



# King County

## Leading with a Lens of Equity

### THE CHALLENGE

In the midst of national social justice movements that have been brought to the forefront, employers have been reevaluating what diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) consist of within the workplace.

However, when it comes to DEI initiatives, it's not just the thought that counts. In order to truly make an impact, agencies need to commit to a long term plan, actively follow equitable practices, and hold themselves accountable. As a NEOGOV customer since 2008, King County set out to put their DEI objectives into action by leveraging NEOGOV's Insight and Learn solutions within their HR framework.

### COMMITTING TO DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

King County is no stranger to celebrating its diversity, as the county itself was renamed in memory of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in 2005. The county is also the 13th most populous county in the United States with 2.25 million residents, and it's projected that by the year 2030, 46% of residents will be from BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, or People of Color) backgrounds. ►

As a result, they knew they wanted to take their commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion to the next level to ensure that King County employees reflected the diverse backgrounds of their local community.

“We are very focused on equity as we roll out tools and build our policies and practices at King County, and we believe making changes to our policies can effectively lead to better outcomes. We need to pay attention to the determinants of equity, including access to healthy food, affordable and safe housing, community and public safety, efficient and safe transportation. These things need to be equitably distributed to everyone in the County, and the same goes for fair employment practices in our local government agencies,” said Michael Strutyński, Analytics and Continuous Improvement Project Manager for King County.

## DEI INITIATIVES IN ACTION WITH NEOGOV’S INSIGHT SOLUTION

King County has implemented a variety of strategies to hold themselves accountable to their DEI commitments. For instance, they are taking steps to enable equitable hiring practices for applicants by using NEOGOV’s Insight tool, which includes a Personally Identifiable Information (PII) Blinding feature to minimize hiring biases during recruitment.

Using the PII blinding feature has helped mitigate bias when hiring managers are screening eligible candidates that have been referred by HR. By hiding applicant information that could impact a candidate’s

chance of being fairly evaluated, the process forces hiring managers to review candidates solely for their qualifications. This prevents them from being passed over because of the inaccurate assumptions that could be made based on an applicant’s name, the city where they live, their gender, and so on.

For this reason, personally identifiable information is only revealed to the hiring committee after they have selected the best candidates based on merit alone -- which greatly reduces unconscious bias in the initial hiring process.

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MICHAEL STRUTYŃSKI  
ANALYTICS AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT PROJECT MANAGER

King County

## USING LEARN TO EDUCATE EMPLOYEES ON UNCONSCIOUS BIAS

King County’s commitment extends beyond their recruiting processes. As they’ve been able to gain a better understanding of the employee experience and how to improve it, NEOGOV’s learning management system has been a huge help.

They used the Learn product to roll out the County’s “Investing in You” initiative, which centers the employment experience around the individual and

promotes open communication between employees and management. Learn empowers agencies to create customized courses or select from over 1,200 pre-built courses in NEOGOV’s public sector-focused course library. With an emphasis on hiring managers, King County will be utilizing Learn to deliver unconscious bias training for employees in an effort to facilitate more equitable interview processes and a more inclusive workplace environment. ►

## DIGGING THROUGH DATA TO IDENTIFY AREAS FOR GROWTH

King County is also taking steps to dig deeper into their data, which helped them discover that BIPOC employees were underrepresented in leadership positions. To work through this issue, Jeff Scheeringa, Senior Special Projects Manager at King County, explained, “We’ve noticed that at first glance, our population of employees is actually representative of our constituents of the County. However, when you start segmenting the data by levels and leadership positions, this isn’t the case. One of the things we are doing is making sure we’re not just taking this at face value, but looking for problems where they might be.”

In order to use this data to learn and improve, King County’s Chief People Officer, Whitney Abrams, proactively reviews their workforce data and addresses how their department can prevent these issues – as well as developing procedures for working through roadblocks as they arise. While they were initially one of the first organizations to undertake this process, more organizations across the country are now beginning to follow suit.

## LOOKING AHEAD TOWARD LONG-TERM EQUITY

What does the future hold for King County’s DEI initiatives? For starters, they’ve published their 80-page Equity and Social Justice Strategic Plan on the King County website, and have done research with hundreds of groups to solicit valuable feedback.

“As we set goals and reach milestones, we’re publishing the results on our public website. Not only are we sharing what we’re trying to achieve, but we’re being transparent about our successes and failures. It’s forced us to hold ourselves accountable, and it’s made it possible for our community to do the same,” said Strutynski.

Ultimately, thanks to King County’s long-term commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion, and their use of NEOGOV’s Insight and Learn products, King County has taken actionable steps to ensure a more equitable future for their community – and set a positive example for other agencies to follow in their footsteps. ■

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**JEFF SCHEERINGA**  
**SENIOR SPECIAL PROJECTS MANAGER**

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