



RACE AND SOCIAL JUSTICE INITIATIVE

ACCOMPLISHMENTS 2009 - 2011



RACE & SOCIAL JUSTICE  
INITIATIVE

**ADVANCE OPPORTUNITY.  
ACHIEVE EQUITY.**



**2009-2011 ACCOMPLISHMENTS**  
**Seattle Race and Social Justice Initiative**

The Race and Social Justice Initiative is making a real difference in the lives of Seattle residents, businesses and City government. Here are just some of the changes that RSJI has accomplished in the last three years. For updated information, please visit [seattle.gov/rsji](http://seattle.gov/rsji).



## BROADENING THE INITIATIVE'S SCOPE

From 2009-2011, the City of Seattle greatly expanded its commitment to racial equity. RSJI received the endorsement of all elected City officials, and the Initiative's reach was extended to Citywide Initiatives, the City budget and legislative oversight of departments.

- In 2009 Mayor Mike McGinn's administration endorsed the Race and Social Justice Initiative, adopting RSJI as a core value that has been integrated into all the Mayor's initiatives and priorities.
- In 2009 the Seattle City Council adopted a resolution endorsing the City's Race and Social Justice Initiative. That same year, newly elected City Attorney Pete Holmes also embraced the Initiative. RSJI now has the backing of all City Hall elected officials in the Executive, Legislative and City Attorney's Office.
- Racial equity has been built into the planning and implementation structure of Citywide initiatives such as the Seattle Youth and Families Initiative, the Seattle Jobs Plan, Engage Seattle, and Walk-Bike-Ride.
- The City's Budget Office requires departments to use the Racial Equity Toolkit to analyze each and every budget proposal. The toolkit helps analyze the Race and Social Justice impact of policy and program decisions, as well as unintended consequences. City managers have been trained to use the toolkit to review policies, programs and projects, resulting in hundreds of changes that are aimed at achieving racial equity.
- Seattle City Council requires all City departments to report on the progress of their annual Race and Social Justice Initiative work plans.

# Achieving racial equity in the community



## RSJ COMMUNITY ROUNDTABLE

RSJI began to address racial inequities in the community by convening the Race and Social Justice Community Roundtable, a partnership of twenty-five community organizations and public institutions working together to achieve racial equity in Seattle.

- The RSJ Community Roundtable chose education as its lead issue, with a focus on ending racial inequity in high school graduation. A committee convened by the Roundtable is working to change inequitable discipline policies, such as out-of-school suspensions and not tracking informal discipline.
- The Roundtable also works with state legislators to promote a statewide agenda on racial equity in education.
- Roundtable members are using the Racial Equity Toolkit to review their own organizations' programs and policies.



## OTHER COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

City departments developed stronger relationships and connections with communities of color for planning and programs.

- To update neighborhood plans in Southeast Seattle, Seattle Department of Neighborhoods staff dramatically expanded outreach to historically underrepresented communities. Hundreds of residents who had never attended a public meeting helped write new plans for their communities.
- The Seattle City Attorney's Office and Seattle Police Department participate on the Task Force on Race and the Criminal Justice System, which is working to address racial disparity in Washington's criminal justice system. The Task Force is a coalition of educators, prosecutors, judges, court administrators, public defenders, and grassroots organizations.
- The Seattle Fire Department developed a Community Fire Safety Advocate (CFSA) program. Community advocates have conducted trainings on fire safety for Seattle's East African communities in Amharic, Oromo, Tigrinya and Somali languages. The department distributes translated safety materials throughout immigrant and refugee communities.
- The Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) developed social equity criteria to help prioritize transportation improvements. SDOT worked with Neighborhood District Councils to reach communities typically left out of the City's Neighborhood Projects Fund process.
- The Human Services Department has revised its funding process for non-profit community agencies to make it more accessible for smaller organizations, including agencies that serve immigrant / refugee communities.
- The Seattle Department of Parks and Recreation has developed training for youth of color on lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) issues. Parks also developed strategies to promote youth employment in the department, and expanded their docent program to better reflect the community.
- The Office of Arts and Cultural Affairs' smART ventures and neighborhood/community arts funding programs create cultural bridges with communities of color – 65% of the funding goes to underserved communities. Arts and Cultural Affairs also works with partnering agencies to sponsor community outreach.
- Seattle Channel programs such as Artzone and City Stream highlight stories about the City's diverse communities. Seattle Channel goes out into communities and covers stories about Race and Social Justice.
- The Department of Information Technology sponsors an internship program for high school and college students, including youth from the Technology Access Foundation and Year-UP, which serves high school graduates and GED recipients ages 18 to 24 years old.
- Seattle Center's Festal program presents ethnic cultural festivals year-round that are free to the public.

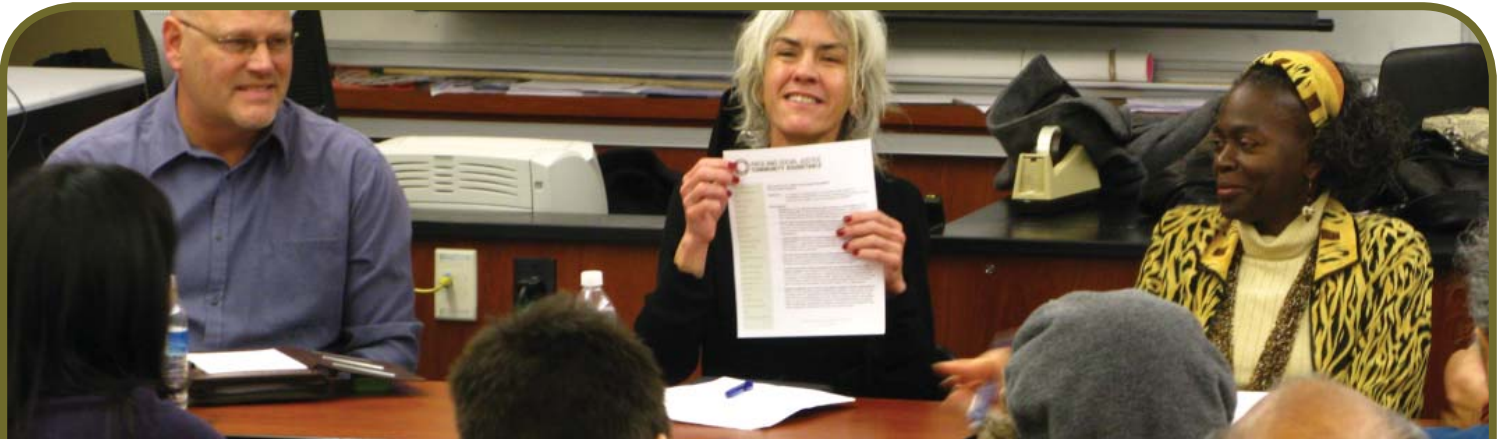
# City engagement, programs, services and projects

## INCLUSIVE OUTREACH AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

New inclusive outreach and public engagement (IOPE) strategies have been implemented Citywide.

- Department representatives meet monthly to coordinate the City's engagement strategies and share information from different neighborhoods. Using a train-the-trainer model, departments are teaching City staff who work with the community how to use the Inclusive Outreach and Public Engagement Toolkit.
- The Seattle Police Department (SPD) has greatly expanded its outreach and engagement efforts to communities of color. SPD meets regularly with Advisory Councils representing the East African, African American, Latino, LGBT and other communities.
- Seattle Public Utilities (SPU) uses the IOPE toolkit to plan projects. SPU created a customized version of the Racial Equity Toolkit that matches the Utility's project management system, and trains its program planners to use it.
- The Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) collaborates with community groups when planning events such as Summer Streets. SDOT reaches out to community colleges, high schools, affinity groups, and ethnic-based associations.
- The Department of Planning and Development partners with communities of color to review the department's web site. User groups review, test and give input to determine final web site design.
- The Department of Neighborhoods has worked with Neighborhood District Councils to expand community access to and participation in the Councils. Three Councils in 2009 developed ideas for greater connections with underrepresented groups, including review of bylaws, coffee chats, and alternative meeting venues and formats.





## IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE ACCESS

The City is working to improve immigrant and refugee access to services. Free translation and interpretation have helped open the doors of City government to immigrant and refugee community members.

- Policies first introduced in 2007 require all City departments to provide free language interpretation to customers on request, and to develop translations of key service information in the six most common languages spoken by Seattle residents.
- The Department of Neighborhoods uses Public Outreach Liaisons (POLs) to engage underrepresented communities in civic processes. Bilingual and bicultural advocates work directly with immigrant and refugee communities and other under-represented groups to increase access to information about community events and provide language interpretation at the events themselves.
- Translated documents about City services extend to the City's web site, which offers program and service information in thirty languages. The Seattle Channel web site offers videos in Spanish, Cantonese, Mandarin and Vietnamese on residential recycling, food and yard waste, and how to recycle electronic equipment.
- Since 2009, the Seattle Immigrant and Refugee Advisory Commission has advised the Mayor, City Council, and City departments on immigrant and refugee issues.
- Seattle Public Utilities' Go Live! campaign used language interpreters in community trainings and provided translated, illustrated materials to spread the word on recycling.
- Many departments have made immigrant and refugee access an important part of their programs and services:
  - Seattle Department of Neighborhoods' P-Patch Community Gardening Program offers extensive translation and interpretation services for gardeners, including gardening classes to East African communities. It does significant outreach and engagement with emerging immigrant communities and low-income neighborhoods.
  - Boiler inspectors from the Department of Planning and Development carry translation cards to help them conduct boiler inspections with business owners who speak little or no English. Improved communication has also strengthened business owners' overall relationships with City government.
  - The Department of Information Technology surveyed Seattle residents' use of the internet, cell phones and other technology, and analyzed the information by race and ethnicity. Tracked over time, the City will use these measures to improve customer services, shape the City's information technology systems and increase communities of color's access to new technologies.

## PROGRAMS, SERVICES AND POLICIES

RSJI has changed programs and services across Seattle City government. Departments applied the Racial Equity Toolkit to create greater equity in programs and policies.

- The Office of Housing and the Human Services Department shifted the City's housing and shelter policies to acknowledge racial inequity in homelessness, and to focus efforts on residents with the greatest housing needs. Both departments play lead roles in the City's Ten-Year Plan to End Homelessness.
- Seattle Department of Neighborhoods Neighborhood Matching Fund has awarded more than 200 projects serving underserved and immigrant and refugee communities, providing nearly \$5 million with a match of more than \$6 million. RSJ awards have supported cultural gatherings, cross-cultural learning, and education and outreach for immigrant / refugee groups and other underrepresented communities. Project managers provide one-on-one support to immigrant and refugee organizations and groups. The Neighborhood Matching Fund also offers one-to-one technical assistance for communities of color, youth and refugee and immigrant groups.
- The Seattle Office for Civil Rights released the results of fair housing testing in 2011 that revealed widespread racial discrimination in housing application procedures. Six property managers were charged with illegal discrimination based on the test results.
- The City Attorney's Office now seeks sentences of 364 days (rather than 365 days) for gross misdemeanors, thereby avoiding a potential deportation trigger under federal law for any non-citizen. The Washington State Legislature followed Seattle's example and instituted the same policy across the state. The City Attorney's Office also assessed and made changes to laws having a disproportionate impact on communities of color. For example, the City Attorney discontinued prosecuting simple possession of marijuana, Driving While License Suspended Third Degree for non-payment, and drafted a new Wage Theft law adopted by the City Council and Mayor. These changes result in better service for all of us. The Office provides Continuing Legal Education anti-racism training to lawyers throughout the community.
- The Seattle Department of Transportation used a Race and Social Justice lens to develop its Pedestrian Master Plan.





- The Office of Housing helped save the John C. Cannon House in the Central Area from foreclosure and maintain community-based ownership. Cannon House provides assisted living for Medicaid recipients, many of whom are African-Americans.
- The Department of Information Technology (DoIT) provides outreach and technical assistance to community organizations of color through its Community Technology Program, including funding to promote social equity and improve online access in diverse neighborhoods. DoIT uses the Racial Equity Toolkit to ensure that the impact on communities of color is considered in new technology projects.
- Seattle's P-Patch Community Gardening Program includes programs that serve youth, low-income, and underrepresented communities. Approximately one-fourth of its community gardens focus largely on low-income and immigrant and refugee communities. More than one-half of the gardens include giving gardens for donations to food banks. Three are market gardens that offer low-income people the opportunity to sell their produce to their local community.
- The Office of Housing has expanded its web-based reporting system to measure the demographics of households utilizing low-income rental housing units.
- The City created an interdepartmental team to ensure equity in the application of a new booting/scofflaw law and adequate outreach to communities.
- The Seattle Department of Parks and Recreation provides free-admission recreation and community center program scholarships to low-income families, as well as transportation for underserved groups.
- The Office of Housing reviews City-funded housing providers' marketing plans on an annual basis to ensure outreach to communities of color.
- Seattle Public Utilities (SPU) created an Environmental Justice and Service Equity division to ensure that all Utility customers receive equitable services. SPU's Environmental Justice Network in Action (EJNA) and other programs help ensure community access to SPU decision-making. Seattle Public Utilities builds long-term relationships and partnerships with community organizations to respond to specific needs and to share information and services.



# Internal city operations

RSJI has dramatically changed how the City contracts for goods and services. New policies and procedures have brought greater equity to the City's personnel practices. Training and education for City staff have improved employees' skills and given them tools to work for racial equity in their day-to-day activities.

## CONTRACTING EQUITY

- The City of Seattle has more than tripled the use of women- and minority-owned business enterprises (WMBEs) in non-construction goods and services since the Initiative began, from \$11 million to \$34 million.
- The City's Personnel Department wrote new rules to create more equitable out-of-class work opportunities for City employees. The City's Workforce Equity Committee developed best practices for filling out-of-class positions and trained supervisors to use best practices to achieve racial equity.
- The Seattle Fire and Police Departments are making concerted efforts to ensure communities of color are aware of recruiting, testing and hiring opportunities.
- A Citywide contracting equity team meets monthly to discuss ways to enhance WMBE utilization in City contracting. Every quarter the team reviews results and shares the reports with City departments to encourage use of as many different WMBE vendors as possible.
- The Department of Finance and Administrative Services (FAS) hosts an annual Reverse Vendor trade show to introduce small business and WMBE vendors to City departments. FAS also helps City departments identify and reach out to WMBE vendors.

## WORKFORCE EQUITY

- The City has reduced the number of unnecessary criminal background checks conducted as part of hiring processes. Background checks now occur only if they directly relate to the position being filled. The change was made to increase employment opportunities for people of color, who are disproportionately represented in the criminal justice system.
- The City's Personnel Department wrote new rules to create more equitable out-of-class work opportunities for City employees. Departments are monitoring out-of-class opportunities to ensure racial equity. The Seattle Fire and Police Departments are making concerted efforts to reach out to minority communities during the recruiting, testing and hiring processes.
- The City's Workforce Equity Committee developed best practices for filling out-of-class positions and general hiring processes, and trained supervisors to use best practices to achieve racial equity.
- Seattle Public Utilities has reduced the requirement for a college education in positions where a college degree is not actually necessary, after the utility analyzed the impacts of a college education requirement on workforce equity.
- Public Utilities, Neighborhoods and Civil Rights have incorporated RSJI into assessing their employee performance reviews.

- Finance and Administrative Services (FAS) assesses its workforce demographics four times a year and compares it to community workforce availability. FAS then targets its outreach efforts to communities that are under-represented.
- The Seattle Fire Department and the Seattle Department of Transportation consider equity when giving overtime assignments. The Fire Department has rewritten its hiring and promotional interview questions to ensure that applicants recognize the diversity of the community.
- Seattle City Light has incorporated the Race and Social Justice Initiative in its succession planning to reduce racial disparities among management, professional and line staff.
- The Department of Information Technology encourages department-wide discussion of hiring practices, promotions, out-of-class opportunities, and discipline to understand the role that race plays and to discover unintended consequences.
- The Office of Arts and Cultural Affairs, DoIT and other departments advertise job openings in community and ethnic media in addition to mainstream media outlets.
- The Office of Arts and Cultural Affairs and other City departments consciously look for specific opportunities to consider candidates from historically under-represented groups to build a diverse workforce.
- The City has developed RSJI hiring and interviewing best practices, and is introducing them to all departments.

## CAPACITY-BUILDING, TRAINING, KNOWLEDGE AND TOOLS

- Over 8,000 City employees have participated in Race and Social Justice training, including training in Inclusive Outreach and Public Engagement. Most departments have trained all their employees. Using a train-the-trainer approach, RSJI has created training teams to support departments throughout the City.
- In an RSJI Employee Survey in October 2010, 83% of the 5,200 respondents said they believe it is valuable to examine the impact of race, and over 3,000 employees stated they are actively involved in promoting RSJI changes in their workplace.
- All City departments have Change Teams that support implementation of departments' annual work plans. A Core Team works across departments on Citywide issues.
- RSJI sponsors a Race and Social Justice Initiative Summit every year for City employees to attend skillbuilding workshops and discuss the Initiative's future direction. The most recent Summit included representatives from King County and other RSJ Community Roundtable members.
- The Department of Transportation, Planning and Development and other departments host RSJI workshops and "Lunch and Learn" discussions for their staffs. The Seattle Office for Civil Rights holds a monthly all-staff discussion about ways to achieve greater equity in its day-to-day work.

This is a partial list of the accomplishments of the Race and Social Justice Initiative.  
For more up-to-date information, please visit [www.seattle.gov/rsji](http://www.seattle.gov/rsji).

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The City's Race and Social Justice Initiative is led by the Seattle Office for Civil Rights.



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