

Proposal for City of Spokane Office of Civil Rights, Equity, & Inclusion

Developed by [Greater Spokane Progress](#) Office of Civil Rights, Equity, & Inclusion Workgroup

Organizations involved in developing this proposal

Asian Pacific Islander Coalition Spokane, (Center for Justice), Hispanic/Business Professional Association, Muslims for Community Action and Support, Spokane Chinese Association, Spokane Community Against Racism (SCAR), Spokane NAACP, Spokane County Human Rights Task Force, Raiz of Planned Parenthood of Greater Washington and North Idaho, Greater Spokane Progress, and the United Nations Association (UNA) Spokane.

Why Spokane Needs an Office of Civil Rights, Equity and Inclusion

As our Spokane community grows and becomes more diverse, our institutions must grow and change to meet the moment. This is why Greater Spokane Progress and its member and partner organizations are advocating for a new Office of Civil Rights, Equity and Inclusion in the City of Spokane, which is consistent with the City's values as stated in Spokane Municipal Code 4.10.040, Section 18.01.020(A):

The City values the dignity and worth of all human beings and is committed to promoting justice, equity and an inclusive environment for all by respecting cultural and individual diversity and fostering mutual understanding among all people regardless of race, religion, creed, color, sex, national origin, marital status, familial status, domestic violence victim status, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, honorably discharged veteran or military status, refugee status, the presence of any sensory, mental or physical disability as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act and/or the Washington State Law Against Discrimination, or the receipt of, or eligibility for the receipt of, funds from any housing choice or other subsidy program or alternative source of income.

In particular, in order to fulfill the City's goals of promoting justice, equity and an inclusive environment, an Office of Civil Rights, Equity, and Inclusion is needed in order to: 1) reduce discrimination and hate crimes, 2) improve community engagement with historically marginalized and underrepresented communities in decision-making and policy implementation processes; 3) improve equity through training and education of City government staff as well as community organizations; and 4) ensure accountability in these processes throughout City government.

Recent years have seen [a rise in hate crime in Spokane](#). In 2018, Spokane County had the second highest rate of hate crimes in Washington State, with 8.1 reported hate crime incidents per 100,000. The total number of reported crimes in 2018 was 41, according to the *Report of the Hate Crimes Advisory Working Group* of the Washington State Office of the Attorney General (July 2020). These numbers only account for reported hate crimes that met the criteria to be categorized as a hate crime by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). According to the aforementioned report, national survey data provides evidence that over half of hate crimes go unreported. Therefore, the actual number of hate crimes committed in Spokane may be significantly higher than what is reported here. These incidents include the painting of [a racial slur on the side of the Martin Luther King Jr. Family Outreach Center in 2016](#), the throwing of [a rock through the window of d'Bali Asian](#)

[Bistro](#), and [the defacing of Temple Beth Shalom in 2021](#). Each of these incidents targeted not an individual, but an entire community.

These high-profile hate incidents should be a warning to all Spokanites that many forms of discrimination remain normalized in our community. Inequities and injustice are a common barrier to economic advancement, social inclusion and community empowerment. Our City can only effectively push back on overt hate and meet the goal of a just and equitable Spokane, if we are able to challenge structural discrimination in addition to the pattern of hate crimes. This calls for bold leadership that involves impacted people directly in the shaping of policies that affect them; for example, discussions on tenant rights and affordable housing must center the needs of tenants, especially tenants from marginalized communities. Many organizations, including the City itself, have [studied aspects of this issue and suggested solutions](#). These studies provide a strong foundation for the work of the City's first Civil Rights Coordinator.

While advocates for justice have done excellent work for the City within the confines of volunteer commission work and consultative task forces, these volunteer-based structures do not provide the capacity necessary to ensure that Spokanites have the resources we need when we face discrimination. The Human Rights Commission does important work in informing City Council about human rights issues, but the Commission is simply not sufficiently equipped with staffing and funding to handle the scope of the work needed to solve the aforementioned issues. These issues are multifaceted, requiring dedicated resources, consistent policies and procedures, and expertise in subjects ranging from tenants' rights, Fair Housing and Equal Employment regulations, to victim support in cases of hate incidents. As the Government Local Offices dedicated to Rights, Inclusion and Equity (GLORIE) Benchmark Study submitted to the Spokane Human Rights Commission in April 2021 shows, a city of our size needs a permanent, well-resourced team in place to address ongoing civil rights and equity issues.

It is also important to note that at this time, City employees and leadership are working to provide excellent public service in the context of an ongoing global pandemic as well as escalating challenges to inclusive democratic governance. Public servants in several key sectors around the country, from public health workers to elections administrators, are leaving their jobs at unprecedented rates in the face of threats and recriminations from antidemocracy and paramilitary groups. Due to the bigoted ideologies behind many of these groups, municipal leaders and workers who are part of historically excluded groups are often targeted in more personal and escalatory ways. If the City is to recruit and retain the diverse workforce we need to ensure that Spokane's diverse impacted communities' needs are reflected in City Hall, the City must build capacity to support its leadership, employees and volunteer members of boards and commissions, who are often on the front lines of contentious issues.

Description and Vision

The City of Spokane recognizes equity and inclusion as the cornerstone of excellence in effective public service. The City of Spokane denounces hate, intolerance and bias in all forms, and commits through the Office of Civil Rights, Equity and Inclusion to encourage, create, and nourish a culture of equity and inclusion across our city in a way that is transparent and accountable to the public by enacting policies, programs, and practices to lead this work with the goal of a creating a just, equitable, and inclusive Eastern Washington community.

A robust and independent Office of Civil Rights, Equity and Inclusion benefits the City of Spokane’s relationship with communities in our City. Because the purpose of the Office of Civil Rights, Equity and Inclusion is, in part, to ensure accountability and transparency, it is critical that a new Office be independent and autonomous while still maintaining access to decision making at the highest level of City government. Both accountability and transparency require that the Director of the Office participate in the decision making of a given administration while also empowering the Office to take action independent of the City when needed. To achieve this, the Spokane Human Rights Commission should be the oversight body and no single branch of City government should have the power to unilaterally remove any member of the Office from duty.

Visual of the Proposal for City of Spokane Office of Civil Rights, Equity, & Inclusion



Principles

From the conception to the creation and operation of the Office, we believe that **all** of these principles should be consistently and continuously applied:

1. **Racial Equity and Intersectionality:** Apply a racial equity lens and an intersectional approach.
2. **Immigration Status Awareness:** Be acutely aware of how immigrant status affects the communities served by the city. Proactively address the gaps of resources available to undocumented immigrants and immigrants of other statuses due to state- and federal-level policies.

3. **Accessibility:** Be proactive in ensuring accessibility in all areas of operation of the Office and the City of Spokane in general and removing barriers related to disabilities, language, socioeconomic status, housing, transportation, etc.
4. **Uplift the Impacted:** Intentionally seek and uplift the voices from the impacted communities in decision-making - impacted communities' experiences and leadership must be central in transparent policy design and decision-making. Impacted communities include historically marginalized and underrepresented communities including but not limited to: communities of color, immigrants and refugees, victims of hate crimes and discrimination, people with disabilities, LGBTQ, justice involved, and other impacted communities.
5. **Leadership Development:** Deliberately seek and cultivate leaders from impacted communities to serve in positions within the Office and in the Spokane community.
6. **Accountability:** Uphold accountability in the Office and the City government by routinely conducting rigorous assessments and disseminating the results widely to the public.
7. **Independence:** The Office should be free to act independently within the City Government and community, without partisan influence or fear of reprisal.
8. **Transparency:** Maintain transparency and actively engage in direct communications with impacted communities throughout the decision making process from inception to implementation.
9. **Timeliness:** Carry out all investigations and resolve issues in an equitable and timely fashion.
10. **Service:** Provide assistance to all individuals who report hate crimes and discrimination to the Office, including those with cases that will be referred to the state or other jurisdictions.
11. **Vision:** Address inequalities at both individual and systemic levels.
12. **Education:** Invest in consistent and ongoing education, training, and outreach to all staff, departments, agencies, community groups, public, and law enforcement.
13. **Collaboration:** Actively collaborate with Spokane County and the State of Washington to achieve these principles with the recognition that all the lives of Spokane residents are affected by the county and the state.
14. **Access to Power:** The Office shall have frequent, consistent, and unhindered access to the highest decision-making rooms within City Council, the Mayor's office, and other facets of City government.

Roles of the Office of Civil Rights, Equity and Inclusion

Discrimination & Hate Crimes:

Enforce the City's Human Rights Code, process and investigate complaints on violations, take reports of any incidents of hate/bias/organized bigotry, as well as reported discrimination claims, including but not limited to employment, impediments to fair housing and upholding tenant protections. Ensure that the City is providing support and resources for its own staff who may face incidents of hate and bias on the job, including options for reporting such incidents, legal support, and a commitment to rapid response communications and security support in cases where incidents may become public. Connect people with resources to file grievances, appeals, and/or access victim/community support. Coordinate closely with law enforcement, agency partners, marginalized communities, religious groups, neighborhood councils, etc. to offer resources and opportunities to respond as a community. Disseminate statistics publicly and regularly in an interactive "dashboard" with data available to the public.

(Examples include City of Eugene's Office of Human Rights and Neighborhood Involvement - <https://www.eugene-or.gov/3913/Human-Rights-and-Neighborhood-Involvement>)

Assessment & Accountability:

Work with the city leadership to adopt a framework of normalizing, organizing, and operationalizing institutional practices to take intentional steps to advance racial equity. Assure deliberate and intentional training of all staff, and the application of a racial equity tool in hiring, decision-making, budgeting, policy, and programs in every department. Establish evaluation and accountability measures, which includes the creation of an interactive equity dashboard with data available to the public.

Accountability should include the oversight of how the city utilizes its funding and resources, for example, how federal funds are awarded, how contracts are distributed and if they are done in compliance with federal and state Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) policies. It should also include data on the City's retention of staff, as well as board and commission members, from impacted and historically excluded groups.

Develop partnerships with regional and national networks around best practices and accountability, including but not limited to partnering with the Spokane Regional Health District, a member of the Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE).

(Examples include: City of Austin's Equity Office - <https://www.austintexas.gov/department/equity-office>, GARE - <https://www.racialequityalliance.org/tools-resources/>)

Community Engagement/Impacted Communities:

Center the leadership of impacted communities in the creation, development, decision-making, implementation, and evaluation/accountability of all Office programs and formalize the role of community in the workings of the Office to ensure transparency and active engagement throughout the decision making process from inception to implementation.

Develop and train staff in a process to conduct inclusive community engagement (see examples below), and develop policies, practices, budgets, and programs to reduce language, cultural, access, and other barriers throughout the City of Spokane to increase civic engagement, participation, and develop leaders (including for new immigrants and refugees). Ensure that staff training takes into account the realities of discrimination, and overt hate, that public servants working for justice and equity may experience at work; assist staff in understanding how these sentiments may surface in interactions with the general public.

Collaborate with community partners providing existing services and community support. Identify and incorporate services into the Office where services/supports/funding do not exist, including but not limited to: communities of color, immigrant and refugees, victims of hate crimes and discrimination, people with disabilities, LGBTQ, justice involved, and other impacted communities, for example, the creation of a fund for immigrant assistance for undocumented families.

(Examples include: City of Austin’s Equity Action Team -

<https://www.austintexas.gov/service/equity-action-team>

City of Seattle’s Inclusive Outreach and Public Engagement Guide -

<https://www.seattle.gov/Documents/Departments/ParksAndRecreation/Business/RFPs/Attachment5%20%20InclusiveOutreachandPublicEngagement.pdf>

Spectrum of Public Participation -

https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.iap2.org/resource/resmgr/pillars/Spectrum_8.5x11_Print.pdf)

Education & Training:

Provide consistent education, training, and outreach to government departments, agencies, community groups, business community, the public, and law enforcement including but not limited to racial equity, implicit bias, cultural humility, cultural fluency, trauma responsive practices, hiring and promotion, inclusive community engagement, and civic engagement. Include education, training and resources to assist each of these sectors in understanding how to deal with potential risks to frontline staff who may encounter hate incidents or targeting by anti-democracy and bigoted groups. Support Spokane Human Rights Commission and/or neighborhood councils with capacity, education, and outreach services.

(Examples include: City of Austin’s Equity Office, City of Eugene’s Office of Human Rights and Neighborhood Involvement, and City of Portland’s Diversity and Civic Leadership Program -

<https://www.portlandoregon.gov/civic/45147>)

Proposed Staffing and Budget for the Office of Civil Rights, Equity and Inclusion

We appreciate greatly the ongoing research the Spokane Human Rights Commission’s Office of Civil Rights Taskforce has conducted, including the GLORIE report compiled by Dr. Kristine Hoover and her research assistant.

Based on findings from the GLORIE report in which data were collected from cities with population size similar to Spokane and cities in the Northwest, we propose adopting the model from Des Moines, Iowa. Des Moines has a comparable population size and shares other characteristics with Spokane. In addition, Des Moines’s Office of Human and Civil Rights is similar to those of other cities with a multifaceted model.

In order to effectively implement this proposal, we recommend that 6 positions are created and fully funded, which is consistent with the staffing model from Des Moines, Iowa. We looked at the different offices presented in the GLORIE report (with staffing ranges from 2-35 FTEs) and chose a modest model in terms of staffing level. Their Office of Civil and Human Rights in Des Moines, Iowa consists of the following paid full time positions (6 FTEs):

1 [Civil and Human Rights Director](#) (salary at \$113,401.60 - \$162,656.00 Annually)

1 [Civil Rights Compliance Officer](#) (\$78,374.40 - \$99,340.80 Annually)

2 [Human Rights Specialist](#) (salary at \$56,950.40 - \$68,369.60 Annually)

1 [Equity Coordinator](#) (salary at \$29.30 - \$35.06 Hourly)

1 [Civil and Human Rights Administrative Assistant](#) (\$24.90 - \$31.55 Hourly)

We provide links to the job descriptions from Des Moines as a reference point to indicate the capacity and budget that another city of comparable size devotes to the same set of issues. We expect further research and continuous dialogue with our newly hired Civil Rights Coordinator, the Spokane Human Rights Commission's Office of Civil Rights Task Force and members of impacted communities to finalize and fine-tune the areas of emphasis and job functions for these 6 positions. The ultimate goal will be to meet the needs of the Spokane community according to the framework presented in this proposal, which was collectively developed by representatives from community organizations.

The Office of Civil and Human Rights in Des Moines, Iowa has a [projected total budget of \\$839,055 \(and general fund budget of \\$801,928\) for Fiscal Year 2022-23](#) out of a total projected city budget of \$939,968,797 (in comparison to City of Spokane's 2021 total budget of \$989,257,219). As stated in the GLORIE report, this amounts to \$3.74 per capita based on an estimated population of 214,237 in 2019 and a general fund budget of \$801,928. The \$3.74 per capita cost was cited in the GLORIE report to show that the creation of a multi-faceted Office of Civil and Human Rights requires a relatively modest investment.

To derive a realistic budget for the Office of Civil Rights, Equity and Inclusion in the City of Spokane, we adopt the \$3.74 per capita figure from Des Moines for the City of Spokane, which has a total population of 228,989 in 2020 and a [cost of living](#), which is 25% higher than than Des Moines. The proposed budget for Spokane's Office of Civil Rights, Equity and Inclusion would be $\$3.74 \times 228,989 \times 125\% = \$1,070,524$. This is equivalent to about 1% of the 2021 City of Spokane total budget. **We believe this is a reasonable budget to propose with existing revenues from the city and potential external grants the City of Spokane can pursue to create the Office of Civil Rights, Equity and Inclusion.**

We believe the budget and staffing we propose will set the City of Spokane on the right track from the start to create an Office of Civil Rights, Equity and Inclusion and ensure its success with the potential for growth. We would like to emphasize that an office with six staff members is needed at a minimum for the Office of Civil Rights, Equity, and Inclusion to achieve the goals set out in this proposal. However, after the office is created, the Executive Staff and their staff may be able to assess the gaps in its services and to pursue new innovative programs and practices. This process may clarify the necessity for additional funding and staffing in the future.

We expect leaders and members of BIPOC, refugee, immigrant, disability, LGBTQ+, justice involved, and other impacted communities to be actively engaged in creating this office. We look forward to collaborating with the City's Civil Rights Officer, members of the Spokane Human Rights Commission Office of Civil Rights Task Force in the creation of the office.

Glossary of terms:

Cultural humility, see an explanation of the concept of cultural humility here -

<https://www.apa.org/pi/families/resources/newsletter/2013/08/cultural-humility>

Trauma responsive practices - see here for an explanation on how trauma-responsive approach is different from trauma-informed one, and its connection to social justice -

<https://uwm.edu/icfw/translating-trauma-informed-principles-into-trauma-responsive-practices/>

Racial Equity Framework: Normalizing, organizing, operationalizing, go to:

<https://www.austintexas.gov/department/equity-office>