

Implementing Diversity and Inclusion Strategies

Equity and Diversity/Leading by Example

**East Bay Community Foundation
Oakland, California**

**Wednesday, September 9, 2003
9:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.**

Presented By:

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The information in this presentation was adapted from A Guide to Enhancing Cultural Competence of Runaway and Homeless Youth Programs. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Youth and Families. Washington, DC. 1994.

Organizational Development Strategies

- Ensure that the foundation's leadership is committed to implementing diversity and inclusion strategies.

It is paramount that the leadership of the foundation, i.e., board members and executives, initiate and lead the diversity and inclusion program. It is much more difficult and highly unlikely that staff-driven programs will succeed. Usually, staff members do not have the authority to allocate the financial, human, and technical resources required to implement a successful diversity and inclusion program. Visible leadership involvement gives credibility to diversity programs and helps to win the commitment of employees and the community.

- Examine your organization's mission and culture, ensuring they support diversity and inclusion.

Begin by reviewing the bylaws, board minutes and newsletters, annual reports, newspaper articles, letters, evaluation reports, and marketing brochures; and conduct interviews with the founder, former staff, board members, participants, and community members.

- Re-examine your mission by listening to community leaders who do and *don't* know the organization.

Interview community leaders and representatives of other social service agencies about treatment issues, and learn what they know about the organization. Get their feedback on what you have been doing and ask for their input on what you should be doing.

- Document the organizational history, similar to the journey mapping process.

Write up the history of the organization, including why it was started, its original purpose, and how it has evolved. The resulting document can be a useful tool for educating new staff about the organization's mission. It also provides a reality check for long-time staff.

- Conduct an annual planning process.

Bring together staff, board members, volunteers, grantees, and community members to conduct an assessment or environmental scan of where the organization is today as compared to its stated purpose, goals, and mission. Look at what is happening in the community and at program outcomes from the last year. If necessary, explore and reaffirm or change the organization's guiding principles and values.

- Hold leadership retreats to build staff and board capacity.

Schedule retreats designed to help staff and board members play a direct role in focusing your foundation's attention and resources on developing culturally appropriate programs and services. Consider hosting retreats that enable staff and board members to spend time building relationships through informal and structured activities.

- Bring in an outside facilitator.

Use a facilitator to help staff and board members think about your foundation's mission and the cultural context in which it operates.

- Establish a management or staff team for diversity and inclusion.

Set up a committee with the responsibility for maintaining the organization's focus on cultural competence. Involve a representative from each program or department. Rotate participation every 12 - 24 months. This team should provide feedback for organizational, program, staffing, and policy decisions.

- Create an environment where the staff feels safe dealing with cultural issues.

Ask the staff what they need to feel comfortable exploring cultural diversity and inclusion in the workplace. Examine the organizational structure to ensure that both formal and informal procedures foster an environment where staff members are empowered through information sharing and involvement in decision-making. Provide training to supervisory and management staff on handling staff input, especially criticism, constructively.

- Encourage the staff to raise issues and create mechanisms for management to process staff input and provide feedback.

Hold interactive staff meetings or host open office hours on a weekly or biweekly basis where staff can drop in and informally discuss new ideas. Review staff ideas and use staff meetings or other forums for providing feedback to the staff as to how their input was included in management's decision-making process. Empower the staff by letting them know where, how, and when decision-making takes place and how they can influence that process.

- Implement a system to track staff career goals within the organization.

Develop learning and planning agreements with the staff to ensure that promotional opportunities are available to all staff members.

- Be flexible.

Look at the job functions and the requisite skills for those functions, and determine which skills you need immediately and which can be enhanced through in-service training. Consider teaming people on jobs to draw on the strengths of more than one person and to provide cross training.

- Establish a minority vendor program.

Research, implement, and train management staff to utilize minority vendors to provide the organization with supplies, consulting, financial, and other services.

- Implement personnel policies that respect cultural differences.

Policies such as flexible leave time to accommodate differences in holidays or important community or family events. Establish flexible work hours that accommodate employees with responsibility for children or elderly parents. Offer benefits that meet the needs of all employees, such as same sex benefits.

- Conduct an organizational culture and climate audit.

Develop a process, written survey, or focus groups, to assess the culture and climate of the organization and the impact they have on employees from diverse backgrounds.

Staff and Board Cultural Exploration Strategies

- Invite community leaders and residents from different neighborhoods and cultural groups to participate in the organization's efforts to build cultural competence.

Host monthly brown bag lunches with program management staff and community leaders, etc. Use the time to learn about what is happening in the community and to solicit feedback on the organization's programs and services.

- Involve representatives of community organizations in your cultural diversity process.

Ask other community service providers and advocates to train staff on specific diversity issues, participate in informal staff dialogues, or to review organizational policies or services in areas where they have specific expertise. For example, you can invite staff from the local affiliate of Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays to talk to the staff about the special family issues facing gay and lesbian community members.

- Share information about other cultures by incorporating their traditions into program activities and services.

Involve the staff in identifying positive customs of other cultures that can be included into agency services. Start small by serving different types of meals at functions or by naming rooms in different languages, and move toward incorporating healing processes adopted from different cultures into program services.

- Conduct an "environmental scan" to determine if your physical surroundings are comfortable for all types of people.

Look at accessibility, pictures and artwork, and messages on bulletin boards in your program facilities. Make immediate alterations that are simple and inexpensive such as replacing old artwork with posters reflecting differing cultures, people, and themes.

- Increase opportunities for staff dialogue on diversity and inclusion issues.

One local program conducts "difficult dialogues" on a monthly basis. Any staff member can raise an issue for discussion by the entire staff. Other options include hosting brown bag lunches where the staff discusses a book or article on a specific diversity topic. Ask a staff member to volunteer to take the lead on a particular discussion. Present an overview of the document and critical issues for those who may not have had time to read the document. Focus on the value of discussing rather than on debating different points of view.

- Arrange interagency staff transfers between organizations serving special populations or ethnic groups.

Work with other local organizations to arrange staff sharing opportunities. Staff transfers build individual capacity and bring new ideas into the organization.

- Build the organization's library of resource materials or provide reading lists of materials on cultural diversity topics.

Request free copies of literature on cultural diversity from national and local organizations or borrow materials on a regular basis from university or local libraries. Collect materials in a variety of formats, including video and audiotapes, magazines, comic books, and printed matter.

- Provide training on cultural diversity and inclusion.

Conduct in-service training for all staff around diversity and then involve the staff in subcommittees to design further training on issues such as gender, race, physical capacity, etc. Show training films on cultural competence, rotating times so that the staff on all shifts can participate.

- Create space where the staff, board, or grantees can share something about their culture.

Invite the staff, grantees, and board members to paint a mural, bring in pictures from their culture, or hang a bulletin board where people can share information about different cultural events.

- Provide different vehicles for the staff to learn about cultural diversity.

Recognize that everyone learns differently. Encourage those staff members who learn by reading to review materials on organizational growth, different populations, change, and personal development. Offer other types of educational opportunities (e.g., group discussions or exercises) for those staff members who prefer different methods of learning.

- Use experiential exercises to help the staff begin to understand how it feels to be different.

One agency conducted a daylong workshop where they "impaired" half of the staff. Those staff members spent the morning in differing conditions, some with Vaseline on their glasses so they couldn't see, some with headphones playing static in their ears so they couldn't hear, and others were in wheelchairs or leg braces so they couldn't move around easily. In the afternoon, the management staff conducted a workshop on the Americans with Disabilities Act and talked with staff about their reflections on the morning exercise.

- Use group exercises to help the staff explore the effects of discrimination.

One agency had the staff create a society designed to discriminate against a specific population (e.g., racist, sexist, homophobic, or ageism). The exercise can be powerful in helping staff see the effects of discrimination. This type of exercise needs an expert diversity facilitator to ensure that it is processed completely and properly.

- Invite someone who has a physical disability to check out the accessibility of your facility.

One agency invited a person who was a paraplegic to look at the facility and talk with staff about accessibility, including how to set up the space so that people in wheelchairs would have ease of movement and feel comfortable.

Building a Diverse Board

- Develop a profile of the types of candidates the organization must recruit to increase the diversity of board members.
- Examine the organizational procedures for replacing board members to ensure that people are not placed in the position of being the "only" gay, African American, Asian American, female, person with a disability, etc. on the board.
- Explore what might be difficult for new board members to understand about board meetings such as financial spreadsheets. Offer training to everyone or present the information so that it is easily understood by people without a financial background.
- Tap into local professional or leadership organizations to find people of different cultures who will bring strong skills to the organization's board.
- Organize a committee of staff and board members with the responsibility for networking and presenting diverse candidates for board membership.
- Examine the requirements of board membership to see if they prevent certain cultural groups from participating.

Building a Diverse Staff

- Develop a profile of the types of candidates the organization must recruit to increase the diversity of job applicants.
- Develop systems for balancing the demand to fill new positions with the need to conduct outreach to meet the goal of hiring diverse staff.
- Recruit through a range of channels, including local newspapers and radio stations.
- Work with minority fraternities, sororities, and service organizations to identify job candidates.
- Establish internships or cooperative work programs with universities that have high numbers of persons from different cultural groups.
- Establish a board committee to assist in recruiting for staff positions.
- Sponsor interagency social or educational events with staff from culturally diverse service agencies.
- Encourage local foundations to establish a fund for your organization to assist in the payment of the college loans of staff of different cultural backgrounds.