



Commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Rural Development Initiatives (RDI) recognizes our diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) work is only as successful as our ability to hold ourselves accountable to the rural people and places we serve. As an organization, we are committed to being a learner and humble champion, dedicating resources to this work, and working alongside others endeavoring to create inclusive and equitable rural communities.

We believe that inclusivity is critical to the vitality and resiliency of rural people, places, and economies. RDI strives to be inclusive throughout our organization. Only through inclusion are we capable of creating equitable rural communities and economies, representing rural needs, interests, and diversity.

Valuing diversity and practicing equity and inclusion are imperative to RDI meeting our mission to strengthen rural people, places, and economies in the Pacific Northwest. We realize that the undertaking of a diversity, equity, and inclusion initiative is not a one-time event, but rather a long-term journey. We're committed to being on this journey; it's essential to recognizing and empowering all individuals in creating thriving rural communities.

RDI recognizes and values the importance of local control, enhancing local assets, and elevating the voice of rural. Rural communities are essential to the strength of our nation, and issues of equity profoundly affect many Americans in rural communities. Throughout history, rural people and places have been systematically marginalized as the result of shifting power structures, ill-intentioned profiteering, and displacement. RDI understands that diversity, equity, and inclusion work is key to reconciling this.

We believe we must be mindful about our DEI work, and we believe this effort requires failing, humility, and audacity. DEI work is more than a value; it is a lens and a directive for all aspects of our work both internally and externally. We believe we must intentionally develop a new organizational culture and identity so that we can better represent and serve rural people and places. We are committed to creating intentional programming and services driven by the diversity of the rural people and places we serve.

RDI's equity work strives to identify and address disparities, leverage our voices and positions of power, and work to elevate others. We believe strong leadership requires not just champions, but also collective action, to create an equitable society. This statement affirms our commitment to this journey of recognizing and empowering all individuals to create thriving rural communities. RDI's board and staff are dedicated to ensuring these efforts are fully realized.

This statement, a living document of RDI's Commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, was crafted and adopted by Rural Development Initiatives' Board of Directors on September 9, 2019.