

National Diversity & Inclusion Public Sector Leaders Convene in New York City



R. Fenimore Fisher

Deputy Commissioner,
Citywide Chief Diversity & EEO Officer
Department of Citywide Administrative Services

As a diversity and inclusion practitioner, I have searched to identify public sector peers across the country. Leaders in the private sector enjoy many benchmarking forums. For those of us in the public sector, our opportunities are not as abundant.

My search ended on October 14th when the Department of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS), of the City of New York, hosted an inaugural diversity and inclusion colloquium. Our goal was to establish a lasting national network of public sector leaders, sharing best and next practices for our current and future workforces. Nearly 150 practitioners convened to discuss topics such as: *Enhancing the Public Sector's Employment Brand; Gender Equity; Emerging Inclusion Strategies; Measurable Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) in Workforce Planning; Transgender Policies and Training; Outreach to Disabled and Veteran Communities; and Workplace Conflict*. Leaders from Dallas, Seattle, San Francisco, Nashville, Minneapolis, Baltimore, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, and a host of tri-state and local sister agencies attended taking an active part in discussions.

Highlights of the colloquium included a *Workforce* roundtable, moderated by Deepali Bagati, Executive Director, U.S., Catalyst; a *Workplace* roundtable moderated by Carol Watson, Senior Director at Diversity Best Practices; and a working luncheon on *Community* facilitated by Carson Hicks, Deputy Executive

Director for the NYC Center for Economic Opportunity in the Mayor's Office, and Cyrus Garrett, Executive Director of NYC's Young Men's Initiative.

Our roundtables included leaders from New York City, Baltimore, Dallas, Jersey City, Minneapolis, San Francisco, and Seattle. DCAS' sister agency co-hosts included NYC Human Resources Administration - Department of Social Services, New York Police Department, Department of Information Technology & Communications, Fire Department of New York, and the Department of Sanitation. Catalyst, the City College of New York, Diversity Best Practices and the Tri-State Diversity Council also served as co-hosts.

According to the EEOC, in 2013, approximately 2,600 municipalities employed nearly 1.4 million full time employees across the nation. Because the City of New York is among the largest of municipal employers, other municipalities are interested in knowing what we are doing. While we are proud that women and people of color make up the majority of our administrator and official leadership positions and the majority of our workforce consists of racial and ethnic minorities, we have a need to benchmark against other public sector employers. During the colloquium, Seattle discussed its recently published Workforce Equity Strategic Plan, which has a racial equity toolkit; Dallas discussed its RFP for succession planning; San Francisco reviewed its best practices concerning recruiting women to its fire department; Jersey City discussed its incentives to support women and minority owned business enterprises; and Minneapolis discussed their strategic approach to measuring worker engagement/morale. In New York City, under Mayor de Blasio, we have trained more than 50,000 employees in areas such as unconscious bias, LGBT inclusion, disability etiquette, EEO and diversity & inclusion. Additionally, we follow a diversity management model, designed by the late Dr. Roosevelt Thomas, focused on fifteen workforce and workplace best practices.

While public sector D&I practitioners aren't often paired with private sector counterparts during national leadership conferences to share our best practices, we shouldn't be overlooked by those organizations that convene thought leaders. We appreciate the participation from Catalyst and Diversity Best Practices, as they have expressed interest in understanding the needs of public sector employers. Also, we appreciate the Diversity Collegium which provided participants the 10th Anniversary 2016 Global Diversity & Inclusion

Benchmarks report. We ended the day identifying the following next steps: conducting virtual quarterly meetings updating each other on the implementation of our D&I strategies, releasing a white paper detailing municipal case studies, establishing a D&I public sector LinkedIn group and convening again next year.

I firmly believe when public sector D&I practitioners pool both our knowledge and record of successful strategies, the impact and service to our government employees will be much more meaningful. When there is meaning in the work experiences for our employees and transparent discourse about the role of equity, this improves the quality of service that we provide to the community. Together, we can drive a national strategy of diversity and inclusion that will be sustainable across multiple generations of public servants.

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