



Vermont Governor's Workforce Equity and Diversity Council 2016 Annual Report

2015 Council Accomplishments

The Council focused most of its attention over the past year on the idea that there is a need to not only recruit, but also retain, a diverse workforce. In Fiscal Year 2015, the State received over 50,000 applications from 15,000 different applicants through its PeopleSoft system; 95% of all recruited positions are posted on PeopleSoft. The State's Workforce Report shows that the State does a commendable job recruiting a workforce that reflects the diversity of the state, but the State appears to have difficulty retaining that diverse workforce. The Council made recommendations regarding how the State can recruit a more diverse workforce, and also examined what factors may be attributing to the lack of retention in the diversity of the State's workforce, including a lack of employment advancement options within the State's various departments.

The Council found that (infrequently updated) job specifications and job descriptions are narrowly written in a way that may inadvertently create barriers to applicants from diverse backgrounds. Training hiring managers regarding the benefits of recruiting a diverse workforce may encourage them to write effective job postings, and update job descriptions and minimum qualifications appropriately. The DHR website has many resources available for hiring managers regarding recruitment, and supervisors should avail themselves of these resources.

2015 Council Recommendations

- State-wide implementation of employee exit interviews should be mandated, in order to gain insight regarding employee retention. Online questionnaires like Survey Monkey could be used to maintain anonymity and encourage candor. The questionnaires could differ slightly depending on the employee's department, union status, etc.
- Hiring managers and DHR Field personnel should be trained regarding how to incorporate EEO principles to their hiring process in order to encourage and facilitate recruiting a diverse workforce; all employees who want to sit on an interview panel should complete this training. For example, hiring managers should certify that they have reviewed the recruitment guidance and resources that are available online through the DHR website.
- Hiring Managers should be trained to consider the benefits of a diverse workforce when creating or amending job descriptions and advertising for open positions, and update all job descriptions and minimum requirements so they don't inadvertently screen out qualified and desired candidates.
- Currently, hiring managers are able to see all applicants' application materials, but are only able to take action with the ones that were "routed" as meeting minimum qualifications.

Hiring Managers should be counseled to look closely at all applicants because some people will inadvertently screen themselves out by answering application questions too literally or incorrectly.

- New Employee Orientation EEO training should be conducted in-person Statewide, and somewhat tailored toward individual departments/agencies. The DHR Workforce Development Division likely does not currently have the capacity to implement such a training Statewide, but perhaps they can train trainers to implement it within each department. A best practice would be for a ‘refresher’ EEO training to occur every 2-3 years, in person, for every employee.
- Incorporate recruitment efforts that focus on public outreach in the Vermont community. Offer informational trainings to the public regarding employment opportunities within State government, and assist members of the public with filling out the employment application.

2016 Council Priorities

- Continue to support DHR in recruitment and retention of a diverse workforce. A starting point for this will be to evaluate the State Workforce Report, and compare Executive Branch employment statistics to statewide statistics regarding diversity in the workforce. The Council will identify gaps in the reflection of diversity in the State’s workforce, and then focus its work on making targeted recommendations regarding recruitment to fill these gaps.
- Evaluate the results of Employee Engagement Survey, identify patterns and trends, and use that information to make recommendations regarding retention in the workplace.
- Research what other states are doing to recruit and retain a diverse workforce, and make recommendations regarding practices that might be successful in Vermont. Right now is an appropriate time to focus on new Americans as an untapped labor force, and the Council will specifically explore how other states are welcoming refugees into their workforce.
- Assist in formulating an EEO training module for new hires upon their joining the State workforce, and ‘reinforcement’ training for all State employees every few years.
- Make specific recommendations regarding how to implement exit interviews Statewide.
- Focus on out-of-state recruitment. Vermont is not a competitive employer on a national scale, and we need to make ourselves marketable. The Council will explore creative job benefits that would not cost the State much money, but would make us marketable to new employees.

Council Operations

- Membership: The Council now has 14 seats filled; it has the capacity for up to 15. One Public Member position is currently vacant.
- Election of Officers: The Council re-elected Cary Brown and AJ Van Tassel as co-chairs for the 2016 calendar term.
- Meeting Schedule: Council meetings will take place once a month at the Center for Achievement in Public Service (CAPS) in Montpelier. The meetings will alternate months between full Council meetings one month and workgroup sessions the next.

List of Council Members

- Mercedes Avila, Multicultural Director for the LEND Program at the UVM College of Medicine, Public Member
- Denise Bailey, Human Resources Compliance Manager for the Burlington School District, Public Member
- Cary Brown, Executive Director of Vermont Commission on Women, GWEDC Co-Chair
- Diane Dalmasse, Director of Vocational Rehabilitation, DAIL Representative
- Cassandra Diederich, Assistant Attorney General, AGO Representative
- Dana Hutchinson, Senior Recruiter at Champlain College, Public Member
- Rubin Jennings, Defender General Investigator, VSEA Representative
- Amila Merdzanovic, Director of Vermont Refugee Resettlement Program, Public Member
- Dottie Morris, Chief Officer of Diversity & Multiculturalism at Keene State College, Public Member
- Maribeth Spellman, DHR Commissioner
- Lori Valburn, Director of AOT Civil Rights Division, At-Large Executive Branch Employee
- AJ Van Tassel, Attorney General Investigator, At-Large Executive Branch Employee, GWEDC Co-Chair
- Jasmine Wheeler, Spectrum Youth and Family Services, Public Member
- Jane Woodruff, VDOL Staff Attorney, VDOL Representative