



Adopt SACOG Racial Equity Statement of Change and Commitment

Action

Prepared by: James Corless

Attachments: Yes

Approved by: James Corless

Referring Committee: Policy & Innovation

1. Issue:

The Race, Equity, and Inclusion Working Group endorsed a racial equity statement of change and commitment for consideration by the SACOG Board.

2. Recommendation:

The Policy and Innovation Committee recommends that the SACOG board adopt the attached Racial Equity Statement of Change and Commitment.

3. Background/Analysis:

Many public and private organizations issued racial equity statements in the wake of social and racial justice protests in 2020. Some of these were statements of solidarity with protesters, some were statements of change and commitment, some were both. The SACOG board did not adopt a statement of commitment for a variety of reasons, but one important reason was the need to be thoughtful about what a statement would mean. The sentiment expressed by the board's 2020 Race, Equity, Inclusion working group was that the full board needed to have a shared understanding of how racial equity is related to SACOG's work, and that any statement needed to be followed with thoughtful, impactful action. The REI working group of 2020 therefore focused on near-term opportunities to explore the role of racial equity in SACOG's work. The working group gave input and endorsement to establish a community-based equity planning grant program in SACOG's biannual funding round, which was under development in 2020. The working group also engaged a racial equity consultant to conduct a racial equity audit of SACOG.

At the end of 2020, in response to a racial equity audit of SACOG, the SACOG board committed to exploring how SACOG, as a metropolitan planning organization and council of governments, could advance racial equity in its work. As an outcome of the audit review, the board formed and charged the 2021 Race, Equity, and Inclusion Working Group to serve as a forum to discuss and make recommendations to the Policy and Innovation Committee of the SACOG board on issues related to race, equity and inclusion. The 2021 working group was intentionally formed with public members who have expertise in the field of racial equity and public policy to bring their perspective to the working group's discussions and recommendations.

A primary action of the working group is the development of a racial equity statement of change and commitment. This statement will be the foundation for SACOG's racial equity work in the years ahead. Adoption of the statement will kick off development of a racial equity action plan, which the working group

will have a strong hand in guiding and shaping over the coming months.

4. Discussion/Analysis:

The first draft of this statement was developed from SACOG staff research into racial equity statements of other public agencies like SACOG or its members, or in SACOG's spheres of work. With this research, staff from across SACOG's teams were invited to give input into the development of the statement. They were asked to think about their area of work in the agency and the kind of direction they would be looking for out of a racial equity statement of commitment and change. Then staff were asked to review the sample racial equity statements and identify key elements that resonated for them—phrases, actions, facts, statements, and/or structure. Staff particularly studied the racial equity statement adopted by the California Transportation Commission, which is responsible for programming and allocating funds to public agencies across California, for the construction of highway, passenger rail, transit and active transportation improvements.

With this set of input, staff iteratively drafted a statement. The key elements of this statement are:

- Acknowledgement of government's and SACOG's role in creating and perpetuating racial disparities in health, wealth, education, transportation, housing, and other aspects of life, and are evident today.
- A vision and commitment by SACOG to work to rectify those racial disparities for the benefit of everyone in the region.
- A list of specific actions SACOG will take to follow through on its commitment.

The REI working group reviewed the first draft of the racial equity statement at its November 19, 2021, meeting. The working group accepted most of the statement, but wanted revision on two issues:

1) Working group members wanted the statement to clearly articulate those racial and ethnic groups that have been historically disenfranchised and excluded in the SACOG region in particular. The working group directed staff to revise this portion of the statement to be specific to the SACOG region's history.

2) Working group members had questions about how income/economic and other inequities intersect with this racial equity statement. Staff answered these questions in the working group meeting and to ensure clarity for all future readers of the statement, also revised the statement as follows: added language at the beginning of the statement to acknowledge and commit to tackling inequities in all forms, added language to the commitment section to clearly connect racial equity actions to improved health and economic outcomes for all racial groups.

The REI working group reviewed the revised statement at its January 14, 2022 meeting, made some additional edits to further clarify the unique history of racial exclusion in the SACOG region, and then unanimously endorsed the statement for consideration by the SACOG board.

At its February 7, 2022 meeting, the Policy and Innovation Committee unanimously recommended that the board adopt the attached statement. Chair Jennings, who chaired the REI working group during the development of the statement, attended the Policy and Innovation meeting to give an overview of the process and deliberations of the working group. The Committee expressed support for the statement with the

addition of two clarifying amendments shown in ~~strikeout~~/underline: the addition of two headers, “Background” and “Plan” were added to give structure to corresponding portions of the statement; the word “tackle” was modified to “reduce” to add more precision to the actions SACOG will take moving forward.

Should the SAOCG Board adopt this racial equity statement of change and commitment, it will set the framework for development of a SACOG racial equity action plan.

5. Fiscal Impact/Grant Information:

Work for the Race, Equity, Inclusion initiative is included in SACOG's adopted budget and overall work program.

6. This staff report aligns with the following SACOG Work Plan Objectives:

Goal 1 : Advance Economic Prosperity

Objective 5: Begin sustained effort to address the racial inequities related to economic prosperity indicators associated with housing, transportation, and opportunity.