

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

October 11, 2022 10:00pm to 12:00pm, WMSWCD Zoom meeting

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

Welcome/Check-In/Announcements – It was reiterated that the meeting taker duties are now rotating between staff committee members. There is an excel sheet in the DEI folder with the dates for each note taker. Scott also pointed out the make-up and role of the committee for the benefit for newer staff that were in attendance. Terri shared about her NACD meeting regarding the conservation funding in the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) – and while it covers similar practices and programs to the farm bill, item across the country only 1 in 3 producers are able to partake in that funding and thus the need to ensure the current and future administrations.

Approval of JUNE, 2022 Meeting Summary – One small rephrasing related to tracking contractor services. Some small other typos corrected by Laura in meeting. Otherwise approved as corrected.

Review & provide input on DEI content for the new website: The proposed language was in the meeting packet/email. While this is still in draft, there is some wordsmithing and order changes that need to happen. Mary had some proposed tweaks to share with the group: strikeout (untrue?) sections, wordsmithing for clarity, “what we have done” section needs more details and items, “whose land report” will be considered final draft (no longer seeking peer review) and posted to the website, and there are lots of sections that end in “...” with the intent to expand those. Some of the language could be taken from what is already in the Long Range Business Plan (LRBP).

The group discussed the order of “what we have done” section. Start with bigger picture things first, than the more specific items lower down in the list. The order could be copied from the LRBP - performance measures > Goals and Tactics. “What we have done” is time sensitive and will need to be changed fairly often. There was a question for Renee of whether this should be more timeless for the website. The more dynamic items could be a “blog post” while the annual work plan could be a prompt to freshen up the language. There was discussion on the land acknowledge and could be added to the DEI page or to the “service area” section of the website. Shahbaz suggested use Strategic Direction 1 from the LRBP and associated goals and tactics on the website than link could be on the website that takes the user to the appropriate section of annual report. Also could start to have an annual DEI standalone report with a link there instead of the annual report.

Scott asked if any of this information should be on the home page just to make it as easy to find as possible. Having the land acknowledgement up front was suggested. The DEI page is currently only two clicks from home page. It was suggested we could have a very short message on the home page with a way to click directly to the DEI page – similar to the COVID statement on the Tualatin SWCD webpage.

Actions – Laura made some changes and suggestions on the word document during the meeting and will follow up with Renee. Mary will also fill in some of the “...” sections on the same document prior to sending to Renee. Shahbaz will also make a mock up of his thoughts to share with Renee. In the future the committee will discuss with Renee the idea of an annual DEI report or more fleshed out sections within the District annual report.

Gathering feedback from staff, public, and board on their interactions with the District: In the LRBP there is a goal related to understanding if WMSWCD fosters a “welcoming and safe environment”. Renee provided suggestions questions related to how to gather information and what information we are gathering. Other staff had further questions about the same. Some include: Are there goals we can measure responses against to know success/unsuccessful? Do the approaches differ between the three groups: staff, board, contractors? What questions do we ask? Different versions for n office vs out in the field? Staff to board, staff to landowner, staff to staff interactions, etc. could all be different versions. If something does come up, how do we address that?

Shahbaz shared an example survey from the April 2022 West Willamette Restoration Partnership meeting where a survey was given to partners. We could take that information from staff and perhaps board. Also suggested this as a future intern project. Mary also pointed out that we still have the surveys from the LRBP process. The group thought that the LRBP survey's could be updated and reused. If they stay relatively similar over time it would allow for comparisons. Overall the group thought that the anonymous survey is a good tool (in addition to things like performance reviews, reports to supervisor or staff meeting discussions) for allowing for all comfort levels and situations.

It was pointed out that in a small organization it can still be easy to discern the survey taker even in an anonymous survey. Removing the open ended questions, narrative answers can reduce that. It could also be helpful to have an outside partner or someone without a stake in the outcome collect and review the data. One opportunity could be an intern and specifically a DEI related internship – but that is not necessarily a yearly option.

The committee also discussed the disconnection between staff and board – lost partly due to the pandemic but also the public meeting requirements that discourage groups of board members gathering informally. Also not have in person board meetings misses the opportunity before and after for staff/board interaction is lost and therefore potential feedback and ideas directly from the Board. Zoom is considered not a good substitute however zoom polls could also be an opportunity to gather feedback from the board.

Actions – Create separate survey for staff and Board. Determine who would be responsible for the data and what is done with it. Laura will connect with Renee in regards to staff and Scott will follow up with Terri for the Board. Timing could be June-July.

Check-in on goal to hire DEI intern in 2023-24: Proposed that the intern would start next fiscal year. Need to request funds in early part of 2023. Part of that would be developing the position description/work plan. Mary shared SD 1 and 2 as some potential tasks. Tasks could include the capture of internal demographics data to inform staff/board make up and potential advisory committee make up, holistic look at services to address benefits and access, disparity analysis for contracts, Staff work-life balance surveys, affinity group creation/fostering/supporting, assisting with committee meetings, attending underserved community meetings, study or project specifically related to the candidate's interest/skills in DEI work, trainings to focus on gaps in organizational knowledge/skills. Include opportunity to hire a consultant with culturally specific experience related to demographic analysis and response – which would be an added expense.

This could also be considered a limited duration position versus an internship. That could also allow for more hours and allow for greater focus on job duties versus professional development.

Timing – need to have work plan and budget ask ready for March budget season. Hiring practices dictate that we have at least a 6 month hiring process so internship would start the following winter.

Actions – Scott will create a bullet of tasks to pass around the group to look for gaps in his notes. From that Scott will create a draft work plan and send out a doodle poll to meeting to discuss some time in November.

Action Items Review

See above

Next Meeting: December 13, 2022 – Time 10 AM

Note taker: Scott Gall, 10/11/2022