



COMMISSION
AGENDA MEMORANDUM

Item No. 11a

BRIEFING ITEM

Date of Meeting September 14, 2021

DATE: September 14, 2021

TO: Stephen P. Metruck, Executive Director

FROM: Alison Beason, Senior Policy Data Analyst, Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

SUBJECT: **Equity Index Briefing**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Port of Seattle’s Equity Index is an open-source interactive map that displays a visual representation of social and environmental disparities across King County. Using 21 indicators within four categories, the Equity Index illustrates the degree to which different communities experience pollution burden and social inequities. The categories were selected in alignment with Century Agenda Goals and the indicators within each category were identified by a cross-departmental working group.

Across the region there are significant variations in pollution exposure, access to economic opportunities, and the overall standard of living. The Equity Index was created as a tool for the Port to understand the variations that exist within the region and use that information to direct resources towards the areas of greatest need. The Index will be used by staff to equitably guide funding decisions and broadly inform policy decisions.

BACKGROUND

The Equity Index was created with the initial intent to equitably guide funding decisions for the South King County Fund, serving as a component of the criteria for applications. Beyond the South King County Fund, the Index will be used to visualize variations in exposure to pollution, access to economic opportunity, and health outcomes to direct resources towards the areas of greatest need. The first Equity Index will be published in September and will be updated annually to provide the accurate data.

Categories and Indicators

There are four categories of indicators there were selected in alignment with Century Agenda Goals. The definitions for these categories were created by a cross-departmental working group. The following are the category definitions and Century Agenda Goals they are aligned to:

Economy	Definition	Indicators that demonstrate the opportunity for the creation, retention, transfer, and accumulation of wealth within a community for residents, businesses, and community stakeholders (e.g. poverty rate, median household income, educational attainment).
	Century Agenda Goal	Goal #3 Responsibly invest in the economic growth of the region and all its communities.
Livability	Definition	Indicators that demonstrate a safe and healthy standard of living (e.g. housing cost burden, home ownership rate, transit access).
	Century Agenda Goal	Goal #6 Be a highly effective public agency. Objective #18 Partner and engage with external stakeholders to build healthy, safe, and equitable communities.
Accessibility	Definition	Indicators that are not necessary for survival but advance the standard of living in a community so that people of all abilities can fully access and participate in public life (e.g. proximity to parks and open space, access to healthy food, pedestrian and bike facilities).
	Century Agenda Goal	Goal #5 Become a model for equity, diversity, and inclusion.
Environment	Definition	Indicators that represent the health of the environment, including human-made impacts and bio-physical elements, and thus the vitality of the community (e.g. diesel emissions, risk of toxic release from facilities, traffic density).
	Century Agenda Goal	Goal #4 Be the greenest and most energy efficient port in North America.

The Equity Index consists of 21 indicators within each of these four categories. The indicators examine variations in pollution, access to economic opportunity, and a healthy standard of living across King County. The internal working group selected indicators based on an assessment of data availability from relevant equity tools created by state and regional governments and the needs of the Port. The following are the 21 indicators.

Economy	Livability	Accessibility	Environment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poverty rate • Unemployment rate • Median household income • Educational attainment • Jobs density 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Life expectancy • High school graduation rate • Transit access • Access to jobs by transit • Crime index • Housing cost • Home ownership rate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proximity to parks and open space • Access to healthy food • Pedestrian and bike facilities • Internet access • Voter participation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diesel emissions and NOx emissions • Average annual particulate matter index (PM_{2.5} index) • Risk of toxic releases from facilities index • Traffic density

For each of the indicators, a literature review was conducted identifying research that connects the indicator to equity.

Ranking Methodology

The Equity Index displays and ranks individual and combined environmental health and social indicators. The map shows how a census block group in King County ranks for each indicator for each of the four categories and for all indicators combined. The individual and combined indicators are ranked from very low to very high. Communities with the least access to opportunities and resources are ranked very low (lighter colors on the map), while communities with the most access to opportunities and resources are ranked very high (darker colors). The rankings are relative to each other and the comparison is within King County.

The methodology used to score census block groups is directly leveraged from the Washington State Environmental Healthy Disparities Map and Kirwan Institute, Ohio State University. Each indicator is ranked very low to very high corresponding to percentiles. Indicators were then averaged to result in a score for each of four categories (economy, livability, accessibility, and environment).

Implementation

The Equity Index will be introduced to all Port staff at the September Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Town Hall and will be introduced to the King County community through a public webinar shortly after. Teams at the Port will be trained on how to use the tool. As the Index is used for projects, case studies will be developed. The Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion will support staff and the community in using the tool by providing a comprehensive user guide and opportunities to ask questions about the tool.

ATTACHMENTS TO THIS BRIEFING

(1) Presentation slides

PREVIOUS COMMISSION ACTIONS OR BRIEFINGS

None.