USAID Executive Diversity Council Communication and Outreach Strategy

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INTRODUCTION

Major organizational changes succeed when a few key factors are in place. One of these factors is securing strong support from the highest ranks of the organization. USAID is fortunate to have such support as demonstrated by the efforts of the Executive Diversity Council and the active involvement of the Agency's Administrators over the course of the past 26 months. As a result of this leadership, and the strong contribution put forth by the Offices of Human Resources and Equal Opportunity Programs, significant advances have been made as the Agency strives to achieve a diverse workforce, and a workplace conducive and supportive of such a workforce. These inroads are born out in demonstrated improvements in workforce perspectives as measured through the Agency's June 2007 Diversity and Inclusiveness Survey, and reported in the September *2007 Diversity and Inclusiveness Survey Results and Analysis Report*. Similarly, gains have been achieved in the Agency's workforce demographics, as noted in the *2007 Workforce Demographic Analysis Report*.

The Executive Diversity Council (*Council*), and the Offices of Human Resources (*HR*) and Equal Opportunity Programs (*EOP*) have labored to truly institutionalize diversity as an Agency core value, working to institutionalize and embed a commitment, and supporting framework, within the organizational fabric of the Agency. To this end, the Council, HR, and EOP have put in place, emphasized, or enhanced a number tools and programs to assist employees in their career development and advancement, and managers and executives in improving their diversity profiles. These efforts have been extensive, and the results significant. At the same time, they have not reached their full potential. The September *2007 Diversity and Inclusiveness Survey Results and Analysis Report* noted that in 2007, when asked for the first time whether they were aware of the new diversity initiatives being conducted by the Agency, over three quarters of all employees, two thirds of the Civil Service, and three quarters of the Foreign Service were not aware of the Agency's new diversity initiatives. That said, the Agency's gains have never the less been built on a foundation of less than one quarter of the entire workforce being aware of the Agency's new diversity initiatives. This foundation must be built upon, allowing the successes to be leveraged Agency-wide. It is thus imperative that internal communication and outreach efforts be dramatically enhanced to ensure that the Agency's new diversity initiatives are being effectively implemented Agency-wide.

TARGET AUDIENCE

The target audience for this Executive Diversity Council Communication Strategy is the entire USAID workforce.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this communications strategy are as follows:

- Inform employees about the Executive Diversity Council and new diversity initiatives.

- Highlight advances made, reporting progress made in implementation of the Agency's annual Diversity and Inclusiveness Action Agenda, as well as report gains made as measured in workforce perceptions and demographics.

- Recognize high-performing employees of diverse backgrounds, posting profiles of successful USAID affinity group members, minorities and women on the USAID and Executive Diversity Council website, in Front Lines, and in other media.

- Enhance employee understanding of the bases surrounding different employment categories, addressing perceived inequities.

- Ensure that Bureaus and Independent Offices are informed champions of the Agency's efforts to advance its diversity agenda.

- Ensure that Missions are aligned and well-integrated in the Agency's efforts to advance its diversity agenda, ensuring that the Agency's efforts extend well-beyond USAID Washington and are exemplified and championed within all reaches of the Agency.

- Ensure the Agency's affinity groups are engaged as partners in development and implementation of the Agency's diversity and inclusiveness action agenda.

- Create a forum for productive, two-way communication to occur between the Council and USAID employees.

KEY MESSAGES

The following messages should be conveyed throughout the spectrum of diversity and inclusiveness communication activities:

- USAID has a proud history and a proud vision statement, proclaiming valuing diversity as an Agency core value, and its commitment to achieving a diverse workforce, and a workplace conducive and supportive of such a workforce: *"USAID is creating a workplace environment where every employee is valued and accepted, where management practices are inclusive rather than exclusive, and where differences are not only accepted, but are utilized to strengthen Agency performance."*[1]

- USAID embraces a very broad and inclusive vision of diversity, extending well beyond mere legislative compliance, and is working to serve as a model agency within the U.S. government for advancing diversity and inclusiveness.

- The Agency's diversity strategy as led by the Diversity and Inclusiveness Action Agenda, is a live document, with concrete objectives, timelines and action agents, as well as processes for analysis and evaluation, ensuring the Agency's diversity strategy evolves and adapts in response to a constantly changing landscape.

- Through successful implementation of the Agency's diversity strategy, USAID is building on the Agency's efforts to embody a diverse workforce, supportive and encouraging of a wide range of perspectives, thereby increasing creativity, ideas and solutions, and further establishing itself as an example of **strength through diversity**.

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[1] http://www.usaid.gov.pubs/sourcebook/usgov/div.html

- The Agency cannot succeed in advancing diversity and inclusiveness without the support and contributions of the entire USAID workforce, but especially not without the strong, sustained leadership of the Office of the USAID Administrator in concert with the Chairperson of the Council.

STRATEGIES AND TACTICS

The five strategic activity areas listed below represent broad areas, which if implemented concurrently, will support multiple communication inputs ensuring visibility for the Agency's diversity and inclusiveness agenda, secure senior support for these activities, and create an ongoing dialog within the workforce critical to workforce engagement and support of USAID's effort to be a model agency for advancing diversity and inclusiveness. The specific tactics recommended under each strategic activity area, if implemented in intervals, will ensure a sustained, ongoing message is delivered, as well as successful execution of each Strategic Activity Area.

Strategic Activity Area #1 – Demonstrated Administrator Commitment

Present clear and sustained communications demonstrating sustained commitment by the Administrator to advancing diversity and inclusiveness.

Demonstrated and unquestioned support and commitment from the top is critical to sending a clear message to managers and supervisors about the seriousness and business relevance of a diverse workforce and a workplace supportive of diversity and inclusiveness. Sustained demonstration of this commitment will combat workforce skepticism and ensure advancement of the Agency's diversity agenda remains a visible priority initiative, amongst many competing calls on employees' time. High-level involvement, support and commitment must convey the expectation of cooperation, involvement and commitment on the part of managers, supervisors and employees at all levels.

Tactics

The platforms for demonstrating this level of Administrator support are numerous. Below are proposed options that can be implemented in sequence, ensuring ongoing communication.

✓ Administrator speaks to Equal Employment Opportunity and Non-Discrimination Policy Statement on an annual basis.

✓ Incorporate cornerstone Diversity and Inclusiveness reports (e.g., September *2007 USAID Diversity and Inclusiveness Survey Results and Analysis Report*; February *2007 USAID Workforce Demographic Analysis Report*) into Administrator communications, showcasing Administration commitment to diversity and inclusiveness, and serving to highlight these documents and promote an ongoing dialog with all employees.

✓ Distribute videotaped message from Administrator Agency-wide. Upon distribution, message to be hosted on Executive Diversity Council website.

✓ Post streaming video from Administrator on timely issues related to diversity and inclusiveness on Executive Diversity Council website.

✓ Publish dedicated feature on diversity and inclusiveness from the Administrator in every edition of Front Lines.

✓ Ensure senior representation at commemorative observances demonstrating visible commitment and support.

Strategy Activity Area #2 – Multimedia Materials

Present multimedia materials supporting diversity and inclusiveness activities, communicating the objectives and activities of the Executive Diversity Council as they work to advance the Agency's diversity and inclusiveness agenda.

Tactics

✓ Distribute Diversity and Inclusiveness brochure in USAID Washington as well as in Missions, highlighting USAID's commitment to diversity and inclusiveness, detailing its diversity and inclusiveness activities and accomplishments, and serving as an informational resource for employee involvement, support and input.

✓ Display collection of four Diversity and Inclusiveness posters, communicating the objectives of the Executive Diversity Council, and informing and motivating current staff of the Council's work to advance the Agency's diversity and inclusiveness agenda.

✓ Maintain an engaging, interactive Executive Diversity Council website on the USAID intranet as a means to communicate the Council's activities as it works to advance the Agency's Diversity and Inclusiveness Action Agenda. The website should support a two-way dialog, allowing a means for all employees with access to the USAID intranet to submit comments and questions on the subject of diversity and inclusiveness for the Council's consideration and response. The Council must designate a permanent representative responsible for website maintenance and to field requests/comments registered there.

✓ Endeavor to employ diversity and inclusiveness computer pop-ups highlighting key activities and accomplishments.

✓ Distribute Executive Diversity Council pins at Executive Diversity Council public meetings and at special events in USAID Washington and overseas.

Strategic Activity Area #3 – Bureau and Independent Office Involvement

Engage Bureau and Independent Office senior-level support for the Council's work to advance the Agency's diversity and inclusiveness agenda.

Tactics

✓ HR and EOP should brief each Bureau and Independent Office's management team individually, discussing their specific workforce demographic profiles, as well as those tools, policies and programs put in place to assist managers and executives in improving their diversity profiles.

✓ Council Chairperson to present updates on diversity and inclusiveness at senior staff meetings on a quarterly basis, timed in anticipation of upcoming Executive Diversity Council public meetings, encouraging senior managers, and broad workforce attendance at EDC public meetings.

✓ Executive Diversity Council public meetings to be hosted quarterly, and incorporate panel discussions and keynote speakers on key diversity issues.

Strategic Activity Area #4 – Agency Affinity Group Involvement

Engage Agency Affinity Group support in the development and implementation of the Executive Diversity Council's Annual Action Agenda.

Tactics

✓ Host annual roundtable with Agency Affinity Group presidents to solicit their group's support and involvement for the Executive Diversity Council, fostering two-way communication between affinity group members and the Council.

✓ Executive Diversity Council Speaker Series cosponsored on rotating basis in coordination with Agency Affinity Groups.

Strategic Activity Area #5 – Executive Diversity Council Members as Champions

Engage Executive Diversity Council Members as champions for the advancement of diversity and inclusiveness.

Tactics

✓ Executive Diversity Council members (senior representatives from the Administrator's Office, Offices of Human Resources, Equal Opportunity Programs, the Management Bureau, and rotating attendance including others at the Deputy Assistant Administrator level) to sponsor and pilot diversity and inclusiveness initiatives (e.g., pilot Upward Mobility Program in specific Bureau), demonstrating active leadership and setting the tone within their Bureaus.

✓ Executive Diversity Council members to discuss activities and accomplishments of Executive Diversity Council activities with their staff at Bureau all-hands meetings.

✓ One Executive Diversity Council member to be assigned to each affinity group. Council member to attend minimum of one affinity group meeting per quarter. Council member to participate in discussion of affinity group's specific issues and work to identify means of

greater integration with Council activities. Council Member to then report out to the Executive Diversity Council at the next monthly meeting.

✓ Track and report to the Administrator Executive Diversity Council member attendance at monthly meetings, ensuring active involvement by all members.

CONCLUSION

Recognizing the Survey Report's conclusion that, *"to truly leverage its efforts for maximum success, the Agency must make effective communication and outreach a priority for 2008,"* this communication strategy, if effectively implemented, will go a long way in engaging the entire workforce towards championing diversity and inclusiveness, advancing the Agency's Diversity and Inclusiveness Action Agenda, and ensuring that all employees feel valued and included. By doing so, employee morale, commitment and motivation will be enhanced, and the Agency will be better able to capitalize on the array of ideas, creativity and potential contributions inherent in a diverse workforce. Effective implementation of this communication strategy will maximize the effect of the Executive Diversity Council, HR and EOP's efforts, and the Agency will be better able to achieve its mission, serve its diverse constituents, and be a model U.S. government agency for fostering a diverse workforce and a workplace conducive to advancing diversity and inclusiveness. Indeed, USAID/Washington should be a showcase for the Agency's overseas missions in demonstrating both the business case for diversity and inclusiveness, as well as communicating that it is, most importantly, the right thing to do.