

WMSWCD Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Committee Meeting Summary

December 13, 2022 10:00pm to 12:00pm, WMSWCD Zoom meeting

Attending: Scott Gall & Laura Taylor (Co-Chairs); Shahbaz Khan, Mary Logalbo, Martina Avendano, Araon Sierras, Terri Preeg-Riggsby, Brian Lightcap

Welcome/Check-In/Announcements – Round of introductions were shared to introduce some of our newer staff to the board members in attendance. Terri provided an update on SWCD Zone Director eligibility requirements. The status quo was retained during a vote on the bill proposed to change this recently, but a working group is starting to discuss this further which includes representatives from both Eastern and Western Oregon. A new bill is also in the works that may satisfy both interests for land ownership and alternatives to this requirement. Brian recommended we check out Prince William’s Earth Shot Awards and is curious about how many of these projects received public funding support.

Approval of October, 2022 Meeting Summary – Add Terri to the attendance. Edit last sentence of Welcome/Check-in section to: “... and thus the need to ensure current and future Farm bill funding levels for conservation.” Mary will review the DEI website language for accuracy and amend as needed. Otherwise approved as corrected.

Education partner funding updates and review of draft ranking rubric: Mary gave a summary of our Education Partner Funding program and how we applied an Equity Lens to it. Education partner funding was treated separately because there are such diverse and numerous land-based education organizations out there. Two goals that emerged from the equity lens exercise and follow-up were 1) to make sure our Partner Funding opportunities and processes are more transparent, and 2) to make sure we’re responding to Education Niche Finding recommendations. Now the goal is to build all this into the rubric used to select awardees. Mary requested DEI committee input on the draft rubric which she walked us through. Brian was looking for some key-words: District visibility and marketing (ensure people know about us). Mary responded that those are intentionally not included because one thing we learned during our community outreach is that it doesn’t matter to community members who’s funding the services as much as making sure that our services are delivered effectively and same for the orgs that provide services to these communities. Several members expressed that they thought it is appropriate to require our grantees to acknowledge our contributions. There was a question about the meaning of the “+1:1+” category. Mary explained that this represents unique funding models, and that it’s fairly subjective how this is defined. Examples: Backyard Habitat CP, Watershed Councils. It was asked if the 50% allocated to Niche-finding 1 & 2 priorities is a departure from the past way of scoring applicants? Mary explained that last year, serving underserved communities was weighted at 20%. It was noted that it seems like a very steep shift to go from 20% to 50% in one year and that we might want to increase this a bit more gradually over the next two years. It was asked if the Board adopted the Education Niche Finding report or if they fully understood the funding implications of it. The board may want to make a deliberate choice to adopt recommendations from the report. This brought up a comment that it might be time to request approval from the board for new practices and initiatives more generally. However, it was also noted that there needs to be a balance between micro-managing staff and allowing for more board involvement and participation in the District’s operations. There was a suggestion to include the new District Manager, Lynn in this conversation. It was noted that the budget and workplan that mentions inclusion of the education niche finding recommendations were adopted by the board, and that the priority goals listed in the Partner Funding Application come directly from our Long-range Business Plan which was also adopted by the Board. Terri is wondering if we should allocate criteria weighting relative to our listed SDs? Another person asked if the two niche-finding criteria are scored on a yes/no basis, and if we want to make them a scale rather than Y/N to reflect different levels or abilities to fulfill these goals? One member suggested following the model that some other grant organizations such as OWEB use to announce a particular focus for the year and what gets higher ranking. They also noted that certain criteria determine feasibility of the whole project and are deal-

breakers if not met. Laura has more questions and suggestions for the rubric that she'll send to Mary since they weren't addressed during the meeting. Concluding questions: Decrease percentages for last two criteria? Terri says yes. Any further action needed with the board on this? Align the rubric with the announcement more closely, or at least make sure that it's clear that the new priorities apply to all partners, not just new partners. Being successful might take a few years.

Actions – Mary will make some adjustments to the weighting percentages in the rubric. Mary will focus her spring Board Meeting budget and workplan presentation time on this issue with input from Lynn incorporated to her presentation and recommendations.

Update on DEI Intern in 23-24: Scott set up a meeting to go through the job description more. We'll hopefully have a draft to share with the committee next meeting.

Actions – Let Scott know if you want to participate in that meeting if you're not signed up already.

New Website Language regarding Invasive species and DEI webpages: Renee wants to make sure she has info and follow-up from all of us on the current drafts of these webpages. Draft for text on DEI page was updated after the last meeting and sent to Renee. Renee sent some questions a while ago and she believes answers to those have been incorporated into this new draft. Committee members expressed that we haven't seen the most recent draft yet and would like an updated draft to review. The Invasives page has been updated and we're moving forward with this in a good way by clearly defining the term "invasive" and avoiding vilifying and combative language. There was a suggestion to use the term "target or focus invasive species" to distinguish species that we strategically chose to manage in our projects versus those that we don't/can't due to lack of resources. Renee confirmed that this concept is communicated in the webpage.

Actions – Renee will take a look at the Minutes from last meeting to make sure we covered everything, and will send an updated draft of the DEI webpage copy to committee members for review.

Action Items Review

See above

Next Meeting: February 14, 2023 – Time 10 AM. Organized by Laura Taylor, with Mary taking notes.

Note taker: Laura Taylor, 12/13/2022