



Summary of 2021 RSJ Accomplishments

Seattle Public Utilities (SPU) is dedicated to delivering essential utility services in a way that dismantles institutional racism and achieves more equitable outcomes for everyone, especially for those in communities impacted by systemic racism. In 2021, SPU implemented 49 Racial Equity Action Plans focused on evaluating business practices, improving community engagement, and fostering a learning culture.

SPU's RSJ values are embedded in our Strategic Business Plan. We're committed to equity and empowerment through building trusting relationships, prioritizing equity in our work, and creating opportunities for all. We apply this RSJ lens to how we deliver projects, programs, and initiatives, and how we set policies and make decisions.

We strive to build a workplace culture where *everyone* understands their role and responsibility to advance racial justice. Environmental Justice and Service Equity (EJSE) team, Equity Bridge, and RSJ workgroups partner with SPU employees to share best practices, take collective action, and advance institutional change.

Based on SPU's commitment to multi-year efforts to ensure equitable programs and services, we continue to make strides towards achieving a truly equitable, community-centered organization rooted in RSJ principles.

The following is an overview of SPU's RSJ accomplishments in 2021 by work group:

Equity Bridge

SPU's Equity Bridge is a space where leaders and organizers come together to build equitable policies, procedures, and practices to advance SPU's culture. In March, the utility held the first Equity Bridge meeting bringing together a representative team of staff from SPU's RSJ workgroups and organizational teams.

Members collectively established a shared vision, goals, and desired outcomes for SPU's RSJ work, and developed a process to support shared decision making to achieve collective impact, which includes developing a shared measurement system, continuous sharing of information, and a common agenda.

Environmental Justice and Service Equity (EJSE) Team

EJSE continued to support three main programs in 2021, while also stewarding the application of Racial Equity Toolkits (RETs) throughout the department. EJSE staff supported SPU project managers to host six

successful WMBE virtual outreach events throughout the year with over 150 participants. The team also created and distributed a comprehensive list of upcoming consultant contracts. As a result of these and many other efforts, SPU was able to realize 23% of WMBE utilization in purchasing and 27% in prime and subconsultant contracts, exceeding 2021 goals.

EJSE also continued management and support of Branch Equity Teams (BET), including developing a BET Logic Model and development and administration of the BET and Change Team member satisfaction survey. EJSE also partnered with People, Culture, and Community Branch leadership to launch the 21-person People, Culture, and Community BET. The utility now has six BETs with over 120 staff participating. EJSE hosted a Utility-wide AAPI healing event as a response to the mass shooting in Atlanta, Georgia and facilitated numerous branch-specific RSJ training sessions and all staff meetings throughout the year.

EJSE continued community outreach with Community Connections partners and the Community Liaisons Program in the Department of Neighborhoods. Partners were able to assist on projects and programs across the utility and share information with community about SPU services, including its Utility Discount Program for low-income ratepayers.

RSJ Change Team

In 2021, the Change Team held virtual meetings to further RSJ work with a focus on building relational culture within the team and the Utility. Accomplishments include reversing an SDHR ruling that did not recognize field experience for the Civil Engineering Specialist class job qualifications; sponsoring training to increase the Utility's internal capacity to facilitate RSJ conversations and workshops; and providing recommendations to make Personnel Rule 3.5 Out-of-Class Policy more equitable. The Change Team also developed RSJ job interview questions and benchmarks in coordination with EJSE, and piloted use of the Racial Healing Handbook as an educational and team building tool.

Branch Equity Teams (BETs)

Drainage and Wastewater (DWW) BET

The DWW BET in 2021 organized work around three key areas:

1. Supporting Frontline Staff
 - In System Maintenance, we started meeting on a semi-regular basis to establish goals and workgroups based on the equity issues crews wanted to prioritize.
 - We formalized three distinct workgroups: 1) staff training and development; 2) improved peer and manager performance evaluation; and 3) fostering a culture of collaboration and respect amongst crews, between crews and other SPU staff, and between crews and the public.
 - Thanks in part to advocacy from staff in the Staff Training and Development workgroup, 2021 saw a successful push to change the minimum qualifications for the civil

engineering specialist classification, which prevented otherwise qualified frontline staff from applying to certain higher paying positions, many of them office based.

2. Equitable Hiring

- Held workshops with managers and supervisors to brainstorm around making the hiring process more equitable.
- Incorporated feedback into a comprehensive equitable hiring guide, which is being integrated with Water Line of Business and Shared Services BET equitable hiring tools to create a single guiding document, tool, and process for use with any hiring opportunity at SPU.

3. Indigenous People and Tribal Relations

- Built a workbook to support team learning and compile resources shared with and from the Project Delivery and Engineering Branch BET Tribal Relations Subcommittee.
- Started team and individual member learning processes through joint activities, discussions, and shared resources.
- Held quarterly meetings with Project Delivery and Engineering Branch's BET Subcommittee, and jointly developed a series of all staff for Indigenous People's Day and Native American Heritage Month.

Finance and Risk Services (FARS) BET

2021 saw the start of the second year for the newly established FARS BET. The team onboarded five members, continued work across four subcommittees, and continued its focus on learning and development. This included:

- Continued participation in one-on-ones, to foster relationships between team members and create an environment for deeper, more meaningful connectivity.
- Learning about and practicing facilitation to develop and hone member skillsets to support broader equity conversations and activation.
- Holding space for EJSE facilitator-led discussions, to draw on in-house expertise and knowledge.
- Holding two branch-wide equity events to cultivate conversation and connection related to:
 - Racial identity and racial identity development, focused on developing a positive racial identity through cultivation of nonjudgmental curiosity.
 - Seeing and understanding racism, including exploring the four types of racism and raising one's race consciousness by learning ways to expand awareness of how racism works as a system.

Additionally, the Racial Equity Toolkit (RET) Subcommittee applied the racial equity toolkit to communication of consultant contracting opportunities, with an emphasis on supporting WMBE firms. The team identified six prioritized next steps, three upstream recommendations, and eight lessons learned.

Project Delivery and Engineering (PDEB) BET

In 2021, the PDEB BET:

- Prepared and worked on 2021 goals for small groups focused on tribal relations and responsibilities; resources for leaders; how staff shows up in communities; and branch learning and connection to RSJ.
- Developed a PDEB BET SharePoint site, branch engagement program, tribal needs survey, cross-training program, recruitment strategies, and gathered and evaluated data on how SPU engages communities during project delivery.
- Partnered with DWW BET, EJSE, and others on Lunch and Learns, resource sharing, and helping raise awareness and foster collaboration on RSJ and equity.

Solid Waste (SW) BET

The SW BET made great strides in 2021, including facilitating four equity Lunch and Learns that provided insight on topics such as the aftermath of national protests, cultural appropriation, canners in New York City, and violence against AAPI Communities. These sessions were offered to staff outside of Solid Waste and across divisions within SPU. In addition, BET members contributed to Racial Equity Toolkits that allowed the branch to use data to eliminate racial disparities in outreach, enforcement planning, and operations. The SW BET also established a presence at leadership team meetings to provide opportunities to request upper management support and share progress and goals.

Water Line of Business and Shared Services (WLOB and SS) BET

The WLOB and SS BET branch also supported implementation of the Water LOB's Racial Equity Action Plans. Accomplishments of the WLOB and SS BET include all staff members of the branch completing "Cracking the Codes" training; developing a branch hiring form to embed RSJ principles in hiring processes; responding to community requests by including a public park as part of the Bitter Lake Reservoir floating cover replacement; and providing free water quality lead testing for Utility Discount Program customers. The BET also worked with staff to review equity in service delivery and planning. Additionally, Racial Equity Toolkits were also used to select water main replacement and rehabilitation projects, and the branch continues to promote WMBE firms and vendors for utility contracts.

Anti-Racist White Caucus (ARWC)

The ARWC met monthly in 2021. The group's purpose is three-fold:

1. To support white-identified SPU colleagues in building the embodied awareness, emotional stamina, humility, community, and action orientation needed to sustain effective engagement in anti-racist work, in strategy with our BIPOC colleagues and RSJ thought leaders.
2. To take responsibility for educating ourselves about history and government laws, policies, and practices that uphold systemic and institutional racism, and to grow our ability to apply anti-

racist concepts, ways of being (e.g. relational culture), and practices in SPU's and other spheres of influence.

3. To take individual and/or collective action to shift power and resources to bring about equitable outcomes with respect to race at SPU, City government, and in our communities.

Parts of each monthly meeting covered a range of educational topics including inter-racial solidarity, confronting internalized superiority, standing up to anti-Asian hate, embodied anti-racism practices, internalized anti-Blackness and the Tulsa Centennial, and the intersection of patriarchy and white supremacy.

The ARWC also worked with the City of Seattle Silence Breakers to support the call for a citywide RSJ ordinance, participated in Equity Bridge, and maintained connection with EJSE, SPU Affinity groups, BETs, Change Team, and other City of Seattle department-wide white caucuses, supported by SOCR.

2021 Racial Action Plan Accomplishments

90% Women- & Minority-Owned Public Utilities Vendors

Attained 61% WMBE vendor utilization on purchasing transactions. While the branch did not reach its WMBE vendor utilization goal, consultant WMBE utilization increased from 29% in 2020 to 49% in 2021.

Accessible City Surplus Process

The Surplus Accessibility Process is still in development. The team continues to work to make the program more accessible to BIPOC communities and advise on process improvements.

Branch Equity Team (BET) Member Survey

The 2021 BET Member Survey was administered in October, with an overall response rate of 81%. Survey results were disseminated to all BETs in February 2022.

Claims Program Dashboard Review

The team applied a racial equity toolkit to review rates of claims filed and the results. The team updated the utility's claims distribution heat map to help identify potential inequitable service delivery and they simplified SPU's emergency housing response plan and procedure to improve response time on housing needs on storm-related claims.

Co-Creation to Reduce Sewer Overflows & Improve Quality

Drainage and Wastewater completed three internal stakeholder equity workshops, and drafted an equity memo that includes the process, decisions, and recommendations for incorporating equity into project management planning and the next phase of options analysis.

Communication Processes for Consulting Review

The team applied the Racial Equity Toolkit to SPU's consultant contracting notices, with an emphasis on supporting WMBE firms and completed guidance identifying six prioritized next steps, three upstream recommendations, and eight lessons learned.

Community Connections

SPU continued to work with Community Connections partners Horn of Africa Services, Chinese Information Service Center, and ECOSS to educate and empower their constituents with SPU messaging that resonates in community. SPU also extended the original Community Connections contracts to allow for a full RFQ process in 2022.

COVID Customer Emergency Assistance & Recovery

Seattle City Light and SPU secured council approval of ordinances improving access to ratepayer financial assistance in response to COVID and expanding funding for qualifying households. This resulted in 2,243 low-income households receiving more than accessing emergency assistance in 2021,

collectively receiving over \$1.5 million from the Utility toward their outstanding bills. In concert with HSD and SCL, we also streamlined access to the Utility Discount Program through a self-certified "fast-track" enrollment form to lower barriers and improve service equity, which resulted in 9,521 new enrollments into the discount program in 2021.

Customer Review Panel (CRP) Engagement

SPU completed a two-part orientation for new members which included Race and Social Justice training, a first for the CRP and incorporated community organizations for the first time into panel meetings.

Customer Review Panel Recruitment

In 2021 the utility completed recruitment for the panel and expanded its make-up to include a majority Black and People of Color. New members represent a range of interests and experience that was previously lacking on the panel.

Develop Staff Equity Learning

In June, we held a branch-wide equity event on racial identity and racial identity development, focused on developing a positive racial identity through cultivation of nonjudgmental curiosity. In November, held another branch-wide event focused on seeing and understanding racism, including exploring the four types of racism and raising one's race consciousness by learning ways to expand awareness of how racism works as a system.

Donation Program for Utility Bills

The SPU Community Donation Fund launched in 2021 to allow customers and the public to donate to help customers unable to pay their utility bill with all monies going directly toward financial assistance to income eligible households. An online app allows anyone to donate using a debit or credit card. Customers can also donate closed account credit balances. Donations by check are also accepted. The Community Donation fund raised approximately \$5,000 in its first year.

Drinking Water Line of Business Hiring Form

The Water Line of Business and Shared Services branch developed a hiring form to add a deeper RSJ lens to the hiring process. The new process includes reviewing the hiring language with an RSJ lens, broadening hiring outreach to BIPOC professional groups and underrepresented communities, screening resumes in a way that removes biases, having diverse interview panels, and adding RSJ questions to each phase of the interviews.

Duwamish Valley Resilience District

SPU has a Racial Equity Evaluation RFP and Organizational Development RFP to choose consultants that will support the Resilience District. Sea Level Rise Adaptation Scenario Planning and Municipal Finance RFPs will follow in the first half of 2022, and the Resilience District development work will begin in mid-2022.

Duwamish Valley Youth Group Mentoring

SPU worked with approximately 60 youth during the year, including staff support and mentoring from five stormwater professionals. Other activities consisting of storm drain stenciling, a youth led booth about storm drain care, and distribution of free lawn and leaf bags in the South Park and Georgetown neighborhoods.

Emergency Assistance Program (EAP)

In 2021 the SPU Emergency Assistance Program doubled the assistance to eligible households by allowing assistance up to two times per year, for a total of \$922 in credits. We provided 2,243 customers with credits, totaling \$1.5 million in assistance.

Encampment Trash Program

The Encampment Trash Program (ETP) provides proactive and preventive weekly and on-call garbage service to Unsanctioned Homeless Encampments (UHE). The program focuses on providing equitable sanitation, and harm reduction services to unsheltered communities. This service reduces health and safety risk associated with high volumes of garbage. Our action item per the 2021 Racial Equity Plan was to increase ETP services and outreach to an additional 12 UHEs. In 2021, 39 ETP sites received service weekly, an increase of 22 sites from 2019. A total of 1,302,932 pounds of garbage was collected.

Encroachment Program Review

SPU applied a Racial Equity Toolkit to the preparation and payment of Temporary Construction Easements to property owners for the use of their property in the construction of SPU projects. We completed two stakeholder workshops, identified four short-term actions, a long-term action, and team lessons learned.

Equitable Access to Public Utilities Development Services Office

Analysis shows no definitive link between Water Availability Certificate/Plan Review turnaround times and income or racial composition. Instead, delays in processing time are most often due to applicant missing requirements or providing incomplete information.

Equity Filters in Waste Prevention Strategic Planning

Split the contracting process into four contracts to increase WMBE opportunities. All four primes are WMBE, and 12 of the 13 subs are also WMBE. This includes one consultant team that will provide RSJ guidance and oversight throughout the project. Contract negotiations are in progress. 2022 will be primarily focused on planning, with implementation of public engagement in 2023.

Food Service Compliance using Targeted Universalism

From 2019-2021, we reviewed the Racial Equity Toolkit and approach for targeted universalism, which enables the program to meet broader goals by developing targeted strategies that better achieve racial

equity in service delivery and resource allocation. In 2022, we will do baseline data gathering and analysis as well as offer technical assistance to customers.

[Free Lead Testing for Utility Discount Program Customers](#)

While SPU's water does not contain lead, it can leach into drinking water from plumbing fixtures. Lead is very harmful to human health and national studies show unsafe drinking water disproportionately impacts BIPOC and low-income communities. The Drinking Water Quality division rolled out free water quality lead testing for Utility Discount Program Customers, and in 2022 the team will promote this free service and report out on participation.

[Hazardous Waste Program Update](#)

The Hazardous Waste Management Plan was developed in 2021 and focused on a shared vision where race is not a determinant of hazardous materials exposure. The updated plan, which is under review by the Department of Ecology, reflects community feedback and includes new policies, programs, and practices designed to better serve people of color. A charter for a Collections and Facilities Study is being developed in early 2022, and results-based accountability metrics will be developed by the end of 2022.

[Improve Distribution of Woman & Minority Business Utilization in Public Utilities Contracts](#)

Each SPU division/branch was contacted to provide information on all upcoming projects on a newly developed easy to use Microsoft Forms site. A list of all upcoming events was compiled and routinely distributed through the following mediums: online posting to SPU WMBE site, email distribution of SPU WMBE Newsletter, and distribution to outside organizations.

[In Language Recycling Assistance](#)

In 2021, we added additional zip codes and we are planning to add outbound email communications to our outreach tools. We're continuing to measure success and to monitor recontamination rates. This program is continuing in 2022.

[In-Language Survey for Commercial Customer Feedback](#)

Completed and analyzed survey results and identified opportunities to increase equity for commercial garbage customers.

[Neighborhood Construction Safety Initiative](#)

Developed a website with multilingual content about construction safety; safety awareness notices, which are available in eight languages; and construction safety activity worksheets for youth. To further promote construction safety, the multilingual notices will be distributed to communities located near SPU construction projects.

North Thornton Natural Drainage Systems (NDS) Project Review

The North Thornton NDS project team completed three workshops and is finalizing their Racial Equity Toolkit. The toolkit will inform Options Analysis approaches to NDS site selection and other opportunities to engage community in project delivery with an eye towards inclusive engagement practices. The team developed the RET in partnership with the Office of Immigrant & Refugee Affairs and six community liaisons from the Department of Neighborhoods.

Open Space at Underground/Covered Drinking Water Reservoirs

In 2021, the Bitter Lake Reservoir planning and design team completed a study of options for replacing the aging reservoir's floating cover. The analysis considered interests and needs of residents in Bitter Lake, which is a diverse neighborhood with the highest Racial and Social Equity Index level for disadvantage and priority. In reviewing options for the reservoir replacement, the project team selected the option that includes installation of a park in this Bitter Lake community that lacks open space compared to surrounding neighborhoods. SPU and Seattle Parks and Recreation are working together to engage the community and other key stakeholders as the project design begins.

PCC Branch Equity Team (BET) Launch

In 2021, we established a BET for the People, Culture, and Community Branch in SPU. The PCC BET held its first meeting in December 2021, with 20 members on the team. 2022 monthly membership meetings have been scheduled.

Pearl Street Drainage Improvement Project

A Racial Equity Toolkit was created, and the project team has had ongoing, successful communication and outreach with the local community throughout the duration of the project, including providing customized translation services in Vietnamese and Spanish for neighbors in the community.

Preserve Mature Trees & Repair Sewers

SPU is committed to preserving the city's tree canopy, which helps to mitigate the impacts of extreme heat events that can have devastating impacts on communities of color. In 2021, SPU project teams worked collaboratively with City departments, including SDOT and Parks, as well as communities to review and assess trees in the right-of-way that might be impacted or removed due to construction and sought opportunities to promote tree preservation.

Public Utilities Talent Acquisition "ReTooled"

Human Resources committed to form a Hiring Advisory Committee and to expand recruitment outreach in BIPOC communities. The team is successful with both objectives. The Advisory Committee received executive leadership approval to launch a pilot for a promising hiring process enhancement anticipated to make employment more accessible for BIPOC communities. In 2021, recruiters conducted

employment outreach at both the Black Health & Wealth and API Community Fair. Finally, we significantly expanded our job posting distribution list to nearly 25 agencies.

[Race & Social Justice Employee Training](#)

In 2021, all members of the Water Line of Business and Shared Service Branch completed Cracking the Codes training.

[RainCity Partnership Program](#)

In 2021, we established RSJ goals including prioritizing green stormwater retrofit projects in the top two priority tiers of the City's Racial and Social Equity Index map or the citywide Duwamish Valley Program. This includes a WMBE inclusion target, delivering at least 10 projects led by community-based organizations serving BIPOC communities, and delivering a mentorship program focused on GSI and riparian area restoration. In collaboration with People's Economy Lab, the program also helped develop an RSJ evaluation strategy and scope.

[Recycling & Disposal Access for Low-Income Customers](#)

Identified enhancements in customer service and internal processes to allow Utility Discount Program customers to request up to two free Special Items (Beyond the Cart) collections/year.

[Review RainWise Program](#)

RainWise made immediate programmatic changes to the program such as collecting demographic data for customers and contractors, revising rebate processing time. The programs will be seeking approval for more funding to achieve additional RET recommendations.

[RV Wastewater Pumpout Pilot Program](#)

The program provided 1546 wastewater collections to people living in RVs in Seattle; evaluated alternative modes of service delivery including testing different service rates to 'right size' the program and piloted temporary dump events, which were less successful than service in place.

[Shape Our Water Drainage & Wastewater Plan](#)

SPU in 2021 continued to develop the Shape Our Water Plan, which will include six-year and 50-year actions and investments. We completed the Shape Our Water Community Vision and Equity Framework, funded BIPOC community-based organizations to share stories of resilience and their connections to our local water bodies, collaborated with and resourced 6 local community leaders to co-design online events and materials, and completed a statement of intent for Shape Our Water that centers environmental justice and equity.

[Side Sewer Assistance Pilot Program](#)

RET for the program was completed, and the results were integrated into the Implementation Plan and Outreach. Partnerships were established with three community-based organizations for program

delivery targeting BIPOC homeowners. This includes Environmental Coalition of South Seattle, Chinese Information Service Center, and Horn of Africa Services. Outreach materials for the program were developed in eight languages. Phase I was launched in partnership with the Office of Housing in late 2021.

Side Sewer Investigation Program Review

Worked with the Law section on a strategy to develop in-language enforcement notices and determined an approach for Law to verify accuracy of translated materials. In 2021, the Side Sewer Program did not have any instances where language barriers necessitated translation services. Therefore, no meaningful metrics were collected. The program also updated other materials, including an updated “Know your Side Sewer” card, and identified strategies for engaging with BIPOC customers and connecting them to community resources.

Solid Waste Branch Equity Training & Conversations

The Solid Waste BET developed plan to host five events in 2022 including Lunch and Learns to continue opportunities for sharing learning, support 2 or more Ops/Frontline staff trainings and/or caucus, and share training offerings from other SPU departments.

Solid Waste Staff Advancement Support

Of 11 employee promotions in Solid Waste Operations in 2021, nine involved 9 BIPOC employees and of 20 Out of Class (OOC) assignments, 18 involved BIPOC staff and 1 female supervisor. This year, Solid Waste Operations is on track to fill nine vacancies and multiple OOC opportunities.

South Transfer Station Phase 2 Community Engagement

SPU is redeveloping an area near the South Transfer Station in the South Park neighborhood. The project team is working to incorporate multiple community benefits in the project design in this highly diverse community, including the installation of a walking trail along 5th Ave S to improve walkability and public safety. The project team is preparing to reengage with community via multi-lingual outreach to build awareness about the project and get feedback on the visioning for future uses of the old South Transfer Station campus.

Teach Green Stormwater Infrastructure Skills to Youth

In 2021, this effort identified Seattle Jobs Initiative as the partner organization to provide hiring and payroll, soft skills training, and support services for the pilot Seattle Opportunity Workcorps (SOWcorps). A MOA was initiated to solidify the partnership, and efforts to find funding beyond SPU maintenance funding were initiated. Internal staff worked with O&M staff to identify bodies of work and potential sites.

Water Main Leak Response Review

In 2021, the Water Line of Business and Shared Services branch generated a map of where water main leaks occur to look for areas that might have a disproportionate number of leaks especially in underserved areas of the city. We did not find any disproportionately affected areas based on a broad overview. In 2022, we plan to look at this data more closely.

Water Main Replacement Review

In 2021, the Water Planning and Program Management division continued to use Racial Equity Toolkits for selecting water main replacement and rehabilitation projects. A new project to upgrade water main infrastructure took place in South Seattle where we were able to partner with the Seattle Department of Transportation to make neighborhood street improvements, as well.

Water Service Customer Call Review

In 2021, the Water Line of Business and Shared Services branch generated a map of where high priority water customer calls occurred and our response time to those calls. We looked for areas where we did not meet our response goal of 60 minutes or less to identify if there were disparities in the level of service in communities with a higher percentage of people of color. A broad overview of the data did not demonstrate any problem areas. Therefore, we plan to further assess the data for service equity in 2022.

Water Service Renewal Review

In 2021, the Water Operations and System Maintenance team continued to replace old water service lines. Our analysis showed that these older service lines might contain short lead connector pieces and are more heavily located in wealthier neighborhoods in the city. Because Seattle's water is treated to minimize the tendency for lead to enter the water, our water quality test results for lead continue to be very good and the lead connector piece has not shown to present a lead risk to customers.