



RGW

# DISCOVERY REPORT

BY RGW CONSULTING, LLC.  
PROPOSED TO:

**Downers Grove  
Public Library**

708.646.8312

[WWW.RGWASHINGTON.COM](http://WWW.RGWASHINGTON.COM)

*"Reimagining & Generating Wonder"*

RGW Consulting, LLC is a boutique consulting firm that curates opportunities for its clients to Reimagine and Generate Wonder that leads to diversity, equity, and inclusion for all.

Our vision is a world where differences are embraced and celebrated. Our mission is to create a community of individuals who possess a growing consciousness of the cultural space they occupy and are agile in their ability to navigate a variety of cultural spaces, toward a more viable and sustainable framework for doing business equitably.

Reesheda Graham Washington



CEO, PRINCIPAL  
CONSULTANT

"If you are always trying to be *Normal*  
you will never know how *Amazing* you  
can be!"

~Maya Angelou

### CONTACT RGW

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OAK PARK, IL 60302

EIN NO.: 83-4284702





# REESHEDA GRAHAM WASHINGTON

## CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

### PERSONAL PROFILE

I am an entrepreneurial consultant with over 10 years experience in providing mission inspired, intersectional leadership that invites equity for all using an efficacious, asset-based approach.

### SKILLS & ABILITIES

- Facilitator of community & connectivity
- Expertise in curriculum development & experience design,
- Well versed in cultural agility, equity & justice principles & practices
- Knowledgeable regarding strategic planning & data analysis
- Entrepreneurial, innovative, generative, and iterative in thinking & leadership style
- Centers practices of collaboration, mindfulness & discernment in decision making
- As a Black Woman, I embody DEI practices by way of lived experiences

### INTERESTS & HOBBIES

- Social Enterprise, Economic Development, & Equity
- Liberal Arts & Sciences
- Interior Design
- Cooking Regionally Inspired Recipes

### CONTACT INFORMATION

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## MOST RECENT EMPLOYMENT

**RGW Consulting, LLC, Chief Executive Officer**  
Oak Park, IL January 2019-Present. [www.rgwashington.com](http://www.rgwashington.com)  
RGW consulting supports individuals, communities, and organizations recognize the actual and realize the ideal through speaking, coaching, training, consulting, and facilitating. Our clients are remarkably diverse: large and small, private and public, faith-based and secular, for-profit and nonprofit. We curate curiosity & wonder to foster sustainable transformation that emphasizes equitable practices for all.

**LIVE 2.0, LLC, Chief Experience Office**  
Oak Park, IL 2016-Present. [www.livexclamation.com](http://www.livexclamation.com)  
Design and develop a start-up artisanal, destination, transformational experience café that infuses asset-based community development, economic development and equity (ABCDE<sup>2</sup>) practices and serves as a model for sustainable community development for other organizations. Innovated the concept, ethos, mission, and vision of a diverse, inclusive, transformational space that curates opportunities to live in tension, live intentionally, and facilitate practices in being in difficult dialogue with one's self and others.

**Communities First Association, Executive Director**  
Oak Park, IL 2013-2019  
Led and strategically developed a board, staff, and national community of practitioners as part of a faith-based, intermediary organization that specializes in the multiplication of asset-based community development, economic development, and equity (ABCDE<sup>2</sup>). Increased board diversity by 34% within the first 12 months of tenure and 73% within the first 24 months. Increased affiliate diversity by 800% within the first 24 months of tenure. Developed and redesigned equitable vetting and certification processes. Rebranded the organization enhancing communication of mission, vision, and values of the organization. Reclaimed relationships with two major foundations formerly acquainted with the organization. Developed a sustainability model shifting the organization from foundation reliance to a fee for service framework, simultaneously avoiding mission drift. Launched a professional development initiative comprised of 11 core competencies, including an online learning community, allowing for an equitable, collaborative network with standards of excellence in asset-based community development

## REFERENCES

Jerod Frenzl, Manager, RTSP, Rebuilding Together,  
[jfrenzl@rebuildingtogether.org](mailto:jfrenzl@rebuildingtogether.org)\*  
Bob Tucker, Former Board Member, The Village of Oak Park,  
[rtucker@cclfcchicago.org](mailto:rtucker@cclfcchicago.org)  
Dr. Carol Kelley, Superintendent, Elementary School District 97,  
[ckelley@op97.org](mailto:ckelley@op97.org)\*  
Kathleen Porreca, Principal, Regina Dominican High School,  
[kporreca@rdpanthers.org](mailto:kporreca@rdpanthers.org)\*  
Rozella Haydee White, Director, Gulf Coast Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Churches of America, [rozella@rozellahwhite.com](mailto:rozella@rozellahwhite.com)\*  
Wilonda Cannon, Director of Development, Breakthrough Urban,  
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Alaina Kleinbeck, Director, Leadership Education, Duke University,  
[akleinbeck@div.duke.edu](mailto:akleinbeck@div.duke.edu)\*  
David Seleb, Executive Director, Oak Park Public Library,  
[d.seleb@oppl.org](mailto:d.seleb@oppl.org)\*

\*Denotes all past/current clients who can speak to our experience





**RGW**

# **RGW CONSULTING, LLC**

[WWW.RGWASHINGTON.COM](http://WWW.RGWASHINGTON.COM)

## **WHO WE ARE**

RGW is a company skilled at guiding individuals and groups on an inquisition of curiosity and wonder about their goals and passions, particularly as it pertains to decolonization and deconstruction of systems that marginalize historically underserved and/or underrepresented people groups. We assist clients in determining what needs to be dismantled, as well as what needs revision and restoration to ensure justice oriented growth and development.

## **WHAT WE DO**

RGW consulting supports individuals, communities, and organizations recognize the actual and realize the ideal through speaking, coaching, training, consulting, and facilitating. Our clients are remarkably diverse: large and small, private and public, faith-based and secular, for-profit and nonprofit. We curate curiosity & wonder to foster sustainable transformation that emphasizes equitable practices for all.

## **CONTACT INFORMATION**

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*RGW: "Reimagining & Generating Wonder"*

## **EMPLOYMENT HISTORY**

**The Evangelical Covenant Church, Director of Mission Mobilization  
Chicago, IL 2011-2013**

Managed and Led a team mobilized to obliterate extreme poverty in the Equateur Province of Congo through the denomination's partnership with World Vision to sponsor 10,000 children in one year and ultimately 20,000 children in Congo. Recruited 400+ churches' involvement in Covenant Kids Congo. Acted as point person and liaison between the ECC & World Vision. Monitored and communicate on the ground developments in Congo. Comprehensively created, coordinated, and implemented tiered strategic plans related to recruitment, marketing, communications, resourcing, and treatment-streaming

**American Quality Schools, Regional Manager of Curriculum & Instruction  
Chicago, IL 2008-2011**

Managed and Supported 9 Elementary and Secondary Charter Schools in traditionally underserved urban communities as it pertained to building & budget management, school leadership, culture & climate, parent & community satisfaction, curriculum & instruction, and professional development. Created, planned, and evaluated the implementation of curriculum. Facilitated partnerships and communications with representatives from school stakeholders. Created a NEW school with a strong culture and climate that supports data-driven decision making and lifelong learning.

## **EDUCATIONAL HISTORY**

**National Louis University Chicago, IL 2006-2007**  
**Master of Educational Leadership, Supervision & Administration**

**Chicago State University Chicago, IL 1996-1999**  
**Master of Arts, English Literature**

**Northern Illinois University DeKalb, IL 1992-1996**  
**Bachelor of Arts, English Literature**

## **CERTIFICATIONS & PUBLICATIONS**

**State of Illinois Administrative Certificate Type 75, April  
2007**

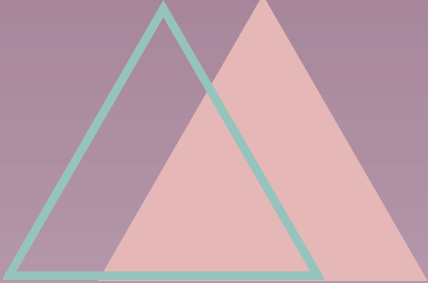
**State of Illinois Teaching Certificate Type 09, August 1998**

**Bi-Vocational Minister's License, The Evangelical Covenant  
Church, June 2012-Present**

**Certified Life Coach, Christian Coaching Institute, April 2015**

**Co-Author, Soul Force: Seven Pivots Toward Courage,  
Community, and Change Published June 5, 2018, Herald  
Press.**





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**PRIMARY POINT OF CONTACT:**

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# THE SCOPE OF WORK

## THE COMPANY

RGW Consulting supports individuals, communities, and organizations recognize the actual and realize the ideal through speaking, coaching, training, consulting, and facilitating. Our clients are remarkably diverse: large and small, private and public, for-profit and nonprofit. We curate curiosity & wonder to foster sustainable transformation.

## THE CLIENT

The Downers Grove Public Library (DGPL) is a place for everyone to discover, grow, play, and learn! DGPL is committed to lifelong learning, relationship building, transparency of information, and equitable access for all.

## CONTACT INFO

Downers Grove Public Library

1050 Curtiss St.

Downers Grove, IL 60515

Julie Milavec, Director

jmilavec@dglibrary.org

630-960-1200

## PLAN GOALS

RGW will work with the Downers Grove Public Library's leadership and staff to complete a comprehensive discovery process that leads to the robust reporting of objective impressions, findings, and recommendations to enhance the launch of the library's equity work in partnership with its current stakeholders.

## PLAN DELIVERABLES

In terms of deliverables under this proposal, RGW has provided the services projected below:

- Preliminary consultation with appointed library representation to review the scope of work, identify issues, priorities, and approaches
- Design, Implementation, and Analysis of a comprehensive needs assessment that includes a series of interactions to ensure intersectional feedback and recommendations regarding the development of a DEI trajectory
- A Consultation with designated library staff that includes recommendations for the best way forward in terms of a plan for DEI Training
- Commencement Debrief with Recommended next steps to further the library's equity work

# OUR METHODOLOGY

## *Let's Get Curious!*

### *Discovery*

Born out of a desire to interrupt racism, bias, and injustice, RGW Consulting emerged from a determination to reimagine the way we approach diversity, equity, and inclusion.

### *Inquiry*

Participants often approach DEI, building on the last traumatic experience they've had, leading to reservation, disdain, and guardedness, before they even start the training. With a sheer wit, a bit of levity, and the significance of storytelling in mind, RGW prides itself on engaging its participants in the preliminary work of thinking about how we learn (metacognition), interrogating our posture (self-reflection), and equipping participants with practices (mindfulness) that lead to a more healthful engagement of humanity in DEI content.

### *Differentiation*

With a commitment to truth, vulnerability, and transparency, we help our clients hold the tension between the deep and difficult work ahead and the care required to face the challenges associated with DEI. With an emphasis on a customized and uniquely differentiated journey for each client, our discovery implementation and curation of a curious space in which to ask hard and heavy questions, cultivates opportunities for individual and organizational transformation. We discover your purpose and align scalable solutions to your passion points, infusing equitable practices all along the way.

## KEY COMPONENTS

01

PRELIMINARY  
DISCOVERY  
CONSULT

02

PRELIMINARY  
PLANNING  
CALL(S)

03

LISTENING  
SESSION  
IMPLEMENTA-  
TION

04

FINAL REPORT  
& FOLLOW UP  
CONFERENCING

## OBJECTIVES

- Participants have given an account of the equity journey the library has taken to date, both from an ideal and an actual perspective
- Participants will be instrumental in the shaping and forming of the objective impressions that will develop over the course of intersectional listening sessions and the reporting recommendations
- Participants are informed by what they hear and share over the course of the discovery process as it unfolds intersectionally
- Participants are empowered toward implementation of the recommendations that emerge from the discovery process as a result of their participation in the development of the resulting findings

## ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- What are the elements of the organization that have been addressed by way of the equity work that has taken place? What are the elements of the organization's development that need further attention as it pertains to DEI?
- What are the ways in which policies, protocols, and procedures must be amended to fortify the library's journey toward equity for all?
- What are the next natural best steps that the library can take to enhance its practices of DEI for all?

RGW



**DISCOVERY QUESTIONS**

1. If you were to explain the current state of diversity, equity, and inclusion at Access Living to a stranger, what would you say to them?
2. What seems to support the presence of diversity, equity, and inclusion at Access Living right now? What helps the organization practice and participate in diversity equity and inclusion today?
3. What are some of the things that serve as road blocks to diversity, equity, and inclusion? What are some of the challenges that get in the way of Access Living being as diverse, equitable, and inclusive as it could be?
4. What is the very next best step that Access Living could actually take toward becoming more diverse, equitable, and inclusive?
5. Is there anything else that you would like to share that may not have been covered by the questions I have asked?



# *Let's Get Curious!!!*

## **Discovery Overview**

RGW Consulting (RGW) spent the week of September 21, 2020 interviewing and listening to a cross section of over 60 Downers Grove Public Library (DGPL) stakeholders including DGPL executive leadership team members, board members, department directors, and community members, as well as stakeholders who represent particular affinity group members based on gender, race, sexual orientation, age, ability, and interests/passions, to illuminate some of the root causes that impact the library's culture and climate, specifically as it pertains to practices related to diversity, equity, and inclusion. The discovery process illuminated strengths, challenges, and the need for stakeholders to continue to engage the interrogation of inequitable practices and how those practices show up systemically in DGPL culture. This document outlines those strengths and challenges that were revealed during the discovery process. Additionally, this document lays out a recommended course of action to address inequitable culture, behaviors, processes, and protocols within DGPL.

## **After Action Reporting**

Having spent more than 30 hours interviewing over 60 different stakeholders including executive leadership, management, board trustees, community members, and staff members across roles, responsibilities, departments, and affinities on issues of equity at Downers Grove Public Library, RGW offers the following strengths, challenges, recommendations, and questions to consider for future work. This after action report also serves as the premise for the recommended next steps and future work that RGW recommends for DGPL.

# *STRENGTHS*

Some of the key strengths upon which to build a Downers Grove Public Library culture that is free of injustice include:

- **ACKNOWLEDGMENT.** The library recognizes and acknowledges across stakeholderhood (though to varying degrees) that there are individual, cultural, operational, and systemic inequities within DGPL. This is a strength in that the organization acknowledges that there is an issue and that its stakeholders (though to varying degrees) are complicit in both the manifestation of the issue and the solutions to remedy the issue of inequity within DGPL.
- **WILLINGNESS.** Stakeholder interviews revealed a team of leaders and other stakeholders who have passion and desire to have the DGPL free of inequity. This energy will serve the implementation of diversity, equity, and inclusion practices well.
- **AWARENESS.** The library team, which is predominantly white, is aware that it has blindspots regarding its own DEI practices and acknowledges that they need to integrate even more diversity on their team in order to further illuminate what lies beyond what they can see on their own. The DGPL team is aware that they have more work to do to become a more equitable and inclusive organization. They also are aware that they need non-dominant culture voices speaking into the process to guide them toward the next best steps on their DEI journey.
- **POSTURE.** DGPL has been working intently to be a better community partner by listening to and operationalizing what they hear as the expressed felt needs of this community. This way of being serves embarking on a DEI journey well.
- **ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE.** DGPL has a uniquely cohesive team that works together synergistically and respectfully, one that is honoring and dignifying, both personally and professionally. Naturally curious and equipped as a solutions oriented band of collaborators with vast critical thinking capacity, the vibrance of this organization's culture and climate will serve them well as they face new challenges in DEI.



# *STRENGTHS*

Some of the key strengths upon which to build a Downers Grove Public Library culture that is free of injustice include:

(cont.)

- **ADMINISTRATIVE & GOVERNING SUPPORT.** There was clear consensus from management and the broader team members that they feel extremely supported by administration to unapologetically carry out equitable practices in their work. Additionally, the board of trustees are unapologetically supportive of the entire team carrying out its work from a DEI based framework. Having this kind of administrative and governing support will prove beneficial to DGPL's DEI implementation.
- **COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS.** DGPL has worked diligently to develop partnerships with external community organizations who are committed to DEI as mission central. There is evidence to support DGPL's intentionality around partnering with school districts, churches, organizations who work to obliterate homelessness, seniors, as well as organizations focused on LGBTQIA+ rights. There is also evidence that these partnerships operate as a result of "outreach" efforts that illustrate DGPL's commitment to going beyond its own walls to reach historically, intentionally, and traditionally marginalized people groups (HITMPGs).
- **LEARNING/COACHING ORIENTATION.** Rather comprehensively, the DGPL team, from the boardroom to the front desk is composed of people who know that they possess shortcomings, blindspots, and even biases, and they are willing to subject themselves to learning and coaching to enhance their awareness and illuminate their blindspots. DGPL's learning and coaching orientation will serve them well in their desires to improve as a library that centers diversity, equity, and inclusion.

# CHALLENGES

Some of the key challenges upon which to build a Downers Grove Public Library culture that is free of injustice include:

- **MARGINALIZATION.** Racism has historically pervaded the systems and policies that inform all library operational systems at large. While a great deal has been done to rectify some of those issues, DGPL does have systems, policies, and protocols that allow for inequitable treatment of people representing historically, intentionally, and traditionally marginalized people groups (HITMPG). This is most evident in the reality that the library's most senior leaders are all white, and that there are not systems/conditions in place that would compel people of more diverse backgrounds to seek employment at DGPL amongst its senior ranks. This issue came up in almost every single convening throughout the listening process. Another pervasive issue was the way in which the MLIS degree creates a barrier for diversity at the senior management level of DGPL. This issue was also pervasive throughout the discovery process.
- **SHARED LANGUAGE.** DGPL does not share a common language as it pertains to terminology that impacts racism. Who defines literacy? Who defines community? What do we mean when we say "public space?" If very few of the people who hold the power to construct definitions are people who represent HITMPGs, meaning will continue to be made and operationalized in a way that omits their needs and presence in the community. Additionally, developing a common language across stakeholderhood is essential to having common understandings as we work toward pervasively DEI culture. DGPL stands to improve upon its ability to share a common language and understanding around issues pertaining to DEI. Additionally, there is "coded language" that everyone understands as a means by which to signal exclusivity and marginalization. For example, "taxpayer dollars" signal a level of power and privilege that intimates that the library staff, whose salary is paid by these dollars, must acquiesce to whatever the proceeding requests entail. Likewise, a patron naming that they are from the north side of Downers Grove implies an expected level of privilege and respect that residing on the south side of Downers Grove does not imply. Allowing for the codification and signaling that the use of language in this way entails, perpetuates power dynamics that allows certain people to be prioritized above others.

# CHALLENGES

Some of the key challenges upon which to build a Downers Grove Public Library culture that is free of injustice include:

(cont.)

- **HISTORY, TRADITION, MERITOCRACY, & NEUTRALITY.** The culture of libraries in general highly values its own institutionalization by way of its history, traditions, meritocracy, and academization. The challenge is that the very history, traditions, and academization that libraries tend to uphold is what often serves as the foundation for unjust principles and practices. Additionally, the idea of neutrality, libraries as a place of impartiality on all issues (which would include topics around racism, sexism, gender, inequality, ageism, ableism, etc.) is pervasive in library sciences. As such, one contention is that taking a just and equitable stance is to “take a side” and diminish the library’s historical identity as a “neutral space,” not naming and identifying policies and procedures that explicitly name and take a stance as a DEI centering institution. The question then becomes what do we preserve from this rich history steeped in tradition, and what are we willing to relinquish, uproot, and/or dismantle toward becoming a DEI centering institution? Discovering the “in between” is part of the challenge of DGPL becoming more developed in its practices of diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- **APPROPRIATION & PERFORMATIVE ALLYSHIP.** In an effort to increase diverse representation, particularly as it pertains to programming, DGPL has both implicitly and explicitly participated in appropriation (the adoption of icons, experiences, and representations of another culture, and using it for purposes that are unintended by the original group or somehow made offensive to that culture’s people) and performative allyship (professing support and solidarity with marginalized groups in ways that either isn’t helpful or results in active harm to said groups). This misfortune often occurs as a result of a shallow integration of DEI, as opposed to the deep examination and re-working of policies, procedures, protocols, programs, and professional development that would spur the redistribution of power, wealth, access, and decision making necessary to achieve a more genuine and authentic representation of diversity, equity, and inclusion that moves beyond depictions, celebrations, and holiday regalia, toward a more integral, pervasive, and holistic approach.



# CHALLENGES

Some of the key challenges upon which to build a Downers Grove Public Library culture that is free of injustice include:

(cont.)

- **THE GAP BETWEEN THE IDEAL VS. THE ACTUAL.** DGPL has notable passion and enthusiasm for a library free of “-isms.” Most stakeholders articulate a deep desire to have a more equitable expression of the library, ideally. However, upon further probing, some stakeholders, particularly from the Downers Grove community (less so as it pertains to the DGPL internal team) struggled to commit to the kinds of actual commitments and sacrifices that they would have to embody in order to achieve a truly equitable library. In order for a greater depth of DEI culture to emerge, DGPL community stakeholders will need to make a greater sacrifice and commitment to relinquishing privilege, power, control, and resources toward DEI.
- **THE "TAXPAYERS DOLLARS" TIGHTROPE.** Patrons of DGPL that represent dominant culture people groups frequently cite themselves as taxpayers who should inform the direction of the library, as just cause for disengaging issues of DEI. The sentiment is that because they pay taxes, they should have resources and experiences that are aligned to their own value system. The challenge in this sentiment is that there are also taxpayers who represent HITMPGs, as well as HITMPG allies who pay taxes and far less frequently see their interests represented in the integral acculturation of the library experience. The challenge that the library faces is how to hold all of the competing interests of its taxpaying patrons, honoring the library as a public square that welcomes everyone, while also upholding the interests of people who have had their interests most primarily neglected historically. Finally, there is also the challenge of acculturating white-centering patrons to the embrace of HITMPGs and their interests in order to ensure health-full acculturation for ALL, as well as in order to mitigate additional harm to HITMPG representatives from dominant culture tax-paying patrons.

# CHALLENGES

Some of the key challenges upon which to build a Downers Grove Public Library culture that is free of injustice include:

(cont.)

- **PARTNERSHIP EXPANSION.** While the robust partnerships that DGPL has developed will strengthen their emphasis on DEI work, many of these partnerships were said to have been more robust on the north side of Downers Grove when compared to the south side of Downers Grove, where more HITMPGs typically reside. There seems to be a perception that there is room for more robust partnership development with people and organizations on the south side of Downers Grove. This may be more difficult to consider during this COVID-19 pandemic, but this may be something to consider a bit more, post-pandemic.
- **REPRESENTATION BEFORE ACCULTURATION.** Library stakeholders ubiquitously expressed a need to have more diversity amongst its staff. Stakeholders talked about ways to incorporate language into job postings and descriptions (ie. non-binary pronoun usage) to signal to HITMPGs that DGPL welcomes them. However, the challenge is that the organization has not first integrated an equity framework into all that it is and does, DGPL runs the risk of signaling to attract candidates from HITMPGs, only to have them experience a white centered cultural experience that causes harm, isolation, and fatigue. DGPL must first address the challenges of a white-centered organizational culture prior to onboarding people who represent HITMPGs to ensure a healthful transition for all.
- **GENERAL PUSHBACK.** There is conservative holdover from patrons about homeless people sitting in the cafe; complaints about the community listening sessions that preceded the development of this report. There are people who hold DEI work as synonymous with the Black Lives Matter movement, though DEI certainly holds more depth and expanse than BLM and is not synonymous with the BLM movement. There are also people who tie DEI work to the narrative that has recently emerged nationally about DEI efforts being “anti-American.” Such narratives create fear in some people about the implications of implementing DEI efforts at the library. As such, DGPL should anticipate some pushback from patrons who are not on board with DEI initiatives as the library furthers and deepens the work.

# CHALLENGES

Some of the key challenges upon which to build a Downers Grove Public Library culture that is free of injustice include:

(cont.)

- **FEAR OF MISTAKES.** A nominal representation of DGPL staff spoke of fear of making mistakes, upsetting people, and/or “getting it wrong,” as an impetus for overthinking and debilitation as it pertains to DEI initiatives. They want to do the work, but they are afraid of the repercussions that accompany doing the work. The repercussions they feared varied based on how much perceived and/or actual power they held based on their race, socioeconomics, title/role. For example, socioeconomically vulnerable people may be afraid because they need their jobs and might be fired for getting it wrong or saying too much. People with more prominent roles/titles feared being shunned or judged for being a leader who didn’t know better. These feelings may be emerging due to the deeply rooted culture of meritocracy that exists within library culture. The fear of doing the work, resulting in overthinking or debilitation must be mitigated to widen the way forward.
- **WHITENESS.** Whiteness is a social construct that significantly informs how everyone should be/act/show up in this country. Designed and informed most specifically by white males, whiteness is also often extremely patriarchal. Whiteness informs how we manage time, hold space, distribute resources, and share power (or not). The pervasive state of whiteness superimposes itself as “the way to be or operate,” rather than “a way to be or operate.” It is held in place by behaviors that maintain the status quo. Most people operate within, carry out, prioritize, and preserve whiteness subconsciously, as they have been so immersed in it their entire lives that it happens without a thought. However, HITMPG representatives are often oppressed, micromanaged, and micro-aggressed as a direct result of nonconformity to whiteness. The extent to which whiteness is allowed to prevail at DGPL is directly correlated to the extent to which the library will be effective in its integration of DEI.



# RECOMMENDED NEXT STEPS

There are a few focal points that RGW Consulting recommends as a result of the research, listening, and discovery protocol implementation. While these elements will be further informed by the development of a DEI team and a team charged with the creations of an equity strategic plan (more details below), the following are key areas that RGW anticipates will require implementation for the continued growth and development of Downers Grove Library, as it pertains to diversity, equity, and inclusion:

- **DEVELOP AN EQUITY ADVISORY TEAM.** The development of an equity team that represents intersectional stakeholderhood; comprised primarily of people of color; comprised of internal and external stakeholders; co-curated with support from a DEI consultant; this team serves to provide an equity lens and race analysis for the decision making process that would otherwise become negatively impacted by the current homogeneous nature of the library staff. Rather than to hire POCs into an environment that may not be completely ready to receive them (performative behavior), this team would support the library in its equity development, paving the way to become a library ready to receive more staff of color without causing harm. This team could also assist departments in its equity auditing protocols, and support leaders as they work to be integrative rather than performative in their work (displays, programs, hospitality, etc.). Any non-staff participants should be compensated (honorarium?) for this work.
- **DEI STRATEGIC PLAN DEVELOPMENT.** Convene a cross section of stakeholders (administrators, staff, patrons, board representation, and young adults) to become the Equity Strategic Planning Team, committed to the development of a comprehensive yearlong equity and anti-racism strategic plan that would include activities, benchmarks, milestones, evaluative measures, and communications. This plan should address all four quadrants of anti-racism work (internalized, interpersonal, institutional, and structural), both from an internal and external perspective. An equity consultant should work with library leadership to appoint 1-2 people who represent historically, intentionally, and traditionally marginalized people groups to run point between the equity consultant, the strategic planning team and the advisory team. Once the plan has been written, dedicate monthly meetings with the DEI Strategic Planning Team to gauge implementation and activate an effective feedback and communications loop for the larger stakeholder community. Any non-staff participants should also be compensated (honoraria?) for this work.

Note: To the potential question of why there needs to be a separate strategic plan, singly focused on equity: think of it as having training wheels. It helps the organization to focus on the learning and the practice by highlighting it as a very intentional element of organizational life. However, over time, as more stakeholders can effectively embody equitable practices, RGW recommends the integration of the equity goals into the larger strategic plan. This methodology keeps us from inadvertently misstepping in DEI priorities. We can talk more about this in the reporting debrief session to follow this report.

# RECOMMENDED NEXT STEPS

(CONT.)

- **BOARD DEVELOPMENT.** All board members will take the Cultural Agility Assessment. Review board of Trustee composite data across 10 cultural agility indicators. Plan and implement 3-5 consultant-designed learning experiences that focus on leadership development in anti-racist work at the board level to ensure readiness and capacity to support the development and implementation of an equity strategic plan the following year; receive training on how to implement an equity framework for equitable decision making; engage a by-laws audit that utilizes an equity framework for ensuring that all governing policies and procedures are equitable for all.
- **LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT.** All department leaders will take the Cultural Agility Assessment. Review leadership team composite data across 10 cultural agility indicators. Plan and implement 3-5 consultant-designed learning experiences that focus on leadership development in anti-racist work at the executive leadership level to ensure leadership readiness and capacity for the implementation of the equity strategic plan the following year; tie their own leadership development goals to the goals, objectives, and benchmarks named within the equity strategic plan; integration of equitable decision making protocol into the work of the leadership team; receive training on how to implement an equity framework for equitable decision making; engage a by-laws audit that utilizes an equity framework for ensuring that all governing policies and procedures are equitable for all.
- **STAFF DEVELOPMENT.** Dedicated time for 2-4 all staff development implementations and communications that focus on developing shared language and posturing well for anti-racism work so that they are prepared for the more robust equity works that will emerge from the advisory team and the equity strategic planning team.
- **OPERATIONS & POLICY AUDITING.** Complete operations and systems audit examining all processes, protocols, and procedures, building aesthetics, and partnerships for inequitable practices. Share findings with all relevant and pertinent team members for revisions and reworkings as necessary. This includes purchasing and vendor management, fiscal management and budgeting protocols, as well as human resources.
- **PROGRAMMING.** Develop a DEI programming track, perhaps in partnership with other community partners, to be hosted via zoom, and eventually at DGPL, intended to bring patrons/community members along in their knowledge and understanding of DEI work in an effort to mitigate some of the cultural harm that patrons often inadvertently inflict upon staff. This programming also serves as a means by which to acculturate patrons to the library's new and emerging ways of being.

# Projected Equity Strategic Plan Elements

RGW

While the primary activities of the equity strategic plan must be developed by the DEI Strategic Planning Team, here are a few equity strategic plan objectives that are strongly recommended to be considered for the DEI Strategic Plan:

1. Developing a sense of belonging with staff members who represent intentionally, historically, and traditionally marginalized people groups
2. A host of interactions to increase community acculturation and engagement in the implementation of the DEI strategic plan
3. A continuation of consistent and intentional analysis of systems and processes that could become an impetus for racist practices
4. Training and implementation of an equity-based decision making protocol that makes clear what decisions are acceptable to make at what "level" of the organization and how those decisions are to be made equitably
5. An inquiry to determine what boosts morale, and an implementation plan based on those recommendations
6. Continued work and development around anti-racist principles and practices for all stakeholder representative groups, both internally and externally
7. A series of social, celebratory activities that strengthen relationships proactively to support us in times of difficult and challenging anti-racism work
8. A professional development and evaluation framework that measures and compensates (raises and promotions) for individual and organizational development around DEI and anti-racists practices



# Further Curiosities

As RGW processed the information garnered from the discovery, there were a few questions that arose as ones to continue to grapple with, while no immediate answers may be currently evident. The following are a few of those questions to consider as this work continues:

1. Is it the library's responsibility to simply provide the community with that which it desires in terms of learning, growing, and resources for learning, or is it the library's responsibility to stretch the community by creating opportunities for learning that the community might respond to with hesitancy, reticence, or even recoil? In such a diverse community, the responses to these questions could be endless, so how does DGPL respond to that?
2. Who are our partners in our work toward anti-racism? Who are ones that we should come alongside to learn from? Who are ones that we should be coming alongside to learn along with in ways that might raise the tide across the village and beyond?

## Further Curiosities (cont.)

3. What are the ways in which it might make sense to formalize a coalition between the township, high school district, elementary school district, park district, village, others, to more intentionally synergize our efforts toward becoming an anti-racist village?
4. How can we mitigate the impact of the MLIS requirement in ways that create access to more opportunities for diversity in more senior roles at DGPL? How do we mitigate the impact of being exempt/non-exempt? Hourly/Part-time? An employee with benefits vs. without, especially during the pandemic?
5. How will we ensure that the ways in which we inadvertently center whiteness as a social construct won't negatively impact the non-dominant cultural work of DEI? How can we be intentional about not fitting the square peg of DEI into the round hole of whiteness that is so pervasively and inherently a part of all that we already do?



# The RGW Commitment



It is our belief that these findings should be shared in the fullest and most appropriate ways with the board of trustees, leadership team, staff, and other stakeholders. RGW is committed to supporting the sharing of these findings by:

- Holding a debrief session with the Executive Director
- Holding a debrief session with the leadership team
- Holding a debrief session with the board of trustees
- Holding a debrief session with staff and other key stakeholders as identified by the DGPL leadership team

## The RGW Commitment (cont.)

*Let's Get Curious!!!*

Additionally, RGW Consulting, LLC, having established these recommendations, would welcome an opportunity to deliver upon these recommendations as a consultant to the implementation phase. RGW welcomes the opportunity to discuss this report, its recommendations, and future planning in greater detail. Should you have interest, please email us at [info@rgwashington.com](mailto:info@rgwashington.com) to set up a day and time for us to connect to speak about this report/plan and the potential to move forward with these recommendations. Thank you for the opportunity to have come alongside DGPL in this great work! It has truly been a joy to support you! We look forward to hearing from you soon. Be well.



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