

# Equity Action Plan

2016-17 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 is 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 our 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 institutionalized 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.

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.
- Imagery posted in and atmosphere of council office and grounds is cross-culturally welcoming.
- Racial equity statement of commitment and safe space policies posted visibly in office.
- Signage makes office and key spaces such as restroom and meeting room easy to access.

**Goal: All council program areas are responsive to community**

- Develop or adopt an action plan or tool for assessing community needs specific to each program (i.e. teachers, students, focus groups, online evaluations, demographic information, etc.)
- Set three clear goals for each program area that specifically address these needs each year. (Ex: change language around watershed restoration to show connection to community health, economic impact. )
- Annual budget and individual work plans support these program goals.

**Goal: Organizational materials support our work and are accessible**

- Review and modify organizational materials for racial bias and to ensure reflection of our communities diversity.
- Website is translated into Spanish and other priority languages based on languages spoken in the watershed. Updates are maintained regularly.
- Key promotional materials into Spanish: Including Paddle Access Guide, CSWC outreach brochure.
- 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**

- Action: Develop best practices document for data collection (see Step 3 of data and metric section of Tool for Organizational assessment related to Racial Equity (Apdx A and BPS Uma Document).
- Collect demographic info of new and existing Board and staff members.
- Events- establish tool for collecting demographic information at each event and from new volunteers (includes Stewardship events)
- 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.
- 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 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-native Spanish speakers.

***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 Community Outreach and Inclusion 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 (would include staff reflection on professional development opportunities). Consider professional facilitation of revision retreat.
- Make equity work plan and folder accessible and intuitive for staff.

**Goal: Council is accountable to equity commitments**

- Develop a formal procedure for addressing race-related complaints.
- Include nondiscrimination policy statement in formal partnerships and contracts.
- Bring in specialist to work with equity committee to provide feedback on data quality and use. Use timeline to assign concrete tasks (ex. folder organization) to staff members.
- Consistently collect feedback from program participants.
- Equity committee and staff (led by executive director) review progress on plan on at least quarterly basis.

**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 POC led non-profits within our watershed.
- Participate in the activities and organizational planning meetings of 3 potential and current partner organizations at their invitation. (ex. Momentum Alliance, Self Enhancement Inc, Urban League of Portland, Latino Network, etc.)
- Continue to partner with current communities of color organizations, Verde and NAYA
- Establish contact with 3 partner organizations per year, at a minimum sharing what resources we offer and asking for information about their needs.
- Update contact information and ask for referrals from these orgs for potential contact
- 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)

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

**Goal: Staff and Board receive orientation and training**

- Develop Board/Staff mentorship program with all new and current employees as well as a list of questions to help facilitate training and orientation of new employees.
- 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 (external). 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. Ex: focus on particular geographic area, professional development opportunities, number of community members involved.