



Equity and Community Outreach Report to Board of County Commissioners



September 26, 2023

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Executive Summary

On August 24, 2021, the Board of County Commissioners directed the Equity and Community Office of Sustainability, Equity, and Economic Development Strategies (hereafter referred to as SEEDS) to complete the following items in response to the proposed Equity Plan presented on that date.

To assemble a 30-member Core Strategic Leadership team (hereafter referred to as CSLT) for equity across the organization, conduct an eight-month onboarding period, and utilize this CSLT to launch work forward on the Board's strategic priorities. This CSLT will also identify two departments integrating equity, beginning with FY2022, including creating performance goals, measures, and implementation plans.

Additional direction from the Board included the creation of an Equity Advisory Committee (hereafter referred to as EAC) by amending the initiating resolution to the Equity Advisory Committee to be named the Equity Advisory Council (hereafter referred to as the CST). Additional guidance was to seat the Council and utilize the EAC to work alongside staff to create implementation plans on equity in Alachua County.

Thirdly, to return to the Board with a Community Outreach structure and plan for the organization.

And finally, to provide the Board of County Commissioners with a formal social and racial equity onboarding workshop by the end of FY2022.

This report describes the above activities and the next steps for the Equity and Community Outreach Office of SEEDS.

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Description

This report describes the Phase 1 activities of the Equity and Community Outreach Office of SEEDS for FY 2021-2023 with the next steps for FY 2024. The report provides the background of the Board-initiated actions that launched the equity work within the organization and the activities undertaken since that effort and concludes with steps and considerations for Phase 2 and FY 2024.

Background: Motions and Actions

Equity Plan

In 2021, the Board of County Commissioners adopted the County's Equity Workplan Phase 1. The Workplan identified numerous strategies across the Alachua County government organization to better incorporate equity into the County's systems, work plans, and policies. One of the strategies identified in the Equity Workplan is a need to examine and potentially amend definitions of equity and how they are applied in the Comprehensive Plan.

The Alachua County Strategic Guide for Fiscal Year 2023, adopted by the Board of County Commissioners, identifies "Equitable and Resilient Community" as a priority for Alachua County. The Strategic Guide defines "equitable" as striving to treat everyone justly according to their circumstances, providing opportunity and access for everyone while focusing on closing existing equity and access gaps; it also defines resilience as integrating the environment, the local economy, and equity to achieve sustainability.

Equity and Community Outreach Manager Position

In 2021, The Board of County Commissioners approved and hired the County's first Equity and Community Outreach Manager. The Equity and Community Outreach Manager position aims to develop an initial infrastructure and proposal for county-wide equity and community engagement and provide leadership for their infusion across Alachua County. The job description defines this role as: "Building an infrastructure to ensure policy decisions are evaluated through an equity lens to create fair access to opportunity. Achieving this job will involve collaborating with County departments, employees, community members, and other stakeholders to make meaningful movement towards a more equitable Alachua County, providing leadership and vision to ensure the development and management of innovative and effective strategies to achieve equity for Alachua County residents; and collaborating with County leadership and community stakeholders to establish equity as a shared value across the organization and community to further advance the County's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion."

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[Previous Racial Reports co-commissioned by the Board of County Commissioners](#)

Understanding Racial Inequity in Alachua County

In 2018, the Bureau of Economic and Business Research (BEBR) at the University of Florida published a report titled "Understanding Racial Inequity in Alachua County." This report was commissioned by Alachua County, Alachua County Public Schools, the City of Gainesville, Gainesville Area Chamber of Commerce, Santa Fe College, UF Health, and the University of Florida to quantitatively document and provide insights about the extent, nature, and source of racial inequities in Alachua County. The report provided baseline data on specific categories of racial disparity, including economic well-being, education, health, housing, transportation, land use, and energy, and identified geographic areas where indicators of inequity were concentrated.

[Alachua County Charter Ballot Amendment](#)

Identification and Elimination of Racial and Gender Bias in Alachua County Policies

In 2020, the Board of County Commissioners voted to place a Charter Amendment on the ballot stating that, "The County officially acknowledges the existence of potential racial and gender bias in County policies and the delivery of programs and services and that the impacts of racial and gender bias are pervasive and increase disparities and inequality to the detriment of the citizens of Alachua County; and the elimination of racial and gender bias in County programs and services will demonstrate the County's leadership in treating all of its citizens fairly; and, racial and gender bias particularly disadvantages low-income communities, communities of color and other vulnerable populations that have fewer resources to withstand negative impacts of such bias; and the County officially acknowledges the need to annually examine policies for all County operations and endeavor to eliminate all elements of racial and gender bias in both the design and delivery of County programs and services...". As such, the Board voted that, "The Board of County Commissioners shall annually examine policies for all County operations and endeavor to eliminate all elements of racial and gender bias in both the design and delivery of County programs and services". The voters of Alachua County approved this Charter amendment in November 2020.

[Equity Comprehensive Plan Amendments](#)

On November 12, 2019, the Board of County Commissioners adopted the Comprehensive Plan, 2019-2040. Within the comprehensive plan, "social equity" or "equity" is a goal or principle within the Land Use, Economic, and Community Health Element. Within the text, social equity is defined as the "Principle of fairness, with attention to the provision of opportunity to those portions of the community that are less well off; as applied to Comprehensive Plan, related issues include the provision of affordable housing, economic opportunity, and choice of living environments for all members of the community without regard to sex, race, age, religion, ethnicity, national origin, etc. (p. 125-126). Health equity means "Everyone has a fair and just opportunity to be healthier. This requires removing obstacles to health such as poverty, discrimination, and their consequences, including powerlessness and lack of

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access to good jobs with fair pay, quality education and housing, safe environments, and health care" (p. 378).

As part of the here-described phase 1 equity work plan, these definitions are proposed to be updated by the BOCC. Please see page 12 of this report, which describes the proposed amendments to the Comprehensive Plan to be reviewed by the Board of County Commissioners on September 26, 2023.

Equity and Outreach Plan Structures and Processes

Within Phase 1 of the Equity and Community Outreach Plan, the following structures were adopted by Board motion on August 24, 2021.

Assemble a 30-member Core Strategic leadership Team

The purpose of the Core Strategic Leadership Team (CSLT) was to learn equity together, create a core dialogue community, design, coordinate, and organize equity plans and activities across the organization of the Alachua County Board of County Commissioners, and remain committed to equitable systems change. The core team serves as the engine for change, leading the way, pulling others along, chugging through sometimes challenging terrain, and building the movement and momentum to arrive at the destination of equitable outcomes. Two cohorts were created within the Core Strategic Leadership Structure to accomplish this purpose.

Establish Two Cohorts

The membership of each cohort is as follows. Cohort 1: County Manager Michele Lieberman; Deputy County Manager Carl Smart; Assistant County Manager Tommy Crosby; County Attorney Sylvia Torres; Assistant County Manager Missy Daniels; Director of Growth Management Jeff Hayes; Director of Environmental Protection Department Stephen Hofstetter; Economic and Food Systems Manager Sean McLendon; Performance Manager Donna Bradbrook; Organizational Development Manager Elisha Cash; Director of Human Resources Heather Akpan; Director of Equal Opportunity Jackie Chung; Director of Community Support Services Claudia Tuck; Assistant Director of Community Support Services; Candie Nixon; Victim Services Coordinator Brittany Coleman; and the Director of Court Services, Michael Arizmendi.

Cohort 2 included: Assistant County Manager Gina Peebles; Court Services Manager Joe Lipski; Director of Communications Mark Sexton; Director of Solid Waste Gus Olmos; Director of Public Works Ramon Gavarrete; Director of Facilities Dan Whitcraft; Director of Parks and Recreation Jason Mauer; Director of Cuscowilla Nature and Retreat Center Jamie Bass; Assistant Director of Community Support Services

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Tom Tonkavich; Community Stabilization Program Manager Satori Days; Program Coordinator Stacie Greco; and Sustainability Manager, Betsy Riley.

Creating the Core Strategic Leadership Team (CSLT)

The Core Strategic Leadership Team meeting structure was divided into two mechanisms: onboarding and ongoing biweekly meetings. Each cohort worked as an interdisciplinary learning team for the Onboarding and Biweekly meeting schedule (approximately January to May 2021 for Cohort 1 and January to May 2022 for Cohort 2). In the Fall of FY 2024, these two cohorts will meet together to discuss the next steps for the Equity and Community Outreach work of Alachua County.

Onboardings

The onboarding consisted of an intensive three-day workshop by Dr. Houchen and Dr. Jennifer Arnold (Reciprocity Consulting, LLC).

Biweekly Meetings

Biweekly meetings consisted of scheduled two-hour facilitated training sessions led by Dr. Houchen and Dr. Arnold.

The objectives of these two combined mechanisms were to:

- Establish shared definitions, baseline data, assessments, and knowledge on root causes of inequity,
- create a shared culture related to equity, justice, racial and social identity, and shared values related to transformational change,
- develop organizational goals and priorities related to creating equity and reducing inequities,
- align with current performance measure/audit process, develop processes for equitable community engagement/collaborative planning, establish plans, delineate and delegate tasks and timetables,
- understand terms such as racism, privilege, intersectionality, social equity, environmental justice, health equity,
- understand and articulate how inequity shapes experience in Alachua County and why anti-racism and social equity work is essential to the mission of the organization,
- articulate an organizational theory of change to reduce inequity, and demonstrate a willingness to identify, accept, and manage the socio-emotional effects of change and
- utilize innovative, results-based decision-making frames to close existing equity and access gaps in departmental and program planning.

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Alachua County Equity Training Philosophy Statement

Including equity and community outreach within the overall explicit organizational structure and hierarchy, all relevant project planning, and all appropriate Alachua County Board of County Commissioners operations is a new endeavor propelled to the forefront by the Board's strategic guide and priorities. Hence, the workshops focused on learning new ideas, new knowledges, new analytic tools, and new ways of working.

The following proficiencies were utilized during the workshop and biweekly meetings to teach— dialogue, a pedagogy for a brave learning space, definitional terms and knowledge related to the terms, and, in specific, deep learning related to the concepts of equity, race, racism, privilege, narratives of inequities in Alachua County through data, and mapping, understanding communal histories, understanding the role of systems change, working through discomfort and emotions, applying new knowledge, supporting oneself and others, building trust and collaboration, and systemically reflecting on the equity and community outreach onboarding and bi-weekly progress.

Structured Dialogue

Dialogue was used throughout the onboarding workshops and biweekly meetings. We structured the small group exercises and whole group debrief to open up creative thinking on the day's topic while also emphasizing reflective practice to build participants' skills in dialogue.

Dialogue refers to the process of opening up to new ideas and perspectives. It includes speaking authentically, actively listening, asking to understand, and being open to change. When people have different worldviews and values, dialogue can be uncomfortable and awkward, yet with genuine effort, it can lead to increased understanding, creativity, and even healing. The practice of dialogue is grounded in a relational view of the world that understanding is held in the relationships between people - or between people and organizations in the context of government working to understand and build trust with the community.

Given that change and equity are mental concepts that are connected to non-mental realities such as implicit biases, feelings, and language, it was imperative to conduct the meetings in such a way that each member of the team had the opportunity to learn, practice vocabulary and express themselves in a group format. This learning style engages people with their implicit feelings and thoughts, representing their behaviors, biases, and competencies, to focus the team on the topics we address daily. Alachua County is a complex and dynamic environment for leadership. This section of the workshops is critical to creating a healthy learning space.

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Onboarding Materials

Within the onboarding process, each cohort began with an orientation email message and packet before the first meeting that contained a set of readings related to race, positionality, intersectionality, equity, and history, as well as a pre-workshop assessment designed to understand the participant's experience, knowledge base, and readiness to begin equity work (see appendix 5 for the pre-Workshop survey).

Day one of the onboarding workshops began with reviewing responses to the pre-workshop survey. For example, the following highlights from the pre-Workshop survey were shared in Cohort 1 related to how forms of oppression such as sexism, classism, ableism, et cetera surfaced within the survey responses, that progressive political leadership [is often] undermined by veiled or unspoken prejudices in the community, that lacks in awareness lead to decisions and analyses of current problems which extend historic marginalization or racism, that often [untrained] White middle-class individuals often lack the language or cultural awareness to engage communities of color adequately, people in poverty or other communities of unfamiliar characteristics to address equity issues, that [there exists] a failure to recognize the contributions of certain groups, and that [it is essential to] rewrite or retell narratives that have been lost or misremembered due to historical inequities. Cohort 2 reported similar survey responses.

Onboarding Equity Concepts, Definitions, and Principles

The following principles, definitions, and concepts related to equity were discussed during the onboarding.

1. Equity as an outcome and a process-- As an outcome equity means that everyone has what they need to thrive and that race and socioeconomic status do not determine one's success. As a process, it means that people most impacted by structural problems are actively engaged in coming up with solutions.
2. Diversity is the breadth of differences within a group
3. Privilege is the special advantages or immunity granted to a particular person or group
4. Actualizing equity as customizing tools that identify and address inequities (as opposed to the organizational stance of inequality, equality, or justice). This definition of equity clarifies the ACBOCC role and goal related to Equity as a staff.
5. Race: Racial inequities are deep, pervasive, and often challenging to discuss, yet without dialogue and intention, anti-racism and reducing inequities based on income, disability status, et cetera often intensify racial disparities. ¹
6. Racism is a system of power that includes prejudice against people of color and includes interpersonal, structural, and institutional dimensions. This discussion had ideas about dominant frames based on race, ethnicity, and cultural lenses.
7. Intersectionality is the interconnected nature of human categories with personal experiences related to one's group privilege or societal marginalization status. Intersectionality is related to harm and trauma for individuals and communities with multiple overlapping identities and social locations.

¹ GARE, Dig DEEP, and U.S. Water Alliance

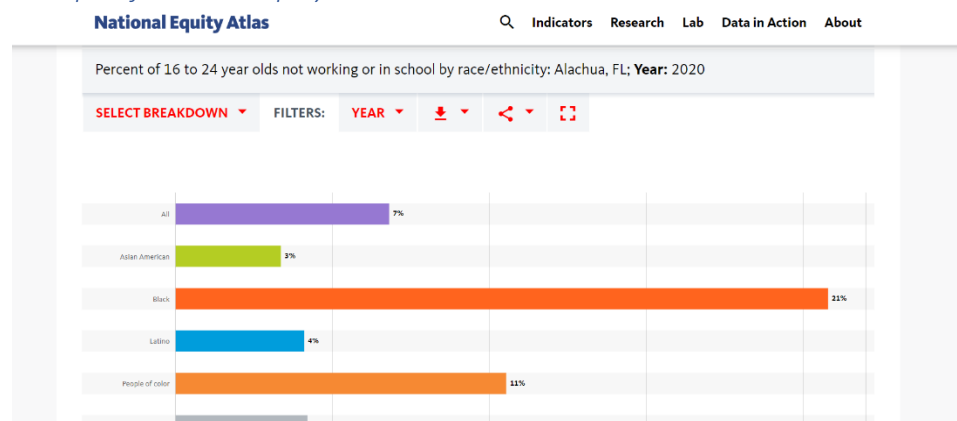
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Mapping Inequality/, Learning the Alachua County Community and Community Consultants

Mapping Alachua County Inequity Data

Equity as an outcome is a measurable indicator of how a population is fairing compared to others over time. To begin understanding the state of Alachua County related to equity and inequity, we utilized the National Equity Atlas and the Opportunity Atlas platforms, which draw from data sources such as the United States Census Bureau, the American Community Survey, and other primary and secondary sources, to create equity metrics and indicators on County, Regional, State and National levels. Using indicators of inequity such as prison terms, maternal mortality, economic vitality, and income across races to note the state of Alachua County, staff investigated local data that was deeply disaggregated by race/ethnicity, gender, nativity, and ancestry. The CSLT analyzed this data to track how the region and communities within the County are doing on critical measures of inclusive prosperity. Each of these communities was only a smattering of the numerous municipalities, neighborhoods, social histories, and overlapping realities that make up the communities and broader community that is Alachua County.

Example of National Equity Atlas Data



Community Consultants

Community consultants were employed during the training to contextualize and nuance the information shared through geographical analysis. Community consultants are local, neighborhood, or community leaders and informants who provide a deeper understanding of a particular locale or mindset through their personal experience, lens, vantage, and growth. Within the first cohort, Dr. Diedre Houchen served as the model community consultant speaker presenting on growing up Black in West Gainesville, cultural isolation, inequity in schooling), Terri Bailey presented on the Pleasant Street neighborhood, addressing positionality and parenting issues related to inequity, race, and disability. Julie Crosby presented on rural whiteness, emerging into activism, and her experience growing up in a neighboring county to Alachua County. Julius Irving presented on emerging into activism as a disconnected youth in the Linton

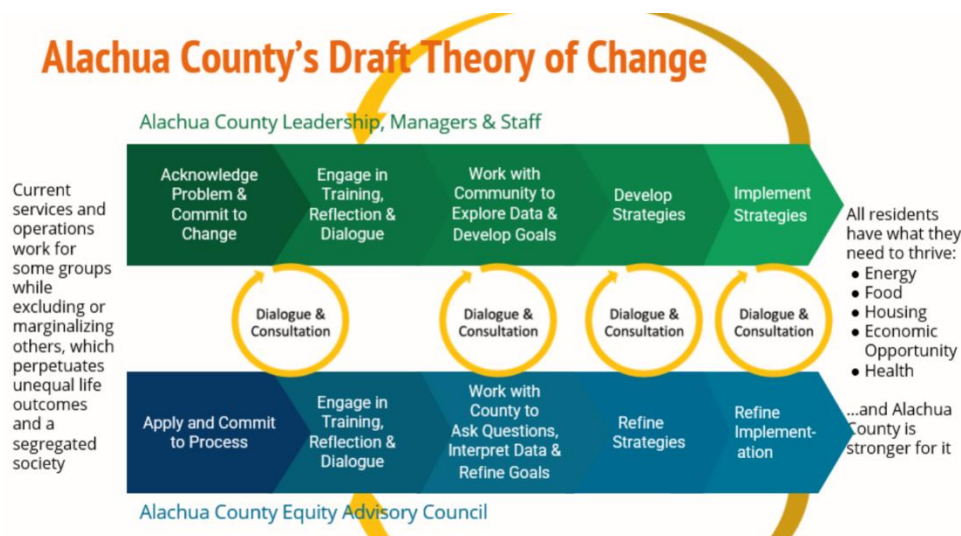
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Oaks/Majestic Oaks and SWAG area. Within the second cohort, Micanopy Commissioner Jiana (now Mayor of Micanopy) was added to the roster of community consultants and described her community's attributes, her rise to advocacy with the Alachua County Community Remembrance Project, and her desires for Micanopy, Florida.

Alachua County Draft Theories of Change

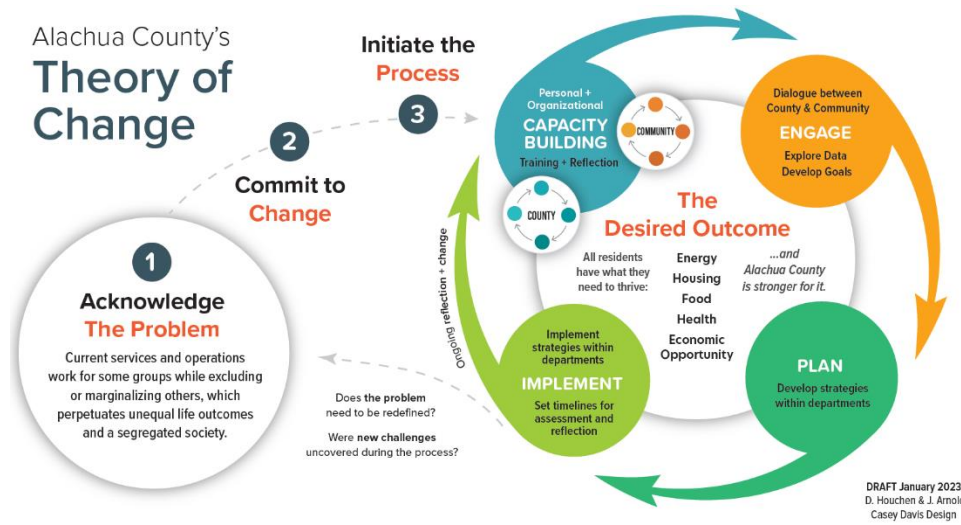
Equity work builds. Understanding complex concepts such as how historical racism shapes current inequities within various life indicators (such as maternal health, community trust and access, and intergenerational wealth) required the participants of the CSLT to iteratively interact with and build knowledge of concepts in multiple ways such as narratives, geographic data, and service delivery data. Each of these aspects of learning is then managed by an overarching operation of transformative change for the entire organization. To that end, the CSLT investigated several working models of transformative change for the Board of County Commissioners, Alachua County organization. Each theory of change model was created by Drs. Diedre Houchen and Jennifer Arnold to describe the activities, inputs, actions, and processes that would engineer equitable outcomes within Alachua County. The following Theories of Change models are presented here for review and discussion by the Board of County Commissioners for potential adoption into practice and procedure.

Alachua County Theory of Change, Draft 1, Core Strategic Leadership Cohort 1



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Alachua County, Theory of Change Draft 2, Core Strategic Leadership Team, Cohort 2



Equity and Environmental Justice Amendments to the Comprehensive Plan

On August 21, 2024, the Development Review Board voted unanimously to present the BOCC with the following updates to the Comprehensive Plan. The proposed amendment to the Comprehensive Plan is one component of the County's ongoing implementation of adopted Comprehensive Plan policies promoting equity and environmental justice, the equity charter amendment, the Equity Work Plan, and the Alachua County Strategic Guide.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS OF PROPOSED COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AMENDMENT

The following is a summary of the changes that are proposed as part of this amendment to the Comprehensive Plan:

- Revise and clarify existing "social equity" and "environmental justice" definitions in the Future Land Use Element Definitions section.
- Amend Policies 4.2.1, 4.4.1, and 5.2.2 of the Future Land Use Element to provide for the consideration of equity, environmental justice, community historical and neighborhood character among the factors that must be considered in decisions on the location of industrial and institutional land uses, with particular emphasis on recognizing, protecting, and preserving historically burdened communities.
- Amend Policy 7.1.2 of the Future Land Use Element to add equity among the factors to be considered in proposed changes to the zoning map.
- Amend Policy 7.1.17 to provide for land development regulations, which include community, historical, and neighborhood character among the factors that will be utilized to evaluate whether or not a special exception or special use permit should be granted.

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Equity and Community Outreach Phase 2: Next Steps

Throughout FY 2024, the Equity and Community Office of SEEDS will continue equity training, moving from working with the CSLT to embedding equity and community outreach more broadly in the organization through collaborations with Organizational Training and Development and Equal Opportunity. Both departments currently lead initiatives that draw from the general body of the County's staff to provide specified professional development related to equity and community outreach.

Organizational Training and Development Leadership Cohort

Within the Leadership Cohort, supervisors and managers can register for a multiweek specialized experience to develop their leadership, profession, and change-oriented skills and knowledge base. The Equity Office will work with this cohort beginning in FY 2024 to provide an overview of the County's equity and community processes, projects, principles, strategies, basic knowledge, and tools. This training will incorporate an analysis. Future fiscal years will potentially embed equity and community outreach knowledge in Supervisor Training and provide online stand-alone equity workshops for staff.

Equal Opportunity

The Equity Office will work with Equal Opportunity to engage Staff through the *Equal Opportunity Advisor*, the Equal Opportunity Office's quarterly newsletter. Each quarter, the Equity Office will provide a column describing one element of the County's equity phase 1 and 2 work and knowledge of the County's equity and community outreach activities, projects, pacing, and initiatives.

Continuing the Core Strategic Leadership Team

The CSLT has been instrumental in creating departmental goals and building equity-based interdisciplinary work and momentum. In the Spring of FY2024, the Equity Office will launch a monthly equity roundtable discussion meeting to continue the CSLT's work on learning equity, equity-based projects, and inclusive community building and to collaborate with the Equity Advisory Council, which will launch in the fall of FY 2024.

Continuing Interdepartmental Equity Work and Inclusive Community Building

Growth Management and SEEDS were the two departments selected during cohort 1 of the CSLT to create equity goals for the FY 2022 year. In FY 2023, these work plans were implemented. For Growth Management, they included the revision of the Comprehensive Plan sections noted above, which was accomplished by September 2023. The Farmworker Housing Code was also identified as an equity and community outreach priority project. To date, members of GM, experts on Farmworker Housing, and the Equity and Community Outreach Office of SEEDS are meeting. We expect to present an update on our work to the Board of County Commissioners by the Fall of FY 2024 that explicitly addresses the code and

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potential lessons for community engagement broadly for the County and Growth Management. Lastly, the Equity and Community Outreach Office is working with GM on widening, increasing, and making its written communications, notices, outreach platforms, and list serves of affinity groups more equitable.

Within the SEEDS Office, the Equity and Community Outreach office identified Local Food Systems as a departmental goal related to equity and establishing the Language Access and Immigrant Liaison specialist position and workflow. To date, the Equity and Community Outreach Manager and the Economic Development and Food Systems Manager have collaborated to create the Fresh Food Pathways project, which combines an equitable solution to health disparities in Alachua County with equitable access to local food for those communities that are most in need and represented by the indicators of inequity studied within the onboarding materials through the National Equity Atlas and Opportunity Atlas. This project is currently in development, with an expected release of a proposal request in the Fall of FY 2024. The position for the Language Access and Immigrant Liaison is in the process of being filled with a projected start date of October 15, 2023.

In FY 2024, a GIS Specialist will join the SEEDS team. This position will assist in creating two additional departmental work plans and goals related to equity and broadly structuring the geographic informational systems for the SEEDS Office and County. Additionally, this position will assist the SEEDS office in moving toward a County-wide equity atlas for the region. Four to six departments within the FY2024 year will identify equity-related goals.

Launching the Equity Advisory Council

As of the writing of this report, the EAC is currently accepting applications for appointment. Once seated, the EAC will begin to meet, learn participatory research and work plan generation, receive an equity and community outreach orientation, and begin to work with members of staff broadly through the CSLT and other venues to serve as an overarching mechanism to field issues related to equity and community outreach, aid the County in creating equitable priorities and assist staff and the Board in representing equity to the community.