



City of Austin Equity Assessment Tool - October 2016 to Present

The Root Cause Equity Consulting team brings the collective experience of leading an initiative within local government to design and implement a comprehensive equity assessment to be utilized across departments. Our team is composed of City of Austin Equity Office staff that led and developed the City's equity assessment tool. We were honored to see that our equity tool was cited by the Des Moines Equity team website as a guiding example, and has been recognized by the Government Alliance on Race and Equity as a best and promising approach to equity assessment.

In response to Council directive and community advocacy, we led the charge to develop and implement Austin's first equity assessment tool, aimed at institutionalizing policies and practices that address the City government's impact on equity. Based on a scan of existing tools and co-creation with community members, we devised a comprehensive assessment or set of questions to guide each department in assessing the benefit and/or burden that their policies, programs, practices and budget decisions place on communities of color and other vulnerable populations in the city.

Austin's Equity Assessment Tool was developed in partnership with directly impacted community members that experienced inequities in the City. These community members logged over 900 hours of volunteer time to co-create the tool and review initial assessment responses by City departments. We also worked closely with department directors and other City staff to work alongside community members to co-create the tool. We dubbed the directors of our first eight departments to complete the equity assessment the "Courageous Eight".

The assessment was split into four categories (Departmental Analysis, Budget, Community Engagement and Alignment) that help identify which practices could reduce current and future disparities. Using 2017 as a pilot year, eight departments used the tool during the annual budget process, examining their work through an equity lens.

Through Brion's leadership as the former Chief Equity Officer, the City of Austin became a national leader in equity assessments and the Austin tool is often featured as a best practice and model for other jurisdictions. Since the first equity assessments that were done in 2017, all 42 departments in Austin have entered the continuous improvement cycle of conducting equity assessments, completing action plans, and implementing interventions to advance equity. The

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City of Austin Equity Assessment Tool received recognition in 2018 by the international Open Government's Partnership as a Star Level Intervention for its level of transparency that it promotes in local government, and its ability to transform systems. It was the only project that was submitted by the United States which received such an honor.

The City of Austin Equity Assessment tool also features a dashboard that can be found at the following link

<https://app.smartsheet.com/b/publish?EQBCT=b90f65efc1d344b2be9ee13526e5236b>

The dashboard allows users to access a department's responses to equity tool questions and an overview of department-specific Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis completed by evaluators. The dashboard also features the Equity Action Plan, 3 to 4 interventions a department has committed to to address with an implementation graph as well as demographic data for the department. If selected for this project, Root Cause Equity Consulting would like to design and feature a similar dashboard for the City of Des Moines to showcase and track the work of its departments through equity assessments.

Overall the members of the Root Cause Equity Consulting team have successfully implemented a continuous improvement process of conducting equity assessments and implementing action plans. We bring a wealth of lived experience to consult and assist you from the design, implementation, and capacity building necessary for a successful utilization of an equity assessment tool across your organization.