

Progress Report on VCN's 2023 Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Justice WorkPlan

The following is a progress report on Virginia Conservation Network's Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Justice plan that was developed through feedback and input from the VCN staff, board and Network Partners throughout 2023. Below is the update on how we're coming on the plan (Fall 2022 – Summer 2023).

While this work is ongoing, to help best visualize progress, we used green and yellow indicators to show where we felt VCN fully accomplished what we set out to do (■) vs. where we made progress on an item but did not fully accomplish what we set out to do (■). Note that a green box does not mean we will stop doing that action item in the future, only that we feel as though we accomplished the action item to the fullest extent that we planned in the time period set.

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

- Staff Communication:
 - 100% participation in the annual anonymous staff survey in June
This survey was completed by all staff members and results were discussed at our staff Team Meeting in August.
 - Revisit our annual DEIJ plan as a staff twice a year
The DEIJ workplan was discussed ahead of the summer board meeting.
 - VCN staff member's work plan will include working towards equity and inclusion
- Board Communication:
 - 100% participation in the annual anonymous board survey in June
11/18 board members completed this survey. Results were discussed by the board at the summer board meeting. While the survey was completed it was only filled out by 11/18 board members so we did not give ourselves a full green check. In the future, we should have 100% participation.
 - New staff and Board Members are required to attend one cycle of VCN's Shared Learning Cohort
Two board members are participating in the Racial Equity Cohort this year. In total, 9 of our 15 current board members have participated in the Cohort.
- Network Communication:
 - Share Progress Report and updated DEIJ plan with VCN Network at the Annual Meeting
Progress Report and draft 2024 Workplan – shared at the Annual Meeting.

2. Create a pipeline for a more racially diverse group of environmentalists to join our Network

- ■ Organize an Environmental Jobs Panels at Historically Black Colleges and Universities
VCN joined [BlackOak Collective](#) – a new organization of black professionals - with a two-year shared agreement including the following joint workplan. On April 21st, we hosted our first Virginia-based jobs panel featuring Ebonie Alexander, Black Family Land Trust; Kim Jemaine, Chesapeake Climate Action Network; Josephus Allmond, Southern Environmental Law Center and Harrison Wallace, Equity Fund. It was co-hosted by our own Narissa Turner. You can read more about our partnership on VCN's blog: <http://www.vcnva.org/blackoak-collective/>.
- ■ VCN's paid fellowship program
VCN hired two full-time paid summer fellows who worked 10 weeks over the summer and

worked directly with one of VCN's managers concentrating on their choice of policy or outreach. In addition, VCN launched our first fall fellowship program and hired four part-time fellows to work with VCN staff from October to December.

- 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.

VCN mailed briefing books to over a dozen professors across the state.

- Revamp and better publicize our dues waiver program for groups that center on low-income communities and communities of color in their work.

VCN updated our Partner application to better onboard Partners and clearly highlight and explain our dues waiver program.

3. Offer Resources / Trainings to Partners

- Run an Annual DEIJ Shared Learning Cohort on core principles of DEIJ
Our second Racial Equity Cohort launched in March 2023 with all 30 spots filled
- Reach out to our smaller community-based organization for their training and educational need
- Annual Survey to all Network Partners on what training/resources they'd like.

VCN shared an annual survey at the end of 2022 with all Partners.

4. Ensure VCN's internal processes follow the best DEIJ practices

- Ensure VCN recruitment & retention process reflects best DEIJ practices
VCN has run 2 recruitment drives in the last year. Our job descriptions have been updated to include the salary and included language such as encouraging anyone who fits 75% of the JD to apply. We increased the number of job boards to cast a wider net for candidates. While we implemented a set of best practices, more work is needed to increase our pool of candidates of color.
- Do An Annual Review of VCN's staff policies
VCN added policies to be inclusive of staff wishing to transition to a part-time role.
- Build and maintain a VCN Equity work webpage
VCN launched a DEIJ commitment webpage that is updated regularly at <https://vcnva.org/deij-commitment/>
- Strive towards a board that is fully representative of the Commonwealth's racial, gender, and geographic diversity.
VCN created a board committee this year dedicated to board recruitment.
- Budget for honorariums for VCN speakers
VCN has a \$2,500 budget for speaker honorariums

5. Ensure equity principles are embedded in all policies pushed by VCN

- Equity Review Committee for the briefing book
The equity review team for the briefing book had 10 members this year. These are members of the Network that look at the policies specifically with the lens of ensuring our policies don't

disproportionately impact low-income communities, communities of color, or rural communities and – where possible lift up these communities.

■ Briefing Book Equity Review Committee highlighting

The Equity Review Committee members were highlighted on the copyright page, and the process was highlighted within the “how the briefing book gets drafted” section.

- ■ Develop statewide Environmental Justice policy priorities in Our Common Agenda based on the guidance of the Virginia Environmental Justice Collaborative

VCN continued to pursue Environmental Justice policy priorities in Our Common Agenda, working with key Partners working directly in environmental justice communities.