



The Evolving Role of a COVID-19 Community Advisory Group



Janna Wilson

COVID-19 Community Mitigation Response Team

Public Health – Seattle & King County

Public Health 
Seattle & King County

COVID-19 Response in King County



Pandemic Community Advisory Group



Early Lessons, Future Directions



COVID-19 Response in King County



King County in Context

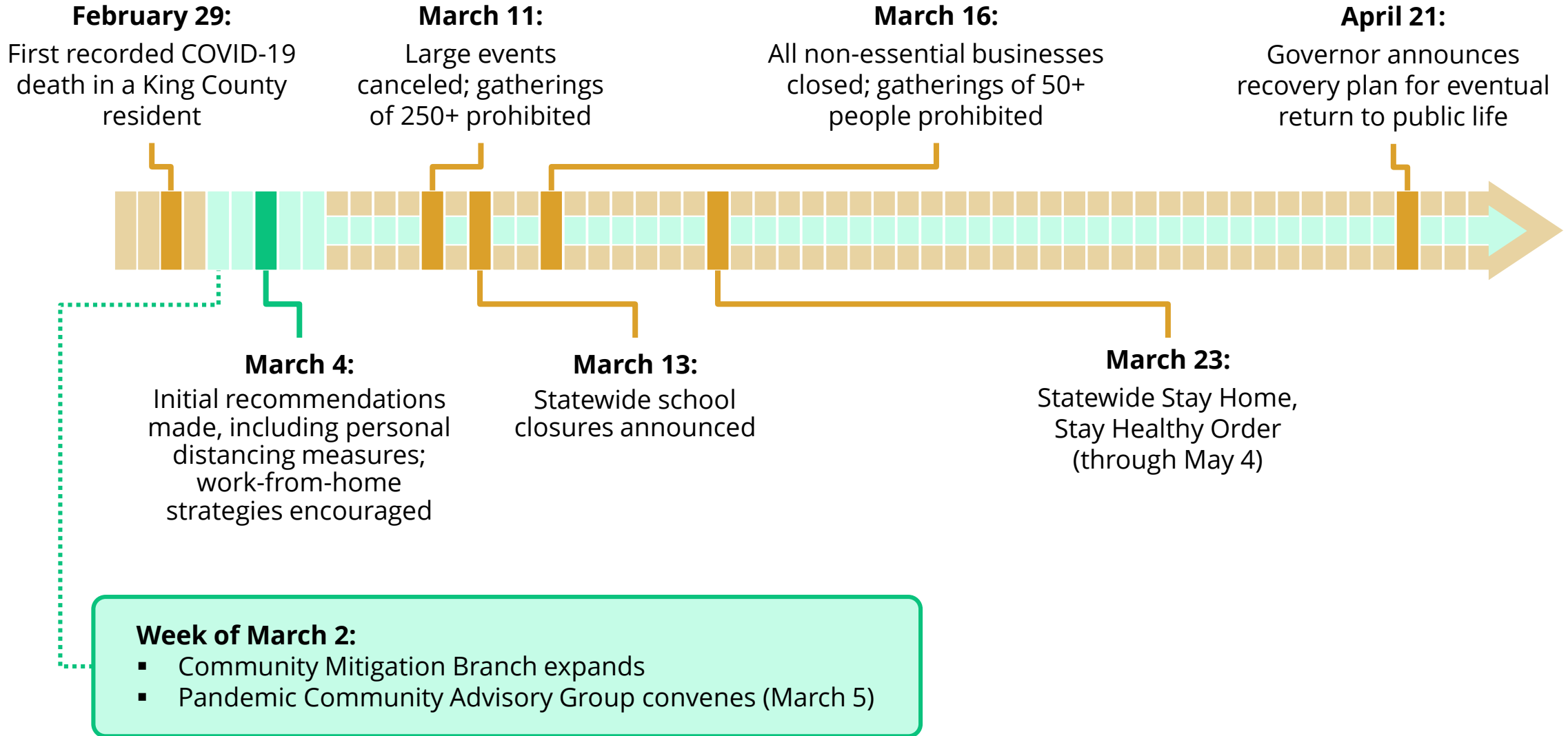
With over 2 million residents and growing, King County is geographically, racially, ethnically, and culturally diverse

- Comprises **Seattle and 38 other cities**, plus unincorporated and rural areas
- **38%** of residents are people of color
- **21.7%** were born in countries other than the US
- About **170 languages** are spoken here
- Stark differences in social and health outcomes by **place, race, and income**

In February 2020, King County was the site of the first known death associated with COVID-19 in the United States



Timeline of Events: COVID-19 in King County



Community Mitigation Branch: Function

Collaborating with community to drive equitable allocation of power and resources to:

- ✓ **Help limit and prevent exposure to novel coronavirus**
- ✓ **Lessen the negative social & economic consequences of the mitigation measures**
- ✓ **Center principles of equity:** *prioritize racial, ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and economic groups at higher risk, and lift up community-guided solutions*

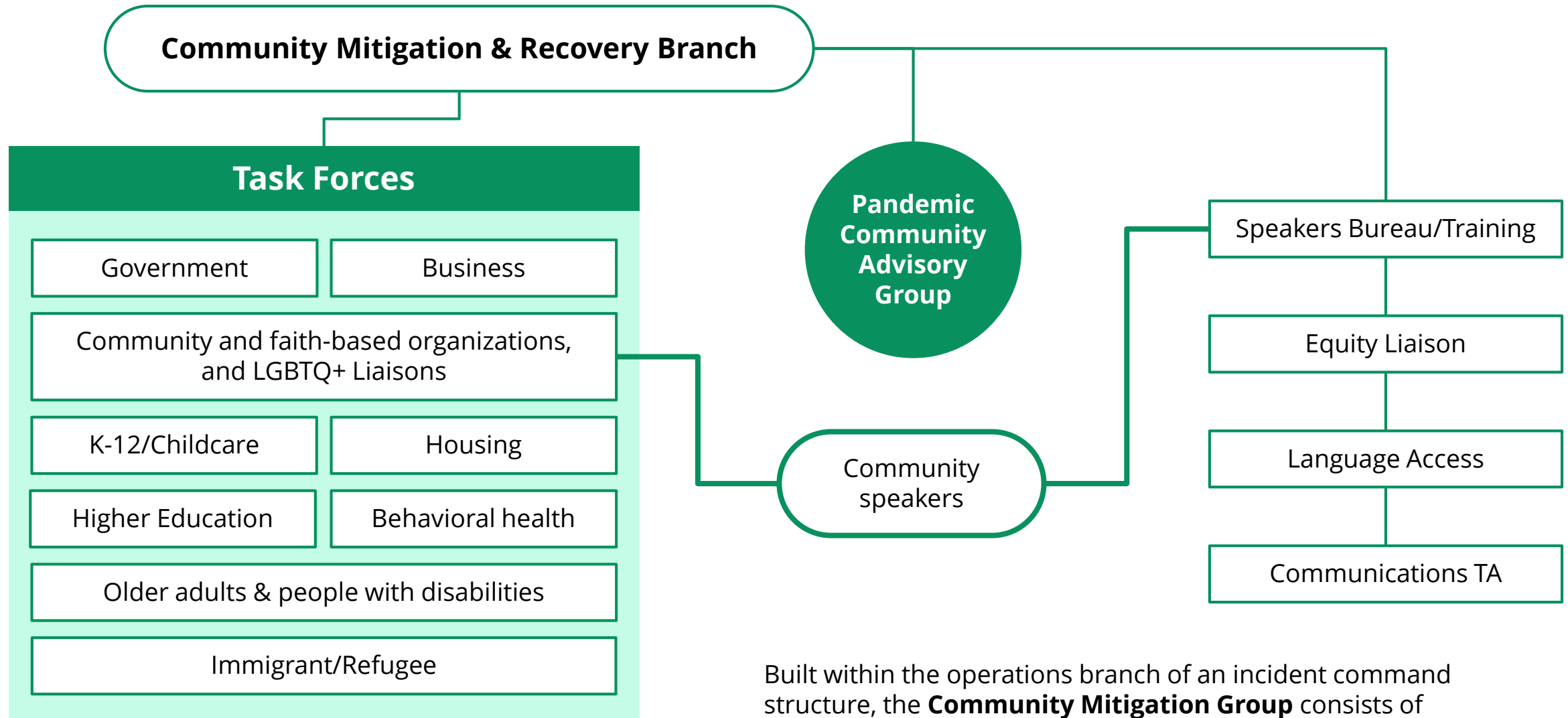
Get up to date information on COVID-19 in King County

Visit kingcounty.gov/ncov 

And follow us on social media at [@KCPubHealth](https://twitter.com/KCPubHealth)  

kingcounty.gov/covid 

Community Mitigation Branch: Structure



Built within the operations branch of an incident command structure, the **Community Mitigation Group** consists of multiple community stakeholders.

Pandemic Community Advisory Group



Pandemic Community Advisory Group: Near-term Roles

The primary goals of the Pandemic Community Advisory Group are to convene representatives from community, public, and private sectors to:

- 1** Help share accurate information and messages about recommended steps to reduce the spread of COVID-19 – within your own organization, to other institutions and organizations in your sector, and with the public.
- 2** Inform us and each other of opportunities, successes, and barriers to implementing recommended and required measures.
- 3** Join us in helping prevent, interrupt, and respond to misinformation and stigma.

Pandemic Community Advisory Group: Stakeholders



Members are drawn from diverse sectors, including:

- Community and faith-based organizations
- Housing and homeless services
- Education
- Business community
- Labor
- Government

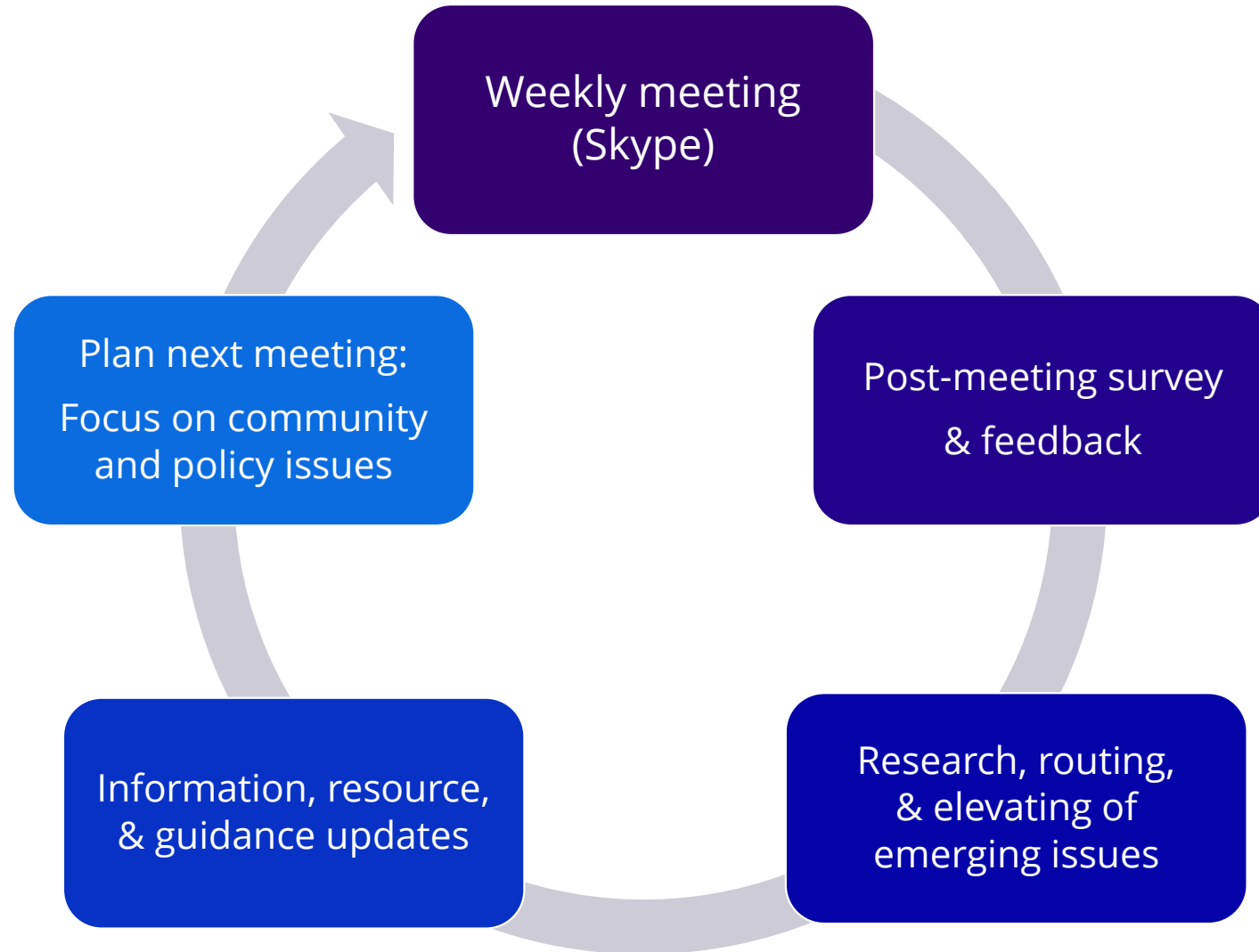
Pandemic Community Advisory Group: Stakeholders

Inclusion of communities most affected by the virus and by the negative consequences of the mitigation strategies, such as:

- People at higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19 (older adults; those with chronic health conditions)
- Historically marginalized communities including Black, Native People, and People of Color
- People living homeless and housing insecure
- Immigrants and refugees
- People with disabilities
- People who do not speak English as their primary language



Approach to Meetings



Early Lessons, Future Directions

STOP THE SPREAD

SAVE LIVES



Early Value and Contributions

Illuminating issues and disseminating information

- Identified additional translation and interpretation needs
- Spotlights inequities in access to information and identified issues where more guidance was needed
- Reflected on early mental health and trauma impacts
- Elevated need for anti-hate and stigma work
- Raised issues that Public Health should consider in modifying social distancing restrictions
- Pushed out messages on how to reduce spread of disease and encourage social distancing



Public service announcements conveying the state's *Stay Home, Stay Healthy* initiative were recorded in 14 languages. Advisory Group members are among those who have helped disseminate these and other messages to the community.

Source: Public Health – Seattle & King County on YouTube:
<https://www.youtube.com/user/KCPublicHealth/>

Early Challenges and Observations

- Tougher to create cohesion & build relationships when meeting virtually
- Balancing act: Needing to disseminate information *and* listen to community
- Some issues are more relevant to some than others—i.e., how to engage *everyone*
- Needing to adapt and change the group as the pandemic evolves
- Advancing issues and equity concerns in an incident command structure



Looking Ahead: Response, Recovery, Transformation

Going forward, how might the advisory group have meaningful roles in:

- Mobilizing to support effective and equitable access to testing and care, economic relief, and beyond
- Illuminating and addressing the disproportionate impacts on communities of color
- Advancing community-guided solutions and recovery policies that transform us to a more just, pro-equity society



Building a Pandemic Community Advisory Group: Key Takeaways

Based on the preliminary experiences of King County's Pandemic Community Advisory Group, communities may want to consider:

- ✓ Opportunities to build on existing coalitions where trust and buy-in is high
- ✓ Ability to adapt quickly—modifying composition, roles, and structure as the pandemic evolves
- ✓ Prioritizing resources, time, and engagement with Black, Native/Indigenous Peoples, and Communities of Color with longstanding racial and ethnic disparities driven by historic and ongoing systemic racism
- ✓ Advancing community power and decision-making in the context of local incident response systems

A Chat with Janna Wilson



Allene Mares



Janna Wilson

A Chat with Janna Wilson

1. What made you say 'yes' to this assignment?
2. Given that the pandemic is putting a national focus on the ways that longstanding racial and ethnic health disparities are being exacerbated, can you say more about the Advisory Group's engagement in this issue locally?
3. What kinds of activities/tasks do you do after the meeting? Between meetings?
4. What measures are you using to evaluate the effectiveness of the group?
5. How much time does this all take?
6. Hindsight is 20-20. Is there anything you would have done differently at the front end or during the process?

QUESTIONS?

To ask a question, please click the



icon in the Zoom toolbar to open your Q&A Pod.

Public Health - Seattle & King County

Anti-stigma social media toolkit

www.kingcounty.gov/ncov/anti-stigma

COVID-19 Resources

www.kingcounty.gov/covid/

Pandemic Community Advisory Group

www.kingcounty.gov/covid/advisory-group/

Communities Count

COVID-19 Vulnerable Communities Data Tool

www.communitiescount.org/covid19vulnerable

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Nonpharmaceutical Interventions

www.cdc.gov/nonpharmaceutical-interventions/index.html