

# Watershed Protection Department

## Equity Update

*Environmental Commission*

*February 17, 2021*

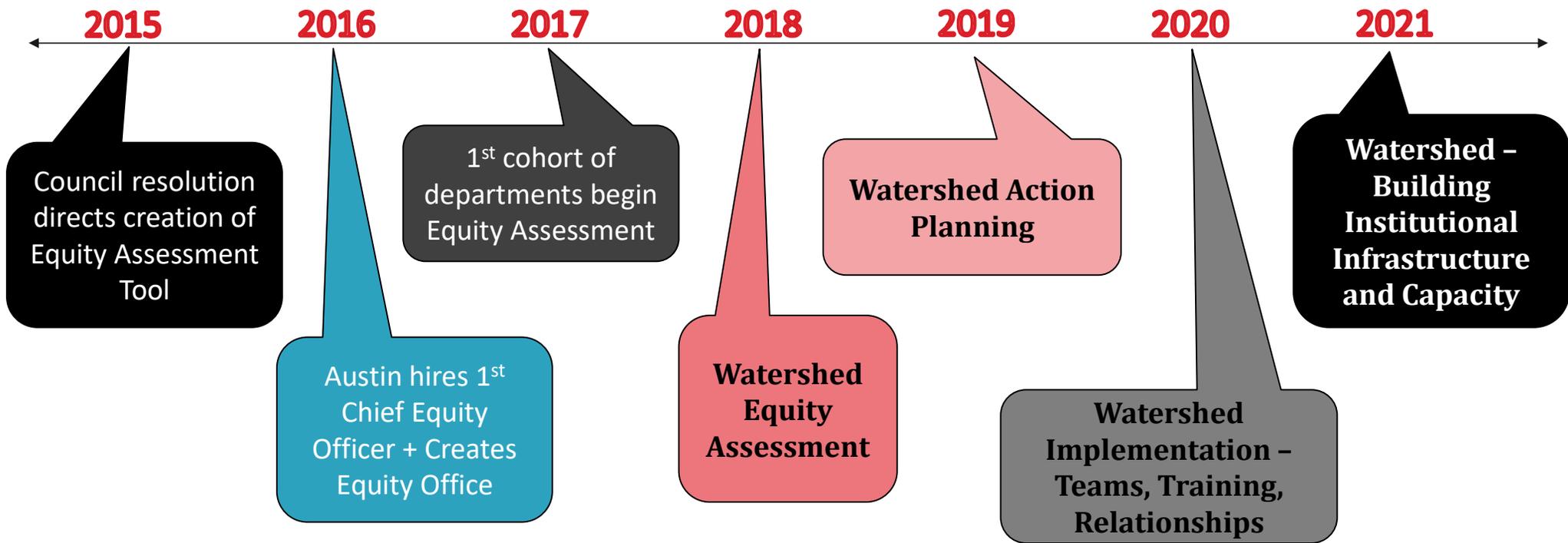
*Presenters: Jorge Morales, Nikki Fowler, Kelly Gagnon, Victor Nelms, Janna Renfro, Ramesh Swaminathan*



City of Austin

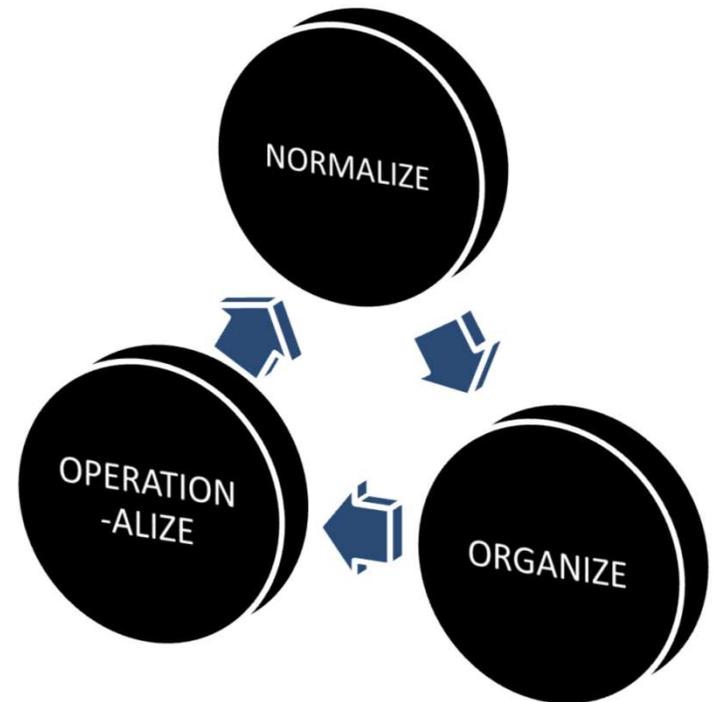
**WATERSHED  
PROTECTION**

# WPD Equity Timeline

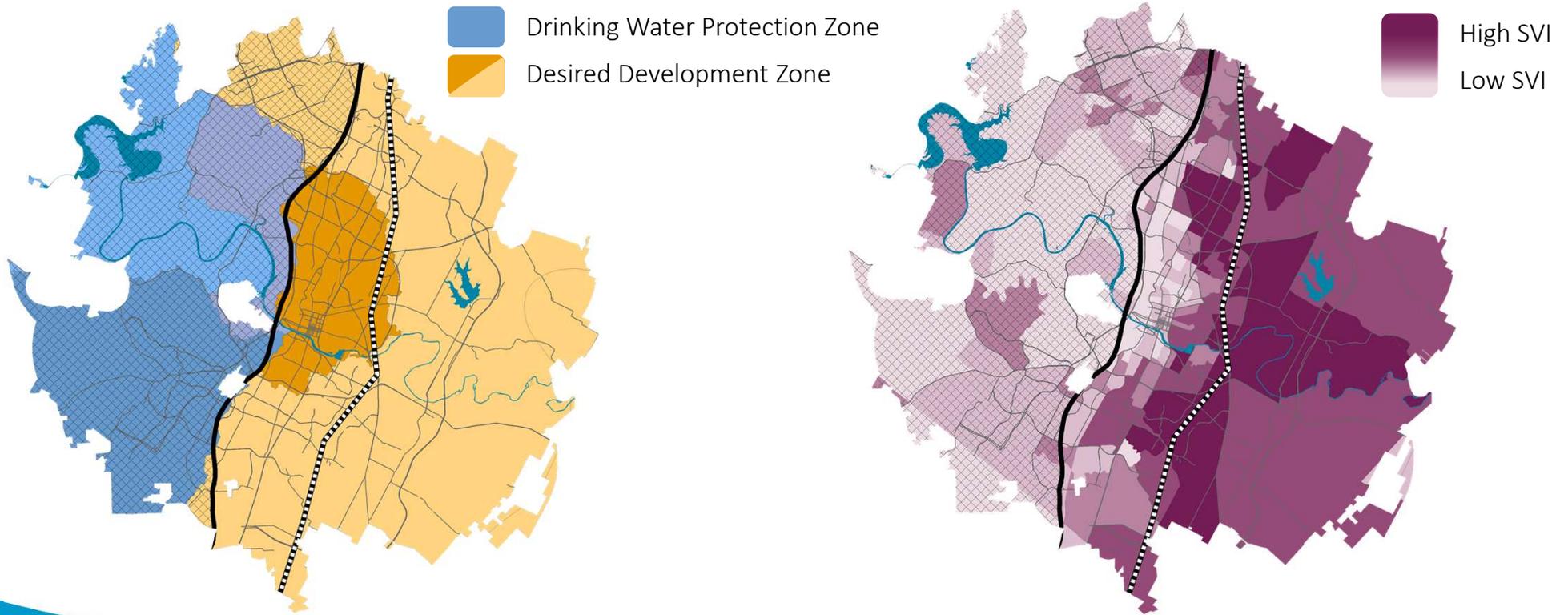


# Guiding Principles

- Shared definition of equity:
  - *Racial equity is the condition when race is no longer a predictor of quality of life outcomes in our community.*
- Lead with Race:
  - *Race is the most reliable predictor of quality of life in Austin.*
- Transformation, not transaction.
- Normalize. Organize. Operationalize.



# Watershed Focus

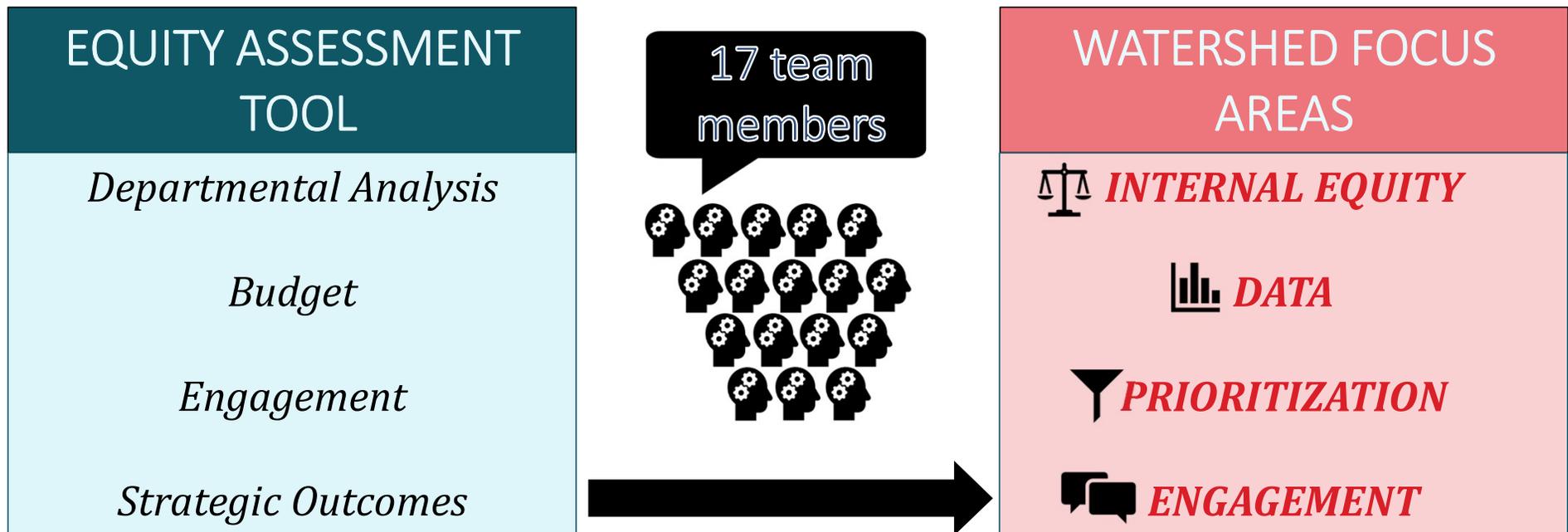


 Edwards Plateau

 Blackland Prairie Transition Line

**SVI = Social Vulnerability Index**  
as defined by the Center for  
Disease Control (CDC)

# 2018 Equity Assessment Process



# Internal Equity

- People of color primarily work in Operations & Maintenance compared to “office” staff which is whiter. How are power + resources shared between these two spaces? How does quality of life differ?
- Is Watershed culture inclusive of all?
- Can we adequately serve the community if we don’t “look” like the community we serve across all areas?
- Are we meeting our full potential as an organization without a diverse professional staff across all areas?

# Data

- Are people of color more likely to face adverse impacts from flooding, erosion, and poor water quality?
- How are we collecting data so that it can be disaggregated by race?
- What are the best ways to measure, analyze, and predict outcomes related to Watershed mission areas?

# Prioritization

- Once we know where inequity exists, how do we prioritize funding to close those gaps?
- How do we make sure our dollars are reaching the right communities?
- Are we choosing solutions in a way that considers the different ways in which communities are situated?
- How do we improve infrastructure without worsening gentrification?

# Engagement

- How can we expand our model of public participation to fully reflect community values and reach those we have marginalized?
- How can we work better with people already organizing within communities of color?
- What does it look like to share power with community?

# 2019 Action Planning + Rollout



- **Action Plan Goals**

- Develop Teams around Focus Areas
  - *Internal Equity*
  - *Data*
  - *Prioritization*
  - *Engagement*
- Expand Training Opportunities
- Continue to build existing relationships

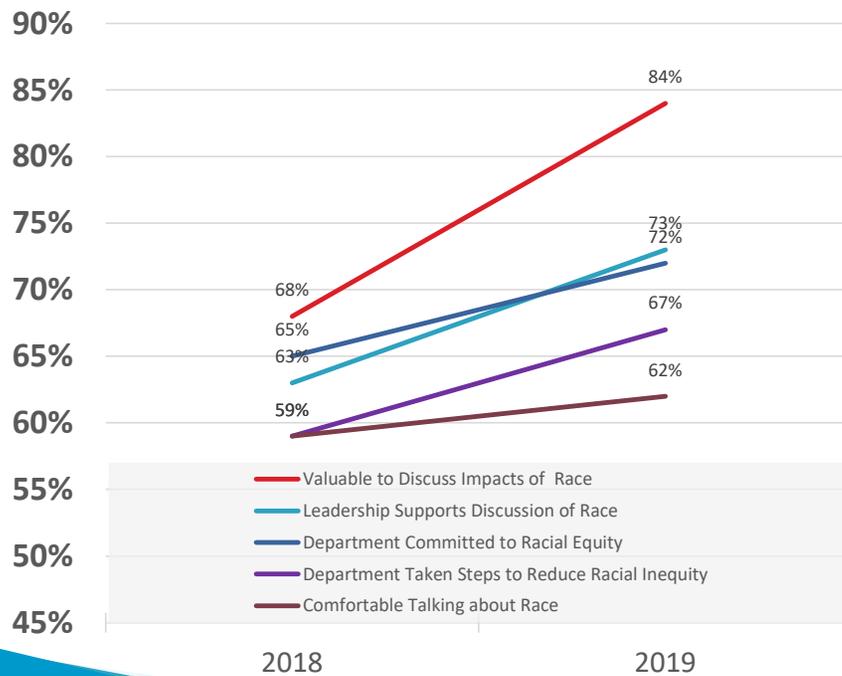
- **Rollout + Recruit**

- 19 presentations to all staff
- Recruited 100+ staff interested in participating

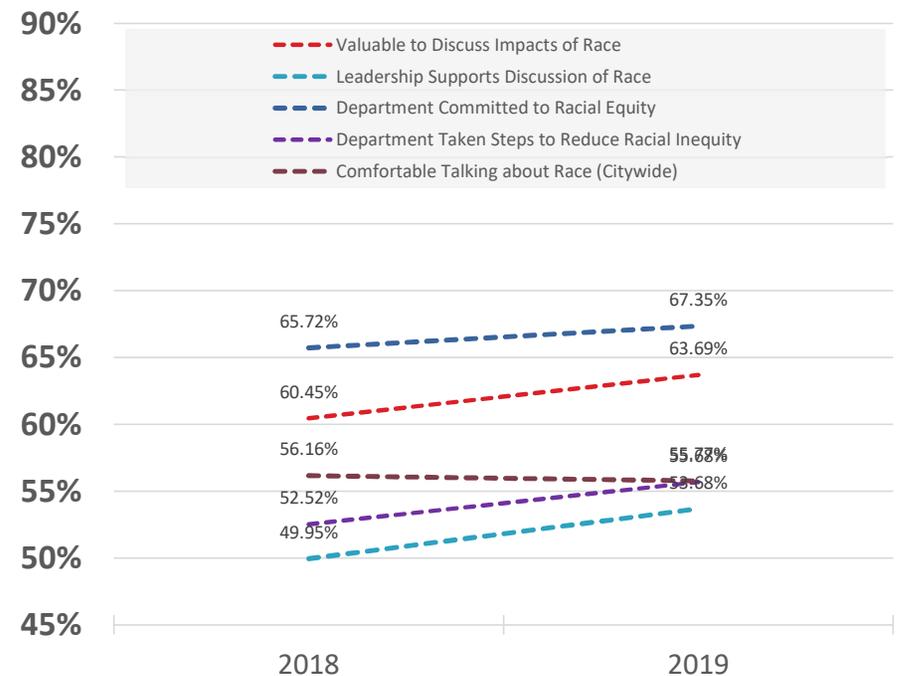
# Seeing results in the workforce...



Watershed



Citywide

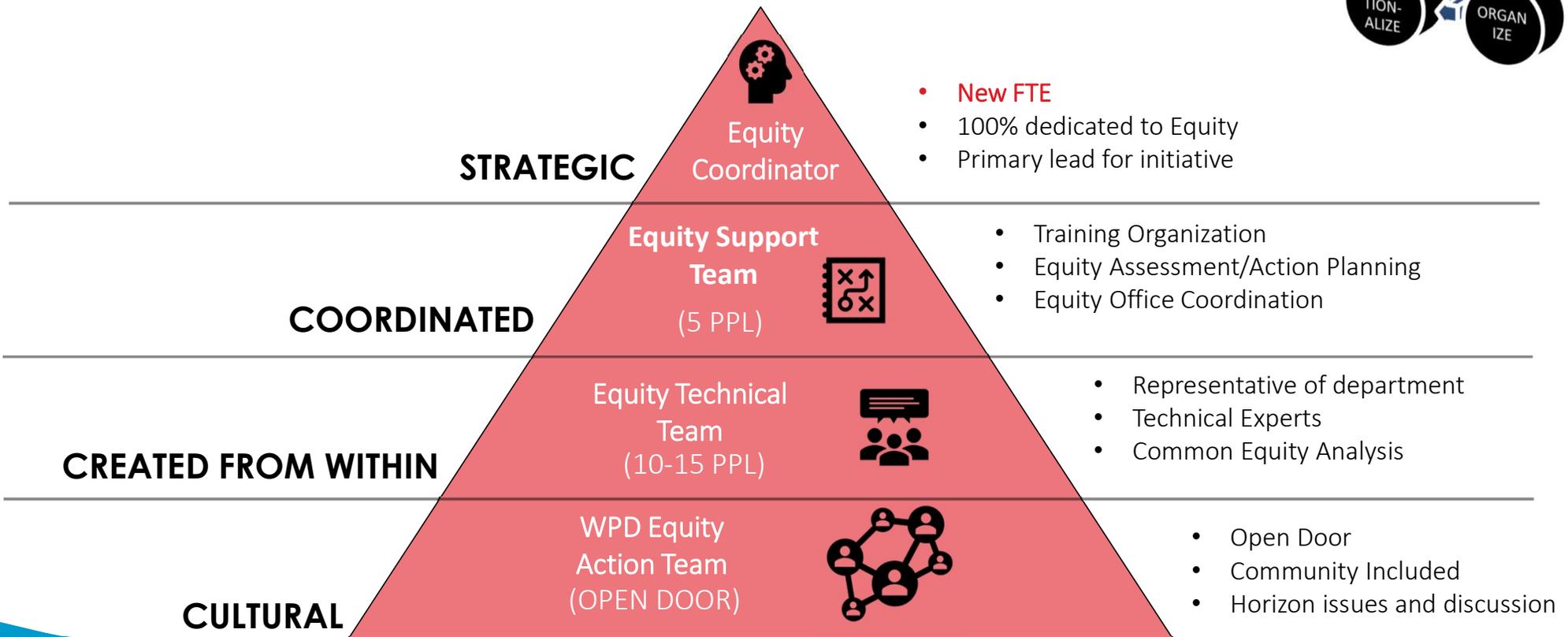


# 2020 Implementation

- Teams worked from July — September
  - Normalize and organize
  - Developed recommendations for further exploration
- Training
  - Undoing Racism
  - Groundwater Analysis
- Building Relationships



# 2021 Infrastructure + Capacity



# Strategic Plan Update + Engagement

- Strategic Plan Purpose
  - Guiding Blueprint for Department
  - Evaluation Framework
  - Communication Tool
- Purpose of Update
  - Original adoption in 2001; last major update completed in 2014
  - Time to re-engage community and address current challenges
    - Assess values, evaluate guiding principles, update goals and objectives, revise prioritization methods, track progress

# Strategic Plan Update + Engagement

- Goals for Update
  - Reflect Community Values
  - **Incorporate Equity and Climate Resilience**
  - Accessible and Informative
- Community Engagement Priorities
  - Under-served groups
  - Impacted groups
  - Community expertise

# Strategic Plan Update + Engagement

- **Draft Timeline**
  - 2021: Planning (*in progress*) and Community Engagement (rounds 1 & 2)
  - 2022: Community Engagement (cont.) and Plan Development
  - 2023: Community Engagement (round 3) and Document Adoption
- Late Spring 2021: Send proposed Scope of Work to Council (by 4/30) and present to Environmental Commission

# Resources

- Equity Office Website

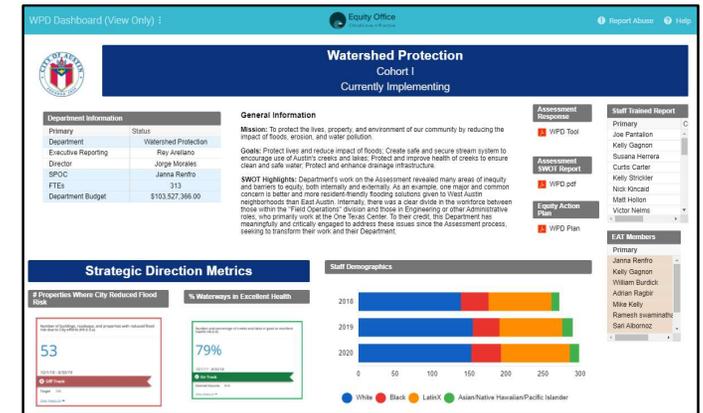
<https://austintexas.gov/department/equity-office>

- Watershed Protection Equity Dashboard

<https://app.smartsheet.com/b/publish?EQBCT=abc25cbc68c041249aa79dab1d9253ae>

- Watershed Protection Strategic Plan Website

<https://www.austintexas.gov/department/watershed-protection-master-plan>



# Questions?

