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Justice, Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion Organization Progress Report

In 2018, Conservation Corps Minnesota & Iowa (CCMI) created the Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI) Committee, a staff lead committee which supports the organization in achieving our JEDI goals. In 2021, we published a [Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion statement](#) to guide our organizational work, hold ourselves accountable, and further our commitment to equitable access.

Last year, we shared our [first Justice, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Organization Progress Report](#), where we outlined the accomplishments that we have made so far, and the areas where we will improve next. The longevity of this work is important to maintain. We recognize the need for continuous improvement, learning, and accountability to hold ourselves to the standards we have set. By fostering a sustainable culture of continuous improvement, we can always move in the right direction and make our programs more equitable year after year. Below we outline the progress made as an organization towards our JEDI goals in the past year.

Goal: Use equity as a lens for all the work we do and the decisions we make.

- Recruitment staff redesigned interview questions for AmeriCorps members with a JEDI lens.
- Staff created more dedicated time to talk with members about JEDI issues and topics and continue to lead by example to ensure that members feel safe coming to them for support.
- Staff in one district meet once per month to work on JEDI goals that they created specifically for their district.
- Summer Youth Corps staff created a new Rainbow affinity crew for LGBTQ+ community.
- The Corps provides resources, or loans equipment to AmeriCorps members that do not have access to those resources on their own.
- In 2022, the Corps held a fundraiser to support our American Sign Language (ASL) crews.
- The Board of Directors partnered with an [Intercultural Development Inventory](#) (IDI) trained consultant to learn and understand its collective cultural understanding, revealing an opportunity to improve engagement, empathy, and understanding of each other's cross-cultural competence.
- The board included JEDI moments in the agenda at two of six board meetings, and will be planning to share a newsletter with JEDI focused topics and resources to further personal learning and drive more understanding and empathy.

Goal: Build a shared vision surrounding Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion goals with our partnering organizations and communities.

- Staff analyzed how our crews spend internally funded time and service Friday projects to strengthen relationships and connect with organizations who share our JEDI values.
- Staff created and strengthened relationships with Tribal Nations and Native-led organizations to increase the number of projects completed with these partners. The Fond du Lac Band of

Lake Superior Chippewa created the Maajii-akii-gikenjigewin Crew in partnership with Conservation Corps Minnesota & Iowa.

- Staff created training and reference resources on how to work with our Summer Youth Corps American Sign Language (ASL) crews for our project hosts so they can be better prepared, more knowledgeable, and more inclusive this summer when they interact with our ASL crews.
- Staff give editorial authority to members when sharing their stories by using direct quotes from members, showing how member stories will be used, and giving them the authority to change or retract what they want to share with external audiences.
- Staff began creating a policy for giving an honorarium to outside collaborators to compensate them for sharing their stories on Corps platforms.
- The Board of Directors is recruiting new board candidates from diverse candidate pools, who more aptly represent the people and communities CCMI serves.

Goal: Provide an equitable training environment and high-quality programming to all our participants.

- Staff hold regular discussions focused on JEDI topics with members and participants.
- Staff incorporate traditional Indigenous knowledge and acknowledgment into new member training and onboarding. (For example, exploring the cultural significance of fire in the landscape, and the history of fire suppression).
- All new staff take a Racial Equity Certification course facilitated by Soul Focused Group and Workforce 180.
- Staff intentionally spend time getting to know Corpsmembers and adapting trainings to better fit the needs and learning styles of members.
- Staff work to create a culture where members have the authority to talk about JEDI topics, raise concerns, and are empowered to lead discussions.
- Staff began including mental health training at new member orientation.
- Summer Youth Corps pays certified ASL interpreters during training to ensure the experience is accessible, and are working on making presentations more ASL/Deaf friendly.
- Staff began working to ensure all communications pieces are accessible by including captions on videos, image descriptions where able, and alternative text.

Looking Forward

- Staff plan to more intentionally research, work with, buy from, and contract with organizations, companies, and vendors who align with our JEDI values.
- The Corps is looking towards incorporating more community-centric fundraising principles into our fundraising model.
- The Corps will approach existing partnerships with a JEDI lens to ensure our partnerships are in line with our JEDI values.
- We are finalizing our JEDI workplan created in partnership with the Avarna Group to improve our organization's capacity to serve underrepresented communities and Corpsmembers.

Conservation Corps Minnesota & Iowa recognizes that building an equitable Corps takes hard work, time, and accountability. CCMI will continue working with our staff, board, members, alum, and community partners as we work towards our JEDI goals.

We look forward to sharing our progress again with you next year.