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BLAINE COUNTY

Sustainability & Climate Program



HOSTED BY:

**BLAINE COUNTY
CITY OF KETCHUM
CITY OF HAILEY**

**DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION
WORKSHOP REPORT**

HELD ON APRIL 20-21, 2022

DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION WORKSHOP

During the November Advisory Committee meeting, members recommended that the county provide training and tools on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) to all volunteer committee members. DEI training can increase awareness and understanding of unconscious bias and other barriers to creating a more inclusive community in which all members enjoy a sense of belonging.

Research demonstrates the positive impact that diversity, equity, and inclusion have on the performance of government agencies—improved teamwork, better decision-making, more innovation, and an increase in equity in services and investments across communities. Corporations have found that DEI training helps employees avoid cultural mistakes, improves employee recruitment and retention, increases innovation, strengthens profitability, and enhances business reputation.

"The first step towards getting somewhere is to decide that you are not going to stay where you are."

– Chauncey Depew

COMMUNITY WORKSHOP

In an effort to provide knowledge and training on creating a more inclusive community, Blaine County and the City of Ketchum hosted a two-day workshop on the topic of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI). Presented by Whitney Mestelle, the founder of Inclusive Idaho, and Luis Alberto Lecanda, former board member for Inclusive Idaho, community members were led through the workshop with a discussion and collaboration-based approach.

The training covered many topics including implicit and explicit biases, how to foster self-awareness, barriers and challenges to building inclusive spaces, and how to confront racial injustices. By the end of the workshop, participants had a first-hand look at how to advance diversity, equity, and inclusion in all spheres of the Blaine County community and even began developing DEI project proposals.

Thirty community members attended the training including members for the Sustainability and Climate Advisory Committee, members of all four task forces formed, and employees for Blaine County, the cities of Ketchum and Hailey as well as staff from local agencies, businesses, and nonprofit organizations.

The following report covers the main goals, takeaways, discussion points, and project proposals of the two-day workshop.

WORKSHOP GOALS

- 1. To learn how to make Blaine County a more inclusive community.***
- 2. To identify and discuss barriers and challenges to accomplishing the first goal.***
- 3. To develop action-based project ideas for making our community more inclusive and equitable.***

WORKSHOP SUBSTANCE

Characteristics of Inclusive Communities

There are three characteristics that every inclusive community promotes among all community members. These are connection, belonging, and voice.

In an inclusive community, there is an authentic and meaningful connection between all groups of people no matter their race, culture, identity, or level of ability. When a community is inclusive there is an inherent sense of belonging that spans all groups of people.

In an inclusive community all people have a voice, are heard, and their perspectives and opinions are valued.

Barriers to Inclusivity

The barriers to creating an inclusive community are unconscious bias, micro-aggressions, gender expectations, and a lack of cultural humility.

Self-Awareness

Self-awareness is a key part of dismantling systems of oppression and exclusivity and building spaces that are welcoming and uplifting.

Expanding Connection

Participants identified how a network of connections can be unintentionally exclusive when there is an over reliance on a select few people, something that can easily happen in local government settings. When community members are intentional about inviting underrepresented individuals to the table, they expand that network and create a more inclusive workspace.

Practices to Build an Inclusive Community

Practices that help to create inclusive spaces include:

- Being present and developing real

DEFINITIONS

Inclusive climate action starts with a process where everyone's voice is represented.

Diversity – the presence of differences that may include race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, ethnicity, nationality, socioeconomic status, language, disability, age, religions commitment, or political perspective.

Equity – promoting justice, impartiality and fairness within the procedures, processes, and distribution of resources by institutions or systems.

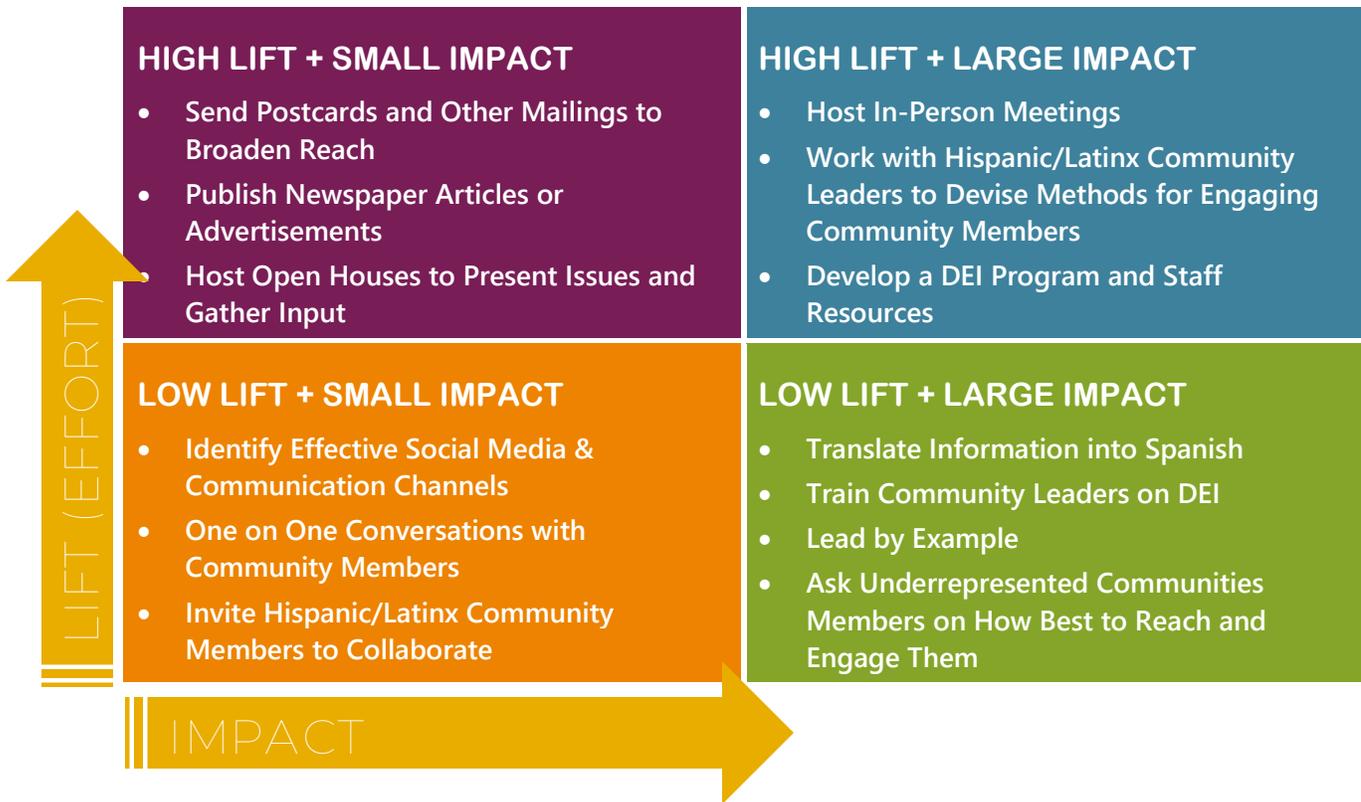
Inclusion – An outcome to ensure those that hold historically excluded identities actually feel and are welcomed. Inclusion outcomes are met when an entity is truly inviting to all. To the degree to which minoritized individuals are able to participate fully in the decision-making processes and development opportunities within a community, organization or group.

Implicit Bias – Stereotypes and attitudes we hold towards people without our awareness or conscious knowledge.

Explicit Bias – An enhanced or more direct bias in which we hold and perpetuate attitudes or stereotypes.

relationships with those around you, especially those who have a different cultural or racial background.

- Embracing the discomfort and challenging ourselves to take action.
- Speaking up when you witness oppressive language, racist micro-aggressions, and exclusive practices.
- Asking questions and authentically listening to one another. Having authentic conversations helps us to break down barriers and dismantle stereotypes.
- Recognize that we all have knowledge gaps and that learning is continuous. When a



- mistake is made be accountable, apologize, and don't fall into shame, make the commitment to learn from the experience and keep trying.

SURVEY OF DISCUSSION

The first major discussion started with participants anonymously submitting answers to several questions. Below is a selection of the questions and answers to demonstrate insightful observations made about diversity, equity and inclusion in our community.

What is your vision for inclusion in your work and community?

Leaders will look different than they have historically.

People will arrive feeling welcome and leave feeling a sense of belonging and accomplishment.

Working-class people have a sense of belonging, have a voice, have affordable and stable places to live.

Equal opportunities for all the youth in our communities.

Making government services more accessible and inclusive for all county residents.

Creating a safe space for everyone to participate and have a say in the future of their community.

What indicators will show the progress you are looking for in your work and community?

Receiving feedback, recommendations, and inclusion from employees and community members that we haven't heard from historically.

Wages will be equalized.

Acknowledgment of biases held toward people of different economic classes (including the affinity bias toward people who have generational wealth and privilege) and work to dismantle those biases demonstrated by resources and programs created to benefit working people and families.

A real change in demographics of both workplace and community events that represent the entire community.

What apprehensions are you holding about building equity in your work and community?

My own personal lack of knowledge in the space and not wanting to misrepresent people or hurt people by not knowing how to go forward with a conversation.

Fear of community retaliation around changing entrenched systems of inequity.

Pushback from the privileged mindset who don't understand why "those" people need or want what they do.

How to actually find the people that feel excluded and make sure they feel heard.

Not fully understanding how to best reach out to underrepresented individuals and encourage engagement.

How to create spaces that are welcoming.

Where do you feel there is the most room for improvement in regard to DEI in your community?

Recognize all areas in the county not just the upper county. Activities could be done in Carey, Picabo, and Gannet to educate residents about things going on at the county.

Equitable wages.

A better understanding of indigenous populations' feelings around the land here. What can those in power do to honor and support these groups?

A roadmap to start seriously wrangling resources and ticking off milestones.

Translation. Hardly anything is translated into Spanish.

Desire to engage different demographics, even if they are not voters.

Education of the public on the challenges different folks face.

Do you or how can you celebrate the diversity of ideas and people in your community?

Take the time to understand all employees and their backgrounds.

Get out of our comfort zone and speak with members of the community we wouldn't normally.

Recognize those who provide recommendations and involvement in decisions.

Try to listen and ask questions.

Leave space for all voices in the room so that the most expansive thought process can come into a project.

Creating culturally conscious events and celebrations in our community.

Ask people around us "how can we celebrate your culture?"

Thank under-represented groups for showing up when they do and for lending their perspective and ideas.





DEI - Blaine County Sustainability

What is your vision for inclusion in your work & community?



That the conversation won't be about who deserves what, like who deserves a home.

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Being able to ask Latinos what it is they need, and want. By involving them in the conversations and the work. Latinos don't want things to be built or created for them they want to be part of it.

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That we all recognize we're newcomers here

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Leaders will look different than they have historically.

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People will arrive feeling welcome and leave feeling a sense of belonging and accomplishment.

What indicators will show the progress you are looking for in your work & community?



Receiving feedback, recommendations, and inclusion from employees and community members that we haven't heard from historically.

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Wages will be equalized.

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When things get uncomfortable & we pose questions for which the answers are unclear or murky

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When there's pushback. That's a clear indication that there's progress. Haterz gonna hate. ;P

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Acknowledgement of biases held toward people of different economic classes (including the

What apprehensions are you holding about building equity in your work & community?



My own personal lack of knowledge in the space and not wanting to misrepresent people or hurt people by not know how to go forward with a conversation.

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There is a deeply ingrained stigma toward "workers" in the WRV, most pervasive toward people earning the lowest incomes, but also present toward all people who have to work for a living. For example, affordable housing efforts that target up to 120% of AMI but don't acknowledge working households earning up to 200% (and beyond) of AMI struggle to attain and retain housing when said household's earners don't have access to generational family assistance for a downpayment, etc.

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It's hard. Process takes time. Often those with power grab hold of the process and those w less power give up & go home.

Where do you feel there is the most room for DEI improvement in your community?



Everywhere

Mainly I think the county needs to recognize all areas in the county not just upper county. Activities could be done in lower county including Carey, Picabo, Gannet areas to educate them about things going on in the county.

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Understanding that the formal process of govt/community participation is unattractive/anathema to many, so the formal process must include less formal processes for participation. ("Notice" on social media & such)

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Equitable wages.

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Acceptance and

Do you or how can you celebrate diversity of ideas & people in your community?



Read aloud Facebook comments in formal meetings.

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Encourage participation in all aspects of local culture, government, etc. Outreach.

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Take the time to understand all employees and their backgrounds.

Get out of your comfort zone and speak with members of the community you wouldn't normally associate with.

Recognize those who provide recommendations and involvement in decisions.

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Add comment

I try to listen and ask questions. Leave space for all voices in the room so that the most expansive thought process can come into a project.

DEI LENS PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

On the second day of the workshop, participants developed project ideas that would increase diversity, equity, and inclusion in the community. Each group identified a goal, rationale, strategy, DEI perspective, ways to measure progress, and mid-year targets. This part of the training allowed participants to put their ideas and desire for change into real projects. The process resulted in the development of several proposals that have the potential to positively impact the community. See Attachment 3 for the DEI Project Template.

DEI PROJECT EXAMPLES

Increase Access to County Communications

GOAL: Prioritize our Spanish speaking community's access to county communications and information.

STRATEGY: Create and implement a county policy requiring all of Blaine County public-facing communication and documents to be available in both Spanish and English.

Improve BCRD Family Outreach

GOAL: Meaningfully connect with more parents who are involved with BCRD and to encourage more participation across all communities in Blaine County.

STRATEGY: Improve the Blaine County Recreation District's outreach by updating their family communication strategies, organizing culturally inclusive events, and translating all communication materials into Spanish.

Create an Inclusive Community Garden

GOAL: Create a safe space for all children to feel empowered and inspired to learn

about food systems, native ecology, climate resiliency, and different cultures.

STRATEGY: Implement inclusive practices at the City of Ketchum's *Watch Me Grow Garden* during its renewal project. Plant labels will be made in Spanish and English and the curriculum developed will include inclusive and culturally diverse content. A wheelchair accessible gardening bed and pathway will be installed so all children can have access to the garden.

MOVING FORWARD

This workshop increased participant awareness and understanding of current DEI knowledge and practices. Many expressed an interest in learning to be better stewards and leaders in their community through inclusive engagement with all members of the community. The most important step in the process of change is taking meaningful action.

With the DEI project examples and a toolkit of resources and knowledge, community leaders are prepared to advance DEI in their workspaces and personal lives.

Thanks to all that took the time to attend and participate and a special thank you to Michelle Whitney and Luis Alberto Lecanda for sharing their knowledge and experience to help the Blaine County community grow into a more inclusive place where all members of the community share a sense of belonging.

Image courtesy of The Hunger Coalition

