

equity

diversity

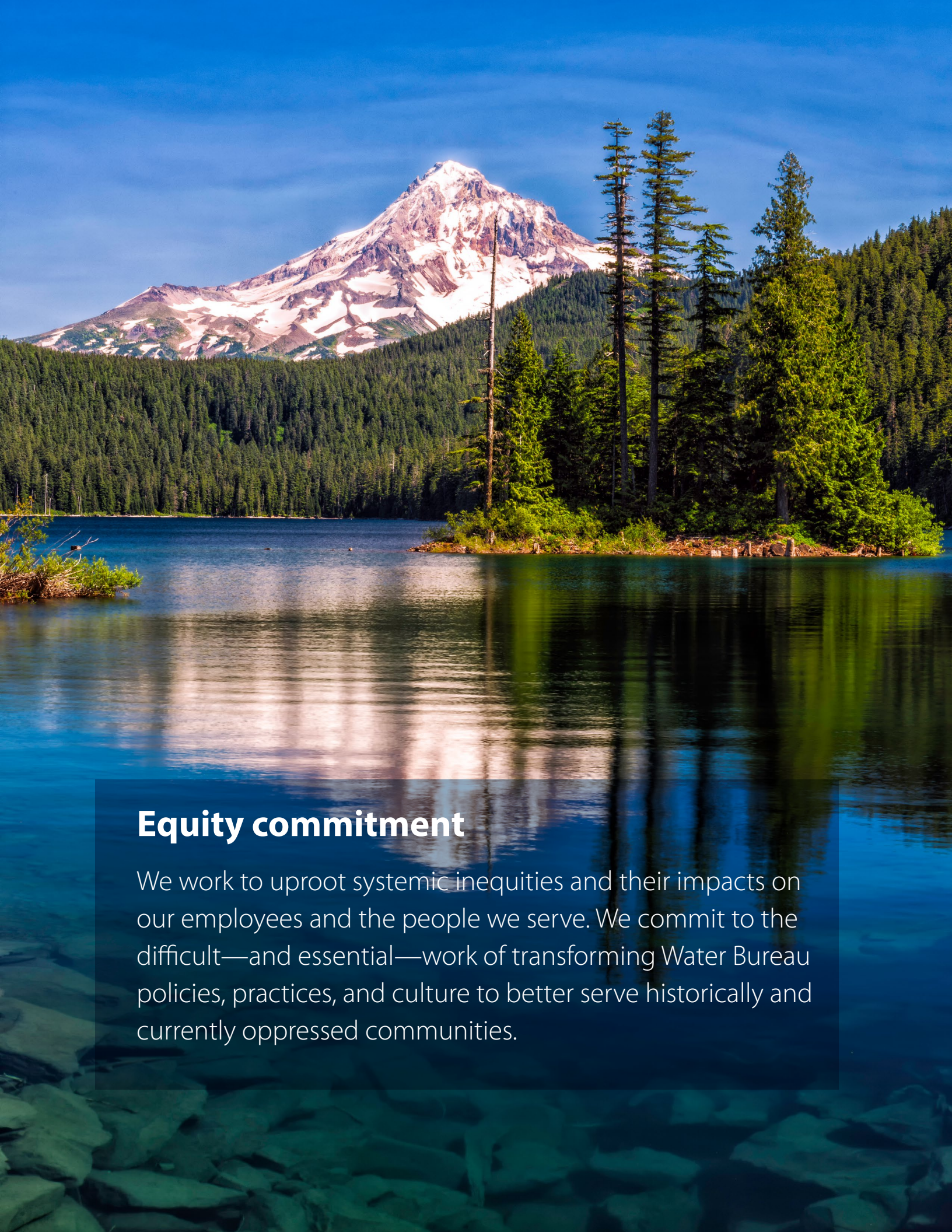
inclusion

2021–2025 Portland Water Bureau

Plan to Advance Equity,  
Diversity, and Inclusion







# Equity commitment

We work to uproot systemic inequities and their impacts on our employees and the people we serve. We commit to the difficult—and essential—work of transforming Water Bureau policies, practices, and culture to better serve historically and currently oppressed communities.

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# Commitment from bureau leadership

The Water Bureau is not neutral about racism. Water is the source of life to all of humanity, regardless of identity. Fulfilling our mission of serving excellent water every minute of every day to all community members requires us to recognize, address, and eliminate institutional racism and discrimination. The Water Bureau is committed to ensuring all members of our community and our employees have access to the resources and opportunities they need to thrive, within the context of our mission.

The bureau’s leadership is committed to continuously addressing equity and racism and creating an inclusive environment where all employees are safe, regardless of their identity. We value the diversity of our workforce and the communities we serve. We stand firmly against hate, bigotry, and prejudice.

We acknowledge that members of our workforce are at various points along the continuum of anti-racism work. And we understand that racism is not only acts of conscious prejudice, but rather a social system embedded in culture and its institutions, meaning that no one is exempt from its forces. Dismantling racism requires intentionality, discomfort, accountability, courage, and compassion. The bureau will act with the intent to change systems and institutional policies, practices, and procedures that have racist effects. The bureau will also purposefully strive to identify, discuss, and challenge issues of race, color, and ethnicity and the impacts they have on employees and community members.

As bureau leaders, we hereby commit to centering equity in all of our decisions, actively implementing the objectives and actions identified in this plan, and committing the resources necessary to uproot policies and practices that perpetuate inequities and systemic racism.

  
Michael Stuhr

  
Gabriel Solmer

  
Tony Andersen

  
Edward Campbell

  
Maiya Delgoda


  
Teresa Elliott

  
Cecelia Huynh

  
Kathy Koch

  
Ty Kovatch

  
Erich Pacheco

  
Chris Wanner

# Letter from Commissioner Fritz

Dear colleague,

Now more than ever, each of us must reevaluate what we stand for. As City employees, as Portlanders, as human beings in a society with a long history of racism, living on a planet in danger from disease and climate disruption—we are at a crossroads. This Equity Plan outlines the work that must be done to ensure that everyone in the bureau and in the community gets their needs met and has the opportunity to thrive.

We cannot fail. Our future depends on it, individually and collectively. The prosperity of our city and health of our community members depends on it; the reputation of our bureau depends on it. There have been many attempts in the past to address the known disparities that have grown over centuries. In the past, the Water Bureau has seen nepotism, White supremacy, sexism, and corruption. For example, in the construction of the reservoirs at Mt. Tabor only White men were allowed to apply for the good recession-era construction jobs. Now, we can be the shining example of justice, fairness, equity, and inclusion. This is a plan to get results with actions. We cannot wait for changes to be seen and experienced in our bureau. Diversity is something that you see, but inclusion and belonging is something that you feel. I want every employee to feel a sense of belonging and of being valued for their unique experiences—every day. And I want that now, not in ten years or fifty. We cannot fail, and we cannot wait.

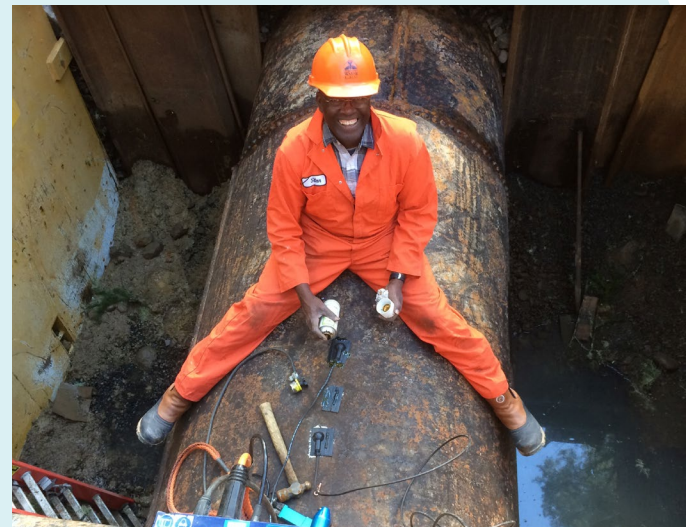
“Portland polite” has been the norm for so long that we haven’t talked about racial injustice and injustice for people with disabilities as much as we should. Some of us shy away from that because we think we’re doing just fine. And some of us don’t because we’re not doing just fine. Now is the time to talk about it, perhaps be uncomfortable, and act on our shared values to reach our shared goals.

The ones who hold high places must be the ones to start to build a new reality closer to the heart. Each City employee holds a high place, compared with many in our community. We must use the opportunities we have to seek equity, in the bureau and in the community. Equity is part of every bureau employee’s job. That is the policy adopted by the City Council. This Equity Plan states, “Bureau employees do not need permission to embed equity into their work.” I will go further. Every bureau employee is required to embed equity into your work. Just like learning to use a new piece of equipment or technology may be added to your job responsibilities, adhering to this Plan is now part of your work. It’s not optional. This plan was created with the intention that all bureau employees will do their part to uproot racist policies and practices. The Equity and Policy Team encourages all employees to educate themselves on equity and anti-racism, explore this plan, and identify actions and objectives they can implement. The Equity and Policy Team is always available to support employees by providing guidance, safety, coordination, and advice. You don’t have to do the work alone.

On page 16, you will find a table with the identified two-year priorities. If you read nothing else, please read that—and then make your own plan for what you can do to help reach the goals. This is a tumultuous time, and this is our time. Let’s be the change agents that make history by making things better. We can do it, and we must.

  
Amanda Fritz  
COMMISSIONER-IN-CHARGE





## Equity:

Creating the conditions for all to have access to the resources and opportunities they need to thrive, so their identities do not predict their outcomes.

## City of Portland Core Values

On June 17, 2020, City Council passed [Resolution 37492](#), which adopts new Core Values for Portland's government. The Core Values are listed below, with language directly from the resolution (for clarity, this document omits the "whereas" and "will be" legal language of the resolution). The Water Bureau embraces these values and will seek to embed them into all decisions.

### Anti-racism

Addressing issues concerning anti-Blackness is a priority for the workforce and city. Actions to dismantle institutional and systemic racism are the responsibility of every employee and resident. Racism, discrimination, and bias will not be tolerated within the workplace or our communities. Oppression, violence, and hate speech towards people of color is condemned by the City of Portland.

### Equity

The intersectional identities and lived experiences of our workforce and over 650,000 residents are valued. We acknowledge Oregon's history of exclusion and are dedicated to rebuilding trust through reconciliation and restorative justice. Solidarity and the preservation of diverse communities and their cultures enhances the livability and vibrancy of our beautiful city. Equity, access, and the removal of institutional and systemic barriers to resources and opportunities is essential in diversifying our workforce and the public good. Our vision to lead people, cultivate change, and develop a culture of innovation, inclusion, and inspiration will strengthen our city and communities. Sense of belonging, support, and safety are vital for a diverse, equitable, and inclusive city and workforce. The Office of Equity and Human Rights was established in 2011 and is charged with setting the foundation and accountability mechanisms for the City's equity work.

### Transparency

Transparency is essential to upholding the principles of democracy. Reimagining political processes occurs through accountability. Portland is the first city in the United States to adopt an Open Data policy, leading the nation in developing a culture of information sharing. Trust is established and maintained through integrity and inclusion.

### Communication

Communication serves as a catalyst for transformative change. Knowledge sharing will impact our workplace and communities. The art of storytelling and narratives can promote a culture of inclusion. The power of our collective voice will unify our city.

### Collaboration

Our belief that we are [Better Together](#) promotes collaboration and the cocreation of knowledge. The nexus of politics and public service will connect our workforce and communities. Civic engagement and collective action will empower our employees and residents. Institutional knowledge and awareness is gained through inclusive outreach and public engagement. All behaviors, actions, decisions, and systems shall reflect a culture of accountability and commitment to the City's core values.

### Fiscal Responsibility

The City of Portland is dedicated to being fiscally accountable to the public. Fiscal resiliency, climate action, equity, and the needs of our most vulnerable populations will be the focus of every budget decision. Community values, addressing inequities, and transparent budgetary decisions are essential to developing trust. Rethinking budget processes will ensure the economic sustainability of our city.



# Glossary

**Anti-racism:** Focused and sustained action, which includes intercultural, interfaith, multilingual, and inter-abled communities, with the intent to change a system or an institutional policy, practice, or procedure which has racist effects (definition from the Anti-Racism Digital Library).

**BIPOC:** Black, Indigenous, and People of Color. The history of Black slavery and colonialism of Indigenous Peoples in the United States calls for the distinction between them and other people of color, such as Asian or Latinx.

**Bureau Equity Committee (2015–2020):** A committee established by employee volunteers of the Water Bureau whose mission was to “facilitate change toward a racially equitable environment by addressing institutional and systemic racism, inequalities, bias, and their impacts on employees of the Water Bureau and the communities we serve.”

**Community-based organization:** A public or private nonprofit organization that is representative of a community or a significant segment of a community and works to meet the specific needs of that community (definition from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services).

**Culturally specific services/programming:** Services and programs that are informed by specific communities, where the majority of members or clients reflect that community. The service or program uses language, structures, and settings familiar to the culture of the focus population to create an environment of belonging and safety.

**Disadvantaged communities:** Communities that do not have the same access to services as others in the area, due to lower incomes, less education, language and cultural barriers, or racial discrimination. These communities may need different considerations to achieve equitable outcomes (definition from the American Water Works Association).

**Equity:** Creating the conditions for all to have access to the resources and opportunities they need to thrive, so their identities do not predict their outcomes.

**Equity Planning Taskforce:** A multidisciplinary team of bureau employees with representatives from all workgroups that convened from September to December 2019. The Taskforce provided recommendations to the bureau on actions to implement the strategies in the Strategic Plan identified with high potential to advance equity.

**Identity:** Who a person is and how a person thinks about themselves. Identity evolves over the course of a person’s life and may include aspects they have no control over, such as place of birth and race, as well as personal choices, such as religion. Some aspects of personal identity might be visible and others not. Personal identities may include, but are not limited to:

- Race (Asian, Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Multiracial, Pacific Islander, White)
- Ability or disability
- Gender identity and expression
- Sexual orientation
- Income level
- Native language (and English proficiency)
- Immigration status
- Level of education
- Age
- Status with the Water Bureau: employee or community member

**Intersectionality:** The interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender as they apply to a given individual or group, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage (definition from the Oxford English Dictionary).

**Institutional racism:** Racism that occurs within institutions and systems of power. It is the unfair policies and discriminatory practices of particular institutions, such as schools and workplaces (definition from Race Forward, *Moving the Race Conversation Forward*).

**Racial Equity-Centered Results-Based Accountability™ (RBA):** A tool that starts with the desired results and works backward toward the means, to ensure that plans work toward community results with stakeholder-driven implementation (definition from the Racial Equity Alliance). This disrupts patterns of doing what we’ve always done, because we’ve always done it that way—which, even when done with the best intentions, does not produce racial equity.

**Racial justice:** The proactive reinforcement of policies, practices, attitudes, and actions that produce equitable power, access, opportunities, treatment, impacts, and outcomes for all (definition from Race Forward).

**Reconciliation:** A justice process that involves publicly acknowledging racist events, acknowledging complicity in those events, and apologizing for those events to empower local communities through relationship building, truth telling, and restorative justice (definition from The William Winters Institute for Racial Reconciliation).

**Service equity:** Providing inclusive and equitable service to all, so that everyone has equitable opportunities, access, and results. Some individuals or communities may need different levels of support to gain equitable service (definition from the American Water Works Association).

**Shared governance:** A professional practice model, founded on the cornerstone principles of partnership, equity, accountability, and ownership that form a culturally sensitive and empowering framework, enabling sustainable and accountability-based decisions to support an interdisciplinary design for excellent services (definition from Vanderbilt University Medical Center).

**Systemic racism:** Racial bias among institutions and across society (definition from Race Forward, *Moving the Race Conversation Forward*).

**Trauma-informed services and programming:** An approach, based on knowledge of the impact of deeply distressing or disturbing experience(s), aimed at ensuring environments and services are welcoming and engaging for service recipients and staff (definition from Trauma-Informed Oregon).

**Underrepresented group:** A subset of a population that holds a smaller percentage within a group than it holds in the general population (definition from Wikipedia). In the Water Bureau, BIPOC communities, people with disabilities, and women are underrepresented.

**Underserved communities:** Communities that have inadequate infrastructure and lack services that exist in the rest of the community, such as utilities, sidewalks, lighting, waste collection, schools, libraries, and grocery stores (definition from the American Water Works Association).

**Workforce equity:** Creating the conditions for all Water Bureau employees to have access to the resources and opportunities they need to thrive, so their identities do not predict their employment outcomes.

# Why the bureau uses equity as a guiding principle

For many of its residents, Portland is a wonderful place to call home. Today, although the city is about 70 percent White, the population is more diverse than it has ever been. Many Portlanders celebrate the cultural richness that comes with that diversity. For many others, though, the city does not offer access to the opportunities and resources they need to thrive. Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (collectively referred to as BIPOC) communities in Portland experience worse outcomes than their White counterparts in almost every dimension, including education, health, income, housing, employment, and incarceration. **Equity is about creating the conditions for all to have access to the resources and opportunities they need to thrive, so identities cannot predict outcomes.**

In 2011, Portland City Council adopted Ordinance No. 184880, creating the Office of Equity and Human Rights and declaring that “achieving equity requires the intentional examination of policies and practices that, even if they have the appearance of fairness, may marginalize individuals or groups and perpetuate disparities or injustices.” On July 8, 2015, the Office of Equity and Human Rights presented Racial Equity Goals and Strategies to City Council, which were unanimously adopted as binding City policy, providing a guidepost for City employees and leadership to follow.

The Water Bureau has worked to center equity since 2015. In 2015, the Bureau Equity Committee formed, bringing employees together to develop common language and advise on bureau policies and practices. In 2016, the bureau developed a Racial Equity Plan, which identified specific actions within a framework created by the Office of Equity and Human Rights. Between 2017 and 2019, the bureau developed a five-year Strategic Plan, which includes forty-two strategies that advance equity. And in 2019, the bureau hired its first equity manager, whose role is to create a workplace where equity becomes part of everyday decisions and is embedded in bureau operations. In 2020, Portland City Council adopted new Core Values for Portland’s government. These values, listed earlier in this document, center equity and anti-racism.

Using equity as a guiding principle means centering the needs of community members who have been historically underserved and underrepresented; in Portland, these community members are overwhelmingly BIPOC and people experiencing disabilities. In designing policies, practices, and processes that explicitly serve these culturally specific groups, the bureau can create conditions that benefit all community members. By improving outcomes for community members with the least access to resources and opportunities, the bureau is able to best serve all Portlanders.

## Citywide Racial Equity Goals

ADOPTED IN 2015

**Equity Goal 1:**  
We will end racial disparities within city government, so there is fairness in hiring and promotions, greater opportunities in contracting, and equitable services to all residents.

**Equity Goal 2:**  
We will strengthen outreach, public engagement, and access to City services for communities of color and immigrant and refugee communities, and support or change existing services using racial equity best practices.

**Equity Goal 3:**  
We will collaborate with communities and institutions to eliminate racial inequity in all areas of government, including education, criminal justice, environmental justice, health, housing, transportation, and economic success.

# How the bureau will embed equity

- The Water Bureau’s approach to advancing equity recognizes that:
- All individuals have individual needs.
  - People—both bureau employees and community members—are the bureau’s most important resource.
  - Within the context of serving excellent water every minute of every day, the bureau must create the conditions for all to reach their full potential and thrive.
  - The bureau focuses on race because race remains the biggest predictor of outcomes.
  - By focusing on race, the bureau is not ignoring the needs of people who may experience discrimination related to other identities. The bureau’s approach recognizes and addresses intersectionalities with many identities, including ability, gender, sexual orientation, class/income, religion, age, education, and language.
  - Different equity issues have different root causes, which require different solutions.

## CREATING AN ENVIRONMENT THAT ENABLES CHANGE

### Supporting personal journeys

Equity and anti-racism are core values of the City of Portland and the Portland Water Bureau. As such, all employees are expected to incorporate these values into their work. The bureau also provides tools and opportunities for employees to learn about how they can advance anti-racism in their personal lives. Creating a workplace culture that centers equity in decision-making requires creating a workforce of equity advocates. The bureau is committed to providing all employees with the resources and opportunities they need to center equity in all decisions. This plan articulates actions and objectives for staff, management, elected officials, and the community to inform or guide bureau operations, services, and programs.

### Alignment with the Strategic Plan and processes for change

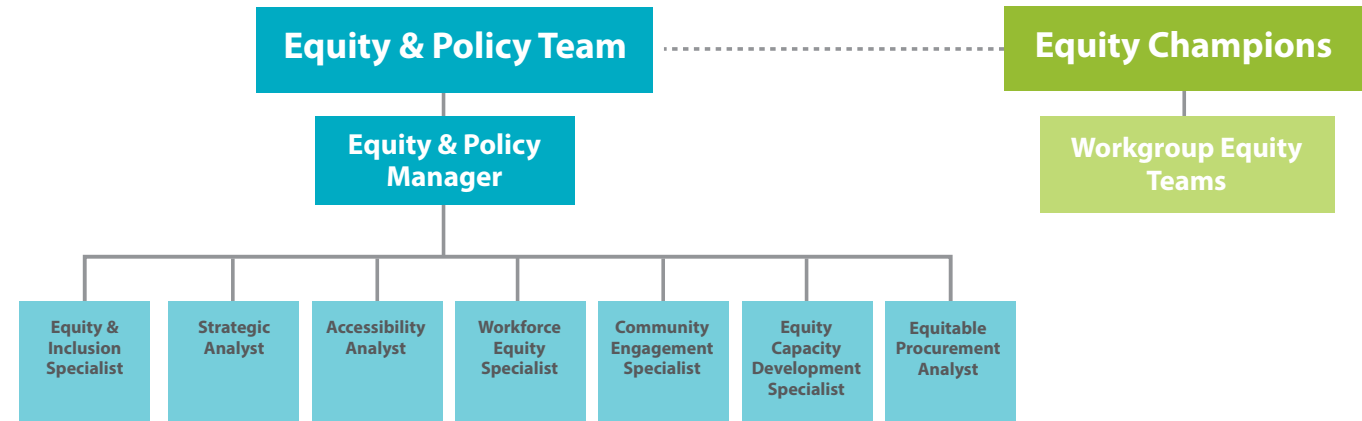
The bureau’s five-year Strategic Plan embeds equity throughout strategies and identifies strategies with high potential to advance equity. However, the Strategic Plan, by design, focuses on strategic risks and does not capture everything the bureau does. This plan expands on the equity-specific strategies in the Strategic Plan and establishes additional actions and objectives necessary to equitably achieve the bureau’s mission. These two foundational plans work in tandem and support one another.

Change requires more than words and commitment; it requires actions, priorities, resources, individual and collective responsibility, partnership, timelines, and leadership willingness. The bureau’s Strategic Plan process offers a streamlined approach of action plan steps to catalyze change around strategies. Because of its strong alignment with the Strategic Plan, this plan will adopt the same general process for moving from idea to action.



This plan follows the bureau’s Strategic Plan process for moving from idea to action.

NEW STRUCTURES TO FOSTER CULTURE CHANGE



Transition from Bureau Equity Committee to Equity Champions

From 2015 to 2020, the Bureau Equity Committee served a vital role. Without this group of employee volunteers, the bureau would not be where it is today in terms of making transformative changes that redress social injustice. Now that the bureau has dedicated equity staff, the Equity and Policy Team is reenvisioning the role employee equity champions can play in advancing the work. Learning from the experiences of committee members, other bureaus, and equity practitioners, the bureau will sunset the existing Bureau Equity Committee and create a new cohort of Equity Champions. The Equity Champions will form seven work group Equity Teams, which will advance this plan by:

- Serving as equity advocates in their respective work groups
- Providing equity expertise on work group-specific initiatives and projects
- Serving as liaisons between work groups and the Equity and Policy Team

The bureau will ensure adequate resources and time to develop the capacity of work group Equity Team members, so they can effectively fulfill their roles. The Equity Champions will launch in spring 2021 with proportional representation based on work group size. Staff members from the Equity and Policy Team will provide technical, administrative, and capacity development support to the Champions to promote their success. A charter for the Equity Champions has been developed, which outlines purpose and scope, membership, term lengths, time commitment, ground rules, and decision-making processes.

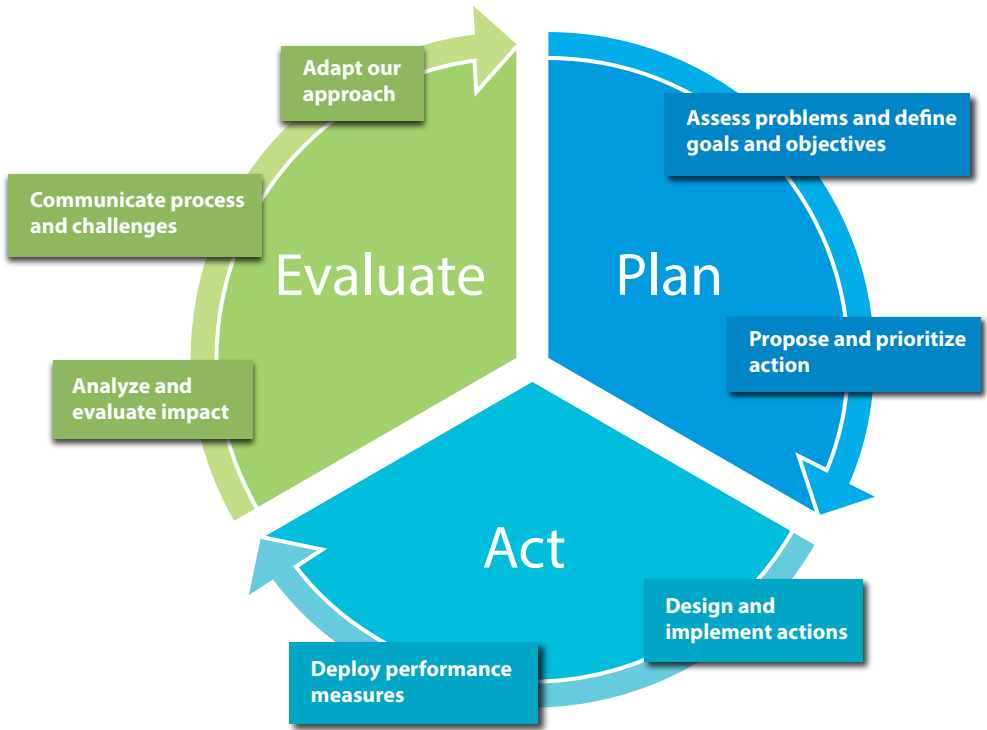
ADAPTIVE PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT

Plans should not be static documents. The bureau will revise and update this document annually. Over the coming two years, the bureau will focus on assessing current conditions, so it is able to design and implement informed actions. The Equity and Policy Team will use data and performance measures to analyze and evaluate impact. And, in the spirit of transparency and accountability, the Equity and Policy Team will continually communicate its current understanding so it can adapt priorities over time and refine its approaches.

Equity and Policy Team

The bureau recognizes that achieving equity requires intentionally examining policies and practices as well as reallocating resources. It also requires a commitment to collaboration and transparent communication among employees, teams, bureaus, and external partners. These broad requirements necessitate a permanent bureau structure that provides leadership and coordination in facilitating systemic change, accountability, and capacity development.

The bureau’s Equity and Policy Team is led by the Equity and Policy Manager, who over the coming years will build a team of experts with diverse skill sets to advance equity work with bureau teams and collaborate with external partners. The team will focus on eliminating disparity in policies, practices, processes, decisions, and resource allocations, as well as on influencing attitudes within the bureau that produce authority, access, opportunities, and measurable outcomes for the bureau workforce and community members. Additionally, the Equity and Policy Team will identify training needs, develop tools, and support bureau employees at all levels to incorporate equity into their work.





# What the bureau will do to create a culture that centers equity

An Equity Plan is a road map for the bureau. But, without reforming culture and structure, it will remain words on paper, another document on a shelf. Much like the bureau’s Strategic Plan, it must be adaptable and durable.

## Prioritizing actions

Because it would be impossible to act on everything at once, this plan identifies two-year priorities and five-year objectives.

## Tools for empowerment and action

To better understand the inequities that exist and to gauge if the bureau’s actions are effective at reducing them, this plan proposes various data-driven tools to be developed over the next two years and regularly updated thereafter. These tools include:

- **Equity-focused performance metrics** that measure if the bureau is implementing the plan’s necessary actions and if those actions are impacting outcomes. The metrics the bureau will focus on address the “Questions for the Data” in the Equity Goals and Outcomes table on page 16.
- **A Spatial Equity Index** to help the bureau better understand who is being served and where, by providing accessible map overlays that identify income levels, races and ethnicities, languages, and other demographics geographically.
- An online **Equity Library** that catalogs research-based best practices, guidelines, and resources to help program managers and managers and supervisors challenge their own thinking and better include, engage, and listen to employees and community members.

## ACCOUNTABILITY: TRACKING PROGRESS TO GUIDE DECISION-MAKING

The Equity and Policy Team commits to sharing and discussing progress made and lessons learned with the people directly impacted by equity work. It is the bureau’s goal to create:

- A publicly available **performance dashboard** that shows equity goals, implementation progress, and outcome impacts. This dashboard will use equity-focused performance metrics and will be updated quarterly.
- A publicly available **annual report** detailing progress made on goals, lessons learned, and next steps.
- Quarterly meetings with **Equity Champions** to receive qualitative feedback on experiences and needs, as well as recommendations on improvements for workforce outcomes.
- At least two **community meetings** per year to receive qualitative feedback on experiences and needs, as well as recommendations on improvements for community outcomes.

## Your role in advancing equity

Racism stops and equity starts with all of us, the bureau employees. This plan was created with the intention that all bureau employees will do their part to uproot racist policies and practices. Bureau employees do not need permission to embed equity into their work. **The Equity and Policy Team encourages all employees to educate themselves on equity and anti-racism, explore this plan, and identify actions and objectives they can implement.** The Equity and Policy Team is always available to support employees by providing guidance, coordination, and advice. Employees should not wait for others to do what they can do themselves. The bureau can only implement this plan successfully if all bureau employees do their part to center equity in everything they do.



## Workforce equity:

Creating the conditions for all Water Bureau employees to have access to the resources and opportunities they need to thrive, so their identities do not predict their employment outcomes.



# The five-year equity plan and two-year priority actions

To create this plan, the Equity and Policy Team drew from several sources:

- The bureau’s Strategic Plan Risk Management Strategies. Bureau employees, community members, and partner organizations identified strategic risks to the bureau, and teams of employees worked together to identify strategies to mitigate those risks.
- The Equity Planning Taskforce, which met over the course of several months to identify equity impacts and ideas within segments of the Strategic Plan.
- The Equity and Policy Team, which researched best practices and sought feedback on potential strategies.

Building on the five goals of the Strategic Plan, this plan establishes desired outcomes and identifies actions to catalyze change. For each goal, the plan catalogues five-year equity objectives and provides priority actions for the next two years. Performance metrics, in the form of an Equity Scorecard, will be developed to answer the Questions for the Data. Progress will be tracked through that Equity Scorecard, which will be updated quarterly; the information will also appear in an annual report. Focus groups, engagement surveys, and personal narratives will be used to gauge change in attitudes and impacts on our workforce and communities.

	Bureau equity goals	Desired outcomes	Questions for the data
Community service	<b>System reliability</b> Pursue infrastructure and system improvements that achieve equity outcomes and are aligned with the values and priorities of residents and stakeholders.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• BIPOC communities experience Water Bureau service levels comparable to those of White communities.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Are any demographic or geographic groups receiving water less consistently than others?</li><li>• Are any demographic or geographic groups receiving lower water quality than other groups?</li><li>• Are there certain demographic or geographic groups that the bureau will not be able to get water to, or get water to less easily, if infrastructure fails?</li></ul>
	<b>Community relationships</b> Advance partnerships, education, and communication to better engage residents and communities in ways that are inclusive, culturally responsive, and socially just.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• All bureau policies, programs, and projects are informed by the needs and perspectives of BIPOC communities. BIPOC communities believe that their input is respected, valued, and welcomed.</li><li>• Community members with disabilities and community members with limited English proficiency have access to the Water Bureau’s physical spaces, programming, customer service, and content.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Are any demographic or geographic groups not receiving or understanding the information they need to make their own decisions about water use?</li><li>• Are any demographic or geographic groups not being listened to or learned from?</li><li>• Are any demographic or geographic groups not receiving the same level of customer service as other groups?</li><li>• Are there any demographic or geographic groups not using as much tap water for drinking and cooking even though they have access to high-quality water (for instance, due to perception of water quality)?</li></ul>
Workplace culture	<b>Workforce and culture</b> Build a pro-equity organization and workplace culture for every employee, driven by a racially just and culturally responsive workforce at all levels.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Water Bureau personnel diversity reflects the diversity of the Portland community at all levels of the organization.</li><li>• BIPOC personnel, women, and employees with disabilities have comparable rates of advancement opportunities, mentorship, and tuition assistance as their White, male, nondisabled counterparts.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Are any demographic or geographic groups not applying/getting hired/staying on/being promoted, compared to other groups?</li><li>• Are any demographic or geographic groups growing less quickly in their careers than other groups?</li></ul>
	<b>Organizational processes</b> Ensure that the bureau’s projects, policies, practices, and budgets center equity values so that the bureau can address the water-related needs of Portland communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• All Water Bureau external projects have contract equity goals that provide opportunity and benefits to BIPOC and Disadvantaged, Minority-Owned, Women-Owned, Emerging Small Businesses and Service-Disabled Veterans Business Enterprises (DMWESB-SDVBE).</li><li>• Project and program equity goals include benefits to BIPOC communities and require early stakeholder involvement and engagement, and must focus on mitigating potential impacts to communities.</li><li>• The bureau’s financial health ensures affordability and sufficient resources to achieve desired equity outcomes.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Are any demographic or geographic groups more unable to pay for sewer/stormwater/water services without facing undue economic hardship than other groups?</li><li>• Are any demographic or geographic groups not benefitting, or benefitting less, from how the bureau spends money?</li><li>• Are any demographic or geographic groups experiencing greater impacts from projects (time until start, completion time, noise, traffic redirection)?</li></ul>
	<b>Accountability and leadership</b> Advance pro-equity practices and systems at all levels through accountable leadership and employees who are change agents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The Water Bureau improves continuously to ensure it achieves all its desired equity outcomes, as demonstrated by the bureau’s Equity Scorecard.</li><li>• Bureau leadership (Management Team, managers, and supervisors) is held accountable for achieving equity actions and outcomes assigned to them.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Are any demographic or work groups not given access to or not using equity resources?</li><li>• Are any demographic or work groups receiving less clear equity expectations? Are any demographic or work groups consistently unable to meet equity expectations?</li></ul>



## 2021–2022 Priority actions

Goal	Priority actions	Implementation measures
System reliability	Build an equity category into the Consequence Likelihood Evaluation Methodology (CLEM) process for asset management. CLEM is a decision-making system for prioritizing asset work and resources.	(Yes/No) Equity category built into the CLEM process
	Assess key service level (KSL) performance with demographic/geographic information to identify areas that receive a lower level of service, poorer water quality, or inadequate infrastructure due to historical circumstances.	% of KSLs that have a demographic or geographic disaggregation
Community relationships	Develop tools to increase the bureau's understanding of communities across the service area, focusing on assessing the water-related needs, priorities, and interests of underserved communities. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Equity Spatial Index, Equity Library</li> <li>Engagement with culturally specific groups</li> </ul>	(Yes/No) Equity Spatial Index developed (Yes/No) Equity Library developed # of focus groups with culturally specific groups % of focus groups that had a culturally specific focus
	Run a cost-benefit analysis for managing and performing shutoffs. Include an assessment of which communities are most likely to experience a shutoff.	(Yes/No) Cost-benefit analysis and shutoff assessment performed
	Develop and implement an external strategic communications plan that prioritizes cultural responsiveness and public trust.	(Yes/No) External strategic communications plan developed
Workforce and culture	Reform recruitment practices by removing accessibility barriers and creating processes that lead to the outcome of creating a workforce that reflects the diversity of the community.	% applicants of color at each step of the hiring process (minimum qualifications, interviews, final hire)
	Fund employee tuition, expand mentoring programs, offer paid time for professional development, and create clear pathways for promotion, focusing on underrepresented groups.	% of workforce that participated in employee tuition reimbursement, mentoring, or professional development programs (disaggregated by work group and race/ethnicity)
	Conduct an equity audit to better understand the barriers BIPOC employees face within the bureau.	(Yes/No) Equity audit conducted
Organizational processes	Develop and implement Equity Impact Assessments for capital planning and project design, as well as community engagement protocols, including considerations for partnerships, community needs assessments, community goals and benefits, and impact reduction and mitigation.	(Yes/No) Equity Impact Assessment template created (Yes/No) Community Engagement protocols created % Capital Planning projects that incorporate the Equity Impact Assessment
	Establish at least one equity-specific performance measure for each budget program.	% budget programs with an equity-specific performance measure
Accountability and leadership	Embed equity into manager/supervisor and team performance evaluations.	% of workforce that received a documented performance evaluation each year % of managers/supervisors that received a documented performance evaluation each year
	Develop a bureau diversity, equity, and inclusion curriculum and conduct continuous leadership- and employee-specific trainings.	(Yes/No) Curriculum developed % of workforce that attends at least one equity-specific training each year
	Establish protocols for reporting and managing acts of hate, harassment, and creating a hostile environment.	(Yes/No) Protocol developed and shared



System reliability

Pursue infrastructure and system improvements that achieve pro-equity outcomes and are aligned with the values and priorities of residents and stakeholders.

Categories	Five-year equity objectives		
Infrastructure and assets	<b>Asset construction, condition assessment, and replacement (maintenance):</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Build an equity category into the Consequence Likelihood Evaluation Methodology (CLEM) process for asset management (CLEM is a decision-making system for prioritizing asset work and resources).</li><li>• Minimize and mitigate project impacts, centering the needs of BIPOC businesses and residents.</li><li>• Prioritize contracting and procurement of goods to DMWESB-SDVBE (see Organizational Processes).</li><li>• Continuously assess how Title 21 affects gentrification.</li><li>• Collaborate on capital and asset planning with other bureaus to minimize impact on communities and price increases.</li></ul>	<b>Emergency management and resilience:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Partner with culturally specific organizations to expand preparedness capacity and distribute emergency preparedness equipment.</li><li>• Issue culturally specific preparedness kits to Water Bureau employees so they can report to work in case of region-wide emergencies.</li><li>• Update bureau Resilience Plan using a multicultural and equity lens.</li></ul>	<b>Smart utility and Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI):</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Adopt digital justice principles: access to information and technology, participatory decision-making, right to privacy, data consent, etc.</li><li>• Avoid worsening existing conditions: assess the needs of underserved and disadvantaged communities and center benefits on those groups.</li><li>• Research and develop a strategy to include multifamily households and commercial tenants in the benefits of AMI.</li></ul>
Water supply and quality	<b>System integrity, reliability, and regulatory compliance</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provide equitable water quality and service levels across geographies.</li><li>• Continue to minimize disruptions to water service.</li><li>• Assess regulatory water quality objectives as well as taste, color/clarity, odor, and pressure and reliability expectations by geography.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Overlay demographic information onto water service infrastructure information, such as age of infrastructure, frequency of maintenance issues, recognized water quality issues, performance metrics (such as response time, time to completed repair, etc.), and trends in regulatory compliance monitoring.</li></ul> <b>Delivery of services to community members living with low incomes or experiencing homelessness</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Expand access to potable water in public places throughout the city, ensuring ADA compliance with those facilities.</li></ul>	
Environmental health	<b>Climate change response</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provide culturally specific protective equipment for employees.</li><li>• Cease optional functions during extreme weather events.</li><li>• Provide alternative transportation options/more time/lodging for employees during adverse weather.</li><li>• Embed culturally specific needs in the bureau's Climate Action Plan and the Supply System Master Plan.</li><li>• Partner with community-based organizations to disseminate information and opportunities for climate adaptation.</li><li>• Manage energy use: monitor, offset, and reduce carbon emissions.<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Require all bureau capital projects to be carbon neutral.</li><li>– Purchase the most efficient fleet and reduce emissions from facilities.</li></ul></li></ul>	<b>Education and water conservation:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ensure historically underserved and underrepresented communities have access to water conservation strategies.</li><li>• Partner with culturally specific community-based organizations to expand access to water conservation strategies resources and opportunities.</li><li>• Prioritize access to culturally responsive and trauma-informed environmental education for BIPOC communities.</li></ul> <b>Green infrastructure:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provide signage for environmental and community heritage education.</li><li>• When possible, use projects to increase the aesthetic value of a neighborhood.</li><li>• When possible, provide access to recreation and open space.</li><li>• Design for multiple uses (landscaping, trails, art, murals, markers, etc.).</li></ul>	

**Anti-racism:**

Focused and sustained action, which includes intercultural, interfaith, multilingual, and inter-abled communities, with the intent to change a system or an institutional policy, practice, or procedure which has racist effects (definition from the Anti-Racism Digital Library).



Community relationships

Advance partnerships, education, and communication to better engage residents and communities in ways that are inclusive, culturally responsive, and socially just.

Categories	Five-year equity objectives	
Affordability	<b>Financial assistance programs</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Continuously determine the population's need for financial assistance, focusing on hard-to-reach groups (BIPOC communities, the elderly, people with limited English proficiency).</li><li>Determine eligibility using existing requirements from other sectors (such as electricity, natural gas, and telecommunications) or public assistance programs.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Adopt a suite of financial assistance tools to fit the needs of diverse populations, including accommodations for people living in units without individual meters.</li><li>Diversify funding sources: consider customer and employee voluntary contributions, donations from foundations and charities, and revenue streams from ads or leases.</li><li>Expand partnerships with culturally specific organizations to increase education about financial assistance, so that participation rates reflect the diversity of the city.</li></ul>
	<b>Demographic and language assessments</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Assess the demographics and socioeconomic contexts of communities across the service area.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Create an Equity Index tool to identify programmatic gaps and water needs by geography.</li></ul>
	<b>Culturally relevant and accessible communications</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Establish a Communications Advisory Group with internal and external members.</li><li>Create accessible materials: increase use of plain language and digital communications (written, audio, and video) for community members living with disabilities.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Expand language capabilities: hire more multilingual employees, establish a pay differential for multilingual employees, and adequately fund translation, interpretation, and digital accessibility services.</li><li>Use communications channels and modes that are accessible to underserved communities, focusing on communities with limited English proficiency and people living with disabilities.</li><li>Develop a community-informed Outreach and Community Engagement Manual for bureau personnel.</li></ul>
Accessibility and engagement	<b>Community-informed policies, programs, and projects</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Assess the bureau's current community engagement efforts and determine priorities to better center the needs of underserved communities.</li><li>Prioritize the bureau's public presence and reputation with BIPOC communities by continuing to attend community events and trainings, host forums, and sponsor events.</li><li>Connect engagement directly to decision-making and community needs, focusing on interests of underserved communities, including people living with disabilities:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Contract community-based and culturally specific organizations to seek input on projects, programs, and policies.</li></ul></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Build partnerships with trusted community leaders and institutions, including social service, faith-based, environmental justice, and community development organizations.</li><li>Create a Community Ambassadors Program for employees, establishing a policy with criteria and training requirements to enable employees to represent the bureau at community events.</li><li>Expand the bureau's use of the Community Engagement Liaisons program.</li></ul></li><li>Expand the use of digital tools, online communities, and engagement groups.</li><li>Use tools to gather and track community input, and report back to community.</li><li>Train all bureau employees interacting with communities on bureau engagement protocols, standard procedures, and best practices.</li></ul>
	<b>Shutoffs and debt collection</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Assess total annual resources expended for managing shutoffs and collections relative to resources recovered due to shutoffs.</li><li>Evaluate the impact of bad debt control (through shutoffs) on susceptible populations.</li></ul>	<b>Customer experience</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Increase bill payment options to meet the needs of all customers.</li><li>Create more self-service options: online requests, payment arrangements, options for self-service in multiple languages.</li><li>Provide culturally responsive service: hire or train appropriate staff to address the needs of customers from diverse backgrounds in a timely manner.</li></ul>
	<b>Customer service</b>	
Community economic development	<b>Community workforce development</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Increase and track contractors' use of work hours by minority and female apprentices, and minority and female journey-level workers in construction projects (as stated in the City's Community Benefits Agreement and Community Equity and Inclusion Plan).</li></ul>	<b>Contracting and procurement</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Increase prioritization of contracting and procurement of goods to minority-owned, women-owned, and disadvantaged businesses (DMWESB-SDVBE) (see Organizational processes for more detail).</li></ul>

Workforce and culture

Build a pro-equity organization and workplace culture for every employee, driven by a racially just and culturally responsive workforce at all levels.

Categories	Five-year equity objectives	
Access	<b>Equitable recruitment</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Set goals for the bureau’s personnel to reflect the diversity of Portland at all levels of the organization. Clearly communicate these goals to hiring managers.</li><li>Develop a Water Bureau Recruitment Handbook that outlines desired practices and actions: clear position descriptions, hiring manager trainings, internal vs. external recruitments, outreach and marketing, interview panels with community members, diversity expectations.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Invest resources in creating a pipeline of diverse candidates in the field:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Offer paid internships and career exploration opportunities.</li><li>Partner with local community colleges or trade schools to align workforce development with utility job skill needs.</li><li>Support STEM education in schools and offer culturally responsive education programming, focusing on underrepresented communities.</li></ul></li><li>For people living with disabilities, expand employment opportunities by implementing the Access to Work Program and lowering barriers to applicants.</li></ul>
	<b>Accommodations</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Expand flexible schedules and telecommuting options, focusing on accommodating individual needs, particularly those of people living with disabilities.<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Classify positions into three categories: 100% field/office, 100% remote, or hybrid (any combination of the other categories).</li></ul></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Offer employees more options to work alternate work schedules (weekends, nights, or alternate hours) to accommodate individual needs.</li><li>Offer part-time schedules.</li><li>Create conditions for all employees with disabilities to request accommodations they need to thrive at work.</li><li>Empower members of the bureau’s work group Equity Teams to meaningfully serve as equity champions, provide expertise, and serve as liaisons with the Equity and Policy Team.</li></ul>
Culture and workforce development	<b>Inclusive and high-performing culture</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Create a bureau policy mandating all employees to have a personal annual work plan with expected equity outcomes.</li><li>Embed the bureau’s values and paid time for professional development into team and individual work plans.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Establish funds, scholarships, and stipends for paid time for professional development trainings, degrees and certifications, or tuition assistance, focusing on underrepresented employee groups.</li><li>Explore creating a program of paid time for employees to volunteer in equitable community development projects that advance the bureau’s mission.</li></ul>
	<b>Leadership development</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Create clear pathways for promotion through classification ladders, manager and supervisor trainings, and formal mentorship programs.</li><li>Create a purposeful leadership development process to increase representation among, and address the needs of, underrepresented groups.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Identify BIPOC employees with leadership aspirations and support them to participate in the City’s Leadership Engagement and Development program.</li><li>Establish executive-level expectation to prioritize the advancement into leadership roles of BIPOC, women, gender nonconforming people, and people living with disabilities.</li></ul>
	<b>Cross-group learning opportunities</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Devote more resources to onboarding and center equity throughout.</li><li>Expand opportunities, and remove participation barriers, for exploring bureau career opportunities, such as the Job Shadow and SOAKED programs, focusing on underrepresented employee groups.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Empower bureau Training and Development Officer to conduct program audits, review and redevelop curricula centering cultural competence, and establish participation expectations from work groups.</li><li>Create a Workforce Equity position to lead efforts that promote employee happiness and well-being: onboarding, accommodations, coaching, reporting and troubleshooting issues, facilitating access to resources and opportunities.</li></ul>
	<b>Employee engagement</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>When this plan is launched, hire consultants to conduct a baseline equity audit. Contract with the consultants to conduct the audit every other year thereafter to track progress on employee attitudes.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Expand internal communications capacity to improve sharing of opportunities and access to knowledge, centering the needs of underrepresented employees.</li><li>Conduct employee engagement survey upon the launch of this plan to establish a baseline on work meaning, autonomy, growth, impact, and connection (MAGIC). Repeat surveys at least every other year.</li></ul>



Organizational processes

Ensure projects, policies, practices, and budgets center equity values so that the bureau addresses the water-related needs of Portland communities.

Categories	Five-year equity objectives		
Project development and delivery	<div><b>Capital planning, design, and construction—focus on underserved communities</b><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Develop capital project Equity Impact Assessments for planning, design, and construction.</li><li>• Engage underserved communities in planning: goals, needs, benefits. Include equity in the values-based approach to project planning.</li><li>• Explicitly address community needs through project benefits in compliance with existing rules, guidelines, and regulations.</li></ul></div>	<div><b>Efficient and effective engineering (E3)</b><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Establish equity goals within E3 for the lifespan of each project (scoping, design, implementation, operation).</li><li>• Improve collaboration and outreach by including impacted communities in E3 process, from project selection to project delivery.</li></ul></div>	<div><b>Contracting, procurement, and project management</b><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Develop a bureau-specific policy to prioritize contracting and procurement of goods from DMWESB-SDVBE vendors. Consider a range of strategies:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Increase preference points in bid selection.</li><li>– Promote applicable contracts as a small business set-aside.</li><li>– Separate scope into smaller bids and identify elements appropriate for smaller firms.</li><li>– Market outreach and capacity-building workshops offered by the City for potential small-bid contracting opportunities.</li><li>– Share appropriate solicitations with DMWESB-SDVBE vendors.</li><li>– Continue mentorship through the City Prime Contractor Development Program to help grow and develop opportunities for contractors and service providers.</li></ul></li><li>• Establish DMWESB-SDVBE targets above those established by the City to improve involvement from BIPOC and women-owned businesses at all levels of the labor force in firms.</li><li>• Develop and implement a bureau-specific project manager training curriculum with an equity focus, centering the needs of BIPOC communities.</li><li>• Establish standard operating procedures for equity-specific project actions, including community-led project evaluations.</li></ul></div>
Standards of practice	<div><b>Key service levels (KSLs)</b><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Create a diverse taskforce to evaluate, standardize, establish, and update KSLs for relevance and impact. Use an equity framework and equity-based data analysis.</li></ul></div>		
Financial health	<div><b>Budgeting and performance measures</b><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Establish at least one equity-specific performance measure for each budget program.</li><li>• During the budgeting process, prioritize funding for objectives that advance an equitable achievement of the bureau’s mission.</li></ul></div>		
	<div><b>Combined sewer/stormwater/water bill (rates)</b><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Assess affordability using industry standards that use household burden and poverty prevalence measures.</li></ul></div>		

**Disadvantaged communities:**

Communities that do not have the same access to services as others in the area, due to lower incomes, less education, language and cultural barriers, or racial discrimination. These communities may need different considerations to achieve equitable outcomes (definition from the American Water Works Association).

**Community-based organization:**

A public or private nonprofit organization that is representative of a community or a significant segment of a community and works to meet the specific needs of that community (definition from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services).

Accountability and leadership

Advance pro-equity practices and systems at all levels through accountable leadership and employees who are change agents.

Categories	Five-year equity objectives
Values	<div><b>Performance management</b><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Partner with the Bureau of Human Resources to develop equity guidelines for employee performance evaluations.</li><li>Establish equity expectations for each employee during performance evaluations. Evaluate employees on their equity performance during their annual reviews.</li><li>For hiring managers, establish the expectation that they will work toward building teams that reflect the diversity of Portland.</li></ul></div>
Capacity development	<div><b>Equity curriculum and trainings</b><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Leadership:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Develop an equity leadership curriculum and train all bureau managers and supervisors on best practices, including recruitment, managing a diverse team and an inclusive workplace, cultural competence, and employee well-being.</li></ul></li><li>Employees:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Develop and train employees on a diversity, equity, and inclusion curriculum focusing on cultural competence, community engagement, maintaining an inclusive workplace, trauma-informed services, culturally specific programming, etc.</li></ul></li></ul></div> <div><b>Assessment</b><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Continuously assess personnel equity literacy and cultural competence through the employee engagement survey, focus groups, and employee interviews.</li></ul></div>
Decision-making	<div><b>Conflict management</b><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Develop a bureau conflict resolution process.</li><li>Establish protocols for reporting and responding to hate, harassment, and hostile environments.</li><li>Minimize conflict by developing awareness across work groups as well as tools and standard practices reflective of diverse perspectives.</li></ul></div> <div><b>Participatory decision-making</b><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Research and adopt models of effective shared governance, such as decision-making committees and participatory budgeting.</li><li>Identify groups and teams that lack diversity and create stakeholders from underrepresented groups to provide advice on decisions that affect employee or community well-being.</li><li>Train a representative group of bureau employees on how to facilitate participatory decision-making processes.</li></ul></div> <div><b>Transparency</b><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Adopt a bureau standard process for transparent decision-making.</li></ul></div>



### Underrepresented communities:

A subset of a population that holds a smaller percentage within a group than it holds in the general population. In the Water Bureau, BIPOC communities, people with disabilities, and women are underrepresented.



## Want to know more about the Equity Plan?

Here are [plans for implementation and updates](#).

You'll find a lot of information [about the Water Bureau](#) on our website.

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### Central Information

503-823-7404

### Water Quality

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### Customer Service

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