



Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Plan

2024-2026

Oregon Department of Environmental Quality



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Non-discrimination statement

DEQ does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, disability, age or sex in administration of its programs or activities. Visit DEQ's [Civil Rights and Environmental Justice page](#).

Gratitude

This plan was made possible through the time, vulnerability and experiences shared by individuals and groups across DEQ. To the folks who joined in engagement sessions with the DEI Planning team, the Strategic planning team and Engaged to Change (ETC), we are grateful for you.

BIPOC affinity group
DEI Council
DEQ Support Staff
Veterans affinity group
DEQ Pride
Disability engagement group
Vehicle Inspection Program
Communications
Human Resources
Wellness Committee
Recruitment and Retention Committee
Environmental Justice Working Groups
DEQ Trainers
Data Governance engagement group
Procurement
Leadership Team



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Statement of support

We are excited and energized to affirm and support this plan. The DEI planners – *the names of DEI Plan team members have been omitted due to safety concerns and a lack of protective factors and accountability measures established at the agency at this time* - spent time planning and modeling the practice of centering the most vulnerable and harmed voices in developing this plan. We know that by centering the traditionally unheard, we are able to identify actions that will benefit all. The plan charts a vision for long term change within DEQ combined with a two-year action plan. The journey is ongoing as we continually strive to build an anti-racist organization that supports current employees and those who will pick up the work in the future. The Leadership Team crafted and shared our individual visions for equity and inclusion. The word cloud is the result. By sharing our individual hopes and aspirations, we built a collective understanding and pinpointed a set of commitments that will be the foundation for ensuring we each champion implementation of the DEI action plan in a way that is inclusive, transparent and accountable to the work.

Our commitments

- **Be of this work.** We individually and collectively strive to be an anti-racist organization. We will prioritize this work, dedicate the time and seek the resources needed to do this work and support the most vulnerable employees at the agency.
- **Relationships first.** To do this we must build relationships with the people doing the work. We recognize that those most impacted are also closest to the solutions. These relationships include the affinity groups, the DEI Council, the Environmental Justice Work Group, The Recruitment and Retention steering committee and individuals.
- **Thoughtful co-creation and action.** We will work to share power and use our positional authority to support the DEI plan activities and the people doing the work. We will show up with curiosity and share our expertise within specific DEI plan activities and in our daily work.
- **Transparency.** We strive to communicate frequently and openly – both the work we are doing and the work of our colleagues throughout the organization. We will show our work and seek feedback and input as a gift.
- **Clarity and support.** We will bring clarity and transparency to our policies, centering them in anti-racism while also supporting our individual and collective work to develop our understanding and skills of DEI practice and anti-racist approaches. We will transparently share our learning and use it to make anti-racist policies.

All this will take time and we share determination to make the time to do this. We are at the beginning of the journey that many in our agency are further along in. We are proud to affirm this plan, support its implementation, and hold ourselves accountable to progress through regular reporting.

In gratitude to the DEI Plan team and all the voices who contributed to it.

Keith Andersen, Brian Boling, Matt Davis, Shannon Davis, Lydia Emer, Leah Feldon, Mike Kucinski, Ali Mirzakhilili, Lori Pillsbury, Sara Slater, Christine Svetkovich, Jennifer Wigal, Lauren Wirtis

Leadership Team DEI Word Cloud



DEI plan introduction

In January 2023, Governor Kotek directed State of Oregon agencies to develop a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Plan to be updated every two years. The DEI plan must be meaningful, actionable and measurable, and it must be connected and aligned with the agency strategic plan and affirmative action plan. The key focus areas required in the DEI Plan are communication, community engagement, data, decision making, contracts and procurement, budgeting, workforce development, workplace culture and no tolerance for racism, hate and discrimination. Agencies were encouraged to adopt the strategies, goals and implementation processes from the statewide [Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Action Plan](#).

Before the announcement of the Governor's expectations, DEI efforts were already taking place at DEQ through the union, DEI Restructuring group, affinity groups, DEI Council, strategic planning, the recruitment and retention project, and countless efforts led by individuals throughout agency. These efforts are staff led, and they developed an essential foundation for building the agency's DEI plan.

DEI Plan Required Focus Areas

- ❖ No tolerance for racism, hate and discrimination
- ❖ Budgeting
- ❖ Communication
- ❖ Community engagement
- ❖ Data
- ❖ Decision making
- ❖ Contracts and procurement
- ❖ Workforce development
- ❖ Workplace culture

Legacy of racism in Oregon

From its beginnings as a state, Oregon's government at the local, regional and state level has played a role in creating and maintaining racial inequity and oppression.

Exclusion laws in the 1840s and 1850s were a determined effort to establish a whites-only state by denying Black people the right to live in Oregon, own real estate, make contracts, vote or use the legal system. Out of growing hostility towards Japanese farmers in the Hood River Valley, the Alien Land law was established in 1923 which prevented first generation Japanese Americans from owning or leasing land. Racism persisted throughout the state's history through the theft of indigenous land, Japanese internment camps and the segregation of communities and schools.¹ Racist language from the exclusion laws remained in the State Constitution until 2002.

Violations to human rights and justice throughout Oregon's history impact diversity, equity and inclusion today. Systemic racism continues to create barriers for the BIPOC community across the state by hindering access to housing, education, healthcare, economic stability, safety and opportunities to thrive.

¹ [Timeline of Oregon's History](#)

History of racial harm and injustice at DEQ

As a government agency, DEQ is linked to historical legacies and white-dominant systems that repeat racial inequity. Patterns of exclusion and harm to BIPOC staff have been voiced and unaddressed. In 2021, the BIPOC affinity group wrote a letter to the agency detailing experiences of inequity, harassment and discrimination. Ten recommendations were presented to promote diversity, inclusion and safety. As of May 2024, the recommendations have not been implemented and agency leadership has not responded to the letter.

DEQ hired a DEI coordinator in 2021, and due to a lack of authority, role clarity and support in the agency's organizational structure, the coordinator resigned in 2023. The former coordinator described that it was unclear who was responsible for DEI decision-making and outcomes, and this challenge remains persistent. The absence of standards for handling microaggressions was also called to attention, and as of May 2024 a racial harm policy has not been put into place.

In June 2023, Engage to Change released an Organizational Assessment (OA) "to provide insight, analysis and recommendations to support DEQ in alignments of its mission and goals with its commitment to racial and social justice." ETC assessed DEQ between "passive and symbolic change" on the continuum in becoming an anti-racist organization. Five themes were identified as barriers within the agency for progressing to full inclusivity: lack of transparency and accountability, perfectionism, defensiveness, a lack of support for BIPOC employees and the siloed nature of DEQ's structure. All of those themes also emerged in engagement sessions for the DEI plan. Harm occurred during townhall meetings when the OA was released. DEQ's lack of readiness to build safe structures for BIPOC staff and facilitate conversations about racism, power and privilege was apparent and has remained.

DEI planning team

DEQ's DEI planning team was selected in November 2023 through an application process that considered diverse identities and specific skills sets needed to craft a comprehensive plan. Our goal was to create an achievable plan that was supportive of existing DEI efforts by the DEI Council, affinity groups, recruitment and retention and with consideration to the incoming Office of Equity team.

Experiences of harm and injustice shared with us through engagement sessions were also directly experienced by the team during the planning process. Patterns of top-down decision making that lack accountability and transparency expressed in the BIPOC letter, the Organizational Assessment and DEI coordinator letter are persistent in the agency today. This plan necessitates actionable and intentional change at DEQ and a call to action by the Governor's Office to dismantle racist and oppressive systems and structures to create a workplace that centers racial equity and supports care and belonging. We recognize the plan sets ambitious goals, but we strongly believe these actions are necessary and achievable for DEQ.

Our decision process

These principles guided our decision-making process as a team:

- Build in time for thoughts to percolate before a decision is made unless it's clear for everyone that we can move forward.
- Everyone gets a chance to share final thoughts before we move forward.
- Recap the decision first then give a clear vote yes, no, thumbs down/up.
- We come to a consensus on every decision.
- We value clarity around action, next steps and roles.
- Revisit a decision if it's not working, new information is available or someone on the team requests.

Our work process

These principles guided how we worked together as a team:

- We will let each other know if we have accessibility needs.
- We will ask for help and resources as necessary—within the team and external to the team.
- We will consider the plan implementors.
- Our process will be inclusive of those most impacted, and we will include impacted groups from the beginning.
- Our team values inclusive ideas of engagement, including but not limited to sharing ideas in meetings by mic or in the chat. It also includes sharing when we don't have items to add or felt stuck, as opposed to being silent. Examples of engagement include sharing positive feedback with team members, recognizing and acting on our areas for growth, offering emotional support, and offering practical support around next items to help balance workloads.

Definitions

The State of Oregon's definitions for racial equity, diversity, equity and inclusion develop a shared language to operationalize the DEI Plan.

Racial Equity means closing the gaps so that race can no longer predict any person's success, which simultaneously improves outcomes for all. To achieve racial equity, we must transform our institutions and structures to create systems that provide the infrastructure for communities to thrive equally. This commitment requires a paradigm shift on our path to recovery through the intentional integration of racial equity in every decision.

Diversity means honoring and including people of different backgrounds, identities, and experiences collectively and as individuals. It emphasizes the need for sharing power and increasing representation of communities that are systemically underrepresented and under-

resourced. These differences are strengths that maximize the state's competitive advantage through innovation, effectiveness, and adaptability.

Equity acknowledges that not all people, or all communities, are starting from the same place due to historic and current systems of oppression. Equity is the effort to provide different levels of support based on an individual's or group's needs in order to achieve fairness in outcomes. Equity actionably empowers communities most impacted by systemic oppression and requires the redistribution of resources, power, and opportunity to those communities.

Inclusion is a state of belonging when persons of different backgrounds, experiences, and identities are valued, integrated, and welcomed equitably as decision-makers, collaborators, and colleagues. Ultimately, inclusion is the environment that organizations create to allow these differences to thrive.

DEI plan

Becoming an anti-racist organization is critical to prepare the workforce to meet the needs of diverse communities and address complex environmental issues. This plan focuses on foundational work DEQ can do to make structural changes to move the agency beyond passive and symbolic change. It provides actionable and measurable changes to policies and practices to build a culture of care through racial equity, inclusion, transparency and accountability.

As a living document, the plan will evolve through implementation and be updated every two years. It connects with the agency Strategic Plan through the shared strategies to a) co-create a culture of care, b) build practices and processes to achieve more inclusive and equitable outcomes, and c) define and prioritize manageable workloads for all DEQ employees.

Equity statement

The Oregon Department of Environmental Quality's journey towards racial equity demands institutional self-reflection, humility, vulnerability, honesty, and a steadfast commitment to recognizing the value of all individuals. Together, we condemn racism and prioritize anti-racism as the cornerstone of DEQ's efforts to build a more just and equitable agency.

We acknowledge that achieving racial equity requires intentional and ongoing practice, involving critical review and strategic changes to policies, accepted practices, systems and structures. We recognize the legacy of historical injustices perpetuated/upholding systems of oppression against Black, Brown, Asian, Indigenous, LGBTQIA2S+, disabled and low-income communities. We commit to centering their experiences, values, and expertise, community self-determination, to expanding opportunities of involvement and leadership, and to working together to advance environmental protection/justice goals for all.

We recognize the enduring effects of racial segregation and disinvestment, particularly in environmental justice issues such as access to clean air, land, and water.

Engagement approach and limitations

The plan is informed by insights shared during engagement sessions with employees most impacted by injustice and individuals and teams integral to the advancement of racial equity in the agency. Engagement included discussions and surveys to understand how the plan could help provide support to achieve DEI goals and activities. We are grateful for the time, vulnerability and contributions of those who participated in the engagement sessions.

The timeline of the plan and siloing of information within the agency resulted in gaps. The team had five months to hold engagement sessions, learn about the agency's data, procurement and budgeting processes, and create the plan by the June 1 deadline. The condensed timeline impacted our access to information. Work with external communities happens across DEQ, but due to time constraints and a lack of central point of contact, the planning team was unable to fully learn about community engagement efforts.

Future updates to the DEI plan should include metrics and use a timeline that supports a fuller understanding of DEQ's structures and processes.

The DEI Plan is informed by internal engagement with the following DEQ groups:

- ❖ BIPOC staff
- ❖ BIPOC managers
- ❖ DEI Council
- ❖ DEQ Support Staff (facilitated by Strategic Planning)
- ❖ Veterans affinity group (facilitated by Strategic Planning)
- ❖ DEQ Pride (facilitated by Strategic Planning)
- ❖ Disability affinity group (facilitated by Strategic Planning)
- ❖ Vehicle Inspection Program (facilitated by Engage to Change)
- ❖ Communications
- ❖ Human Resources
- ❖ Wellness Committee
- ❖ Recruitment & Retention Committee
- ❖ Environmental Justice Working Groups (EJWG)
- ❖ DEQ Trainers
- ❖ Data governance engagement group
- ❖ Procurement
- ❖ Leadership team
- ❖ Wellness Committee
- ❖ DEQ Trainers

Engagement session themes

Themes emerged across engagement sessions, and they are important considerations for agency leadership to know and engage with while implementing the DEI plan recommendations.

- Capacity (FTE, workload issues, funding, expertise)
- The impact of power dynamics and a lack of accountability
- Silos are a barrier to progress and meaningful impact for all Oregon communities
- Uncertainty and a lack of clarity across the agency:
 - Vision
 - Agency priorities
 - Decision-making processes
 - Roles and responsibilities
- Inequitable processes (ex. ADA accommodations, trial service, interview panels, complaints)
- DEQ is a reactive agency that needs to move towards being a proactive and strategic agency
- A lack of leadership team visibility and accountability
- Experiences of individual and collective harm

Focus areas and actions

Strategies from agency's Strategic Plan and key focus areas from Oregon's [statewide DEI plan](#) are represented in DEQ's DEI plan. The recommended actions are solutions to address the barriers identified in engagement sessions.

Transparency and accountability are the foundation of becoming an anti-racist organization, and the DEI Plan shares definitions from the Strategic Plan for those values.

Transparency

We are open and visible to how we make policies and decisions.

Accountability

We take responsibility for the impact of our words and actions with each other and the communities we serve.

No Tolerance for Racism, Hate and Discrimination

Why this is important	DEQ must set up institutional policies, practices and structures to protect, care for and serve those who have been harmed by racism, hate and discrimination. Transparent policies create organizational accountability in the workplace. A lack of transparency and accountability in the execution of current policies and process, for example the complaints process will continue to harm BIPOC employees and employees from marginalized communities. Approaches, practices and policies rooted in care for our most impacted are essential to transforming our current culture rooted in fear to one rooted in diversity and belonging.
Actions	• Fully resource, support, advocate for and empower the newly created Office of Equity and staff. This includes: ○ Leadership at DEQ demonstrating a deep commitment to DEI and anti-racism through word, prioritization, practice, decision-making, funding and care for those doing the work. ○ Co-create² a safety plan for all DEI professionals and practitioners in the agency. ○ Develop the office's scope of work, roles and responsibilities. ○ Include the Office of Equity at the start of strategic conversations and initiatives rather than utilizing the office as a triage service for the agency. • Set clear guidelines and accountability structures for expected behavior and clear methods for reporting and addressing inappropriate behavior. • Co-create and implement a racial harm policy that centers the most impacted employees and outlines a clear range of accountability, from restorative practices to dismissal. • Establish restorative practices and processes for impacted individuals and parties when harm occurs. • Collaborate through DEI best practices with the Office of Equity, DEI Council, affinity groups and other relevant parties to establish clear policies and accountability structures to respond to incidents of racism, hate and discrimination. • Establish clear processes for sharing and reporting complaints related to racism, hate and discrimination using a trauma-centered approach that prioritizes impacts on people who are harmed. • Proactively communicate the racial harm policy, complaints procedure and accountability structures throughout the agency.

² Co-create means figuring out who needs to be at the table, internally and externally, and using inclusive and equitable approaches to working collaboratively from the beginning of the decision-making process.

Environmental and Climate Justice

Why this is important

Environmental and climate justice work cannot effectively be achieved by one person or team within DEQ. It requires all staff, regardless of position or seniority, to embrace environmental and climate justice. This will require cultivating an agency-wide mindset shift to recognize justice as integral to our core work and not as separate or in addition to the work we do. This requires accountability, a deep commitment from leadership, resources and community input.

Actions

- Root all current and future work in anti-racist practices.
- Identify gaps in resources and capacity and address these gaps in future resourcing conversations and plans.
- Ensure that agency-wide training plans include environmental and climate justice related options.
- Develop a comprehensive vision, structure, and plan (for example, decision-making, roles and responsibilities) to prioritize and resource environmental and climate justice activities as an integral part of everyone's work. This will require adequate staffing and time.

Workplace culture

Why this is important

An inclusive workplace culture enhances the success of individuals and the ability of DEQ to achieve its mission. Developing a culture of care through systemic structures is crucial to fulfilling DEQ's commitment to "a work climate reflecting respect, care and concern for every individual."³ DEQ does not currently have effective systems in place to prevent or address harm when it occurs. By reforming these systems to be explicitly anti-racist, DEQ aligns with broader state initiatives and directives and ensures all employees are cared for and supported. This direction is further supported by findings in the Secretary of State's audit and expectations from the Governor's office.

Actions

Workloads

- Collaborate (staff and management) to identify where work can be stopped, paused, prioritized and identify where more resources are needed. Communicate internally and with external interested parties.
- Allocate dedicated time for staff and management to invest in professional development.
- Reduce workloads for interview panelists to intentionally invest in the interview process.

³ [Affirmative Action Plan 2023-2025](#)

	Safety • Create a safety assessment to understand current physical and psychological safety concerns in all programs across DEQ. • Develop a trauma informed safety plan to address current safety concerns in all programs across DEQ.^{3F3F}⁴ Leadership Development and Accountability • Co-create a leadership training program to enhance skills in collaboration, inclusivity, active listening, engagement and team building. • Co-create a robust lead worker training program and cohort. • Reimagine our current performance review tools and processes by applying statewide policies, such as management core competencies, in addition to union contract protections, and centering feedback from employees. • Appoint an independent third-party entity (approved by the DEI Council) to conduct annual manager reviews. Training • Develop and implement an agency-wide DEI training and education plan to increase employee knowledge, awareness, and skills. Ensure that frontline staff can participate. Training subjects should include: ○ Anti-racism ○ Racial equity ○ The history of racism in Oregon ○ Conflict de-escalation and by-stander intervention training ○ Constructive communication ○ Conflict management ○ Trauma informed care ○ Environmental and climate justice ○ Disability justice • Co-create agency-wide standards and practices for incorporating DEI and accessibility standards in internal and external trainings and outreach. • Develop protocols and trainings to disrupt harm, use community agreements to steward conversations and repair conflict.
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⁴ Trauma informed organizations, systems and plans 1) Realize the widespread impact of trauma and understand potential paths for recovery 2) Recognize the signs and symptoms of trauma in individuals 3) Respond by fully integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures and practices and seek to actively resist re-traumatization (SAMHSA, 2012).

	DEI Council • Establish clear roles and responsibilities. • Leverage the DEI Council’s insights to drive meaningful and impactful change. • Provide adequate resources to the council that includes time, funding and leadership support. Centralize Information and Procedures • Create and update Standard Operating Procedures for routine procedures for each position to strengthen information sharing and decrease barriers to fill-in coverage. • Prioritize time for staff and managers to attend Web and Records teams townhalls to increase knowledge and institutionalize best practices. • Evaluate support and resources needed for agency administrative staff. Develop and implement solutions, such as a central hub of information and equitable procedures. Culture of Care • Implement the statewide definitions for diversity, equity and inclusion across the organization. • Co-create and sponsor an agency-wide equitable mentorship program to foster advancement opportunities and networking. • Provide employees support and resources when pay equity is identified as an issue. • Evaluate access to space resources (gyms, meeting spaces, parking costs) and implement equitable changes across all DEQ locations. • Eliminate barriers that are keeping frontline staff and other DEQ employees from taking advantage of flexible work options that DEQ provides other employees. • Prioritize employee well-being by supporting and resourcing affinity groups and employee community building activities, i.e., Wellness Committee activities • Co-create an equitable ADA accommodation policy to better support employee needs, backgrounds and learning styles. • Co-create quarterly review questions to emphasize support, care and professional development. Incorporate pay equity review and training plan forms into quarterly check-in structure. • Develop and implement inclusivity and antiracism guidelines for working groups and project teams at DEQ. Ensure organization-wide understanding and commitment through training and clear communication. Regularly monitor and adjust the guidelines to maintain their relevance and effectiveness.
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Decision making	
Why this is important	Those directly affected by issues often have the deepest understanding of the challenges and deserve to part of the development of solutions and decision-making processes. By involving impacted employees and external communities in decision processes, DEQ can develop more effective, practical, and innovative solutions. Meaningful equity efforts require visibility to build trust with those who have historically been harmed and excluded and to raise confidence in DEQ and our work. Lack of transparency can result in distrust, inaccuracy, uncertainty, and damage to relationships. Transparency requires open communication, honesty, and a willingness to engage in healthy conflict. It is the responsibility of not only individuals within the organization, but the organization itself. This includes transparency around decision making, policies, and accountability.
Actions	• Adopt and use inclusive, racially equitable, transparent decision-making processes that center the voices of the most impacted, recognize that the people closest to the work are closest to solutions, and bring historically excluded individuals and/or groups into the process from beginning to end. • Integrate qualitative data into decision making and collect, synthesize, and center communities of color’s’ stories. • Implement more inclusive and equitable formation and management of workgroups and teams. Involve impacted people early in the process, and revisit decisions regularly. • Visibly communicate how the DEQ leadership team charter’s, principles and beliefs are carried out..⁵

EQUITY BASED DECISION MAKING				
(From DEQ’s Organizational Assessment – Engage to Change)				
Recognize Intersectionality	Challenge Dominant Perspective	Commit to Social Justice	Value Experiential Knowledge	Use an Interdisciplinary Approach
With race at the center of the analysis, consider the identities of the individuals who will be	Identify inequities involved in the issue and consider what would challenge	Address systemic inequities and commit to not do further harm	Consider the real-life experiences of the individuals impacted to	Identify all the interested parties, collaborators and potential solutions.

⁵ [Affirmative Action Plan 2023-2025](#)

impacted by the decision	the dominant perspective		inform the issue/decision	
Data				
Why this is important	Data is key to understanding the bigger picture and taking action. Leveraging qualitative and quantitative data helps identify needs, optimal conditions for access to services, and opportunities for improvement within DEQ and in DEQ's environmental programs. Before collecting and using data, we must build trust with communities involved. Engaging with these communities helps us interpret data accurately, ensuring we focus on the systems at play rather than defining people by the data. Data governance is crucial for DEQ Oregon as it ensures the accuracy, security, and ethical use of data, enabling informed decision-making and fostering transparency. Effective data governance supports our commitment to environmental quality and equity, helping us track progress, identify disparities, and implement targeted actions to protect and improve Oregon's environment for all communities.			
Actions	• Adopt and communicate agency equitable data standards and tools. • Provide agency-wide education and training in alignment with established data standards and tools. • Assess and enhance agency data management roles, responsibilities, and internal structures to implement data actions in the DEI Statewide Action Plan. • Focus on using more inclusive methods of gathering data. • Programs, divisions, regions and groups within DEQ use data for culturally and linguistically responsive communications. • Programs, divisions, regions, and groups within DEQ use data to direct resources for the most impacted communities across the state. • Co-create dashboard(s) to monitor and report on status of strategic planning and DEI plan actions. Human Resources • Collect and analyze demographic data to better inform DEQ's work and to identify barriers to achieving equitable outcomes, including: • Pay equity • Trial service • Recruitment and retention			

	• Track incidents of racial and other harm..⁶ By understanding the prevalence and nature of racial and other harm, DEQ can create interventions, effective policies, and training to foster a more inclusive and respectful environment. • Collect and analyze recruitment, interview panel, advancement and retention data metrics, including, but not limited to: • Diversity of candidates in hiring pools, receiving interviews, asked to participate in second interview, receiving offer letters and accepting offer letters. • Diversity of panel members in interview process • Diversity of candidates who are promoted to an internal position. • Develop a trauma informed exit interview process, develop metrics and co-create accountability for addressing resignations due to mishandling of policies, practices and impacts of internal culture. Collect and analyze trial service and complaints data.
Budgeting	
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Workforce development	
Why this is important	Diversifying the workforce at DEQ provides increased opportunities to engage and support culturally and ethnically diverse staff. The agency's Affirmative Action Plan establishes a commitment to "develop and maintain a workforce that reflects Oregon's demographics, encourages career development and employee advancement, and provides employees with the tools necessary to serve a more diverse customer base." To achieve this, policies and practices centered in DEI need to be created to support recruitment, hiring and retention.
Actions	Position Descriptions (PDs) and Work Agreements • Incorporate DEI, environmental and climate justice related work in all position descriptions and work agreements (current and new). • Equip hiring managers with guidance to create or revise position descriptions to incorporate equity and inclusion work. • Co-create a PD review process to ensure that the agency mission, values, qualifications and expectations of the position are transparent. Interview Panels • Diversify interview panels to include BIPOC staff, staff from marginalized communities, VIP, regions, Lab and administrative staff. • Invite panelists from other state agencies and community partners, such as search advocates, to enhance diversity and leverage expertise. • Co-create a consistent process and approach for evaluating diversity questions and question criteria for interviews. • Improve panelist training on recognizing and mitigating bias and provide guidance on how to report incidents to HR. Applicant Experience

	• Develop an equitable and trauma-informed interview process that centers the applicant's accessibility needs and creates an atmosphere that allows the applicant to thrive. For example, provide applicants more time (ex. 2 days) to review interview questions. Clearly communicate how applicants are reviewed. If length of response to questions is important, make it clear that candidates need to elaborate. Community Engagement and Recruitment • Prioritize and fund recruitment outreach to diverse and marginalized communities. • Increase staff from historically marginalized and underrepresented communities across all work classes. • Establish a transparent pipeline and goals for promoting employees into advanced and leadership roles. • Build relationships with colleges to foster recruitment. Trial Service • Establish clear standards and consistency within the trial service process to address known inequities and harm. Minimize bias by ensuring uniform evaluation criteria. • Rename the trial service process to emphasize its purpose and align it with the goals of inclusivity and fairness. • Establish and track metrics for measuring trial service outcomes. • Conduct a transparent annual review of trial service metrics, develop procedures for accountability and report out themes to the agency. Talent Development and Succession Planning • Co-create a job shadowing program to enhance skill development and succession planning. • Provide transparent communication and mentorship on progressing from one classification level to the next. Clear pathways for growth and advancement should be transparent. • Develop clear expectations and accountability processes rooted in anti-racism and equity for managers and lead workers. • Provide transparent agency-wide communication on the lead worker role, expectations, accountability and an equitable recruitment process. • Evaluate through DEI best practices for positions that are challenging to fill and develop recruitment and retention plans. • Establish a job rotation program to build career development opportunities and strengthen succession planning efforts. • Evaluate and reimagine the project management pool to increase resources and address known inequities.
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	Develop an implementation plan for DEQ's current succession plan.
Community engagement	
Why this is important	Community engagement means proactively working with members of communities to build partnerships and collaborate in decision-making. To achieve its mission, DEQ must work with inclusive and anti-racist engagement practices to serve diverse communities. Without a commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion in community engagement, external policies will burden and further marginalized communities.
Actions	• Ensure policymaking bodies include the voices of BIPOC, Tribal and marginalized communities. • Engage and center diverse community interested parties and local leaders in the decision-making process. • Co-create an agency-wide community engagement infrastructure using the statewide Racial Equity Toolkit. • Co-create resources for staff working in community engagement across the agency to share ideas and collaborate. • Demonstrate accountability and a commit to accessibly report back findings to those involved in engagement efforts. • Provide trauma informed training for staff working with community groups. • Dedicate resourcing to increase the capacity for staff working with community groups. • Address contracting and procurement barriers that prevent community-based organizations from collaborating with the agency. • Acknowledge the labor of marginalized communities and provide compensation for community-based organizations for collaborating with the agency.
Contracting and procurement	
Why this is important	Applying equitable contracting and procurement practices promotes economic development for BIPOC, LGBTQIA2S+, women and service-disabled veteran owned emerging small businesses.
Actions	• Embed an equity framework in the entirety of a project life cycle from concept, planning, project development, procurement and administration. • Increase outreach to BIPOC, women and service-disabled veteran owned emerging small businesses. • Forecast and communicate upcoming contracting opportunities including expiring contracts which will be re-purchased to anticipated new projects.

	• Develop metrics to track and analyze equitable procurement goals. • Conduct annual disparity studies to understand utilization and address inequities. • Require contractors follow accessibility guidelines developed by web team for all relevant deliverables.
Service delivery	
Why this is important	Equitable and inclusive service delivery works to eliminate inequity through policies and actions. According to the Secretary of State's audit report, "the escalating effects of climate change and related impacts to environmental quality may outpace DEQ's ability to provide a high level of service especially to some of Oregon's more vulnerable communities" ("Oregon Department of Environmental Quality Ongoing Strategic Planning Can Help DEQ Address Obstacles to Achieving its Goals," April 2024, Report 2024-1). Providing resources to enhance accessibility, communication and safety for all is crucial to achieving the agency's mission.
Actions	• Evaluate the policies and procedures for translation and interpretation services using the statewide Racial Equity Toolkit. Create an awareness campaign for staff about the translation and interpretation guidelines. • Install visitor signage in multiple languages at all office locations and VIP stations. • Adhere agency-wide to Web Content Accessibility Guidelines for web-based information and services. • Improve communications between state and county agencies by addressing overlapping authority issues. • Use multimodal communication tools, such as short videos, to communicate DEQ processes to the public. • Implement chip readers at VIP stations to improve efficiency.
Communications	
Why this is important	Addressing the overall lack of clarity, transparency and accountability described by our staff and external interested parties is foundational work in advancing racial equity and anti-racism at DEQ. Co-creating a clear agency vision, communication strategies and messages are vital to building an inclusive community of diverse individuals and communities needed to advance our environmental and climate justice goals.

Actions	• Identify and acquire adequate additional staff, resources, and expertise to support the agency's current and communication needs and DEI/anti-racism efforts. • Develop and implement an agency-wide trauma informed language guidance and language access plan. • Identify and begin building relationships with culturally specific media outlets. • Create inclusive, multi-lingual communications to increase accessibility of agency program information and services. Develop a communication plan and engagement process collaboratively with historically and currently underserved populations and communities that includes actively listening, being responsive, and incorporating feedback in the development of programs, policies, and other areas of work. • Utilize the Racial Equity Toolkit questions on Inclusive Communication and community-informed Policy and Partnerships in Oregon's Statewide Diversity, Equity and Inclusion plan.
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Next steps

The DEI plan is a living document to be updated as implementation efforts, future inclusive teams, staff and community engagement, equitable decision-making and resources evolve. Successful and sustainable implementation of the actions will require following anti-racist and DEI best practices. Engage To Change assessed DEQ between **passive and symbolic change** on the continuum in becoming an anti-racist organization. There is much work to be done to transform our structures, policies and practices to center diversity, equity and inclusion.

Harm that occurred in townhalls and conversations after the release of the Organizational Assessment showed DEQ's lack of readiness to build safe structures for BIPOC employees and facilitate conversations about racial equity. Becoming an anti-racist agency requires a commitment to disrupt racism, acknowledge and understand power and privilege, dismantle structures designed for the status quo and learn new ways to carry out the agency's mission and values. In the process of moving from where we are now to where we want to be with our DEI goals, actions must be taken to protect those most impacted by racial harm and oppression. To protect BIPOC employees and employees from marginalized communities, it is recommended that the agency take these implementation steps:

1. Share the plan with affinity groups first. This plan emerged from engagement sessions with affinity groups and sharing it with them first is an act of care and support.

2. Leadership Team in collaboration with other groups in the agency should establish an implementation team to prioritize the DEI plan actions and develop an equitable and inclusive implementation plan.
3. A racial harm policy or plan should be in place **before** agency-wide conversations about the DEI plan are facilitated. A racial harm policy helps to create organizational accountability for anti-racism and DEI in the workplace, guidelines around what will and won't be tolerated, and transparency in the reporting process.
4. Hire third-party DEI facilitators to lead agency-wide discussions about the plan. Protocols should be developed for disrupting harm, using community agreements to steward conversations, holding people accountable and repairing conflict.
5. Create affinity spaces for DEI plan conversations. Harm occurs when BIPOC colleagues are expected to be in the room to listen to their white colleagues learn about racism and work through dominant, white culture conditioning.
6. Leadership Team must ensure that resource shortages do not hinder the implementation of the DEI Plan.

These recommendations create policies and structures that are essential to engage in meaningful and trauma informed conversations about diversity, equity and inclusion. It is crucial that transparent and accountable expectations are set up to support the commitment to becoming an anti-racist agency.

Appendix

Documents Reviewed

- [State of Oregon Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Action Plan \(2021\)](#)
- [BIPOC letter \(2021\)](#)
- Letter from former DEI Coordinator (2022)
- [DEI Organizational Assessment \(2023\)](#)
- Succession Plan (2023)
- [Affirmative Action Plan \(2023-2025\)](#)
- Strategic Plan (2024)
- ETC Engagement Session Notes (2023-2024)
- Strategic Planning Engagement Session Notes (2023-2024)
- [State of Oregon Disparity Study \(2023\)](#)
- [Audit Report: Ongoing Strategic Planning Can Help DEQ Address Obstacles to Achieving its Goals \(2024\)](#)