

TO: Columbia River Gorge Commission

FROM: Joanna Kaiserman, Senior Land Use Planner

DATE: May 11, 2021

SUBJECT: **Work Session*:** Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Workplan

Background

Staff began developing a workplan for diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) following the adoption of a DEI statement and policies in the Gorge 2020 Management Plan in October 2020. At the November 10, 2020 Commission meeting, staff presented the Draft Work Plan for FY 2021-2022 which included DEI as a priority workplan program.

Commission staff began working with Tina E. Patterson, MCI Arb, an extern pursuing a master's degree at Pepperdine University, to develop a framework for the Commission's DEI plan. Ms. Patterson presented the proposed DEI project at the October 13, 2020 Commission meeting. The two goals of the DEI project presented by Ms. Patterson are:

Goal 1: Develop Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Policies and Procedures, choosing to follow State of Washington requirements for state agencies.

Goal 2: Develop a draft Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion strategy, and begin the workplan for the CRGC. The steps to achieve this goal include work sessions with a) Commissioners and b) Commission staff.

Goal 1 was completed by Ms. Patterson and staff in late October 2020, and policies related to DEI were submitted to Washington State. Although the Gorge Commission is not a state agency, staff chose to follow the Washington State's Human Resources Directive 20-02 for state agencies which includes the requirement to update or create workforce DEI policies and procedures.

In consultation with Ms. Patterson, staff determined that the first step to achieving the second identified goal above of developing a DEI strategy and beginning the CRGC DEI workplan was to perform an internal assessment to gauge Commissioner and staff perspectives related to DEI. This assessment was intended to give the Commission a baseline metric of attitudes around DEI and the Commission's work. To gather this information, Ms. Patterson and staff compiled a list of interview questions for Commissioners and staff. Between November 2020 and March 2021, Ms. Patterson

conducted one-on-one interviews with Commissioners and staff, gathering responses to the survey questions. All Commissioners serving on the Commission during that time period and all staff members were interviewed and provided responses.

Ms. Patterson compiled and analyzed the responses of the Commission and staff interviews and provided the results to Commission staff. Staff then prepared the attached Columbia River Gorge Commission Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Assessment Report in consultation with Ms. Patterson. The report includes a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Challenges analysis related to Commissioner and staff feedback; Ms. Patterson's general observations; her recommendations for next steps; and a list of resources compiled by Ms. Patterson for Commissioners and staff to reference while developing a DEI plan.

CRGC DEI Report

Following an analysis of the results of Commission and staff interviews, Ms. Patterson provided a list of recommendations for Commissioners and staff for how to effectively pursue a DEI plan for CRGC. Ms. Patterson's recommendations are summarized below.

Communication

Several Commissioners and staff mentioned issues in communication among Commissioners. In an effort to better understand the diversity of perspectives of Commissioners, the Commission is encouraged to acknowledge and address strained communications during deliberations and discussions to ensure that no one is responding in ways that would seem uncooperative, hostile, disrespectful, or argumentative during Commission meetings and that Commissioners provide the space for differences of opinions and an opportunity to express themselves. Several staff mentioned wanting to explore learning opportunities about diversity, equity, and inclusion. At the end of the report is a list of resources recommended by Ms. Patterson for staff and Commissioners to reference for additional learning.

Timing and Pace

The Commission should take the time to be intentional in identifying and agreeing upon its short-term and long-term goals for a DEI plan. This will help the Commission define and refine the framework for its DEI plan. Analysis of Commissioner and staff responses identified "competing agency priorities versus identifying partners" as a weakness in the Commission implementing a DEI plan. The Commission is encouraged to leverage the work of affinity groups and organizations to support the Commission's DEI work.

Participation

Most Commissioners and staff indicated that they wish to proceed with developing and implementing a DEI plan. The Commissioners who have indicated that they would not participate in DEI need to be acknowledged, but are also asked not to obstruct the Commission's efforts.

Engaging stakeholders (staff, Commissioners, public) who identify as Black, Indigenous, or People of Color (BIPOC), and are showing signs of exhaustion and weariness in discussing the subject of DEI, is a multi-step process. BIPOC stakeholders should be asked how they want to participate, and those who choose to actively participate should not lead the DEI discussion by default. The DEI dialogue should be a representative from the dominant culture who is not involved with the

Commission and who is a professionally skilled facilitator to keep the conversation centered around the issues.

Staff is requesting that Commissioners review the attached DEI Assessment Report, and provide feedback and guidance on next steps based on the results of the report.

DEI Spectrum Tool Survey Results

Prior to the April 13, 2021 Commission meeting, Commissioners and staff were asked to complete a survey based on the Meyer Memorial Trust (MMT) DEI Spectrum Tool. The DEI Spectrum Tool is a tool to assess where an organization is on its DEI journey and to identify potential areas for future work. The tool describes organizational characteristics at different points along a continuum for twelve different components of DEI work: DEI Vision; Commitment; Leadership; Policies; Infrastructure; Training; Diversity; Data; Community; Decisions; Accountability; and Inclusion.

For each DEI Component, Commissioners and staff were asked to indicate the point where they believed the Gorge Commission to be at, based on the descriptions given under each point on the spectrum. Commissioners and staff were given the opportunity to write comments about their answers for each component.

Below is a summary of the responses to the DEI Spectrum Tool Survey completed by Commissioners and staff. Listed are the 12 Components, the average of the responses from Commissioners and staff about where the Gorge Commission is at along the spectrum, and comments provided about the response to each component.

DEI Vision

Launched: Recognizes the importance of DEI to its work and is in the process of developing a shared DEI vision.

Comments:

- *“Ready to Start”. Definitely only have scratched the surface so far. Do not believe there is consensus that DEI is important to the work, even from Commissioners that voted to adopt the DEI statement and policies into the plan.*
- *Between “Ready to Start” and “Launched.”*

Commitment

Ready to Start: Is interested in advancing its DEI work and is considering how to do so.

Comments:

- *“Ready to Start”. We voted to work on it, so we’re working on it – no strategies or actions at the moment and we’ll see what comes out of it.*
- *“Ready to Start”. This is the start of that effort, and I think that we’re starting to put some actions into motion and doing so methodically to not get ahead of ourselves.*

Leadership

Ready to Start: A few members of management, staff or board are leading the DEI discussion.

Comments:

- *“Ready to Start”. Some staff and Commissioners are investing time. Would almost put this at “Launched” but I think we don’t have “DEI work” yet, we’re a step before that. Once we get through this next meeting we’ll be at or closer to “Launched.”*
- *We often speak about DEI as a lens that we look through in all of our decision-making. Once we fully implement DEI in our operations and programs, it will become a natural way of conducting business, one we act on subconsciously, like ethics and fiscal responsibility.*
- *I feel we are somewhere between “Ready to Start” and “Launched” because we do have a DEI lead and initial team with staff and one Commissioner.*
- *“Ready to Start”. There appears to be a recognition of the importance of DEI within the commission, and some honest questions over the overlap between a DEI action plan and the role of the Commission.*

Policies

Launched: May have some DEI-related language in some of its organizational policies.

Comments:

- *“Launched”: Only since gorge2020 update.*
- *“Ready to Start”. We haven’t hit the stage where we have actual organization policies even though we incorporated the DEI statement into the Management Plan.*
- *“Launched”: New, somewhat generic policies in the Plan.*
- *“Launched”. The revised management plan included language to support and encourage ongoing DEI efforts.*

Infrastructure

Ready to Start: Has had some internal DEI discussions, but doesn’t have an infrastructure to guide the organization’s DEI work.

Comments:

- *“Ready to Start”. Another one where we might be at “Launched,” but I think it’s more accurate to say that we “don’t have an infrastructure” yet. I don’t think infrastructure necessarily means the DEI Plan though, so we might hit “Launched” soon, since we have small groups that are guiding internal discussions.*

Training

Ready to Start: Is contemplating doing organizational DEI training; individual staff may have done some initial training.

- *“Ready to Start”. Individual staff have done training, but nothing coordinated. Commissioners may have done training as well, but not something as a group and nothing that staff brought to them specifically. We’ll probably do something following the DEI workshop? Remains to be seen how much of a recurring commitment this is, too.*
- *I think several staff have completed some DEI training—not sure about Commissioners?*

Diversity

Ready to Start: Has had initial discussions about and values the idea of diversifying its board and staff.

- *“Not Yet Started”. One Commissioner made this a priority, and others may agree with it, but we haven’t had a conversation about it nor do we have a good understanding of whether it’s a priority.*
- *“Ready to Start”: The Commission does not select its members and it does not hire staff other than the Director so our role in this are is limited.*

Data

Not Yet Started: Does not collect demographic data in its programmatic or operational work.

Comments:

- *“Not Yet Started”. We have not done this! I think it would be straightforward to collect some census data at least, as an approximation for the NSA. Any other data collection gets difficult to do across all six counties, I think, but there may be other ways to get demographic info too.*
- *Unsure about whether we collect demographic data—assuming we do not at this point.*
- *“Not Yet Started”. I’m not 100% sure on this, but I haven’t seen demographic data asked for on applications or the like.*

Community

Ready to Start: Values the idea of building partnerships with communities facing disparities, but may not know how or have relationships to draw upon.

Comments:

- *“Ready to Start” for non-tribal communities.*
- *“Well on the Way” for tribes.*
- *“Ready to Start”. I don’t think we’d find someone on the Commission or on staff who would not be sympathetic to communities facing disparities. But we’re not doing anything about it quite yet.*
- *“Launched”. This has been more effective in learning to work with the tribal nations. Interest in other communities however, there are very limited connections and outreach. Need to ensure that there is continued effort built on the government-to-government relations and additional capacity in other community inclusion.*

Decisions

Ready to Start: Interested in factoring DEI considerations into decision-making, but may view it as an option or an add-on to core decision-making Considerations.

Comments:

- *As far as Commission decisions with the MP, I don’t see how they incorporate DEI. As far as Commission consideration of actions and paths, they seem to consider DEI when it becomes a topic or issue.*
- *“Ready to Start”. While I get the legal framework of the Act and our two purposes, I think that we may use the Act as a crutch to avoid making decisions with DEI in mind, rather than doing both.*
- *“Not Yet Started”: No history of this.*
- *Between “Ready to Start” and “Launched”: Honoring treaty obligations is built into some aspects of our decision making.*

Accountability

Ready to Start: May recognize the value of including DEI-related metrics in evaluations of staff or programs or in organizational accountability mechanisms, but has not made any plans to do so.

Comments:

- *Is preparing: We do have an informal policy of having at least 1 appointed Indigenous Commissioner.*
- *“Not Yet Started”. No metrics and we haven’t talked about them.*
- *I am thinking about this with VSI update and hope we develop organizational metrics as part of the DEI plan.*

Inclusion

Launched: There is an appreciation of the voice and perspective of staff and Board members from communities facing disparities, particularly in relation to the organization’s DEI work, but they are still expected to conform to the dominant culture.

Comments:

- *This grade (“Well on the Way”) is not particularly accurate as it only reflects progress regarding Native communities in the NSA, not other communities facing disparities.*
- *“Not Yet Started”. No history of this.*
- *Developing relationships with under-represented communities.*
- *“Not Yet Started”. No effort has been made to create an inclusive atmosphere within a DEI context for staff or Commissioners.*
- *(No response): None of these categories seem to accurately fit our situation or perhaps I am unclear what it means in our context to “fit into the dominant culture.*
- *I think first looking at the white supremacy culture characteristics and antidotes as staff would be useful. I see several dominant culture characteristics perpetuated in Commission meetings. I think this may manifest at an unconscious level for many.*
- *At time dissenting opinions can be attempted to be marginalized. This is starting to shift as more diversity finds its way into the Commission and there is a conscious awareness of the role of DEI and the value of inclusion to support the Commission’s mission and purpose.*

DEI Spectrum Tool Survey—Specific Comments

At the end of the Meyer Memorial Trust DEI Spectrum Tool survey, Commissioners and staff were given the opportunity to respond to the question, ***“What is the part of the Management Plan or of the Commission’s operations that you are most interested in? How could a DEI lens be applied to this aspect of the Commission’s work?”***

Commissioners and staff provided answers to this question. In review of these answers, several themes for areas of interest emerged, including: Housing; Development Reviews; Education; Climate Change; Economic Opportunities and Impacts; and Public Outreach. Below are the supporting quotes from Commissioners and staff for each topic.

Housing

- *The situation of terrible housing at the in lieu sites is something the Commission considered a few years ago. We should take up that issue again.*
- *I'm interested in ADU and affordable housing issues both within and outside of the NSA.*

Development Reviews

- *We ought to examine the demographic characteristics of people who have received permitting assistance and been granted construction permits.*
- *In the land use decision making process, staff and the Commission should consider the DEI perspective as a factor and gauge whether those proposed decisions will make the likelihood of persons outside of the dominant culture able to afford to work within those new constraints.*
- *Allowing and disallowing all kinds of uses that have impacts on different populations. We need to identify what those uses are, figure out how they work without impacting scenic, cultural, natural, or recreation resources, and allow the ones that help people.*
- *Are we following DEI in our treatment of applicants and in our land use decisions?*

Education

- *Facilitate the development of a Columbia Gorge Natural and Human History curriculum that provides a more accurate history of the Gorge recognizing the contributions and oppression of native people, Asians, Latinos, Polynesians, etc.?*
- *Gorge Commissioners and staff could offer professional or public service mentoring to minority youth, assuming we have skills that might be of value.*

Climate Change

- *Climate Change particularly affects communities facing disparities, and—given that we are now formulating a Climate Action Plan—this is an excellent place to start.*
- *Consider how we could marry efforts to mitigate climate change (transit, afforestation, etc.) to economic opportunities for BIPOC people.*
- *I'm particularly interested in centering equity in climate change action planning and Vital Sign Indicators monitoring.*
- *I would recommend a focus of DEI energy initially in the ACTION PROGRAM section of the Commission's work--- specifically climate change and economic -- of these activities provide an opportunity to help design and guide how these move forward.*

Economic Opportunities and Impacts

- *Look at the diversity or lack of diversity of the recipients of the eco-devo grant funds, which have been delegated to the state investment boards. We could put conditions on new or remaining grant funds to see if we can secure more funding for minority enterprises.*
- *Advocating for funding to allow for more job opportunities for BIPOC.*

Public Outreach

- *Doing research and outreach to find out all the underrepresented communities in the NSA, identifying points of contact for those communities, and asking them questions like: What do you know about the NSA and the Gorge Commission? What do you want to know about the NSA and Gorge Commission? How can the Gorge Commission better serve you?*

- *Look at how land use policies affect access for the general population.*
- *Are we communicating our DEI commitment to agencies we work with and to the public?*

Next Steps: Developing Short-Term and Long-Term Strategies

The results of the DEI Assessment Report and the DEI Spectrum Tool Survey provide the Commission with baseline knowledge of where Commission and staff are at in terms of the collective interest and perspectives about DEI and how it relates to the Commission's mission and work. Staff will present the highlights from the DEI Assessment Report and the DEI Spectrum Tool Survey results at the May 11, 2021 Commission work session.

Staff requests that the Commission use the results of each of these assessments to inform a discussion on developing short-term and long-term DEI strategies for the Commission. Public comment will be welcome to assist the Commission with their discussion to develop a framework that will guide staff in incorporating DEI into the Management Plan and the Commission's operations.

ATTACHMENTS

A. Columbia River Gorge Commission DEI Assessment Report

B. Combined Summary of Responses to Meyer Memorial Trust DEI Survey

Columbia River Gorge Commission
Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)
Assessment Report

Commissioner and Staff Perspectives,
Awareness, and Interests

Prepared by:

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Background

Between November 2020 and March 2021, Tina E. Patterson, MCI Arb, conducted one-on-one interviews with Columbia River Gorge Commission Commissioners and staff to identify individual perspectives related to the topics of diversity, equity, and inclusion. These interviews and the resulting report are a part of the Commission's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) project. An overview of the DEI project, the interview questions, observations, recommendations, and resources are provided in this report.

During the June 2020 public comment period for the Gorge 2020 Draft Management Plan, staff received comments from individuals related to the topic of equity. Staff presented a summary of these comments to Commissioners at the August 2020 Commission meeting. The Commission discussed how to respond to these public comments and agreed to include a DEI statement and policies into the Gorge 2020 Management Plan. Following the August meeting, Commissioners and staff worked together to develop a draft DEI statement that staff presented at the September 9, 2020 Commission meeting. The Commission reviewed and made amendments to the draft DEI statement and policies and passed a motion to include them in the Draft Management Plan for adoption. In October 2020, the Columbia River Gorge Commission (CRGC) adopted a new Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Statement in the Gorge 2020 Management Plan.

In September 2020, Commission staff began working with Tina Patterson, an extern pursuing a master's degree at Pepperdine University, to develop a framework for the Commission's DEI plan. At the October 13, 2020 meeting, staff and Ms. Patterson presented to Commissioners the proposed DEI project. Commissioners were presented the following definitions of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion as a foundation for the project:

Diversity is understanding, embracing, and celebrating each other's individual differences, including, but not limited to, race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, nationality, religious and spiritual beliefs, age, and socio-economic background, as well as the intersections of these identities. Diversity enhances a community through mutual respect, as we honor each other's lived reality.¹

Equity is providing everyone what they need to be successful.²

Inclusion is the conscious practice of actively engaging people of different backgrounds whose "voices are respected and heard, diverse viewpoints, perspectives, and approaches are valued, and everyone is encouraged to make a unique and meaningful contribution."³ This practice requires the integration of individuals' experiences, knowledge, and perspectives, while acknowledging our

¹ American Association of University Women (AAUW), Diversity and inclusion toolkit (2011).

² National Intramural and Recreational Sports Association (NIRSA), *Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Guide*, page 2.

³ Pless & Maak, "Building an Inclusive Diversity Culture: Principles, Processes and Practice", *Journal of Business Ethics* 2004, p. 130-131.

history and continually reflecting on issues of power and privilege. The intentional goal of an inclusive community is the full and equal participation of all.⁴

The DEI project has two goals.

Goal 1: Develop Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Policy and Procedures, choosing to follow State of Washington requirements for state agencies.

Goal 2: Develop a draft Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion strategy, and begin the workplan for the CRGC. The steps to achieve this goal include work sessions with a) Commissioners and b) Commission staff.

Goal 1 was completed in late October, and policies related to DEI were submitted to Washington State.

The report that follows, written by staff in consultation with Ms. Patterson, focuses on Goal 2, part a and b: reviewing and capturing the work with the Commissioners and Commission staff; specifically, one-on-one interviews to identify Commissioner and staff perspectives and interests. On the following pages are the results of the interviews with the Commissioners and staff. Comments and statements are provided in summary format or without attribution to the speaker.

In addition, the report includes four sections intended to aid the Commission as it defines and refines its DEI workplan: a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Challenges analysis related to Commissioner and staff feedback; general observations; recommendations for next steps; and a list of resources that may be helpful in the learning process.

⁴ National Intramural and Recreational Sports Association (NIRSA), Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Guide, page 2.

Questions for Commissioner and Staff Perspectives on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)

Each Commissioner and staff member was presented the eight questions below as well as two additional questions: “Is there anything we haven’t discussed that you would like to discuss?” and, “What questions do you have for me?”

1. *Commissioners: What does equity mean to you in your role as a Commissioner?*
Staff: What does equity mean to you in your role as a staff member?
2. *How could the Commission better serve all the communities within the National Scenic Area (NSA)?*
3. *Do you think that the Commission provides an environment for the free and open expression of ideas, opinions and beliefs among Commissioners, staff and the public? Please explain.*
4. *What would be helpful for you to be able to engage in DEI work going forward?*
5. *What leadership role, if any, do you see the Commission having in DEI efforts in the NSA?*
6. *Commissioners: Would you be interested and have the time to participate in DEI learning opportunities to assist the Commission’s work in the Gorge?*
7. *Commissioners:(Optional) How much of a priority is DEI to you in the next year compared to other day-to-day priorities? If you think it is high priority, what are the three most important aspects of DEI to be included in the workplan?*
8. *Commissioners: (Optional) Imagine it is 5 years from now; what would Commission progress in DEI look like?*

The next sections, Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Challenges, Observations, and Recommendations, analyzes the Commissioner and staff responses further.

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Challenges (SWOC)

A Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Challenges analysis is a strategic planning tool used to develop awareness of all factors involved in analysis based on input from stakeholders.

The analysis is included to succinctly illustrate perceived or stated strengths, weakness, opportunities, and challenges the Commission may encounter as it moves forward with developing the DEI Plan. Strengths and weaknesses are internally influenced or impacted and can be mitigated or addressed by a combination of monitoring and evaluation of people, process, or technology. Opportunities and challenges are externally influenced or impacted and can be mitigated or addressed by monitoring and evaluation of access to resources provided by others, economic trends, community needs, or priorities.

Strengths

Answers questions such as “What are we known for? What are we most proud of? What are we doing well? What/who are our key resources and exemplars? What do we control (people, resources, knowledge) that gives us an advantage? What are our key areas of expertise? What resources or capabilities allow us to meet our mandate/mission? What positive aspects of the program have students/faculty or others commented on?”

Weaknesses

Answers question such as, “What are we doing poorly or struggling with? What frustrations/challenges have been expressed? What do we need to fix? What are the internal weaknesses and deficiencies in resources or capabilities that may be hindering the program’s ability to accomplish its mission/mandate?”

Opportunities

Answers questions such as, “What opportunities will most dramatically enhance the quality of our program? What changes in demand do we expect to see over the next years? What key environmental/market factors may positively impact the program? Where can we create more value for the program? What external or future opportunities exist for the program? What are some key areas of untapped potential?”

Challenges

Answers questions such as, “What are the key challenges or threats to the quality of our program that need to be addressed? What are others doing that we are not? What future challenges may affect the program? What external or future challenges or threats does the program face?”

The SWOC Matrix below reflects input from Commissioners and staff regarding DEI.

Strength	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Availability of resources within Commission: Commissioners, staff, community • Interested Commissioners and staff • Empathetic and self-aware Commission staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pending agreed upon definition of DEI for CRGC • Perception that Commission is elitist • Need public/community input • Competing agency priorities
Opportunities	Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with affinity groups • Interested Commissioners and staff • Incoming Commissioners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commissioner turnover • Budget limitations • Staff workload and bandwidth

It is important to note that an SWOC analysis reflects a specific period of time and should be revisited periodically to measure progress and completion of tasks, and to identify any potential gaps.

Ms. Patterson suggests adding the following highlighted items to the SWOC analysis.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Availability of resources within Commission: Commissioners, staff, community • Interested Commissioners • Report submitted to State of Washington 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competing agency priorities versus identifying partners • Pending agreed upon definition of DEI for CRGC • Need public/community input • Perception that Commission is elitist • No clearly established relationship with affinity groups
Opportunities	Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify existing DEI plans that may be used by CRGC • Exploring grants, funding • Work with affinity groups • Interested Commissioners • Public/Community input • Incoming Commissioners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commissioner turnover • Budget limitations • Staff workload and bandwidth • Undefined Scope • Governmental restrictions due to COVID-19

Observations

The following are observations based on interviews with Commissioners and staff.

Definitions

Some Commissioners are unclear about what the definition of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion is. As one Commissioner shared, *"[DEI is] not something you think about every day. Some of the questions are difficult to consider given what we do. Starting with DEI – what is it? Most of us are older white folk. It's not our lingo."*

Some Commission staff members are unclear about what the definition of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion is. As one staff member shared, *"So as far as what DEI work is, I'm not sure what that means... I'm open to creating an open and inclusive environment in the workplace. I'm just not sure how I could proactively engage in DEI work so I'm kind of at a loss."*

To advance the Commission DEI Plan, agreed-upon definitions are needed for diversity, equity, and inclusion. One staff member stated, *"I think I need a better idea of what DEI work means. Full disclosure, before the events of this past summer, I don't think I had ever seen the acronym DEI before, and then I started seeing it everywhere."* As mentioned by a Commissioner, *"It would be helpful for Commissioners to get an understanding of what diversity means and establish a single definition."* Another Commissioner observed, *"I realized that we need to define what DEI is. People use equity and equality interchangeably. They're not the same. We make policy decisions. We arbitrated hearings. But equity goes beyond that as we make our policies. We have to make sure we don't have imbalances that impact the people we serve."*

Communication

Several Commissioners mentioned a statement similar to this one, *"We've had rough exchanges lately among Commissioners. People need to listen and try to understand where people are coming from."* Other Commissioners' exchanges were considered demeaning, dismissive, or disrespectful.

Several Commission staff mentioned tense communication among Commissioners. Other Commissioners' exchanges were considered demeaning, dismissive, or disrespectful to fellow Commissioners. One staff member suggested admitting mistakes or when errors are made as one way to mitigate tensions. *"Part of that is admitting when we make a mistake or could have done better -- that's progress. Perfectionism is part of the dominant culture."*

Another staff member observed: *"I know the words I use have weight, and there are several of them I'm consciously trying to shift over time, and they may have something to do with how I make people from other backgrounds feel. I try to choose words in a better, more productive way."*

Lack of respectful conversations can result in Commissioners not feeling valued, respected, or heard. This may manifest as Commissioners suddenly acting out in ways that would

seem uncooperative, hostile, or argumentative. It may also manifest as an increase in absenteeism to avoid the source of discomfort.

Timing and Pace

While several Commissioners acknowledged the sense of urgency to develop a DEI workplan, it should be tempered with the ongoing requirements of the Act; one Commissioner observed, *"I think this is the beginning. It's going to be a slow process. Everyone isn't to remain in their comfort zone."*

While several Commission staff acknowledged the sense of urgency to develop a DEI workplan several staff were concerned about the timing of implementing an equity workplan with competing priorities., *"I think the Commission has got its priorities all wrong on this by having us do multiple things at once. We've got to do one thing, get it right, and then let that inform our work in the other policy areas."* Another staff member shared, *"The Commission is more gung-ho about climate change; equity will be easy to push to the side if the outcome of this process is to suggest that we have to adapt the way we've worked in the past -- or maybe that's too harsh."*

Furthermore, the SWOC identified "competing agency priorities" as a weakness in implementing the DEI Plan. Commission staff comments underscore this sentiment, *"It's not priority number one, but it is what has to be done."* However, some comments suggest the importance of the intersection of DEI with other Commission workplan priorities: *"In terms of other planning efforts, climate change planning needs to be aligned with equity."*

Participation

Awareness and interest in DEI topics vary by Commissioner. Many Commissioners would like to be involved in DEI learning opportunities and seek a way to balance this involvement with Commission and Commission responsibilities as outlined in the Act.

It is important to also be aware that a few Commissioners have no interest in a DEI effort, feel there is no equity concern in the NSA, and think the Commission would be better off focusing its attention on other matters. Two examples are below:

"I should state that one size doesn't fit all. In the Gorge, there's been no complaint about inequity. Our rules apply to everyone including staff."

"I found the opening statement in the Management Plan to be extraordinarily offensive and negative."

Furthermore, Commissioners who identify as Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) may show signs of exhaustion and/or weariness in discussing the subject of DEI, because the topic has been discussed previously with what seems to be no apparent changes or results. One person shared, *"If it weren't for Commissioner Miller the DEI conversation would not be happening, there's also resistance."*

Many Commission staff would like to be involved in DEI learning opportunities and seek a way to balance this involvement with workload and Commission responsibilities as outlined in the Act: *"I love that we're dedicating specific resources to this, so all the work you're doing with Joanna is awesome, and I think it needs to continue."* Another staff member said, *"I see this whole diversity, equity, and inclusion work as being something that we need to be starting out individually looking at within our own lives and our own values, and then translate that into our work with the Commission, the Commissioners and their roles, and staff and our roles."*

Views on public participation varied, as demonstrated by one staff member, *"Whatever we do is going to be limited by our authority. We cannot force folks to do things that aren't related to our authority, we can encourage, we can promote, we can take part in, we can do lots of things, but when it comes to our authority, we have to be careful not to step outside of that boundary."*

It is important to articulate that implementing a DEI Plan does not mean that existing staff must leave. Several staff members expressed hope that the current staff configuration would remain intact which working to achieve greater diversity in the organization: *"A more diverse staff is a harder one if you don't add staff and people don't leave."* *"Secretly I hope nobody leaves in the next 5 years, none of our staff people, because we finally have a nice stable staff but on the other hand, I would love to see more people on staff and see if we can work on improving ourselves that way."*

Recommendations

Based on Commissioner and staff interviews, Ms. Patterson offers the following recommendations.

Communication

As noted in the questions, several participants mentioned strained communication among Commissioners. One Commissioner specifically stated, *"It would be nice to have a retreat about where we are all coming from (a multi-day retreat) to give people time to absorb and think about how to have dialogues."* Ms. Patterson recommends a retreat for the Commissioners with the topic of respectful conversations as a keynote before further engaging Commissioners in the DEI Project.

Several Commissioners mentioned a prior retreat where communication was one of the topics. Ms. Patterson suggests reading *Difficult Conversations* by Doug Stone and Sheila Heen and *Thanks for the Feedback* also by Doug Stone and Sheila Heen. As mentioned earlier, not acknowledging and addressing the strained communication could lead to Commissioners acting out in ways that would seem uncooperative, hostile, or argumentative.

One staff member suggested a land acknowledgement at the beginning of the April 2021 meeting. The staff person stated, *"It would be meaningful, and a nice way to combine with*

the word of the day. It's an action item I wanted to capture because it's foundational, and a simple thing we could do right away."

Other comments focused on learning opportunities among Commission staff: discuss whether the team would like to explore learning more about diversity, equity, and inclusion through mechanisms such a book discussion, lunch and learn with guest speakers, watch a brief video together and discuss, or selecting a topic to research and presenting it to other members of the group.

Ms. Patterson has provided a brief list of books to consider in the Resources section of this report. She highly recommends engaging all staff who wish to participate in suggesting books. The Gorge area historically has been home to populations that were displaced or decimated it may be helpful to understand how that history has impacted the Gorge – economically, environmentally, and culturally.

Timing and Pace

DEI is currently being discussed in many organizations with a sense of urgency to develop and roll out a plan. Ms. Patterson recommends that the Commission take the time to be intentional and address the clarifying questions stated by one Commissioner, *"What is our definition of Community? What is our definition of Community of Place? What is our definition of Community of Intent? What do we mean by Serve? What are the investments that would be of greatest value with the Commission's limited resources?"* Answers to these questions will help the Commission define and refine the framework for its DEI Plan. As one staff member stated, *"I don't think the Commission is clear on this I think the Commission jumped on this concept late and without a good sense of what it ought to be doing. I think the first thing it needs to do is get its house in order."* The Plan should reflect the Commission's short-term and long-term goals, once identified and agreed upon.

Furthermore, the SWOC analysis identified "competing agency priorities versus identifying partners" as a weakness in implementing the DEI Plan. Ms. Patterson encourages the Commission to leverage the work of affinity groups and organizations that are similar in focus (e.g., land use agencies) or similar in ideology, to support the Commission's DEI work.

Ms. Patterson recommends the DEI Plan be reviewed and updated often so that it is relevant and accurately reflects the goals and aspiration of the Commission.

Participation

As one Commissioner stated, *"It's beautiful to hear the Commissioners speak based on their respective experience."* Commissioners who have indicated that they would not participate in DEI workplan efforts need to be acknowledged. However, if the majority of the Commission wishes to proceed with developing and implementing a DEI strategy, those who oppose should be asked not to (overtly or subtly) deter the Commission's efforts.

Many staff articulated a desire for DEI learning opportunities for Commissioner and staff. One staff member voiced, *"Bring in some help from outside people who are well-versed in*

these topics and are professionals to train us and keep it fresh.” Another staff person shared, “We do continuing education for other planning things; this is just as important.”

Staff reported working with other organizations to deepen learning and establish linkages with communities. One staff member commented, *“Reach out to organizations like Next Door and say we want to work with people in the community. You work with underserved populations; who are the populations and who are their leaders that we could work with and learn from?”*

One staff member suggested Commissioners and staff participating in an in-person retreat: *“In person retreats could really help to foster a better sense of community among the Commission and between the Commission and staff. Whether it is yearly or more often, these check-ins that are less formal [are important], and we’ll have the space to get to know each other and understand each other better. There’s a sense of disconnect now between staff and the Commission and this would be one way to build a bridge.”*

Engaging stakeholders (staff, Commissioners, public) who identify as Black, Indigenous, or People of Color (BIPOC), and are showing signs of exhaustion and weariness in discussing the subject of DEI is a multi-step process. Ms. Patterson recommended that the BIPOC stakeholders be asked how they would like to participate – as an observer or be actively engaged? An observer is a person who observes the process but is not expected to expend the emotional and mental labor to bring the plan together. BIPOC stakeholders who choose to be active participants should not lead the DEI discussion by default.

So, who should lead the DEI dialogue? Ms. Patterson suggests a representative from the dominant culture who is not involved with the Commission and who is a professionally skilled facilitator to keep the conversation centered around the issues. In addition, she recommends that this discussion take place during a retreat, so that all participants can give their undivided attention to the topic of DEI. Ms. Patterson anticipates that there will be times when one or more of the Commissioners may feel alienated from the group. She suggests employing an eight-step feedback process outlined below and presented in Ingrid Bens’s book *Facilitating With Ease!*⁵

8-Step Feedback Process, from *Facilitating With Ease!* By Ingrid Bens

1. Ask permission to offer feedback.
 - Asking permission lets people tell you if this is a bad time to hear feedback or indicate they are ready to pay careful attention
2. Describe specifically what you are observing.
 - Give a clear and specific description of what you observed

⁵ Bens, Ingrid, *Facilitating With Ease! Core Skills for Facilitators, Team Leaders, and Members, Managers, Consultants and Trainers*, 4th ed. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2018, pages 139- 141

8-Step Feedback Process, from <i>Facilitating With Ease!</i> By Ingrid Bens	
3. Tell people about the impact of their actions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe the impact on individuals, the program, or the department
4. Give the person(s) an opportunity to explain.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen actively, using attentive body language and paraphrasing key points
5. Draw out ideas from others.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frame the whole thing as a problem to be solved. Urge people to offer their ideas
6. Offer specific suggestions for improvement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make suggestions that will improve the situation
7. Summarize and express your support.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offering encouragement and ending on an optimistic note sets the stage for improved performance
8. Follow up.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • End the feedback discussion with clear action steps

Summary

Ms. Patterson encourages Commission staff and Commissioners to view this report as one of many resources at their disposal to formulate a (or the Commission's) DEI Plan. As stated by a few Commissioners, competency in DEI is ongoing work; it is a process of lifelong learning. Not all staff and Commissioners are going to think that diversity, equity, and inclusion is a priority or that it is even necessary. However, it is important that if that is your position, to support the consensus to move forward and to not obstruct the process.

Resources

The following list is a small representation of resources that may assist the Commission with its DEI Plan.

Books

Me and White Supremacy: Combat Racism, Change the World, and Become a Good Ancestor by Layla Saad

Difficult Conversations: How to Discuss What Matters Most, 10th ed. by Douglas Stone, Bruce Patton, and Sheila Heen

Thanks for the Feedback: The Science and Art of Receiving Feedback Well by Douglas Stone and Sheila Heen

Race Talk and the Conspiracy of Silence: Understanding and Facilitating Difficult Dialogues on Race by Derald Wing Sue

Caste by Isabel Wilkerson

The Warmth of Other Suns by Isabel Wilkerson

So, You Want to Talk About Race by Ijeoma Oluo

They Called Us Enemy by George Takei

Race Talk and the Conspiracy of Silence: Understanding and Facilitating Difficult Dialogues on Race by Derald Wing Sue

Diversity Beyond Lip Service by La Wanna Harris

Stamped from the Beginning by Ibram X. Kendi

Articles

CRGC Future Forum Report

Forum One, "Why DEI is Important and Should be Prioritized",
<https://www.forumone.com/ideas/why-and-how-to-prioritize-dei-at-your-organization/>

American Dance Therapy Association, "Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Action Planning",
<https://www.adta.org/dei-strategic-planning-process>

University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion our Confronting Bias page (<https://equity.ucla.edu/know/confronting-bias/>)

UCLA Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Implicit Bias (<https://equity.ucla.edu/know/implicit-bias/>)

The Diversity Movement (information provided to Joanna Kaiserman)

Training

Harvard University Implicit Bias Assessment: Project Impact,
<https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html>

Organizations

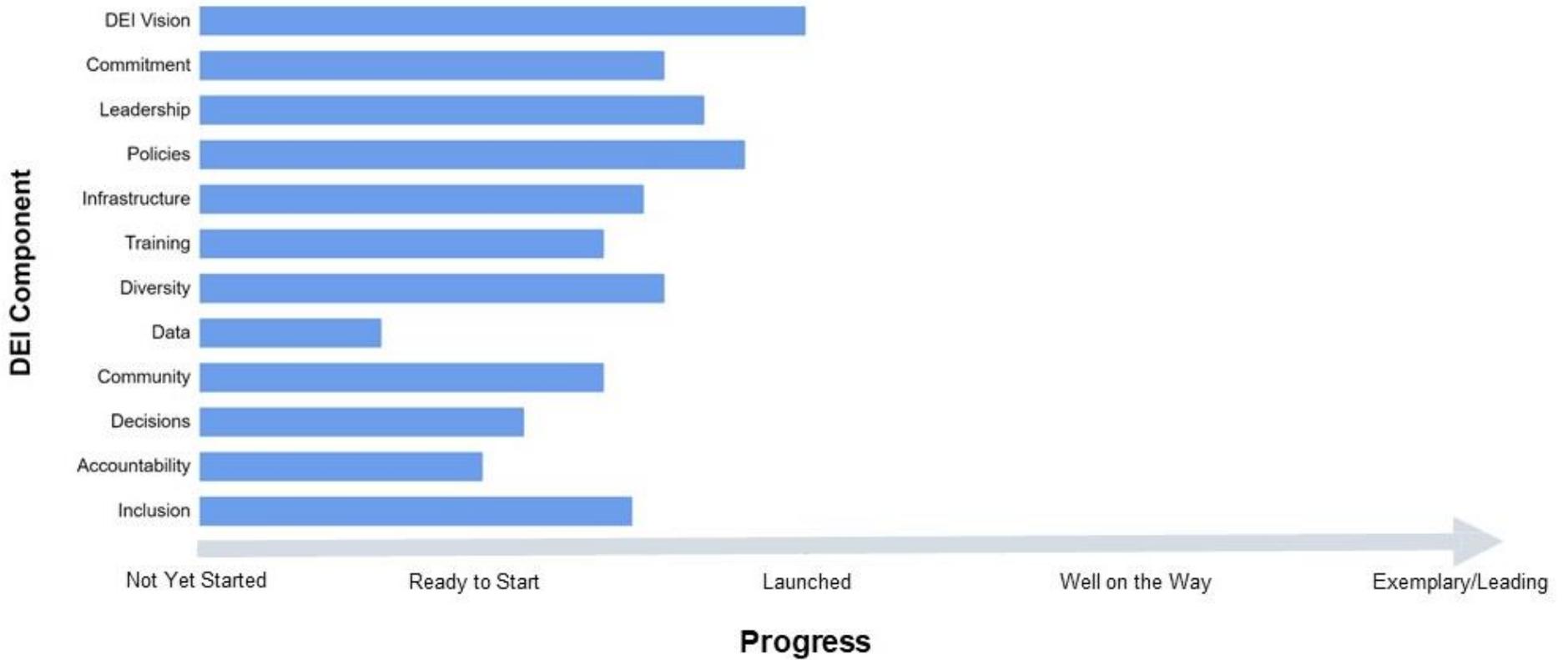
Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE)

American Planning Association (APA)

International City/County Management Association (ICMA)

Meyer Memorial Trust
Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Spectrum Tool

CRGC's Progress on DEI Components



Combined Commissioner and Staff Responses

DEI Component	Not Yet Started	Ready to Start	Launched	Well on the Way	Exemplary/ Leading
DEI Vision	Does not see DEI as relevant to its work	Recognizes the importance of DEI to its work and is contemplating its next steps X X	Recognizes the importance of DEI to its work and is in the process of developing a shared DEI vision X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X	Has developed a shared DEI vision and is working to align the organization’s programs and operations with this vision X X	Has integrated DEI in organizational mission and vision statements which are actively being used to guide the organization’s programs and operations
Comments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Ready to Start. Definitely only have scratched the surface so far. Do not believe there is consensus that DEI is important to the work, even from Commissioners that voted to adopt the DEI statement and policies into the plan</i> • <i>Between “Ready to start” and “Launched”</i> 					
Commitment	Does not have an interest in advancing its DEI work	Is interested in advancing its DEI work and is considering how to do so X X X X X X X X X X X X	Is interested in advancing its DEI work and has put some strategies or actions in motion X X X X X X	Is actively engaged in advancing its DEI work	A commitment to DEI is fully institutionalized throughout the organization both internally and externally X
Comments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Ready to Start. We voted to work on it, so we’re working on it – no strategies or actions at the moment and we’ll see what comes out of it.</i> • <i>Ready to Start. This is the start of that effort, and I think that we’re starting to put some actions into motion and doing so methodically to not get to ahead of ourselves.</i> 					

Leadership	Members of management, staff or board have not taken leadership on DEI issues	A few members of management, staff or board are leading the DEI discussion X X X X X X X X X	A DEI point person or team is leading the organization's DEI work X X X X X X X	All levels of management, staff and board are taking leadership on DEI issues X X	Organization is a DEI leader and is helping to build the field and best practices; leadership demonstrates accountability to clients, constituents, stakeholders
Comments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Ready to Start: Some staff and Commissioners are investing time. Would almost put this at "Launched" but I think we don't have "DEI work" yet, we're a step before that. Once we get through this next meeting we'll be at or closer to "Launched"</i> • <i>We often speak about DEI as a lens that we look through in all of our decision-making. Once we fully implement DEI in our operations and programs, it will become a natural way of conducting business, one we act on subconsciously, like ethics and fiscal responsibility.</i> • <i>I feel we are somewhere between ready to start and launched because we do have a DEI lead and initial team with staff and one Commissioner.</i> • <i>Ready to start. There appears to be a recognition of the importance of DEI within the commission, and some honest questions over the overlap between a DEI action plan and the role of the commission</i> 					
Policies	Does not have any DEI-related organizational policies (beyond non-discrimination policies)	Does not have, but is interested in developing, DEI-related organizational policies (beyond non-discrimination policies) X X X X X X X	May have some DEI-related language in some of its organizational policies X X X X X X X X X	Has DEI policies and/or an organizational DEI plan but may be unclear about how to operationalize it X X	Has DEI policies and an organizational DEI plan with clear goals, strategies and indicators of progress
Comments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Launched: Only since gorge2020 update</i> • <i>Ready to Start. We haven't hit the stage where we have actual organization policies even though we incorporated the DEI statement into the Management Plan.</i> • <i>Launched: New, somewhat generic policies in the Plan</i> • <i>Launched. The revised management plan included language to support and encourage ongoing DEI efforts.</i> 					

Infrastructure	Has not had internal discussions about the organization's DEI work X	Has had some internal DEI discussions, but doesn't have an infrastructure to guide the organization's DEI work XXXXXXXXXX	Individuals or small groups are guiding internal DEI discussions but aren't integrated into the organization as a whole XXXXXX	Has internal committees, affinity groups or other formal structures focused on integrating DEI issues into the organization's work X	Work on DEI issues is integrated into every aspect of organizational culture and infrastructure
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Comments:

- *Ready to Start. Another one where we might be at "Launched" but I think it's more accurate to say that we "don't have an infrastructure" yet. I don't think infrastructure necessarily means the DEI Plan though, so we might hit Launched soon, since we have small groups that are guiding internal discussions.*

Training	Has not done any training related to DEI X	Is contemplating doing organizational DEI training; individual staff may have done some initial training XXXXXXXXXX XX	Some staff or board have participated in DEI-related training XXXX	All management, staff and board are involved in DEI training and capacity building X	Fosters ongoing DEI training, growth and leadership among management, staff and board in line with an equity plan/strategy; staff are held accountable to DEI-related practices
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Comments:

- *Ready to Start. Individual staff have done training, but nothing coordinated. Commissioners may have done training as well, but not something as a group and nothing that staff brought to them specifically. We'll probably do something following the DEI workshop? Remains to be seen how much of a recurring commitment this is, too.*
- *I think several staff have completed some DEI training—not sure about Commissioners?*

<p>Diversity</p>	<p>Doesn't see diversification of board and staff as a priority; may be paralyzed by the perceived challenges or view it as unattainable</p> <p>X</p>	<p>Has had initial discussions about and values the idea of diversifying its board and staff</p> <p>X X X X X X X</p>	<p>Beginning attempts to diversify its board and/or staff but may not know how to do it effectively or have strategies and systems in place; may not result in growing diversity</p> <p>X X X X X X X</p>	<p>Actively works to increase diversity of board and staff, resulting in growing diversity; has begun to identify and institute retention strategies for diverse staff</p> <p>X</p>	<p>Has policies and strategies for strengthening and maintaining organizational diversity; staff and board represent the diversity of the community it serves; effective retention strategies are implemented</p>
<p>Comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Not Yet Started. One Commissioner made this a priority, and others may agree with it, but we haven't had a conversation about it nor do we have a good understanding of whether it's a priority.</i> • <i>Ready to Start: The Commission does not select its members and it does not hire staff other than the Director so our role in this are is limited.</i> 					
<p>Data</p>	<p>Does not collect demographic data in its programmatic or operational work</p> <p>X X X X X X</p> <p>X X X X</p>	<p>Does not collect demographic data in its programmatic or operational work, but views this as a future goal</p> <p>X X X X</p>	<p>Collects some demographic data in its programmatic or operational work, but not in a systematic or comprehensive way</p> <p>X X</p>	<p>Collects and disaggregates comprehensive demographic data in its programmatic and operational work but may not know what to do with the information</p>	<p>Routinely collects, disaggregates and analyzes demographic data for all programmatic and operational work; uses the information in planning and decision-making</p>
<p>Comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Not Yet Started. We have not done this! I think it would be straightforward to collect some census data at least, as an approximation for the NSA. Any other data collection gets difficult to do across all six counties, I think, but there may be other ways to get demographic info too.</i> • <i>Unsure about whether we collect demographic data—assuming we do not at this point.</i> • <i>Not Yet Started. I'm not 100% sure on this, but I haven't seen demographic data asked for on applications or the like.</i> 					

Community	Doesn't express interest in building stronger partnerships with communities facing disparities; may see it as unrealistic or unimportant to the organization's mission	Values the idea of building partnerships with communities facing disparities, but may not know how or have relationships to draw upon X X X X X X X X X X X X X	Is beginning to build partnerships with communities facing disparities but has not yet established accountability to and meaningful partnerships with these communities and may approach it in a tokenistic way X X X	Actively works to build partnerships and trust with communities facing disparities; working to understand how to provide value and support to these communities X (tribes)	Has strong, mutually beneficial, accountable and equitable partnerships with diverse organizations and leaders from communities facing disparities
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Comments:

- *“Ready to start” for non-tribal communities*
- *“Well on the Way” for tribes*
- *Ready to Start. I don't think we'd find someone on the Commission or on staff who would not be sympathetic to communities facing disparities. But we're not doing anything about it quite yet.*
- *Launched. This has been more effective in learning to work with the tribal nations. Interest in other communities however, there are very limited connections and outreach. Need to ensure that there is continued effort built on the government to government relations and additional capacity in other community inclusion.*

Decisions	DEI considerations do not factor into decision-making X X X	Interested in factoring DEI considerations into decision-making, but may view it as an option or an add-on to core decision-making Considerations X X X X X X X X X X	Decisions are occasionally influenced by DEI considerations in an ad hoc way X X X	Decisions regarding organizational policies, practices and resource allocation are informed by DEI considerations	Decisions regarding Organizational policies, practices and resource allocation are systematically guided by DEI considerations
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Comments:

- *Ready to Start. While I get the legal framework of the Act and our two purposes, I think that we may use the Act as a crutch to avoid making decisions with DEI in mind, rather than doing both.*
- *Between “Ready to Start” and “Launched”: Honoring treaty obligations is built into some aspects of our decision making.*
- *“Not yet Started”: no history of this.*
- *As far as commission decisions with the MP, I don't see how they incorporate DEI. As far as commission consideration of actions and paths, they seem to consider DEI when it becomes a topic or issue.*

<p>Accountability</p>	<p>DEI-related metrics are not included in evaluations of staff or programs or in organizational accountability mechanisms</p> <p>X X X X</p>	<p>May recognize the value of including DEI-related metrics in evaluations of staff or programs or in organizational accountability mechanisms, but has not made any plans to do so</p> <p>X X X X X X X X X</p> <p>X</p>	<p>Is preparing to include or is currently including DEI-related metrics in a few aspects of the organization, such as staff and/or board representation or evaluations of specific projects</p> <p>X X X</p>	<p>Some of the organization's standard evaluation and accountability mechanisms include DEI-related metrics</p>	<p>All evaluation and accountability mechanisms for the organization, its projects, programs, management, staff and board include specific DEI-related metrics</p>
<p>Comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Not Yet Started. No metrics and we haven't talked about them.</i> • <i>Is preparing: We do have an informal policy of having at least 1 appointed Indigenous Commissioner</i> • <i>I am thinking about this with VSI update and hope we develop organizational metrics as part of the DEI plan.</i> 					

<p>Inclusion</p>	<p>No explicit effort is made to create an inclusive atmosphere for staff and board members from communities facing disparities</p> <p>X X X</p>	<p>Values the idea of being an inclusive organization but tries to achieve this by encouraging staff and board members from communities facing disparities to participate in the dominant culture</p> <p>X X X X</p>	<p>There is an appreciation of the voice and perspective of staff and Board members from communities facing disparities, particularly in relation to the organization’s DEI work, but they are still expected to conform to the dominant culture</p> <p>X X X X X X</p>	<p>The voice of staff and Board members from communities facing disparities is valued and is integrated into aspects of the organization; the organization is in transition from a dominant culture to an inclusive/multicultural culture</p> <p>X X</p>	<p>All staff and board feel valued and all aspects of the organization reflect the voice, contributions and interests of a multicultural constituency; the organization has transitioned to an inclusive/multicultural culture and has created systems, policies and practices to maintain this culture</p>
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Comments:

- *This grade (“Well on the Way”) is not particularly accurate as it only reflects progress regarding Native communities in the NSA, not other communities facing disparities...*
- *“Not yet started”. No history of this.*
- *Developing relationships with under-represented communities.*
- *Not Yet Started. No effort has been made to create an inclusive atmosphere within a DEI context for staff or Commissioners.*
- *(No response): None of these categories seem to accurately fit our situation or perhaps I am unclear what it means in our context to “fit into the dominant culture.*
- *I think first looking at the white supremacy culture characteristics and antidotes as staff would be useful. I see several dominant culture characteristics perpetuated in Commission meetings. I think this may manifest at an unconscious level for many.*
- *At time dissenting opinions can be attempted to be marginalized. This is starting to shift as more diversity finds its way into the commission and there is a conscious awareness of the role of DEI and the value of inclusion to support the commissions mission and purpose.*

Optional question:

What is the part of the Management Plan or of the Commission's operations that you are most interested in? How could a DEI lens be applied to this aspect of the Commission's work?

- *As a new Commissioner, I completed the survey with limited knowledge of internal policies and recent actions taken by the Commission, other than the statement in the 2021 Commission work plan, recent DEI work lead by staff and consultant, recent Commission appointments reflecting greater diversity, and the leadership provided by the Governor's office.*
- *The management plan as a whole guides the implementation of practices throughout the National Scenic Area. Rather than choosing a chapter of the management plan (eg scenic, cultural, natural, or recreation) would recommend a focus of DEI energy initially in the ACTION PROGRAM section of the Commission's work--- specifically climate change and economic -- of these activities provide an opportunity to help design and guide how these move forward.*
- *I think we need a lot of input at this stage. There are probably things that we do that we don't realize we are doing and things we should be doing that we don't realize we are not doing. From my point of view, there are several aspects to consider: Are we following DEI in our staffing, are we following DEI in our Commission makeup, are we following DEI in our treatment of applicants and in our land use decisions, and are we communicating our DEI commitment to agencies we work with and to the public? It seems to me that we are really well on our way with the first two, hopefully following the best practices in the next two, and really not begun on the final two. It would be nice to see other people of color representing other communities on the Commission.*
- *I am interested in having equity be a guiding principle in all of our work. I'm curious to learn what feels most important to different Commissioners and their constituents. I'm also interested in ADU and affordable housing issues both within and outside of the NSA. And, of course, I'm particularly interested in centering equity in climate change action planning and Vital Sign Indicators monitoring.*
- *I think it will be very easy to get bogged down in conversations about whether our behavior, our interactions with people in the NSA are meeting DEI goals, when we really should be focused on land use planning outcomes. Our Management Plan is the standard, allowing and disallowing all kinds of uses that have impacts on different populations. We need to identify what those uses are, figure out how they work without impacting scenic, cultural, natural, or recreation resources, and allow the ones that help people.*
- *Landowner engagement, general public relations. A DEI lens for this work is crucial. Doing research and outreach to find out all the underrepresented communities in the NSA, identifying points of contact for those communities, and asking them questions like: what do you know about the NSA and the Gorge Commission? What do you want to know about the NSA and Gorge Commission? How can the Gorge Commission better serve you?*

- *I am most interested in applying DEI to our Management Plan. Here are a few ideas about topics we can consider:*
 - *We need to go back over all of the treaty rights we are supposed to be honoring and seeing in what ways we could be acting more affirmatively, especially in the light of the changing Gorge economy and climate.*
 - *Under the second purpose of the Act, we can apply DEI principles by advocating for funding to allow for more job opportunities for BIPOC. Here are some examples: Funding to create opportunities for tribes to generate income from tourism while educating visitors about their history and culture; start-up funding for Latino businesses selling value added agricultural commodities, investing in Latino owned processing facilities, or to buy or lease land for their own farming.*
 - *In this connection, we should look at the diversity or lack of diversity of the recipients of the eco-devo grant funds, which have been delegated to the state investment boards. We could put conditions on new or remaining grant funds to see if we can secure more funding for minority enterprises.*
 - *Can we allow for more diversity in access to recreation and educational experiences in the Gorge, especially for lower income POC? This applies to local residents as well – schools in The Dalles are very diverse already. What access do minority children have to the range of recreational activities? Work on this subject has been done in parts of the Portland region.*
 - *The situation of terrible housing at the in lieu sites is something the Commission considered a few years ago. We should take up that issue again.*
 - *We ought to examine the demographic characteristics of people who have received permitting assistance and been granted construction permits. This is a question in part of our priorities – although constrained by our existing Management Plan.*
 - *We should consider how we could marry efforts to mitigate climate change (transit, afforestation, etc.) to economic opportunities for BIPOC people.*
 - *Can we facilitate the development of a Columbia Gorge Natural and Human History curriculum that provides a more accurate history of the Gorge recognizing the contributions and oppression of native people, Asians, Latinos, Polynesians, etc?*
 - *In the area of operations and outside the subject of the Management Plan implementation, here is an idea: Gorge Commissioners and Gorge Staff offering professional or public service mentoring to minority youth, assuming we have skills that might be of value. This was a major emphasis of John Gray toward the end of his life.*

By the way, I notice that women and sexual minorities as well as class differences seem to have faded from these discussions.
- *I am interested in how land use policies affect access for the general population. In the land use decision making process, staff and the Commission should consider the DEI perspective as a factor and gauge whether those proposed decisions will make the likelihood of persons outside of the dominant culture able to afford to work within those new constraints. The Columbia River Gorge Commission is viewed by many as an elitist organization that makes owning or building on a property within the National Scenic Area extremely expensive and challenging to navigate. This tendency favors the white, educated, wealthy population and is a huge detriment to all other populations. This is a form of economic inequality and is a non-inclusive culture that is detrimental to less educated populations.*