

# Equity and Social Justice Strategic Plan Refresh Frequently Asked Questions

## General Information on the Equity and Social Justice (ESJ) Strategic Plan Refresh

**What is the ESJ SP Refresh Project?** The project aims to build upon progress achieved from the current plan ([2016-2022 ESJ Strategic Plan Executive Summary](#), [2016-2022 ESJ Strategic Plan](#)), through stronger/expanded engagement with employees and community partners to refresh plan goals, objectives, and strategies and to implement to effective systems of accountability to support King County's continued maturation in equity, racial and social justice.

**Why are we engaging with employees on the plan refresh?** There are voices and experiences missing from or not elevated in the current plan. It is critical to amplify those voices and experiences in the refresh.

### Who is engaged on the ESJ SP Refresh?

Employees throughout King County as well as community members will participate in the plan refresh, including but not limited to the following:

- **Employees** – In Identity-Based Affinity Spaces, department meetings, and other future engagement, employees will provide input on leadership, workplace, and workforce equity and operational and service equity.
- **Community Advisory Groups and Community Members** – Community advisory groups and community members will provide input on what is working, what is not, and what improvements should be made to advance equity in King County operations.
- **King County Subject Matter Experts (SMEs)** – SMEs from various department will provide information on progress to the original plan, the current situation, and draft strategy ideas.
- **Strategic Plan Update Leadership Team** – ESJ leaders will elevate the voices of employees and community and develop recommendations for plan elements.

### How are we planning on engaging with employees and when?

- Identity-Based Affinity Spaces (April – Q3 2023) focused on on-site, customer-facing, and shift worker perspectives on workplace and workforce equity and leadership accountability
- Department Meetings (Q2 & Q3 2023) focused on operational and service equity
- Surveys and/or other engagement strategies (TBD)

We will provide updates on engagement activities, as well as information on engagement opportunities, through Employee News and the [ESJ Strategic Plan Refresh SharePoint](#) site.

## How can I participate in the ESJ SP Refresh?

### How can all employees participate or support the refresh?

- [Sign up](#) to participate in Identity-Based Affinity Spaces, especially if you are an on-site, customer-facing or shift worker.
- Sign up to participate in department meetings to provide input on operations and service equity.

- Spread the word to your co-workers, especially other on-site, customer facing, or shift workers.

#### **How can people leaders support the update?**

- Spread the word about the ESJ Strategic Plan refresh and engagement opportunities.
- Support and encourage your team members in participating. Let them know that they will be paid for their time, regardless of whether they are scheduled to work during the meeting times.
- Participate in department meetings.

## **What are Identity-Based Affinity Spaces, how do I sign up, and will I get paid?**

#### **What are Identity-based Affinity Spaces and why are we using them?**

The ESJ SP Refresh Identity-Based Affinity Spaces are being established to provide input on leadership, workplace, and workforce equity for the strategic plan refresh. Identity-Based Affinity Spaces aim to elevate the perspectives and concerns of employees in a shared-identity space. These identity-based affinity spaces aim to create environments where employees can speak openly and authentically about their experiences and perspectives. Providing shared-identity spaces is important to cultivate a sense of safety and belonging for workers from communities that face a wide range of systemic oppressions; however, any employee is welcome to complete [this form](#) to opt into an identity-based affinity space.

#### **How are these different from King County Affinity Groups?**

While several of the Identity-Based Affinity Space names are similar to those for the existing King County Affinity Groups, they are separate entities. If you are in an existing King County Affinity Group and want to provide input on the leadership, workplace, and workforce equity for the ESJ SP Refresh, you will need to complete the [opt-in form](#) for the Identity-Based Affinity Spaces.

#### **Who will be able to participate in Identity-Based Affinity Spaces?**

Any employee is welcome to complete the [form](#) to opt into an identity-based affinity space, but we are hoping to recruit good representation from on-site, customer-facing and shift workers. Please note that while we will work to accommodate staff who wish to participate, to support meaningful engagement, each affinity space is limited to 25 people, and not all employees who want to participate may be included in the identity-based affinity spaces. Participation may be impacted by limitations on group size, operational constraints, desired diversity of positions and bargaining units, etc.

#### **How do I sign up for an Identity-based Affinity Space?**

To participate in an Identity-Based Affinity Space, complete this [opt in form](#).

#### **Whose approval will I require to participate?**

All employees will need direct supervisor approval to participate in any engagement activities, but supervisors are being encouraged to support employee participation in engagement. Approval will be conditioned on operational feasibility to release employees. Many county departments are facing record staffing shortages, which is impacting the ability of these departments to deploy essential services, both

internally and to the public. Employee participation in engagement sessions should be planned in partnership with management and following an assessment of impacts to operations.

#### **Will I get paid for my time?**

- Hourly workers who participate in engagement and are scheduled to work during that engagement will be released from their assigned work and will be paid for the engagement time and work consistent with contractual requirements.
- Hourly workers who participate in engagement when they are not scheduled to work will also be paid for that time consistent with labor contracts, including provisions for overtime.
- Second and third shift workers who participate in engagement will be paid for their participation time and will be released from work with pay for either the shift before the engagement or after the engagement, depending on work hours, employee preference, and supervisor approval.
- Salaried workers will not receive additional pay for their participation in engagement unless their participation results in required overtime, which will require supervisor approval.
- As noted above, participation in employee engagement may be impacted by operational needs.

#### **What commitment of time is associated with the Identity-Based Affinity Spaces and over what time period?**

The Identity-Based Affinity Spaces will meet for between 8 and 12 hours over the course of several months (likely May to September). Meetings will likely include several 2-hour meetings and a retreat.

#### **What will be done with the information I provide?**

The information we obtain from engagements will be documented and analyzed to identify themes. These themes will inform the goals, objectives, and strategies for the updated plan.

#### **What if I want to share, but I do not want others to know what I say?**

The project team and engagement consultants will develop processes to protect input from being associated with a particular participant unless the participant specifically agrees otherwise (for example, if a participant wants to provide a life experience and specifically wants to be identified). These processes will be detailed prior to and at the launch of the identity-based and other engagements.

#### **What other ways will there be to engage?**

In addition to the Identity-Based Affinity Spaces, we will also be engaging with employees in each department in department meetings to discuss equity in governmental services and operations. These meetings will involve about 6 hours of staff time and occur in late Q2 to Q3 of this year. Employees will also be able to opt into these spaces, and again we will encourage participation by on-site, customer-facing and shift workers. Other future engagement opportunities that will be open to all staff are currently under development.

## Questions About the 2016-2022 Plan and Potential Plan Changes

**Where can I find more information on the 2016-2022 ESJ SP?** More information on the 2016-2022 plan is available at this web site: [Equity and Social Justice Strategic Plan - King County](#)

**Where can I find more information on progress made toward the 2016-2022 ESJ SP goals, objectives, and strategies?** In late 2022, the Office of Equity, Racial and Social Justice developed a report of the highlights of recent equity work. This report can be found here: [Highlights from King County's Equity and Social Justice Plan \(arcgis.com\)](#). Additional information on progress to the 2016-2022 goals, objectives, and strategies will be provided in an appendix/attachment to the updated plan.

**Will there be a "new plan" or extension of the current Equity and Social Justice Strategic Plan since the current plan is dated 2016-2022?** We will be developing an updated and refreshed plan, which may have new goals, objectives, and strategies, but the refreshed plan will maintain the elements of the existing plan that are still applicable and helpful.

### How will this plan be different from the last plan?

This plan will work to address gaps in the last plan, better allow all employees to see themselves in the plan, and better incorporate accountability to help King County government advance our learning and work in undoing historical and current systems of racism and other forms of injustice. The new plan will have updated context information as well as goals, objectives and strategies informed by our external environment and internal work as well as by the input we receive from our internal and external engagement.

### Will the plan include other aspects of intersectionality, such as gender identity, sexual orientation, ability, and language? Will Anti-Blackness be covered in the refresh?

Yes. In the ESJ SP Refresh, we will center those most harmed by racism, including Black, Indigenous, and People of Color. We will uplift the voices of people who experience racism with intersecting and compounding levels of injustice and oppression, including those from the disability community, LGBTQIA+ community, immigrants and refugees, and other historically marginalized communities.

## Other Process Questions

### How are we doing things differently for this plan?

As we did for the last plan, we will engage community and employees regarding what is working, what is not, and what King County could do better regarding equity. For this plan, we would like to engage in more two-way, recurring engagement that seeks input on vision, goals, objectives, strategies, and targets. We also want to ensure opportunities for additional feedback on draft plan content as it is developed.

### Will the name of the ESJ Strategic Plan be change to the Equity, Racial, and Social Justice Strategic Plan? This question will be considered by King County leadership as part of the refresh process.

**Is the new plan going to be approved by Council?** This question will be considered by King County leadership as part of the refresh process.

**Will a landscape scan of previous input given through employee engagement surveys be done to gather experiences that have already been shared?** A leadership, workplace, and workforce group is being established to collect information from employee engagement surveys as well as from employee equity information. This information will be made available to internal engagement to support identification of what is working, what is not working, and what King County could do to improve equity.

**How do I get additional information on the ESJ SP Refresh process and engagement or how do I ask additional questions?** To get more information on the ESJ SP Refresh, please go to the [ESJ Strategic Plan Refresh SharePoint](#) site. Also, please watch for updates in UpFront, Employee News, and department messaging. If you would like to submit a question on the ESJ SP Refresh process, please email the team at [ESJStrategicPlanRefresh@kingcounty.gov](mailto:ESJStrategicPlanRefresh@kingcounty.gov).

**Could the ESJ Strategic Plan Refresh be a venue for advancing things like the following:**

- Adding to job descriptions that we want to hire folks that have racial competency skills
- Budgeting regular time for employees to do training/participate in ESJ activities
- Premium pay for customer-facing shift workers who use their bilingual/multilingual skills

The ESJ SP Refresh engagement will ask employees how we can improve leadership, workplace, and workforce equity and also how we can improve equity in government operations and services. The plan will identify goals/objectives and strategies to reach these goals/objectives. While the first two bullets above could be part of potential strategies to achieve a goal, the third bullet pertains to establishing policies on working conditions, pay, and benefits and is therefore reserved for the collective bargaining process. King County does provide premium pay for employees that use their bilingual skills for their job.

**Will there also be a way to share our best practices across the County, so we aren't reinventing the wheel?** We will look to break down silos and share learning throughout development and implementation of the plan.

**How will we account for groups that are at different points in implementing the first plan as the second plan is developed and implemented?**

We recognize that different agencies are at different places with respect to ERSJ work. For operations and services, the plan will identify goals, objectives, and strategies to take advantages of where we are now and opportunities to improve while working to address weaknesses and overcome challenges. With regard to systemic changes to internal processes and policies, we will develop county-wide goals, objectives, and strategies, as well as include minimum standards. The plan may also identify the development of additional supports (tools, training, resources) to help agencies achieve goals and objectives.