



DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION OFFICE

Mid-Year Report
July 2023

OFFICE OF DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION

City of Topeka, KS

*Mid-Year Update
July 2023*

The City of Topeka's Diversity Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Office was established and opened its doors in January 2023. The DEI Office is responsible for the development, implementation, and incorporation of proactive diversity, equity, and inclusion strategies throughout all aspects of the City.

The DEI Office is committed to achieving equal treatment, diversity and inclusion of the individuals it employs. The office is committed to ensuring we do not discriminate against anyone based on their age, color, disability, familial status, gender identity, genetic information, national origin, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, veteran status or any other factor protected by law ("protected class"). This applies to all personnel actions and procedures including compensation and other benefits, as well as when recruiting, hiring, training, transferring, and promoting employees.

EQUITY Vs. EQUALITY

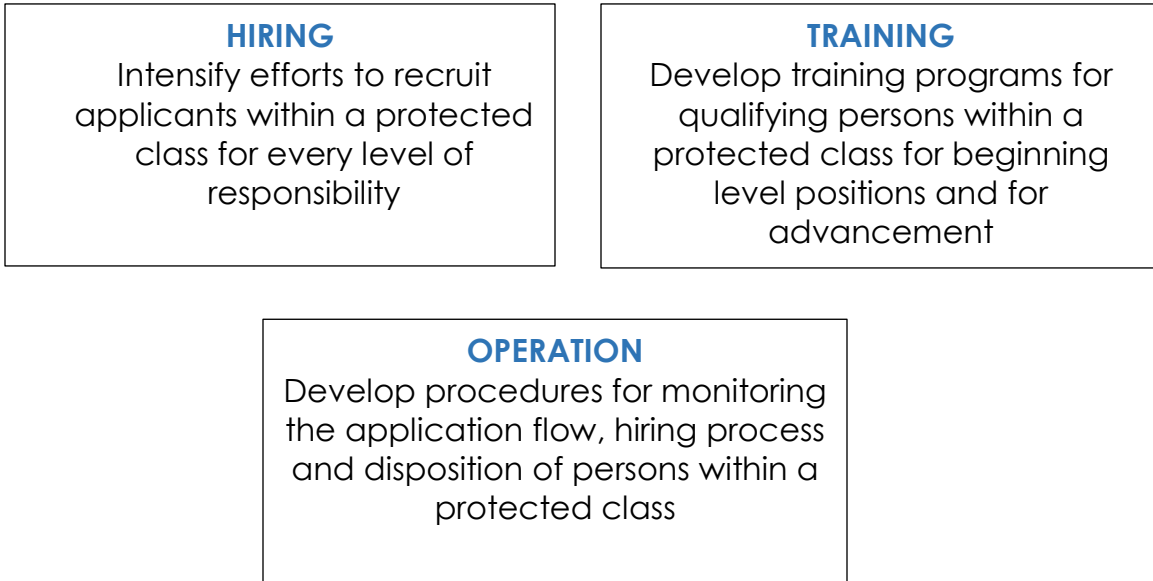
Equity: Provide fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement for all. Understanding that not everyone starts from the same place, we must acknowledge, identify, and eliminate barriers to foster civic participation, belonging and promote just outcomes. Equity is outlined in the Strategic Plan as one of the city's core principals.

The distinction between Equity and Equality is a vital piece in the Diversity Equity and Inclusion Office's role in understanding, addressing, and dismantling inequities faced by marginalized communities, lower-income neighborhoods, and hiring processes.

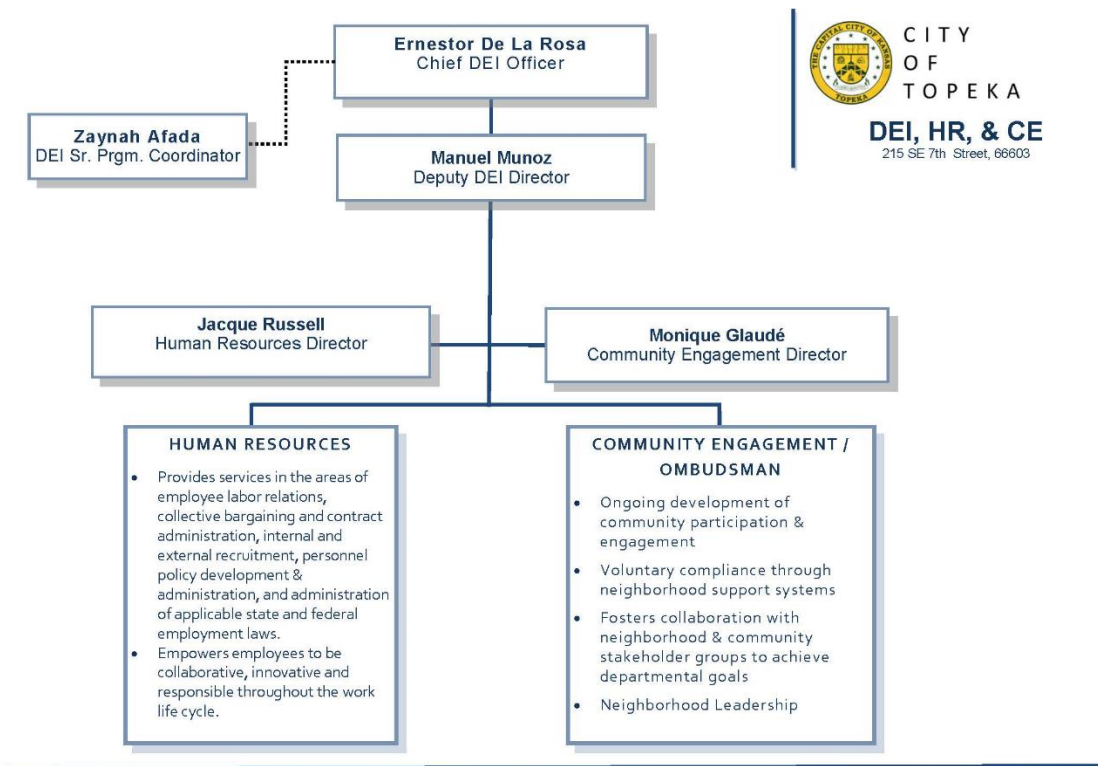
The DEI Office has the following responsibilities:

- Develop a vision consistent with our purpose to power an inclusive future for all, and executing that vision.
- Establish data-driven performance indicators and progress benchmarks to ensure accountability towards equitable delivery of city programs and services.
- Forge strategic alliances within the organization and in the community to further established diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives.

DEI OBJECTIVES



The following organizational chart depicts the organizational structure of the DEI Office and the City departments/division it oversees.



The Chief DEI Officer also acts in the following roles per City policy/plans:

- **ADA Coordinator:** responsible for coordinating the efforts of the City to comply with Title II and investigating any complaints that the entity has violated Title II. 12 total complaints have been received to date (This includes a mixture of city owned properties and private).
- **Title VI Coordinator:** responsible for administering the Title VI program and coordinate implementation of the plan. Ensure compliance with the assurances, policy, and program objectives.
- **LGBTQ+ Liaison:** responsible for looking at city policies and services through an LGBTQ lens and provide feedback when a policy or service might exclude LGBTQ people.

The following boards and committees are staffed and coordinated by the DEI Office:

- **Human Relations Commission:** the Topeka HRC is a nine-member Board of Commissioners who are appointed by the Mayor with the consent of the City Council. The mission of the THRC is to conduct outreach and educational activities that promote justice and cultural understanding and improve relationships among all citizens of Topeka. The HRC meets every second Monday of the month at 5:30 p.m.
- **ADA Advisory Council:** this a nine-member council with or without disabilities, appointed by the Mayor with the consent of the City Council. The mission of the Topeka ADA Advisory Council is to support the civil rights of and full integration into Topeka community life for all people with disabilities. The Council meets every second Tuesday of the month at 1 p.m.
- **TSC - Get Digital Coalition:** the Topeka and Shawnee County Get Digital coalition provides affordable and equitable access to computer and internet equipment and services, along with technical support, training opportunities, and digital literacy services for low and moderate-income individuals and families. This coalition originally started as a partnership with leaders from local community organizations, in order to work toward this shared vision. The City is currently working towards bringing this program under the DEI Office and the relationship will be formalized through the adoption of bylaws. The DEI Office and Community Engagement will provide staff support and help coordinate the coalition's efforts.

ACTIVITIES OF THE DEI OFFICE TO DATE

The following is a list of events or initiatives the DEI Office has organized or collaborated in partnership with other City Departments and local organizations to date:

- **GARE and Welcoming America:** As a first step, the City joined the Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE), a national network of governments that are, “working to achieve racial equity and advance opportunities for all.” The GARE organization provides training and technical assistance to government agencies. The City also joined Welcoming America, a nonpartisan nonprofit organization that leads a movement of inclusive communities becoming more prosperous by ensuring everyone belongs. These two organizations will be helpful to receive continuing education, technical assistance and other resources as we advance DEI initiatives.
- **Translation Services:** the DEI Office provides ongoing translation services for City departments that request it. This is a continuous effort between the DEI Office and City Departments to provide language access for our Spanish speaking residents as outlined in the City’s Language English Proficiency Plan (LEP) under Title VI.
- **Bloomberg Harvard City Leadership Initiative:** this Initiative advanced research and developed new curriculum and teaching tools to help our City leaders improve the development process for housing. The Chief DEI Officer participated in this 8-month project as part of the core team serving in the capacity of Equity/Community Engagement Lead.
- **Concerned Clergy Saluting Excellence:** this event was in collaboration with a local concerned clergy, the Mayor’s Office and DEI Office to celebrate and recognize Topeka High School’s men’s basketball team for responding to a discriminatory event in the fall of 2022 with positive and proper behavior. The event was held at TPAC on March 6, 2023 and over 100 residents attended.
- **Community Information session with Immigration Attorneys:** an informative session was held with three immigration attorneys. This session allowed Topekans to hear the latest updates on immigration law and provided the space to ask questions or share concerns. The event was held at Washburn Tech East on March 11, 2023 and over 50 residents attended the session.
- **Mexican Embassy Meeting:** on April 27, 2023 the General Director of Consular Protection and Strategic Planning, Consul Soileh Padilla Mayer, City Manager, Mayor and DEI staff participated in this meeting. The

Mexican Embassy visited about the opportunity to continue to partner with the City to serve the Mexican community in Topeka.

- **Human Relations Commission Retreat:** on May 5, 2023 we hosted an HRC retreat to discuss and identify goals and focus projects for 2023. The HRC also identified three different HRC subcommittees to operate and move the efforts of the HRC forward.
- **Latino Community Leaders Meeting:** the Mayor and the DEI Office convened a group of local Hispanic/Latino community leaders to hear and identify the challenges the Hispanic/Latino community in Topeka is facing. The group continues to meet and we hope to foster partnership and collaboration with this group to address challenges and to better serve the Topeka community. The groups consist of 12 members.
- **Community Forum with the Mexican Consulate:** this was a community forum where the Mexican Consulate in Kansas City provided a presentation for Topeka residents on their services available to Mexican Nationals living abroad. This forum was hosted at the Washburn Tech East on May 18, 2023 and an estimated 20 residents attended the session.
- **Mexican Consulate Presentations for TPD:** the DEI Office hosted the Mexican Consulate in Kansas City to conduct a couple of sessions for TPD staff to learn and receive additional information about foreign identification documents the Mexican Consulate provides to Mexican Nationals living in the U.S. 20 TPD employees participated in these two sessions on May 18, 2023.
- **Information Session on House Bill 2350:** the DEI Office, TPD and other community organizations hosted an information session after receiving concerns and questions related to the new Kansas law (HB-2350). This session was held at Washburn Tech East on May 31, 2023 and over 100 Topeka residents attended the session.
- **Juneteenth:** the DEI Office, Community Engagement and members of the HRC hosted a table during this community celebration. The purpose was to provide information on services provided by community engagement and to advertise City job opportunities. This was a come and go opportunity for our residents.
- **Table at Fiesta Topeka:** the DEI Office and Housing Services staff hosted a table during this community celebration. The purpose was to provide information on services provided by both divisions and to advertise City job opportunities. This was a come and go opportunity for our residents.

- **Mexican Art Exhibition:** the City partnered with the Mexican Consulate and the Topeka & Shawnee County Public Library to host a Mexican Art Exhibit that coincides with Fiesta Topeka. The art exhibit was available to residents for two months at the Public Library. 28 residents attended the welcome reception on July 19, 2023.
- **Newcomers Academy:** the DEI Office partnered with Top City Promise to kick off the first Newcomers Academy. This is an 8-week program and 20 new residents in Topeka are participating. The goal of this academy is to provide awareness of the functions and responsibilities of public entities, foster open lines of communication between participants and officials, and create a tangible knowledge base for civic engagement for participants.
- **Title VI Plan:** the DEI Office developed and implemented the City's Title VI Plan in which the City of Topeka assures that no person shall be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of or be otherwise subjected to discrimination under any program or activity on the basis of race, color or national origin as provided by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and the Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1987. The plan is comprehensive and includes the Title VI Policy, and plan which details the policy statement, designates the City's Title VI coordinator and its responsibilities and lays out the implementation procedures for when a complaint is filed. In addition, the plan includes a Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Plan for residents who do not speak English.
- **Multilingual Pay Policy:** HR, Legal Department and the DEI Office worked together to develop and finalize the Multilingual Skills Pay policy. This policy is an effort to attract and retain top talent and improve our efforts to serve the needs of our community through certified employee translators/interpreters. The new policy goes into effect on August 3, 2023.
- **ADA Public Grievance Procedure:** under the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) require public entities with 50 or more employees to designate a responsible employee and adopt grievance procedures which provide for the prompt and equitable resolution of complaints alleging noncompliance with the ADA. The City had not established this procedure; however, this process is complete and is currently being implemented.

UPCOMING DEI OFFICE ACTIVITIES

- **Municipal Equality Index (MEI):** the MEI examines how inclusive municipal laws, policies, and services are of LGBTQ+ people who live and work in the City. Cities are rated annually based on non-discrimination laws, the municipality as an employer, municipal services, law enforcement and leadership on LGBTQ+ equality. The DEI Office is currently working to submit the 3rd annual report due on August 31, 2023.
- **Welcoming Week:** an initiative developed by Welcoming America, this year's celebrations will be held from September 8th through the 17th, highlighting the contributions of immigrants in communities like ours across the nation. On September 17, 2023 at 5:30 pm, the HRC will be hosting an evening in historic downtown Topeka at Everygy Plaza alongside neighbors experiencing music and exploring the world's culinary traditions. The event is called "Taste of Topeka Festival".
- **Learn, Explore, Activate in Place (LEAP) - New Growth Innovation Network:** the Greater Topeka Partnership was selected to participate in this year's LEAP program and invited the Chief DEI Officer to be part of Topeka's delegation. The LEAP program's goal is to study inclusive models for economic growth. The groups will explore innovative inclusive economic development models and activate an action plan to implement.
- **Poverty Simulation:** on Thursday, October 26, 2023 the DEI Office and Community Engagement are partnering with the Citizens Advisory Council to convene a Poverty Simulation. The Poverty Simulation experience will be offered to provide participants an opportunity to reflect on how their professional roles impact the lives of low-income citizens. The goal is that participants will not only exit the simulation with greater empathy, but with a commitment to re-imagine their services and solidarity to low-income citizens.
- **"How To become a Naturalized Citizen" with USCIS:** on September 14, 2023 the DEI Office is partnering with the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) to host a presentation for the community about the naturalization process and the requirements to become a U.S. citizen.

DEI OFFICE LONG-TERM GOALS

- **Language Access Plan:** developing a language access plan will define the resources the City will use to effectively communicate with our diverse community of individuals, including those residents who are not fluent in English, are hard of hearing or visually impaired, or have other comprehension issues. The language access plan will help the City provide a wide range of individuals with meaningful access to City services while also complying with Title VI. This will be a collaboration with the City's Communications Department.
- **Internal DEI Assessment:** the Internal Diversity Equity and Inclusion Assessment aims to collect and understand data relating to the knowledge and levels of equity with all City staff. The goal in conducting the assessment is to help the DEI office and the City create a strategic plan on how to move forward with long term success in the work of DEI with consideration of the limitations of staff's knowledge around the issues.
- **DEI Strategic Plan:** this plan would highlight the City's efforts and plan to address disparities and create equity by creating an inclusive culture that is collaborative and respectful. In addition, it will be used as a comprehensive tool to help the City of Topeka understand and measure progress toward equity across the various communities it serves.

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us.

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