



Advocating for Equity and  
Diversity throughout Oregon  
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## 2025-2027 Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging Plan



The Oregon Advocacy Commissions Office is committed to Affirmative Action. OACO recognizes its responsibility to extend equal employment opportunities to all qualified individuals. OACO exists to support and uplift four advocacy commissions which are directly impacted by Affirmative Action and are committed to elevate and screen-in individuals who are most qualified to support the work. To meet OACO's commitment to maintain and improve workforce diversity, the Executive Director must show good faith efforts to target recruitment of women and communities of color to ensure their representation in the applicant pool for potential staff.

**Complaint Options:** OACO has a formal and informal complaint option. For formal complaints, the complainant can contact our DAS CHRO liaison partner, Sherry Lauer, [Sherry.LAUER@das.oregon.gov](mailto:Sherry.LAUER@das.oregon.gov), for informal complaints a complainant can contact the Executive Director, Terrence Saunders, [Terrence.saunders@oac.oregon.gov](mailto:Terrence.saunders@oac.oregon.gov).

**Succession Plan:** OACO has a completed [succession plan](#) that has been submitted to the Department of Administrative Services (DAS) on December 31, 2024.

**Contracting:** Per ORS 659A.015 OACO currently does not complete contracts and there are none to report within the 2023-2025 biennium. If OACO enters contracts in the future, OACO will give first preference to vendors through OregonBuys and will prioritize minority and women owned businesses.

OACO's affirmative action plan will be included in our agency DEIB plan which is outlined below.





## About

The Oregon Advocacy Commissions Office's chief responsibility is supporting the statutory charges of the 4 Commissions:

- [Oregon Commission on Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs](#) (OCAPIA).
- [Oregon Commission on Black Affairs](#) (OCBA).
- [Oregon Commission on Hispanic Affairs](#) (OCHA).
- And the [Oregon Commission for Women](#) (OCFW).

Each Commission is comprised of nine Governor-appointed, Senate confirmed Commissioners and two legislators appointed by the Senate President and Speaker of the House.

Historically, this has included providing support for OACs (Oregon Advocacy Commissions) working within their 7 Strategic Priority areas (education, jobs & the economy, justice, safety & policing, housing & stable families, healthcare, civic engagement, and environmental justice) to identify problems and long-standing challenges to communities of color and women regarding intersectionality, rural issues, plugging in to the policy arc, identifying best practice, and researching policy remedies.

Providing this support includes working collaboratively with OACs, the Governor's Office, legislators, and state partners; maintaining a liaison with and growing partnerships with constituent community groups and research partners in state government and Oregon universities; growing constituent representation in leadership positions in state government; recommending action to policy makers and the Governor on key issues facing their constituents, legislative tracking; developing and submitting testimony; and representing OACs with policy makers and partners, as needed, to inform ongoing policy work and advance OACs' initiatives.

The Oregon Advocacy Commissions Office was established by statute in 2005 to serve what had previously been 4 separately staffed Commissions focused on growing equity, leadership and success among Black, Asian and Pacific Islander, and Hispanic Oregonians, and Women. This was done to more efficiently serve the Commissions during tight economic times and grow collaboration between the Commissions on their statutory missions improving the economic, social, legal, and political equity of their constituent populations. OACO was initiated in 2005 and staffed at the beginning of 2008 with an Administrator and Executive Assistant. In 2010, OACO moved its offices from Salem to Portland to allow ease of access to grow its reach the majority of Oregon population in several key areas: Growing future leaders with internships and leadership development for students of color and women; building expertise and resources affecting poverty, health, education, and justice; and partnering in policy research and projects

The Oregon Advocacy Commissions Office (OACO) was established to support the statutory work of four OACs:

- Oregon Commission on Asian & Pacific Islander Affairs (OCAPIA)
- Oregon Commission on Black Affairs (OCBA)
- Oregon Commission on Hispanic Affairs (OCHA)
- Oregon Commission for Women (OCFW)





- a. By December 31, 2024, OACO aims to cultivate a culture of inclusivity and belonging within OACO, where all employees feel respected, valued, empowered to contribute, and can be their authentic selves with their unique perspectives and talents on full display.
  - b. This will be achieved through creating community agreements that the entire team participates in that is focused on mutual respect, accountability, communication, and maintaining a high-quality work environment. Staff will also participate in meaningful team building experiences to foster positive relationships.
  - c. Progress will be measured by quarterly PAF check-ins with staff, staff attendance at team building experiences, amount of HR complaints and employee engagement surveys.
- 3. Accessibility:**
- a. By July 1, 2025, OACO aims to improve accessibility within OACO to ensure all communication materials and public meetings are inclusive and accessible to all of the diverse communities OACO supports.
  - b. This will be achieved through language access in public meetings, and written materials, closed captioning instruction to start public meetings and SCORM compliance on all OACO flyers and attachments that are publicly available. OACO staff will also utilize plain language when communicating important information to the public and commissioners.
  - c. Progress towards accessibility will be measured by meeting compliance with ADA for public materials, attendance of interpreter services provided by OACO in public meetings and using plain language when talking with commissioners and the public.
- 4. Community Engagement (Commissioners):**
- a. By December 31, 2024, OACO aims to strengthen community engagement efforts with OACs to ensure meaningful participation and collaboration with diverse communities and community-based organizations across the state. This also includes OACO staff engaging with commissioners on a more frequent basis and developing biennial or annual goals.
  - b. This will be accomplished through monthly lunch and learn with a focus on strengthening commissioners understanding of their role including how they can expand DEIB initiatives across the state, collaborating with CBOs, state agencies, and other coalitions across the state, and rural and frontier outreach to diversify commissioners' geographic, ethnic, education, sexual orientation, gender expression age, profession, lived experience representation across the state.
  - c. Follow-through on this goal will be measured by the frequency of monthly lunch and learns over a calendar year and attendance of commissioners, annual gap



analysis of where commissioners are geographically located within the state and identify and prioritize representation from these areas, and track engagement with CBO's and state agencies in commission public meetings.

**5. Policy and Partnership with state Agencies and elected officials:**

- a. By June 30, 2025, OACO aims to enhance the effectiveness and influence of OACs by collaborating and advising the Governor, legislators, and state agency officials by providing targeted feedback around commission priorities.
- b. This will be achieved through increasing the number of interactions with policy makers across the state in participating in public meetings and subcommittees created by the OACs.
- c. Progress will be measured by the amount of engagement of state agencies invited and presenting in commission meetings.

**6. Commissioner Recruitment:**

- a. By June 30, 2025, OACO aims to increase geographic, ethnic, education, sexual orientation, gender expression age, profession, lived experience diversity from Eastern Oregon amongst commissioners for the four OAC's that OACO supports. Currently, no commissioners represent eastern Oregon.
- b. This will be achieved through booking times/office hours for Commissioners to advocate for changes within OACO to best support the commissioners OACO serves. OACO will also seek and prioritize bilingual staff when there are vacant positions within the agency to best support current commissioners as well as attract new commissioners. OACO staff will continue to share information about the four advocacy commissions and engage meaningfully with communities from rural areas to spread awareness and foster interest in participating on a commission.
- c. Progress will be measured by increasing geographic representation in eastern, coastal and southern Oregon from 0 to 1 by June 30, 2025, in each geographic category.

## **Implementation Strategies**

1. Workforce Development: OACO will enhance workforce development to foster diversity, equity and inclusion through workforce retention/recruitment and development for succession planning efforts.
  - a. Retention:
    - i. OACO Executive Director will support workplace wellness opportunities are available to staff to be their full selves within the workplace.



- ii. OACO Executive Director will support OACO employees maintaining a positive work-life balance.
    - iii. OACO will support a 5-minute buffer for meetings to support workplace wellness and encourage taking breaks in-between meetings.
    - iv. OACO Executive Director will support and encourage staff connection spaces with a focus on building relationships and team cohesion.
    - v. OACO Executive Director will support training and development of OACO staff and commissioners.
  - b. Recruitment:
    - i. OACO Executive Director will ensure there is diverse interview panels for vacant position and ensure the team is involved in the interview process.
    - ii. OACO will consider lived experience in our internal hiring practices ensuring applicants utilize an equity framework in screening.
    - iii. Ensuring applicants have interview questions ahead of the interview to allow for thoughtful answers during the interview.
    - iv. Ensure staff within OACO are completing their workday profile in full listing their experience pre-hire to ensure pay equity analysis is exhausted prior to joining state service.
  - c. Development: OACO Executive Director will support and foster development of OACO staff and commissioners and foster an environment of continued learning around DEI and future career development.
  - d. Succession Planning: OACO staff will create and update desk manuals for new staff entering the agency by July 31, 2025.
- 2. Agency Culture: OACO Executive Director is committed to providing a high-quality work culture which cultivates a culture of inclusivity and belonging within OACO.
  - a. OACO is committed to diversity and allowing staff to share their lived experiences in the form of Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) and have established relationships with ODHS and OHA to allow OACO staff to participate without barriers. OACO staff can participate up to 8 hours per month in ERG activities.
  - b. OACO is committed to a culture of continuous learning focusing on DEIB principles to support our agency work with our advocacy commissions.
  - c. OACO Executive Director has established a wellness expectation for virtual meetings to start and end 5 minutes before the hour and allowing for breaks throughout the day.
  - d. OACO is committed to fostering a positive work environment and will create community agreements.
- 3. Accessibility: OACO is committed to providing accessible services in OACO public meetings to commissioners and community members.



- a. OACO will strive to use plain language and explaining acronyms to ensure community members are able to fully participate in meetings.
  - b. OACO is committed to language justice and will strive towards making our public commission meetings and materials accessible to all commissioners. OACO will make every effort to provide translation services to community members in public meeting for them to fully participate.
  - c. OACO will utilize closed captioning when presenting materials and have a statement at the beginning of the meeting to ensure community is able to fully participate in meetings.
4. **Community Engagement:** OACO is committed to strengthening and establishing relationships with community-based organizations and partners across the state.
- a. OACO will engage with rural and frontier areas of the state to diversify the geographic locations of commissioners.
  - b. OACO will support commissioners who live in rural and frontier areas in the state and engage with organizations that support the work they do in their communities.
  - c. OACO Executive Director will participate in career fairs in rural and frontier areas in Oregon that focus on small boards and commissions to share information about the OACs and how individuals can get involved.
5. **Policy and Partnership:** OACO is committed to strengthening and building partnerships with legislators, community-based organizations, state agencies, the Governor and other commissions and councils advancing equity across the state.
- a. OACO will engage with legislators through legislative days, to allow for commissioners and legislators to build key relationships to advocate for legislation that is a priority area for each commission.
  - b. OACO will continue to partner with mission-aligned community-based organizations who support and make up the demographics of our advocacy commissions and support the work of dismantling systems of oppression in government.
6. **Commissioner Recruitment:**
- a. OACO will ensure applicant pools are diverse to ensure that there is representation from the advocacy commissions OACO supports. OACO Executive Director will share job positions with all commissioners to foster a diverse interview panel from the communities OACO serves, in addition to seeking diverse community-based organizations in posting vacant positions.
  - b. OACO will collaborate with commissioners in attending community events to highlight the importance of OACs to potential commissioners and encourage community leaders to apply.



### **Allocation of Resources**

To fully implement our Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging plan, OACO requires additional resources in the form of financial investments and resource allocations from the Legislature, and Governor and additional staffing to meet the statutory requirements for our four advocacy commissions. With nearly all of OACO's work intrinsically being focused on equity, diversity, and inclusion we currently allocate all of our agency's resources to center equity, as it is at the core of why we exist.

### **Monitoring Plan**

OACO will evaluate progress and effectiveness of our strategies to determine if they need to be adjusted on a biennial basis. OACO Executive Director can also update this plan at any time in collaboration with agency staff to ensure there is inclusion and shared decision making within this plan.

