



DIVERSITY, OPPORTUNITY & INCLUSION STRATEGIC PLAN

May 2024



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DO&I COMMITTEE

The Department of Environmental Quality's (DEQ) leadership has continued its commitment to be Diverse, Fair and Inclusive by supporting the work of the agency's Diversity, Opportunity & Inclusion Committee (DO&I Committee). The DO&I Committee has developed a clear, multi-step strategic plan to assist all of us at DEQ to have a voice in the important work of protecting the environment. Members of DEQ's Leadership Team (LT) continue to act in an advisory role to review and provide guidance for recommended changes to agency policies, procedures, and structure.

The DO&I Committee takes a staff up approach, ensuring that all members of our DEQ family have an opportunity to influence and provide direction through internal feedback, committee membership, development of policies and practices, training and education, and the agency's DO&I Strategic Plan. The committee will aim to illustrate diversity from within by promoting membership that spans differences between people, including race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, tenure, geographical location, varying abilities, education, religion, and beliefs.

Committee members are committed to *Shaping DEQ's DO&I strategic direction; Developing DEQ's DO&I Strategic Plan; Identifying DO&I training needs & programmatic changes; and informing and educating through open, honest, and mindful dialogue.*

Committee Members:

Wendy Baker, Talent Acquisition Manager, Human Resources Office

Jerome Brooks (Co-Chair), Regional Director, Piedmont Regional Office

Lisa Hardy, Deputy HR Director for Talent Management, Human Resources Office

Stefanie Jones, Remediation Geologist, Northern Regional Office

Cortney Marquette, Project Officer, Office of Remediation Programs

Craig Nicol, Regional Director, Tidewater Regional Office

Carla Pool, Enforcement Adjudication Coordinator, Enforcement Division

April Rhodes, Stormwater Plan Review Manager, Ofc. of Stormwater Management

Renee Sacra (Co-Chair), Human Resources Director and **DEQ's Chief Diversity Officer**

STRATEGIC GOALS FOR 2024

In alignment with Governor Youngkin’s Executive Order 10, DEQ has committed to focusing on the three strategic goals outlined below for the 2024 plan. The associated objectives and strategies are expected to be fluid. We anticipate an expansion of, and changes to, our objectives and strategies over time as we progress in our knowledge, attitudes, and perceptions of DO&I in the workplace.

Additionally, DEQ contracted C. Parker Consulting to develop a survey to collect employee insights, perspectives, and experiences. The DO&I Committee worked with Dr. Parker to develop survey questions and a communication plan for the agency. The agency is in the process of finalizing a plan and schedule for deployment. The survey results will be used as a baseline and to gather information about the current DO&I culture and perceptions of encouraging and appreciating DO&I in the workplace.

DEQ also plans to deploy pulse surveys in the future that will be used as a feedback mechanism to evaluate the effectiveness of the recruitment and retention and training strategies outlined below, and assess progress in DO&I knowledge, attitudes, behaviors, and perceptions.

Goal 1. Access and Success

- Recruit and retain a qualified, diverse workforce by increasing access to diverse populations for recruiting.

Goal 2. Welcoming and Respectful Culture

- Create and sustain an agency culture that affirms and respects diversity and employs inclusive practices throughout daily operations.

Goal 3. DOI Infrastructure & Training

- Engage the workforce in learning the concepts of DOI, and the importance of these concepts to achieving our agency mission.

Goal 1: Access and Success: Recruit and retain a qualified, diverse workforce by increasing access to diverse populations for recruiting.

Objective 1: Continuous development and implementation of a comprehensive talent acquisition program that will build and maintain a highly qualified workforce which represents diversity in all aspects, to include race, color, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, age, physical ability, religion, veteran status, and thought.

Strategies:

- Identify and build diverse candidate pipelines at every level by utilizing diversity recruitment resources that will maximize a wide-range audience.
- Brand DEQ as the best option for veterans by highlighting the key aspects of DEQ that will resonate and connect well with veterans (e.g., team building, leave benefits, etc.).
- Utilize Department of Human Resource Management's (DHRM) MAP best practices for recruiting and retaining People with Disabilities.

Objective 2: Continuous review, modification and improvement of the agency's volunteer, internship, and apprenticeship programs to cultivate future talent pipelines and create accessible pathways to careers within DEQ for historically underrepresented and diverse populations. Implement intentional outreach to high schools to increase awareness of environmental study programs.

Strategies:

- Ensure that the selection and hiring processes for internships and apprenticeships is competitive and equitable in all aspects of employment and/or experience. Clearly identify equal opportunities that will create a win-win experience for the potential hire and the Agency. Ensure that the intern/apprentice is afforded, a valuable, experiential work experience.

Objective 3: Retain and promote a high performing workforce at every level which represents diversity in all aspects, to include: race, color, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, age, varying abilities, religion, veteran status, and thought.

Strategies:

- Analyze current policies and operations for barriers to DO&I to identify areas to focus efforts.
- Conduct a comprehensive DO&I review of workforce data.
- Collect employee feedback from multiple sources, including surveys and exit interviews to identify and address validated concerns.

Goal 2. Welcoming and Respectful Culture: Create and sustain an agency culture that affirms and respects diversity and employs inclusive practices throughout daily operations.

Objective 1: Establish a climate that is supportive, respectful and exudes a sense of belonging by incorporating Diversity, Opportunity, and Inclusion principles within DEQ. Promote DEQ Culture and Social Awareness by fostering employee engagement with employee morale boosting events and celebrations.

Strategies:

- Through employee surveys, identify the differences in employee experience and values across the organization so that we can better assess and create a culture that is inclusive.
- Offer educational and celebratory events that recognize, value, and honor diversity and promote inclusion.
- Identify and coordinate events for acknowledgment and recognition of different cultures and ethnicities throughout the year.

Objective 2: Ensure accountability at all levels. Continue to provide an environment where conflicts, concerns, and complaints are aired and addressed expeditiously.

Strategies:

- Facilitate opportunities to educate and implement accountability of DO&I at every level in the organization.
- Human Resources to provide avenues to report behavior contrary to DO&I principles and promote productive, structured methods of conflict resolution.
- Develop tools and resources and add DO&I topics to Manager and Supervisor specific training (emotional intelligence, appropriate language, etc.) for their use with ensuring consistency across DEQ when addressing DO&I topics and concerns within their teams.

Goal 3. DO&I Infrastructure and Training: Engage the workforce in learning the concepts of DOI, and the importance of these concepts to achieving our agency mission.

Objective 1: Identify and offer training opportunities for all employees that achieve the DOI learning goal including creating a common language of DOI competency so that terms and concepts are uniformly understood (e.g. using pronouns, use of terms such as gender-fluid, micro-aggressions, implicit bias, etc.).

Strategies:

- Through analysis of the survey data, design training needs assessment that identifies DO&I performance and knowledge gaps based on desired performance levels and learning outcomes.
- Ensure training programs are available to all employee, including through multiple modes of facilitation (e.g. classroom, virtual, online self-paced, etc.)
- Provide monthly DO&I awareness emails and other in-depth awareness opportunities for DEQ employees (topic of the month, DEQ talks, etc.) to help develop DO&I continual cultural competency.

Objective 2: Provide an accessible centralized, well-organized, and easy to follow, web-based center (one-stop shop) for tools and resources that DEQ employees can use to foster greater understanding of DOI learning goals (recorded webinars, documents, links to outside resources, list of online courses).

Strategies:

- Integrate cycle of assessment, evaluation, and improvement using employee surveys/feedback.

Objective 3: Provide resources and training for the Leadership Team, managers, and supervisors to address DOI topics, particularly in difficult situations requiring solutions beyond their experience.

Strategies:

- Set expectation of participation in DO&I initiatives by all LT members, and consistent messaging from agency leadership regarding the importance and value of DO&I.
- Engage agency leaders and key stakeholders in reviewing and analyzing reports to identify achievements as well as opportunities for improvement.

MEASURING AND EVALUATING SUCCESS

The Department of Environmental Quality is committed to measuring and evaluating its DO&I efforts and initiatives to ensure they are intentional and support the agency's mission, vision, and values. As we progress in our education and understanding of DO&I and the impact on our workforce, we will commit to reviewing and updating these measures to assess long-term effectiveness and success of our efforts and initiatives. The following are metrics that will be used to measure progress and evaluate effectiveness:

Goal 1. Access and Success

- Review and track demographic data from the state's applicant tracking system (RMS) showing expanded composition of the applicant pools across the various stages of recruitment and hiring.
- Review and track the number of new hires that represent diversity and were hired as a result of DO&I initiatives.
- Review and analyze the agency's disaggregated employment data, providing a clear picture of the diversity landscape at the agency.

Goal 2. Welcoming and Respectful Culture

- Track attendance, evaluate the participation rates, and solicit feedback for events to determine the level of interest and sustainability.
- Review and analyze survey results to gain fundamental knowledge regarding where staff think DO&I is within DEQ or what the "current" culture is.

Goal 3. DO&I Infrastructure & Training

- Review and analyze survey results to determine training needs and effectiveness of tools, resources, and strategies.