

2022 SACOG Stakeholder Listening Session Findings

STAKEHOLDER GROUP TRENDS	
SACOG Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Internal staff has the most knowledge about SACOG’s REI work, specific activities and status of progress though this understanding differs depending on their role within the agency. For example, those who are closer to SACOG’s programming/community facing work shared a deeper understanding of REI both within and outside of SACOG. Also, those who have been tapped to support programming with specific data/research or as members of the REI working group seemed to have more clarity of various REI activities/initiatives. In contrast, whether because of their role or tenure, those who have been hired less than 3 years ago had the least clarity on the evolution of SACOG’s REI work. SACOG’s staff as a whole see REI as an important part of SACOG’s work. Staff communicated interest in learning more about how to practically incorporate REI into SACOG’s work and were proud that SACOG has made the overall commitment to REI however, were concerned about their capacity to move work forward with their current workloads and pressure to meet current deadlines. Staff reported that even though the work feels slow, they were excited to see that SACOG’s Board of Directors has made intentional strides toward acknowledging REI as a priority, but believe that there is still a lot of learning that needs to happen in order for the work to be a success.
Community Based Organizations and Prosperity Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Clarity and collaboration with SACOG varied based on the capacity of the organization in question. Better resourced organizations seemed to be more aware of SACOG’s specific REI efforts. These organizations also tended to be located in larger counties/jurisdictions with more overall racial diversity. They also were often leading or collaborating on their own REI initiatives within their counties/jurisdictions where they were located. CBOs (and City/County Staff) located in smaller, more rural locations had less of an understanding of SACOG’s REI work and REI as a framework in general. However, many vocalized that they were open to learning and looking to SACOG as a resource for deepening their understanding of REI initiatives. There was a clear ask for resource support as several of these stakeholders felt they did not have the capacity to actively lead REI work as individual agencies/organizations. CBOs want to build/deepen relationships with SACOG. They understand that SACOG cannot do it all, and are not expecting them to; however, they understand the position and resources that SACOG holds and they would like SACOG to actively utilize their strengths to move REI forward throughout the region. CBOs communicated a shared concern that the Board may be a barrier to impactful REI work.
City/County Staff and Regional Transit Partner Agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - These stakeholders tended to have a relatively comprehensive understanding of SACOG’s REI work, especially if they reported to City/County elected officials that participate on SACOG’s Board of Directors. Larger, more diverse cities/jurisdictions seemed to have more direct experience with REI as they were collaborating and participating in REI conversations within their specific locations/organizations. Similarly to CBOs, many City/County staff voiced an interest in SACOG stepping up as an “educator” and “convener” of regional REI efforts, specifically around developing opportunities to deepen understanding and education around the historic impacts of inequitable policies and practices throughout the region. City/County staff understand the complexity of SACOG’s work in the region and see this as a possible barrier to moving REI work forward. There was an interest in SACOG helping to develop a shared understanding of basic REI principles, collaborating with members who are also doing REI work to strengthen alignment throughout the region.

PROGRAMS

Themes	Quotes	Findings
<p>Stakeholder Engagement</p>	<p>“...[SACOG is a fairly] wonky level of government. We're not a transit agency...our brand does not always connect to what we do. If we have a brand to the general public at all. That is a challenge for us [when trying to connect with communities].”</p> <p>“It's very difficult for SACOG to interface with community groups; perhaps a best practice moving forward is having the CBOs sort of be that conduit. That's maybe a more effective way to engage.”</p> <p>“... the traditional model of having a workshop and having 11 people show up and then saying, okay, therefore, we know what the community wants, we got to do better than that.”</p> <p>“I think a concrete example of something we could improve on...something I know has some structural challenges, too, is our engagement with CBOs. We are generally constrained by our funding to be allowed to actually pay them for their involvement on projects. There's been a lot of successes around the state where you can actually lift up CBOs by actually having them get reimbursed for the time they're involved in a project. We just have challenges with the color of money and the constraints on the funding. We have to do that. I would like to try to work towards figuring out how we can do that better and find more flexible money to support our engagement process.”</p> <p>“I feel like we're reaching out to that broader audience, that's really important for us to do for everything, even if we don't think they would be interested, we reached out to groups, I'm like, I don't know if they care. But you know, we're gonna reach out to them anyway.”</p> <p>“The nonprofits you want to partner with that you need, do not have the capacity to do the work that is necessary. And if you're not building that capacity outside of when these grants come, nothing's gonna change.”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● There is a need to build and deepen partnership and relationships with community stakeholders (organizations and individual community leaders) ● Understand that there are a lot of community stakeholders/programs that are more of an “expert” of REI or have made a lot of progress throughout the region and it would be best for SACOG actively collaborate and learn from these stakeholders instead of trying to recreate the wheel/show up as the expert of the work ● CBOs and other community leaders feel like SACOG is not accessible to them and they are unsure how committed SACOG is building authentic relationships in order to create more equity ● There are other agencies who do similar work but have taken a more active role in implementation; there is lack of clarity on what role SACOG wants to play in the region ● SACOG needs a better understanding of the specific needs of each community; increasing outreach to gain a better understanding of these needs is necessary ● SACOG should create new ways to engage with community members that build on what has traditionally been done ● SACOG should engage in more conversations at the local level outside of the Board (for example, city council meetings) ● REI work cannot be transactional; it must be intentional, strategic and ongoing ● SACOG needs to increase/provide more clarity on its REI efforts ● SACOG has done good work in normalizing conversations about racial equity with some collaborative partners through economic development plans; SACOG should look to this process to understand what to replicate ● Stakeholders would like SACOG leadership to be more visible in the community; show a real commitment to participating in community led events in order to build deeper relationships ● SACOG should increase opportunities for community stakeholders to provide input into plan and project development and actively incorporate that feedback into regional plans

“...reaching out to those broader groups, even groups you think might not be interested in what you're doing, just reaching out to all of them as a matter of course, because I feel like [SACOG] hasn't done that.”

“I don't think SACOG does a good job, or will ever be capable of doing a good job of reaching out to individual neighborhoods and communities and talking to people. If folks come and speak to us at a public hearing, We're not their elected officials. And we have very little power to fix all the things wrong in neighborhoods like that's a city council, that's a board of supervisors, we can affect things like transportation and land use planning. I actually think of the services we provide to the cities and counties.”

“...SACOG needs to consider how much disadvantaged communities scoring analysis will play in member agencies/stakeholders applying for competitive state and federal funds. The cities that have staff capacity might be fine. [However], the mid size, small size and more rural agencies are still learning the right lingo. They're gonna have a hard time telling the story. And some of them will just throw up their hands, they'll look at their own neighborhood and say we don't score high enough so we're just not going to apply. I don't know if that's the intent of these funding programs. But that's going to create a disenfranchised electorate and group of cities and counties, and they're going to really hate the work that's been done if they're not even applying. So we can help them.”

“A very valuable point we got in talking to stakeholders is the community members saying, Well, I don't see myself in this plan, right. I live in South Sacramento, I don't see anything about South Sacramento or my community, or my plan. The regional plan doesn't necessarily just add up every single community into then the sum of all its parts is trying to be like, what are some of the common themes so like, not necessarily seeing an individual neighborhood.”

“We have a lot of tribes in this area that are not really being represented, I hope [Venture] will be talking to some people from the tribes.”

“I do wish that they [SACOG] were sometimes a better partner in some of the projects that we're working on. For example, when we are putting in light rail stops or bus stops downtown we get so much pushback from the local businesses down there who don't see it as a bonus benefit to them. They see it as ‘oh, you're bringing poor people down to come and mess up our areas.’ And it can be really hard to get support from our elected officials to push back on those businesses and say, ‘no, this is an essential service. This is how people get around this is actually going to drive economic benefit into your area.’ I feel like having [SACOG] be a good partner to support building buy-in, in similar ways pops up randomly throughout all the work that we do.”

“Oftentimes, our elected officials, just because they represent us, don't always speak on behalf of the priorities that we [community members] have and what we need. We like to go down a deeper

	level and we have had a little bit of pushback from SACOG with that. I don't know what would need to happen to change that. Maybe it's included in the plan. An overall recognition that the input that we get from people who may seem small in the grand scheme of things is actually extremely valuable.”	
OPERATIONS		
Themes	Quotes	Findings
REI at SACOG as an Agency	<p>“I really look at these institutions in a couple of ways. One, I look at the staff, and then I look at their management. And I know, in this region, traditionally, you don't have a lot of people of color in leadership positions. It’s important to look at the leadership level and management level, not just entry level jobs.”</p> <p>“...[In 2020] SACOG opened up some space for staff to come and talk about [George Floyd’s murder] and be vulnerable about it, and the emotions that we were feeling, and even if it was uncomfortable they encouraged us to support each other. When I was talking to my other friends about this they weren't having that same experience with their employer.”</p> <p>“I would love for management to be direct and tell me what SACOG’s role is. They're always asking us at the all staff retreats you tell them what is our job to educate is their job to monitor, it's their job to say this, but then we never really get like feedback and return like we heard you guys say this, but actually, this is what we think we should be doing.”</p> <p>“A part of me super appreciates that management is like, hey, staff, what do you think and be involved in and be a part of this process of figuring out who SACOG is and what we do. And then I also feel like well you tell me what we need to do. And then we can focus on that. I feel there is this kind of lack of focus, because we are trying to somehow meet the needs of staff and the board and all these other things.”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The SACOG staff make up does not fully reflect the diversity/experiences of people throughout the region and this leads to gaps in understanding/lived experience in decision making ● Staff would appreciate more direction from leadership around the mission, vision and values at SACOG ● Staff appreciates the space created to provide input but also would like leadership to be very clear on “what SACOG does” ● Staff feels under resourced; not clear on how to best manage/commit time to REI work with current work responsibilities ● There is a better understanding of externally focused REI work and less clarity on commitment/strategy/action for internal agency efforts ● Last structured full staff capacity building opportunity (Youth Development Network) happened in 2016 and there has been lots of staff turnover since then; staff appreciated this opportunity and eager to engage in ongoing internal REI capacity building opportunities ● There is a gap or presumed gap in clarity on what internal data the agency has/collects on staff demographics and other REI related information; lack of clarity on whether this data exists or not ● There are no standardized/formalized policies/practices for using REI best practices for hiring, onboarding, performance management or retention; not clear how equitable SACOG is as an employer
Staff Capacity, Knowledge and Skill	<p>“We're not even doing what we used to do. And so taking on new work, I don't know if SACOG is aware of that. We don't have the capacity to handle it.”</p> <p>“I think we need more expert help and not just [expect] CBO staff to figure it out. I think part of it is up to us. But we need a lot of help in the area.”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Staff has not been cross trained on REI, some staff have more learned experience on REI than others; there is an interest in developing these skills and putting them into practice

	<p>“[We need] training for staff, but it's almost like a culture change, to recognize and value community [input].”</p> <p>“...providing training for leadership, that's a part that is oftentimes left out, they kind of want to change the culture of an agency, but in the books making the decisions they kind of have the same thought processes.”</p> <p>“I would say capacity is a huge issue stepwise. But this is something we need to fold into what we do.”</p> <p>“Think SACOG already knows this but they need more staff to incorporate more work.”</p> <p>“There's too much [in]equity for it to be a one person job. If there's too many directions, you can't make this person keep going to all these different equity things, it becomes too much. I'm not sure we're all cross trained enough. There's equity stuff we're not even participating in right now because one person can't be everywhere, this has to be an agency wide initiative.”</p> <p>“...if this [REI work] is done in a meaningful way, it's going to extend the processes that we do and extend the timelines, I feel like staff is already feeling like we're barely meeting timelines as is. I don't know if that's fully understood agency wide.”</p>	
<p>Commitment to REI</p>	<p>“I would say that [SACOG’s commitment to REI] has evolved over the years with more focus within the last few years. You see it through the various grant programs that they have in terms of the scoring criteria, and the subject matter of the grant programs, and then also the formation of the committee that they've established to evaluate as well.”</p> <p>“...my manager keeps pushing me on how [REI connects to my work] even though it's hard to understand how equity might come into my role...they still keep pushing me to try to think more about it. And they actually have done a really good job of sitting down with us and brainstorming and supporting various groups like the REI group.. I think that I can tell it's really valued very highly by our executive director and the rest of staff.”</p> <p>“...we are going to look up and it's going to be 2032. We're going to be asking ourselves, how well are we addressing inequity? And saying that we're busy and attending lots of meetings, and that we're sincerely trying isn't going to be how you measure success, you're going to need something that has numbers and metrics, and accomplishments and goals that have been met and achieved or failed to achieve. We need to be real about measuring our success and or failure.”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Equitable funding allocation has to be a priority for SACOG or REI efforts will not be impactful ● There is a need for SACOG to create more transparency of it’s work, many feel like the work is moving extremely slowly but recognize that it may be because they are not fully clear on what is being done ● SACOG leadership has been encouraged the application of REI to the work within the agency ● Staff is committed to REI but is looking for more formal skill building opportunities ● Staff has in interest in deepen trust and relationships with each other to create a “safe space” for all staff to feel comfortable showing up, asking questions and working through uncomfortable conversations

	<p>“...based on explicit direction from our board, staff was tasked to make sure that those [program] guidelines consider economic and racial inclusion and equity. There was a fair question [from staff] about how we go about doing that. I want to commend Rosie, Mia, and Kacey for thinking very creatively about how to do some intentional outreach within a timeframe that's been set on us by the state.”</p>	
BOARD PRACTICES		
Themes	Quotes	Findings
SACOG's Board	<p>“A couple of years ago, when we took equity to the board, they were very hesitant, they said, 'that doesn't belong here.' Not everyone, but there were a lot of those comments. Now you don't hear that as often or almost never. And I think that's a huge success.”</p> <p>“...now we can have more discussions at the board level where we encourage difficult conversations instead of just dismissing it.”</p> <p>“...I think the more that we [SACOG] can do to help give our board the language and help them learn how to talk about [REI] there will be more progress.”</p> <p>“Rick Jennings is our chair now and he's a total advocate of [REI] and supports [REI] and is able to express that in his leadership but what happens next year when he's not our chair? How do we continue to plant these seeds with future leadership and make sure it continues even if we have someone different?”</p> <p>“This work is really hard. And it's going to be the long game, it's not going to happen overnight. SACOG is also managed by a board of directors that have their own viewpoints. And so I think that's a factor that we're going to need to consider.”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● There is concern that Board support of REI work may lack authenticity; REI may be seen as a political move/opportunity to build career instead of a genuine effort to increase equity in communities ● There is opposition of REI by some members of the Board that could create barriers to moving REI forward (this was of greater concern for CBOs than other stakeholder groups) ● There is hope that SACOG's REI work will influence individual Board members to take learnings back to their districts to start/build on new/current REI initiatives ● The Board is started to have the “hard discussions” which shows that even if everyone is not fully bought in to REI, they are willing to discuss it ● There is still a hesitation to speak about race and racism. There needs to be more comfort and openness to talk about the reality of racism in the Sacramento region by leadership ● Deepening an understanding of intersectionality should be prioritized ● The Board is more engaged than it has been in the last 20 years but there is still a lot of education needed ● Board needs greater education on historic impacts of inequitable policies and practices in the region ● Stakeholders would like to see more alignment between the Board Chair priorities and SACOG's work plan.

ADDITIONAL FOCUS AREAS

Themes	Quotes	Findings
<p>Historical Structural Inequities</p>	<p>“I think that the transportation sector needs to recognize the inequities that have just really, literally split up communities. What can we do to make that better?”</p> <p>“...highways, I know, there's a lot of money coming in for highways, and a lot of it was, you know, the feds. So it's not all local and regional planning agencies, but [highway planning practices] have done a lot of harm and split cities up. Those effects are still felt within the community and can be seen in our tree patterns and can be seen and how hot the concrete is...who has access to air conditioning, all these things. And I think that there needs to be an acknowledgement of this.”</p> <p>“Article 34 is an equity barrier”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● There is a need to develop a shared understanding of how disparities in social outcomes and lived experience has been impacted by historically inequitable transportation, housing and other planning policies; the connection to present day inequities should be recognized ● SACOG should explore the ways in which current policies at the regional, State and Federal levels may uphold and perpetuate inequities while creating barriers to reaching REI goals
<p>SACOG’s Role in Regional REI</p>	<p>“I'm just curious about how similar types of agencies have approached racial equity, inclusion and engagement.”</p> <p>“I think that educator piece can be good. And continuing with our roles in regional planning and transportation planning, which is where we provide data, we provide information and help jurisdictions make decisions for themselves.”</p> <p>“Maybe our role can be empowering the right community based organizations or nonprofits or other organizations that are actively involved in that community and can meet the needs of individual communities?”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The “disadvantaged communities” scoring matrix is not having the impact that it is intended to have. SACOG should make it a priority to assess the scoring model and similar approaches to understand the outcomes ● SACOG is encouraging other stakeholders to incorporate conversations about racial equity into their local planning processes ● SACOG has the opportunity to play a primary role of educator and convener within the REI; SACOG has the reach and influence to encourage other stakeholders to develop a shared understanding of how REI intersects with their work ● Rural and smaller member agencies have less capacity to do REI work. They are looking to SACOG to support them in building their capacity and deepening their understanding of REI and how it relates to their localities, which often have less racial diversity ● There is a shift in what it means to be a “public servant” and SACOG is exploring what ways are working and what should be changed. There's how SACOG has historically done its work and then there's how SACOG is shifting to meet the concerns of the current day. This shift can be difficult for staff and Board members to adjust to. There is a need for clarity on how SACOG will do work with its member agencies and what the expectations for aligning with REI values actually looks like ● There's a need to deepen the understanding of SACOG's reach. Clarity on what role SACOG can play in systems change within the sector/region should be understood and communicated to stakeholders
<p>Shared Language</p>	<p>“I don't know that they're truly comfortable talking about racism. And I think that is a distinction. When we're talking about race and racial equity, okay, then we have to talk about racism. I don't see [conversation] at that level. I think that we have to be even more blunt about racism in America and acknowledge the different experiences people have based on their race.”</p> <p>“...there are multiple definitions of a disadvantaged community that we often use for things like funding and our definition of equity. There's a ton of impediment. It's confusing. That also creates a challenge for us to have conversations about equity. I think that this is something that's appropriate for SACOG to take on the role and work with other MPOs to be like, hey, State, we have all these</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● There is a need to align across the region on the language/definitions used in conversation about equity ● SACOG has the opportunity to convene spaces to have difficult conversations while normalizing discussions about race and racism; CBOs see this as a necessary component of SACOG's REI work

different programs, let's think about how they all relate to one another and come up with more common definitions.”

RECOMMENDATIONS

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. SACOG should understand how inequity shows up in the context of the specific communities they support throughout the region. 2. Create/engage in opportunities where community stakeholders identify their unique community needs and interests as connected to current and new programming. 3. Host brown bag discussions to answer questions about SACOG program goals. 4. Regularly engage in standing meetings/conversations held by community stakeholders. 5. Diversify SACOG’s professional and social media networks. 6. Strengthen capacity of outreach team to act as SACOG liaisons to CBOs. 7. Increase access for community members to speak directly with SACOG staff and leadership. 8. Develop and formalize a strategic communication plan to provide updates on SACOG’s REI planning and implementation progress. 9. Highlight stakeholders who are leading REI efforts throughout the region. 10. Build a professional network outside of the region to strengthen SACOG’s role in REI throughout the sector. 11. Deepen understanding of best practices for incorporating REI into work; consider best practices from groups outside of the region and from other sectors. 12. Establish and communicate a partnership goal/expectation that is aligned with SACOG’s equity priorities. 13. Conduct analysis across SACOG programs to determine resource allocation levels disaggregated for race, gender and other markers of identity of the populations served. 14. Build supplemental activities and guidance to support individual and collective application of knowledge, skills and tools into everyday work. 15. Create and share a decision-making map/framework so staff understand the decision-making “inputs”, process, etc. of given decision types. 16. Incorporate REI values into job descriptions and staff onboarding processes with data disaggregated by identity (race, gender, education level, etc.). 17. Conduct pay equity analysis with data disaggregated by identity (race, gender, education level, etc.). 18. Create staff level affinity groups to support culture building. 19. Establish and communicate accountability practices within staff. 20. Design and implement a learning and development arc for all staff that deepens REI knowledge and skill with a focus on intersectionality. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 21. Ensure learning and development sequence incorporates other organizational and regional priorities. 22. Consider “learning pods” to create continuity of learning and peer accountability outside of training spaces. 23. Build skills that support staff in moving through discomfort, not avoiding it. 24. Embed ongoing trust, relationship, and connection-building activities across the team to cultivate a culture of grace and mutual accountability. 25. Conduct exit interviews with staff utilizing an external partner and synthesize findings. 26. Understand and address unique challenges that may impact staff differently depending on their identity. 27. Conduct analysis across SACOG roles to determine resource allocation levels disaggregated for race, gender and other markers of identity. 28. Build and execute workshops that provide an overview of SACOG’s approach to REI goals and actions, visions for regional impact, community engagement, programming, etc. 29. Make a clear statement on the ways in which REI values inform organizational priorities. 30. Identify where barriers to REI goals exist within funding/grant guidelines; consider diversifying funding streams to strengthen opportunities to make progress on REI initiatives. 31. Invest in comprehensive member/stakeholder learning and development initiatives with key learning outcomes and track progress over time. 32. Develop and standardize resources that can be used by other stakeholders as a guide to incorporating REI into their work. 33. Assess member activities through the REI lens. 34. Design and implement a process to engage new Board members that align with SACOG’s REI values. 35. Formalize an onboarding process for incoming Board members that ensures Board members understand SACOG’s commitment to REI. 36. Develop strategic communications to inform stakeholders of SACOG’s role in centering REI into its agency works. 37. Complete a landscape scan to identify stakeholder leaders/experts in REI; prioritize building strategic partnerships with these stakeholders. |
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