

Evaluation of the
Public Outreach Approach
of the
Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission
(SEWRPC)

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Local Governments

29 Cities | 66 Villages | 52 Towns

Area

2,689 Square Miles | 5% of State

Population

2.048 Million | 35% of State

Employment

1.20 Million Jobs | 35% of State

Wealth

\$216.9 Billion Equalized Valuation | 35% of State

- Kenosha
- Milwaukee
- Ozaukee
- Racine
- Walworth
- Washington
- Waukesha

7 Counties



Overview of SEWRPC

Created in 1960

Commission – 21 members, representing 7 counties

Management Stability – Six Executive Directors in 60 years

Impressive Organizational Structure – seven divisions

Approach – Neutrality in SEWRPC work and recommendations is an important part of how SEWRPC operates with member counties which can impact community relationships

Current Leadership – respected internally and externally

“Kevin and his staff have really begun and done a successful job of modernizing and improving the role of SEWRPC. Kevin is doing a great job and staff have changed the approach to SEWRPC work.”

Research Questions

1. What is the history of SEWRPC regarding inclusion of marginalized communities in its planning process?
2. What is SEWRPC's approach to citizen participation?
3. How effective is the PIO Division's public participation approach?
4. How effective is the EJTF in representing marginalized communities?
5. What are the internal and external factors that affect SEWRPC effectiveness in implementing its public participation plan in marginalized communities?
6. What are the outcomes achieved in and the impact on marginalized communities as a result of public participation?
7. How can SEWRPC improve its work regarding public participation in marginalized communities?

Citizen Participation as Catalyst for Change

Community Memory

Construction of I-43 – Example of poor involvement of marginalized communities in critical decision making that impacted them.

Community Action

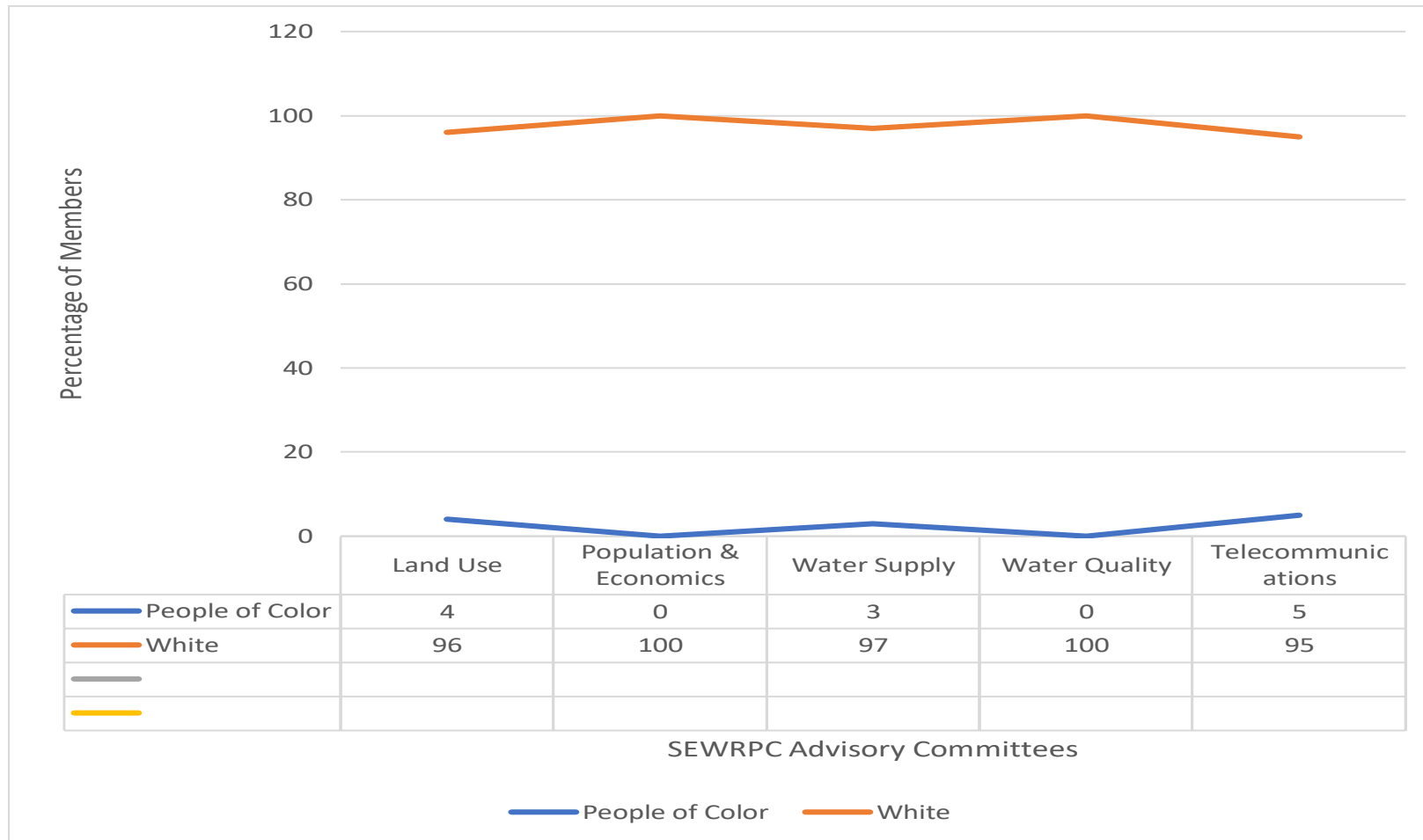
SEWRPC – Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) provides opportunities for quality involvement of marginalized communities in critical decision making that impact them:

- **Certification Reviews Conducted every four years by Federal DOT**
- **2004 Certification Review: Citizen complaints**
- **2008 Certification Review: Citizen complaints**

Citizen Complaints in Certification Reviews: 2004 - 2008

1. Non-representative Commission structure
2. Lack of minority and low-income representation in decision-making structure, therefore, not equitably representing its constituents.
3. Planning process provides inadequate consideration or support for mass transit improvements and favors road expansion.
4. Lack of public involvement relating to the Commission's public participation process.
5. Decisions not responsive to the public input received.
6. SEWRPC has not made meaningful efforts to investigate and address the low-income population.

Racial Composition of SEWRPC Advisory Committees - 2007



Source: SEWRPC and Kairo Communications

Federal DOT Certification Reviews: Citizen Concerns

For almost two decades, the certification reviews have consistently identified these issues:

1. Representation of diverse populations
2. Measurement of public participation
3. Outreach to people of color and low-income individuals
4. Public communication and access to information
5. Effectiveness of public participation measurement methodology
6. Lack of transit services

Federal DOT Recommendations

In response to these major concerns raised by federal reviewers and citizens, SEWRPC has implemented these actions:

1. Created the Environmental Justice Task Force

2. Established the Public Information and Outreach Division

3. Implemented a process to measure citizen participation efforts

4. Improved agency website

Public Participation Approaches

- SEWRPC Framework

- Recipient
- Attendee
- Participants
- Stakeholder
- Partner
- Implementer/Plan Advocate

- IAP2 Framework

- Inform
- Consult
- Involve
- Collaborate
- Empower

SEWRPC Public Participation Goals

Goal 1: Ensure Early and Continuous Public Notification	
Central city, minority, and low-income group updates via personal letter	At least two updates per year to 75+ organizational contacts
Paid advertisements for public meetings and/or planning program announcements	Approximately 10 advertisements per year in multiple publications
Website hits	Increase www.SEWRPC.org hits by 5 percent per year (there were 96,343 hits in 2018)
Goal 2: Provide Meaningful Information	
Briefings, presentations, or other meetings with groups	Reach at least 100 groups, totaling at least 200 meetings annually (includes primary contacts and key partners)
SEWRPC publication development and distribution	At least five publications per year
Summary publications including brochures	At least 3 products per year
Goal 3: Obtain Participation and Output	
Formal meetings with primary organizations	At least two direct contacts with each of some 28 Primary Organizations per year; totaling at least 60 meetings
Public Informational meetings for planning efforts	One or more meetings or series of meetings each year, regardless of planning activity
Non-traditional public outreach techniques	Approximately three to four times per year

Public Outreach and Information Division (PIO)



Initiated in 2009



Focuses primarily on
Milwaukee, Racine and
Kenosha counties



Works with Community
Partners



Works with Community
Organizations

Quality Rating of PIO Staff:



“Nikki is the rock star in my mind when you talk about community outreach. She thinks outside the box. So, when you’re thinking about community engagement, she’s really good at connecting people with others and promoting SEWRPC’s work.”

“I think Nikki is fantastic, from my experience with her, she’s a powerhouse. She’s intentional. She’s a really great organizer. She recruits people very well, she’s very approachable, very passionate, hard working.”

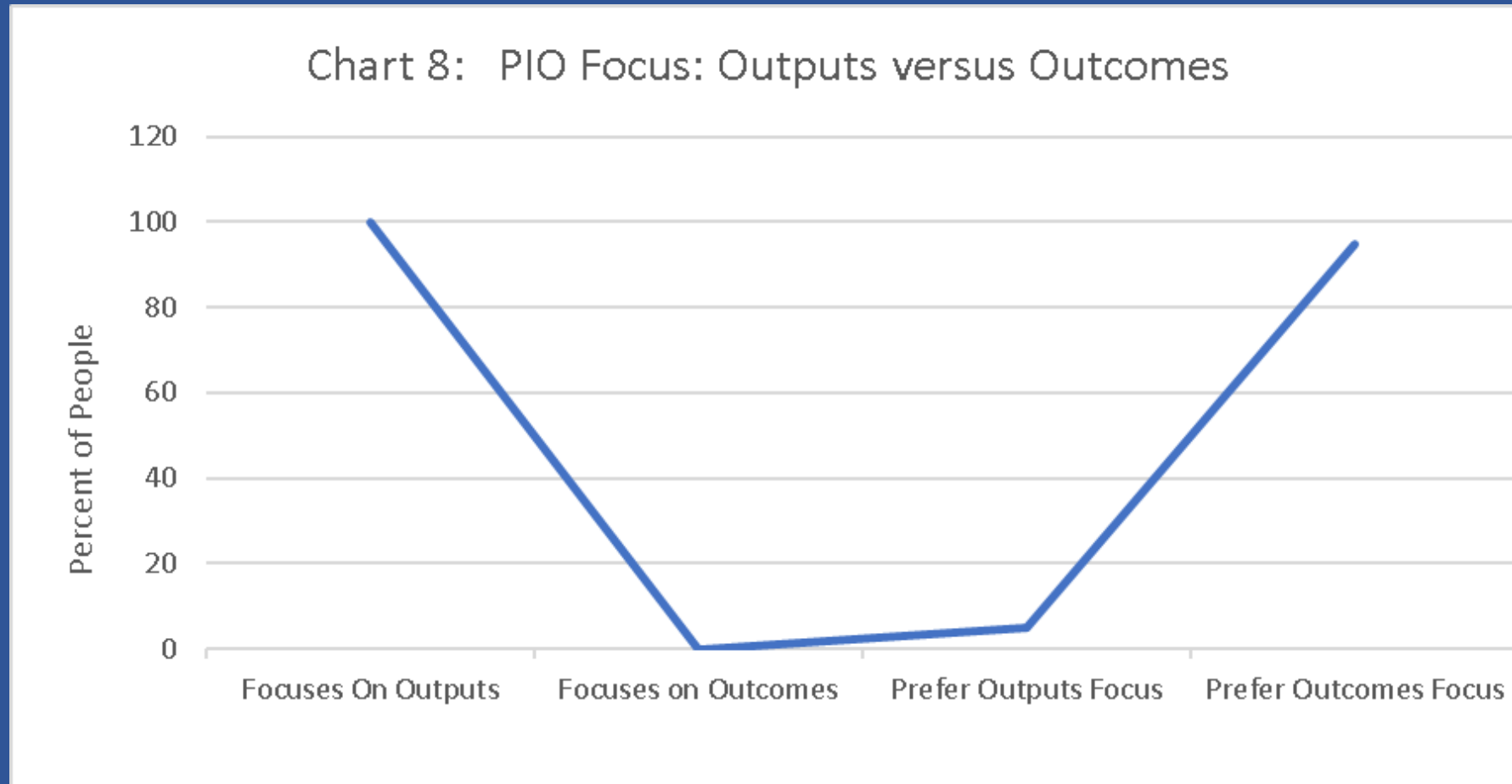
“I have had a number of encounters with Moore. I have known him to be very engaged in his work and he has gone out of his way to get to know the people and the issues in which Common Ground has been involved. He has come to several of our Assemblies and a few of our ‘research actions.’ I think he represents the interests and the commitment of SEWRPC very, very well.”

Activity	Stakeholders	Measurement
Increase contact with SEWRPC Partner Organizations	Community Partners	Visit partners eight (8) times per year
	Primary Organizations	Visit primary organizations four (4) times per year
	Top 100+	Visit top 100+ twice per year
Contact with new organizations	New organizations serving diverse communities	Increase contacts
Printed Communications	Bi-annual update letters to partners	Send letters to partners twice per year
	Produce more user-friendly outreach materials	Increase production
Outreach to individuals	Outreach to young people at least quarterly in all 7 counties	At least quarterly in all 7 counties
	Internal educational outreach	

Source: SEWRPC

PIO Division: Annual Goals 2021

Feedback regarding PIO: Outputs v Outcomes



Environmental Justice Task Force

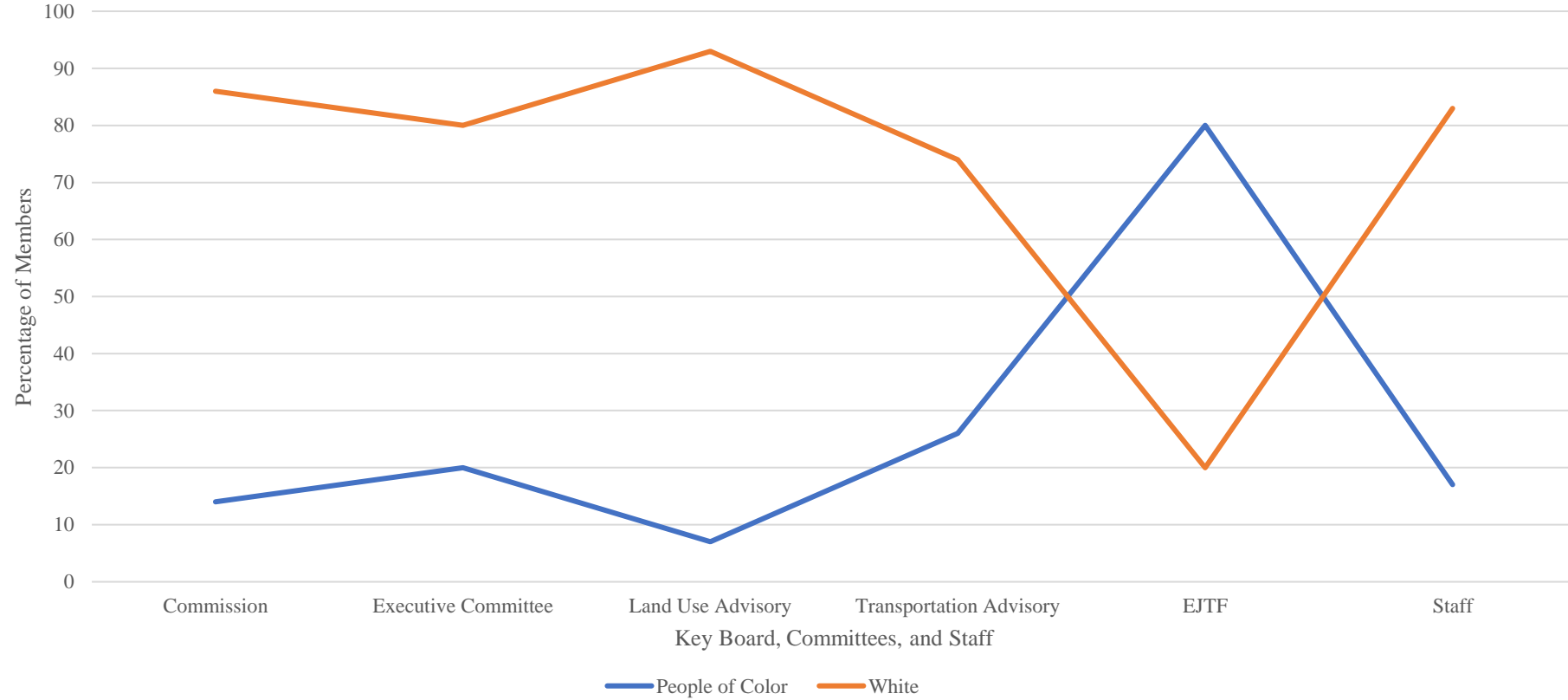
Initiated in 2007

Comprised of representatives of diverse communities

Communicates and works with SEWRPC staff leadership

Has representatives of SEWRPC Commission on EJTF

Ensures concerns of EJ communities are considered in SEWRPC decisions



Source: SEWRPC and Kairo Communications

Racial Composition of SEWRPC (2020 – 2022)

Focus Area	Specific Request/Actions
Equity Issues and Disparities	Revise Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) draft to emphasize the urgency of addressing equity issues and disparities
Transportation	Request information from WisDOT on high-crash locations within the I-94 East-West project corridor
Transit	Request information on the Transit Technical Advisory Committee (TTAC) formed for the I-94 East-West Corridor Study
Minority-owned Businesses	Suggest the Commission invest funds in Black and Latino owned banks
Housing/Transportation	Emphasize the housing and transportation needs of seniors
EJTF Input	Provide high-level information prior to each meeting and place key items requiring EJTF input at the beginning of each meeting
Transit	Provide information on safety measures that transit agencies are implementing in response to COVID-19
Census	Examine how the U.S. Census counting of incarcerated individuals based on correctional facility location (not home address) impacts Federal funding in high-incarceration areas
VISION 2050	Extend the recommended express bus route in western Kenosha County to connect to the Lake Geneva Park-Ride Lot
Reckless Driving	Consider policies and recommendations to address reckless driving
EJTF Role in Funding	Explore potential EJTF role in reviewing legislation regarding funding programs in response to a request made during the public comment period

Source: SEWRPC and Kairo Communications

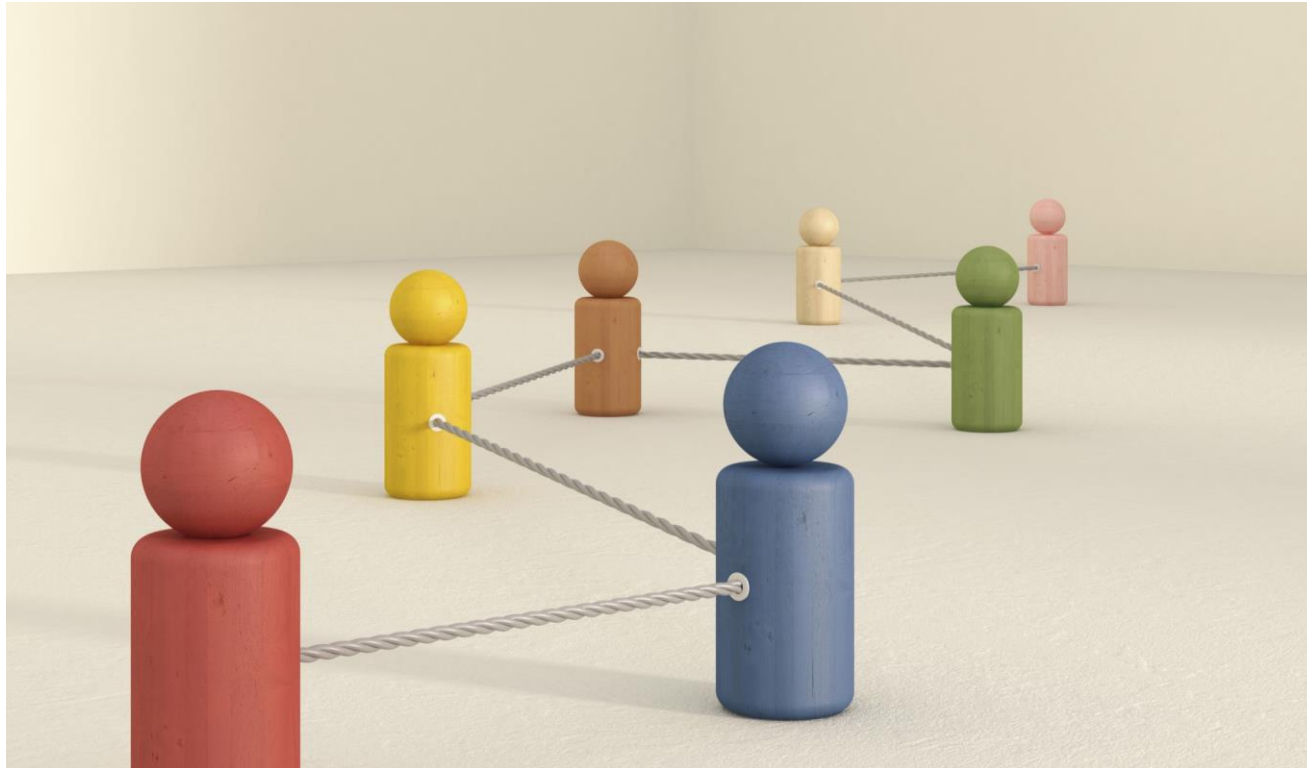
EJTF Issues and Actions

The Opportunity/Challenge of EJTF

“I think EJTF made SEWRPC better in that the recommendations made were taken to heart by SEWRPC leadership. They took the recommendations back and tried to fold them into whatever plans they were creating at the time, and I think it’s a great thing to have the EJTF perspective in the plans SEWRPC is making for the future.”

“I am not familiar with the EJTF.”

Key Evaluation Themes



Communication

Representation and Diversity

Organizational Interconnectedness

Maximize Effectiveness of PIO Division

Maximization of the EJTF

Prioritize Outcomes

Prioritize Community Impact

Recommendations

- 1. SEWRPC should implement innovative methods to communicate technical information in a way that can be understood by everyday citizens.**
- 2. The degree to which segments of SEWRPC function as silos should be decreased to improve the organization's overall work with the EJ community, and specifically the effectiveness of the PIO Division and the EJTF.**
- 3. SEWRPC should demonstrate its commitment to inclusion, diversity, and representation through its governance, workforce and work in EJ communities.**
- 4. The PIO strategies should include greater involvement of residents in key decision-making opportunities and focus more on outcomes and community impact.**
- 5. The connection between the EJTF and the EJ community should be strengthened to maximize the Task Force's effectiveness. The EJTF and PIO work should be coordinated.**
- 6. SEWRPC should create annual goals for the organization and the PIO Division that focus on outcome achievement and impact with less focus on activities and outputs.**
- 7. SEWRPC should address the EJ community's concern about the failure of the region to adequately address long-term issues, such as transit, that adversely impact the EJ community.**



SEWRPC

Serving the counties of
Kenosha, Milwaukee,
Ozaukee, Racine, Walworth,
Washington, and Waukesha

KAIRO
COMMUNICATIONS

Thank You.