



Oregon

Tina Kotek, Governor

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Water Resources Commission
FROM: Laura Tesler, Policy Analyst
SUBJECT: Agenda Item C, March 13, 2025
Water Resources Commission

STRATEGIC PLAN UPDATE

I. Introduction

During this agenda item staff will describe recent efforts to update the OWRD Strategic Plan. Commissioners will be asked to provide feedback and input to strategic plan approach or the preliminary communication and engagement strategies.

II. Strategic Planning Strategy Recommended Action

- No action needed. Information item only.

III. Background

A strategic plan provides a comprehensive roadmap that outlines the Department's long-term goals, strategies, priorities, and measurable, time-bound objectives. It provides clear direction, aligning agency efforts with the mission, vision and core values while advancing Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice throughout the organization.

In January 2023, Governor Kotek outlined expectations for state agencies in Oregon. These expectations included developing agency Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) and Strategic Plans. Agencies were to develop a workplan for the development of their DEI Plan by June 1, 2023, and submit their Strategic Plan by June 2024. Agencies had the option to develop an integrated Strategic Plan and DEI Plan.

The Department submitted a draft integrated DEI Plan and Strategic Workplan by the 2024 deadline and received approval to pause on submitting a full plan until a permanent agency director was hired.

With a director now firmly established, it is time to move ahead with a full version of an integrated Strategic Plan and DEI Plan. The plan due date was June 2025; a meeting was

convened in January 2025 with DAS to ask that this deadline be extended to September 2025. This request was granted in January 2025.

Beginning in January, staff met with agency senior leadership to seek their advice and guidance on a schedule to engage with internal staff to collect their input on the proposed strategic plan priorities and objectives. To help identify the priorities for the next 4 years, the Department is considering input from a number of sources including expectations from Governor's office, the IWRS, and input from water partners with thoughts on modernization for water management. Staff will conduct staff engagement sessions in the six regions in February and March 2025. Efforts to gather information in person are intended to heighten and deepen staff ownership to the objectives and goals that are created by the plan. Engagement is also planned via centralized section staff meetings conducted remotely as many staff do not regularly convene in person.

An external communication and outreach plan will be concurrently developed. There will be outreach and data collection from targeted organizations that will be considered when drafting the plan.

IV. Schedule

Staff engagement efforts will begin in February and March 2025, followed by analysis and interpretation of staff engagement data. In March and April 2025, staff will develop an external Engagement and Outreach Plan. External outreach and engagement are proposed to occur from approximately April through July 2025.

Staff will return to the Commission in June 2025 for additional feedback and comments, with an initial goal for the final version anticipated for Commission review and comment in September 2025. After Director approval, the plan will be submitted to DAS by September 30, 2025. If staff can meet these dates, the timing aligns well with the budgetary process, allowing recommendations from the strategic plan to be included in 2027-29 budget requests.

V. Discussion

The updated strategic plan will create goals and objectives that are realistic, achievable within resource constraints, understood by staff, and are able to be tracked and measured. Other topics of interest to leadership that may need to be addressed may be identified during this outreach and engagement effort.

Additional improvements under consideration for this strategic plan update include:

- Modifying the strategic plan updates from a 4-year to a 5-year cycle to match budgeting cycles, allowing key initiatives to be incorporated into budget requests as needed.
- Categorization of recommended priority actions from the IWRS to more easily "bundle" items requiring legislation, funding, public-private partnerships, etc.
- DEIJ goals that align with broader organizational objectives, ensuring that equity and inclusion are part of every initiative, from talent development to community outreach and engagement, to rule updates. By continuing to fully integrate DEIJ into the strategic plan,

the agency can ensure that DEIJ values are not standalone initiatives, but fundamental drivers of innovation and positive impact.

- Provides the agency with high-level objectives that can be broken into short-, mid-, and long-term actionable goals with timelines and milestones.
- Assist in retaining focus on ensuring objectives and goals are realistic and executable within the time frame and capacity of the agency to achieve.

VI. Conclusion

OWRD is undertaking the update of the agency strategic plan. Internal leadership engagement has begun, and staff engagements are expected in the next few months. External engagement will follow. In June 2025, the Commission will have an opportunity to review the progress of the updated strategic plan and provide feedback. A final draft will be ready for review by the Commission in September 2025.

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