

**CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION**

Bellevue Centers Communities of Color Initiative: Proposal for Implementation

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**DIRECTION NEEDED FROM COUNCIL****DIRECTION**

On December 14, 2020, Council allocated \$150,000 one-time funding for the Bellevue Centers Communities of Color (CCC) Initiative through Council Contingency. Council directed that staff return with a proposal.

Staff is seeking Council direction to proceed with implementation of the Bellevue CCC initiative as outlined in this memorandum.

**RECOMMENDATION**

Move to direct the City Manager to proceed with implementation of the Bellevue Centers Communities of Color Initiative as outlined in this memorandum, which includes:

1. establishing a coordinating team;
2. a three-year timeline; and
3. the three focus areas of developing trust and awareness through dialogue, building racial literacy and skills through education and training, and developing recommendations toward racial equity.

**BACKGROUND & ANALYSIS**

During the City's budget development process, Councilmembers Barksdale and Zahn proposed an initiative to advance racial equity in the City of Bellevue to demonstrate the City's commitment to authentically build and strengthen community trust, understanding, and healing across its diverse communities. Council approved funds for \$150,000 and requested staff to present a proposal for approval.

The CCC will add another valuable tool to the work of equity by the City of Bellevue. Years ago, the City began the work of outreach with a focus on cultural diversity by creating a diversity plan in 1993. Since that time, work toward diversity, equity, and inclusion has been ever evolving for the City of Bellevue. In 2014, the Bellevue City Council considered significant expansion of the work and as a result adopted the Diversity Advantage Initiative which included additional focus in the areas of cultural competence in city government and in the community, human services, public safety, education, economic development and civic engagement. Diversity Advantage recommendations most pertinent to the Centering Communities of Color proposal include:

- Building Cultural Competence (CC) in the Community
  - CC in the Community 10 – *Coordinate with local groups and organizations dedicated to issues of diversity and culture.*
- Education
  - Education 2 – *Encourage and support community conversations on the issues of disability, economic class, gender, social orientation, race, and ethnicity.*
- Civic Engagement (CE)
  - CE 1 – *Emphasize outreach to establish trust within the social networks of our diverse communities as the first step in broadening their participation.*
  - CE 8 – *Develop and implement a civic engagement strategy to increase general participation in local government among diverse populations.*

Emphasis will be given to equity for populations that are known to have experienced inequitable societal outcomes. Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) communities make up 49 percent of Bellevue’s racial demographics. BIPOC communities are disproportionately affected and harmed by individual and systemic racism resulting in socioeconomic disparities, inequity of wellbeing and access to education and services. These disparities remain despite the numerous national and local efforts that have been directed toward reforms and the restoration of civil rights, social justice, and equity.

The City of Bellevue has been committed, through existing policies and programs, to address these disparities. Some examples of this work include providing interpretation and translation for community members on City services, training the City workforce, and community conversations. Training equips staff in the understanding and application of implicit bias, racial equity, and courageous conversations on race. Community conversations have involved facilitated workshops and cultural conversations.

Traditional models of community engagement such as gathering input through surveys have not effectively provided authentic and safe places for dialogue around issues of race and equity that build trust and awareness. The Diversity Advantage Initiative has been employing an inclusive model of community engagement that invites those that are directly impacted and have lived experiences to partner in the work to assess and address racial equity needs for the City of Bellevue. Acknowledging that the City serves as one institution with a limited area of influence, to truly address systemic racism in the community will require cooperation from across institutions as a community collective, harnessing the expertise of our BIPOC community is essential to the success of this work.

In response to Council direction for this initiative, based on broad research, local experience, and community values, staff proposes the following program.

### **Bellevue Centers Communities of Color Initiative (CCC)**

The Bellevue Centers Communities of Color Initiative supports a community-led effort to help shape the City of Bellevue into a community that values and commits to racial equity through a) developing trust and awareness through dialogue, b) building racial literacy and skills through education and training, and c) partnering with the City and other institutions to co-create recommendations and actions with racial equity outcomes. This effort will be led by a City Manager appointed group from the community working in partnership with the City.

## **CCC Coordinating Team and Preliminary Workplan**

The CCC coordinating team is envisioned to include individuals from the African American/Black, Asian Pacific Islander, Indigenous, and Latinx communities, who live or work in Bellevue. The City of Bellevue recognizes the value and expertise of community voices. Taking into account that members of Bellevue's community will have different interests they would like to engage, as well as varying skills around racial equity, the City has identified three initiative targets. The elements of this approach include the following:

1. Develop Trust and Awareness through Dialogue (Year 1)  
Creating opportunities for directed and facilitated dialogues around race and racial equity are essential for building understanding, empathy, and will serve as an entry point to building trust and normalizing conversations around race and racism. This first tier is about meeting people where they are. This proposal includes developing a series of community discussions over the first year.
2. Build Racial Literacy and Skills Through Education and Training (Years 1-2)  
Dialogue is important and is only a starting point in developing understanding of different experiences and perspectives of community members. Providing opportunities to learn and develop key competencies around racial equity across the community and in different sectors in Bellevue are equally important in developing and maintaining a community that understands and supports racial equity. Specific groups (e.g. business sector, nonprofits and community partners) may be convened to participate in identified trainings to build and grow a collective knowledge, skills, and alignment around racial equity in Bellevue.
3. Co-Create Recommendations for Actions toward Racial Equity (Years 1-3)  
The third tier of the initiative includes collaborating on identifying recommended actions that lead the City towards being more racially equitable. Through community feedback and policy reports, the coordinating team may partner with specific formalized groups, City staff and leadership to provide recommendations on updates to the Diversity Advantage Initiative. The objective is to support the practices on racial equity across city lines of business to better serve the needs of communities of color.

The anticipated timeline for this pilot project is within the span of three years. Staff's recommendation of the timeline is based on successfully using the inclusive model of community engagement. The City Manager will ensure that progress updates on focus areas one and two will be provided to the City Council. Focus area three recommendations for actions will come to the City Council for approval.

## **POLICY & FISCAL IMPACTS**

### **Policy Impact**

The Communities of Color initiative will include a multipronged approach across a three-year period under the three areas of developing trust and awareness through community dialogues, building racial literacy through education and training, and co-creating recommendations actions towards racial equity. These efforts will advance and complement many of the Diversity Advantage Initiative

recommendations, especially those regarding equity, cultural competence, civic engagement, and education.

### **Fiscal Impact**

Council approved \$150,000 one-time funding to support the Communities of Color coordinating team through Council Contingency. Staff will develop a detailed budget for the use of these funds early in the scoping process with input from the CCC.

### **OPTIONS**

1. Move to direct the City Manager to proceed with implementation of the Bellevue Centers Communities of Color Initiative as outlined in this memorandum, which includes: 1. establishing a coordinating team, 2. a three-year timeline, and 3. The three focus areas of developing trust and awareness through dialogue, building racial literacy and skills through education and training, and developing recommendations toward racial equity.
2. Do not move to direct the City Manager to proceed with implementation of the Initiative and provide alternative direction to staff.

### **ATTACHMENTS & AVAILABLE DOCUMENTS**

N/A

### **AVAILABLE IN COUNCIL LIBRARY**

N/A