

RISING TO THE CHALLENGE

Strategies for Enhancing Diversity Within Environmental Organizations

June 2004

The Environmental Diversity Working Group

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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First on our list is The National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA). NPCA took the lead in 1995 to develop one of the first major diversity initiatives in the environmental community. Through this program NPCA developed a relationship with the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation; the major funder for this effort. The foresight of NPCA and the Hewlett Foundation has made this guide as well as the work of the Environmental Diversity Working Group possible.

Second, we need to thank the members and participants of the Environmental Diversity Working Group. For the past three years these people have continued to show up even when times seemed challenging. Their commitment and passion for making this work happen is why we are able to present this guide.

Third, warm thanks go out to the leadership of The Wilderness Society and many members of the Green Group who have taken the lead in supporting the work of the EDWG. Without their financial and moral support, it would be a much tougher road to hoe. Many of these organizations also contributed to this guide.

Finally, a very special thanks to all of our diverse partners from around the country who helped by providing insightful thoughts and comments that make this guide a true reflection of a variety of diverse voices.

A core part of TPL's work is in diverse communities across America, improving their quality of life and protecting their heritage. Internal diversity and an attention to improving both our workforce diversity and our staff's consciousness of it are essential for us to do our job well and with appropriate deference to the communities we serve."

Will Rogers, President, The Trust for Public Land

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FOREWORD

America's mainstream green environmental community is a model for the world, evidenced in legislation such as The Wilderness Act, The Clean Air Act, the Clean Water Act, the Endangered Species Act; the protection of large-acreage natural areas, cultural and historic sites, and broad public involvement that makes these successes possible. The movement can also take a lot of the credit for infusing ecological values into American life, making environmental protection relevant from elementary school programs to our presidential elections.

Many of today's green leaders have been in the movement since its inception around the early 1960s, when the nation's conscience was awakened by Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*. At the time, African Americans' priority in the country was to secure voting rights, and the struggle to attain equal rights was the focus of most non-white Americans. Environmental activism in the country appeared exclusively white, and focused on "the great out there," until the emergence of the Environmental Justice Movement in the mid-1980s, responding to the toxic burdens faced by black, urban and poor communities.

The increased challenges confronting our environment today

and the demographic changes that show the new majority in the 21st Century being a plurality of Asians, Latinos and African Americans illustrate how urgently this gap needs to be bridged. Pro-active leaders in the green community are taking steps to reach out and be more relevant and inclusive of people of color. Environmental Justice groups and



ShaKing Alston of NPCA addresses a EDWG meeting in July 2001.

other grassroots environmental organizations from diverse communities are eager to develop partnerships that protect the whole environment.

The current situation provides great opportunity. In recent years, several studies have concluded that people of color are as supportive as white Americans of the long-term preservation of our environment. Prof. Paul Mohai at the University of Michigan's School of Natural Resources and Environment recently published the results of his study which shows that, whether it is the built

or natural environment, there is great support in ethnically diverse communities for protecting the air, water, ozone, open space and wilderness.

The Environmental Diversity Working Group (EDWG) has existed for three years. In that time, we have tackled some of the most difficult issues regarding

inclusion and diversity in the "green" or environmental movement. We've grown to trust one another and address issues of race, class, gender, religion, sexual orientation, and physical ability with a respectful candor. Sometimes our discussions have been hard, even strident. But overcoming the pervasive fear of saying the wrong thing, of offending someone, of speaking plainly and from the heart, may be *the* most important "best practice" of all.

This guide is written in the spirit of the EDWG. It is meant to serve as a candid exploration of why and how environmental organizations can and should approach enhancing diversity and inclusiveness. It is formed from the uncompleted sum of our collective knowledge. It is meant to challenge and support those who would take the opportunity to learn from both our wisdom and our foolishness. It is meant to help.

INTRODUCTION

Under the umbrella of the National Parks Conservation Association, supported by the Wilderness Society, and funded by the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, the Environmental Diversity Working Group (EDWG) was formed in July 2001. The purpose was to bring together representatives of mainstream environmental organizations in an initiative that would enable them to gain the skills, time, and competence to develop relationships with people from diverse racial and cultural backgrounds. Over time, the goal of the EDWG expanded to include providing ongoing dialogue and actions that create a broad, diverse and engaged constituency for environmental conservation and protection.

Since its inception, the EDWG has come to include representatives from environmental justice organizations, youth serving groups, congressional offices, federal government agencies, diverse

community based organizations, and preservation organizations.

When asked, “What stands in the way of your ability to develop effective diversity initiatives and programs?” the most consistent response from members of the EDWG has been, “We don’t know where to start.”

This “best practices guide” is therefore a logical response to the needs of members of the EDWG as well as fulfillment of a commit-

ment made to our funder. It incorporates the experiences, ideas and suggestions of our EDWG members as well as many of our diverse community partners and associates across the country.

We begin with one of the most important tasks before anyone in the environmental community who is motivated to get a diversity initiative up and running: getting a firm commitment from your board and leadership. We share strategies on how our member groups achieved that much-needed support, as well as how to effectively use your internal and external allies to make this happen.

Next, we address what you will need to do once you have an understanding of where you are. We discuss how to pull together a strong team of people who will guide your organization



Left: Eva Young facilitates an EDWG meeting in winter 2002.



Above: Frank Peterman addresses EDWG members at a meeting in Washington, D.C.



Tom St. Hilaire, Michelle Alvarez, Vivian Fong, and Tom Kiernan listen at a 2001 meeting of the newly founded EDWG.

through the development of a diversity initiative. Most organizations call this a diversity council or task force. We share some insights on these entities and how they work.

Third, we address the importance of defining what diversity means for your organization. Many organizations are still working through this question. Is it all about race, or do we look beyond race to other issues such as gender, differently-abled individuals and sexual orientation? To find out what the answer is for your organization, you will need to ask the question of your employees. In short, you will need to assess where you are now. This guide

will help you through this process.

Other important topics that you will find in this guide are how to make diversity an intrinsic part of your organization's long-term strategic plans by including it in strategies for outreach, program development, recruitment and fundraising. We also provide you with strategies for training your staff and leadership, engaging external partners, and building in periodic assessments to monitor and correct your course.

It is vitally important to understand that achieving diversity is not a short-term project but a

long-term process. It is not something that you will wake up and see full-fledged tomorrow in your organization. Achieving a diverse organization requires that we create a climate in which all people are given equal respect and access to opportunities. Although this is a responsibility of the organization, it is also crucial that each individual is committed to this way of being inclusive. We hope that it will be helpful to all organizations that are working to achieve and manage a racial, ethnic and culturally diverse workforce, membership and support base.

DEVELOPING A DIVERSITY STRATEGIC PLAN

Environmental organizations that intend to thrive in 21st Century America and beyond must be able to recruit and retain loyal employees from a wide cross section of the workforce, as well as work with diverse colleagues and partners from many different backgrounds. As the pool of workers,

tal organizations need to reflect this diversity in our own operations if we are to be sustainable. In order to achieve this level of diversity we must include this important work in our overall organizational strategy.

According to a recent study conducted by former National Park Service Director Robert Stanton for the Natural Resources Council of America, more than 90 percent of the workforce in environmental organizations is white. For the organizations to become more reflective of today's America will require sustainable change that can only come through the process of building this work into the very foundation of what we do. Although this should be self-evident, it bears emphasizing.

The varying cultural backgrounds and insights which diverse individuals bring with them add value to the organization, and at the same time they change the organization. A diversity initiative can only be successful when the organization is prepared to change, and to manage change in a productive and positive way.

As well, everyone needs to understand that this is a long-term process. Thinking that this work will yield a change overnight can make the process seem interminable. However, when we understand that there is a learning curve and appreciate the challenges and advantages that come

with this work, the organizational environment becomes more conducive to change. Ultimately, developing an organizational culture in which all individuals feel respected and valued will be a magnet to attract and retain diverse staff and partners.

Getting your leadership on board

Successfully diversifying your organization requires the explicit and active endorsement and support of your top management. Think about how all of the environmental/conservation efforts of your organization are developed, including efforts to reach your core constituents. It is through the vision of your leaders. While the philosophical and altruistic case for diversity may be enough to persuade some of the need to become more diverse, others may need to realize the bottom-line business benefits. If you are faced with the challenge of educating and engaging your leadership, including your board, start by developing a "business case" for diversity.

"Define what you are looking for, develop a strategy to achieve that and stick with it. I don't think that anything should happen before the person who's in charge has given what he has in his mind regarding his definition and expectations. You can't just have a couple of staff members going off somewhere for a couple of days to come up with a diversity plan. The organization's leader has got to be the one to make the decision."

Ira Hutchison, Founder,
Executive Director,
The Roundtable Associates,
Washington, D.C.

potential supporters, and partners becomes increasingly diverse by race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and abilities, it's in the best interest of organizations to appeal to, and include, this diversity. Clients and customers are also more diverse. Like the public and private sectors, environmen-

"The Chief Operating Officer was actively involved in the month-to-month operations of the diversity task force and led the way in developing the diversity plan."

Terry New, TWS

Building a Business Case for Diversity and the Environment

Why is diversity important to the organization's bottom line? What benefits will diverse employees, partners and supporters bring? Just as you would develop a case for any effort within your organization, and particularly those that seek to broaden the support base for your particular issue, you must create a case for diversity.

Strategies:

- ❖ Gather demographic information relevant to your organization's environmental or conservation mission.
- ❖ Gather recent research on perspectives of significant demographic groups (above) on the environment.
- ❖ Assess your current workforce and decide if what you have in place reflects the growing demographic groups you need to support your campaigns and programs.
- ❖ Combine your internal and external research and develop your arguments for the need for diversity in your organization.

Present your findings to your Executive Director or COO with your supporting arguments for why the issue must be presented to the board.

"In the middle 1990s, NPCA began to align forces to prevent an effort by certain members of Congress to deauthorize a number of national parks. The units on the chopping block were largely urban park sites connected to or frequented by communities of color. When NPCA turned to these communities for assistance the organization found that there was little support immediately forthcoming. That experience, combined with an emerging knowledge of the changing demographics of the nation, convinced some staff of

the need to diversify NPCA's outreach and constituency as a means of becoming more effective champions for national parks."

Alan Spears, Associate Director,
Diversity, National Parks
Conservation Association

"By 2000, TWS had become acutely aware of the changing demographics of the country and of the need to better communicate and win over non-traditional groups in support of wilderness conservation."

Terry New, (Title)
The Wilderness Society

"Understand the changing demographics of the donor marketplace, and what it means for your organization. A lot of green organizations think, 'We can do what we've always done and get different results,' but status quo won't cut the mustard anymore. You've got to look objectively at the community in which you're operating and make plans to engage all segments of that community."

Mauricio Velasquez, President and CEO,
The Diversity Training Group, Herndon, Va.

DEVELOP A DIVERSITY COUNCIL OR TASK FORCE

Diversity Councils, committees, or task forces have become popular and effective tools for sustaining diversity initiatives. This dedicated nucleus of people should represent a cross section of your organization, from all staff levels, races, genders, and other diverse categories. These many voices will provide varied perspectives that will help

to guide your process. Your board should also be instrumental in helping develop the council.

When you have your leadership on board, even if you have not completed your assessment it is vital that you start a council for your organization. The Diversity Council be very helpful in making the assessment happen.

“NPCA’s president and senior vice president were instrumental in forming the Diversity Council and helping to craft its vision and advance its work.”

Alan Spears, NPCA

“The Chief Operating Officer was actively involved in the month to month operations of the diversity task force and led the way in developing the diversity plan.”

Terry New, TWS

How to get your diversity council up and running

The compelling “business case” for diversity which you presented to your leadership should have persuaded them of the need to make diversity a strategic priority of the organization. This being the case, impress upon the Executive Director or COO the importance of establishing a task force that will be the driving force for this issue. Ideally, it should include a member of the executive leadership and the Director of Human Resources. Your team should include department managers, and members of your staff who can contribute first-hand experience as a member of a diverse group you are trying to reach and it should be structured to fit the decision making culture of your organization.

Many people want to know how large a council should be. There is really no perfect number but your council should reflect the size of your organization. In most cases the number is some-

“Initially, the Human Resources department took the lead in approaching employees to ask if they would serve on the diversity council. NWF has altered that process to more directly involve the supervising managers in the selection and recruitment of employees for the council. When managers and supervisors play a role in bringing their direct reports onto the diversity council, the reality that responsibility for diversity rests throughout the organization is sustained, and the managers and supervisors are more likely to be understanding of the importance of this role and its impact on employees.”

Kay LyBrand, (Title),
National Wildlife Federation

where between 10 and 20 people. The most important thing to remember about your council is that there needs to be many opportunities for this group to grow in their relationships.

Finally, just as any other effort within your environmental organization the diversity council will need to define what it will do, develop a mission and a vision and set objectives early on so that they do not get off track. This is another very important area in which your CEO/ President will need to take a lead role, as well as your board. Everyone on staff needs to know the council has been empowered to do substantive work that will make a true difference when it comes to diversity in your organization.

What should your diversity council do?

The Diversity Council’s mission is to drive the organizational changes necessary to establish a truly diverse workforce, allies and supporters of your group. Many environmental and conservation organizations have begun councils over the last five years. Each council decides its roles and responsibilities based on the needs of the organization. Some common roles include:

“One of the objectives of the diversity task force has been to instill in TWS employees the sense that adding diversity is not an impediment to saving wilderness but an enhancement. It’s not certain whether this is fully recognized by all employees.”

Terry New, TWS

- ❖ Lead the organization in its diversity initiative
- ❖ Support internal and external diversity efforts
- ❖ Serve as allies and the organization's experts on diversity change
- ❖ Help to identify diverse contractors and external partners
- ❖ Create educational opportunities for the organization

“The membership of the latest diversity task force that was developed in 2000 was designed to have representation from each department and all eight regional offices. All but two of the current members of the diversity task force are original members although a few participants have dropped out over the course of our tenure. There is no formal selection process and no set limitation on the amount of time an individual may spend on the task force at this time.”

Terry New, TWS

TAKING STOCK: ESTABLISH YOUR STARTING LINE

Defining the diversity needs of your organization will require an audit of the organization and its culture. Once you have your leadership on board, you have defined a business case for this effort and your council is up and running, you will need to understand where the rest of your organization is on the issue. It is impossible to create a program that unifies your organization if you are, as Terry New from the Wilderness Society says, “shooting in the dark.”

An organizational audit or assessment will help you identify the prevailing culture: What are the perceptions held about abilities and aptitudes of, for example, people from different ethnic groups? Does the group perceive that diversity efforts should be focused on broadening racial make-up, or reaching out to all the demographic groups that are under-represented? Is there a clear

understanding of what diversity means to your organization? Are there real or perceived barriers to achieving diversity within your organization? Is your organizational culture conducive to a successful diversity effort? If not, what needs to change? The assessment will answer all of these questions. It will also let you know what your staff members and leadership care about, as well as how people think you should proceed.

Create the methodology to establish a baseline of the diversity in your organization. This will give you a marker from which you can periodically assess progress. Over time, how are the individuals beginning to reflect the diversity you have identified by virtue of race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation or other factors?

“NWF looks to provide a representative sample of its workforce which includes all primary and secondary aspects of diversity such as consideration to position level within the organization, length of service, department, division, race, ethnicity, gender, and age.”

Kay LyBrand, NWF

Choosing a consultant

One of the most important elements of getting an assessment up and running is to find an external consultant to help you. Most environmental/conservation organizations have used consultants in the past for many projects and initiatives. However, when finding a consultant for your diversity initiative you will need to look very carefully at the individual or group that you choose. Remember, this important process is about people and the consultant you choose must understand how to support your

diversity effort in a way that is truly helpful to your group.

Diversity consultants can be effective and useful when you are in the process of developing your council, preparing and launching your assessment, beginning your staff training curriculum, and shaping your long-term plan. They bring a variety of perspectives, knowledge, training experience, and commitment. Though it can be very helpful to use a consultant who understands the cultures of environmental/conservation organizations, this is not a requirement.

Key issues to look at:

- ❖ Does the individual or firm have a proven record of working on diversity issues?
- ❖ Have they dealt with a wide range of organizations in terms of diversity?
- ❖ Are they committed to helping clients develop skills so that they can ultimately scale back their dependence on consultants and other outside help?
- ❖ Will they honor, respect, value, acknowledge and utilize your council members?
- ❖ Do they honor confidentiality statements?

Tools for organizational assessments

There are a variety of tools that environmental/conservation groups can utilize to conduct their organizational diversity audits. These assessments are not much different from those you would do to understand your staff as well as your membership base. Again, thinking strategically about these things has helped you to get where you are. Applying these same strategies to your diversity effort will result in an authentic and effective process. The following is a list of those tools.

- Individual staff interviews
- Surveys
- Focus Groups

Your organization can choose to use one strategy or a combination of strategies. What you use should be determined by what it is you most want from the process. For example, surveys encourage a large number of staff to respond. However, the range of answers is limited to pre-set boxes and/or a small space for narrative. This makes for more generalized responses. The advantages of these assessments are that they are quantitative and can give you hard data with regard and numbers that you can use to chart your progress.

While individual staff interviews and focus groups are more time-consuming, they help you get a more realistic picture of where people are and what they are thinking. They also allow for clar-

ification of the answers that you get. However, you will need to find a skilled facilitator who can create a safe space for participants to share honestly, and it may be a bit more difficult to measure your progress over time.

It is very important that you get a broad cross section of your organization to participate in this process.

Reaching and teaching your staff

Your leadership should be very visible during this process.

Individuals at the highest levels of management as well as your board should play significant roles in the announcement and implementation of your diversity effort.

- ❖ Be sure that whenever possible they are at the helm during diversity meetings and events where the focus is on diversity.
- ❖ Provide opportunities for your leadership to share their personal views on the issue with staff by securing time at major organizational functions for them to share their thoughts and opinions about this work. As well, be sure to impress upon them the importance of sharing their commitment with others.
- ❖ Be sure that they are communicating constantly during the entire process by staying on top of any upcoming opportunities including policy changes

When the staff diversity program was first conceptualized, the understanding was that although diversity would be actively pursued internally, it would not necessarily change the core mission work that NWF does in its conservation and education programs, but instead guide how NWF communicates about that work. Over time, this has been expanded to include integration of diversity work into program outreach, particularly in working with certain communities of color on specific issues. Ultimately, it is hoped that diversity will be understood as enabling larger groups of people, inclusive of diverse cultures, populations and abilities, to participate in supporting the mission of NWF, and therefore become the driving force behind organizational diversity initiatives.”

Kay LyBrand, NWF

DIVERSITY TRAINING: THE NEXT STEP TO COMPETENCY

Once you have completed your organizational assessment, decided on your mission, vision, and strategic direction, one of the most important next steps to be included in your plan is training and educating your staff. The environmental community will not be able to sustain any long-term diversity effort if your staff, board and leadership are not properly educated on diversity and the many aspects of creating a workplace that will remain diverse.

Suggested training topics

There are a variety of great training modules that will help to build a staff, leadership team and board that are more aware, respectful of, and interested in moving diversity ahead in your organization. They include:

- ❖ Basic 101 diversity training
- ❖ Communicating across cultures

- ❖ Understanding the business case for diversity
- ❖ Conflict management training
- ❖ Dismantling racism
- ❖ Gender conflict and communication

One important point that we would like to make is to not be afraid to talk about challenging topics. When we back away from hard discussions such as race and sexism, we back away from the possibility of significant changes that will support organizational efforts, as well as provide authentic learning experiences for staff.

Finding the right trainer

A very important next step in training is finding the right trainer. There are many great trainers out there. However, it may be helpful to find someone who understands the environmental/conservation community and can

and special initiatives as well as providing them with updated information to share with the staff.

- ❖ Engage in training along with their staff

“The Environmental Leadership Program sees diversity issues as a key challenge to efforts to expand constituencies for environmental protection. We believe that participants in our fellowship program need to be able to address diversity in a forthright and competent manner as they create coalitions, lead organizations, and develop public policy proposals. Talking about how social inequality and differing values influence environmental policy can be hard, but it promises to yield a more robust movement that is more relevant to people’s lives.”

Paul Sabin, Executive Director,
The Environmental Leadership Program

build training modules that are relevant and helpful to your organization around the cultural aspects of the groups.

Other important elements to take into account when looking for a trainer include:

- ❖ The length of time and experience that the trainer has in this field.
- ❖ Experiences that have influenced the trainer's cross-cultural skills.
- ❖ The kinds of organizations for which they have provided training.
- ❖ The kinds of training they offer.
- ❖ The individual's training style.
- ❖ What is the trainer's understanding of the organization's needs and how do they plan to address these issues?

BUILDING FROM THE INSIDE OUT: ENGAGING DIVERSE EXTERNAL PARTNERS

“Make room at the table for consultation with diverse audiences. Decision making at varied levels should incorporate multiple points of view from communities of interest.”

Nina Roberts, Ph.D.,
National Park Service

Another very crucial step in developing a strategic plan for diversity within your organization is to look externally to diverse organizations for input. Understanding your strengths and weaknesses from the perspectives of the communities that you are attempting to reach can only enrich your understanding of what you need to do.

There are a variety of questions that you will need to ask with regard to how your organization is viewed by diverse communities and especially those who are also doing work on environmental

issues. What are some of the real/perceived barriers that have been erected over the years and how do you go about removing them? How can your organization create more opportunities to work across cultural, racial, ethnic, and other lines? How do you build a more diverse staff by utilizing these partnerships in a fair manner? And how do you work to share resources equally when partnering on projects and initiatives? These questions are important and should be asked of those you know, and also of organizations and individuals with whom you don't have relationships. How do these folks perceive the environmental community? What could you do as an organization and a community to open up the flood gates for new and effective relationships? The only way you will find out is to ask those people that you are attempting to engage. Make this a part of your assessment.

The most important thing environmental organizations can do is to begin to trust others that have innate knowledge from various culturally diverse communities. We need to really trust and let go of a controlling mentality that is in all of us and water the seeds of change and trust. I remember Congressman John Lewis saying 'we came in different ships for different reasons but we are all in the same boat now.' Let's not miss the boat and start working together, please.

Francisco Morales
Bermudez, Nature Lover
and Friend of the
Environment

“Mainstream groups need to have a parallel process of doing internal work on diversity at the same time that they’re conducting outreach and trying to serve more diverse constituencies. Doing external programming without internal diversity work makes little sense.”

Angela Park, Diversity Consultant, Lancaster, Pa.

“If the green groups want to incorporate a more diverse population, they have to come into our communities. You can’t recruit a diverse staff from REI, you have to come down to Crenshaw where the people are. Also, there has to be a multi-generational approach to outreach. In Outward Bound Adventures, we take youngsters from middle-school on and groom them, helping them become eco-literate and exposing them to outdoor careers. We emphasize to the green groups that we partner with that if they want to attract our youngsters, the workshops and recruitment drives have to be in our communities.”

Charles Thomas, Executive Director, Outward Bound Adventures, Pasadena, Calif.

Working with external diverse partners

Organizations with which you are already partnering can help connect you to diverse groups. In communities of color there are multiple organizations working on social justice or environmental issues that would welcome partnerships with mainstream green groups. Newspapers targeted to ethnic or special interest communities are a good source of finding out what the issues are and who is working on them.

Outreach, development and fundraising

There are many small, community based green groups around the country working to expose members of their communities to environmental issues. Particularly in communities of color, these groups are challenged for funding, yet they continue to find ways to expose young people in particular to the great outdoors. These groups are natural allies and potential partners for mainstream green organizations. They have the desire and commitment to do the work, and they are part of the diverse communities you are trying to reach. Many are non-profit organizations that have been in existence for a decade or more.

These organizations are eager to develop relationships with mainstream green groups. Reaching out to them can be as simple as making a telephone call to express interest in learning more about what they do, and growing

your relationship from there. In the process of learning about their work, think creatively about what opportunities there may be for you to develop a funding proposal together. If the organization focuses on exposing youth to the Great Outdoors, for example, and part of your strategic plan is to reach youth from diverse communities, you could conceivably collaborate on a funding proposal.

“Grassroots organizations like ours know what needs to be done in our communities, but we don’t have the resources to do it. But we scarcely have money to carry out our programs for the Haitian community in Miami. Mainstream green groups should know that there are many of us working to improve our environment, but we lack the partnerships and resources to be effective.”

Nadine Patrice,
Executive Director,
Operation Greenleaves,
Miami, Fla.

The opportunity may be to increase the number of youth served, with a component that enables you to have access to the young people, increase their awareness of your organization and possible put them on track for a future career in environmental protection.

Similarly, community groups in urban areas that are concerned about asthma can be natural allies if part of your focus is Clean Air. Urban gardeners will be sensitive to the issues of concern to green groups.

Newspapers and publications that are targeted to ethnic or special interest markets are the perfect vehicles for your information. Advertisements placed in these national or local publications will reach the diverse community you are trying to attract. They will also publish your press releases. However, you should be sensitive to the fact that small businesses are often challenged for funds, so be sure to strike a balance.

“NPCA’s initial focus on diversity was largely external, with a great deal of emphasis placed on increasing the network of Latino, Indian, Asian, and African Americans aware of and concerned about national parks. Iantha Gantt-Wright led the organization through a process of building relationships with “non-traditional” constituents and was especially effective in attracting people from diverse backgrounds to national park advocacy through support of the passage of the National Underground Railroad Network Act of 1998 (Public Law 105-203).”

Alan Spears, NPCA

Recruitment: reflecting all communities

One of the major areas of challenge for the environmental/conservation community when it comes to diversity has been recruitment. This is another area in which you can utilize your external partnerships as well as build a broader more diverse contact list for your work. Many organizations have taken the strategy of recruiting from a wide spectrum of lists and web sites. Though using broad stroke recruiting is one strategy there are several others that may be more effective. The first is utilizing your external partnerships. The more you work to build programs and initiatives that are relevant to the communities you are attempting to reach the more success you will have at recruitment.

A second very effective strategy is to identify and build relationships with specific contacts within organizations and institutions. It is one thing to send out a job announcement and have it get into someone’s hands that may think like the rest of the world does ‘Umm, well nobody here would be interested in this job.’ However, if you have a direct contact within targeted sources you are in a better position to get your job description in the right hands, as well as talk person to person with someone who will do it for you. Even if your candidate cannot be found at this particular venue, the contact will probably be willing to

“Hire people of color. There is still a strong belief in the environmental community that there aren’t enough strong candidates of color for jobs. While there may not be a plethora of African-American marine biologists or Latina organizers, there are plenty of well-qualified (albeit perhaps not in the exact field) people of color that could be candidates. Be creative with where you place ads for job announcements; be open to different backgrounds and experiences (isn’t that what this is all about anyhow?) as qualifications; if you hire people of color for entry level positions, think about what type of career path is available (or not). We not only need to create new programs and projects for communities underserved by the traditional environmental movement, our organizations need to better reflect the diverse nature of these communities and the country.”

Rhea Suh, Program Officer,
The William & Flora
Hewlett Foundation

send it on to others and maybe even suggest a potential candidate. This process is all really about building and respectfully utilizing relationships. Sometimes this means sending a card or picking up the phone just to say hello.

It is very important to remember that it is not the number diverse staff that you have on board that will decide your success with regard to diversity but the kind of organization to are recruiting people into. If you have not created a culture that can sustain the diversity you are trying to attain then your success will be short lived. Working with your external partners to better understand what this means for you will make all the difference in the world.

Using contractors from multi-racial communities

“NWF staff have been trained by Mauricio Velazquez in diversity and conflict resolution. New hires have the opportunity to attend half-day diversity training sessions twice a year. Phone in sessions are held for field staff. The training sessions focus on delivering practical tips for applying diversity practices to one’s work. Leadership training is also a component of NWF’s efforts in that we believe that strengthening our management’s toolkits leads to a greater understanding of diversity of opinions and work styles. As such, NWF’s professional development pro-

gram looks for opportunities for staff to engage one another in diverse viewpoints and alternative ways of applying principles such as Myers-Briggs Type Indicator.

NWF is currently piloting Spanish language lessons in partnership with its employees, and based on participation and feedback, hopes to offer both continued Spanish language lessons and American Sign Language lessons in fall 2004.”

Kay LyBrand, NWF

Another very important element of this work is finding and utilizing multi-racial contractors, and not just for diversity work. There are diverse contractors and consultants that work on a variety of issues including fundraising and development; membership development; communication strategies; computer design and layout; public relations; political campaign strategies; and strategic planning. Many of these contractors can not only bring the skill that you require for a specific initiative, but they also bring some very new and diverse perspectives that can provide opportunities for growth and outside of the box thinking.

This goes back to our discussion on building this work into your organization’s strategic plan. If you have done this well then you have scanned your organization to see where you are with regard to diverse contractors and you have begun a process that will help you to identify potential candidates. As a result when it is time for you to choose a contractor you have taken all of the steps necessary to make a decision based on all the right information. Utilizing this process will put you ahead of the game and not in a situation where you have to choose a contractor at the last minute which many times make it necessary to revert to the usual suspects.

Your next question is probably, “how do I find these people?” Again, tap into the relationships that you currently have with diverse communities. Many of the people who have contributed to this guide will be able to connect you to new contractors from a variety of back grounds. Check out websites such as Diversity-Inc.com or contact organizations that work on issues that address these communities. The point is to start somewhere because if you don’t you never will. The fear of doing this wrong but doing it anyway is no where near as damaging as not doing it at all.

One step to take is to start from the top down. If environmental groups are serious about diversifying, then recruit People of Color for positions of influence in the organization. Hiring a person of color as a receptionist just doesn’t cut it.”

Sonia Ivette Dueño, Coordinator, Racial, Economic and Gender Justice, Fellowship of Reconciliation

ONWARD, UPWARD: SUSTAINING YOUR EFFORTS

We close this project by looking at ways to sustain your efforts, and the first is checking in on your progress. Any program or initiative that you take on to protect the environment has built-in measurements of success. This includes the organization's strategy for building membership, raising funds, and other crucial parts of your overall strategy. So, if diversity is a major initiative for your organization it is important to give it the very same level of attention.

To do this you must build measurements of success and revisit the findings of your assessment from time to time. Suggestions for these measurements could include:

- ❖ How effective has our diversity council been?
- ❖ What diversity projects and initiatives planned have been accomplished?
- ❖ Is the process on track?
- ❖ How are staff, leadership, and board feeling about the progress?
- ❖ Are we seeing a difference in our staff, partners, contractors, and associates?
- ❖ As with other programs, conduct an abbreviated assessment of the process. This will let you

“TWS developed an aggressive diversity plan, which the organization sought to implement within three years. Such unrealistic expectations caused some people to stumble and become disenchanted with the change process. Also, having such a diversity plan largely driven and implemented from the senior management and diversity task force level down left many employees out of the planning process altogether. A recently completed internal diversity assessment was meant to ‘take the organization’s temperature’ on diversity matters and more deeply engage all staff in the process of change.”

Terry New, TWS

know if you're on the right track.

- ❖ Have the changes made been substantive? Are they really making a difference within the organization?
- ❖ Check with your external partners. What do they think? Have they seen a difference?

Be sure to give constant recognition to your diversity council and staff for the work that they are doing.

Addressing missteps and setbacks

Finally, don't be afraid to address missteps and setbacks. Decide on what incremental steps it is realistic for you to accomplish in what time frame. Revisit your strategic plan periodically to make sure the organization is taking all the right actions such as outreach,

using diverse media channels, and building partnerships outside your traditional base. Are you on track? If not, what are the obstacles? With the intense focus of your Diversity Council, devise a plan to overcome the obstacles.

Remember, achieving diversity is the process of changing behaviors, thinking, culture, and as such perfection is a bit challenging to achieve. However, if we are true to ourselves, our organizational missions, and the places and communities we are all working to preserve, it is a state that we will continue to pursue until we make it a reality for the entire movement.

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