

EQUITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE STRATEGIC PLAN

2016-2022



King County

PRO-EQUITY POLICY AGENDA



FOR THE EQUITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE STRATEGIC PLAN

OUR PRO-EQUITY POLICY AGENDA

The Community Engagement Report for the King County Equity and Social Justice (ESJ) Strategic Plan summarizes current states and visions for a range of issue areas, from health and human services to jobs, economic development and transportation.

At the same time, other parts of this Strategic Plan lay the groundwork for a Regional Equity Collaborative, which will be a vehicle for King County to work with partners, institutions and organizations to advance shared equity goals, strategies and interests.

King County, however, is committed to more immediate and shorter-term actions and policies which will move us toward a state of greater equity. In this section of the ESJ Strategic Plan we present our Pro-Equity Policy Agenda, which is our King County commitment to advancing equity in the next three years in the following areas:

- Child & youth development
- Economic development & jobs
- Environment & climate
- Health & human services
- Housing
- Information & technology
- Justice system
- Transportation & mobility

CHILD & YOUTH DEVELOPMENT



OUR CURRENT SITUATION

King County is a region where health and wellbeing indicators are strong: overall, our health indicators are high and our unemployment rate is among the lowest in the nation. However, these overall positive trends mask widening and troubling disparities in our county by race and place. Health outcomes vary widely by race and across communities in King County, for example in infant mortality, chronic diseases and life expectancy. For the first time in recent history, our middle class is shrinking. Of the over 80,000 households added in King County since 2000, nearly all of the increase has been split between the top and the bottom of the income spectrum; less than four percent of the increase in households has occurred in income brackets between \$35,000 and \$125,000. Over 20 percent of our young people do not graduate from high school.

Currently, much of the County's funding has been in response to negative outcomes—severe mental illness, homelessness, chronic illness, and youth who have already dropped out of school or who have been involved in the juvenile justice system. However, research tells us that promoting well-being, decreasing risk factors, intervening early when issues arise and making strategic investments at critical points in young people's development before age 24 are the most effective and least expensive ways to prevent these problems from arising.

HOW WE WILL MAKE A DIFFERENCE

In 2014, King County staff began examining how the County could improve outcomes and allow individuals and communities to achieve their full potential. The resulting [Best Starts for Kids \(BSK\)](#) ballot measure was approved by the voters in November 2015. As a promotion, prevention and early intervention initiative, BSK investments will balance other County investments through [Mental Illness and Drug Dependency \(MIDD\)](#) funding and the [King County Veterans and Human Services Levy](#).

BSK is a strengths-based approach, which will maximize the assets and knowledge of our richly diverse county and its many communities and cultures. It reflects the County's adopted policy direction and was developed within the context of the King County Strategic Plan, the Equity and Social Justice Ordinance, the Health and Human Services Transformation Plan and the [2015 Youth Action Plan](#).

Results for Best Starts for Kids:

- Babies are born healthy and establish a strong foundation for lifelong health and well-being.
- King County is a place where everyone has equitable opportunities to progress through childhood safely and healthy, building academic and life skills to be thriving members of their communities.
- Communities offer safe, welcoming, and healthy environments that help improve outcomes for all of King County's children and families, regardless of where they live.

PRO-EQUITY POLICY AGENDA

CHILD & YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

In the next six years, King County will take action in the following key areas:

1. Invest early: Prenatal to 5 years of age

Highlights:

- Support new parents, families and caregivers through community-based programs, peer support and home visiting.
- Assure parents and caregivers have access to: screening to assure the healthy development of their children; resources for help if developmental issues arise; and effective linkages to treatment if the need arises.
- Cultivate caregiver knowledge, develop outreach resources and referral, and provide information on healthy child development to parents and caregivers.
- Support high quality childcare in homes and in centers, and in licensed and unlicensed settings.

2. Sustain gains from 5 to 24 years of age

Highlights:

- Build resilience of youth and reduce negative risky behaviors.
- Help youth stay connected to their families and communities.
- Meet the health and behavior needs of youth.
- Help young adults who have had challenges successfully transition into adulthood including re-engaging in education opportunities and job skills development.
- Stop the school to prison pipeline.

3. Communities of Opportunity

Highlights:

- Support priorities and strategies of place-based collaboration in communities with much to gain.
- Engage multiple organizations in policy and system change.
- Foster innovations in equity through a regional learning community.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & JOBS



OUR CURRENT SITUATION

King County offers abundant economic opportunity in which many populations and areas of the County are thriving. At the same time, not all populations are able to take advantage of this prosperity; many low-income and communities of color in particular face barriers to well-paying jobs and economic opportunity. For example, unemployment rates for Black/African American, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander and Native American/Alaska Native residents have recently been nearly double that of the unemployment rate for White residents.

Gaps in education persist and continue to produce disparate labor market outcomes. For example, low-income students have on-time graduation rates 15 percentage points below the average. Federal, state and local funding for training is small relative to the need for it to help individuals access better job opportunities. At the same time, businesses face gaps in filling jobs and are importing talent from other regions of the country and the world.

HOW WE WILL MAKE A DIFFERENCE

King County has followed three approaches to expanding access to economic opportunity to residents. First, as a social service provider, the County led development of Best Starts for Kids, a comprehensive, voter-approved set of investments in early childhood and youth that will help ensure they all have the opportunity to fulfill their potential. Second, King County provides an array of workforce training and development programs. We have focused on improving the effectiveness of those programs both in reaching certain populations, such as youth and veterans, and in ensuring their training results in job placement, particularly in key industries such as aerospace and manufacturing.

Finally, King County is leveraging its roles as one of the largest employers and contractors in the region. We are dedicated to eliminating bias in our hiring practice and promoting better access to jobs, promotions and contracting opportunities for people of color within King County; establishing policies that support family wage jobs and benefits such as sick leave and paid family leave; and using our influence through contracting and in the labor market to encourage other employers to do the same. King County is proud to be a union county—with nearly 85 percent of our employees union members.

In the next three years, King County will take action in four key areas to further improve pathways to good jobs and make sure that all residents benefit from a thriving economy. They include:

1. Ensure that private and government employment opportunities are accessible to all groups

Highlights:

- Reduce barriers to hiring more people with criminal records; expand hiring of veterans through improved translation of veteran skills.
- Expand hiring of people with developmental disabilities under the Supported Employment Program.
- Support regional 100% Talent initiative on gender-wage equity, with particular emphasis on gender-wage equity for women of color.
- Expand access to transportation and affordable housing that connects people to job centers and employment opportunities.
- Eliminate bias in our own hiring practices, and support similar efforts countywide.

2. Expand opportunities for disadvantaged populations to build skills that will help them acquire better jobs

Highlights:

- Collaborate with the Workforce Development Council to expand services for individuals with barriers to employment, as described in the new federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.
- Partner with the City of Seattle and the Workforce Development Council to provide summer employment opportunities to King County youth and expand business participation in the program.
- Play leadership role in cross-sector initiatives to increase access to middle-wage jobs and career ladders.
- Support the expansion of apprenticeship programs as an evidence-based way to provide opportunities for higher-paying jobs both in County government and in the region.

- Create local policies around making new funds available to help employers train employees in ways that lead to substantial wage gains.
- Create programming for low-income middle-school students that exposes them to careers available in the area.

3. Leverage the County's role as a large employer and contractor to promote jobs that pay family-support wages and support upward mobility

Highlights:

- Require paid sick leave among County contractors.
- Pilot a County-paid parental leave program.

4. Support entrepreneurship and help small businesses grow

Highlights:

- Continue to expand participation of small businesses in County procurement through work orders and other contracting processes.
- Use more small businesses in construction projects.
- Seek opportunities to further expand the number of employers participating in the small contractors and suppliers certification program.

ENVIRONMENT & CLIMATE



OUR CURRENT SITUATION

King County has an extensive network of regional trails, active parks, natural areas and open spaces. Five major river systems and numerous creeks cross rural and urban landscapes, while many working farms and forests are found in the eastern half of the county. While King County is widely recognized for its clean water and air as well as access to abundant recreation opportunities and fresh, healthful local produce, these benefits are not enjoyed equitably by all county residents. Some may not live close to a park, trail, open space or farmers market opportunity, or have safe and easy access via bus, trail or car. Forests and trees—and the benefits they provide for shade, air and water quality, and habitat—are not distributed evenly across communities.

Additionally, the historical contamination of soil and water, as well as ongoing air and water pollution from urban industry and development, vehicles and polluted runoff from roads, are more concentrated in urban areas with higher percentages of communities of color, lower income residents and people with pre-existing health conditions. The South Park and Georgetown communities, along the Lower Duwamish River, are examples of communities that are disproportionately impacted by historic contamination of the river, soils, fish, and shellfish, as well as air quality impacts from vehicles and industry.

Climate change impacts, like longer and more frequent heat events, urban flooding and natural disasters, are areas where low-income communities and communities of color are likely to be disproportionately impacted. Lower income populations have the least resources to mitigate impacts resulting from increased frequency of heat events and flooding through actions like flood proofing, home insulation, air conditioning, or easily accessing a shady park or air-conditioned community center. Language can also be a barrier to information on flood and storm disaster preparedness.

Many of the actions needed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions can also serve as powerful opportunities to address broader inequities. For example, investments that better integrate transit and land use and expand commute options will increase access to work, education and health care. Development and adoption of well-designed green building standards can make homes more comfortable during heat events, improve indoor air quality and reduce utility and repair costs. Expanded open space protection and linking regional trails to transit expands access to healthy recreation options. Specific actions to both reduce greenhouse gas emissions and prepare for the impacts of climate change are outlined in [King County's 2015 Strategic Climate Action Plan \(SCAP\)](#).

While King County has a long history of strong public support for open spaces, water quality, and farmland preservation bond measures and programs, representation on environment and open space-related advisory committees and the leadership of County water, parks, and open space programs does not reflect the county's racial and economic diversity.

HOW WE WILL MAKE A DIFFERENCE

All county residents should have equitable access to clean air and water, and the health and recreation benefits of King County's extensive network of regional trails, open spaces, and working farms and forests. Our investments in cleaning up historic contamination, upgrading water quality infrastructure, protecting open spaces, and building a clean energy economy should assess and address disproportionate environmental burdens and promote the equitable access to environmental benefits and resulting economic opportunities. To accomplish this, we need to build opportunities and pathways for communities of color and populations with low incomes to participate in defining environmental problems, solutions and priorities through shared leadership models.

Over the next three years, King County will take the following actions to advance environmental justice:

1. Increase diversity and inclusion in climate/environment governance processes, partnerships, program development, and contracted services

Highlights:

- Partner with workforce development, non-governmental organizations, and businesses to strengthen internship and mentorship programs in environment-related fields.
- Improve racial, gender, age, and location diversity on environmental boards and commissions by removing barriers to inclusion, such as requirements for professional certifications.
- Implement priority hire or related policies that increase economic justice through contracting for infrastructure development and natural and built environmental improvements (like green infrastructure installations).
- Define equity and social justice outcomes and criteria for grant programs including Waterworks grants and community grants for recreation facility improvements.

2. Drive equity considerations into long-term improvements to built and natural environments, systems and policy

Highlights:

- Use demographic data and knowledge gained through partnerships and community engagement to drive pro-equity planning for open spaces, habitat, trails, trees, green infrastructure, energy conservation and climate response.
- Ensure that equity considerations, as outlined in the ESJ Ordinance, are applied to siting and design of major infrastructure like combined sewer overflow facilities.
- Build on King County's Local Food Initiative to advance food system improvements (e.g. institutional purchasing practices, policy innovations, incentives, partnerships, and code adjustments) that reduce disparities in food access and security.

3. Ensure that programs supporting investments in energy efficiency and renewable energy are widely available, and prioritize climate change preparedness efforts that enhance resiliency for those most vulnerable to—and at risk—for climate change impacts

Highlights:

- As recommended in the updated SCAP, increase capacity to work with communities to better understand priorities for addressing climate impacts and jointly develop community solutions that will build community resilience.
- Implement Workforce Equity Goal, objectives and minimum standards across King County departments and agencies (see Workplace & Workforce Goal Area).
- Strengthen connections between community-based organizations, housing programs and utilities to increase access to energy and water efficiency grants and incentives in low-income communities.
- Support inclusion of green building and other energy efficient elements to affordable housing developments.
- As part of the "1 Million Trees" initiative, work with partners to prioritize the planting of trees in communities where residents lack tree canopies and face higher temperatures because of concentrated paved and built areas.
- Carry out "heat event" exercise with health care providers, community centers, emergency responders and community organizations to address the needs of populations with pre-existing health conditions during a heat event.
- Publish information on storm and flood preparedness in multiple languages and use non-traditional communication channels to reach communities that are likely to be most impacted.

HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES



OUR CURRENT SITUATION

In King County, we have some people and communities that are among the healthiest and longest living in the world. However, this experience is not universal, and where people live, how much they earn, and the color of their skin are major predictors of life experiences and the chances of living well and thriving. Significant numbers of people in the King County have been left behind as demographics have shifted, and the region now experiences some of the greatest inequities among large US metropolitan areas.

When comparing outcomes by census tracts (lowest and highest 10 percent), life expectancy ranges from 74 years to 87 years, smoking ranges from 5 percent to 20 percent, and frequent mental distress ranges from 4 percent to 14 percent. Reasons for this disproportionality related to health and human services provision include inequitable access to services; a lack of services that meet the needs of all individuals, families, and communities; the historical underrepresentation of important voices in policymaking that determines how and where health and human services are delivered; and inequities in numerous determinants of equity – from housing to jobs – that lead to worse outcomes for some communities. These growing inequities are occurring a time when significant funding challenges for Public Health, mental health and substance use services, human services, and affordable housing threaten to exacerbate these disparities.

HOW WE WILL MAKE A DIFFERENCE

King County's plan to advance equity and social justice in health and human services is outlined in the Health and Human Services Transformation Plan, with a goal that by 2020 the people of King County will experience significant gains in health and well-being because our community worked collectively to make the shift from a costly, crisis-oriented response to health and social problems, to one that focuses on prevention, embraces recovery, and eliminates disparities. In recent years, King County's approach has included increasing equitable access to services with intentional use of the equity lens; focusing on

prevention and outcome-oriented approaches to improve health and well-being and reduce, over time, the number of residents who experience crisis; using data to ensure we are addressing the leading causes of death, disability, and well-being and targeting disparities; integrating services to improve access and outcomes; developing deep community partnerships, including targeted investments to support locally driven solutions; and advocacy at the state and federal levels.

Signature work that exemplifies these approaches include:

- **Best Starts for Kids**, which invests in prevention and early intervention for children, youth, families, and communities;
- **Communities of Opportunity**, an effort launched with The Seattle Foundation to address inequities in health, social, and economic outcomes, through the lens of equity and social justice, via place-based and policy/system change solutions with community partners playing key roles in shaping solutions;
- **Familiar Faces**, a community partnership focused on improving systems of health and social support services, and crisis prevention, for jail-involved individuals who have mental health and/or substance use conditions, and often experience homelessness;
- Integrating physical health care, mental health and substance use services, with the goal of making those systems more responsive to consumer needs and demands, while improving the quality and cost of care for King County residents;
- Leveraging the public health approach to address critical issues such as gun violence, disease outbreaks, enrolling the uninsured population of King County into newly available health insurance; and the King County Accountable Community of Health (ACH), a new, multi-stakeholder, regional collaboration committed to improving health for the entire community.

In the next three years, King County will undertake specific actions in five key areas related to the health and human services priority areas outlined above:

1. Raise community voices

Highlights:

- Increase community engagement in department and Countywide initiatives (including identification of needs, selection of priorities and development of implementation strategies), as modeled by Best Starts for Kids and Communities of Opportunity.
- Support increased capacity for engagement and participation of community partners, and target more grassroots agencies, networks and interested consumers in planning and implementation.
- Systematically and regularly work with community partners, stakeholders and health and human services providers to identify community assets and opportunities to inform strategic plans, programs and service delivery.

2. Contract for equity and outcomes

Highlights:

- Modify King County contracting requirements so that small non-profit organizations (especially those serving low-income populations, people of color and immigrants/refugees) can fairly and effectively compete for contracts and participate in initiatives.
- Establish incentives and performance measures in contracts to spur collaborative approaches to building healthy, safe and thriving communities.
- Increase King County investments in prevention across health and human services to target, in universal and tailored ways, the underlying causes of poor health and well-being.

3. Invest in partnerships

Highlights:

- Invest in the creation of cross-sector, community collaborative partnerships and linkages, within the County and at the community level, that foster equity and focus on improving outcomes for residents and communities.
- Support the integration of physical and behavioral health in the County workforce by building connections at all staff levels throughout Public Health and Department of Community and Human Services, as well as with other County work units and within the community.

4. Expand use of data to address inequities

Highlights:

- Use data to identify and address emerging and significant causes of death and poor health—with a specific focus on disparities—and expand disaggregation of data to ensure we know what is impacting all populations.
- Support the Data Across Sectors for Health (DASH) grant to integrate affordable housing and health data, which will track how public health interventions work for residents of affordable housing.
- Invest in best as well as promising practices and use data to build an evidence base for innovative practices that support communities with the most to gain.

5. Prioritize the public's health

Highlights:

- Work with elected officials and partners across the state for sustainable public health funding.
- Grow the role of the Accountable Community of Health (ACH) to guide health prevention investments in King County.
- Work with state and local partners to design and implement an integrated system for behavioral health and substance use treatment with primary care.

HOUSING



OUR CURRENT SITUATION

King County is experiencing tremendous economic and population growth, and many areas of our region are thriving. However, as a result for households, rents and home prices have increased far ahead of wage growth, making it difficult for them to meet their basic housing needs.

Housing affordability and homelessness have become crises that are worsening in King County. In addition, there are broad race and socio-economic disparities in access to housing. Low income renter households make up 70 percent of King County households earning less than 50 percent of King County's median household income (less than \$43,400 for a family of four) and face the greatest risk of housing instability.

In general, housing is considered to be affordable when a household pays no more than 30 percent of their income towards the cost of housing. Nearly 65,000 households earning between \$26,040 and \$43,400 pay more than half their income toward rent and are consistently extremely rent burdened; within this group, Black/African American and Hispanic/Latino households are disproportionately represented. One adverse event (illness, accident, reduced work hours) can easily launch these vulnerable households into severe risk of homelessness. Each household has different housing needs; there is no one-size-fit-all solution. Access to a variety of housing options is needed.

HOW WE WILL MAKE A DIFFERENCE

In response to the housing affordability and homelessness crises, King County is using a multi-pronged approach to address the housing needs of all residents and eliminate barriers to stable housing for all. First, King County will increase and target its limited resources to match investments with the highest priorities and needs across the region, increasing access to housing for all populations. Second, King County will work to create partnerships with private developers, cities and regional partners to explore innovative housing models to meet the diverse needs of households across the County. Finally, King County will look to develop strategies to prevent homelessness and increase housing stability.

In all programs, housing data and population trends will be analyzed to ensure that the strategies are addressing the region's ever changing housing needs and that all residents have equitable access to affordable, safe and stable housing.

In the next three years, King County will implement the Affordable Housing Strategy, which is organized into five categories:

1. Target resources

Highlights:

- Target capital funding to address specific affordable housing needs, ensuring that regions and populations receive the appropriate type of housing intervention.
- Continue implementation of the homeless coordinated entry for all system, ensuring that each homeless individual or household receives the appropriate level of service, allowing for the prioritization and efficient use of both housing stock and services.
- Invest in transit-oriented development housing around high capacity transit sites and partner with King County Metro and Sound Transit on service expansion to incorporate affordable housing around transit stations and into redevelopment plans of underutilized publicly-owned property.

2. Seek innovative partnerships and housing models

Highlights:

- Pilot new approaches to homeless housing on County-owned property, such as micro modular housing, rotational homeless encampments with service access and shelter with permanent supportive housing.
- Explore incentivizing the production of accessory dwelling units, through exploring mechanisms for design, permitting coordination and financing.
- Explore partnerships with market-rate developers to include affordability in new market-rate projects.
- Support a change in state law to allow for the adoption of Multi-Family Tax Exemption (MFTE) for unincorporated areas, to provide a tax subsidy for apartment developers willing to dedicate a portion of their units toward affordable housing.

3. Increase housing funding

Highlights:

- Dedicate Mental Illness and Drug Dependency (MIDD) tax to housing resources to create affordable housing for residents experiencing mental health or substance use disorders.
- Explore increased Veterans and Human Services Levy funding in 2017 renewal for housing to assist both veteran and non-veteran households.
- Issue hotel/motel tax bonds for transit-oriented affordable workforce housing.

- Consider a County-wide affordable housing Real Estate Excise Tax (REET) to generate large, dependable capital funding sources for affordable housing.
- Amplify the impact of housing resources by connecting them to other County initiatives, such as the Health & Human Services Transformation Plan’s Communities of Opportunity and Familiar Faces, King County’s behavioral health programs, employment programs, public health programs and criminal justice strategies.

4. Increase housing stability

Highlights:

- Implement the Best Starts for Kids levy funds that includes \$19 million to prevent and divert youth and families from homelessness.
- Consider adopting additional tenant protections to increase housing stability.
- Preserve affordable housing through existing and new models, such as the 4% Low Income Housing Tax Credit and the Regional Equitable Development Initiative Fund (REDI).

5. Analyze housing and population trends to address changing housing needs

Highlights:

- Analyze housing and population trends to inform how funding is directed through the Request for Proposals (RFP) processes.
- Utilize data to identify housing need changes and revise the County’s housing strategy.

INFORMATION & TECHNOLOGY



OUR CURRENT SITUATION

At 81.9 percent Washington State has the highest in-home broadband adoption rate in the country, according to the National Telecommunications and Information Administration. With a booming economy, King County is home to a technology literate society that relies increasingly on broadband internet access. But even within King County, 16 percent of households do not have access to the Internet—a resource so essential it is being called the “electricity of the 21st century.” King County residents who earn less than \$50,000 per year are 5.5 times less likely to have internet access at home.

The inability for people in our communities to use this resource limits access to government services, such as health care information, health insurance registration and participation in the online marketplace. It also limits opportunities to apply for jobs, the basic ability to do homework from home, social engagement opportunities, and the ability to engage in other aspects of our economy and society. Not having internet access at home means people must travel to libraries, community centers or schools to find information and access services, often placing an additional financial burden on those who are least able to bear it.

This inequity is often driven by poverty and other factors that limit access. For example, there are some communities, such as White Center in our county and parts of Snohomish County, where broadband services are limited due to their lack of perceived profitability by private carriers.

In response to the digital equity issue, a number of cities nationally, including the city of Seattle locally, are adopting action plans aimed at ensuring disadvantaged residents and communities are not left behind but are participating and benefiting in the opportunities provided by advancements in technology and the internet.

HOW WE WILL MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Access to information and technology is a fundamental social justice goal. Ensuring equal opportunity and access to the Internet for all residents, regardless of age, income or ability, allows everyone to participate in our economy and society. King County plays an important role—both as a service provider and as a regional convener—in connecting people to the resources they need to succeed in our increasingly digital world.

Some examples that illustrate the strides King County has already made in the areas of digital equity and inclusion are:

- **Accessible websites for blind, deaf and hearing-impaired residents**
- **Open data made available to software developers and interested residents, helping our communities transparently share information about County services and trends**
- **Digital communications portals like the Assessor’s Parcel Viewer that help people learn about King County services and make decisions that are important to them**
- **Institutional Network (I-Net), which provides affordable broadband Internet services for education, municipalities, and nonprofits, benefitting students, teachers, government workers and non-governmental organizations.**
- **The creation of a social media tool kit that all agencies and departments can use for enhanced and more effective resident interaction through social media.**

In the next three years, King County will take action in three key areas to improve digital equity in our communities, so that everyone has the opportunity to participate in and benefit from the digital world of the future.

1. Develop and implement a Digital Equity Plan in collaboration with regional partners in King County.

Highlights:

- Develop a digital equity vision along with goals, strategies, approaches and initiatives that comprise an action plan for King County and our regional partners.
- Identify local, state and federal funding sources to support digital equity initiatives.
- Integrate the ESJ Strategic Plan, Best Start for Kids, Youth Action Plan, 311, Smart Cities and other services with the County's Digital Equity Plan.

2. Increase residents' opportunities for digital interaction and engagement

Highlights:

- Target a reduction from 16 percent to fewer than 10 percent of homes in King County without broadband Internet access as part of our public performance scorecard.
- Identify and pilot public/private partnerships that increase the delivery of broadband services to underserved communities in King County, especially low-income qualifying residents and students.
- Increase the number of King County services provided online (as opposed to in-line) throughout County government to make it easier for those with broadband access to get the services they need.

3. Collaborate and integrate with regional partners to better utilize existing capabilities, develop new capabilities, and extend the impact of those capabilities more broadly

Highlights:

- Collaborate with Connecting Community Consortium (c3), a regional 23-member municipal, education and nonprofit organization, to activate a fiber network around Lake Washington that provides low-cost access to high speed connectivity and member-managed services.
- Perform convener and collaborator roles with regional private, public and community partners to identify successfully implemented Digital Equity solutions for re-use replication across King County communities.
- Expand I-Net fiber to more schools, government and nonprofit organizations throughout the county. Additionally, integrate I-Net assets with partner assets to more effectively deliver broadband and wireless connections to rural areas and underserved populations.
- Evaluate the creation of a digital equity investment bank to stimulate digital equity infrastructure by helping to fund community-driven digital equity initiatives.

JUSTICE SYSTEM



OUR CURRENT SITUATION

King County's criminal justice system has long been an innovator in serving the public safety needs of residents. At the same time, King County recognizes that as a nation we often have criminal justice responses to behaviors that have their roots in social, educational and community conditions. In addition, we know that harm often results from criminal justice involvement, and in many situations prevention—versus incarceration—can be more effective in terms of costs, developing human potential, and increased public safety.

Law enforcement is required to respond to harmful behavior and protect people and property from further harm. Law enforcement's work requires understanding human behavior issues, mental health, substance use, developmental disabilities, poverty, homelessness, and those who are purposeful in causing violence and property destruction. Law enforcement seeks to continually build trust between the community and law enforcement, which is essential to safe communities. Law enforcement must have crisis intervention training along with their usual protection and safety training and must be provided with resources to have alternative options to arrest and incarceration based on their experiences and perceptions of proper harm response.

Courts are required to ensure both public safety and a fair and just adjudication of the cases that come before them. Courts must comply with existing laws on due process and punishments, and provide consequences for harm caused. Courts seek to impose judgments that meet those obligations while at the same time providing a pathway out of the revolving door of criminal justice involvement, including advancing the use of therapeutic courts. Courts need the resources to timely process cases and exercise discretion on consequences and monitor behavior when alternatives to jail are imposed.

The Prosecutor is required to review and determine who is charged and with what type of charge. Prosecutors need adequate resources to review and process cases, advise criminal justice partners on issues, engage and participate with communities and systems, design and implement diversions and alternatives, and keep up with changes in laws and processes.

Public defense must protect individual rights to due process and protect the rights and liberty of those accused of a crime. Public defense needs adequate resources to investigate, prepare, and present each client's case and know their stories. Public defense must keep up with changes in the law and sentencing as well as understand alternatives and mitigations for their clients. Public defense works with stakeholders to create alternatives and suggest changes which lessen the harm to individuals involved with the criminal justice system.

Adult and juvenile detention must provide a safe and secure environment for clients and their own staff while the accused are awaiting trial or serving time imposed by a judge. They need the ability to manage this population while also working with individuals to change behavior which may lead to future criminal involvement. They need to provide training in trauma-informed practices, crisis intervention, mental health and substance use, and developmental disabilities.

Furthermore, even though in King County we have made significant strides in reducing the overall numbers of youth and adults we incarcerate, Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino and Native American/Alaska Native populations are increasingly over-represented in the courts, jails, and prisons.

This trend points to our need for an explicit racial equity approach in our criminal justice work.

People of color and people who are economically disadvantaged—who are overrepresented in the criminal justice system—also suffer from the stigma that comes from involvement in that system. Arrests and convictions present significant barriers to housing and employment, perpetuate economic disparity, and often leave individuals with insurmountable barriers to achieve economic independence and well-being. In addition, Washington has the nation's highest rate of property crimes and is experiencing an increase in crimes involving the use of firearms. Victims of these crimes are primarily economically disadvantaged or people of color.

HOW WE WILL MAKE A DIFFERENCE AS A SYSTEM

King County's criminal justice agencies are working collaboratively on three areas of equity focus: Partner with schools, youth, families and community organizations to reduce youth criminal justice involvement; enhance reentry planning and programming to reduce recidivism; work upstream and take a public health approach to public health problems, such as by providing people with mental health and chemical dependency support and taking a trauma-informed approach to all our criminal justice work.

1. Partner with community, schools and justice system to end the school-to-prison pipeline and prevent youth from entering the criminal justice system.

In 2015, King County leaders committed to making a paradigm shift away from detention and toward alternatives for youth. The County brought together the Juvenile Justice Equity Steering Committee (JJESC) consisting of community members, youth, local leaders, law enforcement, school district superintendents, faith based representatives, judges, prosecutor and public defense. JJESC is committed to a paradigm shift in how we approach system

change for youth who get trapped in the criminal justice system. The revolution at the heart of this paradigm shift is the development of collaborative relationships. That includes breaking the institutional decision-making habits that end up pitting community organizations against one another and system against system, particularly when it comes to funding decisions when there is not enough funding to meet all the needs. JJESC has been diving deeply into the disproportionality data and root causes and is currently exploring a number of actions and will be issuing recommendations.

Highlights:

- Establish short- and long-term actions to help end disproportionality in King County's juvenile-justice system.
- Identify root causes of disproportionality and specific solutions needed to address them in individual communities.
- Engage communities by sharing information, then collecting and incorporating feedback.

2. Work upstream to prevent criminal system involvement by addressing underlying needs that result in criminal justice involvement

Engage in the Familiar Faces and Community Alternatives to Boarding Task Force work with the Department of Community and Health Services, health providers and clients.

Highlights:

- Advance the use of evidence-based harm reduction in therapeutic courts, and support the work of the Familiar Faces team, which has committed to providing trauma-informed and harm reduction services to individuals who have been booked into the jail four or more times in a year.
- Support community-based mental health and chemical dependency treatment that can prevent justice system involvement.

3. Enhance community safety by providing trauma-informed criminal justice responses

A high percentage of justice involved youth and adults have experienced serious trauma through their lifetime. The reverberation effects of traumatic experiences can challenge a person’s capacity for recovery and create significant barriers to accessing services, often resulting in an increased risk of coming into contact with the criminal justice system.

King County criminal justice agencies and our state and local criminal justice partners will be trained as trainers on “How Being Trauma Informed Improves Criminal Justice System Responses” with the intention to:

- Increase understanding and awareness of the impact of trauma.
- Develop trauma-informed responses.
- Provide strategies for developing and implementing trauma-informed policies, including designing reentry assessments and programming which focus on needs and outcomes.

HOW WE WILL MAKE A DIFFERENCE AS INDEPENDENT CRIMINAL JUSTICE AGENCIES

Examples of programs and policies King County’s criminal justice agencies are pursuing in support of equity and social justice:

KING COUNTY SHERIFF’S OFFICE (KCSO)

- Hire from a myriad of communities, for example, KCSO has adopted a 10% hiring preference for candidates who speak a second language or who have served in the Peace Corps.
- Appointment of a captain to oversee diversity in our recruiting efforts, especially female candidates.

- New deputies attend the Criminal Justice Training commission, which focuses on a “guardian” rather than a “warrior” approach to policing. This training is reinforced after graduation with a KCSO class, Listen and Explain with Equity and Dignity (LEED).
- Implementing training and policies for transgender members of KCSO, as well as policies for contacting transgender individuals in public.
- Ensure that forms for undocumented immigrants seeking U-Visas are completed in as timely fashion as possible.

PROSECUTING ATTORNEY’S OFFICE (PAO)

- FIRS (Family Intervention Reconciliation Services), a youth diversion crisis intervention program that diverts youth who have been arrested due to a domestic violence interaction with a parent or sibling.
- 180 Diversion Program, in collaboration with community leaders, hosts motivational workshops for youth arrested for misdemeanors.
- Decriminalized Driving While License Suspended (DWLS) 3 cases by making reducing them from criminal charges to civil infractions. Persons with a DWLS 3 matter are economically disadvantaged and the PAO made this change to address the inequities associated with prosecuting these cases.

KING COUNTY DISTRICT COURT (KCDC)

- Problem solving courts, including Regional Mental Health Court and Veterans Court, and developing a therapeutic community court.
- Pre-trial judge-supervised probation in lieu of cash bail, for the purposes of public safety and reduced recidivism.
- Regionalized relicensing through an agreement among district and municipal courts to allow people to get relicensed at any participating court.
- Improved access to the courts through the use of video.

KING COUNTY SUPERIOR COURT (KCSC)

- Problem-solving courts, including adult, juvenile and family drug courts.
- Functional family and multi-systemic therapy from probation services.
- School engagement and truancy interventions, for example, working with King County Alternative Dispute Resolution on a restorative justice-based program training youth to mediate peer disputes in schools.

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC DEFENSE (DPD)

- Proposed a Theft 3 Diversion program (to be launched this summer), which seeks to connect youth accused of low-level crimes to a service provider immediately
- Raising Our Youth As Leaders (ROYAL) program, an evidence-based approach which seeks to serve high-risk youth of color and reduce their criminal justice involvement.
- State law requires that children accused of certain crimes be tried as adults; they are currently housed in a unit at the adult facility in the Maleng Regional Justice Center. Along with DAJD, DPD will pursue the goal of housing all detained children at the Youth Services Center.

DEPARTMENT OF ADULT AND JUVENILE DETENTION (DAJD)

- Re-entry transitional support programs, like the Veteran’s pilot project, providing programming while inside and connecting them to service providers on the outside to maintain continuity of care.
- Educational and vocational classes, for example, GED and vocational training for janitorial programs; partnerships with community colleges and the Seattle Education Access program to ensure students start their classes while incarcerated and focus on what happens next as they transition out; pilot program in Juvenile funded by the Andrus Family Foundation and Seattle University that allows post-adjudicated youth to participate in developing gardening work and culinary skills using the produce they’ve helped grow.
- Drug and alcohol support, for example, AA and NA courses as well as the Transitional Recovery Program.

TRANSPORTATION & MOBILITY



OUR CURRENT SITUATION

King County has an expanding transportation system and infrastructure that meets the transportation needs of many in the community. Although our system connects many people to opportunity, gets them to places they need to go, and links together our growing cities, mobility is one of the top concerns of King County residents. According to a recent study, our region ranks sixth worst in the nation for traffic congestion. In addition, there are transportation barriers, in terms of service and transportation options, that limit access to opportunities for people who live and work in rural areas, are seniors, are non-English speaking, have disabilities, are transit dependent, work during non-peak travel periods, or live in areas with predominately low-income residents and people of color.

HOW WE WILL MAKE A DIFFERENCE

King County recognizes that transportation is a key factor in accessing education, jobs and services that allow our residents to fulfill their potential and that our region's prosperity is dependent upon the ability of workers and freight to move throughout the region. To enhance mobility and access to transportation for everyone, we have followed four approaches.

First, ensure that we get the most service out of every dollar and that the system responds to the transportation needs of the community. For example, King County Transit partially addresses issues of gentrification in the Service Guidelines by looking at how concentrations of low-income populations shift throughout the county and measuring the extent to which low-income areas use transit. King County also supports and encourages land use, policies and practices that promote equitable transit-oriented development.

Second, build an intentional equity focus into the delivery of transportation services. Transit's Long Range Plan team has worked closely and extensively with jurisdictions throughout the county to identify future transportation needs. Our community outreach and planning process also engages with low-income residents and communities of color to identify where the transportation system is not serving them well. King County Metro not only looks at ways to deliver better service options to disadvantaged communities, it also offers low income residents a more affordable way to travel through our [ORCA LIFT](#) pass program which provides a new, reduced fare on Metro Transit buses, Sound Transit services, King County Water Taxi and the Seattle Streetcar.

PRO-EQUITY POLICY AGENDA

TRANSPORTATION & MOBILITY

Third, develop alternative services to respond to the specific needs of those who live in communities that do not support traditional service (e.g., rural communities). To help meet the needs, alternative service projects have been implemented to provide customized service to help residents travel to the places they need to go.

Finally, create broader and more meaningful access to transportation through improved engagement with communities and provide translations into many languages, as we prepare to offer service that connects more neighborhoods with high capacity transit. In every Link Connections public engagement effort, Metro Transit seeks to engage a representative group of people who reflect the bus riding population in the affected project area in each phase of outreach, including race, ethnicity, income, age, disability, and language spoken at home. Some of the things that have been done include: recruiting a diverse community advisory group, translating a project description into 12 languages other than English and maintaining voice message lines in all 12 languages, hosting multilingual briefings, mailing project information for posting at local libraries, schools and community centers, and providing information in formats beyond the web—including printed pieces, stop specific placards, and phone and in person.

In the next three years, to further advance transportation equity, King County will focus efforts on the following:

1. Investments in service improvements

Highlights:

- Examine ways to increase service frequency in underserved areas such as transit corridors running through southeast Seattle, South County along the I-5 and SR 167 corridors, the University District, and pockets of north Seattle and Shoreline
- Look at ways to provide more frequent service that connects disadvantaged communities to major transit hubs by partnering with transportation agencies to integrate service.
- Explore opportunities to better understand how access to education, jobs, social services, health care and healthy food varies by location and use that information to increase access to opportunity to riders and potential riders—particularly those who have been historically disadvantaged—when revising transit service.
- Test new ways to provide rural mobility and access during non-peak times, such as using new technologies to match riders with drivers (TripPool) and exploring partnerships with transportation network companies to provide evening service from transit hubs, as well as enhance our paratransit service.
- Develop a more actively managed park-and-ride program which may make new areas available for people to park and access transit, and implement a permit system that would ensure parking availability at park-and-rides at later times of the morning, benefiting transit-reliant populations and those who work during non-peak hours.
- Implement our Right Size Parking program (improving the bike and walk environment) to encourage more transit supportive design for all groups—particularly people who rely on public transit.

PRO-EQUITY POLICY AGENDA

TRANSPORTATION & MOBILITY

2. Investments in community partnerships

Highlights:

- Work with smaller employers, through outreach and incentive programs, to expand ORCA and ORCA LIFT distribution to low income workers.
- Partner with the City of Seattle and Seattle Public Schools to provide an ORCA card to students that qualify for the Free Reduced Lunch program and live one to two miles from their assigned schools. This partnership will provide low-income students who attend a school in the Seattle Public School district the same pass benefit as students who attend school in districts that are able to provide passes to all students as needed.
- Via translated materials and messages to low-income populations and communities of color, promote and educate travelers through our In Motion program about the benefits of active transportation, and utilize Metro's community-based outreach programs to encourage transit, ridesharing, biking and walking.
- Partner with local jurisdictions as they plan for "complete streets"—their community's transit, bike and walk plans—with a particular focus on those who may rely on public transit or don't have access to cars.
- Work with Washington State Ferries and the City of Seattle to create a new fully accessible multimodal terminal facility at Colman Dock on the central Seattle Waterfront, providing connectivity to many forms of transportation for all.
- Foster partnerships with communities to create alternative transportation options such as shuttles, real-time rideshare, vans or other innovative ways to provide mobility that is responsive to community needs in areas where the County cannot support efficient, fixed-route service.

3. Investments in the places and people with greatest needs

Highlights:

- Continue to implement and expand Community Access Transportation (CAT) program to create mobility options for people with disabilities and seniors.
- Partner with senior centers, non-profits or advocacy groups to provide vans through Fleet surplus and/or Vanshare programs.

4. Leverage the County's role as a major employer

Highlights:

- Focus on historically disadvantaged youth for public service career opportunities at King County Metro Transit, market apprenticeship programs to disadvantaged groups, and recruit at career fairs, community centers, and events in communities that serve low income residents and people of color.
- Partner with labor unions in efforts to achieve comprehensive equity throughout the work environment.

A REGIONAL EQUITY COLLABORATIVE



MOVING TOWARDS A REGIONAL EQUITY COLLABORATIVE

King County government engaged more than one hundred organizations during the Equity and Social Justice strategic planning process, many of whom have made serious commitments to equity issues and who to varying degrees and in varying ways are advancing their pro-equity knowledge, strategies, policies and initiatives. These organizations include local and regional governments and entities, community and civic organizations, educational institutions, philanthropy, businesses, labor and others.

A major conclusion from these interactions with partner organizations is that—though there are a number of important equity-focused collaborations underway—**as a region there is a need for increased coordination and cross-sector activities on solutions that are commensurate with the scale of the challenge of our inequities.** In essence, together we are stronger. Institutional commitment exists among various organizations throughout the region, and many organizations have expressed an interest in being part of an effort greater and bigger than any one of us as individual organizations.

This collaborative—with shared ownership—could lead to the creation of a “Regional Equity Compact,” where organizations would commit to collaborations across sectors, reducing overlapping efforts to achieve more coordinated and effective community advocacy and systems-wide changes. Some common areas of interests for such a regional equity collaborative include:

- **Jobs and workforce—Expanding opportunity to well-paying jobs, especially for people and youth of color, and making sure that all residents benefit from a thriving economy**
- **Data—Improving data collection, analyses and platforms with an emphasis on improved data disaggregation and community assets**
- **Policy agendas—Advancing our individual and collective equity policy agendas, with a focus on the most pressing issues of our community such as education, housing and transportation**
- **Racial equity—Advancing racial equity within our institutions and the community**
- **Accountability—Holding ourselves mutually accountable.**

Such a collaborative would build on some important partnerships and efforts already underway. For example:

- **Among community organizations, the Regional Equity Network** has been a community-led coalition that has worked in the Puget Sound Region on major areas of concern for our residents, such as transportation, economic development and housing.
- **In philanthropy, major players in the Pacific Northwest, including the Seattle Foundation and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, have been taking actions to advance equity and opportunity in our region, often via multi-sector collaborative partnerships.**
- **In government, the Governing for Racial Equity Network** has been a vehicle for local governments in the Pacific Northwest to share, learn and advance innovative and effective approaches to advancing racial equity within and by government.
- **In education, efforts like the Roadmap Project** work closely with institutions and community organizations to improve student achievement from cradle to college and career.
- **At the university and college levels, institutions like the University of Washington** have launched Race and Equity initiatives focused on institutional bias and racism, as well as engagement with communities.

In addition, there are other cross-sector efforts, like the recently launched Seattle Regional Partnerships convened under the umbrella of the Seattle Foundation with entities in philanthropy, business, community and government to focus on creating and expanding middle-wage jobs. Similarly, Best Starts for Kids is an initiative to improve the health and well-being of King County by investing in prevention and early intervention for children, youth, families and communities. As part of Best Starts for Kids, Communities of Opportunity—led by a series of community organizations with support from the Seattle Foundation and King County—engages in place-based activities to improve health, social, racial, and economic outcomes.

As our current situation and inequities demand broad and region-wide action, we as King County commit to advance a regional equity collaborative with a set of partners in the coming months and years.