

# Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Plan 2020-2025



Capitol Region Watershed District  
Saint Paul, MN

September 16, 2020



## CRWD's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Plan

### Background, History and Implementation of Plan

CRWD's Board of Managers created a diversity and inclusion statement in 2010. "The Capitol Region Watershed District embraces and values diversity and seeks to recruit, promote and retain employees that reflect the community we serve. We believe that a diverse mix of employees enrich the workplace and enhance the quality of our service. The Capitol Region Watershed District encourages all qualified to apply for open positions."

In 2016, the Board directed staff to develop a Diversity Plan with support from a consultant. A Diversity Committee, including Board Managers Seitu Jones and Joe Collins and Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) member Pat Cavanaugh, was established. In 2017, Azon Consulting was hired. They began by interviewing key Board, CAC and staff members to learn more about the district's cultural competency, mission, vision and values, and how they related to diversity and inclusion. A Diversity Strategic Plan was developed and approved in 2018.

The district began implementing the Diversity Strategic Plan by reviewing and improving its hiring practices with support provided by Ramsey County. The first step was to review CRWD's position descriptions and announcements and where the district was promoting its openings. Staff participating on interview committees attended implicit bias training and external colleagues were invited to participate in the training and interview panel as well. Interview questions were adapted to include topics such as ethics, values and a demonstrated understanding of and commitment to diversity and inclusion. Applicants received questions in advance of the interview and all personal information was redacted prior to staff review to reduce bias.

Historically, some areas and communities within the watershed have been underserved due to prior District work focused on high-impact projects located in limited areas (e.g., Como Lake and Lake McCarrons subwatersheds). In 2018, with the help a Minnesota GreenCorps Member, the District analyzed hundreds of grant-funded projects and found significantly less program participation in the central and eastern portions of the District (Trout Brook, Saint Anthony Hill and Phalen Creek subwatersheds). These subwatersheds correspond to areas of racially concentrated poverty (ACP50) defined by Metropolitan Council as 40% or more of the residents live with incomes below 185% of the federal poverty threshold and 50% or more of the residents are people of color.

Since 2019, staff have identified ways to reduce potential barriers to participation in the grant program by underserved communities. CRWD is offering higher grant awards and conducting promotion efforts in areas with low participation. Staff began reaching out to district planning councils and community groups in those areas to discuss the

program and how residents, businesses and community groups can get involved as well as additional support provided by the district.

CRWD adopted a policy for soliciting professional services in 2010 and solicits statements of qualifications from interested consultants on a bi-annual basis. The last time CRWD staff solicited qualifications from consultants was in early 2017 for the 2017–2018 consultant pool. A Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for general water resource professional services for 2019 and 2020 was distributed to CRWD’s previous RFQ list as well as approximately 95 Minnesota businesses that meet WBE (women-owned) or MBE (minority-owned) certifications through MNUCP (Federal/State database) and/or CERT (Metro database administered by St. Paul).

CRWD received Statements of Qualifications (SOQs) from 28 firms and determined their qualifications for specific service areas. Of the submittals received, 15 were firms in CRWD’s 2017-2018 pool, and 13 are new firms for 2019-2020. Of the new firms, six are disadvantaged business enterprises (DBE) bringing the total DBE firms in the pool to seven. Going forward, staff will request proposals or qualifications for projects from the pool within a respective service area as needed and will include DBE firms when possible.

Relationship building is the corner stone of establishing trust and making real progress when it comes to diversity and inclusion work. CRWD staff began developing and/or deepening relationships with community groups serving areas of the district where engagement has been low. Staff has presented at community meetings, attended many new events, elevated storytelling about diverse community members doing great work and created a new display with a local artist to better engage residents at community and cultural events. The district has also worked to identify and address barriers to participation in meetings such as transportation, childcare, accessibility, etc.

Since 2018, CRWD staff has gathered over lunch to discuss a wide range of diversity and inclusion topics. These meetings have been focused on reading or watching memoirs, blogs, and videos as well as a role play activity depicting a local environmental justice case. The group has covered topics such as racism, gender equality, environmental justice, sexual identity/orientation, mental health, indigenous history, personality type. The intention of this informal staff group is to build a more inclusive team internally and to make connections to our work that reach outside our organization.

CRWD has folded its Diversity Strategic Plan goals and implementation activities into its updated 10-year watershed management plan, which will be adopted in fall 2020. The plan also includes nine themes that reflect high level topics and District values that will be considered and weaved into every aspect of the District’s work over the next 10 years. Community equity and engaging underrepresented groups is one of the nine themes. We recognize that we can achieve cleaner waters through engagement across the District’s diverse communities.

## **Need for a Plan**

CRWD serves a highly diverse population of residents. Over time, CRWD's population has grown more racially and ethnically diverse. Between 2000 and 2015, the percentage of people of color in the City of Saint Paul, which comprises 85% of the District, increased from 36% to 46%. Across Ramsey County, this percentage increased from 13% in 2000 to 30% in 2014. These trends are expected to continue through 2040.

The Board and staff acknowledged the need for a more thoughtful and strategic approach to the district's diversity and inclusion work in an effort to better engage all of CRWD's residents.

The Diversity Committee developed the following goals in preparation for creating its first Diversity Strategic Plan.

1. CRWD and its service providers should reflect the racial, gender and cultural demographics of the watershed and City of Saint Paul.
2. Understand and incorporate cultural perspectives on water and government.
3. Create opportunities for people of color in the environmental/water resources profession through training and recruitment.
4. Consider equity and equality as a means to achieve diversity.
5. Use water management as a tool to help address local and community concerns.

## **CRWD participants and external partners involved in developing the Plan**

CRWD staff, CAC, Board of Managers

Diversity Committee: CAC member Pat Cavanaugh and Board Managers Seitou Jones and Joe Collins with support from CRWD staff Mark Doneux and Jessica Bromelkamp

Val Jensen, AZON Consulting, Diversity Strategic Plan

Dana Mitchell, Assistant Ramsey County Attorney, Best Hiring Practices

Paul Gorski, Equity Literacy Institute, Implicit Bias Training

Kevin Lindsay, Diversity Implementation Plan

## **Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Plan Timeline**

2010

Board develops the following diversity statement.

12/2016

Diversity Committee formed

1/2017

Azon Consulting is hired to develop a Diversity Strategic Plan.

Interviews with staff, board, and CAC.

10/2017

Board reviews and comments on draft plan

8/2018

Second draft of plan, with Committee, staff and CAC feedback, presented to the board and approved.

See dates above for timeline of subsequent diversity-related activities since Board approval of the Diversity Plan.

### **Geography of Capitol Region Watershed District**

Capitol Region Watershed District includes portions of the Cities of Saint Paul, Roseville, Lauderdale, Falcon Heights and Maplewood.

### **Barriers that were encountered during the process**

Meeting audiences where they are was emphasized in the study A Community Capacity Assessment for Stormwater Management in the Twin Cities Metro Area, 2016. CRWD has been making intentional efforts to do just that by participating in numerous cultural events that are not explicitly connected to water management.

CRWD has also learned that to succeed in being a diverse and equitable organization, it is important to hire staff and consultants that reflect the communities we serve. Staff has been working with partner groups to strengthen programming that educates and empowers young people of all backgrounds to pursue careers and higher education in natural resource fields.

### **Outcomes and Benefits of the Plan**

- Best Practices in Hiring
  - New publications where positions were posted: African News Journal, Hmong Times, Insight News, LaPrensa/Vida y Sabor, MN Spokesman Recorder.
  - CRWD received 284 applications for five positions. Demographics were not collected during the application process.
- Stewardship Grant Equity Bonus
  - Staff conducted outreach to three Saint Paul District Planning Councils.
- Water Resource Professional Services Consultant Pool Expansion
  - 95 Minnesota businesses that meet WBE (women-owned) or MBE (minority-owned) certifications through MNUCP received the 2019-2020 Request for Qualifications

- CRWD received six new Statements of Qualifications from disadvantaged business enterprises (DBE) bringing the total DBE firms in the pool to seven.
    - 8 BMP maintenance service providers (landscape contractors) including 4 DBEs received the request for quotes for 2020 services.
    - CRWD hired a DBE firm to provide 2020 BMP maintenance services.
  - Relationship Building
    - In 2019, CRWD made connections with nearly 11,000 residents at over 70 different events. Events included school presentations, tours, community gatherings and others reaching audiences of all backgrounds and ages across the watershed. CRWD emphasized its presence in neighborhoods and with cultural and ethnic groups the District had previously not worked with.
  - CRWD Diversity and Inclusion Staff Group
    - 12 meetings to explore a variety of diversity and inclusion topics.

**Lessons learned**

The district is very comfortable developing and implementing plans to complete projects. The Diversity Strategic Plan is unique in that the work does not always materialize in a linear way and will likely continue indefinitely, even with specific goals and outcomes in mind. Part of moving forward is embracing that journey and making progress without knowing what to expect and that some strategies may fail. The key is to learn from them and to make improvements.

In cases where the district does not have relationships in a community, it's most effective to communicate through and with trusted community leaders and organizations. The district continues to look for ways to communicate about its programs and projects in ways that resonate with what's important to those audiences. This includes translating materials, amplifying the work of partners through storytelling and sharing, and incorporating the arts and technology into our community engagement efforts.

**Plan Costs**

|                                   |          |
|-----------------------------------|----------|
| External consultants and Training | \$25,000 |
| Staff and Board costs             | \$10,000 |

Capitol Region Watershed District values diversity, equity and inclusion and can achieve cleaner waters through engagement across communities.

**COMMITMENTS**

**INNOVATION**  
We will be innovative in our approaches to communities who truly represent our district.

**COLLABORATION**  
We will continue to collaborate across differences.

**OPEN**  
We will be open to the challenges our community presents as it relates to diversity and inclusion.

**PASSION**  
We will approach our efforts of inclusion with the same level of passion as water resource protection.

| Priorities   | Goals  | Implementation Tasks  | Indicators of Progress  | Timeline               |
|--|--|---|---|------------------------|
| <b>1. Expand CRWD’s internal awareness of the opportunities and challenges related to creating a more diverse and inclusive environment.</b> | Goal 1. a) Create safe spaces and opportunities to explore and understand unconscious bias and increase cultural competency.   | <p>Create internal communication strategy about the importance of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI). Identify speakers and presentation topics.</p> <p>Select DEI workshop opportunities. All Board, Staff and CAC will attend Implicit Bias and Anti-Racism Training.</p>   | Indicator 1. a) Internal communication strategy has been created. Speakers and topics have been identified. All Board, Staff and CAC attend 1-2 Implicit Bias/Anti-Racism Training workshops or cultural experiences annually.                | 2020-2022, ongoing     |
|  | Goal 1. b) Formalize regular reviews of progress made implementing the Diversity Strategic Plan and share with CRWD’s staff, Board and CAC.                          | <p>Schedule regular meetings throughout the year between Administrator and Senior leadership team to discuss DEI efforts.</p> <p>Consider implementing Diversity tool or dashboard to graphically communicate progress and present to the Board of Managers.</p>  | Indicator 1. b) Provide quarterly Diversity Strategic Plan updates at CAC, Board, and staff meetings.   | 2020-2022, semi-annual |
|  | Goal 1. c) Establish Diversity Coordinator.  | Designate a Diversity Coordinator on staff to lead and coordinate the implementation of the District’s Diversity Strategic Plan and track progress to achieving the District’s DEI goals and actions.   | Indicator 1. c) Diversity Coordinator has been identified and appointed.  | 2020                   |
| <b>2. Deepen relationships with many communities in CRWD by increasing outreach.</b>   | Goal 2. a) Use local data to learn more about the audiences CRWD serves.   | <p>Meet with the Office of MN Demographer to better understand demographics within CRWD. Meet with the University of MN Center for Urban &amp; Regional Affairs (CURA) Coordinator of Community Geographic Information Systems (CGIS) Program. Conduct demographic analysis of the District and determine how this information will be used.</p> <p>Meet with Minnesota Legislative POCI Caucus (People of Color and Indigenous) and ethnic community groups to gain a better understanding of ethnic communities and to identify strategic community partners.</p> | Indicator 2. a) Meet with diverse groups, community leaders and partner organizations to identify three underserved <sup>1</sup> communities to focus engagement and communications work. Meet with MN Demographer, gain access to data/maps. | 2020-2021              |
|  | Goal 2. b) Create an outreach plan which includes community engagement focused on building long-term, sustainable relationships.                                     | <p>List existing outreach strategies. Develop and implement Thick Engagement<sup>2</sup>.</p> <p>Identify evaluation tool for community engagement plan.</p>  | Indicator 2. b) Implement an outreach plan for three underserved communities with guidance from members of the community.   | 2020-2021, ongoing     |
|  | Goal 2. c) Create a communications plan which includes materials that are culturally appropriate and translated into the underserved community’s native language(s). | Review existing communications materials. Meet with MN Legislative POCI council and ethnic community groups to refine engagement and communications strategy. Identify metrics for communication plan.  | Indicator 2. c) Implement a communications plan for the same three underserved communities (identified in 2. b) with guidance from members of the community.  | 2020-2022, ongoing     |

| Priorities   | Goals  | Implementation Tasks   | Indicators of Progress  | Timeline           |
|--|--|--|---|--------------------|
| <b>3. Increase organizational diversity and inclusion efforts by increasing recruitment of candidates who truly represent our district for staff, CAC and service providers.</b> | Goal 3. a) Identify organizations, schools and student groups working with people of color and underserved communities to encourage them to enter the environmental field. | Identify trade associations or groups comprised of environmental organizations to collaborate on DEI efforts.<br><br>Develop long term employment strategy of raising visibility of employment opportunities in the environmental field within high schools and colleges.  | Indicator 3. a) Engage 3-5 organizations and schools working with people of color and underserved communities.  | 2020, ongoing      |
|  | Goal 3. b) Formalize best practices in hiring staff are used to ensure an inclusive process and to provide diverse pool of candidates.                                     | Identify hiring needs (ongoing). Ensure that organizations and groups are identified and are made aware of CRWD's hiring opportunities.<br><br>Develop schedule for outside consultant to review hiring practices. Gain more insight on emerging best employment practices.<br><br>Use DEI Watershed Forum to develop recruiting partnerships at colleges and recruiting fairs such as People of Color Career Fair | Indicator 3. b) Research and ensure best practices in hiring are used.  | 2020, ongoing      |
|  | Goal 3. c) Outline and implement recruitment efforts for the CAC in communities of color.  | Meet with officials from organizations such as state POCI councils, councils serving people with disabilities, ethnic business chambers, and ethnic community groups to discuss recruiting.  | Indicator 3. c) Engage community leaders and organizations to invite participation on the CAC.  | 2020-2022, ongoing |
|  | Goal 3. d) Develop and implement best practices to increase contracting with Targeted Group/Economically Disadvantaged/Veteran Owned Small Businesses <sup>3</sup> .       | Review, benchmark and assess existing CRWD procurement plan; identify and implement procurement strategies.  | Indicator 3. d) Increase the number of contracts and vendors from the certified Targeted Group/Economically Disadvantaged/Veteran-Owned Small Businesses.     | 2020-2022, ongoing |
| <b>4. Be a Leader in Diversity and Inclusion.</b>  | Goal 4. a) Develop and maintain a list of diversity and inclusion partners.  | Identify watershed districts and partners that could act as DEI representatives within watershed community; Meet with DEI representatives to identify collaboration opportunities; Create DEI Metro-Wide Watershed Organization Forum. Use DEI Watershed Forum to supplement list of DEI partners.   | Indicator 4. a) Invite our partners to explore and implement diversity and inclusion efforts.   | 2020, ongoing      |
|  | Goal 4. b) Create a leadership forum focused on sharing diversity and inclusion work with other watershed districts and partners.  | Convene DEI Watershed Forum meeting with watershed districts to: (1) benchmark DEI efforts, (2) identify collaboration opportunities in employment, procurement, and engagement, (3) share best practices, and (4) identify forum infrastructure.  | Indicator 4. b) Host semi-annual diversity and inclusion workshops for watershed districts, conservation agencies and environmental non-profit organizations. | 2020-2022, ongoing |
|  | Goal 4. c) Advocate for diversity and inclusion.   | Present CRWD's DEI initiatives.  | Indicator 4. c) Promote CRWD's approach and efforts at a variety of forums.   | 2020-2022, ongoing |

<sup>1</sup> Underserved is defined as communities where Capitol Region Watershed District has less presence.

<sup>2</sup> Thick Engagement is more intensive and interactive. Opportunity for dialogue is offered in small groups, interaction and exploring of diverse perspectives is encouraged, and the options generated by participants are shared with all. Identify evaluation tool for community engagement plan.

<sup>3</sup> The MN Office of State Procurement's Targeted Group/Economically Disadvantaged/Veteran-Owned Small Business Procurement Program supports small businesses owned by a woman, racial minority or person with a substantial physical disability and certified as Economically Disadvantaged or Veteran-Owned.