



Workforce Equity 5-Year Strategic Plan

2024

The City of Seattle's workforce must represent the people who live, work, and play in the City of Seattle by race, gender, and disability to better serve the greater community.

Led by the City of Seattle Workforce Equity Planning & Advisory Committee

Acknowledgments

This City of Seattle Workforce Equity Strategic Plan was developed on Indigenous land, the traditional territories of the Coast Salish People. We acknowledge the legacies of genocide, enslavement, exploitation, displacement, and other forms of structural violence that bring us to where we are today and that people working for the U.S., state, and municipal government led much of this violence. We are committed to a future of justice and co-liberation, which brings us together to do antiracist work from these traditional territories of the Coast Salish People. We uplift and honor the traditional stewards of these lands who continue building vibrant communities today.

We also want to acknowledge and honor the Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) employees at the City of Seattle, particularly women and gender non-binary individuals, who have organized for racial justice and workforce equity. The existence of workforce equity work in the City is because of their long history of organizing for racial equity and social justice within city government and the community. This Workforce Equity Strategic Plan is only possible with them.

Thank you to the many BIPOC women, people who identify as gender non-conforming, people who identify as having a disability, and people in frontline roles who shared their stories to provide the foundational qualitative data and direction for this 5-Year Strategic Plan.

We would also like to thank and acknowledge the following people who contributed to the development of this Workforce Equity Strategic Plan:

Special Thanks to those who played a central role in developing this strategic plan:

Bailey Hinckley, SHR (primary drafter)
Christopher Artis, SHR
Josie Watanabe, SHR
Felecia Caldwell, SHR (Formerly)
Dr. Andrea Ramirez, SHR (Formerly)
Denise Colvin, SDOT
Jessica Smith, SPL
Reagen Price, SCL
Salma Siddick, SDOT

Thank you to the Workforce Equity Planning and Advisory Committee 2021-2023 Members:

Kimberly Loving, SHR – Co-Sponsor
Derrick Wheeler-Smith, OCR – Co-Sponsor
Christopher Artis, SHR –Lead
Davida Ingram, OCR – Lead (Formerly)
Erika Pablo, OCR –Lead (Formerly)
Mariko Lockhart, OCR – Co-Chair (2021)
Bobby Humes, SHR – Co-Chair (2021)
Felecia Caldwell, SHR – Lead (2022)
Jenifer Chao, OCR—Lead (2022)
Tamar Zere, OCR – Lead (2021)
Lovell Davis, ARTS
Diana Falchuk, ARTS & OCR (2021)
Joseph Russell, CBO
Elisa Young, FAS
Norma Garza, HSD (2021)
Edward Odom, Seattle IT
Anthony Davis, Seattle IT/SHR
Iman Ibrahim, OCR (2021)
Jessica Smith, SHR (2022)
Reagen Price, SCL
Linda Elwood, SDCI (2020)

Denise Colvin, SHR (2022)
Bailey Hinckley, SHR
Josie Watanabe, SHR (2023)
Geoff Miller, SHR (2022)
Dr. Andrea Ramirez, SHR (2022)
Salma Siddick, SDOT (2022)
Orion Baker, SFD
Erwin Chappel, SFD
Maliaka White, SMC
Loraine Greening, SPD
Darryl Cook, SPR (2022)
Desiree Tabares, SPR (2022)
Michael Davis, SPR (2021)
Mary Keefe, Local 763
Alisha Gregory-Davis, Local 17 (2021)
Kaite Mark, Local 17

Thank you to the following current and former City employees who helped make this work possible:

Adiam Emery, OCR
Aisha Foster, SHR
Dr. Amarah Khan, OEO
Belén Herrera, SHR/SDOT
Benjamin Eyer, SHR
Connor Dooley, SHR/ Seattle IT
Dave Wright, SHR
David Hennes, CBO
Debbie White, SHR (2021)
Ebony Thomas, SHR
Elsa Nakahara, SHR
Heather Weldon, SHR
Jana Elliott, SHR
Janell Morgan Ndegwa, SHR
Jennifer Sy, SHR (formerly)
Keith Gulley, SHR
Manuela Marculescu, SHR
Michelle Pérez, SHR
Natonía Tayag, SHR
Patricia Narvaez-Wheeler, SHR (2021)
Emma Phan, OEO
Rachael Schade, SHR
Sallie Berry, SHR
Sandra Wong, SHR
Stefani Thornton, SHR

Steve Zwerin, SHR (2022)
Susan Coskey, SHR (2017)
Tina Devrin, SHR
Vivien Sharples, SHR (2022)
Yoshiko Grace Matsui, SHR

Thank you to the Mayor's Office

Mayor Bruce Harrell
Senior Deputy Mayor Monisha Harrell
(Formerly)
Deputy Mayor Greg Wong

Thank you to the Seattle City Council for their unyielding support of Workforce Equity at the City and for funding the first Workforce Equity strategic plan in 2016, establishing an ongoing City commitment to City workers so that we can best serve the diverse people who live, work, and play in Seattle.

Thank you to Lucy Yee Management Consulting, particularly DonYeta Villavaso-Madden, who led this work's first phase of employee engagement and qualitative data analysis in the Fall of 2021.

PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

Table of Contents

Acknowledgments	1
A Note from the Workforce Equity Director.....	6
Executive Summary.....	7
Introduction.....	8
Creating the Strategic Plan.....	9
3 Key Opportunities Driving Workforce Equity Strategy 2024-28.....	15
What are the strategies for the next five years for Workforce Equity?	16
Six Strategies to Support Overall Employee Inclusion	17
Unifying Next-Level Inclusion Through Equity (UNITE).....	18
Metrics to Measure Progress	18
Who is the 5-Year Plan Accountable to?	19
Afterword	22
Appendix.....	23

A Note from the Workforce Equity Director

In 1964, the Civil Rights Act was passed, ending “Jim Crow” laws and prohibiting discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. This marked a significant victory in the fight to create a society where everyone has equal access to the opportunities and resources necessary to pursue the “American Dream.” In the wake of this historic achievement, many people reached the conclusion that the United States had become a country where anyone could be successful simply through hard work and determination. However, this “pull yourself up by your bootstraps” mentality fails to consider the lasting consequences of America’s racist history as well as the many institutional barriers that Black Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) continue to face.

There is still much work to be done.

- Black and brown people continue to see higher unemployment rates and underrepresentation in high-paying jobs (Bureau of Labor Statistics).
- In 2021, overall income for Black Americans was 49% lower than White Americans, and the 2020 Census found that the poverty rate for black families was twice that of white families (US Census Bureau).
- Even something as simple as a person’s name can derail their career pursuits. One Harvard University study found that when people of color “whitened” their resumes (i.e. used “white”-sounding names) they got more callbacks for corporate interviews.

Those are only a few examples of the barriers people most impacted by race and gender must overcome. Throughout this document, you will see words and phrases that indicate an awareness of the historical and ongoing injustices this plan attempts to address. Phrases like “dominant culture” and “systemic racism” speak directly to the circumstances described above, where policies and institutions are advantageous for one group while hindering the success of others. Replacing the words Latino/Latina (masculine/feminine) with “Latine” gives visibility to gender non-conforming people, who are often dismissed for not aligning with the binary view of gender-identity that society imposes. I invite you to explore these terms, and others, in the glossary at the end of this strategic plan.

Workforce equity is not about showing preferential treatment. It is not about blaming and shaming those with privilege. Workforce equity is about acknowledging context. It is about recognizing the unique challenges faced by communities that have been disenfranchised, under-resourced, and marginalized for centuries and instituting effective, data-driven programs and practices to produce equitable outcomes. Institutional and structural racism cannot be transformed without creating the conditions to affect that change. That is the intent of this plan and the motivation of this division’s ongoing work. There were many people who preceded the existing team who contributed their time, expertise, and ideas to the creation of this plan. I am grateful for the foundation they provided for us to build on, and I look forward to partnering with you in our efforts to create a safe, inclusive, and equitable working environment for City of Seattle employees where all people can find opportunity, purpose, and belonging.

In partnership,

Christopher Artis,
Director for Workforce Equity

Executive Summary

In 2016, the City of Seattle's (City) first [Workforce Equity Strategic Plan](#) was implemented. This plan enabled the City to develop the infrastructure for measuring the workforce equity and culture shift work necessary to progress toward an inclusive workplace where everyone belongs and can best serve the people who live, work, and play in Seattle. The 2024 Workforce Equity Strategic Plan builds from that work and the ongoing, decades-long legacy of racial equity organizing work by Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) through the City's [Race and Social Justice Initiative](#) (RSJI). This plan includes six priorities, and the Workforce Equity division, in collaboration with key interdepartmental stakeholders, will identify and recommend best practices that will lead to positive Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility (IDEA)¹ outcomes. Implementing this strategic plan will rely on partnering with City subject matter experts to devise action steps that consider the unique circumstances and business needs of each City department.

The following priorities will define Workforce Equity Strategy in the City for the next five years:

Attraction & Selection Phases of the Employee Life Cycle:

- 1. Remove Barriers to Equity in the Internal Hiring Process for Black Women, Indigenous Women, Women of color, and Employees Who Identify as Having a Disability:** Support each City department's adoption of more equitable hiring processes and evaluative tools.
- 2. Attract & Gain Indigenous and Latine Talent to City jobs:** Advise and support City-wide implementation of best practices in recruiting, evaluating, and hiring talent from underrepresented communities.

Development & Retention Phases of the Employee Life Cycle:

- 3. Retain Black Women, Indigenous Women, Women of Color, and Employees who Identify as having a Disability:** Support and sustain culturally responsive mentorship programs, continuous learning and career development opportunities, and inclusion cohorts for all employees.
- 4. Advance Inclusion, Belonging, and Relational Culture Across the City to Enable all Employees to Thrive in City Service:** Specific, targeted support to managers, supervisors, and teams to ensure belonging in the workplace and the best service to the multi-cultural communities the City serves.

Ongoing Responsiveness

- 5. Engage Employees on How to Continuously Improve & Target Workforce Equity Initiatives at the City:** Develop and implement existing data collection tools to better understand how to support an inclusive workplace.
- 6. Support Emerging Employee Needs:** Leverage ongoing stakeholder engagement to identify and respond to emerging and urgent employee needs while centering those most impacted by structural racism.

¹ Indiana Arts Commission. What exactly is inclusion, diversity, equity and access. 2021. Available at: <https://www.in.gov/arts/programs-and-services/resources/inclusion-diversity-equity-and-access-idea/>. Accessed July 15, 2021.

Introduction

After decades of organizing for racial justice and equity by employees at the City of Seattle, the first Workforce Equity Strategic Plan was launched in 2016. Since then, it has existed to uphold the City's commitment to the Race and Social Justice Initiative, officially adopted in 2004.

The 2024 Workforce Equity Strategic Plan is informed by the past seven years of workforce equity work and is designed to focus the City's workforce equity efforts through 2029. Specifically, this targeted plan emphasizes the City-wide attempt to create a more representative workforce that is inclusive of the communities we serve.

The institutional and structural racism in society cannot be transformed without first creating the conditions to affect that change. Workforce equity is one component of the foundational work to build an inclusive, relational culture at the City of Seattle.² This directly connects to Mayor Harrell's [One Seattle Initiative](#) to build a "thriving, innovative, and equitable city."

The Workforce Equity division at the City of Seattle supports the broader City [Race & Social Justice Initiative and Ordinance](#) to serve those most impacted by structural racism in the greater Seattle Metropolitan Area. For workforce equity, this includes the underlying conditions to:

1. Dismantle the systems, processes, and organizational culture contributing to inequitable outcomes for historically oppressed people.
2. Create an equitable, transformational, antiracist workplace that encourages City workers to thrive.
3. Empower City workers to make meaningful contributions to racial justice organizing work and support Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) community aims and objectives.

Vision—The North Star

The City of Seattle is transformed into a multicultural, antiracist institution where BIPOC employees hold collective power in decision-making for policies and practices that impact the greater Metropolitan Seattle area.

Workforce equity creates the environment for an equitable workplace that makes it possible to achieve this vision. The role of the Workforce Equity division is found in the City's definition of workforce equity:

² <https://belonging.berkeley.edu/targeted-universalism>

Workforce Equity is...

When the workforce is inclusive of people of color and other marginalized or under-represented groups at a rate representative of King County at all levels of City employment;

Where institutional and structural barriers impacting employee attraction, selection, participation, and retention have been eliminated, enabling opportunities for employment success and career growth.

Mission—The core values in our work

The Workforce Equity Division's role is to involve stakeholders at all levels of the organization in the creation of collaborative, sustainable solutions to workplace inequity while amplifying the voices of the employees most impacted by structural racism at the City. We do this by:

1. Listening to employees to develop, recommend, and implement policies, tools, and other mechanisms to enable a relational³, multicultural institution.
2. Creating a continuous feedback loop for employees at all levels of the organization and intentionally sharing actions taken with those most impacted by workplace inequities, including BIPOC women, those identifying as gender-non-binary or transgender, and those identifying as having a disability.
3. Collaborating with employees, specifically centering the work and voices of community racial justice organizers, including supporting the Race and Social Justice Ordinance, 3.14.941-3.14.945. (RSJI). RSJI is the citywide effort to end institutionalized racism and race-based disparities in the City of Seattle government; and
4. Connecting all Workforce Equity division work to the City's [Employee Values](#), [Relational Culture Values](#), and [RSJ Accepted Truths](#).

Creating the Strategic Plan

This Workforce Equity Strategic Plan was developed in collaboration with the Workforce Equity Planning and Advisory Committee (WEPAC), an inter-racial, interdepartmental team of employees sponsored by the directors of Seattle Human Resources (SHR) and the Office for Civil Rights (OCR). The Steering Committee, a subcommittee of WEPAC members who guided the development of the WFE Strategic Plan, included representatives from Seattle City Light (SCL), Human Resources, and Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT).

³ https://www.seattle.gov/documents/Departments/RSJI/Building%20a%20Relational%20Culture_For%20Web_3.12.21.pdf

How stakeholder engagement and data analysis shaped this work:

1. **Stakeholder Engagement:** Stakeholder engagement focused on employees most vulnerable and made invisible by marginalization:
 - i. **Black, Indigenous, and Latine women** in temporary and regular roles with 5+ years of service. Primarily sessions were for those in service and maintenance, temporary, and administrative positions, with one session for the Indigenous Affinity Group, CANOES. This group of stakeholders had their storytelling session led by a third party consultant to create a safer environment for employees to share their stories and document these stories from a non-City perspective.
 - ii. **Employees in Supported Employment Positions and employees who self-identify as having physical or cognitive disabilities.**
 - iii. **Employees in racial equity leadership positions at the City**, including but not limited to Race and Social Justice Change Team Co-Leads, employees in equity lead positions, employees who are members of Seattle Silence Breakers, and the Anti-Racist Coalition (affinity groups).
2. **Shaping the vision:** A diverse, interdepartmental Workforce Equity Strategic Plan Steering Committee, recruited from the Workforce Equity Planning and Advisory Committee (WEPAC), defined the vision statement and guided the entire Racial Equity Toolkit for this Strategic Plan.
3. **The Six Strategies.** The Steering Committee reviewed the available data on WFE at the City and the input from the stakeholder engagement sessions to identify the six key strategies for the 2024 WFE strategic plan. Three diverse, interdepartmental working groups were formed, to further refine the six strategies that would connect to the WFE Division's work.
4. **Verifying accuracy.** Before finalizing the strategies, WEPAC reached back out to the stakeholder groups listed above, with sessions for each group, to hear their input on the accuracy of the qualitative data collected during the storytelling sessions and their insights on the focus areas and underlying strategies. WEPAC also engaged the City's Race and Social Justice Team in the Office of Civil Rights, HR Leadership Team, Office of the Employee Ombud, representatives in leadership positions across the City most impacted by the WFE strategies, the Mayor's Office, and the City's Labor Partners (who are also members of WEPAC) to gather their insights.
5. **Ongoing Reporting.** For ongoing reporting, the Workforce Equity Division commits to the following over the next five years:
 - Leadership and RSJ Leads from across the City will be kept well-informed of the Strategic Plan work and progress annually and understand how to engage and support this work.
 - An accessible, annual reporting internet resource will be defined and utilized, different from the annual reports from the first strategic plan, to ensure transparency to employees and the public on progress.

The Data Approach

Data tells us stories to better inform and achieve workforce equity. The Workforce Equity division's data approach includes utilizing employee stakeholder data and current workforce statistics collected from the City's Human Resources Information System.

Employee Stakeholder Engagements were held to collect qualitative data and included categorizing and open coding of the information collected. A prioritization on outlier analysis was made to ensure that often undercounted and uncounted voices were heard. Outlier themes emerged from BIPOC women and Gender Non-Binary employee experiences in frontline, RSJ, and top-level roles in the City.

Review teams with relevant professional and lived experience examined each raw data set and the ties to emergent themes to ensure accuracy. All parties who took place in storytelling sessions had the opportunity to provide insights and direction on the accuracy of the data findings for this Strategic Plan and the strategies laid out here. This work will continue to be accountable to the employees who shared their stories, which helped shape this plan.

Research internally informs our current practices, while external data points collected from federal government reporting benchmarks community representation. Four key data points inform our strategies.

1) The City of Seattle workforce does not represent the community makeup of King County.

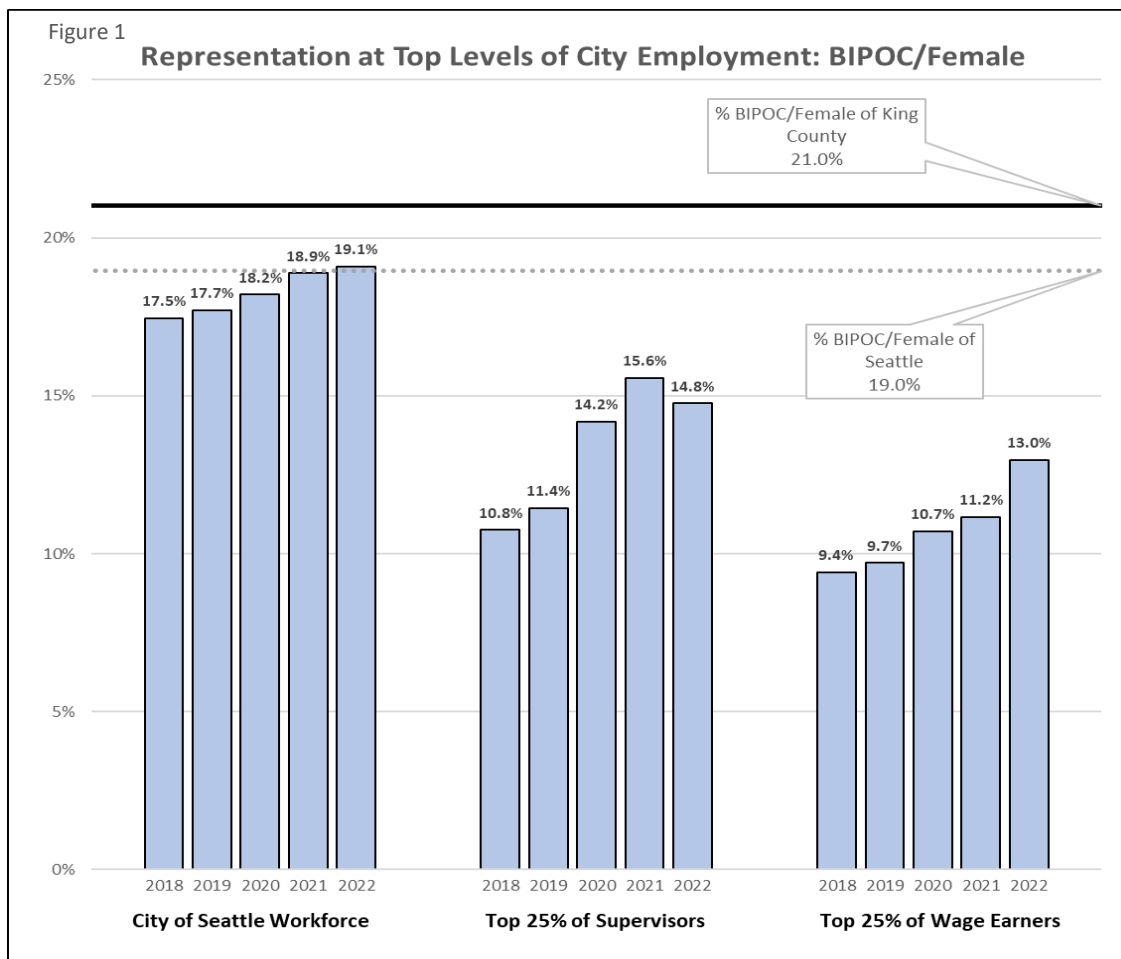
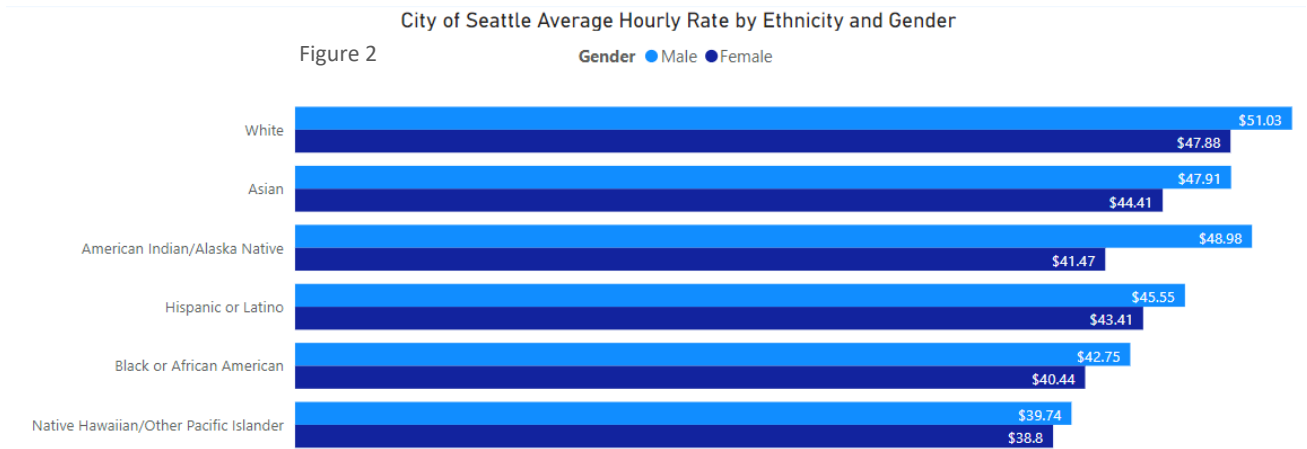


Figure 1 represents the historical underrepresentation of BIPOC women within the City of Seattle workforce, specifically in top supervisory roles and as top wage earners. The most recent data from 2022 shows BIPOC women 6.2% below King County representation (21%). The Workforce Equity division’s strategies are directly informed by this data as our prioritization will be to those most impacted by systemic and cultural barriers driving outcomes as seen above.

City of Seattle employee data was pulled from the City’s Human Resource Information System. General Population figures for Seattle and King County from the 2021 American Community Survey five-year sample.

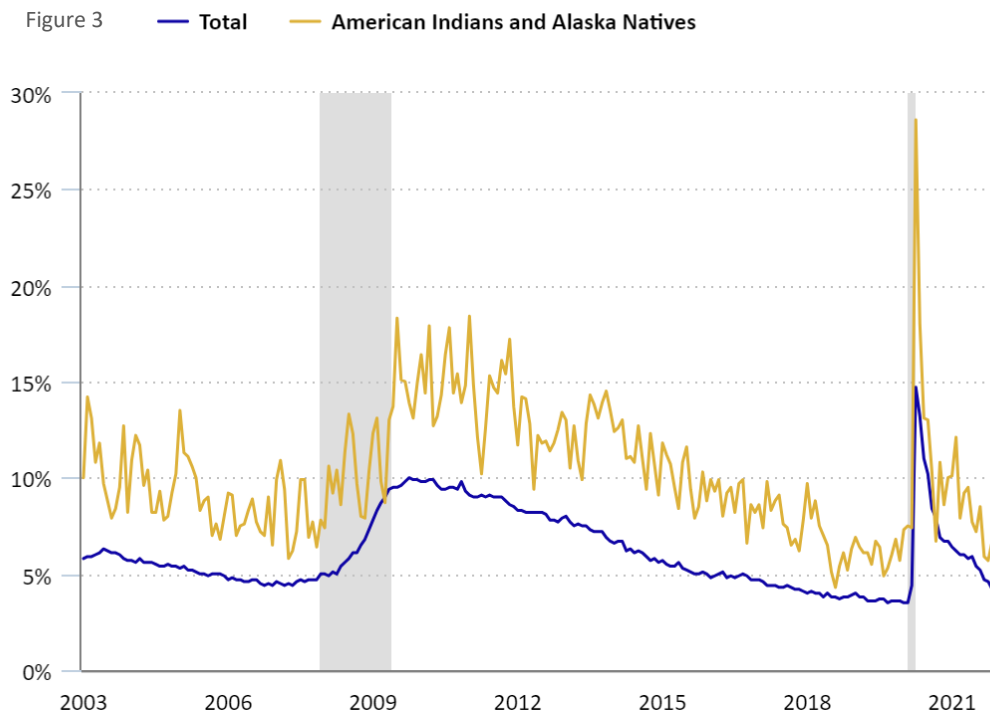
2) Black, Indigenous, and Latine Women are historically underpaid within the City of Seattle workforce.



Breakdowns of pay are ideal indicators of equity within employment. Figure 2 represents the City of Seattle’s average hourly rate for all employees by ethnicity and gender breakdowns. This data represents clear gaps between the highest paid group, White men at \$51.03 comparative to Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander women at \$38.80. Compounding data displays a larger picture where white men are making an averaged \$106,142 per year compared to yearly salaries of Black women (\$84,115), Indigenous women (\$86,257), and Latine women (\$90,292). Long-term impacts of disparate wages impact wealth building, opportunities for growth, and the ability to sustain within the workforce. The reality is, that over a five-year period of time, Black, Indigenous, and Latine women will lose an average of \$96,269 to pay disparities within the current pay structures of city employment.

3) Indigenous peoples have been historically underemployed and unemployed.

Unemployment rates for American Indians and Alaska Natives and for the total population, January 2003 to December 2021



Click legend items to change data display. Hover over chart to view data.

Shaded areas represent recessions as determined by the National Bureau of Economic Research.

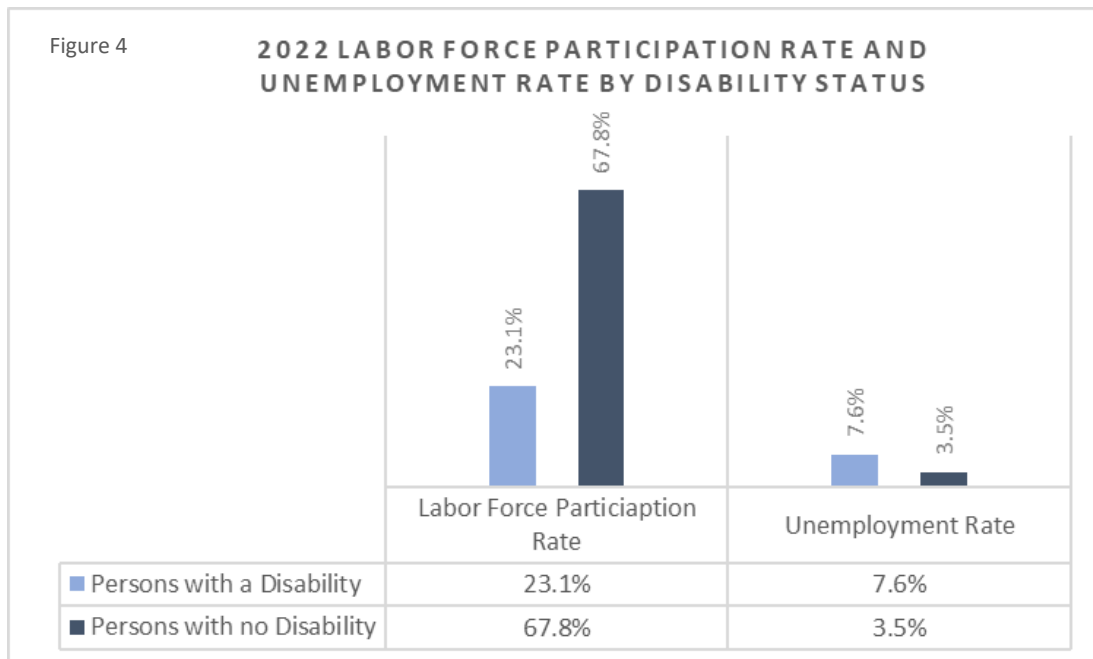
Note: Monthly data for American Indians and Alaska Natives are not seasonally adjusted. The total unemployment rate is seasonally adjusted.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.



The Bureau of Labor Statistics released its first separate monthly jobs report for American Indian and Alaska Native communities in early 2022. While this data has often been disregarded, indigenous communities have been historically underemployed through their availability within the labor force. Figure 3 shows the longitudinal data dating back to 2003 comparing American Indian and Alaska Native unemployment rate to the total unemployment rate (seasonally adjusted). Indigenous people's unemployment rate has staggered around a 10% percent difference in the past decade. This tells us, that indigenous people are getting left behind in the labor market through the underutilization and unemployment of the community.

4) Those who have physical and cognitive disabilities are underrepresented in the workforce.



People who have physical or cognitive disabilities are often underrepresented within the workforce. As seen in Figure 4, the difference between those with and without disabilities represented within the active labor force is distinct. Unemployment rates are almost doubled for those with disabilities and labor force participation is 44% higher for those who are not disabled. It is important to note that the sample group of persons with a disability within this data set were all actively unemployed and eligible for employment.

A Targeted Universalism Approach

Targeted Universalism guides the Workforce Equity strategic plan by identifying a universal goal, which is to increase equitable access to recruitment, hiring, and employee development for all City employees and applicants. Targeted Universalism holds that targeted and differentiated efforts are required to meet the needs of specific employee populations so every employee can have the same high-quality experiences. By focusing on employee groups, such as BIPOC women, who are underrepresented in City employment, particularly in the top levels of City employment, we will make the most significant progress toward our collective workforce equity vision. In addition, we believe that an intentional focus on Indigenous and Latine women and those who identify as gender-non-binary and disabled will benefit other groups experiencing barriers due to the overlap of race, gender, ability, sexual orientation, and culture across our diverse workforce. We will learn how to develop and provide different supports and strategies to meet the needs of specific populations, which will help refine our systems and structures that will ultimately be used to meet the needs of all employees more effectively.

3 Key Opportunities Driving Workforce Equity Strategy 2024-28

The process of developing the 2024 Workforce Equity Strategic Plan resulted in a final focus on three key areas of opportunity in the city. These were informed by employee data, both qualitative and quantitative, and a Targeted Universalism approach.

The 3 key opportunities that will be the focus of the 2024 Workforce Equity Strategic Plan are:

1. All women, specifically Black, Indigenous, and women of color, need career mobility ladders from entry-level roles in the City to the top levels of City employment by pay and supervisory authority.
2. Indigenous communities are getting left behind in the labor market with the highest unemployment rates, and Latine communities are the most under-represented racial identity in the City workforce.
3. Employees with disabilities make up just 1% of the City's workforce according to accommodations data, and yet the Seattle/King County Area Agency on Aging states that 23% of adults in King County live with a disability.

For this reason, improved inclusion of BIPOC who identify as women or gender non-binary, Latine and Indigenous employees, and employees who identify as having physical or cognitive disabilities are critical focuses for the next five years of workforce equity strategy at the City.

What are the strategies for the next five years for Workforce Equity?

There are multiple opportunities for strategic overlap in addressing race, gender, physical and cognitive disability, and their intersections. This strategic plan addresses key inequities over the next five years. The strategies are directly tied to the relevant phases of the employee life cycle, represented visually by the color coding in Figure 1 and Figure 2 (next page).

Strategies 1-2 Bring talent acquisition best practices to the Attraction and Recruitment stages of the employee life cycle while focusing on effecting change for BIPOC women, gender non-binary and Latine candidates and applicants who identify as having a disability.

Strategies 3-4 Affect inclusion, belonging, and relational culture at the employee Development, Retention & Recognition stages of the employee life cycle.

Strategies 5-6 Recognize the importance of agile responsiveness in a complex and continually evolving municipality.



Figure 5

Note: The colors used to represent the employee lifecycle phases in figure 5 correspond to the color coding of the six strategies in figure 6.

Six Strategies to Support Overall Employee Inclusion

Figure 6

1. Remove Barriers to Equity in the Internal Hiring Process for Black, Indigenous, and Women of Color and Employees Who Identify as Having a Disability: Support each City department's adoption of more equitable hiring processes and evaluative tools.	
Challenge:	Create hiring processes that are consistent, transparent, and easy to navigate. Develop a complete and supportive career ladder that will lead BIPOC women to new opportunities and leadership positions.
2. Attract & Gain Indigenous and Latine talent to City jobs: Advise and support City-wide implementation of best practices in recruiting, evaluating, and hiring talent from underrepresented communities	
Challenge:	Use recruitment tools and strategies that will result in City workforce demographics that proportionately represent the surrounding community.
3. Retain Black, Indigenous, and Latine Women and Employees who Identify as having a Disability: Support and sustain culturally responsive programs, continuous learning and career development opportunities, & inclusion cohorts for all employees.	
Challenge:	Create Culturally responsive mentor and employee development programs that support BIPOC women and all employees in obtaining skills and growth opportunities for vertical and lateral promotions.
4. Advance Inclusion, Belonging, and Relational Culture Across the City to Enable all Employees to Thrive in City Service	
Challenge:	Specific, targeted support to managers, supervisors, and teams to ensure belonging in the workplace and the best service to the multi-cultural communities the City serves.
5. Engage Employees to Understand How to Continuously Improve & Target Workforce Equity Initiatives at the City: Develop and implement new and existing data collection tools to better understand how to support an inclusive workforce.	
Challenge:	Prioritize learning through the ongoing collection of qualitative and quantitative data. Engage with the most impacted employees early and often and implement their feedback and suggestions. Share learnings and accomplishments with employees.
6. Support Emerging Employee Needs: Leverage ongoing stakeholder engagement to identify and respond to emerging and urgent employee needs while centering those most impacted by structural racism.	
Challenge:	Focus on engagement and belonging for existing employees in front-line roles who identify as Black, Indigenous, Latine women and gender non-binary or as having a disability; Identify new and existing programs to leverage in promoting employee well-being and building trust.

Path to Progress

Unifying Next-Level Inclusion Through Equity (UNITE)

The UNITE framework will be the vehicle that drives sustainable, City-wide culture change and equity best practice implementation over the next five years. This initiative will operationalize the six employee inclusion strategies through the following:

1. Assessments that will use multiple sources of quantitative and qualitative data to place each City department on a defined equity and inclusiveness continuum; results will be made publicly available on a City of Seattle leaderboard, allowing department leaders, elected officials, and other stakeholders to monitor progress.
2. Individualized best practice recommendations, shaped by the interdepartmental Human Resources Leadership Team and equity leaders, that will provide guidance to departments' leadership teams to address key areas of inequity identified in the assessment.
3. Advisory support from the WFE Division team and key members of the RSJI network (prioritizing department Change Teams). Departments will be assigned a point of contact to support best practice implementation.

The UNITE framework will be described in greater detail in the Workforce Equity Action Plan.

Metrics to Measure Progress

In the near-term, progress will be made evident through the execution of a successful UNITE Initiative Seattle Human Resources pilot to begin in Q1 2024. Successful pilot activities will then be replicated in other City departments incorporating individualization to account for the unique business needs, labor considerations, and local, state, and federal regulations applicable to each department.

Long-term progress will be tracked using metrics based on race, gender, and physical and cognitive disability in the City workforce. They represent the conditions necessary to achieve the transformative, antiracist change needed to fulfill the City's RSJI commitment to "eliminate racial disparities and achieve racial equity in Seattle." Early goals are outlined here:

- I. **Increased career pathways for BIPOC women from entry-level roles and increased representation of BIPOC women at the top levels of employment measured by:**

- a. An increase in the percentage of BIPOC employees identifying as women or gender-nonbinary in upper-level City roles by pay and supervisory authority. The representation of BIPOC women in the City of Seattle workforce is 19.3% as of December 2023.
 - b. A decrease in exiting BIPOC employees who identify as women or gender non-binary who leave for reasons of culture and conflict. Decrease turnover for BIPOC women across the City based on City-wide exit survey data.
- II. **Increased representation for under-represented racial identities in the City workforce, Indigenous & Latine, measured by:**
 - a. Increase the representation of employees who identify as Latine from of City employees at all levels of the City. 6% of the City of Seattle workforce identifies as Hispanic or Latino.
 - b. Increase the representation of employees who identify as Indigenous). As of December 2023, only 1% of the City of Seattle workforce identifies as Native. However, Indigenous communities have the highest levels of unemployment of any race in the country at 11% compared to 4.4% of the nation's topline unadjusted unemployment rate.
 - c. Decrease exits and turnover for employees who identify as Indigenous and Latine (Currently 13.4%).
- III. **Increased representation of people with cognitive and physical disabilities at all levels of the City's workforce measured by:**
 - a. Increase the percentage of employees at all levels of the City who identify as having a disability. The percentage of City employees with a disability is currently 1%. This data is being measured through the accommodations process, which means this percentage is likely being under-reported. WEVOLVE will allow employees to self-identify if they have a disability, which will provide a more accurate representation of this community in our workforce.
 - b. Measure and address reasons employees with disabilities exit the City and how to better support their participation and inclusion in the workplace.

Who is the 5-Year Plan Accountable to?

This 5-Year Workforce Equity Strategic Plan is accountable to City employees. This means that this plan is responsive to employee asks and will provide annual reporting and metrics for employees to track progress on Workforce Equity

progress. This accountability also includes an ongoing commitment and responsibility to center communities most impacted by racial oppression owning mistakes and harm caused and outlining and acting on pathways to right these missteps and harms done.

After completing this plan, an interdepartmental engagement process will be implemented in 2024 as a part of designing and implementing the UNITE Continuum. This will help all employees know how to access the measurements of racial disparities in the City workforce, track progress in each department, and how to partake in supporting anti-racist change in their departments. Annual update reporting will be shared with employees in the Spring of each year until a new Workforce Equity Strategic Plan is developed, likely in 2029.



Conclusion

Workforce Equity at the City of Seattle will forever support the City's commitment to the Race and Social Justice Initiative by creating the conditions for the Initiative, the 2022 RSJ Ordinance, and employees who experience various forms of oppression, including BIPOC and employees with disabilities, to thrive. The Workforce Equity Unit within SHR and the Workforce Equity Planning and Advisory Committee exist to lift employee voices toward affecting this change. If you have input or questions about this dynamic focus for the next five years of workforce equity strategy, please contact the director of the Workforce Equity division or visit the City of Seattle Workforce Equity Website at <http://www.seattle.gov/human-resources/about-us/workforce-equity>

Afterword

As I reflect on our journey to develop and refine the Workforce Equity Strategic Plan, I am filled with a profound sense of gratitude and inspiration. This document is not merely a collection of strategies and initiatives; it embodies our collective commitment to a more inclusive and equitable future for all City of Seattle employees.

Throughout the process, we have delved deep into the complexities of equity, diversity, and inclusion. We have acknowledged historical injustices, examined systemic barriers, and worked diligently to craft actionable strategies that address these challenges head-on. A shared belief in the power of unity, understanding, and empathy has underpinned our efforts.

This document is a testament to the voices that have been heard, the stories that have been shared, and the perspectives that have been valued. It stands as a beacon of hope, illuminating a path toward a workplace where everyone's contributions are recognized, diversity is celebrated, and barriers are dismantled.

As we move forward, let this document remind us that our work is far from over. The journey towards equity is ongoing and requires our continued dedication and vigilance. Let us carry the spirit of this plan into our daily actions, interactions, and decisions. Let us be champions of change, advocates for inclusivity, and allies for those who have been historically marginalized.

I am honored to be a part of this transformative journey, and I am deeply impressed by the unwavering commitment of each person (past and present) who contributed to this plan. Your dedication, insights, and passion have shaped a roadmap for progress that extends beyond these pages. Together, we can and will make a difference, a difference that will be felt by every individual who walks through the doors of the City of Seattle.

Thank you for inspiring me and being a driving force in pursuing a more equitable future. Let us continue this journey with resolve, knowing that the impact of our efforts will resonate for generations to come.

With heartfelt appreciation,

Kimberly Loving
Seattle Human Resources Department Director

Appendix

Resources Relied on in the Development of this Strategic Plan:

- Four Types of Racism [4 types of racism FINAL RSJI \(seattle.gov\)](#)
- Our Bodhi Project Embodying and Coliberation Frame: [The Frame — Our Bodhi Project](#)
- Relational Culture Handout [Microsoft Word - Building a Relational Culture Update 9.3.21.docx \(seattle.gov\)](#)
- RSJ Truths [Microsoft Word - RSJI Truths 10.13.20.docx \(seattle.gov\)](#)
- The shape of Trust Guide: <https://www.seattle.gov/documents/Departments/RSJI/Shape-of-Trust/Shape-of-Trust-Video-Facilitation-Guide-September-2021.pdf>
- The Human in Human Resources Training: [The Human in Human Resources \(csod.com\)](#)

Data Sources Utilized to Define this Strategic Plan:

- [Storytelling by Employees in Frontline Roles Report](#)
- [Bonita Roznos Dissertation on Black Women's Career Advancement at the City of Seattle \(Findings pg. 87\)](#)
- [Employment Pathways Report](#)
- [Supervisor Needs Assessment Focus Group](#)
- [WFE 2021 Update Report](#)
- [Duwamish Tribe Site](#)
- [Chief Seattle Club Services page](#)
- [Tribal Workforce Development Toolkit](#)
- [El Centro de la Raza 2017 Community Needs Assessment](#)
- [Casa Latina Program Areas Links](#)

These Data sets require Employee VPN to Access:

- [Basic Daily Employment Demographics Dashboard](#)
- [City Promotions Dashboard](#)
- [Out of Class Dashboard](#)
- [Apprenticeship & Internship Dashboard](#)
- [Wage & Supervisory Level Analysis Dashboard](#)
- [City of Seattle Exit Survey Results](#)
- [2020 Covid Survey Results Dashboard](#)

Key Learnings from the 2016 Workforce Equity Strategic Plan

Strengths:

The 2016 Workforce Equity Strategic Plan established the critical groundwork for the next five years of workforce equity strategy at the City:

1. Seattle Human Resources & WEPAC gained essential funding and infrastructure to organize and implement workforce equity.
2. Workforce equity data collection infrastructure and processes were implemented to measure racial and gender-based inequities in the City's workforce. Disparities in data were found that are opposed to the Workforce Equity division's vision of having a workforce representative of the people the City serves in the greater Seattle Metropolitan Area.
3. Culture shift definitions and strategy work were completed, in partnership with the Office of Civil Rights and RSJ Team, that enable the meaningful inclusion and participation of all employees to listen to BIPOC communities so the City of Seattle can best serve these communities.

Opportunities:

The 2016 Workforce Equity Strategic Plan was a starting point, with many opportunities to improve workforce equity at the City, which will be integrated into the 2024 Workforce Equity Strategic Plan:

1. The City needs to develop a relational workplace culture that fosters belonging, particularly for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) employees at all levels of the organization. Addressing this gap would significantly improve the service to the BIPOC communities the City aims to serve as how the City works is just as important as what the City does.
2. The stories and needs of employees with disabilities, particularly those who identify as Black, Indigenous, and Persons of Color, have not been centered in the workforce equity strategy.
3. The City has the opportunity to further anti-racist values by naming how government has upheld structural racism, including redlining in neighborhoods and historically limiting access to programs and services, in order to begin to repair some of that harm caused. Until the City fully undoes how structural racism is continued in its practices, workforce equity work will be limited at the City of Seattle. The 2016 Workforce Equity Strategic Plan needed a communications strategy and a plan to integrate with existing RSJ organizing in the City to ensure the information gets widely distributed and is accountable to employees.
4. Workforce equity is not held as a department goal for all departments, with coordination and ownership for implementation across the City.
5. The 2016 Workforce Equity Strategic Plan included multiple disparate strategies informed by employees, City leaders, and best practices documented in the literature and by other institutions. These strategies were not tied to targeted data metrics.
6. Funding for Workforce Equity division work, including an employee engagement initiative that would enable proactive responses to trends in barriers to equity faced by employees, continues to be challenging to access.

7. The City needs to enable support for leadership to grow in their anti-racist practices in order to advance workforce equity across the City.

Glossary

- 1) **Accountability** – Individuals and Departments are held responsible for their decisions, actions, and for their work to embed and reflect racial justice, social justice, and equity principles and priorities. This requires commitment and responsibility to center communities most impacted by racial oppression. This also includes owning mistakes and harm caused and outlining and acting on pathways to right these mis-steps and harms done. This means having a foundational understanding and accepting of one’s role in dominant culture and structural and institutional racism.
- 2) **Anti-racism** – Anti-racism results from a conscious decision by individuals and institutions to make frequent, consistent, equitable choices daily. These choices require ongoing self-awareness and self-reflection as we move through life. In the absence of making antiracist choices, we (un)consciously uphold aspects of white supremacy, white-dominant culture, and unequal institutions and society. Being racist or antiracist is not about who you are; it is about what you do.⁴
- 3) **Culture**⁵ - A social system of meaning and custom that is developed by a group of people to assure its adaptation and survival. These groups are distinguished by a set of unspoken rules that shape values, beliefs, habits, patterns of thinking, behaviors, and styles of communication.
- 4) **Discrimination (Personnel Rules)**⁶ – Any act, by itself or as part of a practice, which is intended to or results in different treatment or differentiates between or among individuals or groups of individuals by reason of race, color, age, sex, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, political ideology, creed, religion, ancestry, national origin, honorably discharged veteran, or military status; or the presence of any sensory, mental, or physical disability.
- 5) **Discrimination (EEOC)**⁷- [In the United States] the law makes it illegal to discriminate against someone based on race, color, religion, national origin, or sex. The law also makes it illegal to retaliate against a person because the person complained about discrimination, filed a charge of discrimination, or participated in an employment discrimination investigation or lawsuit. The law also requires that employers reasonably accommodate applicants' and employees' sincerely held religious practices, unless doing so would impose an undue hardship on the operation of the employer's business.
- 6) **Discrimination and Harassment (WA State)**⁸ - The Washington Law Against Discrimination is broader and prohibits discrimination and harassment on the basis of race, color, creed (religion), national origin, sex, marital status, age (40 to 70 years), sexual orientation, honorably discharged veteran or military status, or the presence of a physical, mental, or sensory disability (including HIV/Hepatitis C) and the use of trained guide dog or service animal.

⁴ <https://nmaahc.si.edu/learn/talking-about-race/topics/being-antiracist>

⁵ Institute for Democratic Renewal and Project Change Anti-Racism Initiative. “A Community Builder's Tool Kit.” Web. 1998.

⁶ City of Seattle. “Personnel Rules Preamble.” Seattle Department of Human Resources. Web. Revised 2017.

⁷ U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. Web.

⁸ Wing Luke Civil Rights Unit Washington State Office of the Attorney General Bob Ferguson. “Civil Rights Resource Guide.” Web. 2015.

- 7) **Dominant Culture** - Dominant culture refers to the cultural values, beliefs, and practices that are prevalent in a society and that are often associated with mainstream or dominant groups. In the U.S., dominant culture is often used to refer a culture that's white, able-bodied, cis-male dominated, and heterosexual. Dominant culture can also serve to reinforce and perpetuate the privileges and advantages of dominant groups, while also marginalizing and oppressing other groups.
- 8) **Inclusion** - Authentically bringing traditionally excluded individuals and/or groups into processes, activities, and decision/policy making in a way that transitions power.
- 9) **Institutional Racism**⁹- Institutional racism refers specifically to the ways in which institutional policies and practices create different outcomes for different racial groups. The institutional policies may never mention any racial group, but their effect is to create advantages for whites and oppression and disadvantage for people from groups classified as people of color.
- 10) **Intersectionality**¹⁰- Understanding that exposing [one's] multiple identities can help clarify the ways in which a person can simultaneously experience privilege and oppression. For example, a Black woman in America does not experience gender inequalities in the same way as a white woman, nor racial oppression identical to that experienced by a Black man. Each race and gender intersection produce a qualitatively distinct life.
- 11) **Labor Force Participation Rate**²: The labor force participation rate represents the number of people in the labor force as a percentage of the civilian noninstitutional population. In other words, the participation rate is the percentage of the population that is either working or actively looking for work. The labor force participation rate is calculated as: $(\text{Labor Force} \div \text{Civilian Noninstitutional Population}) \times 100$.
- 12) **Latine** – A gender-neutral form of the word Latino, created by LGBTQIA+, gender non-binary, and feminist communities in Spanish speaking countries. The objective of the term Latine is to remove gender from the Spanish word Latino, by replacing it with the gender-neutral Spanish letter E. This idea is native to the Spanish language and can be seen in many gender-neutral words like “estudiante”.
- 13) **Most Impacted** – the people who experience the greatest effects of inequitable policies, practices, or culture. In the United States, since most inequitable policies and practices were and are driven by racial motives, Black, Indigenous, and People of Color are most likely to be most impacted, even when additional types of oppressions are also a part of the inequity.
- 14) **Oppression**¹¹- The systemic and pervasive nature of social inequality woven throughout social institutions as well as embedded within individual consciousness. Oppression fuses institutional and systemic discrimination, personal bias, bigotry, and social prejudice in a complex web of relationships and structures that saturate most aspects of life in our society.
- 15) **Power** ¹²- Power is unequally distributed globally and in U.S. society; some individuals or groups wield greater power than others, thereby allowing them greater access and control over resources. Wealth, whiteness, citizenship, patriarchy, heterosexism, and education are a few key social mechanisms through which power operates. Although power is often conceptualized as power over other individuals or groups, other variations are power with (used in the context of building collective strength) and power within

⁹ Potapchuk, M., Et. al. “Flipping the Script: White Privilege and Community Building.” MP Associates, Inc. and the Center for Assessment and Policy Development (CAPD). 2005. Web.

¹⁰ Intergroup Resources. “Intersectionality.” Safe Places for the Advancement of Community and Equity. Web. 2012.

¹¹ Adams, M., Et.al. Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice: A Sourcebook. Second Edition. New York: Routledge. Print. 2007.

¹² Intergroup Resources. “Intersectionality.” Safe Places for the Advancement of Community and Equity. Web. 2012.

www.intergroupresources.com/intersectionality/

(which references an individual's internal strength). Learning to "see" and understand relations of power is vital to organizing for progressive social change.

- 16) **Racial Disparity**- Differences in outcomes or community conditions based on race. Examples include different outcomes in health, education, environment, and criminal justice outcomes based on race.
- 17) **Racial Equity**¹³ - Racial equity is the condition that would be achieved if one's racial identity no longer predicted, in a statistical sense, how one fares. When we use the term, we are thinking about racial equity as one part of racial justice, and thus we also include work to address root causes of inequities not just their manifestation. This includes elimination of policies, practices, attitudes, and cultural messages that reinforce differential outcomes by race or fail to eliminate them.
- 18) **Racial Justice**¹⁴ - the proactive reinforcement of policies, practices, attitudes, and actions that produce equitable power, access, opportunities, treatment, impacts and outcomes for all.
- 19) **Representation** - Present in numbers that reflect the communities the City of Seattle serves.
- 20) **Structural Racism**¹⁵ - The normalization and legitimization of an array of dynamics – historical, cultural, institutional, and interpersonal – that routinely advantage Whites while producing cumulative and chronic adverse outcomes for people of color. Structural racism encompasses the entire system of White domination, diffused and infused in all aspects of society including its history, culture, politics, economics and entire social fabric. Structural racism is more difficult to locate in an institution because it involves the reinforcing effects of multiple institutions and cultural norms, past and present, continually reproducing old and producing new forms of racism. Structural racism is the most profound and pervasive form of racism – all other forms of racism emerge from structural racism.
- 21) **Under-Represented** – Present in numbers that do not reflect the communities of King county serves.
- 22) **Unemployment Rate**¹: The unemployment rate represents the number of unemployed people as a percentage of the labor force (the labor force is the sum of the employed and unemployed). The unemployment rate is calculated as: $(\text{Unemployed} \div \text{Labor Force}) \times 100$.
- 23) **Workforce Equity**¹⁶ - Workforce equity is when the workforce is inclusive of people of color and other marginalized or under-represented groups at a rate representative of King County 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.

¹³ Center for Assessment and Policy Development. "Racial Equity and White Privilege." www.capd.org

¹⁴ Applied Research Center. "Catalytic Change: Lessons Learned from the Racial Justice Grantmaking Assessment" Report. Philanthropic Initiative for Racial Equity. 2009.

¹⁵ Keleher, T. and Lawrence, K. "Structural Racism". Aspen Institute on Community Change Race and Public Policy Conference. Web. 2004.

¹⁶ City of Seattle "Workforce Equity Strategic Plan." Print. 2016.