

Staff Report

COMMUNITY-WIDE INCLUSION PLAN MODELS

January 14, 2025

BACKGROUND:

At the beginning of 2022, the City Council identified as part of its Councils goal a desire to develop a community-wide Diversity Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Plan that identifies definitions and actionable strategies by the end of 2023.

As part of this goal, the FY 2022/23 adjusted budget included \$100,000 dedicated towards the development of a community-wide DEI Plan. The initial goals for the DEI Plan was 1) to develop a Request for Proposal to hire a consultant by spring of 2023, and 2) to have the Mayor appoint a supplemental input committee representing various segments of the community population to work with the consultant to develop the plan.

These steps did not occur in 2023. Instead, the City focused on hiring its first DEI Coordinator. Rather than expedite hiring an outside consultant, the City strategically decided to allow this new position time to become familiar with the work before diving into a community-wide DEI Plan.

With the DEI Coordinator onboard, at the beginning of 2024, the City Council’s goal related to the community-wide DEI plan was modified, and staff was directed to research what other cities’ plan look like and accomplish. Therefore, the purpose of this staff report is to present findings from research staff has conducted regarding the different approaches and outcomes from city-level DEI-related plan.

For the purposes of this report, the terms “DEI plan” and “community-wide inclusion plan” will be used interchangeably since there are no widely accepted standard definitions, and depending on the community it could be called one or the other, or a variation of either.

Attachment A is the PowerPoint that will be presented at the Council meeting. It provides information on 1) Staff’s research findings, 2) the history of Ames related to inclusion, and 3) the community-wide inclusion plan examples from [Decatur, GA - Better Together Community Plan](#) and [Salem, MA - Salem Race Equity Task Force Report](#).

Notably, as alluded to earlier, community inclusion or DEI plans are not prescriptive in structure and format and, therefore, there isn’t a standard product or process used in developing a municipal plan. As such, these plans can vary drastically across communities in terms of scope, approach, format and outcomes.

Based on staff’s research, reviewing over 40 DEI plans and examining 10 city DEI plans closer, there seems to be two distinct types of plans. They are described below along with links to the 10 plans staff reviewed.

Type A: City DEI plans that are community-wide and community-driven, meaning all sectors of the community are involved in its development and implementation.

- Decatur, GA [Better Together Community Action Plan](#)

Type B: City DEI plans that are primarily focused on the City organization, meaning that the organization is developing internal strategies and actions to be more diverse, equitable and inclusive.

- Salem, MA [Race Equity Task Force Report](#)
- Albuquerque, NM [Equity Toolkits and Reports](#)
- Red Wing, MN [Equity Action Plan](#)
- Long Beach, CA [Racial Equity and Reconciliation Initiative](#)
- Pittsburg, PA [Racial Equity Assessment](#)
- Sacramento, CA [Sacramento Centered on Racial Equity Initiative](#)
- Philadelphia, PA [DEI Plan Template](#)
- Boulder, CO [Racial Equity Plan](#)
- Edina, MN [Race and Equity Initiative](#)

As seen above, the most common type of approach staff found are plans primarily focused on the city organization, meaning the organization, possibly with the help of community members, is finding strategies within its control to be more diverse, equitable and inclusive. In other words, an internal, organizational DEI strategy. **It is not surprising this may be the case since community-wide plans are time and resource intensive and sometimes challenging to implement, whereas an organizational plan may be more feasible to tackle and implement.**

Given that Council is more interested in a community-wide, community-driven plan, the two models selected to highlight in the PowerPoint (Attachment A) are from Decatur, GA and Salem, MA.

STAFF COMMENTS:

Community-wide inclusion plans vary greatly in scope and purpose. The majority of city plans that exists now across the country are focused on the City organization and the actions it can take that it has direct control over. Many cities choose to take this more tangible approach at inclusiveness looking at their own policies and practices.

The City of Ames is no exception even though its plans are not written in a formal report. The DEI Coordinator continues focusing on building relationships with the underrepresented communities and assisting staff with ensuring City practices and policies are inclusive and community spaces are welcoming.

Community-driven, community-wide inclusion plans that bring together various segments of community stakeholders to collectively identify roles and action steps for participants to build a more inclusive community are not as common, but certainly doable. It requires significant time and resources.

Ames has always strived to be a community where all people enjoy where they live, work and play, and feel a sense of belonging. The 2024 statistically representative Resident Satisfaction Survey results showed that 80% of respondents agree or strongly agree with the statement, "I feel I belong at this town" and 72% agree or strongly agree that "Ames has a strong commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion." These percentages are considered a positive indicator, suggesting most people feel valued and included.

An important principle in inclusion and equity is recognizing that taking a one-size fits all approach does not always work for everyone. It is important to use different strategies to increase the sense of belonging amongst different stakeholder groups. **Learning more about how to be inclusive and implementing lessons learned has been the focus of the work of the DEI coordinator, who in 2025 will be renamed the Engagement Coordinator.**

This position's workplan in 2025 will continue to build deeper connections with underrepresented communities, on behalf of the City, and build partnership with key community institutions to foster inclusivity. Staff believes this is in alignment with Council goals and that at this time hiring a consultant to develop an inclusion plan is not necessary. An annual update of the work accomplished was presented to Council in [July 2024](#). Another update will be provided in July 2025.

ATTACHMENT(S):

[Attachment A - Community Inclusive Plan Models.pptx](#)