



# ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN:

*Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) Experiences, Community Organizations, and Government Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Efforts within **Clackamas County***

NOVEMBER 2020

 Coalition of  
Communities of  
Color



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## PART I: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Coalition of Communities of Color (CCC), Clackamas County, cities, and local community-based organizations have begun partnering to implement a multi-year community-driven and community-informed study into the everyday lived realities of communities of color in Clackamas county. The work starts with an environmental scan.

This environmental scan:

- Identifies organizations and leaders that represent and organize communities of color in the county.
- Recognizing diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) efforts, trends, and occurrences within various government entities throughout the county.
- Documenting factors such as demographics, public policy, labor markets, housing, education, civic life, and other areas of interest that affect the quality of life for communities of color in Clackamas County.
- Connecting and helping build relationships between the County Equity and Inclusion Officer and community-based organizations and leaders serving BIPOC communities in the county.
- Assessing and analyzing current CCC connections with Clackamas County, including partners, constituents, and activities.

Six data sources informed the environmental scan:

1. A database of 164 organizations, businesses, government, networks, councils, and community efforts supported Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities, of which 64 were engaged during the scan process.
2. A community survey with 121 responses to 14 questions included demographics, the capacity at which folks work and organize BIPOC folks, and concerns about racial injustice and strategies for the county to address.
3. A questionnaire with six responses and three 30 minute interviews with government officials across the county about DEI efforts and concerns.
4. Data gathered from four racial equity listening sessions (held in Clackamas County, Sandy, Gladstone, and Milwaukie) and two town halls hosted by Clackamas County.
5. Document review of over 22 online sources around DEI efforts (task forces, resolutions, anti-racism Facebook groups, Black Lives Matter groups, and other community collaboratives) and nine county and city-specific reports, surveys, and data resources collected to assess or address BIPOC needs and concerns.
6. Four administrative datasets were utilized for framing BIPOC realities throughout the county, which included demographics by race/ethnicity, poverty data by race/ethnicity, languages spoken at home, and COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations, and deaths.

A critical finding of the scan was making sense of the different stages of local governments' DEI journeys. Clackamas County and many of its city governments landed somewhere among the following three tiers of understanding, planning, and action.

### **Tier One: Unclear About DEI Needs**

- Develop an internal employee engagement process, such as surveys and listening sessions, about perceived gaps, needs, and strengths.



- Develop an external, public-facing engagement process through community listening sessions for city leadership to gain a baseline understanding of the challenges, strengths, and everyday experiences of BIPOC constituents.
- Engaging the community to form a community-based advisory group to provide DEI priorities and recommendations.

**Tier Two: New to the Journey**

- Formalize and dedicate resources to hiring permanent, full-time positions to lead DEI efforts internally and externally.
- Commit resources to provide staff members with DEI training so that there is conceptual clarity around racial equity.
- Begin developing short- and long-term strategic plans for applying a racial equity lens to policies, practices, budgets, and services within the government.

**Tier Three: Resourced and Growing**

- Build networks with other cities and government agencies engaged in this work to coordinate DEI efforts across jurisdictions and create “communities of practice.”
- Continue providing educational opportunities for staff (e.g., training, “Learning Labs,” affinity groups, book clubs, etc.).
- Invest in public-facing communication strategies to inform constituents about racial equity efforts and outcomes.
- Invest in independent equity audits that can evaluate DEI work.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

The bulk of recommendations from this environmental scan focus on six critical areas of concern and strategy for racial justice briefly outlined below. It’s important to note that these recommendations are a starting place to understand BIPOC communities in Clackamas County better. These recommendations must be researched, vetted, and finalized by BIPOC communities in a comprehensive study resourced and supported by local governments and organizations.

**Representation and Leadership**

One of the largest areas of concern identified in this scan is the lack of BIPOC representation in leadership positions, power, and decision-making throughout the county. Folks recommend greater representation in those positions of power, the need to create an environment that is more welcoming and safe for BIPOC folks in Clackamas county, developing cultures of inclusivity and respect, and a focus on diversifying the workforce leadership.

**Education and Training**

The need for more education and training related to DEI was a significant data finding that appeared throughout narratives, stories, and testimonials from community members. Common requests included education and training on racial justice in schools and other educational opportunities, training, and conversations about racial justice for people in leadership positions across the county and their employees.

### **BIPOC-Informed Policy**

The knowledge and experiences of communities of color in the county must inform government policies to create a more equitable county. Creating and implementing procedures informed by BIPOC perspectives entails developing meaningful community engagement strategies, providing spaces and forums where BIPOC voices lead, communication from governments back to the community that reflects understanding, and concrete action plans of proposed relevant changes.

### **Access and Services**

Access to resources and specific services was another primary concern that came out of the various data sources. These concerns covered multiple areas such as housing, health care, transportation, internet, schools, and food. Many BIPOC folks also expressed concern with the lack of knowledge of existing services, suggesting the need for stronger BIPOC-focused communications. Also expressed was the need for assessing equity and addressing racially motivated incidents in schools and incentives for minority-owned businesses and workforce development.

### **Multilingual and Multicultural Communications and Engagement**

Many county residents and employees expressed concerns about the lack of communication and engagement in non-English languages across various domains. Examples of diversifying linguist and cultural communication and engagement include verbal, print, digital job announcements, city/county planning efforts, public forums like town halls/listening sessions, and social services. Also uplifted was the need for multilingual and multicultural staff and support. Many county employees expressed pain for their experienced racism by speaking other languages at work or bringing up BIPOC language and cultural barriers.

### **Community Support and Connection**

Many residents of Clackamas County shared how either they or their neighbors do not feel welcome. Community members gave many solutions to address these concerns, such as centralized information resource, community-specific gathering opportunities, and more cultural resources, advocacy, holidays, and foods. They also spoke about the county's need to take more deliberate steps to address white nationalist symbols and rhetoric and take a stance against Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), modeling allyship, and creating an anti-racist environment.





Milwaukie Bay. Photo Credit: Provided by the County.

### OVERVIEW OF ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN

The Coalition of Communities of Color (CCC), Clackamas County, cities, and local community-based organizations have begun partnering to implement a multi-year community-driven and community-informed study into the everyday lived realities of communities of color in Clackamas county. This study aims to establish and promote a shared understanding of racial equity in Clackamas county, build community capacity, and advocate for and improve public investment and delivery of services to communities of color in the county.

In collaboration with the Clackamas County Office of Equity and Inclusion, the CCC will create partnerships with community-based stakeholders to co-create various phases of this research, from initial design to data collection and analysis disseminating research findings. The CCC uses a “[Research Justice](#)” framework, which means that our methods are entirely community-driven and participatory. We work from the explicit assumption that communities of color are the experts of their own experiences and have the right to research, the right to know, the right to be seen, and the right to be heard.

The first phase of this study is an environmental scan conducted between July and October 2020. The purpose of the scan is to establish baseline knowledge about county-wide diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) efforts; how communities of color are being engaged throughout the county; a preliminary sense of the needs, challenges, and strengths of communities of color; and an initial understanding of the racial and ethnic demographic makeup of the county. This report provides details about lessons learned from the environmental scan phase of this research.

The goals of this four month-long environmental scan include:

- Identifying organizations and leaders that represent and organize communities of color in the county.
- Recognizing diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts, trends, and occurrences within various government entities throughout the county.
- Documenting factors such as demographics, public policy, labor markets, housing, education, civic life, and other areas of interest that affect the quality of life for communities of color in Clackamas County.
- Connecting and helping build relationships between the County Equity and Inclusion Officer and community-based organizations and leaders serving Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities in the county.
- Assessing and analyzing current CCC connections with Clackamas County, including partners, constituents, and activities.

These goals were achieved by collecting and analyzing a wide range of data from primary and secondary sources. Primary data was collected through surveys, listening sessions, and town halls. Secondary data was collected through administrative datasets, including data from the Census and American Community Survey (ACS); official government data dashboards, documents, and publications; websites and social media; reports from community-based organizations; and news coverage. For more details about the data sources used in this report, see Appendix I.

The knowledge generated in this environmental scan will inform the broader multi-year study by shedding light on which actors (public, nonprofit, business, schools, etc.) in the county are engaging with communities



of color, what disparities exist concerning communities of color in the county, and what kinds of systems, data collection strategies, policies, and programs exist to address these disparities. Drawing on this knowledge, the next phase of the project will entail assembling a steering committee of community stakeholders to guide the research process, including developing research questions and strategies for data collection, analysis, and dissemination. This research process, which is grounded in the lived experiences of communities of color, will contribute nuanced understandings of and data about community-based needs, challenges, strengths, and solutions that can inform decision-making and policy solutions.

The success of this research depends on the investment of resources, both in terms of time and funds, by multiple stakeholders, including City and County stakeholders, and community members. From the perspective of City and County stakeholders, this research will provide public agencies with in-depth information centered on community data that can profoundly shape the way governments and other public agencies serve communities of color in Clackamas county.

### **POSITIONALITY OF RESEARCHERS**

Dr. Andres Lopez and Dr. Mira Mohsini, the authors and primary researchers, are trained in cultural sociology and cultural anthropology. Andres identifies as a second-generation Cuban American and a queer man of color, and Mira identifies as a second-generation South Asian American and queer woman of color. Our lived experiences and our academic training shape how we make meaning of data, what data we identify as valid and trustworthy, and the choices we make about how to analyze and report on data. We are stating our positionality to model a challenge to dominant ways of doing research, which presume that the researcher is a neutral and objective investigator. We recognize that all knowledge, even knowledge gleaned from numbers, is situated within cultural, historical, and political contexts that are never neutral. We recognize that all knowledge comes from some sociocultural position and often from a place of power. Transparency and clarity about researchers' positionality further validate research and data. Researchers must be honest about what influences how they approach the work, the unique lens they bring, and their process of attempting to reduce bias in their work instead of purporting that their research and data is entirely objective. Claims of objectivity demonstrate a lack of understanding of how power and research shape one another.

We view our unique identities as offering valuable perspectives that frame this research. Our disciplinary training and lived experiences have oriented us towards respecting and valuing the knowledge, expertise, and wisdom of communities of color. Too often, this knowledge – this community data – is dismissed as anecdotal and not trustworthy enough to be considered by governments in decision- or policy-making capacities. As queer researchers of color, we deeply understand how systems of oppression, including research, can silence and erase already marginalized voices and experiences while centering dominant one, mostly from white folks in the case of Oregon, as valid and objective. Our research approach is driven and informed by these voices, experiences, and understanding of power. This report is a reflection of these values.

### **A NOTE ABOUT TERMINOLOGY**

Throughout this report we differentiate between “Clackamas county,” the geographic region, and “Clackamas County,” the government employer and institution. We also interchangeably use the terms “communities of color” and “BIPOC communities,” an acronym for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color.



### SETTING THE TABLE: WHY DO THIS NOW?

The story of Clackamas county often begins with a statement about how the county is overwhelmingly white. Indeed, the racial and ethnic demographics support the statement. According to the American Community Survey (ACS), the estimated percentage of the population in Clackamas county that identifies as “White Alone” is 81 percent. Despite the overrepresentation of people who identify as white in the county – Oregon’s “White Alone” population is 74 percent – this seemingly harmless statement produces the effect of invisibilizing communities of color. It makes invisible the needs and challenges that communities of color experience while working, raising families, accessing services, and participating in civic life in the county. It also minimizes and marginalizes the strengths and solutions that BIPOC folks bring to their communities and the broader county.

The racial and ethnic make-up of Clackamas county, presented in Table 1 in the “Demographics and Data Note” section below, indicates that BIPOC communities are essential constituencies in the county. Compared with statewide trends, demographic trends in Clackamas county point to higher rates of growth for communities of color. BIPOC folks in Clackamas county are our neighbors, colleagues, teachers, children, and business owners. Communities of color live across the county, from urban Milwaukie to the rural hamlet of Mulino, and contribute in many ways to the well-being of communities and civic life. Due to systemic racism and the legacy of exclusionary policies and practices, communities of color also face specific challenges with access to resources, services, and opportunities. Rates of poverty, for instance, are disproportionately higher for all communities of color in the county (see Table 2 in “Demographics and Data Note”).

Clackamas county, like the nation itself, is in a critical moment defined by compounding crises, including COVID-19, incidents of discrimination and harm towards Black and brown people by public safety, and mounting evidence that climate change contributed to the devastating wildfires in the county. What has become clear is that these crises disproportionately affect communities of color (see Table 3 in “Demographics and Data Note”).

Clackamas County government and many cities throughout the county have demonstrated their commitment to racial equity by expanding their work and investing resources into DEI efforts. These efforts indicate that the needs, challenges, and strengths of communities of color are being recognized and strategies are being developed to meet those needs. At the County level, an internal survey of Clackamas County employees was conducted during the fall of 2019 to assess the varied perspectives on diversity and equity within the government. Out of 680 employees who completed the survey (predominantly white folks; 17 percent BIPOC; 8 LGBTQ+), the results suggested that the County is doing a satisfactory job of creating a welcoming environment and that employees are committed to providing equitable service delivery by reducing barriers to inclusion. However, BIPOC employee narratives in the survey and internal listening sessions expressed concerns about needing more workforce diversity, greater clarity around the County’s DEI vision and plans, and more education and accountability around implementing racial equity. Many of these findings resonate with community members’ perspectives when asked how the county could be a more welcoming place to live during external listening sessions, town halls, and in the community survey disseminated for this scan. Details of community perspectives, provided by folks who identify as BIPOC and white allies, are presented in Part V of this report.

In addition to the internal survey conducted in 2019, the County recently created the Office of Equity and Inclusion and hired three full-time staff members. The Office is tasked with “ensuring the County’s core values of equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) is embedded throughout all aspects of the County’s workforce, programs, and services.” To that end, the Office’s internal priorities aim to address ways that the County can embed equity, diversity, and inclusion throughout the agency. These efforts include workforce training and education, establishing recruitment and hiring practices to build a more diverse workforce, creating a sense of community and connection (particularly for marginalized employees), improving retention practices and processes, and providing a clear structure for workplace concerns. What happens within the sphere of government directly impacts what resources, services, and opportunities are available to communities and to what degree they are accessible. Clackamas County’s EDI efforts, which are discussed in more detail in this report, indicate a clear and growing need to understand, address, and advance racial justice in the county.

### LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

A land acknowledgement is more than a statement. It is about recognizing the past, present, and future of Indigenous flourishing, survival, and erasure on the land we now know as Clackamas county. It is about acknowledging the histories of genocide and stolen land, the continuing colonization of these lands, and Indigenous communities’ resilience on these lands. It is about being aware that Clackamas county has a long and rich history of BIPOC communities’ contributions. It is about challenging the narrative that Clackamas county is a white county.

“Present day Clackamas County is located on the traditional village sites of the Multnomah, Wasco (Wass-co), Cowlitz (Cow-litz), Kathlamet (Cath-la-mitt), Clackamas, Bands of Chinook (Cha-nook), Tualatin Kalapuya (Cal-ya-poo-ya), Molalla, and many other tribes who made their homes along the Columbia and Willamette Rivers. Let us also acknowledge the robust Native community made up of tribal diversity that originates from around the country and whose journeys have brought them to the Portland Metro Area byways of forced displacement or seeking opportunities. Today, these same communities celebrate their heritage, showing resilience and tenacity that would be greatly admired by their ancestors.”  
(Acknowledgement by the Native American Youth and Family Center and CCC.)

### DEMOGRAPHICS AND DATA NOTE

One of the environmental scan goals is to begin contextualizing the everyday lives of BIPOC communities in Clackamas county using both qualitative (words) and quantitative (numbers) data. The majority of this report focuses on qualitative data. One reason for this is because quantitative data on BIPOC communities is not always available or reliable. When data is not available on race/ethnicity, this typically indicates that race/ethnicity questions were omitted from a study, or that non-white communities were inadequately engaged during data collection resulting in unreliably low numbers. When data on race/ethnicity is collected and at least somewhat representative of BIPOC populations, it often uses umbrella categories like Asian to represent hundreds of communities. These larger racial categories are unreliable because they do not speak to communities’ specific experiences, such as differences between Chinese and Cambodian communities’ lived realities, promoting false shared experiences of those in that group. Lastly, data collection techniques nearly always fail to capture a representative sample of folks from each race/ethnicity category and generalize findings from a few folks in a specific population as the larger group’s dominant experience (e.g., 25 Pacific Islanders surveyed speaking for the entire state’s Pacific Islander population of 34,000). This is not to say that quantitative data is always inaccurate or unuseful. Still, it often – particularly when it comes to BIPOC

communities – lacks generalizability (one goal in quantitative statistical analysis) of specific populations and can be harmful if presented without context.

With these caveats and limitations in mind, we present available quantitative data about BIPOC communities in Clackamas county to offer some framing around the size and proportionality of those broader race/ethnicity categories (see Table I).

Table 1. Clackamas County Demographics by Race/Ethnicity

Adapted from American Community Survey, Table DP05, 2018 5-Year Estimate	Estimate	% Total (Estimate)
<b>Clackamas County - Total Population</b>	405,788	100
<b>Identifies One Race Only</b>	390,402	96.2
<b>Identifies Two or More Races</b>	15,386	3.8
<b>Identifies as White Only</b>	357,240	88
<b>Identifies as Black or African American Only</b>	3,753	0.9
<b>Identifies as American Indian or Alaskan Native Only</b>	3,054	0.8
<b>Identifies as Asian Only</b>	17,046	4.2
<b>Identifies as Native Hawaiian &amp; Other Pacific Islander</b>	1,189	0.3
<b>Identifies as Some Other Race</b>	8,120	2
<b>Hispanic or Latino (of any race)</b>	34,659	8.5

We use the term “framing” intentionally here as these data can help us, with limited specificity, begin to make sense of the percentages of different BIPOC populations in the county. As research has shown, it is a frame because BIPOC populations are often undercounted in administrative data sets like the Census. According to ACS data above, approximately 18.7 percent of Clackamas county residents identify as a race other than white, multiracial, some other race, or Latinx.

Another example of how quantitative data can frame our understanding of different realities across populations is by comparing one indicator, such as income, to make a case for specific programmatic strategies. For example, the County uses poverty data to draw conclusions about the level of needs of different BIPOC communities and measure the success of their social services (see Table 2). However, besides the limiting factors of this data mentioned above, poverty data singularly orient folks to thinking about BIPOC folks as only being defined by deficit and need. To be clear, while these data are important indicators for understanding the broader context in which many BIPOC communities exist, we recognize that it is systemic racism that produces the conditions reflected in these data, and not the individual failings of BIPOC folks that results in higher poverty rates.

Table 2. Clackamas County Poverty Data by Race/Ethnicity

Adapted from American Community Survey, Table S1701, 2018 5-Year Estimate	N	Percent Estimate
Clackamas County for Whom Poverty Status is Determined	402,449	100
Below Poverty Level - Total	34,195	8.5
Total Population - White Alone, not Hispanic or Latino	331,471	*
Below Poverty Level - White Alone, not Hispanic or Latino	24,736	7.5
Total Population – Black or African American Alone	3,643	*
Below Poverty Level - Black or African American Alone	563	15.5
Total Population – American Indian and Alaska Native Alone	3,019	*
Below Poverty Level - American Indian and Alaska Native Alone	627	20.8
Total Population - Asian Alone	16,871	*
Below Poverty Level - Asian Alone	1,639	9.7
Total Population - Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander Alone	1,181	*
Below Poverty Level - Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander Alone	146	12.4
Total Population - Some Other Race Alone	7,987	*
Below Poverty Level - Some Other Race Alone	1,178	14.7
Total Population - Two or More Races Alone	15,337	*
Below Poverty Level - Two or More Races Alone	1,861	12.1
Total Population - Hispanic or Latino Origin (of any race)	34,213	*
Below Poverty Level - Hispanic or Latino Origin (of any race)	5,147	15.0

Since the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic in early 2020, the data has clearly shown that the virus disproportionately impacts BIPOC communities (see Table 3). The data on poverty presented above can provide insight into the disproportionate rate of COVID-19 cases in BIPOC communities.

Table 3. Clackamas County COVID-19 Data by Race/Ethnicity<sup>1</sup>

	Clackamas County 2018 ACS 5-Year Population Estimate		Clack. Co. COVID-19 Cases		Clack. Co. COVID-19 Deaths		Clack. Co. COVID-19 Hospitalizations	
<b>All</b>	405788		3477		68		278	
<b>White</b>	357,240	88.04%	2062	59.30%	47	69.12%	175	62.95%
<b>Black/African American</b>	3,753	0.92%	38	1.09%	0	0.00%	2	0.72%
<b>Asian</b>	17,046	4.20%	129	3.71%	4	5.88%	11	3.96%
<b>Pacific Islander or Native Hawaiian</b>	1,189	0.29%	26	0.75%	0	0.00%	1	0.36%
<b>American Indian/Alaskan Native</b>	3,054	0.75%	26	0.75%	0	0.00%	2	0.72%
<b>Multiracial</b>	15,386	3.79%	59	1.70%	0	0.00%	1	0.36%
<b>Other/Unknown</b>	8,120	2.00%	314	9.03%	13	19.12%	13	4.68%
<b>Hispanic</b>	34,659	8.54%	823	23.67%	4	5.88%	38	13.67%
<b>BIPOC Totals</b>	75,087	18.50%	1101	31.67%	8	11.76%	55	19.78%

A significant risk factor for contracting the virus is economic insecurity, and BIPOC folks are more likely to hold lower-wage jobs where working from home is not an option. While the data presented in Table 3 is incomplete and suffers from many of the limitations discussed above, it clearly illustrates the disparities. The data shows that “Hispanic” populations in Clackamas county are almost three times as likely to contract COVID-19, Pacific Islander and Native Hawaiian people are twice as likely to contract COVID-19, and BIPOC communities overall are twice as likely to contract COVID-19. The disparity is even starker when we see that BIPOC populations makeup over 30 percent of all COVID-19 cases in the county but are only 12 percent of the population.

With these considerations in mind, we like to think of quantitative data as an important tool for framing the broader context that informs BIPOC experiences, but it is not the only tool that can make sense of complex social and cultural structures that shape everyday life. Our hope here and in future research in these areas is to demonstrate the power of qualitative data to help make sense of quantitative data. A detailed discussion of this approach is not the central purpose of this report. However, it is a strategy we adopted to present data in this report, which centers the words and narratives of BIPOC community members that are often missed by the numbers.

### MAPPING BIPOC-SERVING ORGANIZATIONS IN CLACKAMAS COUNTY

One goal of this environmental scan is to understand what organizations, including community-based organizations, government agencies, networks, and coalitions, serve BIPOC populations in Clackamas

<sup>1</sup> COVID-19 Regional Data Dashboard: <https://multco.us/novel-coronavirus-covid-19/regional-covid-19-data-dashboard>, accessed November 11, 2020.



county. A database was created to keep track of these organizations and categorize them according to whether they are culturally specific and based inside or outside the county (for more details about the database, see Appendix I). We found 28 culturally-specific organizations that operate in Clackamas county and 49 culturally-specific organizations that provide Clackamas county services but are located outside the county. The remaining 87 organizations that we identified in this scan are not culturally-specific. We mapped each organization based on addresses publicly available online to make sense of the county's spatial distribution of services (see Map 1).

Several organizations represented by red pins (indicating not BIPOC specific and based outside the county) are mapped inside the county. These are often larger organizations like health care systems that may have a branch or office inside the county. However, because they are not considered rooted in the county, they have been categorized in our database as located outside the county.

The main takeaways from this map include:

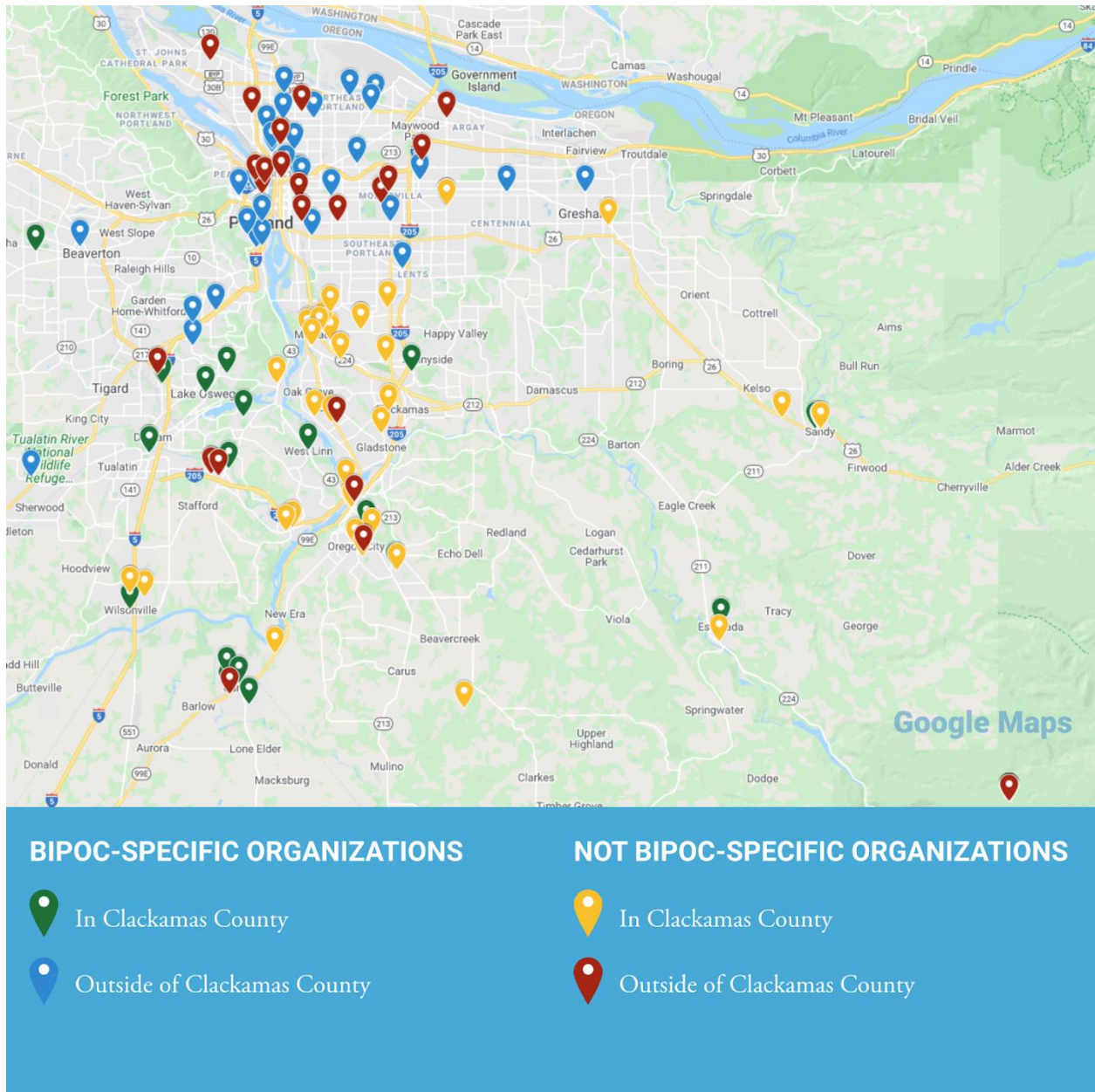
- Fewer culturally-specific organizations are located in Clackamas county than in Multnomah county
- Most culturally-specific organizations in the county are located in urban areas
- Communities of color in rural areas of the county must travel a great distance to receive services and support

The main takeaways from the 28 culturally specific organizations that operate in Clackamas county include:

- The top four areas of work for these organization are in Education (8), community-centered alliances, taskforces, and movements (6), faith/religious groups (3), and social services (3)
- The top four areas of the county these organizations serve: countywide (11), Tualatin (3), Lake Oswego (3), and Canby (3)

Note: We use organizations loosely here, referring to organizations in addition to businesses, networks, councils, taskforces, and community efforts that specifically support BIPOC communities.

Map 1. Community-based Organizations, Government Agencies, Networks, and Coalitions Serving BIPOC Communities in Clackamas County



### A TIERED APPROACH

Identifying perspectives that can shed light on the varying dimensions of BIPOC experiences in Clackamas county is one of this environmental scan's main objectives. A critical part of understanding these dimensions is learning about local government efforts to approach and address issues about diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). Gaining perspectives on how local governments, especially cities, across the county are engaging with these issues captures an array of information and data that can tell us how far along different jurisdictions are when it comes to addressing racial inequities and disparities. City-level perspectives give us a more granular picture of where the gaps, limitations, strengths, and opportunities lie and ultimately give us a better sense of where in the county BIPOC communities are more underserved and need greater support, resources, and investment.

To this end, we engaged cities and other local government entities across the county to learn more about how they are approaching DEI work. We asked City electeds and other government representatives to provide us with written responses to a set of questions (see Appendix III for the list of items). We then followed up with several cities to interview their city managers. The findings presented in this section reflect the data from the written responses and our conversations with city managers. For more details about these data sources, see Appendix I.

The data demonstrates that cities are at different points in their racial equity journey. It is also clear that all the cities and government entities we engaged are committed to going through this journey and that no city has it all “figured out.” To distinguish the different points at which local governments are in their racial equity journey, we use a three-tiered approach. In this tiered framework, we do not identify which cities and agencies are situated in each of the tiers – we certainly do not want to promote any sense of “shame” for those starting their racial equity journey. Instead, we intend to summarize a broad set of shared experiences that define each tier and recommend the next steps to advance government-led DEI efforts.

#### **Tier One: Unclear about DEI Needs**

Cities and other government entities in this first tier are at the beginning of their racial equity journey. People in leadership positions are starting to interrogate what racial equity means for their communities and public institutions. Government employees may be aware of other communities doing DEI work and recognize that “this could be a good thing.” However, there has not been much dialogue internally with employees or externally with community stakeholders, and therefore there is less urgent pressure to engage in DEI work. There is a lack of clarity about DEI needs and a perception that there is less public pressure for the government to be accountable for this work. As such, governments in this tier do not have formal or informal structures in place to begin these conversations.

To gain more clarity about DEI needs, local government entities in this tier can:

- Develop an internal employee engagement process, including tools such as surveys and listening sessions, about perceived gaps, needs, and strengths.
- Develop an external public-facing engagement process through community listening sessions for city leadership to gain a baseline understanding of the challenges, strengths, and everyday experiences of BIPOC constituents.

- Engaging the community to form a community-based advisory group to provide DEI priorities and recommendations.

### **Tier Two: New to the Racial Equity Journey**

Cities and other government entities in this second tier have begun their racial equity journey. They realize that a plan for DEI is needed but may be new to many of the concepts and processes required to implement a DEI strategy. Cities in this tier are responding to internal and community pressure to address racial injustices. Externally, the impetus to address DEI may have been catalyzed by already existing tensions in the city, or by the more recent uprisings for racial justice following the murder of George Floyd in May 2020 (or both). Internally, employees, including leadership, may decide that some formal strategies and structures need to be implemented to ensure that a culture of inclusivity is being fostered. To this end, local governments in this tier may have informally identified staff members and a community-based team to lead these efforts, such as reviewing policies and practices, organizing listening sessions, and working to develop DEI goals and measurable metrics for progress.

To advance in their racial equity journey, local government entities in this tier can:

- Formalize and dedicate resources to hiring permanent, full-time positions to lead DEI efforts internally and externally.
- Commit resources to provide staff members with DEI training so that there is conceptual clarity around racial equity.
- Begin developing short- and long-term strategic plans for applying a racial equity lens to policies, practices, budgets, and services within the government.

### **Tier Three: Resourced and Growing**

Cities and other government institutions in this third tier have a well-established track record of developing short- and long-term visions for DEI in their jurisdiction, as well as committing resources to implement DEI goals. Local governments in this tier have responded to demands and pressure from community members and recommitted to racial equity in the wake of the uprisings following the murder of George Floyd. Consequently, tier three entities have created or have plans to develop full-time DEI positions and have formalized DEI task forces and committees to guide and advance the work. Also, these efforts have buy-in from people in leadership positions. Processes for internal employee engagement and external community engagement are resourced, such as regular listening sessions, town halls, and focus groups. Other engagement tools, such as surveys, are used to gather input and feedback from employees and community members. Entities in this tier have conducted or are well-placed to conduct audits of internal policies and practices using well-developed racial equity lenses. Training and other educational opportunities are regularly offered.

To continue advancing racial justice, local government entities in this tier can:

- Build networks with other cities and government agencies engaged in this work to coordinate DEI efforts across jurisdictions and create “communities of practice.”
- Continue providing educational opportunities for staff (e.g., training, “Learning Labs,” affinity groups, book clubs, etc.).
- Invest in public-facing communication strategies to inform constituents about racial equity efforts and outcomes.
- Invest in independent equity audits that can evaluate DEI work.





Sunrise over Willamette River in Oregon City. Photo Credit: Provided by the County.



## PART V: TOP AREAS OF CONCERN AND TAKEAWAYS

How do Clackamas county residents, and those who work in the county, articulate their experiences of race, racism, diversity, inclusion, and belonging? In this section, we want to provide space for the voices of people who live and work in Clackamas county. Here we present those who speak to the myriad of everyday lived experiences of communities of color from people who identify as BIPOC and those who identify as white. We view these perspectives as valid and reliable data that provide us with a more nuanced and complete picture of the top areas of concern expressed by those connected to Clackamas county. We also provide readers with the main takeaways and what can be learned from these data.

To present a complete picture, we gathered and analyzed hundreds of narratives and stories from people who shared their experiences in surveys and listening sessions and town halls hosted by County officials (for more details about these data sources, see Appendix I). What emerges from these data is a set of specific areas of concern repeatedly discussed across forums. The six areas of concern that identified include:

- I. Representation and Leadership
- II. Education and Training
- III. BIPOC-Informed Policies
- IV. Access and Services
- V. Community Outreach and Multilingual Communications
- VI. Community Support and Connection

Each area of concern listed above is introduced with some context and then broken down into several specific thematic areas. These thematic areas were uplifted by the narratives and stories of BIPOC folks and white allies. We present these narratives and stories as direct quotes and some details about the speaker while omitting information that may be personally identifying. Voicing BIPOC experiences is crucial for better identifying, understanding, and addressing areas of greatest need and opportunity for a county that hosts diverse communities of color.

### I. REPRESENTATION AND LEADERSHIP

“[BIPOC people need] more than a seat at the table, let’s head the table.” (Speaker identifies as African American. Forum: Community survey)

Reviewing the data from surveys, listening sessions, and town halls clarifies that many people connected with Clackamas county recognize a lack of BIPOC representation in leadership positions, power, and decision-making throughout the county. The areas where BIPOC representation and leadership are most noticeably lacking include County and City offices and public school administrations. Community members voiced several strategies and recommendations to ensure that Clackamas county institutions are more representative of the needs and concerns of BIPOC communities.

**Takeaway #1: Create an environment that is more welcoming and safe for BIPOC folks in Clackamas county.** Time and time again, folks recounted stories of people in leadership positions failing to act in response to reported incidents of racism and other inequitable practices. Failure to act, whether by ignoring, dismissing, or not believing the experiences shared by BIPOC folks and white allies, may not necessarily come from a place of malice, but rather from a genuine lack of understanding of, and therefore empathy for,

BIPOC experiences. These leadership failures were explained partly because of the lack of representation of BIPOC voices and experiences in these positions of power.

“Canby, I am told, has one of the highest populations of Latinx folks in Clackamas County. It is also quite rural and quite conservative. I hear there have been instances of racist bullying at the local schools (things about “go back to your country” and “building the wall”) and when youth have brought the issue to school administration nothing has been done.” (Speaker identifies as Mexican and white, and organizes Latinx communities throughout the county. Forum: Community survey)

“Several years ago, the Jennings Lodge/Candy Lane school moved to become a full Spanish immersion program. Members of the CPO [Community Planning Organizations] were angry and I listened to community members denigrate native Spanish speakers at a public meeting with no comment from leadership. I stood up at the meeting and tried to, and made my points and tried and tried to cite a corrective action. I was not supported by leadership and after the meeting I should have and I didn’t follow up with leadership and hold them accountable for what they allowed...I cannot imagine had anybody been a person of color at that meeting how that would have felt, how they would have felt welcome. That is a direct arm of the County so one of the specific things that I would like to see moving forward is, as we talk about what the County is going to do and how diversity efforts are going to move through County offices and so forth, I’d like to see that extended to all of the branches, including the volunteer branches the CPOs, the hamlets, and every part that’s under the County umbrella because that shouldn’t have happened and I should have done more and I didn’t.” (Speaker did not identify. Forum: Town Hall on Race Issues in Clackamas County held on Wednesday, August 19, 2020)

“I have lived in Oregon City since 2016 and while I enjoy many things about the area, I have sometimes felt the urge to move somewhere more diverse and welcoming. I sometimes feel unsafe and not welcomed because of things like Confederate flags in my neighborhood and on trucks along McLoughlin on my way to work; reading the covenant in the deed to the house my wife and I bought the day we moved in saying no person of color was allowed to live here; the graffiti with the N-word (misspelled) at a park nearby. At the same time, I know not every part of Oregon City and Clackamas County are like that, and I often feel more comfortable in places like Canby, where there are more people that look like me.” (Speaker identifies as Central American. Forum: Community survey)

“We need the County to invest in programs that result in more contracting with small businesses run by underrepresented groups. We need to look at our recruitment and hiring practices and be willing to invest in strategies that bring more diversity to the Clackamas County workforce, since having diverse voices involved in decision making actually results in better decisions being made. We need the County to invest in art and cultural events that can be used to lift up unheard voices and share their stories. We need the County to lead with an equity lens first, and not as an addendum once decisions have already been made. I would recommend the Commissioners review the policy demand section of the Reimagine Oregon project, as they have listed a number of policies and programs that our County could consider to help address these and many other issues to improve equity and diversity in our county.” (The speaker identifies as African American. Forum: Town Hall on Race Issues in Clackamas County held on Wednesday, August 19, 2020)

**Takeaway #2: Create cultures of inclusivity and respect.** Many reflected on how dominant norms create cultures in workplaces, schools, and other institutions where BIPOC folks feel marginalized, overworked, and pressured to conform. Cultural shifts towards greater inclusivity and respect entail nurturing and supporting people with different racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds rather than consistently forcing them to comply with dominant cultural expectations. These cultural shifts can be best realized when people in leadership positions lead with these values.

“I continue to see people of color (specifically bilingual staff) be overworked and asked to do unrelated job duties to serve Spanish speaking clients, who have limited representation in Clackamas County. I see departments full of the dominant culture and no room for growth for people of color. It’s very sad to say that the solution is to ‘comply’ and lose your cultural identity in order to gain success in a county/world that is run by the dominant culture.” (Speaker identifies as Mexican. They recounted their experiences of growing up in Clackamas county and having to resort to violence as a way to defend themselves and their peers of color who were racially harassed at school. This respondent is currently working in the county. Forum: Community survey)

“It is painful to live in an institution where you have to deal with whiteness every day. There are talks about how to change things but to the extent of white comfort. We need to give more power to POC [people of color]. County leadership needs to be held accountable. Make sure that conversations go beyond white comfort and fragility.” (Speaker did not identify. Forum: Listening session for Clackamas County employees held on June 18, 2020)

“I think this is an opportunity for Sandy to demonstrate to leadership to do some things very right in being proactive, but also leadership in the sense of we can’t change people’s hearts... We can’t say stop hating people, you can’t legislate that out of people, but what we can do as a city and especially you as City Councilors and city leaders is demonstrate the values and the practices that show people there’s a better way, because there are going to be people who foster that hatred in their heart or have those biases that may not come out at all times, but we really want to make other people feel comfortable in growing and going forward. I would love to see Sandy be at the forefront of that and not just watching other people do it and making superficial changes.” (Speaker did not identify. Forum: Sandy City Council Listening Session on Racism, July 7, 2020)

**Takeaway #3: Diversify the workforce, including leadership positions.** To ensure welcoming and safe environments for BIPOC folks and create cultures of inclusivity, many people voiced their support for diversifying the workforce.

“We need a person of color to run for County Commissioner [sic]. We need more persons of color leading our criminal justice systems. We need more persons of color leading major departments within Clackamas County. We need our commissioners to state their commitment to reducing [racist] behaviors. I have written to the county commissioners and [Sheriff’s Office] complaining about various racist actions (most recent was the Clackamas County [Sheriff’s] and [Oregon State Police’s] support of the Trump rally caravan to downtown Portland) and they never respond.” (Speaker identifies as Hispanic and Latinx. Forum: Community survey)

“Hiring more people of color across the board in the county’s organizations and businesses, including (and especially) in leadership roles.” (Speaker identifies as Columbian American. Forum: Community survey)

“We are hiring to be more diverse. I want to know if all interviews are being asked EDI [equity, diversity, inclusion] questions and if the panel is diverse. Once people are hired, how is the management going to ensure that people feel safe?” (Speaker did not identify. Listening session for Clackamas County employees held on July 29, 2020)

## II. EDUCATION AND TRAINING

“Continuous education for those in power.” (Speaker identifies as African American. Forum: Community survey)

“[S]upport and promote research on the history of racial exclusion of people of color and the genocide of [I]ndigenous peoples in the county and begin telling and highlighting the stories of communities of color in the area, from pre-colonization times until today.” (Speaker identifies as a Central American. Forum: Community survey)

The need for more education and training related to DEI was a significant part of the data collected through narratives, stories, and testimonials from community members. BIPOC folks and white allies often connected the inaction they experienced by those in leadership with the need for more education on anti-racism, Oregon’s white supremacist history, anti-bias and cultural sensitivity, and the long histories of BIPOC folks living in the region as a counternarrative to the pervasive erasure of these histories (especially Black and Indigenous histories and legacies in the county and region).

**Takeaway #1: Education and training on racial justice in schools.** Many expressed their concern about public schools in Clackamas county being places where racism is unchecked. The need to teach a diverse and inclusive curriculum in schools was regularly mentioned as a high priority area. Many BIPOC-identifying community members shared the impact on themselves and their children when seeing hate symbols like the Confederate flag in schools. Some suggested that better education about racial injustice – starting early on – would help students, teachers, and administrators become aware of the history of racism and why these kinds of symbols create an environment of fear and anxiety for many communities of color.

“Teach a more diverse and inclusive curriculum in the schools beginning with grade school. Better training for the police to deescalate situations, especially when interacting with POCs [people of color].” (Speaker identifies as Other Black and Other white. Forum: Community survey)

“Students at the high school don’t understand what this symbol [the Confederate flag] means and don’t understand the actual history of this symbol. I hope that beyond just the removal of this symbol, there can be an effort on the part of the school board and these wonderful students that are coming together to push back against this, to change some of the education that’s happening so that people can understand that this symbol is shameful and we should feel ashamed to display it because the ideas behind this symbol are incredibly violent and painful.” (Speaker did not identify. Forum: Sandy City Council Listening Session on Racism held on July 7, 2020)

“The [high school] is known for [racist] incidents and bullying – stricter guidelines and consequences when these incidents occur. Possibly some sort of education for offenders in the areas of bullying and racism?” (Speaker identifies as white. Forum: Community survey)

“Help the NCSD [North Clackamas School District] (Alder Creek MS and Rex Putnam HS especially) confront the systemic racism present in their curriculums, student cultures and teaching/administration policies” (Speaker identifies as African American. Forum: Community survey)

**Takeaway #2: Opportunities for education, training, and conversations about racial justice for people in leadership positions and other employees.** Many people discussed how trainings could foster a more inclusive and welcoming workplace. They felt that these trainings could provide a common language of understanding between white and BIPOC co-workers as well as provide tangible steps to address discrimination and bias.

“Continued training for leaders, including actionable, measurable steps to fight discrimination and bias. The same thing needs to happen for employers and employees in the county. At NAMI Clackamas I feel like I have hit a wall and need outside help in determining and implementing next steps. If I feel that way then I think other employers and nonprofits are having the same problems.” (Speaker identifies as white. Forum: Community survey)

“I’ve mentioned several times the need for cultural training. There’s a situation where I was placed outside of my supervisor’s office; I was not asked. It was actually traumatic for me when you come from a place where you are always watched. It felt like I was in a fish bowl. That training is going to be very important. We need to understand culture and what affects people. It’s like having been a war zone. If you’re not in a person’s shoes you can’t understand. If my management understood how it felt and traumatized me. But they didn’t. Cultural diversity training will help us understand.” (Speaker identifies as African American. Forum: Listening Session for Clackamas County employees held on July 29, 2020)

“Challenging conversations in County trainings where emotions were relevant, also within my team. I would like to encourage more of that but also to know that County is a safe place to have those conversations, and bringing this up isn’t going to get you a mark in your personnel file.” (Speaker did not identify. Forum: Listening Session for Clackamas County employees held on July 29, 2020)

“I think there needs to be mandatory diversity training for people working with people of color in any capacity and mandatory conversations about how their actions and words can contribute to how communities of color live. People need to be held accountable for their hate speech and talked to from leaders in the community stating that their offensive language will not be tolerated in this community.” (Speaker identifies as Mexican, Hispanic, and Latinx. Forum: Community survey)

“Education, education, EDUCATION. In the school, in the place of work. Remove symbols of hate. Observe, allow to observe and normalize other traditions, holidays, celebration...” (Speaker identifies as Other Hispanic or Latinx and Western European. Forum: Community survey)



“We all have to look at ourselves and say what am I doing how am I being culpable, even as a mom of a biracial kid. I’m white and there’s times that I probably downplay what’s happening to her and so we have to ask ourselves those hard questions. We have to put policies in place but mostly it’s about discussion/ It’s about education. It’s about learning and being willing to grow and that comes from these sessions. That comes from leadership. That comes from people saying, you know, I made a mistake and I did something wrong and this is how I can do better” (Speaker did not identify. Forum: Town Hall on Race Issues in Clackamas County held on August 19, 2020)

### III. BIPOC-INFORMED POLICY

“Identify, empower, and engage civic and community leaders of color in the process to determine what we want and need.” (Identifies as Black/African American. Forum: Community survey)

Another area of concern reflected in multiple data sources was the need for government policies to be informed by the knowledge and experiences of communities of color in the county. Creating and implementing policies that are informed by BIPOC perspectives entails developing strategies for meaningful community engagement and providing spaces and forums where BIPOC voices can be uplifted. The uprisings for racial justice following the murder of George Floyd certainly catalyzed the County and many local governments throughout the county to hold listening sessions and town halls to gather these data points. While these events are needed and can be a productive way for public officials to hear from their constituents, there were also concerns that these events would not result in concrete action plans of proposed relevant strategies. For BIPOC-informed policy to become the norm rather than the outlier or exception, government agencies must also ensure that BIPOC representation is realized at all decision-making levels and especially at leadership levels. As one respondent to the community survey stated, BIPOC folks need “more than just a seat at the table, let’s head the table.”

**Takeaway #1: Engage and ask BIPOC folks about their needs and solutions.** People expressed a desire for meaningful involvement in the processes of policy-making. Many folks also said how critical it is for a racial equity lens to be applied to all policies, programs, and plans from their very inception through to their implementation. A significant part of applying a racial equity lens means ensuring that BIPOC folks are at the table when decisions and plans are being made that directly impact them and provide space for BIPOC folks to shape, early on, the content direction of programs and policies.

“Identify, empower, and engage civic and community leaders of color in the process to determine what we want and need.” (Speaker identifies as African American, and has been an educator in Clackamas county for over 30 years. Forum: Community survey).

“Ensure that all government officials are incorporating racial lens practices/plans/policies and ensure that the voices of people of color are uplifted in their communities. Ensure that people of color have representation within government positions. Empower people of color to speak up and not be afraid/harassed for speaking up.” (Speaker identifies as Mexican. Forum: Community survey)

“Policy changes – curious about how employees will be involved in revising policy.” (Speaker did not identify. Forum: Listening session for Clackamas County employees held on July 29, 2020)

“Policies/procedures that address racism so that staff of color have support when faced with racism on their job. Currently, our management do not have the skills to support a diverse workplace and are unable to see when white supremacy is in action. It is always in action.” (Speaker Identifies as African American and Other white. Forum: Community survey)

**Takeaway #2: Create tangible action plans for proposed relevant changes.** During the listening sessions, many BIPOC folks recounted personal and community experiences that reflected the difficulty of navigating systems and services that are not implemented with their specific needs in mind. Others provided tangible policy recommendations that could produce positive outcomes for communities of color in the county.

“I lived in Clackamas county several times in my life and as an indigenous person my experience was not one that made me want to return. I have also done advocacy work for several years with residents of Clackamas County as well as CHA and have encountered a frustrating lack of resources for people of color. Many past clients have expressed feeling discriminated against in attempts to find assistance, housing, or employment. Community services are hard to locate and hard to travel to as Clackamas county is large and public transport is very limited compared to Multnomah County.” (Speaker identifies as American Indian. Forum: Community survey)

“We need the County to invest in systems that provide public access to information in ways that the public can understand, with information provided transparently so that we, as a community, can hold people accountable for their actions and measure their progress. We need the County to invest in fair and affordable housing programs so that we can improve the rates of home ownership. We need the county to invest in job creation programs and policies that will encourage people from diverse backgrounds to come to work in Clackamas county.” (Speaker identifies as African American. Forum: Community survey)

#### IV. ACCESS AND SERVICES

“Clackamas County needs safe spaces for immigrants or refugees, more stable-affordable-secure housing and transportation system, civilian oversight of policing, and universal access to home broadband.” (Speaker identifies as African American. Forums: Community survey)

Access to resources and specific services was another primary concern that came out of the various data sources. These concerns covered multiple areas such as housing, health care, transportation, internet, schools, and food. While these areas have some specific suggestions and needs, most folks talked about these areas broadly, listing concerns about existing services and those they wished Clackamas County provided. Many folks expressed a need for more general awareness of services for BIPOC folks and transparency around how they are conscious of and committed to anti-racist practices. One goal of advancing DEI efforts in the county is to better understand how to invest in specific communities to understand and address these inequities/disparities through access and services.

**Takeaway #1: General concerns with a lack of knowledge of existing services.** Various examples across the data sources, government, non-profit, and community members listed general concerns with social services, particularly around housing. These concerns were not paired with detailed narratives, but they still demonstrate the need for further support. Also, many folks talked about the overall lack of knowledge of existing services.

“Increased access to affordable and inclusive neighborhoods/housing, equitable healthcare, transportation access, safety, and affordability” (Speaker identifies as white. Forum: Community survey)

“Investment more in programs, services and policies that help eliminate racial disparities in health, education, income, and other factors” (Speaker identifies as Central American. Forum: Community survey)

“Clackamas county needs a better safety net system (health care, internet, shelters).” (Speaker identifies as White. Forum: Community survey)

“Invest in social services that are anti-racist and culturally specific.” (Speaker identifies as Native American. Forum: Community survey)

“First-time homeowners programs for individuals of color to become homeowners” (Speaker identifies as South American. Forum: Community survey)

“Invest more into social/mental health services with folks that are people of color running them or working at them.” (Speaker did not identify. Forum: Community survey)

“More awareness of services available to people of color” (Speaker did not identify. Forum: Community survey)

**Takeaway #2: Assessing equity and addressing racially motivated incidents in schools.** More specificity was provided to evaluate quality across different systems and programs, emphasizing racial injustice in schools and the allocation of resources.

“Conduct audits of existing programs, services and policies to search for opportunities to advance racial equity and to correct or eliminate those that perpetuate or exacerbate racial disparities.” (Speaker identifies as Central American. Forum: Community survey)

“Equitable resource allocation for school districts in county and addressing of racially-motivated incidents in schools.” (Speaker did not identify. Forum: Community survey)

“School administrators who listen to students, speak out against racism, and visibly support LGBTQ+ students.” (Speaker identifies as Mexican. Forum: Community survey)

**Takeaway #3: Incentives for minority-owned businesses and workforce development.** The final group of suggestions in this area of concern was around bolstering BIPOC-owned businesses and incentivizing the hiring of a more diverse workforce.

“Employment, business opportunities and trusting a person of color on their merits, not the color of their skin.” (Speaker identifies as African American. Forum: Community survey)

“[I]ncentives for POC businesses to move into the area.” (Speaker did not identify. Forum: Community survey)

“Opportunities to build economic capital within communities of color and opportunities for leadership development and investment within communities of color.” (Speaker identifies as white. Forum: Community survey)

“We need to bring in businesses that are owned and sell products specific to communities of color.” (Speaker identifies as white. Forum: Community survey)

“More support and advertising of businesses.” (Speaker identifies as Mexican. Forum: Community survey)

## V. MULTILINGUAL AND MULTICULTURAL COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT

“Translation services should not be an afterthought. Listening sessions/town halls should be conducted in Spanish and other minority languages on a regular basis.” (Speaker identifies as Western European. Forum: Community survey)

Numerous folks across the county expressed concerns about the lack of communication and engagement in non-English languages across various domains. According to the ACS 5-year estimate data in Clackamas County, 50,569 residents speak a language other than English in the home. That is approximately thirteen percent (6 percent Spanish, 4 percent Asian and Pacific Islander languages, and 3 percent other Indo-European languages) of the county’s population who may not receive accurate, if any at all, meaningful life-saving information about public health, employment, housing, and emergencies like wildfire evacuations, to name a few. Further, residents explained that folks with varying cultural backgrounds should offer communications and engagement services – not just white Americans and Latinx folks. Examples of diversifying linguist and cultural communication and engagement include verbal, printed, digital, job announcements, city/county planning efforts, public forums like town halls/listening sessions, and social services.

**Takeaway #1: Translation services across all domains.** It is evident when engaging with non-English speakers that the County and its cities need to do more work on translating information on websites, public services announcements, and direct services. It is also crucial that translation is provided in languages beyond Spanish and Russian.

“There are just as many blue collar Asians working in the food and service industry as there are Latinx and other immigrant communities. The Vietnamese, Burmese, Cambodians, Thai, Japanese, Koreans, and Chinese immigrants are often silent and invisible, due to innate cultural values. In Clackamas County, there are more Vietnamese speakers than there are Russian/Ukrainian speakers, yet. Please check the school district to confirm this.” (Speaker identifies as Asian Indian. Forum: Community survey)

**Takeaway #2: Multilingual and multicultural staff and support.** Folks also noted the importance of multilingual and multicultural staff in agencies and organizations to provide direct services in a language that

community members understand. Often, communication through interpreters delays services, and interpreters are not experts in the provided services. Further, in organizations where multilingual folks work, it should be encouraged for non-English languages to be spoken instead of stigmatized through harassment, jokes, stereotyping, and ignoring. While having linguistic and culturally diverse employees is essential to connect with communities, these folks should not be asked to take on translation labor (e.g., translating documents or listening sessions) outside of their job description. Instead, translation professionals should be hired to do this type of work. Participants mentioned feeling unsafe going to HR or their union; instead, they said a safe space was needed to go with racism or discrimination issues where they do not have to fear retaliation or inaction.

“Equitable, timely and culturally appropriate and timely access to all health care, including behavioral health, provided by people who “look like them,” not just other white people who have been trained.” (Speaker identifies as Western European. Forum: Community survey)

“Be more open minded about county employees using other languages in order to reach our communities of color.” (Speaker identifies as Japanese. Forum: Community survey)

## VI. COMMUNITY SUPPORT AND CONNECTION

“I have heard from students, colleagues, neighbors and friends of color that their lived experience in Clackamas county is very isolating and at times, unsafe physically and emotionally.” (Speaker identifies as white. Forum: Community survey)

“Clackamas county has a strong presence of overtly racist residents. We see rather intimidating Trump/Blue Lives Matter flag wavers every day in our neighborhood.” (Speaker identifies as Latinx. Forum: Community survey)

Many Clackamas County residents shared how either they or their neighbors do not feel welcome, as if this is a place for white folks only. Community members gave many solutions to address these concerns, such as centralized information around resources, community-specific gathering opportunities, cultural resources, advocacy, holidays, and foods. They also spoke about the county’s need to take more deliberate steps at addressing white nationalist symbols and rhetoric and taking a stance against ICE. Understanding and addressing these issues requires robust engagement with communities of color in the county to make clear the most pressing needs and long-term solutions.

**Takeaway #1: Centralized community-specific resources and opportunities.** With the concern of not knowing what services are available to BIPOC folks, one solution is to have centralized information or a location to bring deliberation or action issues. This could be a digital platform run by the County, community gathering officially recognized by the County for BIPOC folks to gather and share information, and organizations led by communities of color that are well connected. Overall, folks highlighted the need for more outreach and formalized resources and opportunities for BIPOC communities.

**Takeaway #2: Cultural resources, advocacy, holidays, and food.** Community members believed that more representation in the community means more places to shop, eat, connect, and enjoy entertainment.



“Establish a list of stakeholders, which the Racial Justice Subcommittee of ClackDems has started.” (Speaker identifies as white. Forum: Community survey)

“More ethnic, non-Western, restaurants...Maybe celebrate official days for certain communities (eg. Mexican Independence Day, India \_\_\_\_, Russian \_\_\_\_, etc.). Especially if there’s like a big ethnic supermarket, hosting a little celebration there would be cool.” (Speaker identifies as white. Forum: Community survey)

“School food programs could and should embrace the ethnicities of their populations and provide food that is familiar and comforting. Merely providing a single item from within the community would ‘normalize’ them...and make the non-dominant folk feel more at home.” (Speaker identifies white. Forum: Community survey)

“Clackamas County needs to get clear about its relationship with ICE and make that public so that immigrant communities aren’t afraid of asking for help with things like food, domestic violence and shelter needs.” (Speaker identifies as white. Forum: Community survey)

“A systematic effort to marginalize the white nationalists in our community.” (especially in Law Enforcement) (Speaker did not identify. Forum: Community survey)

“More social outreach for equity work in rural communities.” (Speaker identifies as Black. Forum: Community survey)

“More opportunities for gatherings to actually get to know people of color.” (Speaker did not identify. Forum: Community survey)

“More news that includes positive depictions of POC.” (Speaker identifies as African American. Forum: Community survey)

## PART VI: RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations below come from an array of data sources collected over four months. This is not a comprehensive, community-led list of recommendations that would require considerably more community involvement and leadership over a more extended period to vet such findings. However, the list below can be considered a starting place for Clackamas County and its cities to begin formalizing short and long-term BIPOC community-centered strategies towards advancing racial justice.

### **Representation and Leadership**

- Ensure that recruitment and hiring practices are intentional about diversifying the workforce and informed by equity.
- Build inclusive workplace cultures to nurture and provide support for people with different racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds.
- People in leadership positions should be publicly invested and committed to anti-racism.
- People in leadership positions should lead with DEI values and model equitable, inclusive decision-making.
- Be mindful of asking BIPOC folks, who are often already overworked, to contribute additional labor to compensate for the lack of representations (e.g., translation work).
- Invest in cultural events at the local level.
- Ensure that public contracting is equitable.
- An equity lens should be applied to all aspects of the work the County does, rather than being an afterthought.

### **Education and Training**

- In consultation with BIPOC constituents, review public school curriculum to address racial biases.
- County and City governments to invest in racial justice/anti-racism trainings and educational content for leadership and other employees.

### **BIPOC-Informed Policy**

- In collaboration with BIPOC constituents, develop racial equity plan/strategy at County and City levels.
- Create communications that reflect back to the community what was heard.
- Implement tangible action plans based on proposed changes articulated by BIPOC constituents.

### **Access and Services**

- Community-informed, BIPOC-led/staffed social services.
- Communication campaign detailing BIPOC-specific services and support.
- County to clarify its relationships with ICE.
- Expanding and adding to first-time homeowner programs for BIPOC.
- Programmatic audits of existing programs to assess the perpetuating or exacerbations of racial disparities.
- Assessment of racially-motivated incidents in schools and policies to impose stricter guidelines and consequences of bullying and racism.
- Equitable resource allocation for schools, especially for those with large BIPOC populations.
- Incentives for BIPOC-owned businesses to move to the county and develop BIPOC workforce.

- Opportunities to build economic capital and leadership development within BIPOC communities.
- Support creating and sustaining county-specific community-based organizations.
- Advertising for BIPOC-owned businesses.
- Creating more opportunity for small business and lower-income housing which could be more attractive to BIPOC groups who are often pushed out of the area.

### **Multilingual and Multicultural Communications and Engagement**

- Robust verbal, print, and digital communication plan that is multilingual and multicultural.
- Diversifying linguistic and cultural communication and engagement in job announcements, city/county planning efforts, public forums like town halls/listening sessions, and social services.
- Support and encouragement, instead of stigma, to speak languages other than English at work and for non-English speaking clients or constituents.
- Hire translation professionals instead of depending on multilingual employees to perform translation and interpretation labor outside of their job description.

### **Community Support and Connection**

- Centralized location to bring BIPOC issues for deliberation or action.
- More community gatherings for BIPOC folks to socialize and organize.
- Establish a coalition of stakeholders and advocates to work on the issues that relate to racism in government and organizations (e.g., health care, housing, education, etc.).
- School administrators who listen to and support BIPOC and LGBTQ+ students and speak out against discrimination and violence students experience at schools.
- More cultural holidays, celebrations, appropriate food/nutrition services, and food stores.
- A systematic effort to marginalize the white nationalists in our community (especially in law enforcement).
- More social outreach for equity work in rural communities.
- More news and communication that include positive depictions of POC.

### APPENDIX I: DATA SOURCES

Several approaches were used to gather information about communities of color in Clackamas county. These included

1. Conducting extensive online research to build a database of organizations serving, in some capacity, communities of color in the county
2. Disseminating an online survey in English, Spanish and Russian
3. Gathering written responses from mayors, city managers, and other public officials about Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) work being done in various jurisdictions and following-up with interviews
4. Conducting qualitative analysis on listening sessions and town halls on race
5. Conducting a document review
6. Utilizing administrative data from the Census and American Community Survey to gain a broader picture of demographic profiles of communities of color in the county

The authors of this report, Dr. Andres Lopez and Dr. Mira Mohsini, also collected data and gained insight about communities of color in Clackamas county by attending virtual community events, such as convenings of the Leaders in Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Council (LEDIC), town halls, city managers' monthly meetings, and a weekly standing meeting with the recently appointed County Equity and Inclusion Officer and her team.

#### Environmental Scan Database

Data were collected by conducting extensive online research on organizations that engage with communities of color in Clackamas county. These organizations were separated into the following categories:

- Culturally-specific organizations based in Clackamas county that engage with communities of color in the county
- Culturally-specific organizations based outside of Clackamas that engage with communities of color in the county
- Non-culturally-specific organizations based in Clackamas county that engage with communities of color
- Non-culturally-specific organizations based outside of Clackamas county that engage with communities of color

The database included 164 community-based organizations, businesses, government agencies, networks, councils, and other coalitions. Organizations were also categorized based on areas of work, such as faith, education, social services, health providers, youth services, workforce development, arts, business, and DEI work. Outreach was conducted with 64 of the organizations included in the environmental scan database.

#### Community Survey

Data was collected using a semi-structured survey (see Appendix II for the complete survey questions). Out of a total of 14 questions, five were open-ended and nine were close-ended. The survey was offered in English, Spanish, and Russian. The survey collected information on:

- Race, ethnicity, languages spoken using REaL-D question format<sup>2</sup> and gender
- What capacity respondents live, work, and organize with communities of color
- Top concerns and how the county be a better place to live for communities of color

The survey was disseminated online by conducting outreach with organizations and individuals identified in the environmental scan database. In addition, members of the Clackamas County Office of Equity and Inclusion shared the survey link within their own networks. Through a snowball sampling approach, we reached 121 respondents (116 in English; 5 in Spanish; none in Russian). The survey also helped us identify nearly a third of respondents who were interested in working with us during the next phases of the research.

*Sampling limitations:* The majority of survey respondents reported working in the nonprofit sector or in government, and as such their top concerns will look different than if the survey was completed by more community members and thus more representative of the broader community.

### **Questionnaires for Electeds and Interviews with Government Officials about DEI**

Data was collected using a questionnaire sent to mayors, city managers, and other public officials that solicited written responses (see Appendix III for the complete questionnaire). We received responses from the cities of Estacada, Milwaukie, Canby, Gladstone, and Tualatin, as well as from the Clackamas County Department of Human Services. In addition to receiving written responses, the researchers from CCC and staff from the Office of Equity and Inclusion at Clackamas County conducted informal interviews, ranging from 30 minutes to one hour, with city managers. We were able to conduct three interviews with city managers representing the cities of Milwaukie, Tualatin, and Gladstone.

### **Listening Sessions and Town Halls**

Data was collected by reviewing and coding notes taken by Clackamas County staff members at seven virtual internal employee listening sessions on race hosted by the County between June and August 2020. In addition, one recorded virtual town hall on race, which was hosted by the County on August 19, 2020 was coded and a second virtual town hall hosted by the County on September 30, 2020 was attended by researchers from the CCC.

### **Document Review**

Data was collected by reviewing and analyzing material from online and social media content, county-wide internal organizational surveys, job descriptions, and DEI statements and resolutions from public agencies.

### **Administrative Datasets**

Data was collected on demographic and other social indicators using American Community Survey data and COVID-19 Regional Data Dashboard.

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<sup>2</sup> For more information about REaL-D, see the Oregon Health Authority's website: <https://www.oregon.gov/oha/OEI/Pages/REALD.aspx>, accessed November 11, 2020.



## APPENDIX II: COMMUNITY SURVEY QUESTIONS

The community survey reproduced below was translated into Spanish and Russian. We translated the survey into these two languages based on feedback we received from members of the Leaders in Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Council (LEDIC).

### Survey Questions

Thank you for taking the time to share information with the Coalition of Communities of Color (CCC) to help us complete a “Leading with Race” Clackamas County report. We are thrilled that you are interested in joining Clackamas County and the CCC to better understand the needs, challenges, strategies, and resilience of communities of color living in the county. The success of this project is dependent upon a tremendous community-driven effort. Your responses are essential in developing our research project and centering the lives and experiences of communities of color.

Please provide whatever information you are comfortable sharing. All data collected by the CCC is confidential, and your identities will never be disclosed without your consent. Answering our demographic questions helps us better understand and serve the communities in our coalition.

Thank you for your support.

1. If you, or someone you know, would like to complete this survey in a language other than English, please select the language below. We will do our best to send you this survey in your preferred language. Please also enter your name and email address below, and then hit Submit at the end of the survey (skipping all other questions)

- Arabic
- Burmese
- Cambodian
- Chinese - Simplified Chinese
- Chinese -Traditional
- Farsi
- French
- German
- Hmong
- Japanese
- Korean
- Mien
- Oromo
- Romanian
- Russian
- Spanish
- Somali
- Thai
- Ukrainian
- Vietnamese

2. What is your first and last name?
3. What is your email address?
4. What is your home zip code?
5. Organizational Affiliation (if any)?
6. How do you describe the work you do?
7. Which areas do you have direct experience working with communities of color?  
(check all that apply)

- Community member/organizing
- Non-profit
- Government -- City, County, State
- Community based organization
- Research/data
- Diversity Equity and Inclusion Work
- Business
- School District
- Other

8. Tell us about your lived, work, and organizing experience with communities of color in Clackamas County.

9. What are three things you believe are critical to accomplish to make Clackamas County a better place to live for communities of color?

10. Would you be interested in taking some sort of leadership role in the Clackamas County Leading with Race project (e.g., steering committee member; providing data support)?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe/not sure yet

11. How do you identify? (Check all that apply).

- Woman
- Man
- Transgender
- Non-Binary
- Two Spirit
- Intersex
- LGBTQ

12. What communities are you part of? (Check all that apply).

- American Indian
- Alaska Native
- Canadian Inuit, Métis, of First Nation
- Indigenous Mexican, Central American, or South American

- Asian Indian
- Chinese
- Filipino/a
- Hmong
- Japanese
- Korean
- Laotian
- South Asian
- Vietnamese
- Other Asian
- African American
- African (Black)
- Caribbean (Black)
- Other Black
- Central American
- Mexican
- South American
- Other Hispanic or Latino/a/x
- Middle Eastern
- North African
- Eastern European
- Slavic
- Western European
- Other White
- Chamorro
- Guamanian
- Micronesian/Marshallese/Palauan
- Native Hawaiian
- Samoan
- Tongan
- Don't know
- Don't want to answer

13. Please list the languages you and/or staff members are comfortable speaking in with communities of color

14. Please share any links or information that may be helpful for CCC to engage communities of color and those advocating for them in Clackamas County

### APPENDIX III: QUESTIONNAIRES FOR CITIES

1. Who is leading the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion work in your city? (e.g., Formal DEI titled employees, other employees, community members, city leadership, etc.)
2. What is the driving force that began Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion work in your city? (e.g., police reform, ensure the provision of inclusive services, community pressure, strategic plan, any other details on why this is happening now)
3. What are the goals, outcomes, and strategies currently in place for your city to advance Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion work in your city?
4. What are the strengths (what's working/promising) and challenges (limitations/needed improvements) of achieving Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion efforts across your city?
5. Please provide a list of organizations and groups you have engaged with, are currently working with, or plan to engage around Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion work.