



MEMORANDUM

EUGENE WATER & ELECTRIC BOARD

Rely on us.

TO: Commissioners Brown, Carlson, Barofsky, McRae and Schlossberg
FROM: Rod Price, Assistant General Manager
DATE: June 29, 2022 (July 5, 2022, Regular Board Meeting)
SUBJECT: DEI Board Policy Development Background Information
OBJECTIVE: Information

Issue

Based on Board feedback from the February 15, 2022, Board Work Session, this memo seeks to provide examples of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) policy development at peer agencies and provide background information about DEI work done by EWEB to date, in support of development of a DEI policy at EWEB.

Background

In 2021, as part of Commissioners' annual policy review, along with work on revisions to SD15 Climate Change policy, it was recognized that "equity considerations" were not included within EWEB Board policy. Simultaneously, beginning in the second half of 2021, EWEB management engaged in facilitated discussions of what diversity, equity, and inclusion could mean to the organization. Consistent with best practice, it was determined that diversity, equity, and inclusion are interrelated and should be considered holistically.

In support of 2022 Organizational Goal #2(e), *"build and inspire the workforce necessary to fulfill ongoing business obligations and strategic initiatives amidst a challenging and changing labor and social environment by: (e) developing and nurturing an environment based on the principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI),* Commissioners and Management wish to develop a guiding DEI Board Policy.

In advance of the February 15, 2022 Board work session, Management recommended potential definitions for the terms: diversity, equity, and inclusion. Additionally, after researching other organization's policies and best practices, management suggested that DEI policies should include at least the following components:

- A. Rationale/Vision – Why is it important to have a DEI policy? What's the aspiration or commitment? How does it relate to the mission, vision, and values of the organization?
- B. Purpose – What is the objective (or primary use) of the DEI policy?
- C. Definitions
- D. Directives/Accountability – many DEI policies classify areas of attention and work, and provide direction in the following areas:
 - a. Education
 - b. Recruitment & Selection
 - c. Compensation and Benefits
 - d. Work Environment (conditions, culture, training, advancement, discipline, etc.)
 - e. Decision Considerations & Process (e.g. Triple Bottom Line (TBL) Methodology)
 - f. Community Outreach/Impacts
- E. Transparency and Reporting (Feedback and Status Methodology)

At the February 15, 2022 Board Work Session, an initial discussion was held about the Board's desired outcomes of a DEI Policy at EWEB. Commissioner feedback expressed a desire to invest time and resources in an on-going journey of continual improvement to embed DEI components into the organization at both the Board and the staff levels. There was a desire to include both internal (staff and culture) and external (customer and community) focus areas within the utility. There was a desire to seek professional consulting support in the areas of DEI governance and policy development. The Board requested that staff provide guidance on what best practice DEI policy looks like in other organizations and provide a status update on current DEI activities happening at EWEB. This memo is designed to address those requests. Eventually, a desire for benchmarking baseline performance and development of metrics and reporting was expressed, but there was acknowledgment that this process would take time to develop.

Discussion

This memo serves to provide the Board with background information related to two topics:

1. A summary of the actions taken among EWEB's peer agencies and best practice leaders in the region related to diversity, equity, and inclusion policy and program development.
2. A summary of actions related to diversity, equity, and inclusion work taken to date at EWEB.

Peer Agency Review

Peer agencies reviewed for this Board correspondence were pulled from two groups: local organizations that, like EWEB, are members of the Equity and Community Consortium (ECC) and other regional peers in the utility industry and government that showcase work done in this area.

Overall, this peer agency review identified the following take-aways:

- Non-utility Lane County area government agencies are further along in their development of diversity, equity, and inclusion programs compared to public electric and water utilities.
- Organizations that have engaged in this work for some time, have addressed the components A through E that are listed above in the Background section of this memo in organizational written policy. The organizations that are the furthest along in their efforts to embed DEI concepts into their organization have done the following:
 - o Woven the concepts of diversity, equity, and inclusion into the mission, vision, and values of the organization. (Example: City of Springfield.)
 - o Have expressed their values in specific resolutions (Examples: City of Eugene, Lane County.)
 - o Articulated the value the concepts of diversity, equity, and inclusion bring to their organization and outlined the purpose of the DEI policy. (Example: LTD.)
 - o Defined the language they use (diversity, equity, inclusion, access, etc.) to enable a common language and understanding. (Examples: LCC, LTD, 4j, State of Oregon.)
 - o Outline the scope of work that is expected to be completed and provide direction to staff (Example: LTD.)
 - o Have identified key staff to lead and coordinate actions taken across the organization (Examples with dedicated FTE: Lane County, 4j, City of Eugene is actively hiring.)
 - o Have engaged with outside consulting support or training programs (Examples: 4j, LTD, Lane County)
 - o Integrated DEI programs and an equity approach and/or an equity lens across the organization into all aspects of an organization's culture and services. This is similar to efforts to apply a sustainability or triple bottom line (TBL) approach to organizational culture, services, and decision-making. DEI programs can support the TBL approach by diving deeper into the social

equity component to better understand the ways that culture, services provided by the organization, and decision-making in an organization either perpetuate or break-down historical and institutional discriminatory practices. Terms like environmental justice help convey the overlap between institutional discrimination and environmental issues. (Examples: Lane County and 4j have an equity lens).

The Equity and Community Consortium (ECC) is an information and resource sharing and coordination forum about equity and service to our community for agencies and jurisdictions that provide governmental and public services in the Eugene-Springfield metropolitan area. There are 12 members of the ECC including: Lane Community College (LCC), Lane Council of Governments (LCOG), Lane County, Lane Education Service District (Lane ESD), Lane Transit District (LTD), City of Eugene, Eugene School District 4J, Eugene School District Bethel, Eugene Water & Electric Board (EWEB), City of Springfield, Springfield School District, University of Oregon.

Following is a list of the ECC members and representative DEI related programs, policies, and information.

- Lane Community College
 - [Lane Community College \(LCC\)](#): Defines equity, inclusion, and access
- Lane Council of Governments (LCOG)
 - [Transportation Equity](#)
- Lane County
 - [Equity, Access & Inclusion website](#) and [Racial Equity Plan](#)
 - [Resolution in support of Black Lives Matter](#)
 - [Resolution in acknowledging destruction of first black neighborhood](#)
 - [Resolution denouncing White Nationalism](#)
 - [Resolution endorsing recommendations for advancement of health equity](#)
 - [Resolution reaffirming Lane County's values](#)
- Lane Transit District (LTD):
 - [Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Policy](#)
- City of Eugene:
 - Resolution condemning white nationalism and seditious activities and extremist groups: [Resolution 5274 Condemning White Nationalism and Alt-Right Activities and Groups \(00319956-4\).DOCX \(eugene-or.gov\)](#)
 - Hiring a Human Rights and Equity Analyst: [Human Rights & Equity Analyst | Eugene, OR Website \(eugene-or.gov\)](#)
- Eugene School District, 4J
 - [Equity, Inclusion & Instruction](#)
- City of Springfield
 - [Inclusion Resources](#)
- Eugene School District, Bethel
 - <https://www.bethel.k12.or.us/departments/equity/>
 - http://bethel.k12.or.us/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Bethel_Final-Approved-Resolution-.pdf
- Springfield School District (DEI values and policy sprinkled throughout their documents)
 - [Family Support](#)
 - [Programs & Services Overview website](#)
 - [Student Handbook](#)
- Lane Education Service District (ESD) (DEI values and policy sprinkled throughout their documents)
 - [Lane ESD Strategic Plan and Bold Steps, Actions, & Outcomes](#)
 - <https://www.lesd.k12.or.us/strategic-plan/index.html#step3>
 - [Lane African American/Black Student Success](#)

- <https://policy.osba.org/laneesd/AB/ACB%20D1.PDF>
- University of Oregon:
 - [About DEI | Equity and Inclusion \(uoregon.edu\)](https://uoregon.edu/about/dei)

Other groups from the broader utility industry or regional government that might be related to EWEB’s context and or interest to the Board include:

- Portland General Electric
- <https://portlandgeneral.com/about/who-we-are/diversity-equity-and-inclusion>Portland Water Bureau
 - <https://www.portland.gov/water/about-us>
- State of Oregon
 - [Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion website](#)
 - [Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Action Plan](#)
- Oregon State University (OSU)
 - [Institutional Diversity website](#): Includes links to the following resources - Diversity Strategic Plan, Initiatives, Community Diversity Relations, Diversity Education, Bias Incident Response
- These organizations do not have formal DEI content on their websites (as of June 2022), but are organizations that have joined the [Government Alliance on Racial Equity \(GARE\)](#) and are exploring bringing a racial equity component into their operations: CA state agencies (Department of Water Resources, Department of Transportation, etc.), CA Air Resources Board, CA State Public Utilities Commission, East Bay Municipal Utility District, Sacramento Municipal Utility District, Snohomish County Public Utility District, Alameda County Water District, Orange Water and Sewer Authority, NC, Santa Clara Valley Water District, CA. Locally, Lane County and LTD are also GARE members.

Summary of actions related to diversity, equity, and inclusion work by EWEB

Enhancing EWEB’s culture to continuously improve diversity, equity, and inclusion is an ongoing commitment and we acknowledge there are many opportunities for improvement. At the same time, we appreciate the actions being taken to strengthen these values in the organization and the employees who strive to do their best and continue to learn and grow. Following are examples of steps EWEB has taken to date.

- EWEB is a member of the Equity and Community Consortium (ECC), which meets monthly to seek shared opportunities for its members related to DEI work. The group is emerging to new levels of action. This summer, EWEB will participate in the ECC bi-annual meeting to discuss the development of their upcoming two-year work plan. <https://www.eugene-or.gov/4276/Equity-Consortium>
- In 2021, the Organization’s values were updated to include the psychological health and safety of our workforce and the public. This statement emphasizes the importance EWEB places on creating a culture that fosters the emotional wellbeing of our internal and external human resources. Activities, conversations, and informal focus groups across the Utility highlighted many differences in the interpretations of the term psychological safety. Management believes there is opportunity to clarify the intended scope of this value in the next update to the Strategic Plan and Board Policy SD1 Mission, Vision, and Values.
- EWEB requires Implicit Bias training for all employees who participate on an interview panel. The training was designed to equip panelists with the skills necessary to perform an impartial evaluation of candidates as well as recognize and address bias in everyday situations. Past trainings have been highly attended and well received by employees. These trainings were hampered by the pandemic; therefore many new employees have not yet had an opportunity to attend.

- EWEB recently renewed its membership with [Cascade Employers Association](#) (CEA), a human resources company with offerings such as consulting, training, and support for compensation and benefits programs. Workforce Services is partnering with CEA to conduct an audit of the Utility's recruitment and hiring practices, including a review of position descriptions, hiring processes, policies, and other workforce resources. The consultant is in the process of evaluating EWEB's current practices and documentation to help us ensure equitable treatment and the use of neutral and welcoming language that does not exclude any group. EWEB is also in discussion with one of Cascade's consultants to obtain their expertise around potential opportunities and next steps for the organization's DEI journey. Additional information will be provided in the upcoming Quarterly Report.
- Earlier this year, the Executive Team completed several workshops to help understand racism and its impacts on policy and culture.
- EWEB's Diversity Team has been in existence for many years, and its membership and focus has shifted over time. In recent years the Diversity Team has largely operated as an affinity group, focused on personal growth, supporting one another, and sharing learning activities with the organization. Bi-monthly diversity films and TED Talks followed by facilitated discussions led by DT members were popular prior to the pandemic, although attendance was subject to flexibility of employee's schedules and work locations. These group gatherings were paused when social distancing became necessary due to covid. In 2021 TED Talks were reinstated in a virtual format; attendance vastly increased with remote accessibility and scheduling prior to open of business. Attendees explore topics such as inclusion, allyship, microaggressions, how to have challenging conversations, and implicit bias.
- The Diversity Team will soon reevaluate its mission and vision statements which currently state:
 - Our Mission: Using the strengths and diversity of EWEB Employees we aim to develop the skill sets needed to create an environment in which all people are safe, respected and included.*
 - Our Vision: The Diversity Team is a group committed to enhancing EWEB's culture by raising awareness, inspiring curiosity, and creating opportunities for education and personal growth.*
- Under the leadership of AGM Price, the Diversity Team is looking to expand its membership and evolve its purpose to include additional focus areas which may include enterprise business support, DEI related education, employee advocacy/activities/affinity groups, and community outreach. One example of an expanded role for the Diversity Team is a sub-group which was formed to help review and support staff and the Board in creating a Board level policy. Overall, this transformative work is in an early exploratory stage.

Recommendation/Requested Board Action

No formal action is being requested at this time as this memo was designed to provide background information to prepare commissioners for a deeper discussion in August. The Board will be asked in August to discuss perspectives and provide input, guidance, and direction on next steps in development of a diversity, equity, and inclusion policy at EWEB.