



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.

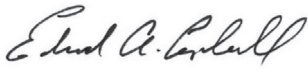
The bureau’s leadership is committed to continuously addressing equity and racism and creating an inclusive environment where all employees are safe, regardless of their identity. We value the diversity of our workforce and the communities we serve. We stand firmly against hate, bigotry, and prejudice.

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. It will purposefully strive to identify, discuss, and challenge issues of race, color, and ethnicity and the impacts they have on employees and community members.

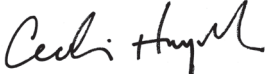
As bureau leaders, we hereby commit to focusing equity in all of our decisions, actively implementing the objectives and actions identified in this plan, and committing the resources necessary to uproot policies and practices that perpetuate inequities and systemic racism.



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Letter from Commissioner Mingus Mapps

Dear colleagues, customers, and community members,

This document serves as a road map to our commitment to a fair, just, and equitable water delivery system. It also serves as a way to hold ourselves accountable to the commitment to remove barriers and dismantle systems that have failed Portland’s most vulnerable communities. Access to clean, affordable, and safe water is our priority. We aim to provide that water with the best customer service centering empathy and trust.

How we deliver water is as important as the water coming out of our faucets. This plan highlights actions we will take to improve our water delivery, like having somebody answering customer questions in their native language. Increasing our hiring of multilingual speakers is important to ensure all Portlanders can easily understand their water bill and to feel safe drinking the water when emergency messaging is occurring. In passing the language pay differential in 2020, Portland City Council not only agreed that we need more multilingual staff but agreed that we should have a premium pay for hiring with that skillset. This is a critical tool to use in achieving the goals set forth in this document.



Commissioner Mingus Mapps



Equity:

Creating the conditions for all to have access to the resources and opportunities they need to thrive, so people's identities are not a contributing factor in their life 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 Portland 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 community members 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 community members. 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.

Why the bureau uses equity as a guiding principle

Portland is a wonderful place to call home for many of its community members. 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 Portlanders, though, the city does not offer access to the opportunities and resources they need to thrive. Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian, Pacific Islander, and Multiracial communities in Portland experience worse outcomes than their White counterparts in almost every dimension, including education, health, income, housing, employment, and incarceration. These communities have been, and continue to be, underserved by governments. **Equity is about creating the conditions for all to have access to the resources and opportunities they need to thrive, so people’s identities are not a contributing factor in their life 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.

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, focus on equity and anti-racism. In 2020, the Portland Water Bureau published its first Plan to Advance Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion. In 2020, City Council adopted Disability Equity Goals as binding City policy.

Using equity as a guiding principle means focusing on the needs of community members who have been historically underserved and underrepresented; in Portland, these community members are overwhelmingly Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian, Pacific Islander, Multiracial, 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.

Regulatory compliance

Equity is a moral imperative, an economic imperative, and a legal imperative. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 stipulates that “No person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.” The City of Portland and the Water Bureau receive federal funds for various purposes, including the Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (WIFIA) loan the bureau is using to finance the Bull Run Watershed Filtration Project. Bureau policies, programs, services, activities, and plans must not discriminate on the basis of race, color, or national origin.

Because national origin is a protected characteristic, Title VI also prohibits language-based discrimination. This lays a solid foundation for our bureau’s language access efforts and creates a legal imperative to lay alongside the moral imperative to provide language access.

Additionally, Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act prohibits disability-based discrimination in services, programs, and activities provided by state and local government entities. Standards for enacting the Americans with Disabilities Act direct all government entities to create and maintain a five-year transition plan for removing barriers to services, programs, and activities. Our efforts to comply with and exceed the letter and spirit of these regulations are reflected in this plan.



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.
- The City of Portland, and the Water Bureau with it, exist to serve our communities. To achieve equitable outcomes and uphold the standards of good governance, we must partner with communities and create opportunities for community members to inform and shape our efforts.
- 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 identity for which a person will most likely experience discrimination. Therefore, Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian, Pacific Islander, and Multiracial peoples are more likely to experience negative outcomes than White people do in almost every dimension, from education to healthcare, from political representation to wealth.
- 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

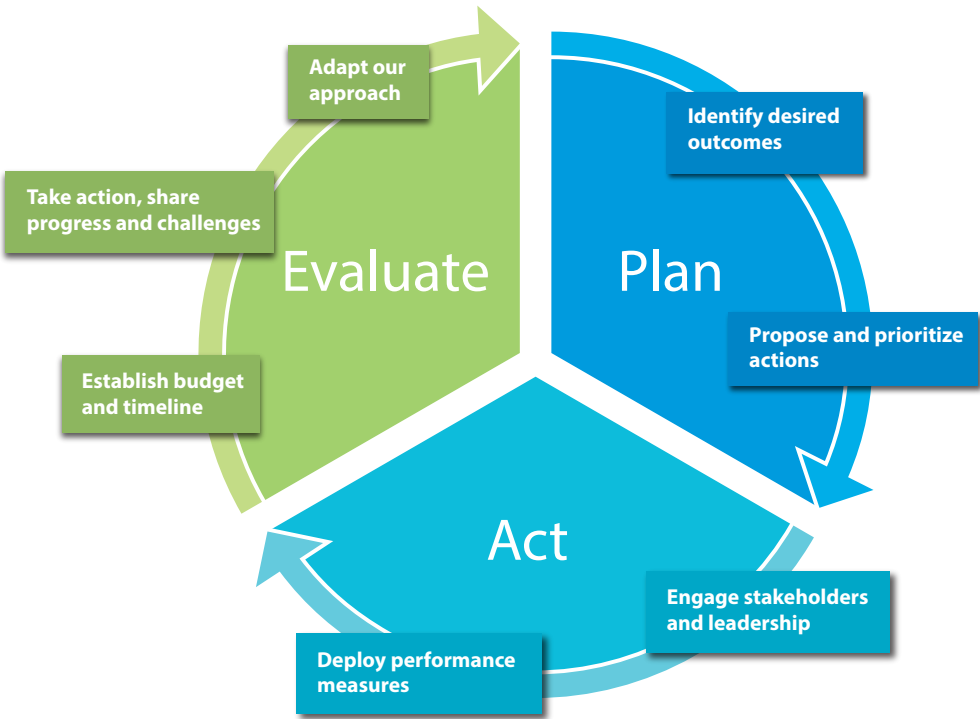
Supporting personal journeys

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 in their work. The bureau will provide an Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion learning curriculum and a set of core competencies connected to training opportunities available to all employees. The bureau will foster an environment of life-long learning where employees understand how they can advance anti-racism in their personal and professional 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. The Strategic Plan, by design, focuses on strategic risks and does not capture everything the bureau does. The Plan to Advance Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion 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 similar general processes for moving from idea to action.



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

STRUCTURES TO FOSTER CULTURE CHANGE

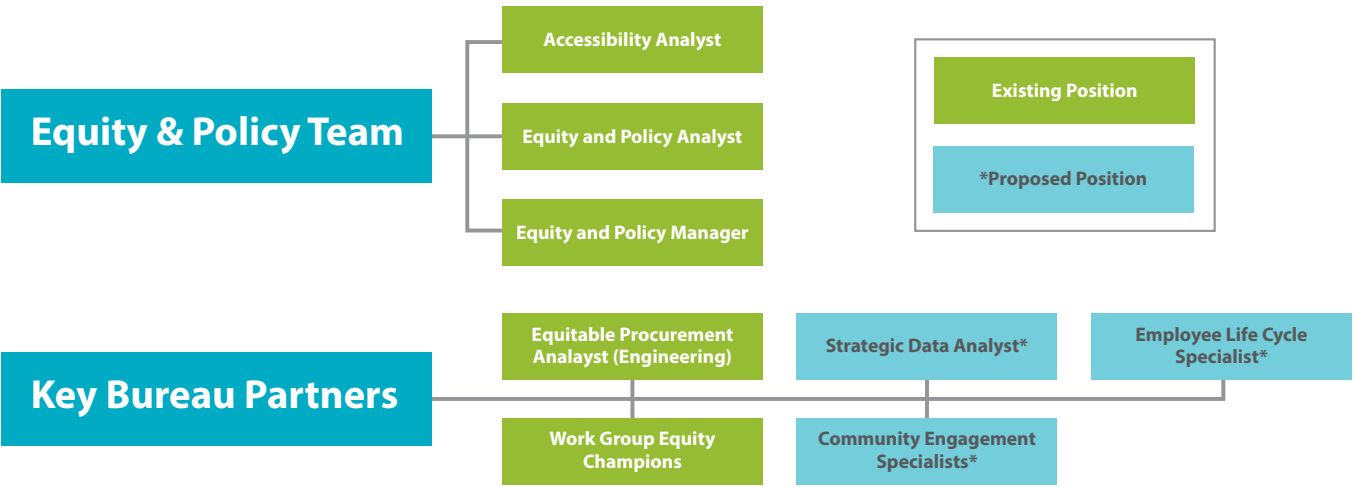
- **Equity and Policy Team:** A group that will advance equity in all bureau decisions. Members of this team work full time in this area. The team may include the following positions: Equity and Policy Manager, Strategic Data Analyst, Equity and Policy Analyst, Accessibility Analyst, Employee Life Cycle Specialist, Community Engagement Specialist(s), and Equitable Procurement Analyst. Not all positions may report to the Equity and Policy Manager.
- **Work group Equity Champions:** Employees from each work group who will advance equity within that work group as part of their job functions.

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.

Proposed capacities to advance equity in the bureau



Transition from Bureau Equity Committee to Equity Champions

Learning from the experiences of former Equity Committee members, other bureaus, and equity practitioners, the bureau has sunsetted the existing Bureau Equity Committee and will create a new cohort of Equity Champions. The Equity Champions will help implement this plan by:

- Participating in bureau-provided trainings to increase their knowledge about equity
- Developing and implementing work group–specific equity action plans
- 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 provide adequate resources and time to develop the capacity of work group Equity Team members, so they can effectively fulfill their roles. Staff members from the Equity and Policy Team will provide technical, administrative, and capacity development support to the Champions to promote their success.

ADAPTIVE PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT

This plan is a living document, and as such it will be revised for relevance 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. Actions in this plan don’t have to be completed in the five-year span. The bureau’s goal is to at least start the efforts so they can mature over time.

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

This plan identifies actions to be prioritized in the 2021 and 2022 fiscal years.

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.
- An **Equity Data Toolkit** 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, discussion guides, and learning resources to help managers, supervisors, and staff grow their understanding of equity, diversity, and inclusion topics.

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 **annual report** detailing progress made on goals, lessons learned, and next steps.
- 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.
- 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.

About this document and how to use it

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.
- Focus group with 25 members of culturally specific communities. Participants were part of the Community Engagement Liaison (CEL) program.
- 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, each section of this plan includes:

- An equity definition for the goal
- Desired outcomes from an equity perspective
- Questions for the data to inform decision-making and track progress toward desired outcomes
- Actions organized into categories, along with their timing for implementation and the proposed lead team or work group

The Equity and Policy Team will work to develop an equity dashboard with relevant performance metrics to track progress over time. The bureau will produce an annual Equity Achievements Report to share accomplishments across the bureau.

Your role in advancing equity

Racism stops and equity starts with all of us, the bureau’s employees. This plan was created with the intention that all bureau employees will do their part to uproot inequitable policies and practices. Bureau employees do not need permission to embed equity in 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 start equity work. The bureau can only implement this plan successfully if all bureau employees do their part to center equity in everything they do.

Teams are encouraged to incorporate actions from this plan into their workflows and procedures, as well as to make all necessary resource requests to achieve the actions. Likewise, all employees are encouraged to incorporate actions from this plan as part of their equity and anti-racism performance objectives.



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 are not a contributing factor in their employment outcomes.

System reliability

Equity goal

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

Desired outcome

All Portland residents experience comparable Water Bureau service levels regardless of their race, ethnicity, or disability status.

Questions for the data

- Are any demographic or geographic groups receiving water less consistently than others?
- Are any demographic or geographic groups receiving lower water quality than other groups?
- 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?

Actions	Timing	Lead
Asset management, reliability, engineering planning, and construction		
1. Incorporate equity into the Consequence Likelihood Evaluation Methodology (CLEM) process for asset management using the bureau's Equity Data Toolkit. (CLEM is a decision-making system for prioritizing asset work and resources.)	2021–2022	Asset management team
2. Assess existing service level performance measures with demographic/geographic information from the Equity Data Toolkit.	2021–2022	Asset management team
3. Identify opportunities to collaborate with other bureaus on capital and asset planning to minimize impact on communities and to maintain affordability.	2021–2025	Engineering design team
4. Consider equity implications of infrastructure design and location policies by incorporating equity criteria into the development of project business cases and planning studies.	2021–2025	Engineering planning team
5. Implement the bureau's ADA Transition Plan.	2021–2025	Equity and policy team
Emergency management and resilience		
6. Partner with the Regional Water Providers Consortium and culturally specific organizations to support communities' efforts to prepare for emergencies.	2021–2025	Communications team, Emergency management team
7. Adopt emergency management communications best practices that include communication accessible to multilingual and disability communities. Develop a bureau guidance document.	2021–2025	Communications team, Equity and policy team

8. Identify bureau technology needs for providing equitable and accessible communications during emergencies, with specific consideration for multilingual and disability communities.	2021–2025	Communications team
9. Update bureau's Emergency Operations Plan & Seismic Implementation Plan using a multicultural and equity lens.	2021–2025	Emergency management team and planning section
Technology, smart utility, and advanced metering infrastructure (AMI)		
10. Adopt digital justice principles: access to information and technology, participatory decision-making, right to privacy, data consent, etc.	2023–2025	Customer service group
11. Use AMI technology, in conjunction with a multilingual, accessible, customer portal, to enhance the bureau's ability to make data-driven decisions, improve access to information, and provide enhanced services to customers.	2023–2025	Customer service group
Climate change and extreme weather		
12. Embed culturally specific needs into implementation of the Supply System Master Plan and the bureau's adaptive planning and climate adaptation work, as well as embedding these needs into development of the Distribution System Master Plan.	2021–2025	Operations group
13. Develop a bureau-wide standard operating procedure for worker protection during extreme heat and wildfire smoke.	2021–2025	Bureau safety team/ climate scoping team
14. Reduce bureau operational carbon emissions 50% by 2030 and increase use of direct renewable energy sources to help mitigate future harms to underserved and other vulnerable communities who are disproportionately impacted by climate change and extreme weather.	2021–2025	Office of the Bureau Director
Education and water conservation		
15. Partner with community-based organizations to expand access to water conservation strategies, resources, and opportunities for underserved, low-income, and disability community members.	2021–2025	Water efficiency team
16. Expand education opportunities about the Water Bureau and its programs for underserved communities, prioritizing culturally responsive and trauma-informed programming.	2021–2025	Water resource education team

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

Equity goal

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

Desired outcomes

- All bureau policies, programs, and projects are informed by the needs and perspectives of Portland’s diverse communities. Underserved communities believe that their input is respected, valued, and welcomed.
- Community engagement is genuine, transparent, and continuous. Our decision-making processes happen with community members, and their feedback is incorporated.
- 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.

Questions for the data

- Are any demographic or geographic groups not receiving or understanding the information they need to make their own decisions about water use?
- Are any demographic or geographic groups not being listened to or learned from?
- Are any demographic or geographic groups not receiving the same level of customer service as other groups?
- Are there any demographic or geographic groups not using as much Portland water for drinking and cooking, even though they have access to high-quality water? For instance, are there groups that use less tap water because of a negative perception of water quality?

Actions	Timing	Lead
Demographic and language assessments		
17. 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: Equity Data Toolkit, Equity Library, etc.	2021–2022	Equity and policy team
Financial assistance programs		
18. Determine the population’s need for financial assistance annually using household burden and poverty prevalence, focusing on hard-to-reach groups (underserved communities, older adults, people with disabilities, people with limited English proficiency, people who are houseless).	2023–2025	Financial assistance team
19. Adopt a suite of financial assistance tools to fit the needs of diverse populations, including accommodations for people living in units without individual meters.	2021–2025	Financial assistance team

20. Identify and reduce barriers to participation in financial assistance efforts. Consider matching eligibility requirements to other utility programs, or categorical eligibility for existing programs. Collaborate with Housing, PBOT, and other City bureaus to assess the potential to establish a common application for City services.	2023–2025	Financial assistance team
21. Review existing structure of bill discount program to ensure equitable distribution of discount across household sizes.	2024–2025	Financial assistance team
22. Expand mechanisms for reaching people to strategically include places and organizations that serve people who need financial assistance, as well as places where people meet basic needs (e.g., grocery stores, faith-based places, schools, and employment offices).	2021–2025	Financial assistance team
Shutoffs and debt collection		
23. Run a cost-benefit analysis for managing and performing shutoffs. Include an assessment of which communities are most likely to experience a shutoff.	2023–2025	Customer service analysis team
24. Evaluate the impact of debt control (through shutoffs) on susceptible populations.	2023–2025	Customer service analysis team
Customer experience		
25. Create more self-service options: bill payment options, online requests, payment arrangements, options for self-service in multiple languages.	2023–2025	Customer information systems team
26. Provide culturally responsive service: hire or train appropriate staff to address the needs of customers from diverse backgrounds in a timely manner.	2021–2025	Customer service group
Culturally relevant and accessible communications		
27. Develop policy, including standards, for language and disability accessibility in all bureau communications: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Advance communications and outreach staff capacity on accessible and culturally relevant communications and outreach best practices, including translation and interpretation, and incorporate practices into daily work.• Incorporate standards into existing communications review processes.• Assess where additional capacity may be needed, including externally for material review.• Expand the bureau’s provision of proactive disability and language access, including translated and interpreted materials, digitally accessibility materials, and captioned and audio-described materials. Incorporate accessibility checklist into Communications Review Process and update checklist quarterly.	2021–2025	Administration group

28. Expand language capabilities: hire more multilingual employees, establish a pay differential for multilingual employees, and adequately fund translation, interpretation, and digital accessibility services.	2021–2025	All groups
29. Use communications channels and modes that are accessible to underserved communities, focusing on communities with limited English proficiency and people living with disabilities.	2021–2025	Communications team
30. Expand current telephone and web systems to increase accessibility to multilingual and disability communities.	2022–2025	Customer information systems team
31. Incorporate disability and language accessibility into bureau emergency communication and response plans. This will involve emergency processes, protocols, and, if necessary, policies.	2021–2025	Communications team
Community partnership and engagement		
32. Develop and implement a Community Partnership and Engagement Strategy that prioritizes cultural responsiveness and public trust.	2021–2022	Equity and policy team
33. Provide tools for staff to build community partnerships and engage with communities in ways that are authentic, transparent, and have built-in accountability mechanisms.	2023–2024	Equity and policy team
34. Connect engagement directly to decision-making and community needs, focusing on interests of underserved and low-income communities, including people with disabilities: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Build partnerships and contract community-based and culturally specific organizations to seek input on projects, programs, and policies.• Prioritize partnership mechanisms that will support sustainable, long-term relationships and partnerships that extend beyond a single project or contract.• Create a Community Ambassadors Program for employees, establishing a policy with criteria and training opportunities to enable employees to represent the bureau at community events.• Expand the bureau’s use of the Community Engagement Liaison program, as well as other community liaison mechanisms.• Expand opportunities for synchronous and asynchronous feedback, including social media, hotlines, and surveys in community-centered locations with staff support.	2021–2025	All groups
35. Develop digital relationships with community and culturally specific organizations to amplify bureau’s emergency communications to their respective networks. Use tools to gather and track community input, and report back to community.	2021–2025	Communications team
36. Identify staff capacity to conduct cross-bureau community partnership and engagement efforts.	2021–2025	Equity and policy team
37. Support the development and implementation of a Citywide policy for paying community members who provide advice and expertise to advance the bureau’s mission.	2021–2023	Equity and policy team

Workforce and culture

Equity goal

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

Desired outcome

- Water Bureau personnel diversity continuously reflects the diversity of the Portland community at all levels of the organization.
- Personnel from underrepresented racial and ethnic groups, women, and employees with disabilities have comparable rates of advancement opportunities, mentorship, and tuition assistance as their White, male, nondisabled counterparts.

Questions for the data

- Are any demographic or geographic groups not applying/getting hired/staying on/being promoted, compared to other groups?
- Are any demographic or geographic groups growing less quickly in their careers than other groups?

Actions	Timing	Lead
Equitable recruitment practices		
38. Set goals for the bureau’s personnel to continuously reflect the diversity of Portland at all levels of the organization. Clearly communicate these goals to hiring managers.	2021–2022	Office of the Bureau Director
39. Develop a Water Bureau recruitment digital 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.	2021–2022	Equity and policy team
40. Invest resources in creating a pipeline of diverse candidates in the field: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Create a pre-apprenticeship program at Maintenance and Construction focused on attracting candidates from underrepresented racial and ethnic groups, people with disabilities, and women.• Offer paid internships and career exploration opportunities.• Partner with local community colleges or trade schools to align workforce development with utility job skill needs.• Partner with local organizations dedicated to connecting individuals from underrepresented racial and ethnic groups to meaningful training and professional experience in water utility-related career fields.• Expose students to STEM and water utility career skills by offering culturally responsive education programming in schools, prioritizing underrepresented communities.	2021–2025	All groups

41. For people living with disabilities, expand employment opportunities by implementing the Access to Work Program and lowering application barriers.	2021–2025	Equity and policy team
Accommodations		
42. Expand options for flexible work arrangements, considering equity perspectives and the needs of employees with disabilities to request accommodations they need to thrive at work.	2021–2025	All groups
43. Deepen employee understanding of the protections of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), including disability definitions and accommodations employees may request.	2021–2025	Equity and policy team
44. Establish work group Equity Champion teams and empower members to learn, advise, challenge, and serve as liaisons with the Equity and Policy Team.	2021–2022	Equity and policy team
Inclusive and high-performing culture		
45. Establish a career advancement program to empower and train current bureau field workers to fill positions in professional, administrative, or technical classifications in other bureau groups.	2021–2025	Maintenance and construction
46. Create bureau guidelines for all employees to have a personal performance objective with equity outcomes within the confines of labor agreement contracts.	2021–2025	Office of the Bureau Director
47. Embed the bureau’s values and paid time for professional development into team and individual work plans.	2021–2025	All groups
48. Fund employee tuition, expand mentoring programs, offer paid time for professional development, and create clear pathways for promotion, focusing on underrepresented groups.	2021–2022	All groups
49. Explore creating a program of paid time for employees to volunteer in equitable community development projects that advance the bureau’s mission.	2021–2025	Equity and policy team
Leadership and career development		
50. Create clear pathways for promotion through classification ladders, manager and supervisor trainings, and formal mentorship programs.	2021–2025	Payroll team
51. Create a purposeful leadership development process to increase representation among, and address the needs of, underrepresented groups.	2021–2025	Administration group
52. Identify employees with leadership aspirations and support those employees’ participation in the City’s Leadership Engagement and Development program.	2021–2025	All groups

53. As bureau leaders, prioritize the advancement of employees from underrepresented racial and ethnic groups, people with disabilities, and women into leadership roles.	2021–2025	All groups
Cross-group learning opportunities		
54. Devote more resources to onboarding and center equity throughout.	2021–2025	Training and development officer
55. Expand opportunities and remove participation barriers for exploring bureau career opportunities, such as the Job Shadow and SOAKED programs, focusing on underrepresented employee groups.	2021–2025	Training and development officer
56. Create an Employee Life Cycle Coordinator position to lead efforts that promote well-being: onboarding, accommodations, coaching, reporting, and troubleshooting issues, facilitating access to resources and opportunities, exit interviews, etc.	2021–2025	Payroll team
57. Expand internal communications resources and expectations to improve sharing of opportunities and access to knowledge, focusing on the needs of underrepresented employees.	2021–2025	Administration group
Employee engagement		
58. Conduct a biennial, equity-focused, employee engagement survey (including focus groups and employee interviews) to understand employees’ attitudes towards their jobs, coworkers, supervisors/managers, and the bureau, as well as to assess personnel equity literacy and cultural competence.	2021–2022	Equity and policy team

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).

Organizational processes

Equity goal

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

Desired outcomes

- All Water Bureau external projects have contract equity goals that provide opportunity and benefits to businesses owned by underrepresented racial and ethnic groups and those registered under Oregon’s Certification Office for Business Inclusion and Diversity (COBID).
- Project and program equity goals include benefits to underserved communities and require early stakeholder involvement and engagement, and focus on mitigating potential impacts to communities.
- The bureau’s financial health ensures affordability and sufficient resources to achieve desired equity outcomes.

Questions for the data

- Are any demographic or geographic groups less able to pay for sewer/stormwater/water services without facing undue economic hardship than other groups?
- Are any demographic or geographic groups not benefitting, or benefitting less, from how the bureau spends money?
- Are any demographic or geographic groups experiencing greater impacts from projects (time until start, completion time, noise, traffic redirection)?
- Do certain groups use less tap water because of a negative perception of water quality?

Actions	Timing	Lead
Capital planning, design, and construction—focus on underserved communities		
59. Develop capital project Equity Impact Assessments for planning, design, and construction.	2021–2022	Engineering services group
60. Engage underserved communities in programmatic planning: goals, needs, benefits. Include equity in the values-based approach to program planning.	2021–2025	Engineering services and communications team

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 US Department of Health and Human Services).

Contracting, procurement, and project management		
61. Develop a strategy to increase contracting and procurement of goods and services from underrepresented racial and ethnic groups, people with disabilities, women, and COBID-certified vendors. Consider a range of strategies: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increase preference points in bid selection.• Promote applicable contracts as a small business set-aside.• Separate scope into smaller bids and identify elements appropriate for smaller firms.• Market outreach and capacity-building workshops offered by the City for potential small-bid contracting opportunities.• Share appropriate solicitations with disadvantaged vendors.• Continue mentorship through the City Prime Contractor Development Program to help grow and develop opportunities for contractors and service providers.	2021–2025	Engineering management team and program owners Maintenance and construction
Key service levels		
62. Create a diverse taskforce to evaluate, standardize, update, or create service levels for relevance and impact. Use an equity framework and equity-based data analysis with the goal of identifying service levels with equity implications.	2021–2025	Asset management team and program owners
Accessibility		
63. Conduct program assessments to determine how the bureau proactively and responsively provides accessibility to community members as required under Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act.	2021–2025	Equity and policy team
Budgeting and performance measures		
64. Establish at least one equity-specific performance measure for each relevant budget program.	2023–2025	Budget team
Structural affordability		
65. Assess affordability using industry standards that use household burden and poverty prevalence measures. Establish affordability goals. Determine which areas of the city and which customers are most harmed by water costs.	2021–2022	Affordability team
66. Study rate structures that prioritize affordability, including rates that incorporate a very inexpensive lifeline (or essential) water use amount.	2021–2025	Affordability team
67. Allow for monthly billing as a part of the AMI project.	2021–2022	Affordability team
68. Diversify funding sources for projects and programs: consider grants, customer and employee voluntary contributions, donations from foundations and charities, water foundation, and revenue streams from ads or leases.	2021–2025	Affordability team

Accountability and leadership

Equity goal

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

Desired outcomes

- The Water Bureau improves continuously to ensure it achieves all its desired equity outcomes, as demonstrated by the bureau’s Equity Scorecard.
- Bureau leadership (Management Team, managers, and supervisors) is held accountable for achieving equity actions and outcomes assigned to them.

Questions for the data

- Are any demographic or work groups not given access to or not using equity resources?
- Are any demographic or work groups receiving less clear equity expectations? Are any demographic or work groups consistently unable to meet equity expectations?

Actions	Timing	Lead
Performance management		
69. Establish equity performance measures and continuously assess progress towards equity commitments. Develop a dashboard to communicate progress.	2021–2022	Equity and policy team
70. Establish annual equity performance objectives with actions from this plan for every employee. Evaluate employees on their equity performance during their annual reviews.	2023–2025	Managers and supervisors
Equity curriculum and trainings		
71. Develop a bureau diversity, equity, and inclusion curriculum and conduct continuous leadership- and employee-specific trainings.	2021–2022	Equity and policy team
Conflict management		
72. Establish protocols for reporting and responding to hate, harassment, and hostile environments.	2021–2022	Equity and policy team
73. Develop a bureau conflict resolution process.	2021–2025	Equity and policy team



Underrepresented communities:

A subset of a population that holds a smaller percentage within a group than it holds in the general population. For example, Black and Indigenous people, people with disabilities, and women are underrepresented in the Water Bureau.

Useful terms for your ongoing equity journey

Ableism: Prejudice and discrimination against people with disabilities. It is based on the belief that typical abilities are superior, and operates at cultural, systemic, and personal/interpersonal levels. At its heart, ableism is rooted in the assumption that disabled people require “fixing” and defines people by their disability. Like racism and sexism, ableism classifies entire groups of people as “less than.” Ableism shows up through harmful stereotypes, harm from systems (like housing and educational systems), and harmful cultural beliefs (definition from Access Living).

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-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 US 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 (definition from National Association of Social Workers).

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).

Diversity: Quantity of people of different identities (see identity below) and cultures in a group or organization (definition from Merriam-Webster).

Equity: Creating the conditions for all to have access to the resources and opportunities they need to thrive, so people’s identities are not a contributing factor in their life outcomes.

Equity Planning Taskforce: A multidisciplinary team of bureau employees with representatives from all work groups that convened from September to December 2020, and which 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

Inclusion: The act or practice of including and accommodating people who have historically been excluded because of their identity. Participation quality of people of different identities in a group or organization (definition from Merriam-Webster).

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: 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 Williams 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 (definitions 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). For example, Black and Indigenous people, people with disabilities, and women are underrepresented in the Water Bureau.

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 are not a contributing factor in their employment outcomes.

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.



Central Information

503-823-7404

Water Quality

503-823-7525

Customer Service

503-823-7770

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Turjumaad iyo Fasiraad | Письмовий і усний переклад
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