

## **2019 Testimonials in Support of NEOEDD's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Programs and Services**

### **Wallowa Resources**

Several things make DEI work in northeast Oregon challenging for our organization. First, DEI is difficult to navigate in any location, but particularly fraught in isolated, rural areas. As an organization, we struggle with how to apply a DEI lens to our approaches and programs. Second, we have found it difficult to fundraise for DEI work as it does not immediately result in traditional "on-the-ground" projects. Third, we do not have many DEI experts available locally, so it requires that we bring in outside help, making it more expensive.

NEOEDD's programs allow numerous other individuals and organizations struggling with the same issues to come together, learn, and benefit from their trainings and workshops. It has been extremely helpful for our organization and has provided our staff with very necessary DEI education. DEI has always been a priority for Wallowa Resources and we are looking forward to using what we learn in NEOEDD workshops as we begin updating our strategic plan next year.

Not only do we see NEOEDD's programs as integral to our organizational growth, but we believe it is vital that for the future social and economic health of our community.

### **Building Healthy Families**

We have participated in NEOEDD's DEI programming by sending multiple staff to workshops and by meeting with NEOEDD staff to discuss needs/opportunities in our communities. As a community leader, I feel this work is important and essential to each and every one of our citizens. After each planning meeting I feel inspired and motivated to continue driving this work forward. I feel that we have planted the initial seeds and are truly ready to move the DEI conversations and action forward in our community. I am eager to participate in the next steps to engage an even wider audience to share, learn and build a more inclusive and welcoming environment for all.

### **EOU Head Start Center**

I have participated in NEOEDD's DEI programming by attending the DEI workshop series and participating in conversation project discussions. I found this experience useful in helping to update the equity plan for my organization, Eastern Oregon University Head Start, and I used the skills and information to develop and deliver our annual organization-wide equity training day. Connecting with other organizations, networking and learning around the topic of equity not only improves my personal skills and enhances my organization, it helps create a better community for the children and families that my organization serves.

### **Wallowa Valley Center for Wellness**

I have participated in NEOEDD's DEI programming by attending three DEI workshops and acknowledging our current and ongoing role in our community's past. I was invited as a

member and representative of the Center for Wellness to each workshop, and I returned to the organization to relay what I had learned. This awareness of how we impact others and how others may feel impacted by us is exactly what my work at the Center for Wellness is centered around. I was thankful and impressed by the attention to issues around diversity and equity from community members. It's obligatory that we as community leaders in these organizations take time to acknowledge power differentials and equity to best serve all members of our community fairly.

### **Community Connection**

We have participated in NEOEDD's DEI and GRANTREADY programming by attending workshops and trainings. When organizations are diverse, equitable, and inclusive, they have higher levels of satisfaction and engagement, stronger staff retention, higher productivity, and a heightened sense of belonging. Millennials, who will compose one-third of the labor force by 2024, place an even higher value on diversity and inclusion than previous generations. We found NEOEDD's programs valuable and would like to see them continue.

### **Fishtrap**

As Fishtrap's Youth Program Manager, I have participated in NEOEDD's DEI programming several times over the past few years in DEI workshops and conversation projects. I feel that this training is integral to making me a better educator in the schools. Likewise, Fishtrap has taken the initiative as an organization the past few years to have our staff participate in NEOEDD DEI workshops and conversation projects. This training was incredibly important to me personally and I feel it has strengthened our staff and introduced DEI into our thinking and conversations about programming. This past year's youth programs served almost 800 youth in Wallowa County and these DEI workshops and conversation projects helped me serve youth more confidently.

### **North East Oregon Network**

Northeast Oregon Network (NEON) staff have participated in NEOEDD's DEI programming as a participant. NEON staff have also participated in several other trainings offered by NEOEDD. We have also worked with NEOEDD in other collaborations, including supporting their regional strategic planning process. These opportunities have been very insightful and interesting experiences. Staff have taken away important lessons and skills from these opportunities, that have helped NEON staff to better conduct the work that we do as a non-profit community health focused organization.

### **Eastern Oregon Legacy Lands Project**

I have participated in NEOEDD's DEI programming by attending a DEI workshop in La Grande along with 3 of my coworkers. It was my first DEI workshop. I came away with a more nuanced understanding of important ways that DEI issues surface in conversations with others and in my own personal thoughts. I also felt very encouraged that my organization is becoming more

aware of these issues and in our efforts to be proactive. While I know that we have much more to learn, I feel that my organization can help bring a better understanding of DEI issues and the complex and subtle ways that they manifest in our community.

### **EOU Career Center**

NEOEDD is spearheading critical work in frontier-fringe Oregon and seeks to bridge gaps in Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Access (IDEA) work to empower residents in in northeastern Oregon to become more nimble, more flexible and more open to change in a rapidly shifting economy.

NEOEDD is a strong advocate and ally in the development of greater University strategic initiatives to elevate workforce development and access to economic vitality through the lens of IDEA. I actively promote NEOEDD IDEA conversations and leadership opportunities with my colleagues, employees, students, student-interns and regional Oregon Humanities donors.

In the past year, I have attended multiple NEOEDD IDEA programs including "What's DEI" and "Encouraging Diversity without Tokenism," along with inviting NEOEDD as a guest to Eastern Oregon University's annual Celebrate, Educate and Appreciate Diversity (CEAD) Conference. I am always energized and inspired by the synergy that NEOEDD and EOU have created, fostered and deepened over my past four-years at EOU. At the "Encouraging Diversity without Tokenism," Sara Curiel Paez challenged the audience of non-profit leaders to examine systematic and historical racism as it is played out in our day-to-day experiences. The topic of systematic and historical racism is a crucial conversation for all organizations -my take-away from the workshop was that NEOEDD, as models of IDEA in northeast Oregon, demonstrated self-reflection as they examined their own marketing through in the lens of potential 'tokenism.' Northeast Oregon Economic Development District is a champion for IDEA work within the region-their partnership is crucial for the future of workforce development and access to economic vitality for all.

Work in the areas of inclusion, diversity, equity and access is paramount to the continued success, expansion and growth of the economies of rural northeast Oregon. I am honored to collaborate and partner with NEOEDD as the Director of Career Services at Eastern Oregon University and as a member of Oregon Humanities' Board of Directors. NEOEDD is a leader in IDEA work in northeastern Oregon.