

Policy Brief: Multnomah County transformed social service delivery by applying an equity lens to Social Service Contracts to ensure that allocations were going towards organizations and initiatives that provided high quality “culturally specific services” designed and delivered for people experiencing inequities as a result of racism and discrimination.

Case Study: Multnomah County set a new requirement on social service contracts to work towards “Culturally Specific Services” which seek to diminish structural barriers and provide a sense of safety and belonging that leads to better outcomes for people experiencing racism and discrimination. Culturally Specific services/programs were defined as those that are informed by specific communities, where the majority of members/clients are reflective of that community, and use language, structures and settings familiar to the culture of the target population to create an environment of belonging and safety in which services are delivered. The County adopted a **theory of change or mission which stated “We will improve the wellbeing of our entire community by collaborating and integrating strategies and services that have been shown to improve educational and economic outcomes for people of color and those living in poverty.”**

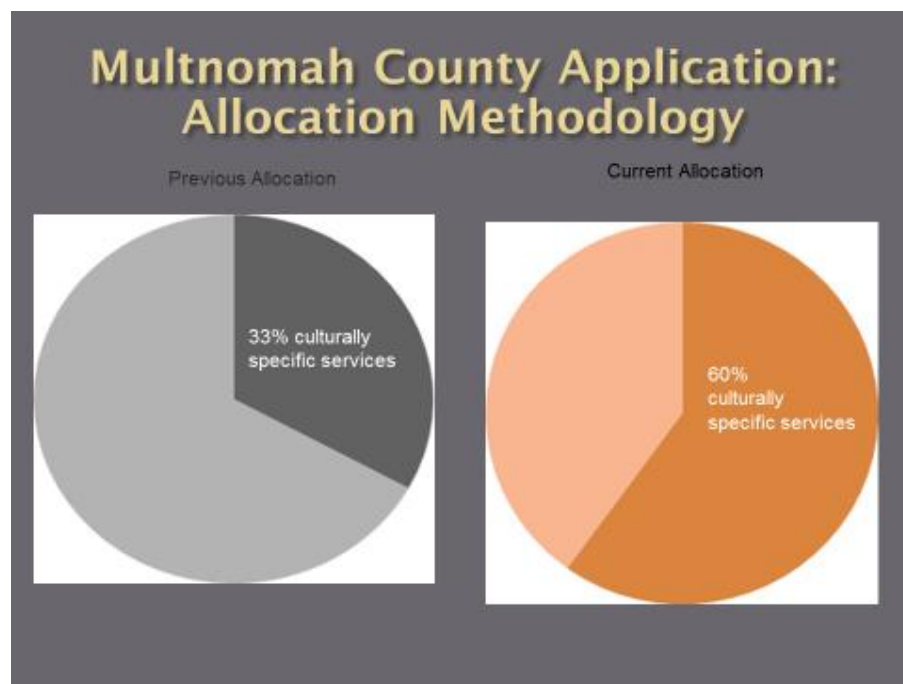
Multnomah County set a standard that all social services should be culturally responsive, and organizations competing for county contracts should demonstrate their capacity through the RFP process

Multnomah County Adopted the Following Criteria for Organizations during the RFP Process:

- Alignment of founding mission with the community proposed to be served (creation of mission was historically based in serving communities experiencing racism) and alignment with the outcomes desired by the program.
- Intimate knowledge of lived experience of the community,
- Multiple formal and informal channels for meaningful community engagement, participation and feedback exists at all levels of the organization (from service complaints to community participation at the leadership and board level).
- Commitment to a highly skilled and experienced workforce by employing robust recruitment, hiring and leadership development practices
- Commitment to safety and belonging through advocacy; design of services from the norms and worldviews of the community; reflect core cultural constructs of the culturally specific community; understand and incorporate shared history; create rich support networks; engage all aspects of community; and address power relationships.
- Demonstration of Culturally Responsiveness to be respectful of, and relevant to, the beliefs, practices, culture and linguistic needs of diverse consumer / client populations and communities whose members identify as having particular cultural or linguistic affiliations

by virtue of their place of birth, ancestry or ethnic origin, religion, preferred language or language spoken at home. Cultural responsiveness describes the capacity to respond to the issues of diverse communities. It thus requires knowledge and capacity at different levels of intervention: systemic, organizational, professional, and individual

Results: The total social service contracts represents \$14 million for the County. Before the county made the decision to adopt a “culturally specific services” standard, the baseline of contracts was only 33% or \$4.6 million went towards organizations and programming that met the criteria. With the new criteria that was adopted, the allocation shifted to 60% or 8.4 million of contracts going directly towards bettering outcomes for people experiencing racism and discrimination.



SUN SERVICE SYSTEM THEORY OF CHANGE

