

COVID-19 Equity Action Circle
2020-2021 Recommendations

October 18, 2020



Introduction

The purpose of this report is to present the Ramsey County Manager, [COVID-19 Racial Equity and Community Engagement Team \(RECERT\)](#), and the Board of Commissioners with recommendations prepared by Ramsey County's COVID-19 Equity Action Circle (EAC).

These recommendations are intended to address some of the immediate, short-term and long-term inequities and needs that are not merely due to the COVID-19 pandemic, rather the result of inequities compounded over time in all areas of life due to centuries of institutional and structural racism that continues to disproportionately impact racially and ethnically diverse communities in Ramsey County.

EAC recognizes that the COVID-19 pandemic has illuminated some of the long-standing inequities and unmet needs of communities in Ramsey county. Primarily Black, American Indian, Latino, Asian/Pacific Islander, and other underrepresented residents in Ramsey County.

Background

In March of 2020, Ramsey County began its emergency response to COVID-19. While monitoring the impacts of COVID-19 on racially and ethnically diverse communities in other states, the Racial and Health Equity Administrators and Saint-Paul Ramsey County Public Health Department requested that the same data be tracked and monitored at the State level based on a race and ethnicity.

Ramsey County's commitment to advancing racial and health equity before and during the COVID-19 resulted in the formation of the RECERT in April of 2020. Our commitment to effective, inclusive, and meaningful community engagement then prompted the launched of the EAC in May 2020.

The EAC is comprised of 15-members representing diverse backgrounds, valuable perspectives and lived experiences that have contributed to the identification and development of what should be prioritized, addressed and/or considered by the county to improve outcomes for racially and ethnically diverse communities during and after the COVID-19 response.

In July 2020, the EAC identified key priority areas that led to the formation of committees that include: EAC members, community members and representatives of the RECERT. The recommendations in this report are based on 5 key priority areas: **1) Family and Youth; 2) Healthcare; 3) Housing; 4) Policies and Practices; and 5) Workforce**

The goal of EAC's recommendations are:

- To help the county realize how decisions and services can carry some inherent disadvantages that disproportionately impact the racially and ethnically diverse communities during this pandemic and beyond.
- To inform the county's efforts in advancing racial equity during the COVID-19 response.



Family and Youth Committee Recommendations

Overarching Goal:

The Equity Action Circle Family and Youth Committee will provide recommendations, insight and guidance **on ensuring families are connected to a Navigator position and receive wrap-around services** during the COVID-19 pandemic to the Racial Equity and Community Engagement Response Team (RECERT) and County Manager, and the Board of Commissioners as needed.

The EAC Family and Youth committee is proposing a position or function called Family Coach. This position would be in addition to the current Navigator position at the County service centers. This position would meet the needs of families in a holistic way, as referenced in Priority 5 of the Ramsey County strategic plan: *Advancing a Holistic Approach to Strengthen Families*.

The Family Coach will be a consistent position supporting families historically oppressed and impacted by socio-economic disparities and who are now disproportionately affected by COVID-19. *The program will be successful when the families working with the Family Coach feel empowered and knowledgeable enough that they can help other families.*

Overarching Objectives:

- Provide access to resources, education, coaching, and follow up support to assist families in acquiring skills and increasing community capital necessary for gaining gradual independence from public services.
- Offer the Family Coach position/function to community agencies/organizations that are already operating and have a history of trusted relationships with community residents. Local agencies know how to assist families in connecting resources to the needs in a culturally responsive manner. Partnering with local organizations is key in honoring community wisdom, family agency and investing in the social capital needed to comprehensively address families' needs. See appendix A.
- Collaborate with Ramsey County Navigators and Financial Workers as they are knowledgeable of the county and how to navigate the system.
- Streamline access to resources including COVID-19 Emergency Assistance, that will focus on cultivating opportunities for the future.

Recommendations:

Immediate (by December 2020):

- Preliminary data to assess success, feasibility, and impact will be collected during this stage by the agencies providing the Family Coaches. Explore sustainability plan within the County or through external funds.

Short-term (by Spring 2021):



- Understanding the success and areas for improvement using the data. Secure funds within County or through external funds for the Coaches to continue providing support to families.

Long-term (by Fall 2021):

- Improving procedures and collaboration with County staff Creating a sustainability plan to maintain the Family Coach program and build community capacity to continue the work in the long run

Outcomes/Deliverables:

Immediate (by December 2020)

- A budget from the County demonstrating financial commitment to this program.
- The County identifies what mechanism to contract with agencies would be most appropriate to stay within our timeline.
- The County commits to the timeline and promptly initiates the process to contract with the agencies interested in this program.
- A designated person from the County managing this process and who can be our contact person.
- A detailed plan for referral process: who can be referred and what is the criteria for Financial Workers and Navigators. This plan must be initiated by the County in close collaboration with the youth and Families Committee.

Short term (by Spring 2021)

- Contracts with at least 5 culturally and linguistically specific organizations by Dec 2020.
- Community agencies train and hire culturally and linguistically competent Family Coaches. The number of coaches per agency depends on funds available.
- During Stage 1, each Coach could work with a maximum of 5 families to assure quality and holistic services.
- Families Coaches getting referrals from Navigators and Financial Workers and engaging with families.

Ongoing

- Families accessing resources to address immediate needs related to COVID-19 and also start working on long-term goals with their Family Coach.
- Families receive tailored coaching to access adequate resources, successfully navigate complex systems including the County, and works expand their social capital.

Long Term (Fall 2021)

- Respectively holding Ramsey County and community agencies accountable
- Ramsey County and the five community agencies continue their partnership to work closely with each other and families.

Resources Needed:

- Partnership with Melinda Donaway, Ramsey County Manager
- Reciprocal training
- Funds to support recommendations



EAC Family and Youth Committee Members:

Co-chairs

Alfreda Flowers, Abigail Gadea

Community Members

Richard Terrell, Deina Zaghloul, Mariah Smith, Chang Vang, Shelly Fountain, Abigail Gadea

EAC Members

Mary K Boyd, Alfreda Flowers

RECERT Staff

Kenneth Pelto, Kamala Jaglall

Healthcare Committee Recommendations

Overarching Goal:

The Equity Action Circle Healthcare Committee will provide recommendations, insight and guidance on **healthcare** during the COVID-19 pandemic to the Racial Equity and Community Engagement Response Team (RECERT) and County Manager, and the Board of Commissioners as needed.

Overarching Objective:

To increase the reach and effectiveness of prevention and testing strategies developed by Ramsey County (RC) focusing on community information and improving testing and follow up.

Recommendation - Information/Communications:

Immediate (by December 2020):

1. **Provide feedback to the Communications department on materials used to prevent COVID-19 and provide information to the population.** The Communications department receives informal feedback from different organizations constantly. However, the information is still not reaching everyone, and it is not being reflected in behavior changes. We recommend having one community conversation (or something equivalent such as several individual interviews) with at least five underrepresented and disadvantaged groups to provide feedback on the materials that already exist to decide what to keep, what to change or what else to create. Communications materials are not effective as a one-size-fits all. These community conversations should be facilitated by Public Health (PH) and Communications and led by community leaders of each community. Participants should be fairly compensated for their time and cultural knowledge and expertise.

Feedback might include checking the translation of materials to other languages, reviewing messaging and images used to understand whether they are relevant and effective for the community. The County should request specific feedback (e.g., should be ready to share concepts, ideas, or materials that have already been developed so that people have something concrete to respond to).

Deliverable: At least 5 community conversations or the equivalent are held before December 31, 2020.

Outcome: Improved educational materials related to COVID-19 so that it is relevant, effective, and reaches underrepresented and disadvantaged groups (e.g., non-English speakers, BIPOC groups, and youth).

The effectiveness of RC's communications strategy should be evaluated through surveys or new community conversations.

2. **Improve access and use of Ramsey County (RC) COVID-19 website content.** Currently, the website is being promoted through every channel that RC utilizes for marketing and communications purposes. In addition to what is being done, we recommend having paid ads in YouTube, TV, radio, and social media (sm) advertisements. The website is a good place to have all the information stored (like a warehouse), however we need to take that information out



and present it in different ways. Make it more available. This project will be the responsibility of the Communications department.

Deliverables:

- RC COVID website is advertised in search engines, YouTube, TV, radio and sm.
- RC COVID website content is presented to the public through other outlets such as bulletins, flyers, videos, social media posts.

Outcome: Increase in visits to the RC website by 20% from the baseline (November 2020)

3. **Develop campaigns to debunk myths to mask use and non-effective preventative measures.** This could be done as a contest for schools or small community organizations. Partner with RC’s Media and Messaging partners to further fine tune targeting these groups. *RC PH and the Communications dept. (advisory board), should review the messages and disseminate them.*

Immediate Deliverables:

- Contest to create materials to debunk myths is happening
- Advisory board reviews the messages obtained from the contest.

Short term deliverables:

- Launch the campaigns of the winners of the debunking myths contest.

Outcomes:

- Decreased misinformation in different communities.
- Increased reach of populations with higher infection rate.
- Decreased COVID infection rate in BIPOC communities.

4. **Complement the focus of prevention on “Social Distance” with “stay healthy and strong”.** Diverse advisory boards should be created to provide feedback about what motivates people to be healthy. That could guide which messages could be more persuasive and adapted for different communities. Trusted messenger (TM) organizations could work on getting the information from the communities, and then RC could create the messages.

Immediate Deliverable:

- TM organizations have gathered the information needed from the communities.

Short-term deliverables:

- RC PH and Communications dept. have reframed the message based on community conversations and launched the campaign.

Outcome: Decrease in COVID-19 mortality rate.

5. **Create a resource hub for providers and clinic managers** to learn about the resources available for patients to receive COVID related care (uninsured, underinsured, undocumented). This will require the PH dept. to gather information from Financial Aid Services, Social Services, and non-for-profit agencies about the programs and funds available. After compiling the information, the **Communications department** would create a page for providers and clinic managers to access these resources.

In addition, workshops and newsletters with the information should be offered for health centers, community health workers and providers. Clinic managers would have to make sure their providers get the information and know how to use it.



During the Spring of 2021 after healthcare providers learn about these resources, clinics would start educating patients about their options.

Immediate deliverables:

- RC PH has gathered all the resources available for undocumented or uninsured people to access in case of need of COVID related care.
- The Communications dept. has created a section in the RC website for providers and health centers where they can find all the resources gathered by PH.

Short term deliverable:

- A list with all available funds and resources supporting COVID related care is compiled and available for health providers

Long term deliverables:

- Brochures are created to distribute in every health center with information about options to get COVID-19 related care.
- Leverage the Racial Equity Index Story Map to evaluate barriers for health centers and providers to provide care for those areas with the highest needs.
- Evaluation of barriers for health centers to provide care is conducted and new recommendations are being developed.

Outcomes:

- Increase in number of people receiving COVID related care, increase in people getting tested.
- Increase healthcare related services in areas with the highest needs.

6. Identify and train/educate cultural/community liaisons (CL) or lay health advisors/peer educators (people in the community) that belong to communities disproportionately affected by COVID-19 to spread information via word-of-mouth and presentations.

This strategy would build on what RC is doing through the “Trusted Messenger Program” and the “Navigators” work. The community liaisons should be community members that do not necessarily belong to or currently work for an established organization. They would be contracted directly by RC.

This project would include training developed and delivered by various **Health and Wellness Strategic Team’s (HWST) divisions and programs staff** about how to prevent COVID-19 and what to do (and not to do) when you test positive or have been in contact with people who have tested positive.

The campaigns developed by the **Communications team** and the community will be used by the community liaisons as talking points with their communities.

The **Communications and PH** department staff will develop a manual for community liaisons to respond to community questions and concerns. This manual, the materials to distribute, and the training the CLs will receive will be developed based on community conversations.



The CLs will be organized in teams by language or geographic area of coverage. They need to be proactive, willing to approach people and talk about COVID-19, be empathetic, engaging, and diverse.

CLs will be deployed to the areas that have more people testing positive, defined based on the Racial Equity (RE) Map developed by RC to target the census tracts with the highest RE scores.

Immediate Deliverables:

- CLs are identified and being trained
- Educational materials for CLs are created, taking in account feedback received during the community conversations.

Short term deliverable:

- CLs are working in the Highest RE score areas of the county.
- Outcome: Decrease in infection rate in the communities where CLs have been deployed.

Long term deliverable:

- CLs are known in communities and become referents for questions and advice about preventing COVID.

Outcome: Increased knowledge and decrease of misinformation about COVID

Recommendation – COVID-19 Testing:

Immediate (by December 2020):

To decrease barriers for getting COVID-19 testing by:

- 1. Offering standing testing sites in community venues** and promoting them in a timely manner. Having a standing free testing site in a community venue will increase testing because people will spread the word about it.
- 2. Continue offering walk-in testing at the free RC Public Health testing sites.** Making an appointment and waiting for confirmation is not always a realistic model for many residents without technology and language barriers. In addition, **adding the time the results will take to come back** should be stated in any informational material about the testing site.
- 3. Expanding the options and methods to get tested.** Continue offering drive thru tests for anyone that wants to get tested. Also, offering testing at home for people that cannot go out. Finally, offering saliva tests for children or others that might need it.
- 4. Having people from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds in the testing sites** testing, educating and guiding people would increase trust and decrease fear in the different communities.

Immediate Deliverables:

- Establish at least 2 standing or consistent locations for free testing.
- Offer walk-in testing in all locations.
- Time for results to get back is stated in any testing informational material.



- At least one measure to increase access to tests is implemented.
- Staff from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds are testing, educating and guiding people in the testing sites.

Outcome: Increase the number of people getting tested.

Short-term (by Spring 2021):

5. **Set a system in the RC website to check where there is availability for testing in the Ramsey County sites in real time.** This would require resources from RC Information Services (IS).
6. **Provide test results within 24 hours.** This will decrease people spreading the virus in the community while waiting for their test results. Also, it will make it easier for people to make decisions about their socialization while they are with symptoms.

Short term or long term (subject to capacity) deliverables:

- System to check availability for testing in the RC sites in real time is established.
- Test results within 24 hours are available in free testing sites.

Outcome: Make testing more accessible, useful, and easy to get. This could be evaluated through a short survey after getting tested.

Provide Preventative Healthcare:

Immediate (by December 2020):

1. Promote a culture of positive mask use:
 - Create a youth contest to design masks
 - Have business owners to promote mask use to keep their business open.

Deliverables:

- *Mask design contest starts*
- *Conversations with business owners have happened, business owners receive materials to promote the campaign "Use your mask so we can stay open."*

Outcome: Increase in mask use. This will be evaluated through simple observation during baseline and after 2 months of campaign.

Short-term (by Spring 2021):

2. **Encourage indoor mask use and warning against not complying, monitoring businesses and indoor venues.** Hire inspectors and educators. This could be done through the county organizing the cities and guiding them to have a strict and standardized protocol.

Deliverable: Inspectors are monitoring indoor spaces and promoting mask use. This will be evaluated through simple observation.

Outcome: increase of mask use that leads to decrease of infection rate.

Recommendation - Addressing mental and emotional, physical health care and self-care:



Short-term (by Spring 2021):

1. Develop a campaign on health and wellness resources to support people and prevent worsening of mental health symptoms in partnership with community partners. This includes contacting the community agencies and creating partnerships.

Deliverable: Agencies are contacted, and the campaign is in development.

Outcome: Increased resources to prevent mental health illness.

Long-term (by Fall 2021):

2. Offering crisis management/support services available 24/7 through partnership with community partners that already provide mental health services. This would require funds to support services provided. These recommendations should be evaluated by Social Services and Public Health.

Deliverable: Process developed based on research to provide group therapy or support via phone to mental health patients is in place.

Outcome: Decrease of mental health morbidity after COVID-19.

Resources Needed:

- Leveraging partnerships with other government agencies (MDH, cities, other counties) and breaking down silos to utilize resources more effectively dividing the tasks of educational campaigns
- Communications team support
- Evaluators to perform needs assessments and evaluation of outcomes.

EAC Healthcare Committee Members:

Co-chairs

Rodolfo Batres- Javiera Monardez Popelka – Beatriz Martinez

Community Members

Beatriz Martinez, Carolina Gentry, Neri Diaz, Shaquona Jackson, Tonya Draughn, Anna Granas

EAC Members

Rodolfo Batres, Javiera Monardez Popelka

RECERT Representatives

Kaosong Yang, Kee Vang



Housing Committee Recommendations

Overarching Goal:

The Equity Action Circle will provide recommendations, insight and guidance on **preventing evictions and supporting communities that are impacted by evictions** during the COVID-19 pandemic to the Racial Equity and Community Engagement Response Team (RECERT) and County Manager, and the Board of Commissioners as needed.

Overarching Objective:

To identify key recommendations and outcomes for preventing evictions and supporting communities that are impacted by evictions during COVID-19.

Recommendation - Evictions:

Immediate (by December 2020):

1. Leverage the work of Financial Assistance Services (FAS) staff at Ramsey County Service Centers by amending their scope of work to include increased outreach and community engagement by the recruitment of clients as result of collaborating with culturally specific organizations located in Ramsey County by December 2020.

Outcomes:

- A FAS intake increase of 10% that are completed and processed at each service center for **EA** by December 2020.
- A FAS intake increase of 10% that are completed and processed at each service center for **EGA** by December 2020.

Deliverables:

- Increase recruitment and outreach services rendered by FAS staff at Ramsey County Service Centers by December 2020.
2. Leverage procurement guidelines to contract directly with local BIPOC operated community organizations to provide rights and responsibilities/eviction prevention education, restorative justice and mediation services, and connections to County resources such as EA and EGA through December 2020.

Outcome:

- Ramsey County contracts directly with local BIPOC operated community organizations , including Community Stabilization Project (CSP) to provide rights and responsibilities/eviction prevention education, restorative justice and mediation services, and connections to County resources such as EA and EGA for property dwellers and property owners, including mortgage holders in Ramsey County through December 2020.



Deliverable:

- The County Manager will work with the Ramsey County FAS Director to authorize the execution of an emergency procurement agreement (direct contract through single source) contract between CSP in Ramsey County.
2. Extend the current exception from \$2,000 for FAS-EA **up to \$4,000** in assets through December 2020.
 3. Extend the current exception of \$5,000 (recent increase) for EGA **up to \$6,000** in “Assets” through December 2020.

Outcomes:

- To increase regenerative opportunities to support people to a point where they are stabilized and positioned to advance to live in the place of their choice, whether as a property dweller, property owner, or owner of an independent owner. As a result of this exception there will be a 10% increase of approved FAS EA cases by December 2020.
- As a result of this exception there will be a 10% increase of approved FAS EGA cases by December 2020.

Deliverable:

- The County will work to increase its response to review and process FAS EA and EGA applications and/or past denials with the new exceptions before December 2020.
4. Release financial assistance regardless of sustainable income. This applies to property **owners including mortgage holders**, and property dwellers in Ramsey County.
 5. Property dwellers’ past due rent from March 2020 - December 2020 will be paid by **direct** payments to property owners including mortgage holders by December 2020.

Outcome:

- Ramsey County eviction rate is reduced by 10%.

Deliverable:

- Ramsey County “Spend the Money” Team develop a property dweller and property owner assistance program by contracting with Community Stabilization Project (CSP) or McLemore Holdings, LLC – local minority operated organizations that can provide immediate expertise in this area of program development - by November 2020.



6. The County enforces requirements to safeguard against unlawful property dweller evictions throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

Outcome:

- Unlawful evictions for unpaid rent between March 2020-December 2020 by property dwellers will be reduced by 50% by December 2020.

Deliverables:

- County will add case numbers to each property dweller and property owner agreement for tracking and follow-up. This includes documentation of rent payments by the County and dweller/owner resolutions and mediated agreements.
- If County funds are received by the property owner for payment of property dweller's rent, the property owner may not request further payment from the property dweller for the same month and may not report non-payment of rent.
- The County sends an official letter that notifies the property owner and property dweller of payments for rent made by the County. The letter will include case number for tracking purposes.

Short term (by Spring 2021):

1. Provide 6 months of rent subsidy to property dwellers who were gainfully employed but are now unemployed due to the pandemic.
2. Contract directly with diverse community organizations that have experience working to expunge unlawful detainers, in partnership with the Ramsey County court system and FAS. Plan a countywide "Unlawful Detainer Expungement Day". Ramsey County and community partners collaborate to ensure that expungement does not become a part of property dweller's public housing record until a legal decision is finalized. If the judgment was in favor of the property owner, the property dweller's expungement record will be removed after 3 years and subject to a review at the end of 3 years.
3. Ramsey County to gather and review information on ordinances for cities in Ramsey County. Then, explore the possibility of removing credit history from property dweller screening. Start with Saint Paul City Manager to remove credit history from the property dweller screening guidelines to remove a rental barrier.
4. Ramsey County to subsidize its Covid-19 impacted dwellers' total monthly rent minus a 20% share assigned to property dweller directly to the property owner. (Ramsey County 80% and property dweller 20%). Or property dweller is required to pay 20% based on their household monthly income toward their monthly rent directly to the property owner - whichever is higher applied.
5. Property dweller is required to use all means to become self-sufficient within 6 months or their case will be reassessed by FAS for redetermination and/or modification. If FAS is not currently doing a reassessment, FAS should be prepared for it due to the unforeseen circumstances



requiring any adjustment or changes. Workforce, and/or career change may be recommended while receiving rent assistance from the Ramsey County. Finding new employment may include enrolling in trade/ vocational courses to enhance job skills and create/revise job resumes.

Long-term (by Fall 2021):

1. All property owners, mortgage holders, or other persons seeking possession on grounds permitted by this Executive Order must provide a written notice of intent to file an eviction action to the property dweller at least **30 days** prior to filing the action, or the specified notice period included in the lease, whichever is longer. The current policy states property dweller is notified at least **7 days** prior.
2. Property owners, mortgage holders, or other persons entitled to recover residential premises are **required** to work with property dwellers to reach amicable resolutions **for 30 days** without filing the current 7-day eviction notice.
3. Ramsey County shall adopt a Security Deposit Limit such as that currently implemented by the City of Saint Paul which ensures that property dwellers will not be required to pay more than a single month's rent as a security deposit or pre-pay more than one month's rent at move-in.
4. Ramsey County shall work with cities within the county to enact the Just Cause Notice ordinance currently enforced by the City of Saint Paul.
5. Ramsey County shall work with cities within the county to enact the Advance Notice of Sale currently enforced by the City of Saint Paul.
6. If a property dweller is unemployed and not of retirement age at the time the eviction notice is filed, the property dweller shall be required to participate 3 job search sessions at a Career Force location.

Resources Needed:

- Leverage staff time
- Leverage partnership
- CAREs funding

EAC Housing Committee Members:

Co-chairs

Suzanne Madison and Thomas Jeziarski

Community Members

Thomas Jeziarski, Maiyia Vang, Gaonou Vang, Johnny Yang, Gaby Olvera, Metric Giles

EAC Members

Richard McLemore, II, Suzanne Madison, Snowden Herr, Marika Reese

RECERT Representatives

Sara Hollie, Derek Thomas



Policy and Practices Committee Recommendations

Overarching Goal:

The Equity Action Circle will provide recommendations, insight and guidance on **Public Policy & Practices** to the Racial Equity and Community Engagement Response Team (RECERT) and County Manager, and the Board of Commissioners as needed.

Overarching Objectives:

To identify key recommendations and outcomes for Procurement, Community Engagement, and Accountability during COVID-19.

Recommendations:

Since the long term effects of the COVID-19 pandemic will be felt for an indeterminate amount of time, we highly recommend the County incorporates these recommendations beyond the immediate scope of COVID-19 in order to ensure the County continues to address the effects of the pandemic in an equitable and inclusive way.

Additionally, to further ensure the County continues to address the effects of the disparate outcomes in the BIPOC community, the County will implement long-term equitable and inclusive change.

Recommendation – Procurement:

1. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the county will address and remove procurement barriers by working with the BIPOC community to simplify the process, which will increase access to opportunities and the number of small BIPOC contract vendors.
2. The County and RECERT will re-examine and modify the procurement process by examining the current process, including how the community is informed, how funding is distributed, and increasing equitable fund distribution.
3. The County will implement the department specific goals and benchmarks that have been set for COVID-19 and beyond that will result in increased funding to and participation of BIPOC communities through the procurement process.

Procurement - Immediate Outcomes:

- Procurement barriers will be removed to ensure BIPOC communities have greater access to procurement funding during the COVID-19 response.
- The COVID-19 grant and contract process and application are clear and concise.
- BIPOC community members will be included in the review, discussion and decisions of contracts or grants for COVID-19 response.
- A potential grantee who is denied COVID-19 funding will be provided with an explanation for denial.
- COVID-19 funding will include a specific outline of information the County is requiring, including an evaluation of how the application is scored. Technical assistance will also be offered during this time.



- Demandstar will not be used to access COVID-19 funding opportunities to increase accessibility among the BIPOC community.

Procurement - Immediate Deliverables:

- All procurement review committees related to COVID-19 responses must have demographics representative of Ramsey County, including representation of 35% or more of BIPOC community members in each review committee.
- The County will form a collaboration with the Minnesota Council of Nonprofits to provide a free “Ramsey County Grant Writing 101” workshop for BIPOC community organizations and groups.
- The County will post a video of the County grant writing workshop on the procurement page for future reference for new applicants, to increase BIPOC community’s accessibility to COVID-19 funds.
- The County will not require Demandstar access COVID-19 funding and other short-term emergency uses.

Procurement - Short Term Outcomes:

- The County will set goals and benchmarks for COVID-19 procurement that incorporates equity and ensures contractors are reflective of the BIPOC community.
- County Procurement Department will be held accountable if COVID-19 procurement benchmarks and goals are not met.
- The County will increase transparency and accessibility to COVID-19 funding to ensure that the BIPOC communities are receiving most of the contracts.

Procurement - Short Term Deliverables:

- The county will share procurement information in the following ways: with community partners, mass mailing and phone banking, in addition to posting to the website and social media sites.
- The County will publish the statistics of who has received COVID-19 procurement funding, and the statistics will be published in an accessible location, such as the procurement website.
- If COVID-19 procurement benchmarks and goals are not met, these failures will be reflected in Procurement Department Program Improvement Plans (PIP) and in procurement staff performance evaluations.

Recommendation - Community Engagement:

1. The BIPOC community will be included in decision making and developing best practices, including when County plans are in their infancy, whether they are non-COVID-19 or COVID-19 specific.

Community Engagement - Immediate Outcomes:

- The County will seek BIPOC community advice and utilize it.
- The County will collaborate with other systems, within and outside Ramsey County, such as cities, hospitals, schools/education systems, etc., regarding their COVID-19 responses to make processes more seamless.



- The County will directly implement the EAC recommendations and follow the input and advice of the County community councils that are already in existence, including those developed prior to COVID-19 and during the pandemic.

Community Engagement - Immediate Deliverables:

- The County will follow through with recommendations of community represented councils regarding COVID-19 and issues beyond the pandemic by deferring to communities since they know best about what works for their group.
- The County will leverage the existing Community represented councils at maximum potential and utilize their expertise to implement COVID-19 related services.
- The County will improve and increase its transparency and accessibility on COVID-19 response in order to strengthen trust and reliability with the community.
- The County will increase an equitable, inclusive, and welcoming culture and climate for employees and external community members during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.
- Each department will describe their partnerships with other County departments and community partners during COVID-19.
- The county staff will have increased access to Racial Equity Trainings and Coaching
- County staff will be better informed on inequities COVID-19 has the BIPOC community, including COVID-19 deaths, health inequities, racial disparities and overt acts of racism and increases in xenophobia.
- All county personnel, including the County Manager and Board, will have access to continuity of programming for COVID-19 and systemic issues through the development of a drive on the county IT system.
- Community members who serve on county boards that advise and support the County in COVID-19 response will be honorably and equitably compensated.

Community Engagement - Short Term Deliverables:

- The County will utilize its RECERT Trusted Community Messengers to translate county website information into additional languages, improving access to resources on the most up to date COVID-19 information.
- The County departments and divisions will submit monthly updates to the COVID-19 county web page to break down silos within departments to make information more accessible to the community.
- Each department will provide updates that are disseminated to the community (via mail, phone banking, etc.) and located on the front page of the county COVID-19 dashboard.
- The EAC, RECERT and the County Manager will increase accessibility to Racial Equity Trainings and Coaching for Ramsey County staff
- County leadership will develop a protocol to improve county staff customer service. The protocol will require staff to go above and beyond during COVID-19, be responsive and



welcoming by answering calls from the community the same day and returning messages promptly.

- Add a drive in the Ramsey County IT system with access for elected County officials, to store community represented councils work, such as meeting minutes from community meetings, histories from those groups and organizations, proposals, programming, training, etc.
- The County will increase and standardize the pay of community members who serve on county boards, specifically those who are advising and supporting the County in their COVID-19 response.

Recommendation – Accountability:

1. For the COVID-19 response, the County and RECERT will develop an accountability policy to ensure county leaders and its divisions implement and act upon community recommendations.
2. Ramsey County will implement cross-system approaches to meet community needs for COVID-19 response and beyond.
3. The County will ensure that values adopted prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, including equity and inclusivity, are reflected in all employee position descriptions.
4. For COVID-19 and beyond, the impact of county services across the community will be measured, highlighting the disparities within BIPOC communities

Accountability - Immediate Outcomes:

- Ramsey County will begin development of an accountability policy that leads to intentional community collaboration during COVID-19 and beyond.
- The county will have meaningful collaboration and coordination efforts with community partners, stakeholders and systems outside of the county for COVID-19 response and beyond (i.e., testing, mask events, messaging, housing/eviction issues, community liaison development, etc.).
- The county will begin development of an internal policy on workplace culture and institute a culture shirt that prioritizes health, racial equity and inclusivity.
- The County will begin instituting changes to employee position descriptions that reflect the recently adopted values of equity and inclusivity.
- The county will begin development of measure regarding the impact of county services has on recipients, highlighting disparities in the BIPOC community.
- The county will have a better understanding of ethnic/cultural groups needs for support and resources by disseminating metrics and statistics by each cultural/ethnic group. An example of this is measuring if the Somali community is receiving the same COVID-19 resources as other communities within the Black population.

Accountability - Immediate Deliverables:

- RECERT, EAC and the County Manager will complete the development of the policy and begin dissemination and training of staff about the policy which defines the process for collaborating with the community regarding current and new initiatives



- The County will deliver a list of stakeholders and initial steps to RECERT regarding the newly developed accountability policy.
- The County will begin collecting COVID-19 impact and services data by ethnic/cultural groups rather than racial groups.
- The County will deliver metrics and draft policies for engaging outside partners, systems and stakeholders for collaboration on the COVID-19 response.
- The County will deliver the list of members of the Racial Equity and Inclusivity group that will head this work.
- County Human Resources will begin planning for changes to employee position descriptions that reflect recently adopted values of equity and inclusivity.
- RECERT and the County will develop metrics to measure COVID-19 on the BIPOC community, which will be reflected on the COVID-19 dashboard.

Accountability - Short Term Outcomes:

- Each department will describe their partnerships with other County divisions and how they collaborated with community partners during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Each division will provide information and metrics that are to be linked to the front page of the County website to improve website and information and community accessibility.

Accountability - Short Term Deliverables:

- To increase transparency to the community, each Ramsey County Department will submit monthly updates on internal and external changes that they have made regarding serving the community during the COVID-19 Pandemic.
- During and after the COVID-19 pandemic, the County will follow website best practices to increase accessibility by making pertinent COVID-19 information available within 3 clicks from the home page.
- The County will publishing the statistics of who has received COVID-19 funding in an accessible location.

Accountability - Long Term Outcomes:

- A newly developed or significantly redesigned yearly performance appraisal process for the Ramsey County Manager will be conducted by the Board of Commissioners, as well for all Ramsey County staff to be conducted by department heads.
- The county will develop a drive in the Ramsey County IT system to ensure continuity with community represented organizations for COVID-19 and beyond.

Accountability - Long Term Deliverables:

- County Human Resources will create a performance appraisal to include specific items, such as, but not limited to, the applicability of the COVID-19 response and beyond: the newly developed accountability policy; action and implementation of community councils and the communities' recommendations and input; the on-going racial and equity culture of the County system and employees; meaningful and coordinated collaboration with the BIPOC and



disability communities; and, the outcomes of BIPOC and disability communities in the County procurement processes.

- Establish a county-wide drive on the IT system to hold minutes from community meetings, histories from those groups and organizations, proposals, programming, training, etc. The drive will assist in continued work with these organizations across County administrations.
- The County will deliver a newly developed or significantly redesigned yearly performance appraisal process for the Ramsey County Manager and County employees expressed in the long-term outcomes.

Resources Needed:

TBD

Policy and Practices Committee Members:

Chair

Laura Dorn

EAC Members

Dawn Blanchard, Hillary Lor, Laura Dorn

Community Members

Janet Washington, Aisha AbdullahiA, Abby Sunde, Xong Yange

RECERT Representatives

Nina Harris, Sarah Myott, Allison Winters, Lidiya Girma



Workforce Committee Recommendations

Overarching Goal:

The Equity Action Circle Workforce Committee will provide recommendations, insight and guidance on **improving workforce services and outcomes for residents and employees** to the Racial Equity and Community Engagement Response Team (RECERT) and County Manager, and the Board of Commissioners.

Overarching Objectives:

- To identify key recommendations and outcomes for workforce services for residents and improvements in Ramsey County.
- To improve workforce outcomes for both internal employees and county residents.

**Melanated Definition - any of various black, dark brown, reddish-brown, or yellow pigments.*

Recommendations:

Immediate (by December 2020):

Internal recommendation:

1. It is imperative that the County establish a non-competitive hiring authority to boost the share of people with disabilities in its local government workforce because of COVID there is a greater economic disparity. In partnership with the Connect 700 Program implemented by the Minnesota State Government and the Washington State Disability Employment Parity Act the county can access the resources needed to assist disabled individuals and families to obtain jobs and economic stability. See Appendix B for supporting documents.
2. We recommend that there would be more money invested in the Young Adult Public Sector Career Academy because of COVID-19 there is a decrease in job internships.

External Recommendation:

3. It is highly recommended that the county continues to collaborate and expand their reach with trusted and culturally specific partners, community members and organizations to provide COVID related communication to Melanated residents regarding current workforce services and programs.
4. Create opportunities for individuals who were recently released from the Adult Detention Center to gain job skills and enter the workforce with county. Due to COVID it has made it challenging for individuals including people with certain background to apply and receive a job.

Short-term (By Spring 2021):

Internal Recommendation:

1. We recommend that the county create pathways from entry level positions traditionally held by Melanated staff to leadership roles by providing trainings, job shadowing, cross-training,



mentoring, and other opportunities. This will allow employees to gain additional job skills for future promotions during COVID-19 and afterwards.

External Recommendations:

- 2. We recommend the county collaborate and contract with Adult Basic Education providers to offer incentives for limited and non-English speakers to attend English classes so that they can gain additional language support to better integrate into the workforce. Individuals can take this COVID-19 season to improve on their life skills which will give them more work opportunities in the future.
- 3. Develop a focused program for the Trade Industry and partner with local unions within the county to get more Melanated residents impacted by COVID-19 job loss, unemployment and recent high school graduation.
- 4. Create a pathway for the employees who were hired through the CARES Act to maintain a permanent employment status by the county.
- 5. To develop and adapt a Public Works program to train and certify Melanated residents who have been released from RCCF due to COVID-19.

Long-term (Fall 2021):

Internal Recommendations:

- 1. To increase the diversity within two specific county departments: Parks & Recreation and Public Works by 15% since data has shown these two departments have a lower percentage of diversity by doing targeted career outreach to residents impacted by COVID-19 job loss.

External Recommendations:

- 2. Provide grants to Melanated small business who have been impacted by COVID. Also collaborate and contract with organizations that offer training in entrepreneurship specifically for low-income Melanated residents to invest in more Melanated small businesses. This is an extension of Trades Industry program because we believe not only is it essential to get Melanated people into jobs but to also give them resources to become business owners.
- 3. Provide means of transportation to low income employees residents who rely on public transportation during times and in areas where public bus services are limited because of COVID. This could be an expansion of Transit Link services with Metro Transit since it is only offered during Monday- Friday from 6am-7pm.

Outcomes/Deliverables:

Immediate (December 2020):

Internal Outcomes:

- 1. In building a relationship with the Connect 700 Program the county will learn about their programs, process, and resources. This will break down another barrier in hiring more people with disabilities because the data shows that there is a large percentage of people in the state living in poverty because of their disability. It will also provide economic stability to individuals with disabilities and their families.
- 2. When more money is invested into the Young Adult Public Sector Career Academy then it gives young Melanated individuals more work experience and an increased opportunity to obtain a government job.



External Outcomes:

1. We recommend that the county continue to collaborate and expand their reach with trusted members and one of those ways to is to maintain the committee members as a power resource in reaching Melanated communities with COVID communication. These leaders are all connected to a group of people in the county and has an influence and ability to share resources by word of mouth.
2. We would like for the county to also create work opportunities for the individuals who were recently released from the Adult Detention Center which means meeting with them one on one to provide employment services or connecting them with an organization that can help them land a job. Workforce solutions will partner with Community Corrections to offer WIOA Adult virtual information session to individuals who have been released from RCCF during COVID.

Short term (Spring 2021):

Internal Outcomes:

1. When the county provides training regarding other internal positions, cross training, job mentoring and other crucial developmental activities such as personalities and career assessments they will improve their opportunities to empower thriving Melanated leaders from within.
2. Since employees were hired through the CARES Act, they have integrated in the county's workforce system and should be given additional points on the scoring exam in being considered for the vacant positions available within the county to secure a permanent position. This will give the county the ability to hire qualified employees who have already gone through the interview process.

External outcomes:

1. In collaboration with Adult Basic Education providers residents will have a greater chance of learning basic English to support their integration into the workforce system. This a great resolution for increasing the hires of employees to service new immigrant groups like the Karen, Karennis, and Somali communities. The county hotline currently provides services in 170 languages but to be able to bring more of those languages internally would bring greater accessibility to residents.
2. Establish a Trades Industry Program Workgroup in partnership with local unions so that the county will provide opportunities to get more Melanated people impacted by COVID job loss in a career that will improve their job skills, bring financial means to their families, and allow them to become healthier. This also leads to breaking generational poverty cycles and future generations will benefit from healthy and stable homes. (See attached PPL document)
3. In addition to the Trades Industry Program we believe that the county will be able to increase their talent pool if a Public Works Program was created to train and certify Melanated residents. We understand the baby boomer generation is retiring and there is a huge opportunity for people to step into these available positions. For example, if individuals could obtain a city job in the public works department it will also be a great career to have. There are 17 cities located in the county which means that there are 19 public works departments if you include the county and the City of St. Paul.

Long-term / Fall 2021



Internal Outcomes:

1. Once the Trades Industry Program is in full effect and certifies a multitude of Melanated workers the goal is that there will be an increase of staff in the Parks & Recreation and Public Works departments across the county by recruiting residents who completed the program.
2. **External Outcomes:** Due to COVID many melanated small businesses have been forced to shut down which means loss of jobs in the county, decreased revenue and higher rates of unemployment. We believe that if the county can provide grants to current business owners and invest in new business owners it will restore communities and families. Once they become business owners this will also allow them to apply to be part of the CERT program offered through the City of St. Paul to allow them opportunities to do contract work with Ramsey County, Hennepin County, City of St. Paul, and the City of Minneapolis.
3. When the county partners with Metro Transit to find a resolution regarding more transportation to low areas of bus services this will also add more accessibility, quality of life, and reduce barriers.

Resources Needed:

- We would like to recommend that the Human Resources Program Administrator be directly connected to the EAC work force plan.

EAC Workforce Committee Members:

Co-chairs

Dr. Mohamed Alfash, Dr. Tamara Mattison

EAC Members

Dr. Tamara Mattison, Thomas Berry John Thompson, Dr. Mohamed Alfash

Community Members

Donte Curtis, Chue Xiong, Alicia Thoj

RECERT Representatives

Prince Corbett, Maria Sarabia



Conclusion

In order to advance racial equity in Ramsey County's plans, priorities, policies, systems and environmental changes during the COVID-19 pandemic as well as to mitigate the long-term harmful impacts beyond the pandemic, it was imperative to engage and consult with the EAC and community members that represent racially and ethnically diverse communities in Ramsey County in inclusive, genuine and meaningful ways. It is Ramsey County's responsibility to address the racial inequities and injustices that have long existed and yielded more inequities, that must be disrupted and deconstructed in order to improve outcomes for those most disenfranchised and impacted.

The formation of the COVID-19 EAC represents a transformative step and commitment by the county to be intentional, center community voice towards advancing racial equity, and to transform systems through community engagement during the pandemic. Engaging community is only one step in the right direction. Demonstrating accountability to the community through the implementation and/or consideration of the recommendations is one-way Ramsey County can begin to rebuild trust as well as improve outcomes with and for its residents during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.



APPENDIX A – Family and Youth Committee

Guidelines for contracting process & job description

General:

-Contracting process needs to be simple and efficient to assure rapid response in alignment with RECERT/EAC timeline.

-We propose to contract with at least five cultural-specific organizations serving African American, Native American, Latinx, Hmong, and Somali families in the county. Organizations will submit a budget proposal including expenses related to providing training and staff capacitation and hiring at least one Family Coach.

- *Stage 1* will be from Oct-Dec 2020 (**immediate goal**). Preliminary data to assess success, feasibility, and impact will be collected during this stage by the agencies providing the Family Coaches. Stage 1 program evaluation parameters are included in this document. *Stage 2 (short-term/Jan-May 2021)* will entail understanding the success and areas for improvement by analyzing data gathered during the Stage. The data will serve to adjust the program and continue providing the services. The *Stage 3 (long-term goals/Jun-Dec 2021)* will involve improving procedures and collaboration based on data collected and creating a sustainability plan to maintain the Family Coaches program.

Contracting Process Guideline:

Purpose: identify community agencies highly experienced in working with the County, able to provide staff ready to fulfill the Family Coach position by October 2020. The Family Coach will provide wrap-around services attending to the needs of families in a holist way, and will collaborate closely with Ramsey County Financial Workers, and Navigators (by next year).

Organizations responding to the contract invitation should:

-demonstrate a strong trajectory of social services in the prioritized communities (African American, Native American, Latinx, Hmong, and Somali)

- demonstrate ability to rapidly hire, train, or reassign personnel into the Family Coach position by Oct 2020

-be able to provide training and coaching as needed to new staff to be able to effectively fulfill the responsibilities of the Family Coach

-strong record of effective collaborations and work with the County

Stage 1 description:

- The main goal is to instruct, assist, coach family members to access resources, gain skills, and advocate for themselves. The program will provide support to address immediate needs and collaboratively and actively will engage families to achieve gradual, long-term and sustainable independence to public services
- Organizations can immediately start working with families referred by Navigators, or Financial Workers.
- All families in need are eligible; however, families currently in crisis should be referred to appropriate services to address those needs first.
- The organizations need to empower Family Coaches to successfully champion families in increasing their capacity to achieve their goals and stay motivated (through resources, incentives, opportunities, and education)



- Organizations participating in this program need to demonstrate willingness and/or experience collaborating with the County.
- Family Coaches and Financial Workers should create a system for ongoing case consultation/coordination to make sure the families they are serving are receiving what they need, making progress towards their goals, and developing independence from public services. In the short-term coordination/case consultation may include other staff from the County that work with families beyond a one-time encounter (e.g. Navigators, Liaisons).
- This program is not meant as a one-time encounter with the family. Ideally the Family Coach would work for a year with the family or until they achieve their goals, whichever occurs first.

Who would be eligible?

This program is meant to address immediate needs triggered by COVID-19 and continue working with the families for long-term goals. If a family is in crisis (facing homelessness, mental health crisis, immediate danger, etc.) the Family Coach needs to refer to appropriate resources and facilitate quick access to funds and resources, including those available to respond to the COVID-19 crisis (within their organizations and/or County services).

Parameters for pilot evaluation:

Organizations should create simple data collection tools to be able to report on:

- How many families were served following the Family Coach design and received wrap-around services?
- How many families have developed goal plans?
- How many families have achieved progress on their goals by 0-25%, 25-35%, 35%-50%, 50-75% or more than 75%?

Family Coach Job Description:

- Provides wrap-around services, education, and support. In-depth work with the families to understand unique needs, support family in setting up goals for themselves and provide tailored education and referrals to services
- Successfully collaborates and coordinates with other County programs and community organizations to tackle structural barriers more strategically and improve outcomes for families
- Builds community and role model how to honor community wisdom with a deep understanding about the importance of literacy and culture.
- Help participants to reveal spirit and community/heritage seeds within and restore family hood.

Responsibilities:

- Support families setting goals and taking steps to meet them by providing access to resources, education and coaching to make progress toward achieving their goals
- Coordinate interaction with County and family programs
- Provide support with continuing career support
- Do one-on-one meetings and home visits (when appropriate) to those who need time and information about the programs and how to overcome current barriers
- Facilitate referral and follow-up to access to adult and children’s health and mental health services
- Deliver resource navigation services (e.g. housing searches and finding health insurance)
- Maintain confidentiality between clients and agencies

Qualifications/Skills:

- Ability to plan and implement a variety of outreach and engagement opportunities, including recruitment and retention



- Ability to work with multiple partners to support families and children
- Ability to work well in a team and has strong relationship building skills
- A good problem solver and can synthesis situations
- Coordinating transportation and other program logistics for families
- Good listening and communication skills
- Willingness/experience working across system
- Formal or informal leadership experience
- Strong experience in working in the community and with families facing a variety of challenges
- Training or experience utilizing coaching approaches, motivational interviewing, strength-based intervention and communication strategies is highly desired
- No minimum educational degree or formal education is required.
- Strong applicants should demonstrate experience and ability to effectively work long-term with families and complex system.



APPENDIX B – Workforce Committee

N ACT Relating to disability employment reporting by state agencies; adding a new section to chapter 43.41 RCW; and creating new sections.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:
NEW SECTION.



- (1) By January 31st of each year, state agencies employing one hundred or more people must submit the report described in subsection (2) of this section to the human resources director, with copies to the director of the department of social and health services' division of vocational rehabilitation and the governor's disability employment task force.
- (2) The report must include the following information:
 - (a) The number of employees from the previous calendar year;
 - (b) The number of employees classified as individuals with disabilities;
 - (c) The number of employees that separated from the state agency the previous year;
 - (d) The number of employees that were hired by the state agency the previous year;
 - (e) The number of employees hired from the division of vocational rehabilitation services and from the department of the services for the blind the previous year;
 - (f) The number of planned hires for the current year; and
 - (g) Opportunities for internships for the department of social and health services' division of vocational rehabilitation and developmental disabilities administration, and the department of the services for the blind client placement, leading to an entry-level position placement upon successful completion for the current year.

Passed by the House April 16, 2015.

Passed by the Senate April 13, 2015.

Approved by the Governor May 8, 2015.

Filed in Office of Secretary of State May 8, 2015.

--- **END**



Kickstart your career as a

PUBLIC WORKS TECHNICIAN

A PPL REENTRY2WORK PROGRAM

CLASS DESCRIPTION

With PPL's free, 6-month Public Works training, you will take classes in the evening at Hennepin Tech to build skills for in-demand positions such as street maintenance, utilities, or landscape and parks workers with a wage range of \$15-\$20/hr.

You will have the ability to obtain the OSHA-10 Certification and your CDL Class B Permit. Also included are on-site learning experiences with employer partners such as MnDOT, the City of St. Paul, Hennepin County, and Ramsey County.

