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Assistance League of Seattle
ArWork
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Black Emerald City
Black Prisoners’ Caucus
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City of Seattle Office of Arts & Culture
City of Seattle Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs
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Overview

Development of an Equity and Social Justice Strategic Plan for King County provides an essential platform for accurately defining the disparities that currently exist in our communities and identifying the most promising solutions toward advancing social, economic and racial equity. It is also a critical opportunity to practice, from the outset, the change that we seek – to approach community engagement and inclusion as fundamental components to every aspect of our work. The Equity and Social Justice Strategic Plan will offer a blueprint for change mutually created by County government and the larger community. Toward that end, our process was designed to hear from people across sectors, geography and populations throughout King County before developing a draft. It is with their input and guidance that we set priorities, goals and strategies for the plan.

Between July and September 2015, King County employees from several departments and agencies conducted over 100 engagement sessions with individuals and groups representing community organizations, business, labor and philanthropy. We systematically posed the same questions at each session concerning the current state of equity, existing work and models for achieving equity, and emerging opportunities for King County to partner with others to advance equity regionally. We also collected responses to these questions via a Community Partner online survey.

The questions posed were intended to establish a baseline for equity conditions in King County.

1. What are the equity and social justice issues in your community and King County that we should collectively tackle?
2. What's working in your community to increase equity?
3. What are existing or emerging opportunities to increase equity in your community/King County?
4. As partners, what role could King County government play and what role could your group/organization play to further equity?
People shared numerous and, in some cases, very specific ideas about how we can move toward more equitable outcomes in major issue areas including, Early Childhood Development & Education, Economic Opportunity & Jobs, Health & Human Services, Housing, Environment & Climate, Safety & Justice, and Transportation. These statements were organized based on the extent to which they reflect the ‘Current State’ of equity or articulate a pro-equity ‘Vision’ for King County.

A summary of responses is included at the end of this report. It does not reflect a full listing of all statements received. Common, reoccurring themes were synthesized and grouped according to issue area.

Data Analysis

Our next step was to identify major themes and priorities for each issue area and to elevate unifying strategies that are fundamental to advancing equity and social justice countywide. The community input that we received will be used to shape near- and long-term objectives across work areas including Communication; Capital Projects and Systems Improvement; Operations and Lines of Business; Plans, Policies and Budgets; Partnerships, Collaboration and Engagement; and Workplace Policies and Practices.
To illustrate our approach, following are early themes and strategies that we have developed for Partnerships, Collaboration and Engagement.

**Major Themes**

Current challenges to achieving equity in King County

- King County’s existing system of services is built on past frameworks and data that are not relevant to current needs and populations in our communities.

- A lack of ‘process equity,’ or the extent to which people can equitably participate civically at critical points of decision-making in King County government.

- King County departments and agencies operate in silos. This undermines our ability to move toward more equitable outcomes, emphasizing a need for higher levels of collaboration and integration of our lines of work.

A pro-equity vision

- King County government is adaptive to an evolving and dynamic landscape of people, their needs and their assets.

- Community-based organizations are critical partners in King County’s work to advance equity and social justice, and the County invests in those partnerships.

- King County’s work is integrated, with a shared commitment across departments and agencies to equity and social justice as an ongoing practice and discipline used to measure the effectiveness of our work.

- King County acts as a leader and model for equity and social justice, and influences other institutions and sectors whose decisions lead to equity impacts in our communities.

**Unifying Strategies**

- Systematically provide financial support to community-based organizations to leverage their expertise toward improving equity and social justice outcomes within King County government and in communities throughout our region.

- Provide non-monetary support to community-based partners (e.g. technical assistance, data sharing) that builds their internal capacities.

- Redefine King County’s role as a partner to allow for ongoing collaboration with community organizations in setting policy and budget priorities, and in defining equity measures for our work.

- Act as a convener of organizations and sectors working toward shared, sustainable, community-driven solutions.
Next Steps

Our next phase of Community Engagement will be organized to elicit feedback to an early draft of the Equity and Social Justice Strategic Plan. Our intent is to produce a working draft in the first months of 2016.

As this process and its results have demonstrated, Community Engagement and Inclusion are essential to the County’s success in adapting to a dynamic, changing landscape of community needs and priorities. A strategic plan that, among other pro-equity strategies, integrates Community Engagement and Inclusion as ongoing practices is based on our understanding that how we approach our work is just as important to what we seek to accomplish – a prosperous, inclusive and equitable King County.
### Education/Early Childhood Development
- Disparate conditions: People of color and lower income households have:
  - More exposure to toxins
  - less healthy food/food insecurity
  - More time in transit to work
  - More traffic impacts around their homes
  - Fewer trees
  - More pavement
  - Environmental injustice
- Widespread decline in biodiversity and natural resources
  - Fish harvest, treaty rights

### Environment/Climate
- Lack of access to services:
  - Ex offenders
  - Youth
  - Children
  - Seniors
  - Undocumented
  - Tribal communities
- Disenfranchised foster youth
- People of color

### Health/Human Services
- Underserved areas:
  - Vashon
  - Eastside
  - South King County
  - Rural
- Lack of support services in school
  - School-based health services
  - Family services

### Housing
- Inequitable funding
  - Well funded
  - Easily navigated
  - Sustain existing programs
  - Integrated with other systems and institutions
- People-aware, valuing themselves of services
- Immigrant/Limited English-speaking populations
- Specialized services:
  - K-12, full-time nurses in all schools
  - Transgender healthcare services
  - Domestic violence survivor services

### Jobs/Economic Security/Economic Development
- Disparities in poverty/pay
  - Immigrants and refugees
  - African Americans
  - Hispanic
  - Native populations
  - Ex offenders
  - Seniors
- Lack of system supports/barriers
  - Inadequate domestic violence training for sheriff deputies
  - Lack of reintegration for newly released inmates

### Justice System/Public Safety
- Racism disparities
  - People of color and native people overrepresented in prison population
  - People of color profiled and harassed by law enforcement
  - Native children at high risk of placement in foster care and incarceration

### Transportation
- Lack of support services/barriers
  - Inequitable funding

### Process Equity
- Disproportionality is eliminated
- No King County living wage
- Limited funding to community-based organizations serving people of color
- Lack of small business/entrepreneurial opportunities, poor infrastructure, limited business development
- New to work/education/services
- Disconnected from larger economic development considerations and pro-equity strategies

### Current State
- Disproportionality is eliminated
- Lack of support services/barriers

### Process Equity
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### Vision
- Density increases are met with:
  - More trees
  - More parks
  - More transit options
  - Walkability
  - Health, affordable food and art and culture
- Our transition from fossil fuels to a clean energy future is inclusive, pro-equity, and economically just

### Cradle to career education pathway
- Racially/culturally responsive education institutions
  - Curriculum
  - Practices
  - Staff
  - Restorative justice
- Supported by:
  - Free pre-K
  - Weekday programs
  - Enrichment programs
  - Mentors
  - Scholarships
  - Summer meal program

### Inclusive neighborhoods:
- Mitigation strategies to address growth-related displacement
  - Planning systems
  - Inclusionary zoning
  - Rent control
  - Development incentives
  - Building codes are pro-equity
- Quality, inclusive, affordable housing options in all areas of King County
  - Private/public collaborative development

### Pro-equity economic opportunity
- All have pathways to work opportunities
  - Especially youth
  - Varied abilities
  - People of color
  - Refugees
  - Increase in minimum wage
  - Maternity/paternity leave
  - Equal pay for women
  - Progressive tax structure
  - Training/prep for employment for diverse youth

### Disparities
- Known
- Understood
- Resolved
- Support services
  - Visible
  - Available
  - Inclusive
- Proportionality is eliminated
- Restorative justice is the dominant approach to promoting public safety
  - Walkable neighborhoods foster transit and non-motorized transportation modes
- Schools are de-policed, closing the school-to-prison pipeline

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Bullets reflect items specifically identified by respondents (e.g. particular populations, geographic area, sector)