

2024

ICMA Leadership Institute on Race, Equity, and Inclusion



2024 | ANNUAL
ICMA | CONFERENCE

SEPTEMBER 21-25 | PITTSBURGH
ALLEGHENY COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA

About The Leadership Institute on Race, Equity, and Inclusion

ICMA



"The fierce urgency of now," as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. stated, is long overdue. We are the ones who can forge real change in our own communities. As our cities, towns, and counties rebuild from the pandemic, we can create a new foundation that replaces white supremacy and racism with an aggressive respect for human rights.

About the Institute

ICMA is committed to creating and supporting thriving communities. As part of this commitment, ICMA has created— in partnership with the [Kettering Foundation](#) and the [National Civic League](#)—the Leadership Institute on Race, Equity, and Inclusion.

The institute supports the ICMA Executive Board's [statement regarding systemic racism](#) and, more specifically, the commitment to: "Engage our members and partners in the process of listening to understand what our profession needs to deliver on the work of our mission and vision through the lens of equity and inclusion."

The institute will take local government participants on a 12- to 18-month journey of interactive learning, networking with colleagues, and discussions of the key leadership issues surrounding racial equity.



Institute's Purpose

- To explore the barriers to and identify how to start and continue community conversation about race, equity, and inclusion.
- To create a cohort of executives who will actively participate in an ongoing conversation, sharing challenges and successes in increasing equity and inclusion in local government and addressing racial issues.
- Participants will be representative of the diversity within ICMA and will be at the manager, assistant, or deputy level to create work that will benefit the most senior ICMA members and thus have the greatest impact on communities. Some exceptions may apply.

2023–2024 Class of the Leadership Institute on Race, Equity, and Inclusion

Heather Abrams, ICMA Credentialed Manager Candidate, *Town Manager*
Town of Fairfax, CA

Valerie Barone, *City Manager*
City of Concord, CA

Bryant Davis, *Chief Diversity Officer*
City of Greenville, SC

Joseph (J.R.) Fourqurean II, *Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Director*
City of Westerville, OH

Mike Holder, **IMCA-CM**, *City Manager*
City of Kaufman, TX

Michael Jones, *County Administrator*
Island County, WA

Mike Land, **ICMA-CM**, *City Manager*
City of Coppell, TX

Ashley Reynolds Marshall, *Deputy City Manager for Social Equity*
City of Charlottesville, VA

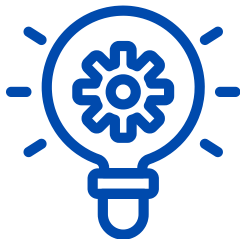
Rachel Richardson, *Senior Program Project Coordinator*
Broward County, FL

Dr. Hezedean A. Smith, **CFO, CPM, CHSE, CEMSO, NRP**,
Fire Rescue Services Director,
Polk County, Bartow, FL

Dr. Merci Umeri, *Assistant Teaching Professor and MiniMPA Coordinator -*
Wichita State University, Wichita, Kansas

Fellow's Locations





STEAL OUR WORK

This year's fellows come from thirteen (13) localities stretching coast to coast. While each jurisdiction is different—from an island community in Washington State to a suburb of Dallas, Texas, to a community in the Deep South—there is one thing in common. Each community has leadership that continues to foster value and strives to include thoughtful diversity, equity, and inclusion work in its organizations.

Each community leader believes that focusing on the impacts of systemic racism, including the New Public Administration principle of equity, and fostering inclusion remains vital to their government's success and their residents' ability to thrive in their communities. Whether that work is from the City Manager, within Parks and Recreation, through Transit, or in Public Safety, it is mission-critical and has a unique return on investment.

This year, fellows discussed the idea that these principles could work anywhere - no matter the jurisdiction and their community's culture.



***“Don’t reinvent the wheel,
just realign it” -
Anthony J. D’Angelo***



So, in that spirit, we invite you to steal our work.

So why reinvent the wheel? If you see a project that might work in your area - reach out to the fellow, and we will help you steal our work.

Below, this year's Fellow's have included a synopsis of their work along with their contact information. We hope that the work you read and hear about will spark ideas and opportunities for your locality to ensure that equity is a part of your mission, vision, and work to foster belonging among your entire community, including your staff. Please reach out to any or all of us so that you can learn how our work may support your goals.



Implementing Diversity Equity and Inclusion in a Small Town

Fellow

Heather Abrams
Town Manager, Fairfax CA
habrams@townoffairfax.org



Project Description

"Implementing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in a Small Town" explores how one small town planned and implemented its diversity, equality, and inclusion strategy. The Town of Fairfax, California welcomes you to use our key steps and hear the story of a mostly homogeneous small town with an unusually diverse police force, that works together to move forward.

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Project Location: Town of Fairfax, California

Website: <https://www.townoffairfax.org/>

Fairfax is an incorporated town in Marin County, California, United States. Fairfax is located 3.25 miles (5.2 km) west-northwest of San Rafael, at an elevation of 115 feet (35 m). The population was 7,605 at the 2020 census.



Greenville Zoo DEAI Plan

Fellow

Bryant Davis
Chief Diversity Officer
bdavis@greenvillesc.gov



Project Description

The Greenville Zoo was up for its AZA Accreditation in 2024. As a new component of the plan, zoos are now required to include a DEAI plan within their process. From October 2023 through June 2024, I work with the zoo team with a series of surveys, listening sessions, live polling, and focus groups to determine an outline for a plan. In this process, a Zoo DEAI committee was formed of employees who would be advocates and an extension of the work we would be conducting. A DEAI plan with a yearly work plan, including metrics and timelines for initiatives, was completed. The AZA was impressed with the depth of the plan, and work has already begun with teams and zoo management.

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Project Location: Greenville, South Carolina

Website: <https://www.greenvillesc.gov/>

Greenville is a city in and the county seat of Greenville County, South Carolina, United States. With a population of 70,720 at the 2020 census, it is the sixth-most populous city in the state. The Greenville metropolitan area had 928,195 residents in 2020 and is the largest metro area in South Carolina.



Equity Lens in the City of Westerville

Fellow

J.R. Fourquarean

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging Director

JR.Fourquarean@Westerville.org

Project Description

The Leadership Institute on Race, Equity, and Inclusion has challenged our cohort to think, build, and participate in our communities through a lens of equity and inclusion. As part of our acceptance into the fellowship program, we have been tasked with completing a capstone project using our experience from the institute to further equity and inclusion in our organization or our community. Before my acceptance into the institute, I was offered and accepted the role of the Director of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEIB) for the City of Westerville. City Councilmembers and leadership at the City of Westerville have made DEIB work a priority by adding it annually to the Council Strategic Plan. However, despite the priority and efforts in the DEIB space throughout the history of Westerville, there was a lack of a unified strategic plan for the DEIB work. The City of Westerville recently completed a year-long engagement with an outside consulting firm to help engage our internal team and residents and draft an action plan to serve as the foundation for our DEIB work. For my capstone project, I will introduce project W.E.L.S., our DEIB framework plan, discuss my efforts to implement some of the initiatives and detail what changes have been made based on my year in the leadership institute.



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Project Location: Westerville, OH

Website: <https://www.westerville.org/>

Westerville is a city in Franklin and Delaware counties in the U.S. state of Ohio. A northeastern suburb of Columbus as well as the home of Otterbein University, the population was 39,190 at the 2020 census.

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Implementing a Culture of Equity within the City of Kaufman Organization

Fellow

Mike Holder, ICMA-CM
City Manager
mholder@kaufmantx.org

Project Description

This capstone project, titled "Implementing a Culture of Equity within the City of Kaufman Organization," explores the journey of fostering a culture rooted in diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) within a municipal government setting. Motivated by the insights gained from participating in the ICMA DEI cohort, the project aims to embed DEI principles into the core values of the City of Kaufman, Texas. The project is anchored in personal experiences from an early career with the Dallas Police Department, exposing me to organizational diversity's challenges and benefits. These experiences highlighted the transformative power of inclusive practices, particularly during a time of significant racial tension and organizational reform in the early 1990s. The lessons learned from this period have profoundly influenced my approach to leadership and organizational management. The project also addresses the broader context of DEI challenges in Texas, where state-level efforts to roll back DEI programs threaten local initiatives. Despite these challenges, the City of Kaufman has made significant strides in promoting equity and diversity with the full support of its city council. This capstone demonstrates that with intentional leadership and a commitment to core values, it is possible to create a municipal organization that not only embraces diversity but also uses it as a foundation for excellence and innovation.



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Project Location: Kaufman, Texas

Website: <https://www.kaufmantx.org/>

Kaufman is a town in and the county seat of Kaufman County, Texas, United States. Its population was 8,388 at the 2022 census. Kaufman was founded as "Kings Fort", named after Dr. William P. King, who established the fort in 1840 after purchasing 2.5 square miles (6.5 km²) of land where the city is now located.

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Starting From Scratch – Launching a Countywide DEI Program

Fellow

Michael Jones, EMPA
County Administrator
Michael.jones@islandcountywa.gov



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Project Description

The report summarizes a rural county's efforts to establish a diversity, equity, and inclusion program. It discusses the stumbling blocks and successes encountered in launching and managing the process. The effort is internal to the organization with a focus on increasing awareness, creating greater equity in hiring, training, and promotion, and developing more equitable service delivery systems. Ongoing work is discussed, and examples of documents and program efforts are provided.

Project Location: Island County, Washington

Website: <https://www.islandcountywa.gov/>

Island County is a county located in the U.S. state of Washington. As of the 2020 census, its population was 86,857. Its county seat is Coupeville, while its largest city is Oak Harbor. The county's name reflects the fact that it is composed entirely of islands.



Building Community Through Public Service, Community Allyship

Fellow

Mike Land, ICMA-CM
City Manager
mland@coppelltx.gov

Project Description

This Capstone provides an overview of the city of Coppell's efforts to create a community of belonging in response to shifting demographics and social issues. It traces the city's journey from its historical context through organizational changes, community engagement, and strategic planning, culminating in the initial "Community Allyship" initiative. Key aspects include the impact of George Floyd's death on the community, Coppell's tradition of strategic planning, efforts to build an inclusive organizational culture, and introducing a comprehensive five-year plan under the "Coppell One Community" initiative. This plan emphasizes collaboration, inclusivity, and proactive community engagement. It reflects Coppell's commitment to fostering a diverse and welcoming community, navigating social challenges constructively, and achieving a long-term vision for an inclusive community fabric by 2040.



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Project Location: Coppell, Texas

Website: <https://www.coppelltx.gov/>

Coppell is a city in the northwest corner of Dallas County in the state of Texas. It is a suburb of Dallas and a bedroom community in the Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex. At the 2020 census, its population was 42,983. A small area in the far northern portion of the city extends into neighboring Denton County.

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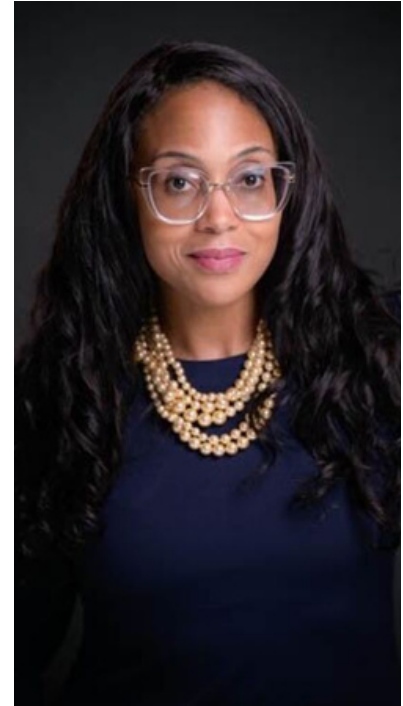
Fair and Just Creating Charlottesville's Social Equity Framework with Public Health in Mind

Fellow

Ashley Reynolds Marshall, JD MPA MPH
Deputy City Manager for Social Equity
marshalla@charlottesville.gov

Project Description

Within the spirit of the fellowship and ICMA's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion lies the chance to consider the intersectionality of our communities and the opportunity that local government has not simply to support our residents so that they survive- but how we can help them in a way that allows them to thrive. *Fair and Just: Creating Charlottesville's Social Equity Framework with Public Health in Mind* focuses on how the City of Charlottesville, Virginia, took a novel and proactive approach to fostering social equity by integrating social determinants of health (SDOH) into our JEDI framework. We aimed to highlight how often local government initiatives can influence, sometimes exclusively, the SDOH that have a greater impact on our resident's well-being than even medical interventions and present a comprehensive social equity framework developed to address disparities and promote overall community health and wellness. Our proactive approach is not just a response to existing issues but a call to action for other cities to follow suit.



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Project Location: Charlottesville, Virginia

Website: <https://www.charlottesville.gov>

Charlottesville is an independent city in Virginia. At the 2020 census, the city's population was 46,553. Charlottesville was the home of two U.S. presidents, Thomas Jefferson and James Monroe. Orange County, located northeast of the city, was the hometown of President James Madison. The University of Virginia, founded by Jefferson, and his home, Monticello, are UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

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Understanding Organizational Readiness Through Experiential Learning

Navigating Project Mountain: Unpacking The Challenges of DEI-Related Projects

Fellow

Rachel Richardson
Senior Program Project Coordinator
rarichardson@broward.org

Project Description

Navigating Project Mountain: Unpacking The Challenges of DEI-Related Projects explores the complexities of managing diversity, equity, and inclusion projects within a government agency through an experiential learning framework. Using the metaphor of a game, I've attempted to illustrate the challenges I encountered when developing projects, such as leadership buy-in and organizational readiness, which are crucial for the success of DEI initiatives. Reflecting on a year of experience, in this narrative, I'm emphasizing the importance of adaptability, collaboration, and strategic alignment with DEI goals to underscore that sustainable progress in DEI work requires more than individual efforts; it demands a cohesive organizational culture that fosters resilience, support, and long-term commitment to equity.



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Project Location: Broward County, Florida

Website: <https://www.broward.org/>

Broward County is a county in Florida, United States, located in the Miami metropolitan area. It is Florida's second-most populous county after Miami-Dade County and the 17th-most populous in the United States, with 1,944,375 residents as of the 2020 census.



Workforce Alliance of South-Central Kansas: Growing the Regional Economy Through Diverse Workforce Development

Fellow

Dr. Mercy O. Umeri (She/Her)
Assistant Teaching Professor and MiniMPA Coordinator;
Hugo Wall School of Public Affairs | Wichita State
University
Mercy.umeri@wichita.edu



Project Description

Kansas is experiencing a significant skills gap in its local government workforce, particularly in city and county roles. Local governments are grappling with challenges in filling essential positions, including administrative, public safety, and technical roles. These gaps are worsened by an aging workforce and increasing retirements, leaving municipalities struggling to maintain services. The shortage of skilled workers is not just a staffing issue—it threatens the ability of local governments to function effectively and meet the growing needs of the communities they serve. This capstone explores how expanding workforce training programs through partnerships with workforce alliance organizations, such as the Workforce Alliance of South-Central Kansas, can address the growing demand for skilled public sector employees in Kansas. By leveraging existing resources and expanding training efforts, these programs have the potential to not only close the skills gap but also enhance regional economic development.

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Project Location: South-Central Kansas

Website: <https://workforce-ks.com/> & https://www.wichita.edu/academics/fairmount_las/hugowall/

Wichita State University (WSU) is a public research university in Wichita, Kansas, United States. The Hugo Wall School of Public Affairs has a diverse faculty, staff, and graduate student body, who together use applied learning and applied research that benefits the community. The Workforce Centers of South Central Kansas are a one-stop resource for job seekers and employers. At the Workforce Centers job-seekers will find the tools and training needed to build successful careers, and employers will find help with their hiring, training, or human resources needs. Because many local, state, and federal organizations help provide these valuable services, most are available free of charge.

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