

## FELLOWSHIP BRIEF

# Working with People and Data to Address Climate Change in King County, WA

Ingrid Thyr, Master of Environmental Management '25

Collaborator: King County Executive Climate Office

## The Need.

Although climate change is a global issue, tailored actions at the local level are a critical piece of the solution. County government serves as an important link between federal and state policies and on-the-ground action. Like other places in the American West, King County in Washington has already seen increases in extreme heat, flooding, wildfires, and sea-level rise due to climate change. As a leader in implementing climate- and equity-driven policy at the county scale, King County works to make data around climate risks, exposures, and opportunities accessible and usable to community members and partners, such as city government and local organizations. This effort to link people, government, and the environment through data is key to King County's community-driven and community-informed approach for addressing climate change.

## The Project.

Ingrid's work supported three ongoing projects within the Executive Climate Office (ECO) related to data and community engagement. This included researching online platform options for a future King County climate dashboard that will display priority indicators and climate actions happening within the county. This process included interviews with team members regarding needs and desires as well as interviews with other departments and governments around the country about their own dashboards. Second, ECO released an Extreme Heat Mitigation Plan in July 2024, and as a part of this rollout, a GIS tool was being designed that includes both heat and health-related data. Ingrid participated in the design process for this tool and helped to conduct user interviews to draft a preliminary user guide. Last, Ingrid assisted with updating ECO's strategic climate action plan (SCAP) by reviewing previous plans and facilitating a community workshop with over 100 participants.





# The Findings.

1. **Climate Dashboard:** Ingrid created a detailed document comparing six options for a climate dashboard. These ranged from “off-the-shelf” solutions to more DIY options such as Tableau and Microsoft Power BI. This research provided ECO with background on the most viable options and allowed Ingrid to see a huge swathe of climate work being done by local governments around the US.
2. **Heat and Health Explorer:** Ingrid’s work on the public-facing GIS tool centered on simplifying technical jargon and making the user experience more intuitive. Ingrid provided a set of recommendations (such as creating an accompanying ArcGIS StoryMap) on to improve the tool and user guide.
3. **SCAP Update:** Affordable housing, zero-emission public transportation, and increasing resources available to community organizations were the most common interests expressed by participants in the July workshop. Ingrid recorded and organized this feedback, which will be used by ECO as they host future workshops and write the 2025 SCAP.

# The Impact.

Data, technology, and artificial intelligence are becoming bigger and bigger parts of managing ecosystems. While these tools can certainly provide greater efficiency and efficacy, they can also make the underlying processes of how environmental decisions get made more opaque and if used improperly, even cut out important input from the humans living in those environments. It’s important for governments like King County to simultaneously incorporate new data technologies into their work and ensure that community voices are still being heard and elevated. Ingrid’s work this summer researching dashboard options, developing a user-friendly GIS tool, and updating the SCAP all aimed to connect people and their environment through data while also furthering climate change mitigation and adaptation goals. Other governments and organizations across the West and beyond will be able to use these public-facing tools and plans to connect communities and data to address climate change.



## The Student.

Ingrid Thyre, Western Resource Fellow | Ingrid is a Master of Environmental Management candidate specializing in ecosystem management and conservation. Before coming to Yale School of the Environment, she lived in Montana and Minnesota and worked in outdoor education and cross-country ski raced professionally. She completed her B.A. in environmental studies and mathematics from Williams College. She is excited to combine her passions for data, people, and the outdoors to better understand how to contribute to sustainable and equitable communities and ecosystems. [See what Ingrid has been up to.](#) | [Blog](#)