



2021-2024 Summary DEIJ Plan

Riverkeeper's Commitment to Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Justice (DEIJ)

Riverkeeper strives to support our partners to increase their power and effectiveness regarding decisions affecting their environment and health. Historically, the better resourced and predominantly white environmental movement, including Riverkeeper, has done this kind of work through its own lens and motivation as opposed to based on what Black, Indigenous and people of color (BIPOC) communities and organizations have articulated as their own needs. We are working to change this narrative and have committed ourselves to the ongoing path of diversity, equity, inclusion and justice work. We began this journey in 2018 with some stumbles and some progress. With race and class inequities magnified by the global pandemic and the uprisings in defense of Black lives in 2020, we re-committed ourselves to this incredibly important and urgent work while simultaneously undergoing organizational strategic planning. We formed a DEIJ Committee of staff and Board members that together produced an 11-page, three-year DEIJ Plan, which we completed in June 2021. The Plan articulates overarching Internal and External Goals, followed by sub-goals, objectives and actions that we hope to achieve over the next three years. The Summary DEIJ Plan below is a condensed version of our longer plan.

INTERNAL

Riverkeeper will promote a 'just workplace'. We understand a 'just workplace' to be a place that is inclusive and welcoming, where differences are valued, where professional development and job growth is encouraged, and everyone—with prioritization of staff members from historically marginalized groups¹—are inspired, energized, empowered and part of a mutually supported collective that takes care of the water and each other. This is an initial blueprint for a 'just workplace' that Riverkeeper will refer to and reassess over time as an organization. Over the next three years, Riverkeeper will work towards this vision of a 'just workplace' by improving our internal organizational culture, developing transparent and inclusive structures and systems, and ensuring equitable internal policies. The organization commits to allocating existing funding and finding new funding to support this plan.

Culture Goal

Riverkeeper will have an inclusive, welcoming and empowering workplace.

Objectives + Actions

- Ensure there is an internal restorative justice process.²
- Ensure there are established practices to work through interpersonal conflict.
- Support a collaborative process for ongoing development of a 'just workplace' blueprint.
- Hold regular and accessible meetings, retreats, trainings, and experiences (e.g. affinity groups as needed/requested) that build connections within and across teams.
- Support professional development for all staff (e.g.. networking and convening, leadership development, professional training).
- Create and/or change physical spaces in order to prioritize accessibility and staff needs (e.g., American Disabilities Act accessibility, nursing room, private space).
- Acknowledge and celebrate culture and identity (e.g., holidays celebrated).
- Create voluntary opportunities for staff to learn more about DEIJ (e.g., book club with BIPOC writers, lunches at the office with outside guests, work time devoted to lectures or workshops organized by others).

¹ 'Historically marginalized groups' include Black, Indigenous, people of color (BIPOC), women, those with physical and intellectual disabilities, the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual (LGBTQIA+) community, and those discriminated against for their religious affiliation.

² 'Restorative justice' is a theory of righting wrongs that focuses on mediation and agreement rather than punishment. Those who have caused harm must accept responsibility for harm caused and make restitution with those that were harmed. (Adapted from: <https://www.weareteachers.com/restorative-justice/>).

Structures + Systems Goal

Riverkeeper will have transparent and inclusive internal power structures and decision-making systems that are grounded in trust, mutual respect and collegiality.

Objectives + Actions

- Assess and identify strategies to address historic and existing internal power structures that impact our decision making systems and how white supremacy and misogyny show up in our organization.
- Clarify Riverkeeper's internal power structure and decision-making systems.
- Reassess Riverkeeper's organizational governance structure in order to consider potential opportunities for integration of horizontal governance and decision-making.
- Ensure staff and Executive Team are trained in DEIJ best practices, such as inclusive decision-making, systemic power inequities, skill building and education, communications/language, mediation and conflict, and restorative justice.

Policies Goal

Riverkeeper will have equitable policies for all staff and board regardless of their identities and roles within the organization.

Objectives + Actions

- Ensure that compensation, promotion, benefits, and recruitment policies are equitable by:
 - Reassessing equity bands and benefits on a regular basis.
 - Establishing clear promotion pathways within teams.
 - Reevaluating and developing robust two-way feedback systems between management and staff that involve accountability, clarity and transparency.
 - Evaluating and updating the Riverkeeper Employee Handbook.
 - Evaluating the existing anti-retaliation policy.
 - Evaluating job descriptions for exclusive language and criteria.
- Ensure equitable staff workload policies and practices.
- Ensure equitable purchasing, contracting, and gift acceptance policies.
- Ensure that there is an inclusive structure on the Riverkeeper Board to implement DEIJ Goals as they pertain to the Board.

EXTERNAL

Riverkeeper will promote lasting justice in the Hudson River watershed. As an environmental organization following the lead of our environmental justice partners, we understand 'justice' to mean: prioritizing historically marginalized groups³ most impacted by environmental issues, reducing historic environmental harms, fairly reallocating environmental benefits and supporting community ownership. Riverkeeper will refer to and reassess these guiding principles of justice over time internally and with our external partners. Over the next three years, Riverkeeper will work toward this vision of justice by elevating and empowering historically marginalized groups and developing equitable and inclusive decision-making processes.

Community Building Goal

Riverkeeper will develop an intentional process for community and partner relationship building that elevates and empowers historically marginalized groups, while still being inclusive of all the communities we serve.

Objectives + Actions

- Ensure that Riverkeeper is centering and responding to the core water issues and concerns identified by the watershed communities we serve, with the prioritization of historically marginalized groups, by:
 - Undertaking a watershed mapping effort to identify and incorporate 'historically marginalized group' indicators.
 - Creating an annual Riverkeeper 'community listening process'—where communities in our watershed identify key needs and/or organizational feedback that will inform Riverkeeper's campaigns, projects and relationship building.
 - Creating protocols for how to address watchdog reports or inquiries for other-than-river concerns (e.g., air quality, waterfront development, etc.).
- Ensure that Riverkeeper allocates resources—including time, money, media attention and expertise—with partners equitably.
- Ensure that Riverkeeper's relationships and projects with Native communities are authentic, benefit Native communities and align with Native goals.
- Ensure that Riverkeeper's external communications and outreach is inclusive of and reflects the communities we serve.

³ We understand 'historically marginalized groups' to include BIPOC communities, low income communities and communities subject to disproportionate levels of environmental harms due to systemic racism and classism.

Decision Making Goal

Riverkeeper will identify and correct power imbalances in decision-making processes among stakeholders, communities, partners, and agencies, using outcomes from the 'community listening process.' This includes relationships where Riverkeeper is the more powerful stakeholder, and situations where not all stakeholders start at the table.

Objectives + Actions

- Ensure historically excluded groups are at any decision-making tables that Riverkeeper is a participant in, by:
 - Advocating for needed changes to government agency decision-making processes to make them inclusive.
 - Providing external support to communities around participation in government agency decision making and “created spaces” (e.g., coalitions, working groups) that influence agency decision making.
 - Monitoring specific issues, communicating them to our watershed communities and creating opportunities for engagement.
- Ensure historically excluded groups are deeply integrated into the decision-making and strategy-building process on projects that Riverkeeper organizes.