

ORANGE WATER AND SEWER AUTHORITY

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

June 2018

PURPOSE: To provide information on OWASA's Diversity and Inclusion work.

BACKGROUND: The Board of Directors and staff recognize the value of establishing an Employee Diversity and Inclusion Program. Our updated Strategic Plan adopted by the Board on June 9, 2016 identified this as a high priority task for the organization.

The Board received and discussed staff's first draft Diversity and Inclusion Plan at its July 14, 2016 meeting. Following discussion, the Board agreed to hold a Special Work Session in the fall of 2016 to receive additional information and to continue its discussion of the draft.

The Board held a Special Work Session on November 3, 2016 and received excellent presentations on diversity and inclusion by Maria Hicks-Few, Camille Brooks, Jennifer Bynum, Faith Thompson and Michelle Johnson. Following discussion, the Board agreed that staff will update the draft Diversity and Inclusion Plan based on information learned since July 2016 for discussion at a future Board meeting.

An updated "working draft" Diversity and Inclusion Plan was provided to the Board by email on November 17, 2016, and it was provided to other peers for review and comment. Voluntary meetings with employees were also held to answer questions and receive feedback and suggestions on the updated "working draft."

The information gathered as noted above greatly assisted staff in preparing its proposed [Initial Implementation Plan](#) (Plan) for our Employee Diversity and Inclusion Program which was approved by the Board at their March 9, 2017, meeting. Board approval also included a directive that a consultant be hired within the next quarter.

Execution of a service contract with VISIONS, Inc. took place in May 2017 and a progress report from Angela Bryant, Senior Consultant and Co-founder of VISIONS, Inc., and Thomas Grigg, Senior Consultant for VISIONS, Inc., at the Board's June 8, 2017 meeting.

The organization formed a voluntary employee Diversity Resource Group along with a Diversity Recruitment Group and Diversity Leadership Group and the groups underwent training with VISIONS, Inc.

In November 2017 an Organizational Assessment took place with employees and the Board. As a result of the Assessment, there were forty (40) general recommendations in seven (7) categories and VISIONS provided an additional four (4) recommendations. Also provided by the Assessment were twenty-six (26) recommendations in four (4) categories for recruitment and retention.

The Board was provided an [update by Staff on April 12, 2018](#) to review an Action Plan for Improvements Identified by Organizational Assessment.

CURRENT STATUS: The Action Plan for Improvements Identified by the Organizational Assessment has two steps. The first is to assign the Diversity Leadership, Resource and Recruitment Groups along with feedback from employees, to work with VISIONS to prioritize and delegate the general recommendations. The second step includes Human Resources, the Diversity Recruitment and Leadership Groups along with VISIONS to review recruitment processes, career development programs, the mentoring program and promotional opportunities fairness and accessibility.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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