

Equity Resolution

OWEB Resolution 01-2023

Background

WHEREAS, OWEB's mission is "to help protect and restore healthy watersheds and natural habitats that support thriving communities and strong economies."

WHEREAS, robust ecosystem biodiversity is a critical component of ecological stability and resilience.

WHEREAS, the same is true for social systems as it is for ecological systems- diversity of people, including experience, ethnicity, locality thought, and perspective strengthen our organization and thus our watershed restoration and conservation work.

WHEREAS, OWEB recognizes that the values of diversity, equity, inclusion, belonging, and environmental justice must be integrated into our board decisions, policy-making, and budgeting processes.

WHEREAS, OWEB acknowledges the dispossession of indigenous communities of landownership and the subsequent exclusion of non-white and less wealthy people from land ownership and management decisions.

WHEREAS, OWEB acknowledges that indigenous communities have a unique relationship with Oregon's native fish, wildlife species and natural habitats and their perspective has not historically been incorporated into OWEB's decision-making processes.

WHEREAS, OWEB seeks to celebrate the rich cultural, socio-economic, and natural resources of Oregon and work with our local partners to engage all Oregonians.

Resolution

Be it resolved that the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board will:

- Continue learning to recognize and eliminate biases, counteract institutional racism, and build a more inclusive grantmaking process.
- Work towards continuous improvement in all OWEB's grant-making processes to ensure accessibility to all eligible applicants.
- Recognize the unique role Oregon's nine federally recognized tribes play in the conservation, stewardship, and restoration of our natural resources and actively work to incorporate tribal knowledge, experience, cultural, and religious values into our grantmaking processes.
- Reach out to and work with organizations that have not been traditionally engaged in the conservation movement as we actively work toward restoration and conservation solutions in the face of a changing climate.
- Encourage our grantees to allocate resources to fairly compensate the expertise and participation of new partners and environmental justice communities.

- Humbly engage in this work while recognizing that we are all human, will make mistakes, and that this is a continuous process of learning and unlearning.

It is further resolved that the above resolutions will be implemented through applicable strategies within OWEB's authorities. Strategies include but are not limited to:

- Rulemaking to reduce the match requirement for some grant types.
- Simplify OWEB's application to reduce the amount of time it takes to write and submit an application.
- Develop an annual agency Diversity Equity, and Inclusion Action Plan, which includes agency-level goals and actions.
- Continue to provide staff and board members opportunities for diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging training.

Definitions

Belonging: means that everyone is treated and feels like a full member of the larger group and can thrive.

Diversity: Honoring and including people of different backgrounds, identities, and experiences collectively and as individuals. It emphasizes the need for sharing power and increasing representation of communities that are systemically underrepresented and under-resourced. These differences are strengths that maximize the state's competitive advantage through innovation, effectiveness, and adaptability.

Environmental justice: means equal protection from environmental and health risks, fair treatment, and meaningful involvement in decision-making of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, immigration status, income, or other identities with respect to the development, implementation and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations and policies that affect the environment in which people live, work, learn and practice spirituality and culture.

Environmental justice communities: includes communities of color, communities experiencing lower incomes, communities experiencing health inequities, tribal communities, rural communities, remote communities, coastal communities, communities with limited infrastructure and other communities traditionally underrepresented in public processes and adversely harmed by environmental and health hazards, including seniors, youth and persons with disabilities.

Equity: Equity acknowledges that not all people, or all communities, are starting from the same place due to historic and current systems of oppression. Equity is the effort to provide different levels of support based on an individual's or group's needs in order to achieve fairness in outcomes. Equity actionably empowers communities most impacted by systemic oppression and requires the redistribution of resources, power, and opportunity to those communities.

Inclusion: When persons of different backgrounds, experiences, and identities are valued, integrated, and welcomed equitably as decision-makers, collaborators, and colleagues. Ultimately, inclusion is the environment that organizations create to allow these differences to thrive.