



**Cornell R. Robertson, P.E., P.S.**

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**FRANKLIN COUNTY ENGINEER**

**FRANKLIN COUNTY  
ENGINEER'S ANTIRACISM  
& EQUITY PROGRAM**

June 30, 2020

The Franklin County Engineer's Office denounces racism in all forms. More needs to be done now. We pledge to listen and continue to learn more from those affected by racism, and we will strive to promote meaningful and lasting change in our organization, Franklin County, and society at large.

## Franklin County Engineer's Antiracism & Equity Program

The Franklin County Engineer's Office (FCEO) is an agency of action, innovation and collaboration. Events in 2020 compelled our organization to take action against the complex nature of racism in the United States in a very intentional and purposeful manner while following the FCEO Vision Statement (Attachment A) and more specifically paragraph 3, which reads, "The Franklin County Engineer's Office is focused on offering a diverse and inclusive work environment where all employees are supported and have the opportunity to share ideas, to grow, and to succeed. We develop future leaders by providing training and education opportunities. Our team understands the importance of, and is committed to utilizing small and disadvantaged business enterprises through procurement and professional services. We actively pursue public engagement and outreach to underserved populations of Franklin County."

This intentional and purposeful approach will be a top priority and will assist us in creating new programs to support our pledge to work to eradicate racism through collaboration in three areas:

1. Workforce Team
2. Vendors, Suppliers, Consultants, Contractors
3. Community Outreach & Public Engagement

Therefore, the Franklin County Engineer has established the Franklin County Engineer's Antiracism & Equity Program (FCE AEP), which contains specific, positive, measureable action items to explicitly and publicly affirm our identity as an anti-racist agency in these three areas. As an anti-racist agency, we pledge to purposefully identify, discuss, and challenge ourselves to understand and correct any inequities we may discover, and gain a better understanding of ourselves during this purposeful process with our teammates, outside organizations, and everyone in Franklin County who we serve whether they be residents, citizens, constituents, those who work in Franklin County but live elsewhere, or those just traveling through Franklin County. The Franklin County Engineer will use this document to develop relationships of solidarity, support, and trust rooted in intentional antiracist thought, action, and reflection.

The FCE AEP was created internally after conducting eight "Listening Meetings" with a task force of subject matter experts within Franklin County. To be intentional and purposeful we will evaluate the action items of the FCE AEP on a quarterly basis with this same task force to ascertain if we are meeting our goals and objectives and will revise the program as needed. We will also conduct open discussions and facilitate a constant dialogue regarding healthy racial relations with our teammates at our monthly project status meetings, weekly staff meetings, individual department meetings, and in a new and smaller meeting format known as "Togetherness Meetings." Annually, on or around May 25<sup>th</sup> of each year, the Franklin County Engineer will present the updated FCE AEP to the Board of Commissioners reporting action items that have been completed, those in progress, and new action items added for the future.

The FCEO considers diversity to mean acknowledging, understanding, accepting, celebrating and valuing the uniqueness of all individuals. Each person is an individual with visible and non-visible differences, and by respecting this, everyone can feel valued for their contributions, which is beneficial not only for the individual but for the FCEO as well. Inclusion is the intentional act of embracing diversity and establishing a culture where each uniquely different person is provided the opportunity to thrive, succeed and excel. Diversity is what you have.....Inclusion is what you do.

Equity helps everyone to recognize that advantages and barriers exist, and that, as a result, we do not all have the same starting point. Equity is an approach that ensures everyone has access to the same opportunities. Equity is a process that begins by acknowledging the unequal starting place and continues by addressing and correcting the imbalance.

### **Workforce Team**

The FCEO is striving to create an inclusive workplace where everyone feels valued for their contributions. This is beneficial not only for the individual but for the FCEO as well. This FCE AEP provides us with a road map to create a diverse and inclusive environment in the workplace, with our business partners, and in the community. To help us achieve this, we need the commitment of every employee to understand what we are trying to achieve, to work together, and be open to change. This program is everyone's responsibility, and all are strongly encouraged to participate and get involved.

To have a respectful and supportive organization that acknowledges, understands, accepts, celebrates and values the uniqueness of all individuals, and by respecting this, everyone can feel valued for their contributions, which is beneficial for all parties involved. This will also assist in attracting and retaining a diverse workforce that is reflective of the community in which we live. This program will help us achieve our organizational goals. It provides a focused direction and commitment so we can work together to respect and value our diverse workforce and build a more inclusive work environment.

The Franklin County Engineer's anti-racism commitment will be reflected in the culture of the agency through policies, programs, practices, and internal communications as we continue to work to eradicate racism. See the June 3, 2020 Diversity & Inclusion Department Message of Encouragement (Attachment B) co-written and co-signed by Franklin County Engineer, Cornell R. Robertson, P.E., P.S. and Diversity & Inclusion Coordinator, Simone Y. Burley.

**BE IT RESOLVED** that Franklin County Engineer's Office teammates shall exercise respect and decency toward humankind by treating all others as they would like to be treated themselves.

**BE IT RESOLVED** that the FCEO will have a zero tolerance policy to racial injustices. This includes, but is not limited, to the following:

1. Uttering the “n” word by any teammate.
2. Not allowing multi-lingual teammates to talk to each other in a non-English language.

Every individual is entitled to a working environment that promotes respect and equal treatment for all. The FCEO will not tolerate any acts of unlawful or unfair discrimination (including harassment, bullying, and/or racism) committed against an employee, job applicant, consultant, vendor, prime contractor, sub-contractor, or visitor because of a protected characteristic. This includes but is not limited to sex; gender identity; gender expression; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race (including ethnic origin, color, nationality and national origin); disability; sexual orientation; religion and or belief; age and/or military status. If a teammate believes that she/he may have suffered discrimination because of any of the above protected characteristics, she/he is encouraged to report the incident via the method as described in the employee policies and procedures manual.

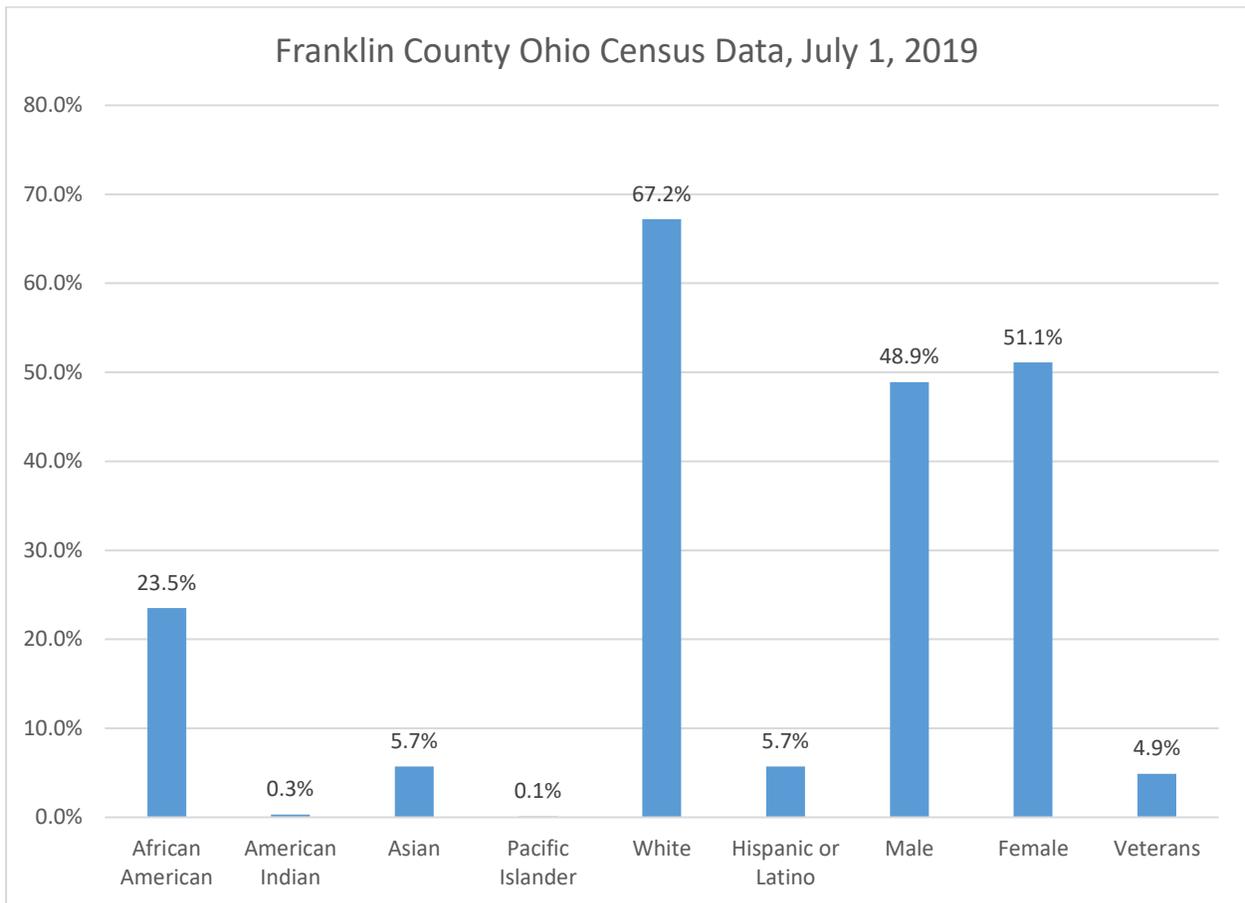
If an employee violates any aspects of this program, the employee shall be subject to penalties ranging from a written warning which will be placed in the employee’s personnel file, up to and including discharge from employment with the FCEO. Violations of this policy are also subject to the rules and regulations as set out in the FCEO Employee Policies and Procedures Manual.

The FCEO is committed to the following:

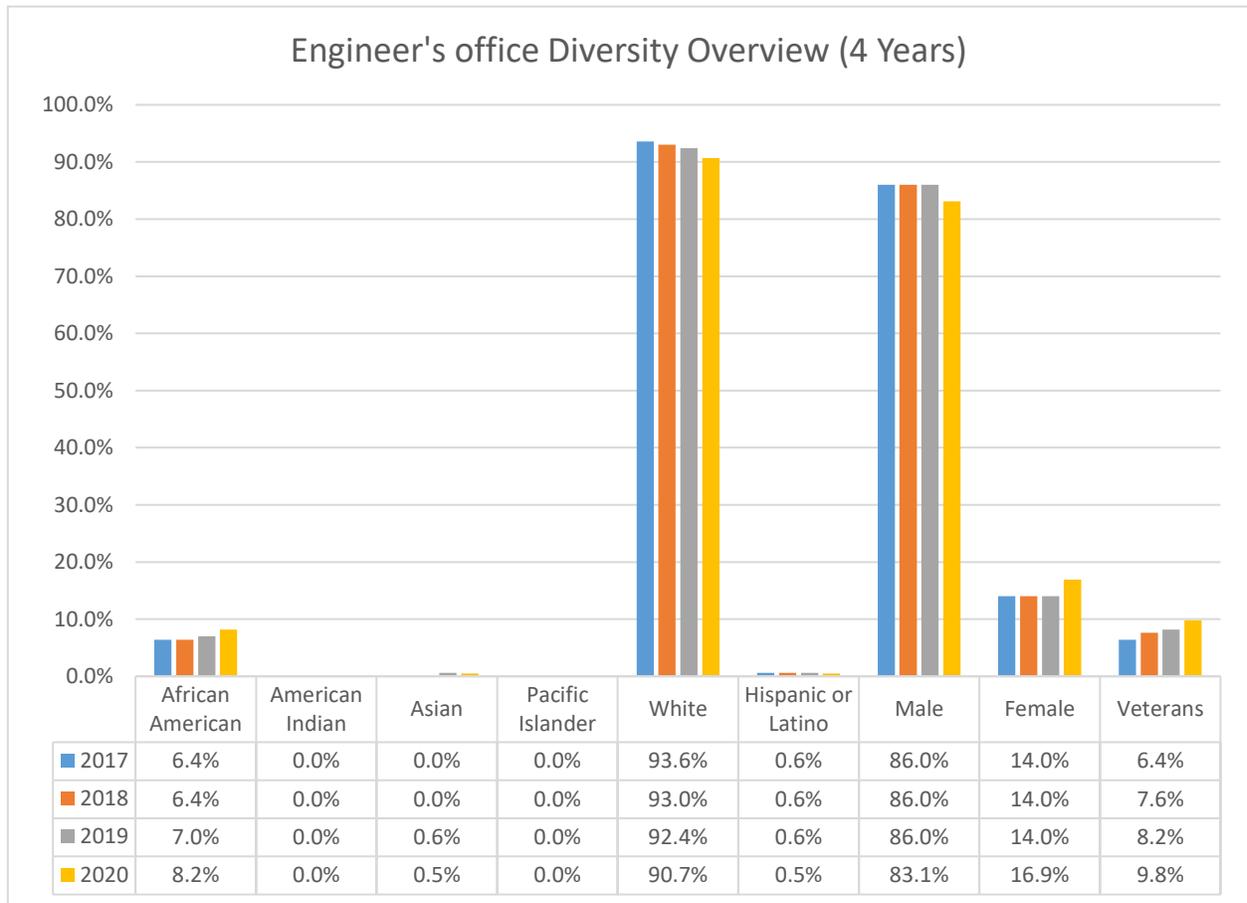
- A workplace which is free from discrimination, harassment, bullying, victimization and vilification;
- Treating employees fairly and with respect;
- A workplace culture that is inclusive and embraces individual differences;
- Equal employment opportunities based on ability, performance and potential;
- Awareness in all staff of their rights and responsibilities with regards to fairness, equity and respect for all aspects of diversity;
- Attraction, retention and development of a diverse range of talented individuals;
- Equitable frameworks and policies, processes and practices that limit potential unconscious bias.

**WE AFFIRM** to educate ourselves and raise awareness on racial injustice and inequality by continuing Diversity & Inclusion training within the agency to all FCEO teammates. This mandatory training along with a review of this Antiracism & Equity Program will be held on an annual basis. Examples of such trainings shall include, but are not limited to, implicit bias, affinity bias, micro inequities, micro aggressions, cross-cultural awareness, etc.

**WE AFFIRM** to expand our recruitment efforts to reach out to Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and other minority organizations to increase the number of minorities employed by the FCEO so that the agency is more reflective of the residents of Franklin County. This can be accomplished by conducting college tours, hosting job and/or college fairs for these populations as well as written communication when appropriate. Data taken from United States Census Bureau reflects Franklin County’s diversity composition is as follows:



With each year we want to see the FCEO’s workforce composition move closer to the then current composition until they match exactly. Going back to 2017, here are the FCEO’s workforce compositions each year:



**WE AFFIRM** to be intentional in the recruitment of our interns and summer help so that young people from underrepresented segments of the population are exposed to job opportunities with the FCEO. This can be accomplished by forming relationships with education professionals within various school systems within Franklin County to help with job placement.

**WE AFFIRM** to implement the Franklin County Engineer’s Employee Investment Program (Attachment C) to ensure that “all employees are supported and have the opportunity to share ideas, to grow, and to succeed.” All employees will be encouraged to develop their skills and fulfill their potential and to take advantage of training, development and advancement opportunities. Selection for employment, promotion, training, or any other benefit will be on the basis of merit, ability, and uniqueness that an individual brings to a position. No form of intimidation, bullying or harassment will be tolerated. If a teammate believes that she/he may have suffered discrimination because of any of the aforementioned protected characteristics, she/he is encouraged to report the incident via the method as described in the employee policies and procedures manual.

## Vendors, Suppliers, Consultants, Contractors

The Franklin County Engineer's Office will support the Franklin County Board of Commissioners' work to progress as an equitable and fair-minded organization, with leadership continuing to identify specific activities to further enhance diversity, inclusion and equity, and to ensure antiracism principles for vendors, suppliers, consultants, and contractors. All people interacting or doing business with the FCEO shall adhere to the terms of this program and have a business model or network that is compatible with the FCE AEP. The Franklin County Engineer's Office adheres to the latest design and construction standards enacted by the State of Ohio and City of Columbus for the maintenance and improvement of roads, bridges, infrastructure for multiple modes of transportation, utilities, and drainage facilities. We want our business partners to be reliable, reputable and productive so we can deliver the best services to the community, and we need diversity to help us achieve this. The collaboration of diverse populations will lend itself to the best possible outcomes for our workforce and the community.

**WE AFFIRM** that the Franklin County Engineer is committed to promoting diversity, inclusion, and equity in all aspects of the Engineer's Office. This commitment was most recently exemplified in the development of the Franklin County Engineer's Equitable Business Enterprise (FCE EBE) Program for Locally Funded Projects on May 4, 2020. The FCE EBE Program (Attachment D) will continue into the future. Checks and interviews will be conducted in-the-field to verify compliance.

**WE AFFIRM** that the FCEO has conducted workshops to help disadvantaged businesses navigate the certification process. These workshops will continue and will be conducted on an annual basis.

**WE AFFIRM** to be intentional in notifying minority owned business of opportunities with the FCEO. This can be accomplished by sending notification of projects or events to minority owned businesses through minority owned publications, email, US mail, text messages and/or telephone calls, open houses, or in-person meetings with our office.

**WE AFFIRM** to designate a specific date to celebrate minority engineers and/or other minority professionals or employees that have made a significant contribution to the industry. This celebration may consist of announcements on social media platforms, acknowledgement through plaques, trophies, proclamations, or other gestures of appreciation, award luncheons, etc.

**WE AFFIRM** to encourage the support of minority owned restaurants by frequenting their establishments during lunch breaks, office-wide meetings of teammates, trainings, open houses, ORC required annual meetings, etc.

## Community Outreach & Public Engagement

The Franklin County Engineer will work to implement strategies that dismantle racism within our community and society at large. Diverse outreach will allow the FCEO to share our story and search for areas where we can make positive contributions to the communities of Franklin County in an impactful and meaningful manner.

**WE AFFIRM** that the Small Governments Infrastructure Improvement Funding (SGIIF) administered by the FCEO to small governments will improve roads, bridges, and infrastructure for multiple modes of transportation in an equitable way for all citizens, constituents, residents, and traveling public within Franklin County. The 2020 SGIIF will be utilized to resurface various roads in need of repair in the Village of Harrisburg and the Village of Urbancrest.

**WE AFFIRM** to utilize a company we retained in 2020 of a translation and interpreting service to ensure Franklin County residents from varying backgrounds can communicate with the FCEO employees and are informed about the FCEO projects and/or events.

**WE AFFIRM** to continue the Adopt-A-School program as initiated in 2020 where the FCEO adopted Ohio Avenue Elementary, an underrepresented elementary school in a disadvantaged area within Franklin County, Ohio, Columbus City School system. The program offers tutoring and provides food and clothing to every child in attendance.

**WE AFFIRM** to continue to engage Columbus City Area Commissions and community organizations located within Franklin County to inform the residents of the roles and responsibilities of the FCEO and how the agency collaborates with other agencies to resolve Franklin County residents' issues of concern.

**WE AFFIRM** to focus on projects that have elements of First Mile/Last Mile in areas of Franklin County that need to provide transportation systems in underrepresented communities, or otherwise, via the expertise of the Franklin County Engineer's Complete Streets Coordinator. Currently under construction or design:

- Agler Road over Alum Creek
- Brown Road Corridor Study
- Cassady Avenue road, pedestrian facilities, and drainage improvements
- Cleveland Avenue from Huy Road to Elmore Road
- Cooke Road Corridor Study
- Eureka-Valleyview-Highland-Harper
- Ferris Road Corridor Study
- Havenwood subdivision street, pedestrian facilities, and drainage improvements
- Refugee Road over Big Walnut Creek
- School Zone Mobility Study