



OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE


Marc Elrich
County Executive

Richard S. Madaleno
Chief Administrative Officer

MEMORANDUM

April 15, 2024

TO: Chris Cihlar, Director
Office of Legislative Oversight

FROM: Richard S. Madaleno, Chief Administrative Officer 

SUBJECT: Draft OLO Report 2024-8, Community Engagement for Racial Equity and Social Justice

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Office of Legislative Oversight's (OLO) Draft Report 2024-8, Community Engagement for Racial Equity and Social Justice.

As a County deeply invested in the well-being and prosperity of our residents, we are committed to fostering a culture of active participation and ownership. Recognizing the transformative power of community engagement, we are dedicated to transcending traditional models and moving dynamically along the spectrum towards a state where our residents not only participate in decision-making processes but also take ownership of the outcomes. By embracing this ethos, we aim to cultivate a vibrant and inclusive environment where every voice is heard, valued, and empowered to contribute to the collective growth and success of our County.

During and following the COVID-19 pandemic, the County government achieved successes in better communicating, engaging, and supporting the needs of our communities. The best practices we established are excellent models to utilize to improve on and increase effective one-way and two-way communication and engagement with our diverse and changing population.

The County Executive and I appreciate this report and the establishment of a collaborative effort with the County Council. My response to specific recommendations are as follows.

Recommendation #1: The County Council and County Executive convene a collaborative effort with County and BIPOC community stakeholders to co-develop, implement, and evaluate an equitable community engagement framework that builds on the County's existing community engagement process.

CAO Response: We agree with this recommendation.

Recommendation #2: Encourage the Collaborative to design and implement learning pathways and resources to guide County staff on equitable community engagement.

CAO Response: We agree with this recommendation.

Recommendation #3: Encourage the Collaborative to recommend County support for programs that build the capacity of BIPOC community members to organize and advocate for their needs and priorities.

CAO Response: We agree with this recommendation.

Recommendation #4: Encourage the Collaborative to propose strategies to strengthen channels for one-way community engagement between the County and BIPOC community members.

CAO Response: We agree with this recommendation.

Recommendation #5: Encourage the Collaborative to develop new channels for two-way community engagement between the County and BIPOC community members.

CAO Response: We agree with this recommendation.

Recommendation #6: Encourage the Collaborative to develop a structure for holding County staff accountable to equitable community engagement.

CAO Response: We agree with this recommendation, and we suggest that this structure apply to planning staff and practices as well. Planning is essential to the future of communities and to maintaining and improving the communities for the diverse population who live there now

Recommendation #7: Encourage the Collaborative to determine resource needs for departments to successfully carry out equitable community engagement.

CAO Response: We agree with this recommendation, and we suggest that this structure apply to planning staff and practices as well.

We look forward to the establishment of a collaborative effort and discussing these items at a future Council worksession.

RM/dv/kc

cc: Fariba Kassiri, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer, Office of the County Executive
Ken Hartman, Assistant Chief Administrative Officer, Office of the County Executive
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Barry Hudson, Director, Public Information Office
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