State of Oregon Equity Framework in COVID-19 Response and Recovery

Office of Governor Kate Brown

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The *State of Oregon Equity Framework in COVID-19 Response and Recovery* is the culmination of the expertise and insight of many individuals, including Governor Kate Brown's staff, agency directors, deputy directors, state equity leaders, and community partners to advance equity in the state government. The Equity Framework would not have been made possible without the support of the State of Oregon Enterprise Leadership Team's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion subcommittee.

Thank you.

A MESSAGE FROM GOVERNOR KATE BROWN

Oregon is at yet another turning point. The COVID-19 pandemic has fundamentally changed and disrupted the lives of every Oregonian with unprecedented levels of economic and health impacts. The effects of this global health crisis deeply exacerbate the existing and persisting inequities experienced by families, children, rural Oregonians, and communities of color. We have made great strides in keeping Oregonians safe and healthy, as we have worked to flatten the COVID-19 curve. However, our state is at a juncture that demands our state government take proactive and anti-racist measures to build a more equitable Oregon while reflecting the state's values of accountability, equity, excellence, and integrity.

The COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated racial disparities. As we work to reopen the economy and build a safe and strong Oregon, I am committed to putting our marginalized communities at the forefront of our recovery plan. Likewise, building a more equitable Oregon requires every part of state government to work diligently to ensure that equity is integrated into every aspect of the state's COVID-19 response and recovery efforts and beyond. The *State of Oregon Equity Framework in COVID-19 Response and Recovery* is designed to be a roadmap and tool to support state agencies, boards, and commissions in our state government's continued efforts to center equity.

The equity framework illustrates the core elements to protect and engage with communities; collect data and promote inclusive workplaces; and build economic resiliency. To support and protect our vulnerable and underserved populations, we need to collect, analyze, and report disaggregated data to deepen our understanding of the communities that are impacted the most. Additionally, community voices need to be uplifted to inform how we target investments in the places that need it most.

I expect all state agencies to fully commit to applying the *State of Oregon Equity Framework* in developing agency-specific strategies and concrete actions to address racial and economic disparities due to COVID-19 as we plan and ready the state for recovery. Through these equity strategies, we can move the metrics to improve equity outcomes and advance racial justice for all Oregonians for years to come.

Your unwavering dedication fuels my commitment to put this work into practice. What truly defines us as Oregonians is our tradition of coming together and working collaboratively toward the shared vision of a thriving Oregon where we all have opportunities to fulfill our greatest potential. It is a great pleasure and privilege to work with you during this critical time in the history of our state. I am thankful for all the agency directors and employees who have been working tirelessly to serve Oregonians.

We stand united and strong during a historic moment to put Oregon on a better path forward. Together, we can build a more equitable Oregon.

Sincerely,

Kate Brown

Governor Kate Brown

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Introduction

During the unprecedented time of the COVID-19 pandemic, Governor Kate Brown's top priority is to keep all Oregonians safe and healthy. Efforts to mitigate COVID-19 have illuminated how connected our communities are, and how disproportionate effects in one community affect us all across the state. At the same time, Governor Brown and state public health experts recognize that COVID-19 has had disproportionate infection rates and other negative effects on specific communities, including Native American, Tribal members, Black, African American, Latinx, Asian, Pacific Islander, linguistically diverse populations, and those with disabilities.

A key learning from COVID-19 both here and across the country is how deeply this virus exacerbates existing racial and economic inequities with wide-ranging health, social, and economic implications. For example, long-standing health inequities have caused higher rates of chronic health problems within communities of color compared to white communities. Because COVID-19 puts people with underlying health conditions at greater risk, people of color face a greater chance of experiencing severe COVID-19 illness. Similarly, economic inequities result in more people of color employed in essential hourly wage jobs, which require them to travel to work and interact with people on the job, putting them at higher risk of exposure to the virus.

Yet, we can address these inequities and lower the risks communities of color have experienced. As we respond to this crisis and plan for recovery, we have an unprecedented opportunity and moral obligation to address the many structural barriers that disproportionately impact Oregon's communities of color and families navigating poverty.

This also includes understanding the government-to-government relationship with the nine federally recognized tribes of Oregon as a vital piece to this work. We must all do our part at the state level to ensure this partnership is being respected and honored.

Governor Brown prioritizes equity in all statewide responses to the crisis to protect and support our historically and currently underserved and under-resourced populations. On the path to recovery, it is imperative that all state agencies prioritize equity in their recovery policies and practices. Culturally specific and responsive strategies are critical to advance equitable outcomes for all Oregonians.

It is the collective responsibility of every state agency to apply the State of Oregon Equity Framework *to develop agency-specific strategies and concrete actions to address racial and economic disparities due to COVID-19 as we plan and ready the state for recovery.*

The State of Oregon Equity Framework

The *State of Oregon Equity Framework* articulates the specific communities that must be included and considered, core elements to advance equity, and guiding questions for developing strategies and evaluating efforts.

Governor Kate Brown's Equity Values:

Prioritizing Equity: Commitment to prioritizing equity and addressing racial disparities on all responses and as we consider and work toward recovery from COVID-19.

Addressing Health and Economic Impacts: Address underlying systemic causes of health and wealth inequalities exacerbated by COVID-19 and disproportionately impacting Oregon's historically and currently underserved and under-resourced communities.

Ensuring an Inclusive and Welcoming Oregon: Commitment for Oregon to be an inclusive and welcoming state for all regardless of race, ethnicity, culture, color, disability, gender, gender identity, marital status, national origin, age, religion, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, veteran status, and immigration status.

Racial Equity, Underserved, and Rural Communities

Racial equity means closing the gaps so that race can no longer predict one's success, which simultaneously improves outcomes for all. To achieve racial equity, we must transform our institutions and structures to create systems that provide the infrastructure for communities to thrive. This commitment requires a paradigm shift on our path to recovery through the intentional integration of racial equity in every decision.

For the purpose of the Equity Framework, the definition of our historically and currently underserved communities include Oregonians who are:

- Native Americans, members of Oregon's nine federally recognized tribes, American Indians, Alaska Natives;
- Black, Africans, African Americans;
- Latinx, Hispanic;
- Asian, Pacific Islanders;
- Immigrants, refugees, asylum seekers;
- Undocumented, DREAMers;
- Linguistically diverse;
- People with disabilities;
- LGBTQ+;
- Aging/older adults;
- Economically disadvantaged;
- Farmworkers, migrant workers; and
- Living in rural parts of the state.

We recognize that individuals often identify with multiple communities and are impacted by compounding systems of oppression, also known as intersectionality. Identity and experience impacts racial, health, and economic equity and should be considered in applying core elements that help us center equity in our planning and response efforts.

Living in rural communities can create additional challenges in accessing fundamental infrastructures such as education, health care, housing, broadband, and employment opportunities. As such, it is essential we consider the impacts of place and the systems of oppression on all rural communities. It is also critical that the state consults and collaborates directly with Tribal Governments to partner on solutions that may have tribal implications or interests via government-to-government relationships.

Core Elements Centering Equity

Engage and Protect Communities

Inclusive Communications:

- Language Access and Literacy - Ensure multilingual Oregonians have access to translated material in appropriate languages. Translate important information and guidance in a timely way. Information should be communicated in a way that is clear, and culturally and linguistically responsive to the intended community.
- Accessibility - Ensure people with disabilities have access to information in appropriate formats and in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
- Message in Appropriate Medium - Deliver information via culturally specific media outlets and culturally and linguistically responsive formats to reach all communities including social media, video, and radio.
- Trusted Messengers - Communicate with communities through trusted local stakeholders, community-based organizations, and leaders.
- Trauma-informed Communications - Recognize traumas people experience due to marginalization, inequity, and other structural factors. Avoid language and messages that exacerbate these inequities.
- Involve Communities in the Development of Communications - Collaborate with community members to develop messages and communications products that resonate with and are accessible to intended communities.

Community-Informed Policy and Partnerships

Engage and center diverse community stakeholders and local leaders across the state to be an essential part of the data-informed decision-making process. Build on and collaborate with the trusted network of community-based organizational partners to lead in policymaking and ensure that we proactively address policy gaps.

Safety for Our Communities

Ensure the safety of all Oregonians by taking active measures against discrimination, racism, xenophobia, stigmatization, violence, and hate crimes; protect civil rights for all Oregonians.

Collect Data and Promote an Inclusive Workforce

Disaggregated Data-Collection and Transparency

Collect, analyze, and report granular data to inform regional mitigation measures, culturally and linguistically responsive communications, and to target resources for the most impacted communities across the state. Sources of data include community narratives, meaning qualitative data, to provide whole context to quantitative data.

Workforce Diversity and Inclusive Workplace

Promote public service through the recruitment, hiring, and retention of diverse staff and commit to retaining staff of color. Create leadership pipeline opportunities and ensure every level of state government workforce reflects the changing population of Oregon. Ensure a safe, inclusive, and accessible working environment for all.

Build Economic Resiliency

Community Resilience Investments

Target investments to historically and currently marginalized populations and/or organizations deeply rooted and reflective of the communities they serve to improve economic welfare in under-resourced communities. Consider representation of organizations across the state, including those historically and currently under-resourced. Ensure data-informed decisions and resources are dedicated to mitigate the disproportionate impacts experienced in communities.

Contract Equity

Provide economic opportunities for all Oregon businesses, and in particular minority-owned, women-owned, service-disabled veteran-owned, and emerging small businesses through equity practices in state purchasing to promote recovery and community economic development.

Guiding Questions

Below are guiding questions to apply equity in all development and implementation of State of Oregon's COVID-19 response and recovery efforts:

1. **How do we ensure our communications and messaging are getting to all Oregonians? Who are the communities being left behind and how do we connect with those communities? What processes are in place for:**
   - Translating and interpreting agency communications?
   - Ensuring that ADA requirements are met or exceeded?
   - Communicating with people who may be unable to read, lack access to the Internet, and/or need information through alternate media?
   - Working with trusted messengers and local leaders to communicate with communities?
   - Seeking early input to inform the development of communications materials?

2. **Are we collecting, reviewing, and analyzing demographic data to inform mitigation measures, communication strategies, and targeted investments? How are these data being woven into decision making?**

3. **How are we ensuring we have representation of voices across race, ethnicity, culture, color, tribal membership, disability, gender, gender identity, marital status, national origin, age, religion, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, veteran status, and immigration status? And geographically?**

4. **What are the ways we engage agency equity leaders and communities in decision making currently? Whose voices and perspectives are not at the table? Why? What can we do to ensure they are part of our decision-making process?**

5. **What are the barriers that keep communities from participating in decision making? How are we ensuring that we provide access to and address the needs of:**
   - Language?
   - Technology?
   - Physical accessibility?
   - Adequate support and preparation?
   - Financial support?

6. **How are we ensuring that forms of response/relief/benefit/resource/budget allocation are:**
   - Going directly to the communities who need it?
   - Accessible regardless of disability or status?
   - Accessible regardless of language?
   - Compliant with the ADA requirements?
   - Accessible regardless of access to technology?
   - Supporting, consulting, and/or partnering with tribes?
   - Accessible regardless of geographic location including rural Oregonians?
   - Being prioritized for communities already living on the margins (e.g., older adults, gender, ethnic, and racial minorities, immigration status, socio-economic status)?

7. Are we using strategies that are culturally specific and responsive to address the distinct needs of Oregonians? If not, what resources or community partners can we consult with to develop culturally specific and responsive strategies?

8. Are our programs and services providing reasonable accommodations in compliance with the ADA to Oregonians? If not, what resources or partners can we consult with to develop strategies to better support people with disabilities?

9. What measurable outcomes are most important to our historically and currently underserved communities? How will impacts be documented and evaluated? How will our communities participate in the evaluation process? Are we achieving the anticipated outcomes? Are we having measurable impact in the communities?

10. How are we consistently communicating our efforts with our communities and demonstrating our results? How do we collect and respond to feedback? How do we use these results to continually reevaluate and improve our efforts? How are we ensuring these partnerships do not exploit the communities we seek to engage?

11. How will we operationalize equity and create accountability systems? How will we ensure adequate capacity to implement strategies as outlined?

State of Oregon's Definition of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion

Diversity is the appreciation and prioritization of different backgrounds, identities, and experiences collectively and as individuals. It emphasizes the need for 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.

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 is a state of belonging 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.

Appendices

Appendix I: State of Oregon COVID-19 Response

Governor Kate Brown and Oregon state agencies have taken significant actions to support and protect our most vulnerable and underserved communities in response and recovery. These efforts include language accessibility; culturally specific and responsive services, guidance and policies; community engagement; and proactive outreach to all communities across Oregon. Below is an exemplary list highlighting Oregon's COVID-19 response.

Governor Kate Brown's *Building a Safe and Strong Oregon* Website

A multilingual page including Executive Orders, state agencies' COVID-19 updates, Reopening Oregon framework and guidance.
https://coronavirus.oregon.gov

Oregon Health Authority COVID-19 Updates

Daily updates on COVID-19, guidance, and resources.
https://govstatus.egov.com/OR-OHA-COVID-19

Actions for an Equity-Centered Response to COVID-19

Resources and FAQs for Immigrants and Refugees

A section for immigrant and refugee communities with a list of resources and FAQs, public charge information to address top concerns, available in 11 different languages.
https://govstatus.egov.com/or-covid-19

Stay Home, Save Lives Materials

In the effort to slow the spread of COVID-19, we are asking Oregonians around the state to share information on how to stay safe and save lives. Materials are available to download and share, unaltered, in any medium for any noncommercial use. They are available in multiple languages.
https://govstatus.egov.com/or-stay-home-save-lives

COVID-19 Outreach and Education Campaign

Safe + Strong is a statewide effort to reach communities most impacted by health disparities with culturally relevant, linguistically responsive resources.
https://www.safestrongoregon.org/

Small Business Resources Navigator

To help connect small businesses to financial support and information they need to stay in business through the COVID-19 crisis.
https://www.oregon4biz.com/

Appendix II: Other COVID-19 Resources

List of resources from national and local organizations:

State of Oregon ADA toolkit
www.oregon.gov/das/HR/Pages/ADA.aspx

U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission: *What You Should Know About COVID-19 and the ADA, the Rehabilitation Act and other EEO Laws*
www.eeoc.gov/wysk/what-you-should-know-about-covid-19-and-ada-rehabilitation-act-and-other-eeo-laws

U.S. Department of Justice: *A Guide to Disability Rights Laws*
www.ada.gov/cguide.htm

U.S. Department of Justice: *ADA Update: A Primer for State and Local Government*

www.ada.gov/regs2010/titleII_2010/title_ii_primer.html

List of COVID-19 Resources compiled by Oregon DHS - Office of Equity and Multicultural Services
www.oregon.gov/DHS/ABOUTDHS/OEMS/Pages/covid-19-resources.aspx

Government Alliance on Racial Equity (GARE)
COVID-19 Racial Equity Rapid Response: Guidebook for Government

Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
Health Equity Principles for State and Local leaders in Responding to Reopening and Recovering from COVID-19

JVION
COVID Community Vulnerability Map

Migration Policy Institute
www.migrationpolicy.org/

National Equity Atlas
https://nationalequityatlas.org/

National League of Cities
https://covid19.nlc.org/

Race Forward
https://www.raceforward.org/

PolicyLink

COVID-19 & Race

Advancing Frontline Employees of Color

Job Accommodation Network: *Accommodation and Compliance: Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)*
https://askjan.org/topics/COVID-19.cfm

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