

## **Project: Everyone Belongs Outdoors Campaign: Relevant and Authentic Engagement for ODFW with Urban populations**

### **Scope**

Conduct individual and group interviews with ODFW employees and members of the public identified as part of urban populations representing significant gaps in the agency's service footprint within the broader Portland-Metro region.

### **Focus Groups Analysis**

#### **Latinx Community: Fostering Family and Cultural Connection**

For the Latinx community, outdoor activities are deeply intertwined with family life and shared experiences, often centered around spending time with children, communal meals, and visiting parks or fishing to provide food. However, participation in more structured recreation is limited by:

- **Information Access:** A lack of Spanish-language resources.
- **Navigational Challenges:** Uncertainty regarding rules, licensing, and processes.
- **Cultural Relevance:** A scarcity of culturally tailored education or mentorship.

To overcome these barriers, ODFW should prioritize:

- **Bilingual and Culturally Resonant Communication:** Distribute materials in Spanish about licenses, laws, and opportunities through trusted community channels like churches, mercados, and family networks. Social media platforms such as Facebook and TikTok are effective for visual, family-oriented messaging.
- **Family-Centered Programming:** Offer workshops in Spanish that combine recreation with education, such as community fishing days, nature hikes, or "learn-to-camp" sessions, and designed for multigenerational groups.
- **Mentorship and Equipment Access:** Establish lending libraries or guided introductory sessions to provide basic equipment and mentorship, thereby lowering participation barriers.

#### **Black and Afro-Latino Community: Building Trust and Ensuring Belonging**

The Black and Afro-Latino community faces primarily social and systemic barriers. Participants expressed significant concerns about safety and belonging outside urban areas, citing experiences of hostility or unwelcoming behavior in some recreational spaces. While aware of institutions like ODFW, they desire greater visibility of diversity within outdoor culture and leadership.

To foster inclusion, ODFW should emphasize

- **Representation and Trust-Building:** Develop campaigns and programs that visibly feature Black and Brown outdoor leaders ("people who look like me"). Collaborate with trusted Black-led and multicultural organizations to ensure community voices shape program design and build credibility.
- **Small-Group, Community-Based Experiences:** Offer workshops and trainings within neighborhoods to help participants develop outdoor skills and confidence in supportive, affirming settings before engaging in larger or more remote activities.
- **Increased Affordability:** Address universal financial barriers through initiatives like subsidized licenses, shared equipment, or group transportation.

### **Safety Concerns as a Common Barrier**

Both groups expressed several instances where they felt unsafe recreating outdoors, such as camping or hiking excursions. Individuals shared distressing accounts, including encounters with confederate flags in campgrounds and malicious interrogations experienced on hiking trails. These stories resonated deeply with the broader group, highlighting a shared concern for personal safety and a feeling of being unwelcome in certain natural spaces. The pervasive sense of insecurity and the feeling of "othering" exacerbated by the current sociopolitical climate, has enhanced their skepticism of trying new outdoor activities, which has led to fears regarding the use of public spaces and interactions with government or official representatives. This stress has paradoxically created a perceived sense of safety in staying indoors and sheltered, which directly contradicts the goals of the EBO campaign.

### **Overarching Recommendations: Outdoor Recreation as a Community and Cultural Experience**

Across both communities, the fundamental recommendation is to frame outdoor recreation not as an individual pursuit but as a **community and cultural experience**.

- For Latinx participants, this means emphasizing **connection, family, and shared learning**.
- For Black and Afro-Latino participants, it means centering **belonging, representation, and collective empowerment**.

Ultimately, inclusive engagement requires more than mere translation or outreach; it demands **intentional design that meets each community where they are**—linguistically, culturally, and emotionally. By investing in bilingual education, community partnerships, visible representation, and family-oriented programming, agencies like ODFW can re-define "the outdoors" into a space where every Oregonian feels welcome, capable, and at home.