RACIAL EQUITY AND INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Sharing stories and resources for supporting diversity work

Corinne Handelman, Sandy River Basin Watershed Council
Adra Lobdell, Tryon Creek Watershed Council
Danielle Miles, Johnson Creek Watershed Council
Hanna Davis, Columbia Slough Watershed Council
What is Environmental Justice?

Equal protection from environmental and health hazards, and meaningful public participation in decisions that affect the environment in which people live, work, play & pray

-OPAL Environmental Justice Oregon
How do we define equity?

The guarantee of fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement while at the same time striving to identify and eliminate barriers that have prevented the full participation of some groups. The principle of equity acknowledges that there are historically underserved and underrepresented populations and that fairness regarding these unbalanced conditions is needed to assist quality in the provision of effective opportunities to all groups.

-UC Berkeley Initiative for Equity, Inclusion, & Diversity
Equality vs. Equity

*Equality* is treating everyone the same.

*Equity* is removing barriers to meaningful participation.
Why does racial equity matter in my organization?

• Personal motivation: moral responsibility
  • It’s the right thing to do

• Institutional motivation: diversity = success
  • Diverse teams *managed* for diversity are higher functioning than non-diverse teams or unintentionally diverse teams

• Financial motivation: grant agencies are now seeking diversity in partnerships & practices
  • OWEB grant application, foundations (Meyer Memorial Trust), private funders and individual donors
Why does racial equity matter in my organization?

• Social motivations: demographics are changing
  • Since 2011, over 50% of births in the US are people of color

• Political motivations: people of color vote!
  • Voters of color show concern over environmental issues *often at higher rates than white voters*

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<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Concerned White Voters</th>
<th>Concerned Voters of Color</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Global Warming</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>57%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pollution of Lakes &amp; Rivers</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>60%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Loss of Fish &amp; Wildlife Habitat</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>51%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Loss of Natural Areas</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>54%</td>
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Metz & Weigel, Key Findings from National Voter Survey on Conservation Among Voters of Color, 2009
Why focus on race?

• Oregon has a history of racially-based exclusionary and discriminatory practices

• History of racism has created intergenerational inequality for many individuals in health, education, housing, employment, income and wealth

• We know that other groups of people are still marginalized
  • Race can be an issue that keeps other marginalized communities from effectively coming together
Now What?

• How do I get started on equity work?
• Where are examples to follow?
• What are resources that support equity work?
• Who can I talk to about this?
Understanding where your organization is today in regards to equity
# Continuum on Becoming an Anti-Racist Multicultural Organization

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<tr>
<td>Intentionally and publicly excludes or segregates African Americans, Native Americans, Latinos, and Asian Americans</td>
<td>Tolerant of a limited number of &quot;token&quot; People of Color and members from other social identity groups allowed in with &quot;proper&quot; perspective and credentials. May still secretly limit or exclude People of Color in contradiction to public policies. Continues to intentionally maintain white power and privilege through its formal policies and practices, teachings, and decision making on all levels of institutional life. Often declares, &quot;We don't have a problem.&quot; Monocultural norms, policies and procedures of dominant culture viewed as the &quot;right&quot; way business as usual. Engages issues of diversity and social justice only on club member's terms and within their comfort zone.</td>
<td>Makes official policy pronouncements regarding multicultural diversity. Sees itself as &quot;non-racist&quot; institution with open doors to People of Color. Carries out intentional inclusiveness efforts, recruiting &quot;someone of color&quot; on committees or office staff. Expanding view of diversity includes other socially oppressed groups. <em>But...</em> &quot;Not those who make waves&quot; Little or no contextual change in culture, policies, and decision making. Is still relatively unaware of continuing patterns of privilege, paternalism and control. Token placements in staff positions: must assimilate into organizational culture.</td>
<td>Growing understanding of racism as barrier to effective diversity. Develops analysis of systemic racism. Sponsors programs of anti-racism training. New consciousness of institutionalized white power and privilege. Develops intentional identity as an &quot;anti-racist&quot; institution. Begins to develop accountability to racially oppressed communities. Increasing commitment to dismantle racism and eliminate inherent white advantage. Actively recruits and promotes members of groups have been historically denied access and opportunity. <em>But...</em> Institutional structures and culture that maintain white power and privilege still intact and relatively untouched.</td>
<td>Commits to process of intentional institutional restructuring, based upon anti-racist analysis and identity. Audits and restructures all aspects of institutional life to ensure full participation of People of Color, including their worldview, culture and lifestyles. Implements structures, policies and practices with inclusive decision making and other forms of power sharing on all levels of the institutions life and work. Commits to struggle to dismantle racism in the wider community, and builds clear lines of accountability to racially oppressed communities. Anti-racist multicultural diversity becomes an institutionalized asset. Redefines and rebuilds all relationships and activities in society, based on anti-racist commitments.</td>
<td>Future vision of an institution and wider community that has overcome systemic racism and all other forms of oppression. Institution's life reflects full participation and shared power with diverse racial, cultural and economic groups in determining its mission, structure, constituency, policies and practices. Members across all identity groups are full participants in decisions that shape the institution, and inclusion of diverse cultures, lifestyles, and interest. A sense of restored community and mutual caring. Allies with others in combating all forms of social oppression. Actively works in larger communities (regional, national, global) to eliminate all forms of oppression and to create multicultural organizations.</td>
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© Crossroads Ministry, Chicago, IL: Adapted from original concept by Bailey Jackson and Rita Hardiman, and further developed by Andrea Avazian and Ronice Branding; further adapted by Melia LaCour, PSESD.
Where does your organization fall on the continuum and why?
BUILDING COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Danielle Miles
Johnson Creek Watershed Council
One Story: Intercultural Partnerships

- Oops moments
- Venturing out of comfort zone: not knowing
- Decolonizing within
- Organizational awareness shift
Lessons learned
Where to start?

More Inclusive Organizational Culture

Diversifying Outreach & Recruitment

Reputation in the Community

Individual Members Awareness

Adapted from “A Multi faceted Look at Diversity: Why Outreach is Not Enough” by Berthoud & Greene
Sticking with your Mission, Looking for Overlap

“It’s not in our Mission”

• You may not find an organization that has a perfectly matching mission, but partnerships can foster projects that benefit more than a single organization’s mission
  • Example: rain garden project to help reduce flooding at Ethiopian church

• You are not providing a service, you are working to make your organization’s programs accessible to all members of your community.
Who is making the decisions?
Getting beyond “tokenism”

- How much is power being shared between partners? Do both/all parties have an equally heard voice?
  - Real collaboration vs. single-serve event attendance

- Recognize that communities of color, low income communities, and often rural communities are more vulnerable to exploitation. It takes time to build trust.
Rethinking Outreach Strategies

• What are the primary avenues being used to connect with the community? If you keep using the same avenues, you will keep seeing the same results.

• “Word of Mouth” is a powerful tool- but requires relationship building and a positive reputation in the community you wish to engage.
  • Example: working with Portland Native community
Going Out into the Community

• What community need is being met through the partnership, and who identified this need?
  • The concept should be coming from within the community you wish to engage or there is real potential for harm.

• Who is benefitting most from the partnership?

• Does your organization have something useful to offer?
Inviting the Community In

Make sure everyone can make it to the table. Some considerations…

• Welcome families and/or offer a space for children, and free childcare

• Transportation: offer to give rides, bus tickets, etc.

• Languages: Hire translators and/or provide event that is carried out in another language
COLUMBIA SLOUGH WATERSHED COUNCIL

Our experience drafting a Racial Equity Action Plan
Where our work began

- Center for Diversity and Environment
  - Exploring Power and Privilege and Tools for Change

- Equity Strategies Cohort Program
  - Coalition for Communities of Color
  - Portland State University faculty
  - Intertwine
Columbia Slough Watershed Council

We’re here

Complete organization assessment
Develop action plan
Implement Equity Action Plan

Communication and support

More equitable outcomes among communities of color

Graphic from Coalition of Communities of Color Organization Self-Assessment Tool, January 2014.
Organization self-assessment

- Organization Commitment, Leadership & Governance
- Racial Equity Policies & Implementation Practices
- Organization Climate, Culture & Communications
- Service Based Equity
- Service-User Voice & Influence
- Workforce Composition & Quality
- Community Collaboration
- Resource Allocation & Contracting Practices
- Data, Metrics & Continuous Quality Improvement
Common difficulties

• “Equity work isn’t…”
  • In my job description
  • In our mission
    • Is our work sustainable and lasting if we don’t have everyone on board?

• “I’m afraid of saying something offensive…”
  • This is common. It happens.
  • Authenticity and humility.

Do it anyway. Start where you are.❤️
Community Collaboration

• **Step 1**: organizational readiness assessment

• **Step 2 (y/n)**: Does your organization allocate resources for engagement and outreach in communities of color?

• **Step 3 (y/n)**: Do you have a method in place to assess the overall satisfaction of communities of color with your organization?

• **Step 4 (short answer)**: How do you ensure that your community engagement practices with communities of color are culturally appropriate? Share specific practices.

• **Step 5 (narrative)**: How do you ensure that your organization is responsive to current and emerging issues in communities of color?
Possible action areas

- Equity committee, board support
- Staff member trainings
- Recruitment and hiring practices
## Equity Action Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Equity Action plan</th>
<th>Implementation</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Vision Statement</td>
<td>• Need:</td>
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<td>• Justification</td>
<td>• Feedback</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Goals</td>
<td>• Practice, experimentation</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Multiple categories</td>
<td>• Committee leadership</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Actions beneath each</td>
<td>• On-going support</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Timeline</td>
<td>• This work needs to be a thread that runs through the entire fabric of our organization.</td>
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### Category 1: Commitment, Leadership, Governance

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<th>Task</th>
<th>Summer</th>
<th>Fall</th>
<th>Winter</th>
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<tr>
<td>Create Equity Steering Committee (ESC)</td>
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<td>Develop work plan for ESC</td>
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<td>Elect ESC Chair</td>
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<td>Develop plan for community member recruitment</td>
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<td>Publish Final Equity Statement</td>
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<td>Collect data of existing Board members</td>
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<td>Incorporate Equity Action Plan into Council's long-term strategic plan</td>
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<td>Include Equity and Inclusion as standing agenda item</td>
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<td>Reconfigure Board meeting structure</td>
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### Category 2: Organizational Culture

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<td>Develop Board/staff mentorship program</td>
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<td>Establish common language tool</td>
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<td>Include equity information into employee handbook</td>
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<td>Post equity statements around CSWC office</td>
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<td>Post equitable images around CSWC office</td>
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<td>Make improvements to office signage</td>
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### Category 3: Policies and Professional Development

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<td>Schedule annual staff reflection/ revision retreat</td>
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<td>Consider equity funding in budget review</td>
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<td>Develop procedure for race related complaints</td>
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<td>Develop and include nondiscrimination policy in contracts</td>
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<td>Include equity statement in CSWC PowerPoint</td>
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### Category 4: Program Design
- Develop tool for assessing community needs
- Review organizational materials for equity
- Set 3 clear goals for each program area
- Assign funding to support program goals

### Category 5: Workforce & Volunteers
- Include equity work in new position descriptions
- Edit work plans to reflect diversity work
- Implement Annual Staff Cultural Competency training
- Develop new employee equity training
- Add optional racial equity self-identification to staff/volunteer intake forms
- Develop a mechanism for considering diversity and life experience in hiring
- Prioritize competency for languages in position descriptions

### Category 6: Community Voice & Collaboration
- Participate in planning meeting/events of 3 potential and current pattern orgs.
- Continue to partner with current communities of color orgs.
- Establish contact with 3 potential partner orgs.
- Update contact information for potential and current partner orgs.
- Consistently collect feedback from program participants