

**Leadership Day #5**  
Mobilizing DE&I in Your MA  
Thursday, January 29th, 2:00-4:00

**Dianne Crilley** (WEF Staff): Opening Remarks - Asked participants to mute their mics, turn their cameras on, use the chat and reminded the participants that this meeting is being recorded. Special thank you to Craig Kelman in support of this program.

**Jamie Eichenberger** (WEF President-Elect): Welcome everybody. I am excited about this topic. DE&I has been a focus of WEF for many years and underway with the Board when I joined. This is a long-term commitment for WEF. Our work began in 2018, when we updated our strategic plan to increase diversity within the water sector. The DE&I taskforce had some recommendations, including a permanent subcommittee that answers to the Board for DE&I and hiring of the Silvering Group. In my case, I participated in a Harvard-supported Implicit Bias study where I was, at first, angry and anxious regarding the results. Also, I am a middle-aged, white male and have never felt as if I have never belonged. Most everyone looked like me. I have become aware of things I have never been aware of which led me to ask the question, why am I up here talking about this at all? I want to be supportive, but who am I? What are some strategies where I can focus upon? I am blessed to have been with WEF along this path and learning about this. I need to put myself into situations which may be uncomfortable, open to listening and accepting feedback and criticism. As we embrace DE&I, there are going to be many opportunities for us to be uncomfortable. We need to make room for the tough conversations, learn from others and ourselves. And do not be afraid to be uncomfortable. In closing, WEF is revisiting our strategic plan and am excited about his process for WEF during the next 10-20 years.

**Chat in italics below:**

**Megan Schneider** (CA WEA): *Here's a link to the Harvard tool Jamie mentioned;*

*<https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html>*

**Megan Schneider** (CA WEA): *Implicit bias is not a bad thing. It is also what keeps you from touching a hot stove - your brain knows it is hot because of implicit bias!*

**Megan Schneider** (CA WEA): *Implicit bias can become hurtful/harmful when we are not aware of how they may influence how we think/ behave.*

**Megan Schneider** (CA WEA): -WEF Board of Trustee DEI Subcommittee Co-Chair: I appreciate the support from the Board of Trustees. We need their support as well as WEF staff and members. We have a few polls and would like your response. Results: About ½ of MA's have a DE&I Committee, about 15% do not have one but creating something and 25% have not started but talking about DE&I. Theme: There is not right/wrong way to do this, no end destination and a journey which goes on for the rest of our lives. It is ok to feel uncomfortable and it is part of this journey. Glad to know you are familiar with WEF's DE&I policy and website. If we want to be leaders as WEF members in the water industry, we must look in the mirror and be critical and look within. We thus started the HOD DE&I workgroup which Darnell Dunkin is the leader. In addition to the Board of Trustees subcommittee and the DEI HOD workgroup, we also have a staff working group. We want to hear the voices which are underrepresented. In 2020 we reviewed and affirmed our non-discrimination and harassment policies;

Walt signed an action letter and then in 2021 we also signed onto a policy on diversity and inclusion which we will share more about. We also created definitions about what DE&I means for WEF and those are in the link that Donnell Duncan and Laura provided. In closing, there are many resources on the why and the how and the Brookings Institution highlights the challenges of the water workforce. I encourage you to determine what works for your MA and ask Why & How, Where, and When. Create safe spaces for authentic conversations. Additionally, we encourage you to create an inventory of opportunities which is something which the subcommittee diving deep into-all the WEF programs and initiatives where we can create positive change.

**Chat in italics below:**

**Laura Childs** (WEF Staff): [www.wef.org/dei](http://www.wef.org/dei)

**Donnell Duncan** (GAWP): <https://www.wef.org/about/diversity-equity-and-inclusion/>

**Megan Schneider** (CA WEA): Podcast on Busting Bias at Work with Adam Grant:  
<https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/how-to-bust-bias-at-work/id1346314086?i=1000522109799>

**Megan Schneider** (CA WEA): Link to WEF podcasts on DEI: <https://www.wef.org/about/diversity-equity-and-inclusion/#actions>

**Megan Schneider** (CA WEA): Brookings Report on the Water Workforce:  
<https://www.brookings.edu/research/water-workforce/>

**Rebecca Losli**: Attached is the latest Board Report from the Missouri DEI Committee.

**Ifetayo Venner** (WEF Vice President): <https://www.wef.org/globalassets/assets-wef/1---about/about-wef/wef-public-policies/wef-diversity-equity-and-inclusion-policy.pdf>

**Megan Schneider** (CA WEA): Some facts to consider:

- \* Women in STEM majors tend to switch majors in college if they do not have a personal connection with a woman working in STEM
- \* Men are 8x more likely to get a job in STEM compared to women
- \* 50% of women in STEM careers leave their jobs within the first 12 years of their career in comparison to a rate of 20% of women in other careers
- \* At the current rate of change, we are 208 years away from equality between men and women in the US (<https://www.equalitycantwait.com/>)
- \* These points just scratch the surface of DEI opportunities. We have lots of opportunities to improve recruitment AND retention, which ultimately benefit our workforce resilience and innovation.

**Megan Schneider** (CA WEA): Another amazing resource on why DEI is important for sustainability, business, society, and beyond: <https://www.goldmansachs.com/our-commitments/sustainability/one-million-black-women/>

**Donnell Duncan** (GAWP): Quick rundown of what is going on with the HOD. The intent is to have parallel paths where we are working with the HOD & subcommittee to drive the outcomes we are looking for. Thank you to Nikita and the workgroup we have created. We've created 3 main categories: A survey of the MA's asking how many MA's had a focus on DE&I. About 77% said they were doing something due to the social unrest of 2020. The YP's are involved and a push to reflect on personal

stories. We have also created the toolkits which the HOD DE&I workgroup will work on preparing the resources that the MA's will need. Our intent is to take this working group and turn it into a permanent HOD committee so that we can continue to work on our efforts regarding DE&I from WEF national level trickling down to the MA's. We would also like to grow the In-Flow program and find a place to store in-Flow resources to use to develop an In-Flow program the HOD would have that within the WEF DE&I subcommittee. Need to shout out to Jeff Berlin, Susan Guswa, Debbie Lewis from CA, John Presta from WEA Ontario, Christy Steiner from Pacific NW & Peter Cavanaugh from Michigan. The framework for the starter kits for the MAs are: Part 1: What is DE&I? Definition and why the need of DE&I. How to? Very important. Need to have a plan and mission. Part 2: Identify the barriers. We are working on a DE&I brainstorming worksheet. Once the brainstorming worksheet is completed, you arrive at your barriers. Rocky Mountain will be testing out the worksheets for DE&I discussions for summer planning meeting on 16 July. Every MA should be able to work with their Delegate to figure out what is happening.

**Ifetayo Venner** (WEF Vice President): I am one of the Board Reps on the DE&I subcommittee. You will be more aware of the newest WEF DE&I policy approved by the Board in May. This policy was done in collaboration with Silvervine Group. We are the DE&I subcommittee, and we are working through the strategic plan for WEF but what does DE&I mean in the WEF context. And then when we get into the scope and what are we hoping to achieve, in terms of diversity, more recruitment and outreach, we are hoping this will be reflected with WEF membership and the Board and the CLC, WEF Staff, it is across the whole board. We also must look at what is our succession plan and developing our emerging leaders to make this happen. And inclusion; incorporating a lot of what we have heard in our surveys, but really looking at our content and programming to become more inclusive. This will go on for quite a few months as we work through our strategic plan. If you have any questions, we will be happy to take them.

**Rebecca Losli** (Missouri WEA): In the past I have heard about WEF's initiatives with HBCU's; how are the things we have done in the past meshing with what we (WEF) are doing today?

**Ifetayo Venner** (WEF Vice President): That is the In-Flow program to which you are referring to. It is our 4<sup>th</sup> year with one tract with 16 students from HBCU's and last year expanded to other underrepresented groups. Also partnered with groups in underserved communities and worked with job bank organizations which now exist in two different tracts. WEFTEC 2021 these programs will be back; both In-Flow and the STEM PATH programs. Our goal is to make these programs more successful and wider geographically.

**Fiona Grant** (Silverene Group): It is fascinating reading the survey comments and working with the focus groups. I am dividing my remarks into 3 categories, and I am going to start with the structure that it takes for an even to be as inclusive as it could be. I will talk about the content and finally about the social side as well. So, we did get some feedback in terms of the why we are talking about his at all. Events may happen to cater to engineers and expertise of the engineers and there may be some rigidity in this industry and that rigidity needs to be appropriate may not be the most welcoming thing. It may not change over night though. From an event planning perspective, like that the HOD focused on the metrics. You need to focus on the demo of the people who come and speak at the events and capture that information. It would be great if there were no more manels in WEF events (all male panels). How can WEF freshen them up to add a complete newbie possibly? How can we mix it up? So, data, data,

data is a great place to start. Track who and what you are working with and who else can you invite and/or partner with (Community College, for example). From an infrastructure perspective, what is the first thing that people see, have you a group of younger people that you run the flyer/wording past for inclusive language. Physically, do you have a registration staff which is diverse and looks like “them”. Logistically, you may wish to identify a staff person to whom someone can safely voice concern to if necessary. Maybe some kind of pin to ID someone as an “Ambassador” to whom someone can speak. From a youth perspective, you may wish to have ribbons which announce their pronouns. Thinking about the “what” the content, no matter how good it is, it is the Q&A afterwards is important to get the audience involved. The use of technical language could come down a notch possibly and still retain the meaning and relax the acronym standard. Use plain English when it can be used. Ask how you can train your moderators to call on a wide range of people. Ask what you can do to provide content to non-tech people specifically. Is there a way, from the content side, who maybe hasn’t been funded yet but who may wish to be heard. From a social perspective, and where liquor is involved, some folks may become “handsy” and there needs to be a “safe” person to approach and seek assistance if one deems it necessary. Organize event where liquor is not involved and not around just golf events, etc. Also, it does not have to be the women who organize the social events. Think about who on a committee is being assigned to doing what when it comes to MA committees and organizing events.

**Donnell Duncan** (GAWP): So where do we go from here now that we have some ideas of best practices for MA functions?

**Fiona Grant** (Silvering Group): We have a draft of suggestions for inclusive events and best practices which we are happy to share with any MA to be customized for an event.

### **Break Out #1**

**Questions:** What are best practices which you may be able to incorporate into your MA Events? Are there lessons you have learned which you can share with others?

### **Report Out**

**Participant:** We were in group 12, where we had reps from NM, NE, WDC and Canada, so other than myself and Atlantic Canada, no others had a DE&I program, but some were trying to get more operators involved.

### **Chat in italics below:**

**Laura Oakes** (Chesapeake WEA):

*Comment/Question - Trying to reach people who cannot hear - how do we accommodate that kind of capability into these events - to be truly inclusive? Using virtual platforms with dictation tools*

*Encourage broad range of folks to organize events - for example young professionals/students lead charge for social events.*

*Suggestion - 1st time speaking/moderating, pairing experienced professionals with young or less experienced; mentoring.*

*Having the conversation of what it means to everyone; things we have not thought about.*

*Technical session unconscious bias training at annual conference - Missouri WEA*

**Janet Cann** (WEA of South Carolina): *Be intentional in recruiting committee leaders.*

**Megan Yoo Schneider** (CA WEA): *We had a great discussion on the importance of following through on our invitations with genuine/authentic actions that mirror the invitation to participate/join.*

**Debi Lewis** (CA WEA): *Discussed a code of conduct.*

**Rebecca Losli** (Missouri WEA): *I heard that one MA is thoughtful on food offerings at events. For vegetarians, those with religious restrictions, etc.*

**Donnell Duncan** (GAWP): *Be intentional concerning who we place on the main stage during conferences and consider a more diverse slate of main speakers.*

**Debi Lewis** (CA WEA): *Discussed mentor/mentee relationship is bi-directional.*

**Kathryn Gies** (CA WEA): *Discussed ideas for non "golf" events - tours of local stormwater projects, hikes, social impact event (cleanup, planting, etc.)*

**Fiona Grant** (Silvering Group): *Also discussed providing coaching / training to introverts for speaking; or moving to more of an interview format rather than requiring 'presentations.*

**Fiona Grant** (Silvering Group): *Lastly, how to make more use of virtual - this was helpful for smaller facilities and operators.*

**John Trofatter** (WEF Board of Trustees): *Right on Stephen, opportunities for Operators beyond Ops Challenge.*

**Jeffrey Berlin** (Rocky Mountain WEA): *I was formerly on the Board of Baywork which is Bay Area association which tries to outreach to do staff development and candidate development. We are specifically speaking about workshop on wheels where we load up 50 people who normally do not attend WEFTEC, and take them to other facilities for hands on training by other staff in their exact positions who will give a 10 min talk and open it up to 30 minutes of Q&A. Works well in getting non-engineering folks and new staff together.*

**Ifetayo Venner** (WEF Vice President): *I would like to ask John to discuss WEF's code of conduct.*

**John Trofatter** (WEF Board of Trustees): *The Board created the ethics subcommittee as part of the committee this year and there is an effort to use a stakeholder group. A code of conduct has been created as well as a discipline policy which has been revised which will be submitted to the governance committee on 01 July meeting for Board to vote on after July Board meeting. After the July Board meeting, there will be an educational webinar to convey further information about that with the intent of MA who choose to implement it or adopt it, and to use, as necessary.*

**Ifetayo Venner** (WEF Vice President): *I will point out that we had DE&I review for that and then certainly with DE&I being a subcommittee to the governance committee was involved in the review as well. This is very comprehensive and very well done by John. I want to move forward to hearing from some of our MA's. We have got folks from Atlantic Canada and New York who have DE&I committees.*

**Stephen Sanders** – (NYWEA, DE&I Subcommittee): Our story began of June 2019. We were sitting on the patio of a hotel, and we thought we should start a DE&I Committee. We approached our Board about starting a committee. The Board thought we first form a task force. We let the task force guide if we are going to have a committee or not. We were asked what the committee is going to do. This was before the social unrest of 2020. We did prepare a mission statement. We needed to diversify and needed to say how we were going to do so. We needed guiding principles which were going to guide this taskforce. Highlights: To increase ethnic & gender diversity, integrate water quality professionals from underserved areas to the water profession and facilitate these conversations. We look to support the development of youth and inspire them. And wanted all workers in the water industry to have equal access to opportunities in our industry. We presented this to our Board, and it was approved. Now I am the Chair! We got some push back regarding equity in 2019. We sent out invitations to people to populate our group. With this initial group, we determined what we needed to set up to organize a committee. We asked how would this committee operate? How would it communicate with underserved groups, how would it relate to/with In-Flow, how do we foster an environment of belonging? At the end of the year, we recommended to the Board that we wanted to have a committee. Committee positions for 3 years, one Board member, one YP, one operator and one student and 5-6 at-large positions. Initial responsibilities; foster a sense of belonging to all members of the water sector, make In-Flow better, encourage operator engagement (let us make them a speaker), seek partnerships with Churches, community Groups, schools. We wanted to promote equity with regard to civil service. In 2020 we become a committee and no more push back regarding equity. We became a DE&I committee. We had our spring meeting in June and introduced our committee to the MA. We wanted to tackle In-Flow and reach out to a group in Syracuse, specifically youth interested in the environment and water.

**Dave Galbraith** (Atlantic Canada): Showed Media (included at wef.org)

#### **Questions from the above two presentations**

**Megan Schneider** (CA WEA): For those of the MA's who do not have forward thinking staff, how do you suggest an MA get started?

**Stephen Sanders** (NYWEA): We simply went out to recruit, specifically white/American males. The want is there but the "How" is the problem. WEF HOD toolkits will show us the "How". Start with the HOD toolkit and be patient.

**Megan Schneider** (CA WEA): Shared the link of a podcast of how white males can be allies and advocates.

**Doug Pike** (Pennsylvania WEA): When can we expect to receive the toolkits? By WEFTEC 2021

**Ken Vogt** (North Carolina WEA): How does one determine or measure if their organization is lacking in DE&I and how would the remedy this?

**Stephen Sanders** (NYWEA): We have seen the holes and things which were not getting attention as they should be. You need to speak with people that do not look like you. Have those conversations.

**Ifetayo Venner** (WEF Vice President): On the WEF end, we did decide to take a step back to find out where we were and brought in the Silvering Group and being open to hear about things as they come up. We set the tone for people to feel comfortable sharing.

**Donnell Duncan** (GAWP): We like to start out with the data gathering initiative.

## **Break Out #2**

**Question:** Are there lessons learned which you can share with others? And what are some of the actions you can take back to your MA?

## **Report Out**

**Participant:** We had dialogue about making sure we invite voices that are not represented in the room, talked about the cultural implications and sensitivity training.

**Amanda Bybee** (Missouri WEA): Continuing to say what we have been hearing...I came from a consultant firm; it was not necessarily inclusive if you were not an engineer, but it is nice to see they're trying to hear all voices.

## **Chat in italics below:**

***Megan Schneider** (CA WEA): Also look for voices that are not yet represented or in the room.*

***Megan Schneider** (CA WEA): Figure out why they are not there :)*

***Dave Galbraith** (Atlantic Canada): Amada Bybee had some great perspectives.*

***Janet Cann** (WEA of South Carolina): Survey's help establish your baseline, help define your direction, so energy can be devoted where it needs to be to make improvements.*

***Ifetayo Venner** (WEF Vice President): In my breakout Fred noted he took away the need to be intentional.*

**Megan Schneider** (CA WEA): Thanking Amada for her comments. We need to be more vocal about having the desire to have all water professionals be a part of the conversations and not just engineers and scientists nor operators. Janet Cann mentioned the surveys and Ifetayo said, "Be intentional". There are ways to create anonymous input or focus groups where people are comfortable sharing openly.

**Jamie Eichenberger** (WEF President-Elect): Closing Comments and Closing Poll - What did you gain from this session? Thank you again for taking the time. Take Away: Be intentional and making space/time for this as you did today. Stephen mentioned the "want" is there but the "how" is the problem. Many are interested in seeing that the toolkits are coming out. Take the steps which will begin the conversation. Regarding the Poll, many more participants were excited to discuss DE&I as today's session continued. Best practices from WEF would be welcome and this session found out that many more people want to become more involved. WEF's commitment will make its way down to the MA's and membership.

**Chat in italics below:**

*Jeffrey Berlin (Rocky Mountain WEA): Thanks all. Appreciate the good discussion.*

*Dave Galbraith (Atlantic Canada): thanks for Including Canada in the program... LOL*

*Rebecca Losli (Missouri WEA): Thank you so much for putting this together! Great ideas!*

*Megan Schneider (CA WEA): We love Canada, Dave!!!*

*Michael Martin (CSWEA): Thanks for the excellent session!*

*Kelsey Hurst (WEF Staff): Especially the lobster, Dave!*

*Madison Quinn (NY WEA): This has been an excellent discussion, Thank you all!!!*

*Jane Carlson (Central States WEA): Thanks!*

*Lisa Webb (Pennsylvania WEA): I am sorry I missed the second survey but today was great, THANK YOU*

*Brad Lovett (WEF Staff): Thank you, all*

*Leanne Scott (Clean Water Professionals of KY-TN): Today was great!*