



Introducing An Equitable Budgeting Framework

Finance and Administration Committee 05/28/2026

Sebastian Ruiz, Chair of the Equity Subcommittee





Equity Subcommittee Members

- Sebastian Ruiz - ESC Chair - Community Policy Liaison at Mujeres in Action
- John Alder - ESC Co-Chair - Volunteer at Spokane Alliance and PJALS (In Memoriam)
- Kiana McKenna - Deputy Dir. Policy & Strategy at Pacific Islander Community Association of WA
- KJ January - Director of Advocacy and Engagement at Spectrum Center Spokane
- Naghmana Sherazi - Project Manager, Immigration Subcabinet, WA Office of Equity - Muslims for Community, Action & Support Founder
- Patricia Castañeda - E.D. at Manzanita House
- Luke Kobin - Spokane Marshallese Community Association



Why We're Here

- Spokane has a commitment to livability and sustainability, yet there's still room for improvement. Local data show that people of color, people with disabilities and people from low-income backgrounds fare worse than many other city residents in areas like income, health outcomes, housing affordability and accessibility.



Why We're Here/Milestones

- Equitable ARPA Allocation Community Response w/ EHF Community Advisory Committee and City of Spokane (2021-2022)
- Finance Presentations to ESC (2021-2025)
- Partnerships with The New School and Southern Economic Advancement Project (SEAP)
 - Collaborated on the Lessons from the ARPA Experience in WA Report from 2024-2025
 - National Budget Equity Community of Practice Member Since April 2025
 - Advancing Racial Justice Through Equitable Public Investment Webinar ESC Panelist, Dec. 2025
 - National Budget Equity Convening in Phoenix, AZ in March 2025
 - National Budget Equity Convening in Atlanta, GA, March 2026



Why We're Here/Milestones

“Organized communities advanced equity when supportive institutions, equity infrastructure, and government leaders backed their efforts. Under-resourced governments, inconsistent standards, symbolic or underdeveloped equity efforts, and reactive governance slowed progress or limited impact.”

Source: [Lessons from the ARPA Experience in Washington Report](#)



Why Budget Equity?

- **The budget is a moral document.** It reflects the values and priorities of the City, including values of equity and inclusion.
- **Addressing systemic racism requires cities to do something different to produce different outcomes.**
 - The status quo is producing the outcomes we are





Outcomes of Today's Meeting

- Identify, propose, and get feedback for:
 - Lessons from other jurisdictions on institutionalizing equity in budget processes
 - Proposed ordinance
 - Next steps
 - Questions & Discussion



Definitions & Landscape

- Equity (RCW70A.02.010) is a fair and just, but not necessarily equal, allocation intended to mitigate disparities in benefits and burdens that are based on current conditions, including existing legacy and cumulative impacts, that are informed by cumulative environmental health impact analysis.
- WA State Office of Equity recognizes difference between outcomes and process
 - Diagnosing & eliminating systemic barriers
 - Acknowledge differences in need, capacity, and contributions.



Overarching Goals - The Why

- **DISPARITY & HARM REDUCTION:** Race, sex, gender, people with disabilities, geography, and income
- **IMPROVE DATA COLLECTION & USE:** Coordinate data collection, tracking and utility across departments for better outcome-based budgeting
- **INCREASE COMMUNITY EDUCATION & TRANSPARENCY:** Publish budgetary decisions and data used to inform decisions (e.g. social media)
- **ENGAGE COMMUNITY:** Create opportunities for residents to share budget priorities (ESC)
- **ESTABLISH COLLABORATIVE FUNDING STREAMS:** Explore private funding sources and community partnerships to maximize and sustain equitable outcome



Guiding Principles - The How

- Accountability: Evidence-based budget and policy
- Community-informed priorities
- Collaborative governance: Multilateral communications between city, community orgs and potential funders, sponsors and philanthropy (ESC).
- Commitment to collaborate: time, interdependence, relationship-building (ESC)



Our Proposal



City of Spokane's "Baby Steps"

- Codify the budget equity process within City of Spokane Code
- *Example: Under the direction of the Office of Equity, all departments must create a multi-year Equity Plan and provide annual, public progress updates each year alongside the budget process. (City of Chicago)*
 - Have City departments define a measurable, achievable goal that both reduces harms and improves data collection.
 - Require City department heads to undergo equity training and education.
 - OCREI would provide feedback for departments on development of departmental equity goals.
 - OCREI would complete, and publicize an annual report on City's progress on departmental equity goals.



Budget Equity in Practice (Bright Spot)



Where Private Philanthropy May Support

- Capacity (funding) support for CBOs to engage in this work (potentially via ESC)
 - Examples: Data listening sessions and collection, ESC, Equity Department Pilot with City, creation of equity dashboard/tracking system for COS
- Technical assistance (data systems, trainings, etc.)
- Feasibility and efficiency studies
- Community engagement



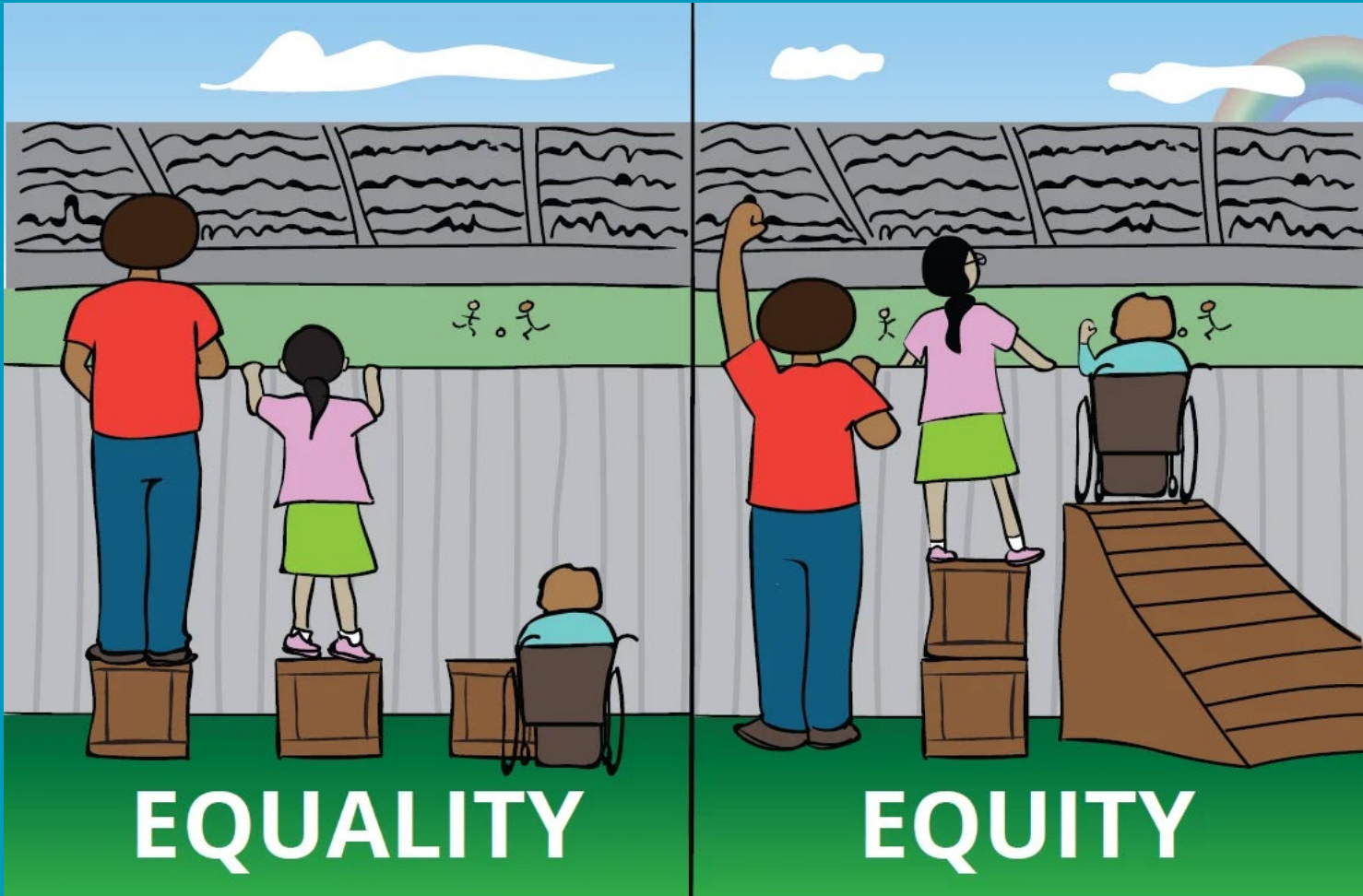
Use the Equity Subcommittee!

- OCREI, department heads, council, or staff can bring program, policy, ordinance, or budget ideas and receive feedback on equity concerns (or support). WG has found support for an equitable budgeting framework
- Needs:
 - Relationship between Finance Committee and Equity Subcommittee
 - relational meetings (1:1)
 - attend each other's meetings
 - Invite non-member orgs to ESC meetings
- Funding



Literature Review

- [Tacoma resolution 40622](#)
- [City of Madison Budget Guide \[error\]](#)
- [SLC UT Budgeting for Equity presentation](#)
- [Tacoma 2025](#)
- Bartle, J., & Rubin, M. (2024). Social Equity in budgeting. *Public Finance Journal*, 1(2), 93–103. <https://doi.org/10.59469/pfj.2024.33>
- [The New School Institute on Race, Power and Political Economy Budget Equity Project](#)
- [Lessons from the ARPA Experience in Washington](#) (2025 Report)



EQUALITY

EQUITY

Thank you!





APPENDIX



Collaborative Next Steps

- Funding & Technical Assistance: Still discovering details of the budgeting process and existing constraints.
 - Civilytics: Asset Mapping
 - Capacity
- Brief the City Council, Staff, and Office of Civil Rights, Equity and Inclusion
- Ongoing learning, collaboration and community engagement
 - The New School Institute on Race, Power and Political Economy, SEAP & the National Budget Equity Community of Practice (ongoing)
 - Inatai Foundation Budget Equity Cohort beginning in April 2026



Where Philanthropies May Help (Pending)

- Potential for
 - Software licenses, data storage and collection systems
 - Support orgs hosting early budget conversations
 - Pilot training for dept. heads
 - Equitable budgeting assessments & feasibility studies
 - Cost-efficiency/effectiveness studies



Literature Review Takeaways

- Tacoma, Austin, Chicago, Madison & SLC embedded equity evaluations in budget and program proposals.
 - Simple, portable
- Elements of successful codification
 - Design, calibrate, communicate, train, implement
 - Chicago example: leverage existing offices
- Keep in mind:
 - Equity in Decision-making - engagement, input, communication
 - Equity in Outcome/Goals - data collection & agency coordination



How do we get there?

- **State Framework: Targeted universalism**
- COS ARPA RFP Processes, Chicago Tree Trimming Initiative, Canada Child Development Program
- The process:
 - Outline a shared (universal) goal
 - Identify stakeholders and differences in their needs/barriers faced
 - Save money in helping stakeholders meet those needs, coordinate their work/expertise towards the goal
 - Leverage existing capacity/knowledge/relationships (This does not entail disadvantaging one stakeholder to benefit another.)



Outreach Strategies

Type	Description	Example	Pros	Cons
Open forums	Listening sessions, town halls		Depth & breadth of feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Time intensive •Labor intensive •Iterative •Continuing & fluctuating costs
Participatory budgeting	Residents vote on allocation arrangements or itemized priorities. Subcommittees like ours are the liaison between residents and electeds	Durham Participatory budgeting	Depth & breadth of feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Time intensive •Labor intensive •Iterative
Subcommittees	Subcommittees serve as platforms for community orgs & individuals to participate	Spokane (us ^{***}) SLC racial equity in policing commission	Expedient Accountable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Depth & breadth of community input depends on who makes it to the committee. •Uncertain impact/authority
Online platforms	Allows individuals to peruse issues and contribute to conversation online	WA-DOH equitable rule-making	Individual accessibility and convenience? ADA & Language access?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Cost •Monitoring •Accountability •Usefulness?



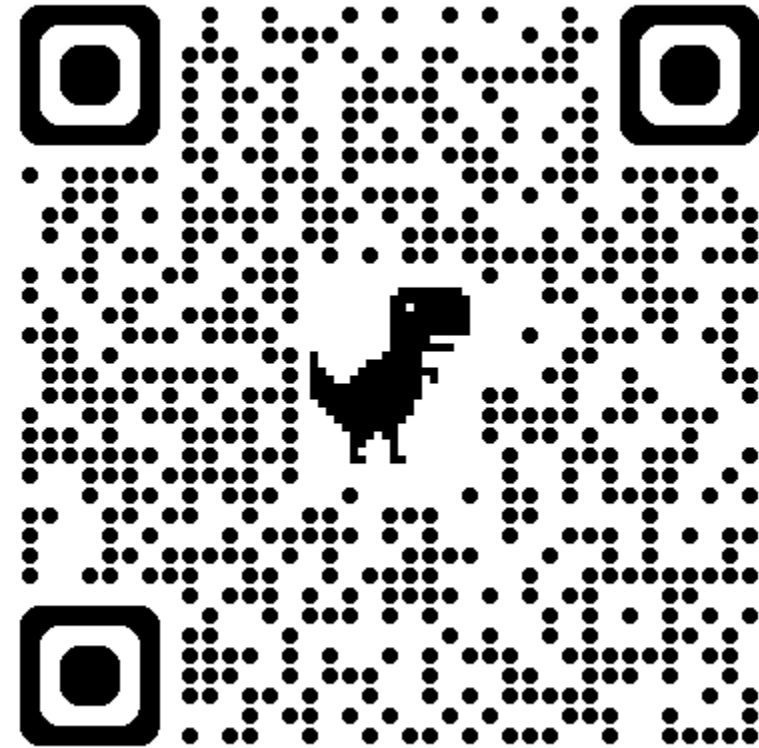
Timeline

- Six workgroup meetings between Oct. 2025 and March 2026 subcommittee meetings
- Present initial findings to Equity SC
 - **Conducted survey for information gathering**
 - Set up community engagement workgroup
- Continued workgroup meetings
- Present/ check in with Finance and Administration chair and co-chair
- Present to council committee deliverables for January (tentative)
 - Equity Framework
 - What it means for CC, Mayor & agencies
 - How it impacts budget process timeline
 - Definitions in the framework



Summary Edit

- [Council 2025-2026 Biennium Budget Modification Timeline](#)
- Literature Review
- Definitions
- Timeline
- Outreach Strategies
- Next steps





The Equity Subcommittee

- The ESC can serve as the community touch-point, where anyone can pitch program, policy, ordinance, or budget ideas and receive feedback on equity concerns (and potential subcommittee support).
- Need:
 - Council liaison in all ESC meetings
 - Invite non-member orgs to ESC meetings, share links.
 - One-on-one meetings between ESC members and their district council members.
 - Connect Immigrant & Refugee Affairs Committee (Mayor's advisory committee)
- **Funding**