

Background

The Better Buildings Workforce Accelerator (BBWA) is a DOE initiative seeking to raise the level of building science and energy efficiency knowledge in the nation's building-related workforce. Through the BBWA, DOE engages industry partners in activities that build interest and awareness, streamline pathways, and improve skills for people pursuing green building careers.

Assuring a strong, sizable, and skilled workforce nationwide requires industry organizations to expand their diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) efforts. To support BBWA partners in achieving their DEI-related goals, BBWA hosted a Peer Exchange event in April of 2021 to provide partners with tailored and actionable resources.

This fact sheet distills valuable insights and resources from the event to support green building trainers and employers in reaching, onboarding, and retaining a diverse workforce.



Key Insights

The following summarizes key points from the event presenters.

▶ **Biased systems have left some people out of good job opportunities.**

Individual biases become systemic over time as they impact how policies and programs are developed, designed, and evaluated. Reaching people that are underrepresented or under-promoted in the green building industry requires considering how current recruitment and onboarding processes work and identifying changes that can increase awareness and reduce unnecessary hurdles.

▶ **Expand networks through collaboration with other organizations.**

It can be challenging to connect meaningfully with people that may be outside of an individual or organization's existing professional and social networks. Fortunately, there are many community-based organizations and educational institutions that have built those relationships. Identifying, engaging and partnering with organizations such as Minority Serving Institutions, Historically Black Colleges and Universities, veterans' organizations, community service organizations, corps member programs, and others can be instrumental for reaching and recruiting larger and more diverse networks.

▶ **Organizational culture is vital for retention.**

People are loyal to culture, not business strategies. Whether in work or training environments, strive to create and maintain a culture of respect, support and belonging. Approaches that can help in this include DEI trainings for staff, employee resource groups, mentoring opportunities, and employee assistance programs.

▶ **Setting goals helps guide expanded efforts and resources.**

It is important to set DEI goals for your organization to guide efforts and track progress and effectiveness. However strict numerical hiring targets can create their own bias. Broader recruitment goals and soft hiring targets can help ensuring new job postings are reaching diverse audiences. Goals should also not be static – regular evaluation and collecting quantitative and qualitative feedback is essential to inform program improvements. Consider hiring or dedicating a staff person to your organization to focus on DEI programs and policies.

▶ **Listening and learning are essential.**

We can never fully eliminate unconscious bias, but we can mitigate its impacts. The remainder of this document identifies steps and resources to help understand bias at an individual and organizational level and improve processes to address these biases. Taken together, these efforts can support a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive green buildings industry.

What can you do to improve DEI in your work?

1. Assess your personal biases.
2. Evaluate organization's culture.
3. Establish DEI benchmarks for where your organization is today.
4. Work collaboratively to set DEI goals.
5. Build relationships with and learn from the communities you want to engage.
6. Track, evaluate, and celebrate your progress.

Table 1. DEI Resources for individual, programmatic, and organization assessment and education

Resource Name	Description
DEI Evaluation Tools	
Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool	National mapping tool for disadvantaged communities, to help evaluate the equity of your participants, staff, or outreach from a geographic perspective.
DEI Self-Assessment	Free assessment tool developed by Harvard to help you explore your strengths and growth areas in learning related to DEI.
Implicit Bias Test	Free tests developed by Harvard to assess your own biases.
Job Listing Gender Decoder	Website for checking subtle linguistic gender-coding in job descriptions that could have a discouraging effect on applicants.
DEI Resource Guide	Summary of DEI organizational assessment tools.
Research, Reports, and Articles	
A Step-by-Step Guide to Transform Diversity & Inclusion into Anti-Racism	Guide by Lily Zheng to help companies and organizations dig deeper and more meaningfully into programs and policies that support DEI.
Building a More Diverse, Equitable and Inclusive Energy Efficient Workforce	NREL report including analysis, case studies, and recommendations for developing effective DEI programs for the energy efficiency workforce.
Expanding Opportunity Through Energy Efficiency Jobs	ACEEE report with strategies to ensure a more resilient, diverse workforce.
From Intention to Action: Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in Building Efficiency	Panel presentation on actions the clean energy field is taking to increase DEI, from the US Department of Energy's Building Technologies Office 2020 Peer PReview event.
The State of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion in Talent Transformation	Beamery report on DEI survey, with solutions and success stories.
These Factors Drive Black Men Out of Engineering School	Findings and solutions from an Iowa State University study.
What Works	University of Massachusetts report on evidence-based ideas to increase diversity, equity and inclusion in the workplace.
Why Traditional Recruiting Pipelines Don't Work	Race at Work podcast episode.
13 Novel Strategies for your Next D&I Recruiting Program	Rakuna blog with tactics for creating a successful diversity recruiting program at your organization.

For more information and resources on the Better Buildings Workforce Accelerator, visit the [Better Buildings Workforce Development portal](#).