RACE & SOCIAL JUSTICE INITIATIVE

VISION & STRATEGY 2015–2017

INTRODUCTION

The Race and Social Justice Initiative (RSJI) is the City's commitment to eliminate racial disparities and achieve racial equity in Seattle.

When RSJI began ten years ago, no U.S. city had ever undertaken an effort that focused explicitly on institutional racism.

Since that time, Minneapolis, Madison WI, Portland OR and our own King County, among others, have all established their own equity initiatives. Across the United States, local governments are acknowledging that race matters.

The current impacts of institutional and structural racism combine to restrict opportunities for people of color, including immigrant and refugee communities.

In 2014, the Race and Social Justice Initiative completed a three-year plan that broadened the scope of the Initiative beyond Seattle City government.

In 2015, RSJI embarks on a new chapter in our work to advance the movement for racial equity.

By 2017, the City of Seattle will:

- Ensure racial equity in City programs and services to make tangible differences in people's lives.
- Work with community-based organizations to support the movement to end structural racism.
- Help lead regional and national networks for racial equity through partnerships with other governments and institutions, the private sector and philanthropy.

The movement for racial equity includes grassroots community, organizations, philanthropy, governments, and other institutions. We all have different roles to play; we all work together to end structural racism and achieve racial equity.

THE STORY OF RSJI

The Race and Social Justice Initiative began in 2004 by focusing on the City of Seattle's internal programs and operations. We developed a common language to address institutional racism, and created structures, tools and training that began to bring a racial equity lens to the City's work.

Beginning in 2009, RSJI broadened its scope to partner with other institutions and the community on racial equity in key areas like education, criminal justice and development. RSJI also introduced ways to track and measure our impact, and began to develop a regional movement for racial equity.

On April 3, 2014, Seattle Mayor Edward Murray signed an Executive Order affirming and expanding RSJI. Mayor Murray's Executive Order requires City staff to use RSJI tools and to assess racial equity progress in both work outcomes and internal practices. It also calls on RSJI to deepen our support for community-led racial justice work through projects and programs that increase the City's accountability to community.

At the same time, the Seattle Office for Civil Rights released data from the first RSJI Community Survey. The survey showed overwhelming support for government to prioritize addressing racial gaps in jobs, health, housing and other areas.

Mayor Murray's direction echoes what we heard from community members and City staff throughout our planning process in the summer and fall of 2014: we must strengthen RSJI accountability across City departments with measurable outcomes, and our approach must partner with the community.

2012–2014

ACCOMPLISHMENTS & LESSONS LEARNED

RSJI's 2012–14 plan centered on three equity strategies. We are proud of our accomplishments over the last three years; at the same time we recognize that some of RSJI's efforts turned out differently than we'd planned. Like any long-term change initiative, RSJI has experienced successes as well as course corrections.

Here are some examples of accomplishments and lessons learned:

APPLY RACIAL EQUITY TO CITY PROGRAMS AND PROJECTS

- **Use the Racial Equity Toolkit in City government:** The City of Seattle's Budget Office now requires departments to conduct a racial equity analysis of all budget requests. In addition, most City departments and interdepartmental teams have used the Toolkit. In 2014, the Utility Discount Program and the Seattle 2035 Comprehensive Plan both used the Racial Equity Toolkit to shape their programs.

  Lesson learned: Toolkit use was inconsistent across City departments, and staff sometimes struggled to understand how to apply the Toolkit to their work. The City should require more consistent use of the Toolkit and RSJI must provide more technical assistance to departments.

- **Online racial justice work plans:** City departments now post their annual RSJI work plans to the RSJI web site so the community can view progress by department, city neighborhood and Equity Areas. In 2015, the site will be upgraded to show indicators in education, criminal justice and equitable development.

  Lesson learned: Posting work plans online is an important accountability measure, but we are still working to ensure that departmental actions incorporate specific racial equity measures to ensure our work leads to meaningful outcomes.

- **Inclusive Outreach and Public Engagement (IOPE):** City departments provide targeted outreach to under-represented communities, including immigrant and refugee communities, for their input on programs. City outreach and engagement staff also developed tools for specific departments and provided training on simple English language writing.

  Lesson learned: Departments have greatly improved community outreach and engagement, but the RSJI Community Survey revealed that not all residents feel their input is valued.

BUILD RACIAL EQUITY INTO POLICIES AND CITYWIDE INITIATIVES

- **Equitable development:** Racial and social equity are embedded principles in the Seattle 2035 Comprehensive Plan, the City's primary long-range planning document.

  Lesson learned: Including RSJI principles in City planning documents is a significant step forward, but it doesn't guarantee those principles will be implemented. We must do more to match our actions with our words.

- **Education:** RSJI developed a Racial Equity Toolkit for implementation of the Seattle Preschool Program. The Initiative also was instrumental in Seattle Public Schools' passage of its "Ensuring Education and Racial Equity" policy. RSJI helped the District create its own Racial Equity Toolkit and provided training to administrators and teachers.

  Lesson learned: Every long journey begins with a first step. Supporting Seattle Public Schools to make significant policy changes is a long-term project.

- **Criminal Justice:** RSJI partnered with the Seattle Police Department to hold a series of open community workshops on institutional racism and ways to improve relations between the community and police.

  Lesson learned: Community members value safety in their neighborhoods … but they also want to see real changes in law enforcement culture, policies and practices.

PARTNER WITH OTHER INSTITUTIONS AND THE COMMUNITY

- **Racial Equity Fund:** SOCR awarded funding to community organizations in 2013 and 2014 to address structural racism in the community. In 2013, more than 700 youth and adults received racial equity training, learned to facilitate racial equity discussions and connected with more than 80 community organizations to address structural racism in education and social services. In 2014, the six funded organizations implemented use of racial equity toolkits in the child foster care system, increased training and curricula for youth to address racism in schools, and began racial equity work in the Urban Indian community.

  Lesson learned: Community based organizations often find themselves pitted against each other in the quest for funding; however, when given the opportunity and support, organizations are able and eager to join together in partnership around common goals.

- **Governing for Racial Equity Network:** Governing for Racial Equity (GRE) is a northwest regional network of government jurisdictions working to achieve racial equity. Annual GRE Conferences from 2012–14 brought together government representatives from Seattle, Portland, San Francisco and other parts of the U.S. to share successful strategies and key measures of progress.

  Lesson learned: Cities and counties of the Pacific Northwest face many of the same urgent problems. We can all gain by working together, though resources to strengthen our network are in short supply.

- **Government Alliance on Race & Equity:** Seattle also joined other cities in a national alliance to promote government's role in the racial justice movement.

  Lesson learned: Cities across the U.S. are realizing that structural racism is holding back our communities. Now is the time to work for racial equity.

2015–2017

HOW WE DEVELOPED THE RSJI 2015–17 PLAN

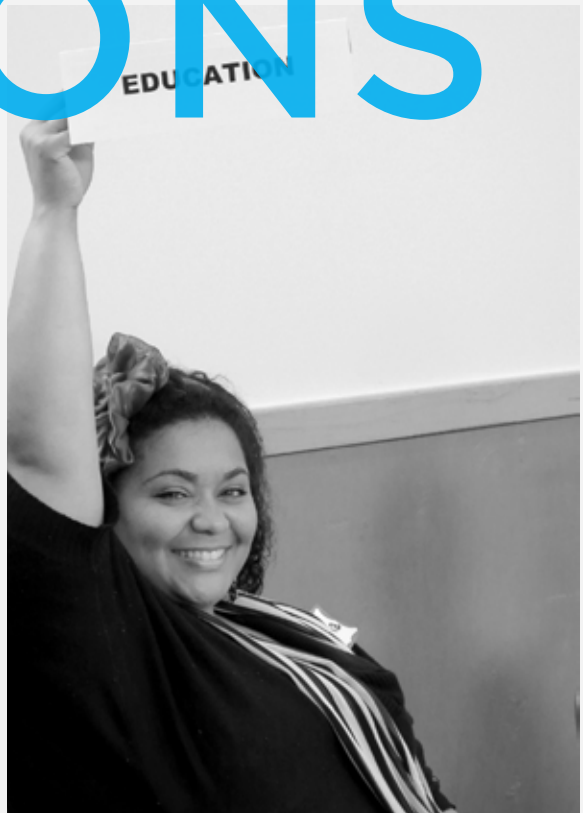
Between May–October 2014, RSJI staff conducted 37 listening sessions with City employees and community members to learn which racial equity issues are most pressing and people's ideas for how RSJI can address them.

We kicked off the process in May with a community event at Seattle's Eritrean Association Center, and held forums in the fall highlighting current community work around our key Equity Areas – Education, Criminal Justice & Public Safety, and Equitable Development. We also held a numerous informal listening sessions with various stakeholders, and drew on information from the 2013 RSJI Community Survey.

We began each session by discussing institutional and structural racism, and the reasons we work toward equity instead of equality. Participants broke into small groups to list and group their ideas and then shared their priorities with other groups in the room. At the community forums, community leaders also shared about their own groups' work to advance racial equity.

Once typed, the notes from all these sessions amounted to 80 pages of themed ideas and statements, which we distilled into "What We Learned." RSJI's strategies for the next three years emerged from these ideas, as well as our own experience of working within City government and in partnership with community. Once we had a draft plan, we collected feedback from community members at a public event as well as from RSJI teams within the City.

37 LISTENING SESSIONS



What We've Learned

In our listening sessions with community members and City employees, participants gave clear voice to the need for City government to be accountable to the community. They also emphasized wanting the City to help increase community capacity to do this work, not simply handed a set of social programs. Participants agreed that RSJI should continue to prioritize Education, Criminal Justice & Public Safety, and Equitable Development, with attention to structural solutions that address how these areas overlap.

Over the last three years, we also have heard from community members, organizations and institutions about actions that Seattle City government can take for racial equity in these areas. We did our best to reflect as many of these as possible throughout the Plan.

Here are some of those suggestions:

EQUITABLE DEVELOPMENT*

- There is a great need for increased access to living wage jobs within Seattle city limits. Education and enforcement of wage theft laws are necessary to eliminate racial disparities in jobs and increase economic stability for people of color.
- Housing and business displacement disproportionately impact people and neighborhoods of color. Seattle needs a significant expansion of affordable housing as well as support for local businesses and arts and cultural organizations owned by people of color, including immigrant and refugee owned businesses.
- The City must eliminate housing barriers for people with criminal records. Racial bias in housing must be addressed through new policies and enforcement.
- The City should develop policies to ensure that development sustains neighborhoods, rather than displace existing residents. All residents, including people of color, should have a say in neighborhood growth and development.
- We need strategies to address the extreme racial disproportionality in homelessness.

EDUCATION

- Suspensions and expulsions disproportionately impact students of color. They must be replaced with alternative practices that keep young people in school where they can learn and graduate.
- The community wants training on institutional racism and cultural competence for teachers and administrators, with parents encouraged to participate.
- Organizations should have equitable access to City education funding, especially those led by people of color, many of whom are also immigrants and refugees.
- The community wants the School District to recruit teachers and administrators who reflect the diversity of Seattle's students.
- Higher educational institutions must end racial disparities and create career pathways for all Seattle residents.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE & PUBLIC SAFETY

- As a community, we must end the School-to-Prison-Pipeline by keeping students in school and ensuring that they graduate on time.
- Police need more race and social justice training to reduce the effects of implicit bias and effectively serve the diverse communities they represent. Seattle must end police practices that impact communities of color more than white communities for the same activities.

*Equitable Development includes jobs, housing, transportation and other types of growth without displacement

2015–2017 RSJI Equity Strategies & Outcomes

To achieve structural change, RSJI's vision for the next three years focuses on community accountability and community empowerment.

The City of Seattle needs to establish clear measures for outcomes in our own programs, policies and initiatives; at the same time, the City must support community-based efforts for systemic change, as well as collaborate with other governments, community organizations and the business community. To do this with accountability to the community, we must support the leadership of communities of color and open the doors for community to access government resources and decision making processes.

EQUITY STRATEGY #1

Ensure racial equity in City programs and services to make tangible differences in people's lives.

1. Establish goals, track outcomes over time and report annually on the City's progress. To create results, we will use the RSJI Community and Seattle City Employee Surveys, community data, and people's stories and experiences.

2. Apply a racial equity lens to all of our work. The Mayor's Performance Plans with department Directors will require at least four uses of the Racial Equity Toolkit and use of the Inclusive Outreach and Public Engagement Guide on programs, projects and service changes.
   - Departments will be required to report annually to the Mayor and Council on their use of these tools.
   - We will track usage and share examples.

3. Establish and strengthen Equity Teams for:
   - Education
   - Criminal Justice & Public Safety
   - Equitable Development
     These teams bring together community members and their City counterparts to raise up issues and push for equitable solutions.

4. Increase our commitment to reflect community in the workplace. In 2015–2017, RSJI will support the Seattle Department of Human Resources' efforts to build a City workforce that reflects the racial make-up of our community at all levels and pay grades

5. Support departments' internal RSJI Change Teams with new resources to engage their departments on RSJI.

6. Challenge City leadership, including managers and supervisors, to more consistently model the principles and practices of RSJI by:
   - Providing support and resources to City departments' Change Teams.
   - Meeting the goals of the Mayor's Performance Plans for departments.

7. Establish an RSJI Assessment Program to review departments' work and City initiatives. The assessment will help departments prioritize racial equity in all aspects of their work – from workplace practices and hiring to outreach, programming and policy.

EQUITY STRATEGY #2

Work with community-based organizations to support the movement to end structural racism.

1. Use the Racial Equity Fund to help community groups develop creative strategies to build racial equity by addressing structural racism.
   - The funding process encourages groups to work together and simplifies reporting requirements.
   - A minimum of $60,000 is awarded each year.

2. Lead the Race and Social Justice Community Roundtable. The Roundtable is a partnership of community groups and institutions that organizes to address systemic racism and focuses on collective action to achieve equity in education and criminal justice.

3. Provide RSJ training to all City boards, commissions and advisory groups to ensure that these appointed community representatives apply a racial equity lens in their advisory roles.

4. Expand the Community Institute for Racial Equity to strengthen community leadership and action for racial justice through training and support.

5. Build public will for racial equity through partnerships and special projects, including arts and culture, to achieve structural change. In education, the City will partner with institutions including preschools and two- and four-year colleges to create cradle-to-career pathways for Seattle residents.

EQUITY STRATEGY #3

Help lead regional and national networks for racial equity.

1. Strengthen Seattle's relationship with other cities in the Pacific Northwest and across the country to promote government's role in the racial justice movement. Continue to be a leader in the regional Governing for Racial Equity Network and the national Alliance for Racial Equity. We will work together to share successful strategies and key measures.
2. Partner with the business community to raise awareness of the benefits of racial equity to the economic and social health of Seattle and our region.
3. Support philanthropic investments in movement-building and systems change work led by people of color.

WHAT WILL SUCCESS LOOK LIKE?

The 2012 RSJI Three Year Plan report concluded with the words,

> *Since the beginning of Seattle's history, racism has existed even as many worked to put an end to it. As a community we have made it to this point thanks to the efforts of those who came before us. We believe that Seattle residents have had enough of the status quo, and that we are ready to end the effects of racism in our city. The current state of affairs is not carved in stone; it is something we can change ...*

We believe that change is not just possible; in fact change is happening. In the next three years, Seattle's Race and Social Justice Initiative is committed to changing the City of Seattle as an institution and supporting the community's vison of systemic change.

We will use our resources to empower community leadership. And we will use our influence to shift the region's agenda and put achieving racial equity on the greater Seattle region's front burner.

We cannot measure progress on racial equity through actions alone; we must measure it through results. Moving forward, the Race and Social Justice Initiative will set measurable targets, track progress and report results.

Photos (P1, P2, P10, P13, P14): Olli Tumelius

Seattle Office for Civil Rights
810 3rd Avenue, Suite 750
Seattle, WA 98104-1627
206-684-4500 voice
206-684-4503 TTY
seattle.gov/rsji

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INITIATIVE