

Cuyahoga Soil & Water Conservation District 2023 DEI Actions & Commitments

In July 2022 Cuyahoga Soil & Water Conservation District issued a statement on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) at the District, including commitments to take action and continued learning. In continued pursuit of transparency and accountability, Cuyahoga SWCD's Board and Staff commit to the following actions and commitments in 2023:

PROGRAMMING & SERVICES

Recognizing the District's work has potential to positively impact a diverse range of residents, businesses, and organizations in Cuyahoga County, it is crucial that we better understand what Soil & Water challenges our community is facing and how our programs and services can best address them. Additionally, we must strive to expand our engagement in communities that could benefit most from our programs.

2023 Actions/Commitments

- Conduct 4-8 listening sessions throughout Cuyahoga County to hear first-hand what our residents want and need and any barriers they may have to participation. Use these sessions to deepen our community relationships and obtain feedback on how we can better align our programs and services to meet the community's needs.
 - Ensure these sessions are accessible and equitably distributed throughout the county.
 - Create tools for capturing demographic information from participants to ensure audiences engaged are representative of the county/community.
 - Utilize data collected to establish baselines for future community engagement efforts.
 - Where applicable, budget for food and/or childcare to help increase participation from residents.
 - Where applicable, tie into NP-SIS planning efforts.
- Wherever applicable, prioritize programming and outreach in Cuyahoga County equity and climate vulnerability zones.
 - Utilize Beehive and Fulcrum to evaluate previous efforts and track ongoing equity zone prioritization in 2023.
 - Include considerations for schools that are in equity zone communities, but may not fall within an equity zone itself.
- Evaluate District's programs for accessibility (see INCLUSION & ACCESSIBILITY below for more detail).

RESIDENT & STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

As Cuyahoga SWCD works to protect and restore healthy soil and water resources, we understand the need to expand our audiences and the partners we work with to ensure we are truly serving everyone in the county. For any community engagement effort, it is important to meet people "where they are"- either physically in their space, or from an awareness and education perspective. With such a strong portfolio of programs and services we can offer our

residents and landowners, Cuyahoga SWCD must broaden our reach and deep our connections in the county to effectively engage with our many stakeholders.

2023 Actions/Commitments

- Participate in 12 existing public/partner/community events in 2023, that we have not previously participated in, to increase the District's presence throughout the community.
 - Ensure balanced attendance across county geography, with priority in Cuyahoga equity and climate vulnerability zones.
 - Utilize Beehive to track event participation throughout the year.
 - Identify opportunities to build off of the activities and engagement tools developed in the listening sessions to capture community input and feedback at events.
- Develop new and maintain existing partner relationships
 - Set a goal of meetings/check ins with partner organizations at least 1-2 times per year.
 - Create a system to track partner engagement and capture opportunities for future engagement or collaboration.
- Use plain language whenever possible to connect with broader audiences (see OUTREACH, COMMUNICATIONS, & MEDIA below for more detail)

OUTREACH, COMMUNICATIONS, & MEDIA

In order to expand our audiences and continue building awareness of Cuyahoga SWCD's work and mission, the District must continue to utilize multiple outreach strategies to promote our message. As noted above, "meeting people where they are," can take many forms and requires a broad range of collateral materials and media outlets to get your message across. While the District has a strong portfolio of print materials and contacts, there is always room for improvement to support more effective community messaging.

2023 Actions/Commitments

- Use plain language whenever possible to connect with broader audiences.
 - Explore tools or other resources that can help in evaluating the reading level/accessibility of the language we use.
 - Set a goal of updating three (3) collateral pieces/web pages/social content in 2023, including a new brochure for the District.
- Translate content into Spanish to create more accessible collateral materials and digital content
 - Committed to creating a Spanish version of the District brochure.
 - Committed to creating a Spanish version of the "About Us" section of the District website.
- Review and update media contact lists to help support more targeted outreach as needed.
 - Engage with trusted partners to help identify additional media contacts to include in the list.
 - Set a goal of adding 10 new contacts/organizations in 2023.

HUMAN RESOURCES, PERSONNEL, & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Diversity, equity, and inclusion starts at home. In order for Cuyahoga SWCD to best serve our constituents, we must ensure that the District is an accessible and inclusive organization where each person we engage feels valued, supported, and safe to be their authentic self. As Cuyahoga SWCD strives to be more representative of the people we serve, there are a number of practices we can employ to educate staff on why DEI is important and how it connects to our work, while implementing practices to support more diversity in our workforce.

2023 Actions/Commitments

- Implement recruiting and hiring practices that create opportunities for a more diverse workforce at the District.
 - Remove names from resumes when initially reviewing and evaluating applications.
 - Create mechanism for tracking demographic information of candidates applying to positions at the District. Ensure this information is not used when evaluating applications.
 - Expand list of networks we reach out to for recruiting new roles.
 - Where applicable, develop job descriptions that allow for the largest pools of qualified candidates possible, including posting the approved salary bands for positions.
 - Create more opportunities for shadowing and internships to expose broader audiences to careers in the conservation field.
- Continue supporting and encouraging CSWCD staff to take DEI and other relevant trainings.
 - Establish training goals and requirements for new and existing staff.
 - Make REI Groundwater training required for all new staff within six months of hire date.
 - Create dedicated time for all staff to discuss DEI trainings and the District's DEI goals.

INCLUSION & ACCESSIBILITY

While Cuyahoga SWCD programs and services offer residents and landowners a wealth of resources and information to practice conservation at home and in the community, we recognize there are certain programs and events which may not be accessible to all. Because we serve everyone in Cuyahoga County, the District is committed to reviewing its programs and services and identifying opportunities to make programs and events more inclusive and accessible.

2023 Actions/Commitments

- Evaluate District's programs and events for accessibility.
 - Establish a checklist of accessibility considerations for District-hosted events. Potential considerations include:
 - Access to public transportation

- Parking considerations
- Building/event access
- Listing physical demands for events on promotional materials
- Childcare/child activity needs (especially for evening or weekend events)
- Food needs (especially for evening or weekend events)
- Language/interpreter needs
- Questions to ask during event registration to understand accessibility needs
- Create a system to track accessibility of events hosted by the District.
 - Utilize this data to inform event planning in 2024.
- Explore how to leverage the District's buying power and establish a purchasing policy/contracting preference for DBEs, FBEs, local businesses, etc.
 - Research draft policy language that could support these efforts.
 - Identify key spending categories which could be candidates to pilot the contracting preferences.