

Diversity & Inclusion Study finalized by IVY with a Strategic Plan

The 2019 Diversity & Inclusion Study has been finalized by IVY Planning Solutions LLC of Bethesda, Maryland and Levy Court has instructed staff to begin strategic plan implementation by developing a schedule for Commissioners' consideration along with regular progress reports. The report is posted on the County website in the Employee Portal under the Notices & Announcement tab or click:

<http://www.co.kent.de.us/personnel/employee-portal.aspx>

The purpose of the study was to complete an independent analysis of Kent County's human resources processes and develop a comprehensive diversity and inclusion strategy that is consistent with the goals of the organization resulting in an actionable written report.



The study started late last summer with a series of focus group meetings and interviews with employees, managers, department heads and citizens conducted by IVY consultants Zaineb Haider and Dina Abercrombie. Later, IVY reviewed previous diversity studies, position testing materials, recruitment and selection processes and procedures, and various demographic reports to develop a variety of recommendations and ultimately the strategies to achieve better workforce representation.

The IVY presentation to Levy Court (*copy located on the Employee Portal*) summarized the Study Findings as follows:

D&I Progress

- When compared to the DE CLF, representation of female employees has improved in 2017 & 2018.
- While still below the minimum representation threshold, the representation rate for POC employees has been higher in 2016-2018 than it was during any earlier year evaluated, 1996-2018.
- Diverse slates - by race and gender - are used during the applicant screening process.

Strengths

1: Overall, department leaders were eager to contribute their voice to this assessment, were excited about this D&I effort, and were open to change that will bring improvements in KCLC's D&I efforts.

2: Employees easily mentioned several awards that KCLC gives in appreciation of their work and service.

3: Many employees easily mentioned several reasons why they stay at KCLC.

4: Health benefits start the first month after an employee is hired.

5: KCLC offers tuition reimbursement (75% of tuition costs for job-related education) and encourages employees to advance their education/skills.

6: KCLC regularly conducts compensation and benefit studies to determine the County's competitive position.

7: Of the six KCLC departments, women are department heads of three departments.

D&I Environment (E)

- E1: Most participants expressed the need for the KCLC workforce to reflect the demographic diversity of the community that they serve.
- E2: More women than men shared the belief that D&I enables better business results.
- E3: Several participants in the White Male focus group perceived D&I as not including them.
- E4: While most people of color expressed being satisfied in their job, some are not able to fully be themselves at KCLC.
- E5: A disassociation between diversity and qualifications exists with some employees.
- E6: The name “Kent County Levy Court” misidentifies the organization consequently, this can impede KCLC’s desire to recruit more racial/ethnic diversity.

Recruiting Life Cycle – Posting (R)

- R1: The short length of time of a typical external posting and inflexible test dates can be barriers.
- R2: Recruiting efforts are low.
- R3: More White employees than POC employees learned about their open position from connections/word of mouth.
- R4: A heavy focus on internal promotions contributes to the lack of racial/ethnic diversity in leadership.
- R5: Hard-to-fill positions are either not available or seldom available on well-known external career search engines or they refer applicants to apply on websites that do not work.

Recruiting Life Cycle - Screening (S)

- S1: The “blind” application process at KCLC is not achieving greater racial/ethnic diversity representation.
- S2: Information needed to evaluate the qualifying exams for potential adverse impact based on gender, race and ethnicity is not available. Therefore, we are not able to evaluate these assessments for possible adverse impact based on gender, race and ethnicity.
- S3: We did not identify any job analysis or validation work linking KCLC's applicant assessments to job requirements. Therefore, we aren't able to determine whether the tests are appropriately difficult, job relevant, or fair.

Recruiting Life Cycle - Interviewing (I)

- I1: Inconsistencies in the interview process can result in outcomes that can further impact the number and diversity of candidates that may proceed to hiring.

ATS Analysis (A)

- A1: Applicant tracking procedures are not sufficient for measuring and tracking equal employment opportunity per EEOC guidelines.

- A2: Based on the available data, it appears as though women and POC are applying for KCLC jobs but are not making it through the screening and/or interview stage as often as one would expect based on their availability.

Performance Management (P)

- P1: Inconsistent experiences exist in ongoing performance management.

Leadership (L)

- L1: Across demographic lines, many KCLC employees do not view the Personnel Office as a place they can go for resources or support.
- L2: Two leadership barriers stand in the way of D&I success at KCLC: 1) There is a disconnect between leadership's desire to advance D&I efforts and in their impact/results and 2) There is a lack of accountability in leadership owning D&I efforts.

The Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) Strategic Plan developed by IVY provides an actionable roadmap to implementing Recommendations from the D&I Assessment. While there are correlations between the Recommendations and roadmap, the plan is intended to stand on its own as the longer term plan for D&I at Kent County Levy Court.

GOAL 1: Improve diverse talent pipelines, sourcing & technologies to support the employee lifecycle

- Strategy 1 –Improve KCLC's reputation as an employer of choice for diverse talent
- Strategy 2 –Enhance diversity recruiting through strategic partnerships
- Strategy 3 –Improve applicant tracking process and tools
- Strategy 4 –Enhance the interview and testing process
- Strategy 5 –Review and update online and print media to include language that demonstrates commitment to D&I
- Strategy 6 –Incorporate succession planning for key roles

GOAL 2: Enhance commitment and accountability to advance diversity and inclusion

- Strategy 1 –Develop D&I organizational goals that cascade to leadership as the way to accountability and inclusion
- Strategy 2 –Hold staff accountable to the D&I strategy, goals, and measurements
- Strategy 3 –Strengthen D&I awareness and expertise among all leaders through learning opportunities
- Strategy 4 -Improve Performance Management and Annual Assessment Tool
- Strategy 5 -Capture and track employee feedback and engagement

GOAL 3: Build a culture of inclusion

- Strategy 1–Build a D&I Implementation and Accountability Team
- Strategy 2 –Enhance internal employee KCLC communications to demonstrate greater commitment to inclusion

- Strategy 3 –Enhance D&I Training
- Strategy 4 –Facilitate on-going D&I discussions to assess progress and maintain feedback loop

IVY has 28 years of experience with a proven track record of managing complex projects and maintaining high quality client relationships for large and small public sector and private sector organizations. IVY conducted a comprehensive diversity and inclusion study of the State of Delaware Executive Branch in 2016. IVY's co-founders have been named as Top 25 consultants by *Consulting* magazine, one of the top 500 woman-owned U.S. companies by DiversityBusiness.com, has testified by U.S. Congressional subcommittees, etc.

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