



Oregon Outdoor School

Cultural Responsiveness Self-Evaluation Tool

OSU Extension Service
Version 1.0



Photo: Joe Kline

outdoorschool.oregonstate.edu



Oregon State
University

OVERVIEW

Introduction

Culture* refers to the shared behaviors, beliefs, customs, values, and ways of knowing that guide groups of people in their daily lives and that are transmitted from one generation to the next. Culture affects how people learn, remember, reason, solve problems, and communicate. Thus to truly engage students at outdoor school, educators and programs must reach students in culturally responsive* ways. A culturally responsive outdoor school program:

- recognizes the role of culture in students' intellectual and social development
- creates an environment where everyone can feel welcome, safe, respected, included, and free to participate in all aspects of outdoor school as their authentic, whole selves
- fosters positive experiences for all students by exposing and eliminating institutional policies and structures that uphold systems of power* and privilege*
- meets the needs of each unique community in Oregon¹

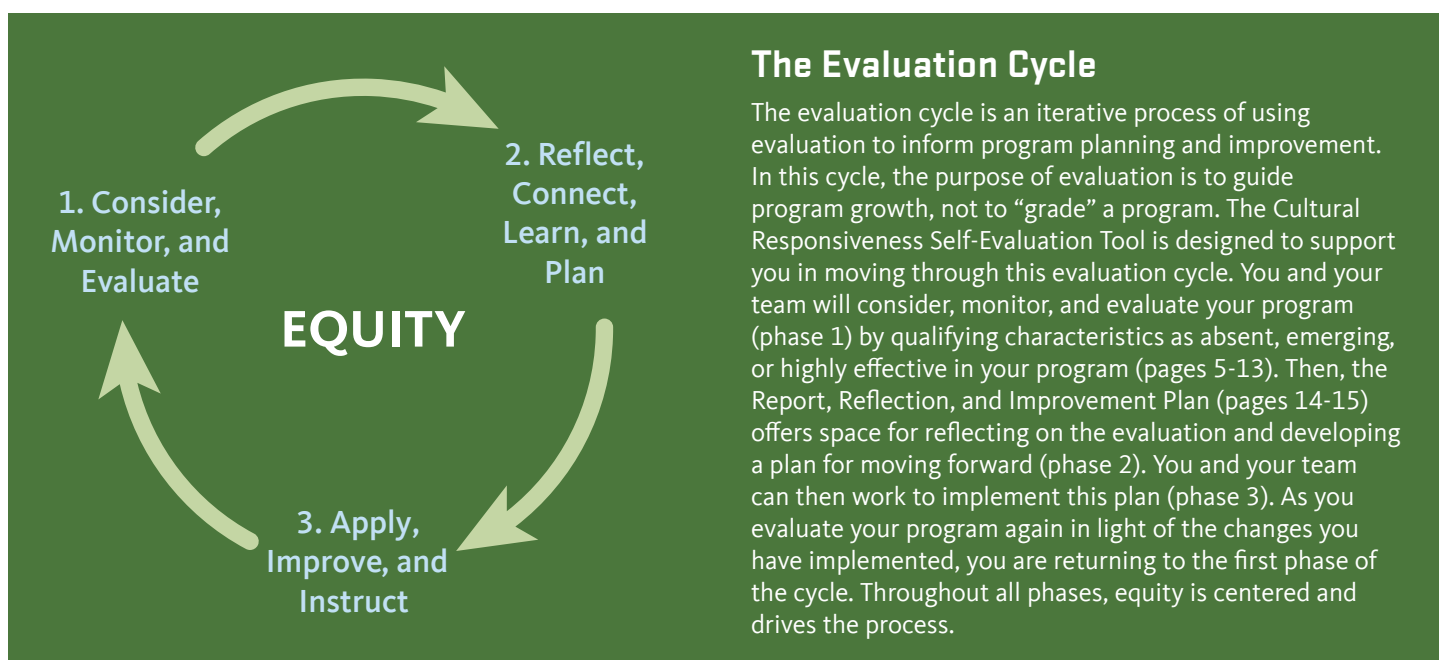
Purpose of This Self-Evaluation Tool

This self-evaluation tool is designed to support outdoor school programs in becoming more culturally responsive. The tool is intended to promote reflection and discussion among team members and move us toward our shared goal: every student in Oregon has a transformative outdoor school experience — one

that is inclusive*, meaningful and high-quality. The tool is not designed to “grade” a program or calculate a program “score,” nor is it intended to standardize the outdoor school experience or shame organizations. The Oregon State University Extension Service Outdoor School program is committed to supporting programs and communities in the ongoing process of growth and will not use this self-evaluation tool in a punitive fashion.

How to Use This Self-Evaluation Tool

This self-evaluation tool is designed for organizational self-evaluation, reflection and subsequent planning. Additionally, there are opportunities for individual self-reflection. The tool is arranged into three themes (Equity*, Diversity*, and Inclusion*). Within each theme, there are four to five characteristics that describe aspects of the theme. Outdoor school program staff (and other stakeholders, as appropriate) qualify these characteristics as absent, emerging, or highly effective in their program. This evaluation process supports outdoor school programs in developing improvement plans for furthering Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI). All outdoor school programs should expect to have areas of growth, as cultural responsiveness is a continual learning and development process. The Oregon State University Extension Service Outdoor School program will not require you to share your results but can offer professional development and in-depth consultation services in areas of self-identified need.



* indicates definitions found in the glossary of terms

¹ Oregon State University Extension Service Outdoor School program EDI Statement:

<https://outdoorschool.oregonstate.edu/equity-diversity-and-inclusion/equity-diversity-and-inclusion-statement/>



Six Steps for Conducting a Culturally Responsive Self-Evaluation

- 1.** Gather team members representing a variety of roles. Must include organization/program leadership and ideally include operational staff, partners and community served.
ASK: What are the community agreements²? How do we attend to power* dynamics?
- 2.** Consider each individual team member's current understanding of Equity*, Diversity* and Inclusion*. We recommend participating in Oregon State University Extension Service online professional learning module EDI 101 (release date: early 2021) and Implicit Bias Tests by Harvard (visit: <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html>) to develop basic understandings when appropriate.
ASK: Does each individual in the organization have a basic understanding of EDI and implicit biases*?
- 3.** As a team or individually, read each "characteristic" definition within the three themes (Equity, Diversity and Inclusion). Discuss and take notes that include specific examples relative to your organization in the "evidence" section.
ASK: Are there vulnerabilities or issues of power that prevent individuals from honestly evaluating the organization?³ How might we respectfully engage people missing from the conversation?
- 4.** Throughout the self-evaluation process, team members are encouraged to reflect on individual characteristics relative to EDI. Provide private or safe opportunities for individual reflection.
ASK: How can I be more culturally responsive*? For each of those characteristics with individual self-reflections, evaluate yourself.
- 5.** Hold a team meeting. Share notes and discuss which characteristics were found to be absent, emerging, and/or highly effective for your outdoor school program.
ASK: How might this information affect the students and communities you serve?
- 6.** Use the Cultural Responsiveness Report, Reflection and Improvement Plan to evaluate and reflect on each of the characteristics. Celebrate and build upon what you are doing well. Develop an Improvement Plan targeting the characteristics and subsequent objectives and actions for being more culturally responsive.
ASK: How might additional support, training or consultation for the outdoor school program or individual further EDI? Consider initiating in-depth equity work/consultation. Contact outdoorschool@oregonstate.edu for more information.

* indicates definitions found in the glossary of terms

² For suggestions on establishing community agreements, see, for example: <https://www.nationalequityproject.org/tools/developing-community-agreements?rq=community%20agreements>.

³ A team may attend to vulnerabilities and issues of power by completing the evaluation separately (either as individuals or within affinity groups) or requesting facilitation support from Oregon State University Extension Service Outdoor School program.



Tips for Using the Self-Evaluation Tool

Identify the scope at which you will conduct the self-evaluation

- Often, outdoor school programs are embedded within larger organizations, and you and your team may need to choose whether to focus the self-evaluation on the entire organization or on the outdoor school program specifically. There is not one right answer. Consider the power* dynamics that may be at play within the organization, and conduct the self-evaluation at a scope at which you and your team have agency to make changes.

Attend to power dynamics within your team

- Organizations are made up, in part, of individuals. Focus of the self-evaluation occurs at an organizational level, yet includes opportunities for individual reflection (i.e., personal self-evaluation). In both cases, evaluation may require vulnerability or occur at a learning edge*.
- After gathering your team, discuss how the process of using the tool can be structured to support honest, engaged conversation. For example, will sharing out about the individual reflection questions deepen team members' engagement, or might it make them less likely to reflect honestly? Will staff members be less likely to critically (but honestly) evaluate the program if program leadership is in the room?

Focus on the goal of this work, not on using the tool "correctly"

- The overall goal of this work is equity* in student outcomes reached through high-quality, culturally responsive* programming.
- If you find yourself questioning whether you are using the tool "correctly," pause and reflect:
 - Is focusing on the mechanics of the tool a way to avoid the hard work of honest self-evaluation? If so, recenter your attention on the goal of the work.
 - Are you using the tool to honestly reflect on and discuss the cultural responsiveness of your program? If yes, the work you are doing is in service of the overall goal.
- If you have questions about the tool or would like to request additional support in using it, please reach out at outdoorschool@oregonstate.edu.

Embrace the subjective nature of using the self-evaluation tool

- There might be disagreement within a team about how to qualify a characteristic as absent, emerging, or highly effective. *The conversations that emerge from these discrepancies are part of the work of becoming more culturally responsive, not a barrier to that work.* The aim is for the program and team to become more culturally responsive, not for all team members to reach perfect agreement.
- The boundary between qualifiers is not concrete. For example, you may recognize some aspects of your program as "emerging" and other aspects of your program as "highly effective" for a particular characteristic. It is not necessary to choose only one qualifier.

Commit to equity work as an ongoing journey

- Working to be more culturally responsive and to center equity is an ongoing process. This tool may be the start of deep equity work for your program, or it may be a continuation of work that you are already doing. In either case, this tool is only one step in the process.
- Equity work is complex and multi-faceted. The Avarna Group has developed a framework (Tackling the Blob) detailing four quadrants to equity work. This framework can be useful in thinking about how to approach equity work: <https://theavarnagroup.com/2015/12/09/the-quadrants-of-equity-inclusion-diversity-work/>.
- Evaluation and professional development are closely aligned. Expect targeted workshops/materials directly connected to the characteristics in this self-evaluation tool. Consider how other available evaluation resources (such as the [Instructional Resource Self-Evaluation Tool](#), [Indigenous Perspectives on Outdoor Education course](#), and [Student Outcomes evaluation report](#)) might further your personal or organizational equity work.

* indicates definitions found in the glossary of terms

EQUITY

The guarantee of fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement. Equity requires an acknowledgement that everyone has different needs, experiences and opportunities. When we understand this we allocate resources accordingly so everyone has access to the same outcomes. Equity is the approach and equality is the desired outcome.
*indicates definitions found in glossary of terms.

Characteristic	Absent	Emerging	Highly Effective	Evidence (factual, specific and detailed examples from organization's guiding documents, training materials, etc.); or N/A.
Organizational Identity Core values and beliefs that direct all elements of an organization. Includes vision and mission, as well as elements of business and strategic plans, staff, partnerships and annual report. <i>Individual reflection: How does your personal identity and understanding of justice affect your work within this organization, your community, and/or as an educator?</i>	- Equity* and justice* are not a part of mission or values, strategic plan or the organization's culture. - Equity and inequity are not a part of the organization's identity, nor explicit within the larger community. - Organization does not see "equity" as an important organizational consideration. (e.g., "We already solved the equity problem.")	- Strategic plan, vision or mission statement consider/assert equity. - Annual report includes explicit consideration of equity. - Equity may be connected to business plan (e.g., community-specific grant funding or reporting on Free and Reduced Lunch).	- Equity is fundamental framing of all elements of the organization, including staff, partnerships, community, vision, mission, strategic and business plan, annual report. - Equity is entrenched in the organization's identity and culture through everything explicit and implicit.	
Community-Specific Histories, Beliefs and Norms Includes thoughts about race*, sexual orientation*, gender*, religion, ability, and their relation to equity and justice. <i>Individual reflection: How does your understanding of your own identities and how they're perceived and received in the world affect your actions within this organization and/or your community?</i>	- Beliefs and norms are representative of the dominant culture*. - Sharing beliefs/perspectives or proposing/establishing norms from non-dominant culture is discouraged. (e.g., "That's their thing. We don't do that here.")	- Explicit recognition of importance of intersectionality*, difference, power* and discrimination (See highly effective category), but still figuring out how to put into practice. - Discussions of difference, power, etc., are encouraged, but dominant culture remains centered.	- Decolonizing perspectives and approaches are well established and valued. - Dominant perspectives are mediated and their adverse effects recognized. - Issues of intersectionality, difference and power are constantly being evaluated. (e.g., Are you considering and moderating power right now within your team while completing this tool?) - Reparations occur (e.g., scholarships, waiving of fees, and systemic initiatives to offset injustices, land-based compensation related to independence, apologies and acknowledgements of the injustices).	

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Characteristic	Absent	Emerging	Highly Effective	Evidence (factual, specific and detailed examples from organization's guiding documents, training materials, etc.); or N/A.
Internal Organizational Activities Includes policies and practices such as strategic, staff work or hiring plans, position descriptions, staff handbook, organizational culture and business plan. <i>Individual reflection: What personal biases* might you have, and how might they affect your actions within this organization, and/or your community?</i>	- Equity* and justice* are not a part of policies and procedures. - Organization does not participate in any training related to Equity, Diversity* and Inclusion*.	- Policies and procedures acknowledge equity, but in practice equity is not centered in the organization's activities. - Equity statements may exist or organizations may have one-off equity training. - Some stakeholder involvement (staff, marginalized communities*) has informed internal activities.	- Policies and procedures center on equity, and strong stakeholder involvement has informed internal activities. - Involvement is respectful, ongoing and bi-directional. - Activities are responsive to stakeholders and regularly change according to need. - Organization provides and/or supports regular Equity, Diversity and Inclusion training for staff as a team and as individuals.	
Educational Programming Includes all educational activities, those with and without explicit learning objectives, and all instructional resources. <i>Individual reflection: Why do you choose to NOT teach certain things? What might you be ignoring or avoiding in your teaching?</i>	- Educational programming conveys only one perspective (e.g., dam design activities considering salmon survival narrowly, or Gold Rush history considering only settler perspectives, both examples of Indigenous erasure*). - Organization does not provide opportunities for students to connect learning to their own lives.	- Some of the educational programming and subsequent learning incorporates multiple perspectives. - Limited opportunities for students to share lived experiences/perspectives.	- Educational programming and subsequent learning are connected to real life and <u>action</u>. - Programming frequently engages critically with multiple perspectives. - Null or hidden curriculum* are regularly and critically considered as learning experiences.	
External Organizational Activities Includes outreach, collaborations, business activities and funding priorities/agreements. <i>Individual reflection: In what ways do you promote equity in your community?</i>	No strategy for community engagement in terms of outreach and collaborations.	- Proposes and/or implements one-size-fits-all strategies that are presumed to work for all people. - Strategies may not be fully participatory. - Employs a colorblind approach, ignoring the importance of race.	- Employs a mix of targeted activities that are participatory and led by the specific communities involved (e.g., organization and community members co-host information night or facility visits). - Organization recognizes itself as one of several parts of a community and humbly engages as leader/ally/accomplice*.	

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Reflections on Equity:

DIVERSITY

All the ways in which we differ, are similar and are unique. These differences for groups and communities include race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, socioeconomic status, education, marital status, language, age, gender, sexual orientation, ability and learning styles.

*indicates definitions found in glossary of terms.

Characteristic	Absent	Emerging	Highly Effective	Evidence (factual, specific and detailed examples from organization's guiding documents, training materials, etc.); or N/A.
Staffing/Workforce Diversity The organization is intentional about staffing representation, including communities of color, gender*, religion, sexual orientation*, ability and languages.	• Staff are not diverse and are reflective of dominant culture* (e.g., White, cisgender and able-bodied). • Staff fails to evaluate other viewpoints and makes little attempt to accommodate the behavior of others. • Staff are trapped in one way of thinking that resists adaptation, rejects alternatives and confuses celebrating diversity* with equity*.	• Recruitment (advertising, position descriptions, etc.) intention is to recruit diverse candidates. • Some diversity is evident in staffing. • Recognition of importance of diversity. • Attempts made to employ people from non-dominant cultures.	• Staff is highly diverse. This includes communities of color, gender identities, religious perspectives, sexual orientation, physical/emotional/cognitive abilities, immigration and socioeconomic status*. • Various languages are used. • A culturally diverse staff represents a variety of life experiences; staff are encouraged to apply their lived experiences to the program. • Training is provided about the culture* and language of the people they serve.	
Community and Student Participation Includes outreach and authentic collaboration strategies that are reflective of the culturally specific communities they're trying to reach. <i>Individual reflection: What is your understanding of "diversity"? Where do you need support in your growth?</i>	• No activities to address disproportionate rates of participation. • Doesn't believe there is a reason to have partners, staff or students outside dominant identities. • Belief in treating everyone identically or with "sameness"	• Some efforts to address disproportionate rates of participation (e.g., family information nights, translated materials). • Focused on treating everyone appropriately and accommodating their differences, rather than treating everyone identically, as if they are the same. • Some culturally specific learning/training occurs.	• Across all settings (outdoor school programming, community outreach, leadership), concerted efforts are made to value and include diverse community and student groups and achieve parity in participation rates. • Individuals' different capacities, abilities and lived experiences (e.g., home lives) are valued and respected. • Cultural collisions* are humbly and respectfully acknowledged; recovery from collisions occurs.	

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Characteristic	Absent	Emerging	Highly Effective	Evidence (factual, specific and detailed examples from organization's guiding documents, training materials, etc.); or N/A.
Diverse Educational/Learning Materials, Ideas and Experiences Focus on how students from diverse backgrounds see themselves in programming and curriculum. At times they may be targeted for particular marginalized* identities or communities. <i>Individual reflection: How do you engage with and facilitate perspectives other than your own?</i>	Internal and outward facing materials do not represent a diversity of ideas and are only reflective of the white dominant culture*.	- Materials, ideas and experiences may represent some diverse perspectives, yet are mostly rooted in dominant culture/ perspectives. - When diverse perspectives are part of a learning experience they are not centered* but sidelined, inaccurately portrayed, marginalized or an 'add-on.'	- Diverse materials, ideas and experiences enhance learning experiences. - Multiple perspectives are centered. - Outcomes and objectives of learning experiences involve an understanding of and honor the histories, cultures*, languages and traditions of land, place and time. - Diverse authors, characters, communities and identities are accurately portrayed.	
Diversity as Asset "Recognition that an organization's success is dependent on, and tied directly to, how well it values, engages and includes the rich diversity* of its community members" (OSU- Diversity Strategic Plan 2018). Similar to ecosystems, highly diverse organizations are far more resilient, adaptable and productive than those with less diversity. <i>Individual reflection: What do you understand about the differences between you and your co-workers and/or community(ies)? How are you valuing these differences?</i>	Diversity is either not seen as an important organizational consideration or is seen as a 'check-box' requirement (e.g., this tool is perceived as a requirement).	- Diversity is seen as an asset*, yet not fully realized in organizational staffing, programming, external activities. - Organization is beginning a process of centering diversity (i.e., becoming intentional with it and embedding it in all activities moving forward).	- Diversity is an asset and has been for an adequate amount of time (enough for the change to be realized and resilient). - Diversity has fully permeated all policies and procedures of an organization. - Organizations recognize diversity as a valued added feature.	

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Reflections on Diversity:

INCLUSION

The perspectives, experiences, and beliefs of marginalized individuals/communities are centered and ensure they feel and experience a sense of belonging. Inclusion attends to equitable distribution of power and agency. “Inclusion is not merely tolerating or accommodating differences; it’s about actively valuing and honoring differences. Diversity is what we are, and inclusion is what we do.” (Avarna DEI glossary)

*indicates definitions found in glossary of terms.

Characteristic	Absent	Emerging	Highly Effective	Evidence <i>(factual, specific and detailed examples from organization's guiding documents, training materials, etc.); or N/A.</i>
Accessibility The degree to which individuals/communities may participate in a manner consistent with community/cultural values and their peers/one another. Requires both removal of barriers and establishment of supports.	Employs an “all are welcome” approach without explicit consideration of how barriers, outcome inequalities (income/wealth, education, health, etc.) and cultural perspectives affect participation.	- Organization is aware of some deficit views* around barriers, outcome inequalities (income/wealth, education, health, etc.), and cultural perspectives that affect participation. - Supports are in place but are not fully realized.	- Individuals and communities with diverse needs all have equal access to participation/experiences. - Organization actively evaluates policies, practices and facilities to limit barriers and put in place supports. - Policies and procedures are regularly created and modified that address disparities and barriers. - Accessibility* is often supported by accommodations*.	
Differentiated Instruction Adaptable, multi-level instruction effective for learners with a wide variety of needs/experiences. Involves varied and scaffolded learning activities and experiences to meet individual students’ needs. <i>Note: The degree to which instruction is differentiated* varies considerably by instructor.</i>	- Uses one instructional approach that is effective for only some of the learners present. - Instructional approaches (e.g., assessment, practice, teaching) are not responsive to different styles of learning, capacities, background knowledge or experiences.	- Incorporates some individualized supports for students’ learning experiences (e.g., assessment, practice, teaching). - Applies ability grouping*, also known as tracking, to group students together according to their different styles of learning, capacities, background knowledge or experiences.	- Instruction is highly adaptable based on individual and community needs. - Uses formative evaluation and adjustment of instruction (assessment, practice, teaching) to scaffold and target learning experiences. - Learning experiences are multisensory, collaborative with interdependent learning, and involve youth voice. - Recognizes, honors and builds upon students’ individual styles of learning, capacities, background knowledge or experiences to construct new knowledge.	

INCLUSION

The perspectives, experiences, and beliefs of marginalized individuals/communities are centered and ensure they feel and experience a sense of belonging. Inclusion attends to equitable distribution of power and agency. “Inclusion is not merely tolerating or accommodating differences; it’s about actively valuing and honoring differences. Diversity is what we are, and inclusion is what we do.” (Avarna DEI glossary)

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Characteristic	Absent	Emerging	Highly Effective	Evidence <i>(factual, specific and detailed examples from organization's guiding documents, training materials, etc.); or N/A.</i>
Targeted or Culturally Specific Program Content May involve specific programming elements or entirety of program driven by community needs.	- Program content does not include any targeted or culturally specific content and is not driven by or responsive to specific community needs. - White dominant cultures* are centered in the program content.	- Some program content has an understanding of more than just dominant culture* and community. - Some program content is specific to the culture of students or land, but it may just be stock curriculum that is based on cultural identity rather than historical context.	- Program content is reflective of and driven by student experience/history, culture and community. - Dynamic, changes often, and is responsive to community needs. - Provider may offer different programming for different groups of students, based on geography, culture and communication with schools and districts.	
Inclusive Collaborations and Partnerships Collaborations with community specific groups (migrant education, special education*, etc.) recognize and deconstruct issues of power. Power* is ultimately shared. Requires self-reflection and accountability regarding organizations' role in creating partnerships. <i>Individual reflection: In what way(s) are you collaborating with community specific groups? How are you tending to power dynamics that arise?</i>	- Few partners with community organizations; partnerships do not share in leadership. - May approach partnerships with a “here’s what we need to get from you” attitude. - The process of collaboration, which involves time, relationship building, humility, respect and patience is not valued. - Organization is critical of, rather than accountable to, potential partners when meaningful partnership is not fully realized.	- Some strategic partnerships exist or are being developed. - Partners involved in planning and decision-making, but power is not always fully shared and may be restricted. - Consistent efforts made to develop partnerships.	- Strong strategic partnerships exist. - Issues of power are deconstructed and shared by partners. - The value of inclusion* in outdoor school is established and discussed. - The ‘process’ of developing partnerships is valued more than the ‘product.’ - Relationships are key. - Partners are accountable to one another.	

INCLUSION

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Reflections on Inclusion:

CULTURAL RESPONSIVENESS REPORT, REFLECTION AND IMPROVEMENT PLAN

1. Tally ALL of the organizational characteristics that were reviewed and see which characteristics are absent, emerging, and/or highly effective.
2. Determine if you will target one or more characteristic for improvement.
3. Use the Improvement Plan template to reflect on and think about what changes could strengthen your organization in the areas of equity, diversity and inclusion.

Cultural Responsiveness Characteristic	Absent	Emerging	Highly Effective	Check if targeted for improvement
EQUITY				
Organizational Identity				☐
Community-Specific Histories, Beliefs and Norms				☐
Internal Organizational Activities				☐
Educational Programming				☐
External Organizational Activities				☐
DIVERSITY				
Staffing/Workforce Diversity				☐
Community and Student Participation				☐
Diverse Educational/Learning Materials, Ideas and Experiences				☐
Diversity as Asset				☐
INCLUSION				
Accessibility				☐
Differentiated Instruction				☐
Targeted or Culturally Specific Program Content				☐
Inclusive Collaborations and Partnerships				☐

REFLECTION

1.

Which characteristics are a priority to target for your outdoor school program to become more culturally responsive?
2.

What are the challenges and barriers to becoming a more culturally responsive outdoor school? How might these be addressed?

CULTURAL RESPONSIVENESS IMPROVEMENT PLAN				
GOAL (CHARACTERISTIC TARGETED):				
Objective Change that needs to occur	Actions What needs to get done to make change	Individual(s) Needed to Implement	Start Date	Completion Date
	1.			
	2.			
	3.			
	4.			

RESOURCES AND REFERENCES

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