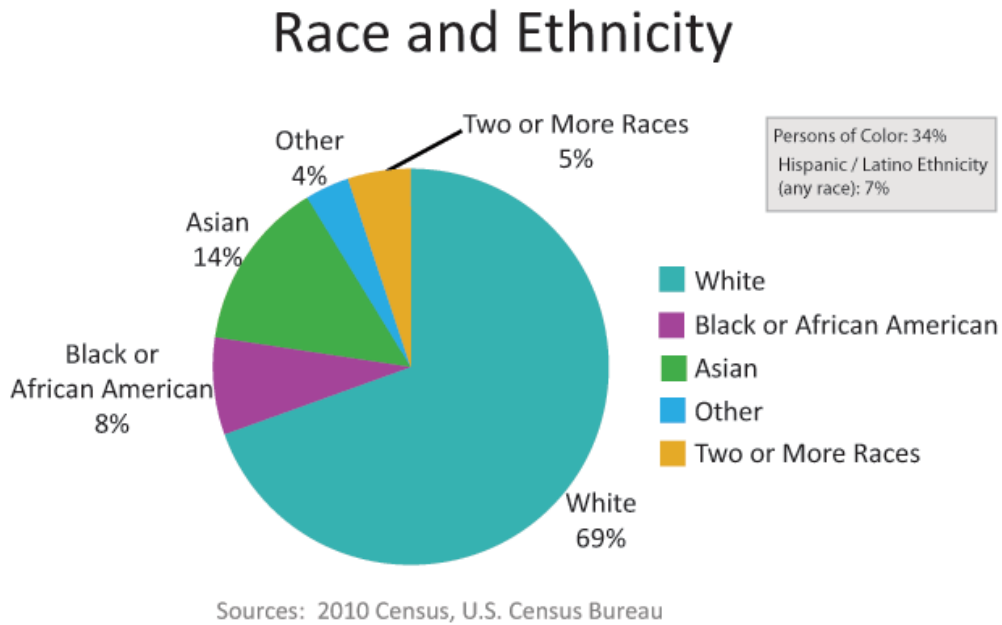


Race and Social Justice Initiative (RSJI) in the Budget

Introduction

This chapter provides background and context for [Race and Social Justice Initiative \(RSJI\)](#) related budget additions throughout the 2015-2016 Proposed Budget. This is an important reflection of ongoing efforts to address issues of racial and social disparities in the City of Seattle. A key component of the RSJI is the examination of City policies, projects, initiatives and budget decisions to determine how each of these items impacts different demographic groups in the City. Seattle is the first city in the United States to undertake an initiative focusing explicitly on institutional racism and has become a national leader in efforts to achieve racial equity.

Racial and social disparities persist across key indicators of success in Seattle, including education, equitable development, health, housing, jobs, criminal justice, environment, service equity, and arts and culture. The 2010 Census indicates more than 34 percent of Seattle residents are persons of color. Recent estimates from sources including the American Community Survey show continued, deep disparities in the social and economic well-being of Seattle residents. In general, the largest disparities in Seattle, as well as in the nation as a whole, are for the black and Hispanic/Latino populations compared with white, non-Hispanic population. Asians and multi-race persons are also doing poorer than non-Hispanic whites on many of these indicators.



Since its launch in 2004, Seattle’s Race and Social Justice Initiative has worked to eliminate these kinds of socioeconomic disparities. RSJI is a Citywide effort to end institutionalized racism and race-based disparities in City government. RSJI builds on the work of the civil rights movement and the ongoing efforts of individuals and groups in Seattle to confront racism. The initiative's long-term goal is to change the underlying system that creates race-based disparities in our community and to achieve racial equity. Specifically, RSJI was created to address issues such as:

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- twice as many people of color as whites in Seattle rate our public schools as poor;
- four of five African-Americans believe our police force treats people differently based on race; and
- since the recession, the racial wealth gap has widened: across the U.S. white families now have about six times the wealth of families of color.

The City's Race and Social Justice Initiative goals include the following:

- end racial disparities within City government, so there is fairness in hiring and promotions, greater opportunities in contracting, and equitable services to all residents;
- strengthen outreach and public engagement, change existing services using Race and Social Justice best practices, and improve immigrants' and refugees' access to City services; and
- lead a collaborative, community-wide effort to eliminate racial inequity in education, criminal justice, environmental justice, health and economic success.

Mayoral Direction

During the first week of his term, Mayor Edward B. Murray convened his cabinet of department directors at the Seattle Pacific Science Center to discuss RSJI, its history, its successes and the opportunities the City has to further that work. This was combined with a tour of the "RACE" exhibit displayed at the Center, which included racial and cultural education information about Seattle and King County. Afterward, the Mayor's cabinet debriefed on the exhibit and discussed how RSJI could become part of departmental awareness and operations in Seattle.

A few months later, on April 3, 2014, Mayor Murray signed an [executive order](#) affirming the City's commitment to the Race and Social Justice Initiative. The executive order expanded the program's work to include measurable outcomes, greater accountability, and community-wide efforts to achieve racial equity throughout Seattle.

During Mayor Murray's first term, the City is prioritizing its racial equity work in the areas of education, equitable development, and criminal justice, identified as the top three priorities by the community. The City is partnering with educational institutions, including two- and four-year colleges, to create Cradle to Career Pathways for all Seattle residents, and work with community organizations to create a Community Equity Institute.

Race and Social Justice in the City of Seattle's 2015-2016 Budget Process

The City Budget Office (CBO) incorporated the following specific efforts to integrate RSJI into this year's budget process:

- review of RSJI impacts in the budget requests submitted by City departments;
- training classes and related discussions of RSJI emphasis with budget analysts and department finance directors;
- collaboration across departments and across department functions to hold RSJI conversations throughout the budget process, which often included program staff and members of the RSJI change teams as well as finance staff; and
- all budget briefings with Mayor Murray included information about RSJI impacts, as well as preparation to answer equity-related questions raised by the Mayor or his staff.

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Outside of the budget development process, many CBO and Office of Policy and Innovation (OPI) staff members participate in regular discussions on race and racism. The discussions use a facilitated format and are led by analysts. They offer an opportunity to discuss equity concerns generally, outside of regular work assignments, and to engage all levels of CBO and OPI in how to more consistently and effectively use an equity lens in policy and budget decision making. CBO hopes these discussions will increase individual and group understanding of how racism and other marginalizing factors can and often do affect equity and service provision.

In summary, CBO is working differently this year in order to develop a broader understanding of issues of race and social justice in the City of Seattle.

Race and Social Justice Impacts in the 2015-2016 Proposed Budget

The following section highlights specific examples of RSJI considerations in the 2015-2016 Proposed Budget and decision-making processes.

Utility Discount Program

The 2015-2016 Proposed Budget includes funding to achieve the Mayor's goal of making Seattle more affordable by doubling participation in the Utility Discount Program (UDP) by 2018. Currently, only 14,000 households out of an estimated 75,000 eligible are enrolled in the UDP. An interdepartmental team began work in 2014 and has already made progress toward the goal of 28,000 participants as they focus on reforms and improvements to the program in the areas of customer retention, recruitment/enrollment, and marketing.

Gender Equity

The Gender Equity in Pay Task Force recently released a report on disparities in pay for City of Seattle employees and submitted it to the Mayor and City Council. The report made a series of recommendations to begin addressing the disparity in pay at the City. To begin implementing the task force's recommendations, the City added two positions in the Department of Human Resources and one position in the Office for Civil Rights. These positions will work to advance the recommendations of the Gender Equity in Pay Task Force. The Mayor has now also proposed funding for the Department of Human Resources to conduct a Citywide internal Gender and Race Equity Study and to develop a women's leadership program.

Fifteen Dollar Minimum Wage

In early 2014, the Mayor formed an Income Inequality Advisory Committee to address income inequality in Seattle and to deliver a recommendation on how best to increase the minimum wage in Seattle. In June 2014, the City of Seattle passed an ordinance based on the Committee's recommendation to raise the minimum wage to \$15 per hour in the City of Seattle over three to seven years, depending on the size of the employer and if health care coverage is provided. Increasing the minimum wage will help increase income stability for over 100,000 Seattle workers earning wages insufficient to support themselves and their families, and narrow the income inequality falling disproportionately on people of color and women. The phase-in implementation of increasing minimum wage starting in 2015 will help ensure Seattle's economy is vibrant enough and fair enough to embrace all who live and work here.

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OIRA Expansion

The Mayor has made expanding the Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs (OIRA) a priority of his administration, and within the first few months of taking office, the Mayor and City Council doubled OIRA's budget to build greater capacity to engage with immigrant and refugee communities. The 2015-2016 Proposed Budget includes many significant new programs and services aiming to build OIRA's capacity, and decrease barriers to immigrant participation in City programs and services. This includes a new English as a second language and job readiness program, as well as the launch of a Citywide Language Access Initiative. This initiative will be focused on ensuring adequate resources, development and training are available for City departments to increase the use of translation and interpretation services, with the goal of providing equitable language access to all of Seattle's residents.

People's Academy for Community Engagement (PACE)

Launched in 2012 as a two-year pilot, the People's Academy for Community Engagement (PACE) is a civic leadership training initiative that engages up-and-coming community leaders from nearly all of Seattle's 13 neighborhood districts to develop leadership, neighborhood planning, community-building and outreach skills specific to underrepresented communities. As a successful model of empowering members to increase their community and individual capacity to organize, sustain and support their neighborhoods, the 2015-2016 Proposed Budget provides funding to continue the program beyond its pilot phase.

Homelessness Investments

The 2015-2016 Proposed Budget includes \$1.4 million to enhance services for homeless individuals and families. The 2014 One Night Count, which occurs annually during the month of January, counted 2,392 individuals living unsheltered in the City of Seattle. This proposed budget includes funding that assists long-term shelter stayers, and supports efforts to rapidly re-house single adults. Moving long-term shelter stayers into permanent housing not only benefits these individuals, it also creates additional shelter capacity by freeing up shelter bed space. Rapid Rehousing as a program model is a nationally recognized best practice. In addition to these investments, the proposed budget also includes funding for day and hygiene services, and outreach support for homeless individuals.

Environmental Equity Initiative

Seattle's Environmental Equity Initiative is a City-community partnership to examine Seattle's environmental progress and implement practices and processes to ensure equitable distribution of assets, benefits and broad participation in the decision-making process. This proposed budget proposes funding consultants from communities typically under-represented to facilitate outreach to those communities through community roundtables and environment forums. This work will shape the Mayor's Environmental Agenda, which is a set of near- and long-term actions to advance equity and environmental justice.

Equitable Development Initiative

The Department of Planning and Development and the Office for Civil Rights are co-leading the City's Equitable Development Initiative (EDI), a multi-faceted, multi-department strategy to help implement the Mayor's RSJI Executive Order 2014-02 and Council Resolution 31492 related to equitable development. The EDI will provide the framework to develop and recommend policies for adoption, create a Strategic Investment Strategy, and prioritize the type of investments to be made in target areas in order to achieve equitable outcomes. This is an important way for DPD to ensure current and future work focuses on achieving racial equity and ensuring all community members in Seattle benefit from

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development. This proposed budget funds continued work on this important program.

Labor Standards

Issues surrounding labor overwhelmingly affect low-wage workers, people of color and foreign-born workers. In 2013, the City Council identified a need for comprehensive review of the City's labor standards laws and a determination of how the City can more effectively implement and enforce these laws. In recent years, the City enacted laws related to wage theft, paid sick and safe leave, minimum wage, and the use of background checks in employment decisions.

In addition, Mayor Murray convened a multi-stakeholder group to explore and recommend how the City could engage in more effective enforcement and compliance with labor and workforce policies. As a result of this group's recommendations, the Mayor proposes funding the creation of an Office of Labor Standards to focus on worker education, business partnerships, and enforcement strategies to protect vulnerable workers from wage theft and exploitation in the workplace.

Priority Workers

Studies show that women, people of color, and those living in economically distressed areas are not employed on City projects in proportion to their availability in the community. These areas with the highest poverty rate in Seattle also have high concentrations of people of color and unemployed residents.

These residents are particularly under-represented in construction trades and training programs leading to family-wage careers in construction. Underrepresented populations face barriers to completing pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship training programs. In the last several years, the reduction of clients from such programs was higher for women and people of color. From 2008 through 2010, 61 percent of people of color did not complete apprenticeship training programs as compared to 46 percent of white participants, and 65 percent of women failed to complete the programs as compared to 55 percent of men. The City devotes considerable resources to public works projects and Mayor Murray is using that investment to prioritize training and employment opportunities for residents living in poverty.

The Mayor adopted the recommendations from an advisory group of community worker advocates, labor unions, minority contractors, and others to fund the creation of a prioritized worker program as a strategy to lower the rates of employment in distressed Seattle communities. The policy would make the training and employment of individuals in these groups a priority hire on City-financed construction projects.

Public Health Base Funding

Public Health – Seattle & King County (PHSKC) is a joint public health department funded by the City of Seattle and King County, created through a merger of the two governments' existing public health departments in 1939. The vast majority of PHSKC clients are low-income people who cannot afford full-cost medical care, and are often from groups that have been underserved by mainstream service programs, including cultural and racial minorities, immigrants and refugees and people for whom English is a second language.

Currently PHSKC is projecting a \$15 million per year deficit, which translates to an estimated \$30 million shortfall for the 2015-2016 King County biennial budget. As part of the collaborative partnership between the City of Seattle and King County, Seattle has decided to help fund some of the base funding for PHSKC services initially proposed to be cut by the department as part of its balancing package it

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submitted to the King County Executive. This is a new approach from Seattle to help fund the base budget for PHSKC.

Specifically, the Mayor has proposed to fund \$400,000 in 2015, and possibly the same amount in 2016. This reserve will help pay for an array of public health services that would otherwise be reduced from the Seattle-King County Department of Public Health's budget for 2015 and 2016. These include resources to pay for maternity support services at the Greenbridge Public Health Center in White Center, access and outreach services for Seattle residents seeking health services, gun violence research and program planning, health education program planning, and HIV and STD education and outreach.

Moving Forward

While there has been increasing attention and work to address equity and social justice issues, there is still a great deal of work needed to address the root causes of inequities and determine culturally appropriate and effective measures to improve access and opportunity.

The City Budget Office (CBO) and the Office of Policy and Innovation will improve their approach to using an equity lens during budget and program analysis each year. Future goals include providing Race and Social Justice Toolkit training for department finance managers, and working with departments to examine the RSJI impacts of their programs holistically – as part of their entire budgets, rather than just the incremental changes.

CBO is considering how to more directly communicate the RSJI impacts and considerations for future budget decisions with departments, the City Council, and city residents. These efforts will contribute to Seattle's vision to achieve equitable opportunities for all people and communities.