

Columbia River Gorge Commission

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Draft Strategic Plan

December 2022

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Land Acknowledgement

The Gorge Commission acknowledges and honors that the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area is located within the ancestral territories of Indigenous peoples who have protected these lands and waters since time immemorial. We also honor the sovereignty and role of the four Columbia River Treaty Tribes in taking care of these lands and waters today—the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, the Confederated Bands and Tribes of the Yakama Nation, the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, and the Nez Perce Tribe. These bands and tribes include the Wasco, Warm Springs, Paiute, Cayuse, Umatilla, Walla Walla, Kah-milt-pah, Klickitat, Klinquit, Kow-was-say-ee, Li-ay-was, Ochechotes, Palouse, Piquose, Se-ap-cat, Shyiks, Skinpah, Wah-lal-la, Wenatshapam, Wishxam, Yakama, and Nimiipuu peoples. We are committed to working together with tribal governments through government-to-government partnerships and people-to-people relationships. We offer this land acknowledgment in gratitude for all those who have come before us and those cultivating respectful relationships today and into the future; in recognition of the historical and ongoing legacy of colonialism; and in commitment to work together toward a more just and equitable future in protection of our shared connection to these lands and waters.



Photo by Peter Marbach

Introduction

The Gorge Commission acknowledges the history of exclusion, structural racism, and forced removal of people from the lands that make up the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area (NSA) today, and how this legacy created systemic inequities in the policies and decision-making of National Scenic Area governments and commissions. The Gorge Commission commits to listening, learning, understanding, and developing diversity, equity, and inclusion strategies that address this legacy.

The Commission developed this Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Strategic Plan to identify inequities in our work; to develop and apply an equity lens to implementation of the Management Plan, Commission operations, and policy decisions; and to establish trusted partnerships that will guide our work into the future. The plan is divided into four main parts. The first outlines the Commission's DEI commitment, including the purpose, goal, and vision of the Commission in creating a DEI Strategic Plan, the directives from the states of Oregon and Washington regarding DEI, as well as establishing accountability within the agency and methods for evaluating progress. The second part focuses on the Commission's organizational operations, and where we are at in the process of integrating DEI components. The third section highlights our approach for anchoring current programs in DEI, including reviewing the Management Plan for opportunities to be more equitable in our policies, as well as in the Commission's other programs such as Vital Sign Indicators and development reviews. The fourth section covers how we engage with everyone outside of the Commission, which includes building relationships and establishing partnerships with organizations and individuals.

Part I: DEI Commitment

a. Management Plan

The Management Plan for the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area establishes goals and policies for resource protection in the NSA. In 2020, the Commission and USDA Forest Service completed its decennial review and revision of the Management Plan. Throughout the process, staff received comments from individuals encouraging the Commission to review the Plan with a focus on addressing how the Commission's policies impact communities of color who have historically and currently face systemic racism and exclusion.

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 in the Gorge 2020 Management Plan.

DEI Statement

Following the August 2020 meeting, Commissioners and staff worked together to develop a draft DEI statement that staff then 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) unanimously adopted the following **Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Statement** in the revised Management Plan:

The Gorge Commission recognizes that the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area represents rich and diverse cultures. The National Scenic Area is located within the ancestral territories of Indigenous peoples who have protected these lands since time immemorial. The Gorge Commission acknowledges that European settlers and their governing authorities took Indigenous land and resources within this region by unjust and inequitable means. Indigenous leaders negotiated treaties that reserved rights to fish at usual and accustomed sites, hunt, and gather traditional foods and medicines on public lands and waters throughout their ceded lands. Despite these treaties, Indigenous people have experienced loss of land and resources essential to their spiritual, cultural, and economic well-being and livelihoods.

Other cultures in the Gorge have also prospered and been discriminated against. Immigrants from Japan, China, Latin America, and other places came to the Gorge to work in agriculture, build railroads, and prepare Columbia River fish and produce for world markets. Their land and possessions were also seized at times, some were taken to internment camps during World War II, and many were discriminated against by unjust federal and state laws and bigotry from fellow residents. The Gorge Commission acknowledges and regrets Oregon's history of structural racism,

including its exclusionary laws and its 1857 Constitution barring Black citizens from residing in Oregon, voting, owning property, or entering in contracts.

The Gorge Commission acknowledges that this legacy created systemic inequities in the policies and decision-making of National Scenic Area governments and commissions. The Gorge Commission commits to listening, learning, and understanding, and developing diversity, equity, and inclusion strategies that take into account and address this legacy.

DEI Policies

In addition to this statement, the Commission outlined the following **DEI policies** in the revised Management Plan:

1. The Gorge Commission shall develop and adopt a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Plan to address these systemic inequities identified or discovered in its work and policies. The Plan shall be reviewed and updated as necessary.
2. The Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Plan shall include specific measures and outcomes to:
 - a. Ensure a diverse staff and commission;
 - b. Develop and apply an equity lens to implementation of the Management Plan, Gorge Commission operations, and policy decisions; and
 - c. Engage under-represented and marginalized communities in the Columbia Gorge region.
3. Based upon the measures and outcomes of the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Plan, the Gorge Commission may determine that conditions in the National Scenic Area have significantly changed and may exercise its authority to develop responsive Management Plan amendments pursuant to section 6(h).

b. Tribal Sovereignty

The Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area is located within the ancestral territories of Indigenous peoples who have protected these lands and waters since time immemorial. The Commission recognizes the sovereignty and leadership of the four Columbia River Treaty Tribes in managing these lands and waters today. Through government-to-government consultation and ongoing work with Treaty Tribes' staff, the Commission is committed to strengthening support for the priorities and initiatives of the Treaty Tribes through our programs and operations.

Land Acknowledgement

The Gorge Commission's approved Land Acknowledgement is on page 2 of this document. At the heart of the Commission's DEI statement in the Management Plan is the recognition of the Indigenous peoples who are the original stewards of the lands and waters within the NSA. Staff wrote the Commission's land acknowledgement with representatives from the

Columbia River Treaty Tribes, including three Commissioners. Staff also consulted with the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission (CRITFC) and the Confluence Project Library. The Commission approved this acknowledgment at its May 11, 2021 Commission meeting.

The Commission's land acknowledgement is intended to bring the Management Plan's words into practice, grounding all of our work together in recognition of the Indigenous peoples on whose ancestral lands the NSA is located and the Tribes who hold treaty rights to these lands and waters today. Spoken at the beginning of each Commission meeting, these words offer a moment to reflect on the connection between past and present, and to re-commit us, each time we gather, to work together toward a more just and equitable future. Staff recognize that we have much to learn about how the historical and ongoing legacy of colonialism affects National Scenic Area policies, and we are committed to better understanding and addressing these impacts as we center equity in our work going forward.

c. Washington's DEI Commitments

Washington State's Human Resources Directive 20-02 for state agencies includes the requirement to update or create workforce DEI policies and procedures. Although the Gorge Commission is not a state agency, staff chose to follow the directive and in October 2020, developed and submitted agency DEI policies and procedures.

Washington State's Office of Equity has identified the following vision, values, and goals related to equity in Washington:

Vision: Everyone in Washington has full access to the opportunities, power, and resources they need to flourish and achieve their full potential.

Values: Access + Belonging + Dignity + Equity + Justice + Love + Ubuntu¹

Goals:

1. Drive pro-equity and social justice for all.
2. Center racial justice.
3. Ensure equitable access.
4. Build a culture of belonging.
5. End disparities, including racial and ethnic disparities, to achieve equitable outcomes.²

In March 2022, Governor Inslee issued Executive Order 22-04, which gives direction for implementing the inaugural five-year Washington State Pro-Equity Anti-Racism (PEAR) Plan & Playbook ("PEAR Plan & Playbook"), Washington State's approach for achieving pro-equity and social justice across state government. The PEAR Plan & Playbook is designed to

¹ Ubuntu definition: "A quality that includes the essential human virtues; compassion and humanity".

² Washington State Office of Equity. <https://equity.wa.gov/>

help agencies partner with employees and communities facing inequities to reframe state government to work in a way that reduces disparities and improves equitable and just outcomes for everyone in Washington, now and for generations to come.³

The Washington Office of Equity presents the concept of a **proactive equity** (“pro-equity”) practice as: *...[T]he proactive way of doing equity work involves starting from the knowledge that we live in a society permeated by racism and bigotry, so we should be looking to combat or control for that in every action — no matter whether there’s an “incident” or not.*⁴

The definition of **anti-racism** offered by the State of Washington is: *“A process of actively identifying and opposing racism. The goal of anti-racism is to challenge racism and actively change the policies, behaviors, and beliefs that perpetuate racist ideas and actions. Anti-racism is rooted in action. It is about taking steps to eliminate racism at the individual, institutional, and structural levels.”*⁵

Required Actions for 2022

The Gorge Commission and other Washington State agencies developed their own agency PEAR Strategic Plans and submitted them to the state in September 2022. The Commission is establishing a PEAR team to advise on the DEI Strategic Plan and support the Commission in working towards its DEI goals. For the Commission’s PEAR Strategic Plan, staff identified three key business lines, or the major categories of products or services our agency offers. These are: Land Use Permitting; Long-Range Planning (Management Plan standards); and Economic Development Certifications.

d. Oregon’s DEI Commitments

The Oregon Governor’s Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion along with the Office of Cultural Change created a statewide DEI Action Plan, which was released in August 2021. The intent of the Plan is to explicitly work on dismantling institutional and structural racism in state government.⁶ The State of Oregon DEI Action Plan outlines the following racial equity vision, values, and goals for Oregon:

Racial Equity Vision:

- Dismantle institutional and structural racism in Oregon state government, and by doing so, have resounding impacts on the communities of our great state.

³ Executive Order 22-04: “Implementing The Washington State Pro-Equity Anti-Racism (Pear) Plan & Playbook”.

<https://www.governor.wa.gov/node/2654574>

⁴ <https://medium.com/228accelerator/designing-the-future-the-power-of-a-proactive-equity-practice-feb63d52ada5>

⁵ <https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-anti-racism-5071426>

⁶ State of Oregon Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Action Plan: A Roadmap to Racial Equity and Belonging.

https://www.oregon.gov/lcd/Commission/Documents/2021-09_Item-2_Directors-Report-Attachment-A_DEI-Action-Plan.pdf

- Build a more equitable Oregon where everyone has the opportunity to thrive and everyone’s voice is heard.
- Ensure an inclusive and welcoming Oregon for all by celebrating our collective diversity of race, ethnicity, culture, color, disability, gender, gender identity, marital status, national origin, age, religion, sex, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, veteran status, and immigration status.

Racial Equity Values:

- Putting racial equity at the forefront while understanding intersectionality.
- Prioritize equity, anti-racism, and racial justice actions.
- Foster internal and external partnerships.
- Ensure collective responsibility and accountability.

Racial Equity Goals:

1. Establish strong leadership to eradicate racial and other forms of disparities in all aspects of state government.
2. Center equity in budgeting, planning, procurement, and policymaking.
3. Strengthen public involvement through transformational community engagement, access to information, and decision-making opportunities.
4. Improve equitable access to services, programs, and resources including education, health, housing, human services, environmental justice, criminal justice, and economic opportunities.
5. Foster an inclusive workplace culture and promote equitable hiring, retention, and promotion practices.

In June 2022, the Office of the Governor issued Executive Order 22-11 “Relating to Affirmative Action, Equal Employment Opportunity, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.” This executive order contains several directives for agencies aimed at promoting affirmative action and diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workplace.

e. Key Definitions

To develop the Commission’s DEI Strategic Plan, Commissioners and staff must have a shared understanding of the terms, *diversity*, *equity*, and *inclusion*. Washington State provided the Gorge Commission with a list of definitions of DEI-related terms. Given that the Commission will be submitting a PEAR Plan to the State of Washington, staff recommends the Commission use the following definitions to guide our work on the Commission’s DEI Strategic Plan:

Diversity

Describes the presence of differences within a given setting, collective, or group. An individual is not diverse – a person is unique. Diversity is about a collective or a group and

exists in relationship to others. A team, an organization, a family, a neighborhood, and a community can be diverse. A person can bring diversity of thought, experience, and trait, (seen and unseen) to a team — and the person is still an individual.⁷

Equity

The act of developing, strengthening, and supporting procedural and outcome fairness in systems, procedures, and resource distribution mechanisms to create equitable (not equal) opportunity for all people. Equity is distinct from equality which refers to everyone having the same treatment without accounting for differing needs or circumstances. Equity has a focus on eliminating barriers that have prevented the full participation of historically and currently oppressed groups.⁸

Inclusion

Intentionally designed, active, and ongoing engagement with people that ensures opportunities and pathways for participation in all aspects of group, organization, or community, including decision-making processes. Inclusion is not a natural consequence of diversity. There must be intentional and consistent efforts to create and sustain a participative environment. Inclusion refers to how groups show that people are valued as respected members of the group, team, organization, or community. Inclusion is often created through progressive, consistent, actions to expand, include, and share.⁹

For the purposes of developing the Commission’s DEI Strategic Plan, the following terms are defined:

Goals are descriptions of what we want to accomplish for a particular section of the Strategic Plan. To the extent possible, Strategic Plan goals are designed to be “SMART”: specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound.

Strategies are effective approaches for advancing progress toward DEI goals. Strategies are intended to guide the Commission’s DEI work for years to come.

f. DEI Strategic Planning Process

Overall Goal

The Commission has integrated DEI in organizational mission and vision statements which are actively being used to guide the agency’s programs and operations.

⁷ “Diversity & Inclusion.” U.S. Office of Personnel Management. Accessed October 9, 2019. <https://www.opm.gov/policy-dataoversight/diversity-and-inclusion/>

⁸ “DEI Glossary of Equity-Related Terms”. Washington State Office of Financial Management. <https://ofm.wa.gov/sites/default/files/public/shr/Diversity/SubCommit/DEI-Glossary%20of%20Equity%20-%20Related%20Terms%20Version%202.pdf>

⁹ “DEI Glossary of Equity-Related Terms”. Washington State Office of Financial Management. <https://ofm.wa.gov/sites/default/files/public/shr/Diversity/SubCommit/DEI-Glossary%20of%20Equity%20-%20Related%20Terms%20Version%202.pdf>

Purpose

As stated in the above policies from the Management Plan, the purpose of the Commission's DEI Strategic Plan is to address systemic inequities identified in the Commission's work and policies.

Vision

The Gorge Commission reflects the unique demographics of the people who live and work in the NSA and leads as a pro-equity, anti-racist agency through our practices and policies.

g. Evaluating Progress and Outcomes

The Commission's DEI Strategic Plan serves as a guide for moving from the preparation phase to ongoing implementation and evaluation. The Commission's DEI Strategic Plan will be a living document and will be reviewed and updated as necessary. As stated in the DEI Policies in the Management Plan, the Strategic Plan shall include specific measures and outcomes to:

- a. Ensure a diverse staff and commission;
- b. Develop and apply an equity lens to implementation of the Management Plan, Gorge Commission operations, and policy decisions; and
- c. Engage under-represented and marginalized communities in the Columbia Gorge region.

h. Expectations for Advancing DEI

In recognizing the positional privilege that the Executive Director and Commissioners hold and their associated responsibility, the agency further directs the Executive Director and Commissioners, with coordination and support from human resources, to do the following:

- Promote diversity in all hiring activities including recruiting, interviewing and selection.
- Recruit and appoint culturally, racially and ethnically diverse managers, leaders and staff by posting and recruiting through diversity and inclusion job posting boards in addition to traditional job posting boards.
- Ensure required qualifications listed for a job are truly necessary for a position. Where possible, other comparable experience should be considered in lieu of education requirements.
- Actively engage in initiating, promoting and championing inclusive strategies to retain workforce diversity in race, ethnicity, color, sex, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, veteran status and disability status.
- Ensure equal access to growth and leadership development, educational and training opportunities, succession planning, mentoring opportunities and other

resources. This includes ensuring competitive internal and external recruitments rather than direct appointments where possible.

- Ensure diversity, equity and inclusion is a continuously present focus and a core value in our agency decisions, especially as they relate to the allocation of resources.
- Use the voices and perspectives of marginalized and oppressed communities to influence and inform our priorities now and in the future.
- Make the agency an anti-oppression institution with inclusive, full participation in decision-making and a purposeful commitment to relationships with marginalized and oppressed communities.
- Support progressive facilities and environment planning to transform the workplace into a welcoming, inclusive and accessible environment for all staff and stakeholders.
- Actively listen to the experiences of staff, especially those from marginalized groups, and take action to change discriminatory or exclusionary practices.
- Continue to assess and correct workforce inequities throughout the agency including leadership appointments, promotional opportunities, training requests, access to flexible and alternate work modalities, and compensation.¹⁰

i. Defining and Establishing Leadership Accountability

The Executive Director and identified staff lead(s) are responsible for advancing the DEI Strategic Plan at the staff level. The Commission chair and other appointed commissioners are responsible for advancing the DEI Strategic Plan at the Commission level. Staff and Commissioners will follow identified best practices to regularly evaluate the Commission's progress and assess how well the Commission is applying DEI components to its work and operations.

¹⁰ From the Columbia River Gorge Commission's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Policy and Procedures as required by the State of Washington for agencies.

Part II: DEI in Organizational Operations

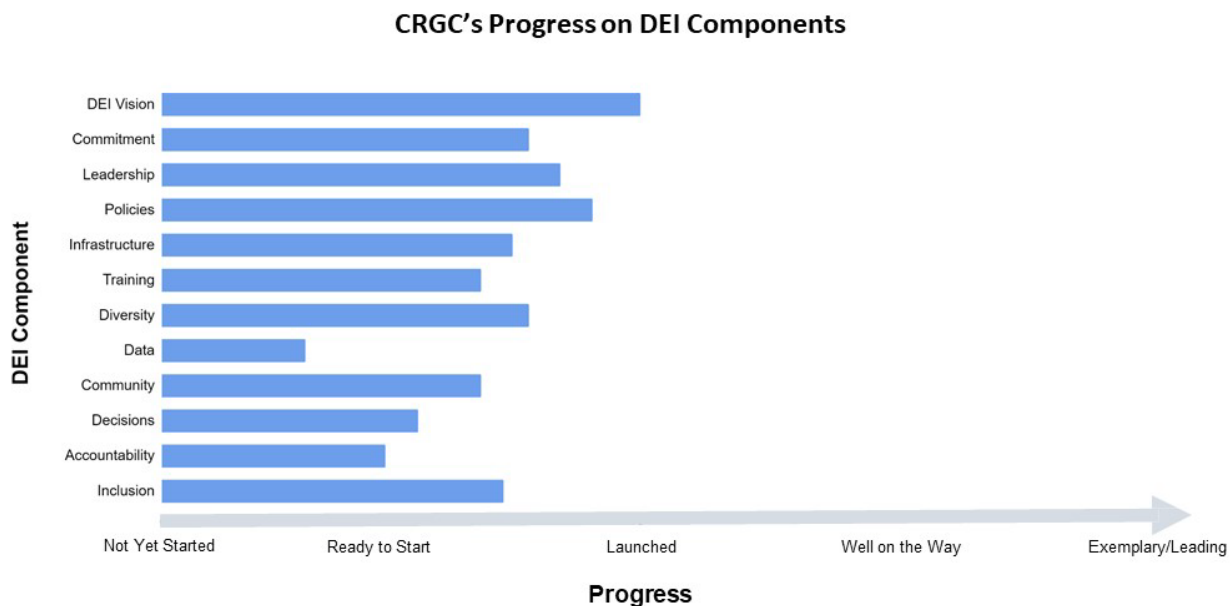
a. DEI Spectrum Tool Assessment

In early 2021, 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.

DEI Component	Definition
DEI Vision	The organization can envision a DEI future and uses this vision to guide its DEI work.
Commitment	An organization has institutionalized its commitment to DEI.
Leadership	Organizational leaders recognize the importance of DEI and prioritize, resource, and lead the effort.
Policies	The organization has DEI policies and an organizational plan with clear goals, objectives and indicators of progress and success.
Infrastructure	The organization has committed resources and structures (i.e., an equity committee) to support the DEI transformation
Training	An organization fosters ongoing DEI learning and growth for its staff, management, and board.
Diversity	The organization has policies and strategies for strengthening and maintaining diversity; staff and board are representative of the community they serve; effective retention strategies are implemented.
Data	The organization routinely collects and analyzes disaggregated data for all programmatic and operational work and uses the information in planning and decision-making.
Community	Mutually beneficial, accountable, and equitable partnerships exist with diverse organizations and leaders from communities experiencing disparities.
Decisions	An organization's decisions are systematically guided by equity considerations.
Accountability	An organization has developed mechanisms to create and maintain accountability to its constituents.
Inclusion	The organization values and reflects the voice, contributions and interests of its diverse staff and constituencies and has created systems, policies, and practices to maintain this organizational culture.

Meyer Memorial Trust DEI Spectrum Tool, <https://mmt.org>.

For each DEI Component, Commissioners and staff were asked to indicate the point where they believed the Gorge Commission to be, from “not yet started” to “exemplary/leading.” Below is a summary of the combined staff and Commissioner responses to the survey.



Each of the DEI Components and how the Commission scored itself on those components is listed below. The goal condition for each of these components is also listed. Based on Commission guidance on the potential goals below, specific strategies may be developed to reach each desired goal state.

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

Goal: Has integrated DEI in organizational mission and vision statements which are actively being used to guide the organization’s programs and operations.

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

Goal: A commitment to DEI is fully institutionalized throughout the organization both internally and externally.

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

Goal: Organization is a DEI leader and is helping to build the field and best practices; leadership demonstrates accountability to clients, constituents, and stakeholders.

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

Goal: Has DEI policies and an organizational with clear goals, strategies, and indicators of progress.

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

Goal: Work on DEI issues is integrated into every aspect of organizational culture and infrastructure.

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

Goal: Fosters ongoing DEI training, growth, and leadership among management, staff, and Commission in line with an equity plan/strategy; staff are held accountable to DEI-related practices.

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

Goal: Has policies and strategies for strengthening and maintaining organizational diversity; staff and Commission represent the diversity of the community it serves; effective retention strategies are implemented.

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

Goal: Routinely collects, disaggregates, and analyzes demographic data for all programmatic and operational work; uses the information in planning and decision-making.

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.

Goal: Has strong, mutually beneficial, accountable, and equitable partnerships with diverse organizations and leaders from communities facing disparities.

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.

Goal: Decisions regarding organizational policies, practices, and resource allocation are systematically guided by DEI considerations.

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.

Goal: All evaluation and accountability mechanisms for the organization, its projects, programs, management, staff and Commission include specific DEI-related metrics.

Inclusion: *Launched:* There is an appreciation of the voice and perspective of staff and Commission 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.

Goal: All staff and Commission feel valued, and all aspects of the organization reflect the voices, 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.

b. Educational Opportunities

Staff and the Commission acknowledge that we do not have all of the answers, and that we must be open to learning. Education is crucial to advancing DEI goals, as it can help each of us understand our own culture and where biases show up so that we can better understand others' experiences without judgment. It is important for staff and Commissioners to participate in continuous learning, development, and trainings in the areas of diversity, inclusion, cultural humility, oppression, equity, and recognizing and mitigating implicit bias as funding is available. Staff and Commissioners are encouraged to participate in no-cost trainings whenever possible, but to ensure that the providers of the training are being fairly compensated in other ways. Additional resources will be needed to facilitate and improve engagement with diverse individuals and partners.

Educational Opportunities	
Goal	Strategies
The Commission fosters ongoing DEI training, growth and leadership among management, staff, and Commission in line with an equity plan; staff are held accountable to DEI-related practices.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep staff and Commission informed of trainings to increase knowledge and understanding. • All new employees and Commissioners receive orientation that includes the Commission’s DEI goals, policies, procedures, and expectations. • Create opportunities for key staff and/or Commissioners to attend DEI training or leadership development program(s) • Utilize relevant DEI tools, resources and best practices to advance the Commission’s DEI work • Engage external consultants or partners to aid the Commission with its DEI efforts • Secure additional funding to support the organization’s DEI work • Create staff position(s) focused on strengthening the organization’s DEI work • Increase the number of bi/multilingual and bi/multicultural staff

c. Hiring and Appointment

Hiring and appointment is one of the most important steps in making progress toward the Commission’s DEI goals. An inclusive Commission culture sets the foundation for people from diverse backgrounds to be their most authentic selves and do their best work. The Commission must address unconscious bias throughout every stage of the staff hiring and Commission appointment process.

Hiring and appointment	
Goal	Strategies
The Commission has policies and strategies for strengthening and maintaining organizational diversity; staff and Commission represent the diversity of the community it serves; effective retention strategies are implemented.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and address bias and subjectivity in the sourcing and interview process. • Adopt inclusive candidate sourcing methods. • Recruit for and retain diverse representation on staff and Commission. • Evaluate candidates consistently and fairly by using strategies such as anonymous application review. • Collect applicant demographic data in application form. • Share the Commission’s mission and DEI commitment statement clearly on website to allow candidates to see how their values align with ours.

d. Agency Operational Policies

The Commission and staff recognize that although we cannot change the oppressive and discriminatory practices of the past, we have control over the workplace culture we create today and in the future. Much work remains for us as an agency, Commission, and individuals to accept our responsibility and seize our opportunity to dismantle the internal policies, procedures, systems, and practices that perpetuate inequity. The ultimate success of these efforts hinges on leadership embracing this work and holding themselves and the Commission accountable. The table below outlines goals and strategies to guide the Commission’s efforts to operationalize equity across staff and Commission operations. Specific actions and activity measures will be identified as part of developing the DEI Strategic Plan.

Agency Operational Policies	
Goals	Strategies
<p>All staff and Commissioners 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>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognize our role in perpetuating inequity through our own individual biases, whether conscious or unconscious. Be willing to walk the journey toward self-awareness and reflection. • Co-create with our colleagues a welcoming, supportive, safe, affirming, and respectful work environment. • Accept that mistakes will be made, acknowledged, learned from and improved upon as much of this journey requires learning through iterations of growth and failure. • Engage and support respectful dialogue and courageous conversations even when uncomfortable about racism, privilege, white fragility, dominant culture, oppression and historical trauma. • Participate in continuous learning, development and training offered in the areas of diversity, inclusion, cultural humility, oppression, equity, and recognizing and mitigating implicit bias through the Washington State Learning Center. • Encourage staff and Commissioners to take the Harvard University Implicit Association Test (IAT). • Recognize why a diverse and representative state workforce is beneficial to all. • Identify and address microaggressions as they occur in our workplace, whether intentional or unintentional, and use these as opportunities to educate, learn, grow, listen and respond with respect. • Offer support and encouragement by honoring each individual’s truth through the affirmation and validation of their values, beliefs, principles and lived experiences.
<p>The Commission has DEI policies and an organizational DEI Strategic Plan with clear goals, strategies and indicators of progress.</p>	
<p>Work on DEI issues is integrated into every aspect of organizational culture and infrastructure.</p>	

Part III: DEI with Equitable and Inclusive Programs

Staff acknowledges that inequities are not happenstance; they have been created and sustained over time and will not go away on their own. It is essential for the Commission to identify and address where existing policies, programs, and practices perpetuate inequities.

Equitable and Inclusive Programs	
Goals	Strategies
DEI is integrated into all of the Commission’s programs in a strategic and explicit way.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Target programs to serve communities or populations facing disparities • Target programs in geographic areas where the greatest inequities exist • Develop and implement culturally and linguistically appropriate services and practices • Provide translated materials and interpretation to ensure diverse communities can participate • Provide programs and services in non-traditional settings that increase access to those services • Conduct outreach and communications to engage diverse communities in the organization’s work
The Commission routinely collects, disaggregates and analyzes demographic data for all programmatic and operational work; uses the information in planning and decision-making.	
Decisions regarding organizational policies, practices and resource allocation are systematically guided by DEI considerations.	

a. Management Plan Review

The Commission committed to reviewing the current Management Plan with a focus on equity. As noted in the DEI Policies in the Management Plan, the Commission may amend the Management Plan based upon the measures and outcomes of the DEI Strategic Plan if the Commission determines that conditions in the NSA have significantly changed. As the Commission looks to the next Management Plan review, this will be a key focus.

Management Plan Review	
Goal	Strategies
The Management Plan reflects the Commission’s DEI vision, values, and goals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the Management Plan with a focus on equity. • Review the Plan for inadequacies, opportunities for improvements

Questions to consider when reviewing Management Plan policies¹¹:

1. Given what we have learned from the data and stakeholder involvement, how will the policy increase or decrease racial equity? Who would benefit from or be burdened by this policy?
2. What are potential unintended consequences? What are the ways in which the policy could be modified to enhance positive impacts or reduce negative impacts?
3. Are there ways in which existing partnerships could be strengthened to maximize impact? How will we partner with stakeholders for long-term positive change?
4. Are the impacts aligned with the Commission’s DEI vision, values, and goals?
5. How and why does the Management Plan impact people of various racial and ethnic backgrounds, income levels, and physical and mental abilities?
6. Look at the intent of the policies when they were created, and ask:
 - a. Who is this serving?
 - b. Who’s needs are not being met?
 - c. Is there any healing we need to do from past policies and engagements?

b. Anchoring Ongoing Programs in DEI

Development Reviews

The majority of the of the Commission’s day-to-day work is the review of development proposals and the monitoring of NSA counties’ development reviews and decisions. This provides an important opportunity to advance the Commission’s DEI goals through the evaluation of the development review process and monitoring with a focus on equity.

Development Reviews	
Goal	Strategies
NSA development applications are available and accessible to all, and the review and monitoring process is equitable and consistent across the NSA.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify the barriers that exist in the application process and create strategies for removing those barriers. • Identify inconsistencies in development reviews and monitoring and work to rectify inconsistencies in process, review, and monitoring. • Identify barriers to compliance and develop strategies for removing the barriers. • Provide each applicant with an evaluation form at the end of each development review to provide the Commission/county with feedback on the process • Make evaluation forms accessible and understandable to all

¹¹ Adapted from the Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE) Racial Equity Toolkit https://racialequityalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/GARE-Racial_Equity_Toolkit.pdf.

Climate Change Action Plan

The Commission’s Draft Climate Change Action Plan (CCAP) emphasizes learning from diverse communities in the Gorge about how they experience climate change impacts and ways the Commission can improve outcomes for those disproportionately affected by climate change. One of the overarching priorities highlighted in the CCAP is equity in community engagement and climate action outcomes. Social and economic resilience are important outcomes the Commission hopes to achieve through climate change action planning, informed by the DEI Strategic Plan. Topics identified in the CCAP with high potential for improving equity outcomes include Tribal Treaty Rights; nature-based tourism; agricultural uses and products; and regional transportation, including transit. The table below includes the Goal, Strategy, and Priority Actions identified for inclusive climate change work in the CCAP. Below are definitions of key terms used in the CCAP and this table:

Priority Actions: Specific activities we intend to accomplish from 2022-2025. Actions can include policy development, best management practices, education, monitoring, and other partnership work to achieve Climate Change Action Plan goals.

Action Plan Progress Measures: Quantitative or qualitative measures that track progress toward the goals for each climate adaptation and mitigation priority.

Climate Change Action Plan			
Goal	Strategy	Priority Actions	Action Plan progress measures
By 2025, the Commission has completed a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Plan with specific, measurable, and timebound goals to advance climate equity.	Engage diverse communities and partners to plan for climate change and implement adaptation and mitigation actions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a forum for regular input from diverse perspectives to the Commission’s climate work. Include youth participants. Ensure that the agency’s PEAR Team, described below and part of the state of Washington’s directive to advance diversity, equity, and inclusion, is empowered to shape implementation of this Action Plan and future updates to it. 	[To be determined with guidance from PEAR team]
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Present CCAP to Tribal Councils and invite continued coordination so that the plan, our actions, and future versions of the plan serve Tribal priorities for climate change adaptation and mitigation. Explore opportunities to share stories, oral histories, and qualitative information in ways that respect confidentiality and Tribal data sovereignty. 	

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue working with The Next Door to understand and be responsive to the interests and needs of Latino/Hispanic and Spanish-speaking communities in the Gorge. Provide meaningful, convenient opportunities to contribute ideas. • Host or co-host a community celebration that introduces the National Scenic Area and the Gorge Commission to those less familiar. Provide Spanish or potentially multi-lingual engagement opportunities. • Through VSI, develop interactive web-based tools, such as story maps and indicator dashboards, to share information about climate change work in the NSA. • Incorporate recommendations from the Oregon Climate Equity Blueprint. Through DEI work, better define who is most “climate vulnerable” in the Gorge and in what ways, to inform future actions. • Launch the Gorge Climate Stewards Program, in partnership with OSU Extension and local experts. The program is an intensive, interdisciplinary, action-oriented training for leaders and potential leaders in the Columbia River Gorge to develop their skills in climate stewardship and carry out capstone projects that further this Action Plan. Graduates of the program become a cohort of active, empowered climate stewards. 	
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Vital Sign Indicators Program

Given that climate change and equity intersect with the Gorge Commission’s work in many ways, both directly and indirectly, the process for updating and selecting Vital Sign Indicators consider both climate change impacts and opportunities to advance equity in our work. For example, monitoring the water temperature in streams critical for native fish species has benefits for a variety of people. Identifying and describing how indicators connect with equity considerations is a key part of indicator development, selection, and data analysis whenever possible.

Part IV: DEI in Community Engagement and Outreach

In late 2021, the Gorge Commission partnered with The Next Door, a local non-profit, for community outreach support in developing a DEI Strategic Plan. Two Listening Sessions were facilitated on the Commission's behalf with diverse members of the community to better understand their values, interests, and needs. The Next Door staff provided recommendations to the Commission based on the outcomes of the Listening Sessions, including: ideas for how to engage in public outreach more effectively, especially to historically underrepresented communities in the Gorge; some suggestions for short, medium, and long-term goals for the Commission's DEI work; and recommendations for trainings for staff and Commissioners when funding is available.

a. Establishing Relational Partnerships

As part of creating an agency PEAR Plan for the State of Washington, the Gorge Commission is focused on cultivating "relational partnerships." The Washington Office of Equity describes "relational partnerships" this way:

Relational Partnerships: Empathy-centered collaboration between government and people groups who have been excluded and marginalized by government decisions and actions to undo harm and advance Pro-Equity Anti-Racism (PEAR) outcomes. Relationships are assessed and continuously improved.

A relational partnership is about people interacting with the agency, not governments interacting with the agency. Together, community members and the agency identify the problem, define the scope, and design the solution, and community members participate in decision-making. A relational partnership means that the investment, benefits, and risk are shared. For example, the Gorge Commission may fund a project, compensate community members, and assume legal risk, and the community member may invest time, energy, and risk their reputation if decisions or services do not serve their community well or cause harm. The Commission is exploring this relational partnership model as a guide for establishing the Commission's PEAR Team.

b. PEAR Team

Washington State Executive Order 22-04 directs agencies to establish a PEAR Team to develop an agency PEAR Plan and to advise the Commission and lend expertise and guidance to help in decision-making. The PEAR Team includes the executive director, key employees, community members, and partners from public and private academic sectors. In addition to (or possibly including) the PEAR Team, the Commission is considering convening a community advisory committee. The purpose of this committee is to facilitate conversations with community members to provide the Commission with guidance on developing and implementing the PEAR Plan, the Commission's DEI Strategic Plan, and Climate Change Action Plan, while building trust and strengthening relationships with community groups.

The Gorge Commission is currently expanding its PEAR Team. An initial PEAR team of the Executive Director and a few Commission staff developed the agency PEAR Plan that was submitted to the State of Washington in 2022. The PEAR Team will assist Commission staff in implementation of the Strategic Plan by helping to define specific measures and outcomes for the goals outlined in this plan.

Next Steps

Staff will be providing updates on plan implementation at Commission meetings. With current resources, staff plan to identify members and convene a meeting of the PEAR team in the next 4-6 months. We requested additional funding to do additional outreach and community engagement as well as translation of key Commission materials. If we receive additional funding, an updated workplan to implement the Strategic Plan will be presented.