EQUITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE STRATEGIC PLAN

2016-2022

King County

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 the progress toward 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 establish 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 February 2017.

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 the 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 above-mentioned 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 ensure that King County exhibits consistent and visible leadership at all levels and furthers 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 as well as 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 distribution (e.g., grant awards) 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 "Communication & Education" 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.

Objective: Each year through 2022, there will be a 3 percent increase in employees answering positively (strongly agree or agree) to the Employee Survey question, "Department leadership does what it says it's going to do."

Objective: Each year through 2022, there will be a 3 percent increase in employees answering positively (strongly agree or agree) to the Employee Survey question, "I have the support to apply equity and social justice to my work."

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, there will be a 3 percent increase in employees answering positively (strongly agree or agree) to the Employee Survey question, "I have the skills to apply equity and social justice to my work."

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 levels, 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 Plans, Policies & Budgets Goal Area) to develop and implement 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 goals 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.

PLANS, POLICIES & BUDGETS

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

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 setting rates for our customers. Significant strides towards implementing this responsibility are demonstrated by

- increased consideration of ESJ impacts in the analysis of biennial budget decisions;
- greater 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. What's more, this work is not routinely built into County practices.

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 measurements of progress towards meeting ESJ goals; and staff has limited knowledge, experience, and capacity to integrate ESJ into plans, policies, and budgets.

Another serious issue that is outside of King County's direct control is State and federal funding and our State's inequitable tax structure. Washington State's tax system, which is heavily focused on sales and property tax, is the most regressive tax system in the United States. This impacts equity in King County in three ways:

1) The poorest 20 percent of residents in Washington State pay 16.8 percent of their income in taxes, while the richest 1 percent pay just 2.4 percent of their income in taxes, thereby worsening income inequality in the State and placing an undue burden on our poorest residents. (source: www.itep.org/whopays/states/ washington.php)

2) In Washington State, counties in particular have limited ways to raise revenue and revenue growth for basic services does not keep up with inflation and the needs of a growing population. At the same time, State and federal funding for services such as public health has also been reduced or not grown to keep up with demand. In King County, that means we have often faced cuts in services for our most vulnerable residents even while many others are prospering in a booming economy.

3) King County voters have raised revenues above State limitations for specific equity-focused investments such as Best Starts for Kids. But the tools the County can propose to voters to raise revenue are limited to sales tax and property tax, with the sales tax being particularly regressive. The County must carefully weigh benefits of new investments with the tax impact particularly on poorest residents, and seek innovative ways outside the tax system to lessen such impacts (the low-income fare for transit is a good example).

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. As part of 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 for a more equitable King County government:

- 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.
- 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 greater 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.

Additionally, working with other partners, King County will advocate for changes that make our State tax structure more fair and less regressive. We will also advocate for adequate State and federal funding to meet the needs of our most vulnerable residents and a growing population.

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 ESJ Strategic Plan guidance and enables improved planning and budgeting to improve equity analysis and outcomes.

Objective: By 2018, demonstrate 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 percent 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 percent 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.

Objective: By 2022, King County's advocacy at the State has resulted in a sustainable and more equitable funding structure for services most needed by our residents and our growing population. King County maintains growth in cost for services at or below inflation and population growth.

MINIMUM STANDARDS

- For County-level plans[1] 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.[2]
- County and department-level policies[3] explicitly include equity and social justice as a principle and have community participation from the start.
- County 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 and community partnerships and investing upstream and/or where the needs are greatest—with transparent and accountable leadership.
- County 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.

[1] Recent examples include the Strategic Climate Action Plan and Comprehensive Plan

[2] Community engagement and ESJ considerations are minimum standards for strategic planning as defined in King County Strategic Planning Guidebook

[3] Recent examples include Best Starts for Kids, low-income transit fare

WORKPLACE & WORKFORCE

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

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 we 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. To get closer to that goal, we must focus on two key parts:

- **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 racially diverse and culturally responsive at all levels of the organization is able to provide equitable, high quality services to all 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 more culturally responsive government to our communities. We are committed to focusing our efforts on those who have historically lacked equitable access to jobs and development opportunities, as well as employees at lower pay ranges.

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

King County has made strides on our 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. For example:

- **Nearly 60 percent of all King County employees participated in the 2015 King County Employee Survey—more than ever before.**
- **The ESJ Strategic Planning process has gone deeper into our organization, 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 have learned more about how and why employee experiences vary based on factors of race, culture, class, gender and sexual identity, education, job, English-speaking skills, disability, age, income, and where an employee is on the organizational ladder.

For many employees, these factors come together to intensify their work experiences, whether positive or negative. Employees' experiences with King County as an employer strongly shape our ability to serve King County residents in equitable, culturally responsive and racially just ways.

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 percent 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 in the ESJ workshops and focus groups shared that 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 experienced varied feelings of distrust, disrespect, discomfort with issues of race, discouragement, hopelessness, and exclusion from decisions.

CAREER ADVANCEMENT, TRAINING, WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AND ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

- Nearly half of the employees who participated 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 more 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 reported that they had 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 came 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 said that these experiences often leave them feeling undervalued, unrecognized, uninformed and fearful of management.

HUMAN RESOURCES POLICIES, PRACTICES AND PROCESSES

- Employees who participated in ESJ workshops and focus groups shared that, in many cases, the County needed 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.

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 practices that are 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, and 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 and 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—consistently reflect our region's changing demographics.

HOW WE WILL MAKE A DIFFERENCE

The 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, regardless of 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.

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 equitable and racially just .
- 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 at all levels

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

GOAL 1: EQUITABLE AND 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 equitable and racially just leadership behaviors by actively removing barriers that have unintended consequences on workplace and workforce equity (see ESJ Organizational Maturity Model notes in the preliminary version of the Implementation Plan).

Progress measure: Each year through 2022, there will be a 3 percent increase in employees answering positively to (strongly agree or agree) the Employee Survey question, "My supervisor takes action to create a racially just workplace."

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 work and grow professionally at the County.

Objective: Review all disciplinary policies and practices for consistency with ESJ Shared Values and take actions to eliminate disproportionate impacts on any groups.

Minimum Standards for Goal 1

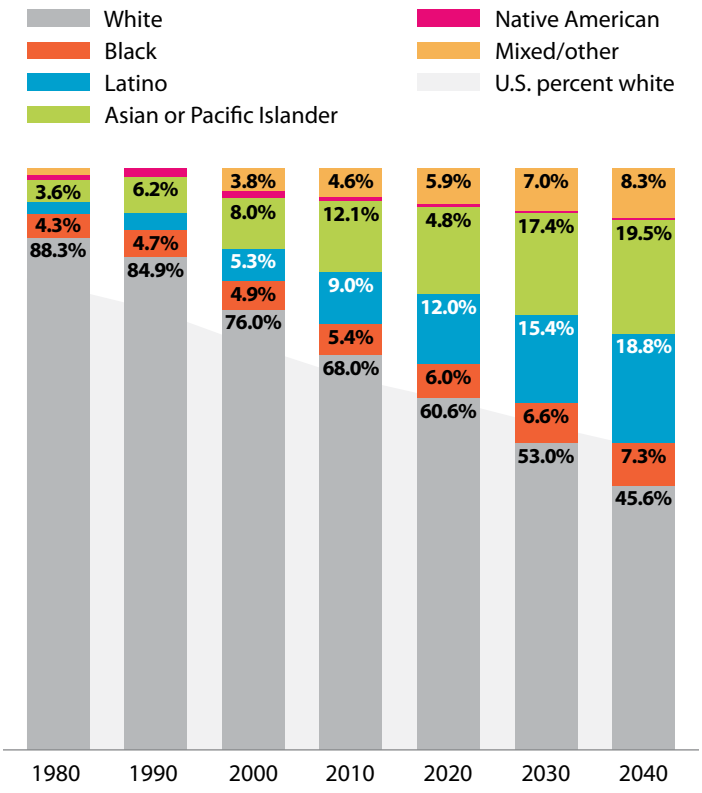
- Each department/agency tracks ESJ Strategic Plan Workplace/Workforce Goal Area action plans and metrics on their visual and performance management systems (tier boards)—working with Office of Equity and Social Justice (OESJ)—and uses ESJ adaptive management practices.
- Using 360-type or similar assessments and ongoing follow-up and coaching, all directors, deputy directors, managers and supervisors will develop and apply King County's core competencies to create 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.

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, will reflect our region's projected workforce demographics for 2030.

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



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 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 recruitment—such as unnecessary education requirements and experience—and hiring of a racially 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 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.
  - 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 and hiring panels.
- The Human Resources Division conducts semi-annual audits of **all hires and promotions for positions in the top 20 percent 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 AND ACCESS TO OPPORTUNITIES

Establish a shared commitment, resources 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 percent 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, HR policies and programs designed for employee advancement and training, and budget constraints. *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 percent of the salary range and those who have historically had limited access to training.
- Job classifications have transparent career paths and associated competencies, skills 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 that is grounded in consistent and effective communication, accountability and transparency.

Objective: By 2022, each employee at every level of the organization is given opportunities to engage in a shared decision-making process—throughout the year—to innovate and solve problems within their roles, as well as 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.
- Work groups 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 diverse 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.

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 by providing 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. The County also 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 under-represented 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 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 Countywide 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 a 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 sizes and capacities, consistent with state and federal law.

Objective: By 2018, departments and agencies adopt a 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 on departments' contractors and vendors lists.
- 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.

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

Objective: By 2018, technical assistance programming is 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, a 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. The report will include a 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.

COMMUNICATION & EDUCATION

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

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 levels 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 with 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 improve external communications during this period, our 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.

By 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 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 ways to get 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 zip code, connections, citizenship status, language, disability 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.

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 immigration status, disability or primary language 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 a 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: 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 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 is trained in using standardized processes 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.
- 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 obtain buy-in and participation from senior management.

FACILITY & SYSTEM IMPROVEMENTS(CIP)

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

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 two 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, 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
- 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, 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 (levies, bonds, etc.), siting, design, and construction of capital projects are responsive to the equity interests and priorities of historically disadvantaged communities.