

Proposed DEI Next Steps for the Council and Town of Orono – March 29, 2021

The following is a high-level overview of how Orono can move forward working on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion work. This plan includes initiatives for the Council, Town of Orono staff, and community engagement.

Council Work: Stakeholder Engagement, Education, Policy, Tools, Asset Inventory, Transparency

1. April 2021: **Stakeholder Engagement**

- Appoint Ad Hoc Committee DEI Stakeholder Committee from May 1-Aug 1 (See attachment “Orono DEI Ad Hoc Committee”)
- August - Schedule a public meeting for the Ad Hoc DEI Committee to present its actionable recommendations. Council will identify priority items to implement that address short and long-term needs, particularly for ongoing stakeholder engagement in DEI in Orono and its municipal government.

2. April 2021 – Ongoing: **Education**

- One yearly training for the full Council to participate in together related to marginalized communities, to take place in a public meeting. This item would be akin to our yearly legal training and Council on-boarding process. Ideally, such a training would emphasize the ways in which legislative bodies positively or negatively impact marginalized communities when making policy. Community Development Committee identifies a trainer, makes a recommendation to council and staff schedules the session
- One training per year, self-selected and attended privately by individual Councilors, on a topic of their choice related to racial equity and social justice issues, to be presented upon briefly at a Council meeting, committee meeting, or workshop (where appropriate). Councilors are expected to publicly provide a brief summary presentation (~5-10 minutes) on their individually-attended training for transparency and accountability, while ensuring the Councilor a modicum of privacy when doing potentially difficult, introspective work.
- A quarterly workshop item devoted to discussing a book, film, documentary, etc. on a topic related to racial equity and social justice, self-selected by Council and established in the yearly Council workplan. When establishing the workplan each year, four Councilors have the option to volunteer to each select materials and lead a discussion in one of four yearly Council workshops. Council and the Town are expected to announce the book/media chosen 2 months in advance and encourage community participation and discussion via Library, School, Faith organization or other local settings. Council discussion will be public.
 - Q2 2021: [Local and Regional Government Alliance on Race & Equity toolkit Article](#) “Racial Equity Toolkit: An Opportunity to Operationalize Equity”. Questions, process, and framework for decision making to assess and determine equity in policy and projects.

3. May 2021 – August 2021: **Policy**

- Consider adopting a Land Acknowledgement Statement or Resolution with regard to indigenous land similar to the statement on the UMaine and Orono DEI Partnership web site

- Consider adopting a Diversity Calendar that would highlight and predict events council should be responding to throughout the year in order to solidify and acknowledge the value of DEI, and to highlight, and educate the council, staff, and community on historic and current events representing the perspective of diverse populations and their impact on residents of Orono and marginalized populations
 - Additional items as identified for ongoing consideration beyond August identified by the Ad Hoc DEI Committee
4. May 2021 – September 2021: **Tools**
- Consider right sizing the Local and Regional Government Alliance on Race & Equity toolkit for a community the size of Orono to adopt and utilize for considering race and equity in all decision-making processes. This tool is used as part of the development of policies, plans, programs and budgets. The tool can be used to facilitate conscious consideration of equity and examine how communities of color and low-income populations will be affected by a proposed action/decision of the Council and Town.
 - Adopt a “Glossary of Terms” so Council and staff can share a common inclusive language
5. June and July 2021: **Asset Inventory**
- Community Development Committee draft an initial list of:
 - Proclamations, ordinances, and resolutions specifically in support of DEI
 - Consider if policies developed in the past that directly impact current decisions might further inequity, in order to raise awareness of historical, systemic issues.
 - Full council engagement in DEI initiatives and trainings.
6. May 2021-July 2021 and into the future: **Transparency**
- Continue to increase transparency and accessibility by including time-stamped links, where appropriate, to meeting minutes.
 - Post council meeting agendas along with related documents for discussion in one location with meeting notices on the Town web site
 - Consider expanding opportunities for stakeholder public comment in Council conversations at the Committee and Council level related to DEI work

Town Work: Staff Engagement, Education, Policy, Tools, Asset Inventory, Transparency

1. **Staff Engagement**
 - a. Seek anonymous staff input on an ongoing basis on diversity, equity and inclusion while working for the Town of Orono
 - b. Publicly identify a staff DEI Work Group inclusive of the highest-level leadership of select departments and others that are specifically trained on how to receive, respect, acknowledge, and address DEI related issues
2. **Education**
 - a. Continue DEI educational efforts by conducting annual DEI training for all town staff and/or encourage participation in quarterly Council media/book discussion.
3. **Policy**
 - a. Adopt policies and practices to recruit, hire, on-board, promote, and retain a diverse and inclusive workforce. Specifically, with regard to mitigating the potential for bias in

the hiring and retention decisions through consistent, evidence-based tools, procedures and training.

- b. Adopt a policy for how to address DEI issues brought to the staff DEI work group

4. Tools

- a. Hiring tool/worksheet that helps mitigate for potential bias
- b. Racial Equity Decision Making Tool for internal projects/initiatives/purchasing run internally

5. Asset Inventory

- a. Draft initial inventory of town staff involvement in DEI initiatives, trainings, and policy in Orono. These might include those in the police and fire departments, human resources, in partnership with UMaine, and across the region, and policies specifically directed toward supporting DEI - that can be shared on the Town of Orono web site.

6. Transparency

- a. Annually or on an as needed basis, update inventory of Town staff and council DEI activities to share on the Town of Orono web page
- b. Consider expanding opportunities for stakeholder public comment in Council conversations at the Committee and Council level related to DEI work.

Orono Ad Hoc Committee on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (3-months)

Purpose: The Town of Orono seeks community and stakeholder engagement on diversity, equity, and inclusion in Orono. Orono's Town Council empowers this DEI committee to develop actionable recommendations to present to the council and town to sustain and grow Orono as an even more welcoming and diverse community.

Council proposes the launch of an ad hoc committee on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion for 90 days to help the town and council on:

1. Developing a survey to understand the current environment for diversity, equity, and inclusion in Orono.
 - a. The Town will host this "climate" survey online and have paper copies. Responses can be submitted anonymously, if desired. Paper surveys may be picked up from outside the town office anytime and completed surveys can be left in a drop box outside the town office, or via mail or email.
 - b. The questions will serve as a discussion guide for council, community members, and organizations to use at in person or virtual constituent engagement events. These small group responses can be summarized by a participant scribe and reported back to the Town via drop box, mail or email. Ideally, each event will produce a bullet point summary of the question responses and specific, actionable recommendations. If groups desire, one or two council members (limited number so the meeting isn't considered a public town meeting) can be invited to these sessions. Council member(s) are not necessary for these events or responses to be submitted to the town. Other formats can include:
 - i. Larger group meetings that include an option to submit written comments during the meeting via Zoom or on paper if in person.
 - ii. Larger group meetings where people break out into small groups to "interview" each other and report back to the larger group on what their partners shared. Zoom breakout rooms can do this.
 - iii. Using trusted advocates/outreach and engagement liaisons to collect information from communities that we know are typically underrepresented in public processes.
 - c. The Ad Hoc Committee will review survey results and synthesize priority, actionable recommendations to present to the council at a public meeting. The committee can engage support as desired from the Town, Community Development Committee, and/or Council committee liaison in summarizing their work. The committee also has up to \$2,000 to engage a consultant, if needed, to summarize their findings and help present their recommendations to council. Assistance will be provided to engage that consultant, if desired.
 - d. Council's public meeting to hear the committee's findings and recommendations will provide an opportunity for community members to provide further input on the plan and next steps.
2. Develop a preliminary asset inventory of local, or relevant regional, DEI initiatives, committees, organizations, resources, ongoing trainings, and support that will get posted on the UMaine Orono Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Partnership website. Seek an inventory inclusive of input from:
 - a. Survey results highlighting community member's knowledge of local DEI assets. Many existing organizations within Orono are already working on these issues. Some of these include: The Antiracism and Equity in Education Team and the Gender and Sexuality Alliance affiliated with RSU 26 and the Multicultural Student Center, the interfaith Social Action Committee, UMaine Office of International Programs, Rainbow Resource Center, Wilson Center, Decolonizing UMaine, and numerous UMaine student groups

- b. List from Town staff of internal and regional initiatives (including the Town Staff DEI Work Group, UMaine and Town of Orono DEI Initiative, as well as the Town of Orono Police DEI training, Community Development Officer. Mandatory town staff trainings, and regional work such as the City of Bangor DEI committee, etc.)
 - c. List from Council via the Community Development Committee (including relevant Council trainings, resolutions, proclamations, ordinances, education, comprehensive plan, etc.)
3. Identify actionable priority recommendations to be presented to the Council on how the Council, municipal government, and community can:
- a. Continue to engage stakeholders with lived experience
 - b. Fill gaps in local DEI assets to support a more welcoming community
 - c. Consider the perspective of those with lived experience in policy and budget decisions
 - d. Engage and educate residents, council, staff, and town committee members on DEI
 - e. Collaborate with local and regional DEI efforts to efficiently amplify, rather than duplicate, current initiatives
4. Share a 45-day and 90-day update on the committee's work with council either via the council liaison or by committee members

Membership (3-month term):

The Council seeks a diverse membership of 9 people, primarily engaging individuals with lived experience in a marginalized population that wish to amplify their voice in the decision-making process of our community. Orono residents are preferred. Individuals that are not Orono residents or do not directly identify with a marginalized population may also serve on the committee if they are leaders of an Orono-based organization, department, group, or committee representing a marginalized population. Council particularly seeks individuals that represent diversity of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, age, physical ability, religious belief, political belief, and other characteristics and beliefs.

The Orono Town Manager will serve as an ex officio support to the committee, present to answer questions, and identify follow up action items as needed.

The committee's launch will be supported by a council liaison. This liaison will assist if needed in helping the committee get started, but hold no decision-making power. Council liaison will not participate in developing recommendations to present to the council.

Officers and Decision-Making Process:

At its first meeting, the Committee shall elect a Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, and scribe (a member of the committee or town staff) that will track attendance to ensure a quorum, summarize decisions the group voted on, and action items for whom and when. These notes shall be emailed to the committee 1 week after the meeting.

A majority vote decision making process will be used for this group, requiring a 5–7-member quorum (quorum size will depend on the size of committee, ideally 9 members). The council encourages the group to take the time to discuss and achieve near consensus, rather than move forward with split vote decisions. Staff or council liaison can provide guidance if there are challenges in decision making.

Ideas for Ad Hoc Committee to Consider for an Orono DEI Community Stakeholder Engagement Survey/Discussion Guide

The following questions are a starting point for the ad hoc committee to consider while developing an Orono DEI environment/climate survey. The ad hoc committee will develop the final survey/discussion guide.

The Town of Orono's Ad Hoc Committee on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion seeks input from community members on their experiences in Orono, and their hopes for the community. This input will be used to develop a set of actionable recommendations for how Orono can be more welcoming and diverse. The recommendations will be presented to the Orono Town Council by August, 2021.

Survey responses can be filled out online at Orono.org, paper copies can be picked up and dropped off at the Orono Town office outdoor drop box or mailed to the Town office at: _____. If you want to gather the input from a group of people at a meeting, please summarize their answers to each question with specific, actionable recommendations, and email, mail or drop off your group response.

1. The Town of Orono values diversity and seeks to understand if it is achieving its goals of being a community that is safe and welcoming for all people. Do you agree or disagree with the following statements:
 - a. Orono is a welcoming community for all people.
 - b. Orono's services are equitable and accessible for all.
 - c. I know how to participate in Town issues that I care about with the town council
 - d. I know how to participate in Town issues that I care about with town staff
 - e. I know how to participate with Town issues I care about with the town's boards and committees.
 - f. I know who to safely speak to in the Town if I experience a situation where I feel that diversity, equity, justice, and inclusion are not being respected.
 - g. I do not experience barriers accessing services provided by the Town of Orono.
 - h. Orono has strong values that respect and support diversity, equity, and inclusion for all people
2. What would you like to see happen in Orono that would make it a more welcoming and equitable community?
3. What can Orono do to better serve you and all residents in the Orono community?
4. Orono wants to understand and support the work already going on in our community in support of DEI. What other groups/initiatives/organizations are you aware of in Orono (or involved in) that support DEI? Some of the entities that we are aware of are: INSERT a list some well-known entities-UM Multicultural Center, Orono Pride, Center for Community Inclusion, Islamic Center of Maine, etc. Please list up to 10 additional efforts in Orono that you are aware of:
5. Are you an Orono resident?
6. Should Orono seek the participation of people with lived experience, or those who lead organizations that support those populations, to participate in an ongoing DEI committee? The committee would identify, work on, and highlight DEI issues that impact Orono, as well as identify and help implement ways for Orono to continually improve in these areas.
 - a. If so, would you be interested in serving on that committee?
 - b. Please share your name, and your best phone and email contact information.
7. OPTIONAL: Do you directly identify or align with a population that has been marginalized?
 - a. CONSIDER THESE FOR MORE OPTIONAL QUESTIONS:
 - i. If so, consider sharing how you identify: _____
 - ii. If not, do you directly work with or serve in a leadership position working on DEI issues in our region?