



Equitable Communities Initiative

This summer, communities of color - led by the Black community and the movement for Black Lives - have demanded that we rise to the occasion and build a better future for Black Americans, Indigenous people, and communities of color.

The Equitable Community Initiative commits \$100 million in new investments focused annually, starting with Mayor Durkan's 2021 budget proposal to scale some of the City's current programs and examine additional priority areas for new investments.

These investments, focused on the Black, Indigenous, and communities of color, will be guided by a community-led Equitable Communities Initiative Task Force that will engage with the broader community to prioritize focus areas for investment and make funding recommendations based on those priorities. The task force will receive the technical assistance of at least 18 City Departments to help make policy and programmatic recommendations to support near and long-term community priorities that ensure that Black, Indigenous, and communities of color can thrive.

The City has suggested initial focus areas for identifying programs and policies based on ongoing engagement with the community over the last several years including developing the [Equitable Development Monitoring Program](#), shaped by deep engagement in BIPOC communities. However, the task force has broad latitude in determining whether these focus areas sufficiently cover community needs and can add or remove topics as they see fit. The suggested focus areas include:

- Building Opportunity and an Inclusive Economy
- Community Wealth Building and Preserving Cultural Spaces
- Community Wellness
- Climate Justice and Green New Deal

All task force members will be connected to the BIPOC communities and have diverse backgrounds and experiences, bringing to the table their expertise and lived experience to address the deep disparities in our systems: economic development, education, community wellness, environmental justice, youth opportunity, and senior services.

Equitable Communities Initiative Task Force Scope

The task force will have broad latitude in setting the timetable, community engagement framework, and agenda for their work. However, it is contemplated that by December 2020, they will identify the initial priority areas, shared policy goals, and outcomes to achieve. In the Spring, the task force will advance to Mayor Durkan recommendations regarding programmatic investments. Based on technical support, the City's legal requirements, and desired outcomes, the task force may consider a range of funding mechanisms and programmatic structures, including participatory budgeting, grants, RFPs, and loans. Members of the task force will not make funding recommendations for individual organizations.

The task force, centered on community input, will also determine the research, data, and technical advice they need in each of those areas to focus on how to accomplish desired and measurable outcomes in each area. The task force recommendations may focus on, but are not limited to:

- Capacity building to support future investments in community-based organizations
- Expanding current proven programs that could be scaled to serve more in the community
- Refocusing current City investments to better serve the BIPOC communities
- Creating new programs or investments that could be quickly implemented (i.e. COVID-19 response programs like grocery vouchers or Small Business Stabilization Fund)
- Developing long-term new programs or pilots to address a specific need (the next Equitable Development Initiative or Seattle Preschool Program or Participatory Budgeting)
- Identifying new and complementary opportunities for investment by philanthropy, regional, state, and federal partners

In Spring 2021, the Mayor will submit a supplemental budget, which will need City Council approval. At that time, Mayor Durkan would task City Departments with implementing RFPs, supporting participatory budgeting, expanding existing programs, or continuing the development of policies, pilots, or new programs needed to address disparities.

Timeline

October 2020 – Task Force Convenes

November 2020 – Subcommittees Convene

November 2020 – Develops Community Listening Session Timelines

November 2020 – City Council Passes Budget

December 2020 – Initial Priorities for Investment

January 2021 – Community Engagement on Initial Priorities for Investment

Spring 2021 – Task Force Issues Recommendations to Mayor Durkan

Spring 2021 – Supplemental Budget to City Council

Summer 2021 – RFPs for investment areas

Frequently Asked Questions

- **How is the Equitable Communities Initiative Funded?** The \$100 million is coming from the General Fund, which by nature are flexible resources and in most cases, specific revenues are not dedicated to specific purposes. Many City departments – including Seattle Fire and Seattle Police Department – are also funded by the General Fund. In June, the Mayor asked that the City for the first time ever build a budget around \$100 million historic investment in BIPOC communities. The Mayor used all of the City's resources to balance the budget, including: \$73 million in emergency funds, \$20M in reductions to the Seattle Police Department, other city reductions, a wage freeze for non-represented employees, and new revenue. In addition to \$100M in new investments in BIPOC communities, the Mayor's budget also includes \$22M in additional COVID relief. The Mayor intends to work with communities to develop a long-term, sustainable, and progressive revenue source for the \$100 million.
- **Is this a participatory budget process?** This is a community-based and community-led process to make recommendations for \$100 million in investments based on focus areas prioritized by community. This process engages community to participate in the budget process, however, it is not what is commonly known as [participatory budgeting](#) that the [City has conducted in the past](#) or that is being proposed by community advocates. Also, whatever process is used, it is important to note that final

budget action and awards and contracts must be done according to City and State law. There is an opportunity for the Equitable Communities Initiative Task Force to recommend that the city dedicate some funding to be allocated towards a participatory budgeting pilot.

- **Will the task force provide recommendations on community safety and SPD?** The City will continue to engage with communities on budget priorities and functional changes to SPD. As the task force develops its investment recommendations, they could include recommendations to build capacity in community-based alternatives to certain functions that will be transferred or reduced from SPD. We also anticipate that other community-led research projects will also inform this work. These efforts, along with [advocating for changes to State law](#), are necessary to reimagine our system of community safety.
- **Is City Council included?** Councilmember Juarez will participate as an ex-officio member. We look forward to working with Council to ensure the \$100 million is allocated expeditiously recognizing our shared values on prioritizing investments in BIPOC communities.
- **Will the task force be able to make final funding decisions?** They will be able to make recommendations at a programmatic level. By City Charter, any allocation of city funds - including in a participatory budget process - would require legislation and any contracts of a certain value and types are subject to competitive bid and/or other local and state law contracting requirements.
- **Will all task force recommendations be included in the budget?** On September 29, the Mayor transmitted her budget to the City Council that includes an unallocated \$100 million to the community task force for recommendations. If the allocation remains through the budget process, it will be the task force that will make recommendations through a community process on how to allocate the \$100 million. Once the recommendations are finalized, we anticipate the investments being appropriated in a supplemental budget. Any proposal will undergo additional community input and public process.
- **How were task force members chosen?** Since the Mayor took office she has had hundreds of community meetings, neighborhood tours, round tables and town halls listening to the needs of the community. After the murder of George Floyd, she met with many community groups and leaders and made the pledge to invest \$100 million in BIPOC communities through a process that would be community-led. The initial task force is comprised of BIPOC leaders who indicated they wanted to help frame these generational investments and they bring a broad range of professional and lived experiences in economic development, community wellness and safety, workers' rights, youth opportunity, food security, and environmental justice. Some members will bring their perspective of current city programs through their participation in City Advisory committees and commissions. The task force will also have the ability to add more community members to ensure the most inclusive approach to this work.
- **Will there be an opportunity for other community members and organizations provide input?** Yes, throughout this process it is vital to not only hear from the task force, but the broader BIPOC communities members and organizations. Task force members will develop a plan for community engagement and listening sessions. In addition, additional task force members can be added. Some community members have declined participation through a formal role on the task force, but the task force is committed to community input and recommendations.

- **What types of recommendations can the task force make?** Based on past research, the City has suggested four focus areas: Building Opportunity and an Inclusive Economy; Community Wealth Building and Preserving Cultural Spaces; Community Wellness; and Climate Justice and Green New Deal. But the task force, through community engagement, will determine priority areas and where investments should be focused to get the desired outcomes. The task force will focus on improving outcomes for BIPOC communities where disparate treatment and impacts are evident. Ideas may be recommended on investments and policy changes, which could include modifications or realignments of current city programs, new pilot programs led by the community or city, current or new projects. This is a community-led process and we look forward to the ideas that will be brought forward.
- **Will the meetings be televised, open to the public, streamed?** The Mayor is committed to full transparency but will defer to the task force on the manner in which information is shared with the public, which will be developed in the coming weeks.
- **Who will lead this group through the process?** The Department of Neighborhoods has issued a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for the facilitation and logistical support of the task force. The Mayor's Cabinet will also be engaged in providing technical assistance support to the task force.
- **Are task force members that work for community organizations able to compete for the funding?** Yes. While task force members will help determine the funding allocated to desired areas and outcomes the task force will not determine the programs that receive funding. Task force members will be apprised of Seattle Ethics and Elections Commissions ethics codes and will pledge to abide by the rules outlined in the City Charter.
- **Why is the \$100 million dedicated to BIPOC communities?** Given the historical inequities caused by systemic racism and the generational harm to our BIPOC communities, we need to address the many current disparities across housing, health, education, criminal legal system, and wealth that disproportionately impacts communities of color, particularly the Black and Indigenous community. The task force will focus on recommendations to change these disparate outcomes with investments that lead to measurable outcomes. The City must comply with the legal principles in the Washington state and federal constitutions and also Initiative 200 – which was upheld in 2019 – and bans preferential treatment based on race and gender in contracting, education, and employment. Mayor Durkan is committed to finding ways to invest in those communities where we know historic under-investment and systemic racism has led to inequities and where disparate impacts have been documented.

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