



WRIA 8 Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Subcommittee Strategic Plan

I. Vision Statement:

Since 2000, 28 local governments in WRIA 8 and representatives from businesses, community groups, residents, state, and federal agencies have partnered to recover endangered Chinook and other salmon species in the watershed. As the most populated watershed in Washington State, WRIA 8 is dedicated to restoring watershed health for the benefit of salmon and people and to strengthening our commitments to diversity, equity, inclusion (DEI), and environmental justice.

Our vision is grounded in an understanding that salmon recovery and values of diversity, equity, and inclusion are fundamentally inseparable. Recovering salmon takes working together and ensuring those contributing to and benefitting from salmon recovery reflect the diversity of communities in the watershed. Maintaining and expanding involvement of all people in the watershed and empowering diverse perspectives better equips us to tackle the complex challenges we face in salmon recovery efforts. We recognize recovering salmon requires long-term commitment, and efforts to engage and inspire a next generation of salmon recovery leaders are critical.

Restoring salmon habitat benefits human health and well-being by protecting and increasing open space, reducing flood risk, improving water quality and quantity, improving stormwater management, increasing recreational opportunities, and helping mitigate impacts from climate change. We acknowledge our role and responsibility to affirm and advance environmental equity and justice and are committed to advancing equitable distribution of the benefits and burdens in setting and implementing salmon recovery priorities throughout the watershed. By advancing equity in recovery outcomes, we open the door for increased and more innovative opportunities to restore the whole watershed for salmon and people.

II. Goals:

1. Achieve equitable and intentional distribution of resources, benefits, and risks of WRIA 8 salmon recovery work.
2. Identify and address barriers that may prevent diverse and inclusive participation in WRIA 8, so we reflect all people in the watershed and benefit from a richness of perspectives, experiences, and skills.
3. Center environmental justice in opportunities and outcomes of WRIA 8 salmon recovery.
4. Ensure WRIA 8 provides culturally appropriate and accessible opportunities and information for the communities we serve.

5. Recover sustainable harvestable populations of salmon that support Tribal fisheries and local livelihoods.

IV. Definitions for DEI Related Terms:

Diversity: Demographic representation and appreciation of individual, social, economic, and cultural differences based on race, ethnicity, gender expression, sexual orientation, national origin, socio-economic status, age, educational background, abilities, religious beliefs, and other factors.

Equity: A state, quality, or ideal of being fair and just. The principle of equity acknowledges certain groups have systematically and historically been excluded or marginalized and that fairness or justice is needed to balance access to opportunities and resources for all groups.

Inclusion: A state, quality, or ideal of being a part of a group or structure where the inherent worth and dignity of all people are recognized and respected. More than diversity and numerical representation, inclusion involves authentic and empowered participation, full access to opportunities, and a sense of belonging and of feeling valued.

Equality: A state, quality, or ideal of being the same or equal. Equality aims to promote fairness and justice, but does not account for systemic inequities, differing needs, or circumstances. For example, equality in resource distribution can perpetuate current inequities and injustices that exist and have been created by policies, practices, prejudices, and biases. For the purposes of WRIA 8's work to advance DEI, the definition of equality is included as an aspiration.

Environmental Justice: The fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies. This includes using an intersectional lens to address disproportionate environmental and health impacts by prioritizing highly impacted populations, equitably distributing resources and benefits, and eliminating harm.

Intersectionality: A term to describe complex and cumulative ways multiple overlapping categories of identity can impact individuals and institutions and to account for these cohesive identities when working towards diversity, equity, and inclusion.

V. Diversity Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Subcommittee

A. Purpose - Diversity Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Subcommittee:

- Develop Strategic Plan to advance diversity, equity, and inclusion in WRIA 8 salmon recovery.

- Provide recommendations to the WRIA 8 Salmon Recovery Council and committees.
- Lead implementation of DEI strategies and actions.
- Ensure continuous learning, partnerships, ongoing engagement, evaluation, and adaptation.

B. Ground Rules:

- Listen actively: Respect others when they are talking, seek to understand, actively listen before responding.
- Speak your truth: Share from your own experiences instead of generalizing ("I" instead of "they," "we," and "you").
- Disagree without discord: Do not be afraid to respectfully disagree or challenge one another by asking questions, but please debate and challenge ideas and not the speaker. Approach differences with a perspective with curiosity, not argument.
- Participate to the fullest of your ability: This subcommittee will be most effective when we hear every individual voice. Also, step back and share the air if you tend to dominate conversations.

C. Initial Actions

- Establish a WRIA 8 SRC Subcommittee to create and implement WRIA 8's DEI vision.
- Revise grant funding applications and review criteria to strengthen DEI principles in the grant round process and funding decisions and outcomes.
- Incorporate DEI principles in WRIA 8 communications and outreach.
- Strengthen connections between WRIA 8 and community groups and organizations focused on environmental equity and justice.

D. Action Framework with Example

Purpose: Lay out the steps to operationalize and achieve our goals. Start with goal (endpoint) and work backwards to identify and implement strategies. Define SMART objectives to track whether we are achieving desired outcomes.

Example strategy: Revise grant funding applications and review criteria to strengthen DEI principles in the grant round process and funding decisions and outcomes.

Associated WRIA 8 DEI goals:

1. Achieve equitable and intentional distribution of resources, benefits and risks of our salmon recovery work.

3. Center environmental justice in opportunities and outcomes of WRIA 8 salmon recovery.

SMART objectives (Specific/measurable/achievable/relevant/timebound actions associated with the strategy; 1-5 per strategy):

Objectives - DEI Subcommittee

- Objective 1: By Jan 2021 incorporate revised DEI language into WRIA 8 supplemental application materials and ranking criteria, and review language with project subcommittee after the grant round. Appraise how the language revisions worked to engage with a wider breadth of projects that strongly support DEI goals, support projects that prioritize our DEI goals, and whether funding allocation better fit with equity goals than in the past? Further revise language based on feedback.

Objectives - WRIA 8 (SRC and Committees)

- Objective 1: Strengthen DEI expertise and input in grant review process during the 2021 grant round. Provide that feedback to applicants and the WRIA 8 Project Subcommittee.

Objectives - External to WRIA 8

- Objective 1: Encourage project sponsors to include DEI in their proposals and work (signaling to people this is important – central value of the organization to facilitate more of this work).
- Objective 2: Capacity building and more broadly advertise the opportunity and recruit new applicants. Reach out and support applicants in submitting proposals.