



## Request for Proposals (RFP) to support Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Justice (DEIJ) Initiative

### Statement of Purpose

Friends of the Columbia Gorge seeks to partner with a consultant(s) to support and strengthen our culture, activities, and policies by adopting a diversity, equity, and inclusion lens. We request a 12-month proposal with consideration for it becoming a multi-year contract. The first year would focus on internal staff and board training to elevate awareness of inequities and bias and assist with initial plans for change. Our organization has been identifying and developing an initial vision, goals, and outcomes for our DEIJ work, and we welcome professional guidance to refine and build upon this work. Support in subsequent years would include identifying specific plans for the growth of the organizational culture and supporting efforts to externally communicate and implement changes. We understand a DEIJ journey is multifaceted and long-term. **The RFP will only request a response for the first year of work.**

### Background Information

The Columbia Gorge is an 85-mile long, wondrous river canyon, extending from the confluence of the Columbia and Deschutes rivers to the eastern edge of the Portland metropolitan area. Home to a diverse collection of ecosystems and microhabitats, the Columbia Gorge is a national treasure and icon of the Pacific Northwest that has been a home and meeting place to humans since time immemorial.

Founded in 1980, Friends of the Columbia Gorge works to protect, preserve, and steward the Columbia Gorge for future generations. We are the only conservation organization entirely dedicated to protecting and enhancing the scenic, natural, cultural, and recreational resources of the Columbia Gorge. Ensuring the Gorge remains a vibrant, living place—wondrous, wild, and open to all—is at the core of what we do.

For over four decades, we have successfully advocated to protect the Gorge from irresponsible development, purchased scenic and sensitive lands for long-term preservation, and worked with community partners to foster a larger culture of Gorge stewardship by connecting thousands of students and volunteers to the Gorge's wonders.

Our first major victory came with the passage of the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area Act in 1986, which created comprehensive Gorge protection across six counties (Clark, Hood River, Klickitat, Multnomah, Skamania, and Wasco) and two states (Oregon and Washington), and recognized four Treaty Tribes (the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs, the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation, the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Reservation, and the Nez Perce Tribe) as partners in the implementation of the National Scenic Area.

For decades, the dedication and passion of Friends' members has been the heart and soul of our work. Our membership base now includes over 7,000 members—including members who live in all six Gorge counties and beyond. We actively work to engage new and current supporters through a series of annual events and outings. But being an effective long-term advocate and steward of this amazing place means building bridges across different points of view. It also requires bringing together a broad and diverse coalition of people who share a common love for the Gorge and want to see it responsibly stewarded and protected.

We understand there's a long journey ahead. Friends has increased the diversity of its staff (22 people) and board (19 people) since it began focusing on these issues in 2016, increasing the ethnic diversity among both board and staff from 0% to 17%. Currently over 50% of our staff and board identify as female. Approximately 19% of our staff is under the age of 34, 52% is between 35 and 54, and 28% is over the age of 55.

During this time, we also increased our efforts working with community partners to create more inclusive and equitable programs and policies. The Columbia Gorge National Scenic Area bridges local, state, federal, and tribal issues, and its implementation benefits from bringing a diverse array of voices, experiences, and perspectives to the conversation. As an organization relentlessly dedicated towards speaking out to uphold the goals of the National Scenic Area, we have a responsibility to engage marginalized and underrepresented communities in regional conservation efforts.

## Work to Date

More recently, Friends incorporated DEIJ work into our 2018-2021 strategic plan calling for the organization to engage in a diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice initiative with the board and staff. In 2019, a DEIJ committee was established and an initial DEIJ knowledge library was created. The committee includes staff of varying ages, professional levels,

gender and race. The committee and staff collectively identified initial three goals to focus on for our DEIJ work:

- Goal 1: Develop a strong foundation for the ongoing Friends DEIJ journey.
- Goal 2: Enrich our internal culture by integrating an accessibility, diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice lens into our internal organizational policies.
- Goal 3: Engage authentically with external individuals, groups, and communities that represent underserved and historically marginalized communities in the Gorge. Successful partnerships and relationships will be authentic, promote agency and ownership, and sustainable.

In early 2020, board members were added to the DEIJ committee, but following the murder of George Floyd and subsequent protests, the board decided to create its own *ad-hoc* DEIJ committee to work in concert with the staff committee. The primary focuses of the board of directors DEIJ committee are:

- Goal 1: Guide/support Board Affairs board recruitment, retention, and strategy with DEIJ considerations and goals.
- Goal 2: Review/support/guide Friends organization policies, practices, and vision with a DEIJ lens.

## Scope of Work

Our first step is to focus on internal staff and board training, development, education, and improve staff and board operational processes to lay a solid foundation. We know this is fundamental to improving and growing organizational culture. We also expect to work with the consultant(s) to take steps towards a meaningful shift in policies, procedures, relationships, and power structures by addressing root problems internally through systematic changes within our organization. We are in the process of drafting a DEIJ Commitment Statement as well as DEIJ Goals & Objectives relative to our mission. We also expect our consultant(s) to help us weave our Commitment Statement and Goals & Objectives into action plans to guide us through this part of our DEIJ journey.

We acknowledge that this DEIJ work is not a process with an end, but rather a continual journey. The board and staff are committed to integrating these efforts into the organizational culture and fabric of Friends of the Columbia Gorge.

## How to Submit a Proposal

The budget for our first year of work is \$30,000. Please submit the following no later than Sunday, October 18<sup>th</sup> at 5 p.m. PST to [mika@gorgefriends.org](mailto:mika@gorgefriends.org). In three pages or less, please share:

1. An overview of your overall philosophy and approach to this work;
2. A description how you recommend carrying out the work outlined above including the identification of any specific expected results;
3. A summary of recent and relevant projects;
4. An estimate of the fees to be charged and expenses to be incurred;
5. A copy of resumes of consultants involved in the project; and
6. A list of names, phone numbers, and email addresses of individuals at three similar organizations, committees, or campaigns who have been your clients during the last eighteen months and whom we can contact as references.

We expect to hold interviews with finalists in late October with the work commencing as of November 2020. If you have questions, please contact [mika@gorgefriends.org](mailto:mika@gorgefriends.org).