



Recommendations for Internal Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Efforts

Washington County DEI "Think Tank"



DECEMBER 2018

PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND

In 2018, the County Administrative Office undertook a process to develop a formal plan for its internal diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) work. It convened a “think tank” to provide direction for the organization’s DEI priorities and strategies related to two key functions: *human resources and procurement*.

This is an initial report from the Think Tank about its work to date. The Think Tank is making two recommendations:

- **Create a Five Year DEI Plan** – Create a five year internal DEI plan that would be developed over the next 12 months via a consultant-facilitated process. Development of the plan should begin with an organizational assessment and should include robust staff communication and input throughout the process.
- **Adopt an Interim DEI Plan** – Adopt a short-term DEI plan that would provide direction for the organization while the longer-term plan is being developed.

DEFINITIONS AND FRAMEWORK

The Think Tank feels it is important to ground our DEI efforts in a common understanding of terms. We propose that the following definitions guide our current DEI planning efforts:

Diversity

Diversity includes all the ways in which people differ, and it encompasses all the different characteristics that make one individual or group different from another. It is all-inclusive and recognizes everyone and every group as part of the diversity that we engage in service to the community. A broad definition includes not only race, ethnicity, gender – the groups that most often come to mind when “diversity” is used – but also gender identity, age, national origin, religion, mental or physical ability, learning styles, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, education, marital status, language and physical appearance. It also involves different ideas and perspectives.

Equity

Equity means striving to identify and eliminate visible and invisible barriers that have prevented the full participation of some groups. The principle of equity acknowledges that there are historically underserved and underrepresented populations and that fairness regarding these unbalanced conditions is needed to assist

equality in the provision of effective opportunities to all groups. An equitable outcome ensures that everyone has the resources they need to succeed. To be achieved and sustained, equity needs to be thought of as a structural and systemic concept.

Inclusion

Inclusion is the degree to which diverse individuals are able to participate fully in the decision-making process within an organization or group. While a truly “inclusive” group is necessarily diverse, a “diverse” group may or may not be inclusive. Inclusion is the act of creating environments in which any individual or group can be and feel welcomed, respected, supported and valued. Through our active, intentional, authentic and ongoing engagement with diversity — in people, policies, County services and in our communities (intellectual, social, cultural, geographical) — we can more effectively leverage our resources to advance our collective capabilities.

Leading with Race Framework

Throughout our work, the Think Tank studied DEI programs from several of our peer jurisdictions locally and DEI programs used nationally in order to ground ourselves in best practice. This included interviews with staff from the City of Hillsboro, Clackamas County, Metro, and the Port of Portland. This research revealed a range of approaches. After extensive discussion, the Think Tank recommends an approach among these best practices known as “Leading with Race.”

In our ongoing commitment to promote public interest and maintain public trust, it is important that Washington County acknowledge the existence of systemic and structural racism inherent within government entities. We understand that over the course of our nation’s history, these structural barriers have led to policies, procedures and practices which disproportionately affect people of color in virtually all conditions of social existence. By leading with racial equity, we have learned that organizations are able to reduce barriers for people of color and achieve equitable outcomes for all, while at the same time build or increase understanding in the dominant culture.

Leading with a racial equity framework does not exclude other oppressed identities. In fact, by leading with race, other identity markers are also addressed as race cuts across all forms of identities. By focusing on solutions to issues that negatively impact our communities of color, and by then broadening those solutions to include as many people as possible, we are able to make improvements for all communities.

A common misunderstanding is that only racism is addressed by leading with racial equity. It is actually the opposite. Racial equity exists at the intersections of other marginalized communities, including but not limited to gender, sexuality, ability and class. For example, by improving the County’s ability to recruit and retain employees of color to join in our organization’s focus on public service, all employees benefit from a more welcoming and inclusive culture and work environment. Our public service mission is better supported as women, LGBTQ, disabled, veterans or other groups of employees experience the benefits of racial disparities being reduced throughout our workforce.

When institutions focus on racial equity, it is an acknowledgment that the organization’s policies and/or practices can create disparate outcomes for communities of color. In order for racial equity to have long-lasting impact, there needs to be discussion and action on how an organization’s policies, programs and practices advantage some groups while disadvantaging others. Racial equity tools that are used to eliminate institutional racism can also be used to dismantle institutional oppressions for other marginalized groups.

Addressing all areas of marginalization in this way is increasingly a matter of public trust for the community we serve. As local and regional governments deepen our ability to eliminate racial inequity, we will be better equipped to pursue the public interest and strengthen public trust.

SHORT-TERM DEI PLAN (12 MONTHS)

The Think Tank recommends the adoption of a shorter-term DEI plan to guide the organization’s work while the longer-term plan is being developed. A proposal for an interim DEI Plan is below (pp. 6-7).

PROPOSAL FOR DEVELOPMENT OF A LONGER-TERM DEI PLAN (five years)

The Think Tank proposes that Washington County hire a consultant in order to facilitate the development of a five year plan that provides vision and direction for the organization’s internal DEI work. Scope of work for the consultant (or consultants) could include the following:

1. **Background** – A contractor (or contractors) would provide facilitation and technical assistance to the County in the development of a five year plan for its internal diversity, equity and inclusion work. Content of the DEI plan would include human resources/workforce development, procurement (contracting and vendoring), and the Limited English Assistance Plan (LEAP).

The work would be accomplished under the direction of the County Administrative Office, in consultation with Human Resources and Purchasing leadership staff, and with advice from a staff DEI steering committee. Development of the plan should begin with an organizational assessment and should include robust staff input and communication throughout the process.

2. **Objectives** – The work of the successful contractor (or contractors) is as follows:

- Conduct an organizational assessment
- Facilitate development of an initial DEI plan focused on workforce development and purchasing
- Facilitate outreach to County staff to seek input on the plan
- Revise the draft plan based on input and produce a final internal DEI Plan

3. **Scope of Work, Deliverables and Schedule:**

• **Phase I – Organizational Assessment and Planning Roadmap (estimated February-March 2019)**

1. Review background documents including previous DEI plans, LEAP and Title VI documents, Affirmative Action Plan, EEO Plan and other related documents.
2. Conduct an organizational assessment.
3. Create a roadmap for development of an internal DEI Plan. The roadmap should

recognize the organization’s readiness (per the organizational assessment) and should include plans for robust participation in the plan’s development by staff from across the organization.

• **Phase II – Development of Draft Plan (estimated April-Sept 2019)**

1. Facilitate a planning process as outlined in the roadmap.
2. The planning process should include robust communication and engagement with staff from across the organization as the draft plan is developed. Outreach activities could include an online survey, staff “town halls” and similar activities.
3. The plan’s content should include:
 - a. Goals, strategies and activities with associated metrics.
 - b. Recommendations for needed policies, procedures, systems, practices and programs that recognize the organization’s readiness and the diverse organizational cultures of our departments.
 - c. Identification of resources needed and recommendations to institutionalize and sustain the plan.
 - d. A dashboard to monitor the organization’s success in meeting the plan’s goals over time.

• **Phase III – Finalize Internal DEI Plan (estimated Oct-Dec 2019)**

1. In conjunction with the DEI steering committee, revise the draft plan based on staff feedback received during Phase II.
2. Assist County leadership staff in seeking approval for the DEI Plan.
3. Produce a final DEI Plan.

INVENTORY OF CURRENT DEI EFFORTS ACROSS THE ORGANIZATION

As part of its work, the Think Tank asked departments to submit information about their current DEI work related to workforce development. The results of that cursory inventory are in process.

PRESENTATIONS FROM PEER ORGANIZATIONS

The Think Tank is grateful for the assistance and expertise from our partner jurisdictions during this process. We gratefully acknowledge the help we received from the following:

City of Hillsboro
Tami Cockeram, Community Services Manager

Metro
Juan Carlos Ocaña-Chiu,
Business Services Manager, Parks and Nature

Clackamas County
Emmett Wheatfall, Assistant County Administrator

Port of Portland
Bobbi Stedman,
Chief Administrative and Equity Officer

DEI “THINK TANK” MEMBERS

The DEI Think Tank met June through December 2018 and included the following staff:

Angie Aguilar, County Administrative Office
Philip Bransford, County Administrative Office
Tamara Falls, Community Engagement
Amanda Garcia-Snell, Community Engagement
Margaret Garza, Assessment and Taxation
Kari Herinckx, Community Engagement

Eva LaBonte, Risk Management
Sia Lindstrom, County Administrative Office
Julie McCloud, County Administrative Office
Mary Rojas, Human Resources
Steve Sanford, Human Resources



The County Administrative Office is grateful to the Think Tank members for their expertise, commitment, and dedication to this important process.

Washington County Proposed 12-Month Plan for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) *January – December 2019*

OVER-ARCHING GOAL: Diverse Workforce and Procurement

Our workforce and procurement are reflective of the community we serve.

Metric: Workforce demographics are measured annually for gender, race/ethnicity and disability and reflect community demographics.

Metric: The proportion of our contracts with Minority, Women and Emerging Small Businesses (MWESB) is measured annually and is increasing to reflect community demographics.

GOALS: Recruit, Hire, Retain and Develop a Diverse Workforce. Support Equity in Procurement. Assess and Plan for DEI.

GOAL #1: We are able to recruit a diverse pool of applicants.

- **Metric:** Measure applicant demographics annually for gender, race/ethnicity and disability, and seek to reflect community demographics.

GOAL #2: We are able to hire a diverse workforce.

- **Metric:** Measure demographics of newly hired employees annually for gender, race/ethnicity and disability, and seek to reflect community demographics.

GOAL #3: We are able to retain a diverse workforce. (“Create a welcoming organization.”)

- **Metric:** Measure demographics of those leaving our workforce annually for gender, race/ethnicity, and disability, and seek to ensure they do not over-represent those demographics most needed in our workforce to reflect community demographics.

GOAL #4: We are able to train and develop our workforce talent.

- **Metric:** Assess the organization’s knowledge and understanding of DEI through annual employee surveys.
- **Metric:** Annually measure demographics of those promoted internally for gender, race/ethnicity and disability, and seek to reflect community demographics.

GOAL #5: We are able to contract with a diverse pool of suppliers.

- **Metric:** Measure the number of COBID* firms the County currently does business with annually in order to establish a baseline, and seek to increase the percentage of contracts with COBID firms every year.

GOAL #6: We proactively plan for the future by creating a comprehensive strategic plan (five years) for diversity, equity and inclusion that focuses on our internal operations (HR, procurement) and includes an organizational assessment, staff engagement, resource plan for implementation, and metrics for measuring success.

- **Metric:** Plan is developed, approved and resourced by June 2020.

STRATEGIES:

GOAL #1: We are able to recruit a diverse pool of applicants.

- **Strategy A:** Conduct expanded recruiting efforts that target underrepresented employee populations.

GOAL #2: We are able to hire a diverse workforce.

- **Strategy A:** Assess hiring practices to ensure they are equitable, inclusive and set up in a way to prevent inadvertent “screening out” of qualified applicants.

GOAL #3: We are able to retain a diverse workforce. (“Create a welcoming organization.”)

- **Strategy A:** Create a County Connector program to welcome new employees and offer links to affinity groups and other County employee resources. This strategy should take place in two steps: it should be started now and fleshed out more completely as part of the longer-term DEI plan.
- **Strategy B:** Create affinity/mentoring networks and/or peer networks that include both new staff and staff with tenure. This strategy should take place in two steps: it should be started now and fleshed out more completely as part of the longer-term DEI plan.
- **Strategy C:** Create equity champions in the departments who will serve as a voice for DEI in meetings; provide the equity champions with additional training to help staff with “courageous conversations,” etc.

GOAL #4: We are able to train and develop our workforce talent.

- **Strategy A:** Create an organization-wide DEI training program that ensures a shared organizational framework for DEI as a core value:
 - Expand required new employee Workplace Inclusion training to include County definitions of and commitment to DEI.
 - Develop an ongoing DEI training supplement for existing staff.
 - Provide regular DEI training for leadership staff (department directors, CAO, division managers) and the Board of Commissioners.
 - Offer alternative DEI training opportunities: heritage month celebrations, lunch and learns, film/lecture series, external training opportunities, and online training resources.
- **Strategy B:** Add DEI metrics to employee evaluations.

GOAL #5: We are able to contract with a diverse pool of suppliers.

- **Strategy A:** Recommend to the Board of Commissioners a DEI purchasing policy that includes a specific target/goal for COBID* contracts for goods and services let by the County (e.g., 10%).
- **Strategy B:** Conduct outreach and engagement with COBID* firms to:
 - Learn what barriers keep them from doing business with the County.
 - Encourage non-COBID-certified firms that qualify as COBID to get certified through direct contact with our current supplier and workshops.
- **Strategy C:** Provide education/training to departments to help ensure they are:
 - Including language in RFP evaluation criteria regarding COBID-certified firms. (Departments will have flexibility to establish the number of points depending on RFP scope.)
 - Contacting at least one COBID-certified firm for all solicitations under \$100,000.

GOAL #6: We proactively plan for the future by creating a comprehensive strategic plan (five years) for diversity, equity and inclusion that focuses on our internal operations (HR, procurement) and includes an organizational assessment, staff engagement, resource plan for implementation, and metrics for measuring success.

- **Step 1:** Conduct an organizational assessment. (estimated February-March 2019)
- **Step 2:** Facilitate development of an initial DEI plan focused on workforce development and purchasing. Include robust communication and outreach with County staff to seek input during development of the plan. (Estimated April-September 2019)
- **Step 3:** Revise the draft plan based on input and produce a final DEI Plan. (Estimated October-December 2019)

**COBID = Certification Office for Business Inclusion and Diversity. COBID is a certification program run by Business Oregon (an agency of the State of Oregon). Their goal is to “level the playing field by providing certified firms a fair opportunity to compete for government contracts regardless of owner ethnicity, gender, disability, or firm size.”*
www.oregon4biz.com/How-We-Can-Help/COBID/