

CITY PROFILE ON RACIAL EQUITY

# Madison, Wisconsin



# Madison City Profile

Although the City of Madison, Wisconsin created an Office of Civil Rights and prioritized equity work in its public health department prior to 2013, a confluence of factors led the city to establish a formal Racial Equity and Social Justice Initiative (RESJI) that year with the mission of addressing racism within the City's institutional structure.

## The Community Brings a Renewed Focus to Equity

Community organizing by the African-American community and faith leaders, such as Rev. Alex, who wrote an opinion article entitled "[Justified Anger](#)," alongside documentation of widespread racial disparities in a 2013 [Race to Equity](#) report from the Wisconsin Council on Children and Families galvanized a renewed focus on equity.

The data in that report showed a city where African-Americans, who make up 6.5 percent of Dane County's population, fared much worse than whites in nearly every category and across 40 different well-being indicators. The results at the county level mirrored the disparities seen in Madison. The city looked at the data and the "Justified Anger" opinion article when organizing efforts to bring greater attention to longstanding structural racism in Madison as a call to action.

In developing the RESJI, Madison deliberately chose to focus internally on the city government's role in perpetuating institutional and structural racism. The initiative seeks to impact change and add equity in three fundamental areas:

1. City policies and budgets
2. City operations
3. The community



## Mayor Soglin's Roundtable on February 20, 2017

The city made a real commitment to develop structures and tools to achieve this mission, by putting resources into staffing a citywide initiative, adequately training all staff to meet these goals and adjusting community engagement to build an equitable and responsive government.

## Making Space for Everyone

The RESJI model to move the city towards these three goals is structured in a way that uniquely engages city staff on racial equity work across department level and position, with oversight and training from the city's Office of Civil Rights. Madison created space for many city employees and found ways to supplement the capacity of the Office of Civil Rights and the Racial Equity Coordinator, a position which was created in 2015.

The initiative is structured to incorporate staff through a Strategy Team, a Core Team and Action Teams:

- 40 people comprise the Core Team, which has one to three people from all levels of each of the city's 27 departments.
- Individuals on the Core Team serve on four different Action Teams: Tools and Trainings, Community Connections, Communications and Data. The Action Teams develop action plans for the year.
- Within the Core Team, the Strategy Team brings senior level managers together to share challenges in their racial equity work and work to advance the mayor's commitment to equity. Members of the Strategy Team lead each of the Action Teams and include 10 City division heads and the deputy mayor.

Educational and training opportunities grounded the racial equity framework in the history of the community. This included racial equity and social justice training and mandatory implicit bias training to embed an understanding of history and bias into the culture of everyday city operations. Madison sponsored a talk by Katherine Cramer, the author of Politics of Resentment, to make the connections between the needs of all community residents and the goals of the RESJI.

"Go for the low hanging fruit first," Mayor Soglin recommends. "Don't fight the resistance initially, you'll have built up a cadre of advocates the first year or two, and then you've got them on your side now to bring over the places where there's resistance."

## Implementing Racial Equity Impact Tools

Several RESJI tools have been key to implementing the racial equity analysis that Madison uses to address racism in city policies, plans, programs and budgets. Currently, the city uses three racial equity tools to analyze the unintended consequences of city policies, funding decisions and community interests when making decisions:

- Equitable Hiring Tool
- Equitable Workforce Plan
- Racial Impact Analysis Tool.

Since starting in 2014, city employees involved with RESJI analyzed more than 50 projects with an equity lens; trained nearly 300 individuals and engaged 40 employees in working directly on the four Action Teams.

## City: Madison, Wisconsin

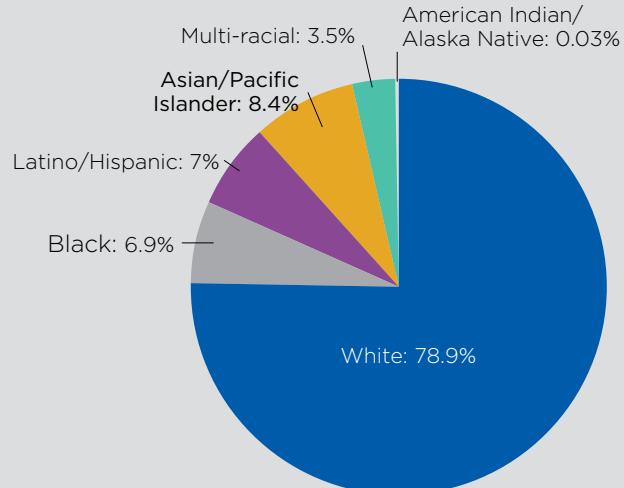
**Year Starting Racial Equity Work:** 2014

**Mayor:** Paul Soglin

**Form of Municipal Government:** Mayor-Council

**Population:** 252,551 (July 2016)

### Demographics:



"I have found that when we are using the racial equity tools in decision making processes, we are finding that it doesn't take a huge policy change or anything legislative — all it takes is a tweak in the current system and the process," the Deputy Mayor for Public Safety, Civil Rights and Community Services Gloria Reyes says.

Here are several examples of tool usage by the city:

- Recently completed an equity analysis of the hiring process for the Transit Operations Supervisor using the Equitable Hiring Tool.
- Through RESJI training, the city incorporated racial equity into its employee engagement model and included demographic information to better understand workplace culture issues.

- Racial Impact Analysis Tool was applied to the residential tiered water rate structure to assess potential benefits, unintended burdens of the rate structure and recommendations for maximum benefit to and minimal burdens on marginalized groups.
- Internally, affirmative action data, surveys and demographics for each department were assessed to develop an Equitable Workforce Plan, including retention, culture and promotion changes.

Each department takes an active role in personalizing the tool to fit their needs in addressing policies, practices and decision. The Civil Rights Office helps each department develop targeted plans to meet their goals. Depending on their needs, they can use additional tools, like the Equitable Hiring Tool.

By 2016, the Racial Impact Analysis Tool was being used citywide, but needed a bit more strategic direction. The city, under Mayor Soglin's leadership evaluated and adjusted the way the tools are used, which coincided with the city's strategic planning process that focused on racial equity.

### Equity in the Community

Since 1990, the city's Neighborhood Resource Teams (NRTs) has played an important role in engaging city employees to apply equity to community engagement. The NRTs work to coordinate city services, promote racial equity and improve the quality of life in key neighborhoods. The teams focus on community-drive agendas, which can range from better lighting and housing to youth recreation and transportation changes. NRTs engage other government agencies and non-profits to ensure that services are delivered in a comprehensive manner covering transportation, health, housing, quality childcare, education and job training.

"[NRTs] had 110 people- active- from every city agency who were committed to focusing on neighborhoods where we've got the most low-income residents and the poorest academic performance. By bringing those folks, who are aligned and committed, in [to the initiative], that made the roll out more expeditious," Mayor Soglin said.

NRTs orient to the needs, issues and priorities of residents who may historically have been left out of government process. One simple example that highlights how government can operate in a more racially equitable manner involves lighting basketball courts. Residents in a neighborhood on the north side of Madison articulated the desire for the local courts to have lighting. The NRTs moved that request forward and that neighborhood ultimately became the first in the city with lit basketball courts. For Madison's Neighborhood Resource Coordinator, this is racial equity at work. It allows community residents to have their concerns heard, and it allows staff to get hands-on experience delivering services in a way that is more racially equitable.

Measuring the impact of racial equity work can be a challenge that few cities have tackled. To measure the impact of their racial equity work, Madison conducts "Ripple Effect Mapping." utilizing focus groups and interview dialogue with individuals across organizations.



### Summary: Madison

**1** Madison uses racial equity tools to work inside and outside government to address structural racism.

**2** Through a Strategy Team and Core Team, Madison has been able to accomplish more racial equity work than they would through one department alone.

**3** The city's existing Neighborhood Resource Team structure paved the way to embed equity in the way the city engages with neighborhoods and residents.

**4** By beginning with hands on projects that equitably address community needs, racial equity principles can be driven home for staff.

They report on the ways taking a racial equity lens to their work has changed practices and has "ripped out" beyond the core group of people involved with the RESJI.