

# TOURISM, EQUITY AND STEWARDSHIP

A 10-YEAR TRANSFORMATIONAL STRATEGY FOR  
TRAVEL OREGON - *DRAFT*  
Oregon Tourism Commission | CY 2022-31

DRAFT

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## **LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

As we, Travel Oregon, carry out our work to create statewide equity, stewardship and well-being, we pause with gratitude and acknowledge the many tribes and bands who call Oregon their ancestral territory, including: Burns Paiute; Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw; Confederated Tribes of Cow Creek Lower Band of Umpqua; Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde; Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians; Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs; Confederated Tribes of Umatilla Indian Reservation; Coquille Tribe; and Klamath Tribes. We honor the ongoing relationship between the land, plants, animals and people indigenous to this place we now call Oregon. We recognize the continued sovereignty of the nine federally recognized tribes who have ties to this place and thank them for continuing to teach us how we might all be here together.

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## **CEO FOREWORD**

In early 2021, in response to a tourism economy facing continuing challenges brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, climate crisis and more, Travel Oregon set out to transform the role of tourism in Oregon. We understood that true recovery doesn't mean a return to the way things were. It means pushing ourselves to find creative and meaningful ways to re-grow, turning loss and uncertainty into an opportunity to come back stronger than ever. We knew that without addressing the needs of all Oregonians and without having systems in place to support our industry when facing social or environmental impacts, we wouldn't have optimized the opportunity the pandemic gave us to pause, reflect, listen and then transform our work. If the last two years have taught us anything, it is that we must be nimble, perseverant, and ready to learn and grow.

Our transformational strategy is the culmination of hours spent in enriching conversations with tourism industry and agency partners, as well as BIPOC communities impacted by the tourism industry. The input and guidance shared was invaluable in helping us reimagine the role and responsibility that the tourism industry has in shaping Oregon's future and was vital in forming the foundation of this strategy that will guide our work over the next ten years.

*-Todd Davidson, CEO, Travel Oregon*

## **ABOUT TRAVEL OREGON**

The Oregon Tourism Commission (OTC), doing business as Travel Oregon was formed in 1995 and granted semi-independent agency status in 2003 by the Oregon state legislature. Funded by the 1.5% statewide transient lodging tax, Travel Oregon carries out statewide work as the official destination management organization— directly investing 30% into Oregon's tourism industry and communities through the dedicated Regional Cooperative Tourism Program and competitive grants program.

A nine-member board of commissioners, including three tourism promotion representatives, five lodging representatives and one public-at-large representative (ORS 284.107), are appointed by the governor to oversee the agency and approve the budget and strategic plan that directs the actions of the Travel Oregon staff.

The original legislative findings outlined below from Chapters 284 and 320 of the Oregon Revised Statutes, which created the OTC over 25 years ago, remain ever-present and guide the transformational strategy:

(1) Travel and recreation industries are important to the State of Oregon as a whole, and the health of these industries affects the well-being of all Oregonians.

(2) Tourist facilities and attractions serve the recreational and cultural needs of both visitors and residents.

(3) It is in the public interest to encourage the orderly growth and development of nonpolluting, labor-intensive industries such as tourism within the state.

(4) The travel and recreation industries have become increasingly important to the economic growth of the state and will become more important in the future because of increased leisure time and declining employment opportunities in other traditional Oregon industries.

(5) State involvement in tourism, recreational and cultural activities needs to be better coordinated to respond effectively to state interests and, where appropriate, to meet the needs of local governments and the private sector.

(6) There is a need to encourage communication, partnership and cooperation between the public and private sectors of the industry to promote orderly growth and implementation of statewide objectives.

(7) It is desirable that there be an agency in state government to act in matters pertaining to public relations.

(8) It is in the public interest to promote quality, integrity and reliability in all tourism and tourism related services and in information offered to visitors to the State of Oregon.

(9) Oregonians want to preserve the historical and cultural foundations of the state as a living part of community life and development and to insure future generations and visitors the opportunity to appreciate and enjoy the rich heritage of Oregon.

(10) Planning and promotion of tourism and recreation should be compatible with other state interests in energy development and conservation, environmental protection, transportation and the judicious use of natural resources.

(11) It is in the best interest of the nation and the tourism and recreation industries to proceed in an orderly fashion toward the development of a promotional program for advancing and enhancing tourism in the state.

## KEY TERMS

Throughout this transformational strategy we use terms that may be new to some of our stakeholders. These terms have been chosen with intention—helping us set the foundation of what this strategy means to us. We value a shared understanding of these key terms and invite our stakeholders to use them alongside us.

**BIPOC** – An acronym for Black, Indigenous, and people of color. Founders of The BIPOC Project use the term to "highlight the unique relationship to Whiteness that Indigenous and Black (African Americans) people have, which shapes the experiences of and relationship to white supremacy for all people of color within a U.S. context."<sup>1</sup>

**Destination management organization (DMO)** – The agency responsible for coordinating the processes where almost all aspects of a destination are managed, including promotional efforts, local resources, accommodation, activities, events, environmental concerns, tourist attractions and transportation<sup>2</sup>.

**Destination stewardship** – A holistic approach to destination management that seeks to balance and meet the economic, environmental, and social/cultural needs of a destination, ensuring active engagement with residents and tourism stakeholders.

**Equity** – Acknowledges that not all people, or all communities, are starting from the same place due to historic and current systems of oppression. Equity is the effort to provide different levels of support based on an individual's or group's needs in order to achieve fairness in outcomes.<sup>3</sup>

**Marginalized communities** – Includes vulnerable, oppressed or underrepresented groups of people. These might include people of different races and ethnicities (as compared to the majority population in that region), low-income individuals, the unhoused, youth, seniors, indigenous people, LGBTQIA+, families that have experienced domestic violence or child maltreatment and people with disabilities.

**Racial equity** – Means closing the gaps so that race can no longer predict any person's success, which simultaneously improves outcomes for all.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.thebipocproject.org/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.revfine.com/destination-management/>

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.oregon.gov/oem/equity/Documents/Oregon\\_DEI\\_Action\\_Plan\\_2021.pdf](https://www.oregon.gov/oem/equity/Documents/Oregon_DEI_Action_Plan_2021.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

**Racism** - A belief or doctrine that inherent differences among the various human racial groups determine cultural or individual achievement, usually involving the idea that one's own race is superior and has the right to dominate others or that a particular racial group is inferior to the others.<sup>5</sup>

**RDMO** – Oregon is divided into seven tourism regions. Each region has identified a DMO to act as its *regional* destination management organization (RDMO), which is recognized by Travel Oregon and is statutorily required to submit regional plans for use of state dollars for the Regional Cooperative Tourism Program.<sup>6</sup>

**Regenerative tourism** – A concept related to the Seventh Generation Principle, which comes from the Haudenosaunee Confederacy.<sup>7</sup> Decisions are made after weighing the consequences for people seven generations into the future. The focus is on renewal and restoration rather than on sustaining the current state.

**Stakeholder** – In Oregon tourism this includes both visitors and residents, as well as regional and local DMOs, the nine federally recognized tribes, tourism-related businesses and workforce, non-profits, natural resource management agencies (local, state, federal) and more.

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<sup>5</sup> [https://www.oregon.gov/oem/equity/Documents/Oregon\\_DEI\\_Action\\_Plan\\_2021.pdf](https://www.oregon.gov/oem/equity/Documents/Oregon_DEI_Action_Plan_2021.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> <https://industry.traveloregon.com/resources/tourism-in-oregon/destination-management-organizations/>

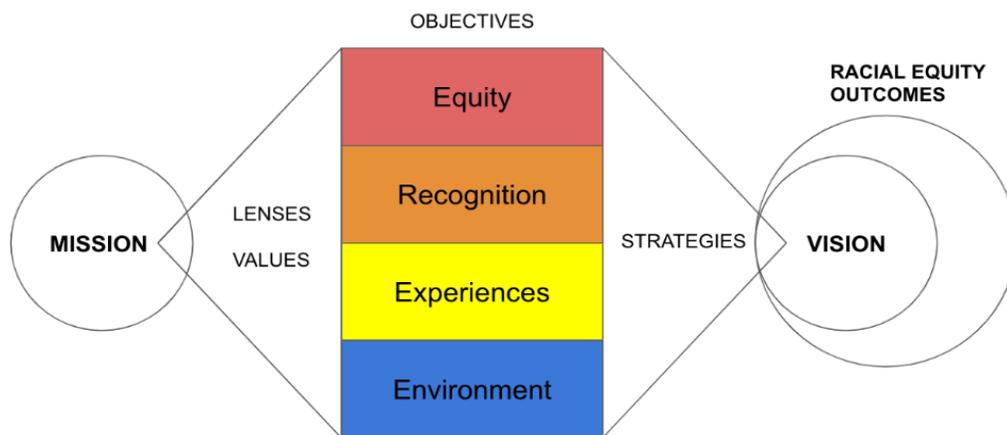
<sup>7</sup> <https://www.haudenosauneeconfederacy.com/values/>

# WHAT IS THE TRANSFORMATIONAL STRATEGY?

To transform is the process of dramatic change. To call this a Travel Oregon transformational strategy is not an overstatement. It designed as a high-level, 10-year strategy—one that is a crucial response to adapt our mission to meet the most timely and significant opportunities and needs of our residents, industry and visitors.

This strategy presents an ambitious and necessary vision for tourism in Oregon – one that reaches beyond our typical purview and includes long-range outcomes. These outcomes are strategically labeled *Racial Equity Outcomes* in support of the state's vision to "Build a more equitable Oregon where everyone has the opportunity to thrive and everyone's voice is heard."<sup>8</sup>

To achieve the vision and outcomes set forth in this transformational strategy we must not only deploy efficient and well-designed internal structures and processes, but we must also grow and evolve our relationships with residents, the industry and visitors. To guide this journey, we have established core values and lenses to root us in our focus and provide a strong foundation to align our actions and decisions, alongside our stakeholders.



<sup>8</sup> [https://www.oregon.gov/oem/equity/Documents/Oregon\\_DEI\\_Action\\_Plan\\_2021.pdf](https://www.oregon.gov/oem/equity/Documents/Oregon_DEI_Action_Plan_2021.pdf)

# RACIAL EQUITY OUTCOMES

1. Racial equity is achieved for all Oregonians along indicators of wellness including education, housing, economics, criminal justice, health, and a sense of belonging.
2. Racial equity exists for all visitors in their travel choices and in their sense of safety, well-being, and belonging.
3. Racial equity exists in Travel Oregon's contracting, hiring, retention, and promotion.
4. Racial equity is achieved in tourism industry contracting, employees, and business ownership.

## VISION

Oregonians and visitors are acting on a common purpose to steward the environment, advance equity and prosperity for all, and respect the diversity of our experiences and cultures.

## MISSION

Travel Oregon works to create statewide equity, stewardship, and well-being alongside our stakeholders by optimizing visitation, investing in communities and strengthening the resiliency of the tourism industry.

## CORE VALUES

**Integrity:** Our words match our actions. We measure the impact of our work, celebrate successes, adapt and change course when necessary, and continually improve together.

**Equity:** We lead through a lens of racial equity and commit to making systemic changes, so Oregon is a more equitable place to live and visit.

**Community:** We celebrate the people, cultures, and places of Oregon. We nurture our relationships with colleagues, the tourism industry, and local communities as we collaborate to make better Oregon experiences.

**Stewardship:** We lead through a lens of destination stewardship to build resiliency for a regenerative future.

# LENSES



We have adopted two lenses, in alignment with the United Nations 17 Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs)<sup>9</sup> and the State of Oregon Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Action Plan<sup>10</sup>, to guide our decisions, programming and actions in a consistent and intentional way.

Applying these lenses to all of our work is critical to the accountability of our transformational strategy over the next decade. As we strengthen our ability to apply these lenses, we aim to support our stakeholders in using this strategic tool as well—to collaboratively align and transform Oregon's tourism industry.

## Racial Equity Lens

Travel Oregon will apply a Racial Equity Lens to all of our work. To apply this lens, we must ask:

- What are the racial inequities that exist related to this work?
- How might decisions around this work contribute to racial inequities and/or racial equities?
- Who benefits from this decision? Who will be burdened by it?
- How might unintended consequences that contribute to racial inequities be mitigated as the decision is made and implemented?

## Destination Stewardship Lens

Travel Oregon will apply a Destination Stewardship Lens to all of our work. To apply this lens, we must ask:

- Does this work balance and meet the economic, environmental and social/cultural needs of a destination, focusing on long-term livability and well-being?
- What are the consequences of this work for the people living seven generations into the future? Have the decisions been made after weighing those consequences?
- Have residents and stakeholder been involved in an inclusive way—informing, validating and co-creating the management of the destination, including promotional efforts, accommodations, transportation and more.

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<sup>9</sup> <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

<sup>10</sup> [https://www.oregon.gov/oem/equity/Documents/Oregon\\_DEI\\_Action\\_Plan\\_2021.pdf](https://www.oregon.gov/oem/equity/Documents/Oregon_DEI_Action_Plan_2021.pdf)

## WHY THIS STRATEGY?

Centering the needs and desires of our stakeholders was a priority in building this strategy. Over an 18-month process beginning in late 2020, we hosted surveys, listening sessions, interviews and focus groups. Through this process we engaged nearly 2,000 Oregonians representing regional and local DMOs (including OTC staff/commissioners), tourism-related businesses and workforce, non-profits and government agencies – paying particular attention to the voices of BIPOC communities who have been marginalized by the tourism industry.<sup>11</sup>

### **The three focus areas stakeholders prioritized included:**

1. **Societal:** Overturning racism and social inequities with an emphasis on community livability and well-being.
2. **Environmental:** Mitigating impacts of the climate crisis with a priority on wildfires; reducing high visitation challenges.
3. **Economic:** Recovering from the global pandemic with a focus on workforce resiliency.

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<sup>11</sup> <https://industry.traveloregon.com/about/strategic-plan/2021-2025-transformational-strategic-planning/>

## **KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS**

These KPIs align with each objective and provide quantifiable measures of Oregon's tourism performance and impacts statewide, regionally and by race.

1. Racial diversity of tourism industry (including OTC staff/commissioners) and visitors.
2. Visitor and resident sentiment.
3. Socio-economic impacts of tourism (including workforce earnings).
4. Carbon footprint of tourism.

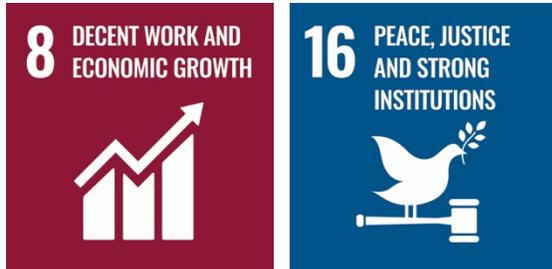
## **OBJECTIVES**

These four interconnected objectives will bring our mission to life – helping to us to reach our vision and outcomes.

1. Oregon is striving to be a place of equity.
2. Oregon is recognized as a flourishing destination.
3. Oregon delivers remarkable experiences.
4. Oregon respects the natural environment.

## **OBJECTIVE 1: Oregon is striving to be a place of equity.**

*Oregon's tourism industry is contributing to overturning systemic inequities that harm marginalized communities, particularly BIPOC.*



This objective makes progress toward UN SDGs:

- Decent Work and Economic Growth: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.
- Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

### **STRATEGIES**

1. Increase awareness of and advocate for social equity within Oregon's tourism workforce (e.g., housing, earnings, education).
2. Foster deep relationships with and elevate the voices of BIPOC, including Oregon's nine federally recognized tribes, as well as LGBTQIA+ and other marginalized communities.
3. Provide the tourism industry with opportunities to better understand how tourism impacts racial inequities and how to apply the Racial Equity Lens to their work.
4. Integrate diversity, equity and inclusion into programming, guidelines, budgeting, contracting, and employee hiring and trainings to shift agency culture to one of transparency and accountability.

## **OBJECTIVE 2: Oregon is recognized as a flourishing destination.**

*Oregon leaves positive and lasting impacts on people's lives.*



This objective makes progress toward UN SDG:

- Good Health and Well-being: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.

### **STRATEGIES**

1. Build recognition of the value of tourism to improve perception and increase advocacy among industry workforce, residents and policymakers.
2. Tell authentic, honest stories that accurately reflect the historic and present intersecting identities and cultures of Oregon's communities.
3. Leverage Oregon's brand by engaging broader audiences that are inclusive of Oregon's diverse cultures, people and places.
4. Create flexible, targeted promotions that address visitor pressures—dispersing visitation and economic impacts— by focusing on visitor passions and market research/trends.
5. Align and support communications across the tourism industry to improve visitor behaviors and experiences with timely information, responsible recreation practices and respect for all communities.
6. Expand opportunities for residents and tourism stakeholders to actively engage and collaborate in destination management processes; provide timely feedback loops.

## **OBJECTIVE 3: Oregon delivers remarkable experiences.**

*Oregon is a thriving place to live and visit.*



This objective makes progress toward UN SDGs:

- Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure: Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization, and foster innovation.
- Sustainable Cities and Communities: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.

### **STRATEGIES**

1. Improve existing, and support the development of, inclusive and safe tourism-related facilities and tourism products (e.g., visitor experiences, tour offerings, attractions, public spaces) to better serve marginalized communities.
2. Stimulate and bolster regenerative tourism business and product development opportunities that provide visitors with immersive Oregon experiences, particularly in rural communities and tribal lands.
3. Reduce high visitation pressures and increase community livability by investing in the development of niche tourism product that is based on growing visitor demand and Oregon's competitive advantage (e.g., outdoor recreation, culinary, agritourism, arts and culture).
4. Provide resources and assistance to tourism-related businesses, organizations and communities that are experiencing, or have recently experienced, crises (e.g., wildfires, extreme heat, global pandemic, houselessness).
5. Utilize partnerships to advance educational and career opportunities to develop, attract and retain tourism workforce.

## **OBJECTIVE 4: Oregon respects the natural environment.**

*Oregon's tourism industry is working towards a regenerative future.*



This objective makes progress toward UN SDGs:

- Responsible Consumption and Production: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.
- Climate Action: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.

### **STRATEGIES**

1. Create and implement a climate action plan to reduce tourism industry carbon emissions.
2. Partner with and support public resource management agencies (local, state, federal) to mitigate visitor impacts on public lands and waterways.
3. Provide the tourism industry with opportunities to better understand how tourism impacts the climate crisis, livability and well-being, and how to apply the Destination Stewardship lens to their work.

## HOW WILL THE STRATEGY MOVE FORWARD?

The transformational strategy is designed with fluidity and flexibility in mind. While the day-to-day actions of Travel Oregon will evolve over the next decade, the commitment to our outcomes and vision, as well as our objectives and strategies, will not change.

To foster success on focused strategies in two-year periods, Travel Oregon will provide action plans and biennial budgets for OTC approval beginning in 2023\*. The action planning and strategy-based budgeting processes will be guided by the transformational strategy, the current state of Oregon tourism and global circumstances, stakeholder input, and will include the next set of priority actions for Travel Oregon staff to carry out.

*\*In response to this transformational strategy, it is anticipated that a budget modification for the remainder of the 2021-2023 biennium will be presented to the commission for consideration in June 2022.*

## CONCLUSION

This transformational strategy sets a compelling course for the decade ahead. It maps the path for Travel Oregon and the tourism industry to find greater success through the lenses of racial equity and destination stewardship. The positive potential for Oregon is significant. The greatest success is possible when we all move together. We invite you to join us on this journey of transformation.