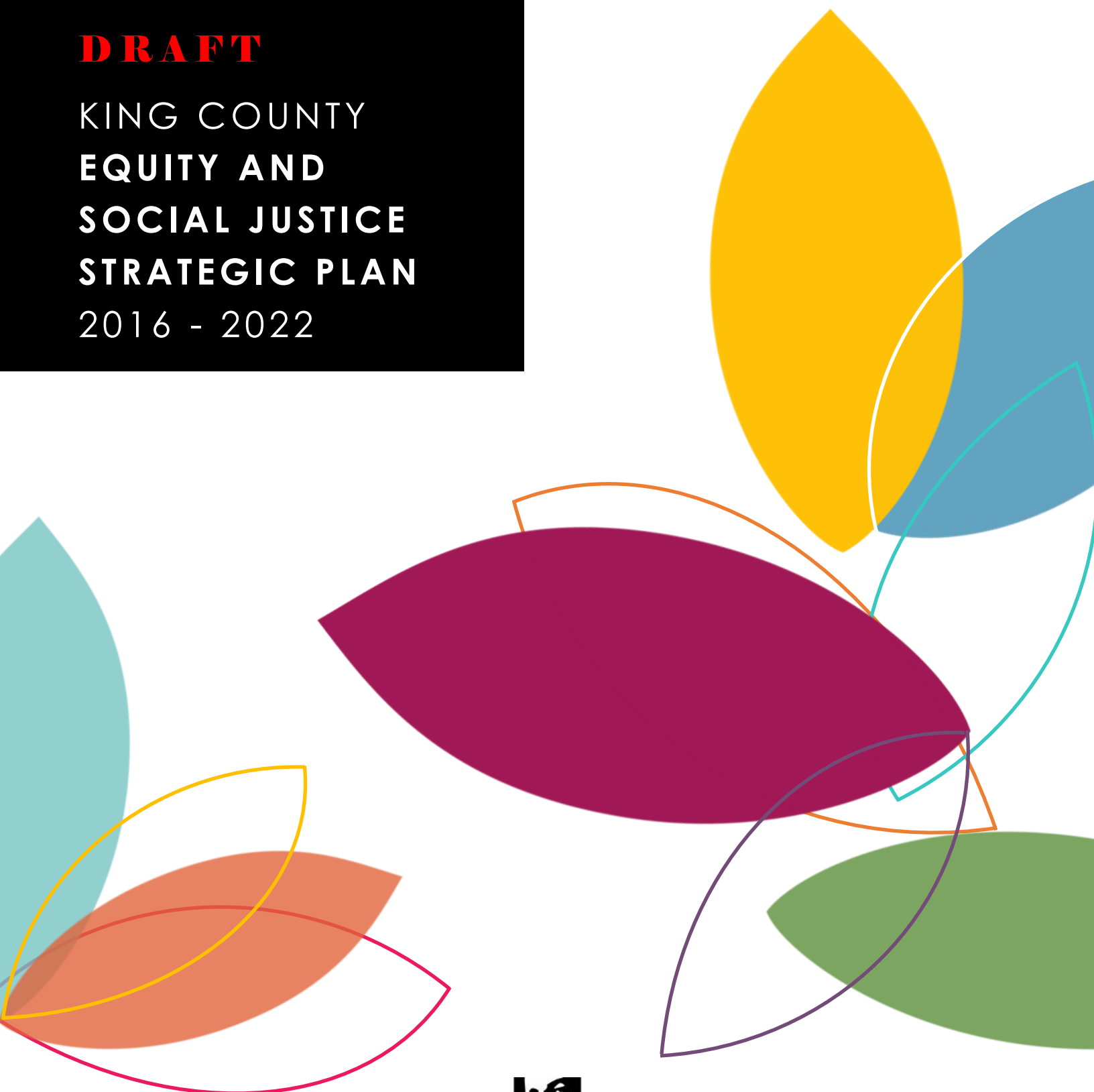


**DRAFT**

**KING COUNTY  
EQUITY AND  
SOCIAL JUSTICE  
STRATEGIC PLAN  
2016 - 2022**



**King County**

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**We are grateful to the following organizations and coalitions for their time and insights. Without their contributions, neither this plan nor equity in our region is possible.**

350 Seattle	ECO Net	Leif Erikson Lodge	Snoqualmie Tribe
African American Advisory Council to the City of Seattle Police Department	Equal Start Community Coalition	Multi-Service Center	Snoqualmie Healthy Community Coalition
All Girl Everything Ultimate Program	Equal Justice Coalition	National Association for Black Veterans-Seattle	Somali Health Board
American Friends Service Committee-Seattle	El Centro de la Raza	National Association of Asian American Professionals	Somali Youth and Family Club
Asian Pacific American Advocates	Ending the Prison Industrial Complex-Seattle	Native American Women's Dialogue on Infant Mortality	South King Council of Human Services
Asian Pacific Directors Coalition	ENSO	Neighborhood House	South King County Human Service Planners Group
Assistance League of Seattle	EnviroIssues	Nordic Heritage Museum	South Park Information and Resource Center
AtWork	Environmental Professionals of Color	Northwest Folklife	South Park Neighborhood Association
Big Brothers Big Sisters of Puget Sound	Ethnic Heritage Council	OneAmerica	South Park Senior Center
Black Emerald City	Faith Action Network	Open Doors for Multicultural Families	Southwest Youth and Family Services
Black Prisoners' Caucus	Federal Way Public Schools – Native American Education Program	Pacific American Advocates	Soy Source
Blue Pony Youth Program	Feet First	Para Los Niños	St. Sava Serbian Orthodox Church
Bulgarian Cultural & Heritage Center of Seattle	Fellowship of Reconciliation Youth	Park Directors Network of King County	State of Washington Commission on Asian Pacific American Affairs
Capitol Hill Housing	Filipino Community Center	Polish Home Association	Sustainability Ambassadors
Catholic Community Housing Services of Western Washington	Forterra	Pride Foundation	Swedish Club
Center for MultiCultural Health	Friends of Youth	Project Feast	Teamsters Local 117
Centerstone	Gay City	Puget Sound Clean Air Agency	Technology Access Foundation
Child Care Resources	Gender Justice League	Puget Sound Educational Service District	The Arc of King County
CHI Franciscan Health	Germans from Russia Heritage Society	Puget Sound Educational Services	The Nature Conservancy
Chinese American Citizens Alliance-Seattle	Global Health Alliance	Puget Sound Sage	The North American Post
Church Council of Greater Seattle	Got Green	Race and Climate Justice	Transportation Choices Coalition
City of Kent	Governing for Racial Equity Network	Ravensdale Park Foundation	Tri-County Refugee Planning Committee
City of Seattle Community Technology Program	Green Lake Association for Chinese Poetry, Calligraphy and Painting	Red Eagle Soaring Native Youth Theatre	Turkish American Cultural Association of Washington
City of Seattle Mayor's Council on African American Elders	Green River Coalition	Rising Tide Seattle	United Indians of all Tribes
City of Seattle Office of Arts & Culture	Green River College	Russian Community Center of Seattle	United Way of King County
City of Seattle Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs	Healthy Auburn Task Force	SeaTac-Tukwila Food Innovation Network	University of Washington School of Nursing and Health Studies
City Vision	Highline Community College	Seattle Children's Hospital	Vashon Social Services Network
Coalition of Immigrants, Refugees and Communities of Color	Hopelink	Seattle CityClub	Washington Defender Association
Community Café Collaborative of Washington	Housing Development Consortium Resident Services Affinity Group of Seattle/King County	Seattle Colleges	Washington Global Health Alliance
Community for Youth	India Association of Western Washington	Seattle Commission for People with Disabilities	Washington State Department of Early Learning
Compassionate Seattle	Interfaith Task Force on Homelessness	Seattle Design Festival: Design for Equity	West Hill Community Association
Connecting Communities Consortium	Iranian American Community Alliance	Seattle Foundation	White Center Community Development Association
Consulate of the Republic of Poland in Seattle	Irish Heritage Club	Seattle Goodwill Industries	Wing Luke Museum
Council on American-Islamic Relations Washington	Kent Cultural Diversity Initiative Group	Seattle Indian Health Board	Workforce Development Council of Seattle-King County
Croatian Fraternal Union-Seattle	Kent School District	Seattle People of Color and Indigenous Peoples Group	YMCA of Greater Seattle
Delta Dental of Washington	King County Children and Youth Advisory Board	Seattle Public Utilities	YouthCare
DESC	King County Promotores Network	Seattle Sister Cities Association	
Digital Equity Action Committee	King County Refugree Forum	Seattle Youth Violence Prevention Initiative	
Duwamish River Cleanup Coalition/Technical Advisory Group	King County Youth Advisory Council	SEIU 1199NW	
EarthCorps	Latino Northwest Communications Leadership Eastside	Senior Services	
Earth Ministry	LeadersUp	Shoreline Community College	
	LGBTQ Allyship	Sierra Club	
		Skyway Youth Network	
		Skyway Solutions	

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

**We are grateful to the King County employees within departments, agencies and offices, and at all levels of our organization, who contributed their ideas and energy to this plan and are committed to realizing the social justice dream of our County's namesake, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.**

Department Adult & Juvenile Detention

Assessor's Office

Department of Community & Human Services

King County Council

District Court

Department of Elections

Office of Equity & Social Justice

Executive's Office

Department of Executive Services

Department of Information Technology

Department of Judicial Administration

Department of Natural Resources & Parks

Office Performance, Strategy & Budget

Department of Permitting & Environmental Review

Prosecuting Attorney's Office

Department of Public Defense

Public Health - Seattle & King County

Sheriff's Office

Superior Court

Department of Transportation

# LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE

CONTENT COMING SOON.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## KING COUNTY EQUITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE STRATEGIC PLAN 2016-2022

For many in our region, King County is a great place to live, learn, work and play. Yet we have deep and persistent inequities – especially by race and place – that in many cases are getting worse and threaten our collective prosperity. Launched by Executive Ron Sims in 2008 and formalized by Executive Dow Constantine and the County Council via ordinance in 2010, Equity and Social Justice (ESJ) is an integrated part of the County's work, supported by the ESJ Office since it was established in early 2015.

The Equity and Social Justice Strategic Plan is a blueprint for change, mutually created by King County employees and community partners. From the outset, the planning process was designed to hear from people across sectors, geography and populations *before* developing a draft. More than 600 County employees and 100 local organizations, including community organizations, philanthropy, labor, business and local governments, shared their insight and expertise on where we have made progress, persistent challenges, and solutions toward achieving equity.

### OUR EQUITY VISION & STRATEGIES

The shared vision we developed out of this process is consistent with the overall vision of King County's Strategic Plan: **A King County where all people have equitable opportunities to thrive.** Our four strategies as One King County to advance Equity and Social Justice are **to invest:**

- **Upstream and where needs are greatest**
- **In community partnerships**
- **In employees**

And we do this with **accountable and transparent leadership.**

Our Equity and Social Justice shared values will guide and shape our work. We are:

- **Inclusive and collaborative**
- **Diverse and people-focused**
- **Responsive and adaptive**
- **Transparent and accountable**
- **Racially just**
- **Focused upstream and where needs are greatest**

Equity is fundamental to the society we seek to build. It is an ardent journey toward well-being as defined by those most negatively affected. Our end goal is for full and equal access to opportunities, power and resources so all people may achieve their full potential. The process of advancing toward equity will be disruptive and demands vigilance.

Being 'pro-equity' requires us to dismantle deeply entrenched systems of privilege and oppression that have led to inequitable decision-making processes and the uneven distribution of benefits and burdens in our communities. Similarly, we must focus on those people and places where needs are greatest ensures that our decisions, policies and practices produce gains for all.

### OUR PRO-EQUITY POLICY AGENDA & REGIONAL COLLABORATIVE

Long-term, sustainable changes within our organization and the community require a comprehensive 'pro-equity' approach for all of King County government. This plan defines a Pro-

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Equity Policy Agenda aimed at expanding access to the County's Determinants of Equity: **digital equity, economic development and jobs, education and early childhood development, environment and climate, health and human services, housing, justice system and transportation.**

We learned through our engagement for the strategic planning process that there is a broad range of equity-focused activities in our region, but at the same time there is a need for increased coordination and cross-sector solutions that match the scale of inequities we face. Together we are stronger. As a result, King County government is committed to advancing a Regional Equity Collaborative with partners from community organizations, philanthropy, business, labor, local governments and education in the coming months and years.

## BECOMING 'PRO-EQUITY'

We understand that *how* we approach our work is just as important as *what* we seek to accomplish. Pro-equity means being racially just and inclusive, consistently taking action to eliminate the root causes of inequities. We adopt systems and standards that allow us to consistently build the capacity of and engage our residents, partners and employees.

To achieve better outcomes in the community, we will integrate and implement pro-equity practices in our major functions of government where we can effect change, including:

- Leadership, Operations & Services
- Policies, plans and budgets
- Workplace & Workforce
- Community partnerships
- Communications and education
- Facility and system improvements

## HOW TO READ THIS PLAN

King County's Equity and Social Justice (ESJ) Strategic Plan 2016-2022 provides a framework and direction for how the County will use the four strategies of the Plan within and across the Pro-Equity Policy Areas, the Regional Equity Collaborative and the Goal Areas. Each Policy and Goal Area has an analysis of our current situation, plus how we will make a difference, including specific actions or goals.

## PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

The Policy Areas are in three-year cycles, and the Goal Areas are in two-year cycles. The two-year cycle for the Goal Areas is aligned with the County's biennial budget process, and builds our organization's capacity in ESJ 'adaptive management.' We incorporate design, management and monitoring to advance our strategies in the various functions of government, and then we continuously and systematically adapt and learn. As a government, we have to practice adaptive management to be coordinated and responsive to our communities and employees. This means:

**We listen deeply** to know how and why assets, priorities, expectations and concerns of our communities and employees –especially those most in need–change with time. We use this knowledge to coordinate and try different approaches toward achieving better outcomes and monitor the results.

**We look at root causes and adapt** by understanding what and why efforts are working or not working.

**We respond** by making appropriate and timely changes.

**We learn and share regularly** about what is happening around us so that we can engage responsibly. We learn and stay current with what and how our residents and partners are doing so we can co-create effectively and with transparency.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Summary of Goals, Objectives and Strategies by Goal Area

### LEADERSHIP, OPERATIONS & SERVICES

Goals	Invest upstream and where needs are greatest	Invest in employees	Invest in community partnerships	With accountable and transparent leadership
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Develop effective and accountable leadership for advancing ESJ</li> <li>2. Develop an organization where all employees are change agents</li> <li>3. Visibly and public display progress on ESJ</li> <li>4. County operations, programs and services are pro-equity and reflect ESJ values</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ESJ values guide department and agency operations, programs and service delivery</li> <li>• Operations and services – including allocation of resources – reflect our ESJ values of investing upstream and where needs are greatest</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase employee sense of responsibility to advance ESJ</li> <li>• Improve staff and leadership proficiencies in delivering services that respond to changing demographics</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In County operations, programs and services, collaborate with other King County and external service providers</li> <li>• Technical assistance resources deployed to CBOs to help connect in marginal communities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elected leaders and directors are ultimately responsible for ESJ</li> <li>• Visibly display progress on plan</li> <li>• Bi-annual "Plan – Do – Check – Adjust" of ESJ Strategic Plan with implementation plans</li> </ul>

### EQUITABLE BUDGETING, PLANNING & POLICYMAKING

Goals	Invest upstream and where needs are greatest	Invest in employees	Invest in community partnerships	With accountable and transparent leadership
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Clear and explicit ESJ goals and objectives that equitably address the needs of King County communities will be embedded in all King County plans, policies, rates, and budgets</li> <li>2. Include analyses of equity impacts in operational, program, and service delivery plans</li> <li>3. Policy guidance incorporates ESJ values and analysis</li> <li>4. Budget decisions, rates, and allocations reflect the values and strategies of the ESJ strategic plan</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide new resources on demographic conditions for planners, analysts and project managers</li> <li>• Develop improved equity analysis tools for plans, policies, and budgets</li> <li>• Ensure budget instructions and decisions support upstream investments</li> <li>• Assess all fees and rates to identify opportunities to create a more equitable structure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Train leaders, planners, analysts, and project managers on the use of demographic data and equity impact tools</li> <li>• Ensure budget allocation leads to a more equitable workplace</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase use of community engagement guide in planning and policy processes</li> <li>• Explore and pilot a participatory budgeting process</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide coaching and tools for agency leadership to develop explicit policy guidance</li> <li>• Develop measurement tools and a public reporting framework to for ESJ Strategic Plan implementation</li> </ul>

### WORKPLACE & WORKFORCE EQUITY

Goals	Invest upstream and where needs are greatest	Invest in employees	Invest in community partnerships	With accountable and transparent leadership
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Require an equitable and racially just workplace culture</li> <li>2. Do systematic and equitable workforce development at all levels</li> <li>3. Have and resource equitable employee development and access to opportunities</li> <li>4. Build an organization of equitable access to and shared decision making</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop 'people managers' to lead a racially just and inclusive culture</li> <li>• Eliminate barriers to high salaried employment opportunities for People of Color, Native Peoples and immigrant and refugee populations</li> <li>• Invest in restorative conflict resolution strategies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invest in lower salaried employees thru active employee development plans and ongoing support</li> <li>• Expand equitable access to resources and decision-making for all employees</li> <li>• Develop career paths toward a racially equitable workforce</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invest in partnerships with historically disadvantaged communities and expand hiring pipelines</li> <li>• Invest in school-to-work pipelines for youth with greatest barriers to meaningful employment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mature as a racially just organization using equity to assess progress</li> <li>• 360-type assessment tool to measure inclusive, equitable and racially just leadership competencies for managers at all levels</li> <li>• Ensure all disciplinary policies and practices are equitable and racially just</li> </ul>



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Summary of Goals, Objectives and Strategies by Goal Area (continued)

### COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Goals	Invest upstream and where needs are greatest	Invest in employees	Invest in community partnerships	With accountable and transparent leadership
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Systematically provide resource support to community-based organizations to leverage their expertise toward advancing ESJ outcomes</li> <li>2. Create pro-equity contracting processes that are visible and accessible to contractors of varied size and capacity</li> <li>3. Provide non-monetary support to community-based partners that build their internal capacities</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invest in partnerships that allow the County to apply early, upstream and preventative solutions</li> <li>• Adopt contracting practices that stimulate economic development in underserved communities</li> <li>• Build community capacity as a strategy to foster full and equitable civic participation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create hiring and advancement opportunities via Community Liaison network</li> <li>• Eliminate barriers for staff seeking to promote equitable contracting</li> <li>• Situate community capacity building as professional development opportunities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invest in partnerships to steadily inform decision-making</li> <li>• Expand and diversify the County's vendor pool</li> <li>• Connect County resources and expertise to capacity development of community partners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrate inclusion of historically underrepresented communities in program and budget planning</li> <li>• Report an increase in the number of historically underrepresented businesses servicing external contracts</li> <li>• Report technical assistance provided to community-based partners</li> </ul>

### COMMUNICATION AND EDUCATION

Goals	Invest upstream and where needs are greatest	Invest in employees	Invest in community partnerships	With accountable and transparent leadership
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Increase language access</li> <li>2. Develop tools for better engagement and access and increase capacity in community</li> <li>3. Increase access to County via internet, social media and mobile devices</li> <li>4. Better connect with and to limited-English speaking communities</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Update tools to better connect with today's community demographics</li> <li>• Move from iterative, project-based outreach to ongoing engagement</li> <li>• Resources for staff to improve communication and collaboration with LES communities</li> <li>• Invest in translation and/or interpretation as needed for public hearings and other engagement opportunities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training and resources for staff, esp. for improved internal collaboration on engagement issues, and language-related tools and resources</li> <li>• Supervisory staff have additional ESJ training</li> <li>• Prioritize and reward language skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partner with community-based organizations (CBOs) to guide improvements and facilitate consistent engagement with communities</li> <li>• Publicize civic engagement opportunities via community media outlets and organizations</li> <li>• Provide information in multiple languages</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agencies demonstrate more inclusive communications, outreach and education</li> <li>• Expand the inclusivity of technology investments</li> </ul>

### FACILITY AND SYSTEMS IMPROVEMENTS (CIP)

Goals	Invest upstream and where needs are greatest	Invest in employees	Invest in community partnerships	With accountable and transparent leadership
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Master and LoB plans include clear objectives to advance ESJ</li> <li>2. Capital development policy, budget portfolios and programs describe contributions to ESJ in community conditions</li> <li>3. Capital projects have objectives for community engagement and ESJ in benefits/burden distribution – which are documenting via the King County sustainable infrastructure scorecard</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Embed 'pro-equity system build-out vision' into long-term, master, and LoB plans precedes, informs and enables capital programs and projects to be pro-equity by defining intended system-scale outcomes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Train and provide ESJ information resources to master planners, capital portfolio managers, and project managers so facility and system development components work is integrated</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build partnerships and partnering abilities -- via support to the LEP community liaison network -- so facility and system improvements best connect with emerging efforts in the public, civic, and private sectors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Activities and responsibilities for pro-equity progress are clear and defined at the Dept., Division, and Section levels</li> <li>• Project scopes have explicit ESJ objectives that align to system goals as described in master /LoB plans</li> <li>• Guide, recognize, and account for progress via King County Sustainable Infrastructure scorecard and CPMWG</li> </ul>

# INTRODUCTION



For many in our region King County is a great place to live, learn, work and play. We have some of the most prosperous communities in the world. However, a closer look at the distribution of resources and wealth reveals that we have deeply entrenched social, economic and environmental inequities – by race and place – that in many cases are worsening and threaten our collective prosperity.

An array of historical and societal factors drives these inequities including unequal access to the [determinants of equity](#), institutional and structural racism, as well as gender and socioeconomic bias. These factors, while invisible to some of us, have profound and tangible impacts on all of us – both in the community and within our own organization.

## PHASES OF OUR WORK

King County's work on equity and social justice can be described as fitting into distinct phases. Before 2008, many of our departments and agencies focused on disparities and

disproportionality in various realms such as health and criminal justice, which were generally not coordinated across the County. In early 2008, then-King County Executive Ron Sims launched Equity and Social Justice (ESJ) as an “initiative.” Based out of the Executive Branch, this initiative aimed to intentionally use an equity lens into departments’ policies and decisions, organizational practices and engagement with community.

Starting in 2010 with new King County Executive Dow Constantine and the County Council, Equity and Social Justice became an integrated part of the County's work with the countywide Strategic Plan and ESJ ordinance. This new ordinance named the Inter-Branch Team as the coordinator and facilitator of the County's equity work and formalized systems and frameworks, including the Determinants of Equity.

This last year represents the latest phase for King County Equity and Social Justice with two major developments: the creation of the Office

# INTRODUCTION

of Equity and Social Justice and the launch of the first ESJ Strategic Plan process. Established on January 1, 2015, the new Office of Equity and Social Justice works hand-in-hand with the Inter-Branch Team to support the work of all County employees and agencies. The office also serves as the backbone and coordinator of key County efforts to advance equity in the organization and community. Although there is now an ESJ Office, every County agency and employee is still ultimately responsible for advancing and being accountable for ESJ activities and deliverables.

---

Our strategies as One King County to advance Equity and Social Justice are to **invest:**

- **Upstream and where needs are greatest**
- **In community partnerships**
- **In employees**

And we do this with **accountable and transparent leadership.**

---

Our next phase – guided by this Strategic Plan – is based on our understanding that how we approach our work on Equity and Social Justice is just as important as what we seek to accomplish. We will become pro-equity in County practices and governance by using an equity lens in our actions, processes and decisions. We will invest upstream and where needs are greatest, addressing root causes and smartly allocating our public resources. We will also invest in community partnerships as a strategy to better understand and address equity impacts throughout our region. We will

invest in our employees to create a strong, racially diverse workforce and workplace at all levels that is best positioned to advance equity in our region. Moreover, we recognize that the success of this plan and progress on equity is fundamentally tied to visible and accountable leadership in King County government.

## OUR VISION

The Equity and Social Justice (ESJ) Strategic Plan is a blueprint for change, mutually created by King County employees and community partners. From the outset, the planning process heard from people across sectors, geography and populations including those who experience the most negative effects of inequities and are working to remove barriers to opportunity. More than 600 employees at all levels of County government and 100 local organizations, including community organizations, philanthropy, labor, business and local governments, shared their insight and expertise on where we have made progress, persistent challenges, and solutions toward achieving equity.

The shared vision we developed through this process is consistent with the overall vision of King County's Strategic Plan:

**A King County where all people have equitable opportunities to thrive.**

# THEORY OF CHANGE



Race and place impact quality of life in King County. People of color, low-income residents and immigrants and refugees persistently face inequities in key educational, economic and health outcomes. Our responsibility to remedy these conditions is not only a moral imperative; inequities undermine our collective prosperity and threaten our region's ability to remain globally competitive. As long as race and place are predictors of well-being, our vision for a King County where all people have equitable opportunities to thrive remains elusive.

We also recognize that many of our government policies and practices have historically been designed to react to problems and crises in our communities after they arise. Using a "stream" metaphor, these problems are the downstream results of inequities that exist in social, physical and economic conditions in our community (also known as our "determinants of equity"). Moving upstream allows us to examine the root causes of these conditions and create solutions that operate at a systems and structural level, ultimately preventing crises and problems

from occurring and leading to healthier, more equitable outcomes.

As people are not all situated the same, with the same opportunities to thrive, pro-equity policies and practices are designed to account for these differences. Focusing on the people and places where needs are greatest leads to improved outcomes for everyone.

**"The prosperity of our region depends on every person having a fair chance to fulfill his, her or their potential."**

Executive Dow Constantine

Our Equity and Social Justice Theory of Change promotes investment in approaches that are pro-equity and move us upstream and where needs are greatest. Moreover, adopting this theory of change ensures that our strategies are consistently evaluated based on their equity outcomes, not just their intent. Ultimately, we seek a course where race and place are eliminated as predictors of prosperity and quality of life for the residents of King County.

# THEORY OF CHANGE

## A 'PRO-EQUITY' POLICY AGENDA & REGION

This Strategic Plan defines a Pro-Equity Policy Agenda aimed at advancing regional change, building on our work and lessons learned thus far while deepening and expanding access to the County's determinants of equity: digital equity, economic development and jobs, education and early childhood development, environment and climate, health and human services, housing, justice system and transportation.

The strategic planning process also created an opportunity for partner organizations to share and discuss important equity-focused work currently underway in our region, including a need for increased coordination and cross-sector driven solutions that match the scale of inequities we face. In addition to meeting our own strategic and operational responsibilities toward advancing Equity and Social Justice, King County government commits to advancing a Regional Equity Collaborative with partners from community organizations, philanthropy, business, local governments and education in the coming months and years.

## HAVING 'PRO-EQUITY' GOVERNANCE

To become 'pro-equity' in our County practices and governance, we need systems and standards that build on our best practices and learnings from our equity journey to date. We need both to lead as necessary and to respond consistently to our residents, partners and employees.

In our different areas of government, we need to ensure that our decisions, policies and practices produce gains for all, while targeting many of the benefits where needs are greatest.

We need new processes that are inclusive

and open, and in particular raise the voices and power of those in the community and our organization who have been historically sidelined by those who have traditionally exercised power. This is why the solutions in this plan are defined by those affected.

We are also challenging business as usual. The journey towards equity is necessarily disruptive. We must question existing systems of power and privilege by undoing the systems that have perpetuated unfair outcomes, and creating new spaces for learning and growth.

To achieve better outcomes in the community, we will integrate and implement pro-equity practices in our major functions of government where we can effect change, which include:

- Leadership, Operations & Services
- Policies, plans and budgets
- Workplace & Workforce
- Community partnerships
- Communications and education
- Facilities and systems improvements



King County

HOW KING COUNTY IS

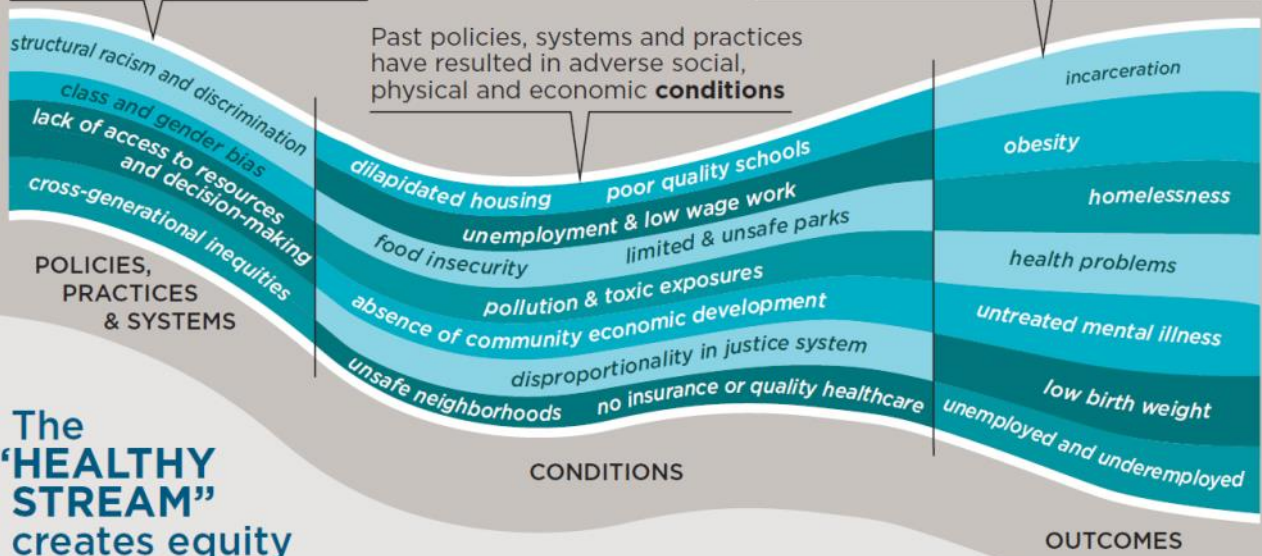
# BUILDING EQUITY...

**RACE AND PLACE MATTER IN KING COUNTY.** PEOPLE OF COLOR, LOW-INCOME RESIDENTS AND IMMIGRANTS AND REFUGEES PERSISTENTLY FACE INEQUITIES IN KEY AREAS, SUCH AS EDUCATION, INCOME AND HEALTH.

## The “UNHEALTHY STREAM” increases inequities

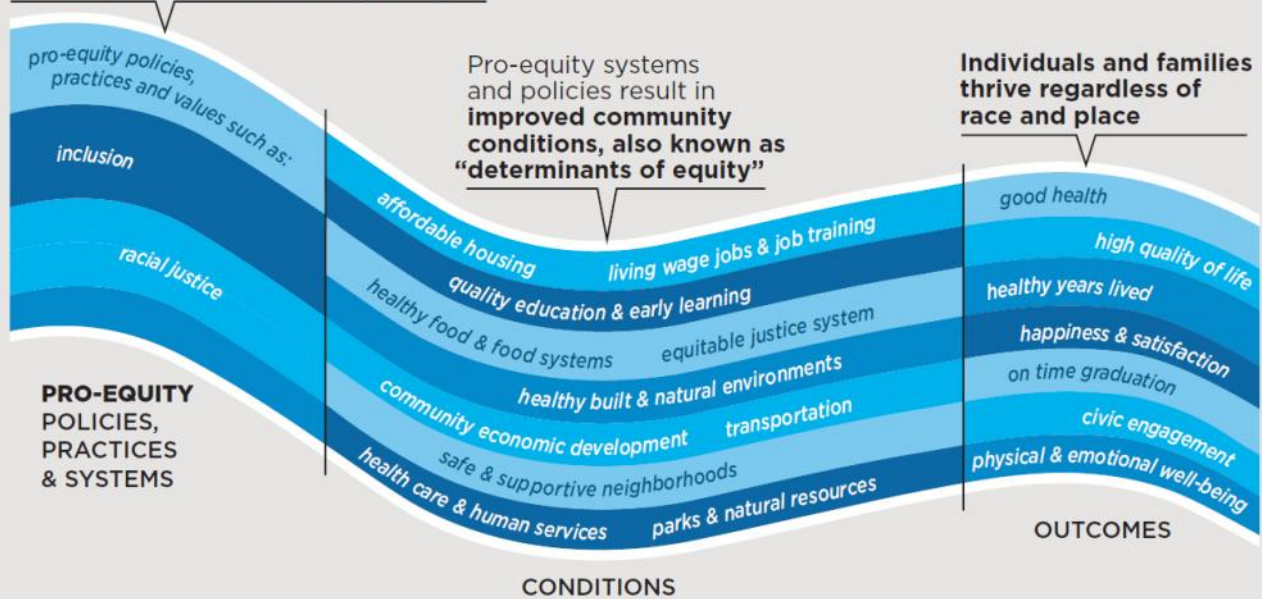
**Policies, structures and systems** – including those in government – have sustained and even contributed to inequities

Government programs historically have tended to react to problems and treat poor individual and family-level **outcomes**



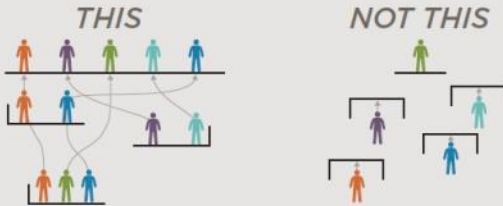
## The “HEALTHY STREAM” creates equity

For greatest and most effective impact, King County is **focusing “upstream” to address root causes and be pro-equity**



# AND ADVANCING SOCIAL JUSTICE...

## PRO-EQUITY means



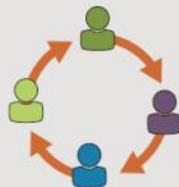
Defining outcomes for all, identifying obstacles faced by specific groups, and tailoring strategies and building on assets to address barriers (targeted universalism).



Dismantling systems of power, privilege and racial injustice in favor of equitable access to resources and decisions.



Focusing on the people and places where needs are greatest – such as low-income communities, communities of color, and immigrant and refugee populations.



Creating inclusive processes and including people early, continuously and meaningfully.

## King County's path toward PRO-EQUITY



# SO ALL PEOPLE HAVE OPPORTUNITIES TO THRIVE

## King County INVESTS...



**Upstream,**  
where needs  
are greatest,



in  
**community  
partnerships,**



and in  
**employees,**



with **transparent  
and accountable  
leadership.**

## We do this in **SIX AREAS OF GOVERNANCE**

**Workforce and workplace equity**  
*Build a pro-equity organization and workplace culture for every employee driven by a racially just and cultural responsive workforce at all levels*

**Leadership, operations and services**  
*Advance pro-equity practices and systems at all levels through accountable leadership and employees who are change agents*

**Equitable Budgeting, Planning and Policymaking**  
*Promote accountability to ensure our plans, policies, and budgets incorporate our ESJ values so that we equitably address the needs of our communities*



**Community Partnerships**  
*Invest in community-based partnerships that will steadily inform the County's decision-making and foster full and equitable civic participation*

**Communication and Education**  
*Advance our education and communication to better engage our residents and communities in ways that are inclusive, culturally responsive and socially just*

**Facility and Systems Improvements (CIP)**  
*Develop facility and system improvements responsive to the values and priorities of residents and stakeholders and achieve pro-equity outcomes*

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# OUR STRATEGIES



## Invest upstream and where needs are greatest

Moving upstream means:

- focusing on early childhood investments that prevent mental, behavioral and physical issues later in life;
- preventing crises and problems from occurring instead of treating the after-effects; and
- continuing and expanding strategies that reduce involvement in the criminal justice system and keep families together.

The equity frame demands that we focus on where the needs are greatest – geographic areas such as parts of south King County, and low-income populations, people of color, and immigrants and refugees.

We acknowledge that universal approaches that apply to a whole population can still result in unacceptable gaps. Instead, we must approach with targeted universalism – where we define goals for all, identify the obstacles faced by specific groups, and tailor strategies and building on assets to address the barriers in those situations.



## Invest in community partnerships

King County has a history of community engagement, but those interactions are often ad hoc, with insufficient compensation for the time and expertise of people and organizations, and without investment in organizations' capacity to continue and expand work.

This plan is designed to move the County from these occasional interactions to strategic investment in community partnerships that will inform the County's programming, service delivery and budgeting, and will provide equitable opportunity for all residents to advocate in their own behalf and influence the decisions that impact their lives. This strategy is rooted in the principle that those affected have the right to define decisions.



## Invest in employees

King County government's greatest asset is our approximately 14,000 employees who are

dedicated to improving the lives of the county's more than two million residents. They are the experts in providing the best services because they know and work with our communities every day.

King County's ambition is to become the best-run government in the nation with a workforce that is diverse and culturally responsive at all levels of the organization. To achieve this, we must ensure that every employee is valued for her, their or his unique assets and experiences and we invest in growing their talent – regardless of who they are, where they come from and where they are in the organization.

We are committed to focus our efforts on employees who have historically lacked equitable access to jobs and development opportunities, and employees at lower pay ranges.

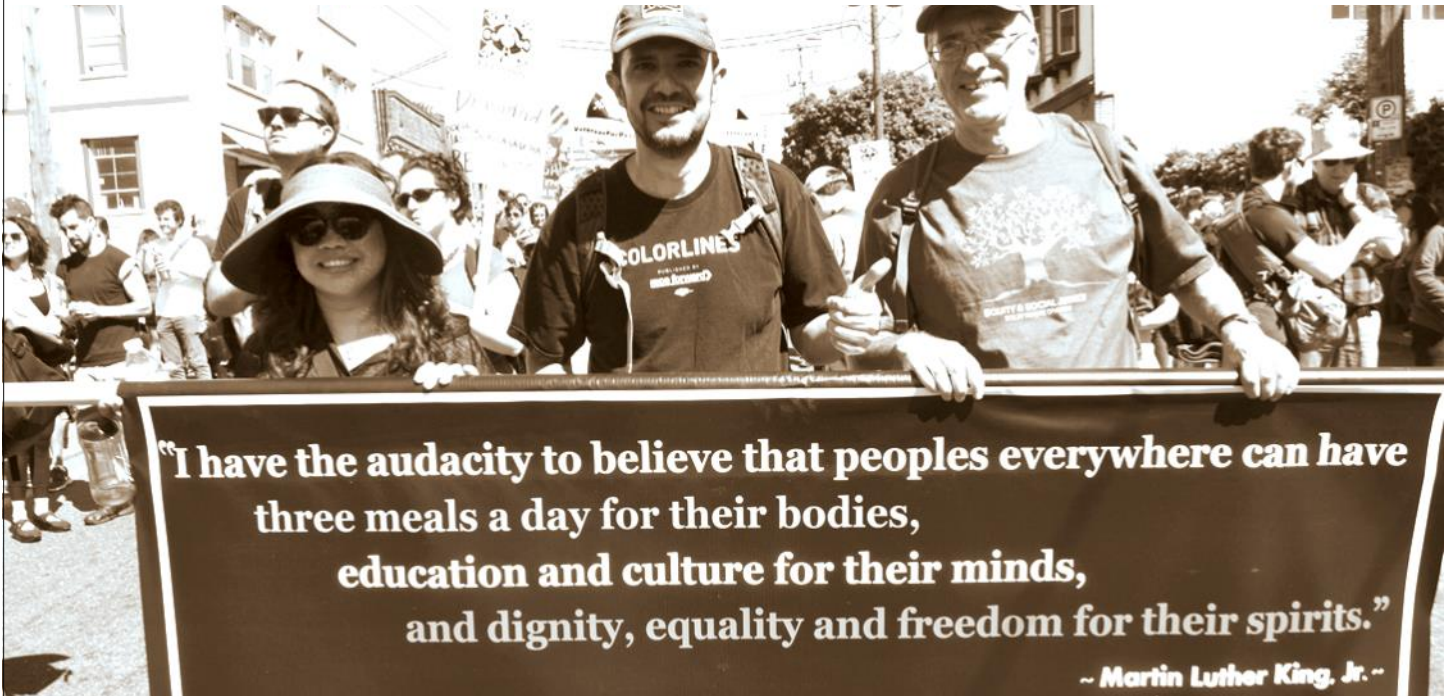


## With accountable and transparent leadership

Accountable and transparent leadership is critical to effectively implementing the ESJ Strategic Plan. The success of this Plan and considerable progress on equity is fundamentally tied to consistent and visible leadership at all levels around a shared vision for ESJ within and across King County government and the region.

All employees are change agents, though the County's top leaders are ultimately responsible for championing and advancing ESJ. A government that is rooted in equity and social justice means that leaders hold themselves and each other accountable, working openly with residents, employees and community partners.

# OUR SHARED VALUES



We will instill our shared values on equity and social justice in all our work. We are:

## Inclusive and Collaborative

Achieve better outcomes by engaging and including employees and communities early, continuously and meaningfully; we maximize opportunities and our collective potential by breaking down silos, partnering and convening across government and organizations.

## Diverse and People-focused

Represent the mosaic of our communities at all levels of the organization to innovate and better serve; we nurture respect and dignity by valuing every person's leadership, strengths and assets.

## Responsive and Adaptive

Be culturally and linguistically responsive to and driven by employees and community.

## Transparent and Accountable

Build trust and common understanding by being transparent and accountable in our actions, processes and measures.

## Racially just

Dismantle systems, policies and practices that perpetuate structural racism, inequities and different forms of discrimination based on power and privilege.

## Upstream and Where Needs Are Greatest

We focus upstream on root causes and sustainable solutions –where returns are greatest –and on populations and places with the greatest needs.

Consistent with our ESJ Ordinance and the historical and persistent patterns of inequities, King County focuses on equity impacts on communities of color, low-income populations, and limited English-speaking residents. Though our approach is comprehensive, and true opportunity requires that every person have access to the benefits of our society regardless of race, gender, class, religion, sexual orientation, disability, or other aspects of who we are, what we look like, where we come from, where we live and what we believe in.

# OUR COMMON LANGUAGE

## INEQUITIES:

Differences in well-being that disadvantage on individual or group in favor of another; these are systemic, patterned and must be changed.\*

**Inequities are not random;** inequities are caused by past and current decisions, systems of power and privilege, policies, and implementation of those policies.\*

## EQUITY: A SYSTEM OF FAIRNESS

Equity is the full and equal access to opportunities, power and resources so all people may achieve their full potential. Equity is an ardent journey toward well-being as defined by those most negatively affected.\*

## SOCIAL JUSTICE:

All aspects of justice—including legal, political, economic and environmental—and requires the fair distribution of and access to public goods, institutional resources and life opportunities for all people.\*

## RACE IN THE U.S.:

Race and racial categories in the U.S. are a social construction created by the dominant group with the intent to determine Dominant and Subordinate categories and access to resources; they have an assigned meaning. Racial categories have changed over time and thus how various communities experience race has changed over time.\*\*

## DETERMINANTS OF EQUITY:

The social, economic, geographic, political and physical environments and conditions in which people live. Full and equal access to the determinants of equity are necessary to have equity for all people regardless of race, class, gender, language spoken and geography.\*

## STRUCTURAL RACISM:

The interplay of policies, practices, programs and systems of multiple institutions which leads to adverse outcomes and conditions for communities of Color compared to white communities, that occurs within the context of racialized historical and cultural conditions.\*\*

## TARGETED UNIVERSALISM:

Led by those most affected and lifting up their assets, we define goals for all; identify obstacles faced by specific groups; and tailor strategies to address the barriers in those situations.\*\*\*

\*Definitions gathered from King County Equity and Social Justice Ordinance (16948)

\*\*As defined by Hackman Consulting

\*\*\*Developed by King County using multiple sources.



# EQUITY POLICY AGENDA

FOR THE  
EQUITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE  
STRATEGIC PLAN

# EQUITY POLICY AGENDA

## OUR 'PRO-EQUITY' POLICY AGENDA

The Community Engagement Report for the King County Equity and Social Justice (ESJ) Strategic Plan summarizes current states and visions for a range of issue areas, ranging from health and human services to jobs and economic development to transportation.

At the same time, other parts of this Strategic Plan lay the groundwork for a Regional Equity Collaborative, which will be a vehicle for King County to work with partners, institutions and organizations to advance shared equity goals, strategies and interests.

King County, however, is committed to more immediate and shorter-term actions and policies

which will move us towards a state of greater equity. In this section of the ESJ Strategic Plan we present our Pro-Equity Policy Agenda, which is our King County commitment to advancing equity in the next three years in the following areas:

- Child and youth development
- Economic development and jobs
- Environment and climate
- Health and human services
- Housing
- Information technology
- Justice system
- Transportation & Mobility



# CHILD & YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

# CHILD & YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

## OUR CURRENT SITUATION

King County is a region where health and wellbeing indicators are strong: overall, our health indicators are high and our unemployment rate is among the lowest in the nation. However, these overall positive trends mask widening and troubling disparities in our County by race and place. Health outcomes vary widely by race and across communities in King County, for example in infant mortality, chronic diseases and life expectancy. For the first time in recent history, our middle class is shrinking. Of the over 80,000 households added in King County since 2000, nearly all of the increase has been split between the top and the bottom of the income spectrum; less than four percent of the increase in households has occurred in income brackets between \$35,000 and \$125,000. Over 20 percent of our young people do not graduate from high school.

Currently, much of the County's funding has been in response to negative outcomes—severe mental illness, homelessness, chronic illness, and youth who have already dropped out of school or who have been involved in the juvenile justice system. However, research tells us that promoting wellbeing, decreasing risk factors, intervening early when issues arise and making strategic investments at critical points in young people's development before age 24 are the most effective and least expensive ways to prevent these problems from arising.

## HOW WE WILL MAKE A DIFFERENCE

In 2014, King County staff began examining how the County could improve outcomes and allow individuals and communities to achieve their full potential. The resulting Best Starts for Kids (BSK) ballot measure was approved by the voters in November 2015. As a promotion, prevention and early intervention initiative, BSK in-

vestments will balance other County investments through Mental Illness and Drug Dependency (MIDD) funding and the King County Veterans and Human Services Levy.

BSK is a strengths-based approach, which will maximize the assets and knowledge of our richly diverse County, and its many communities and cultures. It reflects the County's adopted policy direction and was developed within the context of the King County Strategic Plan, the Equity and Social Justice Ordinance, the Health and Human Services Transformation Plan and the 2015 Youth Action Plan.

Results for Best Starts for Kids:

- Babies are born healthy and establish a strong foundation for lifelong health and well-being.
- King County is a place where everyone has equitable opportunities to progress through childhood safe and healthy, building academic and life skills to be thriving members of their communities.
- Communities offer safe, welcoming, and healthy environments that help improve outcomes for all of King County's children and families, regardless of where they live.

In the next six years, King County will take action in following key areas:

### 1. Invest early: Prenatal to 5 years of age

#### Highlights:

- Support new parents, families and caregivers through community-based programs, peer support and home visiting.

# CHILD & YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

- Assure parents and caregivers have access to: screening to assure the healthy development of their children; resources for help if developmental issues arise; and effective linkages to treatment if the need arises.
- Cultivate caregiver knowledge, develop outreach resources and referral, and provide information on healthy child development to parents and caregivers
- Support high quality childcare in homes and in centers, and in licensed and unlicensed settings.

## 2. Sustain gains from 5 to 24 years of age

### Highlights:

- Build resilience of youth and reduce negative risky behaviors
- Help youth stay connect to their families and communities
- Meet the health and behavior needs of youth
- Help young adults who have had challenges successfully transition into adulthood including re-engaging in education opportunities and job skills development
- Stop the school to prison pipeline

## 3. Communities of Opportunity

### Highlights:

- Support priorities and strategies of place-based collaboration in communities with much to gain
- Engage multiple organizations in policy and system change
- Foster innovations in equity through a regional learning community





**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT  
& JOBS**

# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & JOBS

## OUR CURRENT SITUATION

King County has abundant economic opportunity in which many populations and areas of the County are thriving. At the same time, not all populations are able to access this prosperity; many low-income and communities of color in particular face barriers to good paying jobs and economic opportunity. For example, the unemployment rate for black/ African American residents has recently been double that of the unemployment rate for white residents.

Gaps in education persist and continue to produce disparate labor market outcomes. For example, low-income students have on-time graduation rates 15 percentage points below the average. Federal, state, and local funding for training is small relative to the need for this type of training to help individuals access better job opportunities. At the same time, businesses face gaps in filling jobs and are importing talent from other regions of the country and the world.

## HOW WE WILL MAKE A DIFFERENCE

King County has followed three approaches to expanding access to economic opportunity to King County residents. First, King County is a social service provider. In that role, the County led development of Best Starts for Kids, a comprehensive, voter-approved set of investments in early childhood and youth that will help ensure they all have the opportunity to fulfill their potential. Second, King County provides an array of workforce training and development programs. We have focused on improving the effectiveness of those programs both in reaching certain populations such as youth and veterans and in ensuring their training results in job placement, particularly in key industries such as aerospace and manufacturing.

Finally, King County is leveraging its roles as one of the largest employers and contractors in the region. We are dedicated to eliminating bias in our hiring practice and promoting better access to jobs, promotions and contracting opportunities within King County for people of color; establishing policies at the County that support family wage jobs and benefits such as sick leave and paid family leave; and using our influence through contracting and in the labor market to encourage other employers to do the same. King County is proudly a union county. Nearly 85% of our employees are union members.

In the next three years, King County will take action in four key areas to further improve access to good jobs and make sure that all residents benefit from a thriving economy:

### **1. Ensure that private and government employment opportunities are accessible to all groups**

#### **Highlights:**

- Reduce barriers to hiring more people with a criminal record; expand hiring of veterans through improved translation of veteran skills
- Expand hiring of people with developmental disabilities under the supportive employment program;
- Support regional 100% Talent initiative on gender-wage equity with particular emphasis on gender-wage equity for women of color.
- Expand access to transportation and affordable housing that connects people to job centers and employment opportunities.
- Eliminate bias in our own hiring practices, and support similar efforts Countywide

# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & JOBS

## 2. Expand opportunities for disadvantaged populations to build skills that will help them access better jobs

### Highlights:

- Collaborate with the workforce development council to expand services for individuals with barriers to employment, as described in the new federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act
- Partner with the City of Seattle and the Workforce Development Council to provide summer youth employment opportunities to King County youth and expand business participation in the program
- Play leadership role in cross-sector initiative to increase access to middle-wage jobs and career ladders
- Support the expansion of apprenticeship programs as an evidence-based way to provide access to higher-paying jobs both in County government and in the region
- Create local policies around new funds available to help employers train employees in ways that lead to substantial wage gains
- Create programming for low-income middle-school students that exposes them to careers in the area

## 3. Leverage the County's role as a large employer and contractor to promote jobs that pay family-support wages and support upward mobility

### Highlights:

- Require paid sick leave among County contractors
- Pilot a County-paid parental leave program with a small payroll tax and insurance pool

## 4. Support entrepreneurship and help small businesses grow

### Highlights:

- Continue to expand participation of small businesses in County procurement through work orders and other contracting processes
- Use more small businesses in construction projects
- Seek opportunities to further expand the number of employers participating in the small contractors and suppliers certification program.



**ENVIRONMENT & CLIMATE**

## OUR CURRENT SITUATION

King County has an extensive network of regional trails, active parks, natural areas and open space. Five major river systems and numerous creeks cross rural and urban landscapes, and working farms and forests are found in the eastern half of the county. While King County is widely recognized for its clean water, air and access to abundant recreation opportunities and fresh local produce that benefit health, these benefits are not enjoyed equitably by all county residents. Some residents may not live close to a park, trail, open space or farmers market opportunity, or have safe and easy access via bus, trail or car. Forests and trees – and the benefits it provides for shade, air and water quality, and habitat – are not distributed evenly across communities.

At the same time, historical contamination of soil and water, and ongoing air and water pollution from urban industry and development, vehicles and polluted runoff from roads are more concentrated in urban areas with higher percentages of communities of color, lower income residents and people with pre-existing health conditions. The South Park and Georgetown communities, along the Lower Duwamish River, are examples of communities that are disproportionately impacted by historic contamination of the river, soils, fish, and shellfish, as well as air quality impacts from vehicles and industry.

Climate change impacts, like longer and more frequent heat events, urban flooding and natural disasters are areas where low-income communities and communities of color are likely to be disproportionately impacted. Lower income populations have the least resources to mitigate impacts like increased frequency of heat events and flooding, through actions like flood proofing, home insulation, air conditioning,

or easily accessing a shady park or air conditioned community center. Language can also be a barrier to information on flood and storm disaster preparedness.

Many of the actions needed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions can also serve as powerful opportunities to address broader inequities. For example, investments that better integrate transit and land use and expand commute options will increase access to work, education, and health care. Development and adoption of well-designed green building standards can make homes more comfortable during heat events, improve indoor air quality, and reduce utility and repair costs. Expanded open space protection and linking regional trails to transit expands access to healthy recreation options. Specific actions to both reduce greenhouse gas emissions and prepare for the impacts of climate change are outlined in King County's 2015 Strategic Climate Action Plan (SCAP).

While King County has a long history of strong public support for open space, water quality, and farmland preservation bond measures and programs, representation on environment and open space-related advisory committees and the leadership of county water, parks, and open space programs does not reflect the racial and economic diversity of the county.

## HOW WE WILL MAKE A DIFFERENCE

All county residents should have equitable access to clean air and water, and the health and recreation benefits of King County's extensive network of regional trails, open space, and working farms and forests. Our investments in cleaning up historic contamination, upgrading water quality infrastructure, protecting open space, and building a clean energy economy

# ENVIRONMENT & CLIMATE

should assess and address disproportionate environmental burdens and promote equitable access to environmental benefits and resulting economic opportunities. To accomplish this, we need to build opportunities and pathways for communities of color and populations with low incomes to participate in defining environmental problems, solutions, and priorities through shared leadership models.

Over the next three years, King County will take the following actions to advance environmental justice:

## **1. Increase diversity and inclusion in climate/environment governance processes, partnerships, program development, and contracted services.**

### **Highlights:**

- Partner with workforce development, non-governmental organizations, and businesses to strengthen internship and mentorship programs in environment-related fields
- Improve racial, gender, age, and location diversity on environmental boards and commission by removing barriers to inclusion, like requirements for professional certifications
- Implement priority hire or related policies that increase economic justice through contracting for infrastructure development and natural and built environmental improvements (like green infrastructure installations)
- Define equity and social justice outcomes and criteria for grant programs including Waterworks grants and community grants for recreation facility improvements
- Set annual goals for our diversity targets for the workforce of King County agencies

## **2. Drive equity considerations into long-term improvements to build and natural environments, systems, and policy.**

### **Highlights:**

- Use demographic data and knowledge gained through partnerships and community engagement to drive pro-equity planning for open space, habitat, trails, trees, green infrastructure, energy conservation, and climate response
- Ensure that equity considerations, as outlined in the ESJ Ordinance, are applied to siting and design of major infrastructure like combined sewer overflow facilities
- Building on King County's Local Food Initiative, advance food system improvements (e.g. institutional purchasing practices, policy innovations, incentives, partnerships, and code adjustments) that reduce disparities in food access and security

## **3. Ensure that programs supporting investments in energy efficiency and renewable energy are widely available; prioritize climate change preparedness efforts that enhance resiliency for those most vulnerable to and at risk for climate change impacts.**

### **Highlights:**

- As recommended in the updated SCAP, increase capacity to work with communities to better understand priorities for addressing climate impacts and jointly develop and community solutions that will build community resilience

# ENVIRONMENT & CLIMATE

- Strengthen connections between community-based organizations, housing programs, and utilities to increase access to energy and water efficiency grants and incentives in low-income communities
- Support inclusion of green building and other energy efficiency elements affordable housing developments
- As part of the “1 million Trees” initiative, work with initiative partners to prioritize the planting of trees in communities where residents lack tree canopy and face higher temperatures because of concentrated paved and built areas
- Carry out “heat event” exercise with health care providers, community centers, emergency responders, and community organizations to address the needs of populations with pre-existing health conditions during a heat event
- Publish information on storm and flood preparedness in multiple languages and use non-traditional communication channels to reach communities that are likely to be most impacted



**HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES**



# HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

## OUR CURRENT SITUATION

In King County, we have some people and communities that are among the healthiest and longest living in the world. However, this experience is not universal, and where people live, how much they make, and the color of their skin are major predictors of life experiences and the chances of living well and thriving. Significant numbers of people in the King County have been left behind as demographics have shifted, and the region now experiences some of the greatest inequities among large US metropolitan areas.

Life expectancy ranges from 74 years in the lowest 10% of census tracts to 87 years in the highest 10%, smoking ranges from 5% to 20%, and frequent mental distress ranges from 4% to 14%. Reasons for this disproportionality related to health and human services provision include inequitable access to services; a lack of services that meet the needs of all individuals, families, and communities; the historical underrepresentation of important voices in determining how health and human services should be delivered; and inequities in a numerous determinants of equity – from housing to jobs – that lead to worse outcomes for some communities.

## HOW WE WILL MAKE A DIFFERENCE

King County's plan to advance equity and social justice in health and human services is outlined in the Health and Human Services Transformation Plan, with a goal is that by 2020 the people of King County will experience significant gains in health and well-being because our community worked collectively to make the shift from a costly, crisis-oriented response to health and social problems, to one that focuses on prevention, embraces recovery, and eliminates disparities. In recent years, King County's approach has included increasing

access to services through an intentional focus on equity; increase the effectiveness of our health and human services by shifting to prevention and outcome-oriented approaches; using data to ensure we are addressing the leading causes of death, disability and well-being and focusing on the populations with greatest needs; integrating services; and leveraging partnerships, including advocacy at the state and federal levels.

Signature work that exemplifies these approaches include:

- Best Starts for Kids, which invests in prevention and early intervention for children, youth, families, and communities;
- Communities of Opportunity, an effort launched with The Seattle Foundation to address inequities in health, social, and economic outcomes, through the lens of equity and social justice, via place-based and policy/system change solutions with community partners playing key roles in shaping solutions;
- Familiar Faces, a community partnership focused on improving systems of health and social support services, and crisis prevention, for jail-involved individuals who have mental health and/or substance use conditions, and often experience homelessness;
- Integrating physical health care, mental health and substance use services, with the goal of making those systems more responsive to consumer needs and demands, while improving the quality and cost of care for King County residents;
- Enrolling the uninsured population of King County into newly available health insurance, reducing the percentage of working age adults who are uninsured from

# HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

16% to 10% in the first two years of this Affordable Care Act; and the King County Accountable Community of Health (ACH), an emerging regional partnership committed to working in new ways to improve the health and well-being of King County residents.

In the next three years, King County will undertake specific actions in four key areas related to the health and human services priority areas outlined above:

## 1. Raise community voice

### Highlights:

- Increase community engagement in department and countywide initiatives (including identification of needs, selection of priorities, and development of implementation strategies), as modeled by Best Starts for Kids and Communities of Opportunity.
- Support increased capacity for engagement and participation of community partners, and target more grassroots agencies, networks and interested consumers in planning and implementation.
- Systematically and regularly work with community partners, stakeholders, and health and human services providers to identify community assets and opportunities to inform strategic plans, programs and service delivery.

## 2. Contract for equity and outcomes

### Highlights:

- Modify King County contracting requirements so that small non-profit organizations (especially those serving communities' low-income populations, people of color, and immigrants/refugees) can fairly and effectively compete for contracts and participate in initiatives.
- Establish incentives and performance measures in contracts to spur collaborative approaches to building healthy, safe, and thriving communities.
- Increase King County investments in prevention across health and human services to target, in universal and tailored ways, the underlying causes of poor health and well-being.

## 3. Invest in partnerships

### Highlights:

- Invest in the creation of cross-sector, community collaborative partnerships and linkages, within the County and at the community level, that foster equity and focus on improving outcomes for residents and communities.
- Support the integration of physical and behavioral health in the County workforce by building connections at all staff levels throughout Public Health and Department of Community and Human Services, as well as with other County work units and within the community.

## 4. Expand use of data to address inequities

### Highlights:

- Use data to identify and address emerging and significant causes of death and poor health, with specific focus on disparities, and expand disaggregation of data to ensure we know what is impacting all populations
- Support the “Data Across Sectors for Health (DASH)” grant to integrate affordable housing and health data, which will track how public health interventions work for residents of affordable housing.
- Invest in both best as well as promising practices and use data to build an evidence base for innovative practices that support communities with the most to gain.



**HOUSING**

# HOUSING

## OUR CURRENT SITUATION

King County is experiencing tremendous economic and population growth, and many areas of our region are thriving. However, as a result for households, rents and home prices have increased far ahead of wage growth, making it difficult for them to meet their basic housing needs.

Housing affordability and homelessness have become crises that are worsening in King County. In addition, there are broad race and socio-economic disparities in access to housing. Low income renter households make up 70 percent of King County households earning less than 50 percent of King County's median household income (less than \$43,400 for a family of four) and face the greatest risk of housing instability.

In general, housing is considered to be affordable when a household pays no more than 30% their income towards the cost of housing. Nearly 65,000 households earning between \$26,040 and \$43,400 pay more than half their income toward rent and are consistently extremely rent burdened; within this group, Black/African American and Hispanic/Latino households are disproportionately represented. One adverse event (illness, accident, reduced work hours) can easily launch these vulnerable households into severe risk of homelessness. Each household has different housing needs; there is no one-size-fit-all solution. Access to a variety of housing options is needed.

## HOW WE WILL MAKE A DIFFERENCE

In response to the housing affordability and homelessness crises, King County is using a multi-pronged approach to address the housing needs of all residents and eliminate barriers to stable housing for all. First, King County will increase and target its limited resources to

match investments with the highest priorities and needs across the region, increasing access to housing for all populations. Second, King County will work to create partnerships with private developers, cities and regional partners to explore innovative housing models to meet the diverse needs of households across the County. Finally, King County will look to develop strategies to prevent homelessness and increase housing stability.

In all programs, housing data and population trends will be analyzed to ensure that the strategies are addressing the region's ever changing housing needs and that all residents have equitable access to affordable, safe and stable housing.

In the next three years, King County will implement the Affordable Housing Strategy, which is organized into five categories:

### 1. Target resources

#### Highlights:

- Target capital funding to address specific affordable housing needs, ensuring that regions and populations receive the appropriate type of housing intervention.
- Continue implementation of the homeless coordinated entry for all system, ensuring that each homeless individual or household receives the appropriate level of service, allowing for the prioritization and efficient use of both housing stock and services.
- Invest in transit-oriented development housing around high capacity transit sites and partner with King County Metro and Sound Transit on service expansion to incorporate affordable housing around transit stations and into redevelopment plans of underutilized publicly-owned property.

## 2. Seek innovative partnerships and housing models

### Highlights:

- Pilot new approaches to homeless housing on County-owned property, such as micro modular housing, rotational homeless encampments with service access and shelter with permanent supportive housing.
- Explore incentivizing the production of accessory dwelling units, through exploring mechanisms for design, permitting coordination and financing.
- Explore partnerships with market-rate developers to include affordability in new market-rate projects.
- Support a change in state law to allow for the adoption of Multi-Family Tax Exemption (MFTE) for unincorporated areas, to provide a tax subsidy for apartment developers willing to dedicate a portion of their units toward affordable housing.

## 3. Increase housing funding

### Highlights:

- Dedicate Mental Illness and Drug Dependency (MIDD) tax to housing resources to create affordable housing for residents experiencing mental health or substance use disorders.
- Explore increased Veterans and Human Services Levy funding in 2017 renewal for housing to assist both veteran and non-veteran households.
- Issue hotel/motel tax bonds for transit-oriented affordable workforce housing.
- Consider a County-wide affordable housing Real Estate Excise Tax (REET) to generate

large, dependable capital funding sources for affordable housing.

- Amplify the impact of housing resources by connecting them to other County initiatives, such as the Health & Human Services Transformation Plan's Communities of Opportunity and Familiar Faces, King County's behavioral health programs, employment programs, public health programs and criminal justice strategies.

## 4. Increase housing stability

### Highlights:

- Implement the Best Starts for Kids levy funds that includes \$19 million to prevent and divert youth and families from homelessness.
- Consider adopting additional tenant protections to increase housing stability.
- Preserve affordable housing through existing and new models, such as the 4% Low Income Housing Tax Credit and the Regional Equitable Development Initiative Fund (REDI).

## 5. Analyze housing and population trends to address changing housing needs

### Highlights:

- Analyze housing and population trends to inform how funding is directed through the Request for Proposals (RFP) processes.
- Utilize data to identify housing need changes and revise the County's housing strategy.



# INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

## OUR CURRENT SITUATION

Washington State has the highest in home broadband adoption rate in the country at 81.9%, according to the National Telecommunications and Information Administration. With a booming economy, King County is home to a technology literate society that relies increasingly on broadband internet access. But even within King County, 16% of households do not have access to the Internet at home – a resource so essential it is being called the “electricity of the 21st century.” King County residents who earn less than \$50,000 per year are 5.5 times less likely to have internet access at home.

The inability for people in our communities to utilize this resource limits access to government services, such as health care information, health insurance registration and participation in the online marketplace. It also limits opportunities to apply for jobs, the basic ability to do homework from home, social engagement opportunities, and the ability to engage in other aspects of our economy and society. Not having internet access at home means people must travel to libraries, community centers or schools to find information and access services, often placing an additional financial burden on those who are least able to bear it.

This inequity is often driven by poverty and other factors that limit access. For example, there are some communities, such as White Center in our County and parts of Snohomish County, where broadband services are limited due to their lack of perceived profitability by private carriers.

In response to the digital equity issue, a number of cities nationally, including the city of Seattle locally, are adopting action plans aimed at ensuring disadvantaged residents and

communities are not left behind but are participating and benefiting in the opportunities provided by advancements in technology and the internet.

## HOW WE WILL MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Access to information and technology is a fundamental social justice goal. Ensuring equal opportunity and access to the Internet for all of our residents, regardless of age, income or ability, allows them to participate in our economy and society. King County plays an important role—both as a service provider and as regional convener—in connecting people to the resources they need to succeed in our increasingly digital world.

Some examples that illustrate the strides King County has already made in the areas of digital equity and inclusion are:

- Accessible websites for blind, deaf and hearing-impaired.
- Open data made available to software developers and interested residents, helping our communities transparently share information about county services and trends.
- Digital communications portals like the Assessor's Parcel Viewer that help people learn about King County services and make decisions that are important to them.
- Institutional Network (I-Net) provides affordable broadband Internet services for education, municipalities, and nonprofits, benefitting students, teachers, government workers and non-governmental organizations.



# INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

- The creation of a social media toolkit that all agencies and departments can use for enhanced and more effective resident interaction through social media.

In the next three years, King County will take action in three key areas to improve digital equity in our communities so that everyone has the opportunity to participate in and benefit from the digital world of the future.

## **1. Develop and implement a Digital Equity Plan in collaboration with regional partners in King County.**

### **Highlights:**

- Develop a digital equity vision, goals, strategy, approach, and initiatives that comprise an action plan for King County and our regional partners.
- Identify local, state, federal funding sources to support digital equity initiatives.
- Integrate the ESJ Strategic Plan, Best Start for Kids, Youth Actin Plan, 311, Smart Cities and other services with the county's Digital Equity Plan.

## **2. Increase residents' opportunities for digital interaction and engagement.**

### **Highlights:**

- Target a reduction from 16% to fewer than 10% of homes in King County without broadband Internet access as part of our public performance scorecard.
- Identify and pilot public/private partnerships that increase the delivery of broadband services to underserved communities in King County, especially low-income qualifying residents and students.

- Increase the number of King County services provided online as opposed to in-line throughout county government to make it easier for those with broadband access to get the services they need.

## **3. Collaborate and integrate with regional partners to better utilize existing capabilities, develop new capabilities, and extend the impact of those capabilities more broadly.**

### **Highlights:**

- Collaborate with Connecting Community Consortium (c3), a regional 23-member municipal, education and nonprofit organization, to activate a fiber network around Lake Washington to provide low-cost access to high speed connectivity and member-managed services.
- Perform convener and collaborator roles with regional private, public, and community partners to identify successfully implemented Digital Equity solutions for re-use replication across King County communities.
- Expand I-Net fiber to more schools, government and nonprofit organizations throughout the county. Additionally, integrate I-Net assets with partner assets to more effectively deliver broadband and wireless connections in rural areas and to underserved populations.
- Evaluate the creation of a digital equity investment bank to stimulate digital equity infrastructure by helping to fund community-driven digital equity initiatives.



**JUSTICE SYSTEM**

# JUSTICE SYSTEM

## OUR CURRENT SITUATION

King County's criminal justice system has long been an innovator in serving the public safety needs of residents. At the same time, King County recognizes that as a nation we often have criminal justice responses to behaviors that have their roots in social, educational and community conditions. In addition, we know that harm often results from criminal justice involvement, and in many situations prevention – versus incarceration – can be more effective in terms of costs, developing human potential, and increased public safety.

Law enforcement is required to respond to harmful behavior and protect people and property from further harm. Law enforcement's work requires understanding human behavior issues, mental health, substance use, developmental disabilities, poverty, homelessness, and those who are purposeful in causing violence and property destruction. Law enforcement seeks to continually build trust between the community and law enforcement, which is essential to safe communities. Law enforcement must have crisis intervention training along with their usual protection and safety training and must be provided with resources to have alternative options to arrest and incarceration based on their experiences and perceptions of proper harm response.

Courts are required to ensure both public safety and a fair and just adjudication of the cases that come before them. Courts must comply with existing laws on due process and punishments, and provide consequences for harm caused. Courts seek to impose judgments that meet those obligations while at the same time providing a pathway out of the revolving door of criminal justice involvement, including advancing the use of therapeutic courts. Courts need the resources to timely process cases and

exercise discretion on consequences and monitor behavior when alternatives to jail are imposed.

The Prosecutor is required to review and determine who is charged and with what type of charge. Prosecutors need adequate resources to review and process cases, advise criminal justice partners on issues, engage and participate with communities and systems, design and implement diversions and alternatives, and keep up with changes in the law and processes.

Public defense must protect individual rights to due process and protect the rights and liberty of those accused of a crime. Public defense needs adequate resources to investigate, prepare, and present each client's case and know their stories. Public defense must keep up with changes in the law and sentencing as well as understand alternatives and mitigations for their clients. Public defense works with stakeholders to create alternatives and suggest changes which lessen the harm to individuals involved with the criminal justice system.

Adult and juvenile detention must provide a safe and secure environment for clients and their own staff while the accused are awaiting trial or serving time imposed by a judge. They need the ability to manage this population while also working with individuals to change behavior which may lead to future criminal involvement. They need to provide training in trauma informed practices, crisis intervention, mental health and substance use, and developmental disabilities.

Furthermore, even though in King County we have made significant strides in reducing the overall numbers of youth and adults we incarcerate, Black/African American, Latino and Native American populations are increasingly over-represented in the courts, jails, and prisons.

# JUSTICE SYSTEM

This trend points to our need for an explicit racial equity approach in our criminal justice work.

People of color and people who are economically disadvantaged – who are overrepresented in the criminal justice system – also suffer from the stigma that comes from involvement in that system. Arrests and convictions present significant barriers to housing and employment, perpetuate economic disparity, and often leave individuals with insurmountable barriers to achieve economic independence and well-being. In addition, Washington has the nation's highest rate of property crimes and is experiencing an increase in crimes involving the use of firearms. Victims of these crimes are primarily economically disadvantaged or people of color.

## HOW WE WILL MAKE A DIFFERENCE AS A SYSTEM

King County's criminal justice agencies are working collaboratively on three areas of equity focus: Partner with schools, youth, families and community organizations to reduce youth criminal justice involvement; enhance reentry planning and programming to reduce recidivism; work upstream and take a public health approach to public health problems, such as by providing people with mental health and chemical dependency support and taking a trauma-informed approach to all our criminal justice work.

### 1. Partner with community, schools and justice system to end the school-to-prison pipeline and prevent youth from entering the criminal justice system.

In 2015, King County leaders committed to making a paradigm shift away from detention and toward alternatives for youth. The County brought together the Juvenile Justice Equity Steering Committee (JJESC) consisting of

community members, youth, local leaders, law enforcement, school district superintendents, faith based representatives, judges, prosecutor and public defense. JJESC is committed to a paradigm shift in how we approach system change for youth who get trapped in the criminal justice system. The revolution at the heart of this paradigm shift is the development of collaborative relationships. That includes breaking the institutional decision-making habits that end up pitting community organizations against one another and system against system, particularly when it comes to funding decisions when there is not enough funding to meet all the needs. JJESC has been diving deeply into the disproportionality data and root causes and is currently exploring a number of actions and will be issuing recommendations.

#### Highlights:

- Establish short- and long-term actions to help end disproportionality in King County's juvenile-justice system
- Identify root causes of disproportionality and specific solutions needed to address them in individual communities
- Engage communities by sharing information, then collecting and incorporating feedback.

### 2. Work upstream to prevent criminal system involvement by addressing underlying needs that result in criminal justice involvement

Engage in the Familiar Faces and Community Alternatives to Boarding Task Force work with the Department of Community and Health Services, health providers and clients.

#### Highlights:

- Advance the use of evidence-based harm reduction in therapeutic courts, and support the work of the Familiar Faces team, which

# JUSTICE SYSTEM

has committed to providing trauma-informed and harm reduction services to individuals who have been booked into the jail four or more times in a year.

- Support community-based mental health and chemical dependency treatment that can prevent justice system involvement.

### 3. Enhance community safety by providing trauma-informed criminal justice responses

A high percentage of justice involved youth and adults have experienced serious trauma through their lifetime. The reverberation effects of traumatic experiences can challenge a person's capacity for recovery and create significant barriers to accessing service, often resulting in an increased risk of coming into contact with the criminal justice system.

King County criminal justice agencies and our state and local criminal justice partners will be trained as trainers on "How Being Trauma Informed Improves Criminal Justice System Responses" with the intention to:

- Increase understanding and awareness of the impact of trauma.
- Develop trauma-informed responses.
- Provide strategies for developing and implementing trauma-informed policies, including designing reentry assessments and programming which focus on needs and outcomes.

## HOW WE WILL MAKE A DIFFERENCE AS INDEPENDENT CRIMINAL JUSTICE AGENCIES

Examples of programs and policies King County's criminal justice agencies are pursuing in support of equity and social justice:

### King County Sheriff's Office (KCSO)

- Hire from myriad communities, for example, KCSO has adopted a 10% hiring preference for candidates who speak a second language or who have served in the Peace Corps.
  - \* Appointment of a captain to oversee diversity in our recruiting efforts, especially female candidates.
- New deputies attend the Criminal Justice Training commission, which focuses on a "guardian" rather than a "warrior" approach to policing. This training is reinforced after graduation with a KCSO class, Listen and Explain with Equity and Dignity (LEED).
- Implementing training and policies for transgender members of KCSO, as well as policies for contacting transgender individuals in public.
- Ensure that forms for undocumented immigrants seeking U-Visas are completed in as timely fashion as possible.

### Prosecuting Attorney's Office (PAO)

- FIRS (Family Intervention Reconciliation Services), a youth diversion crisis intervention program that diverts youth who have been arrested due to a domestic violence interaction with a parent or sibling.
- 180 Diversion Program, in collaboration with community leaders, hosts motivational

# JUSTICE SYSTEM

workshops for youth arrested for misdemeanors.

- Decriminalized Driving While License Suspended (DWLS) 3 cases by making reducing them from criminal charges to civil infractions. Persons with a DWLS 3 matter are economically disadvantaged and the PAO made this change to address the inequities associated with prosecuting these cases.

## **King County District Court (KCDC)**

- Problem solving courts, including Regional Mental Health Court and Veterans Court, and developing a therapeutic community court.
- Pre-trial judge-supervised probation in lieu of cash bail, for the purposes of public safety and reduced recidivism.
- Regionalized relicensing through an agreement among district and municipal courts to allow people to get relicensed at any participating court.
- Improved access to the courts through the use of video.

## **King County Superior Court (KCSC)**

- Problem-solving courts, including adult, juvenile and family drug courts.
- Functional family and multi-systemic therapy from probation services.
- School engagement and truancy interventions, for example, working with King County Alternative Dispute Resolution on a restorative justice-based program training youth to mediate peer disputes in schools.

## **Department of Public Defense (DPD)**

- Proposed a Theft 3 Diversion program (to be

launched this summer), which seeks to connect youth accused of low-level crimes to a service provider immediately

- Raising Our Youth As Leaders (ROYAL) program, an evidence-based approach which seeks to serve high-risk youth of color and reduce their criminal justice involvement.
- State law requires that children accused of certain crimes be tried as adults; they are currently housed in a unit at the adult facility in the Maleng Regional Justice Center. Along with DAJD, DPD will pursue the goal of housing all detained children at the Youth services Center.

## **Department of Adult and Juvenile Detention (DAJD)**

- Re-entry transitional support programs, like the Veteran's pilot project, providing programming while inside and connecting them to service providers on the outside to maintain continuity of care.
- Educational and vocational classes, for example, GED and vocational training for janitorial programs; partnerships with community colleges and the Seattle Education Access program to ensure students start their classes while incarcerated and focus on what happens next as they transition out; pilot program in Juvenile funded by the Andrus Family Foundation and Seattle University that allows post-adjudicated youth to participate in developing gardening work and culinary skills using the produce they've helped grow.
- Drug and alcohol support, for example, AA and NA courses as well as the Transitional Recovery Program.



**TRANSPORTATION & MOBILITY**

# TRANSPORTATION & MOBILITY

## OUR CURRENT SITUATION

King County has an expanding transportation system and infrastructure that meets the transportation needs of many in the community. Although our system connects many people to opportunity, gets them to places they need to go, and links together our growing cities, mobility is the one of the top concerns of King County residents. According to a recent study our region ranks 6th worst in the nation for traffic congestion. In addition, there are transportation barriers, in terms of service and transportation options, that limit access to opportunities for those who live and work in rural areas, are seniors, non-English speaking, have disabilities, are transit dependent, work during non-peak travel periods, or live in areas with predominate low-income residents and people of color.

## HOW WE WILL MAKE A DIFFERENCE

King County recognizes that transportation access is a key factor in accessing education, jobs, and services that allow our residents to fulfill their potential and that our region's prosperity is dependent upon the ability of workers and freight to move throughout the region. To enhance mobility and access to transportation for everyone, we have followed four approaches.

First, ensure that we get the most service out of every dollar and that the system responds to transportation needs of the community. For example, King County Transit partially captures issues of gentrification in the Service Guidelines by looking at how concentrations of low-income populations shift throughout the county and measuring the extent to which low-income areas use transit. King County also supports and encourages land uses, policies, and practices that promote equitable transit-oriented development.

Second, build an intentional equity focus into the delivery of service. Transit's Long Range Plan team has worked closely and extensively with jurisdictions throughout the county to identify their future transportation needs. Our Community outreach and planning process also engages with low-income residents and communities of color to identify where the transportation system is not serving them well. King County Metro not only looks at ways to deliver better service options to disadvantaged communities, it also provides low income residents a more affordable way to travel through our ORCA Lift pass program which provides a new, reduced fare on Metro Transit buses, Sound Transit services, King County Water Taxi and the Seattle Streetcar.

Third, develop alternative services to respond to specific needs of those who live in communities that do not support traditional service (e.g., rural communities). To help meet the needs of those who live in in these communities, alternative service projects have been implemented to provide customized service that will help them travel to the places they need to go.

Finally, create broader and meaningful access to transportation through improved engagement with communities and translations into many languages, as we prepare to provide service that connects more neighborhoods with high capacity transit. In every Link Connections public engagement effort, Metro Transit seeks to engage a representative group of people reflective of the bus riding population in the affected project area in each phase of outreach, including race/ethnicity, income, age, disability, and language spoken at home. Some of the things that have been done include: recruiting a diverse community advisory group, translating a project description into 12 languages other than English and maintaining



# TRANSPORTATION & MOBILITY

voice message lines in all 12 languages, hosting multilingual briefings, mailing project information for posting at local libraries, schools and community centers and providing information in formats beyond the web, including printed pieces, phone, stop specific placards, and in person.

In the next three years, to further advance transportation equity, King County will focus efforts on the following:

## 1. Investments in service improvements

### Highlights:

- Examine ways to increase service frequency in underserved areas such as transit corridors running through southeast Seattle, South County along the I-5 and SR 167 corridors, the University District, pockets of north Seattle and Shoreline
- Look at ways to provide more frequent service that connects disadvantaged communities to major transit hubs by partnering with transportation agencies to integrate service
- Utilize origin and destination information to explore opportunities to better understand how access to education, jobs, social services, health care, and healthy food varies by location and use that information to increase access to opportunity to riders and potential riders- particularly those who are historically disadvantaged - when revising transit service.
- Test new ways to provide rural mobility and access during non-peak times, such as by using new technologies to match riders with drivers (TripPool) and exploring partnerships with transportation network companies to provide evening service from transit hubs and enhance our paratransit service

- Develop a more actively managed park-and-ride program which may make new areas available for people to park and access transit, and implement a permit system that would ensure parking availability at park-and-rides at later times of the morning, benefiting those who work during non-peak hours and transit-reliant populations
- Implement our Right Size Parking program (improving the bike and walk environment) to encourage more transit supportive design for all groups – particularly transit reliant populations.

## 2. Investments in community partnerships

### Highlights:

- Work with smaller employers, through outreach and incentive programs, to expand ORCA and ORCA Lift distribution to low income workers
- Partner with the City of Seattle and Seattle Public Schools to provide students that qualify for the Free Reduced Lunch program and live 1-2 miles from their assigned school with an ORCA card. This partnership will provide low income students who attend a school in the Seattle Public School district the same pass benefit as students who attend school in districts that are able to provide passes to all students as needed.
- Via translated materials and messages to low-income populations and communities of color, promote and educate travelers through our In Motion program about the benefits of active transportation and utilize Metro's community-based outreach programs to encourage transit, ridesharing, biking and walking

# TRANSPORTATION & MOBILITY

- Partner with local jurisdictions as they plan for “complete streets”- their community’s transit, bike and walk plans – with a particular focus on those who may be transit reliant or don’t have access to cars.
- Partnering with Washington State Ferries and the City of Seattle to create a new fully accessible multimodal terminal facility at Colman Dock on the central Seattle Waterfront, providing connectivity to many forms of transportation for all.
- Foster partnerships with communities to create alternative service options such as shuttles, real-time rideshare, vans, or other innovative ways to provide mobility that is responsive to community needs in areas the county cannot support efficient, fixed-route service.

### **3. Investments in the places and people with greatest needs**

#### **Highlights:**

- Continue to implement and expand Community Access Transportation (CAT) program to create mobility options for people with disabilities and seniors
- Partner with senior centers, non-profits or advocacy groups to provide vans through Fleet surplus and/or Vanshare programs.

### **4. Leverage County’s role as a major employer**

#### **Highlights:**

- Focus on historically disadvantaged youth for public service career opportunities at King County Metro Transit, market apprenticeship programs to disadvantaged groups, and recruit at career fairs, community centers, community events in communities that serve low income residents and people of color.
- Partner with labor unions in efforts to achieve comprehensive equity throughout the work environment



# A REGIONAL EQUITY COLLABORATIVE

# A REGIONAL EQUITY COLLABORATIVE

## MOVING TOWARDS A REGIONAL EQUITY COLLABORATIVE

King County government engaged more than one hundred organizations during the Equity and Social Justice strategic planning process, many of whom have made serious commitments to equity issues and who to varying degrees and in varying ways are advancing their pro-equity knowledge, strategies, policies and initiatives. These organizations include local and regional governments and entities, community and civic organizations, educational institutions, philanthropy, businesses, labor and others.

A major conclusion from these interactions with partner organizations is that – though there are a number of important equity-focused collaborations underway – **as a region there is a need for increased coordination and cross-sector activities on solutions that are commensurate with the scale of the challenge of our inequities.** In essence, together we are stronger. Institutional commitment exists among various organizations region-wide, and many organizations have expressed an interest in being part of an effort greater and bigger than any one of us as individual organizations.

This collaborative – with shared ownership – could lead to the creation of a “Regional Equity Compact,” where organizations would commit to collaboration across sectors, thus reducing overlapping efforts to achieve more coordinated and effective community advocacy and systems-wide changes. Some common areas of interests for such a regional equity collaborative include:

- Jobs and workforce – Expanding opportunity to good paying jobs, especially for people and youth of color, and making sure that all residents benefit from a thriving economy

- Data – Improving data collection, analyses and platforms with an emphasis on improved data disaggregation and community assets
- Policy agendas – Advancing our individual and collective equity policy agendas, with a focus on the most pressing issues for our community such as education, housing and transportation
- Racial equity – Advancing racial equity within our institutions and the community
- Accountability – Holding ourselves mutually accountable.

Such a collaborative would build on some important partnership and efforts already underway. For example:

- Among community organizations, the Regional Equity Network has been a community-led coalition that has worked in the Puget Sound Region on major areas of concern for our residents, such as transportation, economic development and housing.
- In philanthropy, major players in the Pacific Northwest, including The Seattle Foundation and The Gates Foundation, have been working towards greater equity and opportunity in all communities and on multi-sector collaborative partnerships.
- In government, the Governing for Racial Equity Network has been a vehicle for local governments in the Pacific Northwest to share, learn and advance innovative and effective approaches to advancing racial equity within and by government.

(continued on next page)

# A REGIONAL EQUITY COLLABORATIVE

- In education, efforts like the Roadmap Project are working closely with institutions and community organizations to improve student achievement from cradle to college and career.
- At the university and college level, institutions like the University of Washington have launched Race and Equity initiatives focus both on institutional bias and racism and engagement with communities.

And there are some cross-sector efforts, like the recently launched Seattle Regional Partnerships, convened under the umbrella of The Seattle Foundation with entities in philanthropy, business, community and government to focus on the creation and expansion of middle-wage jobs. Or similarly, Best Starts for Kids is an initiative to improve the health and well-being of King County by investing in prevention and early intervention for children, youth, families and communities. As part of Best Starts for Kids, Communities of Opportunity is led by a series of community organizations with support from The Seattle Foundation and King County in place-based activities to improve health, social, racial, and economic outcomes.

As our current situation and inequities demand broad and region-wide action, we as King County commit to advance a regional equity collaborative with a set of partners in the coming months and years.



# SIX GOAL AREAS

FOR THE  
EQUITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE  
STRATEGIC PLAN

# HOW TO READ THE GOAL AREAS

King County's Equity and Social Justice (ESJ) Strategic Plan provides a framework and direction for how the County will use the four strategies of the Plan within and across our six Goal Areas. The next sections –'Goal Areas'–define how proposed actions will create shifts in how we govern, build our internal capacity, and intersect and coordinate with regional collaborators to become 'pro-equity'.

Each Goal Area includes these parts:

## **OUR CURRENT SITUATION**

Describes our current situation as a County: where we have made progress and where we have needs and opportunities.

## **HOW WE WILL MAKE A DIFFERENCE**

Based on our successes and lessons learned, we have an approach in each area of how to become 'pro-equity'.

- **GOALS**

High-level and aspirational, these goals chart a 6-year path toward the shared vision.

- **OBJECTIVES**

SMART objectives (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound) help departments/agencies and the County as a whole, measure progress along each goal. Objectives will be modified and updated on a two-year cycle as we grow, learn and make progress.

- **MINIMUM STANDARDS**

The proposed Minimum Standards help create a set of core expectations and standard practices necessary to sustain progress in advancing equity and social justice in each goal area. Many of the proposals elevate some of the 'best-practices' underway within County departments and agencies.

## **IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS**

Many of the goals and objectives in this Strategic Plan can and will be pursued with current levels of resourcing and by re-prioritizing. At the same time, some goals and objectives propose system, practice and policy changes that are new, significant, and/or require King County to identify significant new resources for successful implementation. As a result, elements of this Strategic Plan are contingent on appropriate resourcing, including in the biennial budgets. Therefore, the Goal Areas will be implemented using two-year cycles to build our organization's capacity in ESJ 'adaptive management' as described in the Executive Summary. Departments and agencies will be expected to complete department/agency-level ESJ Strategic Plan Implementation Action Plans by the end of 2016.



# LEADERSHIP, OPERATIONS & SERVICES

Advance pro-equity practices and systems at all levels through accountable leadership and employees who are change agents



## OUR CURRENT SITUATION

Employees and community organizations informing the Equity and Social Justice (ESJ) Strategic Plan consistently stated that King County and its leadership have generally shown courage and demonstrated commitment to equity and social justice. For their part, the Executive, County elected officials, Cabinet, Operations Cabinet, the ESJ Inter-Branch Team and agency ESJ teams have taken significant steps by regularly and consistently focusing on ESJ-related projects and initiatives. At different levels of the organization education on ESJ issues has increased with support of regular ESJ trainings, conferences and forums, and most departments and agencies have ESJ work plans, specifying how they will integrate equity.

However, there are areas for improvement. The abovementioned advances need to be institutionalized, and all departments and agencies need to be achieving minimum standards for ESJ as there are inconsistencies in how ESJ is embedded and integrated within agencies. The organization needs consistent internal accountability for follow-through on ESJ action plans. Furthermore, not all departments and agencies have ESJ action plans and work teams, and in some arenas, there is a disconnect between our stated commitment to ESJ and our actions. Additionally, more could be done via the management structure of County government to get the best out of employees and build inspiration, empowerment and trust. A common theme heard from employees is that many mid-level managers need skills and clearer leadership direction to advance ESJ.

## HOW WE WILL MAKE A DIFFERENCE

A major emphasis of this goal area of the Strategic Plan is advance the strategy of "Accountable and transparent leadership." This

goal area aims to advancing King County in having consistent and visible leadership at all levels and further a shared and actionable vision for Equity and Social Justice. All employees are change agents, though the county's top leaders are ultimately responsible for championing and advancing ESJ. Leaders should hold themselves and each other accountable, working openly with residents and employees.

ESJ Strategies of investing in employees, community partnerships and upstream and where the needs are greatest should be incorporated into the development of and adjustments to operations, programs and services. Operational deployment and related resource (e.g., grant awards) distribution should reflect our equity and social justice policy intent.

Furthermore, ESJ should be a force in breaking down barriers and siloes within King County, such as among different agencies, leading to greater innovation and collaboration among agencies, programs and services. Issues around barriers to service and differential treatment of customers, as well as supporting staff culturally and linguistically to support the changing county demographics, are addressed in the "Education and Communication" Goal Area of this Strategic Plan.

### **Goal 1: Develop effective and accountable leadership for advancing ESJ to drive pro-equity governance at all levels of the organization**

**Objective:** By 2018, all supervisors, managers and directors will have ESJ measures in their performance appraisals and/or professional development plans.

# LEADERSHIP, OPERATIONS & SERVICES

**Goal 2: Develop an organization where all employees are change agents who actively apply their ESJ knowledge to their work.**

**Objective:** Each year through 2022, 3% more employees will be able to answer positively to the Employee Survey question, “I have the skills and support to apply equity and social justice to my work.” (Supported by ESJ training plans and the Workforce/Workplace Goal Area)

**Goal 3: Visibly and publicly display progress on Equity and Social Justice**

**Objective:** By 2018 implement a system to display progress on the ESJ Strategic Plan at the County and department/agency level, and then through 2022 report progress on an on-going basis.

**Goal 4: County operations, programs and services are pro-equity in our service delivery – responsive and adaptive, focused on those whose needs are greatest – and collaborate with other King County and external service providers.**

**Objective:** By 2022, all departments and agencies will use ESJ values and their guidance document (see Goal 2 in Policy, Plans and Budget Goal Area) to guide their operations, programs and service delivery.

## **Minimum Standards**

- Elected leaders and directors are ultimately responsible for ESJ, and other leaders and employees are responsible for implementation. For leadership minimum standards, see matrix of standard work (last page of this goal area's Implementation Plan)
- ESJ goals and measures are built into department director contracts/agreements
- Implement a visible system of accountability and progress for ESJ Strategic Plan goal and policy areas
- On a biennial basis, “plan, do, check, adjust” the implementation plans of the ESJ Strategic Plan
- ESJ Strategies of investing in employees, community partnerships and upstream and where the needs are greatest should be incorporated into development of and adjustments to operations, programs and services
- Operational deployment and related resource (e.g., grant awards) distribution should reflect our equity and social justice policy intent



# EQUITABLE BUDGETING, PLANNING & POLICYMAKING

Promote accountability to ensure our plans, policies, and budgets incorporate our ESJ values so that we equitably address the needs of our communities

# EQUITABLE BUDGETING, PLANNING & POLICYMAKING

## OUR CURRENT SITUATION

The Equity and Social Justice Ordinance of 2010 directs King County to build equity considerations into all County decision-making, which includes planning, policy development, and budgeting including the significant policy practice of rate setting for our customers. Significant strides towards implementing this responsibility are demonstrated by

- Increased consideration of ESJ impacts in the analysis of biennial budget decisions;
- Increased incorporation of equity considerations and community engagement in County plans and policies, such as Best Starts for Kids and the King County Comprehensive Plan; and
- Guidance for incorporating ESJ considerations into capital project decision-making and into the line-of-business planning process.

Another notable achievement was the development and implementation of the very successful ORCA LIFT program, the nation's largest reduced-fare program for lower-income transit riders.

Despite these achievements, during the ESJ Strategic Plan engagement process, significant challenges and opportunities for better integrating equity considerations into the development of plans, policies and budgets were presented to King County. While many agencies across the county promote ESJ thinking and activities in their agency, this work often happens with insufficient strategic planning or coordination, and this work is not routinely built into County practices. State and Federal structural issues (e.g., taxes, funding, and policies) also seriously restrain King County's equity efforts, resulting in revenues that are

insufficient to serve the needs of the most vulnerable.

Available resources are not allocated in a manner that supports robust upstream or preventive work. In many instances, King County's resource allocation and rates charged to customers do not reflect the stated ESJ values of the community and County leadership. In addition, there are limited or inconsistent benchmarks, targets, or ongoing measurement of progress towards meeting ESJ goals; and staff has limited knowledge, experience, and capacity to integrate ESJ into plans, policies, and budgets.

## HOW WE WILL MAKE A DIFFERENCE

The ESJ Strategic Plan provides additional clarity for King County government plans, policies, and budgets. The plan provides direction for what services and operations the County delivers, how to deliver them, and for allocation of available resources to support County operations in a more equitable and upstream manner. Per this direction, **King County government plans, policies, and budgets should reflect the stated goals of inclusion, diversity and access to opportunity and services; equitably address the needs of the communities King County serves; and include explicit ESJ-related goals and measurement of progress toward these goals.**

The ESJ Strategic Plan provides an integrated approach to achieving the stated vision of all people in King County having equitable opportunities to thrive. As a future state, a more equitable King County government includes:

- All departments, agencies, and offices have developed specific policy guidance for incorporating the ESJ Shared Values from this Strategic Plan into analysis and decision making for operations and service delivery.

# EQUITABLE BUDGETING, PLANNING & POLICYMAKING

- King County resources target our region's greatest needs and move toward an "upstream" approach in developing services and solutions.
- Budget allocations and charged rates, County and agency plans, and written and unwritten policies reflect partnerships with, and the values of, our communities, and engage those communities in ongoing dialog.
- Budget decisions, resource allocation including the base budget, and rates charged to customers are tied to ESJ outcome measures and tracked.
- Budget decisions are aligned with stated ESJ priorities and facilitate accountability and measures of progress.
- Department and agency business plans, including line of business and other planning processes, include analyses of equity impacts from their operations, services and programs, as well as equity targets and measures of progress toward the County's equity goals.

**Goal 1: Department and agency business plans, including line of business and other planning processes, include analyses of equity impacts from their operations, services and programs, as well as equity targets and measures of progress.**

**Objective:** By 2017, develop an improved, streamlined Equity Impact Review Tool that incorporates the ESJ Strategic Plan guidance and enables improved planning and budgeting to improve equity analysis and outcomes.

**Objective:** By 2018, have demonstrated the use and value of the Equity Impact Review Tool in no less than 10 major policy, planning, budgeting, or facility siting decisions.

**Goal 2: Policy guidance incorporates the ESJ Shared Values from this Strategic Plan, into analysis and decision making for operations and service delivery.**

**Objective:** By 2018, 100% of departments and agencies will develop and publish ESJ guidance that is aligned with this plan and clearly lays out how their organization will incorporate the ESJ Shared Values from this plan, into analysis and decision making for their operations and service delivery.

**Goal 3: Budget decisions, rates, and allocation, including the base budget, reflect the values and strategies of the ESJ Strategic Plan and are tied to ESJ outcome measures and tracked.**

**Objective:** By the 2019/2020 budget submittal, 100% of decision making for the budget and rates will be backed by an equity analysis and, whenever appropriate, be tied to ESJ outcome measures.

**Objective:** The 2019/2020 budget submittal will include funding that is allocated using a Participatory Budgeting process.

(continued on next page)

# EQUITABLE BUDGETING, PLANNING & POLICYMAKING

## **Minimum Standards**

- For county-level plans<sup>1</sup> and department-level plans, involve community organizations, partners and stakeholders early and use the Community Engagement Guide at the beginning of the process to define community involvement.<sup>2</sup>
- County-level and department level policies<sup>3</sup> explicitly include equity and social justice as a principle and have community participation from the start.
- County-level and department/agencies' budget requests and decisions reflect the County's equity goals and priorities by highlighting the ESJ Strategic Plan strategies of investing in employees, community partnerships, investing upstream and/or where the needs are greatest – with transparent and accountable leadership.
- County-level and department/agency budget requests and decisions identify where budget changes impact communities of color, low income residents, and limited-English speaking populations; and, if the impacts are negative, identify ways to address and mitigate those impacts.

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<sup>1</sup>Recent examples include the Strategic Climate Action Plan and Comprehensive Plan

<sup>2</sup>Community engagement and ESJ considerations are minimum standards for strategic planning as defined in [King County Strategic Planning Guidebook](#)

<sup>3</sup>Recent examples include Best Starts for Kids, low-income transit fare



# WORKPLACE & WORKFORCE EQUITY

**Invest in having a pro-equity organization and workplace culture for every employee, driven by a racially just and culturally responsive workforce at all levels**

# WORKPLACE & WORKFORCE EQUITY

## OUR CURRENT SITUATION

King County government's greatest asset is our employees. We work to better the lives of nearly two million people who live in our county with a workforce that is 14,000 strong and diverse. Our employees are the experts in giving the best services to residents because they know and work with our communities every day.

King County has the goal to be the best-run government in the nation and an employer of choice in the region. We must focus on two key parts to come closer to that goal:

- A workplace culture that invests in every employee by valuing and growing each person's unique experiences, assets and talent – regardless of who they are, where they come from and where they are in the organization.
- A workforce that is diverse and culturally responsive at all levels of the organization to help us better know and serve our communities.

Research and experience shows that when we have diversity of people, cultures, ideas and experiences, we are a stronger, smarter organization and a better, 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, and 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).

King County has made strides on our ESJ commitment to be an organization guided by

“fair and just” principles since ESJ launched in 2008. For example, we have “banned the box” on general Countywide job applications, by not asking about criminal history, which can often be a barrier to gainful employment. The County's 2014-2016 Equal Employment Opportunity/Affirmative Action Plan provided Human Resources professionals with best practices to deliver more equitable and fair recruitment and hiring processes. Continued robust employee health benefits have made it easier for employees at all levels of our organization to get quality, affordable health care. We train employees on issues of race, micro-aggressions, bias in hiring, and ESJ basics, and offer “on-the-job” learning to build healthier, more diverse workplaces that help us serve our communities better.

Becoming better and more responsive means that we listen, learn, adapt and are accountable to our employees and communities. We are doing more to listen to our employees and understand their needs and priorities.

- Nearly 60% of all King County employees participated in the 2015 King County Employee Survey - more than ever before.
- The ESJ Strategic Planning process went deeper into our organization and in engaging with our employees to learn how well King County is doing as a “fair and just” employer. We listened to a diverse group of 600 employees (including leadership, management and frontline staff) in ESJ workshops and focus groups. They shared their experiences around workplace and workforce inequities related to some of our organizational barriers and practices.

We learned more how and why employee experiences vary based on factors of race and



# WORKPLACE & WORKFORCE EQUITY

uninformed and fearful of management.

## **Human resources policies, practices and processes**

- Employees who participated in ESJ workshops and focus group shared that, in many cases, the County needs greater accountability for its varied and complex hiring, promotional and training practices. These practices are embedded in union contracts, vary by agency and can hinder successful recruitment, promotion and retention of a racially diverse and culturally responsive workforce at all levels, particularly in leadership and management positions. These employees felt that the complexity of these systems tended to unintentionally, support negative practices (favoritism, bias, nepotism, etc.) that disparately affected some groups of employees.

## **VISION FOR WHO & WHERE WE WANT TO BE**

As One King County, we – departments, agencies, leadership, managers, staff, and labor partners – have a duty and an opportunity to help improve our employees' lives so that they can better serve our residents, by eliminating the areas of inequities listed above. This requires our shared commitment and resources to look at root causes by race and place in the organization, and change our systems accordingly to remove barriers and increase access to opportunities. We will have greater positive impact by creating standard work that is based on promising strategies underway inside and outside of our organization. The ESJ Strategic Plan's Workplace & Workforce Equity Goal Area points the County toward values-based culture change over the *next six years*,

toward a shared vision of **King County government that is inclusive and multicultural:**

- Every employee experiences being regularly valued, supported to grow, and able to fulfill our equity values;
- As an institution and a workforce, we reflect the mosaic of King County communities in all ways, at every level while consistently being pro-equity, and racially and socially just.

**This means that by 2022,**

- All employees – regardless of who they are, where they come from and where they are in the organization – experience being valued, interconnected, and part of a multicultural, supportive team that is culturally sensitive to their unique assets and needs.
- Most of our workforce – at every level of all agencies /departments – reflects our region's demographics consistently.

## **HOW WE WILL MAKE A DIFFERENCE**

This next portion of the Workplace & Workforce Equity Goal Area addresses the specific areas of inequities previously shared in the "Current Situation" section. Our efforts are on systems changes that remove barriers to increase access to resources and decision-making and result in greater opportunities for employees by race and place in the organization. The goals, objectives and actions proposed in the following pages reflect our ambitions, as well as where we have the greatest needs and opportunities to make real differences.

# WORKPLACE & WORKFORCE EQUITY

cultural background, 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 a racially equitable, culturally responsive and socially just way.

This whole body of information points out specific areas of inequities that require our attention in achieving workplace and workforce equity:

## **Organizational culture and inclusivity**

- 2015 Employee Survey results show that 50 to 75% of employees responded positively to feeling recognized, respected, safe and valued, while experiencing collaborative, inclusive and equitable workplaces.

Results varied based on an employee's race, gender and place in the organization. For example, compared to White employees who responded, Black/African American employees were more engaged but responded less positively about their experiences with supervisors and peer culture.

Similar patterns were true for Hispanic employees who participated. Native Americans/Alaska Native employees responded more negatively across all categories.

- Participants of the ESJ workshops and focus groups shared they have experienced or witnessed deeply rooted practices that create fear, uncertainty and resistance to

change in some places within the organization. In such places, employees experience varied feelings of distrust, disrespect, discomfort with issues of race, discouragement, hopelessness, and exclusion from decisions.

## **Career advancement, training, workforce development and organizational structure**

- Near half of the employees who participating in the 2015 Employee Survey responded positively to having fair and equal access to staff advancement opportunities and receiving open and honest communication from senior leaders.

Results varied based on an employee's race, gender and place in the organization. For example, compared to White employees who responded, Black/African American employees were optimistic about professional opportunities at work and personal influence over their work. Yet they indicated they were less likely to have had an opportunity to learn and grow in the last year.

- Employees who participated in ESJ workshops and focus groups shared that they have experienced or witnessed some of our organizational structures and systems reinforce silos, hierarchies and reward seniority, while limiting pathways for advancement, collaboration and innovation among employees.

Employees who come up against these organizational barriers, in many cases, experience insufficient, uneven and often unfair access to training opportunities especially if they are in lower paid positions. Employees shared this experience can leave them feeling undervalued, unrecognized,

# WORKPLACE & WORKFORCE EQUITY

Altogether, the proposals focus on three elements:

- **Using a racial equity framework to identify gaps and prioritize actions** to meet the goals and objectives below. King County's ESJ Organizational Maturity Model will help departments/agencies pinpoint how to become more racially just and socially equitable.
- **Creating Countywide minimum standards that improve daily work lives for employees and increase their access to resources and decision-making – especially for employees most impacted by race- and place-based inequities** – by lifting up some of the County's current best practices in this goal area
- **Phased systems transformation that shape more equitable outcomes in recruitment, hiring, promotion and retention of a racially diverse workforce**

Each department/agency shares responsibility for achieving the goals and objectives below by 2022. The Implementation Plan Guide details proposed actions, expected timeline for implementation of those actions and their assigned roles and responsibilities.

## **Goal 1: EQUITABLE & INCLUSIVE WORKPLACE CULTURE**

**Require and sustain a daily workplace culture where every employee experiences trust and respect, is treated with dignity, and feels engaged and confident to perform well.**

**Objective:** Engage all departments/agencies so that by 2022, all leadership and management are trained and practicing fully inclusive, equitable leadership behaviors by actively removing barriers that have unintended

consequences on workplace and workforce equity (see notes on ESJ Organizational Maturity Model in the draft Implementation Plan).

**Objective:** Train all managers so that by 2022 they have the people-skills, cultural competencies, and their leadership support, to help any of their employees do their best and grow professionally at the County.

**Objective:** All disciplinary policies and practices are reviewed for consistency with ESJ Shared Values and actions taken to eliminate disproportionate impacts on any groups.

### **Minimum Standards for Goal 1**

- Each department /agency tracks ESJ Strategic Plan Workplace/Workforce Goal area action plans and metrics on their visual and performance management systems (tier boards) – working with Office of Equity and Social Justice (OESJ) – and uses ESJ adaptive management practices.
- Using 360-type or similar assessments and ongoing follow-up and coaching, all directors, deputy directors, managers and supervisors develop and apply King County's core competencies in creating multicultural, inclusive workplaces, coaching every employee to grow. Through follow-up and coaching, they will develop a plan for reducing individual bias in decision-making. *A cost-effective alternative assessment tool will be developed using existing County resources.*

**(continued on next page)**

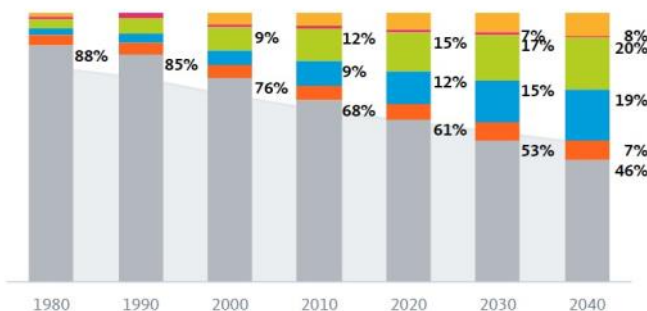
# WORKPLACE & WORKFORCE EQUITY

## Goal 2: EQUITABLE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

**Systematically develop and retain a more racially diverse and culturally responsive workforce at all levels: leadership, management, and staff.**

**Objective:** By 2022, to the extent consistent with federal and state law, **all new hires and promotions in the highest salary ranges** (top 20% of the salary range or salary range 65 and higher), within each department and agency, reflect our region's projected workforce

Racial/ethnic composition: Seattle-Tacoma-Bellevue, WA Metro Area



demographics for 2030.

Source: National Equity Atlas (All ages are represented in this graph, so workforce demographics may vary.)

**Objective:** By 2022, all departments and agencies have fully active school-to-work pipelines from historically economically disadvantaged communities.

### Minimum Standards for Goal 2

- All recruiting policies and hiring practices, including job classifications, are developed to 'screen-in' candidates and eliminate barriers to the recruitment – such as unnecessary education requirements and experience – and hiring of a diverse and culturally responsive workforce, by shifting the hiring process to focus on the core competencies of the ideal candidate (see *Language Access minimum standards for hiring from the Communication & Education Goal Area*).
- All internal promotions are developed to 'screen-in' candidates and eliminate barriers to the recruitment – such as unnecessary education requirements and experience – by shifting the hiring process to focus on the core attributes of competitive, internal candidates.
- All departments and agencies advertise in a range of places where a wide variety of candidates is more likely to look for job postings, and launch more robust outreach efforts.
- All subject matter reviewers in screening process successfully complete "Countering Bias" training and Implicit Association Test (IAT) before and after the training to identify and understand their biases.
- All hiring authorities and **internal** hiring panel members a) individually take the Implicit Association Test (IAT) and b) as a team, successfully complete "Countering Bias" or other approved culturally-responsive hiring training, prior to being selected for hiring panels, during candidate review process, and discuss and take steps to reduce individual bias in interviews and candidate selection process.

# WORKPLACE & WORKFORCE EQUITY

- \* All hiring panels are strongly encouraged to use “Guidelines for Multicultural Interactions (or similar facilitation tools) in their hiring processes.
- Require diversity of race, gender and age on interview panels.
- HRD conducts semi-annual audits of **all hires and promotions for positions in the top 20% of the salary range or salary range 65 and higher**, by department and agency to determine whether best practices were used to maximize opportunities to increase number of racially diverse, culturally responsive hires (Goal 2 objective).
- \* **For the top 20% of the salary range or salary range 65 and higher hiring and promotion processes:** In workplaces where outcomes do not support Goal 2, hiring authorities must provide justification – prior to making an offer – about their candidates of choice, if their selections differ from those recommended by their hiring panels.

## Goal 3: EQUITABLE EMPLOYEE DEVELOPMENT & ACCESS TO OPPORTUNITIES

**Have and resource a shared-commitment and support – between leadership, managers, staff, and labor – to grow every employee’s talent through training, development, coaching and mentoring.**

**Objective:** By 2022, *at least* all employees earning in the bottom 20% of the salary range have active employee development plans (if they want) including a skills inventory, training and “on-the-job” exposure. Employees should jointly develop these plans with their supervisors/ managers (and have support from their labor unions if applicable) .

**Objective:** By 2022, King County has easy-to-understand career paths that employees use for equitable access to advancement opportunities in management, leadership and other County work areas.

### Minimum Standards for Goal 3

- Special duty and term-limited temporary opportunities (internally offered as special duty assignments) of six (6) months or more are **advertised and open to all employees**, subject to applicable labor contract provisions and HR policies and programs designed for employee advancement and training. *Placements of less than six (6) months may be filled in accordance with clearly documented and communicated agency procedures.* (In process)
- Every employee has a development plan that includes quarterly check-ins on the employee’s experience at the County and the County’s role in retaining that employee, as well as an action plan (training, ‘on-the-job’ exposure, etc.) for how the employee plans to grow her/their/his talent at King County—if they want.
- Managers, supervisors and HR community members successfully demonstrate their proficiencies in being able to support employees as they navigate career pathways for advancement.
- All department and agencies equitably resource employee training and development, with primary focus on employees earning in the bottom 20% of the salary range and those who have historically had limited access to training.
- Job classifications have transparent career paths and associated competencies, skills

# WORKPLACE & WORKFORCE EQUITY

and training to guide employee career development.

## **Goal 4: EQUITABLE ACCESS TO DECISION-MAKING**

**Build an organization of shared decision-making and shared-responsibility between staff, managers, leadership and labor partners grounded in consistent and effective communication, accountability and transparency.**

**Objective:** By 2022, each employees at every level of the organization has been given opportunities to engage in a shared decision-making process – throughout the year – to innovate and solve problems within their roles, around business practices, policies, programs and decisions that impact them and our communities.

### **Minimum Standards for Goal 4**

- All departments and agencies inform and update employees, in an equitable way, of the County's major initiatives (e.g. Equity and Social Justice, Best-Run Government, Continuous Improvement, Regional Mobility, Best Starts for Kids, and Climate Change), at minimum, on an annual basis.
- Hiring panels consistently include frontline staff and community partners, where appropriate and feasible.
- Departments and agencies provide opportunities (at least quarterly) that seek process improvement ideas from individuals, teams or work units. Approved ideas receive a reasonable level of resources to meet the improvement goal.
- Workgroups routinely include Continuous Improvement efforts to remove barriers for employees to drive employee engagement,

contributions and innovations as a standard business practice.

- For major staff reductions (not including reduction in vacancies), the County:
  - \* Gathers and maintains demographic data, including race/ethnicity and gender of employees on proposed and final layoff lists
  - \* Transparently communicates demographic data of proposed and final layoff lists to employees in departments/agencies impacted by staff reductions
  - \* Uses demographic trends to identify and address barriers within Labor Agreements that negatively impact the County's ability to retain a racially just and culturally responsive workforce at all levels



# COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

**Invest in community-based partnerships that will steadily inform the County's decision-making and foster full and equitable civic participation**

# COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

## OUR CURRENT SITUATION

King County has a long-standing practice of public engagement intended to inform and seek input from the communities we serve. The County's 2010 Strategic Plan sought to formalize this work by promoting practices that would improve communication with residents and expand opportunities for them to civically engage. The County's Community Service Areas program exemplifies this objective as it provides residents in unincorporated King County with resources to determine and lead projects that enhance their neighborhoods.

The County's 2015 Strategic Climate Action Plan and 2016 Comprehensive Plan both included community engagement programs designed to elicit public feedback prior to final adoption of the plans. And the County has a growing list of community-based organizations that we enlist to assist with our outreach to residents and foster community trust.

Despite the County's history of public engagement and an increasing reliance on community-based organizations to ensure our success, those interactions are often ad hoc, occur without compensation for the organization's time and expertise, and without investment in the organization's capacity to continue and expand its work.

The Equity and Social Justice Strategic Plan is designed to move the County from these occasional interactions toward strategic investment in Community Partnerships that will steadily inform the County's programming, service delivery and budgeting, and will provide equitable opportunity for all residents to advocate in their own behalf and influence the decisions that impact their lives.

## HOW WE WILL MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Community Partnerships has been identified as an essential component to the County's success in adapting to an evolving, dynamic landscape of people, their needs and their assets. Based on input from community representatives and County employees, King County's existing system of services is perceived and/or experienced as disconnected from current needs and populations in our region. Advancing equity and social justice requires a clear understanding of the conditions in our communities, where there is insufficient investment and resources, and where resources are abundant.

A commitment to Community Partnerships is equally rooted in the principle that those affected by a decision have the right to be involved in the decision-making process. Community-based organizations are poised to facilitate access to decision-making for historically underrepresented communities and provide the expertise needed to remove barriers of race, cultural norms and practices, disability, and language in order to foster full and equitable civic participation.

The following objectives are intended to provide a framework for departments and agencies to develop program and staff structures that promote Community Partnerships, while allowing for diverse strategies to be employed and adapted by each department. Attached to each objective are preliminary steps to guide a department or agency in determining its current capacity for building Community Partnerships and action plans designed to sustain ongoing collaboration. Common measures (minimum standards) for each objective ensures continuity across County departments and agencies in approaching Community Partnerships as a pro-equity



# COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

strategy.

**Goal 1: Systematically provide resource support to community-based organizations to leverage their expertise toward advancing ESJ outcomes.**

Objective can be achieved by **adopting one of the following approaches** to investing in community partnerships:

**Approach 1:** By 2018, develop funding strategy that directs a percentage of the department's or agency's resources toward investment in community-based organizations with demonstrated success in engaging populations currently underserved by the department and least represented in the department's decision-making.

**Approach 2:** By 2018, develop and implement hiring plan for Community Liaison(s) to build and sustain partnerships between the department or agency and populations currently underserved by the department or agency and least represented in the department's or agency's decision-making. Liaisons will be centrally coordinated as a county-wide network to ensure continuity and efficiency in County engagement with community partners.

**Objective:** By 2020, department or agency can demonstrate inclusion of communities of color, limited-English speaking communities, and low-income communities in program, and budget planning and decision-making.

**Objective:** By 2020, department or agency will report budget allocation toward community partnerships or staff hired to serve as Community Liaisons.

## **Minimum Standard for Goal 1**

- Community Engagement Guide is consistently applied to all outreach activities,

primarily to create opportunities for residents to express their priorities and have a meaningful role in decision-making.

**Goal 2: Expand and promote diversity among applicant pool by creating pro-equity contracting processes that are visible and accessible to contractors of varied size and capacity, consistent with state and federal law.**

**Objective:** By 2018, departments and agencies adopt process of Identifying deliverables for the year that will require external support, using an equity lens to ensure that, where possible, the work is structured to encourage participation by community-based organizations, small businesses and independent contractors.

**Objective:** By 2018, department or agency can demonstrate expanded outreach in publicizing contracting opportunities.

**Objective:** By 2020, departments and agencies can report an annual increase in the number of community-based organizations and small, minority-owned/women-owned/veteran-owned businesses servicing its external contracts, consistent with state and federal laws.

## **Minimum Standards for Goal 2**

- Augment outreach lists to include individuals and businesses from communities currently underrepresented in department's contractors and vendors.
- Promote contracting opportunities via the Office of Equity and Social Justice (OESJ) website and community mailing list. Work with OESJ to provide technical assistance and other support that will eliminate barriers faced by contractors that are traditionally underrepresented in the County's applicant pool.

# COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

**Goal 3: Provide non-monetary support to community-based partners that builds their internal capacities.**

**Objective:** By 2018, technical assistance programming developed that connects department's or agency's resources to capacity development of community partners (e.g. training, data sharing, peer-to-peer network development)

**Objective:** By 2020, department or agency can report technical assistance provided to community-based organizations and/or contractors serving communities of color, LES communities, and low-income communities. Report will include survey from partners describing increased capacities and any other non-monetary benefits provided by the department.

***Minimum Standard for Goal 3***

- Community engagement is approached as an opportunity to ascertain capacity-building needs of current and potential community partners.

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Spanish

Vietnamese

Russian

Somali

Chinese

Korean

Ukrainian

Other Languages



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# COMMUNICATION & EDUCATION

**Advance our education and communication to better engage our residents and communities in ways that are inclusive, culturally responsive and socially just**

# COMMUNICATION & EDUCATION

## OUR CURRENT SITUATION

Over the past 10 years, King County has been working to improve its communication and education tools and methods for connecting with both internal employee audiences, and with culturally and increasingly linguistically diverse county residents, so that they gain more equitable access to King County services, programs, and engagement opportunities.

Leaders at the Executive, agency, and staff level have directed and implemented new tools for connecting with the workforce and community. They have also sought new ways to foster two-way communication and moved away from the traditional tactic of pushing information out based on county needs, with little internal coordination or consideration for employee or community interests or needs.

Internally, this included improving and increasing paper-based versions of all electronic communications to better communicate to the large number of employees without access to a computer as part of their jobs, and creating a publicly-accessible employee website that staff could access from home to receive updates, news, and opportunities; increasing the frequency, consistency, and transparency of employee communications; adding new tools for sharing information, such as interactive Employee Town Halls; and adding staff with employee engagement, communications, technology, and new media expertise to create new outreach tools and approaches for more successful communications to staff.

To improve external communications during this period, staff worked collaboratively by selectively sharing community leader contacts, sources, and tools (which helped reduce duplication of outreach efforts to the same neighborhoods groups, or contacts), revamped the county's unincorporated area council

system to increase participation, and replicated successful efforts from other agencies, such as outreach and networking events tailored to reach connectors and media outlets in underserved communities.

In increasing and improving outreach, agencies also tried to identify, eliminate, or reduce outdated barriers to participation in county activities and opportunities by smaller community organizations. During the past decade, the county used focus groups and feedback from customers and organizations to update its website by making navigation more intuitive, making the site mobile-aware in response to the increasing number of users accessing the sites pages by cell phone, creating options for the community to receive email and text updates about county news, and making it easier to locate materials online in languages other than English.

Despite those strides, there are still gaps in the application and effectiveness of the county's communication and education efforts, both internally and externally. Outreach and conversations with county employees during the Equity and Social Justice (ESJ) strategic planning process yielded some guidance on a desired future state for communications from county leaders, and for communications between and among staff, residents, and other public stakeholders.

Community representatives expressed appreciation for the County's focus on improving communication with under-served communities and strides over the past decade. But both employees and community members expressed frustration that King County's existing system of communication tools and services remains disconnected from those it serves and many steps behind as new technologies, internet-speed expectations, and changing

# COMMUNICATION & EDUCATION

demographics drive a need for new tools and approaches in the decade ahead. Current county outreach tools do not effectively meet those at either end of the technological spectrum equitably.

## HOW WE WILL MAKE A DIFFERENCE

It is important that the county apply its continuous improvement focus to this work and identify both a new future state toward which to aim, and actions for getting there over the next decade with a focus on upstream efforts where needs are greatest.

In six years, we want to be an organization where a person's access to government services, opportunities for civic engagement, and information about critical issues affecting their community are not determined by their zip code, connections, citizenship status, language, or access to technology. Therefore, our goals and objectives are as follows.

### Goal 1: LANGUAGE ACCESS

**As one in five county residents speaks a language other than English at home or is limited-English speaking (LES), update King County tools for public-facing communication and education to align with current populations, needs, and demographic changes.**

**Objective:** By 2020, home pages of every department on the County website will be available in the six top tier languages as defined by the County demographer, based on the most recent census data. Critical documents and community notifications will also be available in the six top tier languages to provide more inclusive processes that guide the county's

areas of focus and resource allocation.

**Key metric to assess success:** number of pages available in top six languages.

### Minimum Standards for Goal 1

- By 2020, make home pages of every department on the County website available in the six top tier languages as defined by the county demographer, based on the most recent census data.
- Promote plain language and culturally-competent language as a standard for all online communications and job announcements to make translation and outreach easier.
- Prioritize language skills in hiring to increase staff ability to serve Limited-English speaking (LES) customers.
- Each department should setup an account for language interpretation services by phone and train at least one person in a public-facing role in how to access the service.

(continued on next page)

# COMMUNICATION & EDUCATION

## Goal 2: ENGAGEMENT ACCESS

**Develop tools for better engaging with county services and opportunities for input on county projects and initiatives, regardless of neighborhood, immigration status, or primary language used for communication; and improve engagement by increasing capacity-building outreach and marketing buys with smaller, community-based organizations and media outlets.**

**Objective:** By 2020, King County will have a consistent, shared, and proven suite of tools for effective engagement with community members on critical topics and issues.

**Key metric to assess success:** percentage of progress toward establishing tools for engagement.

As a major tactic, designated Web Team and communication staff in King County's Department of Information Technology will work with an employee stakeholder group, such as the County's Public Information Officers and Communication managers to decide on the suite of tools which should be both high-touch and high-tech (e.g., meetings, phone tree, webinars, social media communities, and other emerging online engagement software tools such as Telephone Town Halls).

### **Minimum Standards for Goal 2**

- Ensure translations for major hearings through improved coordination between outreach and communication staff in departments and with separately-elected staff.
- Departments and agencies can demonstrate improved communication with, education and outreach to, and interactions with communities of color, LES communities, and

low-income communities through increased number of translated documents and materials, increased number and quality of outreach activities over the previous year, or an increase in the participation level of residents at recurring or annual activities.

- Departments and agencies can demonstrate improved employee engagement through feedback from periodic surveys or focus groups, and an increase in employee participation in engagement activities.

## Goal 3: TECHNOLOGICAL ACCESS

**Given the digital divide and that many communities rely on mobile devices to bridge that gap, improve the collaborative use of mobile-optimized web pages, and social media across County agencies and services as an engagement, outreach, and feedback tool for the public.**

**Objective:** By 2020, there is increased access to engagement, outreach, and feedback activities related to County services by the internet or mobile devices for currently under-served residents.

**Key metric to assess success:** success will be measured by increases in the total number of followers, subscribers, reach of posts through online sharing, and website traffic from posts on social media.

### **Minimum Standards for Goal 3**

- Departments and agencies will include social media campaigns in all communication plans and increase coordination and outreach, and by having a physical presence at - or serving as monetary sponsor for - a specified number of community events each year as a way to provide engagement activities and materials, and feedback

# COMMUNICATION & EDUCATION

opportunities. Campaigns should include outreach to media serving LES and other traditionally under-served communities.

- Equal online access to information for all employees (in office or by personal email) through employee information in mobile-aware formats for ease of access on mobile devices.

## **Goal 4: IMPROVED COLLABORATION AND LANGUAGE-RELATED TOOLS AND RESOURCES FOR EMPLOYEES.**

**Improve collaboration and language-related tools and resources for employees to provide more services to those who are LES and include more of the community's voice in the policy-making process.**

**Objective:** By 2020, King County employees will have sufficient and dedicated budgetary resources to do outreach, partnership, and evaluation work aimed at creating or expanding existing tools, and implementing emerging tools for communications and education with residents and community stakeholders. Funding level will be decided in collaboration with budget, communications, and senior leadership staff.

**Key metric to assess success:** employees have resources necessary to increase outreach, partnership, and evaluation work relative to baseline funding levels in 2016. The funding must result in improvements in those three areas as measured by increases in the total number of outreach contacts and successful partnerships that increase public engagement and participation or input on County services.

## **Minimum Standards for Goal 4**

- At least one staffer in each division trained in using standardized process for soliciting and using a vendor for document translation and interpretation.
- Department and agencies can demonstrate inclusion of communities of color, LES communities, and low-income communities and outreach to multiple contacts within communities, not just a narrow list of contacts.
- Budget allotment for translations, interpretation for community events, and ESJ training for staff.
- Require completion of training with ESJ-approved curriculum within first six months for staff in supervisory roles.
- Departments should be encouraged to sponsor trainings and lunch-and-learns on ESJ topics and buy-in and participation from senior management.



# EQUITABLE FACILITY & SYSTEM IMPROVEMENTS

Develop facility and system improvements responsive to the values and priorities of residents and stakeholders and achieve pro-equity outcomes



# FACILITY & SYSTEM IMPROVEMENTS

## OUR CURRENT SITUATION

King County manages an array of infrastructure systems for people, information, energy, transportation, water, sewage, garbage/recyclables, and hazardous substances for the benefit and safety of our 2 million residents. The departments that implement capital improvements to facilities and systems are Transportation, Executive Services (Facilities Management Division), Natural Resources and Parks, and Information Technology.

Improvements to these systems and facilities create opportunity for investment that can improve equity conditions in our communities. Capital Improvement Programs (CIP) is a critical tool for developing and maintaining our public infrastructure while ensuring efficient, equitable use of public funds. The process involves multiple stages of planning and implementation and is guided by input from employees, customers and affected communities.

At its best, a CIP supports decision-making that is consistent with community goals and values. Based on input from community representatives and employees, King County's Capital Improvement Programs have not always included clear objectives to advance equity and social justice. Additionally, a CIP has the potential to deliver the most benefits when communities that have historically been underrepresented in the process are engaged to inform a project's development through to its implementation. These communities have also historically been less connected to contracting and job opportunities that capital projects create.

Aggressive schedules and constrained budgets associated with many projects have limited authentic community engagement when equity and social justice considerations are not an integral part of the project team's

assignment or performance expectations.

Equity and social justice considerations may include:

- At the **master planning** level, who's needs are considered? ....whose voices inform system improvement priorities? ... how will different approaches to system improvements benefit or harm impacted communities?
- At the **capital portfolio** levels, what guidance on ESJ is important to provide to project teams regarding project siting, design, and construction contracting?
- At the **project** level, how can project development best leverage potential partners and existing community resources? how can contracting in the design, development, or construction advance economic and environmental justice?

## HOW WE WILL MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Our process for facility and system improvements will routinely be pro-equity (activity countering existing inequities) when:

- Equity Impact Review is employed for the master plan and capital program elements of the CIP process
- CIP resources are targeted to remedy disproportionately negative burdens from facilities and systems on impacted communities and maximize benefits for those whose access levels are most deficient
- The values, priorities, concerns, and ambitions of impacted communities are heard, understood, considered and accommodated in all levels of systems and facilities improvements

# FACILITY & SYSTEM IMPROVEMENTS

- A community liaison network is developed to ensure that impacted communities are engaged to inform and guide pro-equity approaches to system and facility improvements
- Facility and system improvements are informed by plans developed by regional collaborators (community, municipal/public, and private).

**Goal 1: Infrastructure system master plans, including line of business and other strategic planning processes, include clear objectives to advance equity and social justice that are informed by and sensitive to priority populations and key affected parties .**

**Objective:** By 2018, for all King County infrastructure systems, complete and publish master planning updates that include 'pro-equity' future state for the system that guides equity and social justice priorities and goals through the capital portfolio and capital program levels.

**Goal 2: Capital development policy, budgets, portfolios, and programs are developed in accordance with community equity priorities, informed by a perspective on historic and existing inequities, and include a description of their contribution to improving equity in community conditions.**

**Objective:** By 2018, all capital portfolio and program documents will develop and publish ESJ priorities that align to the ESJ Strategic Plan, are informed by equity impact review processes, are specific to the existing infrastructure and system conditions, and inform the ESJ approaches and characteristics of capital projects.

**Goal 3: Activities and responsibilities for pro-equity progress are clear and defined at the Dept., Division, and Section levels.**

**Objective:** By 2018, the project charter and/or project design program conveys a project scope, schedule and budget that includes project goals for equity and social justice, addressing governance, contracting, siting, development, design characteristics, construction practices, operations, and maintenance.

## **Minimum Standards**

- All infrastructure and facility master plans describe the intended equity and social justice outcomes for the system (a.k.a. the 'pro-equity' version of the system)
- All CIP program and portfolio budgets have evaluated and include a description of how equity and social justice considerations are advanced through project decisions – and provide guidance and/or direction on equity considerations and objectives on a project-by-project basis
- Communication and engagement efforts of all capital development programs and projects are culturally appropriate
- Funding sources (i.e. levies, bonds, etc.), siting, design, and construction of capital projects are responsive to the equity interests and priorities of historically disadvantaged communities

# ONLINE APPENDIX

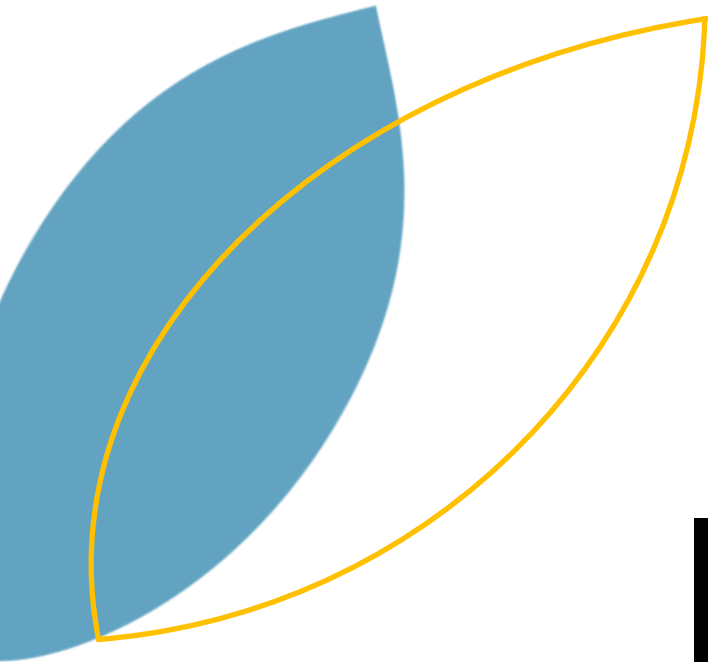
## Available at

<http://www.kingcounty.gov/elected/executive/equity-social-justice/strategic-plan.aspx>

1. **2016-2018 Implementation Plan for Six Goal Areas**
2. **Community Engagement Report**
3. **Employee Engagement Report**

## PHOTO CREDITS

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- P.18: 2016 May Day March / Mauricio Martinez for King County Executive Office
- P.20: Aerial of South King County / Ned Ahrens for King County Metro
- P.22: Best Starts for Kids Levy passed / Metropolitan King County Council, 2016
- P.25: Snoqualmie Tribe community event / King County Parks
- P.28: King County One Million Trees Partnership event / Eli Brownell for King County Parks
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- P.59: South King County and International District bus riders / [King County Metro Future Blog](#)
- P.63: Employee celebration / Ned Ahrens for King County Department of Natural Resources and Parks
- P.71: King County Immigrant and Refugee Task Force meeting / Metropolitan King County Council
- P.75: Screenshot of King County Local Hazardous Waste Management Program's website home page
- P.80: South Park Bridge Opening / Ned Ahrens for King County Metro



**KING COUNTY  
OFFICE OF EQUITY AND  
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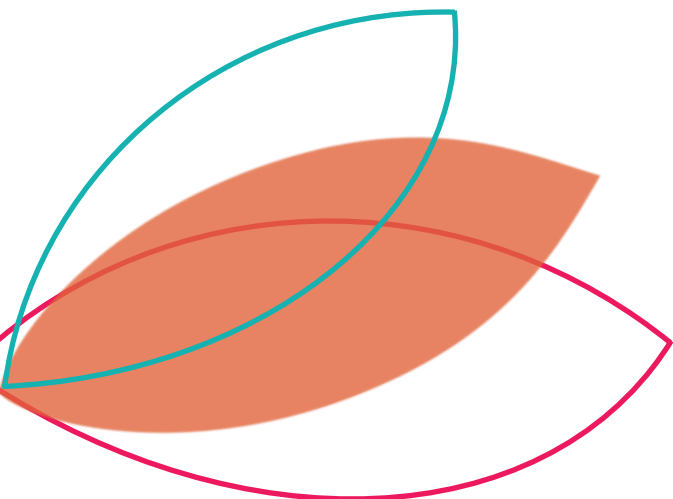
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[kingcounty.gov/equity](http://kingcounty.gov/equity)

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