

Bernadette Karanja, B.Ed., MBA

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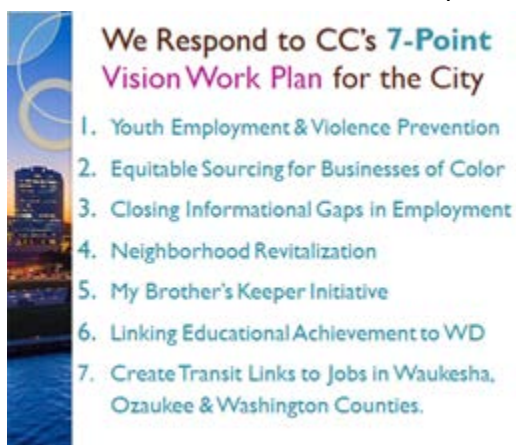
Chairwoman Marina Dimitrijevic, Honorable Committee Members of the Finance and Personnel Committee, I am Bernadette Karanja, Common Council's Workforce Development Coordinator, introducing myself for your consideration to become your next Chief Equity Officer.

I am humbled, to acknowledge Mayor Cavalier Johnson's opinion that I qualify for this exceptional, executive level opportunity, and thank him for his confidence in my work. I am however clear on the heavy responsibility this role carries for my City of Milwaukee. With this in mind, and in understanding one can only hold this role with the ability to continuously learn about the complexity of racial equity and inclusion; below is my responsive and unassuming description of why I am the right person for this job.

My Personal Life & Work Experience is driven by Solving Inclusion & Equity Issues.

I am a Kenyan-American who immigrated to the United States 22 years ago. Seventeen of these 22 years have been in senior management roles. My solution-based work experience has created in me a hands-on leader, adept at driving for results, motivating people, and capable of moving from higher-level planning to tactical collaboration.

Today, I am a Lead Staffer at Milwaukee's Common Council and head their Office of Workforce Development. In this role, my team and I navigate and provide expertise on racially inclusive and equitable workforce development policy, and create awareness of citywide training and placement opportunities targeted at Milwaukee's emerging neighborhoods with unemployment rates of 10% and above. These neighborhoods are predominantly black and brown. I believe everyone deserves the opportunity for a quality lifestyle shaped by economic independence. My purpose is to drive for models that ensure this happens. Consequently, in establishing the Office of Workforce Development, I was guided by the Common Council 7-Point Vision Work Plan, which is inspired by REI solutions. This Work plan includes:



My life experience drives my empathy, relatability, and solution-based approach to eliminating barriers for Americans protected by the Civil Rights Act. I personally qualify for protection under five of the 10 classes: National Origin, Race, Age, Sex, and Color.

I was also blessed to obtain **Experience in Advancing Racial Equity and Inclusion within City Government & Nonprofit Public Sector**
My executive experience has been about

Advocating for Racial Equity and Inclusion.

Over the past 15 years, it is safe to indicate that I have had experience in adhering to GARE Principals by successfully responding to grant applications, creating, implementing and evaluating compliance and program structures, collecting data, and collaboratively engaging the Community.

Well before Racial Equity and Inclusion trended, I was mentored and trained in seamlessly integrating culturally competent structures to workforce models. Diversity, respect, and empathy were principals we used in reshaping Health Relationship & Fatherhood models under the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, Child Support Enforcement, Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act, and more.

GARE'S Racial Equity Tool:

Proactively seeks to eliminate racial inequities and advance equity

Identifies clear goals, objectives, and measurable objectives

Engages community in decision making processes

Identifies who will benefit or be burdened by a given decision

Develops mechanisms for successful implementation and evaluation of impact.

At the time, GARE principals were not branded as such – rather these were a growing school of thought that advanced our efforts in creating equitable inclusive spaces in workforce development while remediating barriers through supportive services which included housing, healthcare, day care, and [more](#). (Please note that many of the items listed on the preceding link are outlined in GARE's listing of impact areas. [\(See GARE Tool Kit Page 7\)](#)). Additionally, I have had hands-on experience with the process recommended in the GARE Tool Kit on Community Engagement.

In addition, I have knowledge of Regular Operations of City Government, Including the Legislative Processes and Council Mandates.

I joined the City of Milwaukee seven years ago on assignment from Employ Milwaukee to create Mayor Barrett's Compete Milwaukee Program. This program was successful in its ability to place about 60% of its Returning Citizens in unsubsidized employment. In 2017, I was hired by the Common Council, City-Clerk's Office to create and lead the Office of Workforce Development. During the past seven years, I have acquired invaluable experience in city government operations and legislative processes. Below is a listing of some activities I have been commissioned to oversee by our Honorable Council Members relative to files they sponsored and/or legislation they adopted:

1. Advanced policy advice on the Common Council's 7-Point Vision Work Plan on Workforce Development

2. Was a member of Milwaukee's City Accelerator Leadership Team which is a Living Cities and Citi Foundation program, designed to increase equity and inclusion through innovation in city government. The City Accelerator Leadership Team learned about equitable sourcing for businesses or color from other city government representatives from Charlotte, Chicago, Los Angeles and Memphis. (Communication File# 180309. Assigned by Former Council President Ashanti Hamilton).
3. Commissioned by Former Council President Ashanti Hamilton to sit on the Disparity Study's RFP Evaluation Team.
4. Commissioned by Former Council President Ashanti Hamilton to create The Disparity Study's Independent Review Committee. (File # 171915).
5. Commissioned by Mayor Cavalier Johnson (then Council President), to Create and Convene The Millennial Task Force. (File # 191180).
6. Commissioned by Mayor Cavalier Johnson (then Council President), to sit on the Racial Equity and Inclusion Leadership Team. (Mayoral Directive by Mayor Tom Barret Promoting REI 8/26/20).
7. Commissioned by Alderwoman Milele A. Coggs to co-draft legislation aimed at creating incentives for corporate social responsibility in workforce development. I then collaborated with employers who adhere to at least one of the clauses outlined in this resolution by inviting them to participate in the Common Council Community, and Drive-Thru Job Fairs. (File # 170638).
8. Lead Creator of Mayor Tom Barrett's Compete Milwaukee Program
9. Commissioned by Alderwoman Milele A. Coggs to create [DCMKE](#) aimed at levelling the playing field for unemployed and underemployed job seekers who may not have access to vital hiring and career forming information, crucial in decisively formulating a life-changing career plan. (File numbers 170979; 171279; 181256 and 177161).
10. Commissioned by Alderman Russell W. Stamper II to explore changes needed in improving the Residential Preference Program (RPP). File # 151474
11. Commissioned by Alderman Khalif J. Rainey to create and convene the CDL Workforce Pipeline, designed to respond to labor supply shortages in the Transportation Industry and encourage the BIPOC community to consider this well-paying career opportunity. (File #211915).

With regard to Contract Compliance Experience, I began my career in Milwaukee working for the state's largest TANF provider, oversaw contract compliance for over 20 sub-contractors, developed and oversaw the strategic planning process, developed a system to evaluate program outcomes and was a lead member of the funding development team. I have successfully led teams that generated and/or maintained revenue totaling \$126 million and supervised related contract compliance requirements.

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In addressing Collaborative Leadership Experience, since the founding of the Office of Workforce Development, my team and I have established contact with 300+ Corporate and Public Service Recruiters. We have maintained engagement with Workforce System Leaders in 55 established Employment Service Agencies. I have led a team effort in designing DCMKE with Software Engineers and Corporate teams from Illinois, Michigan, Pakistan, and Spain. In the past, I led a team of nonprofit leaders to create the Milwaukee Marriage Partnership, which was a key contributor to the development of the national model for the Healthy Relationship and Fatherhood Programs.

In conclusion, my nonprofit management and city government experience in establishing REI models is broad and covers program planning, implementation and oversight in operational compliance for Youth Development, the Non-Custodial Parent Program, Child Welfare, Second Chance Act Re-entry programs, Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, and now City Government.

I am truly honored at the prospect of contributing to the success of city's racial equity and inclusion work and look forward to a favorable consideration.

I Remain Yours in Service,



Bernadette W. Karanja, B.Ed., MBA