

Virginia Conservation Network's 2023 Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Justice Work plan

VCN is committed to build a more equitable and diverse organization and Network. The following work plan outlines concrete steps we plan to take to address the culture and capacity of our own organization and our Network Partner's organizations to embed the values of diversity, equity, inclusion and justice. This plan is updated and released annually to hold VCN accountable, providing a platform for partners and advocates to give us feedback, and to share ideas for partners to implement in their own organizations.

VCN recognizes that this work is ongoing and changes. While VCN's 2023 DEI action plan is an important tool to hold ourselves accountable, we also know that as we continue to listen and learn, we also must be ready to adapt and change. It is also important to note that while we set a plan and goals to hold ourselves accountable, none of these actions themselves nor this entire plan together will move the needle where it needs to be in one year. This is a long-term process that will take commitment over decades and adjustments as we go.

PILLAR: Create more spaces for shared discussion on what VCN is doing on DEI & where we can improve - across the staff, board & Network Partners.

- Staff Communication:
 - 100% participation in the annual anonymous staff/board survey in June.
 - This survey, conducted annually for the last 4 years, collects feedback on what we're doing well, what we should do better & specific ideas on what we should do next. The survey leads to staff and board discussions to update the annual VCN DEI plan.
 - Revisit our annual DEI plan as a staff twice a year
 - Ahead of each board meeting to discuss our progress to date.
 - VCN staff member's work plan will include working towards equity and inclusion
 - These plans will be addressed at least monthly in regular staff check-ins with their supervisor.
- Board Communication:
 - 100% Participation in the annual anonymous staff/board survey in June
 - Portion of each quarterly board meeting is spent discussing progress on the DEI plan.
 - New Board Members are required to attend one cycle of VCN's Shared Learning Cohort
 - New board VCN Board Members, and those who have yet to, will attend at least one cycle of VCN's Shared Learning Cohort, during their tenure as a VCN Board Member.
- Network Communication:
 - Share updated DEI plan for the next year & Report on the DEI plan from last year with VCN Network at the Annual Meeting each year.
 - This will ensure both accountability for the partnership but also create space for the network to discuss what's working / what's not and how we can all improve upon our work in the next year.

PILLAR: Create a pipeline for a more diverse group of environmentalists joining our organizations

- Organize an Environmental Career Panel in Partnership with BlackOak targeted at students and recent college graduates of Historically Black Colleges and Universities.
 - The panels would feature leaders of color in our movement and showcase the type of careers available in the environmental space - organizing, advocacy, legal, foundations, etc.
- VCN's paid fellowship program
 - This paid summer fellowship is meant for individuals looking to launch their career in the environmental field, who may not have the ability to take an unpaid summer internship. Environmental Fellows will join the VCN team for six to eight weeks over the summer gaining invaluable experience by immersing themselves in a summer long project designed specifically for the fellowship. Fellows will work directly with one of VCN's managers concentrating in their choice of policy or outreach.
- Send a copy of the Briefing Book to Universities and Colleges in Virginia, to ensure we include HBCUs and a racially diverse set of professors.
- Revamp and better publicize our dues waiver program for groups who center low-income communities and communities of color in their work.

PILLAR: Offer Resources / Trainings / Education to Partners

- Run an Annual DEIJ Shared Learning Cohort on core principles of DEIJ
 - Through our shared learning cohort organizations will grow their understanding of the intersection between DEIJ issues and the environmental movement. Included will be time for organizations to share their own organization's DEIJ plan, and get tips and ideas from their fellow Cohort members. To be relaunched March 2023.
- Reachout to our smaller community based organization for their training and educational needs
 - VCN will endeavor to grow and direct its smaller trainings to address the specific needs of these smaller organizations, by reaching out directly to these organizations and asking them what they need/want to see.
- Annual Survey to all Network Partners on what training / resources they'd like.
 - The Survey would relate to DEIJ as well as organizational capacity for smaller Black, Indigenous and People of Color led groups.

PILLAR: Ensure VCN's internal processes follow the best DEIJ practices

- Ensure VCN's recruitment & retention process reflects best DEIJ practices.
 - Advertise positions in a variety of places including locations that specifically target individuals of color. Authentically reflect our work on diversity, equity, inclusion and justice on VCN's website.
- Build and maintain a VCN Equity work webpage
 - Striving for more transparency, VCN will create and maintain a webpage that provides viewers with an overview of the equity work the organization has and is performing.
- Strive towards a board that is fully representative of the Commonwealth's racial, gender, and geographic diversity

- Through VCN's annual board recruitment drive, hosting an annual board orientation for new members and annual board survey to collect feedback on what board members enjoy and what they'd like to do more to make the board more effective and enjoyable. VCN will assess additional marginalized identities who may not have an opportunity to engage in VCN's board due to barriers of entry and set goals for recruitment / engagement based on that assessment.
- Do An Annual Review of VCN's staff policies
 - To ensure best practices are reflected including equitable paid time off, health care offerings, grievance policies, etc.
- Budget for honorariums for VCN speakers
 - For events, panels, etc. focused on equity and inclusion. The allocated budget currently is \$2500. Furthermore, VCN will create a memo that details the usage and allocation of this budget.
- 100% of the board and any VCN new staff will complete or be participating in a racial equity learning series

Ensure equity principles are embedded in all policies pushed by VCN

- Equity Review Committee for the briefing book.
 - Each year select an equity policy review committee that does a review of all policies in the briefing book to ensure none of our policies disproportionately impact low income communities or communities of color - and, where possible, lift up these communities.
- Briefing Book Equity Review Committee highlighting
 - VCN will endeavor to highlight the work and process of the Committee for the Network and general public, during the Briefing Book release.
- Develop statewide Environmental Justice policy priorities in Our Common Agenda
 - Based on the guidance of the Virginia Environmental Justice Collaborative.