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Susan Woods
Cornell University, sew13@cornell.edu

Tammy Bormann
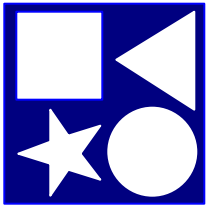*The National Conference*

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The Network Newsletter

A Joint Project of Cornell University ILR and The National Conference for Community and Justice

Summary Report from the 1998 Netter Seminar

Building the Framework for Organizational Inclusion

At a time when notions of workplace fairness have evolved from Title VII and Affirmative Action to valuing differences and from managing diversity to building inclusion, workplace practitioners, policy-makers and scholars are faced with a perplexing question: **What will an inclusive workplace look like when it's achieved?**

Establishing the Context

Recognition and understanding of workplace diversity as a distinct component of organizational life are built on the pioneering work of leading diversity consultants and scholars: Elsie Y. Cross, Roosevelt Thomas, Kaleel Jamison, Taylor Cox, Julie O'Mara, Lee Gardenswartz and Anita Rowe, among many others. In the last decade, the field of workplace diversity has undergone remarkable development and growth. We have seen the meaning of diversity within the context of the workplace expand "beyond race and gender" to encompass a full spectrum of differences and similarities. Today, the roles of diversity policy makers and practitioners are frequently distinguished from EEO and Affirmative Action responsibilities. While diversity awareness training remains an essential element of a comprehensive diversity initiative, the work of the diversity practitioner is expanding beyond training and awareness to encompass facilitation and leadership of organizational culture change. In some organizations, diversity policy makers are included at the strategic level of organizational thinking.

Amidst the seeming dichotomy between social justice concerns and bottom-line business justifications is a growing appreciation for enhancing organizational capability through diversity. Current research documents the significance of workplace diversity for organizational strategy and performance. David A. Thomas and Robin J. Ely make this argument most effectively in their article *Making Differences Matter: A New Paradigm for Managing Diversity* (HARVARD BUSINESS REVIEW, September-October 1996).

Consistent with these developments, current research is laying the framework for establishing recognition of the work of diversity practitioners as a profession. The *1996-1997 Diversity Practitioner Study* conducted by the American Institute for Managing Diversity offers a job function and skill analysis of practitioners who manage the diversity initiative within organizations. The Workplace Diversity Network has collaborated with a research study by WorkWorlds' Human Resources Corporation and Huff, Carver, Villani & Associates that utilizes behavioral event interview techniques to identify core competencies of recognized diversity leaders. The function and skill analysis defines the job; the core competencies identify qualities of individuals who will most likely perform well in the job. Studies like these can be used in the HR process for selection; compensation and rewards; training; development; succession planning; performance management; and career planning for diversity professionals. As the research is unfolding, diversity leadership competency extends beyond the diversity practitioners to a generalized responsibility of leadership throughout the organization from the Board and CEO levels, and cascading down, straight through the organization

The 1998 Richard and Alice Labor-Management-Public Interest Seminar

The 1998 Netter Seminar brought together organizational leaders, workplace practitioners and trainer/educators from public, private and non-profit organizations as well as academia to explore the question: *What will an inclusive organization look like when it's achieved?*

THE 1998 NETTER SEMINAR DESIGN

Day 1 **INCLUSION**	*Day 2* **ATTRIBUTES & POLICY OPTIONS**	*Day 3* **MEASUREMENT**
Explore the meaning of inclusion from personal and interpersonal perspectives	Explore the meaning of inclusion from an organizational perspective by identifying the organizational *Attributes of Inclusion*	Discuss the development of measurement strategy by determining appropriate indicators and measurements

For each *Attribute*, identify potential *Policy or Practice Options*

Measurement Strategies

Attribute ⇨ Policy/Practice Options
Attribute ⇨ Policy/Practice Options ⇨ Process Measures
Attribute ⇨ Policy/Practice Options Outcome Measures
 Feedback Measures

Drawing on personal and professional experience with diversity, seminar participants worked to articulate a framework for understanding inclusion in organizations. Our inquiry began by inviting participants to consider their perceptions of inclusion from an experiential and subjective viewpoint. Discussion progressed from an exchange of personal and interpersonal experiences to a consideration of the qualities or conditions of organizational life which participants perceived as inclusive. The seminar design for building the framework was structured in three steps. First, we worked to identify *organizational attributes of inclusion*, the term used to describe intended organizational outcomes. Secondly, we identified policy and practice options to support achievement of those outcomes. Thirdly, we discussed measurement strategy.

Distinguishing Diversity And Inclusion

Recognizing that diversity and inclusion are terms frequently used together, seminar participants worked from this distinction: *Diversity* describes as the spectrum of human similarities and differences. It refers to the composition of people associated with the organization. *Inclusion*, on the other hand, describes the way an organization configures opportunity, interaction, communication, information and decision-making to utilize the potential of diversity. It refers to the organizational environment.

Achieving inclusion means creating the structures, policies and practices in organizational life that recognize the existence of multiple perspectives and signal the importance of learning from differences. Inclusion refers to the systemic nature of an organization. Inclusion is not necessarily limited to the way an organization deals with employees; it may refer to interactions with customers and clients, partners, vendors, suppliers, and subcontractors as well.

Organizations might be diverse without being inclusive. By broadening recruitment and improving retention, organizations could achieve greater diversity, expanding the differences and similarities represented by those

who comprise it. However, the way interactions are structured could exclude acknowledgement of any but the predominate group's perspectives and concerns. Such organizations would be non-inclusive.

The Netter Seminar diverged from past discussions of diversity where the focus was personal and interpersonal. Its focus was organizational and holistic. Discussion proceeded from the hypothesis that organizations achieving inclusion would invite the synthesis of ideas, knowledge and perspectives. In doing so, inclusive organizations would encourage collaboration, support problem solving and promote creativity, flexibility and responsiveness to change. For organizations having inclusive internal policies and practices without being diverse, the potential of the inclusion to enhance organizational effectiveness would be limited by the extent of the organization's diversity. Without diversity, vision is narrowed. Pursuing high standards for workplace fairness and organizational effectiveness requires both diversity and inclusion.

An Inclusive Organization Is One That . . .

To establish a working understanding of inclusion, seminar participants were asked to complete the phrase: *An inclusive organization is one that—.* Twelve qualities or *attributes* of inclusive organizations were identified. We purposefully omit numbering to invite readers to assign their own priorities.

Attributes Of Inclusive Organizations

- ☐ Demonstrated Commitment to Diversity
- ☐ Holistic View of the Employees and the Organization
- ☐ Access to Opportunity
- ☐ Accommodation for Diverse Physical & Developmental Abilities
- ☐ Equitable Systems for Recognition, Acknowledgement & Reward
- ☐ Shared Accountability and Responsibility
- ☐ 360° Communication and Information Sharing
- ☐ Demonstrated Commitment to Continuous Learning
- ☐ Participatory Work Organization and Work Process
- ☐ Recognition of Organizational Culture and Process
- ☐ Collaborative Conflict Resolution Processes
- ☐ Demonstrated Commitment to Community Relationships

The working paper, *A Framework for Building Organizational Inclusion,* is offered as a thought-starter to further the dialogue on organizational inclusion. It is intended to be neither exhaustive nor prescriptive. It reports the thinking of the seminar participants as shared through group discussion as well as the reflections of subsequent reviewers. Our hope is that this working paper will serve as a catalyst for further discussion and inquiry as we continue learning about the potential of diversity to enhance organizational performance while creating workplace environments that reject discrimination and create unbiased opportunity for achievement and advancement.

A Word On Measurement Strategy

An effective measurement strategy can be a powerful means for developing common understanding of desired culture change and for communicating objectives. Measures establish baselines from which to document progress and motivate improvement. Measurement can infuse intangible objectives with more concrete meaning. To be effective, measurement strategy should fit the context.

Susan Adler Funk, President of The Diversity Difference, in Millcreek, WA, presented an approach to developing measures that begins by asking: *What do you want to know? Why do you want to know it? And who else should know this information?* Recognizing that measurement can have several purposes, strategy for developing inclusion measures should be based on an understanding of the role of measurement in an organization's culture. What else is measured? How is it measured? How are measures connected to organizational goals? Measurement is a choice. Measures should be chosen strategically to yield relevant information to evaluate and drive the desired change effort. Measures should be linked to what's valued in the organization. Both qualitative and quantitative techniques for gathering information may be used.

The key is to understand the different types of measures: process, outcome and feedback. *Process measures* are used to confirm that a policy or practice was implemented. Did it occur? Was the existence and availability of the policy or practice communicated? Was it used? What percent of the employees participated in the practice?

Outcome measures are used to determine if the policy or practice had the desired effect. Developing appropriate outcome measures requires organizational change leaders to think through how the outcome of achieving a given attribute contributes to an organizational goal. For example, what is the financial impact of reducing turnover and increasing retention among diverse employees?

Finally, *feedback measures* provide information on how inclusion efforts are perceived. Appropriate feedback measures provide information on awareness, utilization and suggestions for improvement. Are employees aware of the existence of various policies and practices? Could utilization and participation be higher? What changes could be made to increase utilization of a given policy or practice? How could employee satisfaction with a particular policy or practice be enhanced?

Susan Funk suggests eight steps for building a measurement process.

1) Define the objective of the diversity/inclusion effort.

2) Select an appropriate mix of process, outcome and feedback measures.

3) Choose both short-term and long-term measures.

4) Evaluate the cost/benefit of proposed measures.

5) Integrate selected measures into existing measurement systems.

6) Create baseline measurement.

7) Implement desired policies and practices.

8) Review the process, outcome and feedback measures.

These steps create a common sense approach to measurement that encourages practitioners to think broadly, to seek out strategic allies within the organization and to link the measurement of inclusion to organizational goals and strategies. Susan Funk can be reached at The Diversity Difference, 15210 29th Drive SE Mill Creek, WA 98012

If you would like to read more, a full version of the working paper may be requested from: Susan Woods, Cornell University ILR, at sew13@cornell.edu (Tel: 716/852-4191) or Tammy Bormann, NCCJ, at tlborm@goes.com (Tel: 908/832-9781).

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