

SPR RESEARCH PROGRAM

SECOND-STAGE PROPOSAL SUMMARY

PROBLEM NUMBER AND TITLE

24-10 Development of a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Workforce Sustainability Evaluation Tool

PROBLEM SUMMARY

Quantifying and evaluating the extent to which ODOT workforce incorporates diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) requires a workforce sustainability assessment tool tailored to public transportation agencies. While commercial entities offer existing tools for this purpose, any of these tools requires significant adaptation to Oregon's workforce data infrastructure and Oregon's unique social indicators.

ODOT OBJECTIVES

Objective of this research is to quantify the extent of which ODOT workforce incorporates diversity, equity, and inclusion attributes through ODOT practices, procedures, and policies from the perspective of ODOT's workforce.

BENEFITS

The primary benefit from this research is to bring awareness to ODOT Management and Administrators of current practices, policies and procedures that are detrimental to the sustainability of its workforce. In addition, this research will identify suitable alternatives to these practices, policies, and procedures to improve the sustainability of its workforce.

SCHEDULE, BUDGET AND AGENCY SUPPORT

Estimated Project Length: 18 months.

Estimated Project Budget: \$175,000

ODOT Support:

Erika McCalpine, Assistant Director for Social Equity, erika.mccalpine@odot.oregon.gov

Diana Koppes, Lead - Employee Engagement Survey, diana.koppes@odot.oregon.gov

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For additional detail, please see the complete STAGE 2 RESEARCH PROBLEM STATEMENT online at:
<https://www.oregon.gov/odot/Programs/ResearchDocuments/24-10.pdf>

SPR RESEARCH PROGRAM

SECOND-STAGE PROBLEM STATEMENT

FY 2024

PROBLEM NUMBER AND TITLE

24-10 Development of a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Workforce Sustainability Evaluation Tool

RESEARCH PROBLEM STATEMENT

Sustainable workforce development is about understanding and addressing workforce development needs (Gambatese, 2019). Traditional methods to evaluate workforce sustainability focus on employment practices, procedures, and policies that link employee work-life balance and well-being to employment experiences that include for example access to professional development opportunities, perceived management effectiveness and frequent communication and up and down the management chain. Missing from these indicators are the extent in which an organization's management prioritizes social justice at the workplace, equitable compensation, and promotes racial/ethnic/gender diversity within the workforce. Recent research (Gambatese, 2019) reasserts the importance of implementing these attributes in the development of a sustainable workforce.

Quantifying and evaluating the extent to which ODOT workforce incorporates diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) requires a workforce sustainability assessment tool tailored to public transportation agencies. While commercial entities offer existing tools for this purpose (Streetlight Data, 2023), any of these tools requires significant adaptation to Oregon's workforce data infrastructure and Oregon's unique social indicators. A suitable and likely less costly alternative is the development of an assessment tool with the goal to evaluate the extent of which ODOT incorporates DEI attributes in its current practices. To accomplish this, first it is necessary to identify attributes that reflect DEI workforce practices. For example, indicators of the "equity" attribute might be the extent to which there is: (1) equality, social justice, and non-discrimination in the organization; (2) pay structure transparency; (3) equitable pay/compensation within the organization; and (4) a merit-based recruitment and promotion process/plan. Similarly, indicators of the "diversity and inclusion" attribute might be the extent to which there is: (1) ethnic and racial diversity in the organization, (2) gender diversity, (3) zero tolerance for harassment and inappropriate behavior, (4) ethnic, racial and gender diversity in leadership/management positions.

Most recently, ODOT launched an Employee Engagement Survey in 2022 with the purpose to understand the experience that employees have while working at ODOT as well as to understand what employees feel is important about where they work and what keeps them interested in and excited about the work they do. Missing from this Engagement Survey was understanding the extent in which workers perceive DEI attributes are being implemented at the workplace. This research project seeks to bridge that gap.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Objective of this research is to quantify the extent of which ODOT workforce incorporates diversity, equity, and inclusion attributes through ODOT practices, procedures and policies.

In order to accomplish this objective, it is necessary to first identify the key workforce attributes associated with effective practices that promote diversity, prioritize equity and foster inclusion. Afterwards, it is proposed to employ the forthcoming agency-wide Employee Satisfaction Survey from a DAS-approved vendor and incorporate in the form of questions the indicators identified in the initial research phase. Once ready, the survey or alternative data collection method will be launched for an appropriate period of time to collect data. The final phase of this research will entail data analysis, data interpretation and establishing the recommendations to the agency in order to improve the sustainability of its workforce.

WORK TASKS, COST ESTIMATE AND DURATION

- 1) Definition of key DEI attributes strongly correlated to Sustainable DEI Workforce Development
- 2) Design of survey questions and establishment of DEI Workforce Sustainability metrics
- 3) Incorporation of questions in forthcoming Employee Satisfaction Survey
- 4) Evaluation of survey results against established DEI Workforce Sustainability metrics
- 5) Identification of practices, procedures and policies key to improve DEU Workforce Sustainability
- 6) Final Report: Recommendations

Key Deliverables:

1. Final Report: Includes all interim reports and, final recommendations for ODOT practices, procedures and policy updates.

Estimated Project Length: 18 months.

Estimated Project Budget: \$175,000

IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation of this project will take place primarily by adopting recommendations resulting from the study at various levels of ODOT administration (Human Resources, Human Resources, Office of Equity, and others as appropriate).

POTENTIAL BENEFITS

The benefits resulting from this research are the following:

- Bringing awareness to ODOT Management and Administrators of current practices, policies and procedures that are detrimental to the sustainability of its workforce
- Identification of suitable alternatives to these practices, policies and procedures to improve the sustainability of its workforce
- Development of a system to assess workforce sustainability along with a criteria for data interpretation that can be used over a number of years to assess the impact of programs created to increase workforce diversity and equitable labor practices.

PEOPLE

ODOT champion(s):

Erika McCalpine, Assistant Director for Social Equity, erika.mccalpine@odot.oregon.gov

Diana Koppes, Lead - Employee Engagement Survey, diana.koppes@odot.oregon.gov

Problem Statement Contributors:

Cristhian Galvez, Research Coordinator, Cristhian.GALVEZ@ODOT.Oregon.gov

John Gambatese, Oregon State University Professor, john.gambatese@oregonstate.edu

REFERENCES

Gambatese, J.A., Karakhan, A.A., and Simmons, D.R. (2019). "Development of a Workforce Sustainability Model for Construction," Final Report, Small Study No. 17-8-PS, Center for Construction Research and Training (CPWR), January 2019, <http://www.cpwr.com/sites/default/files/publications/SS2019-workforce-sustainability-model-development.pdf>.

Streetlight Data (2023) [Social Equity in Transportation Solutions - StreetLight Data](#)

STAFF REVIEW PAGE

Literature Check

TRID&RIP

A review of TRID & RIP databases found no existing research that answers the research question.

Technology & Data assessment

No Identified T&D output

At the end of this project, the implementing unit(s) within ODOT will need to coordinate the adoption of new technology or data in order to realize the full potential of this research.

This research will collect responses from employees and this data will need to be placed somewhere accessible for analysis by the research team. Method of data collection has not been defined and is likely to require significant coordination with vendors launching Employee Survey.

Cross-agency stakeholders

- List stakeholders or impacted units
 - Office of Equity
 - Human Resources

- Identify any issues of concern raised by an ODOT stakeholder. Note expected mitigation
 - No issues or concerns were raised by stakeholders.