



# City of Culver City

## Staff Report

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**Item #:** C-6.

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**CC - CONSENT ITEM:** Approval of a Professional Services Agreement with Keen Independent Research LLC in an Amount Not-to-Exceed \$99,000 for the Phase One Preparation of a Racial Equity Action Plan (REAP) for the City of Culver City.

**Meeting Date:** February 26, 2024

**Contact Person/Dept.:** Dana Anderson /Human Resources Department  
**Phone Number:** 310-253-6000

**Fiscal Impact:** Yes  No       **General Fund:** Yes  No

**Attachments:** Yes  No

**Public Notification:** (E-Mail) Meetings and Agendas - City Council (2/20/2024)

**Department Approval:** John M. Nachbar, City Manager (2/19/2024)

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### **RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends the City Council approve a professional services agreement with Keen Independent Research LLC in an amount not-to-exceed \$99,000 for the phase one preparation of a Racial Equity Action Plan (REAP) for the City of Culver City.

### **BACKGROUND**

Culver City has been a member of the Government Alliance on Race & Equity (GARE) since 2017. GARE is a national network of local governments, which believes in leading with race to acknowledge that racial inequity has been built into American society and all sectors of government, rendering disparate outcomes for people of color. The City desires to continue its efforts to embed racial equity into its framework, through current and future policies, procedures, and structure. To meet these objectives, the City desires to establish and initiate implementation of a REAP, applying a results-based accountability framework to facilitate the normalization of conversations around race, development of staff capacity through training, and to operationalize racial equity by embedding this lens into routine internal and community-based decision-making.

Through the REAP, the City aims to improve outcomes for all Culver City residents, and institute more targeted strategies to help improve outcomes for diverse community members that have been

traditionally excluded from equitable opportunity and growth.

The chosen firm will be expected to develop key strategies to ensure the REAP is realized in a manner that is transformational, sustainable, targeted, intentional, and contain actions that will have the maximum impact in creating conditions where all people thrive and experience well-being through an application of targeted strategies.

In August 2020, through an RFP process, the City awarded a contract to develop a Racial Equity Plan, however the awardee was unable to see the REAP development through to fruition. In August of 2023, the RFP for a Racial Equity Consultant was reissued in order to readdress the objectives set forth in the Human Resources Department Workplan.

### **Scope of Work**

To prepare and assist with the development and implementation of the City's REAP in two phases with both short-term and long-term initiatives and goals for each phase. The equity consultant will assist with REAP development, facilitate community engagement and stakeholder convenings in the development of the REAP, and build capacity among staff for ongoing implementation and performance monitoring. In the preparation and development of the REAP the contractor is expected to complete the following:

1. Assess inequity in the City's practices, policies, and procedures; and
2. Set goals that move the City toward equity using a results-based accountability model; and
3. Provide specific tools for City staff to apply the accountability model and a racial equity lens to their daily work.

### **2023 RFP Evaluation Process/Timeline**

- October 16, 2023: 16 organizations submitted proposals for review.
- October 16 - December 1, 2023: The 16 proposals were reviewed, evaluated, and scored based on the proposer's ability to meet the objectives outlined in the RFP.
- December 13, 2023: The top five scoring proposals received were invited back for evaluation interviews that were held December 19, and December 20, 2023.
- January 9, 2024: The top two ranked consulting firms were invited to participate in a second evaluation interview in which the proposers were asked to highlight their process and experience in developing Racial Equity Action Plan's for other businesses, local governments, and organizations.
- January 23, 2024: While both finalists were strong contenders, Keen Independent Research LLC was the unanimous top choice of the RFP panel based on its knowledge and demonstrated experience in the development of REAP plans for several public sector entities in the U.S., including California.

### **Keen Independent Research LLC Background and Team Qualifications**

Founded in 2011, Keen Independent Research LLC is a 23-person equity research and consulting firm with extensive experience conducting analyses involving racially, culturally, and linguistically diverse communities for public agencies throughout the country. Keen Independent Research team

members have had substantial experience providing recommendations and assisting with and providing guidance on implementation of racial equity-related strategic plans based on assessment findings.

Keen Independent Research LLC has completed more than 200 equity assignments that include recommendations for improving racial equity internally and externally. Their studies have provided clients with the tools to measure progress over time and the guidance to implement recommendations across all internal and external operations.

Key personnel have recently prepared racial equity-related plans for public organizations such as the Orange County Transportation Authority, the City of Tacoma, and the City of Milwaukie in Oregon, among many others. Keen Independent worked with the Center for Economic Inclusion to develop a racial equity tool that gauges the economic impact of proposed legislature bills on people of color. In addition, key personnel have extensive experience coordinating and conducting outreach and engagement with diverse stakeholders and other community members. The following staff members will be assigned to the City of Culver City REAP assignment.

- David Keen: co-founded Keen Independent in 2011. He has directed or participated in more than 180 equity studies and his national leadership includes pioneering a court-approved methodology and testifying as an expert witness successfully defending equity programs in court.
- Annette Humm Keen: co-founded Keen Independent in 2011. She has worked on more than 80 equity studies and is known for designing inclusive stakeholder engagement strategies and facilitating productive stakeholder conversations on difficult topics.
- Janine Kyritsis: is the qualitative research lead on current firm DEI and discrimination/disparity projects. She has experience with more than 70 equity studies.
- Dr. Nicole Yates: (Southern California-based) has conducted extensive quantitative and qualitative analyses for equity studies including Santa Clara County, California and City of Milwaukie, Oregon.
- Dr. Vivien Lattibaudiere: has extensive experience with program development and implementation as well as training and learning development for public agencies.
- Blanca Monter: has extensive experience addressing workforce equity and labor market reform for more than 60 equity studies with the firm and in her prior roles.
- Haley Adams: (Southern California-based) played a key role in a number of equity studies and facilitated DEI training sessions.

## **Keen Independent Research Recent Projects**

### Orange County Transportation Authority:

The Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) sought to enhance its efforts to become an even more equitable, inclusive, and diverse organization. OCTA engaged Keen Independent Research to develop a strategy inclusive of employees, contractors, transit users, and all members of the public who utilize and benefit from OCTA's projects, programs, and services. The plan built upon OCTA's past equity efforts, enhancing community engagement and strengthening future decision making. Keen Independent assessed OCTA employment and contracting practices as well as service delivery and community input from an equity perspective. This project encompassed equity in four

areas:

1. An assessment of OCTA's policies, practices, and procedures;
2. Background research on best practices related to equity in the transportation industry;
3. Development of recommendations, strategies and short-, medium- and long-term goals in the form of an Action Plan; and
4. Creation of an equity framework and working definitions for related terms.

Deliverables included a thorough assessment informed by internal and external stakeholders, detailed recommendations, an implementation plan, and an equity framework.

#### Santa Clara County (SCC) Parks and Recreation Department:

Santa Clara County Parks and Recreation Department sought to increase equitable access to its parks by evaluating policies, procedures, training, and community engagement practices. SCC engaged Keen Independent to develop a DEI plan and road map inclusive of all stakeholders.

Keen Independent is assessing SCC service delivery, staff training, personnel practices and policies and community climate among other factors through an equity lens. The project is encompassing the following areas:

1. Assessment of personnel practices and policies;
2. Background research on best practices related to service delivery by comparable public agencies;
3. Assessment of community outreach efforts; and
4. Development of a DEI plan and road map for the Department.

This project will be completed in spring 2024.

#### The City of Milwaukie, Oregon:

The City of Milwaukie, Oregon has made equity, inclusion, and justice a priority in how it serves the public and operates as an employer. The City engaged Keen Independent Research to develop an equity plan to advance these efforts.

Keen Independent Research assessed city employment and contracting practices, facilitating internal and external discussions related to workplace climate, and evaluating service delivery from an equity perspective. The study included four major areas of activity:

1. Developing a comprehensive, long-term plan for ensuring diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging in the City's workforce;
2. Creating a more equitable system for how the City spend funds on contractors, vendors, not-for-profit organizations, and other groups;
3. Redirecting *what* services, the City performs to better reflect equity; and
4. Improving *how* the City provides those services, to ensure equity in service delivery.

Keen Independent Research LLC's work with the City of Milwaukie concluded with a final presentation of the equity plan to the Milwaukie City Council on October 17, 2023.

## **DISCUSSION**

Culver City's ideal Racial Equity Action Plan will apply a results-based accountability framework to facilitate the normalization of conversations around race, development of staff capacity through training, and to operationalize racial equity by embedding this lens into routine decision-making while meeting the three objectives outlined below:

1. Assess inequity in the City's practices, policies, and procedures.
2. Set goals that move the City toward equity using a results-based accountability model.
3. Provide specific tools for City staff to apply the accountability model and a racial equity lens to daily work.

The information gathered, recommendations provided, guidance and oversight through the implementation process given will provide staff with direction and tools to move Culver City's goals of embedding racial equity into the framework of the City's operations.

Keen Independent Research, with having completed over 200 related projects over the last 14 years, its strong objective and analytical approach, its technical marketing skills, and varied community outreach strategies and platforms, has shown itself to be a firm well prepared and equipped to assess, evaluate, and drive the City's efforts to generate a Racial Equity Action Plan that is transformational, sustainable, targeted, and intentional.

## **FISCAL ANALYSIS**

Staff recommends that the City Council approve a professional services agreement with Keen Independent Research LLC in an amount not-to-exceed \$99,000 for the phase one preparation of a Racial Equity Action Plan for the City. The department has \$39,000 encumbered in Account 101.22100.610400 (Human Resources - Consulting Services) that can be released and used for this agreement. An additional \$60,000 for Account 101.22100.610400 (Human Resources - Consulting Services) has been included in the mid-year budget requests being heard by Council on February 26, 2024. If the budget amendment is approved, the Revised Budget for Fiscal Year 2023-2024 would contain sufficient funding for the agreement..

## **ATTACHMENTS**

1. Keen Independent Research LLC Proposal
2. Evaluation Meeting I Presentation
3. Evaluation Meeting II Presentation

## **MOTIONS**

That the City Council:

1. Approve a professional services agreement with Keen independent Research LLC in an amount not to exceed \$99,000 for the phase one preparation of a Racial Equity Action Plan for the City of Culver City; and
2. Authorize the City Attorney to review/prepare the necessary documents; and
3. Authorize the City Manager to execute such documents on behalf of the City.