

City of Seattle



Seattle Department of
Human Resources

WORKFORCE EQUITY STRATEGIC PLAN

Workforce equity is when the workforce is inclusive of people of color and other marginalized or under-represented groups at a rate representative of the greater Seattle area at all levels of City employment; where institutional and structural barriers impacting employee attraction, selection, participation and retention have been eliminated, enabling opportunity for employment success and career growth.

July 1, 2016

Executive Summary

City of Seattle employees work every day to keep our city running and serve our residents and communities. Ours is a dedicated and passionate workforce of which we are proud, and it is our job as city leaders to continue to remove institutional and structural barriers to opportunity. From recruiting and retaining a diverse workforce, to implementing policies that ensure full and equal participation in employment opportunities, I am committed to ensuring we are an equitable workplace. An inclusive and fully engaged workforce is one that serves our city and communities best. — Mayor Edward B. Murray

Over ten years ago, the City of Seattle launched its Race and Social Justice Initiative (RSJI), to end institutionalized racism and discrimination and address structural barriers to full inclusion in City government. Since Mayor Edward B. Murray took office, significant work has been done to build on the City’s RSJI efforts and increase equity in the City’s workforce, including the Mayor’s issuing executive orders on RSJI and pay equity at the City of Seattle. The Mayor’s commitment was further demonstrated in November 2015 by his joint directive with the Seattle City Council to the Director of the Seattle Department of Human Resources (SDHR) to develop the City of Seattle’s first-ever Workforce Equity Strategic Plan (the “Plan”). The recommendations outlined in this Plan are a reflection of, and in alignment with, the Mayor’s pledge and will create an inclusive workplace that centers on a diverse and fully engaged workforce best able to serve the residents and communities of Seattle. This Plan brings the City closer to the Mayor’s vision and continues the City’s leadership to remove institutional and structural barriers to full participation in the workplace for all City of Seattle employees.

In developing this Plan, the following data collection was undertaken:

- A review of the literature on the benefits of workforce equity strategies
- A benchmark review of 11 employers that lead on workforce equity
- 18 employee listening sessions, including 253 employees
- An employee survey with 4,454 employee responses, 36 percent response rate
- 25 leadership interviews—including elected officials, department leaders and representatives from the Unions who represent City workers

The data collection resulted in:

- A proposed definition of workforce equity for the City—a critical tool for analyzing and comparing workforce equity strategies
- Development of cost estimates for strategy options
- Analysis of 18 workforce equity strategies that originated from the above sources as well as from Council Greensheet 2016-155-1-A-1

Definition of Workforce Equity

Workforce equity is when the workforce is inclusive of people of color and other marginalized or under-represented groups at a rate representative of the greater Seattle area at all levels of City employment; where institutional and structural barriers impacting employee attraction, selection, participation and retention have been eliminated, enabling opportunity for employment success and career growth.

Key Findings

The definition of “workforce equity” is both aspirational and operational, describing an environment of full representation and inclusion in the workplace, combined with a call for removing structural and institutional barriers that impede this vision. Achieving this requires fundamental culture change that dismantles barriers, real or perceived, and enables an inclusive workplace, as well as specific investments in the workforce itself. This two-pronged approach is reflected in two distinct types of strategies that form the basis of the recommendations in this Plan:

1. **Platform Strategies:** Workforce equity strategies that catalyze organizational culture change through communication, leadership and accountability in order to decrease barriers to an inclusive workplace.
2. **Workforce Investment Strategies:** Strategies that support career development for all employees while dismantling barriers to full engagement (including access to training, benefits and career growth) for targeted employees.

Platform strategies are foundational to workforce investment strategies. Together they support a workplace where all employees feel valued and the employer leverages the full potential of its labor talent. The platform strategies are the most challenging for an employer to undertake but are paramount to removing barriers to employment in the attraction, selection, participation and retention of employees. True cultural change will take time; progress will be incremental over years, not months. Only through this type of systematic, foundational approach will the City achieve real advancement in terms of greater representation of, and participation by, employees of color and other historically marginalized and under-represented groups in the City’s workforce. The resulting increase in the diversity of experience and constructive engagement from employees within the workforce is intended to improve service delivery, employee retention and employee productivity, which is critical to the City of Seattle’s ability to best serve the people and communities of Seattle.

Additionally, strategy bundles, rather than single-pronged approaches, have been found in other organizations to have a greater effect on reducing barriers to workforce equity in the workplace. The success of bundling reinforces the concept of the platform strategies, but also suggests that workforce investment strategies should be implemented in a coordinated approach. This approach can be concurrent, but should not exclude the platform strategies that enable effective workforce investment strategies.

The cost estimates of the platform and workforce investment strategies considered in this Plan are in Figure 1. This is not an exhaustive list of all strategies that could deliver progress on workforce equity. Additional strategies that surfaced during the later stages of development of this report will be considered in an annual workforce equity accountability report, the first of which will be delivered in December 2017. A commitment to workforce equity is not new to the City of Seattle. However, as with any new body of work, resources are necessary to implement the work. These high-level cost estimates indicate the necessary resources, but are solely based on new budget impacts and do not capture the secondary costs or potential off-setting benefits to the City that may accompany a strategy.

Figure 1. Workforce Equity Strategies Explored

Workforce Equity Strategies	1 st Year Budget Impact Estimate*	Already Underway	New
Platform			
Training to promote unbiased employment decisions	\$265,000		X
Sustained & accountable commitment by leadership	\$0	X	
Adopted, citywide employee performance management	\$270,000	X	
Improved tracking of workforce demographics metrics	TBD ¹		X
Consolidated Human Resources	\$255,000 ²	X	
Interactive, externally-facing employee web portal	\$200,000-\$400,000		X
Workforce Investment			
Employment pathways	\$160,000		X
Improved access to flexible scheduling	\$200,000		X
Increased access to training	\$110,000+TBD ³		X
Infant at work policy	Absorbed by dept.		X
Leadership development programs	\$300,000	X	
Onsite childcare	\$1.7-\$5.1M		X
Paid family leave (4 weeks)	\$590,000		
Paid family leave (8 weeks)	\$3,790,000		X
Paid family leave (12 weeks)	\$8,370,000		
Paid parental leave (4 weeks)	Already budgeted	X	
Paid parental leave (8 weeks)	\$1,730,000		X
Paid parental leave (12 weeks)	\$3,990,000		
Revised seniority restarts	\$0		X
Step wage increases	\$550,000		X
Subsidies for childcare	\$1,200,000		X
Targeted recruitment	\$50,000	X	
Strategic Plan Accountability			
Strategic Plan Project Manager	\$130,000		X
Racial Equity Toolkit	\$0	X	

¹ TBD is necessary for this strategy because the technology investments necessary to better track workforce demographic data require in-depth exploration and are unknown at this time.

² This cost assumes full funding of the Deputy Director of Service Delivery and Director of Strategic Implementation, Organizational Development & Learning positions filled in 2016.

³ \$110,000 reflects only the cost for citywide license access to an E-Learning program and not the additional costs necessary to fund this strategy, which requires further policy direction before a full cost estimate can be developed.

Recommendations

As a result of the finding that coordinated strategy bundles are more effective, platform strategies establishing a culture shift necessary for effective workforce investment are recommended as the top priority, followed by workforce investment strategies. In order to achieve real change leading to increased workforce equity, implementation of the platform strategies is a prerequisite commitment to implementing workforce investment strategies. In other words, platform strategies without investment strategies will still affect structural and institutional change to promote greater workforce equity. The reverse, however, is not true. The final recommendations reflect the need for Plan accountability and annual tracking of the incremental progress this Plan will deliver.

1. **Platform Strategies:** The platform strategies are foundational to removing historical and institutional barriers in the workplace, enabling equitable access to any workforce investment policies. For example, research on promoting diversity and inclusion in the workplace, consistent accountability from leadership at all levels is critical to effectively tracking the results of targeted recruitment efforts. The platform strategies addressed in this Plan include:
 - Training to promote unbiased employment decisions
 - Sustained and accountable commitment by leadership
 - Adopted, citywide employee performance management
 - Improved tracking of workforce demographics metrics
 - Consolidated human resources
 - Interactive employee web portal with an external emphasis

2. **Workforce Investment Strategies:** In order to elicit a lasting improvement on workforce equity the workforce investment policies discussed in this Plan are dependent upon the platform strategies; however, implementation can be concurrent with platform strategies. Implementation of the platform strategies are fundamental to the workforce investment strategies, as is demonstrated in the example of increased access to flexible scheduling: the benefits of flexible scheduling are dependent upon consistent, accountable and aligned application of the benefit citywide that will be made possible through the human resources consolidation efforts and performance management program development, both currently underway. With this in mind, the following workforce investment strategies are recommended to reduce barriers to workforce equity and eliminate known disparities at the City:
 - Targeted recruitment
 - Leadership development programs
 - Improved access to flexible scheduling
 - Increased access to training
 - Paid family leave, including paid parental leave and family care leave benefits
 - Employment pathways
 - Revised seniority restarts
 - Step wage increases

It also must be noted that many of the workforce investment strategies proposed in this Plan rely on negotiations with the labor unions that represent City of Seattle employees.

3. **Plan Accountability:** As with any strategic plan, this Plan will only be as good as its implementation. Thus, it is recommended that an annual report be provided to the Mayor and City Council on the activities undertaken to promote workforce equity and the incremental progress that has been demonstrated. The Seattle Department of Human Resources, through the Workforce Equity Director and a designated project manager, will be tasked with delivering this report. In addition, in the past the City has relied on the Workforce Equity Planning and Advisory Committee (WEPAC) to make recommendations on how to reduce barriers to workforce equity. More recently it has also developed a Workforce Equity Interdepartmental Team (IDT), a result of the Mayor's Executive Order 2015-02 on the Workforce Equity Initiative. It is recommended that a group, similar to WEPAC and the IDT, including Labor representatives, be engaged to guide the project and accountability report and that the work of the IDT be subsumed into this Plan.

As a part of the accountability process, it is also recommended that proposed strategies move through the Racial Equity Toolkit (RET). Steps 1 and 2 were completed as a part of the development of the Plan and steps 3-6 of the RET will be completed during the implementation. This will include revisiting the identified stakeholders to determine the benefits, burdens and potential unintended consequences of the proposed strategies in this Plan and to explore other additional strategies that surfaced through the development of this report. The feedback from stakeholders on the unintended consequences of the strategies will inform the potential adjustments for the workforce equity strategies to advance opportunity and minimize harm. The final steps will require transparent communication with City employees. The continued work of the RET will be included in the annual workforce equity accountability report as a part of this commitment to transparent communication with employees. Any additional strategies that surface during the RET will also be included in the annual accountability report.

Strategies That Are Not Recommended at This Time:

Strategies that are not recommended are workforce investment strategies not found to have an immediate or substantial impact on workforce equity. The literature finds that inclusive workforce investment strategies are more beneficial to workforce equity (Lindsay et al., 2013). Employees validated, through the survey and listening sessions, the below strategies as less inclusive. Additionally, the City of Seattle faces resource constraints and must make choices when investing in workforce equity. The strategies below target parents, especially those with younger children. The workforce equity literature also finds that flexible scheduling and paid family leave policies have greater impact on equity in the workplace for parents than the strategies listed. The strategies that are not recommended in this report include:

- Infant at work
- Onsite childcare
- Subsidies for childcare

Budget

The recommended strategy bundles are captured in Figure 2. It is recommended that the City pursue the platform strategies more immediately, while concurrently phasing in the workforce investment strategies over time.

Figure 2. Workforce Equity Strategic Plan Recommendations

Workforce Equity Strategic Plan Recommendations	Annual Budget Impact Estimated in 2016 dollars
1. Workforce Equity Platform Strategies	
Training to promote unbiased employment decisions	\$265,000
Sustained & accountable commitment by leadership	\$0
Adopted, citywide employee performance management	\$270,000
Improved tracking of workforce demographics metrics	TBD ⁴
Consolidated human resources	\$255,000 ⁵
Interactive, externally-facing employee web portal	\$200,000-\$400,000
Sub Total	\$990,000 - \$1,190,000
2. Workforce Investment Strategies	
Targeted recruitment	\$50,000
Leadership development programs	\$300,000 (\$160,000 year 2)
Paid family leave, including a paid parental leave benefit (4-12 weeks)	\$590,000-\$8,370,000
Paid parental leave (8-12 weeks)	\$1,730,000-\$3,990,000
Improved access to flexible scheduling	\$200,000
Increased access to training	\$110,000+TBD ⁶
Employment pathways	\$160,000
Revised seniority restarts	\$0
Step wage increases	\$550,000
Sub Total	\$1,370,000 + TBD
3. Strategic Plan Accountability	
Completion of Racial Equity Toolkit	\$0
Project Manager	\$130,000
Sub Total	\$130,000

⁴ TBD is necessary for this strategy because the technology investments necessary to better track workforce demographic data require in-depth exploration and are unknown at this time.

⁵ This cost assumes full funding of the Deputy Director of Service Delivery and Director of Strategic Implementation, Organizational Development & Learning positions filled in 2016.

⁶ \$110,000 reflects only the cost for citywide license access to an E-Learning program and not the additional costs necessary to fund this strategy which requires further policy direction before a full cost estimate can be developed.

Timeline

Promoting greater workforce equity relies on removing years of historical and ingrained barriers to an inclusive workplace. This effort requires time, commitment and measurement of incremental progress made possible through the platform strategies. Advancing these strategies over a three to five year timeline will balance the fact that catalyzing a culture shift takes sustained dedication over time. Though incremental progress will be tracked over time, years four and five of the Plan will be critical for beginning to measure the impact of the plan. If the timeline were to be expedited, additional resources would be needed. Additionally, many of these recommendations will need to be negotiated with the Labor Unions that represent many of the City's workforce. It is possible this timing will be adjusted due to the Labor implications of particular strategies.

Implementation of the Plan rests with the Seattle Department of Human Resources Workforce Equity Division in partnership with the Seattle Office of Civil Rights. Over the first two years of Plan implementation, the following actions will be pursued:

1. Obtain direction from policy-makers to narrow the form and function of the recommended strategies and investments.
2. Engage the Workforce Equity Planning and Advisory Committee, or a similar advisory body, to guide the implementation of this strategic Plan.
3. Apply Racial Equity Toolkit steps 3-6 to the strategies, coordinating with the City's Affinity Groups and Race and Social Justice Change Teams.
4. Develop more precise cost estimates for each strategy, including cost estimates for those strategies that require further policy direction before a cost estimate could be developed.
5. Negotiate with the Labor Unions.
6. Develop accountability metrics and a tracking protocol for the annual workforce equity accountability report as well as assessments of additional workforce equity strategies that surfaced during the development of this Plan.
7. Integrate the citywide work of the Workforce Equity Interdepartmental Team (IDT) for Executive Order 2015-02 into implementation of this Plan to focus citywide workforce equity efforts and reduce redundancy. Actions specific to the identified departments may be undertaken separately.
8. Develop an engagement survey to guide and track progress on the Workforce Equity Strategic Plan, beginning with an established baseline in 2017.
9. Hire a project coordinator to manage the timely delivery of each component of the plan at a cost of \$130,000.

Conclusion

This first ever Workforce Equity Strategic Plan for the City of Seattle sets the stage for the City to deliver a higher level of service to the residents and communities of Seattle as a result of its commitment to an inclusive and fully engaged workforce. Platform strategies will enable the dismantling of barriers to employee full participation that will support the efficacy of the subsequent workforce investment strategies. Resources and time are necessary for the success of this Plan, but the benefits through a more engaged, productive workforce will position the City of Seattle among the league of national employers leading on workforce equity.

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