

Town of Manchester Inclusion & Community Engagement Project

Leadership Interviews and Community Focus Group Findings

Executive Summary

KJR Consulting was engaged by the Town of Manchester to develop an integrated strategy, implementation framework, and action plan to enable the Town to reach its goal of increasing inclusion and community engagement among its diverse residents.

Interviews with Town and community leaders were conducted in August 2018 and community focus groups were facilitated in October and November 2018. Both explored perspectives and suggestions for increasing inclusion and community engagement among groups that were under-represented in an August 2017 survey on community engagement. Simultaneously, an Equity and Inclusion Collaborative was established to review the input collected and recommend strategic priorities for the Town to reach its inclusion and community engagement goals.

Town & Community Leadership Perceptions and Suggestions

75% of leaders interviewed have a positive perception of inclusion and community engagement in the Town of Manchester. They perceive communication, community involvement, and demonstration of respect for diverse residents as the top challenges impacting inclusion and community engagement. Leaders suggested improvements to communication and community services and programs as ways to aid the Town in achieving its inclusion and community engagement goals.

Community Perceptions and Suggestions

Over 90 individuals participated in the community focus groups. Participants were asked to share their perception of whether or not the Town of Manchester is welcoming, diverse, equitable, and inclusive. Comments were organized into positive and negative perception themes. Community services and programs, cultural diversity, school quality, and cultural events were identified as the top four themes that validated participant perceptions that the Town is welcoming, diverse, equitable, and inclusive. Communication experiences and lack of diversity validated perceptions that the Town is not welcoming, diverse, equitable, or inclusive.

Focus group participants brainstormed suggestions to increase inclusion and community engagement. Suggestions were categorized into themes. Community services and programs was the top theme and included suggestions focused on enabling community conversations about diversity, equity, and inclusion, establishing community and parenting networks, and multicultural events. Communication was the second highest theme and included recommendations for a community communication campaign to increase awareness of community services and programs, and to foster community dialog on diversity, equity, and inclusion. Opportunities to improve Town leadership communication and information sharing via the town website and social media also fell within the communication theme. Suggestions were also made for increasing diversity in Town recruitment and community engagement.

Strategic Priority Recommendations

A group of community leaders representing diverse groups across the Town were gathered to review interview and focus group findings and to recommend inclusion and community engagement priorities for the Town. Two priorities were identified.

Priority # 1: Create a forum for diversity, equity, & inclusion conversations throughout the community.

- Unite and empower a team of community leaders charged with creating of a forum for diversity, equity, & inclusion conversations throughout the community.
- Create an inventory of diversity, equity, & inclusion programming throughout the community. Use this knowledge to foster connections and collaboration among the groups and individuals undertaking this work.
- Establish an on-going race-equity development program throughout the community to raise internal awareness of systemic race and equity issues.
- Establish a community communication strategy and narrative designed to change the perception of race relations in Manchester.

Priority # 2: Create best practices for disseminating information to the community-at-large.

- Complete an inventory of methods utilized to distribute information across the community, the audiences reached, and perceived effectiveness. Use this knowledge to recommend best practices for communicating with community organizations and all resident populations.
- Assess where information about community events and programs is housed and use this knowledge to make recommendations for how to best aggregate and disseminate this information to the community-at-large.