## STAFF REPORT

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| **Agenda Item:** | 6 | **Name:** | Mike Reed |
| **Proposed No**.: | 2016-B0056 | **Date:** | March 16, 2016 |

**SUBJECT**

Briefing on the King County 2015 Equity and Social Justice Annual Report.

**SUMMARY**

Ordinance 16948, the county’s Equity and Social Justice (ESJ) Ordinance, requires the preparation of an annual report on status and trends in equity and social justice. The 2015 King County Equity and Social Justice Annual Report (Report) describes the formation of the new Office of Equity and Social Justice; summarizes major equity highlights for 2015; discusses the ESJ Strategic Plan; notes progress on the identified Determinants of Equity factors; and reports numerical values for key equity parameters.

**BACKGROUND**

In 2010, the Council approved Ordinance 16948, often referred to as the “ESJ Ordinance.” It defined fourteen “Determinants of Equity”—factors that contribute to individuals or communities having a fair opportunity to attain their full potential. These Determinants of Equity have become the foundation for ongoing equity efforts in King County. The ESJ Ordinance also called for an annual report on “the status and trends in equity in the county” related to the implementation of the ordinance. Since 2012, the Executive has published an Equity and Social Justice Annual Report, building on earlier reporting on equity commitments and accomplishments in King County.

The 2015 Equity and Social Justice Annual Report was published in December 2015. The Report describes the formation of the Office of Equity and Social Justice in the Executive branch and identifies the primary functions of the Office, including integrating equity considerations into major county initiatives, providing training on equity topics to county employees, working on equity initiatives with the community, and supporting county staff in incorporating equity and social justice in program plans, processes and initiatives.

**ESJ Progress Highlights**

Among the ESJ developments of the previous year that are highlighted by the Report:

* King County announced new actions to address racial disproportionality in the justice system, decriminalize homelessness and mental illness, and partner with schools and communities, including the following;
  + The Executive pledged to cap the number of detention beds at the future Children and Family Justice Center at 112, nearly half the number at the Youth Services Center currently;
  + King County Superior Court set a goal of cutting the use of detention for probation violators 50% by April 2016;
  + King County Superior Court also set a goal to eliminate detention for young people who run away from home, violate curfews, and are truant or responsible for other “status violations”, with limited exceptions;
  + The Department of Community and Human Services’ summer youth employment program placed 205 young adults into summer internships, including 15% that were homeless and 21% that were involved in the justice system;
* Bus service became more affordable for riders who qualify for Metro Transit’s new ORCA LIFT reduced fare. As of March 2016, more than 25,000 King County residents have signed up for the ORCA LIFT program and more than 3.7 million trips were taken with ORCA LIFT cards during the program’s first year.[[1]](#footnote-1)
* A new water taxi, the MV Sally Fox, started service with ADA-friendly and passenger safety amenities;
* An ESJ Strategic Planning process began, including summer workshops engaging employees and community organizations to help shape the plan;
* Nine Bridge Fellows graduated, completing a leadership program and producing a collaborative ESJ project;[[2]](#footnote-2)
* King County and partner jurisdictions hosted the Governing for Racial Equity Conference[[3]](#footnote-3) at the Washington State Convention Center in Seattle on June 11-12, 2015, to provide a forum for engagement on issues related to advancing equity and social justice. A range of workshops were offered, addressing the public sector’s role in advancing equity, countering bias in hiring, urban sustainability through environmental justice, and transportation access for low income residents. Over 500 individuals attended the conference;
* The county adopted the Strategic Climate Action Plan[[4]](#footnote-4), which supports achieving ambitious targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, recognizing vulnerable communities that are most impacted by climate change;
* The Best Starts for Kids levy was approved by the voters, establishing a program that will transform the way the region invests in children’s future;
* King County established the Immigrant and Refugee Task Force to expand access to opportunities and voices in government; and
* Following intensive health care outreach and enrollment efforts by the county, census data confirmed that the percentage of uninsured adults declined from 16% to 10%, with more than 200,000 individuals enrolling.

**ESJ Strategic Plan**

Of particular focus in the Report is the Equity and Social Justice Strategic Plan, which will guide the county’s equity and social justice work over the long term. The ESJ Office is currently completing a draft of the Strategic Plan, which will then be broadly circulated for input from interested audiences. The draft will be shared with agencies later in March, and the Office of ESJ anticipates transmitting to Council a final version of the ESJ Strategic Plan in late spring. According to the Report, planners who have been developing the strategic plan have identified a series of questions that are driving the planning, including: What are the elements of county systems and operations where the greatest potential ESJ impacts are? What ESJ initiatives are working and need to be expanded? What initiatives are not working and needs to be discontinued? Where can King County learn and leverage “best practices” for ESJ that promote change? Where are there opportunities for partnerships with community organizations, business, labor, education, philanthropy, and cities to improve equity outcomes?

The Strategic Plan will also define the role that King County ESJ will have in leading and supporting regional equity efforts.

**Progress on Determinants of Equity**

The Report also describes the county’s progress on particular Determinants of Equity,[[5]](#footnote-5) by discussing a number of key initiatives that impact one or more Determinants. Of note, the Best Start for Kids levy is described as impacting all the Determinants. The Report describes several potential Best Starts for Kids strategies that would impact the Determinants, including universal access to developmental screenings, nurse home visitations for first-time mothers and homelessness prevention funding. Other county initiatives identified in the Report that are expected to have an impact on the Determinants include initiatives aimed at building equitable communities, addressing disproportionality in juvenile detention, creating a diverse workforce, and transforming the organizational culture.

**ESJ Dashboard**

Finally, the Report includes an Online Dashboard of Equity and Social Justice. The Dashboard launched in October 2015. Data is drawn from tracking, monitoring and reporting systems and strategic plans of county agencies. The Dashboard is updated on a regular basis, as new data is available, so that it captures the state of the county at any given time. The Dashboard is organized around key priorities, including Equity and Social Justice, Best Run Government, Climate Change and Regional Mobility. Each of these has a number of topic areas. There are nine topic areas for Equity and Social Justice, including Natural and Built Environment/Climate; Education; Community and Neighborhoods; Food Access; Public Transit Access; Health and Human Services; Jobs and Economic Security; Affordable and Quality Housing; and Justice and Public Safety. The Dashboard provides scores on major parameters of these topic areas. For example, according to the Dashboard:

***Social Cohesion:*** King County adults were questioned about trust in their neighborhood and likelihood that neighbors could be counted on to intervene in problem situations. The mean social cohesion score for adults in King County was 36.2, with a possible range from 10 to 50.[[6]](#footnote-6)

***Housing Cost-Burdened:*** 35% of homeowners and renters are paying more than 30% of their income on housing.

***Health Insured:*** 10.1% of adults are uninsured.

The Dashboard can be found at (*https://performance.kingcounty.gov).*

Matias Valenzuela, Director of the Office of Equity and Social Justice, will brief the Committee on the 2015 Report. Matias will also briefly speak to progress on the draft ESJ Strategic Plan, including the attached Strategic Plan Framework.

**ATTACHMENTS**

1. King County 2015 Equity and Social Justice Annual Report
2. ESJ Strategic Plan Framework

**INVITED**

* Matias Valenzuela, Director, Office of Equity and Social Justice

1. http://www.kingcounty.gov/elected/executive/constantine/News/release/2016/March/07-orca-lift-anniversary.aspx [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The Bridge Fellowship (<http://kingcounty.gov/employees/bridge-fellowship.aspx>) is an employee development program that provides selected employees with experiences and tools needed to enhance leadership skills, learn more about County systems, and support career advancement. It is a one-year program made available to ten selected employees, featuring structured training and collaboration, customized development planning, and experiential learning. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. http://grenetwork.org/wp/2015-conference/2015-agenda/ [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Motion 14449. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Determinants of Equity are defined in Ordinance 16948, adopted in October 2010. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. https://performance.kingcounty.gov/stat/goals/m3m3-jtb4/ypgc-e668/kqxt-bn8q [↑](#footnote-ref-6)