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# Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Plan

Rappahannock Electric Cooperative is an  
equal opportunity provider and employer.

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# Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Plan

Collaborative  
leadership effort led by:

**Patricia Hatcher**

Managing Director -  
Human Resources and  
Organizational Development

September 2021



## Board of Directors



**Michael W. Lindsay**  
Region I



**Christopher G. Shipe**  
Region II



**Darlene H. Carpenter**  
Region III



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Region IV



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Region VIII



**Eugene L. Campbell, Jr.**  
Region IX

## An Emphasis on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

### Message to the REC Workforce and Member-Owners

The Board of Directors, leadership and staff at Rappahannock Electric Cooperative (REC) embrace and believe in the values of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI). As a cooperative business and influential community organization, we strive to integrate DEI into the core of our organization through our workforce and its interactions, our community engagement, and the design and access of the programs and services we offer.

In 2020, REC began formalizing initiatives to grow our DEI knowledge and programs. Recognizing this is a journey, the leadership team began by listening and bringing in national expert advisors to help coach and guide the workforce forward.

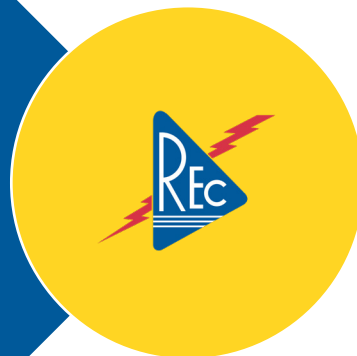
Some of REC's steps in this journey have included:

- A Board of Directors adopted resolution encouraging the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association to embrace DEI.
- Partnerships with advisors to develop our DEI strategy.
- Developing this formal DEI plan.
- Leadership completions of high-performance workshops focused on DEI strengths and opportunities.
- Recognition of Martin Luther King Jr. Day as a holiday for all employees.
- Continued emphasis of DEI culture in internal publications by highlighting the contributions and experiences of those who traditionally have been underrepresented and marginalized.
- Hiring a recruiter in order to expand our reach in identifying diverse candidate pools ensuring REC hires top talent.
- Creating a paid Parental Leave Policy that will enable an employee to care for and bond with a newborn child.

We remain committed to fostering a diverse, equitable and inclusive workforce, which aligns with – and is built upon – our core values of caring, respect, integrity and service.

**Christopher G. Shipe**  
Board Chairman

# Statement of Collaboration



This plan serves as a roadmap for ALL stakeholders of the Cooperative, including the Board of Directors, every employee, all Co-op partners and member-owners. Input and feedback is sought from a broad spectrum of stakeholders who care deeply about fostering a cooperative that is and will be diverse, equitable and inclusive for generations to come. REC has collaborated with independent consultants who specialize in DEI to help develop this roadmap as well as provide training and guidance. We recognize that all DEI work is an iterative process and a constant pursuit. This document is an important step in an ongoing journey that we will use as a guide for everything we do.

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**DEI is an acronym that stands for:**

# DIVERSITY



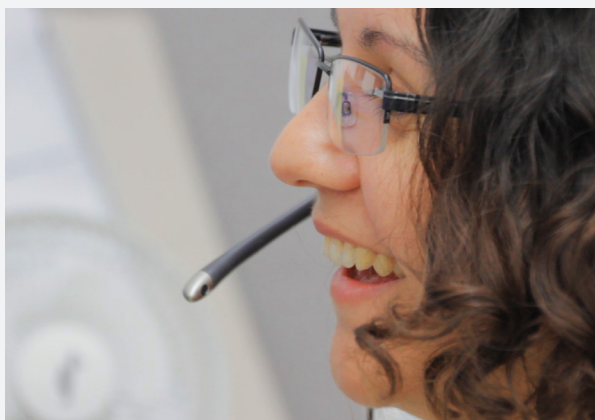
Diversity, broadly defined, refers to all of the characteristics that make individuals different from one another; that is, diversity represents the collective mixture of differences around race, color, religion, sex, gender identity, national origin, age, ability, sexual orientation, values, beliefs, experiences, backgrounds, cultural norms and other differences that makes each person unique.

# EQUITY



Equity is the practice of creating equal opportunity for everyone by identifying and eliminating barriers for individuals or groups such that everyone has a fair and equal chance of succeeding, which may include equal treatment or treatment that is different but is considered equivalent in terms of rights, benefits, obligations, access and opportunities.

# INCLUSION



Inclusion builds upon diversity to create an environment in which employees, member-owners, partners, and stakeholders are valued and welcomed. They all have equal access to opportunities and resources so they can feel fully engaged to contribute to the cooperative's mission and organizational goals.

# Cooperative Principles

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- 1. Voluntary & Open Membership:** Membership in a cooperative is open to all people who can reasonably use its services and stand willing to accept the responsibilities of membership, regardless of race, religion, gender, or economic circumstances.
  - 2. Democratic Member Control:** Cooperatives are democratic organizations controlled by their members, who actively participate in setting policies and making decisions. Representatives (Directors) are elected among the membership and are accountable to them.
  - 3. Members' Economic Participation:** Members contribute equitably to, and democratically control, the capital of their cooperative. At least part of that capital remains the common property of the cooperative. Members allocate surpluses for any or all of the following purposes: developing the cooperative; setting up reserves; benefiting members in proportion to their transactions with the cooperative; and supporting other activities approved by the membership.
  - 4. Autonomy and Independence:** Cooperatives are autonomous, self-help organizations controlled by their members. If they enter into agreements with other organizations, including governments, or raise capital from external sources, they do so on terms that ensure democratic control as well as their unique identity.
  - 5. Education, Training and Information:** Education and training for members, elected representatives (Directors), CEOs, and employees help them effectively contribute to the development of their cooperatives. Communications about the nature and benefits of cooperatives, particularly with the general public and opinion leaders, help boost cooperative understanding.
  - 6. Cooperation Among Cooperatives:** By working together through local, national, regional and international structures, cooperatives improve services, bolster local economies, and deal more effectively with social and community needs.
  - 7. Concern for Community:** Cooperatives work for the sustainable development of their communities through policies supported by membership.
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## A Partnership with Member-Owners

As foundational and guiding principles, REC places an emphasis on creating and building a culture that respects and encourages:

- **Economic Justice** – Ensuring the availability of critical resources and opportunities for everyone.
- **Social Justice** – Providing equal access to goods and services; addressing unfairness caused by unequal access to economic resources and power; protecting the legal, industrial and political rights of all; and expanding opportunities for people to play a role in the decisions that govern their lives.
- **Environmental Justice** – Protecting the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies.



# Introduction

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The foundation for the DEI roadmap is built upon REC's Strategic Initiative "...to continue to embrace diversity in the cooperative's workforce..." as well as the imperative to ensure equity and inclusion, which are all shared responsibilities of all cooperative employees.

Organizations that genuinely embrace diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives have stakeholders in all areas with varying lived experiences.

Numerous studies have shown that a diverse workforce positively impacts an organization in many ways, including:



**Financial  
Stability**



**Quality  
improvement**



**Heightened  
innovation**



**Better  
decision-making**



# DEI Vision and Emphasis

REC’s vision is to exceed members’ expectations. We accomplish this by operating as a forward-thinking, innovative utility that leads the way in safety, reliability and member satisfaction. Among distribution cooperatives, REC benefits from its combination of stable growth; an excellent mix of residential, commercial and industrial members; reasonable wholesale power costs; financial strength; and solid, experienced and diverse management and operational team members. The future of REC promises to be both challenging and exciting.

In recognition of our **SERVICE** to a wide geographic range of counties, diverse socio-economic membership, cultures and communities, we intentionally align the four values to our DEI journey. Our commitment to our DEI plan is anchored in our additional values. **CARING** is evident in our response to the needs of ALL internal and external stakeholders. This includes our teammates and membership. Our commitment to **INTEGRITY** transcends our daily operational responsibilities and considers how we align what we say with what we do as we **RESPECT** the lived experiences, cultures and values of every member.



# DEI Commitment

The cooperative is committed to the ongoing development of an organizational brand built on the ideas that:

- DEI is a business imperative as well as a moral call-to-action; this means we make better decisions, perform our jobs more effectively and have a more knowledgeable workforce when we have diverse teams working together. **This same principle applies when working with or serving member-owners.**
- This plan is a living document that may grow based on staff, member and board participation; and/or legislative policy.
- We want to take everyone along on the journey to include representation of diverse groups’ perspectives; and make a commitment to continuous and ongoing learning; raise awareness and emphasize elements of environmental justice. We acknowledge and remain committed to helping member-owners with these critical issues.
- We can protect the interests of every stakeholder but not the biases of any stakeholder as a person or as a group; and
- All staff and partners of REC have a responsibility to treat others with dignity and respect at all times. All individuals associated with the Cooperative are expected to support and advocate for these ideals.

**We embrace and encourage our staffs’ and volunteers’ differences in age, color, disability, ethnicity, family or marital status, gender identity or expression, language, national origin, physical and mental ability, political affiliation, race, religion, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, veteran status, and other characteristics that make us unique. This includes embracing policies, decisions and actions that reflect an emphasis on social justice, economic justice and environmental justice.**

# KEY DEI STRATEGIC OUTCOMES AND ACTIONS

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## COMMITMENT I

Workforce Development and Diversity

## COMMITMENT II

Creating an Inclusive Workplace Culture

## COMMITMENT III

Dedication to Our Members

## COMMITMENT IV

Accountability

## Commitment I: Workforce Diversity & Development



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The organization attracts, retains, promotes, and develops a diverse and dynamic workforce to advance the mission of the cooperative.

## Dedication to improving and enhancing the talent acquisition and selection process.



### Actions

- 1 Evaluate and revising job descriptions to eliminate bias and underscore commitment to DEI thus expanding the opportunities for candidates who may have otherwise seen themselves as unqualified by unfair standards.

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- 2 Hire with the intent to provide excellent service to our membership who may have varying levels of diversity.

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- 3 Include language of inclusiveness that clearly demonstrates the desire and intent to provide reasonable accommodations for candidates with disabilities.

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- 4 Be intentional and proactive in recruiting of diverse candidates by pursuing diverse talent pools for every job vacancy.

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- 5 Use focused interview questions to determine applicant's willingness to engage in DEI in a meaningful way.

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- 6 Communicate the importance of diversity, equity, and inclusion in staff and contractor training orientation program, and throughout tenure.



## Boosting innovation and collaboration through professional development.

### Actions

- 1 Provide DEI training for all employees
  - a Implement the scope and sequence for ongoing training for every level of staff that raises awareness about impediments to a diverse, equitable and inclusive environment such as racism, lack of cultural responsiveness, bias, insensitivity, and micro-aggression.
  - b Increase inclusive leadership capacity by requiring supervisory training that cultivates leaders who serve as good role models.
  - c Strengthen the workforce to adapt and evolve with the changing needs of members, businesses, and the economy.
  - d Offer culturally responsive coaching for executive leadership.

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- 2 Enhance career pathing and developmental models to help staff plan their careers.

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- 3 Encourage a commitment by every teammate to participate in one or more DEI-related professional development activity annually.

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- 4 Require professional development for the HR and hiring team on recognizing bias in recruiting, interviewing, hiring, and other actions that occur throughout employees' tenure.

## Building diverse teams through intentional and strategic succession planning.



### Actions

- 1 Engaging diverse candidate pools in an effort to have underrepresented populations in management.

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- 2 Create formal employee sponsor and mentor relationships in preparation for leadership roles.

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- 3 Review performance evaluations for bias and address accordingly.
  - a Hold staff accountable by setting and achieving individual goals related to DEI.
  - b Coach Managers to be aware of their biases so they can learn to conduct bias-free performance evaluations.

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- 4 Identify obstacles and solutions to the diversity of staff and volunteer pipeline.

## Commitment II: Creating an Inclusive Workplace Culture



The cooperative creates a workplace culture that allows employees of the organization to be seen, heard, and supported. This culture creates the foundation for a more engaged workforce, and inspires a stronger sense of inclusiveness, belonging, and contribution.

## Creating an engaged workforce through open and transparent dialogue.



### Actions

- 1 Encourage employees to participate in diversity-related, industry, workforce, and community organizations based on REC's code of conduct.

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- 2 Report on DEI Roadmap progress, and celebrate the achievements and milestones.

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- 3 Engage in on-going conversations with our community members to identify, discuss, and resolve events that diminish feelings of safety, belonging, and well-being for our member-facing employees.





## Creating opportunities to listen and learn from the experiences of others.

### Actions

- 1 Executives and other leaders consistently share their individual “why” related to diversity, equity and inclusion.

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- 2 Administer engagement surveys and other forms of employee feedback channels to address workplace conditions/practices affecting the organization’s DEI efforts.

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- 3 Create a DEI employee advisory group that promotes a sustainable workplace of inclusion.

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- 4 Make decisions which highlight and include authentic representation of diversity, equity, and inclusion by
  - a Encouraging sourcing from partners who represent diverse communities
  - b Encouraging involvement and participations of a wide representation of the community.
  - c Providing training and thought leadership for employees on member-engagement that enhances DEI.

## Providing facilities that emphasize productivity and comfort for diverse employees and members.



### Actions

- 1 Erect visual work related images and reminders, which highlight a diverse group of people and their lived experiences.

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- 2 The use of “stick figures” or cartoons should represent diversity of gender, race, etc.

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- 3 Evaluate accessibility of facilities and vehicles.

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- 4 Create gender-neutral bathrooms as facilities are renovated or built.

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- 5 Expand multi-lingual services (link to multi- language website, bilingual bills/statements)

## Commitment III: Dedication to our Members



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**The cooperative's commitment to diverse ideas and creative approaches will be extended beyond the cooperative's workforce. We commit to our members that we will engage in intentional actions that improve the experience of our members with REC as a brand and with REC employees as individuals.**

**Actions**

**Encouraging engagement among members and employees in diverse community events.**

1 Engage in corporate sponsored volunteer activities in the communities we serve.

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2 Communicate REC's role as an advocate for fair and equitable access to utility services.

**Actions**

**Making conscientious choices about who we work with ensuring that they demonstrate and uphold the cooperative's values.**

1 Actively commit to procuring goods and services from more diverse businesses (ie, Small, Women-owned & Minority-owned Business SWaM) such as those owned by people of color and women..

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2 Source products and services from companies with high ethical standards. Share our vision fully, bravely, and accurately.

**Actions**

**Establishing inclusive programs and offerings for the membership that consider the interest in diversity of our membership.**

1 Review current program designs and participation for adherence and furtherance to REC's DEI vision.

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2 Solicit diverse stakeholder viewpoints for REC's member programs.

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3 Develop new programs aligning with REC's DEI objectives.

## Commitment IV: Accountability



The Cooperative develops practices and strategies to equip leaders with the ability to manage diversity, measure results, and refine approaches while institutionalizing a culture of equity and inclusion. Management, at all levels, is held accountable for executing the DEI Strategic Plan. The organization utilizes both quantitative metrics, such as applicant tracking data, and qualitative metrics, such as engagement survey results, to assess its DEI performance. Celebrating incremental change as well as major shifts are critical to sustaining the effort.

## Celebrating our differences through storytelling and outreach.

### Actions

- 1 Track the history and tell the stories of all the diversity, equity and inclusion efforts that have been completed.
- 2 Find opportunities to share these stories and accomplishments with employees and other stakeholders.
- 3 Build and strengthen outreach.

## Investing in DEI to impact change.

### Actions

- 1 Report on the accomplishments of the plan.
- 2 Set and maintain DEI initiatives as annual financial priority by allocating an annual budget to ongoing DEI objectives.
- 3 Appoint an REC staff director to be accountable for leading this DEI plan.



# Evaluating commitments and actions and holding leaders accountable.



## Actions

- 1 Expands ways to partner with groups to create more equitable access to energy programs.

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- 2 Evaluate how leadership is executing on the DEI plan individually and collectively.

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- 3 Be transparent – each executive shares internally and externally their commitment to DEI initiatives and their “why” statement.

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- 4 Incorporate DEI onto the Balanced Scorecard to plan, execute, and monitor progress against the cooperative’s DEI objectives.

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- 5 Include a DEI performance development for managers and executives to address the goals of the DEI Strategic Plan.

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- 6 Leaders routinely discuss the importance of DEI as a core organizational strategy and provide consistent, visible leadership.

# We are proud to serve our workforce and members with excellence.

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**John D. Hewa**  
President and CEO



**Tracey Steiner**  
Chief Engagement  
and Consumer Officer



**Peter Muhoro**  
Chief Strategy, Technology  
and Innovation Officer



**Larry Andrews**  
Chief Administrative  
and Finance Officer



**Jason Satterwhite**  
Chief Grid Operations Officer





**#WE  
ARE  
REC**



# We Value

**CARING  
RESPECT  
INTEGRITY  
SERVICE**

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