Equity Action Plan

2017 – 18 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, it is the right thing to do and it is in the best interest of our organization. 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.

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 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 front page of newsletter. Specific invitations sent according to speaker, issues or featured partner.
    - Language accessibility: 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 holding one in person.one online, start later to make accessible to after work hours, shorten, or otherwise adjust to make accessible.
- Imagery posted in and atmosphere of Council office and grounds is cross-culturally welcoming.
    - Building should have good lighting, and atmosphere of cleanliness and openness.
    - Outside poster area should including directions and message of welcome.
    - Classroom should be redecorated and painted.
- Racial and equity statement of commitment and safe space policies posted visibly in office.
    - Add vision statement (welcome sign already posted)
- Signage makes office and key spaces such as restroom and meeting room easy to access.
    - Add sign on gate, front door, garage, sign from park.
    - Document accessibility on website and link to event listings. Check ADA requirements/documentation. Make sure we use ADA laminated signs with events.

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 program example: currently an informal intake form asks teachers for needs and meets students where they are. Assessment tool such as an electronic device or tablet can be use at end of program.
    - Stewardship: Demographic data at events. Verde and Living Cully conversations.
    - Make space for conversations about community needs, e.g., one-on-one conversations or attend presentations of other organization's plans, etc.
    - Continue having community input station at festivals, etc.
    - Use introduction circle at events to ask questions like "why is nature valuable to you?" to better understand diverse values of participants.
- Incorporate into all plans (annual work plans, strategic plan) based on above.

- o Set three clear goals for each program area that specifically address these needs each year. Apply lens to programs. Responsible party: committee and director for each program.
- o Annual budget and individual work plans support these program goals.

Goal: Organizational materials support our work and are accessible

- Review and modify organizational material 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.
- Key promotional materials into Spanish, including Paddle Access Guide, CSWC outreach brochure. Status: Nature in City, Outreach not paddle guide. Translate into Vietnamese/Russian. Ask BES.
- Ensure transparency in whether staff present are fluent.
- 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 tool for collecting demographic information at each event and from new volunteers (includes Stewardship events)
    - o Check on method, include explanation and talking points.
- Establish consistent procedure for uploading demographic data into the online database system.
- Ask public schools for demographic information specific to students served.

Goal: Hiring practices encourage diversity

- Action: Create a mechanism for valuing diversity and life experience as a part of the hiring process.
    - o Put in job announcements. Be explicit about what we are looking for in a cover letter.
    - o Include question about power and privilege: "our organization cares about power and privilege"
    - o 2-3 ok for 1st interview and 2nd ok for panel.
- Action: Prioritize competency for languages spoken in the watershed in position descriptions.

Goal: Volunteer board and committee recruitment and practices encourage diversity

- Meetings will be held in location and in whichever language best encourages appropriate participation and leadership. For instance, planning meeting for Explorando may be held in Spanish with translator provided for non-native Spanish speakers.
- Work toward supporting funded seat for tribal representative. Consider for other positions.
- Over half of Board are agency staff – is this representative of community?
- Better outreach to community. Specific invitations.
- Look at all of the filters and encouraging factors that bring people in from community → participants → volunteers → committees → board and 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 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 revision retreat.
- Make equity work 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.
    - Store staff form with equity plan work, write up policy
    - Input booth at events
    - Include comment form on website?
- Include nondiscrimination policy statement in formal partnerships and contracts.
- Bring in specialist to work with Committee 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) reviews progress on plan on at least quarterly basis.
- 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 funds for staff to use up to three paid hours per month to volunteer with other 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 communities of color organizations, Verde and NAYA, Project Blueprint, 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. Example, Don't Shoot, Wisdom of the Elders; potentially SMIRC, Sankofa, Brown Brunch, public annex, CCC.
- Ensure organization-to-organization relationship, not just person-to-person.
  - o Record, bring in second person as soon as possible. Create things like recurring dates, contracts, etc.
- Look for and implement ways in which implementation of our mission can meet priorities of Communities of Color. For instance, workforce development and job creation, MLB contracting, air quality, etc.)
  - o Understand priorities of communities of color: look at existing plans, conversations, feedback.
  - o Look for overlaps, opportunities.
  - o 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 preferred and non-offensive terms, but authentic language encouraged.
- 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 Equity 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 espouse 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 get training on JEDI
  - Handbook will include JEDI lens and background.
  - Intake/clarify goals of the organization.
  - Some organizations have training on how to talk to people; cultural agility; competency required for volunteers
  - Include JEDI goals and reminders at volunteer welcomes.
  - Increase access to training for volunteers
    - Calendar of trainings from other organizations
    - Work together with other organization to offer trainings.