

2022 ANNUAL REPORT

# King County Immigrant and Refugee Commission (KCIRC)

**PREPARED BY:**

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**2022 KCIRC COMMISSIONERS**

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# VISION

Our vision is for King County to be a place where everyone has equitable access to opportunities. To achieve this vision, the King County Immigrant and Refugee Commission (KCIRC) plays a significant role in engaging immigrant and refugee communities to establish long-lasting trust-based relationships with County offices and programs. KCIRC strives to leverage existing programs and funding, while advocating for increased dedicated resources necessary to ensure immigrant and refugee communities thrive.



"King County, a place where everyone has equitable access to opportunities."

# OUR MISSION

The Commission will focus on understanding and addressing challenges facing immigrants and refugees within the diverse communities that make up King County. The Commission will work as a hub and central connecting place for building direct relationships with and supporting the vision for social justice for immigrant and refugee communities in King County. The Commission will enhance the integration of refugees and immigrants culturally, economically, and civically, in order to strengthen the communities where they live and will support refugees and immigrants to thrive and succeed while maintaining their own identities.



# KCIRC Guiding Values

## **EQUITY AND RACIAL JUSTICE**

KCIRC commits to using equity, racial justice, and social justice as a framework in all of our work, our relationships, our processes, and our model.

Racial and social justice includes full and equal participation of all members in our community. We hold one another accountable and build trusting relationships through committing to a process of working together and hearing one another and our communities because we believe that our liberation is wrapped up in the liberation of one another. Racial and social justice are both an outcome, and an on-going and evaluative process.

Equity is an ardent journey toward well-being as defined by the affected. Equity demands sacrifice and redistribution of power and resources in order to break systems of oppression, heal continuing wounds, and realize justice. To achieve equity and social justice, we must first root out deeply entrenched systems of racism. Equity proactively builds strong foundations of agency, is vigilant for unintended consequences, and boldly aspires to be restorative. Equity is disruptive and uncomfortable, and not voluntary. Equity is fundamental to the community we want to build.

## **GUIDING VALUES**

The following values guide the work of the KCIRC. We will:

1. Build on community strengths, voices, priorities, and experiences;
2. Hear and learn directly from communities impacted by issues;
3. Prioritize racial equity, inclusiveness, and transparency;
4. Encourage innovation and challenge the status quo; and
5. Acknowledge when we are not successful, correct course, and celebrate success



## Accountability to the Community

We define community as people impacted by the issues. People with lived experiences who often have no voice and visibility and decision-making power. The focus of KCIRC is to connect with and hear from members of the immigrant and refugee communities who are impacted by the issues.

Community engagement is a two-way exchange of information, ideas, and resources. The Commission will offer opportunities for communities to express their views and have a meaningful role in decision-making. Our work will also consider the diversity of our communities, including culture and ethnicity, and seek to create an inclusive and accessible process.

Effective engagement removes barriers for communities that may have previously prevented residents from successfully working with government. We acknowledge that the work is challenging and complex and that we might make mistakes, but the rewards are great and lead to better community-wide outcomes.

KCIRC will engage communities using principles of shared power: Paying careful attention to power relationships, advocating for power to be deliberately shared between the Commission and the community. The community will be our partners in the whole process, including selecting our focus areas and helping to determine the best course of action when facing challenges

# 2022 COMMISSION MEMBERSHIP

Fo-Ching Lu, SYL Foundation

- District 6

Carlos Michel, Executive Board Parliamentarian at Hazen High School

- District 9

Huma Zarif, Attorney

- District 3

Jacob Taylor-Mosquera, Movimiento AfroLatina Seattle

- District 5

Kwadwo Oware Jr., President, WA State Coalition of African Community Leaders

- District 4

Juanita Salinas-Aguila, Enterprise Community Partners

- District 5

Teclé Hiabu, Open Doors for Multicultural Families

- District 5

Nlmco Bulale

- District 5

Mohamed Bakr, Muslim Community and Neighborhood Association

- District 6

Lalita Uppala, Indian American Community Services

- District 9

Jena Yang, Casework Director for Congressman Adam Smith

- District 2

Gul Siddiqi, International Rescue Committee

- District 4

Bilan Aden, African Community Housing Development Association

- District 8



# KCIRC Meetings

KCIRC began meeting in a hybrid format this past year. Meetings were held in various public spaces throughout King County. The Commission hosted 12+ public community meetings and explored a shared leadership model among current membership. KCIRC also adopted a Land and Life Acknowledgement statement which is read prior to beginning a meeting.

## Meetings covered a range of topics including:

- ✚ Eviction Prevention and Rent Assistance Program (EPRAP), DCHS
- ✚ King County Code 2.15 and Language Equity Gap Analysis, OESJ
- ✚ KCIRC held an annual convening on the King County's budget process.
- ✚ King County Comprehensive Plan, PSB
- ✚ Case Management services and School Enrollment for refugees temporarily housed at the Redmond Shelter
- ✚ KCIRC Task Force Recommendations and Commission Structure
- ✚ Support services and resources to support Afghan Refugees Resettlement Support
- **Participated in a number of KC Committees and efforts:**
  - ✚ Racism as a Public Health Crisis (RPHC), Pandemic and Racism Community Advisory Group
  - ✚ King County Office of Equity and Social Justice's Equity Cabinet
  - ✚ Washington State Department of Health COVID Vaccine Collaborative



## Advocacy, Statements and Accomplishments

- ✚ KCIRC members advocated for funds to be reallocated to support Afghan refugees which resulted in \$500,000 support to communities.
- ✚ KCIRC supported the request to the Executive to develop a comprehensive response to the crisis in Ukraine
- ✚ KCIRC also supported a motion requesting the County's support the Cities for Citizenship initiative which resulted in King County's participation in meetings and network with other Cities and Counties.
- ✚ KCIRC initiated a convening with International Rescue Committee and Bellevue School District to discuss how to best support families temporarily housed at Redmond Shelter, this resulted in greater lines of communication between the IRC and Bellevue School District.
- ✚ KCIRC also advocated for the County to support the Cities for Citizenship initiative.
- ✚ KCIRC spent time reviewing the 2015 Immigrant and Refugee Task Force recommendations on the creation of the KCIRC. This resulted in discussions about the role of KCIRC and whether or not a commission is sufficient to fulfil the duties outlined in KCIRC's enabling legislation. The Commission is interested in advocating for additional resources to carry out this work and exploring various models including advocating for a standalone office dedicated to Immigrant and Refugee communities and/or entering into an interlocal agreement with the City of Seattle and/or other cities to expand resources, programming and reach across the County.





## 2023, The Work Continues

- ✚ Continue hybrid format meetings to include members of community
- ✚ Develop a Work plan which focuses on economic, health and social impacts of COVID-19 pandemic
- ✚ Increase public presence and opportunities for community engagement
- ✚ Establish stronger connections with Executive and King County Council
- ✚ Develop an onboarding plan for new commissioners
- ✚ Continuing to engage in discussions about King County Code 2.15, Citizenship Status Ordinance which includes a provision on language access
- ✚ Participate in community engagement and discussions on the Equity, Strategic Plan update

# FOR MORE INFORMATION ON KCIRC, CONTACT US:

Are you interested in joining the Commission? Members can [access application materials on our website](#) and submit online or by email. Candidates seeking appointment can contact [kcirc@kingcounty.gov](mailto:kcirc@kingcounty.gov). KCIRC website can be found [here](#).



**KING COUNTY IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE COMMISSION**

## **BECOME A COMMISSIONER**

**We are seeking residents interested in serving on the King County Immigrant and Refugee Commission (KCIRC). Commissioners from across the region work together to identify, elevate, and develop shared strategies and solutions; and bring more resources to the most pressing issues affecting immigrant and refugee communities.**

**Questions? Email us at [kcirc@kingcounty.gov](mailto:kcirc@kingcounty.gov).**

**APPLY NOW!**