M E M O R A N D U M

TO: Mayor and Council Members

FROM: Brion Oaks, Chief Equity Officer,
Equity Office

DATE: May 18, 2021

SUBJECT: **Staff Response to Resolution No. 20200729-113**

On July 29, 2020 Council passed Resolution No. 20200729-113 directing staff to "advocate locally and through the National League of Cities and Texas Municipal League for relevant policies that improve health in low-income communities and communities of color, and supports local, state, regional, and federal initiatives that advance efforts to dismantle systemic racism." The resolution also directs the City Manager to, "continue work to advance the City of Austin as a race equity and justice-oriented organization, with the Equity Office and departmental leadership continuing to identify specific activities to further enhance diversity and to ensure anti-racism principles across leadership, City staffing and contracting, enhance educational trainings/activities for employees aimed at understanding, addressing and dismantling racism and how it affects the delivery of human and social services, economic development and public safety, and promote relevant policies that improve health in communities of color."

The purpose of this memorandum is to confirm that staff has monitored and advised on legislation that meets the goal of the Resolution, including State Representative Donna Howard's effort to reinstate the state agency dedicated to investigating and solving racial inequities across the state's health agencies. Staff have also coordinated with Council's Health and Human Services Committee (HHSC) to engage in further discussion regarding current and ongoing efforts made by the Equity Office and the Health Equity Unit of the Austin Public Health Department, including a staff presentation on April 7, 2021 to the HHSC. A copy of the presentation is attached.

Please contact Brion Oaks (Brion.Oaks@austintexas.gov) or Adrienne Sturrup (Adrienne.Sturrup@austintexas.gov) should you have further questions.

CC: Spencer Cronk, City Manager
Anne Morgan, Interim Deputy City Manager
CMO Executive Team
Brie Franco, Officer, Intergovernmental Relations Office
Adrienne Sturrup, Interim Director, Austin Public Health
Brion Oaks, Chief Equity Officer

Health and Human Services Committee
“Racism is a Public Health Crisis”

City of Austin's
Equity Office
Critical Love in Practice

“Racism is a Public Health Crisis”

Resolution **No. 20200729-113** directing the City Manager to…

- ✓ Advocate locally and through the National League of Cities and Texas Municipal League for relevant policies that improve health in low-income communities and communities of color, and supports local, state, regional, and federal initiatives that advance efforts to dismantle systemic racism.
- ✓ Coordinate local efforts to address racism as a public health crisis and has asked the State of Texas federal and state leaders to take similar actions.

"Racism is a Public Health Crisis"

Resolution No. 20200729-113 directing the City Manager to…

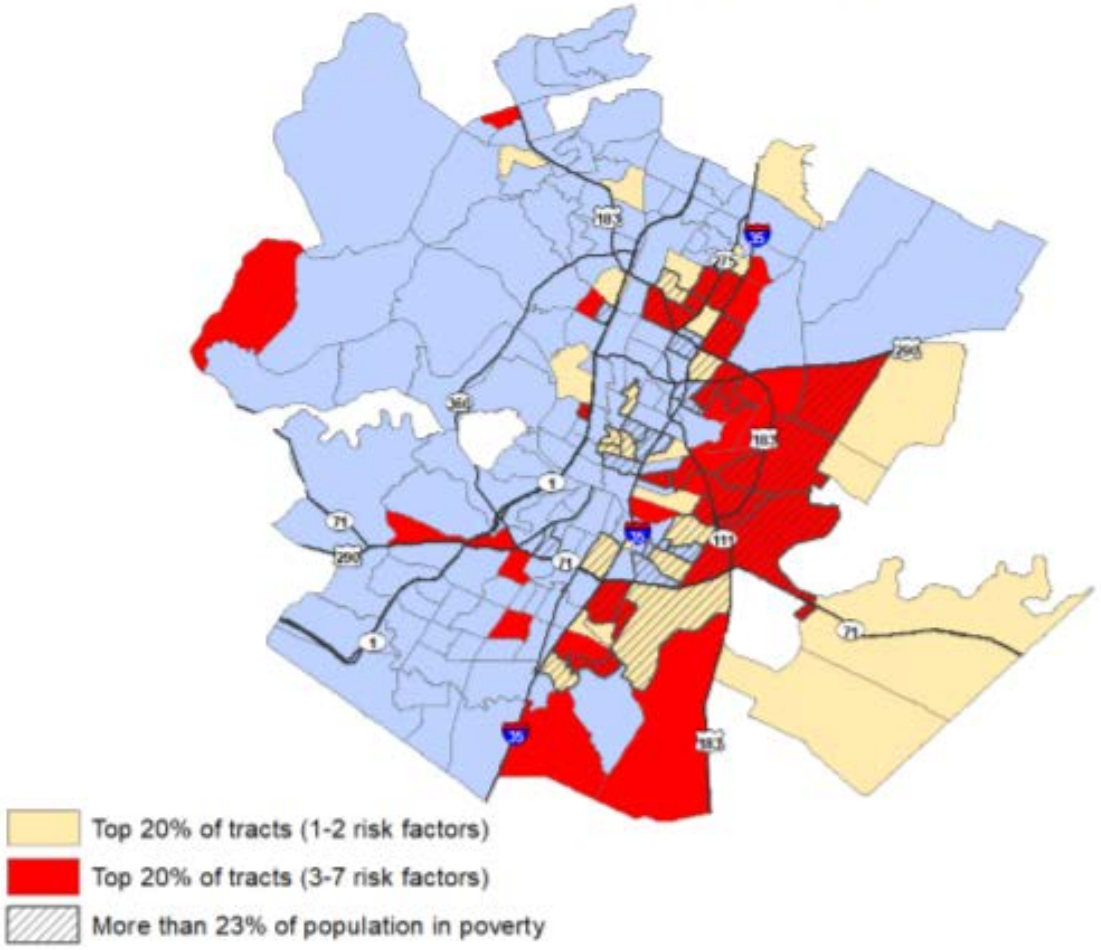
- Continue work to advance the City of Austin as a race equity and justice-oriented organization, with the Equity Office and departmental leadership continuing to identify specific activities to further enhance diversity and to ensure anti-racism principles across leadership, City staffing and contracting, enhance educational trainings/activities for employees aimed at understanding, addressing and dismantling racism and how it affects the delivery of human and social services, economic development and public safety, and promote relevant policies that improve health in communities of color.

"Racism is a Public Health Crisis"

Before COVID-19 Communities of Color were :

- Disproportionately working in low-paying or hourly-wage jobs that make them unable to provide care or interrupt work
- More likely to be uninsured and live in medically underserved corridors
- More likely to live in a food insecure area of the county
- Facing the greatest challenges of being housing cost burdened
- Less likely to have enough liquid assets to cover basic needs for three months without income
- Experience higher incidences of chronic conditions, such as hypertension, diabetes, and heart disease
- Concentrated in zip codes with lower levels of life expectancy

MAP 2a. Risk Factors for COVID-19 Severity in the City of Austin



UTHealth School of Public Health Institute for Health Policy

Sources: 500 Cities project using 2017 BRFSS data; American Community Survey 5-Year Summary, 2018.

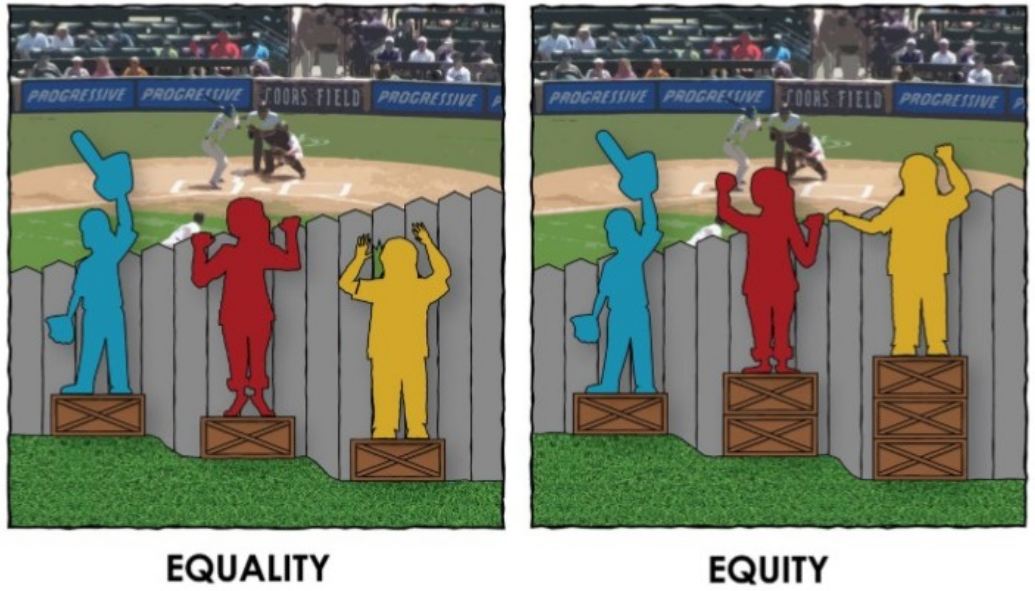
A Shared Understanding of Racial Equity

Racial equity is the condition when **race no longer predicts a person's quality of life** outcomes in our community.

The City recognizes that race is **the primary determinant** of social equity and therefore we begin the journey toward social equity with this definition.

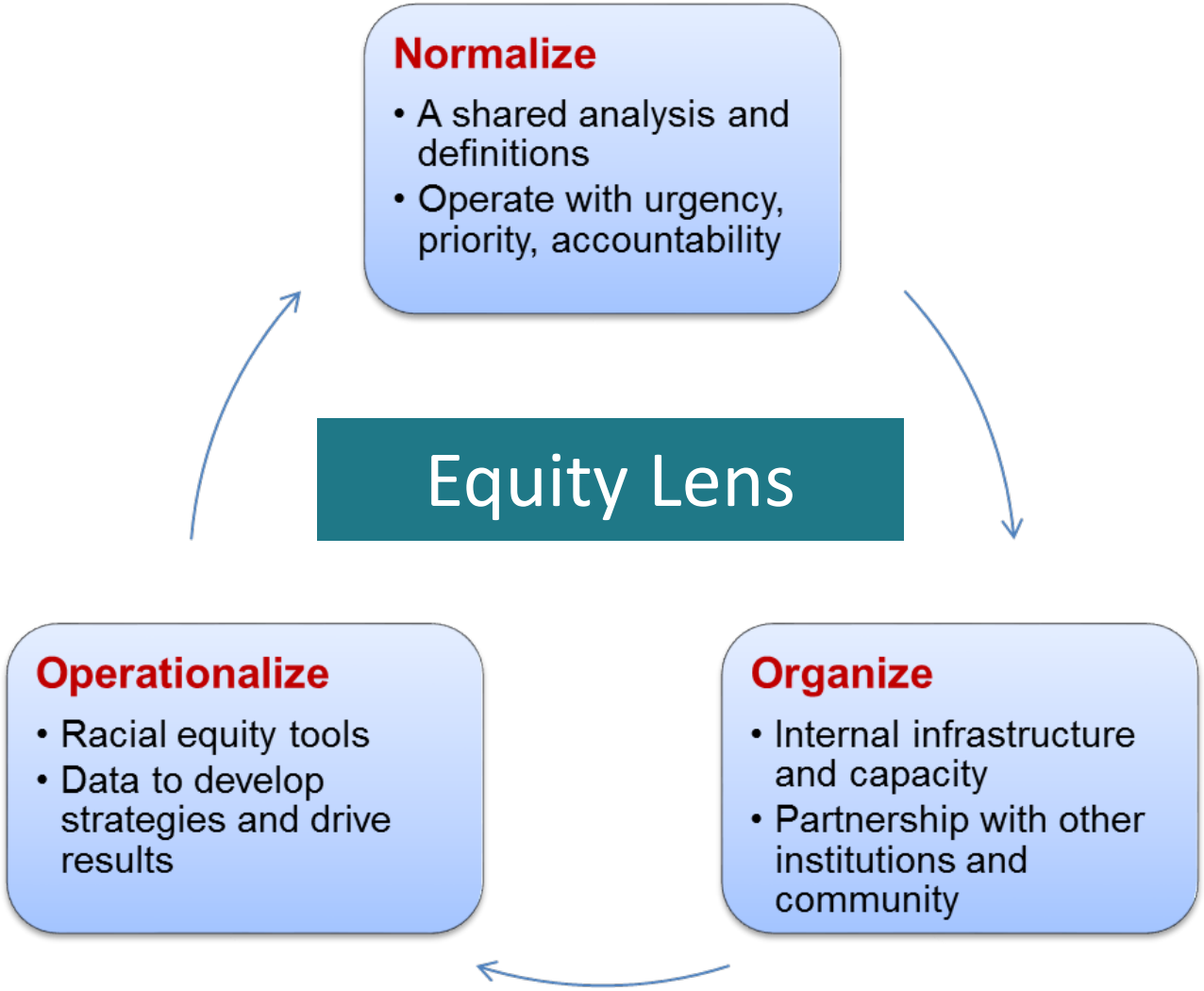
The City of Austin **recognizes historical and structural disparities** and a need for alleviation of these wrongs by critically transforming its institutions and creating a culture of equity.

Often confused…



…But **NOT** the same

COA Racial Equity Framework



This history plays out in everything the City does, so how do we keep from recreating this harm?

Where are we now?

While most explicitly racist laws and policies have been overturned or replaced, explicitly racist laws have had a profound effect on today's racial outcome gaps in wealth, health, lifespan and every other indicator of wellbeing. "Race-neutral" laws, policies and practices like the GI Bill — to name just one example — replicate and worsen existing gaps between People of Color and White people.

Where do we go from here?

We can create a future in alignment with our values by explicitly, proactively advancing racial equity through rigorous, data-driven strategies. Racial Equity is an anchor of Strategic Direction 2023 and we use racial equity tools to operationalize and center this commitment.

The Equity Assessment Process

An Overview of the Assessment Process

- Developed in partnership with Equity Action Team with over 900 hours of volunteer time
- Recognized by Open Government Partnership as a Star level intervention for transparency and potential impact
- By 2020, 100% of departments launched the equity assessment cycle

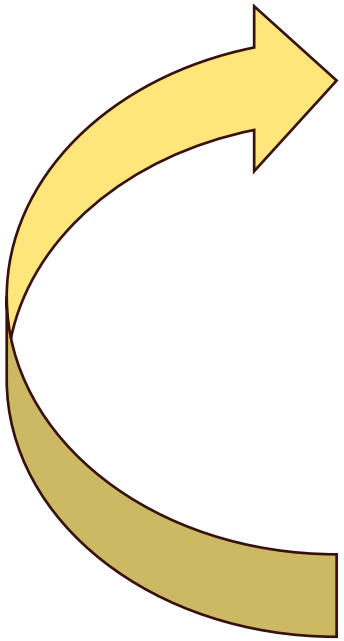
Austin's Opportunity to Advance Racial Equity

It's all about the departmental choices in the 6p's

- **Planning:** Do we prioritize racial equity in our plans?
- **Procurement & Budgeting:** What items do we add or cut and What initiatives get the funding? Who do spend our resources with?
- **Personnel:** Who to hire, retain, promote, or develop as leaders
- **Policy** Development: what to propose or modify?
- **Practices & Procedures :** routines/habits and or expectations to set
- **Public engagement**: Who do we listen to and do we center the voices of those most negatively impacted?

The cumulative impacts of choices across the 6p's can lead to BIG influence on outcomes and equity

An Overview of the Assessment Process



1. Build your Team
2. Train and Build Shared Understanding
3. Complete the Assessment Tool
4. Evaluation of Assessments in SWOT Analysis
5. Develop Equity Action Plan
6. Implement Action Plan

Sections of the Tool

- **Introduction:** Brief historical account, schedule, and Council Resolution for context
- **Departmental Analysis:** A look at the department's culture and commitment to principles that drive equity
- **Public Engagement:** Gauges your practices and quality of interaction with the community, and your customers/clients
- **Budget:** A scan of potential for realignments and insight on how community is included in budget planning
- **Alignment:** Evaluates what programs/projects exist already for equity, and uncovers connections between departmental goals and racial equity

Equity Assessment Core Values

Lead with Race/Ethnicity

Focus on human centered design and institutional empathy

Engage residents, especially those adversely affected, in decision making

Bring conscious attention to racial inequities and disparities *before* decisions are made

Avoid or minimize adverse impacts and unintended consequences

Affirm our commitment to equity, inclusion, and diversity

Equity Assessment SWOT

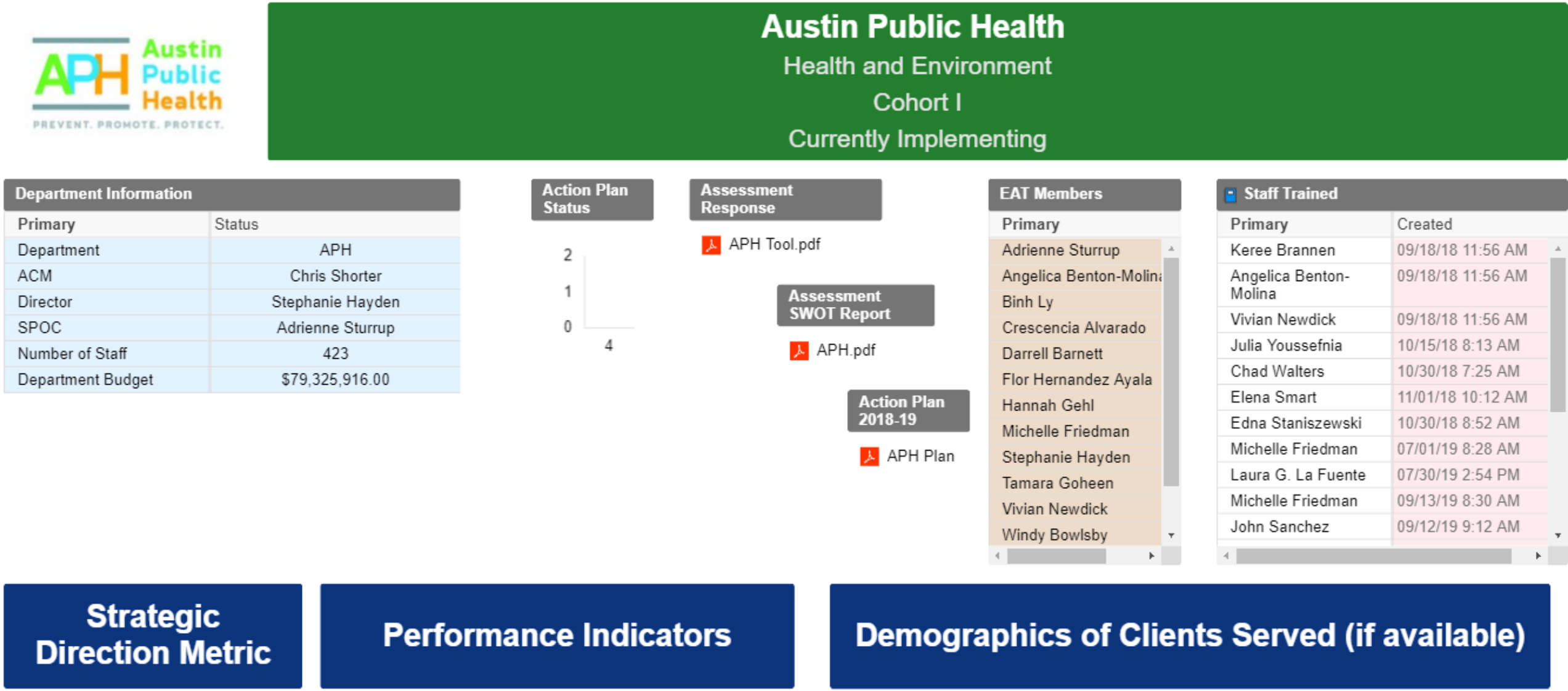
Strengths	Weaknesses

• **Hiring and Training**
  o **Use of community orgs, boards and commissions, and chambers of commerce to ID candidates**
 	
• **Information Sharing**
  o **Standards for document translation and evaluation of cultural appropriateness**
	• **Data Collection and Measurement**
	  o **Lack of disaggregated client, contractor and consultant data**
	
	• **Community Engagement**
	  o **Lack of definitive processes or use of passive processes in gathering input**

Opportunities	**Threats**

• **Programming**
  o **Programs across city are natural touchpoints for engagement and input**
 	
• **Cross-Department Collaboration**
  o **Individual department strengths can address city-wide issues**
	• Funding
	  o Lack of tracking or ability to connect budget line items directly to equity initiatives and goals.
	
	• Disproportional Effects
	  o Well-intentioned policies disadvantaging marginalized groups

Racial Equity Assessment Dashboards



https://app.smartsheet.com/b/publish?EQBCT=e2c74ae520bb46caa5e3ae29759b65a6

Racial Equity in Action with Austin Public Health

APH 2017 Equity Assessment SWOT

Strengths	Weaknesses
• **Community Engagement** o Community Health Assessment o Use of formal process to gather community feedback o Public documents are assessed for readability and cultural appropriateness, and are translated for limited English proficiency into multiple languages • **Training** o Six-training opportunities that directly address inequity, disparities, and racism	• **Data Collection and Measurement** o Lack of disaggregated client, contractor and consultant data o Lack of standardized data collection by race/ethnicity • **Training** o No standard measures for evaluating the effectiveness of training activities
Opportunities	**Threats**
• **Policy** o Desire to work with other City Departments to establish policies that promote racial equity • **Cross-Department Collaboration** o Working with Human Resources Department to identify policy changes to support hiring of diverse staff	• **Funding** o Resources are allocated based on census data and population changes, rather than population health data • **Data Collection and Measurement** o Program structures within the department pose a threat to collecting client demographic data o APH has many programs and each may define their clients differently

APH's Opportunities to Advance Racial Equity

Planning:

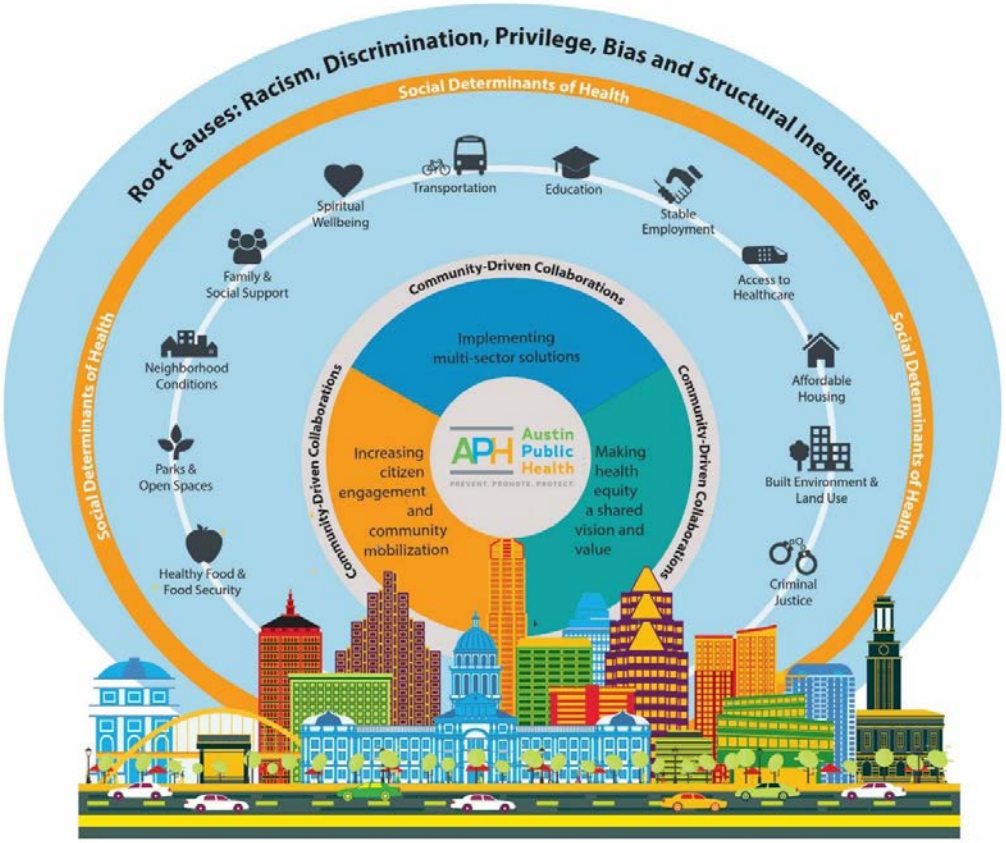
- Consistent reporting disaggregated by race/ethnicity
- Established consistent demographic data collection
- Disaggregation of client satisfaction by race and ethnicity
- Partner with community-based organizations (CBOs)

Procurement & Budgeting:

- Racial equity lens applied to social service contracts

Personnel:

- Draft of an Equity Recruitment Plan
- Established an Equity Academy
- Pilot for the Staff Racial Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (REDI) competency assessment



Adapted from the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine's 2017 Communities in Action: Pathways to Action

APH's Opportunities to Advance Racial Equity

Policy Development:

- Draft of a Racial Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (REDI) plan

Practices & Procedures :

- Conducted a barrier audit of the social service contract process, and established an equity framework

Public Engagement:

- Continuation of Community Health Assessment/Community Health Improvement Plan
- Community Health Worker Training Program
- Offer REDI workshops to community partners