Division of Equity & Social Justice
Strategic Plan 2022
Vision

A County government that incorporates diversity, equity, and belonging into all aspects of our work to help achieve our organizational mission through fair and just governmental processes, equitable distribution of resources, and power to improve outcomes for all.

Mission

The mission of the County of Santa Clara is to plan for the needs of a dynamic community, provide quality services, and promote a healthy, safe and prosperous community for all.
Core Values

**Systems Transformation**
Address the root causes of multi-generational crisis and shift agency and power back to the hands of our most marginalized communities.

**Data-Driven Decision-Making**
Policies, programs, and strategies should be informed by data and be responsive to those affected by inequities in our communities.

**Authentic Community Engagement**
Policies, strategies, and processes should be informed by communities most affected by inequities in our community.
Accessibility & Accountability
Information, services, strategy-setting, and decision-making should be clear, transparent, accessible, and allow for engagement of all stakeholders in the county and our diverse community regardless of language or disability.

Mutually Beneficial Partnerships
Partnerships move at the speed of trust and should benefit all groups, with clear conversations about expectations and power.

Holding Complex, Intersectional Identities
Invitations and pathways must ensure a broad range of voices, especially those with intersectional marginalized identities and deeply systems-impacted experiences.
Who we are

The Division of Equity and Social Justice (DESJ) works to advance the county's mission by elevating the most pressing social issues facing our communities, accelerating action, and providing policy leadership across a wide breadth of issues impacting the most marginalized disenfranchised communities in Santa Clara County.

DESJ brings together community, community leaders, changemakers, researchers, subject matter experts, commissions, non-profits, and other governmental agencies to address root causes and to promote and strengthen equity and social justice in our community to achieve our vision.

DESJ consists of several offices focused on advancing equity in government. These offices impact children, women, girls, workers, immigrants, LGBTQ+ communities, individuals with Limited English Proficiency (LEP), individuals with disabilities, Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC), and those who are targets of hate and violence. DESJ sits within the Office of the County Executive, giving it the highest organizational level and influence within the County structure.
Who do we focus on, and Why?

Across every measure of well-being and life outcomes, persistent inequities exist that are deeply rooted in the foundation of our governmental institutions. Explicitly racist and exclusionary practices, policies, and laws put in place by governmental institutions many decades ago continue to have a multi-generational impact on our communities. For example, the historical and present-day disinvestment of redlined neighborhoods in the 1930s has negatively impacted income, education, community safety, housing, health, and wealth accumulation. We observe the most disparate and inequitable outcomes in communities impacted by the legacies of structural racism and discrimination across our county; this inequity has been by design, not by chance. DESJ emphasizes the need to address the root causes of the inequities that shape the current reality of the communities we are trying to positively impact through our work. We have a moral responsibility and shared urgency to address the underlying systems and root causes that drive the inequities we observe.
At DESJ, we believe that as government leaders committed to equity, we have the power to change the narrative from a government that harms to a government that can repair. We can do this by centering the perspectives, histories, and experiences of the communities we want to impact through our work.

Our unrelenting commitment drives us to service and social justice, both a value and an actionable approach. Equitable strategies acknowledge that people start in different places due to historical and present-day contexts; thus, a one-size-fits-all strategy will not result in transformational change.

At DESJ, we have a shared responsibility and goal for everyone to have full and equal access to information, services, resources, opportunities, and power, to improve outcomes for all.

To achieve this, we have developed a Pro-Equity approach that centers on data and community and helps guide the work across DESJ.
What is Our Pro-Equity Approach?

“We will advance equity through these 6 approaches.”
01. Change the Narrative

02. Subject Matter Expertise

03. Transformational Change

04. Partnerships and Community Engagement

05. Policy Analysis

06. Data, Evaluation, and Accountability
Change the Narrative

Goal: Normalize conversations to advance equity in Santa Clara County.
It is the role of DESJ to highlight and change narratives that perpetuate systemic racism, inequity, and bias to shift the operations and transform systems to improve outcomes for all. Most people have not had an intentional and supportive space to discuss race, equity, and belonging. Because this conversation is often uncomfortable or difficult to engage in, the County must be deliberate and explicit in its goals to open the dialogue, bridging the gap between concept and value to action-oriented strategies.

County employees, as well as community leaders, should be able to have necessary discussions about the root causes of inequities and their impact on communities. Employees and leaders should question default thinking such as ableism, heterosexism, and white supremacy. Before changing something, you must name it, acknowledge it, and understand it to address it.

The narrative change focuses on authentic storytelling that highlights not just transgressions but also creates paths for reparations and problem-solving that consider the rich cultural wealth and collective assets of our community and workforce. We amplify the stories that unfold through data and showcase the power of diversity and our shared goals to create a more inclusive and just Santa Clara County.
How we will make a difference

Strategic Goal 1: Normalize conversations to advance equity in Santa Clara County

Strategy 1.1: Develop a shared understanding of the roots causes of unequal outcomes

Strategy 1.2: Build DESJ's capacity to normalize conversations about structural inequities

Strategy 1.3: Develop intersectional communication strategies across DESJ offices
Subject Matter Expertise

Goal: Foster effective and accountable leadership across the Division to advance DESJ priorities

DESJ will provide subject matter expertise and technical support to the County organization and community partners to increase a pro-equity mindset and action. To accomplish this, we commit to:

- Serve as a convener, connector, and facilitator to advance coordinated countywide equity and social justice efforts.
- Build capacity by providing training and technical support to local jurisdictions related to key policy areas that advance the County’s mission and vision of DESJ.
- Provide research and population trend information to support local jurisdictions and community partners to advance equity and social justice efforts.
How we will make a difference

Strategic Goal 1: Foster effective and accountable leadership across the Division to advance DESJ priorities

Strategy 2.1: Engage with leading experts around subject matter and emerging practices

Strategy 2.2: Serve as a convener, connector, and facilitator to advance coordinated countywide equity and social justice efforts.

Strategy 2.3: Build capacity by providing training and technical support to local jurisdictions related to key policy areas that advance the mission and vision of DESJ

Strategy 2.4: Provide research and population trend information to support local jurisdictions and community partners to advance equity and social justice efforts.
Transformational Change

Goal: Transform systems, structures, and policies that perpetuate inequities and structural racism. Government systems have played a central role in setting up the current state of inequity. DESJ’s priorities lay the necessary groundwork for the ultimate work of creating systems that are equitable and sustainable. Equitable systems allocate resources of time, human capital, and finances in ways that level the playing field and invest in the areas where they are most needed. Equitable systems acknowledge that not everyone starts from the same place or needs the same things. Equitable systems are about creating equal opportunity – and to do so will require that some facing more obstacles receive greater support. Carrying this work forward also requires centering the expertise of those who understand it best – those with lived experience. A transformed local government is where those with lived experience are the ones who are guiding the work and making the decisions. Thus, having robust mechanisms for involving the community in decision-making is critical.
How we will make a difference

Strategic Goal 1: Transform systems, structures, and policies that perpetuate inequities and structural racism.

Strategy 3.1: Embed an equity approach in the process and outcomes of County work.

Strategy 3.2: Build organizational capacity to operationalize an equity lens

Strategy 3.3: Assess and address systemic barriers and root causes
Partnerships and Community Engagement

Goal: Cultivate and strengthen cross-sector partnerships for collective impact

Democracy requires public participation and authentic community engagement. Local governments are responsible for engaging their community members in a robust and meaningful way. This engagement is best cultivated over time by building trust in a reciprocal and mutually beneficial manner.

An equitable, inclusive community engagement approach to public decisions ensures that the people most affected and most marginalized have a say in the decisions that affect their lives. Effective community engagement can lead to decisions that result in a more equitable distribution of resources that positively impact people’s everyday lives.
How we will make a difference

Strategic Goal 1: Cultivate and strengthen cross-sector partnerships for collective impact

Strategy 4.1: Engage in authentic engagement through intentional, meaningful relationship building.

Strategy 4.2: Develop and support strategic partnerships within the County structure and outside of it.

Strategy 4.3: Support community-based organizations to leverage their expertise toward advancing DESJ outcomes.
Goal: Shape the policy arena to support positive outcomes

DESJ partners with County departments, community partners, government agencies, and national organizations to identify and advocate for sound policies that advance the priorities of DESJ. DESJ’s policy development and research approach build on data and meaningful relationships between researchers and local communities. It is an interactive truth-seeking process. From defining the problem to community engagement, vetting, and amending, DESJ works to ensure that community members are co-creators in the design, implementation, and evaluation process.

DESJ will provide County departments and community partners with the support in identifying the most inclusive policies and implementing best practices related to equity and social justice. DESJ will provide information on policies, systems change strategies, and investments to dismantle social, historical, and institutional barriers. In partnership with communities, DESJ will establish and continue to refine culturally informed practices to ensure the respectful and effective engagement of our diverse communities. Fundamentally, the County will strengthen and build lasting relationships and partnerships to foster greater understanding and capacity building in the community and bring County services, programs, and policy closer to the people it serves.
How we will make a difference

Strategic Goal 1: Shape the policy arena to support positive outcomes

Strategy 5.1: Monitor and guide local, state, and federal policy in alignment with DESJ priorities

Strategy 5.2: Develop and advocate for an upstream policy agenda across sectors
Data, Evaluation, and Accountability

Goal: Build a robust data infrastructure to improve outcomes
DESJ believes local governments should be good stewards of public funds, have accessible pathways to engaging the decision-making process, and be held to high levels of performance and accountability. DESJ commits to maintaining data and story-driven evaluation systems, including robust measures of the progression and success of key indicators to monitor impact over time.

Data about equity is critical to progress toward increasing equity in our community and in our County systems. This data will be needed to understand the breadth and scope of inequities faced by those who have been marginalized, the needs they have, the barriers they face, and the contributions they offer that should be leveraged. Such data will also be critical for expanding awareness about existing inequities, increasing widespread commitment to addressing these issues, telling the story about how this work will benefit us all, tracking the progress made, and learning about what is and is not working the way. Furthermore, data must be made accessible to the community to whom it belongs through publicly available dashboards and efforts to eliminate the digital divide.
How we will make a difference

Strategic Goal 1: Build a robust data infrastructure to improve outcomes

Strategy 6.1: Enhance the breadth of data to better understand current DESJ priorities

Strategy 6.2: Develop staff capacity to use evidence and data to make decisions by using accurate, relevant, and actionable data to move County work forward.

Strategy 6.3: Create and maintain a data framework and infrastructure to identify inequities and inform policy, planning, implementation, and evaluation.

Strategy 6.4: Author and fund local research and data-collection methods to continuously build evidence for accountability, and shared responsibility of addressing complex social issues.
### Adverse Impacts
Practices or policies that appear neutral but have a discriminatory effect on a protected group.

### Anti-racist
An anti-racist is someone who supports an anti-racist policy through their actions or expressing anti-racist ideas. This includes expressing ideas that racial groups are equals and do not need developing and supporting policies that reduce racial inequity.

### Belonging
More than just being seen or feeling included, belonging entails having a voice and the opportunity to use it to make demands upon society and political institutions. Belonging is more than having access; it is about the power to co-create the structures that shape a community.

### Bias
Prejudice toward one group and its members relative to another group.

### Community Engagement
The process of working collaboratively with and through groups of people affiliated by geographic proximity, special interest, or similar situations to address issues affecting the well-being of those people.

### Cultural Humility
Incorporates a lifelong commitment to self-evaluation and critique, redressing power imbalances in the physician-patient dynamic, and developing mutually beneficial and non-paternalistic partnerships with communities on behalf of individuals and defined populations.
**Diversity**
Speaks only to the statistical presence of individuals of varying physical characteristics, cultures, or identities in a group. Diversity is silent on the subject of equity. In an anti-oppression context, therefore, the issue is not diversity but rather an equity. Often when people talk about diversity, they are thinking only of the “non-dominant” groups. Diversity requires a mix of people of different races, genders, sexual orientations, etc.

**Digital divide**
The growing gap between those who have access to digital technology and those who do not. Digital technology includes but is not limited to computers, smartphones, or the internet.

**Disenfranchised communities**
Communities are deprived of the rights or privileges of full participation in society or any community or organization, especially of the opportunity to influence policy or to make one’s voice heard.

**Equity**
Just and fair inclusion into a society in which all can participate, prosper, and reach their full potential.

**Equity Lens**
A critical thinking approach to undoing racial and economic disparities by evaluating burdens, benefits, and outcomes for underserved communities.

**Inclusion**
Authentically bringing traditionally excluded individuals and/or groups into processes, activities, and decision/policy making in a way that shares power.

**Individual Racism**
Pre-judgment, bias, or discrimination based on race by an individual.

**Intersectionality**
An approach largely advanced by women of color argues that classifications such as gender, race, class, sexual orientation, nationality, and others cannot be examined in isolation from one another; they interact and intersect in individuals’ lives, in society, in social systems, and are mutually constitutive.
Institutional Racism
Policies, practices, and procedures that work better for white people than for people of color, sometimes unintentionally or inadvertently.

Othering
A set of dynamics, processes, and structures that engender marginality and persistent inequality across any of the full range of human differences based on group identities. In opposition to belonging, othering is a frame that captures the many forms of prejudice and persistent marginalities such as race, gender, sexuality, religion, income, and disability. The term also explains and analyzes a set of common policies and practices that engender othering.

Marginalized communities
Communities that are (intentionally or unintentionally) distanced from access to power and resources and constructed as insignificant, peripheral, or less valuable/privileged to a community or “mainstream” society. Marginalized groups or people are those excluded from mainstream social, economic, cultural, or political life. Examples of marginalized groups include, but are not limited to, groups excluded due to race, religion, political or cultural group, age, gender, or financial status.

Marginalized identity
An identity that causes or has historically caused a person of such an identity to be disproportionately subject to discrimination, harassment, or other negative treatment as a result of the identity.

Pro-Equity
Pro-equity means being racially just and inclusive and consistently taking action to eliminate the root causes of inequities.

Race
A non-scientific classification of human beings created by Europeans (Whites) that assigns human worth and social status for establishing and maintaining privilege and power.

Racial Inequity
When race can be used to predict life outcomes, e.g., disproportionality in education (high school graduation rates), jobs (unemployment rate), criminal justice (arrest and incarceration rates), etc.
Redlining
A form of illegal disparate treatment in which a lender provides unequal access to credit, or unequal terms of credit, because of the race, color, national origin, or other prohibited characteristic(s) of the residents of the area in which the credit seeker resides or will reside or in which the residential property to be mortgaged is located.

Root Causes
The underlying reasons that create the differences seen in health outcomes. They are the community conditions that determine whether people have access to the opportunities and resources they need to thrive.

For example, the root cause of unequal allocation of power and resources creates unequal social, economic, and environmental conditions. Those conditions then lead to poorer health outcomes.

Social Justice
A process, not an outcome, which (1) seeks fair (re)distribution of resources, opportunities, and responsibilities; (2) challenges the roots of oppression and injustice; (3) empowers all people to exercise self-determination and realize their full potential; (4) and builds social solidarity and community capacity for collaborative action.

Structural Racism
History and the current reality of institutional racism across all institutions combined to create a system that negatively impacts communities of color.

White Supremacy
The idea (ideology) that white people and the ideas, thoughts, beliefs, and actions of white people are superior to BIPOC communities and people and their ideas, thoughts, beliefs, and actions. While most people associate white supremacy with extremist groups like the Ku Klux Klan and the neo-Nazis, white supremacy is ever present in our institutional and cultural assumptions that assign value, morality, goodness, and humanity to the white group while casting Black, Indigenous, and People of Color as worthless (worth less), immoral, bad, and inhuman and "undeserving." Drawing from critical race theory, "white supremacy" also refers to a political or socio-economic system where white people enjoy structural advantages and rights that other racial and ethnic groups do not, both at a collective and an individual level.
**Glossary Sources**

**Baltimore Racial Justice Action**
- [https://bmoreantiracist.org/resources/our-definitions](https://bmoreantiracist.org/resources/our-definitions)

**City of Portland, Office of Equity and Human Rights**
- [https://www.portlandoregon.gov/oehr/article/581458](https://www.portlandoregon.gov/oehr/article/581458)

**Cultural Humility Versus Cultural Competence: A critical distinction in defining physician training outcomes in multicultural education, Drs. Tervalon & Murray-Garcia**

**Dismantling Racism**
- [https://www.dismantlingracism.org/ Racism Defined](https://www.dismantlingracism.org/)

**Disparities in Health Care and the Digital Divide**

**Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: Strategies for Facilitating Conversations on Race, Hollins & Govan**
- [https://books.google.com/books/about/Diversity_Equity_and_Inclusion.html?id=dpfCBwAAQBAJ](https://books.google.com/books/about/Diversity_Equity_and_Inclusion.html?id=dpfCBwAAQBAJ)

**Government Alliance on Race and Equity**

**How to be an Antiracist, Ibram X. Kendi**
- [https://www.ibramxkendi.com/how-to-be-an-antiracist](https://www.ibramxkendi.com/how-to-be-an-antiracist)
Interagency Fair Lending Examination Procedures
• https://www.ffcic.gov/PDF/fairlend.pdf

King County, Office of Equity and Social Justice

OpenSource Leadership Strategies
• https://opensourceleadership.com/

Othering & Belonging Institute
• https://belonging.berkeley.edu/redefining-who-belongs/glossary

PolicyLink Equity Manifesto
• https://www.policylink.org/about-us/equity-manifesto

Principles of Community Engagement, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
• https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/communityengagement/pce_what.html

Racial Equity Tools
• https://www.racialequitytools.org/glossary

UC Berkeley Social Welfare
• Social Justice Symposium | Berkeley Social Welfare

Understanding and Identifying Root Causes of Inequities
• Understand and Identify Root Causes of Inequities | County Health Rankings & Roadmaps

Undoing Racism: A Philosophy of International Social Change, Chisom & Washington
• https://books.google.com/books/about/Undoing_Racism.html?id=pstXAAAACAAJ
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desj.sccgov.org