

Recommended Initiatives & 3 Year Strategic DIB Plan

1. Diversity & Inclusion Champion

We recommend an Inclusion & Belonging Champion and Diversity Committee be established in partnership to spearhead these efforts. Who is responsible for diversity and inclusivity efforts within the organization? While it is often thought to be everyone's responsibility, minimal knowledge about diversity and inclusion, organizational bias, as well as the lack of a structure to support it, that model will likely not serve Town of Apex very well. It is strongly recommended that a DIB Champion report to the Town Manager. Regardless of who owns the execution and tactics, visible and deliberate engagement is necessary. Without senior-most-level engagement, diversity is often considered a secondary "nice to have" rather than a priority for an organization.

Status as of 2/23/2021

A full-time Diversity Officer position has been created to assist us with these efforts and establishing a committee will be one of their first initiatives.

2. Increase diversity among the leadership

Increasing diversity among the leadership of the organization is a substantial task to take on, but it can and should identify ways to support building a more diverse, inclusive, and equitable community. Options would include to support the existing programs, identifying resources and tools to promote continued awareness and education for those in leadership & annual inclusion assessments. New styles of thinking, asking better questions and getting better answers will take the organization where it decides to go.

Status as of 2/23/2021

Recruitment initiatives are being implemented, included, but not limited to:

- reviewing job ads to speak to a broader range of candidates
- targeting sources where diverse candidates can be found
- encouraging employee referrals
- developing internship programs to bring under-represented populations into local government careers
- developing a mentorship program to prepare employees for higher level roles

3. Integrate D&I Across Organization.

We recommend all committees and leaders consider how their work promotes, supports, and/or unintentionally hinders the shared goal of working within a diverse and inclusive organization. The Diversity and Inclusion Champion and Committee can assist all leaders not only those targeted in this report, with reviewing their mission and suggesting potential assessment methods to evaluate work in this area. A diverse workforce has been positively associated with greater talent utilization, better employee retention, increased innovation and higher performance. To achieve this, leaders must emphasize the importance of inclusive diversity by integrating the value of inclusive diversity within all forms of agency communications to include social media channels, agency websites, and inter office correspondence. Possible effective communications should be cascaded from senior leadership through to first line supervision.

Status as of 2/23/2021

- Individual departments are working through various initiatives to impact positive change within their departments and help bring diversity into the local government career field

- Individual bathrooms have been identified across all Town facilities, to convert to unisex bathrooms
- Juneteenth was adopted as Town Holiday
- Implemented a \$15 Living Wage
- As employee policies are created/updated, employee events are planned, impacts to under-represented groups are being considered

4. Employee Resource Groups

These groups offer many benefits to team members and the enterprise:

- Employees have the opportunity to be heard, valued, and engaged at all levels.
- They can build connections within and across teams, fostering cooperation.
- They can contribute perspectives that help executives identify business gaps.
- They are able to understand both their customers and business drivers better.
- They help to facilitate key areas of the employee life-cycle, like onboarding.
- Remember that safe spaces are crucial components of inclusivity.
- ERGs provide underrepresented employees with a safe space to make their voices heard. By coming together in more intimate settings, employees along with sponsors, advocates, and allies are often more comfortable speaking openly about their concerns and can then discuss how to create short-and long-term solutions.

Status as of 2/23/2021

The Town's Employee Relations Council is already established, other ERC resources groups are being explored.

5. Listening Sessions

Hold executive listening sessions where senior leaders listen to employees from underrepresented groups talk about their experiences at work. These sessions will provide key insight to assess, redesign, and reengineer organizational structures and processes to promote teamwork, collaboration, cross-functional operations, and transparency; and to deconstruct organizational siloes that lead to exclusive cultures and to flawed decision-making.

Status as of 2/23/2021

- Quarterly Town Manager Roundtable sessions are already established (randomly selected employees meet with the Town Manager to discuss whatever topics they'd like).
- Facilitated monthly Town Hall "Rap Sessions" have been implemented for employees at all levels (including Senior Leadership) to share thoughts and perspectives on various DEI topics.
- Other sessions are being considered to provide additional opportunities for employees in under-represented groups to talk with senior leaders about their experiences at work.

6. Hiring/Promotion Practices

Leaders shall develop and implement broad outreach strategies to attract candidates from diverse sources, to the organization, consistent with merit system principles, through strategic partnerships with affinity organizations, diverse postsecondary educational institutions, professional associations, and public, private, and non-profit sectors. Develop metrics to foster the diversity of the potential applicant pool throughout all stages of the employee life-cycle. This can be accomplished through targeted and

strategic outreach and recruitment efforts that include the use of social media, as part of an overall and comprehensive recruitment plan. Further, we look to focus upon and raise awareness about the potential impact cognitive biases can have on all stages of the employee lifecycle process. These “decision or selection” stages can have a significant impact on the upward mobility and level of engagement employees experience within the workplace, and it is important to support a system where the impact of any such biases is minimized.

Status as of 2/23/2021

The HR Department has conducted a review of hiring practices and implemented strategies for increasing diversity and removing bias. A similar review of promotional practices will also be completed, and hiring managers will be trained in strategies for removing unconscious bias in hiring/promotional decisions. In addition to the strategies listed for the “Increasing Diversity Among Leadership” recommendation, we have also “banned the box” (removed the criminal history question on applications) and have configured our recruitment system to allow for “blind” application review.

7. Training

Provide training and education on cultural competency, implicit bias awareness, and inclusion learning for all employees. We recommend the Understanding Unconscious Bias & Leveraging Diversity and Empowering Belonging class for all employees, a 4 hour workshop. Include and engage everyone in the workplace to foster a culture that encourages employees to feel uniquely valued and experience a sense of belonging.

Status as of 2/23/2021

- Required training for all full and part-time employees on Diversity, Inclusion, Equity, & Belonging during the months of September-December 2020. The course will continue to be offered quarterly for new hires.

8. Diversify the Workforce Through Active Engagement of Leadership.

It is further recommended that the full Leadership team participate in the 2 Day Strategies to Building and Leading a Diverse Work Force. This customizable, interactive learning experience will provide personalized coaching to organizational leaders. It will also offer the latest research, thought leadership, real solutions and strategies for real organizational challenges. Leaders will leave with a roadmap for how to effectively influence a culture transformation. They will also leave with practical tools, templates, and sample documents for immediate use in their roles. Leaders can promote progress by communicating the importance of inclusive diversity by speaking, modeling, and accounting for it.

Status as of 2/23/2021

- Required training for the Town’s leadership team (Town Manager, Assistant Town Managers, Directors) titled “Strategies for Building and Leading Diverse Organizations.” This program helped us discover how diverse organizations realize performance advantages by attracting the best and brightest, while gaining a deeper understanding and appreciation of the differences in our workforce and in our community.