



**City of Bend**  
**Human Rights and Equity Commission (HREC)**  
**2025-2027 Workplan**

**Approved by HREC: 04/30/2025**  
**Approved by Bend City Council: 09/17/2025**



# INTRODUCTION

The Human Rights and Equity Commission (HREC) acts as a crucial bridge between Bend’s community and its local government, providing guidance, advocacy, and public engagement on issues of equity, access, and inclusion. In the 2025–2026 workplan, HREC prioritized three interconnected focus areas: Policy, Community Engagement, and Education and Awareness. These priorities collectively aim to drive systemic transformation, rebuild community trust, and enhance institutional learning.

Over the past six months, HREC has diligently refined this workplan. Commissioners collaborated closely with staff, council, and community partners to ensure that the priorities not only align with the City Council’s objectives but also resonate with the lived experiences and needs of Bend’s residents. This collaborative process has strengthened HREC’s role as a trusted advisor and a collaborator, ensuring that its recommendations are grounded in community realities and responsive to pressing equity concerns.

On September 3, 2025, HREC presented its focus areas to the City Council—Policy, Engagement, Education, and Advocacy. Following Council’s feedback and further collaboration with HREC leadership, the workplan underwent revisions to enhance its alignment with council goals, clarify the focus areas into distinct functions, and strengthen its alignment with organizational priorities. These suggested changes have also resulted in a decrease in focus areas from the suggested three to Community Engagement and Policy.

This workplan aligns with the Council’s overarching vision for a more equitable and resilient Bend. It contributes to several key areas:

- **Accessible and Effective City Government:** By promoting transparency, accountability, and accessibility in city operations, the workplan aims to enhance the city’s governance systems.
- **Safety and Belonging:** Addressing hate, bias, and structural inequities while fostering community resilience are crucial steps towards creating a safe and inclusive environment for all residents.
- **Housing, Transportation, and Infrastructure:** Ensuring that community voices are heard in shaping growth and planning decisions is essential for developing a sustainable and equitable housing, transportation, and infrastructure system.
- **Economic Prosperity:** Advancing supplier diversity and creating more equitable access to city resources are vital for fostering economic growth and prosperity in Bend.
- **Climate Resilience:** Integrating equity and partnership into the City’s climate adaptation and sustainability efforts is crucial for building a resilient city in the face of climate change.

# MOVING FORWARD

Through this workplan, HREC reaffirms its mission to serve as a thoughtful advisory body to City Council. By strengthening connections among staff, council, and the community, HREC aims to guide Bend toward becoming a city where equity, access, and inclusion are not only stated values but lived realities. Focusing on systemic change, trust building, and shared learning, HREC continues to play a vital role in shaping Bend’s future.



# HREC 2025-27 FOCUS AREAS

## *Community Engagement*

Vision: Trust is built when the City's decision-making is informed by inclusive, accessible, and culturally relevant engagement. HREC's role is to ensure that community voices, especially those most directly impacted, are reflected in both public conversations and formal Council decisions.

## *Strategies & Actions*

### **Center Community Voices in Decision-Making:**

- Support the development of multilingual outreach mechanisms to ensure communications reach diverse communities about policy conversation and key council objectives.
- Track and report participation of underrepresented groups, measuring progress in access and inclusion.
- Ensure HREC participation in HOME Committee deliberations and provide feedback to Council and staff.

### **Create Meaningful Feedback Loops:**

- Deliver an annual Community Voices Memo to the Council that highlights the work of HREC and connects Council priorities to annual updates.
- Host quarterly community conversations tied to Council priorities (housing, safety, climate resilience, transportation, economic prosperity). This will require proper noticing of upcoming presentations from staff to ensure community-based organizations are present for discussions during HREC meetings.
- Recommend and support heritage month proclamations and events that highlight changemakers and promote belonging.

### **Build Community Policy Literacy:**

- Facilitate workshops that help community members understand City processes, ordinances, and policy pathways. *Note: This is something we already do. Staff currently provide timely updates on issues while explaining the importance of a given process, policy, or ordinance.*
- Establish accessible public resources through the Equity Learning Hub (launch Q2 2027) as a space for shared learning, training, and dialogue around the HREC lens, AIM Equity Tool, and Equity related resources.

HREC will connect community experiences into government processes while also equipping residents with the knowledge to shape policy. These efforts strengthen trust, transparency, and belonging across Bend. This requires active participation amongst HREC members and connectedness to community discussions.

## *Policy*

Vision: City policies should reflect equity considerations, reduce disparities, and align with Council's goals. HREC's policy role is both proactive and educational: co-developing tools that embed equity in governance, while also strengthening Commissioners' and staff's ability to analyze and communicate equity impacts.



## ***Strategies & Actions***

### **Institutionalizing Equity Tools in Policy:**

- Finalize and pilot the HREC Lens by Q1 2026 as a complement to the AIM Equity Tool (see appendix for details).
- Deliver structured AIM + HREC Lens training for Council, committees, and commissions to ensure tools are applied consistently.
- Share HREC equity resources, memos, and tools, with other Council committees to build citywide adoption.

### **Provide Policy Recommendations on Council Priorities:**

- Deliver memos with equity-centered recommendations on the Growth Plan, Emergency Preparedness/Wildfire Resilience, and HOME Committee housing strategies.
- Develop clear metrics to evaluate how Council policies affect access, affordability, and inclusion across communities.

**Advance Equity Through Connected Citywide Campaigns** Collaborate with the regional anti-hate campaign by Q2 2026 to strengthen public awareness and response to bias incidents.

- Support the implementation and tracking of the Supplier Diversity program.

### **Strengthening Policy Literacy within HREC:**

- Hold quarterly workshops that build Commissioners' capacity to interpret ordinances, policy drafts, and staff reports. These would be delivered by staff explaining council actions, staff policy updates and recommendations, and future policy changes.

Policy and equity literacy go hand in hand. Through policy development, structured recommendations, and committee internal learning, HREC helps ensure that City decisions are both informed by community realities and resilient enough to reduce systemic inequities.

## ***TIMELINE (HREC Discussions)***

- **2025:**
  - September: HREC presentation on AIM + sponsorship program updates
  - October: Continued HREC AIM Presentation
  - November: HREC Lens Pilot #1: Water Rate Modernization
  - December: COBAAC | Shared Meeting (Share AIM Lens)
- **2026:**
  - January: Council presentation on AIM + HREC Lens progress.
  - February: HREC Lens adoption and memo to Council + Annual HREC Refresher
  - March: HOME Committee Discussion and Update
  - April: Hate and Discrimination Update and Questions
  - May: Community Conversation (Welcoming Week + priorities)
  - June: Electrification Discussion and Invitation
  - July: Preparedness/Wildfire Resilience
  - August: Equity Hub discussion (Resources for HREC Webpage)
  - September: Council update on HREC workplan



# APPENDIX: AIM EQUITY TOOL – WHAT, WHY, AND HOW

The AIM Equity tool is a practical resource for integrating equity into everyday decision-making. AIM stands for Assumptions, Impact, and Measure; three areas of questioning that help city staff examine how decisions affect internal and external customers. It is a streamlined tool intended to be easy to use, repeatable, and adaptable across departments.

## **This tool helps staff:**

- Identify potential unintended consequences of decisions
- Surface and question assumptions
- Prioritize equity in service delivery.
- Track and evaluate equitable outcomes using data

## ***Why Use the AIM Equity Tool?***

Structural barriers exist, even if we can't see them. Pausing and reflecting on how we deliver service internally and externally, engage with the public, or even arrive at a decision moves us beyond symbolic equity work.

## **This tool helps us:**

- Operationalize the City's commitment to equity
- Ensure consistent equity considerations in planning, budgeting, and policy development
- Build trust with all communities
- Expand how we arrive at decisions and minimize harm, and expand access

## **Key Terms:**

- **Equity:** Our working definition: "Working toward fair outcomes for people or groups by treating them in ways that address their unique advantages or barriers." (**OHSU Language Inclusion**) Our aspirational definition: "Equity acknowledges that not all people, or all communities, are starting from the same place due to historical and current systems of oppression. Equity is the effort to provide different levels of support based on an individual's or group's needs to achieve fairness in outcomes. Equity actionably empowers communities most impacted by systemic oppression and requires redistribution of resources, power, and opportunity to those communities." (**State of Oregon DEI Action Plan, Roadmap to Racial Equity and Belonging**)



## ***How does it work?***

Think about the tool as a lens. Its structure is to make us pause and reflect.

### **A- Assumptions**

- a. What assumptions are we making about identity, experience, and access?
- b. Are we unintentionally prioritizing one audience over another?
- c. What historical or social context should inform this decision?

Example: Are we assuming everyone has access to digital tools when rolling out a service online?

### **I- Identify**

- a. Who benefits and who may be burdened by this?
  1. Who benefits the most from the project, program or policy?
  2. Who bears the greatest burden? (time, cost, access limitations, displacement)
  3. Are any communities being asked to trade off their needs for the benefits of others?
- b. What strategies can we use to reduce harm or increase access and inclusion?
- c. Have we meaningfully engaged the group of people who will be affected most?

Example: If we're proposing a rate increase for a utility service, have we identified how low-income households might be impacted and what support already exists?

### **M- Measure**

- a. What outcomes are we tracking? Who is better off? (What is the data telling us?)
- b. How will we know if our strategy advances equity?
- c. What is our connection to data? Are we creating targets to maximize impact while minimizing harm?

Example: We might measure the demographic breakdown of those who access language access services over time to track and improve the quality of service.

## ***Expectations***

Staff are expected to use AIM Equity Tool thoughtfully, consistently, and with a clear understanding of its purpose: to reduce harm, challenge systemic inequities, and improve outcomes for the community. Using AIM is not optional or symbolic, it is a shared responsibility embedded in how we plan, make decisions, and deliver services.

Staff are expected to apply the tool early in their projects, reflect critically on underlying assumptions, identify who is most impacted, and measure how benefits and burdens are distributed. This includes engaging directly with communities most affected, removing barriers to participation, and documenting how feedback and data inform decisions. Simply put, possessing the AIM tool means committing to a practice of transparency, accountability, and collaboration.

Equity staff is available to partner with staff in applying the AIM Equity tool.



## ***Using the AIM tool in Practice***

*When do I use it?* During project planning, service design, budget decision, community engagement, evaluation, or whenever there is a moment to reflect back or forward in a project, program, or policy.

*Who should use it?* All City staff, particularly those who make decisions that affect service delivery, community access, budgeting, resource allocation, or make a big change.

*How often should we use it?* As often as possible. Embedding the tool into our routine processes, such as team meetings, project charters, or evaluations.

Examples: Right After Project planning template, before community engagement, right after community engagement, before reporting to council

### ***Quick Tips for use***

- **Start From Where You Are:** Use what applies. Not every section will fit every project.
- **Be data-informed:** Use both community insight and available data to guide decisions. Try the City of Bend Equity Indicator Report or any of the additional resources created by the City of Bend Office of Performance Management.
- **Pause with a Purpose:** Slowing down allows time to make informed, inclusive decisions. This tool will slow you down, so be prepared for that.
- **Work Together: One City, One Voice.** Equity isn't a solo task. Ask for support from equity staff, project managers, the policy team, and the City Manager's Office.

### ***What to communicate and how to communicate it?***

This is a reminder that what we message matters, and so does the delivery. Not every equity insight needs to be public-facing, but every equity-informed decision should be communicated thoughtfully and intentionally.

Consider the following to do this well:

- **Loop in the right people early:** Equity staff can help frame equity consideration, communications staff can support accessible and culturally competent messaging, and the City Manager's office can ensure alignment with citywide goals.
- **Tailor the message to the audience:** What we share with the public may be different from what we share with Council, community partners, or staff while continuing to maintain transparency and accountability.
- **Use AIM to assess:** Are we reinforcing any assumptions with the way we're framing this message? Who might feel excluded or unheard by our communication choices?

**Bottom Line:** Work with Communications and Engagement, Equity staff, and the City Manager's office. Effective communication is part of equity work. Using the AIM lens helps teams name what should be communicated, why it matters, and the best way to do so.



## ***How does this connect to advisory bodies and the Council?***

The AIM for Equity doesn't operate in isolation. It is part of the broader citywide infrastructure that includes participatory governance and Council accountability.

- The Human Rights and Equity Commission (HREC) is developing a way to support applying the AIM lens to all presentations they review. This means the city departments that present to HREC will be asked to clearly identify assumptions, impacts, and measures related to equity before HREC can provide recommendations.

### **Sources:**

- The Government Alliance on Race and Equity. (2016) Racial Equity Toolkit: An Opportunity to Operationalize Equity.
- Coalition of Communities of Color. (2018). Leading with Race: Research Justice in Washington County.
- Powell, J. A., Menendian, S., & Ake, W. (2009). *Targeted universalism: Policy & Practice*. Haas Institute for a Fair and Inclusive Society.



### **Language Assistance Services & Accommodation Information for People with Disabilities**

You can obtain this information in alternate formats such as Braille, electronic format, etc. Free language assistance services are also available. Please contact the Accessibility & Equity Program at [accessibility@bendoregon.gov](mailto:accessibility@bendoregon.gov) or call **541-693-2198** Relay Users Dial 7-1-1. Contacting us with your accommodation 24 to 72 hours in advance will help us procure your request.



### **Servicios de asistencia lingüística e información sobre alojamiento para personas con discapacidad**

Puede obtener esta información en formatos alternativos como Braille, formato electrónico, etc. También disponemos de servicios gratuitos de asistencia lingüística. Póngase en contacto con Gestor del proyecto o creador del documento en [accessibility@bendoregon.gov](mailto:accessibility@bendoregon.gov) o **541-693-2198**. Los usuarios del servicio de retransmisión deben marcar el 7-1-1.

