Uprooting Punitive and Harmful Culture in Intersecting Systems

Reimagine Public Safety Task Force Work Group

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What is a punitive or harmful culture?

A punitive and harmful culture is one based upon assigning blame and punishment, while rewarding and commoditizing violence and oppression. It creates a culture of fear.

Vision

Vision:

We want to be the most livable city in the country.

Livable for whom?

Mission

Mission:

To be the best managed city in the country.

Our city council has proven to be easily swayed from its commitments and our values. It has betrayed the trust of this task force and city by agreeing to a new cadet class against our unified recommendation.

Reimagined???

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City Council Approves Reimagined APD Cadet Academy Blueprint

How is this reimagined if you ignore the people that you have tasked with the very process of reimagining your failed system?

"...Austin is a beacon of sustainability, social equity, and economic opportunity; where diversity and creativity are celebrated; where community needs and values are recognized; where leadership comes from its citizens, and where the necessities of life are affordable and accessible to all."

"Austin's greatest asset is its people…"

Vision for Austin's Future

Sustainable for whom?

Socially equitable for whom?

Economic opportunities for whom?

Where is diversity and creativity celebrated and how?

What community needs and values are recognized, and by whom?

What kind of leadership comes from its ~~citizens~~ residents?

How will Austin insure that the "necessities of life are affordable and accessible for all" since it has failed miserably thus far?

Proposed Recommendations

Our proposal is to operationalize the Guiding Values of the Reimagining Public Safety Task Force, in order to create a process for the City of Austin to evaluate city initiatives for equity, potential harm, and holistic safety. We seek to apply this process to any system and mechanism in the space of public safety with the potential to cause harm and/or save lives. Our goal is to disrupt and deconstruct the pattern of punitive culture within public safety, in order to build a public safety system that is liberating, supporting, and holistic in achieving community safety.

Proposed Recommendations

1. This process should be piloted with the recommendations of the Reimagine Public Safety Task Force based on the initial framework developed by our working group.

2. The city should increase funding to the Equity Office by $1 Million immediately, using divested funds, to develop the validating tool, expand the Equity Office staff sufficiently to implement this process on an ongoing basis. This funding increase is a start. <u>We must make our investments reflect our commitments.</u>

Proposed Recommendations

1. **Any item that comes up on the city council agenda is subject to review by the Equity Office through this process and can choose which items it wishes to review. The intent is that the Equity Office would prioritize Reimagine public safety proposals, policing (including the APD budget and contract), public health, housing and economic development.**

2. **The Equity Office must be given 10 days prior to when the item is placed on the agenda to review any item it notifies Council that it wishes to review. The Equity Office review would then be attached to the agenda item when it is posted.**

3. **An Equity Office representative must be given space to present the results of the equity review as testimony to the City Council during the scheduled meeting prior to public testimony on the item.**

The validating tool will be built upon the following framework:

Step 1

Be Rooted in History and Shared Understanding - Complete a historical analysis in the context of systemic racism. Is this project connected to a system that was intentionally created to perpetuate the harm and oppression of one group for the benefit of another and of capitol? What is the impact and legacy of policies, practices, procedures and key decisions?

The validating tool will be built upon the following framework:

Step 2

Center Those Most Directly Harmed by Systems - Gather data disaggregated by demographics to tell you who is most harmed or negatively impacted. Analyze data to also tell you who has benefited

The validating tool will be built upon the following framework:

Step 3

Initiate an Accessible and Co-Creative Process for Community Involvement - Center those most directly harmed by systems by committing to a process to collaborate, problem solve and design with the community. This process should be accessible and transparent and can be achieved by ensuring lagangue access services, digital access, stipends, and other efforts to remove barriers for participation.

The validating tool will be built upon the following framework:

Step 4

Be Holistic and Tackle Root Cause - What are we trying to problem solve for? How do we follow the leadership of those most directly impacted by punitive and harmful systems to clearly frame and develop the shared understanding of the problem? Conduct a root cause analysis and identify holistic options and multiple solutions that can achieve the desired outcome.

The validating tool will be built upon the following framework:

Step 5

Divest From Systems that Cause Harm - Analyze the project or program for unintended negative impact and outcomes for those most directly harmed. Has the community been engaged at a deep and meaningful level to help identify these unintended consequences? Has modeling been conducted to see routes of potential negative outcomes with solutions and strategies developed?

The validating tool will be built upon the following framework:

Step 6

Establish Community Accountability - How will you ensure accountability, communicate, and evaluate results? Does this project represent sustainability and long-term thinking? Is it framed to just mitigate harm or will it promote equity and make those historically most harmed better off?

Question that must be answered by the Equity Office's review process
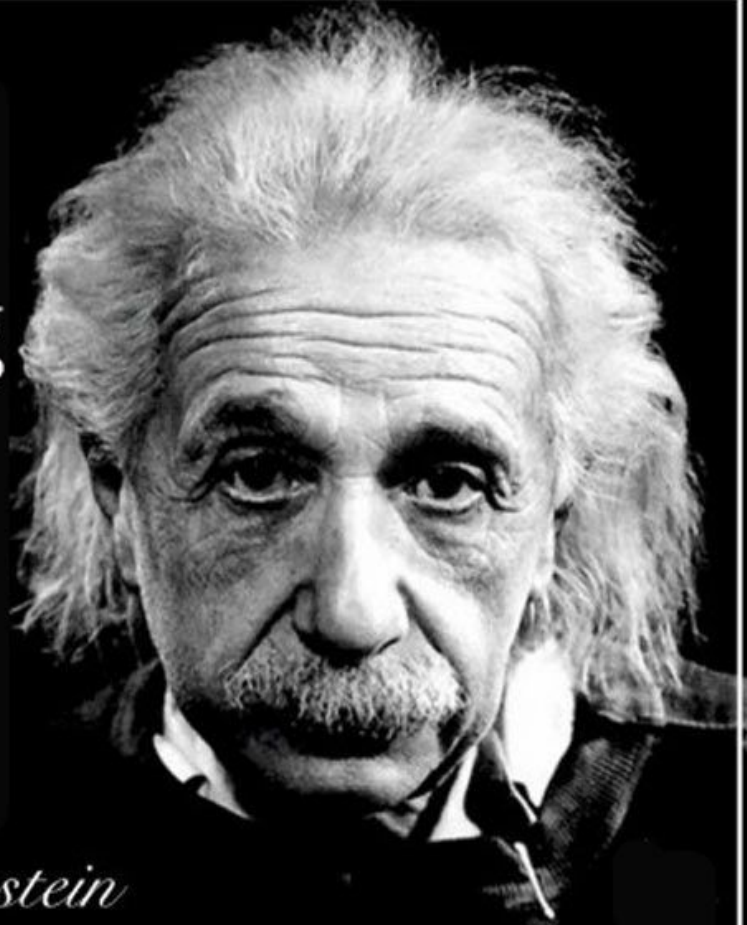
- What are the top challenges/barriers we encounter to deliver the services or deploy specific resources?
- Does the proposal demonstrate program design and delivery that directly addresses the top challenges/barriers you identified?
- What does the data tell us about who's most vulnerable and at-risk for this service or need?
- Is the program design intentional enough to directly get resources to those most in need?
- Are data disaggregated by race and geography available, and are you utilizing those data?
- Were people with lived experience and those directly impacted a part of your program design?
- Do you have a mechanism to get consistent feedback from clients on the customer experience to course correct as necessary? (This tells us if the vendor really understands the needs of the community and the nuances in what's needed to make sure the services effectively benefit those who need it)

Question that must be answered by the Equity Office's review process

- Who already has access, is overserved, or benefits?
- What does the personnel for the delivery of the services look like?
- Are they competent in connecting to the populations as highest risk?
- Do they have community relationships and are truly able to navigate to get to those most in need?
- What are some unintended consequences for this proposal? (Example: masks are recommended, but what does this mean for Black men already the subject of state surveillance, suspicion, and violence?)
- Are there existing negative outcomes or disparities that exist for the populations that will be impacted by the proposed goals or process in this proposal?
- What are the outcomes you intend to create or impact with this proposal or process?

Insanity:
doing the same thing
over and over again
and expecting
different results.

-Albert Einstein

Thank you.