



Seattle
Office for Civil Rights

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Contact:

Nona Raybern, PIO, (206) 684-4528

nona.raybern@seattle.gov

Seattle Office for Civil Rights undertakes City's participatory budgeting process

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On June 1, Seattle City Council unanimously voted to place the development of the Request for Proposal (RFP) for the City's approximately \$30 million Participatory Budgeting process into the Seattle Office for Civil Rights (SOCR). SOCR will not be distributing the funds for participatory budgeting, but will be developing the RFP that will contract the agency to run the participatory budgeting process.

"Today's legislation is a real milestone in this process. Now, we begin the biggest people-directed investment process that the City has ever funded. Whether it's better parks, community safety programs, new investments in our youth, the Seattle community will soon have a real say in how the city spends a large portion of our budget," Councilmember Tammy Morales said.

[Ordinance 120087](#) releases \$1 million to SOCR to develop the Request for Proposal. This opportunity for collaboration to draft the RFP with an interdepartmental team and community-led organizations ensures a democratic process where those generally left out and marginalized from budgetary conversations have a stronger voice in building the contractual criteria.

After the protests following the murder of George Floyd in 2020, calls to acknowledge the systematic harm done to Black communities resulted in numerous proposals coming from BIPOC organizations like King County Equity Now and Decriminalize Seattle on how to invest in community safety through funding for housing, education, and healthcare directly back into the community instead of policing.

What resulted was the participatory budgeting process through a report by the [Black Brilliance Research Project](#) submitted in February 2021.

[On a new website](#) that will document the development of the RFP, SOCR made clear their intention of full transparency throughout this process.

"We acknowledge the valid criticisms that exist on the transparency that the City has displayed throughout this process and how that has caused significant harm, especially to Black, Indigenous, and people of color communities. Our commitment with the development of the RFP in the Office for Civil Rights is to offer access to information; that you, as members of the communities most impacted by racism, oppression, and colonization hold the right to see how



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this process works, how decisions are made, by whom they are being made, and how they will affect you.”

SOCR Director Mariko Lockhart views this undertaking as an exceptional opportunity.

“Participatory budgeting offers the potential to transform the way the City conducts budgeting and investment in community by putting the decision-making power into the hands of those who will be most impacted by the investments. We want to take the time to do this right so that it can become a model for future expansion of participatory budgeting in Seattle,” said Director Lockhart.

The next steps for SOCR will be identifying an Interdepartmental Team and community-led organizations, and recruitment and hiring of staff to support the work of the RFP.