

GREAT RIVER PASSAGE CONSERVANCY EQUITY FRAMEWORK



EQUITY STATEMENT

As a core value since our founding, equity guides the Great River Passage Conservancy's work in making Saint Paul's 17 miles of Mississippi River welcoming to all.

We acknowledge that the river flows through the traditional homelands of the Dakota, and that centuries of systemic exclusion have made natural spaces, including the river, less accessible to Indigenous people and other BIPOC communities. The conservancy believes everyone should be able to participate fully in the recreational, educational, social, and economic opportunities the river offers.

As an organization whose vision is to bring the Mississippi back to the center of public life in Saint Paul, we can build a new, more inclusive relationship with the river. To ensure that all our projects are welcoming to a range of communities, we collaborate with a diverse group of partners whose work helps people of color, of all ages, and of different physical capabilities experience the land, water, art, and culture of the Mississippi. We also recognize that diversity strengthens our organization and is critical to our mission.

We are fully committed to pursuing policies and programs that address systemic injustices and ensure that the river is healthy and accessible to all. We are the river, and the river is all of us.

BACKGROUND

GRPC completed 12 months of High Line Network-sponsored Equitable Impact Framework planning, which included six months working with Harvard GSD on foundational equity research and recommendations, and six months with Urban Institute on an equity plan strategy. Details and GRPC's case study from this program is available at greatriverpassage.org/initiatives/high-line-network.

The Harvard GSD students recommended:

- Develop, adopt, and publish an explicit equity plan.
- Define roles and responsibilities between the City of Saint Paul Great River Passage Initiative and the Great River Passage Conservancy to meet developed equity goals.
- Use the fundraising capabilities of the Great River Passage Conservancy not only for capital projects, but for long-term community relationship building especially with Native American communities.
- Build expansive, diverse, and transparent channels of communication around Great River Passage efforts to maximize information exchange and community engagement.
- Develop methods to equitably distribute economic benefits brought on by Great River Passage capital investments.

OUR COMMITMENTS

Great River Passage Conservancy fully commits to the long-term work of becoming culturally competent, welcoming, and inclusive of all people both within and outside our organization.

GRPC goals include:

- Cultivate long-term relationships with communities that have historically been disconnected from the river and excluded from city building planning and design.
- Adjust planning, design and engagement systems and processes to make sure community voices are heard and help shape projects.
- Better understand the roles and responsibilities for both the GRPC and the city with respect to equity.
- Support, engage and include people with different racial, cultural, economic, ages and religious backgrounds as well as those with varying physical abilities, gender identities and sexual orientations.
- Reach beyond our traditional allies and constituencies.
- Enter intercultural relationships with humility, prepared to listen, learn, follow their lead, and adapt our methods and practices to achieve mutual benefit.
- Recruit, hire, retain, and develop culturally competent staff whose demographics more closely mirror those of our local and regional communities.
- Recruit, retain, and develop culturally competent board members and other volunteers whose demographics more closely mirror those of our local and regional communities.

OUR STRATEGIES:

- Obtain financial and other resources to support the long-term achievement of this and future Equity Strategic Action Plans (ESAPs) while meeting current obligations.
- Ensure there is a constant mechanism to collect, report, and use customer satisfaction, dissatisfaction, and engagement data and information.
- Ensure systems set up by independent contractors are aligned with our Equity Framework and help us meet our measurable DEI goals.
- Ensure that we can collect, track, and report good quality ESAP data and information segmented (at a minimum) by stakeholder type, race and ethnicity.
- Ensure we are using the segmented data and information to make business decisions now and in the far future.

TRACKING OUR PROGRESS – 2024 GOALS:

- 1) Finalize tracking of board and staff demographics.
- 2) Set up a system to track demographics with constituents and partners.
 - Ask for demographic information through the registration process.
 - Ask partners to share demographic data for partnership programs.
- 3) Set up a system to track customer satisfaction.
 - Utilize consistent post-event surveys.
- 4) Set up a system to track relationships with communities that have historically been disconnected from the river.
 - Utilize CRM (Bloomerang) to track outreach and relationships.
 - Uplift and amplify stories from communities where we work (social and print media).
- 5) Determine if funding is needed to meet and expand ESAP goals.
 - Learn from Highline Network and park groups about new innovations.
 - Work collaboratively with the City of St. Paul on mutual goals for park users.
- 6) Set up a system for reviewing data collected.
 - Schedule an annual review each fall.
 - Ensure consistent data collection year-to year.