Snohomish County

DEI Assessment

November, 2023

Our Project Team

Krystal O'Leary, M.Ed.
Director

17 years of DEI experience

Areas of Expertise*:*

Organizational Culture
Project Management
Training Development and
Facilitation
Program Design

Non-Profit Leadership
K-12 Teacher and Education
Management
Partner Engagement
Stakeholder Engagement

Heather Curry, Ph.D.
Senior Consultant

5 years of DEI experience

Areas of Expertise:

Organizational Analysis
Training Design & Facilitation
Project Management
Public Sector Leadership
Stakeholder Engagement

Gender Studies
Curriculum Design &
Delivery
Adult Learning
Community Engagement

Our Project Team

Juan Osuna, MA
Senior Consultant

10 years of DEI experience

Areas of Expertise:

Project Management
Policy Analysis
Organizational Culture
Quantitative Data Analysis
Stakeholder Engagement
Best Practice Recommendations

Jaime Hoffman, LLMSW
Consultant

5 years of DEI experience

Areas of Expertise:

Program Evaluation
Stakeholder Engagement
Policy Review
Data Analysis
Quality Improvement
Social Impact of Programs

David Bushnell, MA
Senior Consultant

4 Years of DEI experience

Areas of Expertise:

Assessment Design
Policy Analysis
Organizational Improvement
Quantitative Data Analysis
Community Landscape Analysis
Stakeholder Engagement
Best Practice Recommendations

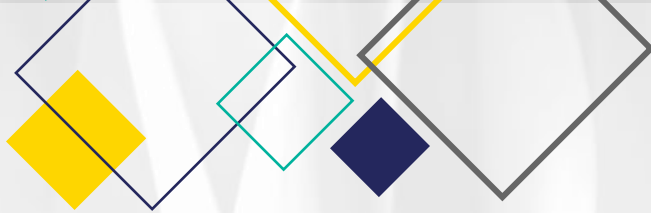**Stephanie Intal**
Senior Consultant

5 years of DEI experience

Areas of Expertise:

Organizational Analysis
Facilitation
Project and Program Management
Quantitative Data Analysis
Education

Project Delivery | *A Five Phase Approach*

1. Project Kickoff & Client Engagement

Project Kickoff

Client Engagement

2. Organizational Assessment

Analysis of Policies and Practices

Staff Outreach and Engagement

Equity Resource Library

3. Community Engagement

Community Outreach and Engagement

Community Focus Groups

4. Summary Report and Presentation

DEI Assessment Report

Presentation of Findings and Recommendations

5. DEI Action Plan

Future Envisioning Analysis

Development of DEI Action Plan
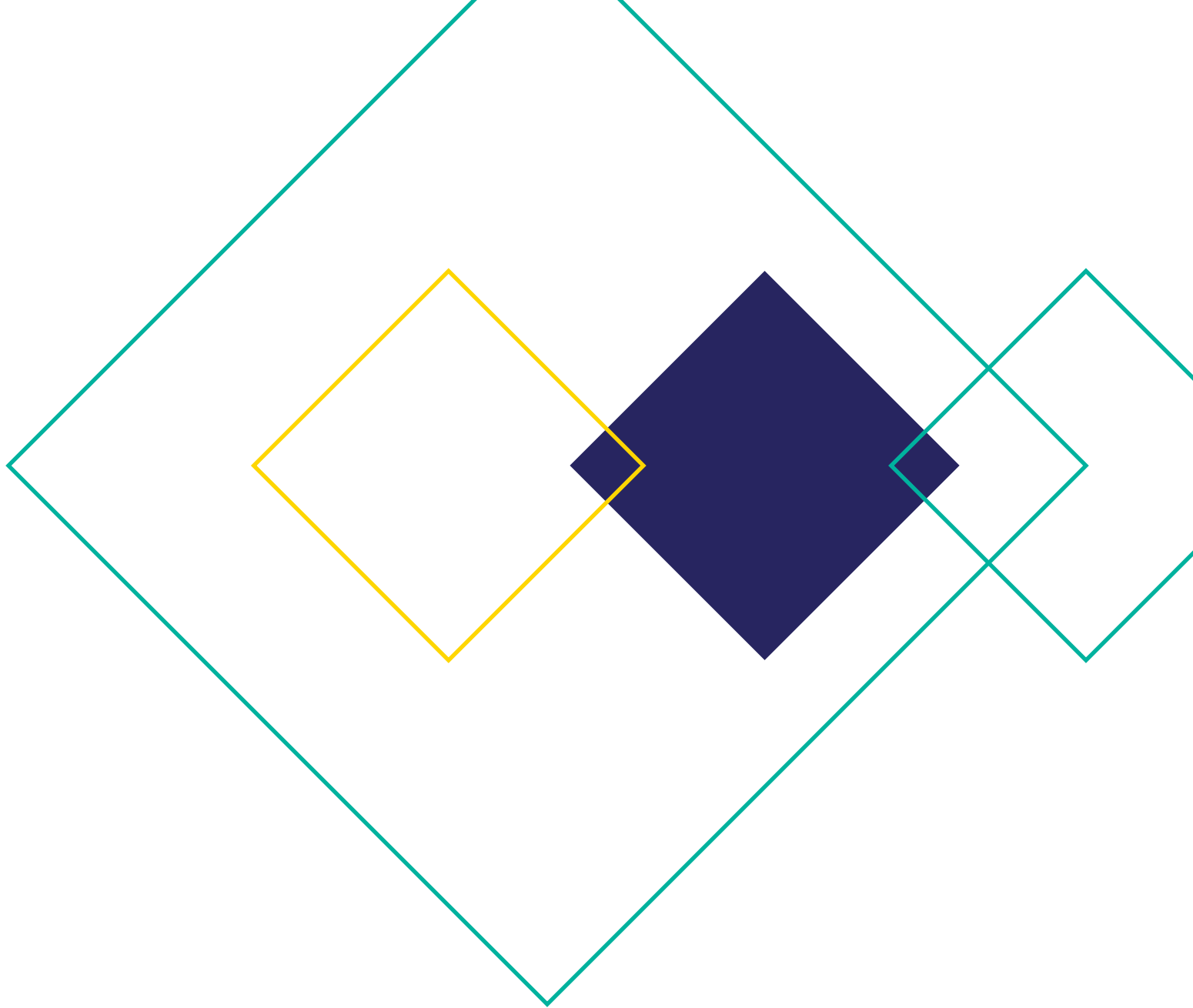
Development of Progress Monitoring Plan

Findings

Snohomish Employee Survey Open-Ended Feedback Quick Facts

1713 total employee responses
818 employee responses with open-ended feedback

3 open-ended questions, including a space for additional feedback

4 roles represented in survey responses: Directors/Deputy Directors; Managers; Leads; Individual Staff
Note: Elected Officials were surveyed, but no respondents identified they held that role.
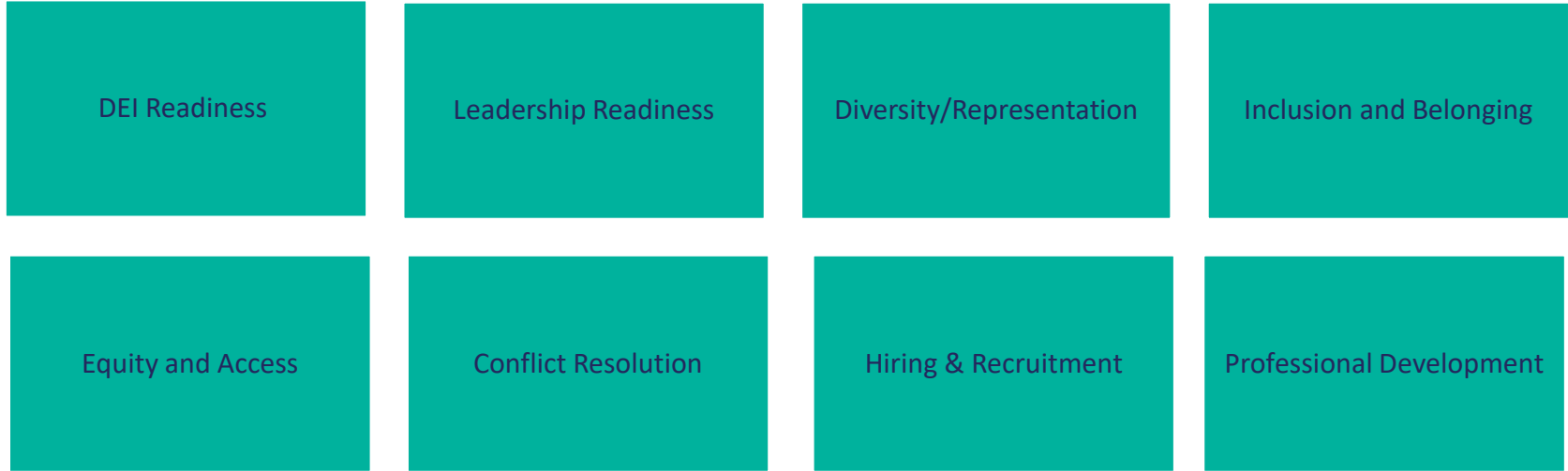
Qualitative Analysis Methodology

Snohomish County's employee survey included three (3) open-ended questions for staff to respond to, including a space to provide additional feedback.

Question	Major Insight	# of anecdotes
In three to five years, what do you want to be true about the organization that is not true today?	Looking ahead	743
From a DEI perspective, help us understand how you have been made to feel uncomfortable at work at Snohomish?	Opportunities for change	802
What else feels important to share regarding your perspective of diversity, equity and inclusion at Snohomish?	Additional feedback	563

All qualitative responses were processed using qualitative software, Dedoose, coded and grouped by similar themes and sub-themes, de-identified of all personal information, and reported out providing both direct anecdotes and summarized feedback.

DEI Survey Context and Background

The eight (8) topics covered in the survey are:

DEI Readiness	Leadership Readiness	Diversity/Representation	Inclusion and Belonging
Equity and Access	Conflict Resolution	Hiring & Recruitment	Professional Development

Aggregate Survey Results: Leadership Readiness

Statement	Favorable	Respondent Unsure	Unfavorable
Key decision makers at Snohomish County are fully ready to create a safe space for all people	53%	23%	24%
Top leaders of my organization are fully ready to engage in difficult conversations regarding equity	52%	24%	24%
Department and County Management demonstrates behavior that is in alignment with their community facing priorities	53%	27%	20%
I am comfortable raising a concern to the person I report to	76%	8%	16%
Managers in the organization are held accountable to a specific set of defined leadership competencies	44%	28%	27%
I am kept well informed by Senior Management about the strategic direction, plans and progress of the organization	52%	16%	32%

■ Favorable   ■ Respondent Unsure   □ Unfavorable

Aggregate Survey Results: Inclusion and Belonging

Statement	Favorable	Respondent Unsure	Unfavorable
All parts of my identity and background that I present at work are accepted (e.g., gender, race, religion, disability, sexual orientation)	75%	12%	14%
I feel there is a sense of inclusion at the County	62%	19%	19%
I feel like I belong at the County	74%	15%	11%
Employees generally respect each other	83%	7%	10%
I feel that I am recognized for my contributions in my department	72%	9%	18%
My coworkers openly share their challenges	65%	16%	19%
When challenges are shared, employees receive support and guidance from others	66%	19%	16%

■ Favorable ■ Respondent Unsure □ Unfavorable

Themes from Open-Ended Survey Questions

Accountability

❖ Staff want to more accountability across the organization as a whole from leadership down

Improved Internal Relations

❖ Staff are seeking improved internal relations. Staff identified that Snohomish County is divided along many polarizing lines, contributing to siloing and exclusion. They are calling for a shift in culture

Staff Feel Uncomfortable from a DEI Perspective

❖ Staff expressed discomfort in terms of microaggressions, lack of support, and a culture of intolerance or misunderstanding

Resistance to DEI

❖ Some staff have a misunderstanding of and resistance to DEI work, based on their own lived experiences and identities that inform their work.

Snohomish Employee Focus Groups Feedback Quick Facts

10 Focus Groups, **90** minutes each

3 Staff Focus Groups, **1** Office of Social Justice Focus Groups, **2** Directors and Separately Electeds Focus Groups, **4** Community Focus Groups

8 questions with the following key themes: Current DEI culture at Snohomish County; Role of Leadership; Training and Education; Recruitment, Hiring, and Promotion; Inclusion and Intersectionality

Themes from Focus Groups

Culture of DEI

❖ Understanding of Diversity versus Inclusion

❖ Lack of consistency when Assessing Snohomish County's DEI progress

Hiring, Recruitment, Retention and Promotion

❖ Significant barriers to Advancing DEI as a core priority:

❖ HR Practices and Performance Management as Key Areas for Improving DEI

Leaderships' Role

❖ Communication of DEI Initiatives needs to come from Leadership

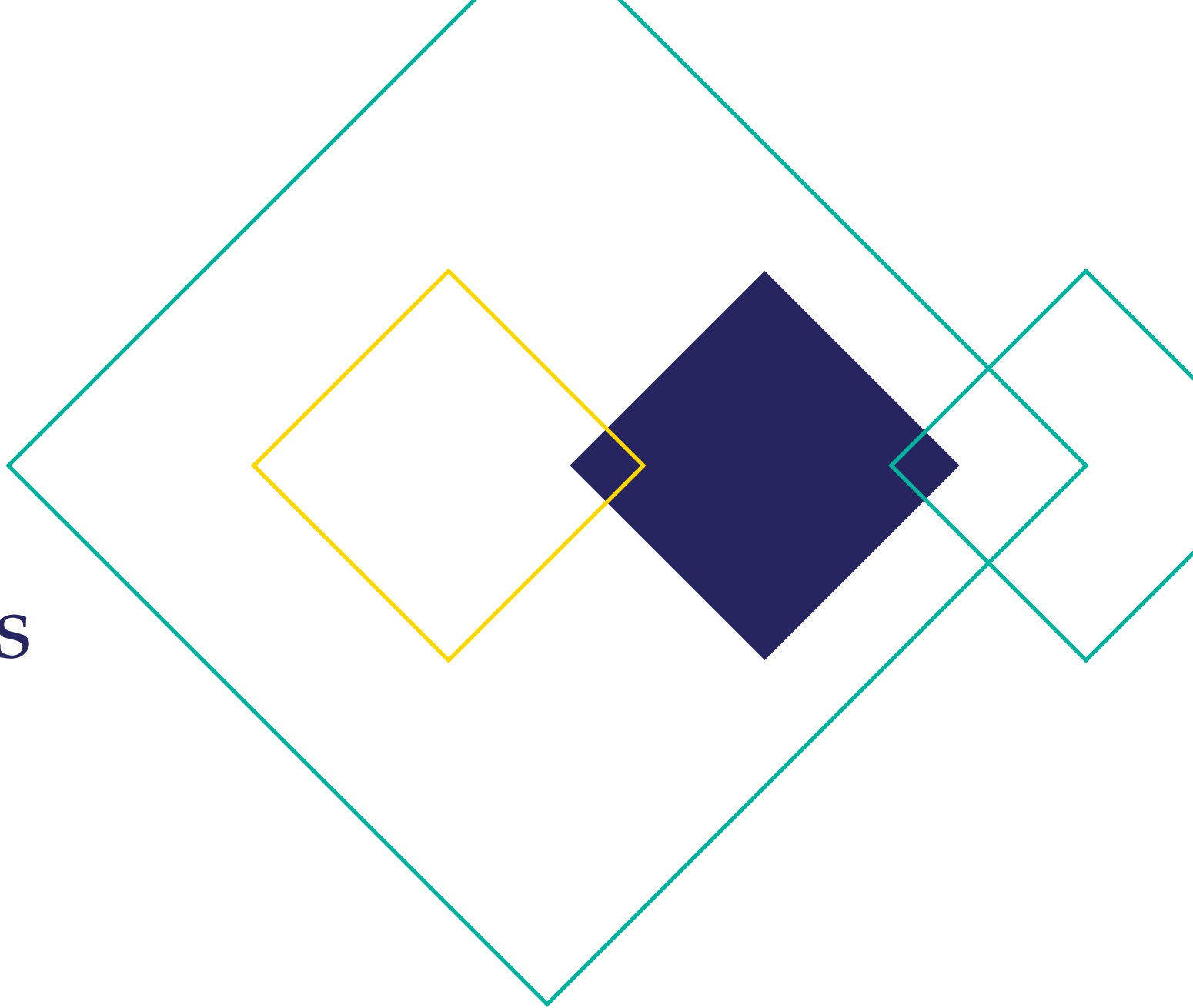## Psychological Safety and Support

❖ Fear of speaking out and feeling safe and supported:

Training and Education

❖ Snohomish County needs to be intentional with next DEI Steps and provide thoughtful learning opportunities
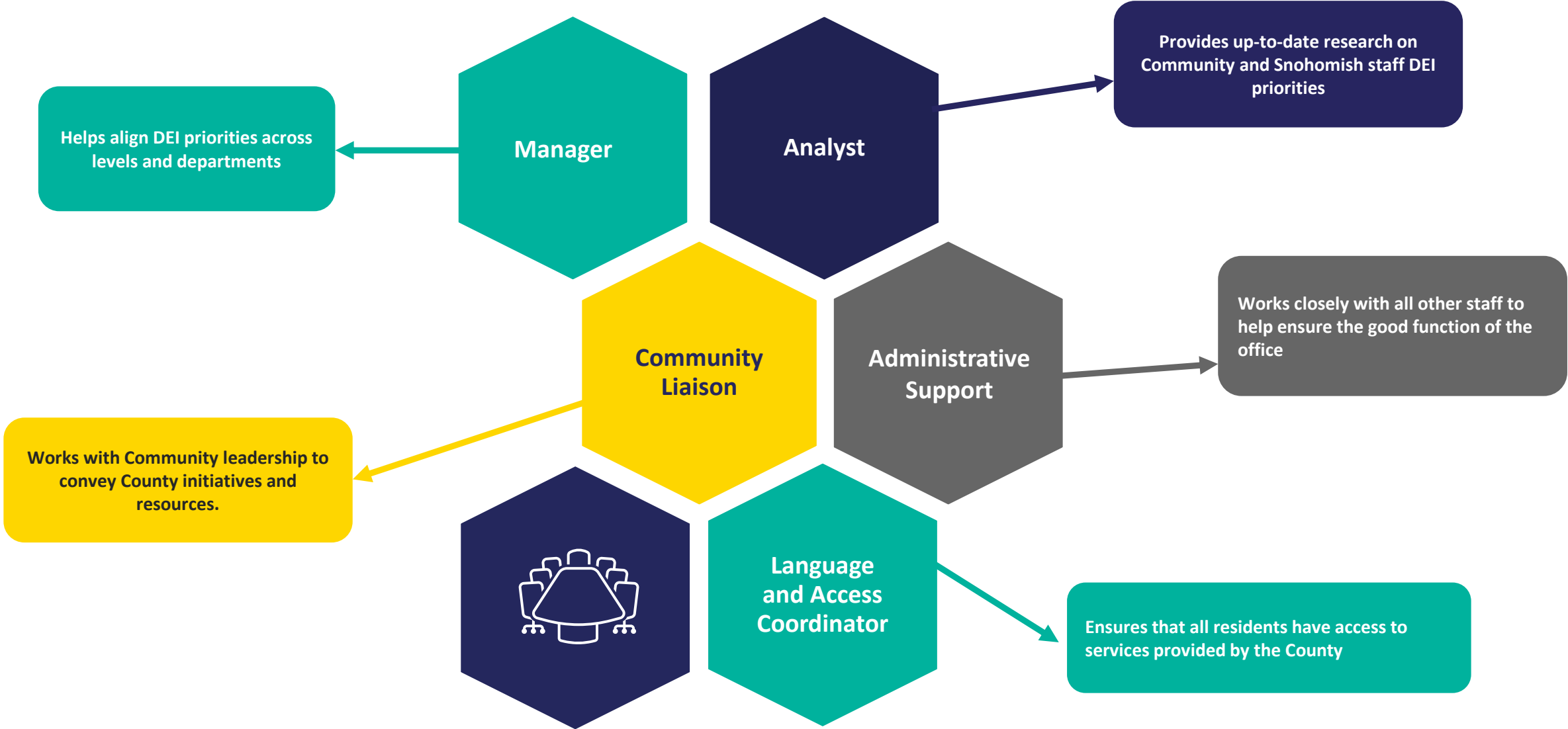
Recommendations

RECOMMENDATION 1: ENHANCE STAFFING FOR THE OFFICE OF SOCIAL JUSTICE

The feedback from Focus Groups and Surveys indicates that the Office of Social Justice is understaffed for the broad reach of the work and support for DEI for which it is intended. MGT recommends at a minimum the following staffing map as support for the Chief Officer of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.

Manager

Helps align DEI priorities across levels and departments

Analyst

Provides up-to-date research on Community and Snohomish staff DEI priorities

Community Liaison

Works with Community leadership to convey County initiatives and resources.

Administrative Support

Works closely with all other staff to help ensure the good function of the office

Language and Access Coordinator

Ensures that all residents have access to services provided by the County

RECOMMENDATION 2: PROVIDE DEI TRAINING FOR STAFF AND LEADERSHIP

Staff consistently noted the need for training across various DEI topics, during onboarding, but also regularly throughout one's employment. They also pointed to distinct trainings for management and HR in addition to foundational DEI training.

- o **Offer DEI training for a variety of specific topics**
    - Implicit Bias Training
    - Microaggressions in the Workplace
    - Increasing Cultural Competence
    - Creating a Culture of Belonging

  - **HR and People Management DEI Training, for example**:

- o **Foster regular and designed around DEI-related discussions in which staff can engage, for example:**
    - Lunch and Learn opportunities

    - Make resource library available to staff members

RECOMMENDATION 3: INVEST IN LEAD GROUP WITH LEADERSHIP ENGAGEMENT

Snohomish County needs to leverage LEAD group by clarifying mission, vision, and values, ensuring executive support and cross-representation from all levels and departments.

Ensure LEAD team has executive sponsorship and representatives from all departments. The LEAD team will help oversee the implementation of the forthcoming DEI Action Plan

Position LEAD team members to help model how to have meaningful DEI conversations within their respective departments. The Committee members can also assist in curating and identifying DEI courses or content that is relevant to staff

Committee members will have time-limited service terms and should be rotated out with strong succession planning support.

Ensure the success of the LEAD Committee

RECOMMENDATION 4: ENHANCE AND EXPLORE EXISTING COMMUNICATION CHANNELS FOR EFFICACY

Staff feedback pointed to the need for leadership to step in front of DEI initiatives. This would also require greater communication between leadership and staff. By increasing their own acumen and comfort with DEI, Snohomish County leaders can make great strides in building support for DEI and addressing resistance among staff.

o **Explore new vehicles and channels where necessary**

- Empower LEAD members to engage in equity work within individual departments and communicate DEI updates to all staff

- Task different members of the Executive Leadership team to provide ongoing DEI updates in existing standing meetings

o **Once revised and fully developed, communicate vision, mission, and goals of an inclusive culture to your workforce**

o **Internally publish the new goals and alignment to organizational DEI values**

RECOMMENDATION 5: CREATE CONSISTENT PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT PROCESSES

Staff feedback indicated that many departments have no performance management process, while others have outdated processes. Special consideration should be made to include DEI into the development of these value-based behaviors. Certain distinctions should be made between leaders/people managers in the organization and general staff.

For HR Managers, all Managers and Directors, and Executive Leaders

Accountability and demonstrable commitment to growing DEI at the County, for example:

- Develop DEI metrics in conversation with LEAD team members

- Develop DEI leadership capabilities to empower staff as DEI champions

- Create recognition systems for leaders whose performance demonstrates inclusion competencies, behaviors and skills that are teachable and observable

- Identify meaningful responses to leaders who do not exhibit or show misalignment with Snohomish's DEI values

- Model inclusive leadership behaviors

- Communicate organization's performance management process

- Ensure DEI priorities are reflected in KPIs

- Design KPIs centered on DEI

RECOMMENDATION 6: IMPLEMENT REGULAR PULSE CHECK SURVEYS

One practice to maintain a consistent read on staff levels of satisfaction and areas for continued organizational improvement is to implement regular opportunities to check in at an all-staff level. We recommend regular pulse check surveys as a tool for progress monitoring.

- o **Collect feedback from employees every 3-6 months, not to exceed 5 multiple choice questions and one open-ended question**
    - ▪ Consider using 'start', 'stop', continue' model based on prioritization of themes identified from employee feedback
    - ▪ Communicate feedback themes, suggestions, and action steps using formal channels to show that concerns are being heard

RECOMMENDATION 7: ADDRESS GAPS IN SNOHOMISH COUNTY POLICIES

The County has a number of strengths on which to build for policy revisions (e.g., very little jargon, non-gendered language). However, MGT suggests implementing or clarifying policies in the following ways:

- o **Employee benefits should be revised to include:**
    - ▪ Gender affirming care
    - ▪ Paid parental leave
    - ▪ Enumerated lactation breaks
    - ▪ Child/elder care benefits
- o **Snohomish County should consider standardizing the hiring process, including anonymous resume screening**
- o **Performance reviews should be standardized**

- o **Performance reviews should identify key DEI objectives as part of the performance review for all employees, accounting for good faith. Some categories to consider are:**
    - ▪ Visible commitment to DEI
    - ▪ Awareness of Bias
    - ▪ Cultural Intelligence
    - ▪ Humility
    - ▪ Curiosity about Others
    - ▪ Collaboration with Others

Next Steps

➢ **DEI Action Planning:** *November 13th and 14th*

➢ **Progress Monitoring Tool**

MGT

Thank You