

# Workshop | *How to Create an Industry that Reflects and Serves Diverse Communities*

## Workshop Summary Notes

The 2019 Midwest Energy Solutions Conference included an interactive workshop where participants shared best practices and tips to increase diversity that participants could bring back to their organizations. Below is a high-level summary of the discussions that were facilitated by our table lead experts that focused on three main topics: workforce development, supplier diversity, and program delivery for traditionally underserved communities.

## Workforce Development

- What has worked?
  - Jobs fair + open house—smart grid theme in diverse communities
    - Specific job openings → resumes in hand
    - Track participants, resumes, outcomes
    - Set goals
    - Provide face time with employers and resources to assist attendees with resume creation
      - Resume services really should be part of the equation
  - Strategic partnerships
    - Technical schools/ high school programs
    - Junior achievement (or equivalent)
    - Mentorships
    - Coordinate with other EE programs
    - Community Action Agencies
- What is needed
  - Industry cultural shift
  - Childcare
  - Transportation vouchers
  - Mentorship programs
  - Professional development opportunities
  - Mandatory diversity training
  - Job application changes
    - Prevent self-select
    - Must display in job postings that diversity is important to the organization to attract diverse applicants
  - Scholarships/grants to cover:
    - School
    - Training courses
    - Conference scholarships

- Efforts can be made to provide travel vouchers for low income populations to assist in their travel to work
  - Efforts to diversify the board
  - Testimonials of success stories within a community
  - Industry professionals should make efforts to introduce minorities to the right people to get employed
- Report out
  - Two concepts: (1) how do we grow a workforce? (2) how do we help workers grow and stay engaged? Job fairs, mentorships, sponsorships
  - Recruitment, training, mentorship, scholarships are all important
  - Diversity plans drive workforce development – having an implementable plan of action within the organization that actively sets in place a strategy (that includes training and was to make cultural shifts) is a crucial way to ensure a diverse workforce

## Supplier Diversity

- Help organizations develop a supplier diversity plan
- How do you define “diversity”?
  - Certification requirements → should look at defining in a broader way
- Diversity coach/mentor
  - Offer to vendors
- How to find people
  - State Registries
  - Google
  - Certifying bodies
  - Word of mouth
  - Talk to communities
  - Job board/utility
  - Professional associations
- Training/Mentoring
  - Utility offerings that focus on diversity and inclusion
  - Mentoring efforts for diverse suppliers to help engage and train
  - EE job boards
  - Professional Organizations such as 1871 or the Women's Business Development Center (WBDC) in Chicago
- Diversity Policy
  - Difference between a diversity *policy* and a diversity *plan*
- Report out
  - Suppliers are having trouble getting certifications – for example, non-profits can't be certified because they don't have an owner; lots of paperwork and requirements
  - Three common items heard –
    - Most companies have policies but lack a plan of action to implement the policy
    - It's tough to find diverse firms/people
    - Training/mentoring is challenging but important

- Having an organization or someone (MEEA?) to help with making a plan would be beneficial

## Program Delivery

- Consumer insights can help understand how to reach customers
  - Focus groups research—program participants and how the program is going
- Track diversity of customers engaged
- Help program participants transition to clean energy
- Messengers matter
  - Trust is a long-term game and it requires time and involvement
  - Meet people where they live and where they are in EE program
  - Understand the community's culture
  - Partnerships
    - Organizations that are already part of the community
    - State organizations to help find community partners
      - Recommendations/referrals from people they know
    - Trade industries
    - Community Colleges of Chicago, other schools
    - Local non-profit organizations
  - Hire from the community
  - Long term engagement
- Use social media
- Needs
  - Data on diversity of messengers
  - Identify that trusted voice
- Make everyone feel that they are a trusted and valued customer
- Good program education for certain population that may not understand EE basics
- Designing programs to allow for the long-term continual engagement with customers
- Can't have top-down efforts, need broad support across community and organizations
- Testing
  - Do testing recognizing existing messaging that's used for everyone may not resonate with certain communities – speak the language
  - Message Testing – see what works, people want to hear someone like them— language barriers also matter
- Everything should be targeted based on community and audience – it really works
  - Advertising, packaging has to resonate – thinking about the look and feel
  - Ethnography studies
  - Social media influencers – getting local influencers involved
  - Follow up is important
    - Simplify steps
    - Give participants a trusted EE source – someone who will walk them through the entire process
- Report out
  - Despite diversity efforts, leadership is all still the same (mostly white and/or male)

- Trust – how are you able to ensure that you're able to reach diverse communities authentically? Include people from that community will increase trust
  - You need to hire from within the communities you want to target
  - Being aware of the challenges in the communities you want to reach, acknowledging the history, what their experiences are
  - How to identify a trusted voice – other community leadership orgs can help
- People who are being served need to be at the table – folks that are going to be impacted are often not part of the planning process – these people need to be part of the design (hiring process, EE program within communities, etc.)
- Meet people where they are; “come to us” doesn't work

## Next Steps

MEEA will continue to work with our members and EE stakeholders to identify resources, research, and ways to continue to collaborate that fosters a more diverse and inclusive energy efficiency sector.

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