

King County Equity & Social Justice Initiative

Place Matters Design Lab 7
March 3-5, 2008



Why Focus on Equity and Social Justice?

- Despite broad economic and social gains in this country over the past 15-20 years, major disparities persist for some communities, particularly for communities of color, across most measures of health and well-being.
- In 2006, the Dellums Commission developed reports detailing disparities for young men of color in health, education, employment, child welfare, criminal/juvenile justice, and media. These reports highlight decades of policies/conditions that leave many young men of color with few options and opportunities to lead full and happy lives.
- Over the past two years, Martin Luther King County along with other jurisdictions from across the country have been participating in an effort called Place Matters to identify and address upstream causes of health inequities.



Goals

- King County's program investments & policy decision-making process can impact the root causes of inequity by intentionally evaluating new & current programs & policies through the lens of their impact on people of color & people in poverty.
- Increase communities' power & reduce power inequity within the County by facilitating community dialogues for understanding racism as a root cause of inequity. Community input into programs & policies will be sought, valued and incorporated.

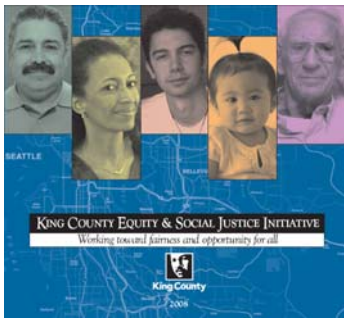


How did we get here?

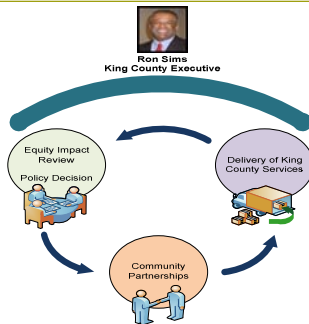
- A long, many-year process:
 - UIR training → Courage to approach Public Health and King County leadership.
 - Excitement about Dellums and about Place Matters → common set of strategies
 - Strategic meetings with leadership → Convening a county-wide partnership "summit" of King County staff
 - Momentum continues to build
- Some foundational aspects of our process:
 - Seeking out a diverse set of skills, perspectives and partners
 - Teams believe strongly in the work
 - Team members have fun doing this work
 - All have the same "agenda" as a team
 - King County leadership buy-in



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Components of the Initiative



Realities for advancing equity: Learning from the process

- Need more upstream strategies (continue downstream work)
- Increase community role in creating solutions & shaping policy
- Develop and deliver solutions by working across departments, service systems, and jurisdictions...beyond Public Health
- Gear up for the long haul...persistence until you get traction
- Build and foster organizational buy-in and capacity
 - Broad inclusion...form new partners along the way.
 - Involve leadership as early as possible.
 - Tap people waiting for an opportunity to do this work
 - Ensure that all employees understand issues/concepts
 - Create enabling support structure to address equity



Next Steps

- County policy development and decision-making
 - Develop and test an equity impact assessment and review tool & process for incorporating in decision-making.
- Delivery of county services
 - Each Executive department identified action items for 2008
- Community partnerships
 - Ensure that county decision-making incorporates meaningful input from potentially impacted communities and improve internal capacity to work with communities.
 - Education: community forums and dialogue.



Human progress is neither automatic nor inevitable Every step toward the goal of justice requires sacrifice, suffering, and struggle; the tireless exertions and passionate concern of dedicated individuals.

-- Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.



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