



### **Leadership Series 2022 - #3**

August 18, 2022 | 2:00 – 3:30 pm ET

Leading with DE&I in Mind

**Introduction:** Dianne Crilley

Dianne shared “admin/zoom call” policies

**Welcome Message:** Ifetayo Venner

Address “Why” DE&I is a priority” at WEF

“Thank you for joining. We are going to hear from various members and WEF’s journey which began in 2017. We have two goals in our strategic plan. Include DEI in water sector and meet the future needs of the water sector. The water sector was not diverse, especially in gender and on race – displayed a lack of equity. Within in WEF, we have known our membership does not show the diversity those in our workforce. So, we ask, how can we improve. We started with our InFLOW program as year 5 or 6. It is a permanent program. We also wanted to est. a permanent Board committee for DE&I. We have hired an outside consultant to assist for the past few years. We wanted to lead from the front and need our member associations to do this as well allowing for greater success in this journey. We need everyone at the table and listen to all voices.

**Donnell Duncan, Associate VP, Arcadis, Speaker, WEF House of Delegates (see first pic on phone)**

Thank you very much. WEF’s DE&I leadership is what I will talk about today.

WEFTEC 2018: InFLOW pilot with 3 schools

WEFTEC 2019: Launch of workforce diversity Consultant, launch of Board of Trustees DE&I Subcommittee and HOD DE&I.

WEFTEC 2021: Upgrade to Board of Trustees DE&I Committee and launch of HOD DE&I Committee.

DE&I resources may be found online at WEFTEC.org. Inclusive Committee Leadership is newly added. Of course, we have the MA DE&I starter kit. If your MA is excited about DE&I, we have provided this kit. This may be found at [wef.org](http://wef.org) and look for DE&I starter kit available for all MA’s. The kit is simple, hands on and a great way to start. We are enhancing that starter kit this year. The HOD is going to add the MA inclusive Events Best Practices. This year, we had the first DE&I WEFMAX focused in Fargo, ND. We learned the MA’s are interested in learning best practices for DE&I. During MA forum at WEFTEC 2022, we are going to have a meeting with the DE&I chairs, to focus on DE&I committees and task forces. Every quarter, we will have a WEF DE&I call to discuss this issue and to highlight what your MA may be doing across the country. We learned from WEFMAX is that we are sharing the same DE&I challenges.

WEF Events

- All Conferences – Gathering Speaker Demographics.
- Specialty Conferences – Moderator Training.
- WEF Nominations – Revamped the 2022 nominations process to include DE&I considerations.

- DE&I Coaching – 6 Current and emerging leaders were selected for a DE&I coaching program.
- Currently developing a Member/Volunteer DE&I scorecard allowing us to measure our progress as an organization.

### **WEF's DE&I Leadership:** Donnell Duncan

Showcase WEF DE&I Resources to include: WEF Two-Pagers, MA Toolkit, Inclusive MA Events Best Practices and DE&I outcomes from WEFMAX Fargo, ND

### **DE&I In Action**

#### **Our DE&I Journey** – WEA of Texas, Julie Nahrgang

Our DE&I is rocketing forward quickly and began our DE&I committee in 2018 modeled after WEF's InFLOW program. Also, Tom Kunez was influential regarding WEF's space with DE&I. After the death of George Floyd, WEA&T released a statement regarding DE&I.

Our Strategic Priorities: Long-term, diversification, member services. (Note: We are 44% done of achieving our diversification and DE&I policies.)

We hosted an online seminar with Charmaine Jackson (Southwest Water Company) as our moderator. We sponsored a second online seminar where private firms were allowed to participate, this also was hosted by Charmaine Jackson. In April was our Texas Water 2022 annual meeting. We had about 6,000 other water folks in attendance. We had a DE&I tract and created a DE&I award giving to two co-chairs of our DE&I committee to Aisha Niang and Ana Pena-Tijerina. Also, our first InFLOW program was highlighted at Texas Water 2022. 3 of the students have jobs coming from this InFLOW. We also have committee fact sheets and strongly suggest you do the same. Our DE&I committee has their respective fact sheets modeled from the Brookings Institute.

In 2022, we celebrated Black Heritage Month, Latin/Hispanic Culture, Pride (Drink Water-Love All). Regarding Pride we took quotes from some of our members. We also celebrated Women's Day. We talk about serious issues and want to promote large ideas and persuade people to march forward. Therefore, our DE&I mascot is an octopus. Nathan came up with the octopus as its arms pulls you in and keeps you close, supports you and keeps you closer.

#### **Building a WEF MA InFLOW Program** – Illinois WEA, Dr. Lindsay Birt & Ed Jankun

IWPC 2022 – Together for clean water. Executing the first MA InFLOW project. InFLOW enhances diversity and inclusion in the water workforce. The scholarship engages participants in WEF programs and events to solidify their interest in working in the water sector and increase the probability of employment and long-term success working in water. Early on, it is important to have leadership buy-in. We had several students participate in the first InFLOW. We had six students in STEMPath and CareerTech paths.

How do you create an InFLOW at your MA? Ed Jankun

InFLOW Benefits and Goals:

We began with fifteen minority students

Fully engage the students in conference activities

Full-time students, University and Community Colleges

For student selection we contact professors/Deans to reach out to students. Better to hear from personal contacts from school and not just from an MA. Requested professors to recommend students, Utilized YP network. Once selected, we send them the conference invite and itinerary via a call to set expectations and familiarize the students with a large conference. We also introduce them to MA volunteers who can assist them if they have questions.

InFLOW Itinerary: Technical tracts in ½ hour increments for each day, Special welcome to the InFLOW Opportunities during IWPC: Tech sessions, Exhibit, Career Fair, Networking and YP events, Ops Challenge, Student Poster, Direct access to corporate sponsors, interview opportunities, solidify interest in the water sector.

Sponsorship is important as it costs money and provide bundle discounts to potential sponsors. This assists in hotel, travel, food, registration costs.

### **Incorporating DE&I at a MA Conference – Michigan WEA, Cheryl Vosburg**

Leading with DEIB in Mind! 3 Major events occurred this year: Created DEIB committee, incorporated DE&I discussions at retreat, and we were asked to present at DE&I event. We also received a grant from WEF.

Unconscious Bias: A quiet Performance Killer Dr. Tyrone Holmes. We had him present for our DE&I efforts at our annual conference in two workshops. Also discussed microaggressions, uncomfortable conversations and unconscious bias.

Goals: Introduce concept of DEIB to our members/committee Chairs/Board. We had about forty people in attendance and to spur conversation/action towards a more inclusive organization.

Outcomes: Good conversation. Incorporating what we have learned at the work retreat and our DEIB committee can use this activity to build upon.

Breakout Session: The Future of DE&I

**Breakout Question:** What Needs to Happen Next for WEF to Keep Being a Leader in DE&I?

### **Report Out**

Breakout Room 1: Donnell Duncan: “How can we best communicate and provide proofs of WEF’s DE&I efforts?” Additionally, since many MA’s may be facing resistance, the question is asked, “Did WEF – at the national level – get pushback?” The answer is yes. WEF did experience pushback. So, the next question would be is how WEF responded. This allows WEF the opportunity for *thought leadership* of how to respond to this pushback as it pertains to DE&I. It would be good if MA’s were on the same trajectory of the DE&I journey could work together and share ideas. How best can we facilitate those conversations and how to share resources. There is much work to be done and the MA’s are able to create material & campaigns so is there a way to pool our resources via the WEF HOD to allow for MA access and MA Support.

Breakout Room 2: We need to hear what others are saying. Having something once/twice a year where we can discuss what other MA’s Chairs, etc. are doing that would allow us to learn from each other.

Breakout Room 3: There is a lot of discussion regarding making sure what resources other MA’s have created to other MA’s, that MAs know what WEF resources are available. Share DE&I related moments you may have allowed to make DE&I a culture. Having conversations with people that are not on board with this and how do we have those conversations and prevent a utility leave an MA. There is ugly out there and we need to have the resources on how to deal with unbiased.

Breakout room 4: Understanding how did we get here? There is momentum to understand how to move forward. How do we ensure that we are not replicating past mistakes. This must be established as a core value at WEF in how WEF advocates for the issues which affect DE&I. How do we ensure authenticity and elevate and live it in our leadership and the things we advocate and the platforms we promote.

Breakout Room 5: We had reps from NY and MI and discussed what we are doing and sharing stories from our geographic perspectives. DE&I grant money is necessary and increasing the amount would be great. But that money should also be DE&I focused. We do have the funding and it is helpful for MA’s. Taking diversity wins to the nominations process. This is bold and radical. What does this

look like? We have been struggling with this in Texas and sharing this would be helpful. WEF needs to lead in the DE&I space loudly and boldly. MA Boards need to accept the DE&I space and if necessary, they may be pointed to the WEF Board for guidance and support.

Breakout Room 6: WEF has the resources to provide the MA's. Additionally, it is great to hear there is that this amount of interest and support at/from at WEF. Great to hear that MAs are looking and working towards DE&I programs. There is some push-back possibly from long-term members who may not be supportive of DE&I efforts. We need to Continue to promote DE&I. It is a continuous process and not just to a destination. Would be great if WEF could keep a list of vetted speakers to assist with DE&I initiatives. This list could be provided to MA for a workshop and/or conference. Also, I think some MAs have tried it (albeit expensive), is develop brief video vignettes of water sector people (all levels) talking about my career, here's what someone in my position can earn, etc. and then take to a career fair, upload online/social media so that others may see this especially if the presentations are diverse and inclusive. Also, WEF has many committees so they may have a committee which may be interested in that. The CareerTech portion of our (Illinois WEA – Ed Jankun) InFLOW focuses on workers' and their work allowing students to choose a career path. WEF focuses on Engineers/Tech experts for presentations, but it would be great to have more operator staff in these presentations and in leadership positions.

**Summary Discussion:** Donnell Duncan

Thank you and I am proud of the fine work we have done!

**Closing Statement** – Ifetayo Venner

Thank you very much and for sharing. I was at WEA&T and saw what they are doing. If you have thoughts, please share them. Let us know what we can do to support your DE&I efforts. As noted in our strategic plan, this is a priority at WEF. Let us continue this conversation!

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