



TO: Columbia River Gorge Commission
FROM: Joanna Kaiserman, Land Use Planner
DATE: December 8, 2020
SUBJECT: **Work Session:** Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: 2021-2022 Work Plan Summary

At the November 10, 2020 Commission meeting, staff presented the Draft Work plan for FY 2021-2022 which included Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) as a priority work plan program. This staff report provides a brief overview of the work plan approach and timeline for the Commission's DEI project in FY 2021-2022.

Background

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 Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion statement and policies into the new Management Plan. Following the August meeting, Commissioners and staff worked together to develop a draft DEI statement. At its September 8, 2020 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. The Commission adopted the DEI statement and policies at the October 13, 2020 Commission meeting.

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 2020 Commission meeting, Ms. Patterson provided an overview of the DEI project, including the project's two main goals:

- 1) Develop Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Policy and Procedures as required by the State of Washington for agencies; and
- 2) Develop a draft Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion strategy and begin the work plan for CRGC.

Ms. Patterson completed the first goal in late October 2020, and policies related to DEI were submitted to Washington State as required. Ms. Patterson then identified steps to achieving the second goal, which included work sessions with Commissioners and Commission staff.

During the month of November 2020, Ms. Patterson had one-on-one interviews with each Commissioner to identify their perspectives and interests related to DEI. Ms. Patterson provided

staff with a draft report summarizing the results of the interviews with Commissioners, along with a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Challenges analysis related to the Commissioners' feedback, and her observations and recommendations based on the interviews.

At the November 10, 2020 Commission meeting, staff presented the Draft Work Plan for FY 2021-2022 which included DEI as a priority work plan program. The two major tasks identified in this work plan are:

- 1) to convene a workgroup to assist the Commission with a DEI work plan for agency operations and review of the Management Plan; and
- 2) to engage a facilitator to help involve the public in focus groups with community leaders.

The Commission decided to extend the time for completing the DEI Work plan and divide work outcomes into two phases: Phase 1 in 2021 and Phase 2 in 2022.

Staff acknowledges that while DEI is an important and urgent topic, the Commission and staff must consistently relate this work back to the purposes of the National Scenic Area Act and the goals, objectives, and policies of the Management Plan. Ms. Patterson recommends that Commission's DEI Plan be reviewed and updated regularly to ensure that it remains relevant and accurately reflects the Commission's core values and mission.

Phase I (2021)

Staff recommends that first phase of the DEI work plan focus on internal management, discovering Commissioner and staff perspectives on DEI and begin to build competency in DEI among Commissioners and staff. Based on the recommendations provided by Ms. Patterson, some key steps of this first phase include:

- Complete staff interviews with Ms. Patterson (her externship was extended for another 3 months).
- Commissioners and staff agree upon definitions for the terms diversity, equity, inclusion.
- Ask Commissioners and stakeholders who identify as Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) how they would like to participate.
- Schedule a Commission retreat, including newly appointed Commissioners, with a discussion about respectful conversations.
- At the retreat, identify a representative of the dominant culture, outside of the Commission, to lead the DEI dialogue for the Commission.
- Identify existing DEI plans that may be relevant to use as inspiration for a CRGC DEI Plan.
- Define and refine a framework for a DEI Plan.
- Identify short, medium, and long-term goals for a DEI Plan.
- Explore grants and other types of funding for DEI work.

Phase II (2022)

The second phase of the DEI work plan will focus on the review of the revised Management Plan through the lens of DEI to identify any policies and guidelines that may need to be re-visited if

deemed to be inequitable or discriminatory. The Commission may seek advice and perspectives through engagement and interaction with four Columbia River treaty tribes, Gorge communities, and stakeholders who are interested in working with the Commission. Staff recommends the following steps for phase two of the Commission's DEI work plan, knowing that these may be revised after Phase 1 is completed.

- Identify affinity groups and organizations and leverage their work and advice to help the Commission's DEI work.
- Identify any changes needed at the Commission that can occur outside the Management Plan through partnerships, as well as any policy or guideline changes that may be recommended within the Management Plan, and a schedule/timeline for making any potential needed changes in the Plan.
- Begin implementing the Commission's DEI Plan to achieve internal operational goals identified in Phase 1.

Staff welcomes Commission discussion on the staff recommended phases and approach.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Work Plan Timeline

PHASE I: 2021

PHASE II: 2022

Fall 2020 - Winter 2021

Spring 2021

Summer-Fall 2021

Early 2022



Internal
Commissioner
and Staff
Discovery
Work

Commission
Retreat

Develop DEI Plan

Start
Implementing
DEI Plan

Commissioner interviews; staff interviews; analysis of Commissioner and staff responses; agree on definitions for the terms diversity, equity, inclusion.

Facilitated discussion on Respectful Conversations; identify representative to lead DEI dialogue for Commission.

Define and refine framework for DEI Plan; identify short, medium, and long-term goals; identify existing DEI plans that may be relevant to CRGC; establish working/advisory group.

Engage affinity groups and organizations; implement steps defined in DEI Plan.

