**Equity and Social Justice**

**What to Know:**

Research and experience shows that when we have diversity of people, cultures, ideas and experiences, we are a stronger, smarter organization and a more culturally responsive government to our communities. We are committed to focusing our efforts on those who have historically lacked equitable access to jobs and development opportunities, as well as employees at lower pay ranges.

Workplace and workforce equity—fair and just treatment and equitable access to jobs and job growth—have been identified as central to transforming King County government into an organization that is rooted in equity and social justice (ESJ).

Employee experiences vary based on factors of race, culture, class, gender and sexual identity, education, job, English-speaking skills, disability, age, income, and where an employee is on the organizational ladder. For many employees, these factors come together to intensify their work experiences, whether positive or negative. Employees’ experiences with King County as an employer strongly shape our ability to serve King County residents in equitable, culturally responsive and racially just ways.

**Mythbusters:**

Diversity, particularly racial diversity, has a positive impact on engagement when there is a strong culture of inclusivity and belonging. You can have diversity but not inclusion in your organization. Inclusion is the ability to engage diversity in your workforce, so that everyone has equal opportunities to contribute. Inclusive teams make better decisions up to **87%** of the time. Teams that follow an inclusive process make decisions **2x** faster with half of the meetings. Decisions made and executed by diverse teams delivered **60%**better results. ([**Forbes**](https://gcc01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.forbes.com%2Fsites%2Feriklarson%2F2017%2F09%2F21%2Fnew-research-diversity-inclusion-better-decision-making-at-work%2F%23288ba3634cbf&data=02%7C01%7CLilia.CabelloDrain%40kingcounty.gov%7C07255875894f41f6512a08d6e43fcbe5%7Cbae5059a76f049d7999672dfe95d69c7%7C0%7C0%7C636947359982614023&sdata=9rdIc9IjW%2F94LXPm7ayv8vbrIg1zJexqg4kR4YWLbc0%3D&reserved=0)).

**Question to Ask:**

* What does our engagement data tell us about the experiences of employees across different demographic categories?
* What are the stories and lived experiences behind these numbers? What are some causes for the differences?
* How can we find out more about what’s driving the differences in ways that are inclusive and brave?
* What can we do to close the gap(s)? Who is missing from this process that we need to help us close the gap(s)?
* How do we feel about our own equity and social justice knowledge and applying that knowledge to close the gap(s)? ~~skills?~~
* What could we do to improve them?

**Best Practices:**

* Engage and listen to those most negatively affected by racial impacts and inequities. They know best what solutions, priorities and strategies will work for them.
* Understand the history, purpose and application of race in the US.
* [Understand why King County is Leading with Racial Justice.](https://gcc01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fyoutu.be%2FosgOuDvyqLg&data=02%7C01%7CLilia.CabelloDrain%40kingcounty.gov%7C07255875894f41f6512a08d6e43fcbe5%7Cbae5059a76f049d7999672dfe95d69c7%7C0%7C0%7C636947359982624014&sdata=E%2BD2pSERaHx4CWaRXgzb%2FMY%2Bd7suMc17OTuRUnUEH3U%3D&reserved=0)
* Gain insight into the root causes of disparate outcomes within Native Communities, Indigenous Communities, and various communities of color. Center their experiences and wisdom in designing processes and decision-making that generate ideas and solutions.
* Be self-aware around biases.
* Understand when people can bring their full selves to work, innovation and creativity thrive for all in the workplace.
* Recognize differences as an asset toward equity, social justice and racial justice.

**What Managers Can Do:**

Managers can model continuous learning, applying and improving equity and social justice skills. Be open about your own journey. Let others know the relevance to your job and your ability to lead and support people. Create a culture of learning around race, racism and whiteness - not blame and shame. Support people in developing their skills.

**What Employees Can Do:**

Learning about the history and current application of race, racism and whiteness in the US and its impacts on people make many Native Peoples, Indigenous People, and people from various Communities of Color feel re-traumatized, and many White people feel uncomfortable and fragile. Practice self-awareness around how your feelings, fragility, lived experiences, trauma and healing practices are negatively and positively impacting your engagement and learning. Practice self-care. Be willing to speak up / interrupt oppression and racism if someone says or does something that is harmful to you or someone you work with.

**What Leaders Can Do:**

Model a commitment to equity and social justice by engaging in continuous learning, discussing it often and drawing attention to ESJ impacts when programs, policies, practices and systems are being designed and implemented.