



**COMMISSION  
AGENDA MEMORANDUM**

**Item No.** 9b

**BRIEFING ITEM**

**Date of Meeting** April 24, 2018

**DATE:** April 3, 2018  
**TO:** Commissioners and Executive Director  
**FROM:** Veronica Valdez, Commission Specialist  
**SUBJECT:** Equity Briefing

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The purpose of this memo is to provide an update on the Port's efforts to address equity issues. At the Port, equity refers to equal economic, political and social rights and opportunities. The Port is committed to becoming a more equitable, diverse and inclusive organization by building awareness of the causes and impacts of institutional racism while evaluating policies and procedures to address any institutional barriers that may exist. The Port of Seattle's goal is to increase equity, diversity and inclusion in the work that we do. This goal applies to how we identify and address priorities, navigate complex issues, engage employees and work with the diverse communities we serve.

**BACKGROUND**

Our country has a history of programs and movements that have contributed to addressing social equity such as access to quality jobs, affordable housing, education, public services, civil rights, labor movement, healthcare, etc. Despite the various programs in place, deep historical chasms based on race, class and education levels remain in our society. We see this in the widening income inequality and systemic racism and bias that exist within our institutions manifested, for example, by the disproportionate number of people of color who are incarcerated and the distrust of the justice system which result in activist movements like Black Lives Matter.

Inequities hurt everybody, not just people in the lower socio-economic status. Regions and countries with greater economic equality have more sustained and robust economic growth. Everybody gains from creating a place where all people can lead better lives and contribute to their communities (Benner and Pastor 2012).

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Although King County, as compared to the rest of the country, has overall better economic, health, and quality of life conditions and the region benefits from world-class businesses and institutions, these assets mask deep and persistent inequities—sometimes more pronounced than in the rest of the country. Comparing the 10 zip codes with the highest average household incomes to the 10 zip codes with the lowest household incomes, there is a difference of more than \$100,000 within King County. In a similar comparison, life expectancy also varies by race by up to 12 years (King County 2015).

These gaps by race and place are a concern because they correspond to significant differences in opportunity. Place and race matter in King County, and they are predictors of income and a wide set of outcomes, including life expectancy and education (King County 2015).

When King County looked at data across our communities, whether it is people’s health, access to housing and good paying jobs, graduation rates, incomes or incarcerations, disparities are greatest when we look by race. The most persistent and detrimental disparities are starkest when we look at race. By leading with racial justice, King County is committed to taking on the root causes of our most challenging problems and to focus where we can have the biggest impact and needs are greatest (King County 2015).

Many low-income and communities of color in particular face barriers to well-paying jobs and economic opportunity. For example, unemployment rates for Black/African American, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander and Native American/Alaska Native residents have recently been nearly double that of the unemployment rate for White residents (King County 2015).

### **RACIAL EQUITY**

From the inception of our country, government at the local, regional, state, and federal levels have played a role in creating and maintaining racial inequity, including everything from determining who is a citizen, who can vote, who can own property, who is property, and where one can live, to name but a few. Governmental laws, policies, and practices created a racial hierarchy and determined, based on race, who benefits and who is burdened (The Local & Regional Government Alliance on Race and Equity, September 2015).

Current inequities are sustained by historical legacies, structures, and systems that repeat and formalize and legalize patterns of exclusion. The Civil Rights movement was led by communities, and government was frequently the target. One of the many successes of the Civil Rights movement was making racial discrimination illegal. However, despite progress in addressing explicit discrimination, racial inequities continue to be deep, pervasive, and persistent across the country (The Local & Regional Government Alliance on Race and Equity, September 2015).

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### ***Racial Equity Toolkit***

Too often, policies and programs are developed and implemented without thoughtful consideration of racial equity. When racial equity is not explicitly brought into operations and decision-making, racial inequities are likely to be perpetuated. Racial equity tools are designed to integrate explicit consideration of racial equity in decision analysis, policies, practices, programs, and budgets. Use of a racial equity tool can help to develop strategies and actions that reduce racial inequities and improve success for all. Routine use of a racial equity tool explicitly integrates racial equity into governmental operations.

Local and regional government jurisdictions are using racial equity tools. The City of Seattle's Race and Social Justice Initiative (RSJI), established in 2004, started using its racial equity tool during the budget process in 2007. The following year, the tool was expanded to be used in policy and program decisions. And in 2015, an Executive Order was issued by the Mayor directing expanded use of the racial equity tool, and requiring measurable outcomes and greater accountability. In early 2008, King County executive Ron Sims launched the Equity and Social Justice (ESJ) initiative to begin to use an equity lens in departments' policies and decisions, organizational practices, and engagement with the community. In 2010, led by King County executive Dow Constantine and the County Council, ESJ became part of the countywide Strategic plan and adopted an ESJ ordinance. The ordinance reaffirmed the commitment to create a more just organization and community by expanding access to "determinants of equity" those social, physical, and economic conditions necessary for everyone to thrive.

The Port has the ability to implement policy change at multiple levels and across multiple sectors to drive larger systemic change to address historic inequities. Last year, the Port worked with the Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE) to develop a racial equity tool.

A racial equity tool:

- Proactively seeks to eliminate racial inequities and advance equity;
- Identifies clear goals, objectives and measurable outcomes;
- Engages community in decision-making processes;
- Identifies who will benefit or be burdened by a given decision, examines potential unintended consequences of a decision, and develops strategies to advance racial equity and mitigate unintended negative consequences; and,
- Develops mechanisms for successful implementation and evaluation of impacts early in the process.

A Racial Equity Tool is a series of questions:

1. Proposal: What is the policy, program, practice or budget decision under consideration? What are the desired results and outcomes?
2. Data: What's the data? What does the data tell us?
3. Community engagement: How have impacted communities been engaged as part of the planning process? Are there opportunities to expand engagement?

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4. Analysis and strategies: Who will benefit from or be burdened by your proposal in technical terms? What are the impacts to quality of life in the community? What are your strategies for advancing racial equity or mitigating unintended consequences?
5. Implementation: What is your plan for implementation of an equity strategy as part of the project?
6. Accountability and communication: How will you ensure accountability, communicate, and evaluate results?

### **PORT EQUITY EFFORTS**

Our region is undergoing tremendous growth and the Port of Seattle is committed to ensuring the economic prosperity is shared by all communities in King County, regardless of race and place. The Port strives to protect the rights and uphold equity for all King County residents and provide fair and equal access to services, benefits and opportunities.

In 2016, the Port strengthened its commitment to become an anti-racism organization that courageously addresses obstacles to and opportunities for increasing equity in the agency's policies, procedures and practices. The executive team participated in an institutional racism training to recognize the negative impact of institutional and structural racism. By building capacity to address racism, the Port will also improve its ability to recognize and address other forms of discrimination.

In 2017, the Port of Seattle was the first port to join GARE, a national network of governments working to achieve racial equity and advance opportunities for all. Across the country, governmental jurisdictions are making a commitment to achieving racial equity, focusing on the power and influence of their own institutions, and working in partnership with others. When this occurs, significant leverage and expansion opportunities emerge, setting the stage for the achievement of racial equity in our communities. GARE captures best practices and with a network in 30 states and over 150 cities, they provide tools to put theory into action. The Port is able to leverage these best practices in meeting the goal of being a more equitable, diverse and inclusive organization.

For many years the Port of Seattle has worked to leverage its resources and work efforts to create opportunities for diverse communities, individuals and small and women and minority-owned business enterprises. We are dedicated to eliminating bias in our hiring practices and promoting better access to jobs, promotions and contracting opportunities for underrepresented populations including; women, people of color, immigrants and refugees and those in economically distressed areas of our region; establishing policies that support family wage jobs and benefits; and using our influence as an "*Anchor Institution*"<sup>1</sup> through contracting

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<sup>1</sup> Anchor Institutions are universities, hospitals and other enduring organizations that play a vital role in their local communities and economies. They tend to remain in their geographical settings, even as conditions change around them. Therefore, they are vital assets to their neighborhoods, towns, cities, and regions.

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and in the labor market to encourage other employers to do the same. In addition, the Port supports entrepreneurship and helping small businesses grow.

The Office of Social Responsibility directly engages with the immigrant, refugee and minority communities to encourage participation in Port programs and affiliated industries. Our Workforce Development team leads efforts to expand and sustain workforce development, training, job and business opportunities for local communities in Port sectors. The Small Business Program promotes Small and Women and Minority Business Enterprise opportunities at the Port. Human Resources develop programs addressing representation, diversity and inclusion in the Port's internal workforce. And Public Affairs conduct community and stakeholder outreach and hold events in the region's communities.

In addition, the Commission chartered the Energy and Sustainability Committee on January 26, 2016, which established an equity work group tasked to develop recommendations to address disproportionate environmental impact of Port operations on disadvantaged communities. One of recommendations called for pilot projects to utilize the Sustainable Evaluation Framework that includes areas that advance racial and social equity.

In order to achieve our goal of becoming a more equitable, diverse and inclusive organization, we must coordinate efforts across the Port that already addressing Equity, Diversity and Inclusion. The Port is in the process of hiring an equity leader to plan, train employees, and engage with the community. This work is important and complex. The Port of Seattle's executive leadership recognizes that a successful Port-wide effort requires expertise, experience and a consistent method of practice across the Port.

**ATTACHMENTS TO THIS BRIEFING**

- (1) Draft Motion to develop and implement an equity pilot program
- (2) Presentation slides

**PREVIOUS COMMISSION ACTIONS OR BRIEFINGS**

November 28, 2017 – The Commission was briefed on the budget which included a full-time employee (FTE) request for an equity manager

July, 12, 2017 – The Commission was briefed on Commission 2018 Budget Priorities: Equity, Priority Hire, Women Minority Business Enterprises (WMBE), and Quality Jobs

July 20 – 24, 2017 – The Commission was briefed on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion: Developing a Port of Seattle Model of Practice