

Oregon State Parks and Recreation Department

BELONGING, EQUITY, & ENGAGEMENT ACTION PLAN

July 2025 - June 2027



DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

On a recent hike I was walking under the canopy of an old growth rainforest with my daughter, and I immediately felt a sense of calm and peace. Any feelings of stress or being overwhelmed quickly dissipated. My thoughts felt lighter, and my worries distant. Oregon's forests, rivers, beaches and even desert landscapes help soothe in a way that nothing else does.

Everyone should have access to this experience. But right now, not everyone does. For some it's physical barriers like steps or steep grades while for others it's financial. And for several communities, the barriers stem from not feeling safe or welcome.

One of our top priorities is to remove these barriers so parks and programs reflect the growing diversity of our state.

I am so grateful for the crew at Oregon Parks and Recreation Department, and the work we have already done to remove barriers. Your dedication, resourcefulness and heart for service help shape this agency every day.

Through programs and initiatives, we are actively reaching out to a wide range of communities so that staff and visitors of the future mirror the diversity of the population.

But this is not a short hike, it's a journey. It's one that requires leaning into curiosity, openness, patience, grace and humility even when the conversations get tough. For me, the work means modeling these traits and working to change our process, policies and procedures to reflect our values while consistently reevaluating to make sure we're on the right path.

Like many agencies around the state, we still fall short in reaching underserved communities. Currently, OPRD data shows that Black, Indigenous and people of color (BIPOC) are less likely than white Oregonians to visit Oregon State Parks. For example, about 13% percent of visitors identify as non-white yet they make up about 28% of Oregon's population, which means that they are underrepresented in our parks.

At the same time, the BIPOC population is one of the fastest growing in the state, meaning this gap will continue to widen. While we do not have numbers for other traditionally underserved communities, it is likely that this underrepresentation holds true for those communities as well. At some point, this disconnect will mean fewer visitors overall.

But I know that we can change this trajectory. I'm excited to work together to create a sense of welcome in our parks, policies and programs so we can deliver on the promise of public land.

Thank you for being on this journey with me.



Lisa Sumption
Director, Oregon Parks and Recreation Department

BACKGROUND

In January of 2024, the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department (OPRD) began to implement the Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Action Plan. This plan was the result of the agency's continued commitment to value and serve everyone, and to provide safe and equitable access to state parks and agency programs. As OPRD began to engage in the work called for in this plan, it became apparent that OPRD needed to make adjustments that focused on operationalizing its efforts in belonging, equity, and engagement to provide service for the public that is truly inclusive of the original plan's commitments.

While OPRD's structure, staff, and approach to this work have changed over the past few years, its commitment to putting belonging, equity, and engagement into practice remains constant. This updated and condensed plan continues the commitments to implement Targeted Universalism in a way that supports the agency's diverse programs, services, and structure.

OVERVIEW

This plan details how OPRD will implement Targeted Universalism into agency operations.

Targeted Universalism is a goal-oriented strategy focused on achieving universal goals. OPRD will set universal goals, which are established for all groups and populations the agency serves. Across the agency strategies, or targeted approaches, will be developed to achieve universal goals. Targeted approaches will be developed at the agency and unit level based upon how different groups are situated within structures, culture, and across geographies. The culmination of all these targeted approaches will support the agency in achieving the universal goals.

OPRD will establish two different types of targeted approaches: agency initiatives and unit initiatives:

- **Agency initiatives** are proposals that task work to multiple units, involve a change to larger agency systems or operations, and establish an agency-level commitment.
- **Unit initiatives** are proposals that primarily impact a single unit and involve activities that fall under the responsibilities of the manager and unit.

UNIVERSAL GOALS

OPRD has committed to two initial universal goals. These universal goals align with OPRD's welcoming statement and commit the agency to carry out the work to ensure the welcoming statement is operationalized and that our commitment to the statement goes beyond intention.

Welcome Statement: Oregon Parks and Recreation Department is proud to care for Oregon’s extraordinary landscapes and rich cultural history. The department serves its visitors and all Oregonians through its properties and programs, and recognizes that the state’s resilience and beauty are strengthened by its diverse population. Oregon State Parks are public spaces where all are welcome. We value and serve everyone, and we are committed to providing safe and equitable access to state parks and agency programs. The department will not tolerate racism, harassment, discrimination or intimidation in any form.

Access

Everyone has access to state park and agency programs.

Belonging

Staff engagement creates an inclusive environment where everyone feels they belong in OPRD, as well as in the programs OPRD offers.

ONGOING WORK

OPRD remains firm in its commitment to serve everyone and maintain their access and engagement with the programs and properties it operates. While OPRD is implementing the structure to support targeted universalism, the agency will continue to advance work that has already been identified that supports goals in belonging, equity, and engagement.

Staff Training and Collaboration

All employees are responsible for supporting a culture of belonging within OPRD. The agency continues to identify training opportunities that are applicable to all staff to support a welcoming culture for our employees, visitors, and volunteers.

In 2024, OPRD partnered with Black Folks Camp Too to design and offer Unity Blaze Customer Service Training. This training provides information on the history and experience of historically and currently marginalized groups and the outdoors, as well as how to support a welcoming environment for everyone. This training frames equity, inclusion, and engagement through a customer service lens.

OPRD is currently working to identify additional training opportunities for staff and management that support belonging, equity, and engagement. The goal of at least one training opportunity will include unconscious bias training for employees, with the expected outcome that bias is addressed and will not be an unaccounted factor in service delivery or program development.

Field Maintenance Training Program

To support employee belonging and expand job opportunities for individuals from diverse skill levels, backgrounds, and experiences, OPRD initiated the Field Maintenance Training Program (FMTP) project in 2024. The FMTP is a multi-year initiative to build a structured, hands-on training program for staff in field maintenance roles through a series of task books that support on-the-job learning.

The program’s foundation, the Ranger Core Task Book (RCTB), is currently in its final stages and is expected to launch in 2025. The RCTB provides practical, baseline training in core maintenance competencies for

park rangers and other field staff, helping create a more inclusive pathway into these roles by removing assumptions that all employees must enter with prior technical experience.

In parallel, a series of Technical Task Books is in development, beginning with beginner-level content in trades such as plumbing. These books are designed to help employees learn and demonstrate skills in specialized maintenance areas, with the first in the beginner series expected to be available for use in early 2026.

By offering structured, competency-based training and clear documentation of progress, the FMTP will increase access to field positions for individuals historically underrepresented in OPRD's workforce, including women and people from communities with limited exposure to outdoor or technical work. As implementation continues, OPRD will monitor the program for its impact on training access, workforce development, and hiring across field and leadership roles.

INSIGHTS

INSIGHTS is an OPRD initiative that began in 2024. It gives employees the chance to explore different roles, tasks, teams, and environments across the agency through short, guided experiences. The purpose of the program is to foster greater understanding of agency operations and to break down siloed work. Employees who participate in the INSIGHTS program are given the opportunity to shadow an employee who works in a different role, unit, region, and/or division of the agency. Example experiences include a policy analyst who spends a day shadowing a park ranger, a park specialist experiencing the work of an accountant, or a park ranger learning the work of another ranger who coordinates the camp host program for a management unit.

These experiences allow staff to better understand how the agency operates and how their work impacts the agency at large. It allows staff to network with people they may not directly work alongside, and promotes collaboration and understanding of agency programs and projects. As the program continues, OPRD will evaluate staff experiences to ensure the INSIGHTS program gives staff positive opportunities to explore different fields of work, and recognize how all OPRD units and staff collaborate to achieve OPRD's mission and deliver service to the public.

Programs & Research

Explore Yurts & Cabins

The Explore: Yurts and Cabins (EYC) program was an OPRD pilot project in partnership with the Oregon Office of Outdoor Recreation. The program was an opportunity for organizations to apply to host one of up to 12 small group camping trips for communities that are underrepresented in outdoor recreation. Each selected organization was given five cabins or yurts for a two-night weekend stay at designated parks. The program's goal was to remove barriers to camping and outdoor experiences for underrepresented communities. These facilities are an entry point for people new to staying overnight in the outdoors or who lack access to gear. Cabins and yurts may not be as accessible to underrepresented communities due to cost and limited availability. OPRD has hosted 32 groups over three summers since the program began, reaching as many as 160 participants who might not have otherwise experienced camping at a state park.

In 2023, the program was paused to review its implementation and potential improvements to support effectiveness and program accessibility. To continue to provide a hosted opportunity for community groups, in 2025 OPRD launched a temporary version of the EYC program. The temporary program offers parks the opportunity to host community groups for self-guided experiences in yurts and cabins. This decentralized model enables parks to engage directly with groups from their local community, adding

flexibility while maintaining the program’s core values of inclusion and engagement. This approach keeps the program functional while laying the groundwork for its future administration in 2026 under the leadership of the new Belonging, Equity, and Engagement (BEE) Coordinator.

Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan

The [2025–2029 Oregon Statewide Outdoor Recreation Plan \(SCORP\)](#), titled *Balance and Engagement: sustaining the Benefits for all Oregonians*, constitutes Oregon’s basic five-year plan for outdoor recreation. The plan guides the use of Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) monies that come into the state, guides other Oregon Parks and Recreation Department (OPRD)-administered grant programs, and offers recommendations to guide federal, state, and local units of government, as well as the private sector, in making policy and planning decisions.

The plan addresses three important priorities facing outdoor recreation providers in the coming years, including:

1. The importance and benefits of recreation to Oregonians and the local economy.
2. Balancing conservation with outdoor recreation.
3. Engaging with underserved communities in outdoor recreation efforts.

The third priority is of particular relevance to OPRD’s belonging, equity, and engagement efforts, as it shares research and recommendations that will inform agency and unit targeted approaches; helping to prioritize agency efforts to operationalize the welcoming statement.

Universal Access & ADA Transition Plan

OPRD’s Universal Access Policy establishes a framework for planning and effective implementation of actions necessary to ensure visitors have access to OPRD programs, facilities and services. OPRD continues to build resources and training opportunities that advance the agency’s ability to meet the expectations OPRD has established for universal access.

OPRD’s ADA Coordinator developed training for all staff, ‘Introduction to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Oregon Parks and Recreation Department’ to support the agency’s ADA Transition Plan. This training provides an overview of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), OPRD’s commitment to accessibility through the transition plan, and cultivates an accessibility lens for staff to utilize to ensure their work, whether programs, projects, or communications is intentionally considering accessibility.

The agency’s [ADA Transition Plan](#) is one example of OPRD’s commitment to identifying and removing physical barriers to access to OPRD services and properties. In 2021, 4,872 individual barriers, ranging in classification from low to high, were identified across all agency properties. Remediation of these barriers has been made possible by different training, tracking, and coordination efforts that support staff as evaluators and gives them the tools necessary to identify and correct barriers. As of December 2024, 768 barriers have been remediated. The goal is to have all barriers remediated by 2046.

MOVING FORWARD: BELONGING, EQUITY, AND ENGAGEMENT

The Belonging, Equity, & Engagement plan will be monitored and evaluated for successful implementation in 2025 - 2027. Success will be measured by the agency's accomplishment of these strategies:

Strategy: Implement a welcoming framework (universal goals) and customer service strategy across all park regions.

Outcomes

- Welcome Statement has been adapted into agency operations. Use includes: signage, onboarding & recruitment materials, OPRD SharePoint site, website and reservation system.
- Community mapping, resources to better understand the communities the agency and each unit's programs serve, will be provided to support outreach goals and the development of targeted approaches.

Timeline

| Deliverable | Completed By |
|--|---------------|
| Welcome Statement inclusion in property and program areas will be tracked in a progress report. Gaps in adoption of the welcome statement will be identified, alongside a plan to remedy these gaps. | December 2025 |
| Community mapping resources will be added to OPRD's SharePoint website. Resources will include demographic information, along with identified partners, community groups and other resources. | August 2025 |
| Welcome Statement progress report updated to ensure gaps have been resolved. | December 2026 |

Evaluation

Progress toward a welcoming framework will be evaluated by the timely completion of the listed deliverables. Effectiveness will be determined by the relevance and utility of community mapping tools in shaping targeted approaches. Success will also be measured by full integration of the Welcome Statement in all designated programs, ensuring previously identified gaps are resolved.

Strategy: Create measurable and actionable plans for OPRD units and the overall agency that identifies and addresses barriers to belonging and access.

Outcomes

- OPRD adopts Targeted Universalism into agency planning and operations.
- Unit targeted approaches for goals in belonging and access are identified and implemented for all OPRD units. This includes creating and sharing resources that support outreach and initiatives, as well establishing evaluation metrics for unit targeted approaches to measure progress and success in achieving universal goals.

- Agency targeted approaches for goals in belonging and access are identified and implemented. This includes establishing a Universal Goals Workgroup and the process for managing agency targeted approaches. The process will be designed to support greater staff engagement in adapting operations to ensure OPRD achieves these goals.
- Explore Cabins and Yurts program is re-implemented as an agency targeted approach.
- Agency will evaluate unit and agency goals, and share successful targeted approaches, as well as lessons learned with OPRD staff to support ongoing progress in achieving goals in access and belonging.

Timeline

| Deliverable | Completed By |
|---|---------------|
| Unit targeted approaches established for all OPRD units. | January 2026 |
| Agency targeted approach process, including the universal goals workgroup, established. | January 2026 |
| Explore Yurts & Cabins Program reimplemented as an agency targeted approach. | February 2026 |
| Progress on unit and agency targeted approaches shared with OPRD managers and staff. | April 2026 |
| Additional agency targeted approaches identified and established. | December 2026 |
| Progress on unit and agency targeted approaches shared with OPRD managers and staff. | April 2027 |

Evaluation

Successful outcomes related to implementing Targeted Universalism will be measured by the completion of the deliverables above. Additionally, each identified unit or agency targeted approach will be as a SMART goal (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time bound). This will allow the agency to assess the impact of each approach in achieving a distinct desired outcome to support increased access and/or belonging.

Strategy: Have a well-trained workforce that is committed to the values and culture of OPRD.

Outcomes

- 25-27 Affirmative Action Plan targeted approaches are implemented. This includes: establishing staff training that supports understanding of the welcome statement, evaluating the workforce and candidate pool to identify gaps in representation and develop additional strategies to address these gaps.
- Review and update onboarding and annual training requirements for staff and volunteers to identify opportunities for establishing principles of belonging, equity, and engagement into OPRD culture and work.
- Provide unconscious bias training for employees to ensure that bias is interrupted and not an unaccounted factor in service delivery or program development.

- Develop and establish the Field Maintenance Training Program, including the foundational Ranger Core Task Book and the Technical Task Book to support training for the park ranger series.

Timeline

| Deliverable | Completed By |
|---|--------------|
| Gaps in representation in workforce and candidate pool are identified. Targeted approaches are established and implemented to address these gaps. | January 2026 |
| Staff training, in support of the welcoming statement and unconscious bias is implemented and included in staff and volunteer onboarding processes. | March 2026 |
| Ranger Core Task Book is implemented. | March 2026 |
| First phase of Technical Task Books is implemented | May 2026 |

Evaluation

Successful outcomes related to staff understanding of the Welcome Statement and increasing access and belonging in OPRD’s workforce will be measured by the completion of the deliverables above. Additionally, the impact of the Field Maintenance Training program will be evaluated for equitable opportunities and access to advanced training for staff from underrepresented communities. Identified training as part of onboarding will be evaluated for success in advancing understanding of OPRD’s Welcome Statement and adoption into agency operations. To address gaps in the workforce, as well as other unit and agency targeted approaches, additional training opportunities will be implemented as needed. These opportunities will be evaluated for their ability to achieve the desired outcomes related to specific approaches.

TARGETED UNIVERSALISM: NEW STRATEGIES AND CONTINUING PROGRESS

OPRD will continue with ongoing work and efforts to support access and belonging for staff and volunteers, as well as current and future visitors. The agency is aware that there are commitments and efforts by OPRD units, managers, and staff not formally recognized in this plan. One of the expected outcomes of implementing targeted universalism is not only to support units to identify new strategies that advance goals for access and belonging, but also to identify current unit approaches. Providing agency-level commitment and support for different unit approaches allows OPRD to learn from and support its greatest resource, its staff. The way OPRD will continue to support its staff is to ensure the agency is authentic in its commitment to make opportunities available to individuals from diverse backgrounds, and to support the strategies and approaches by units to ensure the agency truly serves everyone and meets its universal goals of access and belonging.