

TO: Madison Food Policy Council

FROM: Community Engagement Work Group – Erica Anderson, Nan Fey, Jenn Lam, Claire Mance, Teal Staniforth; *George Reistad, Nick Heckman (staff)*

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RE: Equity Questions Activity - Summary of Response Findings

History of Community Engagement Work Group

- Michael Bell, Nan Fey, and other council members encouraged the council to be more externally facing. There was a sense that the council could be doing to connect with the community and the first step was to gather information from community leaders.
- The City of Madison's Racial Equity and Social Justice Initiative (RESJI) launched in 2014, which prompted conversations about the MFPC having a CEWG and a way to better interface with the community to drive council priorities. The council had been in existence for 2-3 years when these conversations commenced, the Community Engagement Work Group (CEWG) formed as a result.
- There was recognition that the MFPC could explore the use of RESJI resources to inform their work through work groups. The group interviewed Tariq Saqqaf from Neighborhood Resource Teams and Beverly Hutcherson for UW & Operation Fresh Start, and also explored Lexa Dundore's (UW-Extension) [Food System Racial Equity Assessment Tool](#)
- The fundamental question was whether the CEWG would function as a PR branch of the MFPC or function as a conduit between the public and the Council. Lack of consensus led the Community Engagement Work Group in early 2017 to take a hiatus from their work for the purpose of revamping the scope and focus of the group.
- In early/mid-2018, the work group re-launched, examining the role of the work group's internal focus on racial equity and community input and how we integrate those considerations into the MFPC's work.

Equity Questions

In late 2018, Work Groups were asked to provide Progress Reports as a means to inventory current and future projects. This reflection was previously conducted in 2016. Following these reports, Equity Questions were designed to determine whether work groups were identifying current equity concerns and considerations in their work and to gauge whether groups had a process for doing so.

These questions aimed to lead work groups in a reflection of their methods for collecting information and scoping their work. An intended outcome of this activity was to assist work groups in determining if their approach incorporated an equity lens, or whether it needed to shift focus in order to do so.

What Was Learned?

What Drives Work Group Projects? (Sources of Information & Work Group Formation)

- Work group data and information sources, which incorporate a mix of national and local perspective both is quantitative and qualitative, provide a foundation for project focus
 - National initiatives (e.g. [2014 Pollinator Partnership](#))

- Local community needs (e.g. Expert interviews, interviews/evaluation from residents/organizations)
- Executive direction (e.g. 2014 SEED Grants mayoral appropriation)
- Inherited tasks (e.g. Community Gardens Committee)
- Work Groups support relevant City agency initiatives
 - E.g. Food Waste - shifted focus from biodigestion and infrastructure (Collaborated with Engineering Division and Streets Division) to food recovery (community organizations)
 - E.g. Comprehensive Plan
- Many work groups reported that their decision-making processes are informed by the [Food Access Improvement Map](#), developed by City Planning Division and Public Health Madison & Dane County
 - Healthy Retail Access Program
 - SEED Grants
- Community needs drives the demand for work and the MFPC translates that into implementation strategies
 - Ex: Community demand for Allied Drive grocery store helped launched the Healthy Retail Access Program
 - Ex: Evaluations received from SEED grant recipients (community-based orgs) changed the project application process for 2018.
- Membership Interests
 - Because of the open membership structure, there is direct community involvement in the form of food systems professionals who are not MFPC members, but who help advance the priority of each work group. However, some of these professionals are already engaged in these various fields of work and may not necessarily represent the broader community or general population the project intends to serve.
- Community Input and Impact
 - There are inherent challenges with how we gather diverse feedback and representation on the issues facing our communities.

Conclusions

- Seeing our work through an equity lens is critically important, but it is not the only lens that has historically guided or currently guides the council's work.
- There are inherent challenges with how we garner diverse feedback and create work groups representative of the Madison community
 - Demographics of Madison
 - Interest and bandwidth of diverse constituencies
 - Rigid/formalized structure of City Committees (meetings, attendance, participation model, etc.)
- The Community Engagement Work Group has determined that there is an interest in having structures and processes to guide equity considerations and also engage with the public to gather input and be more community-facing
- Many work groups turn to professionals working in food systems or local government because it is easier - and sometimes more impactful - to invite those people into the current structure to participate or share perspective.

Recommendations

- At the recommendation of Kate Clancy, food policy councils should have some form of a governance body.
 - The membership and structure of this body would require exploration and group decision-making by the full food policy council.
- The Community Engagement Work Group will explore the following:
 - Identify tools that work groups can use to think about equity and incorporate equity exercises into their work.
 - Determine appropriate methods to seek community input
- The Madison Food Policy Council should collectively develop a mission statement, define goals and objectives, and create a structure to meet them.
 - Doing so will create parameters by which the governance committee will provide support and facilitate decision making about how the council and work groups function.
 - This will aid work groups in integrating new methods for understanding and implementing community priorities.
- Council vacancies should be announced at the end of every meeting to encourage members to think of potential recruits.

Next Steps

- Madison Food Policy Council approves this summary of findings.
- The Community Engagement Work Group will then explore the feasibility and appropriateness of forming a Governance body
 - Engage with experts at the local and national level about the organizational structure, reform, and management of such a body.
 - Research models appropriate for our council size, scope, and structure
 - The work group will bring formal recommendations to the full Food Policy Council as an action item.