

Environmental Justice Task Force Operating Principles

Adopted: November 21, 2019

EMBRACE EQUITY

We use equity to strive for fairness and justice to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to meet their full potential. This includes the right to live and work in a healthy environment and shape decisions that improve the health of their environments. Equity takes into account disadvantage experienced by groups.¹ Equity is not equality. Equity is achievable, but requires prioritizing resources and support towards communities facing inequities. Our work prioritizes communities of color, workers, and low-income communities in both urban and rural regions of Washington. Embracing equity requires us to identify, name, and dismantle institutional racism, economic injustice, 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 take the intersections of various identities such as, but not limited to: the LGBTQIA+ community, women, people who are limited English proficient, people with low incomes and limited wealth, and people with disabilities into account. 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. We will seek to challenge and undo all forms of oppression, and are committed to making anti-racism work a primary focus.

CENTER COMMUNITY

We recognize that we can only achieve equity if the communities suffering from inequities where they live and work are at the center of our work. We acknowledge that each community knows their assets, and needs, and as such, can speak best to the viability and impact of proposed solutions. This is especially true when we build relationships with tribal governments and respect treaty rights. We strive to transparently recognize and share the power we have as representatives of our organizations, and to structure our meetings to foster meaningful, community-oriented 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, economic injustice, and systemic oppression that hinder opportunities for individuals and communities to thrive. Eliminating racism, economic injustice, and oppression requires bold change. We commit to using our power, privilege, and 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 principles of equity are 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, as a government entity, seek to understand that our decisions have long-term impacts. An example of that is the Seven Generation Principle² 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 Governor's Interagency Council on Health Disparities. Equity Language Guide. December 2018. Accessed November 11, 2019 <https://healthequity.wa.gov/Portals/9/Doc/Publications/Reports/EquityLanguageGuide_Final_.pdf>

² We acknowledge the Tribal and Urban Indian Pulling Together for Wellness Leadership Advisory Council and the American Indian Health Commission for Washington State for sharing this articulation of the Seven Generation Principle.