



Metro Parks and Nature Equity Advisory

Group Charter

April 2025

If you picnic at Blue Lake or take your kids to the Oregon Zoo, enjoy symphonies at the Schnitz or auto shows at the convention center, put out your trash or drive your car – we’ve already crossed paths.

So, hello. We’re Metro – nice to meet you.

In a metropolitan area as big as Portland, we can do a lot of things better together. Join us to help the region prepare for a happy, healthy future.

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This charter is a living document. It was first created in spring 2020 and reviewed and updated in spring 2024 and again in spring 2025. It will continue to be reviewed annually to check on progress and update as needed.

BACKGROUND

Metro Council adopted the Strategic Plan for Racial Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in 2016. The plan identifies racial equity as the best path forward to ensure that all people in greater Portland equitably help to define, share and benefit from living in a thriving, livable and prosperous region.

Metro benefits from the individual and collective wisdom of people of color and the experience of diverse communities. Metro must ensure these voices are integral to policy and planning processes.

In 2018, Metro's Parks and Nature department completed their Racial Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan. This Plan unifies Metro's commitment to racial equity, diversity and inclusion with the department's mission to connect people to nature while preserving and protecting water quality and fish and wildlife habitat. One of the priority actions in the Action Plan was to establish a standing equity advisory committee for the department.

In 2019, community members from across the region applied, were invited and formed a Parks and Nature Equity Advisory Committee (EAC). These members, who come from communities of color, help advance racial equity work throughout the department. These members bring a community-led racial equity perspective to the department's policies, programs, processes and projects, from system-wide efforts to individual projects.

EQUITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE PURPOSE

We are here as Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian and Pacific Islander, immigrant, refugee, able-bodied and disabled peoples bringing critical views and experiences to inform policies and practices of the agencies that manage the land on behalf of the public. We are the survivors of displaced people both native to this land as well as from many places around the world who recognize our interconnectedness and inseparability to place, culture and land, and that we need to be in connection with the places we live.

We are here because we know we are connected to the earth and the environment and that our survival is intertwined with the natural world. We are passionate advocates for nature stewardship.

We are here to learn the current structures that govern our systems, and to help frame and shape them into structures that authentically support all members of the diverse public.

We are here because we stand at the intersection of racial, social, cultural, economic, and environmental justice. We are passionate about nature and land and know that they are core to life.

We are here because we bring a diverse set of skills, abilities, and experiences to the table which inform how we work and how we innovate for changes in government to better reflect the needs of ALL people, not just those with traditional access to power.

We are here to increase the strength and resilience of our communities by working together, to learn from one another, and to take what we learn and apply it to how we work with government agencies.

We believe in belonging and equitable access to nature and government. We are here to advance racial equity, diversity, and inclusion and put them into action to bring the changes we want to see: Real access for all abilities, real inclusion of all people, real change.

We are here because we care profoundly, and we want to serve to the best of our ability to benefit everyone in our regional community.

EQUITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE VISION

We see the stories and history of all people across the landscape, through imagery, posters, brochures, websites, information, and language. We see all people reflected in the cultural elements throughout parks and nature design and architecture, the programs that are offered, and in park policies that support, include and welcome the most vulnerable in our communities. We know that our communities are a part of this place; past, present and future. When we look at who is experiencing these places, we see our communities reflected back to us; people from all walks of life, able-bodied and disabled, faith and non-faith, LGBTQIA+, and communities who represent the myriad cultures that we come from.

We see agencies that manage the land on behalf of the public as outward and engaging in creating a sense of belonging and welcoming for all people. We see our health as a reflection of the health of the land itself, interconnected, intersecting, and inseparable. We see spiritual practices and connections to nature alive and well as people come to our parks and nature areas to seek respite, relaxation, rejuvenation or connection to a higher power. We see young people connecting deeply, unrestrained and free to play, get dirty, explore, and be curious in the natural world.

We envision a future where we are all thriving and live within an inclusive system based in belonging. We are active in leadership to shape and build new places, policies, projects, programs, and processes. We recognize and honor the injustices of the past and have focused where healing needs to occur. We continue to center healing and to move forward to a stronger, more resilient, and racially, socially, environmentally and economically just, shared future.

DESIRED OUTCOMES

The Equity Advisory Committee and the Parks and Nature department will work together to ensure;

- There is opportunity for long-term relationship building and collaboration.
- Successful implementation of the Parks and Nature Racial equity, diversity and inclusion action plan.
- Committee members are meaningfully engaged in evaluating identified policies, programs, processes and projects.
- The committee provides clear, consensus-based recommendations and/or guidance to the department.
- Parks and Nature leadership participates in EAC meetings as needed to build relationships, trust, authenticity and transparency.
- Parks and Nature project managers clearly understand how to work with the EAC, bring them in at the right time for best use of their skills, and provide appropriate background information prior to work-specific conversations.
- Parks and Nature decisions recognize and respect contributions of the EAC.

WORK-AREA OUTCOMES

Between July 2025 and June 2026, the EAC and Metro will work together to:

Provide the EAC with adequate background knowledge and historical information of current and past department projects, and how Metro has engaged communities in the development of these projects.

Increase understanding for the committee of how Metro functions, including how Metro staff and Council develop and maintain policy.

Provide ongoing opportunities for EAC and staff throughout Parks and Nature to connect and build relationships.

Provide a facilitated space for EAC members to develop a shared understanding of core equity and diversity concepts.

Inform department work related to the implementation of the 2025-2032 Parks and Nature Racial Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (REDI) plan.

TERMS OF MEMBERSHIP

The committee will consist of 10 standing members. EAC members must live and/or work are in the Metro region for the duration of their term. Members are paid participants and receive a stipend of \$200 per attended monthly EAC committee meeting.

Service terms for committee members are two years with an option for renewal of up to three additional two-year terms (up to eight years total).

A member's position on the committee may be declared vacant if the member:

- Resigns from the committee (this should be in writing and forwarded to the Metro Parks and Nature department EAC committee liaison, who at this time is Jennifer (JP) Perrine: jennifer.perrine@oregonmetro.gov)
- Fails to attend more than one meeting per calendar year without prior notice.
- In the event of vacancy, a recruitment process will be co-created between department and committee members to fill those positions.

EQUITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE OPERATING GUIDELINES

Convening of Meetings

- To better match EAC members with the projects they're most interested in, monthly meetings may be of the full committee or of a subcommittee of 2-5 members who have expertise or interest in a particular project. Details about whether monthly meetings will be for the full committee or a subcommittee will be available at least 2 months in advance.
- Meetings will be held virtually via accessible video/phone conference software at an appointed and agreed-upon time and frequency.
- No more than six times per year, in-person meetings will be held at Metro Regional Center or Parks and Nature sites at times when people are most available to attend. These meetings will generally meet outside to connect and be in nature together, with the focus and emphasis on continuing relationship building and inter-committee and committee/Metro dialogue. The Metro staff liaison (at this time JP Perrine) will provide a scheduling poll to members at least three months prior to these gatherings and will send a calendar invitation to members the week after the poll closes.
- When meetings are scheduled in-person, they will be 2.5 hours, with half an hour dedicated to breaking bread together.
- When meetings are virtual they will be 2 hours, with the option to log-in up to 15-minutes before the meeting starts to ensure equipment is functioning appropriately.
- The Metro staff liaison will provide the previous meeting's minutes / actions / decisions AND meeting materials and agenda for the upcoming meeting at least 7 days prior to the next meeting via email, with additional phone follow-up for those who desire or need additional accommodation.

Conduct of meetings

- Meetings will be facilitated by the Metro staff liaison or a third-party facilitator.
- Meetings will end with a clear understanding of expectations and assignments for next steps.
- Meetings are expected to end at the appointed time.
- Metro staff support will keep a record of meeting attendees, key issues raised, and actions required.
- Comments from individual members will generally not be attributed and a verbatim record of the meeting will not be prepared.

Committee meeting agreements

- Have fun, laugh often
- Listen to understand
- Assume good intent, attend to impact
- Take space and give space. Be mindful of how much you're participating in the discussion.
- Speak your truth
- Come prepared on agreed upon assignments
- Manage gatekeeping and honor confidentiality
- No hidden agendas
- Be respectful
- Electronic devices on silent
- Say your name before speaking
- Share your knowledge, whether from your personal experience, or your knowledge of a topic
- It's okay to ask questions
- Share the story, not the person
- Honor the unique individual, family, and personal stories and history of each other.
- Recognize each other as representatives of different communities.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Equity Advisory Committee is an advisory group to Metro Parks and Nature.

Equity Advisory Committee members agree to:

- Provide specific community expertise, including identifying emerging local issues.
- Review materials provided and comment promptly when assigned to do so.

- Attend all meetings possible and prepare appropriately.
- Complete all necessary assignments prior to each meeting.
- Relay information to their communities after each meeting and gather information/feedback from their community members as practicable before each meeting.
- Articulate and reflect the interests that the committee members bring to the table.
- Maintain a focus on solutions that benefit the people and environment of the region.
- Discuss, ask questions, and give reflection, feedback and guidance to Metro Parks and Nature on department work regarding policies, programs, processes, and projects brought to the committee.
- Continue to learn how Metro operates to then share with community.
- In sharing your expertise with Metro, be an independent and honest voice.

Metro parks and nature staff and leadership agree to:

- Equip members to have the information needed to represent their role on the department's EAC to community members.
- Provide the EAC members the opportunity to collaborate, co-create and inform on department work to support the advancement of racial equity.
- Ensure that members of the Parks and Nature leadership team are available as needed at EAC meetings to listen, ask questions and connect, to ensure ongoing trust, relationship building and transparency.
- Ensure that project managers bringing work to the EAC have given the committee sufficient background information.
- Come to the EAC at the onset of the planning process and in advance of each decision point, allowing them to interact directly with decision makers rather than later as a review body.
- Keep the EAC informed quarterly of progress and how their guidance has supported department work.
- Provide an updated timeline of work projects related to policy, processes, programs and projects for the EAC to identify where they best want to focus their current efforts.
- Provide technical expertise and break down concepts into everyday language for conversation.
- Manage logistics for meetings, including food and any special accommodations.
- Explain the reasons if deviations are taken from EAC recommendations and provide insight on how to make improvements in the future for recommendations.

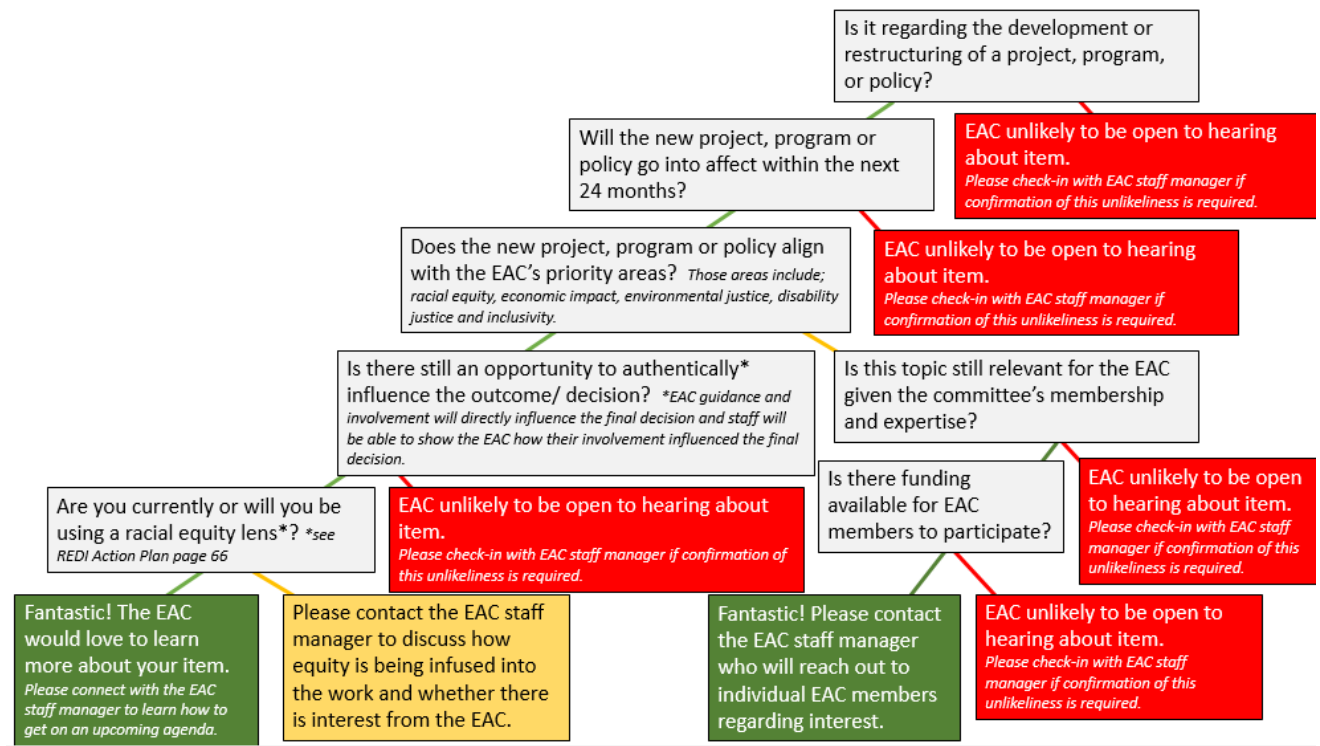
COMMUNICATION

- EAC members will be informed/reminded of meetings through email or by phone, depending on their preference, at least two weeks prior to the meeting.
- Meeting materials for review (including agenda and previous meeting minutes) will be provided no later than 7 days prior to the meeting.
- EAC members also have the opportunity to participate in coffee get togethers (in-person or virtual) with rotating members of the committee, including Metro parks and nature team members to build between meeting connections and relationship building. The Metro staff liaison will support this opportunity with check-ins during each regular meeting.

AGENDA SETTING AND MEETING FORMAT

- In-person meetings will provide a meal and time to break bread with one another.
- The agenda will take into account time for people to check-in and share updates.
- The agenda will maintain time in the schedule monthly, every other month, or quarterly as determined by the committee, for learning about Metro and processes of governance.
- The agenda will allow for time for people to ask clarifying questions before diving in deeply on to a topic for discussion.
- The agenda will create opportunities for small group discussions in addition to large group conversation.
- The agenda will have time for review of agreements and assignments at the end of each meeting to ensure mutual understanding of expectations prior to the next meeting.
- The agenda will provide opportunity for stretch or movement at least every 90 minutes for one to two minutes to support people's minds and bodies.
- In-person meetings at the Metro Regional Center will reflect accessibility needs of participants, including but not limited to the limitation of perfumes and scents, specific lighting needs, chairs without arms to accommodate different body types and sizes, as well as space for those using mobility devices.
- When meetings are held at the Metro Regional Center, items will be provided to support focus and listening (i.e. fidget spinners, legos, pipe cleaners, pencils/paper for sketching), in addition to nature elements (potted plants, etc.) to support a welcoming space and environment.

CRITERIA FOR DEPARTMENT WORK TO BE BROUGHT TO THE COMMITTEE



- For the 2025 - 2026 time period, projects brought to the EAC should be considered if they have the potential to affect:
 - Advancing racial equity
 - Economic impact in communities (via contracting, hiring, recruitment, grant-making, paid partnership, or via impacts to economic justice)
 - Environmental justice
 - Advancing successful outcomes for communities
- Projects should be early enough in development that the committee has capacity for impact rather than a “rubber stamp”. Presentations that are purely informational, without an opportunity to influence the development or implementation of a project, should not be brought to the committee. Examples of meaningful committee involvement include but are not limited to: voting among proposed options, opportunities for members to solicit and share feedback from their broader communities, refining a draft project plan, and contributing to the creation of transparency and accountability mechanisms for department projects.

- Project managers, with a solid understanding of their roles and responsibilities (see roles and responsibilities section) may submit proposed work to the committee through the Metro committee liaison.
- The committee will then have an opportunity to assess work they would like to take on 2025 - 2026.
- The committee will determine the portfolio of work to take on with consideration to timeline and potential for impact.

SUB-COMMITTEES

EAC committee members may decide they would like to focus on a particular area of interest that is not necessarily in the interest of the whole group. In this case, sub-committees may be formed. These will meet in lieu of the regular monthly meetings, in coordination with the Metro committee liaison.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION MAKING

The EAC is an advisory body. Where the committee comes together to discuss and make recommendations to project managers and Parks and Nature team members, committee members will strive to reach agreement by consensus at a level that indicates that all partners are willing to “live with” the proposed action.

Doing so will be done at the end of a dialogue period and will be done with a show of thumbs up (good to go), thumbs to the middle (can live with it) and thumbs down (do not approve of proceeding.)

If there are members of the committee in the thumbs down position, dialogue will continue to try to understand and assess those points which are up for contention before a final thumbs up / middle / down for recommendations to the parks and nature team members on their particular body of work.

Committee members will strive to work expeditiously and try to avoid revisiting recommendations once made.

If agreement cannot be reached on a particular issue, the committee acknowledges that the work team in charge will retain final authority on how to proceed.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

- When an issue arises that cannot be easily resolved, the EAC committee agrees to:
- Remember that relationships, trust, and transparency are central to moving the dial forward on racial equity.

- Determine if the issue should be resolved within or outside of the committee meeting, and participate however is appropriate.
- Ensure the appropriate decision makers are at the table to resolve the issue.