

CITY OF SEATTLE
ORDINANCE 126799
COUNCIL BILL 120525

AN ORDINANCE establishing the Race and Social Justice Initiative as City policy; establishing governance of the Race and Social Justice Initiative within the Office for Civil Rights; authorizing the Office for Civil Rights to lead the Race and Social Justice Initiative; and adding new Sections 3.14.941 through 3.14.945 to the Seattle Municipal Code.

WHEREAS, in 2004, The City of Seattle (City) launched a Race and Social Justice Initiative (RSJI), adapted from anti-racist organizing, to be led by the Seattle Office for Civil Rights (SOCR), to implement its longstanding commitments to social justice and ending racism; and

WHEREAS, the goal of RSJI is to end institutional racism within City government, working toward a vision where racial disparities will be eliminated and racial equity achieved; and

WHEREAS, City staff leadership championed and incorporated the anti-racist organizing efforts of The People’s Institute for Survival and Beyond (PISAB). Further, City staffers from that period to the present have honored the efforts, insights, and leadership of grassroots organizers in racial equity work at the City. The inspiration of this work was a catalyst for the eventual formation of RSJI and anchors this body of work in the lives of communities that are most affected by historical acts of racial exclusion; and

WHEREAS, SOCR and RSJI leaders have developed and implemented strategies and infrastructure that are set up to inform the City’s lines of business and internal culture; and

WHEREAS, RSJI’s goal is to build a coordinated and unified Citywide strategy, in support of “One Seattle,” that builds foundational awareness and move toward a shared framework to promote belonging; to create capacity and will to shift internal culture; utilize healing

1 and anti-racist tools to change how programs, services, policies, and budget decisions are
2 made; and

3 WHEREAS, SOCR offers technical assistance to departments and various trainings for City
4 employees to build awareness and develop shared language and analysis; and

5 WHEREAS, many departments have Change Teams, which are groups within departments that
6 work collaboratively with the Citywide RSJI network to sustain the implementation of
7 internal departmental changes to undo institutional racism and to incorporate racial equity
8 and social justice principles into everyday work; and

9 WHEREAS, departments can currently use racial equity toolkits (RET) to determine how
10 potential policies or actions taken by the City can more effectively advance racially
11 equitable outcomes; and

12 WHEREAS, SOCR remains uniquely positioned to lead RSJI, given SOCR's authority in Seattle
13 Municipal Code Sections 3.14.900 and 3.14.910 to “provide citywide leadership and
14 guidance in the areas of civil rights and equal opportunity... [and] recommend policies to
15 all departments and divisions of City government in matters affecting civil rights and
16 equal opportunity to all people;” and the duties of the Director to “[r]eceive, consider,
17 and make recommendations concerning statements, reports and complaints relative to
18 problems of civil rights including such problems of civil rights as may arise in connection
19 with the treatment, facilities or services of any office or department of the City;” and

20 WHEREAS, Executive Order 2018-04 pointed out that in the 2018 Citywide RSJI survey
21 completed by 4,000 employees, 34 percent of participants reported experiencing or
22 observing an incident of workplace harassment in the last 12 months; 80 percent of
23 respondents who reported experiencing gender-based incidents of harassment in the

1 workplace did not seek help; 29 percent of women of color and 18 percent of men of
2 color reported experiencing different workplace treatment due to their race compared to
3 seven percent of white women and seven percent of white men; and 30 percent of women
4 of color and 37 percent of white women reported experiencing different treatment due to
5 their gender, compared to 12 percent of men of color and 11 percent of white men; and

6 WHEREAS, since the issuance of the 2018 Executive Order, the City has made progress in
7 creating a more robust complaint and investigation process, and this ordinance is
8 intended to continue to improve the experiences reported by employees and is consistent
9 with the goals and objectives of the 2018 Executive Order; and

10 WHEREAS, one of the issues impeding sustained progress is the differing levels of commitment
11 to RSJI beyond mere legal compliance as electoral administrations change and budgets
12 fluctuate, leaving employees with the impression that RSJI work can be optional or
13 deprioritized; and

14 WHEREAS, though multiple Mayors have issued executive orders and the City Council has
15 adopted resolutions committing to advancing RSJI, executive orders are subject to
16 modification or repeal by subsequent administrations and resolutions are non-binding;
17 and

18 WHEREAS, because of the temporary and non-binding nature of the commitment to RSJI, use of
19 the existing RSJI infrastructure and mechanisms to make change beyond mere legal
20 compliance is dependent on the level of commitment of individual leaders rather than an
21 institutional expectation; and

22 WHEREAS, while RSJI should be integrated into the work of all City employees, integration is a
23 goal yet to be achieved, as RSJI is often still seen as its own discrete body of work, both

1 optional and separate from the work of City employees rather than essential and wholly
2 integrated; and

3 WHEREAS, the Council discussed concerns about the structural barriers keeping SOCR from
4 fulfilling its mission while located in the Executive Department, which resulted in
5 Ordinance 125470 in 2017, providing just cause protections for the SOCR Director, and
6 directing SOCR to conduct an RET analysis on the permanent structure, leadership,
7 duties, responsibilities, and functions of SOCR; and

8 WHEREAS, the team conducting the RET issued a report in October 2019, recommending a
9 variety of actions to, among other things, minimize political influence on SOCR and
10 strengthen its ability to successfully fulfill its mission, including RSJI; and

11 WHEREAS, since the RET analysis began, the Council and Executive have taken steps toward
12 implementing the recommendations, including adding staff and resources for increased
13 community and employee-centered outreach, commission support, and RSJI efforts; and

14 WHEREAS, the Council passed Statement of Legislative Intent (SLI) OCR-002-A-003 in the
15 2021 Adopted Budget, requesting that representatives from SOCR, the Mayor’s Office,
16 and members of the RSJI network participate in a Council-convened work group to
17 review and determine how to implement the remaining recommendations in the RET
18 report; and

19 WHEREAS, the workgroup to respond to the SLI began meeting in early 2021 (“Workgroup”)
20 and examined the RET Report recommendations in the context of the civil rights
21 reckoning and related events of 2020, which underscore the need for meaningful change
22 and progress in racial equity; and

1 WHEREAS, the Workgroup sent the SLI response to the City Council on July 1, 2021, and
2 recommended passage of an RSJI ordinance; and

3 WHEREAS, the Workgroup recommended that a long overdue step necessary to advance race
4 and social justice is to embed RSJI into the City’s government as policy, by codifying the
5 “initiative” by ordinance; and

6 WHEREAS, the recommendation to codify RSJI’s purpose and leadership by SOCR, and other
7 practical considerations led to the ordinance as one step the City can take to end
8 institutionalized racism in City government and achieve racial equity throughout Seattle;
9 and

10 WHEREAS, while making this institutional change on its own will not by itself create progress,
11 embedding RSJI into the City’s code can create better conditions for progress toward
12 achieving racial equity; and

13 WHEREAS, codifying RSJI in the Seattle Municipal Code will advance the City’s policy and
14 goal to end institutional racism within City government, working toward a vision where
15 racial disparities will be eliminated and racial equity achieved; and

16 WHEREAS, this legislation is intended to set clear expectations about prioritizing racial and
17 social justice work; and

18 WHEREAS, ordaining race and social justice work will clarify that racial justice and social
19 justice issues beyond mere compliance with legal requirements should be considered
20 when doing City business; and

21 WHEREAS, this ordinance is intended to set the baseline for the work the City does to achieve
22 racial equity and social justice; and

1 WHEREAS, the intent of this ordinance is not to strictly define how each department structures
2 its racial equity and social justice work for the lines of business and the communities it
3 serves, but rather to lay the groundwork of shared analysis, values, principles, and
4 infrastructure that underpin the Citywide commitment to racial equity and social justice
5 work Citywide; and

6 WHEREAS, given the dynamic nature of this work, this ordinance intends to allow for flexibility
7 and evolution of racial equity and social justice work, in part, informed by anti-racist
8 grassroots organizing in pursuit of achieving racial equity; and

9 WHEREAS, SOCR and the City Budget Office are partnering to develop equitable funding
10 practices including resources that support RSJI work; NOW, THEREFORE,

11 **BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY OF SEATTLE AS FOLLOWS:**

12 Section 1. New Sections 3.14.941 through 3.14.945 of the Seattle Municipal Code are
13 added to Subchapter VII of Chapter 3.14 as follows:

14 **3.14.941 Race and Social Justice Initiative established**

15 The Seattle Office for Civil Rights shall lead a Citywide effort to end institutionalized racism
16 and race-based disparities in City government called the Race and Social Justice Initiative. The
17 Seattle Office for Civil Rights shall identify foundational racial equity and social justice
18 principles and the framework within which each City department shall conduct its own Race and
19 Social Justice Initiative work. The work of the Seattle Office for Civil Rights shall inform each
20 City department's independent decisions and proposals regarding strategic planning and
21 analyzing budgets; staffing; setting metrics and measurable racial equity outcomes; setting equity
22 indicators; collecting and accessing demographic information; and implementing change toward
23 ending institutional racism.

1 **3.14.942 Short title and purpose**

2 Sections 3.14.941 through 3.14.945 shall constitute the “Race and Social Justice Initiative
3 Ordinance” and may be cited as such. The purpose of the Race and Social Justice Initiative
4 Ordinance is to authorize the Seattle Office for Civil Rights to lead the Race and Social Justice
5 Initiative and identify the City’s racial equity and social justice foundational practices and
6 framework for all City departments. In doing so, the City furthers its commitment to integrating
7 racial equity and social justice principles into the work of every department and employee.

8 **3.14.943 Governance of the Race and Social Justice Initiative**

9 The Seattle Office for Civil Rights is authorized to lead the Race and Social Justice Initiative by:

10 A. Developing analytical tools to support the identification of equity impacts of policies,
11 practices, and decision making, as well as ways to amplify positive impacts and mitigate
12 negative impacts;

13 B. Developing guidelines, which can be implemented Citywide, for outreach,
14 communication, and community engagement to improve the scope and effectiveness of external
15 City efforts to ensure that all communities receive information and have the opportunity to shape
16 City policies and services;

17 C. Identifying focus areas and making recommendations to relevant City departments for
18 development of policies and actions that improve fairness and opportunity in City government
19 organizational practices, including all employment practices such as hiring, training, retention,
20 and promotion, and business practices such as contracting, procurement, and grant writing;

21 D. Providing a forum for exchange of information and identification of opportunities for
22 collaboration Citywide on racial equity and social justice foundational practices and framework;

1 E. Supporting departments in identifying equity-related service gaps, setting measurable
2 racial equity and social justice goals, creating departmental action plans to achieve them, and
3 developing systems of accountability;

4 F. Guiding equitable funding analysis and practices in departmental annual budgets in
5 partnership with the City Budget Office; and

6 G. Supporting City departments in developing an integrated external focus, working with
7 community to assess community strengths, identify service gaps, and co-create plans that help
8 the department reach its racial and social justice goals.

9 **3.14.944 Internal staff racial equity and social justice groups**

10 A. Each City department, working individually or with other departments, should
11 prioritize the creation of or continue support for existing internal staff racial equity and social
12 justice groups. An internal staff racial equity and social justice group is a group of employees
13 who work collaboratively with the Race and Social Justice Initiative’s Citywide network to
14 sustain the implementation of internal departmental changes to undo institutional racism and to
15 incorporate racial equity and social justice principles into everyday work.

16 B. The Seattle Office for Civil Rights is authorized to develop guidance for all
17 departmental internal staff racial equity and social justice groups to provide foundational
18 practices, direction, and frameworks to allocate each department’s budget for such groups.

19 **3.14.945 Ongoing learning and trainings**

20 A. The Seattle Office for Civil Rights, in partnership with other departments, as
21 appropriate, shall define, advise upon, and make available the City’s fundamental racial equity
22 and social justice trainings for City employees.

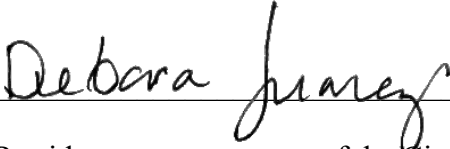
1 B. Each department should prioritize employees completing the fundamental racial equity
2 and social justice trainings defined in subsection 3.14.945.A, and each department should
3 prioritize funding outside trainings as identified by the Seattle Office for Civil Rights.

4 C. The Seattle Office for Civil Rights, in partnership with the City Council and Mayor,
5 shall annually celebrate and recognize City staff and departments who demonstrate exemplary
6 practices aligned with this ordinance.

7 Section 2. The Seattle Department of Human Resources shall provide to the City Council
8 by December 31, 2023 a plan and a proposed timeline for determining how it would consider
9 issues of position classification and exemption from the civil service related to race and social
10 justice work.

1 Section 3. This ordinance shall take effect and be in force 30 days after its approval by
2 the Mayor, but if not approved and returned by the Mayor within ten days after presentation, it
3 shall take effect as provided by Seattle Municipal Code Section 1.04.020.


4 Passed by the City Council the 18th day of April, 2023,
5 and signed by me in open session in authentication of its passage this 18th day of
6 April, 2023.

7 
8 President _____ of the City Council

9 Approved / returned unsigned / vetoed this 21st day of April, 2023.

10 
11 Bruce A. Harrell, Mayor

12 Filed by me this 21st day of April, 2023.

13 
14 Elizabeth M. Adkisson, Interim City Clerk

15 (Seal)