

Youth Development Executives of King County

Thriving Leaders. Thriving Organizations. Thriving Youth.

Advocacy and Policy Operating Procedures and Equity Screen

Final Revised January 2021

Mission: YDEKC connects, strengthens and amplifies the leaders of youth serving organizations so that all Black, Indigenous and youth of color thrive.

Who We Are: YDEKC is a diverse coalition of youth-serving community based and nonprofit organizations across King County. With a focus on equity, our members embrace a youth development approach to support young people to reach the future they envision. Our members partner with schools, communities, and families, to ensure every young person has what they need to learn, grow, and thrive.

YDEKC strives to center antiracist policies and practices in our work to ensure that leaders at every organizational level have opportunities to strengthen their skills and peer networks to advance along their own pathway. We also work to strengthen the youth development field through advocacy and awareness raising of the critical work that our sector does to build the ecosystem of supports young people need to thrive.

We are committed to Antiracism and Racial Equity: Racial equity is a result of antiracist policies, practices, and actions. We are committed to building a society where race is not a predictor of one's success. We must address racism and racial inequities in our own organizations and institutions while also working for the policies, programs, and systems in other sectors that will lead to optimum outcomes for all. Racial equity work addresses root causes of inequities not just their manifestation. This includes the elimination of policies, practices, attitudes, and cultural messages that reinforce differential outcomes by race or fail to eliminate them. As a coalition of youth-serving organizations working to support young people to thrive, we must be explicit and committed to centering Black, Indigenous and People of Color in our programs and activities – the leaders among us, and the young people we serve.

Why we work together:

- **Issues facing young people and their families are connected:** we can be more powerful if we are speaking about the overlapping needs of the young people that we serve – particularly when we prioritize our messages.
- **A coordinated voice can better advance our field:** while YDEKC's first 10 years created a more unified and coordinated voice for youth and youth development, we still have far to go to be recognized and valued as a field alongside early learning, health and education which have more coordinated and well-funded advocacy efforts and fields.
- **Greater public awareness can translate to greater political will:** The general public still does not have a strong understanding of the programs and services provided by the Youth Development Field. Raising public awareness about the importance of youth development opportunities for young people can help increase political will for funding and improving systems and supports for young people.

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Advocacy and Policy Principles:

Building on our commitment to antiracism and to youth development, we infuse the following principles into our decision making:

- We will strive to make decisions that promote equity, antiracism and anti-discrimination;
- Our positions will benefit youth of color and/or the youth development field;
- We recognize and value diversity of opinion;
- We think critically before making decisions;
- We will make decisions quickly and reserve the right to revisit/revise as new information becomes available;
- Members are responsible for governing their own potential conflicts of interest;
- We reserve the right to not take action.

How we act:

YDEKC will lead on some issues and efforts, and will engage with and support other coalitions and efforts that are aligned with YDEKC's mission and goals. YDEKC will participate in year round activities to broaden the dialogue about issues facing the youth development field and young people across all jurisdictions that impact King County youth.

Actions may include:

- Convening stakeholders around important advocacy topics through "lunching with leaders" or "hot topics" or other gatherings virtually or live;
- Providing education and awareness through live mechanisms or electronic communications about how to take action as a citizen and a provider;
- Connection to our own and partner coalition Action Alerts;
- Meeting directly with elected officials or other decision makers;
- Signing-on to position statements or letters;
- Writing letters, op-eds or other communications and encouraging others to act;
- Testifying and coordinating joint testimony at the legislature, King County Council, municipal councils, school boards or other decision-making entities.

What we stand for:

The YDEKC Advocacy Committee will generate an advocacy agenda on an annual basis to be vetted and prioritized with the full YDEKC membership. Issue areas may be broad and allow for advocacy in multiple jurisdictions, or may be a more targeted issue (such as a legislative bill) that YDEKC staff and mobilized YDEKC members, will advocate for.

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Protocol for taking a position:

- Issues that **HAVE** been vetted and included in the YDEKC Annual Policy Agenda may be acted upon by the Advocacy Committee, Executive Committee, full YDEKC Advisory Board or staff on behalf of YDEKC Membership. *Beginning in 2021, all substantive issues on YDEKC's agenda will have a brief available that answers the Equity Screen questions on next page.*
- Issues that **HAVE NOT** been vetted and included in the YDEKC Annual Policy Agenda must follow this protocol:
When an issue comes to staff, these criteria are used as initial screen by staff, and shared to Advocacy Co-chairs for affirmation with 24 hour turnaround. If time available, request for any concerns goes to full Advocacy Committee. If Questions 1 – 3 are not clearly affirmative, or there are known likely unintended negative consequences we will not sign on until we can answer the longer equity screen questions satisfactorily.

Quick Criteria for Policy Sign-on – must answer all in affirmative (and be able to explain why) in order to sign on, on behalf of YDEKC:

1. Is it relevant to the mission of YDEKC? (***YDEKC connects, strengthens and amplifies the leaders of youth serving organizations so that all Black, Indigenous and youth of color thrive.***)
2. Will the policy positively impact children and youth of color?
3. Will it address a clear need or gap in King County?
4. Are there any unintended consequences that are known?

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Full Equity Screen Questions (for significant policy issues)

Directions:

- *Staff and Advocacy Committee answer these questions (or subgroup if specific topic, i.e. child care or foster youth, etc.) annually for any substantive policy issues we are championing or considering*
- *Answers to questions guide conversation and decision making for YDEKC participating in policy issue. If issue becomes a priority, then answers to questions also become base for a “policy brief” to activate members in advocating for the issue.*

Issue:

Decision making body for Issue (who must be influenced):

1. How is the issue relevant to YDEKC’s mission (YDEKC connects, strengthens and amplifies the leaders of youth serving organizations so that all Black, Indigenous and youth of color thrive) and purpose (Thriving leaders, thriving organizations, thriving youth)?
2. How will this policy positively impact Black, Indigenous and other youth and families of color? (Include underlying assumptions)

Follow up: If the answer is none or there is a weak positive impact for youth of color, could YDEKC play a role in strengthening language and equity focus? (If answer is still no, then no need to complete following questions)

3. Will the policy address a clear need or gap in King County?

Additional Optional Information:

4. What YDEKC members or partners are champions on the issue? Has the issue/need/policy been supported by communities of color? How and by whom?
5. What are potential unintended consequences of the policy?
6. How does YDEKC’s involvement in the issue offer a path to advance the policy issue? (In what way should/can YDEKC play a role? Does it matter if YDEKC is involved?)