

A Blueprint for an Equitable Economic Recovery

Seattle Colleges

January 2021

Summary

On December 10 and 11, 2020, we convened leaders from across the Seattle Metro Area to participate in this important discussion. Following is a summary of those discussions. It serves as a blueprint for a path toward an equitable economic recovery. Three themes emerged from our discussions.

Theme One: Outcomes will be Racially Equitable

Across all sectors, this theme was the most common. While that is perhaps unsurprising after the summer of advocacy and protests in 2020, it is a long-overdue conversation in Seattle and the nation. Recently, some companies have begun to hire Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion officers. This has been a show of support to the efforts advocates from black and brown communities have made for centuries. These hires are a start, but it is imperative that this work does not become siloed. Racial Equity work must be imbued throughout projects, policies, companies, and society. This work requires systemic thinking. Work must happen at every level – from primary education to public policy. A sustained focus on racial equity at every level is our best hope to chart a new course for true equality in the future.

The systems of education and training have largely been created by white people. As such, they are steeped in white culture, white perspectives, and white desires. As we collectively work to promote equitable education and employment opportunities, the systems of education and training must be reevaluated to ensure alignment with and respect for BIPOC cultures and norms. Once historically marginalized populations graduate from education and training institutions, they face discrimination and implicit biases in networking, recruitment, and hiring. These norms and practices must be overhauled, with a focus on expanding opportunity to black and brown communities. BIPOC communities are over-represented in low-wage, entry-level, and gig-economy jobs. Minority workers are more likely to be deemed “essential workers” during the COVID-19 pandemic. Conversely, higher-wage occupations and management positions suffer from a lack of BIPOC representation. This contributes to the income and wealth gap between white communities and communities of color.

Within the workplace, we must stop equating “professionalism” to whiteness. This is another effect of white people building the systems and institutions of our society. Culturally competent training must be expanded, and awareness of cultural differences must be increased. These efforts will look different from sector to sector, but all efforts share the common goal of realizing equitable outcomes to eliminate racial disparities.

Theme Two: Livable Wages for All

Women and people of color are disproportionately represented in minimum-wage and low-wage occupations. As part of realizing and equitable recovery from the pandemic, increased economic security must be advanced. Community leaders and educational institutions must provide pathways into high-earning occupations, rather than entry-level jobs.

Funding streams, such as Washington College Grant, Worker Retraining, and private funds from employers, will allow students and employees opportunities to learn new skills. Community and Technical Colleges will provide transparent pathways to earn credentials, ranging from micro-credentials earned in a few months to degrees earned in a few years. Funders, employers, and education institutions will work hand in hand to realize this new system.

Food security, affordable housing, secure internet access, childcare, and academic guidance are essential to those currently in the workforce, and those preparing to enter the workforce. Providing adequate wrap-around supports to students and employees will further advance economic equity.

Theme Three: Strong connections between those who train and those who hire

To create an equitable recovery, the relationship between those who train and those who hire must become stronger. By aligning our knowledge and efforts, we will create strong, transparent pathways into high-paying positions. Administrators, Executives, Faculty, Hiring Managers, Community-based Organizations (CBOs), K-12 Educators, Industry Leadership Tables (ILTs), and more must be in constant communication to adequately prepare students for employment opportunities.

The smartest way to increase collaboration is by training providers collectively engaging with industry partners. By thinking holistically within each sector, big-picture trends will be identified, and all partners will be able to quickly adapt. This collective engagement will allow for easy, fast communication between the two groups. Employers will quickly respond to community needs, and service providers will quickly respond to industry needs. Small businesses must be represented alongside large companies, as different size companies frequently face different challenges. This model has been piloted with the Healthcare Industry Leadership Table, which is a model other sectors can replicate and expand.

Sector Goals and Strategies

Attendees broke out into six sector-based groups, focusing on designing a blueprint for recovery in different economic sectors. Groups worked through a structured visioning and design thinking process resulting in a number of goals with tangible strategies for recovery. The pages ahead describe the goals and strategies for those six sectors: Construction; Healthcare; Hospitality; Logistics, Transportation, and Manufacturing; Retail; and Technology.

Construction

Goal: Embed Racial Equity Work

Participants: Seattle Colleges Wood Center, WMBEs, Organizations supporting WMBEs, Labor Training Trusts, Priority Hire

Strategy: Seattle Central's Wood Technology Center will specifically target the needs of WMBE contractors. Options include offering night classes and connecting students that might thrive in small company environments into these opportunities.

Strategy: Target Federal clean technology/green energy investments in neighborhoods and communities of color, building career and ownership opportunities for BIPOC communities. With a new federal administration, additional investments are expected soon. By advocating for these investments, and pairing them with green jobs, the Seattle area will create high-paying jobs that advance efforts to fight climate change.

Goal: Livable Wages for All

Participants: Labor Training Trusts, Seattle City Light, Priority Hire

Strategy: Workers will earn prevailing wages and apprenticeship minimums for new Federal, State, and local clean energy investments. Seattle City Light, for example, is currently preparing plans to invest in an electrified transportation system requiring the construction of robust infrastructure.

Goal: Strengthen connections between Education/Training Providers and Employers

Participants: Wood Center, PACT, Center of Excellence for Construction, Labor Training Trusts,

Strategy: Training and employment pathways will be built to support resident construction. Within Construction, the small-scale residential sub-sector contains untapped opportunities. Training providers must strengthen relationships with small business owners, and train new employees to match the skills needed to land and succeed in high-paying occupations. Small contractors can take advantage of demands for Detached Accessory Dwelling Units (DADUs) and home renovations, once training providers increase the supply of skilled professionals.

Strategy: Construction pathways will include digital skills needed for the next generation of construction technologies. Automation and advanced technologies are entering the construction space and these competencies are needed in training pathways.

Healthcare

Goal: Embed Racial Equity work

- Participants: Community Members, Community Leaders, Small Businesses, Corporate Businesses, Healthcare Industry Leadership Table
- Strategy: Companies and training providers will grow and support a more diverse workforce. In the Healthcare sector, a more diverse workforce has multiple benefits. In addition to providing career opportunities to BIPOC communities, the ability to see oneself in caregivers provides immeasurable benefit. BIPOC caregivers are able to engage in culturally relevant caregiving and are less likely to underestimate or disregard patients' perspectives. Employers still have work to do, in order to manifest and support a Healthcare workforce that is reflective of Seattle's population.
- Strategy: As the workforce diversifies, it becomes paramount to stop equating "professionalism" with whiteness. Since white people have dominated professions for decades, white culture has become the "norm" and is seen as superior to other cultures. This must end.

Goal: Livable wages for all

- Participants: Community Members, Community Leaders, Training Providers, Higher Education, Public Policy, Public Funders, Private Funders, Small Businesses, Corporate Businesses
- Strategy: In the immediate future, we must work together to advocate for increased hazard pay. Healthcare workers have been on the frontlines of the pandemic for months and will remain on the frontline for months to come.
- Strategy: Provide tuition support for healthcare training to dislocated workers, and to incumbent Healthcare workers for upskilling after the pandemic is under control.
- Strategy: Education and training providers will promote jobs that provide high earning potential. This includes creating pathways to high-wage jobs now, while other strategies are advanced.
- Strategy: In the short- and long-term, we must work together to increase the minimum wage.
- Strategy: All parties must work to provide supports addressing food security, affordable housing, secure internet access, childcare, and academic guidance to those currently in the workforce, and those preparing to enter the workforce.

Goal: Strengthen connections between education/training programs and employers

- Participants: Community Members, Community Leaders, Training Providers, Higher Education, Public Funders, Private Funders, Small Businesses, Corporate Businesses

Strategy: We will expand apprenticeship models and internship opportunities, opening these pipelines to historically marginalized populations. By doing so, education and training providers will begin to show BIPOC communities the breadth of opportunities available in the Healthcare sector. These new models and pathways will focus on opportunities beyond nursing.

Strategy: We will work to align pre-requisites for Registered Nursing programs across Washington State. This unnecessary variability creates and reinforces inequities, while hindering the progress of some students.

Strategy: Create and advertise a Healthcare IT micro-pathway to model a shared skills language and an “unbundled” just-in-time training pathway

Goal: Integrating behavioral health into the continuum of care

Participants: Community Members, Community Leaders, Public Policy, Small Businesses, Corporate Businesses

Strategy: Continue & grow work to destigmatize behavioral/mental health. Behavioral health has been stigmatized, and that perspective needs to change. Workers themselves must be provided behavioral health benefits.

Strategy: Strengthen outreach to BIPOC and general communities to promote behavioral health.

Strategy: Among existing coalitions, advocate for increased funding for behavioral health. Identify and implement new funding streams.

Goal: Embracing digital health and telehealth

Participants: Community Members, Private Funders, Small Businesses, Corporate Businesses, CBOs, K-12 Education, Higher Education

Strategy: Promote telehealth equitably as it grows in popularity, availability, and potential. Digital literacy within industry is essential. This will be achieved through culturally competent training from software providers and supported through equitable adoption strategies at the company level.

Goal: Invest new energy and funding in social determinants of health

Participants: Public Policy, Public Funders, Private Funders, Small Businesses, Corporate Businesses

Strategy: Embrace and enthusiastically promote affordable housing, healthy foods, adequate physical movement, and other social determinants of health. Industry leaders will find new, innovative ways to support these basic human needs among current employees, current students, and particularly those most affected by the pandemic.

Hospitality

Goal: Embed Racial Equity work throughout the industry and strengthen opportunities for BIPOC communities

Participants: Community Members, Community Leaders, Training Providers, Public Policy, Public Funders, Private Funders, Small Businesses, Corporate Businesses

Strategy: Build “upskill and backfill” models within the hospitality sector, specifically tailoring upskill opportunities to BIPOC communities. BIPOC communities are over-represented in low-wage and gig-economy jobs. Meanwhile, hospitality is an industry in which low-wage, entry-level work is often a pre-requisite for advancement into managerial roles. By providing upskill training, particularly for BIPOC immigrant communities already working in the industry, we can promote their advancement while making way for new individuals to enter the field.

Strategy: Provide English language support for English as a Second Language speakers through on-staff ESL instructors, and/or related partnerships with ABE/ESL programs at regional colleges. Pre-COVID-19, the Sheraton employed 2 ESL instructors on staff. In pockets nationally, the hospitality industry has partnered with local colleges on app-based ESL coursework that ESL workers can complete on breaks at work, or whenever they can find the time, gradually preparing them for further education and workplace advancement. Replicating these models, or innovating similarly, the industry can promote its immigrant and ESL workforce.

Strategy: Engage, collaborate with, and support BIPOC communities as the hospitality sector reemerges from the pandemic. As the COVID-19 pandemic gradually abates, there will be opportunities to engage BIPOC communities in new ways as well as building from pre-existing models. Arts districts, the Global Nightlife Initiative, and the Capitol Hill Eco-District are all examples of initiatives that can provide opportunities for BIPOC communities.

Goal: Livable wages for all

Participants: Training Providers, Public Policy, Public Funders, Private Funders, Small Businesses, Corporate Businesses

Strategy: Provide upskills and retraining opportunities targeted to BIPOC individuals and women disproportionately displaced by COVID-19 in the hospitality sector. BIPOC communities and women are over-represented in hospitality and retail positions. Therefore, the loss of hospitality and retail jobs during the COVID-19 pandemic has disproportionately affected people of color and women. The hospitality industry and training providers must partner to identify and reach out to hospitality workers who have been laid off or are at risk of layoff, encouraging and supporting upskill or retraining opportunities.

Strategy: Develop a plan to address persistent low wages in the hospitality sector, disproportionately impacting BIPOC individuals, immigrants, and women. Many

Hospitality positions have lower wages than in other sectors. To counteract the compounding effects of minority representation in low-wage positions, the hospitality sector, as well as stakeholders from the impacted communities, must discuss and develop a plan to address the poverty cycle in which BIPOC individuals, immigrants, and women can get stuck. Considerations include advocacy for minimum wage increases, voluntary wage increases among large hospitality businesses, and other innovative models.

Goal: Strengthen connections between education/training programs and employers and revamp education pathways

Participants: Community Members, Community Leaders, Training Providers, K-12 Education, Higher Education, Public Policy, Public Funders, Private Funders, Small Businesses, Corporate Businesses

Strategy: Build mechanisms to recognize transferable skills for both hospitality education and employment. Many people possess transferable skills relevant to Hospitality. By embracing prior experience, Hospitality will be strengthened by new perspectives and individuals. Mechanisms to recognize transferable skills may include adopting a shared skills language across hospitality employers and education providers, and/or building crosswalks between specific "feeder" industries and education programs into hospitality.

Strategy: Identify the emerging digital skill/digital literacy needs among throughout the hospitality industry and develop professional development/training programs to meet those needs. As new technologies change the way we order, purchase, and receive products within Hospitality, digital skills will become a focus of professional development. Addressing these needs now will ensure that our regional hospitality industry is preparing the future workforce.

Goal: Embrace positive changes resulting from COVID-19 pandemic

Participants: Community Members, Training Providers, Private Funders, Small Businesses, Corporate Businesses

Strategy: Advocate to make permanent some of the COVID-era allowances, such as liquor laws changes (e.g., take-away cocktails), and outdoor seating/parklets. Several temporary changes/laws have made positive impacts on the Hospitality sector. These changes have been particularly critical for small businesses. As normalcy returns and the vaccine rolls out, it will be critical to advocate for the permanent adoption of these changes to support a strong, equitable recovery.

Logistics, Transportation & Manufacturing

Goal: Embed Racial Equity work

- Participants: Community Members, Community Leaders, Private Funders, Small Businesses, Corporate Businesses
- Strategy: Implement equity trainings, cultural shifts that emphasize belonging and mitigate biases. Existing reports will guide the work, preventing the need to continually request input from marginalized communities.
- Strategy: Increase access to the field for people who speak a primary language other than English, including translated materials and services.

Goal: Livable wages for all

- Participants: Community Leaders, Training Providers, K-12 Education, Private Funders, Small Businesses, Corporate Businesses
- Strategy: By engaging employers and community members through advisory committees, training providers will highlight pathways for education and career advancement into high-earning occupations.
- Strategy: A new branding campaign focused on the dignity of this work will shift societal perspectives on what it means to work in Logistics, Transportation, and Manufacturing.
- Strategy: As jobs shift from in-person retail to warehouse distribution positions, warehouse positions with advanced training will be better compensated than the jobs they replace.

Goal: Strengthen connections between education/training programs and employers

- Participants: Community Members, Community Leaders, Training Providers, K-12 Education, Higher Education, Public Policy, Public Funders, Private Funders, Small Businesses, Corporate Businesses
- Strategy: Employer representation will be expanded and strengthened on advisory committees, such as Technical Advisory Committees (TACs) at Community and Technical Colleges.
- Strategy: Pathways into manufacturing jobs will be strengthened by building and expanding cohort-based models, providing additional surety to employers for when new hires will be ready for employment.

Goal: Improve outreach and career awareness

Participants: Community Leaders, Training Providers, K-12 Education, Higher Education, Private Funders, Small Businesses, Corporate Businesses

Strategy: Industry leaders will develop promotional presentations, which will be shared with community leaders. These tools will promote a better understanding of career opportunities in the Logistics, Transportation, and Manufacturing sectors, while promoting trusted voices within BIPOC communities. Promotional materials will be age-appropriate, and span from K-12 education to worker retraining initiatives.

Goal: Updated, accessible data on sector

Participants: Training Providers, K-12 Education, Higher Education, Private Funders, Small Businesses, Corporate Businesses

Strategy: Accessible data on job openings, career advancement, and sub-sector definitions will provide transparency to employees and training providers. This data will both measure the success of equitable career advancement within the industry and show external partners where additional work must occur.

Strategy: These data will include advancement through education and employment, disaggregated by race and gender.

Goal: Support clean energy initiatives

Participants: Public Policy, Public Funders, Private Funders, Small Businesses, Corporate Businesses

Strategy: As a major energy user, the Logistics, Transportation, and Manufacturing sectors will advocate for regulatory changes, new research and development, and future green jobs. Opportunities exist with fleet conversions and new infrastructure investments, and must be complemented with funding for new training, including maintenance of new high-tech vehicles.

Retail

Goal: Embed Racial Equity work

- Participants: Community Members, Community Leaders, Training Providers, K-12 Education, Higher Education, Public Policy, Public Funders, Private Funders, Small Businesses, Corporate Businesses
- Strategy: Identify advancement opportunities from low-wage to living-wage work within the retail sector and target these opportunities for BIPOC individuals and women working in low-wage positions in the field. BIPOC individuals and women are over-represented in entry-level jobs and are more likely to be deemed essential workers during the COVID-19 pandemic. Racial disparities in these positions contribute to racial disparities in income and wealth and are a major challenge for the Retail sector moving forward. Partners will need to develop training pathways and career pathways, and targeted outreach to low-wage retail workers for upskilling and/or retraining. An “upskill and backfill” model may be appropriate here, as in the hospitality sector.

Goal: Livable wages for all

- Participants: Community Members, Community Leaders, Training Providers, Public Policy, Public Funders, Private Funders, Small Businesses, Corporate Businesses
- Strategy: Develop a plan to address persistent low wages in the retail sector, disproportionately impacting the BIPOC and female workforce, without disadvantaging small business owners from these same communities. Many Retail positions have lower wages than in other sectors. To counteract the compounding effects of minority representation in low-wage positions, the retail sector, as well as stakeholders from the impacted communities, must discuss and develop a plan to address the poverty cycle in which BIPOC individuals and women can get stuck. Considerations include advocacy for minimum wage increases, voluntary wage increases among large retail businesses, and other innovative models – taking pains to advance the minority workforce without disadvantaging minority entrepreneurs.

Goal: Strengthen connections between education/training programs and employers

- Participants: Training Providers, K-12 Education, Higher Education, Public Funders, Private Funders, Small Businesses, Corporate Businesses
- Strategy: Training Providers will increase their knowledge of ecommerce jobs and skills.
- Strategy: We must identify the digital and related skills that will be in-demand as the retail sector continues to move online, in partnership with the retail sector and data analytics firms. We will grow our existing status as a hub of ecommerce, targeting BIPOC individuals and women who often have the requisite entry-level experience in retail.

Strategy: The Retail sector and training providers will partner to provide short-term “micro-pathways” and bootcamp models to upskill incumbent retail workers, particularly in preparation for an increasingly online/digital retail space. We must develop clear, equitable, and innovative training pathways into leadership roles within Retail, with particular emphasis on the transition to ecommerce roles. These programs must build on the relevant skills incumbent workers gain through brick-and-mortar experience and be offered in flexible, accessible formats.

Goal: Increase sustainability measures

Participants: Community Members, Public Policy, Public Funders, Private Funders, Small Businesses, Corporate Businesses

Strategy: Increase consumer-facing transparency around sustainability practices within retail, allowing consumers to make more informed choices. With the rise in online retail, the materials and energy used in packaging, refrigeration, and transportation have become more central in the fight against climate change. We see opportunities to create transparency in all areas, leading to consumer-informed directories that rate companies based on their sustainability practices.

Strategy: Regional online retailers undertake a process to consolidate shipments, both within supply chains and when shipping to consumers. The move to ecommerce has been accelerated due to COVID-19. Regional online retailers must lead the way in sustainable packaging, given our stature as a hub of ecommerce as well as a regional concern with the climate crisis and our role in it. This includes both reducing packaging/shipments, as well as researching and developing new materials and processes that will cut down carbon emissions.

Strategy: Collaborate with the logistics & transportation sectors around green initiatives. Give the interconnected and interdependent nature of the retail and logistics & transportation sectors, close collaboration around green (and other!) initiatives is imperative. This may include regular cross-sector meetings, shared leadership, and joint investments/funding proposals to support this work.

Goal: Promote independently owned small businesses

Participants: Community Members, Community Leaders, Public Policy, Public Funders, Private Funders, Small Businesses

Strategy: Develop entrepreneurship training opportunities and angel investing/funding for underrepresented, underserved communities. Entrepreneurship is one way to create wealth and strengthen communities. By investing in local, small business, Seattle will grow equity within BIPOC communities. Start-up funding and angel investing, focused on marginalized communities, is essential.

Strategy: Advocate for shared, transferable benefits and other policy to support small businesses and their workforce. Collective support must be created to strengthen small businesses. While large corporations have the profit and people to navigate

regulations and provide robust benefits, many small companies do not. Local policy will focus on supporting small businesses and provide opportunities to publicly and/or collectively provide benefits such as healthcare.

Goal: Encourage the resurgence of Downtown Seattle

Participants: Community Members, Community Leaders, Public Policy, Public Funders, Private Funders, Small Businesses, Corporate Businesses

Strategy: Establish a Commission to examine and prepare for downtown revitalization post-COVID. A commission including small retailers and affordable housing providers will examine the future opportunities for dense retail areas, including Downtown Seattle, Southcenter Mall, and Downtown Bellevue. The emptying out of these spaces due to COVID-19 has created new opportunities to repurpose and reimagine what a healthy, vibrant central business area can be. Investing in place-based businesses (housing, personal care, healthcare, etc.) rather than businesses with online presences, will serve these areas well into the future.

Technology

Goal: Embed Racial Equity work

- Participants: Community Members, Community Leaders, Private Funders, Corporate Businesses
- Strategy: Overhaul recruitment & hiring practices with equity lens. Within the Technology sector, much of the equity work to be done is at the corporate level. As a sector, we see opportunities to overhaul recruiting and hiring practices, imbuing them with an equity lens. These revamped processes will dovetail with specific recruitment and retainment initiatives, focused on local talent and communities of color.
- Strategy: Once hired, employees will have access to mental health support, helping to alleviate the pressure and trauma of being the “first and only” person from an underrepresented population.

Goal: Livable wages for all

- Participants: Community Members, Community Leaders, Training Providers, Higher Education, Private Funders, Corporate Businesses
- Strategy: Professional development opportunities, including clear career advancement and mentorship, will support the long-term career growth of newer employees and BIPOC employees. These opportunities will provide ever-increasing financial compensation.
- Strategy: Corporations will invest in their employees by offering professional development opportunities at no charge to employees. This will be achieved through strong organizational partnerships between corporations and education providers.

Goal: Strengthen connections between education/training programs and employers

- Participants: Community Members, Community Leaders, Training Providers, K-12 Education, Higher Education, Private Funders, Small Businesses, Corporate Businesses
- Strategy: Community and Technical Colleges, in partnership with nonprofit training providers, will collectively engage the Technology industry. This collective engagement will allow for easy, fast communication between the two groups. Employers will quickly respond to community needs, and service providers will quickly respond to industry needs.
- Strategy: Education and Industry partners will collaboratively create clearly defined pathways for those newly entering the workforce, and those who bring skills from other careers. These pathways will be promoted within K-12 education and highlight the diversity of job opportunities (not necessarily math- and code-dependent) within the Technology sector.
- Strategy: Employers will support skills-based credentials, ranging from micro-credentials to

longer-term certificates. These will enable employment mobility for workers.

Strategy: Prior learning, non-credentialed learning, and lived experience will be valued by employers.

Strategy: Employers will provide mentorship opportunities to students of all ages, from K-12 students to mid-career workers looking to enter the Technology sector.