

MEET OUR

# PIERCE COUNTY COMMUNITY

DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION | 2022 ANNUAL REPORT



# A TIME TO REACH OUT

When we launched our DEI initiative in 2018,  
**our first goal was internal awareness.**

Over the last four years, we've implemented processes, programs, and committees county-wide to meet this goal head-on.

In 2022, we continued building internally, to gain the capacity to expand much-needed programs to the communities we serve. We always continue to strive for improvement, but we're also very excited to share how far we've come.

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*Bruce Dammeier, Pierce County Executive*

## A message from Pierce County's Executive

Welcome to Pierce County's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) annual report. This marks the third year we have paused to report our work to you.

I invite you to dive in and learn more about a few of the initiatives we have underway to create a more diverse, equitable and inclusive Pierce County. We are making great strides to create a more welcoming, open place to work, as well as offering impactful opportunities to our community to create generational wealth. The Pierce County Small Business Accelerator is one of the programs that is creating lasting benefits for the hundreds of entrepreneurs who participated in 2022.

In the spirit of continued accountability, you will also see the measures we are tracking to evaluate our effectiveness and results. You can follow along and keep track of how we're doing at our Open Pierce County dashboard and the DEI-focused webpages at [piercecountywa.gov](http://piercecountywa.gov).

DEI is about much more than just numbers and data, of course. It's about creating a workplace where everyone uses their distinct voice, achieves their career goals, and has an opportunity to be their full whole self. In this way, we ensure we not only create a positive, fulfilling place to work but we also provide the meaningful and relevant services for all the residents of Pierce County.

Our work has benefited from a wide range of community partners and collaborators, including the Korean Women's Association, The Urban League, Mi Centro, Asia Pacific Cultural Center, The Black Collective and the Tacoma-Pierce County Chamber of Commerce. These organizations, and many more, have helped us move our initiatives forward more quickly than we could have accomplished on our own, and have created clear pathways for exciting new programs.

My thanks to the employee members of Pierce County's five DEI working groups for their steadfast commitment and encouragement. They are a constant source of learning and perspective for me.

Thank you,



Bruce F. Dammeier  
Pierce County Executive



**STRIVING  
TOWARDS  
OUR GOALS**



## CHANGES

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**80** Racially diverse  
County managers

Up from 51 in 2019

**24.1%** Diverse  
employees

Up from 20.5% in 2017

**11.2%** Veteran  
employees

Exceeding our goal of 10%

## GOALS

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**50%** Female  
employees

Currently at 48.9%

A blurred, blue-tinted background image showing a group of people sitting on the floor in a circle, engaged in a community activity or meeting. The text is overlaid on the lower half of the image.

**PROGRAMS  
CONNECTING  
OUR COMMUNITY**

## PIERCE COUNTY BUSINESS ACCELERATOR (PCBA)

PCBA was developed to reinvigorate our economy in the wake of COVID-19 and support minority, women and veteran-owned businesses in need. The program has become a model for other counties near and far and has won multiple national awards for its innovative approach.

## NAVIGATOR PROGRAM

How can we provide continued support and resources to entrepreneurs across Pierce County, specifically in underserved communities? The Navigator program answers this question by hand-selecting qualified business development ambassadors to meet individual community needs with customized coaching and mentoring.

## SUMMER INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

By reducing or eliminating barriers in the hiring process at Pierce County, the HR department's Summer Internship Program increases access to careers in government for individuals who may have otherwise never had the opportunity.

## WORK CREW PLUS

This program builds pipelines into field operations jobs for individuals who historically would not be granted access.



# PIERCE COUNTY BUSINESS ACCELERATOR

The Pierce County Business Accelerator (PCBA) is designed to provide training for micro businesses and startups, with a focus on BIPOC, veteran, and women entrepreneurs. In partnership with the Tacoma-Pierce County Chamber of Commerce, the PCBA was developed to grow a healthy economy in Pierce County where typically underserved and minority businesses are provided opportunities and resources to thrive.

In addition to its unprecedented impact in Pierce County, this multi-award-winning program has become an innovative model adopted by other counties across the country.

The program focuses on equipping participants with the skills needed to raise external funding, connecting them to the PCBA network, providing financial resources and professional coaching, and empowering them to accelerate their business growth.

Betty Capestany, the program lead and director of Economic Development, believes this unique approach is what made the program so successful.

She says, “What was groundbreaking and different from any business accelerator program out there was we intentionally had the cohorts taught by paid coaches who came from their communities and taught the cohort in their native language... it was truly special.”

The PCBA has also formed strong partnerships with local organizations such as the Tacoma-Pierce County Black Collective, Korean Women’s Association, Asia Pacific Cultural Center, Mi Centro, and the Tacoma Urban League, who have helped to connect small businesses from their communities with the program and provide additional resources.

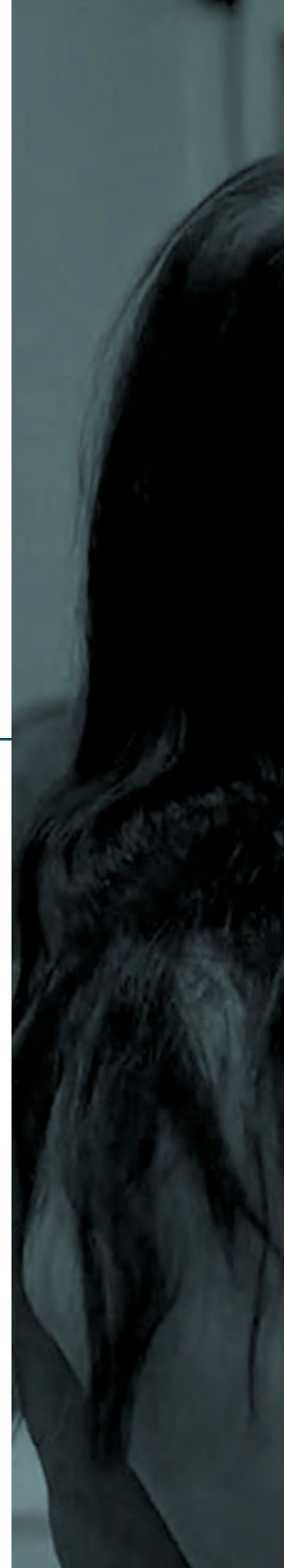
# NAVIGATOR PROGRAM

While the PCBA helps entrepreneurs take their business to the next level, the Navigator program equips them with the tools they need to sustain themselves and thrive in the long-term.

Launched in fall of 2021 with \$2.5 million in American Rescue Plan Act funding, this innovative and inclusive “hub and spoke” model connects the cultural knowledge of community organizations with the unique needs of small businesses, particularly those owned by BIPOC, women, veterans, and those in rural communities.

Navigators are essentially business development specialists who are trained by the Pierce County Economic Development Department to go out into various communities and provide personalized resources, connections and outreach.

With the goal of reaching 3,500 underserved small businesses over the next two years, Navigators are breaking down barriers and building trust with BIPOC organizations to ensure their unique needs are met.





# PIERCE COUNTY BUSINESS 2022 IMPACT

144 BUSINESSES  
RAISED

**\$3.5M**

WHICH  
HELPED

**200+**

Businesses since 2021

**70%**

Women-Owned

**14%**

Veteran-Owned

**93%**

Black-Owned

# ACCELERATOR'S

A HEALTHIER ECONOMY  
FOR PIERCE COUNTY

WHO WERE  
AWARDED

**\$5000**  
EACH

AND RECEIVED  
BUSINESS TRAINING

**9** COHORTS

**3** CITIES

**4** LANGUAGES

English, Vietnamese,  
Korean, and Spanish

...N'T RE...  
...N'T ALERT YOU  
...ALERT to 888-777...  
...or call 253-798-6595  
...ercountywa.gov/ALERT

Washington Environmental Training Center



www.wetrc.org

800-562-0... 769

WETRC S...  
quality tra...  
and pres...

Washington Environmental Training Center



800-562-0...

Drinking

- ✓ Entry or Admitt...
- ✓ Certification Rec...
- ✓ Backflow Assemb...
- ✓ Classroom
- ✓ Flex

Opport...


JOB & CAREER EVENT



EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

When you're called to the scene, you need...





# BROADENING OPPORTUNITIES

The Summer Internship Program was designed to bridge gaps and break down barriers to develop a more diverse and representative candidate pool within Pierce County government. The program is one of the ways the County's Human Resources department is creating more opportunity for everyone.

Five years ago, Lindsay Derrick joined Pierce County with a passion for building diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives. Since then, she and her recruitment team have endeavored to make the workplace more accessible for everyone. They've taken a human-centered approach, focusing on building relationships with the community and listening to their needs. This has allowed them to better serve and meet people where they are, rather than just tick boxes.

The recruitment process has been overhauled to remove any obstacles that may prevent great candidates from applying. For

example, they've done away with the requirement for a four-year degree for roles where it was not necessary and widened the net to include two-year college and technical school experience. They've also addressed the barrier of pay by offering competitive wages to interns, recognizing that they deserve to be compensated for the work they do.

The recruitment team is also engaging with the community in new ways, such as hosting job fairs and events at various locations like Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Reclamation, Latinx Festival, Bethel Community Day, and the Bite of Black Business Festival. This intentional approach is allowing Pierce County to connect with a wider range of individuals and build pipelines for future career opportunities.

# WORK CREW PLUS

Nationwide, underrepresentation in the construction, landscaping, and concrete industries means those workforces do not accurately reflect the diversity of the communities they serve.

“We don’t have the pipelines in place for different communities that were clearly there for one dominant group of people—that group being males and Caucasians. I can imagine someone from a different culture seeing the access and privilege provided to others and not feeling like they could belong,” said Bruce Wagner, longtime County employee and current deputy director of the Planning and Public Works Department.

Here in Pierce County, cross-department partnerships are forming to re-imagine and restructure industries with

this deep-seated legacy and begin including those historically underrepresented.

One promising program resulting from these collaborations is Work Crew Plus, a pre-entry level position that provides on-the-job training and career opportunities for individuals who have been court-involved. It developed from an open dialogue among members of a DEI subcommittee for Work Crew, spearheaded by Dominique Hardemen, probation manager, who met and shared his ideas and experience with Bruce. Together, they created this new program to provide inviting, engaging, and safe opportunities for those who are typically overlooked and underestimated.





“If we’re going to be different,  
we have to do things differently.”



**Q&A**  
**WITH SOME OF**  
**PIERCE COUNTY'S**  
**CHANGE AGENTS**



# CONSTANCE WHITE

*Pierce County Clerk of the Superior Court*

***Tell me about your role at Pierce County.***

A couple of years ago, I was just going through the motions in my previous job in court administration in Texas, but I felt like something was missing. Then, on October 8, 2020, I had a major surgery for a brain aneurysm. Exactly one year later, I interviewed for my current role with the County and finally realized what was missing for me was purpose. This job truly felt like my calling, so while my first year in Washington was challenging, the amazing people I work with and my drive to make a positive impact made it all worth it.

***What is your experience with DEI work at Pierce County and the role you play in it?***

We have been actively creating community engagement where it's not expected by taking services we provide outside of these four walls and into the communities we serve. We have a responsibility to take our services to supportive spaces for people because the courthouse does not always feel like one - and we can't say what is one for others. We need to actually go out and listen to their concerns and hear what their safe space is.

***What is your vision for DEI as Pierce County continues this work?***

The engagement piece where we build relationships with the community and key organizations to help break down any barriers to people coming to the court is really different for my department. My vision is to focus on creating a culture of transparency and engagement, and to continue building a management team that feels comfortable coming to me with ideas and issues.



# PURPOSE IN ACTION

A police officer in uniform, wearing a tactical vest and sunglasses on his head, is talking to a young child. The child is standing with their back to the camera, holding onto a piece of outdoor exercise equipment. The scene is set in a park with a brick building and a fence in the background. The entire image has a pinkish-red tint.

# REPRESENTATION MATTERS

# ERNEST CEDILLO

*Pierce County Deputy Sheriff*

***Tell me about your role at Pierce County.***

I have been a Deputy for the Pierce County Sheriff's Department for three years. As a first generation American with immigrant parents from Mexico, I know firsthand the challenges that come with being underrepresented in a field like law enforcement. But I've also had the privilege growing up and knowing some amazing officers of Latin descent who made a huge impact on my life. They've shown me that even a small amount of representation can make a big difference.

***What is your experience with DEI work at Pierce County and the role you play in it?***

One of the most rewarding aspects of my job is the opportunity to connect with Hispanic residents who may only speak Spanish or have limited English. Language barriers can make it difficult for deputies to effectively communicate with multilingual communities and help them get the assistance they need. Being bilingual, I'm able to bridge this gap and assist in finding resolutions to problems.

***What is your vision for DEI as Pierce County continues this work?***

We all come from different backgrounds and have different experiences, but we're all working towards the same goal of helping and serving our community. I want everyone to feel like they belong and that they have a voice. That's what makes us strong as a team.





# YU NAKAYAMA TRAN

*IT Project Manager*

***Tell me about your role at Pierce County.***

I'm a project manager working in the IT division of Finance at Pierce County. I essentially oversee the implementation of external technology applications for the County, such as Microsoft and DocuSign. I was born in Japan but have lived here since I was two years old. I speak Japanese fluently, which is actually what led to my first job in project management years ago where I translated between the company and their Japanese clientele.

***What is your experience with DEI work at Pierce County and the role you play in it?***

For years, the public could not make both sewer and surface water payments online. The old billing system was outdated and tedious. To create better access and increase our system's capabilities, the County decided to implement an external software. This type of project was a huge undertaking that took multi-department collaboration, four years, and extensive testing to ensure accessibility passed standards for individuals with visual impairments. But the end result was a successful and inclusive software billing program which won a Standing Ovation Award for Effective Government, an annual award recognizing the achievements and innovation of County employees.

***What is your vision for DEI as Pierce County continues this work?***

I am committed to ensuring that technology solutions are accessible and inclusive to all members of the community.

A man with a white cane is walking through a doorway into an office. He is wearing a light-colored, short-sleeved button-down shirt and light-colored trousers. The office in the background has a desk, a chair, and a whiteboard. The lighting is warm and yellowish. The text 'MORE ACCESS MORE SUCCESS' is overlaid in large white letters at the bottom of the image.

**MORE ACCESS  
MORE SUCCESS**

# MOVING INITIATIVES FORWARD



Held 5 DEI  
Lunch & Learn  
events for employees



Provided 3 sessions of  
Government-to-Government  
Tribal Relations training for  
117 employees



More than 123 employees  
attended  
9 LGBTQ+ classes



Facilitated 12  
**Attitudes Towards  
Differences basic bias  
courses** for 244 employees



Certified 188  
Bronze, Silver and Gold  
**Pierce County Leaders** from  
all levels of government



**44 Book Club members**  
met throughout the year

# IN PURSUIT OF CHANGE

FOR PIERCE COUNTY

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**Strategic Oversight and Coordination** | *Chair: Judy Archer*

TJ Bohl, Brent Bomkamp, Joseph Evans, Brian Hardtke, Gary Robinson, Misty Robison, Sarah Colleen-Sotomish, Constance White, Michael Kawamura

**Communications** | *Co-Chairs: Lisa Hilligoss and Libby Catalinich*

Anthea Aasen, Lillian Allred, Delmar Algee, Megan Hutton, Jeremy Acree, CJ Johnson, Lauren Wallin, Meghan Brocato

**Recruitment** | *Chair: Kelly Lewis*

Malissa Adame, Peter Barlow, Lindsay Derrick, Jody Ferguson, Denise Petrie, Joe McDonald, Keturah Melton, Letticia Neal, Debi Ross, Gayle Robbins

**Training**

Mary Benton, Aaron Copado, MaryBeth DiCarlo, Dea Finnigan, Tyesha Green, Karl Imlig, Maura Maye, Abi McLane, Wolf Opitz, Debi Ross

**Work-based Programs** | *Chair: Kandace Thomas*

Kevin Clegg, Carrie Frohlich, Dom Hardeman, Roxanne Miles, Aaron VanValkenburg, Bruce Wagner