ADVANCING RACIAL EQUITY IN GOVERNMENT

Documenting the Progress on Arlington County Government's Racial Equity
Framework for Action

Advancing Racial Equity In Government

An equitable Arlington is one where all are valued, educated, healthy and safe regardless of race-**Vision**

Mission-*As an employee, resident or business in Arlington, advance racial equity as a county-wide priority to eliminate, reduce, and prevent disparities in our policies, procedures practices, engagement, and interaction with and service to the community.*

INTRODUCTION

In September 2019, the Arlington County Board adopted an Equity Resolution.

In furtherance of this commitment to equity, Arlington County Government and Arlington Public Schools participated in a 10-month racial equity learning cohort program convened by the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) in partnership with the Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE), specifically identifying racial equity as a priority.

This means closing race-based outcome gaps so race does not predict one's success in any area of life while improving outcomes for everyone; moving beyond services to focus on policies, institutions and structures.

Arlington County is committed to developing an organizational culture that actively addresses barriers to equity and prioritizing racial equity and its cultural intersections. This was demonstrated with the creation of a new position, Chief Race and Equity Officer.

This position, filled by a Deputy County Manager, serves as a thought leader for the organization setting a precedent for the County's racial equity work, providing strategic direction and vision for institutionalizing racial equity in Arlington County.

Over the past year, work of the organization has been guided by an internal work plan based largely on the GARE theory of change for advancing racial equity in government.

This theory serves as the foundation for the County's Racial Equity Framework to be carried out as the work of all employees throughout the organization and in partnership with the community.

The Framework provides a structure for the County's work around four goals: Normalize, Organize, Operationalize and Assess.

This document is intended to report on implementation of the work plan between July 1, 2020, and June 30, 2021. Specifically, it provides a glimpse of the County's efforts over the year to establish a shared understanding of racial equity through conversation and training, and its work with Schools, other organizations, neighboring jurisdictions and local businesses to enhance the County's effort to foster equity.

It also details how the organization, as a whole, is working to advance the County's mission of dedicating resources *"to eliminate, reduce, and prevent disparities in (it) policies, procedures practices, engagement, and interaction with and service to the community."*

This includes applying the racial equity lens to programs by asking the five questions of who benefits; who is burdened, who is missing; how do we know; and what do/did we do?

Framework for a Racial Equity Action Plan

The County's **Racial Equity Framework,** shown to the right, is intended to help the County accomplish four goals: Normalize; Organize; Operationalize; and Assess. It was the basis of the work undertaken during the year to move the County Government and the Arlington community closer to achieving its vision.

This work included, but was not limited to, facilitated conversations and dialogues on Race and Equity; completing an organizational assessment to establish a baseline of where the County as an organization is today regarding race and equity; incorporating a racial equity tool in evaluating policies, and surveying the community's perspectives and experiences regarding race and equity in Arlington.

Racial Equity Goals: Framework for Action

NORMALIZE

The goal of Normalize is to create a shared understanding, knowledge and terminology around racial equity within the organization and among the community. The objective of this work is two-fold:

- Ensure the commitment of every individual, whether a County Board Member, leader, supervisor, manager, or frontline staff, to meaningfully engage in raising awareness of disparities.
- Commit to having the conversations, engagement and education needed to share information about disparities which exist due to race and inequities.

What was Accomplished

FACILITATED CONVERSATIONS: Between July 2020 and June 2021 County staff participated in either employee or consultant led conversations on racial equity, facilitated workshops and forums. Here is a sampling:

In July 2020, the Department of Park and Recreation Extended Leadership Team participated in a dialogue on racial equity facilitated by the department's human resource liaisons. A series of in person small group

dialogues followed. Convened between September and November 2020, the talks consisted of three, 1.5-hour sessions and three, two--hour virtual sessions for front-line staff.

Additionally, between May and June 2021, the department conducted workshops led by Thompson and Associates, titled an *Intro to Race and Equity,* that offered opportunities for staff to engage on the topics of cultural exposure, the history of inequity and exclusion, and systemic racism. A total of six, three-hour virtual sessions were scheduled with one in-person session conducted in Spanish at the Trades Center.

In August 2020, AED staff participated in the *Racial Equity Forum*, a four week facilitated series of conversations (total eight hours per staff) led by Thompson and Associates.

The forum featured two cohorts with 25 staff members each, for a total of 50 employees. Following the American Bar Association's *21-day Racial Equity Habit Building Challenge,* it provided a forum to promote understanding, prompt dialogue and inform the work of AED staff. A final report, shaped by the forum, now serves as a framework for racial equity initiatives internal and external to AED based on its mission. *(continues on the next page)*

In the fall and winter of 2020, the Department of Management and Finance established a Racial Equity Book Club and Steering Committee. Staff completed discussions on racial equity based on readings and materials and those relevant to the department's line of business. This included a presentation and discussion by the Real Estate Assessments Division regarding the implications of race on fairness and inequities in the assessment process stemming from a *Washington Post* article on the topic. In addition, staff participated in a department wide discussion facilitated by Thompson and Associates in January 2021.

A series of focus groups was conducted within DES between January and February 2021, the purpose of which was to gauge the perspectives of Black Supervisors, Hispanic and Asian employees as well as others interested in participating in the Department's DEI Committee on barriers to career advancement and job satisfaction and a fair, inclusive and accountable work environment.

Dialogues on Race and Equity: In August 2020, the County partnered with the Arlington-based organization, Challenging Racism to develop a series of virtual dialogues for the community on race and equity.

The conversations were guided by the *Challenging Racism* curriculum tailored specifically for the County to support participants in understanding and speaking about privilege, bias and equity.

As reported to the County Board in January 2021, between October and December of 2020 there were six community wide virtual conversations held throughout Arlington (DRE in Our Community) with a total of 150 participants, and four virtual trainings of 62 partners representing businesses, nonprofits, civic associations, and faith entities (DRE Partners) who host interactive conversations within their own networks and with other organizations.

In May 2021, the County released DRE In Your Neighborhood, a toolkit, available in Spanish and English, to support and guide conversations on privilege, bias and equity.

The purpose of the toolkit is to build capacity among family and friends to have conversations on these topics with anyone, anywhere.

As of June 23, 2021, there were 1,903 DRE In Your Neighborhood page views with an average time of 3.1 minutes spent on the page, potentially indicating the time people are taking to download the resource.

RACE VCircles:
In March 2021, in partnership with Restorative Arlington, a series of Virtual Dialogue Circles (VCircles) were developed to create a supportive space for employees to engage fully and honestly about their lived experience of racial equity.

The circles provided an inclusive opportunity for all County employees to connect, explore together and engage in experiential learning around restorative circles. In all, five, two-hour virtual circles were established as a summer series beginning in June and to continue through August 2021, each with varying topics consistent with the theme of racial equity.

The first RACE VCircle was conducted on June 11, 2021 with the topic, *This Past Year: Making Sense of this Moment of Racial Reckoning.* Forty-eight employees participated across departments representing a diversity of race, gender, ages, and position within the County. The second RACE VCircle on the topic, *Truth Telling* was convened on June 25, 2021, with 37 employees participating— again with the same diversity represented in the previous session.

As of June 30, 2021, a total of 148 employees signed up to participate in the RACE VCircles; registration remains open for future planned session up to one week prior to the Friday scheduled VCircle.

Dialogues on Race and Equity for Employees: In May 2021, a request for quotes was issued for consultants to complete capacity building training for all employees via facilitated dialogues on racial equity. As of June 30, 2021, responses were under review with selection of a consultant pending.

<u>TRAINING AND KNOWLEDGE BUILDING</u>: During the year, training of staff and County leadership took on many forms.

Senior Leaders Capacity Building Training: In August 2020, the Executive Leadership Team and County Board Members participated in a two-day workshop tailored specifically for the County by the Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE).
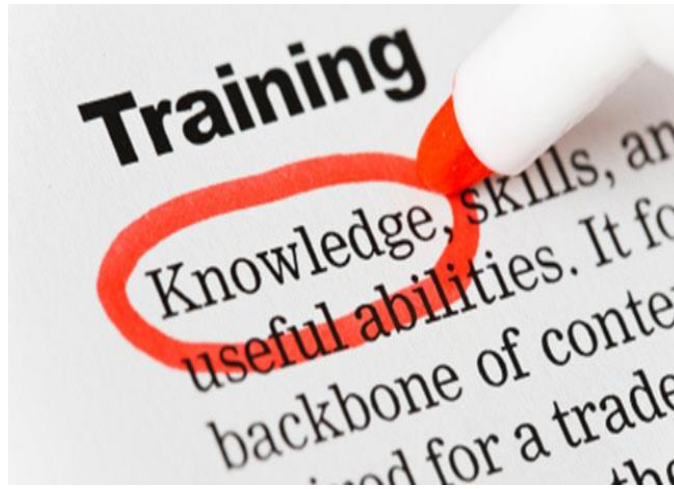
The two-day training was designed to build and expand understanding of racial equity key concepts and applying GARE's theory of change; provide training on the role of leadership in operationalizing racial equity; support and facilitate a briefing from Arlington County's Racial Equity Cohort team; and assist senior leadership with developing next steps for integrating racial equity into County operations.

GARE Train the Trainers: In October 2020, 2019-2020 Racial Equity Cohort members completed "train the trainer" training facilitated by GARE. The course was provided in a virtual format over 1.5 days.

Bi-monthly, team members participated in the GARE Implementation Cohort that began in September 2020 focusing on specific topic areas relevant to operationalizing racial equity. The final Cohort meeting was planned for July 2021.

Black Employees Council (BEC) Series on Racial Trauma and Healing: During October and November 2020, the BEC partnered with the George Mason University Carter Center to convene four virtual workshops for employees on racial trauma and healing. Held on Fridays, the sessions were well attended.

Racial Equity Course: In November 2020, staff began designing a multi-part course for all County staff addressing race, equity and racial equity. The curriculum is designed to introduce staff to various concepts and topics in digestible bites with a key take away to consider and/or act on from each course. The course as it is being designed will be offered as a series of digital modules through the Learning Center. The first module is an introduction to racial equity. Development of future modules is ongoing.

Employee Diversity Equity and Inclusion, Cultural Competency and Bystander Training: During the year, several departments began training in a number of areas related to race and equity. Here is just a sampling.

In May 2021, DES launched a Diversity Equity & Inclusion (DEI) pilot training program for its Operations Service Area. The series includes a topical/themed training video with requirements to complete a series of questions after viewing each.

Completion is documented through the Learning Center. This was preceded by Cultural Competency Training in May 2021 for members of the Department's DEI Committee.

Additionally, in summer 2020, DMF staff completed Bystander Training. This was followed then in October of 2020 with Unconscious Bias training. Three dates and times were offered each for all department staff to participate in the three-hour trainings.
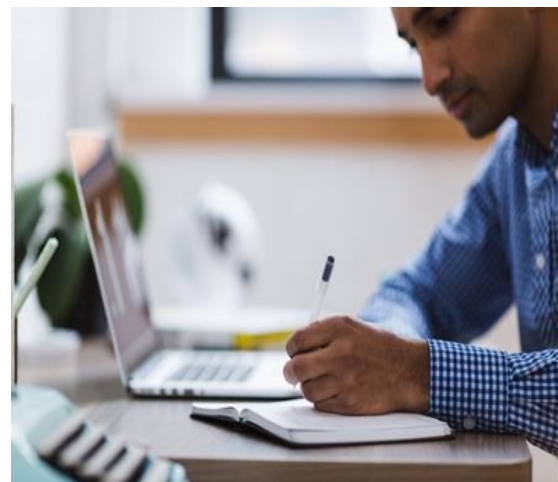
DES is now offering online diversity and inclusion training

<u>RESEARCH AND DOCUMENTATION:</u> Work began on researching and documenting the history of race in Arlington to establish community context.

History of Race Timeline: In October 2020, an interdepartmental staff team began to develop a comprehensive, interactive and iterative timeline of the evolution of Arlington County's racial and ethnic history from the retrocession to the present.

The History of Race Timeline will include the historic Green Valley neighborhood, home of the Green Valley Pharmacy

The timeline will include not only documented historical facts across disciplines and the areas of service to the community by the County—land use, zoning, housing, parks, recreation and cultural amenities, education, transportation, civics, politics, etc.—but personal stories, narratives and experiences, as well as in a variety of medium.

The vision is that it will be available in an online/digital format, with other formats to be considered. Preliminary work to document some of the history and categorize it by discipline and time periods has been completed, with the first installment documenting the period spanning from 1930-1960 released in July 2021.

Black families were displaced by Pentagon construction in the 1940s

ORGANIZE

Organize efforts focused on creating a sustainable and supported structure to advance racial equity to include personnel and resources that become a defined and integral component of the organization and the system. Its objectives are:

- Build the requisite infrastructure and establish a framework and guidelines in which racial equity work can be implemented.

- Create culture for systemic and organizational change and management.

What was Accomplished

ESTABLISHING A BASELINE TO MEASURE PROGRESS

Department Survey: In September of 2020, a survey was issued to Department directors to gather information on:

- If the department had a staff member participating in the COG/GARE Racial Equity Cohort

- Staff identified as the agency's lead for Racial Equity initiatives

- Existence or creation of a department level racial equity working group or task force

- Department specific statement/principles or policy on racial equity

- Department specific racial equity framework, plan or tool on racial equity

- Department specific education, training or consultation on racial equity.

The responses provided a baseline of where the County as an organization is on meeting its mission of advancing racial equity based on the work of the departments; and to further outline organizational and capacity needs. The results were shared with the Executive Leadership Team and the Racial Equity Core Team. They have been used to consider structure and organization enterprise wide and at the department level in implementing racial equity.

Racial Equity Core Team: In November 2020, the County's GARE Racial Equity Cohort was established as the County's interdepartmental Racial Equity Core Team (RECT).

A representative from each County department was included on the team along with three members from Arlington Public Schools inclusive of its Chief Equity Diversity and Inclusion Officer, the County Attorney's Office and the Sheriff's Office.

All RECT members completed GARE training either as a member of the cohort or thereafter through the program's virtual foundations training offered to members between October and December of 2020.

The team's role and responsibilities is detailed in their scope document. The RECT meets monthly and has established work areas for implementation which includes communications, community engagement, data and metrics, education and training, finance, contracting and procurement, and workforce.

The purpose of the working groups is to develop guiding principles and standards for departments to implement as they advance racial equity in their lines of business.

Team members also serve as liaisons to their departments in aligning the work of department level teams with the county-wide racial equity framework.

Budget and Resources: With the adoption of the Fiscal Year (FY) 2022 Operating Budget in April 2021, dedicated resources were allocated to support the continued education, training and capacity building for the organization on racial equity.

One-time funds were allocated to focus on equity

and budget along with increased funding from the FY 2021 adopted budget for continued training and capacity building.

In addition, monies were allocated for the addition of a new Race and Equity Projects Manager position, which was filled in June 2021, to support the Chief Race and Equity Officer's work plan.

Departmental Racial Equity Teams, Groups, Steering Committees: Between July 2020 and June 2021 departments established or expanded existing teams comprised of staff either appointed or via application to lead efforts in advancing racial equity.

The structure, composition and founding of each team varies by department.

Some have established sub-committees within their teams with specific focus areas while others are department wide.

The work varies from monthly discussions, readings, trainings and learning to considering changes to department wide vision, mission and values to center race and equity.
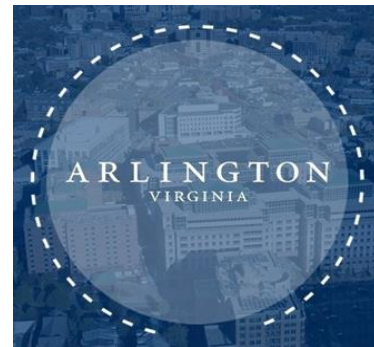
COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT:

Establishing a network and relationship with community groups, the private and academic sectors, non-profits, and individuals advancing racial equity is a component of the DRE work plan. Between July 1, 2020 and June 30, 2021, the Chief Race and Equity Officer was the guest speaker, presenter or on the agenda for meetings with community organizations, advisory groups and civic associations. She also held one-on-one meetings with several community stakeholders, influencers and individuals. As shown in the list below, in all, the CERO engaged nine County advisory groups, five civic associations, 28 community groups (including media outlets) and five internal County groups and agencies.

ADVISORY COMMISSIONS/GROUPS

- Arlington Neighborhood College
- Climate Change, Energy and Environment Commission (C2E2)
- Commission on the Status of Women
- Community Services Board
- Economic Development Commission
- Fiscal Affairs Advisory Commission
- Human Rights Commission
- Pedestrian Advisory Committee
- Planning Commission

CIVIC ASSOCIATIONS

- Arlington Forest Citizens Association
- Donaldson Run Civic Association
- Fairlington Citizens Association
- Glencarlyn Citizens Association
- John M. Langston Civic Association

COMMUNITY GROUPS

- Arlington Coalition of Black Clergy
- Arlington Rotary Club
- Alliance for Housing Solutions, Leckey Forum
- Arlington for Justice; Let's Talk Tuesday
- Arlington Independent Media (AIM) - Arlington Voices
- Arlington Independent Media - Choose to be Curious
- Arlington 55+
- Arlington Interfaith Network
- Arlington Magazine
- Arlington Partnership for Children Youth and Families
- Black Parents of Arlington
- Columbia Pike's Presidents Group
- Destination 2027
- League of Women Voters Annual Meeting
- Northern Virginia Building Industry Association -NVBIA
- National Landing Business Improvement District, DEI Steering Committee
- NVRC One Military, One Voice
- NAACP, Arlington Branch
- United Way NCA

- Urban Alliance
- WAMU
- WTTG/Fox 5
- WDVM
- The Hill, Diversity Summit
- ULI Pathways to Inclusion (Panelist)
- ULI Young Leaders Group (Panel Moderator)
- Volunteer Arlington
- Government Alliance on Race and Equity, Annual Membership Meeting Emcee
- Housing Action Arlington

INTERNAL GROUPS

- Arlington Department of Human Services Children's Behavioral Health Bureau, Mental Health Summit
- Arlington Economic Development (AED), Arlington Convention and Visitor Service
- Arlington Economic Development --Return on Creativity
- Arlington County Government Employee Lounge Podcast
- Human Rights Forum, Sponsored by the Human Rights Commission

OPERATIONALIZE

The goal of ensuring the principles of racial equity is applied throughout the organization in developing policies, plans, and programs; and decision making is guided by three objectives:

- Analyze planning, programs, services, policies in the context of a "response-driven government" culture to determine whether they address or exacerbate disparities.

- Define strategies to address and resolve disparities.

- Allocate and distribute resources to support identified strategies.

What was Accomplished

APPLYING THE RACIAL EQUITY TOOL: Over the past year, staff have begun the process of using the racial equity tool/lens to inform strategies around policy and decisions.

For instance, the Commission for the Arts applied the equity lens when selecting recipients for its Fiscal Year 2022 Arts Grants. As part of the application process, applicants had the opportunity to answer three optional questions regarding their equity initiatives to receive an equity bonus award, with the objective of furthering the equity work of each organization in line with the priorities of the Arts Commission's Equity Statement and the County's commitment to equity. In addition, the Equity Tool influenced the development/revision of the County's environmental programs and plans, financial policies, policy for naming facilities, human services programs and more.

While we are not able yet to measure and track impact, listed to the right are a number of other areas where the racial equity lens has been applied at a high level or as an initial step to frame a work plan, approach or guiding principle.

HOUSING PROGRAMS

- Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) Affordable Housing Development
- Fair Housing Plan
- Housing and Engagement
- Missing Middle Housing Study

ENVIRONMENTAL EFFORTS/PROGRAMS

- Green Building Density Incentive Policy Update
- Community Energy Plan
- Urban Forestry & Natural Resources Plan Update
- Energy Assurance Plan

DEVELOPMENT/PLANNING

- Pentagon City Planning Study
- Economic Development Commission's Strategy Report
- Public Art Master Plan Update
- Neighborhood Conservation Program Review
- Historic Preservation Master Plan Update
- Site Plan Process

HUMAN SERVICES

- Department of Human Services Vision, Mission and Values Statement
- Community Services Board Equity Statement
- COVID Testing/COVID Vaccine
- Continuum of Care
- Parent-Infant Education Program (PIE) Program-School Health Nurse Aids
- Nonprofit Funding Framework

FINANCIAL

- FY 2021-FY 2022 Operating Budgets
- FY 2021 & FY 2022-2024 Capital Improvement Plans
- Prevailing Wage Provisions

TRANSPORTATION

- Bicycle Advisory Committee Charter Review
- Pedestrian Advisory Committee Charter Review
- Residential Permit Parking Report
- Performance Parking Request for Proposals

OTHER

- County Logo and Facility Naming and Renaming
- Digital Equity
- Police Practices Group
- State: the SWaMmys
- Small Business Grant Relief Program
- Relaunch Program

ASSESS

The work to assess the County's performance regarding advancing racial equity in the workforce and the community has a single objective—Track and measure outcomes and strategically manage long-term systemic impact and organizational and cultural change.

What was Accomplished

DIALOGUES ON RACE AND EQUITY (DRE) ASSESSMENT

Between October 2020 and December 2020, a 31-question assessment was issued County-wide as part of the Dialogues on Race and Equity initiative.

The assessment was conducted to gauge the perspectives and experiences of people in the community with regard to race and equity as an individual resident in Arlington, at the neighborhood and community level, and in their interaction with the Arlington County Government.

The results provide a baseline on attitudes in the community on racial equity and also key themes of focus to include: 1) the Arlington Way, 2) Educational Equity, 3) Affordable Housing, and 4) Language Accessibility.

A total of 2,821 residents completed the assessment. Regarding questions about their experiences, over 80% of the respondents think it is valuable to discuss race and equity; 47% have observed or experienced negative (implicit or explicit) bias against a particular group/ethnicity and 57% believe structural racism in Arlington exists. In responding to questions about the community, 70% answered they believe institutional racism exists.

The survey also revealed that only 33.18% of respondents feel "Arlington seeks input and assistance in decision-making from communities of color" and just 41.7% believe "Arlington is making progress on improving access to services for people of color."

The findings/summary of the assessment was presented to the County Board on January 26, 2021.

RACE AND ETHNICITY DASHBOARD

In May 2021, the County released a new data dashboard using American Community Survey Data from 2019 that disaggregates by race and ethnicity 22 indicators such as income, education, housing, etc.

This dashboard was designed to display individual snapshots of Arlington's White, Black or African American, Asian, Other (all other races and multi-racial), and Hispanic or Latino Origin populations. It provides context to understand disparities and differences in people's lived experience in Arlington.

The dashboard serves as a baseline to both understand and communicate on existing racial disparities and gaps and to measure and track progress in closing those gaps.

It provides a key tool for application of the racial equity lens to operationalize; and can be used by the community and staff to inform policy decisions and design programs, services and processes.

With the release of the dashboard, a briefing paper summarized key findings in the area of the wealth gap, housing, education and language in Arlington.
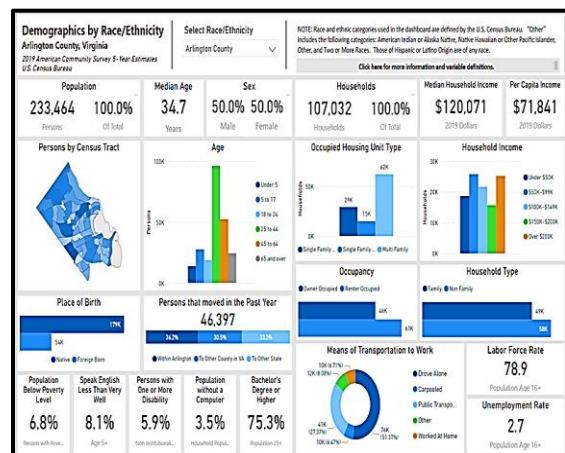
YEAR AHEAD SUMMARY

Over the coming year, the efforts of RACE will continue those activities established around the goal of Normalize. Specifically, the following activities will be furthered or undertaken:

Dialogues on Race and Equity: The County will work with Challenging Racism to provide support and resources to current DRE Partners to convene another series of DRE in Our Community conversations.

Additional effort will focus on expanding the curriculum to provide support for dialogues that center and are designed for youth, BIPOC, (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) immigrants, businesses and boards.

In addition, in the coming year, the County will work with Challenging Racism to provide additional support in the use of the DRE In Your Neighborhood self-guided toolkits on privilege, bias and equity by both the community and employees.

RACE VCircles: In partnership with Restorative Arlington, RACE VCircles will continue throughout the summer. There will be training offerings for RECT staff in Restorative Practices as well as Basic Circle Processes. With additional training and increased capacity, another series of RACE VCircles or RACE Circles for employees to continue to engage in conversations on race and equity will be considered for winter or spring.

Racial Equity Course: Beginning in the summer of 2021, the first of 10 modules designed to provide a foundation for all employees on terms and concepts around racial equity will be implemented. Modules will be posted in the Learning Center once per month thereafter.

Each module up to 15 minutes in length will be foundational for all employees with enrollment and completion tracked through the Learning Center. It also will be incorporated in the on-boarding process for all new employees.

Dialogues on Race and Equity for Employees: Consultant led workshops and trainings will be offered beginning in the fall of 2021 to build the capacity of employees in their understanding of racial equity in the workplace and how to implement strategies to operationalize in their work.

Racial History Timeline: In July 2021 staff submitted a grant application to Virginia Humanities to expand and build upon the existing Racial History Timeline.

If approved, the grant will assist Arlington County with refining the initial segment of the timeline, supplementing what currently exists with additional historic research, capturing personal interviews and stories from a diverse range of community members, and filling in content prior to 1930 and after 1960 for the remaining periods of the Racial History Timeline.

This will be accomplished through partnerships with identified Community Liaisons and storytelling sessions, through recorded oral history interviews, as well as via various crowdsourcing opportunities. While efforts to normalize racial equity will be ongoing, a primary focus will be to organize.

Department Equity Teams: Over the coming year, the Racial Equity Core Team will document, via a template, a structure to guide the department teams, their organization, and expectations regarding roles and responsibilities with the goal of each department having a coordinated team in place to guide the work and implement department level Racial Equity Action Plans.

Racial Equity Core Team: RECT work that began in Spring 2021 and will continue over the coming year, will focus on:

Communications: Compilation and review of all communications and material developed by departments since July 2020 to develop templates and guides for use in communicating on racial equity to employees.

Community Engagement: Root cause analysis of "the Arlington Way" to make recommendations on and help inform an inclusive and racially equitable community engagement process.

Data and Metrics: Develop standards for departments to collect, disaggregate, and analyze data based on race and ethnicity with community centered projects, programs and processes. A key component of this standardization with be County's participation beginning in August 2020 in the *UVA and Master Card Data Commons* pilot project.

This project will facilitate documenting minimum data standards needed to inform staff decision making and development of a scorecard to report on the use of data and outcomes. Pilot projects are being considered by the Department of Parks and Recreation and the Sheriff's Office. Based on the outcome of the six-month project, there will be a model to implement County-wide on programs/projects by departments.

Education and Training: Review materials and courses designed by staff at the department level and consultant proposals for consistency with the County's racial equity framework, documenting and tracking/measuring completion. Developing a standard list of racial equity focused topics in which all employees should be trained and tracked on an on-going basis.

Finance, Contracts and Procurement: Develop a template for application of the equity lens with budget and training for its application.

Workforce: Review best practices across departments to develop standards to be consistently applied at the department level and consider where and how standards can be incorporated into relevant policies and regulations.

GARE and COG: COG will host GARE to facilitate another Learning Cohort program for member jurisdictions in the region. The Cohort will begin in September 2021 and is anticipated to meet monthly for a day long learning session through June 2022. A group of five staff will be identified to participate.

Participation in COG Chief Equity Officers Committee will continue with monthly meetings as well as membership with GARE and participation in monthly member meetings and convenings to network and share with others around the country.

Racial Equity Tools: As we operationalize, we will formalize the use of the equity lens. In the coming year, a template will be developed, and staff trained to implement and document their use of the equity lens to evaluate policies, programs, and processes. This includes adding the analysis and staff summary in County Board reports.

Further, a specific focus in the application and use of the equity lens will be equitable budgeting. Effort will be made to map the current approved budget with an equity lens, establish guiding principles around budgeting for equity and develop a template and train budget analysts to assist departments in applying the lens to budget proposals. This will build upon the work started with the FY2020, '21, and '22 adopted budgets with the goal of formalizing and standardizing the process.

Work to demonstrate and train on the use of the Race and Ethnicity dashboard by both employees and the community will continue with the intent of formalizing the use of the tool in operationalizing racial equity in decision making. The tool will be updated as new Census data is released. In addition, new briefing papers will be developed using the data over the coming year along with considerations for additional indicators to disaggregate and add to and refine the dashboard.

Assess: Lastly, to measure progress and understand where we are and how we are evolving in our efforts to advance racial equity, the FY 2022 Resident Satisfaction Survey will build upon the DRE Assessment incorporating questions on racial equity to track and monitor attitudes, focus areas, and impact County-wide and by level/area of service (department).

APPENDIX

All-

We hope the warm spring weather is lifting everyone's spirits and hope fills your soul as we move through the pandemic.

The work of Realizing Arlington's Commitment to Equity (RACE) begins with learning and developing empathy together. In partnership with Restorative Arlington, we have been developing a session of Virtual Circles for you. The goal of these VCircles is to create a supportive space where ACG employees from all departments can engage fully and honestly about their lived experience of race and equity. We also hope that the VCircles will provide an opportunity for ACG employees to connect, explore together, and engage in experiential learning around restorative circles.

Together with, Kimiko Lighty, co-coordinator in this work, we invite you to participate in a series of dialogue circles specifically designed for ACG employees.

About Dialogue Circles

Circle processes have their roots in indigenous cultures around the globe, stretching back to ancient times. Circle values and practices are now known by many names, such as: community-building circles, peacemaking circles, talking circles, or simply "circles."

In-person Circles usually include the following elements:

- People are seated in an open circle, with no obstructions between them.
- The group comes up with guidelines or agreements for behavior in the circle.
- Conversation moves around the circle so that each person in turn has an opportunity to speak if they want. Often, a "talking piece" is passed around the circle. The person with the talking piece is invited to speak if they wish; all others listen.
- There is some kind of opening and closing ceremony, observance or activity.

Virtual Circles (VCircles) are an online adaptation of the circle process. While they differ from an in-person Circle, we are incorporating many circle elements for a virtual space. The VCircles are intended to build connection and community during this time of physical distancing.

About the RACE VCircles

- VCircles will take place via Zoom on Fridays from June - August from 12-2pm. Our first Circle will be Friday, June 11th and then periodically on Fridays in June, July with the last session to occur on Friday, August 20th.
- Our Volunteer Circle Keeper Team has spent weeks planning these circles so that you will have the best possible experience. Please commit to the full two-hour time period.
- These conversations will be cross departmental and open to all Arlington County Government Employees.
- There is no pre-work required for the circle, aside from a short introductory pre-circle call with

one of our VCircle facilitators, that will take place the week prior to your first VCircle. During the call, we will provide more context about circles and the expectations of these circles, in particular.

As we initiate this series of RACE VCircles just one week before the County observes Juneteenth, a time when we honor the emancipation of enslaved people in the United States, we thought it important that our first RACE VCircle be devoted to reflection and dialogue about what has occurred and transpired since this time last year. Over the past year, many moments of crisis have defined, framed and refined us individually and collectively as well as our thinking on race and equity. During our June 11th RACE VCircle we will connect with each other in a way that will allow each participant to be heard in a deeply meaningful way without problem solving, without advice giving, without judgment as we reflect together on the topic "This last year: making meaning out of moments of crisis and racial reckoning?"

Next Steps:

If you are interested in participating in our dialogue circles with ACG colleagues, please:

- Complete this form by the appropriate sign up date for the circle you wish to attend, e.g. no later than Thursday June 3rd for the 1st VCircle on June 11th (see the detailed timeline below at the bottom of this invitation). In order to provide the best possible VCircle, this pre-registration is necessary to facilitate planning and pre-circle calls; and
- Block your calendars for the VCircles you plan to attend starting June 11th and subsequent scheduled Fridays between 12-2pm, Please note, participants arriving after we move into break out rooms will be invited to join the next circle so please be prompt and plan to be present for the entire conversation.

We know the past year has been challenging beyond imagination, and that building and keeping community has been a lifeline to so many. Please consider joining this VCircle series as an opportunity to build understanding and connection today, and for the future.

If you have any questions about this session of VCircles please reach out to Samia, Chief Race and Equity Officer, at sbyrd@arlingtonva.us.

Warmly,

Mark & Samia

Detailed VCircle Timeline:

VCircle Dates	Sign Up Deadline (use this form)	Participants receive Community Agreements and Zoom information for VCircle	NEW VCircle participants receive Pre-Circle Calls	Two hour VCircle via Zoom
June 11, 2021	6/3/21	6/8/21	6/8/21 – 6/10/21	6/11/21
June 25, 2021	6/17/21	6/22/21	6/22/21-6/24/21	6/25/21
July 16, 2021	7/8/21	7/13/21	7/13/21-7/15/21	7/16/21
July 30, 2021	7/22/21	7/27/21	7/27/21-7/29/21	7/30/21
August 20, 2021	8/12/21	8/17/21	8/17/21-8/19/21	8/20/21

Community and Online Agreements for Realizing Arlington's Commitment to Equity (RACE) VCircles

RACE VCircle 1, June 11, 2021

Join Zoom Meeting
Link: https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87040526691?pwd=dlJ4dWlzTlFmQlFRUU9xazJyWkxjdz09
Meeting ID: 870 4052 6691
Passcode: 004361

Circle Keepers: Sarah Atif, Ana Berwa, Michael Brown, Samia Byrd, Bill Casey, Nutan Chada, Casie Graham, Siobhan Grayson, Lisalyn Jacobs, Kimiko Lighty, Sharon Solorzano, Bob Stump, Ellen Toups, Emily Warner

<div align="center">

Seven Core Assumptions: What We Believe to Be True
From Heart of Hope Resource Guide by Kay Pranis and Carolyn Boyes Watson

The True Self in Everyone is Good, Wise, and Powerful
The World Is Profoundly Interconnected
All Human Beings Have a Deep Desire to Be in Good Relationship
All Human Beings Have Gifts, and Everyone Is Needed for What They Bring
Everything We Need to Make Positive Change is Already Here
Human Beings Are Holistic
We Need Practices to Build Habits of Living from the Core Self

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Thank you for participating in our VCircle Community. Below you will find:
- Essential information about the Circle Process
- How VCircles are different from an in-person Circle
- How VCircles are different from a regular Zoom meeting
- RACE VCircle Self Care
- Agreements we would like to hold for our time together

Essential Information about Circle Process
Circle processes have their roots in indigenous cultures around the globe, stretching back to ancient times. Circle values and practices are now known by many names, such as: restorative circles, community-building circles, peacemaking circles, talking circles, or simply "circles."

In-person Circles usually include these elements:
- People are seated in a circle, with no table in between them.
- The group comes up with guidelines or agreements for how they will act while in the circle.
- Conversation moves around the circle in rounds so that each person in turn has an opportunity to speak if they want. Often, a "talking piece" is passed around the circle. The person with the talking piece is invited to speak or pass; all others listen. Passing allows the circle to honor your participation even if you choose not to speak during a particular round.

- There is some kind of opening and closing ceremony, ritual or activity.

VCircles are different from an in-person Circle
- **Virtual Circles (VCircles) are an online adaptation of the circle process.** While they cannot compare with the experience of an in-person Circle, we are incorporating as many elements of these circles as we can. The VCircles are intended to build connection and community during this time of physical distancing.
- **Like an in-person Circle, VCircles will be facilitated by one or two circle keepers.** Circle keepers are all-partial which means that we are invested in the welfare of every person in the circle. Circle keepers are full participants which means that we are part of the circle and will engage in each round.
- **Circles move in rounds.** The conversation for each VCircle will move in a predetermined circle order, shared at the beginning of the VCircle, for each round. Each speaker will either speak or pass during their turn. At the end of your turn please offer the value of your choice to the next speaker in the circle order. This helps us to know when it is our turn and it keeps the values of our circle present in the conversation.

  For example in our introductory round: The first speaker will share their name, their pronouns, and a word or phrase that describes what they are hoping to receive from this VCircle Experience. That speaker will then offer a value: "I pass to the next speaker with 'Hope.'" And then the second speaker will share their introduction and we will continue until everyone has been heard and we return to the first speaker.

- If you have a technical issue either at the beginning of our call or during our call please return to our main room and our technical host will work with you so that you can participate.

VCircles are different from a regular Zoom meeting
Many of our participants are accustomed to video chats on various platforms. This meeting is different. The purpose of this meeting is restorative connection. The format we are using is derived from universal and existentially intuitive ways of gathering. During our brief time together, think of yourself as an ancient being gathering with peers you respect deeply around a fire in a sacred location.

*Photo by Courtnie Tosana on Unsplash

<u>RACE VCircle Self Care</u>
During your VCircle we will discuss sensitive and challenging topics. Some participants may feel tension or stress in our bodies during the conversation. Below you will find a list of stress response strategies that may support your ability to participate as your best self.

Stress Response Strategies

For Yourself:
- Carefully prepare your space before training
- Listen to calming music
- Practice deep breathing
- Monitor and be mindful of your body
- Step away if necessary
- Tend to your physical needs (water/snack)
- Share, if you feel comfortable
- Use the break time mindfully
- Reach out privately to someone you trust to process what you heard
- Journal

For Others:
- Acknowledge the catalyst of stress response
- Message them privately to offer support
- Don't offer support in a public way, to avoid putting attention on them
- Alert your Circle Keeper
- Allow space for emotion

We acknowledge that you know you best. Care for yourself as you need to be well and to be present.

<u>Agreements we would like to hold for our time together</u>

Purpose: The Purpose for our time together is to connect with each other and for each participant to be heard in a deeply meaningful way. We hope to create brave spaces for participants to share their experiences and perspectives on race and equity.

Values: The following values have been shared by members of previous circles. You may wish to write them on a sticky note and place them in your eyeline for passing.

Exploration
Learning
Empathy
Patience
Confidentiality
Collaboration
Connectivity
Humility
Authenticity
Honesty

Integrity
Openness
Listening to Understand
Compassion
Caring for those around us
Good communication
Community
Creativity
Inspiration

Community Guidelines: The following guidelines were compiled based on the experiences of previous VCircles, and were included in the Sign Up form:

Confidentiality: "What is shared here, stays here" (Circle will not be recorded)
What is learned here, leaves here

Respect the "talking piece" (speaking order)

Participation is always voluntary: prompts are invitations, not directives. Participants may pass.

Respect each participant

Listen actively. Only use chat box for technical help, not side conversations

Be patient and compassionate, especially since this is a new process for all of us

Vulnerability is welcomed; speak and listen from the heart

Mute your audio until it is your turn to share

Cameras on: all are seen, all are heard, all are welcomed

Hold this as a place for being seen, not judged or invalidated

Acknowledge assent or understanding through non-verbal cues (facial expressions, clapping [ASL version or hearing version], etc.)

Be willing to take some risks

Take space and make space

Offer what you can ask for what you need

Accept and Expect lack of closure

Get comfortable with being uncomfortable

Words are powerful, use them wisely and intentionally

Harm: If there is an incident of harm, your circle keeper may interrupt circle order to address it and follow up with participants afterward if necessary.
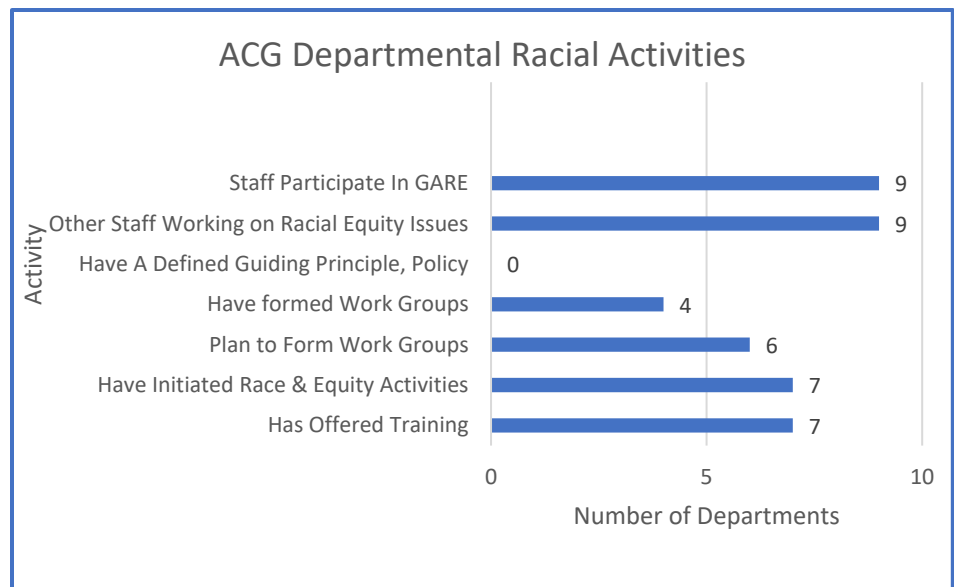
RACIAL EQUITY DEPARTMENT SURVEY RESPONSES:

INTRODUCTION: The survey garnered responses from all 12 departments that report to the County Manager. Collectively, the feedback offers a snapshot of the County's current efforts surrounding race and equity. Below is a breakdown of the results. But first, a few observations:

- Respondents overwhelmingly see a need for a county-wide framework for this work, especially in the areas of developing tools and materials, training and facilitating capacity building.

- Currently, no agency has "department specific" guiding principles or policy on racial equity.

- More than half of the respondents affirmed that their agencies have initiated department specific education, training and consultation activities related to race and equity. However, much of this activity is taking place in the upper levels of organizations with plans to involve staff further down in the hierarchy later.

LOOKING AT THE NUMBERS:

<u>Staff Involvement</u>

- Nine (9) departments, or 75%, have staff participating in the RACE/Gare Cohort. Their roles range from introducing/presenting GARE principles to their departments or divisions, participating in committees or work groups or serving as either the lead or co-chair of their department's racial equity initiative. Others act as advisors to their departments or actively participate in the GARE Cohort.

ACG Departmental Racial Activities

Activity	Number of Departments
Staff Participate In GARE	9
Other Staff Working on Racial Equity Issues	9
Have A Defined Guiding Principle, Policy	0
Have formed Work Groups	4
Plan to Form Work Groups	6
Have Initiated Race & Equity Activities	7
Has Offered Training	7

- Nine (9) departments (75%) have identified staff other than GARE members to lead racial equity related initiatives. However, in only two departments are those staff in positions on the lower end of the hierarchy.

<u>What Departments Have Done So Far</u>

<u>Working Groups</u>

- Four (4) agencies, or 33%, have active working groups conducting activities addressing racial equity. One department has provided GARE training for all its managers and supervisors, its "Racial Equity Advancement Partners (who all have taken "Allyship" training) conduct bi-weekly meetings, and the department's leadership team is working on revising the unit's, vision, mission and values.

   A second, through its steering committee, is using the GARE framework to address racial biases and inequities in community deployment, personnel matters (hiring, discipline, training, etc.) and interpersonal relationships. Another is in the early stages but plans to survey staff and offer training and opportunities for dialogue amongst staff. In the future, the group plans to focus on policies, recruitment, retention, and its department's culture.

Rounding out the picture, one department conducted facilitated conversations with a employees of color and plans to continue/expand the talks to include others to "normalize" the discussions.

- Six other departments, or 50%, report either having groups in the very early stages of development or laying the foundation for establishing future work groups. The remaining two agencies, or 17%, did not indicate that they either had a working group or intend to establish such a team.

<u>Other Activities</u>

- Beyond work groups, seven respondents, or 58%, affirmed that their agencies have initiated department specific education, training and consultation activities related to race and equity.

  One has created a framework for its activities-- titled Listen. Learn. Act. —that will inform its future training opportunities and information exchange. A second has adopted a decentralized approach with division chiefs initiating the activities, including employee dialogues; another added a statement regarding its commitment to racial equity to all its recruitment announcements, while in one department, senior leadership met with each of its divisions to introduce GARE the principles to staff.

  Other departmental activities include focus groups developing recommendations for department, community, and racial equity improvements; racial and equity training and Zoom sessions with a consultant; and as mentioned above, engaging employees in discussion related to race and equity.

  Departments also are offering employees a menu of resources to build upon their knowledge base including dedicated SharePoint sites populated with educational materials and issuing lists of relevant books, videos, and movies. Additionally, several departments in 2018 and 2019 conducted "Unconscious Bias" and "Bystander" training for employees.

<u>Mission Statements, Policies and Guidelines</u>

- No department has developed "a specific statement, principle or policy on racial equity." Two respondents, though, reported that their agencies are either working on revising or creating a statement regarding racial equity.

- Interestingly, the one respondent cited their department's "Inclusion Statement" or its guidelines for "Inclusion of Everyone, Everywhere, Every day," as meeting the qualification for a statement on racial equity, but it does not reference race.

<u>Desired Support</u>

- Respondents expressed a strong desire for the development of organizational or enterprise wide resources to ensure continuity across departments. Specifically, in response to the question about the provision of additional resources for departments, 10 of 12, or 83% , answered that it would be "very helpful" to have assistance with "tools and toolkit development and application", while 9 of 12, or 75%, signaled it would be "very helpful" to have support in "organizing—structure and capacity building".

GAPS & OPPORTUNITIES FOR ENHANCEMENTS:

- There is a lack of agreement or a gap in understanding what racial equity is and what the County is trying to achieve. For instance, one respondent stated the department's Strategic Plan "outlines strategies with equity goals, however they do not include race. A second responded that they are using the County's equity lens of "who benefits, who is burdened, who is missing and how do we know" as their guiding principle. But again, it is broad and is applicable to spectrum of constituencies and does not specify race.

- Departments have taken a scattered approach in this effort. Some have established working groups or identified key staff to lead the effort while others have not moved beyond conversations amongst members of their leadership teams or discussions at staff meetings.

CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATIONS/THOUGHTS

- **Develop a Countywide Vision and Mission statement:** Development of (or reinforcement of) a/the countywide policy and mission statement is a critical first step for this effort as it will provide a roadmap for agencies to follow in the adoption of their individual policies. The work undertaken for its creation will also establish a common understanding of the objective and goals of this work.

- **Create a Coordinated Training Program:** Based on the survey's results, there is need for a coordinated countywide program complete with consistent messaging, training curriculum and supporting tools and materials. This will allow for organizational continuity and accountability. Models currently in place include the "New Employee Orientation Program" and EEO training."

  Such a program should be adaptable to best serve the culture and the makeup of the individual department. Or as one respondent noted, *"It will need to be tailored for different work groups, and in some cases within work groups given their mix of employees. Short videos with practical, situational models like the security training would probably be most effective, multi-lingual would be even better."*

- **Leverage the Work Group Membership:** Staff who make up the department work groups are best to facilitate the work within their departments. They would be an asset in developing the mission statements and guiding principles for their departments as well as a county wide training program and messaging. Just as important, they can champion the work in the workforce.