

Board & Staff Retreat – 2023

Strategic Plan Success Factor #1



Expanding the Circle

...of neighbors helping neighbors, who are representative of the diversity of our community as a staff, board and volunteer base.

This commitment takes...

attention to the many, interconnected ways that quality, relevant service to our community depends upon the structural and systemic nature of our operations and program design and implementation.





— **Civil Rights Act
1964
Section 10 -**

Charged community mediation centers with co-creating opportunities for justice, peace and engagement – as holders of space and facilitators of conversation.

This was before and in addition to the narrower role of court-adjacent alternative dispute resolution processes, that had lessening the impact on courts as its original, primary purpose.

Community Mediation Hallmarks

Community-Based (1)

A private non-profit or public agency or program thereof, with mediators, staff and governing/advisory board representative of the diversity of the community served.

Open (2)

The use of trained community volunteers as providers of mediation services; the practice of mediation is open to all persons.

Accessible (3)

Providing direct access to the public through self-referral and striving to reduce barriers to service including physical, linguistic, cultural, programmatic and economic.

Low-Cost (4)

Providing service to clients regardless of their ability to pay.

Inclusive (5)

Providing service and hiring without discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, gender, age, disabilities, national origin, marital status, personal appearance, gender identity, sexual orientation, family responsibilities, matriculation, political affiliation, source of income.

Timely (6)

Providing a forum for dispute resolution at the earliest stage of conflict.

Innovative (7)

Providing an alternative to the judicial system at any stage of a conflict.

Outcome-Oriented (8)

Initiating, facilitating and educating for collaborative community relationships to effect positive systemic change.

News-worthy (9)

Engaging in public awareness and educational activities about the values and practices of mediation.

2017-2018: Board & Staff Actions

- There was recognition of being an historically-white organization in a community that had more racial diversity than was present internally, which informed a board-led organization reflection;
- While we did offer volunteers a Cultural Humility training and the 40-hr training at that time had a module on oppression and power, as well as the ADDRESSING model, more was needed.
- Written, video and in-service resources were regularly shared to increase awareness on issue areas of: white supremacy culture; implicit bias; racial justice; honoring wisdom lineage; white fragility; privilege; social justice; identity; & more.
- Discussion began on whether scholarships to trainings was the right way to provide access in a mechanism that supports dignity and respect.
- Based on local race representation, an intentional effort was begun to transition from bilingual mediation services in Spanish to bicultural – this included a workgroup involving staff, volunteers & local partners.
- The organizational operations plan integrated measurables on commitments.



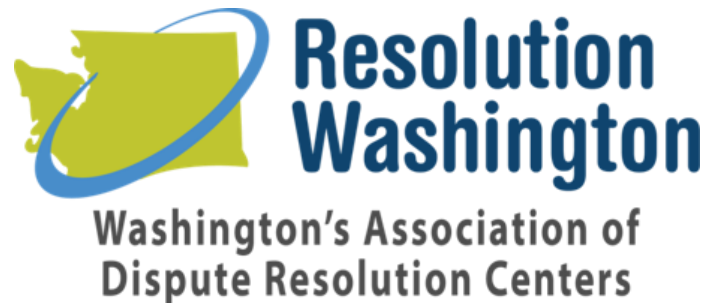
2019: Board & Staff Actions

- The Cultural Humility Organizational Plan was adopted to investigate an integrated approach to bringing the organization, including volunteers and staff along the development continuum from Awareness to Action. Decision: IDI process for vol. & staff.
- A representation grid was created for the Board to inform recruitment, collecting information on geographic, industry & race that was used for several years, though was often missing one or more individuals.
- Staff built the first Equity Actions Matrix, within which the first action was to augment scholarships with open spots for individuals based on access goals.



2019: Support at the State Network Level

- Resolution Washington became a member of the WA REJI Initiative, which is a network of people, communities and organizations working together for racial fairness and justice in the law, legal profession, and justice systems.
- Resolution Washington was awarded the Access to Justice Award, on behalf of the work happening in the 21 mediation centers.
- Being member center-led, ResWA added a People of Color Committee that focused on supporting our centers with implementation of a race equity lens to support an ongoing commitment to bringing all centers along ensuring access and be fully representative of our larger communities.



2020: Pandemic Begins a Period of Rapid Change

- ❖ Staff & Volunteers work together to create online access to services – getting training ready in just 4 weeks and mediations ready in just 6 weeks after lockdown.
- ❖ Thurston pursues and receives two rounds of federal PPP funding to keep the doors open for service provision and staff employed.
- ❖ Thurston DRC is invited into 6-county pre-pilot during eviction moratorium.
- ❖ Thurston DRC partners with Evergreen State College in development of new Inclusive Community Practitioner certification program, which includes critical race theory.
- ❖ Additional staff are hired, with a focus on further diversifying racially in line with long-term goals for leadership development and succession.



2021: Ongoing Benefits & Struggles of Rapid Change

- Case support staff hired with community access long-term vision.
- After years of no or minimum 3% COLAs, substantial pay increases begin.
- Staff hired for leadership pipeline dismayed by nonprofit realities, leading to some beneficial changes, while modifying intent of position.
- Program and operations hiring pace negatively impact acculturation of staff; rumors and incomplete information circulates.
- ERPP significantly raises the visibility and appreciation of Thurston DRC by community partners and clients.
- Board adopts intentionally crafted equity statement.
- Two staff opt in to becoming internal IDI assessors.
- The DRC expands its building footprint - resulting in tech rooms for client access.



2022: Ongoing +/- of Rapid Change

- Board & Staff develop new Strategic Plan, with three Success Factors, the first of which is all about equity, diversity, access and inclusion.
- The two staff identified for IDI assessor training postpone due to training calendar commitments, pushing to end of year. At end of 2022, two new candidates are needed.
- An onboarding document is added for all staff and new hires thereafter, outlining our individual and shared commitments to justice, equity, diversity, access and inclusion.
- ERPP caseload as well as evolving dictates and legal interpretations at the state level result in a continuously evolving program that is stressful to the point of burnout for staff and clients, within the reality that being a crisis-response program, all parties involved are experiencing either primary or secondary trauma.
- Significant pay equity advancements are made, raising the hiring minimum to \$20/hr. and giving between 10% and 23% raises for all positions.
- The organization's annual budget intentionally keeps the 40-hr training revenue goal flat in order to ensure access by community members, as structural support.
- Expanded interpretation service is provided at the state level to ensure language access beyond what is offered by bilingual and bicultural staff members.
- Thurston DRC is requested as statewide Interim ED, necessitating diversified leadership – Associate Director position is added – all staff adjusting – not everyone has all info.



2023: Ongoing +/- of Rapid Change

- The high-demand, high-impact ERPP program ends June 2023, as predicted, but without ramp-down funds that were expected.
- Of the seven staff funded via the ERPP program, only four can remain with staffing needs and funding available. Three layoffs are identified for June 30th.
- Sadly, all three roles identified to end are held by people of color. While the process is reviewed internally for possible discrimination concerns, finding none, the layoffs proceed. ED causes harm by not naming the impact specific to POC.
- In person training and mediation services come back, for those that need it.
- A third year of substantive pay equity raises are put into place.
- JEDAI committee forms.
- IDI effort is slowed; 3 staff begin.
- Team culture still mending.
- ResWA conducts statewide Demographic survey – data soon!
- ResWA offers Equity Toolkit for all centers' use.



2024 & Beyond:

- Shared language and history assist everyone forward movement.
- Board member inclusion in JEDAI effort.
- Equity Toolkit integration into JEDAI effort.
- Staff and volunteers that choose to may participate confidentially in IDI process.
- Organization-wide IDP results in focused support opportunities and decisions.
- Multicultural services continue to expand, including community listening sessions.
- Staff take action on latest version of equity actions matrix created in October.
- We accept that we are always on the development continuum and what is important is to keep showing up, for ourselves, each other & our community.
- The organization sees a continued change in the volunteer pool and clientele.

