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EQUITY & DIVERSITY INITIATIVE Draft Action Plan



American Planning Association
Wisconsin Chapter

Creating Great Communities for All

The Wisconsin Chapter of the American Planning Association is committed to achieving diversity within the Wisconsin planning profession and equity in Wisconsin communities.

Diversity in our profession is important both because it broadens professional employment opportunity and also because a planning workforce that collectively reflects the population it serves is better able to connect with and identify the needs and wants of that population.

Equity in our communities is important because all residents should have the opportunity to follow their dreams and live healthy, full lives. While there will always be some differences within and between communities in quality of life metrics such as income, health, or access to parks, we are committed to using our planning tools and skills to ensure that gender, sexual orientation, age, race, ethnicity, or other aspects of an individual's identity do not predict or determine quality of life outcomes.

APA-WI will pursue the goals of diversity in our profession and equity in our communities through actions toward four specific objectives:



A) Improved Community Engagement

We will provide tools and training that planners can use to hear and elevate the voices of marginalized and disadvantaged residents



B) Informed Leadership

We will provide tools and training that planners and others can use to help community leaders understand and respond to the experience and needs of marginalized people in their community and region



C) Improved Public Policy

We will identify and promote policies and practices by state and local governments that can improve equity in our communities



D) Diversity and Equity in the Planning Profession

We will work to ensure that the planning profession in Wisconsin reflects the diversity of residents in our communities, and we will seek equity in wages and access to leadership roles

There are four high priority actions that will support all four objectives:

1. **Create an APA-WI Equity and Diversity Committee**

APA-WI should create a standing committee to promote and facilitate the actions described hereafter in this initiative. This committee should meet at least quarterly to work on implementation of the APA-WI Equity and Diversity Initiative. The committee should develop metrics tied to the actions to evaluate whether the initiative is having an impact.

2. **Use the APA-WI Communication Channels**

Education and advocacy are core activities for APA-WI, and we do this through use of our website, emails, social media, conferences and district events. We will use these methods to achieve many of the actions in this initiative.

3. **Collaborate with Partner Organizations**

APA-WI should have strong relationships with allied organizations (i.e. The League of Municipalities, Towns Association, County Association, Center for Land Use Education, UW-Extension, etc.) and should use those relationships to share resources and communication channels in pursuit of the objectives in this initiative. Our reach is much greater through these organizations than through just our own members and tools.

4. **Create an APA-WI Equity Network**

Learning directly from peers who have tried new things is powerful and effective. APA-WI can form a network of planners interested in this topic who want to learn from each other.

The remainder of this document explore ways the Wisconsin Chapter of the American Planning Association and its members can reach the four objectives listed on page 1.



A) Improved Community Engagement

We will provide tools and training that planners can use to hear and elevate the voices of historically marginalized and disadvantaged residents.

1. **Encourage planners to develop relationships and partnerships with leaders and groups that can help draw underrepresented residents into planning processes**

One of the obstacles to effective public engagement is lack of trust in the planning process. Negative experiences with development outcomes, or with government in general, can lead residents to disengage if they believe their interests won't be a priority in the process. Partnerships with individuals and organizations that know and have the trust of underrepresented residents are critical to effective engagement. APA-WI should promote this strategy and provide stories and case studies to illustrate how to do it effectively.

2. **Identify and promote other community engagement methods that are effective at finding and elevating the voices of marginalized residents**

Many tactics have been tried to reach underrepresented residents, to varying degrees of success, including things like booths at neighborhood events, meetings in neighborhood venues, citizen panels with stipend payments and more. APA-WI should collect and share information that describes these methods and gives examples of their successful (or unsuccessful) use.

3. **Use the APA-WI Equity Network for Peer Training**

Pursuing a new initiative or using a new technique gets easier if you have direct access to someone who has done it before. The APA-WI Equity Network should be used to connect planners who have tried and/or want to try new techniques for engaging underrepresented groups.



B) Informed Leadership

Informed leadership is crucial to the achievement of diversity and equity goals. We will provide tools and training that planners and others can use to help community leaders hear, understand, and respond to the experience and needs of marginalized people in their community and region.

1. **Collect and share a variety of stories that explain why equity and inclusivity matter.**

Community leaders typically have opinions about policies affecting things like housing, transportation and economic development, but those opinions are often not informed by an understanding of how past and current local government practices have caused or preserved inequitable conditions. Planners need case studies and anecdotes they can use to explain the relevance of inclusivity as an important issue in every Wisconsin community.

2. **Help people learn how to talk about equity and implicit bias**

Local leaders, including elected and appointed officials and municipal staff, often lack the vocabulary or confidence to talk about equity, especially when it comes to conversations with marginalized residents about equity. APA-WI can improve this by talking about equity and implicit bias in our communications and by offering (or promoting) training and workshops that are designed to make people more fluent and comfortable with these topics. Planners should invite the participation of other leaders from their communities.

3. **Promote Plan Commissioner attendance at APA-WI conferences**

APA-WI conferences can be a great venue for messaging about equity strategies, but we are usually just talking to other professional planners. We should make a stronger effort to recruit plan commissioners to our conferences.

4. **Work with the Center for Land Use Education (CLUE) to provide training for plan commissioners and other local leaders that incorporate equity and inclusivity issues.**

CLUE is Wisconsin's leading provider of plan commissioner education. APA-WI should work with CLUE to ensure that their programs include content on implicit bias, equity, and inclusion.

5. **Use the APA-WI Equity Network to connect local leaders interested in equity**

Many of our communities have existing leaders interested in improving equity. APA-WI should encourage planners to identify those leaders and to invite them into our Network as resources to help leaders in other communities to pursue their own initiatives. This help could come in the form of a phone conversation or inviting a local leader to sit in on another community's meeting to hear discussion when an equity issue is on the table.



C) Improved Public Policy

We will identify and promote policies and practices by the state and local governments that can improve equity.

1. **Promote zoning amendments that allow a greater diversity of residential formats in neighborhoods**

The zoning tool was conceived to segregate land uses and people, and has continually been used to segregate residents by race and income through segregation of housing types. Concerns about housing affordability and equity are causing a reevaluation of zoning policies that prioritize single family homes while excluding various attached unit formats. Recently, the City of Minneapolis and the State of Oregon have taken action to ensure that smaller-scale types of attached unit housing can be built in any residential area. APA-WI should collect and share examples of communities that are working toward healthy, balanced neighborhoods by enhancing flexibility in residential zoning and promoting "complete neighborhoods" policies.

2. **Identify and promote other development standards that support inclusivity**

Many municipal ordinances include standards that have the effect of excluding certain people, especially by income. For example, excessive minimum requirements for off-street parking, home size, lot size, and material standards can help to price people out of certain neighborhoods and communities, and inadequate requirements for safe and convenient walking and biking facilities can make car ownership a necessity. APA-WI can help to identify and share examples of development standards that make communities more inclusive.

3. **Seek amendment of Wisconsin's comprehensive planning law to require an Inclusivity Element**

Wisconsin Statute 66.1001 offers a detailed set of required topics that comprehensive plans must address. It does not explicitly address inclusivity. APA-WI should work with partner organizations, including 1,000 Friends of Wisconsin and the Wisconsin Realtors Association to craft and promote an amendment that requires goals, objectives and policies focused on being welcoming and inclusive so that people of all ages, races, genders, religious beliefs, and abilities can achieve stability and success in their communities. While working toward legislative amendment, APA-WI will promote explicit consideration of equity in the plan as a best practice.



D) Diversity and Equity in the Planning Profession

We will work to ensure that the planning profession in Wisconsin reflects the diversity of residents in our communities and we will seek equity in wages and access to leadership roles.

Diversity, equity, and inclusion are cornerstones of the planning profession when working in communities we serve. It is critical that we continue to advance these ideals, not only within our work, but within the profession itself. As an organization, APA-WI can directly support equity and diversity of planning practitioners through the following actions.

1. Use scholarships to attract diverse scholars entering the profession

Each year, APA-WI sponsors two full-tuition scholarships for students entering the planning profession, one at each of the state's accredited graduate programs. Eligible students currently must be Wisconsin residents who have graduated from a Wisconsin High School. APA-WI has the opportunity to further representation of the state's planners by using these scholarships as a recruitment tool for planners from underrepresented groups, shifting eligibility from Wisconsin residents to scholars from underrepresented backgrounds while maintaining all other eligibility and award criteria.

2. Promote the use of youth councils in planning projects

Public engagement is central to the planning practice, and APA-WI has the opportunity to expose young people to planning by getting them involved in public engagement process for planning projects more often. APA-WI should encourage planners to organize and utilize youth councils, targeting high school-age students and specifically seeking diversity of race, culture and gender within these groups. Through these efforts we can help more people become aware of and interested in planning while still in high school.

3. Encourage planners to visit classrooms and provide facilitation tools and ideas

Children are ready to learn about planning in elementary school. Visiting a classroom in an elementary or middle school with some maps, stories, or canned activities is a great way to introduce kids to the work we do, so that they can consider it as a future career. APA-WI can provide encouragement and materials to help planners do this. Ideas can be borrowed from the Terrace Town program in the Madison area.

4. Support AASPIRE best practices for internships and learning opportunities within the profession

AASPIRE (Affirmative Action Student Professionals in Residence) is the internship program in the City of Madison to provide college students with on-the-job experience in Planning, Public Administration, and other programs. As the majority of planners work in the public sector (72%), APA-WI can create internship best practices that support and encourage AASPIRE hiring practices as public agencies promote internship opportunities and recruit students from underrepresented groups both in- and out of state, from both graduate and undergraduate programs.