

WMSWCD Board Equity Lens Training - January 26, 2019

Flip Chart & White Board Notes Regarding Director Eligibility

Organizational Factors

- Credibility of farmers as stakeholders (C)
- History & Mission to target rural landowners (A)
- In some districts there is a rural-urban tension, including WMSWCD (C)
- Does having a tax base influence what the criteria should be? (A)
- Barriers to running – there are few and infrequent board openings (C/A)
- Current board lacks racial diversity (C)
- Hard to get folks to run for or join the board (C)

C – Organization as decision control. A – Organization can only advocate for change

Interested Stakeholders & Partners

- Nonprofit organizations in our district
- Other natural resource agencies – national, state, local
- Schools
- Places of faith
- Landowners – farmers/foresters
- WMSWCD staff, board, potential board members
- Politicians and their constituents
- People who care about DEI
- People who care about conservation
- Contractors we work with
- Other SWCDs within Oregon

Potential Outcomes (of changing the current director eligibility rules)

- More diversity on our board
- More people wanting to be on our board
- More people wanting to take over our board
- More diverse perspectives on the board or informing the board
- Discussion on state-wide level about director criteria
- Identify a specific outreach task to accomplish interaction with diverse perspectives
- Maintain focus – not too broad scope

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Training Takeaways and Inputs to the Equity Lens

Takeaways from Training

- I am amazed at how the use of the equity lens allows different perspectives to be shared. So, reporting out and letting all voices be heard is key.
- Candidate requirements are limiting to equity (DEI)
- We need to spend more time rethinking Board eligibility criteria.
- There are things we can do to diversify our Board.
- Want to be able to put tool to use more seamlessly.
- Change is difficult and slow, but possible.
- Quite challenging, time consuming.
- I think that employing the lens will ultimately prove worth the effort.
- Lastly, that I think that the process does enable the illumination of biases and provide a perspective from which to examine them.
- It clarifies the parameters of the discussion – or decision making process.
- “Hold differences” – very beneficial to recognize different perspectives – multiple viewpoints help us gain a better, broader understanding.
- Replace judgement with curiosity.
- There is great value to all group & small group discussions.
- Facilitator very beneficial.
- Would be difficult to facilitate and participate (i.e., if staff or Board member ran process, could not also be part of the conversation).
- Expanding the table has promise to bring more diverse perspectives to the Board and build different routes to participation.
- Just changing the eligibility requirements seems like a difficult way to increase participation on the Board.
- Surprised by a statement that people of color would struggle to understand mission of SWCDs – this has been stated at the state level.
- Created ability to hear different perspectives.
- Concerned that at state level there may not be a perceived benefit to having a more diverse SWCD Board composition.
- Grateful for Board’s commitment of time and input today.
- Helped us be prepared for unintended consequences and helped new participants understand.
- Come up with idea of having specific/quarterly meetings designed to invite input from underrepresented groups.
- Intentionally find minority leaders help us get outreach and participation.

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Inputs to Use of Equity Lens

- Facilitation is important. Can be internal but the person is explicitly assigned that role and has training in that role.
- Do in multiple sessions if time is an issue.
- Needs experienced, neutral facilitator.
- Small group and pairs discussions help move the process.
- Need to narrow focus to outcomes and stakeholders.
- Have someone chart input.
- Have a long process and a short process.
- Have a less specific but more plain language version.
- Assign specific sessions to small groups – don't have everyone do everything.
- Practice it over and over.
- Keep use of the lens a high priority of the organization.
- Racial equity statements are solid but practice of engagement of underserved populations is nebulous. Love the idea of bringing non-board "committee" members into the Board. Need specifics. How to.
- Multiple shorter sessions with fewer questions.
- It was a useful, good tool.
- The policy we worked on was a good one, relevant.
- Offers important opportunity for changing normal approaches.
- Somewhat cumbersome, can it be simplified.
- Difficult to slow down in a practical work setting with many time demands.
- Skilled facilitator helped immensely. A necessary control of process. I was thinking that the facilitator's role was key to implementation of the lens.
- I definitely felt that small group discussion helped stimulate and expand thinking and horizons about what was possible.
- Lens is a bit cumbersome to use, could be distilled, more clear language. However, excellent discussion – starters.
- Practice is good.
- Good exercise to go through steps.
- The lens is a touch awkward.
- Would love defined next steps.
- More time focused on a specific goal that we need to address as a Board
- Question assumptions is useful.

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Training Takeaways and Inputs to the Equity Lens

Inputs to Use of Equity Lens - continued

- Consider cleanup of wording lens section – “Equity and Inclusion” – bullet #2
- Overall experience generated increased awareness of lack of diversity and call to action of Board to increase engagement.
- Have someone chart/facilitate to keep track of the discussion.
- Facilitator ideally neutral.
- Long and short process
- Assign [se]
- I found process was good and caused us to imagine creative action for our Board and staff.
- Process helped create clarity, focus and Board action.
- Helped remove pre-conceived bias and move toward solutions.
- Can help Board focus on policy action. Be intentional.

Other

- When I was on the [Join] Board, an assumption that we/the group were already looking at the whole diversity equity program. That changed

Compiled by J. Cathcart and T. Preeg Riggsby, February 8, 2019.