

Agenda



Metro

600 NE Grand Ave.
Portland, OR 97232-2736

Meeting: Nature in Neighborhoods Capital Grants Pilot Program Design and Review
Committee Meeting #21

Date: Tuesday, May 9, 2023

Time: 4:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.

Place: Zoom

Purpose: Review idea collection, vetting procedures

Outcome(s): Feedback from Idea Collection Process, Confirm Vetting Procedures

Pre-work Review: CDA Update Webinar
(Optional) Review: [event photos](#)
Review: [Community Choice Grants Project Page](#)
 *Note, short URLs
 English: OregonMetro.gov/CommunityChoice
 Spanish: OregonMetro.gov/EleccionComunitaria
Review: Project Ideas on [Digital Platform](#)
Complete [PDRC Idea Collection Feedback Survey](#)
Review: [Bias awareness & conflict of interest documents](#)
Review: [Vetting Worksheet](#)
Review: [Vetting Instructions](#)

4:30 p.m. Welcome

4:40 p.m. What are we doing today?
What decisions is the committee expected to make today?
How will those decisions be used?

4:50 p.m. Review idea collection, kickoff events, tabling, and CDA program
What went right?
What could have gone better?
What can we learn and how can we improve?

5:20 p.m. *Break when committee needs it*

5:30 p.m. Discuss Vetting process and timeline, worksheet, instructions

6:20 p.m. Next Steps

- Expect project descriptions June 1 - 5
- Vet projects June 5 - 19
- Next meeting: June 27th

6:30 p.m. Meeting adjourned

Post-work Review, vet, and evaluate project ideas
(Optional) distribute links, digital flyers, and social media for idea collection (closes May 14th)

- [Project Page](#)

- [Idea Submission Form](#)
- [Digital Platform](#)
- [Community Survey](#)
- [Digital Flyer](#)



Metro

600 NE Grand Ave.
Portland, OR 97232-2736

Meeting summary

Meeting: Nature in Neighborhoods Community Choice Grants Program Design and Review Committee Meeting #20
Date: Tuesday, April 11, 2023
Time: 4:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.
Place: Zoom
Purpose: Review Idea Collection Engagement
Outcome(s): Review & recommendations for idea-generating events & digital platform

Links:

[Meeting Video](#)

[Survey Information Sharing and Idea Collection](#)

[Team Coordination Meeting video: Colloqate](#)

Attendees

Committee Members

Andrew Butz, He/Him

Laura Feldman, She/Her

Blanca Gaytan Farfan, She/Her, East Portland Rising Community Project

Kim Hack-Davidson, She/Her/They/Them

Theresa Huang, She/Her, Urban Greenspaces Institute

Kevin Hughes, He/Him, Hillsboro Parks and Recreation

Isaiah Jackman, He/Him, Urban Leagues Portland

Kate Sams, She/Her, Zenger Farms

Staff

Crista Gardner, She/Her, Metro

Gabrielle Brown, She/Her, Metro

Humberto Marquez Mendez, He/Him Metro

Meeting Summary

The committee reached an agreement on the Idea Submission Form and Community Survey; questions on both will be broader to allow for a variety of feedback. The committee confirmed that the questions and information will be enough to guide the vetting process. The project team will incorporate the committee's feedback on languages and update the materials to be clearer, more accessible, and ensure it is written in plain language. The committee will help promote upcoming events and Metro will provide support, such as materials.

Welcome and Introductions

Humberto welcomed the group and reviewed the Zoom logistics. He introduced himself as the new facilitator, noting that the change is due to the meeting's evolving needs. He reviewed the meeting plan and invited participants to participate verbally or through chat.

Meeting Purpose and Role Definition

Crista reviewed the purpose of the meeting and agenda items, including:

- The first idea-collection workshop and the upcoming workshop in Tualatin.
- Discussion and review the digital platforms, including language support and accessibility.

Language Support and Accessibility

Crista thanked the staff and project team for their continued effort in suggesting ideas and providing support for accessibility, language interpretation and translation needs. She shared that the need for support and languages was determined by the vulnerability index map. The project decided on an English-Spanish approach as the data shows a greater overlap between low English fluency and higher Spanish fluency, particularly in District 4. Spanish translation and interpretation were also noted to be higher in quality. She highlighted that American Sign Language (ASL) interpretation was also provided at live events. She emphasized that staff quality control is essential to provide high-quality translated materials for different communities and Spanish is selected as a baseline with that consideration.

Crista emphasized that additional language support is offered for other language needs, including translated materials in other languages, and additional interpretation and translation support are provided at specific events. In the upcoming event, Vietnamese and Mandarin translation and interpretation will be provided, in accordance with the demographic data.

Review Kickoff Event

Crista and Gabrielle reviewed the event photos noting the several distinct stations, including an activity table, a story station, and an idea-collection table. There were approximately 50 attendees, some who were there specifically for the event and many who were visiting the library and aquatic center. Crista added that 30 submission forms were collected at the in-person event, and 4 were submitted digitally.

Crista invited the committee members who attended to share their thoughts and feedback.

- **Comment:** I am glad to have attended. It was important for me to see what the community looks like. I visited the surrounding areas and being physically there to see the community and nearby green spaces was very important to me. The event was lively and rich, one of the activities was a raffle, which was a very popular activity at the event. The space was a bit crowded.
- **Comment:** It was a really well-tracked event, the participants enjoyed hands-on activities. The food offered was high quality and the low-stress, voluntary participation aspect of the event allowed attendees to be at ease. Space-wise, it was a bit cramped and there was a lot happening. This is positive as too big of a space could feel quite empty, however, I did envision the event to have more of an expo feel. Allowing enough space for attendees to stay at each station. The ideas that the communities shared are great. For ideas that don't necessarily fit into the requirements of this program, City of Hillsboro staff were available to offer information on more suitable projects and plans. An improvement suggestion is to have ASL and Spanish Interpreters present at the entrance to welcome attendees to the event. As well as having greeters at the entrance, which could help with attendance tracking.
- Humberto shared a positive experience with children in the community as they were excited to share ideas for future parks and actively participated. He shared that the team could pull materials together for committee members to share on social media.

Discuss Digital Engagement Tools

Gabrielle shared that the project page is now available in Spanish and English, community and idea collection surveys are live, and the team has received responses. She walked the team through the project site, highlighting the translation feature, as well as the changes that were made based on previous committee feedback. The forms are designed with consideration of low internet speed and the team is exploring integrating the larger digital platform into the project page. To ensure accessibility, only the ZIP code is required.

Gabrielle shared the map-based feature with the group and highlighted its capability for participants to learn more about submitted project ideas and express support or share feedback on that idea. She emphasized that it is going through internal testing and will be available once completed. Gabrielle shared the logistics of moderating the submissions, noting that there is a bit of a delay between an idea being submitted and it showing up on the map.

Comment: Change the address questions to "enter your project idea location".

- **Response:** Good idea, as the project boundary is limited to district 4.

Question: Will the ideas shared at in-person events be entered into the map manually?

- **Response:** Yes, folks at the event will have access to paper forms (entered manually by staff later) as well as online forms.

Question: On the physical forms, could the ideas be collected through canvassing or is it limited to the in-person events?

- **Response:** Yes, you can engage with folks in ways that feel the most comfortable, not just at events. Humberto noted that the physical forms are also left behind at popular community spaces, including the aquatic center and library.

Question: Who translated these forms?

- **Response:** Immigrant & Refugee Community Organization (IRCO) translated these materials and Metro staff reviewed and updated them to be more conversational.

Question: Could you share the most updated PDFs with us?

- **Response:** The most updated forms have been added to the SharedFiles folder.

Comment: On "what projects can be funded" the explanation is confusing to me. I would suggest reworking the wording if possible.

- **Response:** We'll bring that to our communications specialist to see if it could be reworked. Do you have any suggestions on wording, in describing the capital aspect of this program?
- **Comment:** I was thinking "resulting in physical space, physical development" or "physical enhancement" something along that line.

Project Idea Vetting

Humberto moved the group to the next agenda item, a discussion on project vetting. He noted that the next meeting will happen right before the project vetting process starts. Gabrielle elaborated that the project vetting will happen in two parts: the first review will be with jurisdictional partners to review the suitability of the projects based on program requirements and limitations. The committee will then conduct the second review, where they evaluate the projects based on different criteria. She noted that an updated vetting worksheet is available via SharedFiles and the worksheet was updated based on committee feedback and comments.

During the June meeting, the group will review the projects during that meeting and preparing for portfolio development at the later workshops. This will help create a diverse portfolio.

Question: I am wondering what the rubric for scoring would be. What is a one versus a four?

- **Response:** We will share a document that lays out standard rubric information, as well as a summary of the process to help the group. Additionally, the scoring will be used to help the group form their discussion as they explore which projects to advance.

Question: How are we scoring the demographic or equity aspect of the submissions? Given that we are not tracking demographic information at in-person events and the demographic questions will be optional online.

- **Response:** It is a difficult balance, especially with folks not wanting to leave contact information.

Comment: I am wondering if we could overlay the heat map on the project map and use that as a tool to inform these criteria.

- **Response:** All the project ideas will have a location and will be mapped. That is a tool we presume the group will have for the project vetting process.

Comment: I want to uplift that there're percentages for demographics and languages but the statistic references aren't shared with the team. I know it will not work well in my community, and while we're trying to reach as many folks as possible, it does feel like we're leaving some folks out.

- **Response:** Thank you for sharing your thoughts on this. The team can follow up on the data references to ensure transparency with the committee.
- **Response:** One of the data points we referenced came from the Coalitions of Communities of Color in Washington County, which we have shared with the committee. Our decision to create this pilot also holds the intention of creating a precedence where the process is informed by the specific context of the area. Decisions are made with the caveat that it is specific to the area and the context of the communities.
- **Response:** I recognize that this project is not an excuse, and I want to acknowledge that. We will continue to do better and have learned a lot along the way. Is there any information we could share or tangible things we can do right now to address some concerns or questions?

Question: Regarding the vetting sheet and climate resilience criteria, if I want to submit a successful idea, where am I able to learn more about the criteria? Where could people learn more about the criteria?

- **Response:** On the forms, right of the named description and location, there's more information on the criteria.

Question: Is there an educational piece at the events to ensure the communities know what the decisions will be based on?

- **Response:** The team provides many avenues for folks to learn more or share more to ensure sufficient information and thoughts. The descriptions are listed on the project forms and website. Within the submission forms themselves, we offer an open-ended space for participants to share their thoughts or clarification to provide more information on how their idea fits the criteria. Additionally, project examples were exhibited at in-person events.
- **Response:** This program is a three-step process: project vetting, conceptual project development (which goes through the first community vote) and selected projects will be further developed and go through a second community vote before the final decision. There are many opportunities through this process for community members and committees to check and ensure the criteria are made.
- **Response:** I also hear a need for education beyond submission criteria but also our process.

Question: Could these materials be printed and shared with us?

- **Response:** Yes, we can print it out and mail it to you or we could set up a meeting for you to collect the materials. Please put it in the chat if you know you'll need the materials, and please note your language needs.

Question: When is the official end of the idea submission?

- **Response:** May 14, 2023.

Next Step and Closing

Humberto noted that the next meeting will focus on orientation and project vetting, and changes to the vetting worksheet will need to be concluded before then. Gabrielle added that the meeting pattern will differ at the June meeting, where the committee will dig deeper into vetting and evaluation and select projects for the portfolio.

Crista invited the committee to the workshop and different tabling events. She shared that Metro would provide materials and swags such as pencils and bandanas at the events. The goal of these events is to promote the project and submission opportunity as much as possible.

Committee members shared the engagement events that they'll be conducting independently: Urban Leagues will be at the Portland Saturday Market with gift cards and Urban Greenspaces Institute will hold an event. The team thanked the group and concluded the meeting.

Appendix A: Zoom Meeting Chat

00:18:01 Crista Gardner (she, her), Metro: Kate Sams absent; Kevin Hughes absent;
00:18:14 Crista Gardner (she, her), Metro: Theresa Huang will arrive at 5 pm
00:23:04 Gabrielle Brown (she/her/Mrs.) | Metro: And one more event: tabling @ M&M
Marketplace in Hillsboro, Saturday 1pm-4pm
00:26:39 Gabrielle Brown (she/her/Mrs.) | Metro: If you want to drop by: 346 SW Walnut
St, Hillsboro, OR 97123
00:26:49 Isaiah Jackman (he/him): Reacted to "If you want to drop ..." with 👍
00:27:28 Gabrielle Brown (she/her/Mrs.) | Metro: 91 ideas submitted (so far as of
5/9/23, excluding submissions pending translation or ineligible projects)
91 responses to community survey (so far)
00:31:15 Gabrielle Brown (she/her/Mrs.) | Metro: <https://arcg.is/GfC4y>
00:36:16 Gabrielle Brown (she/her/Mrs.) | Metro: Roughly 30 from each idea-generating
event
00:38:05 Brandon Goldner: Curious if this map link is public? I LOVE it. And I love how
thoughtful the ideas are.
00:38:35 Gabrielle Brown (she/her/Mrs.) | Metro: Replying to "Curious if this map ..."

Yes, it is! And it's also linked from the primary project page.

00:38:49 Brandon Goldner: Reacted to "Yes, it is! And it's..." with ❤️
00:39:01 Crista Gardner (she, her), Metro: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/YW3HN3N>
00:40:42 Kim Hack-Davidson: Replying to "Curious if this map ..."

I'm actually not sure how to find the map from the Metro project page

00:45:05 Humberto Marquez Mendez, he/him: Welcome, Theresa!
00:45:14 Theresa Huang (she/hers): thank you!
00:46:12 Humberto Marquez Mendez, he/him: Replying to "Curious if this map ..."

It should be towards the bottom of the "Share your ideas" tab

00:48:55 Kim Hack-Davidson: Replying to "Curious if this map ..."

Thanks, Humberto! Would you share your screen and show it? I see two survey links (project idea and general idea), but not the map still

00:50:36 Humberto Marquez Mendez, he/him: Replying to "Curious if this map ..."

Of course, I can show anyone interested when we break.

00:50:45 Theresa Huang (she/hers): the children model (?) section
00:50:46 Kim Hack-Davidson: Reacted to "Of course, I can sho..." with ❤️
00:52:21 Kim Hack-Davidson: Replying to "Curious if this map ..."

Just found it scrolling further down on the page- thanks! It might be nice to have on the main project page side bar too

00:57:42 Kim Hack-Davidson: Bathroom facilities is a great intersection of needs from
parks/public space to people experiencing houselessness too
00:58:18 Isaiah Jackman (he/him): Great point Laura!
01:16:19 Kim Hack-Davidson: Will you send a meeting invite for June 6th and June 27th?
01:49:43 Kim Hack-Davidson: I like the idea of reviewing half too
01:51:19 Theresa Huang (she/hers): I think I can manage to do half but am ok if we do 1/3 to
make things easier for easier distribution to accommodate people who can't do half

01:51:37 Kim Hack-Davidson: I like the idea of randomizing it to mix it up and have different combinations of reviewers

01:57:09 Crista Gardner (she, her), Metro: Next steps: Expect project descriptions June 1 - 5
Vet projects June 5 - 19
Next meeting: June 27th

01:57:40 Theresa Huang (she/hers): can you post the link again

01:57:44 Theresa Huang (she/hers): sorry I was late to meeting

01:57:49 Gabrielle Brown (she/her/Mrs.) | Metro:
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/YW3HN3N>

01:57:53 Theresa Huang (she/hers): thank you

01:59:22 Elizabeth (They/She)| Metro: Thanks all!

01:59:23 Valentina Peng (they/she) | JLA Public Involvement: Thank you everyone! Have a great evening.

01:59:51 Humberto Marquez Mendez, he/him: Thank you for taking notes Valentina!

02:00:08 Crista Gardner (she, her), Metro: Turn off recording

Appendix B: Land acknowledgement – Oversight Committee

The greater Portland area is built upon the ancestral homelands, villages and traditional use areas of multiple Indigenous tribes and bands who have stewarded these lands we cherish since time immemorial.

The lands at the confluence of the Willamette and Columbia rivers have long served as a major crossroads for the economic, social and political interactions of tribal nations for thousands of years and a place of significance in the homelands and traditional territories of many tribal nations.

We owe a special acknowledgement to the many tribes and bands and their descendants who ceded these lands in treaties with the United States.

We recognize the strong and diverse tribal nations and Native communities in our region today and offer respect and gratitude for their stewardship of these lands past, present and future.

Metro seeks to establish meaningful relationships and explore opportunities to collaborate and consider tribal priorities and interests in our work, including our parks and nature bond work.

We are building our understanding of tribal interests in the greater Portland area as we implement our parks and nature work.

As we learn more, we hope to refine Metro’s approach to land acknowledgements in the future;

We recognize land acknowledgements are important and can be sensitive. We are hoping to learn more to integrate this into our work appropriately and in a good way honoring tribal interests going forward.



Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in Recruitment, Hiring and Retention

Prepared for USDN by:

DESIREE WILLIAMS-RAJEE, KAPWA CONSULTING

October 4, 2018

Background

The purpose of this fact sheet is to provide guidance to hiring managers seeking to diversify their sustainability staff by applying an equity lens. Recent and historical studies have shown that sustainability and environmental fields lag in their ability to recruit, hire, and retain employees of color.¹ This can be due to a variety of systemic factors including access to social and professional networks and exclusion from the practices of environmental campaigns and organizations, as well as implicit and explicit racial bias in hiring processes.

As our nation, counties, and cities become more diverse and as the challenges that sustainability departments face in addressing climate change grow, it is imperative now more than ever that offices build cadres of professionals that can understand how to work with, support, and galvanize action amongst all diverse communities. The work of sustainability becomes relevant to more people when the perspectives of people of color and low-income communities are represented within the organization and individuals are situated to make decisions that are equitable.

The practices and tools provided in this fact sheet will support USDN members in their evolving practices to achieve increased equity, diversity, and inclusion in their offices by addressing historical discrepancies in recruitment, hiring and retention efforts.

Recruitment

Job descriptions

A job description outlines the responsibilities of the position and desired skills, experience, and abilities to complete a job effectively, but it also communicates the values of your organization. It is worthwhile and strategic to first evaluate how any position being recruited for can advance the equity goals of an organization and how such expectations and responsibilities can be integrated into the job description.

- If the position will work with racially, ethnically and socioeconomically diverse communities, consider adding language like the following:
 - Experience working directly with people from diverse racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds.
 - Ability to speak a second language or ability to speak ____ language (if the position will be working with a particular community)
 - Ability to flex communication style to multiple cultural environments
 - Excellent written and verbal communication skills, and ability to present to diverse audiences, specifically racially, ethnically, and socioeconomically diverse communities.

Note: These qualifications are clearer if the cultural elements that are relevant are named. However, they must be written in a manner that does not appear to be a forced disclosure of a protected class².

¹ Taylor, Dorceta. Ph.D. "The State of Diversity in Environmental Organizations: Mainstream NGOs, Foundations & Government Agencies." Green 2.0: <http://www.diversegreen.org/the-challenge/>. July 2014.

² The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission is the federal resource to learn about discrimination law. The list of Federal protected classes is here: <https://www.eeoc.gov/laws/types/>. Your state or local jurisdiction may have identified additional protected classes.

- If the position will be focused on policy, consider the following language:
 - Experience incorporating the perspectives of multiple communities, including [communities of color], in the consideration of impacts and outcomes of a decision-making process.
 - An understanding of the concepts of institutional and structural racism and bias and their impact on underserved and underrepresented communities.
- Highly technical or specialized positions should consider how the position could be structured to support equity goals:
 - Experience considering the impacts of the work on multiple communities, including communities of color, in technical analysis.
 - Experience working on a diverse team
 - Experience working with different communication styles

Member Spotlight: Portland, OR

“We have two outreach and engagement positions that were recently hired for that were designed using our equity lens. Both programs were intended to meet equity goals of the bureau and the Portland Climate Action Plan. One was a mid-level position for our Sustainability at Work program, and the other was an entry-level position for our Public Trash Can program. A depth of understanding of sustainability was less important than great communication skills and the ability to learn quickly and work with others. We realized that we could teach the sustainability components of the job, so it was important to emphasize the ability to build authentic relationships with racially and socio-economically diverse communities in the job descriptions. We also needed people who love engaging with the community and would be able to connect them to important topics in ways that are relevant while also attentively listening to and responding to their needs. Both positions were filled by people of color, and these staff have brought innovative and successful new methods for engagement. The Sustainability at Work Advisor holds office hours in the community at a local nonprofit, and the Public Trash Can program has become a community place making initiative.” – Susan Anderson, Portland, OR

While the membership of USDN is relatively balanced in terms of gender, there are still gender disparities within science and technology fields, which many sustainability related positions include. The following guidance on language for position descriptions from the National Center for Women in Information Technology (NCWIT)³ not only supports inclusion of women, but inclusion of different communication styles found across different cultures:

³ Full PDF of NCWIT Job Description Analysis can be found here:
http://www.ncwit.org/sites/default/files/resources/ncwittips_jobdescriptionanalysis.pdf

BEFORE	RECOMMENDATION
Manages the successful resolution of client issues, including competing demands, sensitive situations, and conflicts with other groups.	Thoughtfully works with the client to resolve issues, including competing demands, sensitive situations, and conflicts with other groups.
Mobilizes team, establishing the tactical plans, projects and objectives needed to accomplish these goals and ensure their attainment.	Mobilizes and encourages team, establishing the specific (or concrete, day-to-day) plans, projects and objectives needed...
Proactively manages the talent in their area, establishing performance goals and objectives, providing ongoing constructive and formal performance feedback and establishing and implementing development plans.	Proactively develops (or nurtures) the talent in their area; co-constructing performance goals, objectives and development plans, and providing ongoing constructive performance feedback.
Manages and resolves the diverse perspectives of stakeholders.	Is sensitive to (or understands) the diverse perspectives of stakeholders and works with them to resolve differences.

Another important strategy is to evaluate the job description for socioeconomic bias. Requirements related to educational background, particularly advanced degrees such as a Bachelor or Master's degree, could be biased against individuals who have relevant professional experience but could not afford a college education.

If a degree is essential, consider if there is bias in the types of degrees mentioned. It may also be most strategic to not specify the type of degree or field of study, unless it is a highly technical position.

- Relevant education background – if you decide to include this portion, consider the range of fields that could be relevant beyond environmental science or ecology. Sustainability professionals come from a variety of backgrounds and benefit from interdisciplinary work environments. Examples of relevant skills from different paths of study:
 - Social work, psychology – important for behavior change and engagement work
 - Communications and marketing – important for engagement and outreach (material development)
 - Business management – developing the business case for sustainability work and communicating this to different audiences, financial modeling and cost benefit analysis
 - Education – important for outreach and engagement work (workshop design)
 - Economics – data and research analysis centered on human experience
 - Public Health – systems approach to various factors impacting individual experiences that support well-being
 - Multicultural studies – culturally competent communication and cross-cultural understanding

Bias checklist

- ✓ Do the minimum qualifications include experiences that can be learned on the job?
- ✓ Are educational requirements being used as a proxy for specific skills that could be attained through some other means?
- ✓ Does the language incorporate communication and management styles that are culturally and gender inclusive?

Diversity, equity, and inclusion statements

By law, you may be required to include an Equal Employment Opportunity Statement in your recruitment. Consider adding your department's equity/diversity/inclusion statement or a value statement that reflects your department's commitment to equity in hiring. This statement should not be added superficially. If one does not exist, work to develop one should be considered as part of a broader diversity strategy for hiring in your department. At the very least the position description should say:

- Department is committed to building a diverse staff and strongly encourages applications from candidates of color, and
- People of color are encouraged to apply.

Outreach

Focused outreach directed towards communities of color can be a highly effective mechanism for increasing the number of qualified applicants of color and balancing the impact of traditional forms of outreach. While broad outreach, like webpage posts and job listing boards, will get a large number of applicants overall, it's important to consider the quality of the reach for the desired pool of candidates — and therefore the return on investment of time and money if such avenues are fee based. Traditional forms of outreach (posts through environmental organization networks) serve to advantage white applicants because they use lines of communication that are expected for those who are already familiar with those networks and in sustainability professions. Relying on traditional forms of outreach can have the unintended outcome of decreasing the percentage of qualified applicants of color in the applicant pool. Such dynamics should also be considered with social media accounts and sending the announcement to schools and other large institutions that may be predominantly white.

Each of the following ways to reach a more diverse applicant base needs to be considered based on its ability to reach candidates with the specific experience and background relevant to the position.

- Community newspapers, news websites run by communities of color
- Multicultural centers or cultural studies departments at local colleges and universities. Ideally a relationship would exist prior to sending; one way is to offer to discuss jobs in government and sustainability with students.
- Historically Black College and Universities (HBCUs), community colleges and schools with a large number of students of color, either graduate or undergrad, alumni associations or current job boards. Look for department contacts in sustainability, planning, or environmental departments.
- Job boards, websites, social media accounts and in-person job or community events hosted by organizations that serve communities of color
- Professional associations (i.e., the National Forum for Black Public Administrators), affinity groups within professional associations (i.e., Latinos and Planning Division, American Planning Association), networks of professionals of color (Environmental Professionals of Color local chapter). Member organizations like the National Society for Black Engineers (NSBE) are usually hosted by a college campus.
- Organizational partners that represent and serve communities of color.
- Affinity or employee resource groups (County Asian Employee Network)

Member Spotlight: Fayetteville, AK

"Our HR department reports that a typical job posting receives 15 applications at the high end for a part-time position and on average, we have less than 1 person of color apply to any City posting. They also estimate that less than 5% of applicants to general City positions are people of color. We received over 26 applications for our (2018) USDN EDI summer fellow, exceeding the general seasonal job numbers. We also had had a much higher percentage of traditionally underrepresented groups, including 1/3 non-white applicants

We targeted our marketing of the position, rather than casting a wide net. For instance, we had face-to-face meetings with a number of groups on campus that are led by students of color and international students and we met with the dean for diversity and inclusion – each of those entities shared the posting within their networks and recommended specific individuals to apply. We had the posting sent out through a listserv that reaches organizations run by students of color, international students, dreamers, etc. We had phone meetings with the student placement office at the local HBCU and with two local community centers in our most racially diverse parts of the region and they all were eager to share the position with their networks. We did reach out to our sister City to the north which is much more racially diverse than Fayetteville and their communications team pushed out the position in their City newsletter and social media platforms.

Because of our success our HR department wanted to talk in depth about how to start incorporating some of the recruiting and marketing practices we employed into their general hiring practices."

– Peter Nierengarten, Fayetteville, AR

Hiring

Resume reviews and interview panels

When the candidate pool is narrowed to those who are most qualified to perform the duties outlined in the job description, bias, regardless of intent, can often play a role in hiring processes. There are a few things to consider and be aware of through the resume review and interview process that can help neutralize the impact of an individual's internal biases.

- Briefing session – For resume reviewers and interview panels, spend time to explain your goals for the position and how that ties to the equity work and goals of your organization as part of the criteria for consideration.

Self-Assessment: Do I have bias?

A great resource is the Harvard Implicit Bias Test. This 10-minute test can be included as pre-interview preparation for your hiring panel:

<https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html>

- Resume reviewers and interview panel composition
 - Aim to have diversity on your panel and have a balanced representation of people of color and women at each interview stage. Seek out hiring panel participants from the communities that you partner with or that will be involved in the work the position is performing.
- Bias training – Require all hiring panel members to participate in bias training. This can be as simple as having them review content to make them aware of what bias is and the strategies for addressing bias in an interview process. This handout from the University of Florida serves as a good example: http://training.hr.ufl.edu/resources/LeadershipToolkit/transcripts/Identifying_and_Avoiding_Interview_Biases.pdf

Quick Fact: A recent *Harvard Business Review* article found that if there is only one woman or person of color being considered for a job, the chances of getting hired are weaker. *“The odds of hiring a woman were 79.14 times greater if there were at least two women in the finalist pool,” they write. ‘The odds of hiring a minority were 193.72 times greater if there were at least two minority candidates in the finalist pool.’”*

http://www.slate.com/blogs/xx_factor/2016/04/28/if_you_re_the_only_woman_or_person_of_color_being_considered_for

Member Spotlight: Knoxville, TN

Erin Gill from Knoxville shared how her City is addressing bias in the interview process:

“The City of Knoxville’s Public Service Department implemented a new, more structured approach to hiring in order to help avoid “familiarity bias” or “similar to me bias”. In the new system, (1) Candidates receive a structured interview using a standard set of questions; (2) A diverse interview panel individually scores answers, (3) Interview scores are supplemented by a training and experience questionnaire to create an overall applicant score, (4) Applicants are ranked based on scores and the top five names are sent to hiring managers as openings occur, and (5) jobs are again posted when the list of top-ranked candidates is exhausted.”

Interview questions

The questions asked in an interview are another way to identify a candidate's skills and abilities related to equity skills sets and competencies. Below are example questions that could be included in an interview⁴:

- How do you see yourself contributing to our work on advancing racial equity? (Listen to see if the candidate has past experiences that will add to or enhance the jurisdiction's efforts.)
- Please describe a situation in which you worked on a project with people who were from backgrounds other than your own. What was challenging for you in this work? What did you do to make your work together successful? (Listen to see if the candidate has reflected on the opportunities and challenges of creating inclusive workplace cultures.)
- Please provide examples of ways in which you have worked to eliminate institutional racism in previous jobs. (Listen to see if the candidate has a clear understanding of institutionalized racism and has relevant experience combating institutionalized racism.)

Member Spotlight: Johnson County, KS

Jasmin Moore, while at Johnson County, KS, was a host to a 2016 USDN Building Diversity Fellow. She shared this interview question, which challenged candidates to think about their own story and relationship to the project's health equity focus, while also introducing clear definitions of health equity and inequity from the department:

"Health Equity: Attainment of the highest level of health for all people. *Health Equity means efforts to ensure that all people have full and equal access to opportunities that enable them to lead healthy lives. **Health Inequities:*** Differences in health that are avoidable, unfair, and unjust. *Health inequities are affected by social, economic, and environmental conditions.*

Take a minute to think about when you first became aware of health inequities. If you feel comfortable, please share your story. How did that affect you? Have you worked with or lived in communities who have experienced health inequities?"

Retention

Onboarding

Once your candidate has been hired to a position, it's important to first onboard them with appropriate training to be successful for the job. Government systems often work well for permanent employees, but temporary employees and interns may miss important information in terms of regular onboarding if they are hired

⁴ From: Nelson, Julia and Tyrell, Syreeta. "Public sector jobs: Opportunities for advancing racial equity." Government Alliance for Racial Equity. <http://racialequityalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Public-Sector-Jobs-Final1.pdf>

differently than other staff. It should go without saying, but ensuring they have access to a computer, a usable work station, are oriented to equipment, the office, and people is essential to a good start. A concerted effort to welcome a new employee to the team, and hosting opportunities for members of the team to get to know one another will accelerate relationship building. Other components of the onboarding process over time can include:

- Discussion on organization culture and norms (i.e., expectations for how to represent the department with the public, communication norms, any expectations on appearance and time).
- Overview of racial equity work, organization functions, and how decisions are made in your agency.
- Connection with a “buddy” or informal mentor to help learn more about what to expect when working for the department and government.
- Connection to activities and networks like affinity groups, lunch and learn sessions, employee gatherings based on their interests.

Such onboarding practices are not specific to employees of color but are important to establish a sense of belonging and welcome for everyone.

Support strategies

Employees of color in predominantly white organizations can face a great deal of social isolation and bias within the workplace. It is important to be cognizant of the unique strengths that each employee of color has, the challenges they may face in the workplace, and methods to support them.

- Build trust – Be open to learning about your employee and their perspective and worldview on sustainability and environmental issues. Be willing to engage on uncomfortable topics, which may include race. Be willing to receive feedback and also provide clear feedback on performance.
- Identify interests – Know what the employee wants to learn and be exposed to. For interns, develop goals that are both work oriented and experience oriented for their short term of employment.
- Build social networks – As a manager, serve as a connector to other individuals and organizations that align with the employee’s interests. Connect to affinity groups, professional associations, and other social groupings that support employees of color. Encourage informational interviews with people at different levels of decision making in the organization.
- Mentors – Identify individuals that can serve as formal or informal mentors to help navigate problems, but also provide assistance in thinking about how to develop professionally. Mentors can be identified through project work, cultural background, or experiences.
- Avoid putting the employee of color in the position to be the sole educator on race. Create an environment that normalizes learning about institutional bias and racism, including self-reflection about one’s relationship to these systems.
- If your employee is drawn to work on diversity and equity, sponsor their participation by endorsing it and supporting them to find balance in their work. Be careful that they are doing this work with a sufficient time and resources and with a group of collaborators to avoid burnout and frustration. Don’t press involvement if the interest isn’t clear.
- Check-in regularly on the experience they are having in the workplace, and if the employee feels they have what they need to be successful.

- Work to identify when dominant culture is impacting the ability of your employee to effectively participate, contribute, or be accepted in the workplace. (i.e., communication styles that favor linear presentation as opposed to non-linear; taking turns vs. jumping in to voice an opinion; responses to showing of different kinds of emotion; defensive responses to bringing up cultural blind spots).
- Normalize self-care especially when a traumatic event has happened or when there is a triggering environment. For example, racially motivated incidents are on the rise across the country and impact people of color differently than white people. Events, even if they are not local, can be very personal because of long-standing racial trauma. Triggering events can also come in the form of microaggressions.⁵ Acknowledging what has happened and creating space for staff to process collectively or individually as they need to will help them to be more present and focused in the long-run.
- Support professional development. Support the employee to seek out and participate in opportunities for training and professional growth.
- Provide learning space. A management style that hovers or micromanages an employee's work prevents staff from gaining confidence in their work product or feeling like they are trusted. Allow the employee to push themselves and focus on what can be learned if a mistake is made.

Member Spotlight: San Antonio, TX

"In my experience, retention is based on making sure the employee feels that they are a part of the team, they are able to share and contribute, they are acknowledged, have opportunity to grow and have some flexibility. I have experienced coworkers leave a position or project, because of the responsibility to be the designated "expert" to the Latino community and not being provided appropriate resources to be genuine or successful. People of color can sometimes be expected to be a cultural expert, a trusted community messenger, translator, and provide cultural training to fellow co-workers amongst other unwritten responsibilities. You feel like a tool instead of feeling empowered to make a genuine change or impact." – Eloisa Portillo-Morales, San Antonio, TX

To be successful, she offered 3 recommendations:

- Dedicated time to build relationships with community organizations that you are expected to connect with. That can mean showing up to their events where we are not driving the agenda.
- Support services such as funding for professional translation services or review for outreach materials.
- Training or Continuing Education to build up cultural skills and competencies.

⁵ For a list of common microaggressions see: <http://sph.umn.edu/site/docs/hewg/microaggressions.pdf>

Stay interviews⁶

Exit interviews occur when an employee has already decided they are ready to end their employment. Stay interviews are a strategy to identify ways to keep a valued employee from leaving. These types of meetings can happen regularly in check-ins, during performance evaluations, or at some other frequent interval. This is a valuable opportunity for a manager to get direct and useful feedback on how to support their employee in the way the employee needs support.

Sample questions:

- What kind of work culture do you work best in? What ideas do you have to create that kind of work culture here?
- What gets in the way of you being as successful as you want to be? What support do you need to get there?
- Do you feel connected to your team members? If not, what has been challenging for you? If so, are there things that we should be doing more of?
- Where do you see yourself growing professionally? Do you see yourself here long-term?
- What types of projects do you find fulfillment in? When are you challenged in a good way?
- What do you want to learn? What goals have you set for yourself?

⁶ For more information see the book: The Stay Interview: A Manager's Guide to Keeping the Best and the Brightest, by Richard Finnegan (2015).

Institutionalization of Racial Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Efforts

Member Spotlight: Dane County, WI

Lisa Mackinnon from Dane County shared that in 2016 they created and funded a new Office for Equity and Inclusion (OEI), a freestanding county department. The purpose of OEI is to improve the county's efforts in promoting racial, gender and disability equity in its workforce, contracting and service opportunities. OEI centralizes equity and outreach efforts throughout county departments and provides support for departments to take on equity initiatives.

The impetus for creating the Office for Equity and Inclusion was a recommendation in the 2015 [Dane County Racial Equity Analysis](#) conducted by the Center for Social Inclusion and the Government Alliance on Race and Equity at the request of the Dane County Board of Supervisors. The Equity Analysis comprehensively examined government operations, policies and practices from a racial equity perspective and enumerated the steps necessary for Dane County to transform into a racially equitable institution. The analysis outlines actions and strategies that, if implemented with urgency, will move the county toward eliminating racial inequities. Among its findings were that there were hiring disparities in hierarchy, function, job classifications and across departments. One of the key steps OEI will take with respect to hiring policy is to attract a more diverse pool of applicants for jobs.

In implementing any of the above strategies, you may find that there are institutional barriers that prevent you from creating the internal systems and practices needed to support your endeavors in a replicable and scalable way.

Using an equity lens on hiring efforts can be a helpful tool to advance change at a larger institutional level. These efforts take time but will support your long-term equity objectives. Here are a few suggested actions to get you started:

1. Ask for disaggregated data from your HR department for all of the hires for the last ten years. This information should exist to be compliant with Civil Rights law.
 - a. What does the data show across race? What is the nature of the recruitment, hiring, and retention disparity?
 - b. Does the department workforce reflect the racial diversity of the community served?
 - c. Are management and leadership racially diverse?
 - d. Do employees of color stay with the organization?
 - i. How much are employees of color paid in comparison to white counterparts in similar positions?
 - ii. How frequently do they get promoted? How long does it take to get a career advancement opportunity?
 - e. How does this compare to the jurisdiction as a whole?
 - f. What information has already been collected to understand the disparity and why it exists?
2. Identify current tools and initiatives that are intended to support equity, diversity, and inclusion.

- a. What are the jurisdiction-wide strategies and goals around recruitment, hiring, and retention?
 - b. What has been accomplished so far?
 - c. If it isn't successful, why not? Do efforts specifically address institutional racism and bias?
 - d. How does your jurisdiction's Affirmative Action framework support or hinder your efforts?
3. Develop a strategy
- a. Develop a narrative that uses data (quantitative and qualitative) as the base for describing the problem and the need. Incorporate your experience as to why the current system is not current meeting your needs, and what you would like to see done.
 - b. Identify who are potential partners in other departments in advancing equitable hiring that can help you in your department.
 - c. What goals can your department set and implement for itself beyond diversity training?
 - d. How will you evaluate your progress over time? What data do you need to track?
 - e. What do you need to advocate for to strategically advance your efforts with Human Resources?

Conclusion

Good management practice is also an active mechanism for advancing equity. The resources listed above are relevant to all employees, regardless of race and can improve talent retention and performance. However, bias and institutional racism will affect employees of color differently than white staff and may even affect each employee of color in the workplace in a different way. So, it is important that any hiring manager who has staff of a different race continue to advance their own learning on cultural competency and systems of privilege and power. This ongoing education will support effective management of high-performing teams and individuals.

Eight conditions for successfully fostering a diverse and inclusive workplace:

1. Leadership must accept and value that a diverse workforce will bring a diversity of perspectives and approaches to work.
2. Leadership must be committed to persevering in the face of inherent challenges that these different perspectives and approaches will bring to an organization.
3. There must be an expectation of high performance from everyone.
4. The organization should design jobs that allow people to grow and be educated.
5. Openness and tolerance for debate must be encouraged by the organizational culture.
6. All workers must be made to feel valued and empowered.
7. The organization must have a clear and well-recognized mission that includes diversity.
8. The organization must be structured to promote the exchange of ideas and welcome constructive challenges as a part of its culture

From: Thomas, David A., and Robin J. Ely. "Making differences matter." Harvard Business Review 74, no. 5 (1996): 79-90.

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A photograph of two business professionals, a man and a woman, shaking hands in front of a modern building with large glass windows. The man is on the left, wearing a dark suit and a blue tie, looking up at the woman with a smile. The woman is on the right, wearing a light-colored blazer, looking down at the man with a smile. The background shows the architectural details of the building, including glass panels and metal frames.

Everyday Bias

Further Explorations into How the
Unconscious Mind Shapes Our World at Work

An Evolving Understanding of Unconscious Bias
Offers Opportunities for Improving Performance at Your Place of Work

by Howard Ross, Founder and Chief Learning Officer, Cook Ross Inc.

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INTRODUCTION

Hurricanes were exclusively assigned female names until the late 1970's. Since then, the World Meteorological Association (WMA) has alternatively given them male and female names. In May of 2014, the Proceedings of the National Academy of Science released the results of an interesting study from the University of Illinois¹. Researchers analyzed more than sixty years of death tolls from ninety four hurricanes that occurred in the United States between 1950 and 2012. They removed two hurricanes whose death tolls were so dramatically greater than the others that they would skew the data: Hurricane Katrina, which killed approximately 1,500 people in 2005, and Hurricane Audrey, which killed more than 400 in 1957. The researchers then compared the death rates of the hurricanes based on the gender classification of their names.

What they found was fascinating.

It turns out that there is a dramatic difference between the average death rates of the storms named for men (23) and those named for women (45). Was this because the WMA chose female names for the harshest storms? Not unless they had a crystal ball. The names, it turns out, are designated years before the actual hurricanes. The difference, it seems, lies not in the naming of the storms, but in the reaction to the storms' names. "People may be dying as a result of the femininity of a hurricane (name)," said Sharon Shavitt, one of the studies co-authors. "In judging the intensity of a storm, people appear to be applying their beliefs about how men and women behave," Shavitt says. "This makes a female-named hurricane, especially one with a very feminine name such as Belle or Cindy, seem gentler and less violent."

¹ "Female hurricanes are deadlier than male hurricanes" National Academy of Sciences, Jung, Shavitt, Viswanathan, and Hilbe, May 2014 Kiju Jung, Sharon Shavitt, Madhu Viswanathan, and Joseph M. Hilbe

Female hurricanes are deadlier than male hurricanes

PNAS 2014; published ahead of print June 2, 2014, doi:10.1073/pnas.1402786111

Is it possible that people consciously choose to take female-named hurricanes less seriously? Is it likely that during times of emergency preparedness somebody says, or even thinks, “Don’t worry about that one...she’s just a girl!”? Doubtful. It is much more likely that this is yet one more example of unconscious bias at work.

Unconscious or implicit bias is an issue that affects every person and every organization, no matter how inclusive people think they may be, or how diverse their organization has tried to become.

Everyone possesses unconscious biases, and they impact us in ways that we can hardly imagine.

The encouraging news is that breakthroughs in our understanding of this fascinating topic offer new opportunities for organizations that truly wish to create inclusive workplaces and diverse employee populations.



At Cook Ross, we published our first major thought paper on unconscious bias (<http://www.cookross.com/docs/unconsciousbias.pdf>) in 2007. That paper concentrated on the definition, reality and prevalence of unconscious bias. Since that time, our understanding of unconscious bias and its implications for organizational performance has expanded greatly. Our discoveries arise not only from research in the neurological and cognitive sciences, but also—and perhaps more importantly—from our experience with thousands of clients. This work has permitted us to gain a deeper understanding of how individual and group behaviors affect organizational performance.

The collective body of knowledge about this topic has also grown exponentially. The topic has been brought to public view in a way that allows us to address problems with broader strokes, addressing the full impact of unconscious bias.



This paper represents an update in our learnings on unconscious bias since we published the original paper. I will discuss some of those new findings and will also lay out ten distinct ways unconscious bias manifests in the workplace, including a case study from a Cook Ross client, a leading global management consulting company that has leveraged unconscious bias awareness to increase the number of women in senior leadership positions. Lastly, the paper presents practical guidelines for reducing the influence of unconscious bias on decision-making in the talent management process.

UNCONSCIOUS BIAS: WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

The concept of unconscious bias in organizations was initially recognized in the 1960s, against a backdrop of hiring changes that were brought about by federal civil rights legislation and changes in societal social norms. Bias is culturally rooted, and generally directed at value and belief systems different from our own. Bias falls into the realm of the unconscious when it transcends our moment-to-moment perception and awareness. For instance, a person may know “instinctively” when they feel physically threatened without knowing the exact source or location of the threat. Ultimately, the impact of bias may not be different whether it is conscious or unconscious. Both can create inequities in opportunity and treatment, and also very poor decision-making. However, our understanding of how unconscious they are may radically alter our way of dealing with these biases and creating more conscious organizations.

Distinguishing friend from foe is essential to our survival. The ability to do so quickly might mean the difference between life and death. As a result, our minds tend to look for danger first, a clear precautionary function. We are far safer assuming danger and being surprised when it is not there, then in assuming all is safe and finding danger instead. In a survival context, a “false positive” is always safer than a “false negative.” As a result, we may unconsciously look for cues that identify something as threatening in a person we encounter, based on what we have experienced before. This may make a lot of sense in terms of keeping us safe, but when a job candidate with qualifications similar to another person is given a low rating because they “don’t feel” like a good fit, it becomes problematic.

Organizations that wish to create diverse employee populations and more inclusive workplaces have struggled for decades with



cultural bias and with trying to attain “cultural competency.” The essential ingredient in culturally competent organizations is the recognition that re-training the conscious “rational” mind to achieve behavioral change is often largely ineffectual. Leaders in particular need to recognize that we don’t always consciously know exactly what in our organizations needs adjustment. Let me cite an example to clarify.

Research has shown that people tend to believe others more when they have similar accents.² Let us say a person is not aware that they consistently exhibit a preference for team members who speak with the same kind of accent that they do. (Of course, for most people, accents and dialects only exist when they are present in other people who speak differently from them...an unconscious bias in itself!) Creating systems and structures that reveal those patterns and help explore areas of discomfort are critical. Avoiding difficult conversations about bias will lead to poor talent management decisions and many other inefficiencies. Still, views and preferences among people will continue to legitimately

² Shiri Lev-Ari, Boaz Keysar, Why don’t we believe non-native speakers? The influence of accent on credibility. Journal of Experimental Social Psychology 46 (2010) 1093-1096.

differ. We may still prefer our own unconscious or conscious views and our own patterns of thinking and behavior. They feel more comfortable to us. The challenge is that “comfortable” feelings are not necessarily synonymous or strategically aligned with organizational goals and priorities. “Comfortable” could prevent you from getting the best talent and organizational results.

Developing an awareness of our own biases is the foundation for making better decisions. Why? If you are in possession of that awareness, you can take advantage of our growing understanding of unconscious bias and its implications for organizational success and failure. The available body of knowledge has exploded during the past six years as discoveries unfold from research in the neurological and cognitive sciences.

New findings are teaching us more about the brain and consciousness than we have ever known. Some of this work is valuable and is based on solid evidence. Some is not as well reasoned. Too often the approaches that people take in applying research findings to organizational behavior are missing the fundamental basis of what the research findings are actually teaching us.

What one can only surmise from the findings of the best research is just how universal unconscious bias is...in everyone.

While unconscious bias still may not be fully understood, many organizational leaders today at least agree that it is real, prevalent, and a barrier to organizational success. To help bring understanding of unconscious bias to a new level, let’s examine several issues that have been recently researched and brought to public view. Some of these insights are discussed in my books, *ReInventing Diversity: Transforming Organizational Community to Strengthen People, Purpose, and Performance* (2011), and *Everyday Bias: Identifying and Navigating Unconscious Judgments in Our Daily Lives* (2014).

NOT INHERENTLY BAD OR GOOD: IT’S JUST THERE

Our everyday use of the word bias has a distinctly negative connotation. The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines bias as an “unreasoned judgment” or “prejudice.” In working with diversity issues, we have been told repeatedly that bias is bad. Bias carries a stigma. If you are biased, the prevailing discourse suggests you also must be a bigot or one who practices discrimination. Therefore, we must eliminate bias.

We make a fundamental mistake when reducing bias to something purely “bad.” Too often we conflate people’s intentions with the impact of their actual behavior or we make attribution errors. If we believe good people are free of bias, then someone who has bias must be bad and must intend to harm. As a result, people have created “anti-bias” training and



practices. Bias, however, is not inherently bad or good. As discussed in our original paper, bias is a fundamental function of the human mind. It is a danger detector that allows us to navigate the world safely. By attempting to eliminate bias, all too often we have actually driven it more into the unconscious.

In order to expand the conversation, it is critical for us to recognize that these biases can be positive or negative and can have constructive or destructive outcomes.

How does bias occur?

<div>Negative</div> <div>Positive</div>	<div>Constructive uses of negative biases</div> <div>Q2</div>	<div>Destructive uses of negative biases</div> <div>Q1</div>
	<div>Constructive uses of positive biases</div> <div>Q3</div>	<div>Destructive uses of positive biases</div> <div>Q4</div>
	Constructive	Destructive

We are most familiar, of course, with destructive uses of negative bias (Q1). The classic case of someone not being hired or promoted because they belong to a particular group exemplifies this kind of bias. But there are also constructive uses of negative bias (Q2). For example, when we realize that a particular behavior (e.g. raising one’s hand with a knife in it pointed at you) should be avoided or protected against. There may also be constructive uses of positive bias (Q3), as when we recognize that a person with a particular cultural background may be valuable in a certain position in which people from that culture are prevalent. Another example occurs when we decide to hire people with particular “qualifications,” which are simply biases that we have all agreed to and written down. And, finally, there are times when there are destructive uses of positive bias, as when we hire one person because they “feel familiar” and in doing so do not hire someone who is more talented. We live in a web of all of these biases.

CONFRONTING BIAS CONSTRUCTIVELY

Understanding this basic truth is not quite enough. We must be vigilant and recognize biases as they arise. We must not allow the unconscious nature of bias to work as an excuse for the impact of it to continue. For example, we may believe that not having conscious intent is enough to negate the negative impact of something we say or do. We get into an offensive/defensive posture because we don’t have the capacity to look at the issue from anything other than the right/wrong perspective. Past attempts at diversity training have often reflected this moralizing approach. We have tried to show people how wrong they are, thinking that in and of itself would force them to change. The problem is that guilt may seem effective as a motivator, but in reality, it is not. Guilt leads to self-recrimination, which is destructive rather than constructive. More often than not, guilt creates contraction, resistance, forced compliance, and sometimes, backlash.

It has been fascinating to see unconscious bias proliferate as a topic throughout the diversity industry within the past several years. Basically, good and reasoned research done with the purest of intentions gets plugged into the traditional “good person/bad person” paradigm of diversity work. “You may not be biased,” the trainer often says, “but you are unconsciously biased!!”

We believe passionately in the connections between neuroscience research, diversity, and organizational performance. For instance, we know that unconscious bias is present, but how, honestly, can we reasonably castigate someone for reacting in a way that they don’t even realize is happening in the first place? This is not to suggest that people are not responsible for the impact of their behavior. All of us are responsible for our behavior. Our challenge is to determine whether or not our way of creating opportunities for insight and behavior change is appropriate and effective. After all, what the research clearly shows is that “they” are not the ones who demonstrate bias. “We” are the ones who demonstrate bias. All of us, every day. The key is not to drive people toward guilt, but to move us all toward responsibility. The daunting task of leaders is to create mechanisms to help people

develop an understanding of how these subtle and often invisible dynamics might be benefiting them or affecting them in ways that they haven't realized and haven't always intended.

The reality is that good people develop bias. Bad people develop bias. All people develop bias. The question is: how we can see bias in others if we're not even willing to look at it in ourselves? While there is no question that certain groups are more negatively impacted by bias on a grand societal scale, the limiting patterns of unconscious behavior are not restricted to any one group. All of us have these attitudes and exhibit these behaviors. Effective managers and business leaders must focus on their own assumptions and biases if they expect to have the legitimacy and experience to guide others in acknowledging and confronting their bias.

And here lies the fault lines of neuroscience, personal behavior, organizational behavior, organizational performance and societal health (economic and otherwise). The work needs to be conducted on an organizational level, in a manner that allows individuals and groups to solve problems and create value. But we do this with the understanding that the connections stretch from our organizational learning out to society and the world.



NEW RESEARCH FINDINGS

As Brett Pelham, a social psychologist at the American Psychological Association has said:

“Virtually all bias is unconscious bias. We have learned to trust women to be nurturing and men to be powerful, for example, in much the same way that Pavlov’s puppies trusted ringing bells to predict the arrival of meat powder. If we had to think consciously about keeping our balance, digesting, breathing and perceiving the moon as a celestial sphere rather than a floating coin, we would all fall over, throw up, suffocate, and fail to appreciate the moon’s majestic beauty. Being biased is how we get through life without everything being brand new every time we experience it.”

The new reality that science is teaching us is that virtually everything we do is driven by unconscious thoughts, reactions, feelings, and beliefs. In a way, we are far more robotic in our thinking and actions than we have ever realized. In addition, our automatic thoughts happen much faster than our more careful ones. New research findings are teaching us how unconscious bias forms and operates in the brain. The prefrontal neocortex (PFC) is the part of the brain that most distinguishes humans from all other animals. It gives people the capacity for metacognition, or the capacity to think about our thinking. This makes humans more able to contemplate thoughts and behavior than any other animal. Yet, the “computing power” of the PFC is relatively tiny compared to the far more robust autonomic parts of the brain. In order to conserve our mental resources and the internal chemicals (e.g., glucose) that feed the brain, we naturally rely on our “automatic” functions and reactions. It is not efficient for the brain to stop and really think about each stimulus and response. In fact, it is downright dangerous. Imagine, for example, if we had to stop and think about hitting the brake when somebody stops short in front of us while we are driving. How many of us would react quickly enough to avoid hitting the car?

Since the time of Plato, we have generally believed our rational minds need to “control” our emotional or subconscious minds in order for us to function at the highest level. The reverse appears more likely to be true.

Think about it. If somebody asks “1+1=?” you react pretty quickly. If they ask “223 x 175” you move much more slowly. You need more brainpower. You need to compute, not recite from memory. Assumptions about people fitting into stereotypes operate the same way. It is much quicker and easier

to form the unconscious first impression, “She is/ looks/does _____, so therefore she must be like _____” than it is to say, “Let me stop and see what I can learn about her.”



We are beginning to better understand how this organic mechanism works. The memory connections that we make seem to occur in the hippocampus, a part of the limbic system of the brain next to, and closely associated with, the amygdala. The way it works is actually very logical at some level. Let's say I am walking down the street and a man with a red shirt attacks me. In the hippocampus, “red shirt” becomes connected to pain. Three months later, I meet somebody wearing a red shirt and I begin to feel “uncomfortable” with that person. I may not have any conscious memory that my attacker was wearing a red shirt or that my discomfort has anything to do with the attack at all. It just occurs at the moment as fear of potential danger.

Similarly, imagine that you have grown up watching the whole slew of early sitcoms on television that depicted fathers as the “bread winners” and mothers as the homemakers. You might remember at least a few of them: Ozzie and Harriet; Leave it to Beaver; Father Knows Best; etc. Really, the list is practically endless. In your brain, specifically in your hippocampus, women and domestic chores may have become linked. Then years later, a woman comes into a meeting and, without thinking, you say, “Would you mind getting some coffee?” Or, even more

insidiously, if you are a woman, you automatically get the coffee without even being asked to do so! Yes, we even internalize unconscious biases about people like ourselves.

As I stated earlier, we are learning more and more about this subject and how it functions. Let's now look at examples of research published since the 2007 paper that help illustrate these concepts.

THE HIRING PROCESS

Getting a job is of paramount importance for millions of people around the world, and generally receiving an offer requires going through an interview or even many interviews. We know that our beliefs about people—most of them existing beyond our awareness—lead to automatic thinking and behaviors that inevitably appear when interviewing and hiring. Let's have a look at a few touch points where our unconscious bias surfaces in the hiring process.

“PRIMING EFFECTS”

We are discovering that the information and messages we use to inform our decisions are much more subtle and non-rational than we ever realized. Lawrence Williams, a marketing professor at the University of Colorado and John Bargh, a psychologist at the Automaticity in Cognition, Motivation, and Emotion Lab at Yale University, conducted a series of fascinating experiments³ about a phenomenon they refer to as “the priming effect.” They studied test subjects who were asked to conduct job interviews. Everything about the people they interviewed was structured to be as similar as possible except for the fact that some of the interviewers were given warm drinks while they were conducting the interviews and some cold drinks. Based on nothing more than that, the interviewers who were holding the warm drinks scored their interviewees higher than those holding the cold ones. They attributed a “warmer personality” to these people. We are not certain why such attributions were made.

³ Citations for Williams and Bargh's work can be found at the Yale University Automaticity in Cognition Lab Page: <http://www.yale.edu/acmelab/publications.html>

Perhaps our common societal messaging about people having a “cold heart” or a “warm smile” has created a neurolinguistic encoding within our brains. We also know that a cold hand may be interpreted unconsciously as signaling that a person is less friendly, less healthy, less robust, or less confident. Either way, the result is a non-rational way of conducting interviews and scoring job candidates.

Mikki Hebl and Laura Mannix, two Rice University researchers, found a similar dynamic exists when an interviewer was asked to walk out and meet his or her interview subject in a waiting area⁴. If the interviewee was sitting next to somebody who was perceived to be obese, they rated him or her lower in their interview scores. Talk about guilt by association!

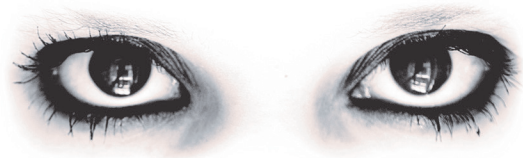
Both of these studies, and many others like them, naturally bother people who believe in fairness and equity in job decisions. After all, how fair is it to be more likely to select somebody simply because they are sitting next to a particular person in the lobby, or because you happen to have a warmer drink in your hand? It seems ridiculous, doesn't it?

However, the more pressing issue to business people may be:

How can we run an effective, productive and profitable organization when we make talent management decisions based on such ludicrous and invisible conditions?

EYES, COFFEE, HONESTY, AND THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

Unconscious bias makes its mark known in many areas involving employees that go well beyond hiring. In another recent study, researchers Melissa Bateson, Daniel Nettle, and Gilbert Roberts at the University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne in Great Britain put signs on the walls of break rooms in companies that asked people to pay for their coffee, tea, and snacks on the “honor system.”⁵ Some of the notes had flowers on them, others photographs of eyes.



COFFEE CLUB

Prices:

Coffee (with or without milk): 50p

Tea (with or without milk): 30p

Milk only (in your own coffee or tea): 10p

Full cup of milk: 30p

Please put your money in the blue tin.

It turned out that people were more honest when the note on the wall had pictures of eyes looking at them rather than flowers. Now why should photos of eyes be more likely to rationally propel anyone toward honesty?

The findings from this study are consistent with a studies conducted by Dan Arielly, the Duke University behavioral economist, who found that students were more honest in grading themselves in tests when they had simply been asked to read the Ten Commandments before taking the test⁶. Feeling like we are being watched or being reminded of our “moral compass” seems to have an impact on us, even when it is simply a piece of paper on the wall or a list to read!

⁴ Michelle R. Hebl and Laura M. Mannix
The Weight of Obesity in Evaluating Others: A Mere Proximity Effect
Pers Soc Psychol Bull January 2003 29: 28-38, doi:10.1177/0146167202238369

⁵ Melissa Bateson, Daniel Nettle, and Gilbert Roberts
Cues of being watched enhance cooperation in a real-world setting
Biol Lett. Sep 22, 2006; 2(3): 412-414. June 27, 2006. doi: 10.1098/rsbl.2006.0509

⁶ Dan Arielly, The Honest Truth About Dishonesty: How We Lie to Everyone--Especially Ourselves, Pub by Harper Perennial June 2013.

ISN'T UNCONSCIOUS BIAS REALLY ABOUT STEREOTYPING?

Now that it has been examined how warm drinks, staring eyes, and the Ten Commandments relate to unconscious bias, let's look at the all-too prevalent thought that unconscious bias is all about stereotyping. It's true that much of what we think of as "bias" has a lot to do with stereotyping, be it racial or addressed to other facets of our identities. However, it may be far more complex than that in reality.

Amy Cuddy, a social psychologist at the Harvard Business School, has conducted some of the most interesting research done on stereotyping.⁷ Cuddy distinguished two basic kinds of bias. One form is based on how warmly we feel toward people and how inclined we are to like them, to be empathetic toward them, and to see them as somebody to whom we can personally relate. The second is based on what we think of the person's competency.



We can see one example of the importance of these distinctions in the current marketplace. One group that has felt the sting of unconscious bias in the recent employment marketplace is people over age 50. While we may have no "dislike" of people in this age group, researchers at Harvard have found that about 90 percent of Americans associate negative

competency traits with the "elderly." What they also found was that these negative ideas were just as prevalent among people who were 60 or older as they were among people 20 or younger. We may "like" somebody very much, and still have strong negative biases about their competency.

All of this research tells us that our decisions that involve stereotyping are neither intentional nor rational. They make no sense; yet, these decisions run our lives, often in unintended ways.

TEN DISTINCT WAYS THAT BIAS SURFACES

Over the course of the past ten years, we have examined hundreds of research studies on unconscious bias. This does not even include all of the anecdotal examples that we have all seen and experienced first hand while working with clients. All of this research leads to the conclusion that there are at least 10 distinct ways that unconscious bias manifests itself in the workplace and in many other areas of life. They are:

1. **Diagnosis Bias:** The propensity to label people, ideas, or things based on our initial perceived opinion. Dozens of studies demonstrate the way our quick decisions about people affect the way we treat them. Simply think of a time when you saw somebody, made an assumption about him or her, and then acted accordingly. How many times have you made assumptions like that about people? The truth is, it has probably happened any time that you've met somebody new. We "scope them out," without having to think about doing it. It is just the way we are "wired."
2. **Pattern Recognition:** The tendency to sort and identify information based on prior experience or habit. This is a fundamental

⁷ Cuddy, Amy J.C., Peter Glick, and Anna Beninger. "The Dynamics of Warmth and Competence Judgments, and Their Outcomes in Organizations." *Research in Organizational Behavior* 31 (2011): 73–98.

protective mechanism of the mind. If we see something in a person that has been dangerous for us—or that we think has been dangerous for us, or even reminds of us something that has been dangerous for us—we don't wait to determine whether or not it will threaten us this time. Instead, we immediately respond. This is very much like staying away from a hot stove after having been burned by one before.

3. **Value Attribution:** The inclination to imbue a person or thing with certain qualities based on initial perceived value. An example of this was an experiment conducted by the Washington Post, when the noted violinist Joshua Bell was asked to play in a subway station in Washington D.C., looking like the typical itinerant subway troubadour.⁸ Almost nobody stopped to listen, even though the night before he had sold out the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.
4. **Confirmational Behavior:** The tendency to look for what confirms our beliefs and to ignore what contradicts our beliefs while disregarding facts that contradict our point of view. This is often called the “Pygmalion Effect,” or the self-fulfilling prophecy.
5. **Automatic Perception:** The reflexive reaction to a particular person, object or situation based on unconscious associations and expectations. One example of this was a groundbreaking study, conducted at MIT and the University of Chicago, in which identical résumés with “traditionally White” and “traditionally Black” names were sent to companies looking to hire people.⁹ A total of 50 percent more of the people with

traditionally White names were called back for interviews. Similar results were found in studies conducted in Singapore with traditionally dominant Chinese surnames and in Sweden with traditionally dominant Swedish surnames.



Another similar study was recently conducted by Jo Handelsman, a Professor of Molecular, Cellular & Developmental Biology at the Yale School of Medicine. Handelsman gave science professors a one-page synopsis about a potential hire.¹⁰ When the name “John” was put on the document, the candidate was rated a “4” on a 7-point scale and was offered an average starting salary of \$30,328. When the exact same document was distributed with simply the name “Jennifer” replacing “John,” the rating was 3.3 and the salary offered was \$26,508. A stunning aspect of this study was that there was no difference between male and female professors in their relative gender assessments.¹¹

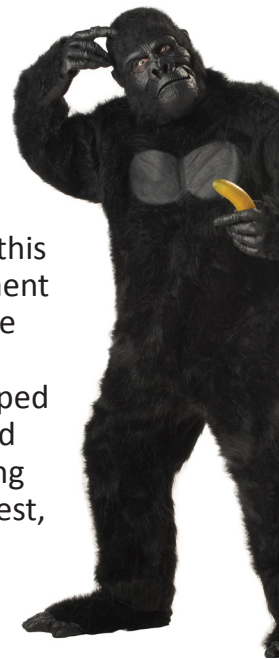
⁸ Gene Weingarten, Pearls Before Breakfast – Can one of the nation’s greatest musicians cut through the fog of a D.C. rush hour? Washington Post, April 8, 2007. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/04/04/AR2007040401721.html>

⁹ Marianne Bertrand and Senhild Mullainathan, Are Emily and Greg More Employable than Lakisha and Jamal? A Field experiment on Labor Market Discrimination. The American Economic Review, Vol 94. No. 4, (September 2004), pp. 991-1013.

¹⁰ Moss-Racusin, C.A., J.F. Dovidio, V.L. Brescoll, M.J. Graham, and J. Handelsman. 2012. Science faculty’s subtle gender biases favor male students. Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences. 109(41): 16474-16479. Anderson, W. A., U. Banerj

¹¹ “Bias Persists for Women of Science, a Study Finds,” New York Times, September 24, 2012

6. **Selective Attention/Inattentional Blindness:** The propensity to see some things and not others dependent upon what a person is paying attention to at a particular moment. This explains why pregnant women tend to see lots of other pregnant women, or when you are thinking of buying a car you seem to see advertisements for that car every time you turn around. It also explains why two people can look at the same picture and see different things. One of the most well known examples of this is the experiment originally conducted by Daniel Simons, a professor in the Department of Psychology and the Beckman Institute for Advanced Science and Technology at the University of Illinois, and Chris Chabris, Associate Professor of Psychology and Co-Director of the Neuroscience Program, Union College.¹² Simons and Chabris developed a video showing two groups of students passing basketballs back and forth and asked the viewers to count the number of times the team in white completed a pass. During the sequence a person in a gorilla suit walks across the scene, stops and beats its chest, and then walks off, and yet few people ever see the gorilla because we are so busy counting the passes!
7. **Priming Effect:** The inclination to respond to something based on expectations created by a previous experience or association. (The “cold drink/hot drink” experiment outlined earlier is a demonstration of this phenomenon.)
8. **Commitment Confirmation/Loss Aversion:** Our tendency to maintain belief or support in something because we have committed to it, and because we want to avoid possible losses. Most of us have experienced this one. We choose somebody for something, perhaps hire him or her, and then are reluctant to admit we made a bad choice. This is kind of like continuing to throw good money into a poker game, even though we know we have a bad hand!
9. **Stereotype Threat:** The experience of anxiety or concern in a situation where a person has the potential to confirm a negative stereotype about their social group. This has often been referred to as “internalized oppression” and was, perhaps, most famously demonstrated in the well-known experiment conducted by Drs. Mamie and Kenneth Clark with black children who, when offered white or black dolls to play with, preferred to play with white dolls.¹³ This important experiment is known to have influenced the U.S. Supreme Court in the 1954 Brown vs. Board of Education school desegregation ruling. In more recent studies, Professor Claude Steele found that simply asking African American students to report their race before taking their SAT tests significantly lowered their scores.¹⁴ Being reminded of being black seemed to internalize a negative performance bias. Similarly, in a 1995 study by psychology professors Margaret Shih, Todd L. Pittinsky and Nalini Ambady, Asian female students were shown to perform significantly higher on math tests when they were reminded of their Asian identity rather than their gender identity.¹⁵
10. **Anchoring Bias:** The common tendency to rely too heavily or “anchor” on one trait or piece of information when making decisions. Nobel Prize winner Daniel Kahneman and his research partner, Amos Tversky, famously identified this bias.¹⁶ For example, do you automatically assume, without questioning, that people who come from elite schools are better qualified than others? Or that certain personality types are “more professional”?



¹² http://www.theinvisiblegorilla.com/gorilla_experiment.html

¹³ Clark, Kenneth; Mamie Clark (1950). “The Negro child in the American social order”. *The Journal of Negro Education* 19 (3): 341–350

¹⁴ Claude M. Steele and Joshua Aronson, Stereotype Threat and Intellectual Test Performance of African Americans, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol 69(5), Nov 1995, 797-811. doi: 10.1037/0022-3514.69.5.797

¹⁵ Margaret Shih, Todd L. Pittinsky, and Nalini Ambady, “Stereotype Susceptibility: Shifts in Quantitative Performance from Socio-Cultural Identification,” *Psychological Science* 10, no. 1 (January 1999): 80–83.

¹⁶ Amos Tversky and Daniel Kahneman, Judgment under Uncertainty: Heuristics and Biases. *Science*, New Series, Vol. 185, No. 4157. (September 27, 1974), pp. 1124-1131.

CASE STUDY: A GLOBAL MANAGEMENT CONSULTING COMPANY

The Situation: A division of a leading global management consulting company engaged Cook Ross to lead a group intervention for a business line of more than 50,000 employees working worldwide to increase the number of women in senior leadership by focusing on the role of unconscious bias in hiring.

The Cook Ross Work: The effort began by bringing together executive leaders and then a group of 150 senior leaders to engage in dialogue about the impact of unconscious bias on their organizational culture. They subsequently expanded the education effort to include leaders throughout their global system. In addition, an internal train-the-trainer program was created using videoed content and live facilitation. All leaders were exposed to Unconscious bias education. Unconscious bias education was also provided to their accounts, and account leads were held responsible for increasing the diversity on the account teams.

In addition to education, structures and systems were recreated. More jobs were posted so that others outside of those on top of mind could have the opportunity to apply. Each geographical group submitted a diversity strategic plan that they were accountable for delivering on and reporting on it monthly. They also were expected to put together teams to deliver on the plans. All of the human resources functions were tasked with realigning their processes to mitigate bias in the talent management process, and decision-tools were created to encourage more conscious talent management practices.

Top managers also began to make discussions about bias a part of every management meeting and top leaders were vocal in providing leadership for the effort by talking about how their worldview was shaped by their own biases. Individual leaders received coaching to assist them in transforming their leadership approaches.

The Outcome: The division's leadership pipeline gender spread has increased, including a three-fold increase in the number of women applying for, and being accepted into, senior leadership positions. Similar, though less dramatic, increases have been occurring among people of color. As a result, the company is now preparing leaders in most of the other business lines to focus on unconscious bias in talent management systems throughout the organization. This program has expanded to specifically focus on mitigating unconscious bias in the performance management process, as the organization's leaders want to ensure equity in this critical talent management process.

CONSCIOUS OR UNCONSCIOUS: GOOD OR BAD?

All of these manifestations of unconscious bias are operating in us and on us all of the time, without our conscious knowledge. Of course, the question still remains: does it really matter if bias is conscious or unconscious? After all, the net effect on the person whom the bias impacts may be the same. It needs to be made clear that it is necessary to develop both an awareness of our own biases and a rigor in addressing these biases. Too often, it is easier to see bias only in others. Fundamentally understanding the automatic nature of bias requires us to adjust the way we approach dealing with these issues, both with others and within ourselves.

Those who work in diversity have all too often traded in the currency of guilt, either feeling bad about ourselves for our biases or trying to make others feel guilty for theirs. In that context, the core driver

of the conversation has often been to find the “bad people” and cure them of their biases. The goal has been to eradicate bias. As we now can see, it is impossible to eliminate bias.

The goal should be to recognize bias and intervene when and where it interferes with personal, professional, and organizational effectiveness and productivity.

If we believe that it is important to create a just and equitable society and strive to create successful organizations in which everybody can fully contribute and have access to their fair measure of success, it is not consistent for some to people to be discriminated against based on their identification with a particular group. That clearly will not contribute to making smart business decisions, in talent management and other domains. But are the people who feel these biases, those who act this way in all the areas of life...all bad people? Are we bad people? The problem with the good person/bad paradigm is twofold:

- First, it virtually assures that on a collective and individual basis we will never “do diversity right” because every human being has bias of one kind or another.
- Second, it demonstrates a lack of understanding of the reality that bias is as natural to human beings as any function of the mind.

The bottom line is we need it to survive, so we have to work with it.

THE GOOD NEWS: WHAT WE CAN DO ABOUT IT!

A combination of factors has led us to understand, and experience, that the mind is malleable. We seem to have an enormous capacity for neuroplasticity, which involves subtle changes in neural pathways and synapses, which are due to changes in behavior, environment, and experiences. In other words, the old saying “you can’t teach an old dog new tricks” might not even be true for dogs! There appear to be a number of things that we can do to increase our ability to make more conscious decisions. Regardless of someone’s position in an organization or society at large, everyone can take practical and meaningful steps to reduce the influence of unconscious bias on decision-making. Review the steps listed below, which are designated for either individuals or for people who manage others, and pick two or three that speak to you directly.



- **Perhaps the most important of all is this one: You have bias...yes, you...and so do I.** Biases evolve over the course of our lives based on our experiences and the things and people we are exposed to. However, the notion that we can *make* all bias go away is a fantasy. We all have it. All of us. If we didn’t, we wouldn’t survive. Our brains make decisions, and mistakes, without us even knowing it. The more we try to convince ourselves that we are without bias, the more likely we are to overlook and ignore our own blind spots. The more comfortable we become with the reality

of our biases, the more we move away from the notion that they are traits that only bad people possess. This recognition and awareness helps us develop behaviors that limit the negative impact of bias on our lives and the lives of others. As the Swiss psychologist Carl Jung said, “We cannot change anything until we accept it. Condemnation does not liberate, it oppresses!”

It might be helpful to think about our relationships with biases by using the metaphor of the clutch in a standard transmission vehicle. When a driver steps on the clutch to shift gears the engine never stops running. It doesn’t even slow down. It keeps humming along as it always was. However, what the clutch does is to disable the engine’s ability to move the car. I have found this to be a helpful way to look at bias. We do not have to eliminate it in order to mitigate its impact on our behavior. When we notice it, we have the opportunity to choose our behavior in new ways.

- **Consciously develop the capacity to shine a flashlight on yourself.** There is no clear answer as to how much real capacity we have to develop self-awareness.



However, it is clear that checking in with ourselves and learning to watch ourselves in action can bring patterns to the surface. Do you notice yourself reacting consistently

in particular ways or to particular kinds of people? Do certain things, people, or situations consistently trigger an emotional reaction? These kinds of observations can open up a path of exploration that leads to insight and transformation. Research in mindfulness demonstrates that when we slow ourselves down and exercise self-observation, we are more likely to generate awareness from our prefrontal neo-cortex rather than our more automatic limbic system. Perhaps one of the

reasons that many of our most innovative ideas occur to us when we’re in the shower!

- **Develop and practice constructive uncertainty.** We live in a culture that loves certainty. We are often convinced that the more certainty we feel or see expressed about something, the more likely it is to be true. This is why smart people may be more, rather than less, susceptible to unconscious biases. Our intelligence convinces us that we are right. The more we replace our exclamation points with question marks, the more likely we are to be able to see the irrationality of our decision-making.

By observing ourselves in action, we are more able to thoughtfully consider our perspectives. One way to remind ourselves is by using this simple mnemonic, P.A.U.S.E:

- **Pay** attention to what’s actually happening, beneath the judgments and assessments.
- **Acknowledge** your own reactions, interpretations, and judgments.
- **Understand** the other possible reactions, interpretations, and judgments that may be possible.
- **Search** for the most constructive, empowering, or productive way to deal with the situation.
- **Execute** your action plan.

See the following page for details about the P.A.U.S.E. mnemonic.

- **Explore awkwardness and discomfort.** Our tendency is to back away from situations that make us feel uncomfortable. Since it appears as though our brain’s default mechanism is to assume “danger in the stranger,” we would be well advised to notice those feelings of fear when they occur. Rather than allow our amygdala (the fear or “fight, flight or freeze” center of the brain) to hijack us, we should take some time to more deeply examine what we are reacting to. Who or what is this person reminding us of?

Pay attention to what's actually happening, beneath the judgments and assessments.

When we slow down and look at what's really happening, we have an opportunity to distinguish between an event and our interpretation of that event. For example, say somebody shakes your hand softly. Do you have a visceral reaction and association with weakness as many people in the United States do? ("Limp!" "Cold fish!") What actually happened is that they used less pressure in the handshake than you are used to with most people. The rest is your interpretation.

Acknowledge your own reactions, interpretations, and judgments.

This is where you have an opportunity to identify your interpretation as an interpretation. You might say something to yourself like, "I can see that when he shook my hand softly, I interpreted that as weakness." As soon as you notice an interpretation, as an interpretation, you have moved to a higher level of consciousness.

Understand the other possible reactions, interpretations, and judgments that may be possible.

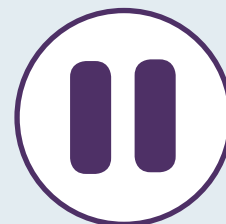
There may be any number of other reasons for the behavior. In the case of the handshake, the person may come from a different culture (a significant percentage of people in different parts of the world shake hands more softly than we do in the United States), or may have an injury, or be recovering from an injury. Or they may have arthritis, or—whatever! Looking at all the possibilities reinforces the dis-identification.

Search for the most constructive, empowering, or productive way to deal with the situation.

What makes the most sense? Should I assume that the person is weak because of my initial reaction to his handshake, or should I get to know him a little better before I make a definitive assessment? What should I say? What is the best way to handle the circumstance?

Execute your action plan.

Act consistently with what makes the most sense.



- **Engage with those people you consider “others.”** Because of the nature of our lives, we often find ourselves living with, working with, and relating to people inside a relatively limited bandwidth of human difference. Consciously expanding that bandwidth can give us a broader perspective about people who are different from us. The United States is a more diverse country in 2013 than it was in 2007, and far more diverse than it was in 1997. The diversity of people is increasing, competing for jobs within a tight marketplace and yet, it is imperative that we find ways to engage with those who are different from us in positive ways. Remember that every one of us is an “other” to someone else.



The more we know people for who they are, the less we treat them as what they are.

- **Reframe the conversation to focus on equitable treatment, respect, and good decision-making, and away from only discrimination and “protected classes.”** Review every aspect of the employment life cycle for patterns of hidden bias—screening résumés, interviews, onboarding (bringing new employees on board), assignment processes, mentoring and sponsorship, performance evaluation, identifying high performers, promotion and termination.

Emphasizing the universality of bias allows people to interrelate from a sense of commonality rather than difference. It builds on the human tendency towards homophily, the “love of same,” which leads us to feel more comfortable with people like ourselves.

- **Get feedback and data.** It is almost impossible to rationally look at our own patterns of bias. However, we can review our behavior. Gathering data and getting feedback can be very helpful in determining whether or not there are any patterns of bias in our behavior toward others. If the data show a potential pattern, it should at least be an invitation to look and see whether there is some bias at play. You may want to initiate a résumé study within your industry, organization or department to see whether those with roughly the equivalent education and experience are weighted equally relative to names, race, culture, etc. Conduct an assessment of your organizational unconscious to understand what issues of bias might exist in your workplace. Interviews and surveys with present and former employees also can be helpful in this process. Once people are outside of the culture they often are able to offer valuable insight.
- **Offer customized unconscious bias education based on the needs of different areas in the organization.** When it comes to training and awareness, one size does not fit all. Different functional areas have different cultures, needs, and requirements. In several client engagements Cook Ross has undertaken within the past few years, we have customized approaches to address the specific needs, sometimes even focusing on the specific vocabulary of recruiters, engineers, sales people, marketers, or executive leaders. We also have developed education programs to recalibrate structures for job interviews, performance reviews, and talent assignments/team selection.
- **Support activities that encourage positive images and experiences of members of non-dominant groups.** Research shows that



images, posters, newsletters, annual reports, speaker series, podcasts and other exposure can insert positive messaging that can serve to counter negative stereotyping when they are coupled with a genuine attempt to observe behavior and change it. In fact, “positive stereotyping” of this kind has been found to be among the most effective systemic interventions to address patterns of unconscious bias.

- **Reduce guilt and increase responsibility.** While the aversive emotional feeling associated with guilt may discourage an individual from performing a guilt-provoking (and presumably socially undesirable) act in the future, as a long-term strategy is a non-functional reaction. Guilt is what people feel because of what they have done. Responsibility represents an understanding of our impact on others and our commitment to change. When people feel guilty they generally react in one of two ways: by contracting or by feeling bad about themselves. Guilt and shame can make us react to, or get angry at, the source of our guilt. This is altogether unproductive. When we take responsibility, we are able to move forward to correct our mistakes.
- **Develop structures and systems that remove identifiers that might stimulate bias.** Removing names, pictures or other qualifiers can often create a greater sense of equity and inclusion in decision-making.

For example, in the 1970s approximately ten percent of orchestra members were women. As a way to counter-balance this trend, blind auditions were widely developed in which the musician auditioned behind a screen and even walked in on a carpet to mask the sound of high heels.¹⁷ By the mid-1990s, the percentage of women musicians had risen to 35%.

- **Make it a cultural thing.** This may be the most important of all. It is very difficult for an individual to tackle his or her own unconscious biases. If we create an organizational community of consciousness in which people collectively commit to support each other in addressing bias, we are far more likely to have dynamics that we are unaware of brought to our attention. Create environments where different views are welcomed. Build integrated teams and create policies that require colleagues to treat each other with respect and professionalism, not political correctness. In our experience this may be the most impactful result from unconscious bias training when it is done well. It opens up a new, more constructive way to engage in dialogue around issues that we sometimes struggle to talk about.



So far we have been mainly focusing on the ways that individuals can manage their own biases. Now let’s look at some ways to build consciousness into the talent management process.

¹⁷ Claudia Godlin and Cecilia Rouse, *Orchestrating Impartiality: The Impact of “Blind” Auditions on Female Musicians*, *The American Economic Review*, Vol. 90, No. 4. (September 2000), pp.715-741.

PRACTICAL STEPS IN THE HUMAN CAPITAL LIFECYCLE

By broadly including people in task groups, they can begin to see themselves as part of a larger, interdependent community in which everyone has skills and equitable opportunities to contribute. Together, as an organizational community, we can look at systems and structures that support better decision-making in areas like recruitment, bringing people on board, assessment and development. Structure creates behavior in organizations and the right structures can encourage more inclusive behaviors.

What are some of the specific behavior that can contribute to more conscious people management? Consider these ideas:

RECRUITMENT

- Note and evaluate your “first impressions.”
- Do you notice an immediate like or dislike of the candidate?
- Do you have anchoring biases about experiences, schools, and personal preferences?
- Avoid distractions or “speed conversations” when talking with potential recruits. Short interactions tend to strongly favor people in dominant groups.
- Attempt to get a deeper understanding of the recruits’ background and the path they took in getting to your door. Non-traditional paths may not show up in traditional ways.
- Make yourself available, both logistically and interpersonally to get a better sense of the potential recruit. Share a personal story. Let them get a better sense of you.
- Track your results for patterns that might reveal biases, including unconscious bias.

ONBOARDING

- Provide cultural, as well as logistic orientation. We often underestimate how important it is to help new employees (especially people from non-dominant

groups) understand the organizational culture and how to successfully navigate it.

- Watch out for early assumptions about a person’s performance. Some people are slower starters than others but they soon catch up and even move ahead of those who seem to be quick learners.
- Make time to personally connect with associates.
- Make yourself available, when possible, to check and see how they’re doing.
- Be systemic, rather than intuitive, in providing opportunities for new associates. Keep track of job assignments and other similar opportunities. Be sure all new associates have multiple opportunities to succeed.

ASSESSMENT

- Make sure there are well-articulated expectations for behaviors and results that can be clearly monitored.
- Use data to balance your “gut” reactions.
- Watch for patterns of assessment among particular groups. Do certain groups tend to receive lower ratings than others?
- Get broad input from different people about an employee. One way to diminish the power of unconscious bias is to include more voices and perspectives in the process of collecting input.
- Be sure you are measuring against “success” rather than your own personal ways of doing things. We are often



unconsciously dismissive of other ways of doing things, not because they are less successful, but because they are not our ways.

- Create a mentorship or sponsorship relationship. Relationships like these not only benefit the protégé, but the mentor or sponsor as well.

DEVELOPMENT

- Expose employees to a broad range of educational and developmental opportunities.
- Create a career development process for your associates, including:
 - Job assignment strategies
 - Clear performance objectives
 - Regular feedback opportunities
 - Ongoing opportunities for growth and development
- Be aware that unstructured processes will tend to benefit the dominant group. Structure allows us to be sure that all employees have opportunities to grow and be successful.
- Monitor your own patterns in assigning tasks. It is easy to slip into patterns that benefit some employees to the exclusion of others.
- Encourage employees to take responsibility for their own development.

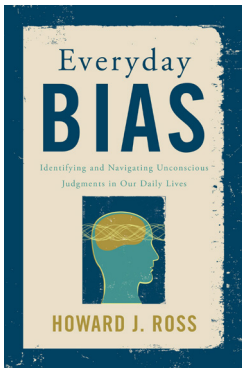
CONCLUSION

Unconscious patterns have an enormous impact on both our individual behavior and on organizational behavior. Only when we find the courage and curiosity to engage in a seemingly contradictory path – consciously becoming aware of and addressing something that is, by nature, concealed – can we begin to see more clearly into our blind spots. As Viktor Frankl wrote:

“Between stimulus and response, there is a space. In that space lies our freedom and power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and freedom.”¹⁸

Awareness and growth does not happen overnight. Increasing our diversity, inclusiveness, and cultural competency requires us to undertake a long journey of continuously challenging our perceptions and slowing down our impulse to judge instantaneously and reactively. This means we must continually confront unconscious bias. Ultimately, the result will be more conscious, inclusive and humane organizations with greater opportunity for all, more engaged individuals and higher profitability. Isn't that worth the effort?

¹⁸ Frankl, Victor, *Man's Search for Meaning: An Introduction to Logotherapy*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1959.

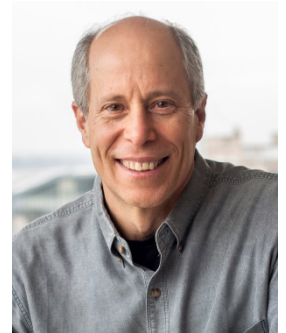


To learn more about unconscious bias and how to address it in your life and organization, check out *Everyday Bias: Identifying and Navigating Unconscious Judgments in Our Daily Lives*, by Howard J. Ross, Published by Rowman and Littlefield, 2014 available at www.cookross.com or amazon.com.

Order now: www.cookross.com | 301.565.4035

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Founder & Chief Learning Officer at Cook Ross Inc., a visionary at heart, **Howard Ross** has served more than 25 years as an influential business consultant to hundreds of organizations across the United States and in 21 other countries, specializing in leadership, diversity, and organizational transformation. As a recognized thought leader, Howard brings invaluable expertise and knowledge on the topic of exploring, revealing and addressing Unconscious Bias. He is the architect of several award-winning training and awareness programs, notably CultureVision and The Diversity Toolkit. He is also the author of *ReInventing Diversity: Transforming Organizational Community to Strengthen People, Purpose & Performance*, published by Rowman Littlefield in association with the Society for Human Resource Management. Howard was the 2007-2008 Johnnetta B. Cole Professor of Diversity-in-Residence at Bennett College for Women, the first time a white man has ever served in such a position at an HBCU (Historically Black Colleges and Universities). He is a frequently invited international speaker for organizations and at diversity and inclusion conferences. Howard can be heard monthly on NPR, as a regular guest on The Kojo Nnamdi Show.



ABOUT COOK ROSS INC.

Cook Ross has over twenty four years of experience in providing an innovative approach to diversity, inclusion, cultural competency, and leadership development through training and consulting products and services. Cook Ross is considered to be a thought leader in the practical application of academic research of the unconscious to organizational diversity & inclusion efforts. For more information, contact us at lookingforanswers@cookross.com.



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Description	Project ID	0001
	Name	Pollinator Garden
	Project Description	Replace parking lot w/ small nature garden w/ native plants and pollinator-friendly habitat
	Location	Beaver Acres Elementary
	Inside equity focus areas?	Y
	Sponsor (Owner? Partnership?)	City of Beaverton
	Community Needs	teach kids about native plants and pollinators at school
	Notes from consultant team	
	Reviewer Notes & Comments	
	Community Needs Score (0-5)	4
Minimum Requirements (completed by agency staff)	Partnership	X
	UGB	X
	Feasible	X
	Capital	X
	Willing Sellers	-
Climate Resilience Criteria	Protect, connect and restore habitat to support strong populations of native plants, fish and wildlife that can adapt to a changing climate.	X
	Protect and restore floodplains, headwaters, streams and wetlands to increase their capacity to handle stormwater to protect vulnerable communities from flooding.	
	Increase tree canopy in developed areas to reduce heat island effects.	X
	Use low-impact development practices and green infrastructure in project design and development.	X
	Increase community experience of nature.	X
	Reviewer Notes & Comments	
	Climate Resiliency Criteria Score (0-5)	4
	Build wealth in communities of color, Indigenous communities, low-income and other historically marginalized communities through contracting and jobs.	X

Racial Equity & Program Criteria	Improve human mental and physical health, particularly in communities of color, Indigenous communities, low-income communities and other historically marginalized communities.	X
	Nurture a relationship with land and create educational opportunities (including Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Math [STEAM] opportunities) and promote careers in the environmental and agricultural sector, especially for people and youth of color.	
	Demonstrate leadership by Black, Indigenous, and People of Color in project identification, selection, design and implementation.	
	Increase accessibility of public, park, and other natural spaces.	X
	Reviewer Notes & Comments	
	Program Criteria Score (0-5)	4
Purpose	Water quality, fish & wildlife habitat	X
	Climate resiliency	X
	Experience of nature at community scale	X
	Reviewer Notes & Comments	
	Bond Purpose Score (0-5)	5
Principles	Serve communities through inclusive engagement, transparency and accountability.	X
	Advance racial equity through bond investments.	X
	Protect clean water for people, fish and wildlife.	X
	Protect and restore culturally significant native plant communities.	X
	Protect, connect and improve habitat for native fish and wildlife.	X
	Take care of what we have.	
	Make parks and natural areas more accessible and inclusive.	X
	Connect more people to the land and rivers of our region.	X
	Invest in trails for biking and walking.	
	Support community-led parks and nature projects.	X
	Make communities more resilient to climate change.	X
	Reviewer Notes & Comments	

	Bond Principles Score (0-5)	5
Notes & Comments about Projects	<i>What's compelling?</i> <i>What could be improved?</i>	
Total Score (up to 25)		22
Scorecard Notes & Comments	<i>Was the worksheet easy to use?</i>	
	<i>Was is useful for vetting and evaluation?</i>	
	<i>How could it be improved to make it more useful or easier to use?</i>	
	<i>Additional comments or questions on worksheet or vetting process?</i>	

0002

0003

Community Garden

Tennis Court

Gated neighborhood
raised bed garden

Develop park space to
build concrete tennis
court

Sylvan Heights

Harleman Park

N

Y

City of Portland
allow residents to grow
their own organic
cruelty-free arugula

City of Cornelius
help residents exercise
and stay healthy in city
park

4	4

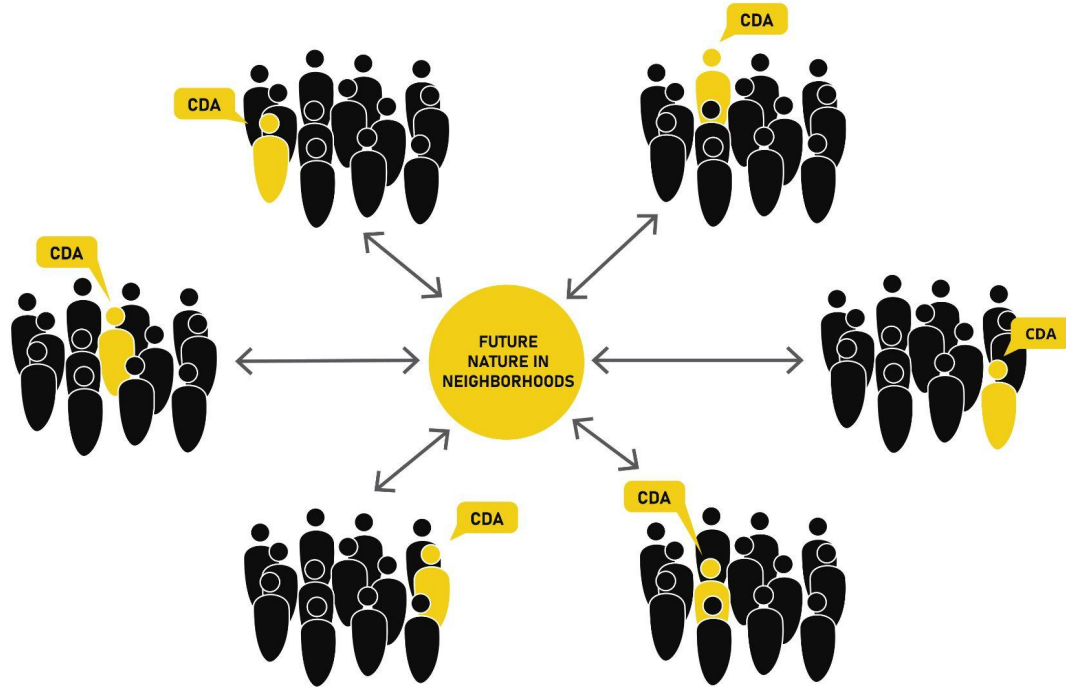
X	X
X	X
X	X
X	X
X	-

X

X

1	0

Nature in Neighborhoods Community Design Advocates!



Beaverton Black Parent Union

"The Beaverton Black Parent Union views connecting to nature as an essential strategy to restoring our ancestral wisdom and culture into modern daily life and healing from the racial traumas of the past."

Black and Green Fellowship

4 week long program for Teens ages 14-17

Soul Stroll

Summer outings getting out into different parks and hikes. Exploring history, learning about soil, trees, and native animals.

50-100 people



Brandon Culbertson

- Northern Arapaho and Sioux Tribes
- Long time Beaverton resident
- Sees a vacuum around indigenous and tribal resources and space and wants to see greater indigenous representation in meaningful ways



Patricia Kepler & James Albrecht

- Accessibility specialists.
- Worked with Metro on accessibility review for updates to park.
- Desire to help make materials and events accessible, provide spaces for people with disabilities to get out and experience nature and create ideas together.



Centro Cultural

- A long time partner
- Excited to help host events and get the word out

Environmental Protectors

Organizers and teachers of how families can protect the waters and land

Working Theory Farm

Edad de Oro seniors to grow their own food, raise chickens, and connect with each other and the land.

Climate Justice Leadership Program

High school students learn about land stewardship and conservation

Backyard Habitat Certification

be trailblazers in western Washington County for a sustainable redesign of our land



CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

2023 Nature in Neighborhoods

Community volunteers authorized to act on behalf of Metro, such as grant review committee members, “ensure public respect by avoiding even the appearance of impropriety... Metro decisions are based on the merits of the issues. Judgment is independent and objective.” ¹

If a committee member or their immediate family’s “financial interests will be specifically affected by a decision, that official will...withdraw from further participation on the matter... Intervention on behalf of constituents or friends is limited to assuring fairness of procedures, clarifying policies or improving service.” ²

Therefore, any committee member or their immediate family, who is a **staff member or board member of an organization** submitting a grant (pre) application, will recuse **themselves from the scoring and the committee discussion** of that grant (pre) application.

Any committee member or their immediate family, who is a staff member or board member of a **partner organization** with **financial interest** in submitting a grant (pre) application, will recuse themselves from the scoring and the committee discussion of that grant (pre) application.

Any committee member or their immediate family, who is a staff member or board member of a **partner organization** with **no financial interest** in submitting a grant (pre) application, may score and participate in the discussion of that grant (pre) application.

¹ Metro Executive Order No. 66. (January 21, 1997). Code of Ethics.

² Metro Executive Order No. 66. (January 21, 1997). Code of Ethics.