



Equity in Port of Seattle COVID-19 Response Principles and Potential Strategies



Port of Seattle
Office of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion
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Background and Purpose

The Port of Seattle has been fully engaged in crisis response as the COVID-19 global pandemic has caused, and is anticipated to continue causing, enormous economic and human costs, and extreme disruptions to Port operations and finance.

On April 1, 2020, the Port of Seattle Commission approved an immediate, short-term emergency financial relief package focused on airport businesses, that provided rent deferral and barred evictions of tenants who cannot pay rent. Forthcoming measures will also provide financial relief for tenants and partners in the Port's maritime and real estate work. The Commission also approved a set of principles to guide a longer-term economic recovery plan, to be developed by the end of April 2020.¹

The Commission motions included directives that equity should be integrated into the Port's COVID-19 response and economic recovery plan, stating:

The Port commits to values of equity, justice and inclusion in the COVID-19 crisis response, from immediate response to longer-term recovery. In developing recovery plans, the Port will ensure that principles of equity, justice, inclusion, transparency, and accountability are embraced. The Port will engage communities who are most impacted to understand their needs.

The Port shall consider its fiscal, legal and equity responsibilities in all decisions made when applying these principles.²

These efforts shall also follow the Port's principles of supporting regional economic vitality, environmental stewardship, equity and inclusion.³

Guided by the Commission's directives, the purpose of this document is to provide a set of core principles and specific actions the Port can take to integrate equity into its COVID-19 response.

¹ Port of Seattle Motion 2020-06, "A Motion of the Port of Seattle Commission to provide guidance for Port leadership in prioritizing Port investments to assist local, regional, and statewide economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic." Port of Seattle Motion 2020-07, "A Motion of the Port of Seattle Commission to provide immediate relief and support to Port employees and Port tenants and concessionaires."

² Port of Seattle Motion 2020-06.

³ Port of Seattle Motion 2020-07.

Equity and Crisis Response

Due to historic and current day discriminatory practices, communities of color and other marginalized communities tend to experience disproportionate harms and impact throughout all phases of a large-scale public crisis or disaster. Inequities arise in all crisis stages from preparedness to immediate response to longer-term recovery. These inequities exacerbate a crisis' impacts on marginalized communities, such as:

- Environmental injustice conditions (high pollution, contamination, lack of natural resources assets) make them more susceptible to physical impacts of crises.
- Systemic barriers to economic security such as a lack of access to credit and banking services, insurance, and stable housing exacerbate economic impacts of crises.
- Low capacity to utilize available resources and support, such as accurate information, navigating government or civic support systems.
- Lack of access to civic influence due to limited political power or connections.
- Inaccurate data about marginalized communities prevents crisis response actions to reach communities or adjust service delivery methods.
- Service providers may not be representative of the communities most in need of services, and/or are not culturally competent.
- Price gouging of necessities takes advantage of communities that lack access to accurate information or alternative networks to secure access.
- Federal and local policies render relief unavailable to undocumented and mixed-status families.

Recognizing these inequities, crisis response should “...account for the needs of all people. Emergency response and relief practices must benefit everyone while also accounting for the specific needs of vulnerable populations.”⁴

The response “...cannot just band-aid the immediate damage...or put things back to the way they were before...efforts must advance a long-term vision for our communities that puts justice at the core.”⁵

Just as crisis response can “...deepen inequality, [it] also provides an opportunity to improve the conditions that existed before the disaster occurred. This is a just recovery—one that accounts for and addresses the underlying problems.”⁶

Core Principles

The Port’s Office of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (OEDI) has developed the following set of core principles and outcome, intended to complement the Commission’s directives on COVID-19 response, and to further elaborate on how equity can be integrated into the Port’s response.⁷

1. Centering anti-racist practices and policies

The Port of Seattle commits to taking a lead role in regional and national efforts to achieve racial equity and social justice. We are identifying and dismantling structural barriers to ensure that historically oppressed communities, particularly communities of color, have access to the resources they need to thrive. In order to achieve equitable outcomes for all our communities, we must be accountable for equitable policies that ensure racial, social, and economic justice are achieved in strategies, practices, and projects.

The Port of Seattle leads its equity work with a focus on racial justice, because we recognize the historical role that government has played in perpetuating racial inequities; leading with race is a strategy that allows us to go deep into understanding and

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Ibid

⁶ Ibid

⁷ Adapted from “Recommendations for Philanthropy and Policy Makers”, National Coalition for Asian Pacific Islander American Community Development (CAPACD) and “Principles for Equitable Crisis Response”, in Movement Generation’s “Principles for A Just Recovery”

addressing a framework of oppression (individual, institutional, structural) that can transform our institution; and, race has and continues to be used as a wedge to divide us, so we need to address race to truly build a movement for equity.

This principle includes explicitly committing to values of equity, justice, and inclusion throughout the stages of crisis response, from immediate relief to longer-term recovery. The Commission’s directives for COVID-19 establish a foundation for these values to be implemented throughout the response and into long-term planning for future crises.

At the heart of these guiding principles are the following anti-racist values:

- Addressing Racism at Every Level: racism manifests at individual, institutional, and structural levels, and we are committed to addressing racism in all its forms.
- Acknowledging Our Past: understanding our history and our role in perpetuating inequities, taking ownership of that history, and recognizing how it influences our present policies, practices, and culture.
- Creating a Culture of Learning: gracefully accepting feedback and humbly learning from our mistakes, knowing that perfection is unrealistic, but transformation and growth are possible.
- Prioritizing Relationships: we strive to create a culture that is relational, values trust and transparency, and recognizes that relationships are just as important, if not more so, than the bottom line.
- Sharing Power: we are committed to working with directly impacted communities to make decisions and find solutions to inequities.

2. Centering the needs of those who are most impacted

An equitable response to any problem must engage those who are most adversely impacted and collaborate with them in creating solutions. This approach recognizes that those who are directly affected have the best insight for how to create change, and they know what their barriers are and what is needed for their community to succeed. For the Port, impacted communities are both internal (employees) and external (small businesses/vendors/contractors/airport workers, and vulnerable communities impacted by the Port).

3. Ensuring Language and Cultural Competence

Language and cultural competence barriers are exacerbated in a crisis. When vulnerable communities cannot access timely and accurate information, they often are unable to voice their needs, avail themselves of public assistance, or follow directives from public agencies. The Port can address this for its stakeholders who experience these barriers.

4. Supporting BIPOC-led, Community-based Organizations

Trusted community-based organizations provide essential direct support to vulnerable communities and can be important partners in crisis response. The Port already has numerous community partnerships that can be leveraged to support equitable efforts.

5. Direct Resources to support the Most Impacted

The Port has expressed a strong interest in supporting the economic viability of its business partners. As small businesses and BIPOC-owned businesses are being drastically affected by the pandemic, they experience major loss of revenue, and risk loan defaults, evictions, laying off workers, and/or shutting down. Many workers have also lost their livelihood. The Port can engage in economic recovery work equitably by prioritizing businesses, communities, and workers most disproportionately impacted.

Strategies for an Equitable Response

Given the scope of its operations, the Port has a significant impact on vulnerable individuals and communities among its stakeholder groups that include small business owners, employees and Port-impacted communities. In its response to the pandemic, the Port has an opportunity and responsibility to ensure equitable impact for those most vulnerable.

The following section includes specific measures in the Port Commission’s directives and describes how each can be implemented equitably. The recommendations are grouped into two sections that align with the Commissions’ directives: 1. Immediate relief (Motion 2020-07), and 2. Longer-term recovery (Motion 2020-06).

Immediate Relief: Motion 2020-07	
Provisions in Port Commission Directive	Strategies for Equitable Implementation
<p>Port Tenants and Concessionaires – deferred rent and no evictions</p> <p><i>“...authorizes the Executive Director to implement immediate financial relief to Port tenants and concessionaires.”</i> <i>“...tenants and residents at Port of Seattle facilities shall not be evicted for inability to pay rent through June 30, 2020.”</i></p> <p>Two-month deferral of rent and fees for six groups of airport operators: airlines, airport dining and retail, rental cars, remote parking, ground transportation, and non-aeronautical properties.</p> <p>Evaluate for possible extension of two-month deferrals.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support tenants who are disproportionately impacted economically and/or have disproportionately greater challenges, such as operators of color, first-time business operators, women, or those with less business experience/capacity, those with less English proficiency, and/or those with higher barriers to navigating and securing other sources of financial assistance. • Focus especially on workers in airport dining and retail, and ground transportation. • Consider targeted strategies for the most vulnerable, such as longer deferrals or eviction bans and re-evaluation of lease terms.
<p>Port Employees and workplace support policies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centering the conditions and needs that our employees who are most economically vulnerable, occupy the lowest

“...review and enact workplace policies that enhance the ability of employees to care for themselves and their families while continuing to provide the work essential to Port operations. Priority shall be given to maintaining employment and benefits to the greatest extent possible.”

“The Port shall continue to protect the health, safety and well-being of our employees and will maximize teleworking policies and leave policies.

The Executive Director shall consider steps to keep our workforce employed such as deferring hiring of new and replacement positions, flexible leave without pay options, and reduced hours over reduction in the workforce.

In addition, the Executive Director shall determine whether new skill-building and educational resources for employees are necessary to transition employees to new career pathways. The Executive Director shall take into consideration the Port’s represented employees and their unique needs.

Youth employment: The Executive Director will continue to offer youth internships to provide to the extent possible a short-term boost to the economy, support the most vulnerable and underserved communities, and continue its strategic investment in the Port’s workforce of the future. Where possible, the Port should consider youth living within communities identified by the Equity Index as furthest away from opportunity or youth whose parents have lost employment as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.”

tiers of pay, and/or have disproportionately greater home/family challenges such as childcare, care for elderly family members, to create better policies and impact for all.

- Created Public Health Emergency Leave. A voluntary Public Health Emergency Leave benefit, which allows for up to 240 hours of paid leave that meet certain eligibility requirements.
- Consider targeted strategies for the most vulnerable and those impacted directly by the virus, such as more support and/or for longer duration.
- Create learning opportunities and benefits that support our workforce’s mental health, wellbeing and resiliency. Including: Mindful mornings; mindfulness workshops; teleworking and childcare; effective teleworking, Deer Oakes EAP training and assistance, trust based remote teams (list of resiliency offerings
- Consider targeted strategies as we develop processes for returning employees to worksites. Continue to center the conditions and needs that our employees who are most economically vulnerable, occupy the lowest tiers of pay, and/or have disproportionately greater home/family challenges such as childcare, care for elderly family members, to create better policies and impact for all
- Adopt policies that prevent racism and discrimination based on fears and perceptions about the virus
- Create programs that sustain operations by deploying available employees to priority work needs and providing employees opportunities to develop and engage with the Port in new ways. Employees are developed and redeployed in areas where there is much work to accomplish due to the pandemic.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consider targeted strategies to inform and educate employees about new policies in ways that reaches employees most effectively- Shift workers, represented workers, workers who do not have access to email during the day or do not sit at a desk• Identify potential inequities in telework and leave policies and address. Such as:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Quality and reliable internet access○ Potential discrimination or biases towards employee in deciding who can and cannot telework or take leave○ Flexibility to control work location is rarely available for lower tier or positions that require employee to be onsite• If/when jobs need to be furloughed or eliminated, consider equity in decision making of who is impacted.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Review seniority and structural best practices<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Are lower tier jobs eliminated versus managerial positions?▪ Are women of color impacted while keeping on white counterpart who are equally qualified?▪ Are parents impacted while keeping on their childfree counterpart who are equally qualified?○ Understand the history of existing pay gaps within a team• If/when new jobs or assignments are identified, consider equity in decision making of who is selected.• In identifying needs for new skill-building and educational resources for new career pathways, Center the conditions and needs that our employees who are most economically vulnerable, occupy the lowest tiers of pay, and/or have disproportionately greater home/family challenges such as childcare, care for elderly family members, to create better policies and impact for all
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<p>Port Employees, Tenants, and Employees of Tenants - assistance finding relief from other sources</p> <p><i>“The Port will develop an outreach program for its tenants, their employees, and port employees, to facilitate their ability to access local, state and federal relief resources.”</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and support tenants who are disproportionately impacted economically and/or have disproportionately greater challenges, such as operators of color, first-time business operators or those with less business experience/capacity, those with less English proficiency, and/or those with higher barriers to navigating and securing other sources of financial assistance. • Centering the conditions and needs that our employees who are most economically vulnerable, occupy the lowest tiers of pay, and/or have disproportionately greater home/family challenges such as childcare, care for elderly family members, to create better policies and impact for all • Provide support to workers at the airport throughout the process of applying for assistance, including understanding eligibility, navigating processes, collecting documentation and completing applications. • Make Information about assistance and economic recovery accessible to workers at the airport in linguistically and culturally competent manner. • Ensure Port communication and services are linguistically and culturally competent, including use of plain English and avoiding technical terminology and jargon. • For translation and interpretation, provide relevant context and subject matter information to language professionals so they can translate and interpret accurately. • Employ multiple communication methods to reach diverse communities, including engaging trusted community leaders, community-based organizations and/or ethnic media.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When using technology for communication, consider who has access and who doesn't, and address barriers for those who lack access to technology. • Redouble efforts to link to alternative sources of relief those excluded from federal eligibility. • Increase efforts to find ways for in person meetings where we can practice physical distancing as many were not able to participate in webinars because of access issues.
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Longer-term Recovery: Motion 2020-07	
Principles in Port Commission Directive	Strategies for Equitable Implementation
<p>Port Tenants and Concessionaires</p> <p><i>“The Executive Director may consider proposing adjusted agreement terms in a manner that serves the financial interests of both the Port and its tenants and concessionaires. The Executive Director shall consider prioritizing:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Businesses that are directly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and the restrictions that have been implemented to address it;</i> • <i>Businesses that can commit to being available to provide services and generate revenue;</i> • <i>Businesses who are not otherwise eligible for significant state or federal economic relief;</i> • <i>Small and diverse businesses;</i> • <i>Independent contractors, hourly-wage workers, “gig workers”, and artists and craftsman who do not otherwise have access to basic economic safety nets; and</i> • <i>Non-profit organizations and not-for-profit tenants.”</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritize tenants who are disproportionately impacted economically and/or have disproportionately greater challenges, such as operators of color, first-time business operators or those with less business experience/capacity, those with less English proficiency, and/or those with higher barriers to navigating and securing other sources of financial assistance • Consider targeted strategies for the most vulnerable, such as more flexibility in re-evaluating contract terms to allow for targeted adjustments

<p>Capital Programs</p> <p><i>“The Executive Director shall evaluate project assumptions for all capital projects approved prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Executive Director shall determine which projects shall be postponed, accelerated or phased, and consider the following principles when making decisions:</i></p> <p><i>Maximize economic impact: Prioritize projects that generate significant economic activity – not only construction-related employment and spend, but also projects that, once completed, will facilitate key drivers of regional economic activity such as trade, fishing, tourism and travel.</i></p> <p><i>Diversity in Contracting: Prioritize capital programs that have high utilization rates for woman and minority owned businesses consistent with the Diversity in Contracting Policy Directive.</i></p> <p><i>Small Business Enterprises: Prioritize projects that provide opportunities for small business.”</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If/when criteria for economic impact and equity impact are applied, weight equity impact at least equal to economic impact. • Support and prioritize small businesses and WMBEs, such as first-time business operators or those with less business experience/capacity, those with less English proficiency, and/or those with less ability to navigate and secure other sources of financial assistance.
<p>Economic Development and Community Investment Programs</p> <p><i>“The Executive Director shall consider the following principles when making decisions about economic development and community investment programs:</i></p> <p><i>Existing Grant and Community Benefit Programs: Prioritize community investments using existing programs such as the Economic Development Partnership Program, Tourism Marketing Support Program, Duwamish Valley Community Equity Program, the South King County Fund and others.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When identifying “partnerships to maximize funding impact”, consider leveraging Port dollars by working with other government and prioritize where the Port has influence and unique value • Continue to integrate and center equity into existing community benefit programs such as the South King County Fund. • Engage and learn about recovery efforts in community organizations the Port has partnered with to inform

<p><i>Partnerships to Maximize Funding Impact: Identify partnerships and coordinate efforts to create multiplier effects of Port funding. For example, the Executive Director can leverage Washington Department of Commerce economic recovery investments that create near-term economic activity; expand on regional transportation investments that support the region’s trade and travel needs; leverage city and statewide tourism promotional programs; and address long-term infrastructure needs.”</i></p>	<p>Port recovery strategies, with a priority to those that are in and serve communities of color.</p>
<p>Long-term Preparedness</p> <p><i>“The Port of Seattle Commission is focused on the Port’s responsibility to plan strategically and proactively for how to help our region during this crisis and guide its recovery once it is over. As a public agency that provides essential services to facilitate our economy, the Port is uniquely positioned to be a key driver of economic recovery. The Port’s roles in the transportation of people and goods, economic development, tourism promotion, workforce development, trade and travel facilitation, environmental remediation, youth employment and equitable inclusion are all essential tools that are needed to help workers, businesses, local residents and the overall economy.”</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the COVID-19 experience to build policy and operational mechanisms for future crisis responses and recovery efforts, including templates for policy directives, tools for equitable rapid-response, and tools for monitoring effectiveness of response and equity impacts.