



# People Engagement

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department  
2023-2028 Diversity and  
Inclusion Strategic Plan



# Our Core Values

## **Stewardship**

We are passionate about the natural and cultural resources of Texas, and we use our knowledge, supported by the best science, to manage and conserve those resources.

## **Service**

We are a community of public servants focused on delivering outstanding service to all our stakeholders and customers. We strive to be responsive with a sincere desire to inform, educate and help.

## **Excellence**

We strive for excellence in every aspect of fulfilling our mission while relying on research and sound science to adapt to ever-changing environmental, economic, and societal conditions.

## **Integrity**

We have a culture that strives to inspire and maintain trust based on ethical decision-making. We are accountable for our actions and communications.

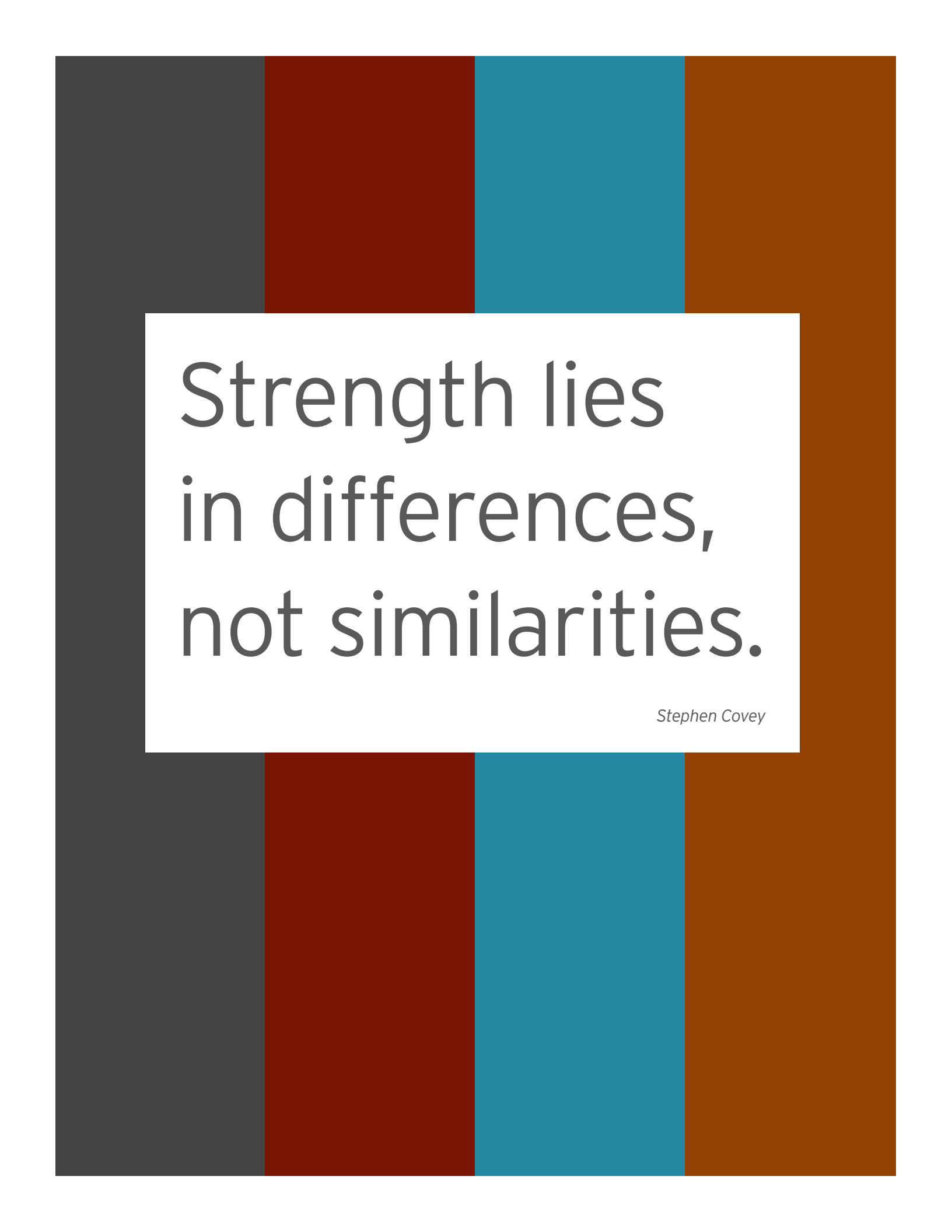
## **Teamwork**

We treat each other with respect and communicate often and openly to foster collaborative efforts. We appreciate the value of diverse backgrounds, expertise, ideas and incorporate multiple perspectives in decision-making and strategic actions.

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Strength lies  
in differences,  
not similarities.

*Stephen Covey*

# A Message from our Executive Director

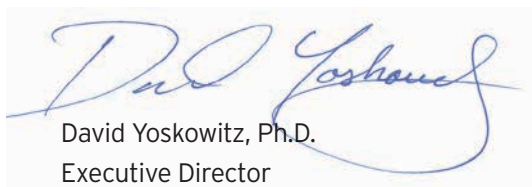
Dear Colleagues:

The strength of our great state has always been in no small part due to our rich heritage and history, our bountiful natural and cultural resources, and our diverse and resourceful citizens. For parts of three centuries, the women and men of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) have had the privilege of not only helping to steward these unique and irreplaceable resources, but also serving the many and diverse people across all of Texas. As a mission-directed state agency which helps serve and advance the outdoor interests and values of all Texans, TPWD professionals must be at the forefront of adapting to these changes and addressing the dynamic opportunities and challenges that come with them.

To that end, I am pleased to present the Department's *2023-2028 Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan*. This Plan is intended to serve as a guidepost for how we as an agency can even better serve our diverse constituencies, both old and new, traditional and non-traditional. Consistent with our mission, that service will come through many venues, including science and stewardship, public safety and enforcement, land- and water-based recreation, and education and engagement. It will also be an internally focused one that emphasizes maximizing our talent from within, creating opportunities for advancement for all, and augmenting and expanding the strengths for which TPWD is already well known. Ultimately, our success will be determined by how effectively we engage our diverse employees and communities in this effort.

The path ahead will be largely driven by all of you, our best and most effective ambassadors and representatives for and within TPWD. As we move ahead together with this Plan, we will stop and periodically take stock of important milestones in the Plan, as well as any factors that may be affecting our collective success. Course corrections and changes in this initiative should be expected. Your commitment to this important Plan will be essential as we work together to make our agency the best it can be in our service and stewardship of our beloved State, its natural resources and its people.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "David Yoskowitz". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

David Yoskowitz, Ph.D.  
Executive Director  
Texas Parks and Wildlife Department



## Defining Diversity and Inclusion (D&I)

There are as many ways to define diversity and inclusion as there are organizations that desire to better reflect such goals into their culture. What they all have in common is an understanding that their people are their most valuable asset and that each person is unique and capable of bringing different important contributions to the workplace.

There are numerous dimensions to diversity, including those visible aspects such as race, ethnicity, gender, and age. There are also many invisible attributes like religion, disability, and sexual orientation, as well as many personal and professional characteristics such as communication style, work habits, behavioral attitudes, economic status, knowledge, thought processes, ideas, life experiences, cultural background, and geographical origin. Diversity and Inclusion focuses on relationships and how our varied backgrounds and experiences can add value to our mission, work, services, engagement, and culture.



## Diversity and inclusion focuses on both the present and future of a workforce:

### PRESENT:

Continue evaluation of the organization's efforts to engage all employees and serve a large, growing, and diverse state. Externally, continue evaluation of outreach programs to ensure we are offering recreation activities that are accessible and relevant to all Texans.

### FUTURE:

Continue to engage all employees to ensure all individuals perform to their full potential and the workplace presents a respectful and productive environment for everyone. In addition, future demographic trends are anticipated which will impact the diversity of the organization and the constituents that we serve. Ensure TPWD outreach and engagement programs support our mission and are accessible to all Texans.

### DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION SHOULD:

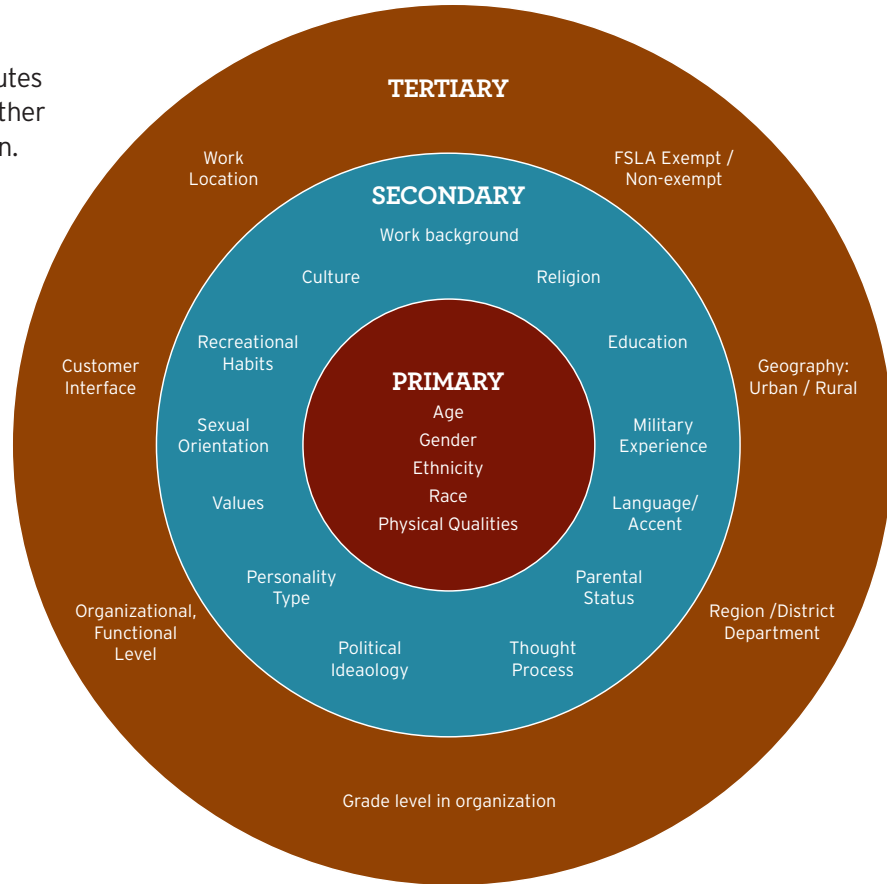
- Respect diverse points of view among team members
- Build awareness of the ways leaders can more effectively communicate internally and externally
- Increase the size of the talent pool internally and externally
- Reduce turnover through increased trust, morale, and employee satisfaction
- Increase customer satisfaction
- Broaden customer base and revenue
- Leverage employees' potential
- Increase relevance to the state's diverse populace
- Diversify constituent participation
- Result in better product deliverables and solutions to challenges when broader experiences and perspectives are incorporated in decision-making processes

### DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION SHOULD NOT:

- Foster processes that minimize the importance of others
- Create a tool to pass over deserving team members for someone who is less qualified
- Promote quotas of selected classes for hiring
- Lower standards
- Diminish or undermine the importance of traditional partners and constituents

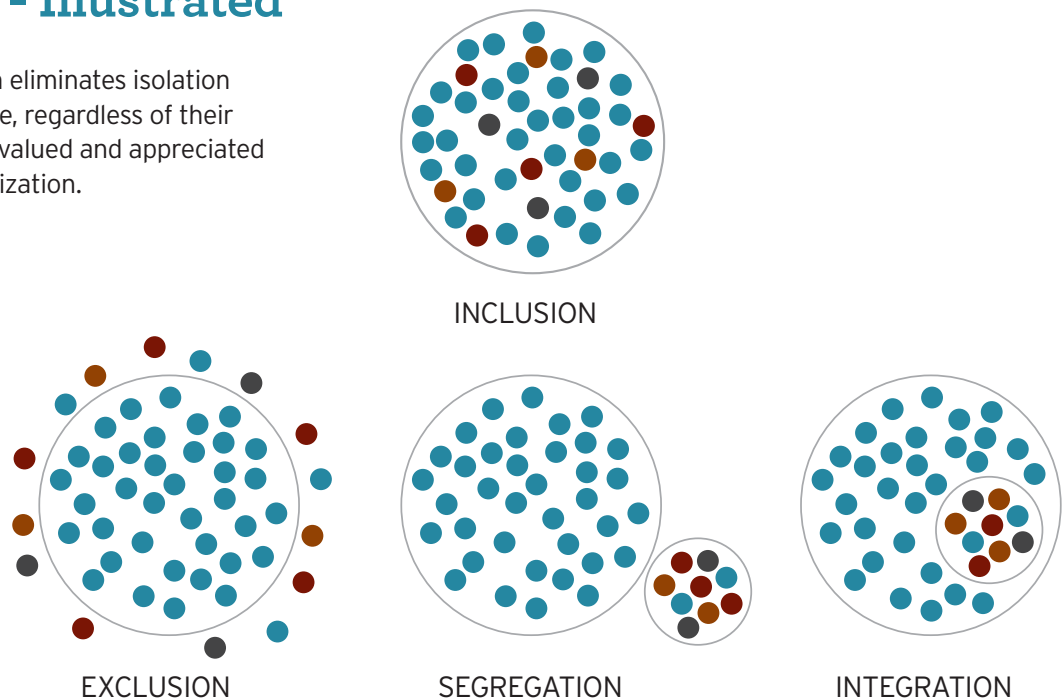
# Diversity - Illustrated

Diversity includes unique dimensions of physical attributes that can be seen, as well as other attributes that cannot be seen.



# Inclusion - Illustrated

Practicing inclusion eliminates isolation and allows everyone, regardless of their differences, to feel valued and appreciated by the entire organization.





# TPWD Strategic Priorities

The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) is well poised to implement a successful Diversity and Inclusion Program. TPWD's 2015 *Land and Water Resources Conservation and Recreation Plan* includes the following priorities relevant to the agency's diversity and inclusion efforts:

**Recruit and retain a professional and diverse workforce**

**Provide excellent customer service with integrity and professionalism**

**Promote an organizational culture which is informed, adaptive and innovative**

**Increase the awareness and value of rural, urban and suburban ecosystems**

**Promote citizen participation in hands-on conservation.**

**Promote and provide outdoor education**

**Encourage people of every age, backgrounds, and ability to experience the outdoors**

## The Value of Diversity and Inclusion at TPWD

The TPWD diversity and inclusion value proposition has a dual focus: internal and external.

Internally: TPWD has a rich history of serving the state of Texas with excellence. We have developed multiple initiatives to fulfill our mission of managing and conserving the natural and cultural resources of our state and to provide outdoor recreational opportunities for present and future generations. Our focus on providing outstanding service to this state has not wavered; however, as the demographics of our state have changed and will continue to change, our recruiting, hiring, and development must change to reflect this increasingly diverse populace. To accomplish this, TPWD will capitalize on the diverse attributes of our state to build an inclusive TPWD for tomorrow.

TPWD will strive to be the Texas government model employer by leveraging diversity and inclusion to deliver the best public service on behalf of the citizens and resources of the state of Texas. Our goal is to recruit and retain the best and brightest, and that includes people of different ethnicities, genders, ages, and backgrounds.

Externally: Our mission compels us to provide high-quality outdoor recreational experiences and to execute the most effective conservation initiatives for our state's lands, waters, fish, and wildlife. To be successful at both, we need even more cooperation and input from our staff and constituents. That requires that we develop broader relationships beyond those already common to our agency. We must make every effort to be inclusive in our programming, media, engagement, training, and partnerships. We must be vigilant in our efforts to engage all Texans in outdoor recreational activities and conservation efforts.

# TPWD Diversity and Inclusion Pillars

The TPWD Diversity Working Group (chartered in February 2013) has embraced the theme “At TPWD, we are committed to promoting a diverse workforce and providing recreation opportunities that are inclusive of all Texans.”

**TPWD will seek to become an employer of choice by achieving the following diversity and inclusion pillars:**

**RECRUITMENT:** Recruit from a diverse, highly skilled group of potential applicants to secure a high performing workforce drawn from all segments of American society.

**RETENTION:** Cultivate a culture that encourages collaboration, flexibility, and fairness to enable individuals to contribute to their full potential.

**EDUCATION AND ENGAGEMENT:** Develop structures and strategies to equip staff with the ability to engage diverse customers, be accountable, measure results, refine approaches based on such results, and institutionalize a culture of inclusion.

The three pillars listed above are necessary to strengthen the integration of diversity and inclusion into the culture at TPWD. TPWD will support these three pillars by focusing on the six recommended priority areas established by the *TPWD Diversity Working Group Final Report* (December 2013):

1. Commit to a sustainable agency-wide diversity and inclusion program that fosters enhanced workforce and constituent diversity
2. Encourage all TPWD employees to take responsibility for an enhanced culture of diversity and inclusion, and provide the necessary tools and training to support them
3. Leverage new strategies to expand diversity recruitment programs that have a clear pathway to employment
4. Ensure that hiring and career development opportunities are transparent and available to all, and that employees are heard and supported
5. Recognize the fundamental connection between efforts to diversify TPWD’s constituent base and workforce; and ensure that all engagement efforts and volunteer programs are fully leveraged
6. Engage, invite, and accommodate diverse audiences in TPWD facilities, activities, and services

# TPWD Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan Implementation

## RECRUITMENT PILLAR

### OBJECTIVE: Develop and Execute Strategic Recruitment Engagement to a Broader Segment of the Population

#### STRATEGIC ACTIONS

1. Continue implementation of a college and university recruitment plan that is inclusive of historically black colleges and universities, Hispanic-serving institutions, and institutions serving Asian Americans, Native Americans, and Pacific Islanders.
2. Continue to develop and enhance relationships with college administrators to assist in recruitment.
3. Maintain the tracking of applicant flow for various demographics and provide quarterly report to division leaders.
4. Require quarterly report of engagement efforts.
5. Establish annual recruitment goals for each division.
6. Involve various levels and greater engagement of employees in the recruitment efforts.
7. Engage diverse recruiting venues, i.e., websites, magazines, business publications, and ethnic- and gender-focused professional engagement organizations.
8. Synchronize engagement and recruitment activities across all divisions.
9. Continue to establish strategic relationships with internal and external constituents at colleges and universities.
10. Provide clear applicant education and certification requirements to all diverse colleges and universities.
11. Review all divisions' interview processes to ensure objectivity in candidate selections.
12. Further develop employer branding strategy which includes images and messaging that reflect the target audience.
13. Develop an inclusive internship focus for all divisions with collaborating points of contact, a start-to-finish participation plan, and a way to capture participant and division feedback with the goal of full-time employment.
14. Review job description requirements for language which may not be necessary for the job that could exclude candidates with different types of disabilities.
15. Check all aspects of the job application page to ensure accessibility, i.e., screen reader, text aloud, images with descriptions, additional time for testing, large print, etc.

#### SUCCESS MEASURES

1. Increased number of diverse applicants for all open positions
2. Expanded diversity in applicant pools
3. Growth in acceptance rate of diverse applicants for interviews
4. Increased number of diverse interns becoming full time employees
5. Increased number of first-time viewers to the TPWD website
6. Reports (appropriate intervals) that measure diversity of applicant pool
7. Reduced early attrition of new hires
8. Increased number of TPWD employees across the state equipped to assist with cross-divisional recruiting
9. Increased interest in careers at TPWD by high school and college students of all backgrounds
10. Increased TPWD employees with disabilities
11. Increased appreciation of TPWD by members of the ADA community

## RETENTION PILLAR

### OBJECTIVE: Promote an Inclusive Work Environment Through Education, Development and Employee Engagement Activities

#### STRATEGIC ACTIONS

1. Maintain employee advisory committee that supports diversity and inclusion (D&I) efforts and provides feedback to the Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer and all senior-level Directors.
2. Implement additional D&I management education.
3. Review leadership development programs, determine whether they draw from all segments of the workforce, and develop strategies to eliminate barriers wherever they exist.
4. Work with HR to develop succession planning processes.
5. Encourage managers to adopt broader career paths that meet current and future needs.
6. Continue to distribute employee demographic data within each division bi-annually.
7. Provide cultural awareness education for all customer-facing personnel.
8. Provide monthly D&I information via internal media.
9. Continue providing relevant updates to D&I webpages for TPWD.
10. Update D&I strategic messaging for use by all TPWD leaders.
11. Distribute additional information and education tools that address and discourage non-inclusive behavior.
12. Encourage participation and transparency in career development practices for all TPWD employees.
13. Continue providing a presentation on the value of diversity and inclusion to TPWD during New Employee Orientation Program.
14. Host quarterly employee information sessions to educate employees on other cultures.
15. Continue recognition of diversity and inclusion via awards to employees who exhibit inclusive behaviors at TPWD.
16. Annual review of accessible/safe features in all TPWD offices, i.e., conference rooms with space for wheelchairs, accessible panels in elevators, easy open-door handles, etc.
17. Education for managers on how to manage employees with disabilities.

#### SUCCESS MEASURES

1. Reduced voluntary turnover by diverse employees
2. Improved scores on Survey of Employee Engagement and Culture survey
3. Increased diverse hiring
4. Effective communication between employees from different backgrounds
5. Growth in support of diversity and inclusion education and policies
6. Increase in employee development planning
7. Decreased discrimination reports
8. Increased promotions of diverse employees
9. Increased support of employee development at all levels within TPWD
10. More effective leadership due to cross-cultural understanding
11. Participate in developmental activities annually by all employees
12. Better organizational and individual performance due to increased trust and cooperation
13. Reduced complaints from employees with disabilities
14. Increase work production from employees with disabilities

## EDUCATION AND ENGAGEMENT PILLAR

### OBJECTIVE: Enhance and Create Inclusive Programs and Facilities and Services to Accommodate Diverse Constituents

#### STRATEGIC ACTIONS

1. Establish strategic relationships with local faith-based and community organizations to better understand their views on outdoor activities and conservation.
2. Educate engagement personnel, law enforcement and state park employees on cultural understanding and building relationships across cultures.
3. Continue including more diverse images in both print and electronic media.
4. Continue updating TPWD website and social media with images and languages that are inclusive of those in our state.
5. Continue pursuing additional partnerships with other in-state wildlife, recreation, and conservation organizations to create synergy in messages to diverse audiences.
6. Continue seeking opportunities to acquire and develop park lands and promote high-quality outdoor experiences close to urban communities.
7. Publish diversity engagement events in magazines and other publications.
8. Establish relationships with and participate in events with outdoor recreation sponsors that support D&I.
9. Continue soliciting D&I stories from all TPWD employees and circulate via web, e-mail, and print media both internally and externally.
10. Provide interactive maps at customer sites.
11. Customer service education and information on website to assist people with disabilities.
12. Publish easily identifiable locations which accommodate service animals.
13. Place donation boxes in similar locations at all TPWD facilities.
14. Registration forms include request for accommodations.
15. Educate front-facing staff on the language of accessibility and how to deescalate.
16. Seek and include volunteers with disabilities.

#### SUCCESS MEASURES

1. Increased participation in engagement events by diverse population
2. Increased visitation of state parks by diverse population
3. Increased number of volunteers for engagement events at parks and other TPWD venues
4. Higher positive scores on cultural questions included in the Survey of Employment Engagement
5. Increase in diverse talent seeking careers at TPWD
6. Increased participation at TPWD facilities by persons with disabilities
7. Increased customer satisfaction rating by customers
8. Increased revenue from license, registration and park fees, measured over a five-year period.
9. Increased number of TPWD facilities that are completely ADA-compliant
10. More innovative approaches to programs and services

# SCOPE:

This Plan applies to all TPWD divisions.

## ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

### **Executive Office, Directors, Managers/Supervisors**

Responsible for the implementation and management of this Plan within their areas of responsibility.

### **Employees**

Responsible for upholding organizational values and working to achieve clear organizational D&I goals and objectives in a mutually respectful work environment.

### **Human Resources**

Responsible for facilitating compliance by managers and supervisors in accordance with the TPWD Human Resource Policy, and state and federal laws. For the purpose and execution of this plan, servicing human resources offices will be responsible for management and implementation of the various action items and measures as identified by the *TPWD Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan*.

### **Diversity Committee**

Responsible for engaging managers and supervisors through departmental diversity policy development, and for collaborating with the TPWD Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer on diversity engagement, retention strategies, and cultural awareness training.

This document is the property of TPWD Diversity Office. Created in compliance with information from the following: TPWD Diversity Working Group, *TPWD 2013-17 Natural Agenda*, and the *2015 Land and Water Resources Conservation and Recreation Plan* for Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. If you have any questions concerning this document, please email [tpwd.culture@tpwd.texas.gov](mailto:tpwd.culture@tpwd.texas.gov).

4200 Smith School Road Austin, Texas 78744

# CONCLUSION:

## Embedding Diversity and Inclusion into the Culture

Our outdoor spaces have never been more important to us than they are today. However, modern technology and other interests are competing for the time and attention of new and legacy outdoor users. The health of our environment, and specifically, our lands, waters, fish, wildlife and parks, needs to be the concern of all residents. As Texas becomes an even more urban state, our outdoor spaces have become increasingly important for the preservation of nature and the restoration of our people.

Sharing the importance of conservation and outdoor recreation and getting our increasingly diverse population engaged in what we do will not happen by chance. We must implement an organized approach that is strategic and practical. It must be culturally sensitive enough to attract those who have not been customarily targeted and balanced enough to retain those who have traditionally engaged with conservation-focused organizations like ours.

The execution of our diversity and inclusion strategy should be carried out in conjunction and in partnership with TPWD's other organizational strategies. This collaborative engagement of strategies is key to the agency's long-term success and relevance to those we serve now and in the future. The implementation and success of these strategies rests with the senior staff's commitment to implement these plans and to provide guidance to the broader employee base on the benefits and the value of diversity and inclusion.

