



Equity Action Plan

2018-19 Update

Organization Overview

The Columbia Slough Watershed Council (Council) is a diverse group of neighbors, property owners, businesses, environmental groups, recreation advocates, and government agencies who work to restore and enhance the 60 miles of waterways known as the Columbia Slough. The Council focuses on three main program areas: restoration, recreation, and education. We provide low to no-cost field science education programs to watershed schools, vibrant community events that celebrate nature and people, and stewardship activities that improve the ecological health of North and Northeast Portland, Gresham, and Fairview communities.

Racial Equity Vision Statement

The Columbia Slough Watershed Council recognizes that human diversity is a fundamental strength of our community, that racism and oppression have caused long-lasting and grievous harm, and that this is fundamentally relevant to our work. We must meet our mission in a way that builds equity across cultures and races in order to be successful.

Justification (Why we are creating an action plan)

This action plan is intended to guide the Council toward the goal of being an anti-oppression, multicultural organization. There are many reasons for this effort, but most importantly, we cannot achieve our organization's mission without this effort. We recognize that our organization will be made stronger and have a deeper impact by being diverse and inclusive.

While there are many types of oppression that we hope to address, including heterosexism, cissexism, ableism and misogyny, we are focusing on race for several reasons. Racism is a deep and institutional wound that people experience over generations and as communities. We believe that will have the most impact by focusing on this issue. As this work may be the most difficult, addressing other areas will be easier if we lead with race.

We also will bring an intersectional approach to this work. This means that when designing equity efforts, we will ask how our efforts are impacting people who experience oppression based on multiple axes of identity. We will seek to include and benefit people who experience overlapping forms of oppression.

This action plan will address four goal areas:

- Our programs and actions will serve all of our communities.
- Board and staff members should reflect racial diversity of the watershed.
- The way in which we do our work will support equity goals.
- Staff and volunteer leaders have the knowledge, background and skills that support this work.



Our programs and actions will serve all of our communities.

Goal: Our spaces are welcoming to all

- Change the structure of the Board meetings to be more inclusive and inviting to guests and occasional attendees.
 - Meeting includes built-in social time at the start.
 - Location is chosen to be safe, familiar, and accessible by public transportation such as schools or libraries. Consider rotation to feature partners.
 - Meetings are mentioned on the front page of the CSWC newsletter. Specific invitations sent according to speaker, issues or featured partner.
 - Offer translation if this is a barrier to community members wishing to attend.
 - Board members provide a welcoming atmosphere.
 - Assess whether frequency, timing, and/or length of meetings is a barrier to board membership. Consider alternately holding one in person and one online, start later to make accessible to after work hours, shorten, or otherwise adjust to make accessible.
- Imagery posted and the atmosphere of the Council office and grounds is cross-culturally welcoming.
 - Building should have good lighting, and an atmosphere of cleanliness and openness.
 - Outside poster area should include directions and a message of welcome.
 - Classroom should be redecorated and painted.
- Equity statement and safe space policies posted visibly in the office.
- Signage makes office and key spaces such as restroom and meeting room easy to access.
 - Add a sign on the gate, front door, garage, and directional sign from the park.
 - Include accessibility information in online event listings. Ensure ADA requirements are fulfilled. Ensure that we use ADA laminated signs with events.
- Office should be ADA accessible.
- Office culture should be welcoming and inclusive.
 - Staff attend regular trainings on understanding implicit bias, microaggressions, and everyday racism.
 - Staff have regular conversations about what these ideas mean in practice for our own office culture and put these ideas into practice in ways that we identify. We do this without tokenizing or placing responsibility on people of color or other members of oppressed groups for advising us or leading implementation.

Goal: All Council program areas are responsive to our community

- Develop tools for assessing community needs specific to each program (i.e., teachers, students, focus groups, online evaluations, demographic information, etc.).
 - Education: Currently an informal intake form asks teachers for needs and meets students where they are. An assessment tool such as an electronic device or tablet can be used at the end of each program.
 - Stewardship: Collect demographic data at events. Continue conversations with community partners.



- Events & Outreach: Continue having community input stations at festivals, etc. Use the introduction circle at events to ask questions like “Why is nature valuable to you?” to better understand the values of participants.
- Create programming to specifically target communities that are typically excluded.
 - We recognize that one-size-fits-all programming doesn’t benefit everyone equally. We will therefore create programming that is explicitly designed to reach culturally-specific community groups.
 - We will create this programming with an intersectional approach and strive to include community members that experience overlapping forms of oppression.
- Make space for conversations about community needs, e.g., one-on-one conversations, and attend other organization’s events, etc.
 - Create a plan for strategically devoting staff time to attending and supporting community events hosted by culturally-specific groups, and having one-on-one meetings to discuss opportunities for mutually beneficial collaboration.
- Incorporate the above into all plans (annual work plans, strategic plan).
 - Set three clear goals for each program area that specifically address these needs each year. Apply an equity lens to programs. Program directors are responsible for implementation within each program.
 - Annual budget and individual program work plans support these goals.
- Create a plan for evaluating demographic data and feedback surveys across program areas, and develop a plan for making changes in response to findings.

Goal: Organizational materials support our work and are accessible

- Review and modify organizational materials for racial and cultural bias and to ensure reflection of our community’s diversity.
- Website is translated into Spanish and other mainstream watershed languages. Updates are maintained regularly.
- Translate key promotional materials into Spanish, including Paddle Access Guide, CSWC general outreach brochure.
- Ensure transparency in whether staff are fluent in languages other than English.
- Translation services are budgeted in grants.

Board and staff members should reflect racial diversity of the watershed.

Goal: Understand demographics of community and our organization

- Develop best practices document for data collection (see Step 3 of data and metric section of Tool for Organizational assessment related to Racial Equity (Appendix A and BPS Uma Documents)
- Collect demographic info of new and existing Board and staff members annually.



- Events: Establish tools for collecting demographic information at each event and from new volunteers. Include explanation for collecting the information.
- Establish consistent procedure for uploading demographic data into the online database system.
- Ask public schools for demographic information specific to students served.
- Establish a routine procedure for analyzing demographic data collected and making needed changes to programming in response to findings.

Goal: Hiring practices encourage diversity

- Create mechanisms for valuing diversity and life experience as a part of the hiring process.
 - Include statements about these values in job announcements. Be explicit about what we are looking for in a cover letter.
 - Include statements and interview questions about the importance of equity work to each position.
 - Conduct two rounds of interviews, including a phone interview and an in-person interview.
- Prioritize competency for languages spoken in the watershed in position descriptions.
- Staff positions are accessible in terms of compensation and hours. Staff positions pay a living wage. The Council strives to offer positions that are full-time when possible.
- Value volunteer experience, life experience, and relevant experience from other job fields. Weigh these experiences for their merits when compared with professional, non-profit experience. Ensure that hiring committees have this understanding and hiring rubrics include these values.

Goal: Volunteer, board, and committee recruitment and practices encourage diversity

- Meetings will be held in locations and in whichever language best encourages appropriate participation and leadership. For instance, planning meetings for Explorando may be held in Spanish with translator provided for non-Spanish speakers.
- Work toward increasing tribal representation and inclusion in decision-making for the Watershed Council, including possibly offering compensation for tribal representative seats. Consider additional culturally-specific seats.
- Ensure that the Board is representative of the community.
- Conduct outreach to the community. Make specific invitations to culturally-specific community groups.
- Analyze the factors that bring people in from community → event participants → volunteers → committees → board. Work toward equity in these filters.



The way in which we do our work will support equity goals.

Goal: Build teams and systems to make sure this work is done

- Create and maintain a JEDI committee led by a Council member made up of staff, board, volunteers and community members.
- Develop annual work plans for JEDI Committee including election of chair, recruitment, equity review and update to plan.
- Incorporate Racial Equity Action Plan into the Council's long-term strategic plan.
- Include equity and inclusion as a standing agenda item for Council and staff meetings.
- Schedule annual staff reflection and revision retreat to modify Equity Action Plan as needed.
- Consider professional facilitation of equity retreat.
- Make Equity Action Plan and folder accessible for staff.

Goal: Council is accountable to equity commitments

- Develop a formal procedure for addressing race and other equity-related complaints.
 - Input booth at events
 - Include a comment form on a website
- Include nondiscrimination policy statements in formal partnerships and contracts.
- Bring in a specialist to work with the Council to provide feedback on data quality and use. Use timeline to assign concrete tasks (example, folder organization) to staff members.
- Consistently collect feedback from program participants.
- Equity committee and staff (led by Executive Director) review progress on Equity Action Plan semi-annually.
- Nature of check-in or accountability measures are dependent on goals.

Goal: Our external relationships promote equity work and include meaningful mutually beneficial relationships with communities of color

- Budget time and funding for staff to use up to three paid hours per month to volunteer with culturally-specific or equity-focused organizations. Staff are encouraged to support people of color led non-profits within our watershed.
- Participate in the activities and organizational planning meetings of 3 potential and current communities of color/culturally-specific partner organizations at their invitation.
- Continue to partner with current culturally-specific organization partners: Verde, NAYA, Blueprint Foundation, Mecha, Wisdom of the Elders, IRCO, Africa House.
- Report on partnerships to Board.
- Establish contact with 3 partner organizations per year, at a minimum sharing what resources we offer and asking for information about their needs. Examples: Portland Harbor Community Coalition, Wisdom of the Elders, etc.
- Ensure organization-to-organization relationships, not just person-to-person.
 - Keep records of contacts and conversations, bring in a second staff person as soon as possible. Create recurring dates, contracts, etc.



- Look for ways in which implementation of our mission can meet the priorities of communities of color. For instance, workforce development and job creation, MLB contracting, air quality, etc.
 - Understand priorities of communities of color: look at existing plans, conversations, feedback.
 - Look for mission overlaps, new opportunities.
 - Create policies for meeting these goals where appropriate.

Staff and volunteer leaders need to have knowledge, background, and skills that support this work.

Goal: Staff and Board receive orientation and training

- At minimum, plan one annual meeting dedicated to JEDI training.
 - Training for Board: include non-explicit item – creative way to ask/engage such as warmup of “culture you grew up with” empathy-increase questions.
- Equity dictionary available to staff to encourage use of shared equity-focused language.
- Include information in employee handbook regarding the practice of safe space for talking about racial equity questions and concerns.
- Include racial equity statement in the CSWC PowerPoint presentation.
- Budget should be allocated for professional development around racial equity. Leadership in research and scheduling of programs comes from Executive Director and the JEDI Committee.
- Annual staff and new employee cultural competency training required (by external resource), i.e., training in community organizing skills and engagement based on the principles and practices espoused by communities of color, immigrants and refugees.
- Work plans reflect diversity work and include clear benchmarks for employees. Example: focus on particular geographic area, professional development opportunities, number of community members involved.
- Volunteers receive DEI training.
 - Handbook will include DEI lens and background information. Paddle Team training will include section on DEI and cultural responsiveness.
 - Intake/clarify goals of the organization.
 - Offer training on cultural agility/competency for volunteers.
 - Include JEDI goals and reminders at volunteer welcomes.
 - Increase access to training for volunteers. Provide a calendar of trainings from other organizations. Work together with other organizations to offer trainings.

The Columbia Slough Watershed Council, a non-profit-tax exempt organization, is a diverse group of stakeholders working to restore and enhance the 60 miles of waterways known as the Columbia Slough, located in Portland, Gresham, and Fairview.

All donations are tax-deductible as allowed by law. Our IRS Tax Identification number is 03-0456181.

For more information you can visit our website at www.columbiaslough.org.