**City of Seattle**

**Racial Equity Toolkit (RET) Summary Sheet**

**Cover Sheet and Questions**

**Department/Office:** Office of Sustainability and Environment

**Name of policy, program, etc. analyzed:**

Environmental Justice Fund and KCD Seattle Community Partnership Grant management and application processes

**Names and titles of key staff that led this RET process:**

Ximena Fonseca-Morales, Equity & Environment Program Coordinator

Alyssa Patrick, Strategic Advisor, Food Policy & Programs

**Dates of RET process:** 06/2020-12/2020

1. **Describe the project, program, policy or budgetary decision that you assessed using the Racial Equity Toolkit.**

This Racial Equity Toolkit explored changes that could made to two community grant processes to make them more accessible and responsive to the needs and constraints of BIPOC community groups during the COVID crisis in 2020. These two processes are the [Environmental Justice Fund](https://www.seattle.gov/environment/equity-and-environment/equity-and-environment-initiative/environmental-justice-fund) (EJF) and the [Seattle-King Conservation District Partnership Grant](https://kingcd.org/tools-resources/grants/seattle-community-partnership-grant-program/) Program (KCD Seattle). The EJF is s a City-funded grant opportunity for community-led projects that improve environmental conditions, respond to impacts of climate change and get us closer to achieving environmental justice. The KCD Seattle grant program is a partnership with [King Conservation District](https://kingcd.org/tools-resources/grants/seattle-community-partnership-grant-program/), a Special District with its own governance structure, including an elected Board of Supervisors. In this grant program, OSE partners with KCD to determine the grantmaking guidelines, and in 2018 we aligned the grant program with the [Equity & Environment Agenda](https://www.seattle.gov/Documents/Departments/OSE/Equity/SeattleEEAgenda.pdf). However, the KCD Board of Supervisors has decision-making authority over the funds, which introduces some additional barriers for racial equity, as noted in this toolkit.

**2. List the racial equity outcome(s) that you set in Step 1 of the RET process.**

The racial equity outcomes we aimed to meet by making changes to the Environmental Justice Fund (EJF) and King Conservation District Seattle Partnership Grant (KCD Seattle) grantee expectations and funding processes were:

* Community organizations and groups that are led by or work in solidarity with Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) have flexibility to adjust their projects to meet their communities’ emerging needs.
* Grants are more accessible to community organizations and groups that are led by or work in solidarity with BIPOC at a time when staff capacity is even more limited

**3. Which stakeholders (groups and/or key individuals) did you engage in this RET? In what ways did you engage them?**

* **EJ Fund Grantees**: Gathered feedback through conversations with grantees to understand organizational needs, challenges impacting communities that are exacerbated by COVID-19, and the changes that would help them meet their organizational and communities’ needs.
* **KCD Seattle Grantees:** Sent a survey to grantees asking what needs they had to adjust projects due to COVID and their preferences for the 2021 grant cycle. Also held input sessions to gather additional qualitative feedback from organizations.
* **KCD Staff**: Consulted with KCD staff about which changes recommended in grantee feedback were possible.

**4. Please describe up to five key benefits and/or burdens for people of color of this policy, program, project, or other decision, which the RET process helped you to identify or confirm.**

Through engagement with EJ Fund and KCD Seattle grantees, our RET team identified the following burdens grantees experienced as a result of COVID-19. These burdens needed to be addressed to ensure grantees could pivot their work to better serve their communities.

1. COVID-19 put large economic and staff capacity strains on organizations making it more important for funding processes to be as simple and accessible as possible. We also know that BIPOC-led organizations are historically underfunded and may feel these strains more acutely.
2. COVID-19 required social distancing which necessitated grantees pivoting their work designed to be in person. As a result, grantees would be unable to complete projects on original timelines.
3. COVID-19 required a transition to online programming which created a barrier for grantees that did not have access to technology nor funds to purchase them for their staff. This transition also exacerbated the digital gap that our communities face, including access to equipment, internet, and online software/tools in language.

**5. Please describe up to five key actions – things that you will do differently or begin to do now – of this policy, program, project, or other decision, which will increase opportunity and/or minimize harm for people of color.**

EJ Fund:

1. Incorporated flexibility into the grant program to benefit grantees which included:
   * Extension of project completion deadline from June 2022 to November 2022 to ensure grantees have additional time to meet their project goals
   * Flexibility to adjust proposals including proposed changes to project budgets and adjustments to project scopes which benefit BIPOC communities.
2. Streamlined the 2020 EJ Fund application to decrease the administrative burden of submitting a proposal for funding and provided flexibility to fund proposals that also seek to address emergent needs caused by COVID.

KCD Seattle:

1. Wrote letter to Board of Supervisors requesting grantees be allowed to adjust project scopes and timelines in response to COVID and to add technology purchases (especially related to COVID technology access needs) as an allowable expense.

* KCD Board of Supervisors agreed with including flexibilities for existing grantees, but ultimately did not choose to make technology an allowable expense.

1. For the 2020 grant round, we simplified the application process to reduce administrative burden by eliminating the LOI stage (went from two-step to one-step application process).
2. Following the example of the EJ Fund, we also added a virtual presentation option to give grantees the opportunity to explain their projects verbally and in-language (translation was provided and requested by two organizations).

**6. How will leadership ensure implementation of the actions described in question 4?**

OSE leadership supported the proposed changes to the 2020 grant processes for both programs. We implemented the activities and plan to continue integrating them into the structures of both the EJ Fund and KCD Seattle for the 2020 grantmaking cycles and beyond. The effectiveness of the implemented changes will be tracked through check-ins with grantees and will be reported to leadership. Acknowledging that COVID-19 will impact our BIPOC communities for years to come, we will continue to assess additional changes that may be needed and work with leadership on implementation.

**7. How have/will you report back to your stakeholders? (This includes the people who were directly engaged in this RET process, those who will be affected by decisions made, and other departments or divisions impacted by the RET findings and the actions described in question 4.)**

Both programs have open lines of communication with funded organizations and those that are applying which has helped build and maintain relationships. The EJ Fund has regular check-ins with grantees and a final report that helps assess the benefits that were possible with the funding, and to give opportunities for feedback to make improvements in the future. KCD staff also have regular check-ins with KCD Seattle grantees and seek feedback on the grant process on an ad hoc basis.

**8. What additional racial equity issues did this RET reveal? Consider how these unresolved issues present opportunities for structural transformation (i.e. working across departments, and with other institutions and sectors to achieve racial equity).**

The RET revealed that there are some limitations to the changes we can easily make to the KCD Seattle grant process since the funding comes from KCD. The Board of Supervisors did not want to change their technology policy and a major sticking point of the program remains that it is reimbursement-based. As organizations experience increased economic strain it is even more important to consider alternative options that would allow organizations to receive at least a portion of funds up front. The grant program made some significant strides as a result of the 2017 RET, and we will continue working with KCD to make additional changes to create a more equitable overall process.