Uplift Oregon
Peer Equity Network 2023 Report

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Executive Summary

Uplift Oregon is charged with providing education to state employees in three areas: benefits, wellness, and equity. With the formation of the Office of Cultural Change in the Department of Administrative Services, and the issuance of the State Equity Plan, a common language is being developed for advancing equity. In this context, the Board of Trustees agreed to have Uplift Oregon organize a one-year peer learning cohort with the goals of:

1. Building a community of practice on equity
2. Supporting positive contributions to agency DEI Action Plans
3. Collecting and providing resources and tools for agency use

The program met the goals that were stated. Ninety-two percent of participants agreed that they had made relationships that would help them in doing equity and inclusion work. In the larger scheme, this community approach led to a hosted labor-management discussion about the opportunities and challenges of DEI work at the State of Oregon. Seventy-nine percent rated the program 5/5 stars – excellent "Unique, Helpful, Affecting and/or Transformative" with another 14% rated 4/5 stars – above average "Exceeded my expectations." The tools and resources gathered are on the Equity page of the Uplift Oregon website, and we are steadily adding more. In addition, the Office of Cultural Change is also in the process of creating a resource library of its own to be available to all agencies soon.

One of the vital factors regarding the second goal was the work of the consultant, Malika Edden Hill. She was tasked with meeting and coaching the individual agency groups to help them advance their own work and their own challenges in equity and inclusion. These meetings helped participants situate the learning and engagement of the monthly meetings into their own agency's context. In one instance, this led to Uplift staff meeting with managers of one agency to review and make recommendations for their DEI Action Plan based on the overall State DEI Action Plan.

Overall, the program was successful in what it set out to do, **and** it allowed participants, partners, and Uplift Oregon to forge solid, productive ongoing relationships in the DEI space in State of Oregon government. These relationships are an integral part of growing Uplift Oregon's role in equity training strategy and development moving forward.

Introduction & Background

The formation of Uplift's program started with the benefits workshop, Uplift Your Benefits. As that program solidified and reached over 80% of new employees, it was important to provide programming in the other areas of Uplift's charge. In the summer of 2022, the Board of Trustees approved a pilot program for equity to meet a few immediate needs (1) the importance of equity work across the enterprise is high, but there were few places of exchange, (2) through articulating a shared vision for what equity work could be through the Office of Cultural

Change's DEI Action Plan, and (3) opportunity to partner with the Office of Cultural Change toward that vision.

In late 2022, Uplift Oregon recruited State of Oregon staff from 8 agencies. Each agency, along with the union serving their staff, identified 4 candidates (2 represented, 2 management services) to participate in Oregon Peer Equity Network (OPEN).

State of Oregon Agencies participating in OPEN cohort 2023
Department of Agriculture
Department of Forestry
Department of State Lands
Department of Early Learning and Care
Department of Corrections*
Public Employees Retirement System
Department of Administrative Services
Department of Public Safety Standards and Training*

*DOC joined after participating in Facing Race in late 2022. DPSST dropped out early in 2023.

Uplift worked with the Office of Cultural change to identify 10 agencies that had similar numbers of staff, similar equity questions, and were interested in more support in developing their agency equity plans. The departments of Land Conservation & Development, Fish & Wildlife, and Oregon Administrative Hearings declined participation in the program.

The program launched by taking cohort members and Uplift Oregon staff to the Facing Race conference in Phoenix, AZ in November of 2022. There were several goals for bringing the cohort to the conference. We wanted to introduce state practitioners to other state practitioners. We wanted to show there is a national network of support. And we wanted to provide a baseline of information, as well as kickstart relationship building.

Conference participation was followed in 2023 by meetings held on the third Friday of each month from 9:00 AM to 1:00 PM. These meetings focused on topics relevant to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) work in state government. You can see more detail on those subjects in the "Program Structure" section. This subject matter was presented by Uplift Oregon's staff, as well as consultants and guests from the state agencies to provide real life examples of equity work in action.

Much of the content was drawn from the State of Oregon's own DEI Action Plan created by the Office of Cultural Change. This ample resource provides all the essentials for DEI work to be done in any agency within the enterprise of state government.

The subject matter was realized by the building of a brave space and a viable community to parse both challenges and insights into how to do equity and inclusion work within participant's own agencies. It allowed practitioners to have frank and honest conversations about subject matter as well as approaches to delivering subject matter to a variety of audiences within state government. These two things (brave space and building a viable community) were the

essential components to the success of this program to date. Because this work is largely transformational and relational, it is essential to engage these topics in community.

At the start of the program, there were 32 participants. Through attrition, the program finished with 22 participants. Of that 22, 15 were management services, and 7 were represented. This shift from a balanced labor-management approach shows one of the challenges of advancing long-term work. Uplift also sees an untapped resource in how to draw on the experience and skills of represented staff in more meaningful ways to expedite agency equity culture shift. The cohort had a spectrum of knowledge and experience in the subject matters of concern ranging from basic to expert understanding of the principles and practices of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Not all the agencies that began the program finished it. The Department of Public Safety Standards and Training did not feel that the content matched their expectations and stopped participating.

It was clear by halfway through the program that the social goals of the project were coming to fruition by how often and how many participants expressed wanting to spend more time in community working on and discussing solutions to these issues. Frequently, the terms "safe space," "authentic interaction," "insightful," and "valued" came up to describe how useful and meaningful these meetings were to those in attendance.

Participants

Participant selection was based on several factors outside of being union represented or management services. In the original project scope, the ideal candidates were described as –

> *…leaders who can act individually and collectively as a proactive change agent to address challenges and barriers to achieving equity, inclusion, belonging, and justice for all staff within state government.*

Agency Directors approved management services candidates, and union elected leadership approved represented staff. Once candidates were identified, they filled out interest forms that helped demonstrate their level of knowledge, experience, and desire to do diversity, equity, and inclusion work. There were a couple of challenges at the start of the program during recruitment in late 2022:

- Candidate selection was hurried because of the short timeline for conference registration and accommodation booking
- The need to find agreement between management and labor on proposed candidates

The first challenge was situational, and it was driven by our goal of kicking off the cohort with conference attendance. However, it did have an impact on the second challenge. It's our desire to build bridges between management and labor, and the hurried pace of recruitment could be an obstacle to negotiating consensus. We began the conversation with labor later than we did

with management at the state, and labor needed more time to work through their process of consultation and to reach agreement. The process also showed some of the challenges of how agency equity committees are set up, and who decides which candidates participate, and how mutual those decisions are between labor and management.

List of Participants

First Name	Last Name	Agency
Bryant	Campbell	BIZ
Naima	Chambers	DOC
Allison	Daniel	DSL
Megan	Donecker	Forestry
Ryan	Greco	Forestry
Deanna	Grimstead	Forestry
Karina	Guzmán Ortiz	ELD
Gabriela	Hernandez	ELD
Tamie	Johnson	PERS
Brian	Kirschner	PERS
Casara	Nichols	Forestry
Lindsay	Pearson	ELD
Louise	Plata	PERS
Timindra	Pratico	ODA
Toby	Primbs	ODA
Deborah	Rudd	DSL
Arin	Smith	DSL
Kristina	Stevens	ELD
Cameron	Stuckart	DAS
Christine	Vanderhoof	PERS
Lies	Wattimena	BIZ
Michael	Williams	ODA
Tash	Wilson	ODA
Jaclyn	Zatta	DSL
Ramesh	Grandhe	DAS

Program Goals

In the initial conversations with the Uplift Oregon board of Trustees, the following goals were discussed regarding the Peer Network project that became the Oregon Peer Equity Network (OPEN). These goals were:

Establish a peer network of 10 agencies to support the creation of, and action on, equity plans for their agency.

1. Establish a peer network of 10 agencies to support the creation of, and action on, equity plans for their agency.
2. Participants will improve upon or start an equity action plan for their agency. Network to meet monthly in 2023
3. Peer network will meet monthly, and participants will remain 70% consistent.
4. Peer network serves as a resource to further the work across agencies and labor-management positions.
5. Develop plan to take network to scale.
6. Benchmarks may include: Network participants report quantitative and qualitative improvements in their equity work over the course of the year. Participants have access to tools and resources relevant to their agency equity plans that they did not have previously.

While OPEN did not accomplish all of these goals, three of them were met fully, and one partially. As the OPEN program came online and the Office of Cultural Change was staffed, the goal of moving to scale was deprioritized. The Office of Cultural Change is the body tasked with developing enterprise-wide DEI approach, strategy, and accountability for the State of Oregon, and Uplift Oregon's role shifted to one of supporting the work and goals of the Office of Cultural Change as it grows and gains definition moving into 2024. That transition led to the goals for OPEN shifting to those outlined in the Executive Summary.

That said, participants remained consistent and over 70% attended each meeting. Many of the participants are now doing more formal DEI work in their agencies, and they have developed their toolkits and resources for doing this work. Other goals in the above list are on hold as the Office of Cultural Change comes online and directs the development of this work more formally.

Build community

The nature of engaging in equity and inclusion work can be isolating. The subject matter of the field is emotionally charged because of the overarching taboo nature of subjects concerning systems of oppression like racism, sexism, ableism, homophobia, xenophobia, and transphobia to name just a few. This experience can be compounded by staff having to navigate and experience oppression while trying to dismantle it through their work. Without a clear DEI plan from top leadership, most agency approaches will remain piecemeal and limited in scope.

The effort to build community serves two purposes: diminishing the feelings of isolation by providing a community of practice AND improving capacity for doing the work through the experience and gaining trust in the cohort. This emergent community led to feelings of empowerment, and that was a catalyst for action within their own agencies. The recommendation being that "they could build this where they are." We saw evidence of this through a participant who is a manager at PERS bring a training on bias to her department, as

well as update their hiring practices to account for bias. There were also a few instances of more senior DEI staff participants act as mentors and share resources with other participants who sought more understanding and options. These things were also shared out openly during cohort meetings which created a feeling of optimism and possibility.

Uplift hosted a community dinner at the Facing Race conference as a first step in bringing participants together over a shared meal. Our programming at the monthly meetings always provided ample time for participants to join in pairs, small groups, and open discussions. This created opportunities for teams to talk about their work, peers sharing experiences and opportunities, along with troubleshooting challenging situations. Uplift also provided a continental breakfast buffet for all participants at the monthly meetings.

The efforts to connect participants within their own agency groups were supported by bringing in Malika Edden Hill, MSW as a consultant to meet with and mentor agency groups on their specific work. Malika is a former Oregon Health Authority employee who had organized and developed similar efforts in her time at the agency and while she was involved at SEIU 503.

DEI Action Plans

In the initial phase of establishing direction for curriculum, we had considered focusing on crafting DEI Action Plans for their respective agencies. However, the governor had asked agencies to submit DEI Action Plans by June 1, 2023. This situation changed the nature and stakes of DEI Action Plans and placed them out of reach for about half of the cohort, who were volunteers in equity or multicultural committees, and DEI plans are usually led at the executive level.

Identify capacity

Through interactive exercises during the monthly meetings and agency team meetings with Malika, the capacity and challenges of each group became clearer and took shape. For some teams coming from a context of operating DEI efforts through a volunteer committee, they needed support on how to operationalize and solidify those committees' work. Malika helped the departments of State Lands and Agriculture to get policy drafted and accepted to formalize the structure, function, and decision-making power for their committees.

This effort coincided with the OPEN session focused on "Power" and "Power mapping," which focused on developing strategy for engaging partners and management to build capacity for equity work.

Collect & provide resources

On the program webpage, we had collected and shared relevant resources that ranged from documents, to web resources, to videos. Malika also provided a curated list of trainers in Oregon. Members of the cohort also shared a few resources through email, as well as a Teams forum that was created in Uplift's Teams channel. These resources still exist and can be found on this Uplift web page: https://www.upliftoregon.org/equity/

Program Structure

The program structure was iterative. We established some basic parameters and initial subject matter and cohort feedback to adjust trajectory and fulfill essential needs to lessen the gaps of knowledge and understanding between our cohort members.

At key junctures, we employed consultants to help clarify concepts and connect the learning to their own agency environments. Table 1 below is the subject matter journey that the 2023 cohort explored.

Table 1. Session Titles & Justification

Session #	Title	Why this?
1	Racial Identity: Who we are and what we bring	For cohort members to connect over how racial identity is formed across a lifetime, and what that means more broadly.
2	Racial Identity: Socialization, Power & Privilege	The cohort explored socialization's role in race & racism
3	Scott Winn: Leading with a Racial Equity Lens for Structural Transformation	Establish what, how, and why of racial equity in government. Strengthen the understanding of "targeted universalism" in practice through case studies.
4	Visioning: Defining the Way	Corrections presented their model for the work, ADKAR.
5	Mapping Our Way to Power	When working toward systemic change, it's helpful to understand where the power to make change lies and if there are any pathways to influence it. Power mapping is a helpful tool for engaging this level of DEI work.
6	Building Bridges with Stories – Julie Sifuentes	To highlight the role narrative and stories have in maintaining or changing our understanding of difference. Julie Sifuentes discussed elements of her "Staff of Color Story Project" done through the (Developing Equity Leadership through Training & Action) DELTA Program.
7	Reflecting through World Cafe	Interactive session to gauge progress, understanding, and assess needs of cohort members.
8	Agency Cohort Independent Work	Members were sent these recommendations in lieu of an in-person meeting. • For agencies that have a more developed DEI plan, take time to review the plan and

		see what stages or phases of development it addresses using the Office of Cultural Change's DEI Action Plan (extra points if you can list out what strategies are being used in the plan) • Meet in person with your colleagues and build out next steps for the DEI work that you are engaged in currently (build out your charter, etc.) • Read through the OCC's DEI Action Plan with attention to pages 12-29 • Have lunch with colleagues and spend time building community
9	Melinda Gross – Presentation and Q&A	The new Director of the Office of Cultural Change joined us to discuss the work ahead for the state, and she also answered questions from cohort members. This was helpful in establishing the overall vision for DEI work at the state.
10	Equity, Justice, and Labor	Leaders from SEIU 503, AFSCME council 75, and DAS OCC came together for a panel talk on the role of labor in changing culture at the State of Oregon. Followed by a Q&A and open discussion. The goal was to expand the context of influence and responsibility for DEI work in state government.
11	2023 OPEN Celebration	A recognition and celebration of the work done through the OPEN cohort in 2023.

Consultants

Scott Winn

Scott Winn is a racial equity consultant supporting a variety of entities, from grassroots organizations to government institutions, to address racial and other inequities by transforming systems, policies, and practices. He provides strategic direction, assessment, training, facilitation, and coaching. Recent consulting work ranges from supporting the grassroots "Community Alliance on Global Justice" to update its mission, vision, and theory of change; and providing racial equity training and implementation support for the leadership of the U.S. Department of Transportation, including Secretary Pete Buttigieg, and all members of the U.S.

President's Cabinet. Other current clients include KUOW, Fuse Washington, University of Washington, Metro (Portland, OR), and the City of Portland.

- Title of Presentation: "Leading with a Racial Equity Lens for Structural Transformation"
  - Explained the three levels of Racism: Individual, Structural, and Institutional.
  - Described racial equity skills and competencies.
  - Offered guidelines for critical dialogue.
  - Shared King County Youth Detention Facility case study in using a Racial Equity Toolkit from the City of Seattle.
  - Explained the distinction between "Strategies" and "Tactics" in the course of pursuing this work.
  - Shared a process for setting and measuring Racial Equity Outcomes.

After the workshop by Scott Winn, "Leading with a racial equity lens for Structural Transformation," I feel better equipped to be effective in furthering racial equity efforts in my agency.

20 Responses

Agree 75% — 15
Somewhat disagree 5% — 1
Somewhat agree 20% — 4

● Agree ● Somewhat agree ● Somewhat disagree
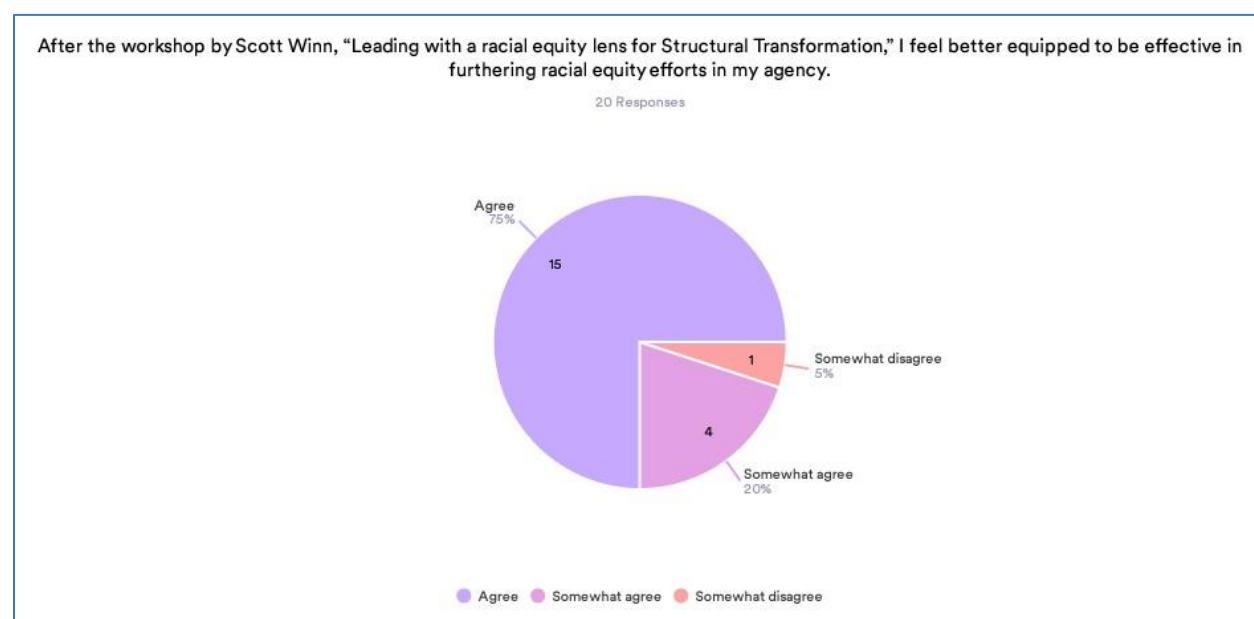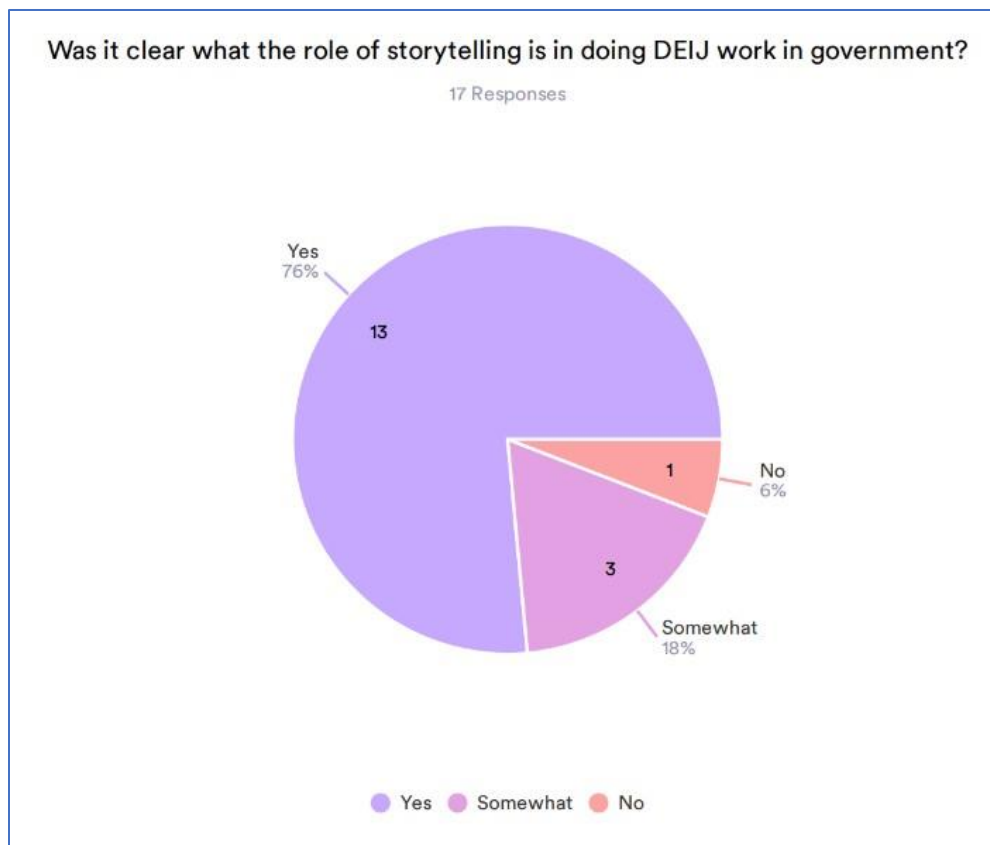
Malika Edden Hill

Malika Edden Hill, MSW, worked at the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) in the Reproductive Health Program as the Health Education Coordinator for more than 5 years, and then transitioned to support the Covid Response and Recovery Unit/Public Health Directors office as an Equity Liaison. While she was at Oregon Health Authority, she had the opportunity to get involved with her union, SEIU 503, and was on the State's Central Bargaining team. This opportunity helped her to become more engaged in union work, including being an original trustee for Uplift Oregon. The following quote is representative of the overall feedback we received from participants regarding Malika:

> *I appreciated having additional 1:1 time with a leader in this space to help me and my colleagues continue the conversation on DEI in our workplace. Not only was it helpful*

to keep the dialogue open and ongoing between OPEN meetings, but it also provided a more intimate setting where my colleagues and I felt safe disclosing setbacks in our work and having someone's undivided attention in helping us move forward. -Allison Daniel, DSL
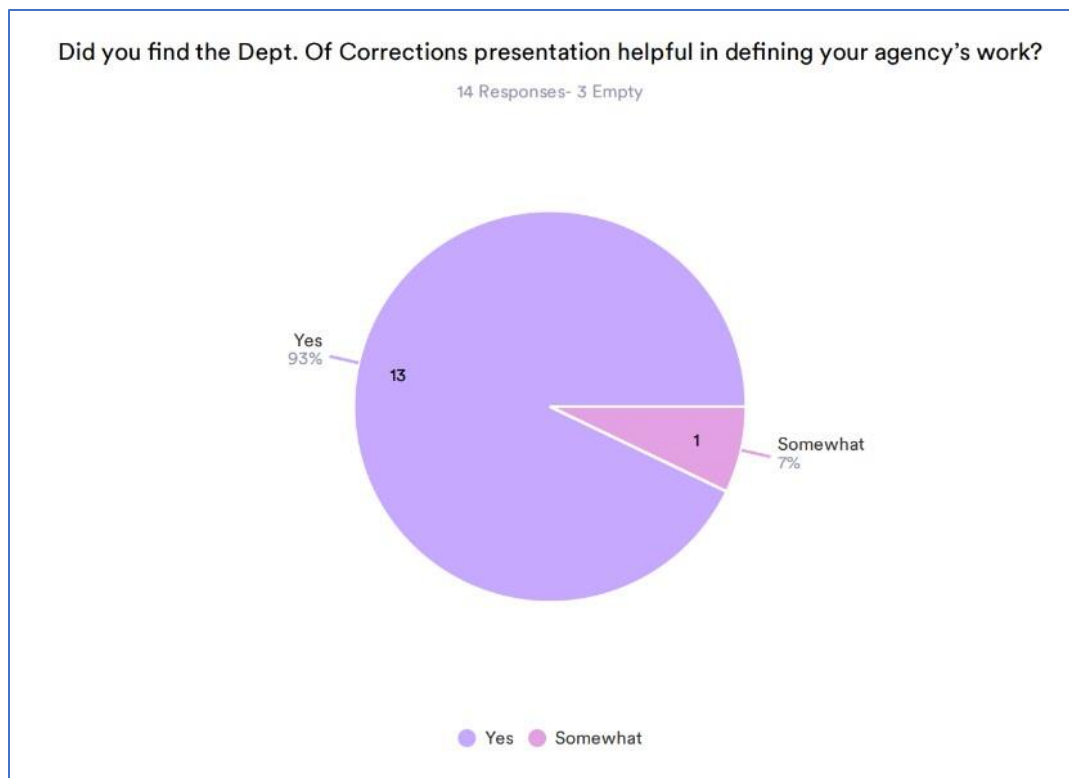
Julie Sifuentes: Oregon Health Authority

Julie Early Sifuentes (she/ella) is a mother and daughter with deep family roots in the Peruvian Andes and in Oregon. Julie's professional roots are in cultural anthropology and community-based participatory research. She is passionate about collaborative storytelling as a powerful strategy to create social change, resilience, and healing. Julie has worked in environmental public health at the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) for 18 years and has continually sought opportunities to incorporate storytelling into the projects she is working on. She facilitated a Staff of Color Story Project to bring the lived experiences of staff of color to inform OHA decision-makers. She also led three collaborative storytelling/research projects for the Climate and Health Program that elevated the voices of communities disproportionately affected by climate change: Voices of the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, Climate Change and Social Resilience, Climate Change and Youth Mental Health. Outside of OHA, Julie founded the storytelling project Peace Corps Kids that aims to create a sense of belonging among multicultural and multiracial people and families who were brought together through the Peace Corps experience.

Was it clear what the role of storytelling is in doing DEIJ work in government?

17 Responses

Yes 76% — 13
No 6% — 1
Somewhat 18% — 3

Yes • Somewhat • No

Naima Chambers: Dept of Corrections

Naima is the founder and CEO of the Tri-Cities Diversity & Inclusion Council (TCD&IC) 501(c)(3) and organizer of the Tri-Cities Collective Black Voice. Naima is a certified Trauma Informed Care Facilitator and is currently working on her Certified Diversity Professional (CDP®) credentials. Naima is an ASCENT Leadership graduate and holds two DEI certifications in addition to Continuous Quality Improvement and Real Colors/Real Teams. With core competencies in Behavioral Intervention and Cognitive Restructuring, she has over 20 years' progressive law enforcement experience using trauma informed practices for youth and adults in custody. Naima is a DEI leader and trainer for officers, managers, and staff members of the Oregon Department of Corrections where she is the Program Manager over Equity, Inclusion, and Organizational Change. Naima also sits on the Oregon State DEI Conference Planning Committee. Naima brings the lived experience of a multiracial, multicultural family. Naima also serves as the Vice Chair of the City of Pasco Inclusivity Diversity and Equity Commission (IDEC). Naima sits on the Washington Historical Society's Black History Project Advisory Committee. She is a member of the myTRI 2030 Inclusion Council, Tri-Cities WA Chapter of The Links Incorporated, African American Community Cultural & Educational Society (AACCES) and Tri-Cities Racial Equity & Social Justice (RESJ) Coalition while also volunteering for the Washington Immigrant Solidarity Network (WAISN) and Tri-Cities Mutual Aid Fund.

Did you find the Dept. Of Corrections presentation helpful in defining your agency's work?

14 Responses- 3 Empty

Yes
93%
13

Somewhat
7%
1

● Yes ● Somewhat

Impact: How has this equity network impacted the way you "do" your work or how you contribute, or the lens with which you view your work?

I'd say my time with OPEN has greatly improved my understanding of the nuances that exist in the ways we CAN conduct equity work, either subtly or explicitly. Coming into this program, I had a base-level understanding of what DEI in the workplace looked like. Coming out of it, I feel much more well-versed in DEI: what it means to me, what my role is and can be, where and how DEI plays out, where it isn't yet playing out and can use improvement, etc. I feel far more equipped to have conversations with others about DEI and to help move the needle at my agency.

—Allison Daniel, OPEN cohort member (DSL)

DEI&A is consistently at the forefront of my decision making. Evaluating my decisions and how I move through the world as well as guiding others. See something, say something.

—Christine Vanderhoof, OPEN Cohort member (PERS)

Uplift has provided me with so much training on how to just be a more considerate human being. As a new manager, going through this program has helped me understand and value

cultural differences. Diversity can make all the difference in our organizations. The ability to see things in aspects that I couldn't come up with on my own can greatly improve the service we provide for our customers, the people of Oregon. Uplift has also opened my eyes to the lack of diversity we have in our organization, and I am making it a personal goal to change that.

—Casara Nichols, OPEN cohort member (Forestry)

I have become even more dedicated to making a difference within my team, our agency, and even the PTA at my son's school. I am putting some of what I learned into recommendations for our agency's DEI Plan for the Plan, in educating my team, in adding DEI questions and statements into my interviews. I would say participating in this cohort has renewed my spirit with a passion for DEI work. That being said, I also believe that there is a lot more work that this cohort can do, we've seemingly barely scratched the surface, and I would encourage the powers that be to highly consider continuing this cohort, in a Phase 2, to not stop the momentum that has been started. This cohort provides the support, the grease in the spokes so to speak, that lifts people up to continue this important work.

—Tamie Johnson, OPEN cohort member (PERS)

The above statements were shared through post-workshop surveys, one of the sources for understanding cohort development and needs. Below are other insights that were shared or observed outside of formal survey collection:

- What side conversations happened?
  - Some details on the climate of DEI within different agencies
  - Challenges within workgroups on managing internal tension between being problem focused versus solutions focused
  - Brainstorming ideas on finding appropriate analogs for concepts to help people with expertise in a certain field connect and understand the value and importance of DEI work
- What changes did we observe over time?
  - Growing trust and familiarity led to deeper conversations about innovative ideas for policy change, transformation of internal agency structures, as well as new approaches to data gathering and usage.
  - Some groups were already implementing changes within their power. For example, one of the participants from PERS transformed their hiring process to be more equitable and bias aware.

Evaluation Methodology

Evaluation was largely done through voluntary feedback surveys sent out 30 minutes prior to the end of in-person sessions via JotForm. The same methodology was used to assess the impact of attending Facing Race. Additionally, there was an hourlong debrief session via Teams Meeting for Facing Race attendees.

Some of the Evaluation Questions used during the program
Was it clear what the role of storytelling is in doing DEI work in state government?
Did you find the breakout sessions helpful in normalizing the conversation on race?
Did you find the Dept. Of Corrections presentation helpful in defining your agency's work?
Did the in-class power-mapping activity help you find ways to build partnerships for equity work in your agency?
What is one thing you took away from the World Café activity?

Later in 2023, there were evaluative activities used in sessions: World Café and a couple of small group feedback and list-building activities. The feedback surveys were largely focused on programmatic effectiveness for Uplift Oregon, and the in-session activities were focused on the experience and needs of DEI practitioners of different stripes within the state enterprise.

There was also a demographic survey to capture elements of our participants regarding:

- Race/Ethnicity
- Ability
- Language
- Age
- Salary
- Sexual orientation
- Gender identity
- Veteran status

The categories and questions were based on the Oregon Health Authority's approach to collecting demographic data in a way that allows the identification of access and equity for communities who have historically been marginalized. It's because of this that we are not providing a chart describing the racial makeup of the cohort using the federal array of 5-6 categories. Here are some of the results from that survey to help paint the picture of our participants beyond their words shared throughout this report. To see more detail, refer to Appendix I.

The average OPEN cohort member:

- >40 years old.

- identifies as female.
- 44% of respondents report something other than "Straight."
- 68% of respondents make over $70k annually.

Results, Challenges, and Discussion

Programmatically, we were concerned overall with relevance, usefulness, and applicability of the material presented to and the discussions had by the cohort. The following two figures are taken from a survey we conducted at the 6-month mark during the cohort:

Figure 1. Relevance of Material

Has the material so far been relevant to doing this work in your agency?
% of Respondents

- Yes
- Somewhat
- No

4%
18%
78%

Figure 2. Relationship Development

I have developed a relationship(s) with people that will help me with this work?
% of Respondants

- Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Disagree

8%
33%
59%
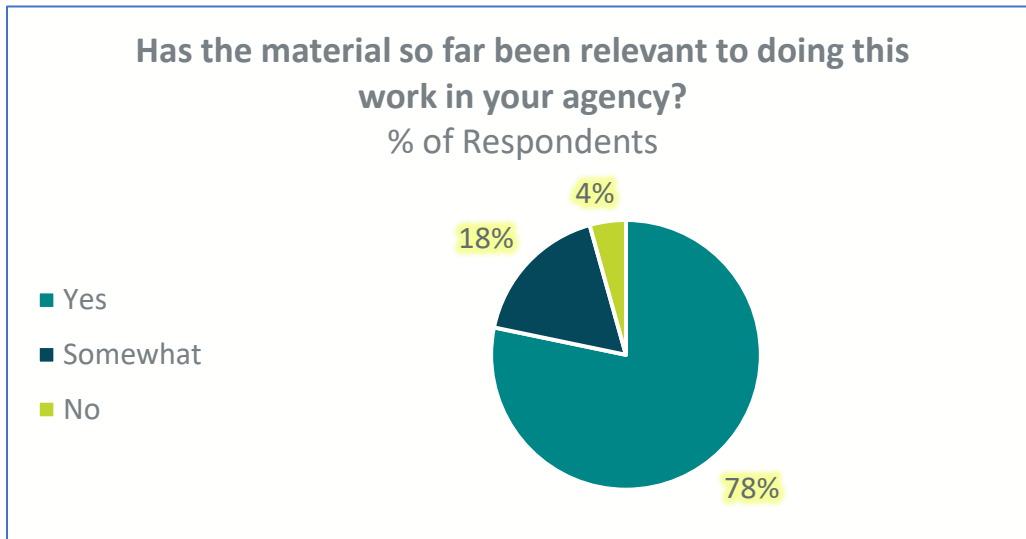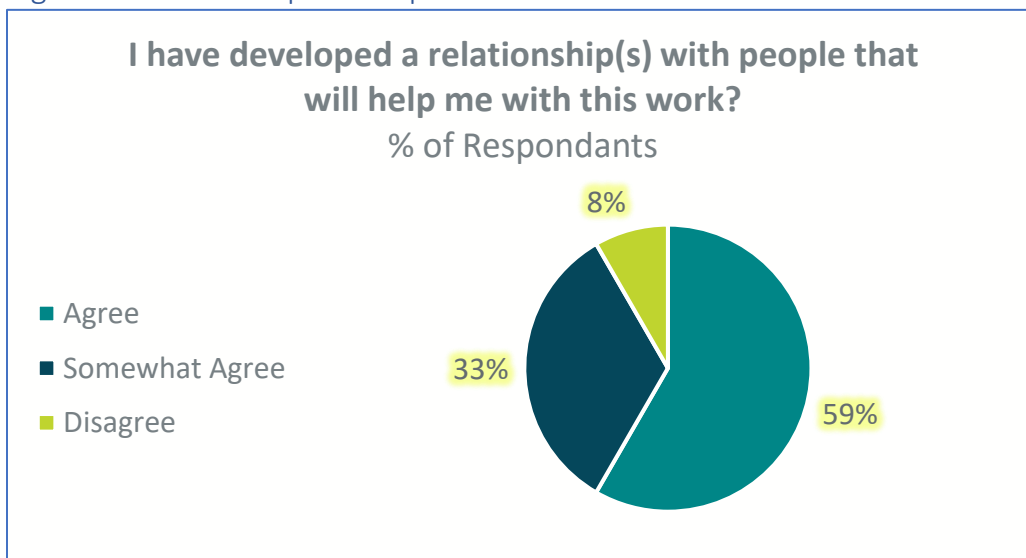
Other things began to emerge from side conversations with Uplift staff and meetings with consultant Malika Edden Hill. One example comes from a discussion with a staff member from the Forestry cohort wherein they felt that linking the discussion of staff diversity to the concept of "biodiversity" might be a more effective way of discussing the value and importance of staff diversity. That discussion led to an overall insight of seeking relevant metaphors that fit the agency or audience for learning about DEI concepts.

In-between Meetings for Agencies with Malika Edden Hill were very informative in terms of the specific needs of agency groups and individuals within each group. Below is a table of the major goals each agency group worked toward:

DAS	DSL	DPSST	ELD	ODA	ODF	PERS	BIZ*	DOC*
DEI Action Plan	Build their DEI Committee	Hiring	Start a DEI Committee	Hiring	Support ERG's (Employee Resource Groups)	Survey staff of Color to understand about employee engagement	Trainers and facilitators for DEI work	DEI Action Plan
DEI Dashboard (workday)	Participate in creating the agencies DEI Plan	Support for small agencies who are new in their DEI work	Create DEI Policies	Training for staff	Support female identified staff	Trainings for Staff	Hired a consultant to help with their DEI plan	
	Internal culture change		Create an Internal Civil Rights Process	Internal culture change	Internal culture change	Focus on hiring	Created a community engagement policy around paying communities for their expertise.	
	Increase staff of Color		Create an External Civil Rights Process		Increase staff of Color	Support staff of Color		

*Both Business Oregon and Department of Corrections OPEN members had decades of experience in the field, and they were far ahead in learning and implementation of this work.

Challenges:

- There were difficulties that arose regarding discomfort when engaged in personal reflection on equity and racial justice conversations that led to misunderstanding and attrition for some participants. This is directly relevant to the broader context of the enterprise. It suggests a need for a tiered approach to staff education, as well as compulsory components.

- BIPOC/LGBTQ2SIA+ staff need different equity offerings that consider their intersectional experiences. The lived experiences of historically marginalized communities often give them a clearer understanding of oppression in systems.

- The support learners in the cohort needed was dependent on where they were on their own learning journey for this subject matter;

  - *Beginners* = in-person support is important to process the novel and sometimes dissonant information depending on their own background and experience.

  - *Intermediate* = support is available and accessible as needed.

  - *Advanced* = supportive cohort to have community in doing the work.

- The stories and information the cohort shared from their own experiences and understanding ranged from uninformed to very helpful. This is the nature of a mixed-level learning cohort in DEI work. The uninformed stories sometimes led to retraumatizing or placing a burden of emotional labor on members from historically marginalized communities. This is not always avoidable in these spaces, but it deserves more critical reflection on the focus and purview of a cohort. These situations support the need for tiered learning approaches described above.

- There were also instances where the concept of equity was used to stymy efforts to do the work. One participant shared that they were told by their human resources department to stop doing equity training for their section because it was inequitable that not all parts of the agency were able to receive the training. This is also a case demonstrating confusion between the concepts of equity and equality.

- Conducting the meetings as hybrid virtual/in-person led to a disparity between the experiences of participants. This was not the most effective way to approach this work. At the outset, COVID-19 restrictions were slowly being removed, yet some participants requested the option for personal safety reasons.

- Post-workshop Survey response rate was rarely above 70%.

Conclusions & Recommendations:

Overall, the Oregon Peer Equity Network was effective at building a learning cohort and a community of practice regarding equity and inclusion work. Key indicators were:

- Participants connecting across agencies outside of the cohort meetings for advice, help, or collaboration on equity projects.
- Agency groups improving their equity or multicultural committee output and standing within the equity work being done at their agencies.
- Changes to policy and practice that improve equity and inclusion within their agency.
- Clear asks and indicators that participants want to continue this cohort work into 2024 and beyond.

In considering the wider enterprise of state government overall, it's important to embrace the fact that equity, inclusion, diversity, justice, and belonging work is relational, reflective, and translational. As such, it demands more time and training resources to achieve goals of cultural change on multiple levels. It's vital to consider doing this work in cohorts and learning communities, as that is how we engage and embed culture in our own lives.[1] These are the broader agency recommendations we have based on the challenges described by participants during the 2023 cohort year.
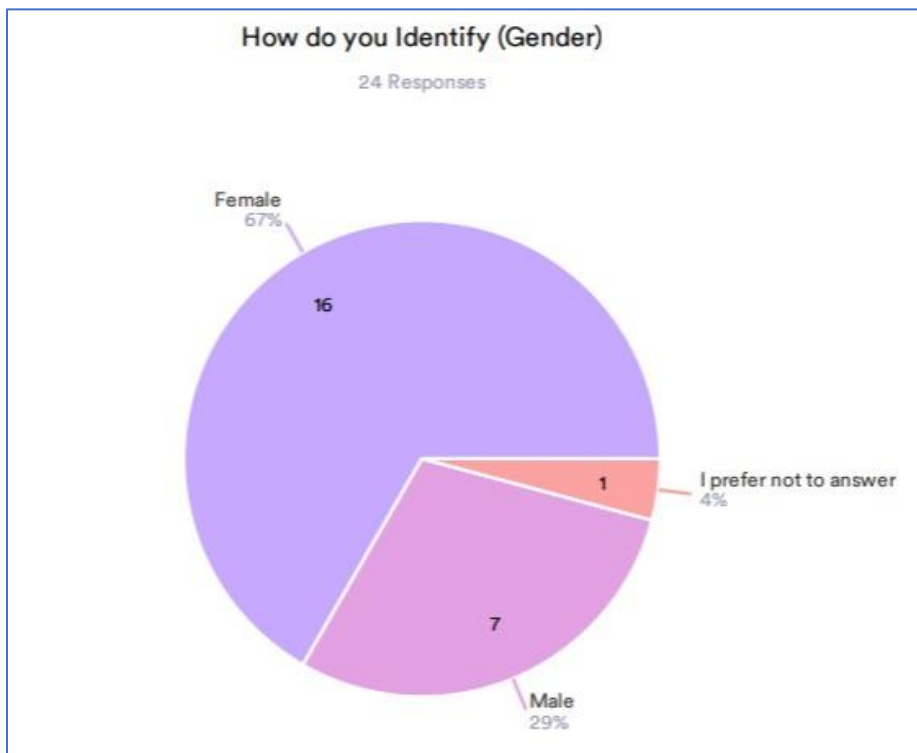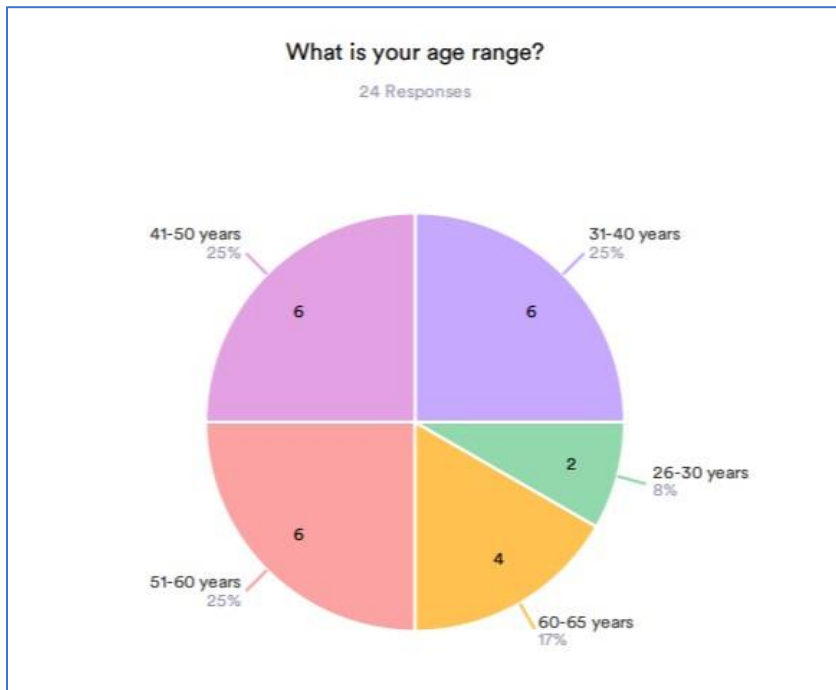
1. Provide support and direction for agencies that demonstrate a need for support in understanding current equity and justice information and practices. The agencies in question can be those who apply and, despite good intentions, put forward an insufficient effort (requesting training and speakers with no clear benchmarking, goals, understanding, or strategy for transformational change). Such efforts sometimes demonstrate, albeit unintentionally, a performance of equity work rather than a transformational approach. This accounts for or authenticates an awareness of the agency's needs and efforts required to fulfill them. In these cases, it can be helpful to start training at the executive level ahead of training for supervisory and baseline staff.

2. Establish a strategy for evaluating not only a baseline of understanding, but a way to measure progress throughout implementation of DEI efforts. This strategy should be linked to the specific developmental goals the agency sets for itself depending on what level of work they are engaging in.

3. Devise an instrument to gage what level of understanding someone has of this subject matter (without a tone of judgment) and set up learning and/or working cohorts based on that background [Intercultural Development Inventory , the Coalition of Communities

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[1] Hamedani, M. G., Markus, H. R., Hetey, R. C., & Eberhardt, J. L. (2023). "We built this culture (so we can change it): Seven principles for intentional culture change." American Psychologist. Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1037/amp0001209

of Color Organizational Assessment, and similar tools have shown promise]. Tie these results to a professional development path: beginner, intermediate, advanced.
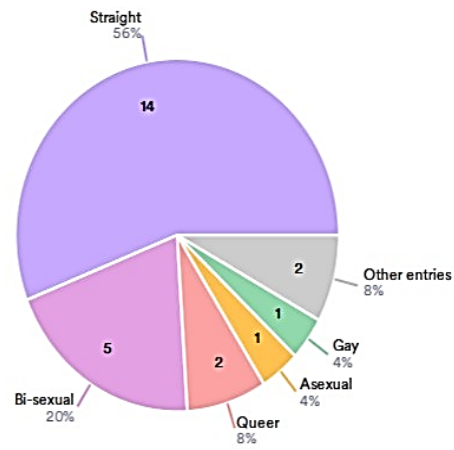
4. Provide a number of relevant resources: articles, websites, videos, podcasts, books, etc. These allow staff to follow curiosity, seek better understanding, and/or gain more perspectives on the subject matter.

5. Consider adding an equity and inclusion track to employee development plans and manager/leadership performance reviews along with training support for management.

6. In regard to working cohorts engaged in agency-level DEI work: consider more lead time in the recruitment effort and encourage a broader campaign seeking applicants from the appropriate learner level.

7. For any professionals engaging in training, education, or coaching aspects of this work, it would be prudent to have an application process for limited spots to avoid attrition and engage the work productively. In addition, it would be helpful to have a rubric of knowledge, skills, and abilities that indicate an appropriate level of competency in the subject matter.

8. Connect with other local or national governmental efforts toward transformational change in the equity, inclusion, diversity, justice, and belonging areas, for instance, GARE.

9. Conduct meetings in a single format; either virtual or in-person, but not both. At the beginner level, it is vital to ensure live engagement whether in-person or virtual. This is the phase of learning that can require the most emotional and intellectual labor from learners and instructors.

    a. It may also be helpful to consider providing some form of mentorship from more advanced staff, to lend more support for contextualization and connection to how these matters relate and connect to staff roles and work.

10. It would be helpful to create a shared communication platform for resources and discussions to take place asynchronously. An intranet site, Teams channel, or other digital space that all participants could access would accelerate the state's ability to change culture across the enterprise. This was discussed frequently and unfortunately difficult to realize due to Uplift Oregon operating in a different data system than the state.

Appendix I:

What is your age range?

24 Responses

- 41-50 years 25% — 6
- 31-40 years 25% — 6
- 26-30 years 8% — 2
- 60-65 years 17% — 4
- 51-60 years 25% — 6

How do you Identify (Gender)

24 Responses

- Female 67% — 16
- I prefer not to answer 4% — 1
- Male 29% — 7

How do you describe your sexual orientation or sexual identity? Are there other terms or categories you use for your sexual orientation or sexual identity? Please feel free to check all that apply from the options listed below:

25 Responses

What is your salary range?

22 Responses

Black or African American

7 Responses

African American
57%

4

Other Black
14%

1

2

African (Black)
29%

● African American   ● African (Black)   ● Other Black

Asian

6 Responses

Other Asian
50%

3

Other Pacific Islander
17%

1

1

1

Japanese
17%

Fillipino/a
17%

American Indian or Alaska Native

5 Responses

American Indian
100%

5

● American Indian

Hispanic or Latino/a/x

5 Responses

Hispanic or Latinx Mexican
80%

4

1

Other Hispanic or Latinx
20%

● Hispanic or Latinx Mexican ● Other Hispanic or Latinx

Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander

1 Response

Other Pacific Islander
100%   1

Would you like to identify as multiracial, or would you like to choose a primary race of ethnic category?

23 Responses

Primary race
70%   16

Multiracial
30%   7

● Primary race   ● Multiracial

White
15 Responses

Western European
73%
11

Other White
27%
4

Western European   Other White

Other Categories
7 Responses

Other
43%
3

Unknown
29%
2

Declined
29%
2

Other   Unknown   Declined

Language: What language or languages do you use at home?

26 Responses

English 85% 22

Indonesian 4% 1

Indonesia 4% 1

Spanish 8% 2

● English   ● Spanish   ● Indonesia   ● Indonesian