

Our Equity Commitment

“At Oregon Food Bank, we hold people experiencing hunger and food insecurity in Oregon and SW Washington at the center of our actions and decisions. We envision a community where each person can participate, prosper and have access to food that is both nourishing and in keeping with their culture. We recognize that systemic injustices exist – such as racism, classism, and sexism – and that these create and perpetuate conditions that sustain poverty and hunger.

Understanding this, we commit to serve marginalized communities, in both urban and rural environments, in ways that value who they are and their lived experiences. We resolve to listen to and include these communities in our work, and to respond where bias and inequities appear. We will confront oppression and poverty by developing solutions to hunger that are community-driven, honor a diversity of needs, and value everyone. Our food programs and public policy efforts aim to build a society where everyone can thrive – celebrating our differences and working together to overcome injustices that might divide us...because no one should be hungry.”

One of the things that I advocated for is the inclusion of rural in this statement. Rural communities are often forgotten because their populations are smaller and they seem invisible. They are often the victim of “expert syndrome”. Regional governments will hire consultants to write economic development or community beautification plans for communities without involving community members.

Through our grassroots community food assessments and rural grocery surveys we are documenting and building awareness of the challenges of providing food to rural communities. The inability to compete in the wholesale market is an equity issue for rural grocers.

The issue that is front and center for us right now is creating safe spaces for our Latino neighbors and the migrant farm workers that will harvest crops this summer. It is critical to our agricultural partners. We are working hard with all of our partner agencies to make sure that everyone feels welcome & valued.

For me, the bottom line about creating equity is listening, respecting diverse opinions and cultural norms other than your own, then finding common ground.