



Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Implementation Plan
and Strategic Approach

**OREGON
DEPARTMENT OF
ENERGY**

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ODOE DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION
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LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

In the summer of 2019, ODOE began work on a new strategic plan. Strategic planning enabled our organization to set direction, establish goals, prioritize work, measure progress, and allocate time, resources, and attention – all while fostering organizational cohesion, shared purpose, and common values. The agency had been through considerable change and needed to provide clarity about our work and focus on specific areas to ensure we are meeting our mission on behalf of Oregonians. Developing the strategic plan involved input from the public, stakeholder groups, Tribal partners, peer organizations, and our own staff.

Diversity, equity, and inclusion are central to ODOE’s strategic plan; these elements show up in the process we used to develop the plan as well as in the plan itself. The development of the plan began with gathering input through interviews and focus groups, and ODOE brought on a consultant specifically to help with outreach and engagement on diversity, equity, and inclusion. The consultant conducted one-on-one interviews with a small group of stakeholder and community representatives, peer organizations, and Tribes. This work informed the first phase of our plan, which involved developing clarity and a shared understanding of ODOE’s work. This led to the development of a new vision, mission, and position statement (articulation of what we do.)

Defining these clarity elements of our strategic plan was a critical first step in setting the course for the future and laying the groundwork for discussions on the second phase of the plan: the strategic focus for the agency over the next four years. ODOE’s vision is the ideal future state we are working toward — the “why” behind our work. In creating the vision, our staff took our previous mission and added “equitable.” Our vision is for a *safe, equitable, clean, and sustainable future*. ODOE’s mission is our purpose, the “what” of ODOE’s specific work to make the future in our vision statement happen. Grounded in the responsibilities outlined in ODOE’s authorizing statutes and informed by outreach and engagement on the strategic plan, we developed a mission statement that highlights the need to ensure our energy system is resilient and that the clean energy transition is equitable: *The Oregon Department of Energy helps Oregonians make informed decisions and maintain a resilient and affordable energy system. We advance solutions to shape an equitable clean energy transition, protect the environment and public health, and responsibly balance energy needs and impacts for current and future generations.*

In the second phase of our plan, we identified focus areas, objectives, and initiatives that form the basis of actions we are going to take as an agency over the plan’s four-year timeframe to improve and meet our mission more effectively. Based on the feedback during the first phase, ODOE reached out to past collaborators and partners for guidance and advice on diversity, equity, and inclusion. We also spoke with peer organizations who were focused on equity so we could listen and learn from their journeys. As part of the discussion with these diversity partners, ODOE provided a discussion guide with the following concepts and commitments:

- Acknowledgement that our organization and processes do not yet fully represent the dimensions of diversity in people and viewpoints in the state.
- Recognition that it will take more resources to ensure equity in the energy sector.
- DEI needs to be integrated throughout our strategic plan and we want ODOE to be held accountable to being a better partner.
- We need to build trust and develop relationships that will enable us to meaningfully engage with diverse communities.
- ODOE will show up with a spirit of openness, learning, and humility, and will commit to following up, sharing our lessons learned, and offering support through partnerships and action.

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Diversity, equity, and inclusion are a major piece of the five imperatives, or focus areas, of ODOE's strategic plan. These imperatives are not meant to summarize or capture the entirety of the work being done at ODOE, but instead represent a path toward us doing that work better. Each imperative includes objectives that will help us measure progress in meeting these goals. Initiatives are the specific actions we will take to achieve those objectives. This part of the strategic plan was drafted concurrently with and informed by the 2021 State of Oregon Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Action Plan.

Consistent with the 2021 Oregon DEI Action Plan, and as will be discussed throughout this document, ODOE's strategic plan includes key strategies to establish and maintain relationships with organizations representing currently and historically underserved Oregonians; center equity in budgeting, planning, procurement, and policymaking; strengthen public involvement; improve equitable access to services, programs, and resources; and foster an inclusive workplace culture.

Examples of where equity is highlighted in ODOE's strategic plan include:

- One of the five main plan imperatives is to “Build Practices and Processes to Achieve More Inclusive and Equitable Outcomes”
- Initiatives related to equity and environmental justice are woven throughout all five imperatives:
 - Conduct assessment of current agency decision-making and advisory bodies to identify opportunities for more diverse representation
 - Develop a communication plan and engagement process collaboratively with historically and currently underserved populations and communities that includes actively listening, being responsive, and incorporating feedback in the development of programs, policies, and other areas of work
 - Build on existing Tribal engagement efforts by expanding internal responsibilities and resources, and reaching out to Tribes to assess and amplify shared interests and priorities
 - Enhance ODOE's internship program to provide benefits to interns, such as paid positions and greater access to educational credits, to help build a more diverse network of ODOE and energy industry employees
 - Develop a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Action Plan in partnership with historically and currently underserved populations and communities
 - Create inclusive, multi-lingual communications to increase accessibility of agency program information and services
 - Conduct agency-wide DEI assessment and training to measure and increase employee knowledge, awareness, and skills
 - Collect and analyze demographic data to better inform ODOE's work and to identify barriers to achieving equitable energy outcomes

Work has begun on each of these activities and has led to improvement and change already. These activities will be covered in more depth in the following pages.

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ABOUT US

Our Mission

The Oregon Department of Energy helps Oregonians make informed decisions and maintain a resilient and affordable energy system. We advance solutions to shape an equitable clean energy transition, protect the environment and public health, and responsibly balance energy needs and impacts for current and future generations.



Our Vision

Leading Oregon to a safe, equitable, clean, and sustainable future.

Our Values

- We listen and aspire to be inclusive and equitable in our work.
- We are ethical and conduct our work with integrity.
- We are accountable and fiscally responsible in our work and the decisions of our agency.
- We are innovative and focus on problem-solving to address the challenges and opportunities in Oregon's energy sector.
- We conduct our agency practices and processes in a transparent and fair way.

Our Position

On behalf of Oregonians across the state, the Oregon Department of Energy achieves its mission by providing:

- **A Central Repository of Energy Data, Information, and Analysis:** We research, collect, and analyze data and information to inform state energy planning, regulation, program administration, and policy development.
- **A Venue for Problem-Solving Oregon's Energy Challenges:** We convene constructive conversations about Oregon's energy challenges and opportunities that consider a diverse range of perspectives, foster collaboration and innovative solutions, and facilitate the sharing of best practices with consumers and partners.
- **Energy Education and Technical Assistance:** We provide technical assistance, educational resources, and advice to support policy makers, local governments, industry, energy partners, and the general public in solving energy challenges and meeting Oregon's energy, economic, and climate goals.
- **Regulation and Oversight:** We manage the responsible siting of energy facilities in the state, regulate the transport and disposal of radioactive materials, and represent Oregon's interests at the Hanford Nuclear Site.
- **Energy Programs and Activities:** We manage and administer statutorily authorized energy programs to save energy, support the state's decarbonization efforts, make communities more resilient, and position Oregon to lead by example.

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PURPOSE STATEMENT

The purpose of this document is to detail how the diversity, equity, and inclusion elements of the agency's 2021-2024 Strategic Plan are being implemented and to highlight our approach and key strategies to address the guidance provided in Oregon's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Action Plan.

This document highlights the measurable actions at ODOE that are designed to help fully integrate diversity, equity, and inclusion into every action to promote and practice social justice and fairness for underserved and underrepresented communities, ensure decision-making is intentional, and enhance organizational cultural change while recognizing future workforce challenges.

KEY STRATEGY AND FOCUS AREAS

Community Engagement

Communities across Oregon are important partners in ODOE's work to advance an equitable clean energy transition. One key imperative of ODOE's strategic plan is to expand and improve stakeholder engagement to ensure that all Oregon voices across race, ethnicity, culture, color, Tribal membership, disability, gender, gender identify, marital status, national origin, age, religion, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, veteran status, immigration status, and geography are represented. ODOE's strategic plan and approach to community engagement was informed by conversations that took place during the development of our strategic plan, and with the support of a DEI consultant. Key themes emerging from these conversations are described below. These are also highlighted in the agency's internal strategic plan guidance document:

Consider New Partnership Models and Approaches.

- ODOE has an opportunity to move away from transactional relationships toward transformative partnerships. This may involve having external partners set engagement agendas and create objectives together. This also includes looking for opportunities to re-center decision-making and power.
- Outreach, engagement, and partnership will require time and relationship building.
- ODOE should also be cautious when engaging in listening-only exercises that do not lead to action to avoid stakeholder fatigue and feelings that their feedback does not change outcomes. ODOE should invest in better understanding communities' needs and impacts of current policies and programs on communities.
- It is ODOE's responsibility to address a lack of engagement, to better understand our partners' needs and barriers to participation, and to set expectations and create transparency around actions, impacts, and outcomes.
- Showing up and listening is key. ODOE should also set expectations on what we will and can commit to work on and what we plan to do with the feedback we receive.
- ODOE can convene and facilitate and should bring people together to ask provocative questions that illuminate how to better design programs rooted in equity and inclusion.

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Use agency power/position to make changes and shift narratives.

- ODOE needs to understand what positions require a non-neutral stance, especially as it relates to equity and partnering and supporting self-sufficiency in underserved and underrepresented communities. We have a responsibility to lift and amplify voices of underrepresented and marginalized communities.
- ODOE can use and share its power to help communities understand their influence on legislative decisions. ODOE should be ready to respond when communities come to ODOE to ask for them to play a role in this work.
- Energy can be considered not as a commodity, but as a basic right/health issue.
- ODOE should regain the urgency and fire from its founding days to become more innovative.

Be clear/get clear on what ODOE does and can do.

- Acknowledge that some stakeholders are not clear on who ODOE is and what ODOE does. Recognize that outside partners may have unique and important perspectives on ODOE's history and identity.
- Recognize feelings that generally, bureaucracies are not very transparent, are paternal, and use White, dominant culture voices and approaches. As a part of government, ODOE is implicitly part of this and will make strides by first acknowledging and working actively to change this pattern.
- ODOE has an opportunity to provide clearer and targeted communications about opportunities. Focusing solely on transparency to share basic data or "just the facts" isn't always the most helpful means of communication. ODOE should consider other methods (e.g., storytelling) that are more responsive to audience needs and ways to share out that can be more effective.
- Stakeholders would like ODOE to feel more accessible and be accountable.

Commit to doing internal agency equity work.

- To better serve a diverse state, ODOE should seek to increase the diversity of staff and commit to building skills and raise consciousness around diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- This will involve assessment, planning, and action. This will also require staff and the agency to lean into discomfort and lack of closure, and to commit to cultural change.
- ODOE will also need to reconcile and be accountable to the agency's history. This includes historical and cultural context and experiences that communities have with all governments and the energy sector in Oregon. This means putting away individual defensiveness and accepting the responsibility of being a good representative and steward of this work.

Engagement Approach

Informed by the key themes highlighted above, ODOE has taken many steps and developed strategies to advance our strategic plan imperative to build practices and process to achieve more inclusive and equitable outcomes.

Strategies

- **Centralized team to develop and promote best practices for engagement.** ODOE created a Strategic Engagement Team within the Director's Office and headed by an Associate Director for

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Strategic Engagement. This team develops tools; conducts centralized engagement efforts, such as on policy discussions related to legislative concepts; and supports and consults with program staff on engagement efforts.

- **Create direct connections with representatives of communities of color and other currently and historically underserved communities.** In support of our strategic plan initiative to increase agency engagement with historically and currently underserved populations and communities, ODOE’s Strategic Engagement Team organizes regular check-ins before, during, and after key milestones like legislative sessions and budget development with stakeholder groups that focus on DEI in the energy and climate change space. These check-ins are intentionally focused on questions and topics most relevant and identified by the stakeholder group. ODOE staff regularly participate in Legislative Commission on Indian Services’ Cluster Groups to learn about interests of Oregon’s nine federally recognized Tribes and seek opportunities to work with them. ODOE piloted a new partnership with University of Oregon’s RARE program (Resource Assistance for Rural Environments) to be more present with and support rural communities in eastern Oregon, which has helped ensure that more communities, local governments, and Tribes are aware of and supported in accessing ODOE’s state and federally funded financial incentive programs.
- **Diversify agency’s decision-making and advisory bodies.** One of our strategic plan objectives is to increase the diversity of the agency’s stakeholder groups. We have started this work by conducting an assessment of these groups to identify representative gaps and opportunities for more diverse representation.
- **Build on existing tribal engagement efforts by expanding internal responsibilities and resources and reaching out to Tribes to assess and amplify shared interests and priorities.** In support of this strategic plan initiative, ODOE has adopted a practice of notifying Tribes with a formal letter in advance of agency decisions, such as rulemaking and program design. ODOE recently co-hosted a workshop with the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs to help develop a program funded by the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act that will help prevent outages and support a resilient grid. This is a unique opportunity to coordinate and work with the nine federally recognized Tribes that have been allocated formula funding through this program that could align with the state’s formula funds. ODOE is excited to help sponsor the 2023 Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians (ATNI) Energy Summit to help share information, build relationships, and hear ideas from Tribes about the state’s equitable clean energy transition and the state and federally funded programs that seek to advance that transition.
- **Actively listen, be responsive, and incorporate feedback in the development of programs.** Where the agency has discretion, we are endeavoring to incorporate the perspectives of community partners in the development of new programs at the agency. Recent program examples of this include the development of the Community Renewable Energy Grant Program and modifications to the Oregon Solar + Storage Rebate Program, both referenced further below. Another example is the development of a new “Community Navigator” position and program. ODOE staff held an environmental justice roundtable in the summer of 2021 to inform development of our budget and legislative concepts, which led to the recognition that in many cases communities, especially rural and Tribal communities, do not have the resources, time, or capacity to apply for funds in our state and federally funded energy programs. This led to the development of a legislative concept that would establish a program to provide information about potential funding resources and other technical assistance to rural, Tribal, and other environmental justice communities as they work to develop energy projects or build energy-

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related capacity. ODOE introduced SB 852 to create this program at the agency and submitted a Policy Option Package in our Agency Request Budget to create a full-time position to help communities navigate funding opportunities for projects and capacity-building.

Inclusive Communications

The Oregon Department of Energy provides energy expertise, incentive programs, energy education and information, and other services to Oregonians across the state. The agency is dedicated to ensuring our communications are reaching all Oregonians, especially historically and currently underserved communities such as racial justice and environmental justice communities, and those who are affected by systemic racism and inequality. ODOE's [2021-2024 Strategic Plan](#) provides several initiatives and measurable objectives in support of this effort.

Communications Approach

The agency has developed a high-level communications approach to guide and bolster communication about the agency and to ensure we are: accessible to all Oregonians and swift to act when barriers are identified, inclusive in our language, and strategic in our communication approaches to meet diverse audiences and needs.

Strategies

- **Use multiple methods of communication to reach different audiences with varying levels of technology access and skills, languages, and literacy, including:**
 - Information about programs and services on ODOE's agency website that is easy to find and understand, and is translatable through built-in website software.
 - Downloadable PDFs and two-pagers about energy and program information for Oregonians who prefer to review print material.
 - Website structure and design that are accessible and readable in both desktop and mobile view.
 - Regular sharing of energy events, policy topics, program information, and engagement opportunities on social media channels, including Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Instagram.
 - A translatable agency blog to share energy stories, provide information about upcoming events or meetings, and market agency incentive programs.
 - Proactive media communications and press releases to diverse Oregon media outlets, and timely responses to media inquiries about our work and energy topics.
 - Dozens of topic-specific email interest lists where Oregonians can self-select to receive updates by email for specific energy topics and programs.
 - An agency podcast covering a wide variety of energy topics for Oregonians who prefer to access information through listening.
 - A monthly newsletter available through email and online to share the latest energy news and milestones, as well as upcoming meetings and opportunities for engagement.
 - Activities for young Oregonians to learn about energy, including energy science projects and a custom Oregon energy activity book (available in English and Spanish).
 - The agency is also exploring more video opportunities, including sharing understandable, accessible information about complex activities like energy facility siting in Oregon.

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- **Develop a communication plan and engagement process collaboratively with historically and currently underserved populations.** The agency’s 2021-2024 Strategic Plan includes a focus area to *expand and improve stakeholder engagement*.

An initiative under that focus area is to develop a communication plan and engagement process collaboratively with historically and currently underserved populations and communities that includes actively listening, being responsive, and incorporating feedback in the development of programs, policies, and other areas of work. An internal action team is working on implementing this initiative, including developing a communications and engagement framework for ODOE staff to incorporate into their work.

The action team used the Racial Equity Impact Assessment Worksheet that was used during the 2023-2025 budget development process to serve as a starting point for the agency framework. ODOE used the worksheet to guide engagement activities for several pilot projects, including federal funding activities, the Oregon Rural and Agricultural Energy Audit Program, and the agency’s new heat pump programs, among others. The team identified best practices and approaches learned through this pilot activity to inform an agency framework for engagement and communications going forward.

- **Create inclusive, multi-lingual communications to increase accessibility of agency program information and services.** This comes from another strategic plan focus area around building practices and processes to achieve more inclusive and equitable outcomes. An action team is focused on this work, including members of the communications team.

ODOE has renewed efforts on multi-lingual communications, including ensuring program applications are translatable, translating program materials into additional languages, and translating our agency strategic plan into the four languages most often spoken in Oregon homes other than English. Our websites have built-in translation capabilities, and ODOE’s virtual meeting platforms also allow for live translation captioning. One challenging area is accessing live interpretation services for in-person meetings – available companies are limited and ODOE has not been successful in finding a consistent service yet.

The agency is also considering other inclusive communication options, such as audio or video information for Oregonians with visual impairments or literacy considerations. ODOE has a podcast to share energy information, and has developed some video tutorials, including for a complex public energy facility siting process and for navigating data dashboards or other tools.

- **In developing communications materials, consider how racial bias can influence those materials.** For example, when using graphics or images, ODOE staff consider if they are reflective of Oregon’s racial, income, and geographic diversity. Photos or other visuals can be very helpful in messages and materials, but less so if they only represent urban environments or the majority racial group in the state, for example. When possible ODOE will use staff-captured photos or Oregon-specific images, but may use stock imagery when needed.

ODOE will continue connecting with community organizations to gather feedback on materials, including recommendations for culturally specific and inclusive language. ODOE has received valuable feedback from organizations in the past, in particular for incentive program flyers or brochures to ensure language is inclusive and clear.

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Expanding Access to Oregonians

ODOE acknowledges that diverse communities have different communications and engagement needs – there is no one-size-fits-all approach. Some communities experience specific barriers to receiving messages from our agency or being able to engage with us.

Strategies

- **Consider Oregonians and families whose first language is not English when developing communications materials.** The agency tries to provide translated or translatable materials when possible. While ODOE’s information is primarily available electronically, the agency does provide some printed brochures and flyers in our office. Incentive flyers are translated into Spanish regularly, as are brochures specifically about the Hanford Nuclear Site and emergency preparedness activities. Materials about Hanford are also provided to Oregon counties within the emergency planning zone for display at their on-site offices. ODOE has a general agency brochure available in English, Spanish, Vietnamese, Simplified Chinese, and Russian. Some translation barriers remain, however. In particular, as noted above, it has been challenging to secure live translation services at in-person public meetings.
- **Acknowledge and address, when possible, how the energy system continues to be affected by systemic racism.** Historically, energy policy decisions and programs – such as tax credit or other incentive programs – were more likely to benefit white and higher-income Oregonians. Recent changes have expanded ODOE’s program reach, but barriers still remain, especially for Oregonians with low or moderate incomes. Trust in government also remains a barrier, as past government decisions negatively affected certain communities. It will take time and deliberate action on the part of state government to earn back trust from racial justice and environmental justice communities.
- **Continue to strengthen communication and engagement with Oregon’s Tribal governments.** Systemic racism in the energy landscape particularly negatively affected Tribal communities in Oregon. For example, dams installed to generate electricity blocked the flow of rivers and harmed salmon populations important to Tribal communities. ODOE has worked to strengthen our partnerships with Tribal governments in our communications and engagement work through a Tribal Liaison, regular communications to Tribal leadership, and participation in LCIS meetings and events.
- **Target communications toward Oregon’s rural communities to ensure they know about ODOE activities and programs.** There continue to be barriers to participation among rural communities, especially for certain organizations or community groups that lack the time or capacity to engage in complex topics.

ODOE’s engagement efforts are supporting this strategy through a new Community Engagement Specialist joining the agency in Spring 2023 as well as a Resource Assistance for Rural Environments (RARE) AmeriCorps Fellow. Their focused outreach targets rural Oregon communities. (More information above under Community Engagement.)

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ADA Compliance in Communications

ODOE works to ensure ADA-effective communication requirements are met, such as through website and materials design.

Strategies

- **Format materials with adequate font selection and font size, as well as contrasting colors to help those with visual impairments.** A good example is the agency’s Biennial Energy Report. We produce a printed version of the book that includes readable font sizes and strategic color choices when possible. Some report sections are also available as interactive webpages, and each section is also available as downloadable PDFs that could be used with screen readers.
- **Design ODOE’s website with ADA considerations in mind.** ODOE’s website has ADA-compliant and ADA-friendly features, but has room for improvement. The agency will be updating to the latest SharePoint template in 2023-2024 and will be conducting an audit of web pages to meet ADA best practices for headers, font use, alt text for images, and other features.
- **Offer hybrid in-person and virtual meetings and events to expand access geographically and among those needing ADA accommodations.** COVID-19 led to ODOE’s public meetings going virtual. As the state recovers from the pandemic, ODOE continues to offer hybrid in-person/virtual or completely virtual meetings. A benefit of this approach has been built-in closed captioning and live translated transcription options for online meetings. The agency also posts videos to YouTube for later viewing, where users with hearing impairments can use YouTube’s closed-captioning features.
- **Include language in public hearing or meeting notices about how Oregonians can request accommodations to participate.**

Measuring Success and Customer Satisfaction

Annual Customer Survey

The Oregon Department of Energy measures customer satisfaction through a series of biennial customer service surveys as part of an agency Key Performance Measure.

ODOE creates multiple surveys based on customer type, from incentive program participants to efficient schools program contacts to those engaging in energy facility siting activities. The agency asks a specific set of KPM questions and then additional questions based on the relevant topic. Oregonians have an opportunity to measure ODOE’s helpfulness and knowledge, alongside other characteristics of our work.

While the surveys have provided valuable data for the agency, this is an area of identified improvement in ODOE’s 2021-2024 Strategic Plan: to implement more useful and timelier evaluations.

Strategic Plan Objectives

As noted above, ODOE’s 2021-2024 Strategic Plan includes several communications-related focus areas and initiatives. Alongside those are a set of objectives to measure our success, including:

- A year-over-year increase in agency engagement with organizations representing historically and currently underserved populations and communities.
- Year-over-year increase in the percent of historically and currently underserved populations and communities participating in ODOE programs and services.

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ODOE reviews progress against the objectives regularly, and will measure and report out on how the agency has achieved its objectives after the final strategic plan year.

Data

Data collection and analysis is a key part of the work that ODOE does every day in an effort to be a centralized source of unbiased energy data. Most of the data we use is secondary data, collected by partners such as the U.S. Department of Energy's Energy Information Administration. With the launch of new incentive programs at the agency that provide grants and rebates to individuals, businesses, and communities, we have started collecting data to help the agency determine who we are serving and how to ensure that we are providing services equitably to all Oregonians.

Data Collection

One of the imperatives of our strategic plan focuses on strengthening our skills, systems, and structure for research, as well as working with data providers, vetting analytical assumptions, and producing unbiased data and information that can serve as a foundation for the agency and for public use.

Strategies

- **Assess what data we have, what is relevant, why it is valuable, and how we are using it.** Within our data imperative is an objective to increase the collection, review, and analysis of data. This objective acknowledges that having more complete, comprehensive information can help ODOE fulfill its role as the state's central repository of energy data, information, and analysis.
- **Set in place tools to allow us to determine what additional data might be necessary and how we can get access to it.** Through another strategic plan initiative, ODOE is completing a strategic evaluation of all of our programs. This evaluation will involve an assessment of what data is collected, how the data is used, and whether there is additional data that would be beneficial but not currently collected.
- **Where possible, collect demographic data to inform our work.** One gap that we identified through the strategic planning process is demographic data. Through implementation of the strategic plan, we have identified barriers to collecting this type of data, which has provided staff with a better understanding of what data is available and, where possible, ideas about how to weave these data into current workflows and analysis. An example of this work includes the development of voluntary demographic surveys that the agency now sends to participants in our incentive programs. Information about who we are serving can help inform outreach and targeting strategies to ensure equitable delivery of our services.

The agency does not currently have a formal written policy or practice regarding the collection of race or ethnicity data, although where we do request this information for our programs we include a statement about how the information will be used. For example, in our survey of existing agency advisory and decision-making bodies, our request for demographic data includes the statement:

We are collecting demographic information to help us better understand who may be missing from energy-related conversations and decisions. Filling out this information is optional. Under state and federal law, this information may not and will not be used to discriminate against you.

The demographic data that we voluntarily request from program and advisory body participants includes disaggregated race and ethnicity data in the following communities: Asian, Black or African American,

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Hispanic/Latinx, Middle Eastern or North African, Native American or Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, Slavic, white, or two or more races. The survey form also includes an “other” category that the respondent can fill in.

Data Analysis

Strategies

- **Use the demographic and community-specific data that we gather to inform policy development and program design.** For our incentive programs, this information can also help us tailor our engagement strategies to better reach certain targeted populations. The data is made generally available to the public through the agency’s public-facing and legislative reports.
- **In addition to quantitative data about the populations we serve, ODOE seeks to use our research and analysis tools as a platform to surface energy challenges faced by communities.** For example, our Biennial Energy Report includes information on energy burden, which can help inform advocacy and policy making on behalf of energy burdened communities. During the outreach and engagement to inform our strategic planning process, ODOE was reminded that we can and should use the agency’s power and position to make changes and shift narratives, even where we may not have direct control over the outcome. We recognize that we have a responsibility to lift and amplify the voices of underrepresented and marginalized communities. For example, we can do this by helping communities understand their influence on legislative decisions. We are aware that the information and data we share can help others make changes and shift narratives.

Decision-Making and Budgets

State Budget Process

House Bill 2167 (2021) required agency request budgets to include racial impact statements. The Oregon Department of Energy was pleased to be one of the initial 27 agencies chosen to submit a Racial Equity Impact Statement as part of our 2023-2025 Agency Request Budget process. Working in consultation with the Racial Justice Council, ODOE developed a REIS for the Oregon Solar + Storage Rebate Program. Our REIS was developed using the RJC’s Racial Equity Toolkit, which establishes a framework to assess how programs benefit or burden certain populations and geographic areas. The toolkit encourages a data-based approach to evaluating benefits and burdens, inclusive communications and community partnership, and incorporating equity into program decision making to ensure benefits go to communities who need it. We received valuable feedback through this process, including to make the program more accessible through website organization and expanding information into languages other than English, and to communicate about all available incentives together to help streamline the information for communities. We also learned that there are barriers to participation that can’t be addressed within program rules.

Strategies

- **Use the lessons learned from the REIS exercise as considerations for future budget decisions.** ODOE is already using the Racial Equity toolkit and lessons learned through the REIS exercise to inform other ODOE programs and budget requests.
- **Look to future budget instructions for further direction on how to implement REIS.** ODOE is

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looking forward to using these tools through the development of our next budget.

Federal Funding

The historic investments of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) and Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) will transform ODOE's budget in the coming years. An essential part of these investments is President Biden's Justice40 initiative, which requires that at least 40 percent of the benefits of climate and clean energy investments flow to disadvantaged communities.

Strategies

- **IIJA and IRA programs will be built with Justice40 considerations from the start.** ODOE is working to ensure that Oregon communities' perspectives are represented as we determine how to comply with the Justice40 objective. How disadvantaged communities are defined can vary by grant but often includes racial and ethnic residential segregation, particularly where the segregation stems from discrimination by government entities.
- **Use the Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool (CEJST) released by the Biden-Harris administration's Council on Environmental Quality** as a primary way to identify disadvantaged communities. This tool is a map that helps delineate populations that the federal government deems "disadvantaged."

Decision-Making Influences

ODOE considers our equity values when designing programs and making investments. Four specific examples include:

- Agency support for extending the [Oregon Solar + Storage Rebate Program](#). The program has a minimum 25 percent carve-out for Oregonians with low and moderate incomes and low-income service providers. ODOE has tried to exceed that minimum and made early decisions to hold back funds beyond 25 percent for those low- and moderate-income projects rather than reallocating to non-income restricted projects.
- ODOE designed the [Energy Efficient Wildfire Rebuilding Incentive Program](#) to have a focus on supporting heat pump installations in manufactured homes, and offering higher incentive amounts for wildfire survivors with low and moderate incomes.
- The [Community Renewable Energy Grant Program](#) offers grants to public entities for renewable and resilience projects. ODOE formed an [advisory committee](#) for the program design process, and followed the committee's advice to let environmental justice communities define themselves. ODOE also formed an external evaluation committee to help select projects, and offered financial support to reduce barriers to participation on that committee.
- For forthcoming [federal funding](#) investments, ODOE formed a set of guiding principles developed through a series of public webinars, one-on-one conversations, and conversations with our Energy Advisory Work Group. The first principle is to consider equity at every step, including geographic diversity, in the design of programs and dispensing of funds.

Strategies

- **Offer higher incentive amounts in ODOE's grant programs to low and moderate-income populations, a group traditionally overrepresented by BIPOC communities.**

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- **Make intentional investments to increase equitable engagement with our stakeholders.** As mentioned previously, ODOE’s 2023-2025 Budget (as recommended by the Joint Ways and Means committee) includes a Policy Option Package that will support this work by establishing a Public Advocate to help the agency meet the requirements of HB 4077 and to more effectively engage environmental justice communities in our work. Our Governor’s Request Budget also included a Policy Option Package to establish a Community Engagement Specialist to serve as a “navigator” to help environmental justice communities access federal and state energy funding and programs. We are hopeful that these new positions will help us better engage with currently and historically underserved communities — and will enable us to do more on racial justice issues.
- **When possible, provide financial support/payments to participants of advisory committees or other stakeholder engagement bodies who indicate they would need financial assistance to be able to participate.**

While ODOE’s 2021-2023 budget does not have a specific percentage of the budget allocated specifically to racial justice initiatives, much of our work, as described above, is focused on ensuring that our programs and services support historically and currently underserved communities and populations.

Contracting and Procurement

The majority of ODOE’s procurements are not competitive, as we procure intergovernmental agreements and specific contracts to fulfill energy facilities and grant obligations. However, ODOE remains committed to promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion values throughout our procurements and business.

Strategies

- **Utilize OregonBuys to post solicitations, invite businesses to bid, and keep track of purchases.** The Oregon Department of Energy has been using OregonBuys since August 1, 2022, and follows all the Department of Administrative Services’ statutes, rules, and policies for procurement. We will also be following the Department of Administrative Services’ implementation of Executive Order 22-15, which requires agencies to ensure equity is pursued throughout all procurement processes.

ODOE primarily procures contracts related to specific energy sites, projects, grants, and intergovernmental agreements. However, as all of our formal procurements are through OregonBuys, we capture data from Minority, Women & Emerging Small Businesses as well as businesses certified through the Certification Office for Business Inclusion and Diversity.
- **Participate, where applicable, with the Statewide Disparity Study conducted by the Department of Administrative Services.** It launched in the fall of 2022 with the goal of increasing and promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion values and outcome with procurement.

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Diversifying Workforce and Internal Culture

The Oregon Department of Energy's 2021-2024 Strategic Plan includes a focus area to build practices and processes to achieve more inclusive and equitable outcomes. One objective within that focus area is to see a year-over-year increase in the percent of agency job applicants identifying as Black, Indigenous, or People of Color. The Plan also has an initiative specifically for enhancing our internship program to provide benefits to interns, such as paid positions and greater access to educational credits, to help build a more diverse network of ODOE and energy industry employees.

ODOE is committed to taking actions to increase diversity and equity in the workforce and to maintain an inclusive workplace. We will recruit, hire, and develop a high-performing workforce that is competent and culturally Inclusive.

Candidate Diversity

Strategies

- **Update position descriptions to include DEI principles and strategies.**
- **Create a virtual interview process that reduces barriers to participation.**
- **Conduct targeted recruitment outreach.**
- **Review the desired attributes in job postings and the identified interview questions to remove potential bias and align with business needs of the position.**

Inclusive Workplace

Leaders need to make intentional efforts to invite and include people in discussions who hold different viewpoints to their own. For this reason, ODOE strives to create a culture that values and appreciates all people for their individual differences and experiences.

To provide our employees a positive employment experience, we must have actionable priorities that include onboarding, inclusive internships, training and development opportunities, employee engagement, communication of DEI goals, and measured progress.

Strategies

- **Committing to DEI principles and incorporating them into employee communications, meetings, and daily activities.**
- **Quarterly performance accountability feedback discussions include a discussion of how managers are applying inclusion and equity in their daily activities.**
- **Enhancing the internship program by seeking funds to provide paid internship opportunities.**
- **Encouraging remote work to reduce transportation barriers.**
- **In addition to providing an accommodation when asked, looking for ways to ensure people with disabilities can participate in ODOE events.**
- **Supporting employees in seeking new opportunities and in creating individual development plans.**
- **Commitment to identifying developmental opportunities to build appropriate skills to help employees meet their current and future career goals within the agency or within the**

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enterprise.

- **Facilitating DEI trainings as effective tools for employees to identify their own unconscious bias in the workplace and develop a cultural competency for creating an inclusive workplace.**

To build an inclusion-based culture, it is essential to engage new employees in an orientation process that allows the new employee to learn about the organization and its structure, culture, vision, missions, and values.

ODOE's Human Resource Section has been leading efforts and providing guidance to agency leadership on how to recruit, retain, promote, and support a diverse workforce, cultivate a culture of inclusion and belonging, and incorporate equitable and just approaches into the organization's objectives and day to day operations. The commitment at all levels of authority, as well as the facilitation of high-performing teams, are key results.

To ensure that equity is included in the agency's policies and actions, ODOE commits to the effective execution of programs that support our workforce. Integrating equality into the agency's recruiting process and the development of agency practices is necessary for the successful execution of these initiatives across the agency.

ODOE is dedicated to fostering an inclusive, respectful, and safe working environment where employees can reach their full potential and support the success of the organization. We strive to be a model employer in preventing and addressing workplace harassment, fostering a safe work environment, and maintaining a climate of fairness, equity, dignity, and respect in the workplace.

Employee Engagement

Employee engagement relates to the connection employees feel toward the work they do, their teams, the organization, and the community they serve.

Strategies

- **Work to ensure employees understand the significance of their role in a larger organization and are energized and enthusiastic about where they see themselves in its purpose and objectives.**
- **Ensure employees have a voice to offer ideas and express views that are considered.** Employee engagement is a key differentiator when it comes to growth and innovation.
- **Successfully advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion requires direct engagement from the management within the agency and holding all employees to the same accountability.**

Accountability

We pledge to provide all Oregon residents equal access to our services and programs. Our employees will treat everyone with respect and dignity and will not discriminate based on age, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, military status, language preferences, nationality, parental status, physical, mental, and developmental abilities, race, religion, sexual orientation, skin color, socio-economic status, work and behavioral styles, and the perspectives of each individual influenced by their own nation, experiences, and culture.

Supporting the needs of Oregonians, and removing barriers to services, will serve not only our external partners, but initiates a dialogue that will resonate throughout the agency and support diversity and inclusion in our culture.

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Service Delivery

Through our agency vision for a safe, clean, equitable, and sustainable future, ODOE recognizes that we are working toward an energy future that prioritizes protecting and supporting members of currently and historically underserved communities, including those most impacted by systemic racism, racial injustice, and implicit bias. As discussed above, ODOE's strategic plan includes objectives and specific initiatives to advance an imperative to build practices and processes to achieve more inclusive and equitable outcomes. Our agency's vision is for a safe, equitable, clean, and sustainable future.

As ODOE Director Janine Benner stated in a recent speech to law students and as is posted on ODOE's blog:

We know the path [to a clean energy transition] needs to lead toward a more equitable energy future. It's clear this clean energy transition needs to move forward in a way that doesn't leave any Oregonians behind.

If you go read the [history timeline](#) from the [Biennial] Energy Report, you'll see that past energy transitions were not always equitable. For example, as the region installed large hydropower facilities – dams – that generated vast amounts of electricity, these dams blocked the flow of our rivers, flooded sacred fishing grounds, and launched the decline of native salmon populations.

Past programs to incentivize energy efficiency improvements or renewable energy purchases were not equitable. Oregon used to have tax credits for efficient appliances and rooftop solar. In most cases, only homeowners with a tax appetite could take advantage of those incentive programs. They were out of reach for Oregonians with low or moderate incomes who didn't have the upfront capital to afford improvements. I'm proud that the new incentive programs that ODOE is running avoid some of these issues, in part because they are in the form of grants and rebates instead of tax credits — and also because we are proactively working to make them available to Oregonians with low and moderate incomes and who live in environmental justice communities.

As discussed earlier in this document, implementation of the federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act and the Inflation Reduction Act presents an immediate opportunity for ODOE to further this commitment to protect and support members of communities impacted by systemic racism, racial injustice, and implicit bias. Through the Justice40 initiative, the Biden-Harris administration is seeking to invest federal dollars to benefit communities that have been historically disadvantaged. Under Executive Order 14008, the Biden-Harris Administration is seeking to provide that 40 percent of the benefit of these funds serve disadvantaged communities. This complements the administration's comprehensive approach to advancing equity in line with Executive Order 13985. This means that in spending the federal dollars coming to Oregon through ODOE, we are committed to ensuring that 40 percent of the investments benefit disadvantaged communities.

As we apply for federal funding and implement related programs, ODOE will be working directly with communities to develop ways to determine whether and how investments are benefiting disadvantaged communities. Federal funding and program timelines add urgency to this activity. For example, in the spring of 2023, ODOE is working to develop a grid resilience program responding to the "Preventing Outages and Enhancing the Resilience of the Electric Grid" opportunity from the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. As part of the application, ODOE has committed to an objective to deliver benefits to disadvantaged communities, as defined by the Justice40 initiative, and nine federally recognized Tribes in Oregon, and to support Justice40 Initiative goals through grid infrastructure improvement projects. Metrics that the agency will use to demonstrate progress toward this objective

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include: number of service disruptions among disadvantaged communities or federally recognized Tribes, duration of electricity service disruptions among these populations, and number of utility customers in disadvantaged communities or federally recognized Tribes affected by electricity service disruptions. We will be working to further refine program objectives, metrics, and criteria for future years of program funding that include lessons learned from previous application cycles.

Other programs at the agency similarly prioritize investments in currently and historically underserved communities, including the Community Renewable Energy Grant program. Under this program, at least half of the grant funds are to be awarded to projects that serve environmental justice communities, including communities of color, lower-income communities, rural communities, and others. The program design and implementation guidance were developed in partnership with an advisory committee comprised of diverse representation including counties, cities, Tribes, and organizations representing environmental justice communities. This advisory committee was instrumental in providing guidance on program rules, establishing program equity metrics, adopting a methodology to identify qualifying communities, supporting statewide community outreach efforts, and developing an application review processes that brings in expertise from environmental justice communities.

ODOE periodically communicates progress on our strategic plan, including on objectives and initiatives related to achieving more inclusive and equitable outcomes. We provide updates to the Energy Advisory Work Group and post dashboards that measure progress on our [website](#). The status of some of the most relevant objectives (as of [May 2023](#)) include:

- Increase diversity of agency stakeholder groups, rulemaking, oversight, and advisory boards: ODOE is sending out a voluntary survey to existing boards and advisory bodies to determine the baseline for this objective. The information will also help us identify gaps in perspective in our advisory committees and inform our recruitment approach for new members.
- Year-over-year increase in the percent of agency job applicants identifying as Black, Indigenous, and People of Color: this metric has increased each year since we started measuring it. In 2019, 19.1 percent of our job applicants identified themselves as people of color. In 2022, 39 percent identified themselves as people of color.
- Year-over-year increase in agency engagement with organizations representing historically and currently underserved populations: the agency has struggled to measure this objective, but proxy data show an overall increase. Staff are working to better delineate populations and communities in our tracking mechanisms.
- Year-over-year increase in the percent of historically and currently underserved populations and communities participating in ODOE programs and services: since the creation of this metric, the number of incentive programs at the agency serving historically and currently underserved populations and communities has increased from one (Oregon Solar + Storage Rebate with set-aside for Oregonians with low and moderate incomes) to six incentives programs with additional incentives, reserved funding, or a prioritization for environmental justice and Oregonians with low incomes. While we have not yet collected enough demographic data to specifically identify who these programs are serving, we are using the number of programs as a proxy.
- Increase in agency Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion awareness and fluency: the agency has sponsored and supported staff participation in numerous DEI courses since the adoption of our strategic plan, including a mandatory all-staff Intercultural Effectiveness Study in 2021. The results of that study have enabled leadership to determine which areas of cultural awareness need additional attention.

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Another relevant initiative from our strategic plan that will evaluate and improve efforts with respect to racial equity is a strategic evaluation of each of our programs. Oregon's energy system has changed substantially since ODOE was created in the 1970s, including an increased understanding of how past energy programs, policies, and processes have contributed to racial and income inequities. Under this initiative, in service to the imperative to assess and modernize agency programs and activities, ODOE will evaluate each of our programs to make sure they are effectively delivering on our mission. We have developed a set of criteria on which to evaluate our programs, including questions of equity and accessibility such as: Who benefits and who is burdened by each program? How do our programs advance equity? Is information about the programs or provided by the programs accessible? Are there avenues for public engagement and transparency? The evaluation will also involve seeking feedback from participants/customers of the programs to help us determine how well we are providing services and meeting the needs of communities.

As we have increased the amount of engagement with and requests for feedback from currently and historically underserved communities, we have learned that these communities are often resource- and capacity-constrained. To support their engagement, we look for ways to compensate people for their time and involvement. Where possible, we offer stipends to participants in our processes, such as the external evaluation committees that are established to help provide a competitive review of Community Renewable Energy Program grant applications.

ODOE looks forward to continuing our Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion journey in partnership with historically and currently underserved populations and communities. While our strategic plan clearly embeds equity in its goals, actions, and metrics, it includes a specific initiative to work closely with our community partners to develop a DEI Action Plan that can guide our work, both internally and externally, to improve our relationships and ability to serve currently and historically underserved communities. Through the work described in this document, including building relationships with currently and historically underserved communities, we have made significant progress on this initiative. Through this work we can further our existing efforts to conduct outreach in a way that supports racial equity and inclusion and removes barriers to participation in agency activities. We recognize that this will involve meeting people where they are and continuing to offer support for their time and participation.

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FOR MORE INFORMATION

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