



OBTP OREGON BOARD OF  
TAX PRACTITIONERS



Oregon

Tina Kotek, Governor

# Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) and Affirmative Action Plan 2024-2025

Supporting Our State. Building Our Future.

## Our **MISSION**

is to protect Oregon consumers by ensuring that Oregon tax professionals are competent and ethical in their professional activities

## ABOUT THE BOARD

The Oregon State Board of Tax Practitioners, created by the 1973 Legislative Assembly, protects Oregon consumers by ensuring that Oregon tax professionals are competent and ethical in their professional activities. All persons in Oregon, who prepare, advise, or assist in the preparation of personal income tax returns for a fee, or represent that they do so, must be licensed.

The Board is comprised of seven volunteer members and two full-time staff – an executive director and a licensing specialist. The executive director serves as the agency's affirmative action representative. Human resource services are provided by the Department of Administrative Services.

## POLICY STATEMENT

### Introduction

The purpose of this plan is to update and maintain the previously initiated affirmative action program for the Oregon State Board of Tax Practitioners. This plan is in keeping with the directive of the Governor, state and federal laws and regulations, executive orders of the President of the United States of America concerning affirmative action, discrimination/nondiscrimination guidelines appropriate under the Civil Rights Acts, equal employment opportunity (EEO) policies, and the Americans with Disabilities Act by which our good faith efforts must be directed.

### Policy Statement

The Oregon Board of Tax Practitioners will not tolerate discrimination or harassment based on age, color, marital status, mental or physical disability, national origin, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, or any reason prohibited by state or federal statute. Nor shall the Board do business with any vendor/provider for the State of Oregon who discriminates or harasses in the above-described manner. All personnel actions of the Oregon State Board of Tax Practitioners, and all licensing actions and disciplinary actions concerning licensees, shall be administered according to this policy.

The Board adheres to established nondiscrimination and affirmative action precepts when screening, selecting and appointing Board members.

The Board of Tax Practitioners aggressively seeks to attract qualified applicants from diverse backgrounds including historically and currently under served communities including women, and disabled persons. It actively facilitates their retention and advancement based on merit, ability, and potential.

All staff of the Oregon State Board of Tax Practitioners shall adhere to the Affirmative Action Policy and Plan and to the spirit and letter of equal employment opportunity laws, rules, regulations and affirmative action concepts. The application of this policy is the individual responsibility of the Executive Director and shall be evaluated on his/her performance in achieving this affirmative action policy as well as in other job performance criteria. The Affirmative Action Plan is posted on the Board's website and intranet; a hard copy is placed in our reception area. The Affirmative Action Policy Statement is posted on the bulletin board where all other required posters are located. Failure to meet our Affirmative Action standards will be subject to disciplinary actions.

All employees shall be advised of the procedure for lodging a discrimination/ harassment complaint, and all employees with concerns of any kind related to affirmative action shall be encouraged to bring them to the attention of the Executive Director.

It is further the policy of the Oregon State Board of Tax Practitioners to establish and maintain this program of DEI and affirmative action to provide for a method of eliminating any effects of past or present discrimination, intended or unintended, which may be indicated by analysis of present employment patterns, practices, or policies.

### **Duration of Plan**

This revision of the Board's DEI/Affirmative Action Plan has been in effect since March 30, 2024 and shall be evaluated annually or as needed when state or federal changes occur.

## **SUMMARY STATEMENT**

### **Agency Diversity and Inclusion Statement**

This policy applies to all Board of Tax Practitioners employees, volunteers, proctors, constituents, and Board Members. This policy applies to all matters related to hiring, firing, transfer, promotion, benefits, compensation, and other terms and conditions of employment, as well as delivery of the Board of Tax Practitioners services.

### **Agency Goals for the Current Biennium**

- Seek to create a (DEI/Affirmative Action) Panel which will include Board members, licensees and volunteers.
- Send out a survey to identify the current numbers that creates our licensee base and where we are lacking.
- Work to identify qualified minority and disabled candidates to pursue employment as tax professionals.

- Working on creating a new licensee program through legislature to bring in a more diverse base of candidates.
- Working to hold a Rule Making for remote rules which would allow more disabled candidates and caregivers to apply.
- Work directly with the volunteer groups in Oregon (CASH Oregon & VITA) to help bring qualified candidates across.
- Attend trainings for DEI and Affirmative Action - agency personnel, Board Members and DEI/AA Panel.
- Work toward building a diverse and culturally competent agency.
- Seeking to become an employer of choice for qualified minority and disabled candidates.
- Ensure all staff and Board Members have reviewed and understand the content and purpose of the (DEI & AA) Plan.
- The (ED) will report progress toward goals to the Board as a discussion item in general session annually.
- Work with new hires to assess the physical work environment, standard equipment, and practices for equal access.
- Identify potential barriers they might perceive and develop strategies and objectives for addressing these barriers.
- Actively engage in outreach efforts to recruit qualified persons from diverse backgrounds and underrepresented classes.

#### **Next Biennium Goals and Action Items**

- Continue to work with the (DEI/Affirmative Action) Panel to review progress and set new goals.
- Review the Survey and send out a high-level review to current licensees identifying the findings.
- Work with the Survey findings to identify areas the Board needs to be more proactive in recruiting from.
- Continue reaching out to qualified minorities and disabled candidates.
- If the new licensing program is created monitor the progress it has had bringing in a more diverse candidate base.
- Continue to work toward allowing Remote Rules if those are not in place by the end of the current biennium.
- Continue working with volunteer groups in Oregon (CASH Oregon & VITA) to help bring qualified candidates across.
- Work to implement DEI & Affirmative Action trainings as well as attending them.
- Continue to work towards building a diverse and culturally competent agency.
- Continue seeking to become an employer of choice for qualified minority and disabled candidates.
- Continue to ensure all staff and Board Members understand the content and purpose of the (DEI & AA) plan.
- Continue to provide an annual progress report on our goals in regard to our (DEI & AA) Plan.
- Continue working with new hires assessing the work environment, standard equipment, and practices for equal access.
- Continue engaging in outreach to recruit qualified persons from diverse backgrounds and underrepresented classes.

## **KEY PARTNERS**

The Board is working with both of its associations as well as the Board members as well as reaching out to our licensees to create a DEI/Affirmative Action Plan panel. The Board is also working with the volunteer groups in Oregon that work on tax returns (CASH Oregon & VITA) and I am attending their recruitment events to let them know the opportunities that are available to them. We are also working closely with the DEI and Affirmative Action teams as well as other Executive Directors.

## **TRAINING, EDUCATION AND DEVELOPEMENT PLAN**

### **Employees**

New Oregon Board of Tax Practitioners employees are required to read and discuss the agency DEI and Affirmative Action Policy, ask questions and clearly understand the policies. They will receive trainings on complaint procedures and on the practical application of the policies in the workplace. The Oregon Board of Tax Practitioners has a policy manual that clearly identifies its Affirmative Action Policy.

All recruitment announcements and advertisements for the Oregon Board of Tax Practitioners contain the statement, "The Oregon Board of Tax Practitioners is an Equal Opportunity, Affirmative Action employer. Minorities, women and persons with disabilities are encouraged to apply."

Given the small size of the Board, all staff receives cross training in critical job duties. Staff is encouraged to take work related training classes. Since advancement opportunities within the Board are rare staff is encouraged to seek promotional opportunities outside the agency.

Staff receives quarterly Employee Performance Evaluations.

### **Volunteers**

Every Oregon Board of Tax Practitioner volunteer receives the DEI/Affirmative Action Policy and training on complaint procedures each year. Volunteers work closely with staff and learn about workplace expectations, agencies goals and mission, and forms of appropriate conduct expected while interacting with licensees and consumers.

### **Contract/Vendors**

The Oregon Board of Tax Practitioners uses contract service providers to administer exams through a company named PSI Exams. PSI can provide our exams throughout Oregon and the United States as well. The service providers are accountable through the Department of Higher Education's DEI/Affirmative Action Plan. The Oregon Board of Tax Practitioners uses vendors for supplies and services. The Board does not currently provide DEI/Affirmative Action training to vendors who do not directly interact with the public.

## ROLES FOR IMPLEMENTATION

### **Executive Director**

Foster to employees the importance of a diverse, discrimination and harassment free workplace. Participate in cultural diversity trainings, orientations, and be an example of cultural sensitivity. Annually evaluate the DEI and affirmative action and work environment progress. Maintain all records of the agency's affirmative action plan and make them available to all employees and Board Members.

### **Staff**

Will also work to foster the importance of diversity and nondiscrimination with our clients. Participate in cultural diversity trainings, orientations, and be an example of cultural sensitivity. Give input for the annual review of the Board's progress on their DEI/Affirmative Action Plan.

### **Board Members**

Review the DEI and Affirmative Action Plan annually and support the efforts and goals of the Board.

## STEPS REQUIRED TO COMPLETE DEVELOPMENT OF THIS PLAN

- Work to create a DEI/Affirmative Action Committee consisting of Board Members, Licensees and Volunteers.
- Send out Practitioners Survey as soon as tax season is completed to ensure a larger pool of responses. Use this to create a baseline and understand our current demographics.
- Continue to send out annual surveys to monitor any progress in reaching other groups.
- Gain assistance from other similar Boards/entities in getting the word out to varying groups (for example: Workforce Oregon and Colleges.) relying that becoming a tax practitioner is a career option for everyone.
- Continue working on legislation to create a new pathway for licensure that would allow for a more diverse base starting at a more entry learning level akin to an apprenticeship program.
- Work on holding a Rule hearing to include rules that encompass a work from home environment to hopefully included more minority, disabled and care providers in the industry.
- Attend DEI and Affirmative Action trainings as well as begin to create internal trainings for staff, Board Members, Volunteers, 80-hour course providers and Key partners.
- Work to gather data in areas throughout Oregon to find out if the knowledge regarding tax returns and becoming a tax professional is reaching everyone and what languages would be beneficial to add to reach more people.
- From this data work on our exams to and our courses to be able to provide both of these in more languages. The Board has already implemented the Preparers exam in Spanish.

## **BARRIERS/CHALLENGES IMPACTING DEVELOPMENT OF THIS PLAN**

- The main barrier the Board has is that we are a Board of two FTE's without a spare budget to work with to implement many of the changes the Board would like.
- Implementation of new languages may cost quite a bit and the Board may not be able to afford the changes needed.
- The Board would like to gather more data and spread the word regarding tax practitioners being a good job pathway but with limited staff, resources and money this becomes more challenging.

## **KEY STRATEGIES AND FOCUS AREAS**

The key strategies and focus for Board of Tax Practitioners are to address how we can become more available and known to the community. To inform the public that filing their taxes is important as well as making the public aware that the Board's main priority is to assist those who have had trouble with a tax professional. Getting the word out that becoming a tax professional is a job path for everyone. The Board of Tax looks to be as inclusive as possible by allowing more remote supervision, an apprenticeship program going forward and working closely with Oregon's volunteer groups creating flow through. As well as educating all staff, Board Members, educators and key partners on the Board's goals surrounding DEI and Affirmative Action.

## **TIMELINES**

The majority of this will be an ongoing daily, weekly, monthly and yearly review and action plan the Board does have a timeline for the following action items.

- Currently working on outreach to gain assistance from other Boards to help get the word out to colleges and other agencies. I believe that several partnerships will have been created by the close of 2024.
- I will be working with the Board on rulemaking to create a remote work-based environment for our supervision rules. Hoping to work on this in 2025.
- Implementation of more languages in our exams and classes. This one will be a more ongoing processes depending on desirability, what languages and how much money it would take for implementation.
- We will continue to gather data annually by sending out an annual survey. This will allow us to track data and progress and this will begin at the end of this year 2024 and continue annually.