

# Branch Equity Teams

## Overview

SPU has a longstanding history in support of diversity, the City of Seattle's Race and Social Justice Initiative and service equity. In 2015, representatives from the SPU Change Team, Diversity Team, and Environmental Justice and Service Equity (EJSE) Division worked to craft a new operating model to further embed these efforts into SPU.

The new operating model was approved in early 2016 and requires the formation of individual SPU Branch Equity Teams (BETs), along with a strengthened central SPU RSJI Change Team made up of Branch Equity Team members and at-large representatives.

## Why a Branch Equity Team model for SPU?

This new operating model will further embed diversity, race and social justice, and service equity principles and practices throughout SPU, building accountability and ownership at all levels of the organization.

This approach is made necessary because of the large size of the organization, the variety and scope of its business needs, and the desire to create opportunities for staff across SPU to support these issues 'close to home' within their own Branch.

## Background

SPU Executives are sponsoring their own BETs, which are a mixture of staff across their divisions while also accounting for racial, gender and positional diversity. Seven BETs were launched in Summer 2016, with over 80 staff participating.

EJSE provides direction and guidance to each of the BETs, and attends most BET meetings. EJSE is also responsible for overall BET management and implementation, including facilitation of BET Co-Leads meetings, development of a newsletter, work plan, and annual reporting templates. EJSE also coordinates and facilitates most training, coaches Executive Sponsors and Co Leads, organizes BET events, authors messages, develops and administers surveys, and engages with other City departments and officials.

This new model supports efforts to routinely use SPU equity planning tools, increase WMBE contracts, and embed diversity, service equity into decision-making processes (i.e. Asset Management/Stage Gates, Multi-Objective Decision Analyses and Budget Issue Papers).

Over the past 12 months, most of the time and energy has been spent on implementation of RSJI-related training to BET members, the formation of the teams, and the identification of equity-related issues within the Branch. Each Branch has also developed their own vision statement, elected Co-Leads and notetakers, developed an annual work plan, and created

sub committees to complete various tasks. All materials (e.g. meeting agendas, minutes, work plans) are stored on the SPU RSJI Share Point site, which is also managed by EJSE.

In March 2017, there was a large BET Kick-off event, and an End of Year celebration is planned for December 7, 2017. BET members participated in numerous trainings including Race, the Power of an Illusion, Why We Lead with a Racial Equity Lens, SPU Racial Equity Toolkit Overview, and PROSCI© Change Management.

### Recent highlights:

- Sub committees are developing and implementing training plans, creating opportunities for application of SPU Racial Equity Tools, assessing WMBE utilization, and creating communication plans.
- BET Members also took a participant survey (developed by EJSE) designed to capture learning, feedback on BET management, depth at which equity is being embedded into their Branch, and additional thoughts and benefits of the BET model. The survey will be administered annually, and will measure growth against the baseline established this July.
- In the closing months of 2017, BETs will be completing an annual progress report, submitting articles for the first-ever BET Newsletter (December), and begin development of their 2018 work plans.
- As a result, there is increased opportunities for staff to participate, be engaged and support SPU diversity, the Race and Social Justice Initiative, and service equity efforts, as well as clarity on the role of EJSE and accountability of branches in support of this work.
- As a result, RSJI and service equity work is moved 'closer to home': Branch-specific service equity goals and work items are now immediately relevant to individual workplaces within SPU.



### Additional information

Here's what BET members are saying about their participation:

*"It has been my pleasure to serve on the BET. I am relatively new to equity work, but feel lucky to have teammates and leaders that have been involved with this work for many years."*

*"This is a good step forward for SPU and has succeeded in engaging more staff across the department in equity issues."*