



**ADVANCE OPPORTUNITY.
ACHIEVE EQUITY.**

Race and Social Justice Initiative 2010 Employee Survey

Executive Summary
June 2011

Introduction

In the fall of 2008 the Seattle Office for Civil Rights conducted the first Citywide Race and Social Justice Initiative Employee survey. The survey results were to inform the Race and Social Justice Initiative assessment and plan for the following three years (2009 - 2011). This first survey had three goals:

- Help measure understanding of the initiative, as well as gather ideas for improving our efforts;
- Help develop future RSJI work plans and communication strategies; and
- Establish a baseline to track our progress over time.

The results of the first survey provided a snapshot in time, giving us invaluable information on employees' attitudes and perceptions of racial equity in the workplace three years into the formal launch of the Race and Social Justice Initiative. Indeed the survey results demonstrated that there was much to be gained by City government undertaking an initiative aimed at ending institutional racism. The survey, completed by roughly a third of the City of Seattle workforce, revealed strong support for the Initiative with 89% of respondents stating they found value in examining and discussing the impacts of race in the workplace and 69% of respondents reporting active involvement in promoting race and social justice in the workplace.

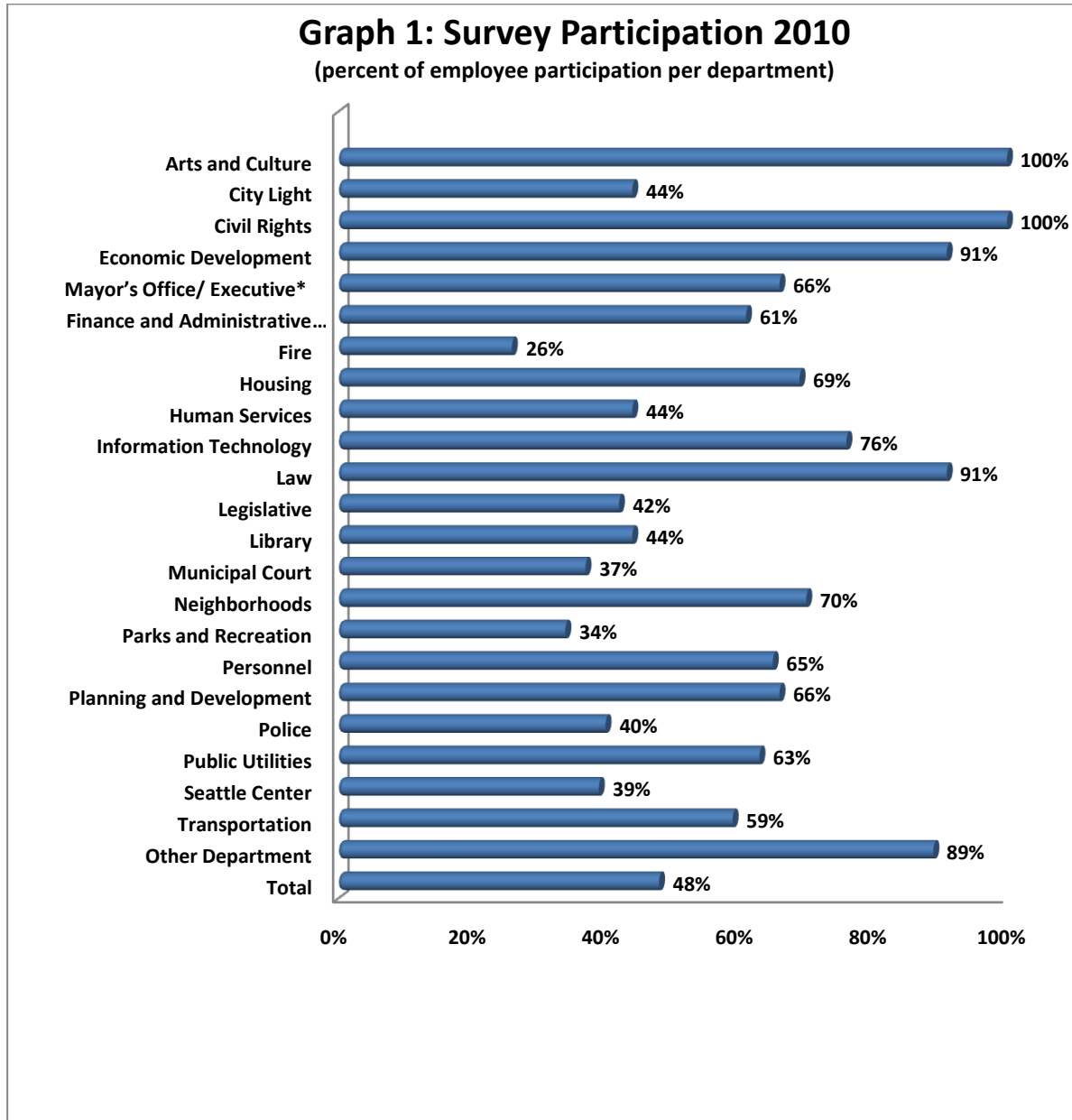
The 2008 survey also gave us important feedback on the areas we needed to strengthen to ensure an effective Initiative. Communication was highlighted as an area for improvement, with a particular focus on making sure employees understood both the breadth and the depth of the Initiative. Many employees were aware of racial equity training taking place. Far fewer were aware of the efforts to analyze policies and programs in order to end racial disparities in City business or the interdepartmental teams that were working on workforce equity, contracting equity and inclusive outreach and public engagement. Our work was clearly cut out for us.

As an Initiative we took in the lessons learned from this first survey, building upon what was working and refining our approach where needed. During this time we also expanded the Initiative's focus to include ending racial disparities in the community through work with the Seattle Race and Social Justice Community Roundtable, while continuing our work to end institutional racism internal to City government.

In October 2010 we conducted a second City-wide survey that will inform the assessment and strategic plan for Race and Social Justice Initiative for the next three years (2012-2014). In addition to the first two goals of the 2008 survey, this time around our third goal was to measure progress made since the first survey. The 2008 survey had given us a baseline to measure employees' attitudes and perceptions of racial equity in the workplace and of the work of the Initiative. Now it was time to learn what had changed over the last two years, what had stayed the same and what should we carry into the next phase of RSJI work.

Survey participation grew dramatically between 2008 and 2010. In 2008 approximately one-third of City employees completed the survey, an overwhelming majority of whom were actively

engaged in the Initiative. In the 2010 survey, we saw the response rate rise to nearly half of all City employees. This spike in survey participation is positive. While it is valuable to hear from those already working on racial equity, it is absolutely critical to learn what all City employees feel and perceive about the City's racial equity work, including those who are not actively engaged in the work or from departments who have historically been only peripherally involved.



Key Findings

1. Creating space for racial equity to thrive in the workplace

To build lasting racial equity in Seattle, we need a solid understanding of how institutional racism impacts our work as City government and our working relationships with one other. Survey findings show the City of Seattle is succeeding in laying the foundation for this type of workplace, but there is still more work to be done.

- **There is overwhelming support for the work of the Race and Social Justice Initiative.**

Over 4,000 employees (83%) who responded to the survey believe that it is valuable to examine and discuss the impact of race. Sixty-three percent (63%) of employees stated they are actively involved in promoting RSJI changes in their workplace.

We looked at the questions asking respondents if they found it valuable to discuss the impact of race in the workplace and if they were actively involved in promoting race and social justice in their workplace. We compared responses of people who completed the 2008 survey with those who participated for the first time in 2010. Sixty-two percent (62%) of repeat survey respondents gave positive responses to these questions, compared with 38% of first-time respondents – suggesting that employees who are new to the Initiative are less likely to be promoting racial equity changes in the workplace.

- **Walking the talk – leadership needs to support racial equity.**

Over 60% of respondents stated that leaders in their department supported discussions of institutional racism. This was a positive result yet there was a difference in who was aware of these efforts. While 72% of supervisors found leaders to support these discussions, only 56% of non-supervisors found this statement to be true.

The results also indicate that departmental leadership places greater emphasis on activities that require less action on their part than on activities that can only be carried out through a more engaged and active focus. When leadership is making efforts to support racial equity work, it is critical that all employees be aware of their efforts. Greater leadership support for workplace discussions will yield greater overall understanding of how to implement measures to achieve racial equity.

- **City employees report overall positive outcomes from RSJI training and education.**

The focus of RSJI training is to provide an understanding of institutional racism and tools to eliminate institutional racism. We know that people who have participated in RSJI training have a positive response. Seventy percent (70%) of employees who have attended RSJI training and/or education found it to be useful. For those who have not attended RSJI training, the gap in understanding and ability to identify examples of institutional racism in the workplace is noticeable.

Training effectiveness was also noted in the use of the RSJI Racial Equity toolkit and budget filter. While employees of color were six percent (6%) less aware than white employees of their departments use of the RSJI racial equity toolkit, of those who were

aware, they were eleven percent (11%) more likely than white employees to state that the toolkit improved racial equity.

We were pleased to find that the initiative is helping City employees understand how oppression works in other forms. Nearly two-thirds of respondents (62%) reported that the Race and Social Justice Initiative has helped them understand other forms of oppression.

- **RSJI Change Agents increase the effectiveness of the Initiative.**

RSJI Change Teams, the RSJI Core Team and the RSJI Subcabinet provide daily on-the-ground support to departments and the Initiative as a whole. Fifty-two percent (52%) of employees were aware of their department's Change Team. Departmental awareness of Change Teams varied widely, from a low of 21% in the Police Department (an increase from 11% in 2008) to 95% in the Office of Economic Development. We were pleased to find employees' perspective on the effectiveness of Change Teams increase slightly between 2008 and 2010, both years rating highly (72% in 2010 and 70% in 2008).

2. Concrete strategies aimed at institutional change and communicating the efforts

The survey measured City employees' attitudes and perceptions of Citywide and departmental strategies currently underway as part of RSJI. When we conducted the 2008 survey, many of these strategies were just beginning to take shape. The key findings reveal that while communicating these efforts remains an important task, specific strategies are viewed as having begun to gain traction in ending institutional racism in City policies, programs and procedures.

- **Workforce equity strategies are beginning to be noticed**

Fifty-six percent (56%) of respondents reported being aware of departmental efforts to increase workforce equity. Of those who reported being aware of these efforts, over half (52%) reported that their department is implementing upward mobility strategies for employees. Only 39% of those who were aware of workforce equity efforts in their department reported that their department was implementing the new rules for out-of-class assignments.

- **Those aware of contracting equity efforts recognize positive impacts.**

Nearly half (49%) of all respondents were aware of their department's efforts to increase purchasing and contracting equity. Of those who were aware, a strong 89% felt their department promotes women and minority business enterprises; 73% felt their department promotes contracting equity goals.

- **Departments' use of inclusive outreach and public engagement is growing.**

Sixty percent (60%) of respondents reported being aware of inclusive outreach being done by their department. Of those who reported being aware of these efforts, 73% stated that their department seeks input from communities of color, and an even greater percentage (79%) reported that their department supports community efforts to eliminate racial inequities.

- **There is a potential rise in employee awareness of departments' efforts to increase access to services and interpretation/translation for immigrant and**

refugee residents.

Seventy-two percent (72%) of respondents were aware of their department's efforts to improve access to services for refugee and immigrant residents. Just over half (53%) of those who were aware felt that their department was improving access; 60% felt their department was improving interpretation/translation for refugees and immigrants.

[Note: This data must be interpreted cautiously. A glitch in the web version of the survey caused this series of questions to not be screened appropriately.]

- **Employees are aware of department's RSJI work plans, but greater focus should be placed on specific equity tools.**

In 2008 less than half of all respondents (42%) felt their department was measuring and tracking progress on racial equity. By 2010 the number of respondents familiar with their department's annual RSJI work plan (which states departments' goals and outcomes) had risen to 54%. While this increase in awareness is positive, there remains work to be done in communicating the specific tools that departments are using to evaluate policies, programs and procedures to be sure we are reducing racial disparities in our lines of business. Only thirty-three percent (33%) of respondents were aware of their department's efforts to apply the RSJI Racial Equity Toolkit to policy and budget decisions. Yet of those who were aware, over half (55%) reported that the toolkit did in fact improve racial equity. This illustrates both a need for communication to share departmental best practices on the use of the toolkit as well as the need to work with staff to more effectively use it.

- **Accountability can be communicated more effectively – we still have a long way to go.**

Departmental reports to City Council are an important governmental tool to ensure the effectiveness of an initiative such as RSJI. Yet less than half (42%) of all respondents were aware that their departments report to City Council on their RSJI progress. Fifty-five percent (55%) of respondents felt their department is making progress on the Initiative, with slightly less (51%) reporting they thought that the City of Seattle overall is making progress. Rather than disagreeing that progress is being made, employees were more likely to report that they didn't know (28% within departments and 30% for the City's progress as a whole).

Section 4: Conclusions and Next Steps

The results of the Race and Social Justice Initiative Employee Survey provide valuable information on employee perceptions and attitudes concerning the City of Seattle's racial equity work. By explicitly tackling racial disparities, RSJI is unlike any other initiative in the country. Navigating the road ahead requires ongoing evaluation. Those employees who took the time to complete the survey provided us with tremendous insight into what is working well and what we can do better to achieve racial equity.

Overall, we can draw the following high-level conclusions from the survey data:

1. **The Race and Social Justice Initiative has expanded and is no longer just “preaching to the choir.”**

There are more City employees than ever before who are ready to get to work on furthering racial equity, including many who previously were not involved with the Initiative.

The survey results confirmed that City employees support RSJI and that RSJI training is paying off. Yet we also learned that as we reach new groups of City employees through communication and training, we see a lack of understanding or commitment by some to work on racial equity. This is not surprising; it is to be expected as more people become aware of the Initiative but have not received training on how to apply racial equity to their lines of business.

We also recognize that there will never be 100% buy-in of the Initiative. As with any organizational change effort, receiving support from a strong third of the organization is critical. Today over 3,000 City employees have stated that they support RSJI in the workplace. Our task is to deepen the ways that each of us owns the Initiative in our daily work.

2. The growing reach of the Initiative creates a new challenge of capacity.

In order to deepen the Initiative's effectiveness, it is important we strengthen our capacity Citywide in leadership, training and communication.

Strong leaders who actively support the Initiative and promote racial equity strategies in their departments are critical for the Initiative's success. While we were encouraged by survey results that show support from leadership for staff to attend training, there was comparatively less support from leadership to actively engage in resolving workplace issues involving institutional racism. Active engagement from leadership is essential as we move forward.

Training will need to focus on the concrete application of new and evolving tools to eliminate racial disparities in our lines of business. Over half the respondents found the racial equity toolkit to be effective at improving racial equity in their departments. Consistent practice applying it to budget and policy decisions as well as the development of new and project-tailored tools like the Neighborhood Planning Equity Toolkit is a critical component of deepening the skill level of City employees.

The 2008 survey identified the need for greater and more effective methods of communicating the work and outcomes of the Initiative. While we did see a growing awareness of departmental work in different areas, there is still room for improvement. We will work on sharing best practices across the City as well as bringing in innovative ways to spread knowledge and awareness of why this work is important, and how best to apply racial equity principles in day-to-day City operations.

3. A multi-tiered response is required to effectively carry on racial equity work within the City and bring real change to the lives of people who live and work in Seattle.

The Race and Social Justice Initiative is about real people. We aim to change the way we do business as a City to create positive and racially equitable outcomes for every person living and working in Seattle. This is neither an easy nor simple task. It will require continued refinement of the concrete strategies we have begun to develop as a City aimed at ending institutional racism. It will require deepening the level of involvement by leadership and City employees. Education and training will be critical. Lastly, it will require consistency in engagement across departments. We cannot succeed if one department is left behind. To end racial disparities as a City requires all departments to be actively contributing to racial justice.

At the end of the day this work isn't about training or finding the perfect tool or strategy. It's about ending racial disparities and impacting people's lives.

Next Steps

We truly thank everyone who participated in the 2010 RSJI Employee survey. The survey data is a great resource to strengthen our approach to building racial equity. To take advantage of the opportunity provided by this data, we will be taking the following steps:

- 1) The Survey Report will be posted on Inweb for all employees to review:
<http://inweb.ci.seattle.wa.us/rsji/>
- 2) Mayor McGinn will send an email to all City employees thanking them for their participation and including a link to this report.
- 3) The Mayor's Cabinet, City Council, RSJI Subcabinet, Core Team and Change Team leads will be briefed on survey findings and engaged to develop strategies to address areas for improvement.
- 4) We will tie these discussions to the development of the 2012-2014 RSJI Strategic Plan.
- 5) Department-specific data will be shared with all departments (data from small departments will be combined to maintain employee confidentiality).
- 6) A new RSJI Survey will be conducted in 2012 as we continue to track progress.