



## Seattle Office for Civil Rights

Julie Nelson, Director

June 7, 2011

TO: Council President Conlin  
Councilmember Bagshaw  
Councilmember Burgess  
Councilmember Clark  
Councilmember Godden  
Councilmember Harrell  
Councilmember Licata  
Councilmember O'Brien  
Councilmember Rasmussen

FROM: Julie Nelson, Director

SUBJECT: **Race and Social Justice Initiative: 2011 mid-year overview briefing**

I appreciate City Council's ongoing support for the Race and Social Justice Initiative (RSJI) over the past year. RSJI Manager Glenn Harris and I are looking forward to providing you an update on Monday, June 13. This memo describes some highlights of RSJI in 2011 thus far. This information will provide useful background to prepare you for the departmental briefings on 2011 work plans during the coming months in your respective committee meetings.

### **2011 highlights of the Race and Social Justice Initiative**

**2010 RSJI Employee Survey:** In October 2010 SOCR conducted a second Citywide survey to measure understanding of RSJI, develop future RSJI work plans and strategies, and assess progress made since the original survey in 2008. Nearly half of all City employees participated in the 2010 survey, up from one third in 2008.

Key survey findings:

- *Strong support for RSJI:* Over 4,000 respondents (83%) believe that it is valuable to examine the impact of race; 63% stated they are actively involved in promoting RSJI changes in their workplace.
- *Leadership support for the Initiative needs to grow.* Over 60% of respondents stated that leaders in their department supported discussions of institutional racism. The survey results indicate that City employees feel it is important for their leadership to demonstrate support for tangible implementation of the Initiative.
- *City employees report overall positive outcomes from RSJI training and education:* 70% of employees who have attended RSJI training and/or education found it to be useful; 76% stated they feel comfortable talking about race within their work setting.
- *RSJI strategies have begun to gain traction in ending institutional racism in City policies and programs:* 56% of respondents reported being aware of departmental efforts to increase workforce equity. Nearly half (49%) were aware of their department's efforts to increase purchasing and contracting equity. Sixty percent (60%) reported awareness of inclusive

outreach being done by their department, and 72% knew of their department's efforts to improve access to services for refugee and immigrant residents.

The survey demonstrates that RSJI has expanded and is no longer just "preaching to the choir." The growing reach of the Initiative creates new capacity challenges, especially as RSJI develops active community partnerships to extend the reach of our work to achieve racial equity. The full survey report and an executive summary are available [on the RSJI Inweb site](#).

**RSJ Community Roundtable:** The Race and Social Justice Community Roundtable is a partnership of twenty-five community organizations and public institutions working together to achieve racial equity in Seattle, as well as working to address institutional racism within their own organizations. The Roundtable has made education its primary focus; it also is analyzing the connections between education and criminal justice, economics, environmental justice and health.

The Roundtable's accomplishments include:

- Roundtable members have worked with state legislators to promote a statewide agenda on racial equity in education.
- A Roundtable subcommittee is developing specific strategies to end disproportionality in schools' discipline rates.
- Roundtable members have used the Racial Equity Toolkit to review their own organizations' programs and policies.

**Development of RSJI 2012-2014 Strategic Plan:** 2011 marks the last year of the Race and Social Justice Initiative's three-year plan that the City began to implement in 2009. This new assessment process is an opportunity to describe successes and challenges and to identify opportunities that will be captured in our next three-year plan. A Steering Committee of individuals that represent the breadth of City government (including Councilmember Bruce Harrell and Deputy Mayor Darryl Smith) will coordinate the assessment process, gather feedback from internal and external stakeholders, and develop recommendations to create a useful, living document to guide our work over the coming three-year period.

**Departments' mid-year RSJI progress reports:** Council's interest in and support of departments' work for racial equity is critical. Departmental mid-year RSJI reports last year proved to be a tremendous opportunity for the Initiative. Not only did the reports provide a venue for Councilmembers to learn about departments' RSJI progress; they also greatly increased accountability within departments for RSJI engagement. In addition, the process offered an opportunity for the general public to learn more about RSJI.

In 2011, all departments continue to work on workforce and contracting equity, inclusive outreach and public engagement and immigrant/refugee access to services. We have asked departments this year to use their reports to share one or two specific examples of their application of the racial equity toolkit, along with the results. In addition, we have asked departments to highlight any efforts to achieve racial equity in the community within their lines of business.

I look forward to meeting with you on June 13 to provide more details concerning the Initiative and to answer any questions you may have. If you have comments or questions prior to our meeting, please contact me at 233-7822 or Glenn Harris at 255-6914.