

June 2, 2020

To: Washington County Board of Commissioners and Senior Staff

From: Washington County Racial Equity Collaborative

Re: Coronavirus Relief Fund

Dear Chair Harrington and Washington County Board of Commissioners (BOC) and senior staff:

The Racial Equity Collaborative (REC) has observed a marked shift in the perspectives, approaches, and decisions made by the BOC to advance equity in Washington County. We applaud your efforts and appreciate the opportunities in which our members and other community-based organizations have been invited to participate in public dialogue to achieve better outcomes for the most vulnerable residents of Washington County. Under your leadership, we are grateful for the past investments that the County has made in both the REC and culturally-specific organizations in service to communities of color, as well as the current agreements forged in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

We also recognize that equity is a continuous journey, and one which will require a sustained, long-term, and monumental effort to uproot inequality and plant justice in its place. Fifty years ago, Washington County had roughly 158,000 residents, and nearly 99% identified as White according to the 1970 U.S. Census. Today, the demographics of Washington County look dramatically different, yet the cultural, systemic, and institutional racism woven into the fabric of Oregon's history perpetuate racial inequality where "white institutions created it, white institutions maintain it and white society condones it," a conclusion by the Kerner Commission established under President Lyndon Johnson's administration in response to the race riots of the 60s. Bringing us back to the present, we commend the BOC's statement denouncing the "death by force" of George Floyd under the knee of a Minneapolis police officer, and we share your outrage that over 50 years later, heinous acts continue to be perpetrated against black and brown people in the name of law and order. The riots continue.

In the spirit of collaboration, we would like to offer comments and questions regarding the framework of the Coronavirus Relief Fund (CRF) Workgroup recently adopted by the BOC during the June 2, 2020 regular Board meeting. We anticipate many of the questions we raise have already been considered by the workgroup and the BOC, but the REC was not involved in the specifics of the workgroup's recommendations, and in the County's effort to act swiftly, there was very little time for us to review, much less ascertain all that went into the process.

As additional context, we include Attachment A which contains our brief public testimony during the June 2, 2020 BOC Board Meeting's Oral Communications, as well as Attachment B which contains our Mid-Year Update and recommendations submitted to the BOC on Friday, May 29, part of which specifically references the CRF, and all of which is relevant to the broader dialogue regarding the County's Covid-19 response.

First, we have a few comments and questions that apply generally to the framework and proposed allocations:

- 1) Communities most impacted by Covid-19 must be included to provide input with respect to funding recommendations that affect their health and well-being.

- a) How were communities most impacted by Covid-19 included in the CRF workgroup to develop the workgroup's specific allocation recommendations?
  - b) How will these communities be involved in subsequent requests and allocations for CRF funding for the remainder of the calendar year?
- 2) The county, cities, and special districts ("Government") should avail themselves of all sources of funding to creatively and effectively respond to Covid-19.
- a) Question: How are all other sources of funds being exhausted by the Government, such as those available from FEMA for which the Government is eligible to apply, in a way that preserves the use of CRF funds which are, presumably, more flexible to allocate?
- 3) It is not clear how allocations are apportioned under the section Protect Public Health which represents 61% of the County's entire CRF allocation.
- a) What is the breakdown of how \$64M is proposed to be allocated for the county operations listed under Protect Public Health?
- 4) It is not clear what monies have already been spent or committed versus money earmarked for future estimated expenditures.
- a) Question: What portion of the allocations represent money already spent or committed versus that which remains available for use?
  - b) Question: Can the county provide clear distinction between general fund budgeted expenditures and the CRF allocation proposals?
- 5) Covid-19 expenditures should represent the highest and best use of CRF funding, differentiating between what is merely allowable versus what is most justified, for the benefit of the Washington County community.
- a) How do the proposed allocations directly impact the most vulnerable residents and business owners in Washington County?
  - b) What activities may be considered a necessary cost of doing business and recouped through other means, perhaps over a longer time horizon, so that CRF and other special funding may be used to satisfy the immediate and present needs of the county's most vulnerable residents who have no means of outside support and may not survive the devastating health and economic impacts of Covid-19?

Our next set of comments/questions are specific to the activities listed under Principles.

### **Protect Public Health**

- 1) Funds allocated for telecommuting and other support services should be designated to public health, EOC, and County Administration staff and elected officials whose functions directly support the public health of county residents.
- 2) PPE, thermometers, and cleaning supplies that are reserved for others beyond health care workers, emergency responders, and other essential public health workers, should prioritize the most vulnerable workers and residents.

- 3) The communities most impacted need to be an integral part in the planning and implementation of contact tracing, and CRF funding should be allocated directly to community-based organizations that serve them.
- 4) Individuals and families required to isolate as a result of testing and contact tracing must receive the highest level of support to ensure their health and economic well-being.
  - a) Question: What constitutes support for families and individuals who are isolated by Public Health due to Covid-19? How will the level of support be determined? What additional measures will be taken to support communities of color who are disproportionately impacted, as well as immigrants and refugees for whom English is not their heart language?
- 5) Respite Center should provide culturally-specific services for immigrants and refugee.
- 6) Mental health residential treatment needs to prioritize communities of color and the most vulnerable residents.
- 7) Wellness programs should prioritize people of color.
  - a) Question: What is the justification of prioritizing the Sheriff's Office staff over other County staff, such as Public Health workers or communities of color who are disproportionately traumatized by racial profiling and mass incarceration?
- 8) Communities of color should be prioritized in the testing for Covid-19 and Covid-19 antibodies.
  - a) How will communities of color and other vulnerable populations be prioritized above the rest of the population?
  - b) How are costs currently covered for testing?
  - c) Will residents bear any future costs associated with testing?
- 9) Increased costs that do not benefit the community's public health should be treated as the cost of doing business and covered through means other than CRF funds, if at all possible.
  - a) How does an anticipated surge of applications from staff for FMLA, OFLA, workers compensation claims, and the use of temporary leave policies represent a public health problem that should best be funded by CRF?
  - b) Do these costs include expenses already incurred and/or anticipated? How will impacted communities be involved in county's decisions to determine essential staffing needs for EOC and other employee costs as we enter recovery?
  - c) What percentage of cost is expected to be incurred for administration of the CARES Act programs?
  - d) How will those most impacted by Covid-19 be involved in vetting the decisions made by the County Administrator regarding "other qualified items and programs?"
- 10) Cities and Special Districts must adequately describe health and safety facility upgrades and supplies that are separate and distinct from already budgeted general operations and justify these requests based on the benefits to public health.
  - a) How will cities and Special Districts be held accountable for expenditures?
  - b) Who will those most impacted by Covid-19 be involved in vetting the decisions made for prioritizing health and safety facility upgrades?

### **Stabilizing the Local Economy**

- 1) County should not reimburse cities for dollars spent, but rather reinvest in business assistance grant programs, especially for those small businesses that have little to no access to current systems of public assistance.

- 2) Assistance for child care should target the most vulnerable populations, and an assessment should be made of the actual demand to confirm the prioritization of these business operations.
- 3) Countywide small business support should prioritize the sectors that are not currently served well by the existing public support systems infrastructure.
  - a) How is the County determining the types of small businesses that are most deeply impacted by the Covid-19 crisis?
  - b) How will the county prioritize the most vulnerable business owners and sole proprietors including those led by BIPOC, women, veterans, and people with disabilities?
- 4) Current rent and mortgage assistance programs, such as those administered by Community Action, are severely limited in scope due to existing staff levels and systems.
  - a) How can the County ensure that rent and mortgage assistance be rapidly and effectively deployed to the most vulnerable residents?

The REC appreciates the BOC's consideration of our comments and questions pertaining to the Covid-19 response, and we are committed to working with you to ensure the best possible outcomes for those who are impacted most by this horrible pandemic. Please let us know how we can help strengthen the response that holds equity at the center in Washington County.

In service,



Marcus C. Mundy, Executive Director




Glenn Montgomery, Executive Director




Bridget Cooke, Executive Director




Chi Nguyen, Executive Director




Nathan Teske, Executive Director



## Attachment A

### Public Comments Submitted during Oral Communications of Board Meeting of Washington County Board of Commissioners June 2, 2020

Good morning Chair Harrington and Board of Commissioners. For the record, my name is Glenn Montgomery, Executive Director of Vision Action Network. I am offering public comment as co-convenor of the Racial Equity Collaborative, or the REC, a coalition of five organizations including Adelante Mujeres, APANO, Bienestar, Coalition of Communities of Color, and VAN. My comments primarily pertain to Agenda Item #2 – CARES Act Coronavirus Fund Workgroup Recommendations.

We first became aware of the details of these recommendations when they were included as addendums to the Board of Commissioners' board meeting agenda and published at 4:30pm last Friday, a little more than 1 business day from the time of this Board meeting. While we applaud the prior work of the county's Business Assistance Workgroup which included culturally-specific organizations to inform their decision-making, as well as the decision to contract with community-based organizations to help support the county-wide response to Covid-19, it's not clear to the REC how the Relief Fund workgroup engaged the broader community to arrive at its specific recommendations. I can't find any record of outreach for this effort. Admittedly, we are all moving at the speed of change, and I apologize if I am ill-informed.

Regardless, the questions I raise here still deserve attention. I refer to the Washington County Racial Equity Tool that was developed by the Emergency Operations Center Equity Officer and implemented throughout its branches.

The tool asks these broad questions:

1. Who are the key groups who would directly benefit from the decision or action?
2. Who is burdened or excluded from the benefits of the decision or action?
3. Are people directly impacted by the decisions and actions engaged in the decision and in keeping the county accountable to the outcomes?
4. What revisions are needed in the decisions and actions to avoid or mitigate inequitable impacts?

I am cognizant of the time and, if the Chair permits, I would like to submit a written document to the BOC and senior staff later today that includes more specific questions that elaborate further.

On behalf of the Racial Equity Collaborative, I thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration.

## Attachment B

### REC Mid-Year Update

May 29, 2020

To: Washington County Board of Commissioners  
From: Washington County Racial Equity Collaborative

Re: REC Mid-Year Update

Dear Chair Harrington and Washington County Board of Commissioners (BOC):

The Washington County Racial Equity Collaborative (REC) is committed to provide you information on our plans and progress as part of the agreement and funding award we received in December 2019. This update is consistent with that commitment and also reflects our recommendations for the outcomes identified in our internal Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).

Since this agreement, the world has dramatically changed, thus the questions we raise and the recommendations we offer reflect our present shared reality of COVID-19 and its impact on every facet of the County's and the REC's ongoing work portfolio. In some cases, we have altered our recommendations completely because of the pandemic, adjusting our work to match community needs. Admittedly, this update comes a month later than originally planned based on our partner agreement with Washington County (WashCo), though it follows an earlier set of recommendations that served as a proxy when the community was in the early grips of the Covid-19 crisis.

With that said, in this correspondence, we remind you of our initial charge, what we have achieved to date, what questions have surfaced from our recent conversations, and our recommendations that merge the goals and strategies enumerated in our MOU.

### **The Frame**

In our proposal, and as reflected in our members' internal MOU, the REC:

- Outlined its vision for a flourishing WashCo with a commitment to equity and racial justice via its communities of color;
- Named the challenges facing its communities of color based on systemic and institutional racism and the lack of civic infrastructure to counteract such systems;
- Set a goal to increase the level and impact of engagement with these communities;
- Identified two specific strategies to do so:
  - Strengthen the capacity of culturally specific nonprofits and partners by establishing a foundation to support the civic, economic, and cultural infrastructure that serves them directly;
  - Increase the collaboration between communities of color and existing bodies of leadership across sectors including government, business and education;
- Set multiple objectives encompassed by the strategies above;
- Identified a desired outcome “that Washington County is more prosperous and resilient because people of color successfully contribute to policy decisions, plans and investments in their schools, local businesses, and civic life for the benefit of the entire community,” along with specific outcomes for this first phase of funding:

## Current Status

This is an instructive, though not exhaustive, list of what we have done:

- Adhered to the vision of a flourishing WashCo by:
  - Maintaining frequent and iterative communication between WashCo staff and the REC on matters ranging from day to day operations, Civic Leaders program, Chief Equity and Inclusion Officer (CEIO) positions advice and contributions, housing structural analysis (with WashCo engaged consultants), and multiple sessions with different commissioners/agencies on WashCo civic engagement related issues;
- Addressed some of the challenges of systemic racism, through:
  - Monitoring, cultivating participation, and submitting testimony and feedback concerning the CEIO staff; submitted suggestions for position descriptions; uplifted COVID-19 issues regarding small business emergency funding, language/translation issues respective to sharing healthcare updates, workers not qualifying for federal/local government relief programs, etc.; participating on key advisory committees with frequent outreach from WashCo elected officials and staff (Kathryn Harrington, Pam Treece, Dick Schouten, Jerry Willey, Sia Lindstrom, Elizabeth Mazzara-Myers, and others);
- Increased impact with these communities through the actions above, as well as:
  - Specific outreach to communities of color prior for the publication and implementation of Small Business Emergency Grants responsive to COVID-19 impacts;
  - Participation in Chair Harrington's outreach to community-based organizations (CBOs);
  - Supporting the merger of WashCo's Community Engagement office/function with new CEIO office/function, creating greater cohesiveness of staff/duties, and hopefully, outcomes;
- Identified strategies to strengthen capacity and increase collaboration through the actions above, as well as:
  - Continued focus on the business sector with exponentially increased government interactions between WashCo and community;
  - Invited more members of REC to programs involving WashCo leadership (e.g. Building Bridges of Understanding, discussions on ICE, etc.)
- Met several objectives outlined in our original proposal, such as:
  - Built trust among partners and communities;
  - Identified and aligned mutual goals (Chair outreach, CBO Zoom meetings, etc.);
  - Identified communities of color priorities;
  - Improved traditional methods of funding partners to promote collaboration (vs competition) among culturally specific organizations (several REC members have co-written grants together based on our current collaboration and supported each other's application for funding);
- Realized desired outcomes as our collaboration grows and our interactions with WashCo multiplies with many points of entry (BOC/other leadership, Community Engagement, Government Relations, Housing, Law Enforcement, Public Health, etc.) which has increased REC's visibility and cooperation between partners.

## Questions for Board of Commissioners, COVID-19 Inclusive

We respectfully raise the following questions for the BOC's consideration with the hope of receiving specific replies to any actions taken, underway, and/or planned.

1. What policy decisions will you make and what *actionable* steps will you take to prioritize communities of color in the COVID-19 recovery plan?
2. How will you support small business owners and essential workers in critical sectors (e.g. food service, agricultural, retail, health care, personal services, etc.) as they navigate new risks/requirements for health protection (PPE et al)?
3. How will you support families of color who lack digital resources gain access to educational communication, unemployment filing, small business-related needs, etc.?
4. How will you involve communities of color in ongoing BOC decisions surrounding COVID-19 issues?
5. How will you include people of color in the planning and decision making to ensure that rebuilding increases economic, social and environmental/climate justice?
6. How will you use data to inform your decision making on COVID-19 and other WashCo issues?

## Current Recommendations

At this point in time, we offer the following recommendations for the BOC's consideration:

1. Communities of color writ large, and particularly the REC, should be involved and give advice regarding the best way to share information and receive input from residents of color, immigrants, language or technology-challenged residents, etc.
2. As WashCo has recently demonstrated in funding CBOs to advise planning and response efforts and conduct outreach and engagement, REC members and concomitant partners, should be participants on all critical advisory boards, economic development committees, fund allocation/disbursement committees, etc. with respect to COVID-19 related relief;
3. REC members be asked to inform how best to identify and reveal "hotspots" for COVID-19 infections, as communities of color, low income, those with pre-existing conditions, immigrants and other categories are most at risk due to health, intergenerational living conditions, and other factors;
4. Use data driven resources (REC-related researchers, universities, state/federal) to inform these decisions real time.
5. With support from the REC, ensure that the large cadre of contact tracers come from the recently unemployed, and are culturally and language specific individuals known to the community;

6. Use disaggregated, translated data in all reporting of information to communities, and use the most relevant conduits identified by REC members (e.g. texting, Spanish and other language radio or cable programming, the appropriate time to air to reach most folks, etc.)
7. Weave in the multiplicity of education and other electeds of color in Washington County to augment REC and WashCo engagement (e.g. school boards, fire and rescue, others).
8. Establish regular meetings with REC to ensure continuity of efforts and increased collaboration with communities of color;
9. Be clear and culturally specific in communications surrounding activities going forward.
10. Utilize Community-based Participatory models that have demonstrated the increased engagement of community in other municipalities by including the REC and other community members on hiring panels for WashCo's CEIO and other significant positions (director level and above);
11. For the next budget cycle, increase funding to expand the scope of work and number of participants in REC, even under COVID-19 constraints;
12. Use the \$104.66 million received from the federal government for COVID-19 relief, in part, by making *direct appropriations* to communities of color for a variety of purposes, such as:
  - a. Creation of resource hubs (as envisioned by Latinx partners);
  - b. Renters/homeowners protections;
  - c. Language/interpretation supports;
  - d. Small business supports;
  - e. PPE/increased testing in hotspots;
  - f. Enlistment of cultural leaders (churches, CBOs, low income housing experts) as conduit to get out more focused testing and information;
  - g. Bridging the school/digital divide;
  - h. Transportation;
  - i. Job search/retraining;
  - j. Oregon Workers Relief Fund (OWRF);
  - k. Food distribution/school lunch continuation/ summer program food/ food pantry;
  - l. Work with REC collectively, and organizations such as CCC directly, to develop of surveys, conduct research, and create disaggregated development tools to assist REC/WashCo in the identification of best targets for investment

In summary, the REC has made significant progress on the objectives and outcomes outlined in our original proposal to Washington County. In the second half of this year, the REC will continue to work with the County to address difficult questions, such as those we pose in this update, to act upon our recommendations, and to increase the engagement of communities of color, both in response to Covid-19, as well as in its day-to-day County operations. Finally, the REC will devote significant attention to create a 3-year Equity Action Plan, its final deliverable to the County as per our funding agreement.

We appreciate the increased collaboration demonstrated by the County's elected leadership and staff, and we look forward to your response to this mid-year update.

Sincerely,



Marcus C. Mundy, Executive Director



Glenn Montgomery, Executive Director



Bridget Cooke, Executive Director



Chi Nguyen, Executive Director



Nathan Teske, Executive Director



cc: Stephen Rhodes, Interim County Administrator  
Sia Lindstrom, Acting Assistant C