



**Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Assessment and Plan**  
**October 2017**

**Sponsors.** Board of Directors & Dharma Council.

**Why.** Many Zen sanghas in the West, including Dharma Rain, have grappled with issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion for decades. All the while, our country, state, and city have been becoming increasingly diverse and multicultural. Taken together, these trends pose both opportunities and challenges in our effort to ensure that the dharma is available and accessible to all.

**What.** Through an interactive and iterative sangha-wide process, we seek to:

- 1) assess our current state of diversity, equity, and inclusion
- 2) identify organizational opportunities and barriers to enhanced diversity, equity, and inclusion
- 3) gather input regarding our experiences with and vision for diversity, equity, and inclusion
- 4) identify evidence-based or promising practices being used by other Western Zen sanghas
- 5) report our findings and recommend options for increasing our diversity, equity, and inclusion

**Timeline.** October 2017 - April 2018.

**Phase 1: Build Ownership, Understanding & Engagement.** We want all of the main bodies at Dharma Rain to understand what we are doing, why we are doing it, how we are doing it, and what our end product will be. We also want to secure the active engagement of these groups in our process.

- Co-Abbots
- Board of Directors
- Dharma Council
- Mandala Council
- Ethics Council
- Elders Council
- Dharma Garden Council

**Phase 2: Establish Baseline Metrics.** As best we can, we will assess the current demographic composition of our sangha, including participants in our two signature programs, dharma garden and prison outreach. Knowing who we are now will help inform our efforts going forward.

- Membership
- Councils
- Dharma Garden
- Prison Sangha

**Phase 3: Review & Assess Systems.** We will take a look at the ways we do what we do - administratively, dharmically, programmatically - and assess those systems through a diversity, equity, and inclusion lens. Where are our systems, policies, and procedures helping or hindering our efforts?

- By-Laws
- Policies
- Procedures
- Practices
- Program Materials
- Website
- Communications

**Phase 4: Gather Input via Surveys.** We want to ask our sangha and program participants for their experiences, concerns, hopes, and vision regarding diversity, equity, and inclusion at Dharma Rain. We will synthesize their feedback for recurring themes.

- Members
- Dharma Garden
- Prison Sangha

**Phase 5: Gather Input via Focus Groups.** In-person conversations will help us solicit a more nuanced type of feedback regarding diversity, equity, and inclusion. We will convene small groups representing our sangha at-large, and synthesize their feedback for recurring themes.

- Members
- Dharma Garden
- Prison Sangha

**Phase 6: Conduct Research.** We will ask other sanghas what they are doing to advance diversity, equity, and inclusion, with a focus on evidence-based or promising practices. Depending on what we do or do not find, we may expand our inquiry to other spiritual communities.

- Soto Zen Buddhist Association
- American Zen Teachers Association
- Lay Zen Teachers Association
- Other Western Zen Sanghas

**Phase 7: Report & Recommendations.** We will summarize the information we gather in Phases 1-6, and offer recommendations for enhancing diversity, equity, and inclusion for discussion by the sangha, and consideration by the Board and Dharma Council.

**Phases 1-7: Regularly Communicate.** Throughout our assessment and planning process, we will update people about what we are doing, why we are doing it, where we are in the process, and how they can engage. We will leverage all communication channels available.

- Sangha Forums
- Board & Council Meetings
- Website & Blog
- Yahoo Groups

- Email Contacts
- E-Bulletin
- Social Media
- Sangha Circle

**Who and How.** This assessment and planning process will be professionally facilitated, and donated, by Bruner Strategies ([brunerstrategies.com](http://brunerstrategies.com)), sangha member Thomas Bruner's consulting business.