

ACHIEVING DIVERSITY  
A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE  
PHASE 1 ~ Start-Up.

Before introducing organization-wide diversity efforts, senior-level staff and the board of directors should learn as much as possible about managing a diversity process and should identify internal and external resources that they can rely on for support and assistance. Familiarity with how other organizations have managed an organizational change process can build commitment and enthusiasm and create a sense of empowerment which may diminish the anxiety of venturing into uncharted waters.

While it only makes sense to be well-prepared before undertaking a diversity initiative, this preparation will almost certainly fortify the initiative during lag times and when these efforts are met with resistance.

### KEY PARTICIPANTS

An organization's director/CEO should be the visible leader and spokesperson for achieving diversity and the board of directors should be involved from the outset. With leadership in place, a diversity coordinator should be selected and given direct access to top management. A diversity committee should be established with representation that reflects the diversity of the organization and as many levels of the organizational structure as possible. (If it is feasible to invite representatives of the groups served by the organization to join the diversity committee, they will add other vital perspectives.) The organization may also consider hiring a consultant to assist with further planning and implementation.

### ACTION STEPS

- To help build an effective working team, engage planners and leaders in team-building experiences and provide educational materials about diversity and organizational change.
- Determine a budget for the diversity initiative.
- Identify other individuals who can be called upon to assist the effort.
- Clarify time commitments and expectations for all participants.
- Establish a calendar of regularly scheduled meetings for diversity planners.
- Establish a short term plan for the next stage of the initiative.
- Consider hiring a consultant to assist with planning and implementation.

### TIMING

The director and board must determine when the diversity initiative should begin and whether or not there is a projected timeline for its implementation. Once these decisions have been made, it is time to schedule an event to kick off the initiative and give it recognition throughout the organization.

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## PHASE 2 ~ Establishing A Framework.

### ESTABLISH A FRAMEWORK

A substantive framework will help the organization to build and to reinforce commitment to the diversity initiative and to respond to pressure from internal and external sources of resistance. Several components are key to the success of any initiative: a clearly articulated philosophy and vision about diversity and its connection to the mission of the organization; a "business" case for diversity which outlines the ways in which diversity can improve operations and enable staff and volunteers to more effectively meet the needs of those being served; and expected outcomes.

A crucial component of the framework is the concept of safety. Organizational leaders must create an environment in which all members of the organization feel they can participate and share their perspectives honestly without fear of reprisal. Candor is essential in the assessment process if the resulting plan for diversity is to be accurate.

### KEY PARTICIPANTS

Organizational leaders must continue active involvement and should issue an open invitation for staff members to join the diversity committee as a way of creating "ownership" in the initiative. Participants should reflect the demographics and operational levels of the organization. However, individuals who are members of a minority group should not be expected to speak for that group as a whole. As participation in the initiative broadens, organizations should be sensitive to power dynamics.

### ACTION STEPS

- Define organizational culture by considering such factors as philosophy, policies and practices, interpersonal dynamics, and work environment.
- Articulate the benefits and motivations for becoming a more diverse organization.
- Develop a definition of diversity that is linked to organizational mission.
- Identify other organizations, both locally and nationally, that might serve as models for diversity efforts.
- Develop a realistic action plan for diversity efforts that takes into account ongoing operations and competing priorities.
- Develop criteria to measure success. In other words, begin to build an evaluation plan.
- Create a safe environment for candid and honest participation.

### TIMING

Set fixed times for diversity committee meetings. Begin to schedule meetings and events to build momentum for the initiative, being certain that meetings and activities are accessible to those they are intended to include. Staff time for

the diversity initiative should be incorporated into staff work plans so that the effort is not viewed as ancillary to their other responsibilities.

## ACHIEVING DIVERSITY A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE PHASE 3 ~ Early Implementation

While the first two phases set the stage for the diversity initiative, at this point implementation begins in earnest and activities become more visible as organizational interventions. During this phase, the organization continues to build knowledge through needs assessments and is able to identify issues and themes that relate to diversity and to sort out other issues that represent general organizational and management problems. The assessment can also help identify existing resources and other strengths which can be very encouraging.

A comprehensive needs assessment will gather data about interpersonal behavior, organizational culture and systems that impact people. The findings of various audits and assessments can be used to develop a strategic plan to address diversity-related concerns.

Lending objectivity to the information gathering process is critical. If a consultant has not been engaged up to this point, now would be the time to work with someone who has knowledge of organizational development issues and experience with diversity initiatives.

As different members of the organization become involved through various activities, expectations and reactions begin to emerge. If not already evident, resistance is likely to occur as increasing time and attention are given to the diversity initiative. It is essential to have a communication plan in place to support the process that is underway.

### KEY PARTICIPANTS

The diversity committee and other key leaders will plan and oversee the needs assessments and/or audit and take responsibility for developing a strategic plan based on the findings. Managers should be prepared to communicate plans to their respective departments and to help build commitment.

### ACTION STEPS

- Engage the services of an experienced consultant.
- Conduct a needs assessment among staff and board members of the organization, or at least among a representative sample, and communicate findings throughout the organization. Audit organizational demographics, systems, policies and procedures.
- Set relevant, pragmatic and achievable goals for bringing about organizational diversity. Articulate expected outcomes and measures of change.
- Determine priorities and develop a strategic plan and a realistic timeline.

- Utilize meeting agendas, newsletters, memos and other forms of communication to publicize the diversity process and accomplishments of the initiative to date and to outline the next steps.

## TIMING

Allow sufficient time to ensure that the needs assessment or audit and strategic planning process are not rushed or forced.

## ACHIEVING DIVERSITY A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE PHASE 4 ~ Integration

In many ways, this stage is the linchpin of a diversity initiative. Individuals at all levels of the organization become involved through education and training programs, while diversity committee members continue to review existing policies and procedures as they relate to diversity. As more individuals are involved, communication efforts should be enhanced.

All activities should be monitored to determine their effectiveness in supporting diversity goals; adjustments should be made as necessary. Data gathered at the conclusion of specific activities will also contribute to the overall evaluation process.

## KEY PARTICIPANTS

Senior management and other key staff throughout the organization should remain actively involved and should seek feedback and accountability from managers and others instrumental in moving the various action steps forward.

## ACTION STEPS

- Employ training, consultation and technical assistance to promote diversity goals. All efforts should be pragmatic in their approach and presented in a positive way.
- Call upon skillful trainers/consultants to implement activities and place diversity efforts within the context of the total organization.
- Seek ongoing feedback from participants as a way to refine training activities and monitor overall progress.
- Anticipate reactions and issues that will surface and have guidelines in place to address them.
- Use a variety of strategies to communicate about the diversity process, while reinforcing the connection of diversity activities to the larger goals and mission of the organization.
- Establish committees with representatives from different areas of the organization to review policies and practices that relate to diversity concerns.

## TIMING

Schedule and announce upcoming events with adequate lead times. Be certain that major diversity-based activities are scheduled at optimal times and that individuals are acknowledged for their role and participation.

#### ACHIEVING DIVERSITY A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE PHASE 5 ~ Evaluation

Informal evaluation should take place throughout a diversity initiative to revise and refine specific activities. But it is also essential to engage in a formal evaluation with a design and methodology that will assess overall organizational change and measure the impact of diversity efforts. In undertaking an evaluation, organizations should anticipate three types of outcomes--progress, no progress, and unexpected change--and be prepared to address each as needed.

#### KEY PARTICIPANTS

A consultant can bring a broad and objective perspective to the task of evaluation. In many cases, one consultant may be able to provide an important thread of continuity by fulfilling a number of responsibilities from assessment to planning to evaluation. At each stage of the diversity initiative, however, the organization should ascertain that the consultant has the appropriate skills. A consultant's familiarity and experience with your type of organization can yield results more effectively.

While the consultant may take the lead, in evaluation, the diversity committee should give direction to the consultant and remain actively involved throughout the process.

#### ACTION STEPS

- Focus the evaluation on the goals and objectives of the diversity initiative.
- Use a comprehensive approach to evaluate individual change as well as changes in organizational systems. Gather data through multiple methods and from multiple sources.
- Identify barriers and enablers to achieving diversity to help guide subsequent efforts.
- Communicate findings throughout the organization to build knowledge and understanding.
- Acknowledge and celebrate even the slightest increment of progress.

#### TIMING

In practice, evaluation begins at the earliest stages of the initiative and continues throughout. Including evaluation as an ongoing component of a diversity initiative design allows for the flexibility and refocus necessary to stem resistance and keep the process moving forward.

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## PHASE 6 ~ Redefinition

An organization should use the results of the evaluation to reexamine and redefine its direction, clarify and focus goals and objectives, develop new strategies, and plan for the future.

### KEY PARTICIPANTS

The diversity committee should review the findings from evaluations and other sources and make recommendations about future directions for consideration by the executive director and board.

### ACTION STEPS

- Modify goals and objectives, establish new goals and strategies, and conduct future planning.
- Seek to determine the context in which change is or is not occurring.
- Seek recommitment from key participants.
- Communicate new goals and strategies throughout all levels of the organization.

### TIMING

Acknowledge "burn out" and any changes that lead to a reconstitution of the diversity committee in a timely way. Create opportunities for other people in the organization to join the committee.

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## PHASE 7 ~ Consolidation

The most successful aspects of the diversity initiative should be incorporated into the general activities and policies of the organization. This will help to ensure the ongoing presence and vitality of diversity efforts even as an organization takes steps to address other unmet diversity needs.

### KEY PARTICIPANTS

Senior management and the board of directors should take the lead in recommitting to diversity efforts and in articulating the benefits for the entire organization.

### ACTION STEPS

- Reexamine working strategies and solutions to determine if they should become part of the organization's structure, processes or strategic planning.
- Develop or utilize new methods to assess and promote progress on an individual and organizational level.
- Continue to introduce new practices and events that support a multicultural organization.
- Integrate elements of the initiative that speak to a "business" case for diversity.

## TIMING

It cannot be emphasized strongly enough that there is no "end" to a process which helps create diversity. Nonetheless, when an organization arrives at this stage, it is important to publicly acknowledge that a milestone has been reached. It is vital to take stock of accomplishments to date and use them to envision the next stages of the organization's development.