

**Washtenaw Equity Partnership (WEP) Data Subcommittee Inaugural Meeting**  
**January 7, 2022 11:30am – 1pm**

**Meeting Minutes**

**Attendees:**

MaryAnn Sarosi (Co-Chair)

Eli Savit (Co-Chair)

Delphia Simpson

Linda Rexer

Judge Darlene O'Brien

Grady Bridges

Truly Render

Lindsay Ryan

Joe Ryan

Trevor Bechtel

Angela Tripp

Chief Michael Cox

Sue Shink (WEP Co-Chair)

Sandhya Kajeepeta (Vera)

Alex Roth (Vera)

- Co-Chairs Eli and MaryAnn welcomed everyone and discussed the importance of data in addressing racial disparities, acknowledging how little the criminal legal system currently utilizes data, how data remains siloed and how the Washtenaw Equity Partnership presents an important opportunity to build sustainable oversight systems.
- Members all introduced themselves.
- Meeting ran ahead of schedule before WEP Co-Chairs Sue Shink and Alma Wheeler Smith were available, so MaryAnn provided an overview of the WEP and Guiding Principles (handout shared prior to meeting). She explained that the County Board Chair began holding a series of meetings in December 2020 with the Public Defender, Chief Judge, Prosecutor, Sheriff and members of CREW (“WEP Founding Partners”) to discuss ways to identify and address racial disparities in Washtenaw’ juvenile and adult criminal legal systems. In February 2021, the WEP Founding Partners voted to obtain funding to engage a team of

experts to support the WEP Founding Partners in developing a process to produce a transparent, coordinated, evidence-based Community Plan to identify and address racial disparities across all components of those systems and a framework for the plan's implementation, oversight and evaluation. A grant from the Michigan Justice Fund allowed the WEP Founding Partners to bring the Vera Institute for Justice on board as the expert team in June 2020 and worked with the WEP Founding Partners to develop an oversight entity ("Working Group") made up of institutional representatives, community advocates and justice impacted people. The Working Group established 6 subcommittees (Prevention and front end of the criminal legal system, Court process, Post-sentencing and reentry, Youth justice and schools, Behavioral health and Data.) The Working Group adopted a charge for each subcommittee and Guiding Principles which the subcommittees are asked to use as touchstones for their work, including answering seven questions when formulating recommendations for the Working Group to consider. MaryAnn outlined the Guiding Principles adopted by the Working Group (equitable outcomes, evidence-based actions, accountability, collaboration, innovation and resources) and explained that these principles are ideals the Working Group wants to achieve in Washtenaw County and that the Working Group and all subcommittees should analyze how their work contributes to furthering these principles.

- Sue spoke about her role as chair of the WEP and the importance of this work. She discussed the principles the WEP steering committee considered when building the WEP working group: racial equity, inclusivity, action-orientation.
- Sandhya presented on the role of Vera in the WEP and the subcommittees and provided updates on data procurement:
  - The WEP work should be a community and institutionally-driven and evidence-based process where WEP and subcommittee members have ownership over the work.
  - Vera has been brought on as an independent party to provide technical support, to bring expertise working with other local jurisdictions, and to help facilitate administratively. Vera has no predetermined answers of what recommendations should be implemented in Washtenaw County.
  - Alex and Sandhya are the two Vera staff members who will be supporting the data subcommittee.
  - Vera is in the process of executing data sharing agreements with the Washtenaw County Trial Court to obtain adult court data and with the Washtenaw County Sheriff's Office to obtain jail data.
  - External to the WEP, there are three ongoing research projects with overlapping goals focused on the prosecutor's office, the juvenile justice system, and traffic stop data in the City of Ann Arbor. The WEP will not duplicate this ongoing work, instead we will coordinate with the leads of those research projects and integrate their findings into our recommendations.
- Eli summarized the charge of the data subcommittee (handout shared prior to meeting):
  - What do we want to learn from the data?
  - What and how do we communicate to the public? i.e., balancing data transparency with legal and ethical obligations for privacy

- What should we be doing going forward? i.e., how do we create and sustain data systems going forward?
- Acknowledged how data systems were originally built for a specific purpose, and often not conducive to research and analysis
- Member mentioned it's important to formally revisit the questions on the charge throughout the work and ensure we are following these
- Member reemphasized the importance of sustainability
- Question about other subcommittee topics (full charges for all to be circulated):
  - Prevention/front-end
  - Court process
  - Post-sentencing and re-entry
  - Behavioral health
  - Youth justice
  - Data
- Sandhya gave preview of next step of developing research priorities:
  - WEP Working Group is in the process of identifying broad research priorities to guide the overall work
  - Each subcommittee will then identify ~3 more specific research questions to guide their topic-focused work. Each question will fall under the umbrella of one of the WEP broad research priorities.
  - The process of identifying specific research questions should start with an analysis of what problems the subcommittee aims to address, what is already known vs. what gaps in knowledge exist, and what additional evidence is needed to form recommendations.
  - Questions:
    - Will we have more guidance on the WEP research priorities in advance of our next subcommittee meeting? Yes
    - Can we have prompts to help us brainstorm before next subcommittee meeting? Yes, Sandhya will share some prompts and examples.
    - If the other subcommittees ask questions that are very research-involved, will the data subcommittee be involved in reviewing those other questions? It's likely that other subcommittees will have questions about what data systems exist and what data can be accessed, so it would be a great first step for this committee to start by mapping out existing administrative data systems. That would provide a lot of foundational support to the other subcommittees. However, the data subcommittee has its own tasks of reviewing current data being collected for this project and developing recommendations for data integration and transparency moving forward, so we should not get too bogged down by providing data support to other subcommittees.
    - Are there ways to avoid trying to answer very big questions that will take up all of our time? Our goal is to guide each subcommittee toward specific, relevant questions that are feasible to answer given the data we can access and the time/resources we have. If we identify questions that should be

answered but the necessary data/resources/time is unavailable, we may develop recommendations for future research related to those questions.

- MaryAnn sharing some logistics updates:
  - The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, February 1<sup>st</sup> from 12-1:30pm
  - Going forward, we'd like to pick a monthly time slot. Eli and MaryAnn will email the members about which slot works best so we have the scheduled locked in by the next meeting. The 2 times being considered are any Monday of the month (11:30-1pm) or any Wednesday of the month (4:30-6pm).
  - We will use Google Drive to share subcommittee materials. If anyone has issues accessing the drive, we can try an alternative.
  - We will use majority vote for decisions.
  - The WEP working group is raising money to give \$1,800 stipends to people who either: 1) work for an NGO having a budget of 350K or less; or 2) make less than \$50,000/year. Email Eli or MaryAnn if you are eligible for a stipend.
- Closing questions:
  - Will we still be adding subcommittee members? Yes, we're open to adding new members. We could also decide we want to bring in an expert for a meeting or to assist with a particular issue rather than add that person as a subcommittee member.