



King County

Department of Community and Human Services

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Questionnaire for Executive Department and Key Subordinate Unit Appointees

1. Please describe your experience and what qualifies you to lead the agency to which you have been nominated?

My experiences as an U.S. Army Infantry Officer, a local legal aid attorney, and leading King County's renewal planning and implementation of the Veterans, Seniors and Human Services Levy (VSHSL) prepare me for the privilege and responsibility of leading the Department Community and Human Services (DCHS). These experiences provide the leadership expertise, perspective as a local human services provider, and demonstrated success in local coalition building that will be critical to serving the Department, the County and our residents.

Leadership

Leadership is a professional skill whose full development requires deliberate study, training and practice. I am fortunate to have started my career in an institution that prioritizes and provides leadership training and deliberate leadership practice. Over more than a decade of formal leadership development, first at West Point and then as an Airborne Ranger-qualified U.S. Army Infantry Officer, I have honed an understanding and practice of leadership that informs how I approach this opportunity:

- Leaders serve the people they lead,
- People follow an example before an order,
- People respond to integrity above ingratiation, and
- People will humble you with their sacrifice when you inspire and equip them to succeed.

I have successfully applied these principles in large organizations with difficult missions under conditions as trying as combat in Iraq and Afghanistan. I understand how the differences between military and human services organizations call for tailored approaches, and I look forward to the opportunity to apply formal leadership training and experience in service of the DCHS team, DCHS mission and our broader community.

Local Human Services Provider Experience

After leaving the Army, I graduated from law school in Seattle and joined Northwest Justice Project as a legal aid attorney. My practice focused on integrating the delivery of free civil legal services to justice-involved veterans in local therapeutic courts, local jails and state prisons. I focused on public benefits, debt relief and housing access, all of which are issues confronting many of the people that DCHS serves.

During my time as a legal aid attorney, I learned the joys and difficulties of providing direct services. I witnessed how people experience complex challenges that defy the distinct silos in which we often design and deliver services. I also learned how the people whom we serve forge strengths and abilities to survive within systems that disfavor them, and that the most powerful approaches to human services recognize and leverage those strengths and while upholding personal dignity.

My experience with Northwest Justice Project also allowed me to work with DCHS as a contracted partner. I learned from that experience how the County is often one of several funders whose resources and requirements providers must blend together to serve clients, and I recognized how the quality of those contracts and relationships can elevate an organization's ability to serve clients.

Building and Supporting Local Coalitions

My most recent employment has been within DCHS itself, leading the renewal planning and implementation processes for the VSHSL. This experience highlighted the essential work of partnering with communities and nurturing coalitions with the recognition that community accountability and strong relationships are themselves some of our most powerful tools in solving difficult problems. I have also taken from this experience a tremendous appreciation for the community of public servants working within King County.

I am humbled to be considered to serve the DCHS team as its Director. Should I be confirmed, I look forward to bringing my experiences to bear on our important work as a member of the team of DCHS professionals serving our County.

2. King County has a well-established policy for examining and considering equity and social justice in its decision-making process. Please describe your thoughts on the topic and how you plan to advance these goals in your leadership of the agency?

Our opportunity and responsibility to advance equity and social justice in King County calls us to be clear about the challenge before us and to have the courage to implement our plans. Equity considerations are fundamentally entwined with every area in which DCHS serves the community. Whether the issue is homelessness, poverty, justice-involvement, unmet behavioral health needs, inequitable access to opportunity, or workforce development, we operate in a context in which social and government systems have for generations systemically advantaged some communities and systemically disadvantaged other

communities, none more so than black and native communities and non-gender conforming and non-gender binary persons. It is not a coincidence that those same communities are the ones that today consistently experience the greatest disparities in homelessness, poverty, unmet health needs, and inequitable access to opportunity.

King County is in a uniquely powerful position to help undo inequitable systems and to help promote the conditions for our residents to thrive. King County's shared values, scale, direct connection to the community we serve, and ability to examine data and deploy resources make us potent contributors to equity and social justice. Specific approaches that I will emphasize within DCHS include:

Centering the Most Affected Communities

We hear a constant theme in all community engagement across all human services lines of business that the people whom a program would support or affect must be centered—early and consistently—in the process of planning, designing, implementing, assessing and refining human services programs and systems.

Being Clear About the Role of Race and Ethnicity

The most important step in developing a strategy is understanding the problem or challenge. A mounting body of evidence clarifies that race and ethnicity are the most significant determinants of inequity in the United States, more powerful in isolation than socio-economics, gender or any other factor. Clarity on this premise is an essential part of meaningfully centering in our plans and actions the communities most affected by our policies and programs. King County has a responsibility to all of our residents, in all parts of the County, and clarity about the most powerful drivers of inequity will help us keep moving towards fulfillment of that duty.

3. What is your vision for the agency you have been nominated to lead?

Homelessness, poverty, racism, and inequitable access to treatment and opportunity operate as complex systems. Each emerges from entangled causes and each resists simple solutions. No single program or organization—no matter how well designed, resourced, or implemented—has the scale or complexity to overcome the systems that inhibit opportunity for too many King County residents. **Systematized challenges call for systematized solutions.**

King County and DCHS hear that call. I look forward to guiding DCHS as we focus not just on our programs themselves, but on how we set the conditions for our programs, our partners, and our communities to combine into systems that are up to the challenges we face. To succeed, we must deploy in thoughtful combinations the public resources and confidence with which we are entrusted so that they work together, amplifying each other's strengths and mitigating each other's weaknesses.

For DCHS, realizing this vision of systemization will depend upon our ability to nurture a cohesive, inclusive and accountable team; to maintain trusting relationships with funding and

policy partners; to operate public processes that inspire public confidence and incentivize community collaboration above competition for resources; and to cultivate persistent community partnerships that seek broad input while centering the voices of the people most impacted. DCHS will pursue these goals through rigorous and community-partnered planning, skillful procurement and contracting, disciplined focus on results, and consistent and candid communication.

4. What challenges does this agency currently face?

The Human Services “Last Mile”

Borrowing a phrase from infrastructure planning, DCHS has the opportunity to focus on how tailored connections between large human services systems can allow those systems to combine effectively for particular people. For example, having invested in affordable housing, behavioral health treatment on demand, and employment services, DCHS’s challenge is to ensure that our systems allow a single person to meaningfully access those services in combination and in their community. Success in addressing “last mile” challenges in human services will allow DCHS and our partners to begin to support the combinations of services into the systems that are essential for continued progress in human services delivery.

Meaningfully Defining and Measuring Success

Most human services challenges operate as complex systems, often formed over generations. Some of our most difficult and important work is to formulate and foster community ownership of definitions and measures of success that enable short-term assessment of performance while also contributing to our long-term, systematized goals. Nowhere is this challenge more pronounced than in DCHS’s work to make homelessness rare, brief and one-time, but similar challenges exist in the fields of behavioral health, services for persons with developmental disabilities, affordable housing, and services to promote equity and access for youth, seniors, vulnerable populations and veterans.

Funding Specificity and Customer-Centric System Design

King County and its residents entrust DCHS with significant resources. Only a small portion of the DCHS budget is from the General Fund, and the vast majority of the remainder is from use or recipient-restricted revenue sources. Funding specificity provides important guidance and accountability on the purposes for which funds must be spent, and DCHS must continue to find ways to blend these specific funds into integrated, customer-centric systems that minimize barriers and promote positive customer experiences.

5. How do you plan to address those challenges?

My approach is to identify and focus on core competencies, foster a common operational picture, and emphasize community partnership. Teams that develop strong relationships and effective systems around the execution of their core competencies are better able to continuously improve and adapt to new tasks. In DCHS, our core competencies include strategic planning, project management, procurement and contracting, community partnership, and performance measurement. Fostering amongst specialized teams a common

understanding of their shared environment enables integration of teams. In each of the cases listed in the previous response, the execution of solutions will require DCHS to perform in an integrated fashion and at a high-level its core competencies and to do so in an accountable conversation with affected communities and partners.

6. How can your agency do a better job of serving the public? How do you plan to implement those changes?

In addition to addressing the challenges and the equity and social justice considerations already discussed, DCHS can ensure that we consistently focus on customer experience, embrace continuous community partnership, and communicate about the services and projects that we deliver.

Customer Experience

DCHS can continue to design service access experiences—both in person and online—that meet the expectations of the communities we serve. The essential step in designing customer-centric services and systems is seeking customer feedback and input and incorporating them in all phases of service system design and delivery.

Continuous Community Partnership

DCHS must maintain our current shift from episodic community engagement to persistent community partnership. We must also continue to adopt new models that of engagement that reinforce community strengths and structures rather than only asking community members to come to our meetings.

Communication

The Department operates across multiple human services domains and serves nearly all human services populations in the course of any given day. DCHS must use inter-personal, digital and traditional communications approaches to keep partners and the broader community informed of upcoming opportunities, ways to access services, recent accomplishments, performance measurement and long-term goals. These communications must also reflect King County's linguistic diversity.

7. How do you plan to promote ethical behavior among your staff and in your agency?

Ethical behavior is the cornerstone of credibility and public confidence, both of which are essential for DCHS and King County to fulfill our duty to serve our community. Specifically within DCHS, the Department oversees substantial public resources, the vast majority of which flow to community-based organizations through procurements and contracts. Our procurement, contracting, payment and stewardship processes must comply with requirements and inspire public confidence. I see three key approaches to promoting ethical behavior:

Personal Example

The most fundamental tool for promoting ethical behavior is personal example. As with leadership generally, people follow examples before orders. As a leader, my first responsibility in promoting ethical behavior is to act ethically myself.

Culture

An individual example of ethical behavior empowers a leader to then credibly cultivate a team's ethical culture. Ethical cultures arise where leaders expressly value ethical behavior, exemplify ethical behavior, and then create team environments in which small, good faith missteps are openly identified and productively cured. An ethical culture that values open identification and transparent response to ethical lapses, distinguishing between good-faith mistakes and deliberate or negligent behavior, will over the long-term be more credible and better serve the public than a culture that purports to be "zero tolerance".

Training

Not all aspects of ethical behavior are self-evident. For DCHS, staff must be aware of detailed ethical provisions around conflicts of interest in particular. To be an organization that expressly values ethical behavior requires that DCHS also is an organization that prioritizes effective ethics training. I will assess existing ethical training programs with DCHS and then institute improvement and application of those programs to equip staff with an understanding of our ethical duties and rules before we are in positions to make mistakes.

8. Does your prior work history or any other relationship create any conflicts of interest with carrying out the duties of leading the agency to which you have been appointed?

My spouse is a current member of the Creative Justice Adult Advisory Group, a non-appointive advisory group. Creative Justice is a current Best Starts for Kids awardee. Her participation is uncompensated, informal and does not create a financial interest in or fiduciary duty to Creative Justice. My spouse is in the process of ending her role with Creative Justice.

I have not previously in the course of my King County employment been involved in decisions or work with Creative Justice. If confirmed as Director and presented with a situation involving Creative Justice that would implicate a conflict of interest, I will take or avoid action in accordance with King County ethics requirements to ensure ethical compliance and DCHS's organizational integrity.