



## Racial Equity Toolkit Summary Sheet

### 1. What issues area did you apply the RET on? (project, program, policy, or budgetary decision)

Developing a 40-year sewer pipe rehabilitation plan that will guide where and when aging sewers are addressed.

### 2. What was your north star? What racial equity outcomes guided your thinking (Step 1)? How did you design and facilitate a process that was rooted in relational culture? (See the RSJI document, [Building a Relational Culture](#).)

Our analysis and plan development were guided by understanding the impact of a sewer failure and related sewer back-up for our customers, and how our customers differ in their resiliency to respond to that impact.

Initially, the project manager, our Equity Lead, and the consultant who would be facilitating the planning workshops met to discuss an equity strategy for the plan and the workshops. As a result, our process to develop the rehabilitation plan included a diverse team of SPU employees comprised of those involved with assessing sewer conditions, maintaining and rehabilitating sewers, responding to sewer overflows, and planning rehabilitation work. We also engaged staff from SPU's Change Team, Environmental Justice and Service Equity (EJSE) team, Drainage and Wastewater (DWW) Branch Equity Team (BET) and the Office of Planning and Community Development. The process consisted of several workshops where we used virtual whiteboarding, small break-out groups and large group discussion to share ideas and form consensus decisions. The virtual and online format also helped promote more even participation and "airtime" among the participants.

### 3. What data, stories, and communities did you engage with? What relationships did you develop, sustain, or deepen during this process? How did these relationships contextualize your institutional objective? (Step 2)

A key factor considered to develop the plan was service equity. One key resource was the DWW Social and Environmental Systems Analysis, which layers citywide data on racial equity, language access, environmental burdens, health disadvantage, etc. Service equity discussions centered around who may be disproportionately affected by structural sewer system failures, potentially resulting in a sewer back-up. A back-up can be costly and time consuming as a resident must deal (either themselves or by hiring contractors) with the clean-up and disposal of damaged items, possible home repairs, and replacement of personal items. While some customers may be able to recover their costs through the City of Seattle's claims process, the customer must pay for the overflow recovery costs upfront. Several challenges can also occur in this claims process that can disproportionately impact low-income individuals and families, immigrants unfamiliar with Seattle's governmental processes, and individuals that are less fluent in English.

### 4. How did these relationships help you to identify the burdens and benefits of your proposed work? What are the burdens? What are the benefits? (Step 3)



## Racial Equity Toolkit Summary Sheet

The project team chose to prioritize sewer rehabilitation in areas where customers are likely to experience a heavier burden and challenge from a sewer overflow. For this analysis, this heavier burden and greater challenge is defined as lower resilience to recover from a sewer back-up. Resiliency is measured using the City of Seattle's Racial and Social Equity Index (RSE) composite index as a proxy for resiliency. The RSE composite score incorporates data on race, ethnicity, and related demographics with data on socioeconomic and health disadvantages to identify where marginalized populations make up relatively large proportions of neighborhood residents. This allowed the analysis to link resiliency to several important factors including limited financial resources, limited English language proficiency, lower educational attainment, and race and ethnicity.

### **5. Please identify the way in which the four types of racism (internalized, interpersonal, institutional, and structural) animated your RET process and what you learned. (Step 3)**

We discussed how a sewer back-up may be challenging to our customers, which include:

#### Internalized

- Lack of trust in government, reluctance to engage from communities of color.
- Belief that City expertise is best equipped to develop infrastructure plans without community input (White normative culture).

#### Interpersonal

- Lack of awareness/desire to engage BIPOC communities in designing programs and solutions to infrastructure inequities and to mitigating barriers to service equity.

#### Institutional

- Not knowing how to/being comfortable with reporting a sewer back-up to SPU.
- Not knowing that a customer can recover costs from a back-up caused by SPU's system.
- Not being able to navigate the claims process successfully, including submitting the proper documentation or self-advocating.

#### Structural

- Not being able to pay for disposal, repair, and replacement costs out of pocket.
- Not having job flexibility, free time, or support systems to deal with overflow recovery.

These challenges caused the group to prioritize rehabilitation work (and hence lower the risk of a sewer back-ups) in communities where one may expect these challenges would occur more frequently, as discussed above.

### **6. As a result of the above analysis, how will you increase opportunity and/or minimize harm for the impacted community? (Step 4)**

The plan prioritizes work in areas where we expect lower resiliency to address a sewer back-up.

### **7. What steps will the RET team take to ensure that department leadership will implement the recommendations from the RET?**



## Racial Equity Toolkit Summary Sheet

The racial equity work resulted in a service equity analysis, which was in turn used to develop the 40-year sewer rehabilitation plan and schedule. The plan documents those decisions and SPU is now implementing that plan.

### **8 How will you become/remain accountable to the relationships developed during the RET process? How will you report back to your stakeholders?**

Implementation of the plan includes measures of how rehabilitation work is distributed across the city, specifically in lower resiliency areas. Those will be tracked over time.

### **9. What additional racial equity issues did this RET reveal? Consider how these unresolved issues present opportunities for structural transformation, including [building a relational culture](#) (i.e., working across departments, and with other institutions and sectors to achieve racial equity).**

To facilitate ongoing attention to equity as the strategy is implemented, the team developed rehabilitation targets related to resiliency. Incorporating these service equity targets, or others like them, into Rehabilitation Program monitoring over time will help assess program success at equitably distributing sewer services.

Another implementation action identified is the need to consider equity interventions as rehabilitation work is scheduled in the lower resiliency areas of the city. These interventions include increased communication about upcoming repair work, identification of quick fixes to adjacent residential pipe connections, ADA improvements to sidewalks, or street re-paving.

As the Rehabilitation Strategy is updated, the City's RSE score should be revisited as potential shifts in city development patterns and investment may redefine those areas having the greatest equity concerns. It will also be important to communicate to new SPU employees how the Rehab Strategy incorporates service equity to ensure continuous improvement. The Rehabilitation Strategy should be updated, at minimum, every five years.