

PEAR Team Meeting 5 – Meeting Notes– October 11, 2023, 12-2 pm

Welcome & Icebreaker – Melinda/Janette 12:05 pm

Icebreaker asking the group to respond to the prompt below.

- name
- pronouns
- Role(s) if you like
- What is your battery Level?
- (In the chat) What is one of your favorite community events?

Facilitators Present:

Janette Chien, she/her, State Parks DEI Director, 14%

Melinda Posner, she/her, State Parks DEI Manager, 89%

PEAR Team Present:

Jeff Vassallo, he/him, State Parks Tahoma Gateway Area Manager, 100%

Lynn Makowsky, she/her, State Parks Mount Spokane Program Specialist 2, 10%

Michael Hankinson, he/him, State Parks Planning Program Manager, 90%

Megan Grisso, she/her, Community Member, 50%

Reco Bembry, he/him, Big Tent Coalition, 70%

Kearstin Williams, she/her, UW, 90%,

Kristi Hamilton, she/her, Community Member, 7%

MJ Sampang, she/her, Community Partnership WTA, 50%

Michele (Mickey) Tussey, she/her, Volunteer Camp Host State Parks, 50%

Amber Forest, she/her, Whatcom Bays Area Manager

Stacy Coltrain, she/her Ranger 1 Sequim Bay

Denice Rochelle, she/her, Bronze Chapter

Curtis Fackler, Veteran, Camp Host East side

Observers Present:

Tonna Jensen Sigler, she/her, State Parks Administrative Assistant, 80%

Jenee Kramer, she/her, Recruiter for State Parks HR, 60%

Wendy Vandal, she/her, Parks HR Recruitment, 90%

Heidi Olmstead, she/her, Community Member, 70%

Wendy Vandal, she/her, Parks HR Recruitment, 90%

Alan Robinson, he/him, Community Member

Review from last meeting

Janette started the meeting by covering today's agenda and shared that we are going to spend 45 minutes doing small group work on community outreach in state parks.

Last meeting, we looked at the social change ecosystem (image on slide 4). We also looked at some preliminary DEI "bucket priorities" at Parks.

Melinda shared our preliminary equity impact review chart (slide 5). Janette shared that last meeting we asked you to consider what role the PEAR Team plays in these three priorities.

1. Community Building & Engagement
2. Workforce Development
3. Visitor Experience

Melinda shared that due to time restraints and technical difficulties we didn't make it through all the prompts in the last meeting. Today we will focus on one of the main themes, Community Building and Engagement.

Community outreach at State Parks

Melinda shared that Community Building and Engagement covers a lot of ground so today we will specifically focus on Community Outreach.

Janette shared how we are defining Community Outreach vs. Community Engagement.

Community Outreach

- Defines a target community or audience you are trying to reach
- Gathering information or data
- Providing services or resources to specific community or audience
- Transactional and often directional (What can A do for B)
- Generally short-term
- Common model for community health initiatives, marketing strategies, discrete projects

Community Engagement

- Relationship building
- Mutually beneficial when successful/healthy
- Connecting and collaborative (what can A and B do together)
- Longer-term
- Cyclical

Janette asked the group to answer the following questions in the chat.

1. What is a benefit to community outreach?
 - An agency can communicate its intentions to the public
 - Transformational
 - Understanding community's needs and also sharing resources or information to the community that can benefit them / tend to their needs
 - Gets the conversation started
 - Intentional listening
 - Sparks community interest
 - Data collections
 - Helps determine services that are useful for the target community
2. What is a drawback?
 - Sometimes people don't show up to a community outreach event.... ; low follow up
 - Not long-term engagement
 - Short term time limited
 - Might not be reaching the correct people
 - It is difficult to keep a long-term relationship if the project is "over" and everyone has moved on
 - How do you know that you're not accidentally leaving people out?
 - Not enough of a diverse attendance
 - Inability to connect with marginalized communities not represented by the outreach team
 - Transactional rather than transformative
3. What is a benefit to community engagement?
 - Problem solving can be easier if there is a long-term relationship built with trust
 - Building long lasting relationships
 - It helps more people feel included
 - Still understanding each other but finding solutions with each other
 - Community engagement, on the other hand, is a two-way communication process that involves active participation and collaboration between community members and organizations. The goal of community engagement is to build relationships, foster trust, and empower communities to take action on issues that affect them.
 - Increase in interaction and relationship building (understanding communication styles a bit more)
 - Fosters a sense of belonging, provides a voice, civic responsibility
4. What is a drawback?
 - Not enough resources to maintain a long-term relationship if you are planning parks for example.
 - It takes time
 - Potential for conflict without access to mediation
 - Creating expectation which can't always be met
 - Sometimes engagement gets exploited by other interests and needs - like outreach

It's important to know that there is a role for BOTH in social change. And that there are benefits and drawbacks to both of these. While we do want to move from outreach to engagement to create more

long-term change, there are instances where outreach is the more appropriate function! As we provide an overview of Outreach at Parks – consider where it makes more sense to move towards engagement, or whether it is more appropriate to stay in outreach and do it in a way that feels more just.

Melinda shared outreach at State Parks is done by many divisions, by programs within divisions and by individual projects, in some cases. The Communications team led the Parks (Re) Branding and new website projects, and this process required intensive outreach to capture diverse voices.

Policies about Community Outreach

Melinda shared that there is limited direction in law or policy to guide outreach work of the agency. In state law, the Open Public Meetings Act has directed much of the outreach conducted historically – this act, in addition to requiring that the governing body of the public agency be open and public, states that agencies are encouraged to provide for the increased ability of the public to observe and participate in the meetings of governing bodies through real-time telephonic, electronic, internet, or other readily available means of remote access that do not require an additional cost to access the meeting.

State Parks authority is rooted in RCW 79A – and includes how the commission is appointed and its powers and duties.

There are two policies that provide some guidance but are very outdated. These include Advisory Group Policy and Citizen Participation. They are very similar and reference each other.

The Advisory Group policy states how the commission can receive input thru advisory committees, task forces, public meetings, public hearings and shall only be created for recreation activities that have or require:

- A continuing long-term, perhaps changing interest
- A greater than local interest and demand
- Coordination and compromise among diverse special interest groups
- Credibility and support of recommended programs

The citizen participation policy differs by providing the requirements for how a committee will do its work: having documented purpose, roles and responsibilities, bylaws, officers, and membership. Aside from this, there are no standard practices within the agency for how to do, when to do, who to do, etc. Each team develops their own method, much of this based on historical practice – which may or may not be appropriate today. In some cases, practices are shared across teams, but this is informal and not universal.

Janette shared that Teams within Operations also conduct outreach – this includes the Folk & Traditional Arts Program, events and education opportunities hosted by the interpretive program and area-specific events/opportunities hosted by area staff such as hosting a booth. Michael Hankinson added that ranger staff are also outreach leads for the agency.

For the PEAR team recruitment, we reached out to teams who have been doing outreach in similar fashion for years like the planning teams – who have contact lists of elected officials, community groups, historical societies, land trusts. etc. and teams who have been doing more focused outreach work to reach underrepresented and underserved as part of more inclusive project work such as:

- Parks design for resilient communities
- Sign manual

- Black Washingtonians Outdoor Recreation Workgroup – Reco (lead facilitator)
- Affinity groups
- Communications team
- We literally just have lists! Not relationships (yet)
- Internally we used our internal newsletter The Carabinier
- Similar outreach methods were used by the Trails program too to create the scenic bikeway advisory committee

The slideshow presentation also included outreach done for recruitment. Wendy from HR Recruitment noted that HR is always looking for ways to market state parks positions and that staff are our #1 recruiters in getting the word out.

Melinda shared that volunteers play a vital role in extending the capacity of current staff – they help manage visitors, participate in clean-up activities, and offer extra hands to do some of the many tasks required to keep parks open, clean, and environmentally sound. Volunteer opportunities include park hosts, beach cleanups, and specific volunteer activities for groups and individuals at specific parks, as well as more formal Friends groups, individual/groups, and Friends Groups, who meet regularly with parks staff and commit to certain activities over the course of the recreation season.

Janette shared that the procurement team of Administrative Services recently updated the agency’s procurement manual, integrating the statewide supplier diversity policy. There are different steps and outreach methods depending on the type and dollar value of a purchase; procurement is also affected by existing statewide contracts and if there are special circumstances like needing to procure goods or services in an emergency situation. Competition is the standard method of procurement and is generally required except for purchases of less than \$25,000 or up to \$30,000 with a waiver. Supplies, equipment and motor pool vehicles are some examples of purchases made by state parks to outside vendors.

Melinda shared that the planning and real estate team conducts outreach in a variety of ways. Long-range park plans and policies are done with the input of the public; so, doing public outreach is a big part of most planning work. The real estate team also collects public input about property acquisitions, transfers and surpluses; this feedback is shared with the commission when they act on a real estate project. Outreach methods used by our planning team and other outreach methods to consider include:

- Email is the go-to method for reaching the public
- Presenting at stakeholder meetings is a way to efficiently reach interested parties; For example, getting on the agenda for the local chamber of commerce was one way of connecting and ensuring an audience for the discussion
- Public meetings are still the norm for having in-person communication – to share information and collect input
- Many outreach professionals are looking for more creative ways to engage – including site visits, tours, and other more proactive methods to meet folks “where they’re at”
- During COVID we hosted virtual meetings and created some videos so interested parties could view the information and provide comments at their leisure
- Direct mails is used in some cases – when we only have physical addresses, when we are doing a long-term boundary and need to reach everyone within x proximity and when

we want to ensure mail gets in the hands of people who own the land located adjacent to the park

10 minute break

Small group work

The groups were divided into break out rooms for 45 minutes and prompted to answer the following questions:

- What other outreach and engagement strategies should we consider?
- How can we reach underrepresented and underserved communities for outreach and engagement?
- What role can the PEAR team play in outreach and engagement?

Additional Questions - from Office of Equity

1. Who is impacted by agency decisions and NOT part of the decision-making process?
 - A. How do we consider the needs of communities who have historically not been included in decision-making?
 - B. What do we need to do differently to get their involvement?
 - C. What partnerships can we build to inform decision-making?
2. Is there a fair and just distribution of benefits and burdens to people and communities and organizations? (who are we asking to do the labor?)
3. How are our processes informed by historical, structural and intergenerational disparities?
4. What other data should we be collecting? What other research is needed?

Share out

Janette shared that each group will have three minutes to share three main points. See page 8 for complete document of group work.

Group 2

1. We need to dig into safety. How do we make BIPOC communities feel safe in our parks?
2. Can we design interpretive experience for children, maybe we need to go to schools
 - This is being done at a local level, not a statewide effort
2. PDP-evaluation requirement for DEI, expectations for area managers to do these things.
3. We need concrete deliverables
3. We need to develop a position or hire a consultant to make this a position, so communities and organizations aren't so burdened.

Group 3

1. Advertise roles available at parks
2. Emphasize entry level positions and the responsibilities
 - o More outreach to young adults
3. Staff and PEAR team members can be “boots on the ground”

Group 4

1. Explore other roles at SP besides rangers - e.g. Interpretation - and how there are so many other jobs - e.g. boating, archeology, communications, admin, creative services, arbor crew, etc.
2. Job shadow (work alongside WSP staff - at parks) → local people and have it be informative and hands on
3. Showing up to specific and relevant events that PEAR team can contribute to
 - o Example: BIPOC outdoors spaces, affinity spaces, library events (outdoor or community themed)

Group 5

1. Utilization of digital tech, Expansive comm. Outreach, cultural competence training, difficult for the over 125 different cultures, using inclusive language, accessibility issues are attended to, go to places that we can find these different cultures, (festival halls/social security offices/libraries/comm. centers/festivals/job shadowing or apprentice type programs in urban or comm. Not well represented) lack of transportation is an issue, connection with recreation departments?
2. Safety
3. Transportation

Announcements & Closing

- Hyak Winter Rec Partnership-working with staff in the central lakes area to offer a complimentary snowshoe tour; DEI staff is looking for interested underserved communities – contact Melinda if you have ideas or contacts
- PEAR Team Meeting dates – 2024 – most meetings are proposed for the third Wednesdays of the month with a couple of exceptions
- 2023: Next meetings Nov 8th and Dec 13th

To close, type in the chat what is something you like to do when it gets chilly outside?

- Plunges in commencement bay!
- Cuddle under a blanket with hot cocoa. Thank you everyone!
- Snowshoe!
- Bundle up
- Camping, snow trail hiking, off-road Ebiking @ state and national forest

Meeting Adjourned

Janette thanked the group and adjourned meeting at 2:05 pm.

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Small Group Work

Directions:

1. *Your team will have 45 minutes to consider the questions and capture responses*
2. *Select a reporter - someone who will share out highlights from your group*
3. *We'll give you a halfway warning and when there are ~5-10 mins left*
4. *Each group has a page in this google doc*
 - a. *Group 1 is on page 3*
 - b. *Group 2 is on page 4 -Jeff, Michael, Tonna*
 - c. *Group 3 is on page 5*
 - d. *Group 4 is on page 6 - Janette, Stacey, MJ*
 - e. *Group 5 is on page 7 - room 5*

Questions

1. *What new and different strategies should we consider to reach underrepresented and underserved communities?*
2. *How is this different for outreach and engagement?*
3. *What role can PEAR team play?*

Additional Questions - from Office of Equity

1. *Who is impacted by agency decisions and NOT part of the decision-making process?*

- a. How do we consider the needs of communities who have historically not been included in decision-making?
 - b. What do we need to do differently to get their involvement?
 - c. What partnerships can we build to inform decision-making?
2. Is there a fair and just distribution of benefits and burdens to people and communities and organizations? (who are we asking to do the labor?)
3. How are our processes informed by historical, structural and intergenerational disparities?
4. What other data should we be collecting? What other research is needed?

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Community Outreach at State Parks

Project or Program	Outreach tools and strategies												
	Direct connect relations	Web	Posters and flyers	Affinity groups & other email contacts	Honorarium and/or community compensation	Internal comms, DEI email	Focus groups	Social media	Other agencies	Statewide Business Resource Groups	College and job fairs	Public and stakeholder meetings	Direct mail
Community Events	X	X	X	X	X								
Advisory groups	X	X		X	X	X			X	X			
Re-Branding Project	X	X		X	X	X	X	X					
Employee recruitment		X				X			X	X	X		
Volunteer Program	X	X	X					X					
Procurement		X							X				
Planning & Real estate		X	X	X								X	X

Small Group 2 (note: there is no Group 1)

What other outreach and engagement strategies should we consider?

- We don't necessarily support long term engagement, the agency needs to prioritize and support community engagement
- We just got a Tribal Relations director last year
- Planning does have short term community outreach, however not engagement, bridge building disappears after a project.
- We design parks for adults (car drivers, camper owners) we don't do outreach for children. Our parks aren't designed for children.
- Can we design interpretive experience for children, maybe we need to go to schools
 - This is being done at a local level, not a statewide effort
 - PDP-evaluation requirement for DEI, expectations for area managers to do these things.
 - We need concrete deliverables
- Develop a Community Engagement Program to develop long term relationships overtime
 - Position, decision package

How can we reach underrepresented and underserved communities for outreach and engagement?

- Protocol to follow G2G letters, tribal outreach letters
- Go to high population areas with no parks to introduce Washington State Parks
 - Many people can't name a state park
 - Even interviewees don't fully understand what State Parks is
- Where can we go to engage more people
 - Churches
 - Community Colleges
 - Schools
- **NEED TO DIG INTO SAFETY**
 - Safety in numbers
 - Signage
 -

What role can the PEAR team plan in outreach and engagement?

- PEAR can help identify underrepresented groups to engage with
- Identify specific tasks for how this engagement should be one

Who is impacted by agency decisions and NOT part of the decision-making process?

- Tribes, community

How safe do BIPOC communities feel in Parks? Built for white people by white people.

- How do we fix this problem with limited resources?
- Bring in interested people with a variety of ethnic backgrounds to help guide this work. How do we design parks for BIPOC Communities?
- We need to prioritize, social justice, ada improvements, DEI considerations, access to parks, climate change
- How do we create policy when it connects to “free speech” and are being hateful towards BIPOC communities-we can’t really do much, can’t sensor

Is there a fair and just distribution of benefits and burdens to people and communities and organizations (who are we asking to do the labor?)

We need to develop a position or hire a consultant to make this a position so communities and organizations aren’t so burdened.

How are our processes informed by historical, structural and intergenerational disparities?

We haven’t changed much in design since the 1930s, intergenerational disparities, designed for people who have vehicles, equipment etc.

What other data should we be collecting? What other research is needed? Lit review on communities that haven’t been included in park planning historically.

Group 3 - Curt, Megan and Lynn

1. What other outreach and engagement strategies should we consider?
 - Rural park needs vs urban park needs, how are they different?
 - Increase staff diversity through recruitment. - increasing staff diversity will help to increase outreach
 - Advertise roles available at parks
 - Volunteer camp host
 - Working with local city parks to promote job openings
 - Outreach to state and federal agencies
 - Develop a process to ensure info is passed onto other groups
 - Emphasize entry level positions and the responsibilities
 - More outreach to young adults
2. How can we reach underrepresented and underserved communities for outreach and engagement?
 - Reach out to other agencies, networking.
 - BRGs

- Having a more formalized process for sharing information between groups. Being able to recognize biases and how they play a role in how we pass information along.
- More outreach to veterans.
- Meet them where they are at, don't expect groups to come to us.
- People don't know what resources we have, advertise more. Post at welcome centers - not everyone can go online. Electronic billboards. Work with local city parks to promote job openings.
- Regional wage adjustments.
- Housing!!
- Entry level positions - emphasize permanent staff that started as park aides. Make sure they get lots of experience learning different skills.
- Create and distribute flyers.
- Are applications available in different languages?

3. What role can PEAR team play?

- Volunteers can hand out flyers.
- Staff and PEAR team members can be "boots on the ground".

Group 4

Questions: Theme - Community Outreach

1. What other outreach and engagement strategies should we consider?
 - Job shadow (work alongside WSP staff - at parks) → local people and have it be informative and hands on
 - Short video introduction to your role
 - Explore other roles at SP besides rangers - e.g. Interpretation - and how there are so many other jobs - e.g. boating, archeology, communications, admin, creative services, arbor crew, etc.
 - Show how all these roles connect and support the agency (storytelling)
 - Ask a ranger on eastside about their day to day (storytelling, photos)
 - Want more data/statistics - which SPs have had more outreach? E.g. Saltwater with FTA
 - Rangers and area staff share outreach and engagement in their region (map out on a table- like the one on on p2)
 - Each park is different
 - Help us to identify gaps, needs
 - Would be interesting to hear from current SP staff about their experiences applying for a SP job

2. How can we reach underrepresented and underserved communities for outreach and engagement?
 - Gauge what these communities' perceptions of Parks and state agency is - is it clear? Is it some place where these communities can see themselves/ourselves?
 - **How do we go from interest -> to follow through**
 - Job shadows can provide insight
 - Someone you know works there, mentors
 - Where are you - specific parks have their own respective visitor-base, culture, etc.
 - Diverse hiring best practices
 - Instead of finding "perfect" candidate, looking for someone that fits the role
 - Thumbs up for looking at a Parks job announcement at PEAR team - look at a Park Aide job description (seasonal), a full time role, admin role
 - What do you see?
 - What attracts you? What turns you away?
 - What communicates a work culture that values DEI? That would attract a candidate from the communities we are trying to reach.
 - Required vs. Desired qualification
 - Other observations?
 - How does it feel to fill out the application
 - Look at a job description with that interwoven DEI language
 - Experience working with a range of communities
 - Contributing to SP vision of X

3. What role can the PEAR team plan in outreach and engagement?
 - Share ideas
 - Form that connection, community
 - Participating at a career fair in HS, local fairs in town
 - Get a range of staff to go (not just rangers) - arbor crew, maintenance, comms, etc.
 - PEAR team hosting specific events for their respective communities - to talk about PEAR work, share specific topics (like community outreach), collect feedback to bring back to PEAR team
 - **PEAR Team becomes a part of Parks outreach team!**
 - Meet with specific groups, agencies, helping to spread the word
 - Bringing specific items (e.g. job announcements)
 - Showing up to specific and relevant events that PEAR team can contribute to

- Example: BIPOC outdoors spaces, affinity spaces, library events (outdoor or community themed)
- Listening to lived experiences to help build trust

Big question - How many people know about WSP PEAR team?

- Yes! Big question!!! (Janette)
- Would love to brainstorm how we can share this to the WA state community (in a friendly, simple, impactful, and inspirational way)

Small Group 5

1. What other outreach and engagement strategies should we consider?
Utilization of digital tech, Expansive comm. Outreach, cultural competence training, difficult for the over 125 different cultures, using inclusive language, accessibility issues are attended to, go to places that we can find these different cultures, (festival halls/social security offices/libraries/comm. centers/festivals/job shadowing or apprentice type programs in urban or comm. Not well represented) lack of transportation is an issue, connection with recreation departments?
 2. How can we reach underrepresented and underserved communities for outreach and engagement? Demographic shift happening in our state,
 3. What role can the PEAR team plan in outreach and engagement? Paying close attention to the cultural competency issue. Visit places, ask questions, be more curious, educational. Internal education. "Not your story to tell" - do a series of listening sessions, hear "their story", we are going to be pupils and how are we going to serve you? Work with young people, give them a different experience, STEM (approved STEM educator/maybe State Parks should have a STEM educator?).
Transportation budget.
- **Safety**
 - **Transportation**

Tabor 100 list, other lists that aren't on state parks email lists.; connecting better with local cities

- **Safety is essential!**
- **Listening to disenfranchised/marginalized/traumatized community groups Sessions**
- **Cultural Competency**
- **Engage with Community Events, Locations and Activities**

- Inner Agency education "Cultural"

Know our History of State & National Parks Infrastructure

John Muir

[Sierra Club Denounces Founder John Muir For Racism : NPR](#)

Gilford Pinchot

[It's time to own up to the racism and violence embedded in the names of parks and public lands | The Wilderness Society](#)

NRPA new future: features DEI keynote speaker this year

[Diversity, Equity & Inclusion in Parks and Recreation Report \(nrpa.org\)](#)

Tell their own story

[palouse falls - Search \(bing.com\)](#)