

**DRAFT – WMSWCD Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Committee Meeting Summary – Approved**

**August 22, 2022 1:00pm to 3:00pm, WMSWCD Zoom meeting**

**Attending:** Scott Gall & Laura Taylor (Co-Chairs); Ari DeMarco (minutes), Shahbaz Khan, Mary Logalbo, Terri Preeg Riggsby, Jordan DeLawder

**Welcome/Check-In/Announcements** – Terri shared that she is working to change the director land ownership requirement in a new method and hopes to see that move forward.

**Approval of JUNE, 2022 Meeting Summary** – Clarification on language from the Education Niche-finding Report: “The City’s Parks and Recreation community garden program were unable to make culturally specific community gardens due to exclusion that would occur by only limiting access to certain parties.” This was clarified to be understood that the City cannot prioritize garden access to specific members of communities in a way that would exclude other community members from access or circumvent their regular waitlist. This is especially in regards to a high demand that Parks can’t currently meet. Minutes were approved with these changes.

**How to report on annual spending amounts related to DEI:** At last year’s budget committee, participants wanted to see how we were spending our money especially in regards to WBE and MBE (which are two state certifications). We have been tracking our contracts and looking contractors up via COBID. In response to feedback that the certification process itself is a barrier to getting certified, we are also currently tracking contractors who self-identify as MBE or WBE. Contractors also reported that they found applying for MBE cost prohibitive and arduous, but the federal version (Disadvantaged Business Enterprises, which is almost identical) is easier – thus, we’ve decided that we want to report on these three things (WBE, MBE, and Disadvantaged Business Enterprises).

Also, we noted that the District has lots of other funds out besides just contractors, such as materials and supplies, and nonprofit partners, which we haven’t been tracking and may want to start reporting on. Renee and Randi’s ideas are that the general public just wants to know how we’re spending our funds in simple categories, such as: “non-profit partners”, “landowner payments”, “nurseries”, etc. The Education Niche Finding Report found that we should also be prioritizing certain organizations based on being BIPOC led or culturally specific in their services. We have not currently been tracking non-contractors carefully, which limits the type of reporting we can do for this year.

Laura suggested that we should apply MBE and WBE to tracking other forms of spending, as well, perhaps lumping like businesses together into general categories when sharing with the public.

Mary mentioned we could report out on contracted services that we’ve already been tracking to save effort this year.

It was agreed that we should include self-identified businesses with COBID-certified businesses when analyzing our spending. Randi can decide if we should include the federal certification mentioned above, as well.

There are other business certifications that we don’t currently track – Emerging Small Business and Service-disabled Veteran Owned Business. The state database records these. Unless there is a fiscal/administrative reason not to track these, we should begin doing so for next year’s report.

The committee was comfortable with keeping this year’s report on WBE and MBE only, and not doing a research-heavy retrospective for this year. and not doing a lot of research

Shahbaz suggested finding representatives within those categories, similar to how we conducted the Education Niche Finding Report, to have the opportunity to hear from them. Besides querying the database, we might do a

more thorough outreach to find out where any disparity may lie - then when we report on them later, the community could know why they're being emphasized as well.

It was noted that since we can't give preference to anyone who has this type of certification without doing a disparity analysis for 3 years, we could start tracking this now for a future disparity analysis.

When deciding what dollars out to show to the public, Jordan reminded the committee that the public (and the District) is likely only interested in "how the money affects people's lives".

We might consider that if we show the contractors etc. w/ BE distinction, maybe we shouldn't include nonprofits in the pie chart unless we want to also split them out by BE

Other items to decide on that come up with this topic were:

- Operating costs
- Landowner reimbursements (likely we can just look up what contractor a landowner paid)
- Nonprofit partners is bundled into program areas spending, and next year Mary will ask partners to report on leadership and service community. The Education Niche Finding Report encouraged us to focus on BIPOC led, *as well as*, culturally specific organizations.
- Friends of Tryon Creek example – now has a Title 1 school focus but also serves the general public.
- When in doubt, ask those partners who we funded how they identify.

**Actions** –Make changes for how we collect this type of information moving forward, but keep it research-light for this year. Mary will meet with Randi to follow up. Begin tracking Emerging Small Business and Service-disabled Veteran Owned Business certifications.

**DEI content for website:** Renee is thinking of displaying things like our racial equity statement, DEI principles, and "Whose Land" report under the "About Us" section - maybe the "Conservation Priorities" could have a quick DEI statement that then links to the full DEI page.

The committee agreed that its good to have a dedicated space for DEI on the site, but also wants to imbed it within program pages as well. "Our Commitment" page was suggested. The committee agreed that Renee's plan is good. The focus is: easy to find, + a standalone page where all the info is gathered.

**Review physical requirements for internship program for inclusion of disabled persons:** This is part of a continuing conversation about looking for guidance on how to go about increasing accessibility for our field internship program. Technical staff suggested various options for accommodating different physical needs, though since accessibility is so personal, it seems difficult or impossible to promise any sort of accessible condition for an individual. Ideas included seasonal work, offering exclusively office-based positions occasionally.

Another question on accessibility is benefits, and when the District is required to offer them.

Technical staff agreed that at least one intern needs to be available to work in the field, based on our current staffing model. We also discussed the benefits of an intern being able to conduct both field and office work.

Terri reminded us that our current positions can accommodate many types of disabilities without much change, so she doesn't feel that we need to put much pressure on ourselves in this regard at the moment. She also reminded us that constituents voted to pay us to deliver on the ground conservation work and we have to stay committed to delivering that.

The LSAMP internship also provides a way for someone with a disability to get involved with the District.

Regarding the language in the job description, putting a “reasonable accommodations’ qualifier in front of “accommodations” seems very subjective, but without it, we may be promising things that we can’t do.

Terri shared with the committee that there are lots of people in the disability community who don’t want to be known by their disabilities, but by the work that they’ve done. There aren’t job lists to target folks like this! People will just look for the jobs that they want and know they can do, which is perhaps a different type of community than we are accustomed to seeing with the BIPOC community. Terri also shared that she is happy to connect with us on this either personally, or with someone who knows more.

Consider what a secondary plan would be if someone who does need accommodation applies for a field internship position. We could also post a GIS project at PCC or PSU where we could be hosting internships that aren’t our typical ones, still have 2 field interns, and also open up other opportunities to intern with us.

**Actions** – reach out to spring/fall tech staff and see what the field needs actually are. Also see if we have the office work capacity to do a full office-only internship. Consider being more specific/descriptive within the “job conditions” section of the announcement (be sure to be clear both positions include field *and* office work) to help folks self-identify their own capacities. Consider being more clear about what accommodations can or cannot be made.

Start working on an accommodation plan.

#### **Action Items Review**

See above

**Next Meeting:** Tuesday Oct 11<sup>th</sup>, 10am-12pm