

Race and Social Justice Initiative (RSJI)

Introduction

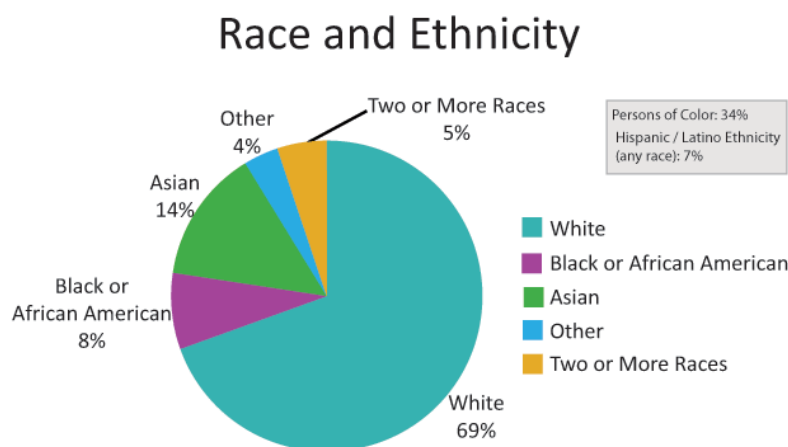
This chapter provides background and context for [Race and Social Justice Initiative \(RSJI\)](#)-related budget additions throughout the 2016 Proposed Budget.

RSJI is a Citywide effort to end institutionalized racism and race-based gaps in City government. A key component is the examination of City policies, projects, initiatives and budget decisions to determine how each item impacts different demographic groups in Seattle. Launched in 2004, Seattle was the first U.S. city to undertake an effort that focused explicitly on institutional racism. Since then, our own King County, and other cities – including Minneapolis, Madison, and Portland – have all established their own equity initiatives. RSJI’s long-term goal is to change the underlying system that creates race-based disparities and to achieve racial equity, as well as:

- ending racial disparities within City government so there is fairness in hiring and promotions, greater opportunities in contracting, and equitable services to all residents;
- strengthening outreach and public engagement, changing existing services using Race and Social Justice best practices, and improving immigrant and refugee access to City services; and
- leading a collaborative, community-wide effort to eliminate racial inequity in education, criminal justice, environmental justice, health and economic success.

RSJI works to eliminate racial and social disparities across key indicators of success in Seattle, including: arts and culture, criminal justice, education, environment, equitable development, health, housing, jobs, and service equity.

The 2010 Census indicates more than 34 percent of Seattle residents are persons of color. Recent estimates from sources including the American Community Survey show continued deep disparities in the social and economic well-being of Seattle residents. In general, the largest disparities in Seattle, as well as in the nation as a whole, are for the black and Hispanic/Latino populations compared with white, non-Hispanic population. Asians and multi-race persons are also doing poorer than non-Hispanic whites on many social and economic indicators.



Sources: 2010 Census, U.S. Census Bureau

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Mayoral Direction

During his first week in office, Mayor Edward B. Murray convened his cabinet of department directors at the Seattle Pacific Science Center to discuss RSJI, its history, its successes and the opportunities the City has to further that work. This was partnered with a tour of the “RACE” exhibit displayed at the Center, which included racial and cultural education information about Seattle and King County. Afterward, the Mayor’s cabinet debriefed on the exhibit and discussed how RSJI could become part of departmental awareness and operations in Seattle.

A few months later, on April 3, 2014, Mayor Murray signed an [Executive Order](#) affirming the City’s commitment to RSJI. The Executive Order expanded the program’s work to include measurable outcomes, greater accountability, and community-wide efforts to achieve racial equity throughout Seattle.

Consideration of Race and Social Justice in the Mayor’s Office

Each City department has a “Change Team” – a group of employees that supports RSJI activities and strengthen a department’s capacity to get more employees involved. The team facilitates and participates in discussions on race and racism. The Mayor’s Office (including the City Budget Office (CBO) and the Office of Policy and Innovation) created a combined Change Team in 2015. This offers staff an opportunity to engage all levels of the Mayor’s Office in how to more consistently and effectively use an equity lens in policy and budget decision-making. These discussions increase individual and group understanding of how racism and other marginalizing factors affect equity and service provision.

Consistent with established practice since the launch of RSJI, all 2016 budget adjustments were screened for RSJ impacts. Departments used the City’s Racial Equity Toolkit (RET) or other tools to assess direct and indirect results of their proposals, and this analysis was then utilized in the decision-making process within CBO and the Mayor’s Office. To facilitate their analysis, CBO budget analysts attended a full group training on RSJI with specialized training on the RET. This training allowed them to appropriately analyze new policies and program additions or subtractions to ensure that impacts to all communities are carefully considered before any decisions are made.

Race and Social Justice Impacts in the 2016 Proposed Budget

This section highlights specific examples of RSJI considerations in the 2016 Proposed Budget and budget decision-making processes.

Equity and Environment Initiative

The Equity and Environment Initiative (EEI) was a new program in 2015 designed to advance racial equity in Seattle’s environmental policies, programs, and outcomes. The 2016 Proposed Budget continues to fund this initiative, which brings RSJI to the center of the City’s environmental work with a sustained focus on equity.

Expand Program for Priority Hire

The Priority Hire program was launched in 2015, based on recommendations from an advisory group of community worker advocates, labor unions, minority contractors, and others. It creates a Community Workforce Agreement which prioritizes hiring workers for large City projects from disadvantaged populations as a strategy to lower the rates of unemployment in distressed Seattle communities. In

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2016, the Proposed Budget includes increases to this program to ensure that contractors are complying with the terms in the Community Workforce Agreement.

Mobile Neighborhood Service Center

The 2016 Proposed Budget includes funding for a Mobile Service Center vehicle and staff. The Mobile Service Center will expand the network of services offered in economically distressed areas of the city by offering services to those who may not have access to the physical Neighborhood Centers. The Mobile Service Center can connect residents with resources and strengthen City outreach and public engagement for underserved populations.

Assistance for Minority Owned Businesses

The 2016 Proposed Budget includes funding for the Office of Labor Standards to expand education, outreach, and technical assistance to the Seattle business community – with an emphasis on small businesses owned and operated by minority, immigrant and refugee communities – for successful implementation of Seattle's labor ordinances.

Retention of Art Spaces in Our Neighborhoods

The Office of Arts & Culture (Arts) has developed programs to combat the displacement of arts and ethnic cultural spaces, to create cultural affordability, and to support the retention of art spaces in our neighborhoods. The 2016 Proposed Budget provides additional funding to support these efforts, including but not limited to increasing granting initiatives, locating and funding new cultural spaces, and retaining crucial cultural anchors.

Youth Work Readiness

In 2016, Office of Arts & Culture will implement a new grant program to supplement the Seattle Youth Violence Prevention Initiative (SYVPI) Work Readiness Arts Program (WRAP). WRAP is limited to the central, southeast and southwest parts of the city to align with SYVPI boundaries. The current program provides funding to cultural and community organizations to provide programming linking arts learning and work experiences for Seattle youth participating in the SYVPI program. Arts estimates this funding will provide five to 10 additional grants in 2016, allowing for approximately 40 youth (aged 12 to 24) to receive 80 hours of paid training in creative industries with a focus on recruiting youth from historically disadvantaged communities in Seattle.

Creative Advantage

The proposed budget increases funding for Arts' support of Creative Advantage, an arts education initiative led by a public-private partnership that includes Arts, Seattle Public Schools, and The Seattle Foundation. The additional funding in 2016 will provide culturally relevant arts instruction that will help address significant inequities in arts learning and educational outcomes for low-income students and students of color.

Recreation Opportunities for All

The Seattle Department of Parks and Recreation has made continuing efforts to reach and serve immigrants, refugee populations, and others that have been historically underrepresented. These programs have proven successful, but there is currently no dedicated funding for new recreation opportunities in underserved communities. The 2016 Proposed Budget introduces an enhancement fund directed to partnerships with underserved communities which will be used to support partners who work with underrepresented communities and to make connections between Parks and the communities they serve.

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Immigrant Family Institute

The Immigrant Family Institute will focus on young immigrant and refugee men of color and their families. The program, which will serve 15 young men and their families (up to 45 individuals) and 20–30 police officers, seeks to build understanding between officers in the Seattle Police Department and the communities they serve and protect. The program will feature an eight- to ten-week curriculum, engage numerous City departments to raise awareness about available services, and develop community leadership and capacity within some of Seattle's most vulnerable communities. The police officers will learn more about the diverse communities they serve, helping to address issues around public trust and cultural sensitivity.

Expand Programs for New Citizens

This program assists residents with the application process to become a U.S. citizen. The proposed budget increases funding for this program to ensure that as many eligible residents as possible are on the path to citizenship, with a goal of increasing the number of completed applications from 800 to around 2,000 a year. The proposed budget also includes additional resources to begin implementing a comprehensive civic education and voter engagement campaign, Seattle Votes. In order to understand the unique challenges and barriers immigrant communities face to political participation, resources will be focused on data collection in 2016.

WiFi HotSpot Program

In the 2016 Proposed Budget, the Library is expanding a grant-funded program to provide WiFi internet hotspot devices to library patrons. Many of the patrons who are using the devices belong to the approximately 70,000 households in the City of Seattle without reliable internet service. Internet access is vital to obtain many educational, economic, legal, health, consumer and social services resources.

Homelessness Services

The 2016 Proposed Budget increases funding for homelessness shelters and adds funding for case management services for sanctioned encampments. The budget also adds funding to support the vehicle license fee rebate program and the reduced fare bus pass program known as ORCA LIFT. These programs aide individuals experiencing homelessness and others with low incomes, who are statistically shown to be disproportionately people of color.

Youth Employment

The Summer Youth Employment Program provides jobs and training for youth, helping to build work experience to prepare youth for future educational and work opportunities. The 2016 Proposed Budget sustains the program in the Human Services Department (HSD) to serve at least 450 youth, despite the loss of a federal grant. The budget also includes funding in the Office of Economic Development to support the creation of a new entity to improve matching between employers and youth employees, which is expected to increase the number of available jobs to opportunity youth.

Child Care Facility

The budget also authorizes HSD to use Child Care Bonus revenues to support the construction of a child care facility on Beacon Hill which will serve at least 20% low- and moderate-income clients.

Workforce Equity

In 2015, the Mayor issued Executive Order 2015-02: Workforce Equity Initiative, which addresses gender and race/ethnic wage equity for City employees. Another milestone event for 2015 is the creation of

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Paid Parental Leave, which was adopted through stand-alone legislation. Initial costs will be funded with existing resources. The City is now tracking the use of leave and will make budget adjustments at the end of each calendar year based on actual use of paid parental leave that exceeds existing funding.

Moving Forward

While there has been increasing attention and work to address equity and social justice issues, there is still a great deal of work needed to address the root causes of inequities and determine culturally appropriate and effective measures to improve access and opportunity.

The City Budget Office (CBO) and the Office of Policy and Innovation will improve their approach to using an equity lens during budget and program analysis each year. Future goals include providing Race and Social Justice Toolkit training for department finance managers, and working with departments to examine the RSJI impacts of their programs holistically – as part of their entire body of work, rather than just incremental budget changes.

CBO is considering how to more directly communicate the RSJI impacts and considerations for future budget decisions with departments, the City Council, and city residents. These efforts will contribute to Seattle's vision to achieve equitable opportunities for all people and communities.