WEF’s DE&I Leadership
SPEAKER INTRODUCTION

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WEF Leadership Roles:
- DE&I Subcommittee Co-Chair
- HOD Speaker-Elect
THE WEF DE&I JOURNEY

**WEFTEC 2018:** Launch of InFLOW pilot with 3 schools

**WEFTEC 2019:** Launch of Workforce Diversity and Inclusion Task Force

**September 2020:** Engagement of DE&I Consultant, Launch of Board of Trustees DE&I Subcommittee and HOD DE&I Workgroup

**WEFTEC 2021:** Upgrade to Board of Trustees DE&I Committee and launch of HOD DE&I Committee
Here are some common ways our brains create simplification from chaos:
1. We filter information from diverse perspectives, generalities, and prior biases.
2. We notice flaws in others more easily than we notice flaws in ourselves.
3. We are drawn to details that confirm our own existing beliefs.
4. We think we know what other people are thinking.

Why is this important?
1. Our decision making is not as objective as we think it is.
2. We tend to overestimate our influence on others, which may not lead to simple misunderstandings and misjudgments.

What can we do to mitigate against bias?
1. When making decisions about people, think twice before stating with certainty what others think.
2. Become aware of your personal biases and prejudices, and work to correct them.
3. Look for ways to identify and challenge group-think vulnerabilities.
4. Consider a "taster session" where meeting happen before important decisions to assess the group's biases.

Therefore, we can define racism as:

RACISM = RATIONAL PREJUDICE + INSTITUTIONAL POWER

While the idea of race was invented without any real biological basis, over time it has been used to construct systems that subjugate and oppress. Race was made very real through racism. These systems continue in many aspects of society.

Misconceptions
There is no such thing as a "dissimilar" person. Groups can be diverse, not individuals.

Even people who are color blind see light and color. You can’t not see skin color.

Since racism relies on hierarchies of power, reverse racism does not exist by definition.

Four Types of Racism

Individual racism refers to the idea that one person’s rights are superior to another’s.

Intergroup racism occurs between individuals from different group memberships.

Institutional racism occurs in organizations, those who possess power, privilege, and prestige that benefit one’s family or community, are unable to recognize or refuse to recognize overuse of power or racism.

Structural racism is the interplay and co-mingling of these racism types. These systems create privileges for white people resulting in disadvantages of people of color.

Microaggressions
Microaggressions are intentional or unintentional everyday slights, indignities, put-downs, and insults that members of marginalized or underrepresented groups experience. The name doesn’t do justice to the impact, which can be extremely hurtful.

Within our water community
This following examples have all been experienced by WEF members working in our industry. Often these are unintentional. A helpful principle in addressing such behavior is to help understand why the other person behaves that way.

Age/Youth
"There’s not enough experience to serve in that role" "You wouldn’t know anything about this" "It’s below your time."  "You’re so inexperienced. (in a woman’s voice)"  "Can I touch your hair?"

Race
"Where are you from?" "You don’t sound black." "You’re so articulate." "That’s so aggressive." (in a woman’s color)"

Gender
If people get a little corrective, they are either attacked or shut up. If people show that they are too young to be familiar with the work.

Racism as Microaggressions
I believe the most qualified person should get the job.

Types of Microaggressions
Microinsults: Neering the meanings and experiences of advantaged or privileged individuals.

Microviolents: Real or imagined slurs or actions that can be slightly covert.

Microassaults: Defamatory, defamatory comments or actions meant to harm the target.

Create Connections. Transform Tomorrow. 2022.
New: Inclusive Committee Leadership

Why does WEF need inclusive leadership?
- To facilitate learning from each other
- To maximize professional development
- To network outside of your geography and company
- To drive innovation

Committee Leadership sets the tone for WEF work

Leadership in committees and task forces sets the tone, and it directs the course of the work. It’s a team effort and requires a good mix of people, experience, and thought. As leaders, we must be willing to support all committee participants’ learning styles, facilitate work meetings in which everyone can contribute, and develop group rapport that invites challenges to bring their concerns forward in order to innovate.

Collaboratively develop agreed meeting norms, such as communication, decision making and application or involvement routines.

Determine how members join the group and make this information public and transparent.

Develop committee agreements that focus on mutual respect for example:
- Invite diverse perspectives
- Leave before responding
- Raise hands and wait to speak until called
- One person speaks at a time
- Leave before the “or four before more” rule of contribution is in effect
- Look and invite participants of those agreements at the beginning of each meeting.
- Consider appointing an usher for accountability.
- Repeat what others are welcoming to newcomers.
- Consider also a greater at the door and structurally allowing leadership at different scales.

I have definitely endeavored to be a much more understanding listener. I am more thoughtful in listening to understand rather than respond and to take time to process rather than providing a primarily emotional instead of thoughtful response.

Mona Kless, WEF Vice President

Active Facilitate the Meeting

Develop skilled facilitators, whether on the steering committees or within the general committee who can facilitate different topic discussions.

1. Develop norms for acknowledging contributions. Skillfully balances appreciation of comments depending on the context of the committee, e.g., “Thank you,” “I was impressed,” etc. or “Why do you think that’s the case?”
2. Manage the room to skillfully navigate dominant speakers. You may need to interrupt someone who is dominating the conversation by reminding them of group agreements and their need to yield other speakers, for example, “I’d like to invite folks who haven’t heard from you to share.”
3. Periodically step back to check-in with members. Do these committee meetings make sense? Does everyone have questions about what’s coming up? Are we learning from each other by sharing ideas, inviting all questions, comments, and suggestions.
INTRODUCTION

If you are reading this section, you are probably a committed volunteer for your Member Association (MA). As such, you are probably a Pathfinder. Anyone, beginning a journey into new territory understands that the right equipment will help them on the journey. This section presents ideas and information (tools) for leadership to consider when addressing DE&I for their MA.

A survey was conducted to learn from MAs, particularly regarding DE&I gaps and efforts in progress. Members of the Water Environment Federation’s House of Delegates DEI Workgroup then went to work to provide a series of tools that would share the best ideas and information available.

KEY SUCCESS FACTORS

Respondents to the DEI Survey identified the following factors as being key to their success:

• Engagement of Pathfinder members.
• Consistency in communication.
• Personal stories that enhance and make real the importance of the topic.
• Support and leadership from the MA Board.
• Structured and routine DEI committee meetings.
• Engaging Pathfinder members.
• Being realistic about what can be accomplished in a given period of time.
• The MA leadership must establish lines of communication and access to resources.

It takes multiple people pulling together and encouraging each other. This is really hard work. First and foremost, personally, and then beyond trying to address systemic long-standing issues. Tools, resources, and formal training is not enough, we need to see the people behind the topic. The people who are impacted, the faces of people who will benefit from this work being done now.
• Need for partnership with MA committees.
• Engagement of colleagues for INFLOW program.

WHAT IS DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION?

Diversity, equity, and inclusion are integral to the success of WEF. We believe that creating an inclusive and equitable organization is vital to ensuring that the diverse perspectives of our members are valued, respected, and considered. WEF believes that enhancing diversity with respect to race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, age, ability status, accent, socioeconomic status, cultural heritage and religion, parental status, marital status, personality type, political perspective, or any other characteristic of diversity allows us to better serve our members and the diverse water workforce.

Diversity, equity, and inclusion are not mutually exclusive and the success of one is dependent on the other. For instance, diversity without inclusion can result in tokenism, “checking off the box,” or systemically excluding those who are not perceived to be included. At the same time, equity is necessary to ensure the best outcomes from diversity and inclusion efforts. Therefore, these three definitions are interrelated and connected.

DIVERSITY

Diversity encompasses the variety associated with human ancestry, skin color, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, sexual identity, race, ethnicity, age, ability status, socioeconomic status, and many more. Each individual is a unique combination of all of these characteristics.

EQUITY

A commitment to equity means an organization intends to reduce (not remove) existing inequities because of these differences, recognizing that each person’s unique circumstances.

INCLUSION

The act of inclusion means an organization identifies the characteristics of the person; it means accepting the person for who they are in a safe environment, without fear, anxiety, judgment, or discrimination that is in the best interest of the WEF purpose.

Click to View WEF’s Board of Trustee’s commitment to DEI

WEP’s Board of Trustees has established a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Subcommittee to provide guidance on programs, communications, and membership. In 2020, WEF established the Minority Group to work with the subcommittee to develop a strategic plan for diversity, equity, and inclusion.
MA DE&I Starter Kit

THE BENEFITS OF DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION IN WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Against the backdrop of the WEF’s commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion in our organization, our industry is facing a number of significant challenges: widening development.

ASING WORKFORCE

As determined through the “40/40” of workforce figures is the number of employees and the size of the organization which to its size compared. Even more concerning, workers in this sector tend to be older at a median age of 42.2 years as compared to the national median of 42.2 years.

A LACK OF DIVERSITY

In 2018, 85 percent of the workers were male and two-thirds were white. This combined with rigidity in prevailing hiring procedures, and lack of training programs leads to difficulties in reaching out to new types of workers.

CHALLENGE OF RETENTION

Workers tend to migrate to areas of the country with a lower cost of living. These are clear indications of the need for a new talent pipeline, one that values the diverse perspectives of our work force and is representative of the communities that we serve.

THE WATER INDUSTRY HAS OPPORTUNITIES

Water’s work force includes nearly 12 million people involved in designing, constructing, operating, and governing the US water infrastructure. While operations, executives, and plumbers rank the largest occupations overall, and there are also workers involved in administration, finance, and management. Utilization of the diversity, equity, and inclusion toolkit components can help improve organizational outcomes and lead to positive impacts on workplace culture.

THE RESULT IS A BUSINESS CASE FOR DIVERSITY

While expanding the resource pool and reflecting the community in which we serve is of tremendous benefit, the McKinsey Report Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: Making a difference details how inclusion rates, a five-year study of 1200 large companies across 15 countries, provides evidence data on additional benefits of diversity.

Greater diversity, in terms of both gender and ethnicity, is correlated with significantly greater likelihood of outperforming.

- Competitive advantage: Companies whose boards are in the top quartile of gender diversity are 28% more likely to outperform their peers.
- Increased innovation and marketability of ideas.
- Diverse employee retention and increased job satisfaction.
- Increased commitment: Employees and volunteers who feel connected and included are more engaged and motivated.
- Positive business growth and development.
- 'Talent banks' are through the bottom line.
- Improving performance and increasing value.

Best practices are needed to foster diversity, equity, and inclusion in WEF and your member associations. This toolkit has been developed to support your efforts.

SPEAK WITH SOMEONE IN THE KNOW

The first step to take is to speak with someone who has taken the journey. Contact the water environment federation (WEF) diversity, equity, and inclusion (DE&I) team. They have knowledge and experience that will help you to create your goals, tactics, and with fewer voluntary tools.

UNDERSTAND YOUR NEEDS

Not all MAs are alike. Some are large and some are small. Some have staff and others do not. The diversity needs are different, and the DE&I Steering Committee is a small group that can help.

DESIGN AND IMPLEMENT YOUR PROGRAM

Follow this checklist to come up with a plan.

THE TOOLS

Tool No. 1: Inventory and Define DE&I for your Member Association

A four-hour training development and implemented DE&I leadership and toolkit that is designed to increase awareness of DE&I issues and offer policies, best practices, and tools.

Tool No. 2: Action Plan for Defining DE&I for your Member Association

This tool has many of the same ideas and concepts. Tool No. 2 is the extension tool that can be used to create your own curriculum. It is in this collaboration would you take fear in the DE&I planning process.

Tool No. 3: Stakeholder Committee: Equity Vision and Mission Statements

Tool No. 4: Best Practices

Tool No. 5: Program Guidance

Click to Learn More

CREATE CONNECTIONS. TRANSFORM TOMORROW. 2022
What’s New

MA Inclusive Events Best Practices (launching at WEFTEC)
First DE&I Focused WEFMAX
Additional Virtual Resources

Event Moderation

What Committee is right for me?
WEF EVENTS

1. All Conferences
   i. Gathering Speaker Demographics

2. Specialty Conferences
   i. Moderator Training
WEF NOMINATIONS

• Revamped the 2022 Nominations process to include DE&I considerations which will be reflected in the new slate of trustees and VP to be announced soon.
DE&I Coaching

• 6 Current and Emerging leaders were selected for a DE&I coaching program that is currently underway
DE&I Consultant worked with the Board on Psychological Safety and led a Design Thinking workshop with the Board during the board meeting at UMC.

Currently developing a Member/Volunteer DE&I Scorecard which allows us to measure our progress as an organization.
ANY QUESTIONS?