas with high potential for interaction among different cultural groups.

PDCA Cycle	Milestone	Responsible Person	Deadline	Resources Required
DO	3. Identify and gather relevant existing GIS layers to show potential for intercultural interaction. Consider areas like schools, parks, transit corridors, shopping areas, public services (DVS, library, etc.), diversity of surrounding neighborhoods, etc.	Emmy Baskerville, Projects and Grant Specialist	Q2/2024	• Staff Time • Consultant Time & Budget
DO	4. Develop a way to demonstrate/visualize on a map where the areas with high interaction potential fall.	Emmy Baskerville, Projects and Grant Specialist	Q2/2024	• Staff Time • Consultant Time & Budget
DO	5. Add current and past MWMO projects to the map and analyze trends and gaps in current project locations.	Emmy Baskerville, Projects and Grant Specialist	Q2/2024	• Staff Time • Consultant Time & Budget
CHECK	6. Develop quantitative and qualitative metrics (e.g., frequency of cultural events) and establish a baseline for future comparison.	Nick Busse, Communications Principal	Q3/2024	• Staff Time • Consultant Time & Budget

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By the end of 2024, the MWMO will have a tested framework for prioritizing built projects to be located in areas with high potential for interaction among different cultural groups.

PDCA Cycle	Milestone	Responsible Person	Deadline	Resources Required
CHECK	7. Evaluate potential improvement activities and cross-reference them with the level of resource investment and with the results so far.	Nick Busse, Communications Principal	Q3/2024	• Staff Time • Leadership Time • Consultant Time & Budget • Feedback from People Involved and Affected
CHECK	8. Share initial findings across the organization.	Nick Busse, Communications Principal	Q3/2024	• Staff Time
ACT	9. Draft guidance based on initial findings and using the available data.	Dan Kalmon, Planning Principal	Q4/2024	• Staff Time
ACT	10. Design an evaluation process, including periodic reviews, community feedback mechanisms, and data analysis methods.	Dan Kalmon, Planning Principal	Q4/2024	• Staff Time

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By the end of 2024, the MWMO will have a tested framework for prioritizing built projects to be located in areas with high potential for interaction among different cultural groups.

PDCA Cycle	Milestone	Responsible Person	Deadline	Resources Required
ACT	11. Prepare a comprehensive report detailing findings, challenges, and successes of 2024 ESAP work. Plan for the next phase, incorporating lessons learned and feedback.	Dan Kalmon, Planning Principal	Q4/2024	• Staff Time
ACT	12. Share our learning with others outside our organization (peers, industry associations, etc.)	Dan Kalmon, Planning Principal	Q4/2024	• Staff Time

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[1] Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound. See https://asana.com/resources/smart-goals.

[2] https://asana.com/resources/pdca-cycle.

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