



## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Councilmember Sally Clark, Chair, COBE  
Councilmember Sally Bagshaw  
Councilmember Tim Burgess

**FROM:** Diane M. Sugimura

**DATE:** August 5, 2011

**SUBJECT:** August 10 Committee Briefing: DPD's Annual Report on Race and Social Justice Initiative Milestones

Over the past year, the Department of Planning and Development (DPD) has focused its efforts on achieving racial equity in the community within our lines of business. Although employee training activities remain important, the capacity we have built in the department over the past years has enabled us to spend more time applying the concepts learned throughout the department by use of the RSJI Equity Toolkit. To facilitate the use of the toolkit, merit leave for eligible employees is tied to the application of the toolkit to a program, policy or practice within their line of business. After applying the toolkit, the resulting analysis will guide changes to the program or be submitted to Seattle Office of Civil Rights (SOCR) as a best practice for publication.

We would like to highlight two programs that we believe have broader applicability in the City (see attachments):

- Increasing Diversity on Boards and Commissions
  - Recruiting efforts have included press releases to the ethnic media list, personal outreach by planners, working with the Department of Neighborhoods to identify design professionals in the communities, working with constituent groups throughout the city, contacting past members of the commissions, and contacting ethnic professional and community organizations for identification of potential members
- Analysis of the Trade Licensing Program
  - Many applying for licenses (e.g., for installers and operators of boilers, refrigeration equipment or gas piping) are Asian who may speak English as a second language. Several initiatives were undertaken to increase the success rate of these applicants including providing the exam in a language other



than English, attempting to provide interpreters and finally allowing applicants to bring their own interpreters while testing.

- We also provide on-site testing at local community and technical training facilities and/or on site at larger businesses where several applicants are testing.
- One challenge identified is diversifying the composition of the technical advisory boards for the various licenses issued by the department.

Additionally, we would like to briefly touch upon the 2010 RSJI Employee Self-Survey results for DPD and how they differ from the results of the 2008 survey.

- In 2008, 37% of employees responded to the survey (152 of 407 employees); in 2010, 66% responded (206 of 313 employees)
- Those with a basic understanding of RSJI did not change significantly (92% in 2008; 94% in 2010).
- Employee's familiarity with the Toolkit greatly increased (25% in 2008; 42% in 2010). This exceeded the Citywide response (33%), but there is clearly room to grow.
- Those aware of DPD's efforts to improve services for refugee and immigrants increased as well from 51% in 2008 to 89% in 2010.
- SOCR noted that "The overall results indicate holding steady and/or some increase in awareness and support for the initiative, even in a time of ongoing budget stress in the department."

We look forward to sharing our work with you, and strategizing with the Committee about how we can collectively work for greater racial equity. Thank you.

#### Attachments

cc: DPD Change Team  
SOCR – Julie Nelson, Glenn Harris and Darlene Flynn

## **Racial Equity Impact Analysis Worksheet** ***\*Design Review Board Recruitment\****

**1. Department and Project/Program/Policy Title:**

Dept of Planning & Development – Land Use Program, Design Review Board Recruitment.

**2. Briefly describe the proposed action and the desired results:**

DPD has a desire to ensure that our Design Review Board recruitment process is effectively engaging the diverse minority populations in Seattle. The goal is that our boards are reflective of the racial diversity in our city through a process that actively recruits board candidates from communities of color.

The proposed action plan includes:

- Send press release regarding DR Board recruitment to Ethnic Media list (maintained by DPD's Public Relations group) ;
- Personal outreach during the recruitment period by staff to people of color for board positions;
- Work with the Department of Neighborhoods and other City departments to identify additional contacts in communities of color;
- Engage current and previous board members for contacts/referrals in communities of color and professional minority organizations;
- Post board openings in neighborhood and interest group blogs; and
- After recruitment and during the interviewing and selection process, actively consider the level of diversity on our boards and look for qualified candidates that will augment and strengthen board diversity.

**3. Who are the racial / ethnic groups affected by this program, policy or practice? How will each group be affected? What are the racial disparities related to this project?**

All racial/ethnic groups will be affected by this practice. Ethnic minorities would likely see a positive effect in the form of greater representation on the boards which would also have the result of decreasing representation by white populations. The goal is to increase board diversity and effectively represent communities of color. In the past, we have not tracked these statistics, so the degree of disparities is unknown.

**4. How does the proposed action expand opportunity and access for individuals to City services (including immigrants and refugees)?**

By engaging members of minority communities as board members, we anticipate that these individuals may serve as liaisons between the civic engagement aspects of the Design Review program and communities of color. In addition, members of the public who attend these public meetings see a Board that represents the diversity of their neighborhood.

**5. How does the proposed action promote racially inclusive collaboration and civic engagement? Is there community support for or opposition to the proposal? Why?**

The proposed action is specifically seeking to engage greater involvement in the civic process. The Design Review program has not received feedback for support or opposition in the past; it is not anticipated to generate opposition, however such feedback will be monitored.

**6. How does the proposed action affect systemic change (address institutional racism)?**

By actively engaging communities of color during the recruitment and selection process, it is anticipated that these efforts will positively affect systemic change.

**7. How does the proposed action educate on racial issues?**

Board diversity demonstrates that the City values the knowledge and participation of communities of color in effecting change through the Design Review program.

**8. How does the proposed action support work force equity and/or contracting equity?**

This action has an indirect relationship with workforce equity. The Design Review Board members are voluntary positions, made up of citizens and industry professionals who donate their time and energy to be involved in the civic process of reviewing development proposals throughout Seattle. Though not a part of the formal "City of Seattle" workforce, these volunteers work on behalf of the city and the citizens at large and it is important that the makeup of these boards reflect our cities cultural and ethnic diversity, therefore efforts to ensure racial equity should be consistent with our efforts to achieve diversity amongst the City of Seattle's workforce.

**9. How does this action help to achieve greater racial equity? Describe the resources, timelines, and monitoring that will help ensure success.**

Recruitment efforts typically begin in October and typically extend through December, with the selection process being complete by April of the following year; however given these new action items, recruitment will begin a month earlier to ensure adequate outreach. Staff anticipates the following four reports will document and monitor success of the proposed actions:

1. Establish baseline data of board diversity (August/Sept)
2. Summary Report on results of recruitment data (January)
3. Summary Report on staff recommendations to Council/Mayor (February/March)
4. Summary Report on final confirmations approved by Council/Mayor (April/May)

Resources who will work on this recruitment effort include the DR Program Lead, a quarter-time DR Planner, and a half-time administrative assistant.

**10. Are there any unintended consequences on racial equity? Are there strategies to mitigate any negative impacts?**

No unintended consequences are anticipated; however any that arise will be monitored and evaluated.



## Application of the RSJI Tool Kit to the DPD – Trade Licensing Program

### Review of Existing Programs and Services

Since the beginning of the Initiative, departments have been asked to analyze their lines of business to eliminate institutionalized racism and promote multiculturalism. Departments now use the Toolkit to systematically review all programs and services to deepen our approach to eliminating institutional racism.

#### **1. Department and Project/Program/Policy Title:**

This report is a summary review of the Licensing Program within the Operations Branch of the Department of Planning and Development (DPD).

The trade licensing program issues licenses to installers and operators working on boilers and steam engines; refrigeration equipment; and gas piping. The purpose of the program is to assure public safety by evaluating an individual's minimum qualifications and experience to install or operate the various mechanical equipment requiring a license within the City. An applicant after providing documentation validating the necessary pre-qualifications are tested for minimum code knowledge that will assure the safe operation of the mechanical equipment.

#### **2. Briefly describe the proposed action and the desired results:**

This report will analyze the current status of the Licensing Program (LOB U2463); high lighting how the current testing process and communication/outreach to our customer base works; and indentifying areas within the process that may be improved to enhance customer service and minimize barriers to ethnic groups.

#### **3. Who are the racial / ethnic groups affected by this program, policy or practice? How will each group be affected? What are the racial disparities related to this project?**

The Licensing Program can impact virtually every ethnic group within the City. Large numbers of our customer base are of Asian ethnicities that currently tend to operate business establishments which would require a trade license issued by the program. English may be a second language to the ethnic groups that utilize our services therefore, it is imperative that we provide opportunities to minimize barriers that would prevent an applicant acquiring the license they need to operate their business establishment. In addition, knowledge of technical codes and safety regulations may not be the primary focus for the owner or employee of a business establishment. The tests for a license are geared to codes and standards for the safe installation and operation of equipment. Without background experience and knowledge of the industry associated to the license, the comprehension of these requirements even at the entry level licensing requirements can be difficult for an individual whose primary language is not English or has not had any formal

training. The Program has been aware of these barriers and attempted to mitigate them by implementing opportunities that promote a higher success level for non-English speaking groups.

**4. How does the proposed action expand opportunity and access for individuals to City services (including immigrants and refugees)?**

In an effort to increase the number of individuals in ethnic groups that successfully get their license, the program has instituted several initiatives. To compensate for non-English comprehension, the program first attempted to provide the boiler exam in Korean. At the time, large numbers of applicants for entry level boiler licenses were being applied for by this ethnic group. The experience did not have a positive outcome. After the Department learned that test questions were being distributed to the Korean community by the organization that was helping develop the test, the project was discontinued.

The Department then moved to another alternative to provide better access by attempting to provide an interpreter for the applicant. Often, an interpreter was either not available or may have not existed within the City organization. The program evolved to allowing the applicant to provide their own interpreter, which has proven to be more successful. It is our impression that an applicant having a person whom they know or trust has a multiple benefit. It not only allows the applicant to have a better comprehension of the testing materials but, it also reduces the intimidation an applicant may have toward government and the whole notion of testing for a license. However, if the applicant is unable to provide their own interpreter, attempts are made to provide an interpreter for the applicant to assure every individual has an equal opportunity.

Another method the Department has initiated for expanding access is on-site testing. The program frequently provides testing at local community and technical training facilities. This effort is to provide a user friendly environment and reduce the intimidation of government mentioned above.

**5. How does the proposed action promote racially inclusive collaboration and civic engagement? Is there community support for or opposition to the proposal? Why?**

The testing and licensing process is a required step for many individuals to obtain employment or to advance their career. Licensing is typically a onetime event for many applicants. As a result, we have very limited input from our customer base. Thinking outside the box and drawing upon the experience and knowledge of the minority community within the industry would assist us in evaluating the outcome of the licensing process. In addition, we have determined that producing the tests in multiple languages would be cumbersome and costly to manage and maintain. Conversely, allowing the applicant the option of providing an interpreter has been universally acceptable to the ethnic communities that utilize our services.

One area that the program would benefit most from is participation by minorities on the established technical advisory boards for the various licenses issued by the Department. Historical, it has been difficult to solicit participation from individuals from ethnic groups primarily due to the fact that the applicant is a onetime user. An outcome of this program review is a renewed commitment to continue efforts to draw interest in board participation by individuals from ethnic groups.

**6. How does the proposed action affect systemic change (address institutional racism)?**

Individuals that tend to have interest in the long term impact of the Department's licensing program are usually from the higher more experienced licensee levels. Our experience indicates that the higher level licensee's are typical white males (we do not have any ethnic data to support this assumption) and we have depended on volunteers within this industry group to fill positions on the advisory boards. Continuing to solicit volunteers from only this group will not increase ethnic participation in the licensing program. Several options are under consideration that will target increased participation by ethnic groups. One option that will be implemented this year is reviewing the tenure of current board members. It is important to have a good mix of individuals on the board with institutional memory but, adding new board members from ethnic groups with fresh ideas will enhance the programs focus on meeting the needs of the diverse groups utilizing our services.

**7. How does the proposed action educate on racial issues?**

The mission of the licensing program is to assure the safe installation, maintenance, and operation of mechanical equipment within the City of Seattle. The program depends on community and technical training organizations to provide training to applicants that will be utilizing our services. We do however, provide coaching and mentoring for those individuals who may be experiencing difficulty in obtaining a license through our testing process. Guidance as to where information or training can be obtained is provided. In addition, increasing diversity on the licensing advisory boards will promote a better understanding of any misperception our processes may have erroneously drawn.

**8. How does the proposed action support work force equity and/or contracting equity?**

Promoting the use of interpreters, when needed, and on-site testing promotes equity for all individuals in our licensing process. As noted above, developing more diversity on the technical advisory boards will increase awareness of diversity issues and open opportunities to develop solutions in the future.

**9. How does this action help to achieve greater racial equity? Describe the resources, timelines, and monitoring that will help ensure success.**

As noted above, the changes made in the licensing program have increased equity for all applicants. Future changes in the technical advisory board's diversity will provide greater perspective for developing awareness for non-English speaking applicants. During the remainder of this year and into the future, the Department will be working toward achieving the goal of diversity on the advisory boards.

**10. Are there any unintended consequences on racial equity? Are there strategies to mitigate any negative impacts?**

An anticipated impact to the program will be the lack of interest of ethnic organizations support to the licensing program and ultimately staffing the licensing advisory boards with people from diverse backgrounds. Past experience indicates that the level of interest in the licensing program is directly related to a licensee's need for higher level licenses. In other words, a onetime user who may need a license to operate their business establishment or an applicant getting a license to enhance their pay grade (our license program is used as an indicator to an employer that a person has reached a perceived level of knowledge) is not interested in donating time to a technical advisory board. Eliminating an advisory board due to its dependence on a specific class

of individuals is not the solution either. Therefore, it will require more effort on the Department's part to solicit participation from individuals who can provide diversity to the advisory boards

We view establishing diversity on the technical advisory boards to be a long range goal. Along the way we anticipate, other goals will be detected that will be more of a short range or mid range goal. For example, during our conversations regarding this analysis of the licensing program it was determined that while it may be impractical to produce the tests for a license in all the various languages, it may be practical to produce a flyer that describes the basic process for obtaining a trade license in the languages the City has established as the minimum threshold. We will be conducting a feasibility study to determine if this work would be of value to our customers.

Another example of a short term goal is reviewing the examples used in the testing. Some applicants have indicated that they were confused by the examples. We will be analyzing what generated the confusion and how best to display an example that will be universally understandable.

In conclusion, during our review of the program, we determined that while many improvements have been made to enhance equity in the licensing process, more can be done. We will continue to make improvements to the process and increase diversity on