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## Strategic Plan

### **Vision | Missions | Values | Equity Statement |**

#### **VISION:**

To offer timely service and practicable, actionable advice, guidance, and policy development to anyone interested in correctly applying or improving the public records process in Oregon.

#### **MISSION:**

The Office of the Public Records Advocate (“the office”) is responsible for:

- Providing resolution of disputed public records requests at the behest of public bodies or public records requesters;
- Providing training on public records laws and best practices;
- Providing guidance and advice on the public records law upon request, including policy development; and
- Serving as a voting member and executive director of the Public Records Advisory Council.

#### **VALUES:**

We prioritize transparency, accessibility, and accountability in all aspects of our service, fostering trust and integrity in the public records process.

#### **EQUITY STATEMENT:**

We are committed to ensuring equitable access to information and resources, striving to eliminate barriers and address disparities, fostering inclusivity, and honoring diverse perspectives in our work.



**PESTLE Analysis |**

<b>PESTLE Factor</b>	<b>Analysis</b>
<b>Political</b> (State or federal policy, rules, new laws, and upcoming elections.)	The administration and work of the office is guided by its founding statutes, ORS 192.461 – 488. The office is also developing its first administrative rule to outline the facilitated dispute resolution process.
<b>Economic</b> (The broad, economic climate we are in, such as inflation rates, interest rates, economic growth, and property prices.)	The current economic forecast for the state government has conscribed state government growth as of spring 2024. Accordingly, the office has requested, but is unlikely to receive, two additional full time staff members.
<b>Social</b> (The population growth rates, cultural aspects, age distribution, and changing social behaviors.)	More requesters who are contacting the office for assistance on disputed public records requests appear to have little faith or trust in the government to process their request honestly and equitably. This has led to an increase in contentious and difficult to resolve public records requests. Moreover, requests to the office overall have grown, increasingly approximately 30% since 2019, while staffing levels remain static.
<b>Technological</b> (The availability of technology and rate of technological changes for you and to your customer.)	A lot of public records exist in electronic format. Moreover, increasingly complex public records are being submitted related to these records, including for metadata, file headings, and whole databases. Finally, as many public records requests involve email, which must still be reviewed manually, time delays and costs for producing records continue to increase.
<b>Legal</b> (The laws directly connected to us and our area of activity.)	<b>See Political</b> , above. In addition, the office is a subject matter expert on ORS Chapter 192.
<b>Environmental</b> (The surrounding environment, weather, natural disasters, geographical position, climate changes, and sustainability.)	No impact on office operations yet, although public records requests for records related to weather incidents have increased, leading to additional requests for assistance to the office.



**SWOT Analysis |**

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Subject matter experts.</li> <li>• Active listeners.</li> <li>• Ability to offer pragmatic, actionable legal guidance and policy advice.</li> <li>• Services available to all Oregonians, including public employees, the media, and the public, fostering strong, cross-disciplinary relationships and stakeholder trust.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inadequate staffing.</li> <li>• Response times to request for assistance are sometimes longer than optimum.</li> <li>• Inability to pursue more than one or two large projects or system analyses at a time.</li> <li>• Lack of administrative staff impacts agency director’s ability to carry out agency functions.</li> </ul>
<b>Opportunities</b>	<b>Threats</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement newly derived KPMs to gather data on agency performance and improve constituent service.</li> <li>• Seek efficiencies within existing programs.</li> <li>• Expand outreach to affinity groups to offer community trainings on the requirements of and best practices under Oregon’s public records law.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Economic downturn and impact on public body’s ability to appropriately respond to public records requests.</li> <li>• Cuts to agency budget would affect ability to offer trainings and mediation services.</li> <li>• Growing hostility toward public bodies amongst some requesters makes it difficult to offer satisfactory advice or compromises.</li> </ul>



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## **Goals and Objectives |**

### **GOAL 1: Customer Service**

Conduct an annual survey regarding office performance as it relates to:

1. Timeliness;
2. Accuracy;
3. Helpfulness;
4. Expertise;
5. Availability of information; and
6. Overall Service.

Survey recipients will be broken into the four groups who utilize office services:

1. State employees;
2. Local public employees;
3. The media; and
4. The public.

### **GOAL 2: Public Records Advisory Council Best Practices**

Annual self-assessment survey of all 14 members of the Public Records Advisory Council (including two non-voting ex officio legislative members) using the 15 questions required for the best practice measure of all Oregon state boards and commissions:

1. Executive Director's performance expectations are current;
2. Executive Director receives annual performance feedback;
3. The agency's mission and high-level goals are current and applicable;
4. The board reviews the Annual Performance Progress Report;
5. The board is appropriately involved in review of agency's key communications;
6. The board is appropriately involved in policy-making activities;
7. The agency's policy option packages are aligned with their mission and goals;
8. The board reviews all proposed budgets (likely occurs every other year);
9. The board periodically reviews key financial information and audit findings;
10. The board is appropriately accounting for resources;
11. The agency adheres to accounting rules and other relevant financial controls;
12. Board members act in accordance with their roles as public representatives;
13. The board coordinates with others where responsibilities and interests overlap;
14. The board members identify and attend appropriate training sessions; and
15. The board reviews its management practices to ensure best practices are utilized.



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### **GOAL 3: Tracking Mediation and Dispute Resolution**

Document requests for mediation of disputed public records requests and related questions across 12 categories by year, to determine mediation efficiency, i.e., the average number of days from request for mediation of disputed public records to resolution.

The categories of data that are tracked are:

1. Date of request for assistance;
2. Name of person requesting assistance;
3. Does the requester represent a member of the public, the media, a local government, or a state government;
4. The public body whose records are at issue;
5. The nature of the dispute;
6. The Oregon Revised Statute (ORS) section at issue;
7. To whom the request for assistance is assigned;
8. Actions taken in responding to the request;
9. The resolution of the request;
10. The date on which the request is closed after rendering service;
11. The date on which the request is closed if the requester has not responded to the office after 30 days; and
12. The total number of days for which the request was open.

### **GOAL 4: Training Satisfaction**

Create a survey tracking satisfaction with public records trainings to be provided to members of the public and public employees at the end of each in-person or online training to determine whether the training provided them with relevant and useful best practices for processing and responding to public records requests.

### **GOAL 5: DEI plan**

The office is currently in a discovery phase as we examine our statutory duties through an equity lens. To date, three areas have been identified for further assessment:

1. Office policy:
  - a. How to meet those who request assistance where they are?
  - b. How to maintain the historical office approach to customer service of “no wrong door in state government”?
2. Administrative rules: As the office is currently in the process of drafting its first administrative rule (for facilitated dispute resolution), it will consider relevant matters like ensuring that varied cultural communication styles are heard and respected in the mediation process.



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3. Public Records Advisory Council: Questions for council members to consider and decide as a group to ensure that diverse perspectives are welcome and incorporated into the council's work will include –
    - a. What does it mean to be inclusive in our efforts; and
    - b. What agreements and expectations are there about how people show up in conversation.

**GOAL 6: Implementing policy on relationship with tribes (ORS 182.164)**

1. The office has two (out of three) statutorily prescribed program areas relevant to the requirements of ORS 182.164:
2. the mediation of disputed public records requests; and
3. an extension of our mandate to offer public employee trainings to interested members of the public as well.
  - a. However, the office is limited in its ability to offer services that affects tribal governments themselves as the public records law prohibits one public body of making a public records request of another. Moreover, tribal governments do not fall under the authority of the Oregon public records law in terms of answering requests for disclosure of their records, and thus would not be eligible to receive trainings. Nevertheless, the office stands ready to assist any tribal member who wishes to make a public records request of a state or local government in Oregon in their individual capacity and will take greater steps to promote our availability.
4. Todd Albert, Public Records Advocate, and Yufeng Luo, Deputy Public Records Advocate, are responsible for developing and implementing programs of the office that affect tribes.
5. The office has reviewed its three primary program areas in conjunction with our authorizing statute to identify programs that affect tribes. While none affect tribes directly, the office has identified disputed public records request mediation and public trainings as programs that could be beneficial to tribal members.
6. The office has previously attended Tribal-State Government-to-Government Annual Summits to inform tribal leaders directly of the services offered and available to tribal members and will continue to do so each year.
7. The office is a statutorily prescribed two-person state agency. As such, both employees work closely together on all relevant matters and share information necessary to the successful operation of the office. Furthermore, neither employee has regular communication with tribes on the legal status of tribes, the legal rights of members of tribes, or issues of concern to tribes. Thus, no employee training is required.
8. The Public Records Advocate has provided the Deputy Public Records Advocate with a copy the report required under ORS 182.164 and ORS Chapter 182.



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## **Strategy Development and Action Plan |**

### **Goal 1: Customer Service**

**Strategy:** Enhance customer service through regular feedback mechanisms.

**Action Plan:**

1. Develop an annual survey with questions addressing timeliness, accuracy, helpfulness, expertise, availability of information, and overall service.
2. Categorize survey recipients into state employees, local public employees, the media, and the public for targeted feedback.
3. Administer surveys through email and online forms to reach targeted groups efficiently.
4. Analyze survey responses to identify strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement.

### **Goal 2: Public Records Advisory Council Best Practices**

**Strategy:** Ensure effective governance through regular self-assessment and adherence to best practices.

**Action Plan:**

1. Create a comprehensive annual self-assessment survey based on the 15 required questions.
2. Distribute the survey to all 14 members of the Public Records Advisory Council.
3. Collect survey responses and compile them for analysis.
4. Analyze survey results to identify areas of improvement and adherence to best practices, while addressing identified gaps and improve governance practices.

### **Goal 3: Tracking Mediation and Dispute Resolution**

**Strategy:** Improve efficiency in mediation and dispute resolution through systematic tracking and analysis.

**Action Plan:**

1. Establish a systematic tracking system for mediation requests and related data points.
2. Utilize a standardized form for recording mediation requests and related information.
3. Generate regular reports on mediation efficiency, including average resolution times and trends across categories.
4. Analyze mediation data to identify bottlenecks and areas for improvement.
5. Implement process improvements based on data analysis to streamline mediation procedures.

### **Goal 4: Training Satisfaction**

**Strategy:** Measure and improve satisfaction with public records training programs.

**Action Plan:**



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1. Develop a survey to be administered at the end of each training session to gauge participant satisfaction.
  2. Administer the survey electronically or in print immediately following each training session.
  3. Analyze survey responses to assess satisfaction levels and identify areas for improvement.
  4. Use feedback to refine training content, delivery methods, and facilitation techniques.

**Goal 5: DEI Plan**

**Strategy:** Integrate diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) principles into office policies and practices.

**Action Plan:**

1. Conduct a comprehensive review of office policies to identify opportunities for DEI integration.
2. Engage stakeholders, including staff and external partners, in discussions about DEI priorities and goals.
3. Undertake staff training on DEI concepts, cultural competency, and inclusive communication.
4. Revise office policies and administrative rules to incorporate DEI principles and practices.

**Goal 6: Implementing Policy on Relationship with Tribes**

**Strategy:** Foster collaboration and support for tribal members within the constraints of the office's statutory mandate.

**Action Plan:**

1. Identify programs within the office's mandate that could benefit tribal members.
2. Attend Tribal-State Government-to-Government Annual Summits to inform tribal leaders of available services and support.
3. Review primary program areas to identify opportunities for indirect support to tribes.



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## **Allocation of Resources |**

The legislatively approved budget for the office for the 2023-25 biennium is \$900,101 (2023 HB 5032). The office is an “other funds” agency, deriving its financing through the assessment of each public body in state government (2023 SB 510, incorporated as ORS 192.476). The office has created a policy option package to request the funding of two additional full-time positions in its 2025-27 draft budget to ensure the maintenance of core office functions while expanding its ability to meet program goals, including those outlined in this strategic plan. However, pursuant to guidance promulgated by Governor Tina Kotek in a letter dated April 8, 2024, all proposals for other funds agencies are limited to available resources. Therefore, the office will strive to meet the goals outlined in this strategic plan in an appropriate timeframe and manner without additional revenue or staffing. Moreover, the office does not currently anticipate any IT investments during this strategic planning cycle.



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## **Monitoring and Evaluation |**

For each of the six goals outlined in this report, continuous monitoring of progress and evaluation of the effectiveness of chosen strategies will occur to determine if they need to be adjusted. More specifically:

### **Goal 1: Customer Service**

1. Use survey findings to implement targeted improvements in customer service; and
2. Repeat the survey annually to track progress and make iterative improvements.

### **Goal 2: Public Records Advisory Council Best Practices**

1. Implement feedback mechanisms to address identified gaps and improve governance practices; and
2. Conduct an annual review of governance practices and update self-assessment surveys as needed.

### **Goal 3: Tracking Mediation and Dispute Resolution**

1. Implement process improvements based on data analysis to streamline mediation procedures; and
2. Continuously monitor mediation metrics and adjust processes as necessary for ongoing improvement.

### **Goal 4: Training Satisfaction**

1. Track satisfaction trends over time to assess the impact of improvements and identify persistent issues; and
2. Continuously iterate on training programs based on ongoing feedback and evaluation.

### **Goal 5: DEI Plan**

1. Establish metrics to track progress on DEI goals and regularly evaluate outcomes; and
2. Continuously assess and refine DEI initiatives based on feedback and performance data.

### **Goal 6: Implementing Policy on Relationship with Tribes**

1. Provide required reports under ORS 182.164 and Chapter 182; and
2. Ensure clear communication between the Public Records Advocate and Deputy Public Records Advocate regarding their responsibilities related to tribes.