

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee Minutes

12:30pm -2pm, June 18, 2025

Minutes

Minutes keeper: Eleanor Greene

Attending:

Staff: Scott Gall, Shahbaz Khan, Lynn Barlow, Eleanor Greene, James Tracy, Pavlina Slezak., Laura Taylor, Sherman Enstrom.

Board: Terri Preeg Rigsby., Jan Hamer, Josh Spector.

Other: Katie Meckes (EMSWCD)

12:30

Meeting started, we went through introductions, including name, pronouns, and song that reminds you of the summer.

12:45

Looked at and approved meeting minutes from March 2025 meeting (though there is room to still edit).

12:49

SK begins presenting demographic data analyses -

- a. Why did we do it: Long Range Business Plan contains the strategic direction (#1) to “embed equity and inclusion in all that we are and all that we do”. Goal 1.3 specifically i.e., *Work to welcome, increase, and maintain diversity within our board and staff, contractors we hire, and the people who benefit from our work to better reflect the diverse demographics of our service area.* By referencing the success criteria and tactics also established in the LRBP, we noted that doing a demographic analysis was a precursor for the larger direction.
- b. What it was: Explained 2023 Demographic Mapping Analysis, how Census tracts map to the WMSWCD zones, including age, race/ethnicity/income, language spoken, housing status, etc.
- c. Followed up with a Staff & Board Demographic Survey, and compared the survey results to the Demographic Mapping Analysis with “Not represented (0%), Under-represented (under 50%), Represented (50-75%), Well-represented (75-

100%), and Over-represented (over 100%)” to understand the composition of our internal demographics compared to our constituency. Noted we should consider margins of error with any statistics work.

LB describes that the organization had planned a reconvening of a community advisory committee, but the conversation evolved previously to determine whether a committee is the best way to do things. There was an idea that a survey might be a better use of time, or one-on-one conversations to check in with different community stakeholders and organizations.

We have a new fiscal year starting July 1, 2025, and the next Long Range Business Plan (5-year strategic plan) has yet to be developed, and needs to be one year from that date.

Main takeaways on Board/Staff demographic survey (March 2024):

- 1. More than one participant, including staff and board, chose more than one in the categories of race and ethnicity, gender and sexual identity.*
- 2. WMSWCD’s staff and board was well-represented in comparison with service area demographics with Spanish speakers and those of Hispanic background.*
- 3. One census tract within the District exceeded the Federal Safe Harbor thresholds for Chinese Limited English Proficiency, though this language is not represented within staff and board. [More about safe harbor in Portland:
<https://www.portland.gov/officeofequity/language-access/language-list-and-guidance>]*
- 4. WMSWCD staff and board lacks representation of Black or African American and Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander community members.*
- 5. There is a lack of representation of individuals younger than 45 on the WMSWCD Board.*

EG: Checking in, what do we want to do with this information that we have now. How can it help shape our next LRBP, events, hiring, board recruitment, etc.

Comment from TPR: The Board should definitely be made aware of the main take-aways from the survey results. I think the issue of incorporating this data in the next LRBP is something that we'll want to bring in our new DM. I think it would be great to have a direct conversation with the new DM about this.

SG: We are not able to hide behind not knowing our demographic data, which had happened before. Now we have it, what are we going to do?

LT: Giving us credit for doing a lot of work on this already. We have already come up with strategies and enacted them for centering inclusion in our hiring which attracts and appeals to a diverse group of applicants. Acknowledging we cannot tokenize or prefer any characteristics

besides skill in new hires. Apply learnings for recruitment for new board members, but there are steps for attracting potential new board members.

SK: Agreeing with Laura that there has been a lot of work done in the realm of hiring -- we're sending out demographic surveys for all applicants to new permanent positions, the same as has been done for the internship since 2018. We recently updated this to be 1:1 to the Staff & Board survey to maintain that data into the future. Staff is fairly static, but internship we hire for each year can continue to be a good chance for this conversation in strengthening hiring processes. However, it is unclear how the same might be done for the Board recruitment (i.e., "*setting diversification goals*" as written in LRBP, where there is limitations on any "campaigning" for people with certain identities).

Katie: Are you finding out data from participants? We have been doing it from behind—after the end of the event, we ask people this kind of data so it's anonymous. We haven't done staff surveys yet.

EG: I have been adding it into the front end of registration form, asking housing status, job status, and zip code.

LT: We have talked about sending a survey to landowners, but I don't think it has been done before. We can only bite things off one at a time, as far as what we talk about in each conversation. Who are we talking about when we talk about representation? Also, our staff mostly don't live in our district, so we're drawing from different pools.

SK: Next steps for me would be revisiting the language in what is outlined in the Goal 1.3, i.e., 1) who we are, 2) who we work with, and 3) who we serve. I have been hoping we can use that "who we are" data to see what we're going to do next (particularly #3, which we have yet to really identify as concretely in this process) if we plan to continue this effort post-demographic analyses. I think pursuing representation requires re-engagement with those who helped us understand what that looked like before during the development of the current LRBP.

1. May be used: Gauging how we do with reaching people in our service area through a broad survey.
2. In the development of the current LRBP, there was engagement and outreach of constituents, staff & board, and partner and community organization via interviews, surveys (in multiple languages, both online and in-person), and community meeting discussions to inform what people really wanted out of our services. Refer to end of the LRBP for more information on this process – is this something we are replicating? How can we use existing partnerships, or current demographic analyses, to determine who to reach out to?

Jan: I think goal 1.3 is spot on and I think our team is behind it. We talk about where's the pool of diversified contractors. I see the next step as looking for diversity, but we don't want to discriminate. We have an impression that we are diversified, but we have to work harder to show it. I always want to keep an eye on our culture, it's so important. We don't want to lose it. I was worried hybrid [work schedule] was going to take a dent on our culture, but it hasn't shown that. Maybe a consultant can help us. We want to be successful at what we do.

Katie: I'm wondering if we assemble a small working group of East and West staff to share what each of us have done/are doing and share resources so nobody needs to recreate the wheel as we move forward in collecting/reporting out on demographic data?

Josh: Can we get more people to apply as associate directors, to help? I don't think many people know it exists. I'm not sure how this shows in more action steps, but I want to help. Josh was also interested in learning if it was possible, and if there might be opportunities, for board & staff members to table together at community events.

1:54

Next steps:

Katie requesting working group between East/West to talk about this work

Terri requesting perhaps the list of takeaways from the board packet, to make note of during this work, attaching the presentation. Terri can lead conversation, invite people to future DEI meetings. Since we have a lot of new faces.

Jan proposing reaching out to our partners/circle, to see what they're doing, such as EMSWCD. Maybe we're back to the information step, but maybe we need that.

SK: Start considering who those previous community advisory group members, partner agencies, etc. that we used to guide our current LRBP's development were and how we can reach them/pull them back into the conversation of our success at the various points we developed together. This can then lead into the development of the next LRBP as we identify where we were meeting success criteria, and where we were not.

LT: From earlier. There was an idea that a survey might be a better use of time, or one-on-one conversations to check in with different community stakeholders and organizations

LT: Reinvigorate the effort to recruit more associate board members, to try to get the word out with people in our district. We might want to think about targeting our messaging at new and old events about who we are and what we're looking for, like associate directors.

EG: If you know about events, please do let us know, we would like to do more events that we haven't done before.