

Questions for MLTN Land Trusts

to begin a process of incorporating diversity, equity, and inclusion into their work

Why incorporating diversity, equity and inclusion into land trust work is important:

Conservation work has the goal of being permanent. To build and maintain both an organization and a body of conservation work that are sustainable over time, it is important for land trust work to be truly relevant and more accountable to a broad set of communities. Here are some starter questions that may help your land trust become more relevant and more accountable to more communities in your region.

- 1. What does diversity mean to your land trust?**
- 2. With your concept or definition of diversity in mind, who are the groups of people or human communities within your land trust's geographic region of coverage?**
Consider ones that may not be visible, but have ties, such as Wabanaki.
- 3. Which of those communities get more of your land trust's attention, and which get less?**
For example - if you focus on fishing access, what are your connections to that community of fishermen to know you are doing it well? Do you have an awareness of the Wabanaki stories, ties to the land and people in your coverage area?
- 4. Which Communities do you need to learn more about or connect better with to implement your trust's mission?**
Could a community survey help learn more, or even a Board or staff survey?
- 5. What organizations or entities in your region are doing a good job of being relevant to a certain community with whom you do not yet work? How might you engage or partner with those organizations?**
For example - LGTBQ clubs or organizations or Facebook Groups, the Elderly, Employees of a nearby large entity such as hospital, store or mill, etc.
- 6. How can we actively diversify the partners with whom we work? Which communities are we missing among our partners, and to which should we do more outreach?**
- 7. Should we be conserving an entirely different type of land to make sure that we also serve, and serve well, some communities?**
For example - Should we create waterfront parks with picnic tables? What are those types of land, landscapes, or programs that you traditionally have not pursued, but may be how some in your region access the outdoors?

- 8. What changes should be made to our assessments (e.g., natural resource inventories (NRI)) to include resources important to other groups and cultures?**
For example – Adding cultural resources such as medicinal plants, basketmaking resources or middens into NRIs, or asking other communities how they might be interested in conducting their own natural resource inventories.
- 9. What changes should be made to our conservation land selection criteria and processes to be more inclusive of resources and communities?**
For example - Change project criteria to help us make better choices, ensure that we've considered atypical partners, or new ways of serving communities that are new to us, proximity to schools, etc.
- 10. What changes can we make to our preserve management plan process to consider more communities?**
For example - Building trails that are accessible for those with strollers or mobility aids or creating parking lots that are in the open and feel safe.
- 11. What changes could we make to our visitor experience to better serve more communities, and how do we find out what those improvements should be?**
How do we reach out to communities to get the input of those who will be using these preserves? Instead of the usual suspects deciding for these other communities, how do we get their opinions and buy-in? For example - asking educators about interpretive signs for school groups
- 12. What changes can we make in our communications (social media, publications website, etc) to be more inclusive and relevant to more communities? Who else's communications can we follow to learn more about the values and needs of other communities we may not be serving?**
Carefully consider the wording, but also the platforms and recipient lists. How do you reach beyond your typical networks?
- 13. Who are our donors and funders? Which communities of potential donors are we missing?**
Once our work has perhaps been made more directly relevant to communities, how can we then work to include them in our development efforts, to draw in their support but also to engage them and welcome them? What changes can we make to our fundraising work, to do a better job at being relevant to and inclusive of a broader set of donors? How do some of these communities do their fundraising, and how can we work with them so it works in a way that is effective amongst their peers? Critically, as we consider these changes in our funding, how do we ensure we are not competing with other groups for funding they are seeking? For example - 'Unlikely hikers', hikers of color groups, parents of kids we engage, etc

14. Once work has been done to help ensure that your work becomes more relevant to other communities or partners you had perhaps been missing, it is also time to think about your readiness to make changes in who works with the land trust.

- a. Are we ready to actively attempt to diversify our staff? If so, how? Consider where and how to advertise, creating positions thinking of opportunities to perhaps bring in more young people, criteria for the position, your process of reviewing applications, how you conduct interviews, etc.
- b. Are we ready to actively attempt to diversify our volunteer base? What opportunities can we create that would attract volunteers of different backgrounds and perspectives?
- c. What steps should and should not be taken to actively diversify our Board and Committees, yet keep the views in balance with our work and mission?