DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION

STRATEGIC DEI PLAN

Department of Conservation & Recreation

DCR

PURPOSE/COMMITMENT TO AGENCY DEI ACTIVITIES

The Virginia Department of Conservation & Recreation (DCR) is the state's lead natural resource conservation agency. Because of this leadership role, it is imperative that DCR understands, embraces, and values not only diversity in nature, but also in the cultures and communities we serve in order to ensure a sustainable future for equitable recreational access and a healthy environment for all. To do so, we have adopted the mantra of listen, learn, act, and repeat to help ground our work as we strive to foster an inclusive and equitable environment both inside and outside of the organization where programs and services are accessible to every person in the Commonwealth.

We undertake and commit to this work because we know we haven't reached our destination yet. We know that DCR must promote targeted outreach efforts, perform program equity reviews, and ensure historical barriers to access to DCR programs and lands we manage are removed. We also know that we are still not currently a workforce that is fully reflective of our constituents and we must do more to improve our efforts to attract and recruit employees with different perspectives, identities, backgrounds, and experiences. Further, we also know that it is critical to continue our efforts to foster a safe, welcoming, and inclusive workplace for all employees, and that we must maintain focus and support on raising awareness around the core issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

As evidenced by the following plan, the agency remains committed to the important work of DEI--continuing its steadfast and intentional actions to weave equitable and inclusive efforts into the fabric of DCR's mission and culture. Milestones that have been met were not reached overnight and the journey is far from over, but working together DCR will continue to move forward using the roadmap laid out below as our guide.

"We will take actions to make improvements and bring diverse points of view into our decision-making processes. We have this obligation because of who we are, who we serve and what we do. And it's clear that as a staff we have the collective strength, resilience, and drive to broaden our scope and understanding to move from where we are to where we need to be."

-Clyde Cristman
DCR Director

"As the state's lead conservation agency, Virginians look to DCR to create a sustainable natural resource conservation future that Virginians and we need going into the future. Centering equity in all that we do is essential if we're to be successful with our goals."

-Tom Smith
Deputy Director of Operations

"Each program within our agency is unique; and as such will require a unique approach to better understand each program's historic inequities and how we can better serve all Virginians. We must ask ourselves why and how we got to where we are today and how we, as an agency, will do better to ensure our just, equitable and sustainable future."

-Nathan Burrell
Deputy Director of Government & Community Relations

"In order for diversity, equity and inclusion efforts to have an impact we must engage with all communities and understand how their perspectives may differ from our own. We must find a way to see through our blind spots and hear all voices so that we can make informed strategic and effective decisions that are best for us all."

-Russ Baxter
Deputy Director of Soil & Water Conservation, Dam Safety & Flood Prevention

"We all have biases and different levels of privilege. It's human. It's who we are. Becoming more aware of yourself and your biases and privileges opens you up to a better understanding of the inequities and microaggressions that are in the workplace."

-Rochelle Altholz
Deputy Director of Administration & Finance

DEFINITIONS

In order to have a more common framework and language around the concepts and practices of DEI, DCR has adopted definitions of diversity, equity, and inclusion based on language from the D5 Coalition, Racial Equity Tools Glossary, and UC Berkeley:

DIVERSITY is the practice of appreciating and involving individuals who are different from one another. In the same way biodiversity is essential to the health of the planet, DCR recognizes that the presence of differences is healthy in the workplace. Diversity encompasses the different characteristics that make one individual or group different from another, and can reference race, ethnicity, gender identity, age, national origin, religion, disability, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, education, marital status, language, physical appearance, and more.

EQUITY is the elimination of barriers that have prevented the full participation of marginalized groups in society. Improving equity involves increasing justice and fairness within the procedures and processes of institutions or systems, as well as in the distribution of resources. Equity is based on need - on meeting people where they are to ensure they have the same access, resources, and opportunities as others.

INCLUSION is the act of creating environments in which any individual or group is welcomed, respected, supported, and valued to fully participate. An inclusive and welcoming climate embraces differences and offers respect in words and actions for all people.

DEI STRUCTURE

While division-level initiatives have been underway for several years, 2018 marked the first year DCR took formal steps towards addressing the mission-critical elements of diversity, equity, and inclusion at an agency level. Originally created under the framework of the *Employment Opportunities Plan*, those initial efforts set the stage for the mission, vision, and goals laid out in this DEI Strategic Plan. Specifically, DCR's 2018 work established the first ever Diversity & Inclusion Committee--bringing together division leaders and representatives who collectively charted the agency's initial course towards attracting, recruiting, and retaining a diverse and inclusive workforce.

Recognizing the strategic need to address both internal-focused equity within DCR as well as external-focused equity in the programs delivered to the public, in 2020 the committee's name changed to the Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI) Committee as a reflection of this critical undertaking. As part of that refocus, goals were simplified using the Global Diversity & Inclusion Benchmarks (GDIB). In addition, the DEI Committee was restructured into five (5) sub-committees with two deputy-level co-chairs providing oversight. Now, using the ONE Virginia Plan as a guide, the agency commits to the following overall goals.

STRATEGIC GOALS

GOAL 1:
Recruit and retain a diverse workforce.

GOAL 2:
Create and sustain an agency culture that affirms and respects diversity, and employs inclusive practices throughout daily operations.

GOAL 3:
Engage in learning the concepts of DE&I, and the importance of these concepts in completing the agency mission.

GOAL 4:
Create and sustain an agency or departmental infrastructure that effectively supports progress and accountability in achieving diversity goals.

GOAL 5:
Focus community engagement activities on those that provide measurable, direct, equitable, and sustained benefit to all of Virginia's diverse communities.

DEI COMMITTEE

The main engine for change related to diversity, equity, and inclusion (including how the above goals will be accomplished) occurs through the work of the DEI Committee. Comprised of representatives from each DCR division, the DEI Committee is mission-focused on advocating for and implementing initiatives that will ensure equity both internally and externally. DCR's philosophy is that DEI engagement cannot be achieved simply through the filling of a position, but rather through being intentional with agency actions. To bring this belief to reality, DCR's has adopted a collaborative approach, working through the DEI Committee to ensure that the DEI efforts are best understood, implemented, and adopted by the workforce. Sub-committee tasks and objectives are outlined in more detail below:

INTERNALLY-FOCUSED SUB-COMMITTEES

- **ATTRACTION & RECRUITMENT:** Focus is on activities related to more effectively and equitably attracting, recruiting, and selecting DCR employees.
- **EDUCATION & TRAINING:** Focus is on activities related to creating, publishing, and promoting educational and developmental content for the agency around the topics of diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- **RETENTION & INCLUSION:** Focus is on activities related to optimizing DCR's workplace climate and the agency's inclusive practices.

EXTERNALLY-FOCUSED SUB-COMMITTEES

- **EQUITY REVIEW:** Focus is on assisting divisions and helping with the evaluation and implementation of equity reviews for current programs and practices.
- **PARTNERSHIP & PIPELINE DEVELOPMENT:** Focus is on forging and fostering partnerships with external agencies and other stakeholder groups to increase awareness of DCR programs and initiatives.

GOAL 1: Recruit and retain a diverse workforce
*Carried out by the DEI Sub-committees of **Attraction/Recruitment** and **Retention/Inclusion,** as well as Agency Leadership, and DCR's Office of Human Resources*

Objective 1: Recruit and hire a diverse workforce at every level of leadership

Strategies:

- Develop and implement an annual Diversity & Inclusion communication plan to promote DCR's commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion within attraction and recruitment initiatives
- Expand opportunities for recruitment to include diverse civic organizations, constituent service organizations, sports clubs, community events, historically minority and gender-based colleges and universities, minority fraternity & sorority organizations, professional organizations, disability advocacy groups, and natural resource partners
- Create division-specific listings of recruitment outlets where job opportunities should be advertised in order to ensure a more diverse applicant pool
- Identify by discipline the pipelines for how and when new hires can enter the DCR system— focusing on defining professional levels (entry level to advanced) for positions as well as actual entry points
- Create partnerships with historically black colleges and universities and other marginalized groups (e.g. partner with Virginia State University internship and work study programs; reach out to Biology and Ecology professors; etc.)
- Develop agency recruitment plans as part of annual diversity and inclusion strategic planning (plans will include annual reviews of applicants and hiring data so that DCR can determine and implement best practices)
- Work with other Virginia agencies that have successful diversity programs to improve DCR's diversity recruitment and hiring programs and review and implement best practices related to recruitment and retention of a diverse workforce
- Use data to identify gaps in representation and create new community partnerships to increase representation from those groups
- Document activities to evaluate how working with established partners contributes to a more diverse, robust applicant pool
- Establish criteria for effective "Agency Ambassadors" and identify/develop potential ambassadors for outreach activities

Objective 2: Retain and promote a more compositionally diverse workforce
Strategies:

- Develop and define the agency's "Employment Value Proposition" (EVP) to guide efforts for why individuals would want to work for DCR—paying specific attention to the optimal environment, culture, and benefits needed to attract and retain historically under-represented groups in each Division
- Identify and categorize outreach efforts by roles, divisions, and locations for: Career fairs; University career centers; Veteran transition centers; social media/affinity groups; and targeted industry outlets/publications
- Research, compile, and analyze data to determine potential vs. actual representation by diversity category (including age, race, gender, disability, etc.) for role within labor market
- Review DCR screening and recruitment processes and provide written guidelines for improving processes that will lead to more diverse, equitable, and inclusive applicant pools and hiring outcomes. Provide unconscious bias training to hiring managers.
- Analyze and revise current professional and leadership development processes and related policies to ensure that all opportunities have equitable growth opportunities

Indicators of Success: *Based on the Global Diversity and Inclusion Benchmarks developed by the Centre for Global Inclusion https://centreforglobalinclusion.org/). ONE Virginia Plan Metrics Dashboard follows in Appendix A.*

- The organization's reputation for quality DEI efforts enhances its ability to attract and retain employees who contribute to outstanding organizational results
- Recruitment includes advertising on diversity-focused career websites, using social media, and networking with internal and external diversity groups
- Recruitment and selection panels understand how bias enters into recruiting and therefore include members knowledgeable about the diverse population the organization wants to attract and advance
- Managers are educated in understanding differences and the impact their biases may have on selection, development, and advancement decisions
- Analysis of the demographic composition of pools across all stages of the recruitment and hiring process is used to inform future efforts
- A compositionally diverse workforce is attained/maintained both cross-functionally and vertically

GOAL 2: Create and sustain an agency culture that affirms and respects diversity, and employs inclusive practices throughout daily operations.

*Carried out by the DEI Sub-committee of **Retention/Inclusion**,as well as Agency Leadership, and DCR's Office of Human Resources*

Objective 1: Create and sustain a climate that is supportive, respectful, and that values and integrates differing perspectives and experiences

Strategies:

- Perform surveys (employee and customer) to assess the climate of the agency and employee engagement and analyze results to drive future DEI efforts
- Provide monthly communications related to upcoming events, celebrations, and items of historical or cultural significance
- Provide employee events to understand history, terminology, commemorate, to have increased honest dialogue to improve communications and acceptance
- Identify best practices within the public and private sectors as well as natural resources in terms of diversity and inclusion efforts to optimize the climate of the agency
- Build a safe and trusting work environment where we have policies for safe spaces and staff feel comfortable elevating equity and justice related issues
- Empower staff to act and model equitable and just behaviors and actions
- Charter special project groups to focus on larger-scale initiatives such as on-boarding, employee engagement, mentoring
- Provide access and resources for ASL and multiple languages for websites, documents, and in-person services
- Establish Employee Affinity and Resource Networks (EARNs) for underrepresented groups
- Emphasize senior management's commitment to DE&I by conveying the business need for DE&I in messaging, promotion, and behaviors reflective of the ONE Virginia brand and mission

Indicators of Success: *Based on the Global Diversity and Inclusion Benchmarks developed by the Centre for Global Inclusion https://centreforglobalinclusion.org/). ONE Virginia Plan Metrics Dashboard follows in Appendix A.*

- Employees are exposed to a variety of cultures, markets, values, and practices as part of development and retention
- High potential and performance talent is provided with internal coaches, mentors, and external coaching opportunities to maximize performance and develop advanced careers
- DEI elements are included in onboarding programs and materials, marketing materials, website, wall coverings, and agency decorations/bulletin boards, etc.
- Employee perceptions of climate, safety, awareness, and belonging are appropriate to organizational benchmarks

GOAL 3: Engage in learning the concepts of DE&I, and the importance of these concepts in completing the agency mission.

*Carried out by the DEI Sub-committee of **Education/Training**, as well as Agency Leadership, and DCR's Office of Human Resources*

Objective 1: Offer training and workshops that achieve DE&I learning goals

Strategies:

- Develop and implement a comprehensive employee annual training program on diversity/equity/inclusion and provide organization-wide learning opportunities
- Develop methods for delivery of learning opportunities across the following topical areas:
  - **Enhancing awareness across the DEI spectrum (Self, Group, and System);**
  - **Understanding racial inequities;**
  - **Seeing activities and access through an equity lens;**
  - **Effectively dealing with biases;**
  - **Understanding the Cycle of Prejudice;**
  - **Creating an Upstander Culture;**
  - **Awareness and handling of Microaggressions in the workplace;**
  - **Understanding privilege;**
  - **Emotional intelligence; and**
  - **Promoting the value of a representative workforce**
- Provide monthly awareness emails and other in-depth awareness opportunities for DCR employees
- Develop and implement a feedback mechanism or follow-up survey to evaluate effectiveness of training initiatives and gauge changes in employee knowledge and attitudes
- Utilize the internal SharePoint application to create a web-based resource center for all employees to access and share tools that DCR as a whole can utilize to foster greater understanding of diversity and inclusion

Indicators of Success: *Based on the Global Diversity and Inclusion Benchmarks developed by the Centre for Global Inclusion https://centreforglobalinclusion.org/). ONE Virginia Plan Metrics Dashboard follows in Appendix A.*

- DEI is integrated into the organization's overall learning and education programs, including employee orientation, customer service, and management programs
- A variety of innovative DEI tools and resources are accessible to all regardless of location
- Programs focused on specific dimensions of diversity, such as disability, gender and gender identity, sexual orientation, social class, generations, culture, religion, race, and ethnicity are offered based on identified needs
- Challenging and sometimes controversial issues such as racism, sexism, ageism, classism, heterosexism, religious bias, stereotype threat, privilege, and unconscious bias are effectively addressed with sensitivity, fairness, conviction, and compassion; and include development of skills to address those issues.
- DEI topics are easily located on the organization's websites; information is thorough, fully accessible, and regularly updated

GOAL 4: Create and sustain an agency or departmental infrastructure that effectively supports progress and accountability in achieving diversity goals.

*Carried out by **all** DEI Sub-Committees, as well as Agency Leadership, and DCR's Office of Human Resources*

Objective 1: Sustain and increase agency or departmental efforts designed to amplify opportunities to advance the goals outlined in this framework

Strategies:
- Develop and implement a comprehensive equity and access review structure and template to be used in the strategic planning process (utilizing the expertise of consultants)
- Reinvigorate and potentially re-brand agency DEI Committee (and subordinate sub-committees) to more accurately reflect activities and charters
- Increase awareness and knowledge of our staff around equity and justice issues by sharing resources and tools, communicating across the organization about our equity and justice work, and hosting events to raise awareness of these issues
- Incorporate DEI in all applicable agency policies, strategic plans, and operational guidance
- Ensure DEI is a regular topic on all agency meeting agendas
- Perform regular compensation analysis to act on disparities

Objective 2: Create structures and processes of accountability for organizational leadership and effectiveness

Strategies:
- Create a diversity metrics dashboard to inform leadership of workforce diversity status relative to the ONE Virginia Goals, EEO complaint numbers, and Employment Dispute Resolution (EDR) bias incidents cases
- Develop semi-annual communication plans for reporting on progress toward statewide DE&I goals-- cascading from leadership down to front-line employees
- Ensure agency leadership accountability for achieving specific measurable, actionable, and timely DE&I objectives through establishment of performance expectations in respective EWPs
- Incorporate DEI accountability measures in **all** employee work profiles and the performance evaluation process
- Provide an evaluation report and supporting action plan outlining actions that can be taken to explicitly improve equity and access across all DCR services offered

Indicators of Success: *Based on the Global Diversity and Inclusion Benchmarks developed by the Centre for Global Inclusion https://centreforglobalinclusion.org/). ONE Virginia Plan Metrics Dashboard follows in Appendix A.*

- The organization's DEI initiatives are perceived as a core function
- Documentation of processes used to evaluate DE&I efforts
- Documentation of process/policy/practice redesigns which can be directly linked to DEI efforts
- Evidence of agency sponsored legislation that advances DE&I or confronts barriers to inclusive excellence
- Documented processes for reporting progress toward DE&I goals to appropriate oversight agencies (Governor's Office, DHRM, SBSD, SCHEV, VDOE, etc.)
- Units provide an annual report to senior leadership on their progress toward the ONE Virginia goals
- Inclusion performance measures are included in job descriptions and performance evaluations
- Job requirements and descriptions are clear and not confused by non-job-related factors such as gender, school graduated from, religion, age, sexual orientation, disability, appearance preferences, or culturally specific behaviors
- The organization ensures that annual compensation gap analyses are conducted to confirm that biases based on age, disability, gender, organizational function, race, and other potential equity issues are dealt with appropriately
- The organization systematically reviews its job requirements, classifications, and compensation practices for bias and takes action to mitigate adverse impact
- Classification/grading and compensation/ remuneration systems are widely communicated to and understood by employees

GOAL 5: Focus community engagement activities on those that provide measurable, direct, equitable, and sustained benefit to all of Virginia's diverse communities.

*Carried out by the DEI Sub-committees of **Equity Program Reviews** and **Partnerships/Pipelines**, as well as Agency Leadership, and DCR's Office of Human Resources*

Objective 1: Improve outcomes and experiences for populations the agency or department serves directly

Strategies:

- Create a prioritized listing of DCR top partner opportunities by Division and prioritize them based on collaborative opportunities to increase DCR DEI efforts. New partners will then be sought to improve the opportunities to attract new populations to DCR and/or to expand access to DCR's programs
- Develop and implement event opportunities for cross-collaboration of DCR with partners and other agencies to create improved equitable access of programs
- Catalog current (and identify new) pipeline opportunities that increase program awareness and equitable access. Create opportunities for exposure to natural resources opportunities to diversify the DCR workforce
- Intentionally build and foster diverse partnerships that are in support of DE&I practices

Objective 2: Improve outcomes and experiences for underrepresented groups in the agency or department's larger community

Strategies:

- Create a formal communication feedback mechanism to get input from underrepresented groups, advocates, nonprofit organizations, sister agencies, etc.
- Identify causes of barriers to services--providing solutions to resolving barriers, and creating/redesigning policies to address barriers to agency services
- Develop and implement a language access strategy--ensuring equitable access for diverse needs including but not limited to language access, digital access, and access for individuals with disabilities

Indicators of Success:
Based on the Global Diversity and Inclusion Benchmarks developed by the Centre for Global Inclusion https://centreforglobalinclusion.org/). ONE Virginia Plan Metrics Dashboard follows in Appendix A.

- The organization leads in supporting and advocating for diversity-related interests.
- Community involvement reflects long-range planning and supports most population segments
- The organization connects DEI goals with ethics and integrity initiatives, and supports social justice, social cohesion, and economic development
- Almost all teams involved in the ongoing development of access and services are diverse and likely include customers, stakeholders, and community representatives
- The organization shows the link between diversity and innovation, consistently leveraging DEI to increase access to services and service innovation
- Changes in demographics, values, and consumer behaviors are researched, anticipated, and served
- The organization is sensitive to the religious views, values, and cultural norms of various communities and develops programs, services, and policies that are considered appropriate for those customers or stakeholders
- The organization successfully leverages diverse teams, believing it will improve the quality and innovation of access to services, services, and policies
- Access to services, programs, and policies are analyzed for their value to current and potential customers and are tailored appropriately
- Organizational facilities serve/promote economic growth of the whole community, particularly communities that have been historically denied access to resources, or are in the greatest need
- Demonstrated impact of initiatives and partnerships are evaluated through the five conditions of collective impact