

Environmental Justice Task Force

Operating Principles (Draft)

Proposed: September 30, 2019

Adopted: _____

EMBRACE EQUITY

Equity is a journey toward well-being, where everyone has the opportunity to reach their full potential, as defined by those impacted by inequity. Equity is not equality—equity acknowledges that everyone is not starting from the same place. Equity is achievable and requires unwavering commitment to prioritizing resources and supports toward communities of color and other marginalized communities. Achieving equity requires us to identify, name, and dismantle institutional racism and oppression.

FOCUS ON RACISM

We are committed to promoting equity for all historically marginalized communities. We recognize that different forms of discrimination and oppression are related to each other, and we will strive to take these relationships into account. However, we also recognize that racism is ingrained in our history and deeply embedded in our institutions today, leading to the inequities we see across all sectors. Therefore, while we seek to challenge and undo all forms of oppression, we are committed to centering racism as our primary focus.

CENTER COMMUNITY

We recognize that we can only achieve equity if communities impacted by inequities are at the center of our work. We acknowledge that communities know best their assets, needs, and solutions. We strive to recognize and share power and structure our meetings to foster meaningful engagement. Stakeholder and community engagement will be intentional. We will create opportunities as a Task Force, individual members, and staff to listen, learn, and seek input to guide our work. We will strive to incorporate stories of lived experience into our reports and recommendations.

COMMIT TO BOLD ACTION

Inequities exist because of racism and oppression that hinder opportunities for communities to thrive. Eliminating racism and oppression requires revolutionary change. We commit to using the authority we have and our collective influence to propose changes that interrupt and dismantle historical systems of oppression. We will use our time in Task Force meetings to engage in discussions that lead to actionable recommendations. We will commit as individual Task Force members to be bold and serve as champions for equity in our respective roles.

BE VIGILANT FOR UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES

Policy, program, and budget decisions can have adverse unintended consequences if equity is not intentionally and systematically considered. We commit to using an equity lens in the development of recommendations as a Task Force and in our decisions as individual members. We honor the Seven Generation Principle¹ as standing in the present, while looking back three generations to the wisdom and experience of our ancestors, thinking about issues in the current context, and planning forward for three generations for the protection of our children and the generations to come.

¹ We acknowledge the Tribal and Urban Indian Pulling Together for Wellness Leadership Advisory Council, American Indian Health Commission for Washington State for sharing this articulation of the Seven Generation Principle.