

Strategic and Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Justice Plan 2025–2030

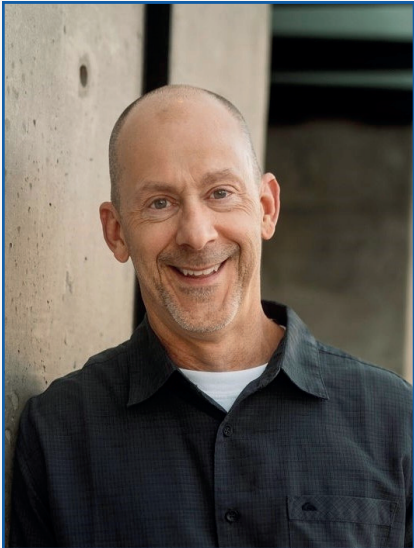


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Message from the Director



I am excited to share this strategic plan, outlining our agency's priorities and focus areas over the next five years. At the Oregon Water Resources Department, we recognize that water is fundamental to thriving communities, ecosystems, and economies. We are proud and committed to delivering high-quality service, while fostering innovation as we move towards a more active water management approach to help address water scarcity and supply challenges for all.

This plan is a roadmap for our agency work. It clearly defines our priorities, goals, and tasks that will help us manage our resources sustainably over the coming years. We are focused on enhancing efficiency, strengthening partnerships, and meeting new and future water supply needs through resiliency, agility, and equity.

Our success is built on the dedication and expertise of our staff, meaningful engagement with our partners, and the trust of the communities we serve. By working together and prioritizing transparency, inclusiveness, and efficiency, we will build a stronger, more effective agency that upholds our mission, delivers optimal results, and meets the needs of the public.

I encourage everyone in our organization to embrace this plan as our shared vision for the future. With determination and a collective commitment to excellence, we will achieve our goals and create lasting, positive change today and for generations to come.

Ivan Gall

Director

Indigenous Peoples Acknowledgement

We honor Tribal sovereignty and value our shared water relationship with Oregon's nine federally recognized Tribes: Burns Paiute Tribe, Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw Indians, Confederated Tribes of Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Tribe of Indians, Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians, Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, Confederated Tribes of Umatilla Indian Reservation, Coquille Indian Tribe, and The Klamath Tribes.

Staff Acknowledgement

The development of the Strategic and Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Justice Plan was made possible through the time, vulnerability, and experiences generously shared by individuals and groups across the Oregon Water Resources Department. Your dedication to engaging in meaningful conversations, sharing personal insights, and shaping a vision for a more inclusive and equitable water future has been invaluable.

We deeply appreciate your commitment to the Department and those we serve. Your contributions have laid the foundation for a plan that reflects our voices, aspirations, and collective wisdom. Together, we are responsive to the operational needs of today to serve tomorrow.



Butte Falls. Photo by Laura Tesler Photography.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Overview

The Oregon Water Resources Department presents the 2025–2030 Strategic and Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice Plan (Plan), a comprehensive framework designed to guide the Department’s work over the next five years.

Water is a vital public resource that sustains Oregon’s communities, ecosystems, and economy. Its availability and accessibility are increasingly threatened by climate change and other emerging pressures. These challenges demand a proactive, inclusive, and adaptive response.

In recognition of this urgency, the Department has developed a Plan to optimize the Department’s work and embed equity throughout the Department’s operations, programs, and services. The Department has identified four priority areas which address our programs, services and capabilities to respond to ever-changing water conditions.

Agency Priority Areas



Priority Area 1

Act with Urgency to Protect Instream and Out-of-Stream Uses



Priority Area 2

Assist the State and Communities to Prepare for Water Scarcity



Priority Area 3

Adapt to Doing More with Less by Stretching Our Water Supplies



Priority Area 4

Advance Agency Workforce & Operations

Priorities one through three are adapted from the 2025 Integrated Water Resources Strategy (IWRS). The fourth priority area looks at optimizing Department internal functions with the resources we have. Together, the priority areas reinforce and support the Department’s mission to deliver sustainable and equitable water resources management.

Transparency in our work is foundational to this plan and strengthening our partnerships with all Oregon communities is central to the Plan’s success. The Oregon Water Resources Department is committed to transparency in our decision-making and continues to strive toward making science-informed decisions and managing our shared water resources sustainability to promote resiliency now and in the future.

Agency Mission

The Department's mission is to serve the public by practicing and promoting responsible water management through two key goals:

- To directly address Oregon's water supply needs
- To restore and protect streamflows and watersheds in order to ensure the long-term sustainability of Oregon's ecosystems, economy, and quality of life.

Agency Vision

The vision of the Water Resources Department is to assure sufficient and sustainable water supplies are available to meet current and future needs.

Agency Core Values

Integrity – We are accountable for all that we do. We act with honesty and promote transparency.

Service – We are dedicated to providing outstanding service and treating everyone equitably in our management and stewardship of state resources.

Technical Excellence – We base our resource decisions on law, science, and expertise.

Teamwork – We are united in our mission, relying on one another and working together with the communities we serve.

Forward-Looking – We seek innovative and practical solutions to the water challenges of today and tomorrow.

Equity Statement

Water is a shared, vital, and finite resource. The Oregon Water Resources Department strives for meaningful engagement, transparent decision-making, and accessible services. Together we will build a resilient and equitable water future for this generation and the many to come.



Crater Lake National Park. Photo by Getty Images.

Oregon Water Resources Department Background

The Department manages Oregon's water quantity. As of August 2025, the Department operates with 236 filled, and 25 vacant positions located throughout the state in 23 districts and organized in six regions as illustrated in Figure 1. Additionally, the

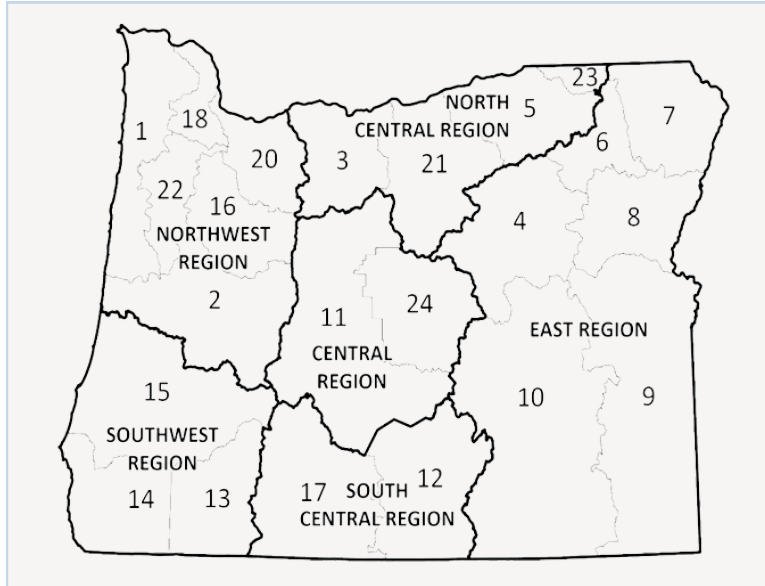


Figure 1. Administrative Region and District Map

Department is structured into six divisions: Administrative Services; Directors Office; Field Services; Planning, Collaboration, and Investments; Technical Services; and Water Rights. The Water Resources Commission (WRC), a seven-member citizen board, oversees the establishment of select policies governing operations of the Department.¹ The Commission and Department seek to understand

Oregon's water resources, needs, and coming pressures to meet instream and out-of-stream needs by:

- Collecting and providing crucial data about groundwater, stream flows, and water needs throughout Oregon
- Protecting public safety and water supplies through proper well construction and dam safety
- Adjudicating and distributing water based on the system of prior appropriation and upholding Oregon water law
- Providing technical assistance and funding for planning, assessing and implementing water resources projects to help meet instream and out-of-stream needs
- Processing water rights, permits, transfers, and certificates

¹ ORS 536.025

The Department's operating budget is authorized through the state general fund by the Oregon Legislature. Other sources of funding are through federal funds, fee collections, lottery funds, and grants and loans. (See figure 2)

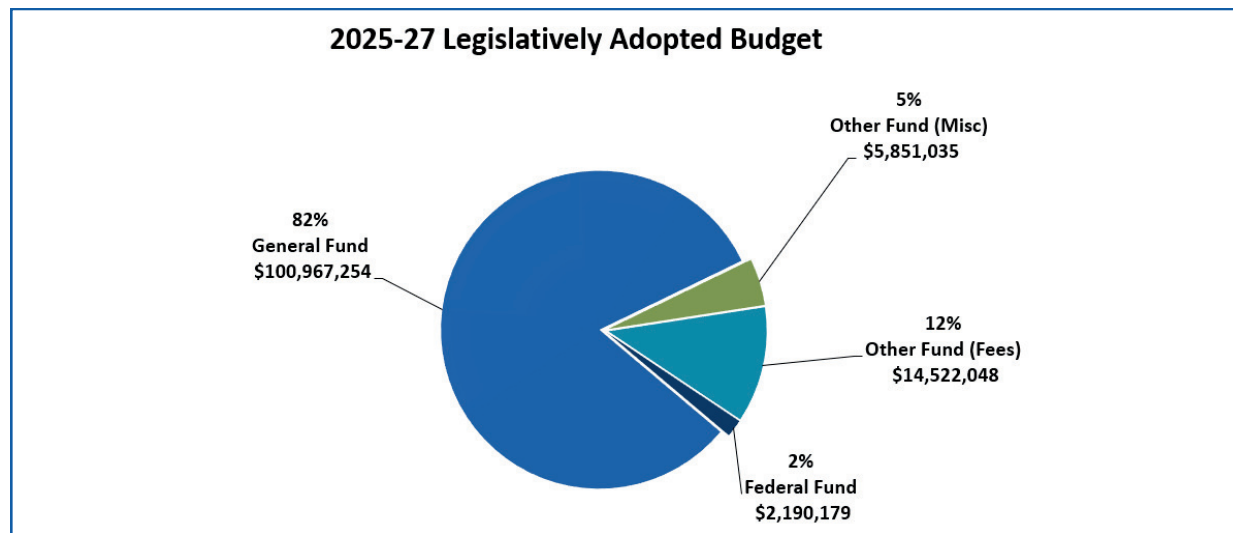


Figure 2. 2025-2027 Legislatively Adopted Budget

Oregon's Integrated Water Resources Strategy and Strategic Plan Development

Oregon's Integrated Water Resources Strategy (IWRS) is a central component to the development of the Strategic Plan and the Department's work. Oregon's IWRS provides a statewide inter-agency framework for better understanding and meeting Oregon's instream² and out-of-stream water needs, including water quantity, water quality, and ecosystems.

The 2025 IWRS was informed and developed with contributions from the public, the Governor's office, Tribes, and state and federal agencies. Three of the four Strategic Plan priority areas are adapted directly from the 2025 IWRS.

Strategic Plan Development

Plan development was centered on internal engagement to capture a diversity of perspectives, experiences, and expertise throughout the entire agency. Some external engagement was incorporated through the IWRS process to align the priorities and tasks with the collective needs of those we serve and with other state agencies. For more information on external and internal engagement see Appendix B.

² See ORS 537.332(1) for definition of "instream."

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, & Justice

Recognizing the environmental and systemic challenges that impact water accessibility, the Department developed this Plan with an intentional focus on diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice. While water scarcity affects all communities, environmental justice communities often face disproportionate risks and burdens.³

We also acknowledge Oregon's long-standing exclusionary water policies, particularly the prior appropriations system, which is common among many western states. This system has excluded some communities from securing water rights as they were often tied directly to property ownership. While this system is set in law and it is our responsibility to follow the law, we also have a responsibility to analyze and inform on how policies impact equity around the state.

DEIJ is recognized by the Department as a foundational element embedded in all aspects of our work. As such, DEIJ considerations were integrated throughout every stage of strategic plan development. This included creating a DEIJ workplan and conducting an informal assessment to identify existing gaps, strengths, and opportunities.

The DEI Team, along with staff and leadership, had opportunities to contribute to this process by sharing input on how their work connects to DEIJ principles and identifying areas for growth and improvement. This input informed milestone development and will be used during workplan development.

³ Dalgaard, S. (2022) State of Water Justice in Oregon: A Primer on How Oregon Water Infrastructure Challenges Affect Frontline Communities Across the State, White Paper prepared for the Oregon Environmental Council and the Oregon Water Futures Project (<https://www.oregonwaterfutures.org/water-justice-report>).

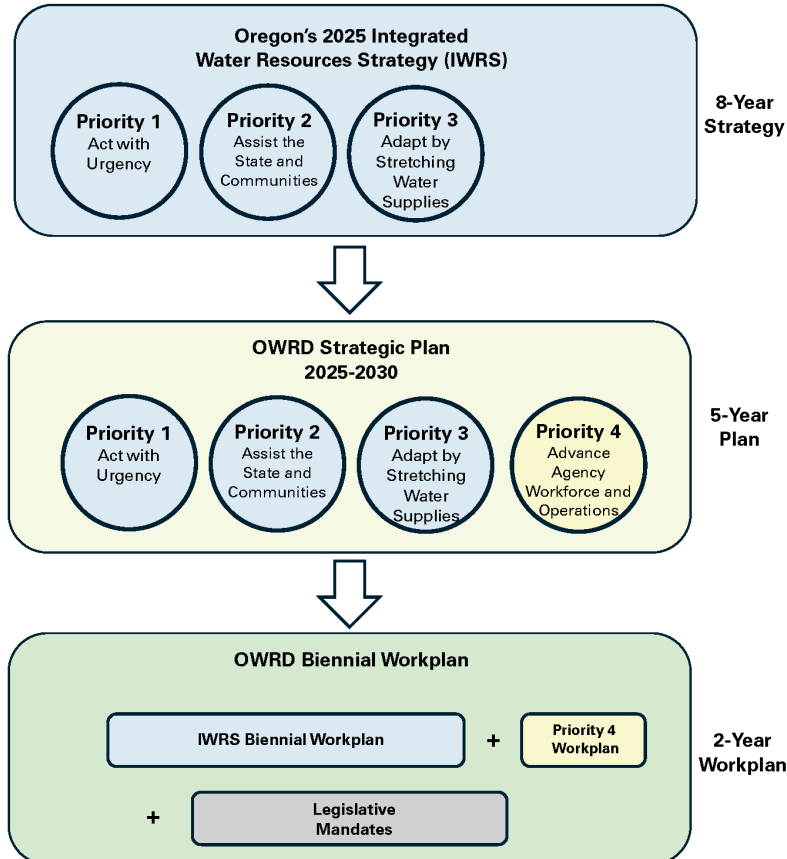
Department Strategic Priorities

This section describes the Department's four strategic priority areas for 2025-2030. Note that priority areas are targeted areas of focus and do not encompass the full scope of the agencies work.

The first three strategic priority areas are adapted from the IWRS. The fourth priority area is focused on the key outcomes and tasks to strengthen core agency operations, enhance external communication and customer service, modernize department technology and processes, and foster a forward-thinking, resilient, and adaptive workforce.

The priorities, associated tasks, and milestones are intended to be designed to align with the Department's ongoing responsibilities, drive performance goals, guide resource allocation, and monitor progress. Milestones will monitor Plan progress through biennial reporting in alignment with the IWRS reporting timelines. The IWRS follows an 8-year update cycle, while the Department's Plan operates on a 5-year cycle. As not to duplicate efforts, workplans and reporting for priority areas 1 through 3 will be developed through the IWRS. Priority area 4 workplans and reporting will be done through the Departments own mechanism. Figure 3 below illustrates how these concepts fit together and align for an overall agency strategy.

Figure 3. Organization of Strategic Priorities.



Priority Area Descriptions and Discussions

Each priority area is structured to present tasks and milestones. To track progress, the development of biennial milestones and workplans for each priority area will provide a clear mechanism for reporting. This format was chosen to help translate strategic priorities into concrete actions. By developing biennial milestones and linking them to workplans and through a portfolio management approach, the agency can maintain alignment, accountability, and public transparency.

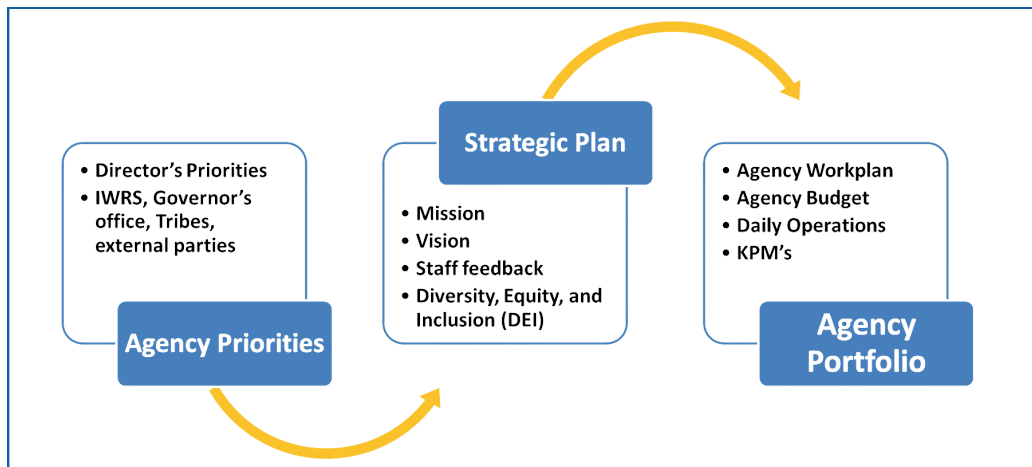


Figure 4. The connection between priority areas, Strategic Plan, and portfolio management.



Priority Area 1: Act with Urgency to Protect Instream and Out-of-Stream Uses (Adapted from IWRS)

Priority one contains targeted actions for near-term improvement to secure a healthier instream and out-of-stream water future for Oregon. This includes updating water laws, improving permitting processes, increasing resources towards compliance, and protecting priority geographical areas.

Tasks

P1.1 Reduce unauthorized water use and gain compliance with other water laws

P1.2 Provide guidance for what constitutes reasonable use of water

P1.3 Increase the use of existing programs and tools and develop new programs and tools that protect priority waters and/or watersheds that support instream needs and promote resiliency

P1.4 Expand efforts to protect the quality of surface and groundwater sources that provide drinking water to Oregonians

P1.5 Implement improvements to water permitting processes to improve transparency, efficiency, and effectiveness of decisions



Priority Area 2: Assist the State and Communities to Prepare for Water Scarcity (Adapted from IWRS)

Water scarcity is a growing challenge for communities across Oregon. Addressing it requires collaboration, innovation, and reliable data. In this priority area, the Department is focused on modernizing and integrating water data systems across agencies, supporting the Oregon Water Data Portal, and improving access to critical information. We are committed to using the data we already have to guide near-term planning, while expanding data collection in strategic areas to meet future demands.

Tasks

P2.1 Increase quality and accessibility of water availability, water use, and water demand information

P2.2 Modernize water data systems and website user interfaces to facilitate wider data sharing amongst agencies and the public and enhanced customer service

P2.3 Improve understanding of instream and out-of-stream needs through increased numbers of completed basin assessments, instream flow studies, and clean water plans

P2.4 Increase the number of communities and Tribes that have completed or are participating in water planning efforts to meet instream and out-of-stream water needs, protect drinking water sources, improve water quality and promote drought resiliency

P2.5 Increase the involvement of OWRD in advisory committees for Economic Opportunity Analyses (EOAs) and implement other actions to better align land use planning and actions with water resource goals



Fourmile Creek in Klamath County. Photo by Garrett Steensland.



Priority Area 3: Adapt to Doing More with Less by Stretching Our Water Supplies (Adapted from IWRS)

Oregon has effective tools like water conservation, reuse, and water right transfers, but their impact is limited by funding and capacity. To scale up solutions that benefit both people and ecosystems, the Department seeks opportunities to work with Tribal, federal, and local partners and invest in voluntary efforts that improve water quantity, quality, and habitat. By aligning resources and streamlining processes we seek to accelerate resilience-building across the state.

Tasks

P3.1 Increase the pace and scale of completion of water reuse and aquifer storage, recovery and recharge projects that support resilience and protect the environment

P3.2 Increase the number of water users that are planning for or implementing water conservation, efficiency, or modernization efforts that support resilience or improve instream flows

P3.3 Align existing and future agency funding and incentives programs to further instream flow restoration, groundwater recharge, source water protection, and water quality and habitat improvement efforts in priority basins/watersheds

P3.4 Identify priority areas and/or guidance for new above and below ground storage that would support resilience and protect public health and the environment

P3.5 Improve water right transfer processing times for lower risk transfers to facilitate the movement of water to high-priority use



Priority Area 4: Advance Agency Workforce & Operations

Priority 4 was created by the Department to address internal operations and workforce development that were not contemplated in the IWRS. It reflects the common themes and trends gathered through engagement with staff, leadership, the DEI Team, Tribes, and external partners. Notably, there is strong consistency in the input received on the areas of needed focus across all feedback received during the Plan development. Six themes, seen below, emerged from internal engagement. These themes informed the development of tasks, milestones and will be used to inform the development of future workplans and the agency portfolio of projects and initiatives. (See Appendix B for more information on what we heard during internal engagement).

Governance: Reviewing, modernizing, and making accessible internal policy, regulation, and statutory frameworks.

Workforce Development & Staff Experience: Expanding professional growth opportunities and fostering a resilient, adaptive, and positive workplace culture.

IT Infrastructure, Systems, and Technology: Investing in and modernizing tools and systems to enhance efficiency, security, and accessibility.

Operational Efficiency & Resource Allocation: Streamlining operations, refining and developing processes, and identifying resource needs for optimal utilization.

Internal & External Communication: Strengthening communication strategies that center on audience need, transparency, engagement, and accessibility.

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Environmental Justice: Building DEIJ infrastructure to support and reinforce each of the above themes.

The fundamental purpose of this priority is to cultivate and support an inclusive and resilient work environment by focusing on staff experience, workflow optimization, operational excellence, and portfolio management. Our agency commitment to DEIJ principles is also embedded in these efforts. We believe DEIJ values are not standalone initiatives but fundamental drivers of innovation and positive impact. This priority area is focused on building a stronger, more agile, adaptive workforce by enhancing staff supports and improving internal processes. Operationally, this priority area involves modernizing IT systems, streamlining and developing standard operating procedures, improving interdepartmental coordination, and using data and technology to increase efficiency and transparency.

P4.1 Modernized IT security, systems, and processes to meet current and future Department needs and requirements

Modernizing information technology (IT) is foundational for the Department's internal operations and external service delivery goals. Investment in IT resources was a recurring theme throughout strategic planning engagement, highlighting the critical need to align agency IT and Department investments with ongoing and evolving responsibilities and service demands. These tasks were identified within our agency 2025-2030 IT Strategic Plan.⁴

⁴Accessible online <https://www.oregon.gov/owrd/aboutus/Pages/default.aspx>

Tasks

4.1a Assess and close infrastructure and foundational system gaps to strengthen IT stability and performance

4.1b Implement comprehensive IT governance, security, and compliance frameworks to ensure accountability and regulatory alignment

4.1c Publish IT services and establish standardized work intake processes to streamline operations and improve service delivery

4.1d Minimize technical debt by modernizing legacy systems and improving code and infrastructure quality

4.1e Document existing systems to support effective collaboration and ensure continuity of operations

P4.2 Standardized Agency Operating Procedure and Workflows

Standard operating procedures (SOPs) and agency workflows formalize how work is prioritized, initiated, processed, implemented, reviewed and direct how decisions are made. Updated SOPs will increase staff efficiency, improve engagement, clarify roles, reduce redundancy, and will help optimize resource allocation. The implementation of SOPs will also improve the employee onboarding process and succession planning for staff.

Tasks

4.2a-f Prioritize, update, and develop SOPs and workflows for each of the six agency divisions

P4.3 Improved External Communication

Relevant and consistent external communication helps the Department fulfill its responsibilities and deliver equitable and accessible services to the public. The Department engages with a diverse array of external groups, including state and federal agencies, instream and out-of-stream users, Tribes, local governments, industry representatives, advocacy organizations, and community partners through many platforms. Through audience appropriate communications, the Department aims to improve equity, build trust, and enhance transparency and accessibility for all Oregon communities.

Historically, Tribes and other disproportionately impacted, and environmental justice communities⁵ have faced barriers in policy development and access to services. Thoughtful, appropriate, targeted communication strategies help minimize some of these barriers.

⁵ OAR 690-601-0200

Tasks

4.3a Modernize the Department Website

4.3b Develop communications pipelines with differentiated audiences

P4.4 Career Development and Career Pathways Planning for Key Agency Roles

Career development and career pathways planning supports workforce continuity and organizational resilience and adaptability. Well-structured career planning identifies key agency roles, anticipates future leadership and staffing needs while developing internal talent pipelines to maintain retention, stability, and service. Career planning coupled with succession planning is a holistic process that includes assessing future workforce needs, mapping critical positions, and implementing structured training, mentoring, onboarding, and professional development programs. By integrating career development and career pathways planning into the agency's strategic framework, this provides sustained operational effectiveness and preserves valuable institutional knowledge over time.

Task

4.4a-b Identify and Develop Career Development and Career Pathways for Field Services and Information Technology Roles.

Reporting and Workplan Development

Workplans will be developed after Strategic Plan publication. They operationalize the strategic tasks into specific actions that coordinate cross-departmental efforts. Workplans also enable structured monitoring, evaluation, and course correction on projects throughout their lifespan. The Department is committed to transparency and will assess and report the progress and status of each outcome and task within Strategic Plan reporting on a biennial basis.

Appendix A- Priority Area Dashboard

Adapted from Oregon’s Integrated Water Resources Strategy

Priority Area 1: Act with Urgency to Protect Instream and Out-of-Stream Uses					
Task	P1.1 Reduce unauthorized water use and gain compliance with other water laws	P1.2 Provide guidance for what constitutes reasonable use of water	P1.3 Increase the use of existing programs and tools and develop new programs and tools that protect priority waters and/or watersheds that support instream needs and promote resiliency	P1.4 Expand efforts to protect the quality of surface and groundwater sources that provide drinking water to Oregonians	P1.5 Implement improvements to water permitting processes to improve transparency, efficiency, and effectiveness of decisions
2025-27 Milestone	Improve compliance programs and processes Develop metrics for tracking compliance	Update Division 250 and 260 rules	Update Division 2 and 77 rules	Implement Action Plan for the Lower Umatilla Groundwater Management Area (conduct backflow inspections; publish conceptual model of groundwater system; seek federal funding for additional observation wells; investigate well construction) Participate in interagency teams for groundwater quality management areas	Implement HB 3342 and 3544, including rules updates Track and report water rights process timelines Participate in Reuse Interagency Team per HB 2169 Seek resources to address Aquifer Storage Reuse/Artificial Groundwater Recharge (AR/ASR) program needs and improvements Seek resources for IT staffing and resource gaps
2027-29 Milestone	Implement compliance improvements Report compliance metrics		Implement the Deschutes Water Bank Legislation, if funded	Continue Lower Umatilla Basin Groundwater Management Area Action Plan implementation	Identify and implement administrative or permitting streamlining opportunities regarding AR/ASR

Priority Area 2: Assist the State and Communities to Prepare for Water Scarcity					
Task	P2.1 Increase quality and accessibility of water availability, water use, and water demand information	P2.2 Modernize water data systems and website user interfaces to facilitate wider data sharing amongst agencies and the public and enhanced customer service	P2.3 Improve understanding of instream and out-of-stream needs through increased numbers of completed basin assessments, instream flow studies, and clean water plans	P2.4 Increase the number of communities and Tribes that have completed or are participating in water planning efforts to meet instream and out-of-stream water needs, protect drinking water sources, improve water quality and promote drought resiliency	P2.5 Increase the involvement of OWRD in advisory committees for Economic Opportunity Analyses (EOAs) and implement other actions to better align land use planning and actions with water resource goals
2025-27 Milestone	Convene Technical Advisory Group, publish stream gage data, install natural flow meters and develop modeling approach for the Surface Water Information Modeling System (SWIMS) Partner with U.S. Geologic Survey on developing conceptual water budgets Seek resources for IT staffing and resource gaps	Identify IT staffing and resource gaps and formulate strategy for addressing gaps See also P4.1, P4.3, and P4.4	Complete Walla Walla Basin Study Initiate Fifteen Mile Sub-Basin Study Provide base level data package for Place-Based Planning groups	Launch Place-Based Planning grants and participate in planning	Participate in advisory committees as needed
2027-29 Milestone	Scope water use reporting improvements and resource needs Seek resources to implement an effective Water Use Reporting program Complete statewide recharge study by 2028; complete SWIMS by 2029			Administer Place-Based Planning grants and participate in planning	

Priority Area 3: Adapt to Water Scarcity by Stretching Our Water Supplies					
Task	P3.1 Increase the pace and scale of completion of water reuse and aquifer storage, recovery and recharge projects that support resilience and protect the environment	P3.2 Increase the number of water users that are planning for or implementing water conservation, efficiency, or modernization efforts that support resilience or improve instream flows	P3.3 Align existing and future agency funding and incentives programs to further instream flow restoration, groundwater recharge, source water protection, and water quality and habitat improvement efforts in priority basins/watersheds	P3.4 Identify priority areas and/or guidance for new above and below ground storage that would support resilience and protect public health and the environment	P3.5 Improve water right transfer processing times for lower risk transfers to facilitate the movement of water to high-priority use
2025-27 Milestone	<p>Provide technical assistance</p> <p>Participate in Interagency Reuse Team per HB 2169 (2025)</p> <p>See also P1.5</p>	<p>Implement expanded Feasibility Study grants program. Launch Place-Based Planning grants</p>	<p>Continue support for the Conservation Reuse Enhancement Program (CREP) to voluntarily retire groundwater rights</p> <p>Launch Place-Based Planning grants; implement new laws for Feasibility Study Grants and Water Projects Grants and Loans</p> <p>Administer grants to Walla Walla efforts</p>	<p>See also P1.5</p>	<p>Complete temporary transfers in a timely manner</p> <p>Solicit contractor to evaluate our transfers processes and provide recommendations consistent with Lean Six Sigma principles</p> <p>Begin implementation of transfer process improvements</p>
2027-29 Milestone	<p>Provide technical assistance</p> <p>See also P1.5</p>	<p>Provide technical assistance and outreach on grant programs</p>	<p>Launch Deschutes Water Bank, subject to receiving funds</p>	<p>Seek resources to support a robust AR/ASR program</p> <p>Seek resources to develop guidance for above and below ground storage projects</p> <p>See also P1.5</p>	<p>Implement transfer process improvements</p>

Priority Area 4: Advance Agency Workforce & Operations P4.1 Modernize Informational Technology Security, Systems, and Processes to Meet Current and Future Agency Needs and Requirements					
Tasks	P4.1a Assess and close infrastructure and foundational system gaps to strengthen IT stability and performance	P4.1b Implement comprehensive IT governance, security, and compliance frameworks to ensure accountability and regulatory alignment	P4.1c Publish IT services and establish standardized work intake processes to streamline operations and improve service delivery	P4.1d Minimize technical debt by modernizing legacy systems and improving code and infrastructure quality	P4.1e Document existing systems to support effective collaboration and ensure continuity of operations
2025-27 Milestones Note: Asterisked items are intentionally presented at a high level to maintain security	Assess and address security gaps* Stabilize IT infrastructure* Improve remote connectivity* Revise hardware refresh lifecycle Implement file transfer protocol/secure file transfer protocol solutions Seek resources for establishing IT assets and licensing management	Establish right size IT governance Seek resources to launch agency-wide IT and security engagement	Establish work intake channels Enhance Halo IT service management to support intake processes	Launch agency-wide intranet redesign Migrate our code repository system Seek resources for data quality improvement efforts	Develop comprehensive data dictionary
2027-29 Milestones	Implement IT asset and licensing management	Launch agency-wide IT and security engagement		Implement agile methodology for software development Initiate data quality improvement efforts	Document the IT application Portfolio Expand use of the IT wiki

Priority Area 4: Advance Agency Workforce & Operations P4.2 Standardized Agency Operating Procedure and Workflows						
Tasks	P4.2a Prioritize, update, and develop SOPs and workflows for Planning, Collaboration and Investments Division	P4.2b Prioritize, update, and develop SOPs and workflows for Field Services Division	P4.2c Prioritize, update, and develop SOPs and workflows for Water Right Services Division	P4.2 d Prioritize, update, and develop SOPs and workflows for Director's Office	P4.2e Prioritize, update, and develop SOPs and workflows for Technical Services Division	P4.2f Prioritize, update, and develop SOPs and workflows for Administrative Services Division
2025-27 Milestones	Identify & prioritize SOPs for development & update Develop/update 2 of the identified SOPs	Initiate update of Field Operations Manual (FOM) Deploy confined animal feeding operation (CAFO) water supply review	Update desk manual for limited license application processing Update desk manual for division administrative support Update SOPs for extension of time application processing	Develop digital media policy Develop internal legislative process Develop internal rulemaking process guide	Develop SOPs for Seismic Stability Analysis; Dam Breach Inundation Analysis; & Spillway Capacity Analysis. Develop groundwater transfer review workflow Initiate workflow development for the Surface Water Information System update.	Identify & prioritize SOPs and desk manuals for development and/or update Initiate the development of safety operations manual Develop/update 1 identified SOP or desk manual per section
2027-29 Milestones	Develop/update 2 of the identified SOPs	Complete FOM update Identify & prioritize additional SOPs for development & update Develop/update 2 of the identified SOPs	Update SOPs for temporary and permanent transfer application processing.	Develop communications workflow based on team expansion Develop Tribal interactions SOP and agreements	Develop SOPs for Probable Maximum Flood and Slope Stability Analysis Complete development of workflows for the surface water information system update.	Develop/update 2 identified SOPs or desk manuals per section Complete the update of safety operations manual

Priority Area 4: Advance Agency Workforce & Operations		
P4.3 Improved External Communication		
Tasks	P4.3a Modernize department website	P4.3b Develop communication pipelines with differentiated audiences
2025-27 Milestones	Develop existing website mapping Assess website content relevance Scope and Implement accessibility compliance requirements on website by March 31, 2026 Scope website overhaul and redesign Seek resources to overhaul and redesign website	Complete electronic communication plan that prioritizes organizational goals Establish quarterly legislative communications based on interest areas Establish consistent communication with interested partners, and environmental justice entities Establish consistent communication with Tribes
2027-29 Milestones	Implementation of funded website redesign focused on user experience	Position planning for watermasters

Priority Area 4: Advance Agency Workforce & Operations		
P4.4 Career Development and Career Pathways Planning for Key Agency Roles		
Tasks	P4.4a Identify and develop career development and career pathways for key Information Technology roles	P4.4b Identify and develop career development and career pathways for Key Field Services roles
2025-27 Milestones	Development of position map/org chart Identify key roles and core competencies, and develop succession plan for key roles by June 2026 Identify and seek resources for staffing gaps in critical IT roles	Develop position map/org chart Identify core competencies and develop succession plan for region manager positions
2027-29 Milestones	Identify position series of roles and seek training and development pathways for growth	Position planning for watermasters in hard-to-fill Districts

Appendix B- Engagement Summary

External Engagement

As part of the IWRS engagement process, the Department conducted a variety of external efforts in a broad set of forums to solicit public, water partner, and Tribal input on agency functions and performance. Efforts included a written invitation to Tribal leadership to engage both informally through staff-to-staff coordination as well as formally through government-to-government consultation. The Department also shared regular updates on the process during quarterly staff level updates to the Legislative Commission on Indian Services (LCIS) Natural Resources Work Group and Cultural Resource Cluster meetings. Engagement with water partners and the public also included director and manager tours around the state and a public Strategic Plan informational open house.

Internal Analyses: PESTLE, SWOT, Gallup Poll

In preparation for Plan development, the Department conducted a Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Legal, Environmental (PESTLE) and a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis based on feedback from staff, leadership, Tribes, and external partners. The PESTLE evaluates external factors impacting an organization: political, economic, social, technological, legal, and environmental factors while the SWOT evaluates an organization or project's internal and external factors to improve decision-making and overall performance.

Additionally, the Department conducted two Gallup polls with the purpose of evaluating staff engagement and experience. Analyzing the Gallup poll, SWOT, and PESTLE data lightly informed the development of the Plan's priority areas, tasks, milestones, and will be used to inform the creation of future biennial workplans.

Internal Engagement

During the Strategic Plan development, the Department hosted 20 internal staff workshops, engaging 94 percent of Department staff. The Department also conducted a series of workshops with the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Team and agency leadership. Lastly, all staff were invited to engage throughout the Plan development process via a variety of surveys including a Gallup poll and informational sessions.

The internal input was used to develop the strategic planning process, priorities, tasks, equity statement, and milestones. The input from staff will further inform the development of biennial workplans. The result is a Plan that aligns with institutional priorities and reflects the voices of those who help implement and deliver the agency programs, services, and mission every day.

The Water Resources Commission was informed of these efforts throughout the Strategic Plan development process and was given several opportunities to provide input.

This section expands on the key themes identified during the internal engagement process, which was designed to encourage broad participation and diverse input from the Department. Conducted through surveys and workshops with staff, leadership, and the DEI Team, the process facilitated conversations that helped shape our understanding of key priorities and were used to develop the tasks, milestones, and future workplans. The following section provides priority area specific staff feedback.

Priority Area 1 - Act with Urgency

What we heard: Agency staff and leadership recognize the importance of reevaluating administrative rules to ensure clarity, policy alignment, relevance, and integration of DEIJ principles. Additionally, there is strong support for updating the water right and transfer application review systems, eliminating backlogs, improving the water rights permit system, and digitizing records and the application process. Streamlining these systems improves accessibility and customer service and reduces administrative burdens. Staff and leadership recognize the importance of reevaluating administrative rules to ensure clarity, policy alignment, relevance, and integration of DEIJ principles. Agency staff also showed wide support for improving agency enforcement of rules and acquiring more staff to increase compliance to make the agency more effective in protecting limited surface and groundwater resources. Staff also noted that protecting ecosystem needs is a priority and working towards assuring the agency acquires clearer authority to do so would be consistent with the agency's mission.

Priority Area 2 - Assist Community Preparedness Efforts

What we heard: Staff and leadership expressed a strong commitment to being proactive in their outreach and engagement efforts, emphasizing the importance of tailoring their approach thoughtfully and strategically to the unique needs of each community they serve. Planning, Collaboration, and Investments Section staff need to engage using methods that are community-specific and grounded in DEIJ principles. Staff expressed a shared desire to enhance operational efficiency and strengthen interagency communication networks - efforts that will foster deeper relationships, increase transparency, and support more equitable and informed decision-making. Technical Services Section staff also expressed support for completion of the Water Use Reporting System update to the new Surface Water Information Modeling System (SWIMS) by 2030.

Priority Area 3 - Adapt to Doing More with Less Water

What we heard: Staff and leadership expressed the importance of engaging with Tribes and honoring recognized or existing treaty rights as a high priority. Staff also support proactively working on developing Critical Groundwater Areas.

Priority Area 4 - Advance Agency Workforce & Operations

What we heard: Staff and leadership are motivated and eager to address identified internal barriers to strengthen communication, efficiency, transparency, and accountability across the agency. This includes a clear desire to modernize and formalize internal processes, enhance IT systems, and develop succession planning strategies. The outcomes and milestones associated with these priorities are rooted in internal engagement and further informed by insights gathered through external partner input. There is a desire to modernize and formalize internal processes, enhance IT systems, and develop succession planning strategies. The outcomes and milestones associated with these priorities are rooted in internal engagement and further informed by insights gathered through external partner input.