

# **When Cultural Competence is Not Enough:**

## **Diversity and Inclusion**

**Jankavey Seng**

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The need to for diversity and inclusion is now more pressing than ever. In 2007, Napa County's Health and Human Services Agency created the Diversity and Inclusion Program to assess the need of its customers and to better to provide services in an increasingly diverse population. The program was halted temporarily due to the recession but was reestablished in 2011 with a focus on creating a foundation for the agency by prioritizing training efforts. The program consists of a steering committee. The members were hand selected for their dedication to diversity as well as the skillset they could contribute to the success of the program, many of whom are also volunteer trainers.

Mandatory trainings now include *LGBTQ Best Practices* and *Diversity Foundation Training* for all new employees hired within 90 days as well as a series of three half-days titled: *HHS in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* consisting of *Implicit Bias*, *Cultural Intelligence*, and *Emotional Intelligence and Teams*. These trainings aim to create a mutual learning environment through transformational change. The objective is not to have workers be culturally competent, where they are loaded with facts on a myriad of cultures, but instead to equip participants with tools based on understanding their own values and biases.

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#### **Alameda County**

Alameda County has a Diversity Programs Unit managed by Sal Morales, the Diversity Programs Manager. Mr. Morales works with diversity coordinators at the different county agencies, who usually work in the agency's internal Human Resources department. However, Alameda County has not officially adopted a Diversity and Inclusion Program (DI). Rather, DI is implemented throughout county practice and policy. There is a Diversity Program Policy (DPP) Statement that aims to incorporate diversity and inclusion that was approved by the Board of Supervisors. DI is distinguished from Affirmative Action and Equal Employment Opportunity (AA/EEO) in that its concepts and principles are aspirational and voluntary while AA/EEO is based on compliance. There are three fundamental principles to DI:

- Enablement: removing barriers to success.
- Empowerment: including someone in the decision making process.
- Engagement: having the person become a strategic partner.

The purpose of DPP is to form a different lens for viewing diversity: from compliance to aspirational. For example, it moves away from cultural competence: having a basic knowledge of other cultures to cultural intelligence: the ability to operationalize that knowledge and support staff to leverage it for success.

DI faces the same challenges of any local government program. This includes the natural resistance to change and ease of keeping with the status quo. There are also institutional and bureaucratic constraints, such as budget, union considerations, and state and federal regulations. Government also tends to be compliance driven versus a private company that can be driven by more efficient processes to increase profit. The main challenge, however, is to transform organizational culture from top down to a point where DI is apparent in all levels within the organization.

Different methods can be used to measure outcomes once the program is in place; these include benchmarking or using surveys to measure progress or pulse surveys that are done more frequently to capture and track changes made. It is important to note that these outcomes must be reported out for transparency to establish and sustain trust while encouraging growth and learning.

Promoting DI is beneficial to a local government agency in many different ways. It promotes an environment that best utilizes a diverse staff population. This will help minority staff feel more included at work and improve retention of minority groups including millennials, or those in the LGBTQ community, who in turn, will be able to better serve the richly diverse Alameda County residents that utilizes county services.

### **County of Napa**

The demographics of the Napa County have a clear division of Caucasians and Latinos. Despite a large population of Latinos, there are very few Latino employees at the Health and Human Services Agency (HHS.A.) County jobs and services were traditionally utilized by Caucasians for Caucasians. In fact, the Sunset Law in the 1970's prevented African Americans from staying in

Napa County past sunset. Although the law is now obsolete, it still has influence over Napa County HHSA culture.

Diversity and Inclusion started in the County of Napa in 2007 with the previous agency director, Randy Snowden. When Director Snowden was the director of an adolescent treatment program in Oakland called Thunder Road, he was waiting at the elevator with another participant discussing the crisis of refugees and possible solutions. An African American woman said to him, “You just don’t get it, do you? What makes you think that a bunch of white men knows what a Lao immigrant need?” It was then that Mr. Snowden realized how important DI was needed to determine why the programs in existence were not having the desired outcomes with South East Asian youth.

Andrea Banks, Staff Services Analyst, was one of the original members for the DI project and is still apart of the steering committee. It started as a five-year plan with staff donating three to five hours a week across the division to meet, discuss, and address the issues of diversity. They eventually met with representatives of the community and community based organizations (CBOs) in a two-day conference at a hotel to identify the reasons why HHSA needs to address diversity. The conference was successful in identifying three major steps to take:

- A strategic plan was needed and developed to include organizational development/leadership, workforce development, standards and training, access to quality care, diversity infrastructure, and reassigned recommendations.
- A steering committee was established to identify issues and steps towards its resolution.
- Support from leadership.

Unfortunately, despite the success of the conference, the recession hit and the program was halted. It was not approved again until 2009, but reestablished in 2011.

Jennifer Swift came on board as the program coordinator in December 2012. Randy decided that they needed someone working over ten hours a week on the program in order for it to succeed. Initially, he sought to hire a diversity manager but the budget did not allow for it. Ms. Swift was hired due to her vast experience with 24 years of advocacy for those with mental disabilities. She started part-time working 20 hours a week as an analyst and later became full-time.

Jennifer was first tasked with observing and interacting with staff at HHSa for several months. This allowed her to gain insights about what drove employees for when she had to re-create the steering committee. Past practice required staff interested in participating in the committee to submit an application. The members were selected for functional reasons, such as the analyst classification, since they had more flexibility than line staff, or, if an employee would be working closely with the policies that might be affected. Another reason for selection was based on the applicant's diversity dimension, or external factors such as race and gender. Ms. Swift realized that internal motivation for diversity was another necessary attribute that would push the program further. She hand-selected the committee members based on their dedication for diversity as well as the skillsets that they would bring.

The committee now realizes that it could not have done everything set forth by the strategic plan. Instead, it had to prioritize creating a foundation for the agency by focusing on providing training to HHSa staff as well as the community. One of the challenges faced early on was that there were a core group of employees that truly believed diversity and inclusion had no place at work.

The steering committee quickly identified this group of people and used them as sounding boards to strengthen its ideas and proposals.

The steering committee has moved forward by collecting data and research. This had to be done in order to address the issue of race. The committee was the first in the Bay Area to complete a final report on the BARHII Organizational Assessment (website here: <http://barhii.org/>). This is a toolkit an organization can use to address the social determinants of health through an assessment process. This toolkit is vital because it affects opportunities in areas of education, employment, housing, and overall health by recognizing that race and culture are the lowest common denominators with the social determinants. This study took two years. Internal experts were included in this research in order to get their buy in and to provide meaning and purpose to the research.

To disseminate this information and to lay the foundation for the program, committee members completed roadshows, trainings at division meetings, and showed a plethora of short videos on the subjects. All of this led to a survey consisting of 157 questions to staff. A similar survey was then given to community partners. Depending on the results of the survey, the committee made changes to the program and redid the survey to measure the outcomes. It was important to gather feedback then reassess with a follow up survey. A self-assessment was also done by interviewing all of the leadership staff. The surveys indicated that people knew about the entrenched culture and the apparent lack of diversity, but they were determined to move forward with training with the ambition of encouraging diversity.

## **Training**

Prior to the re-launch, the same issues that the previous steering committee faced were present with the initial training committee. Volunteers applied to participate and were selected by deputy directors based on their classification since analysts had the most flexibility.

Training curriculum was developed from a combination of the GARE and WorldTrust. Ten people were selected as part of the GARE Cohort and were sent to train-the-trainer sessions that met monthly on race and equity in Oakland with 13 other jurisdictions for \$10,000. The training was not utilized with the initial roll out.

The current trainers now consist of six volunteers across the agency who were trained as trainers. It is important to note that up to this point, there were no professional trainers within the agency. Instead of being a detriment to the program, this is considered to be an attribute of success for the program later on. The program rolled out across the agency, and volunteers applied concepts from the trainings and linked it with work experience. This created a connection between the concepts from the training to real life application in the work environment.

Training for the entire agency started November 2015 and is scheduled to complete April 2017. Mandatory half-days trainings include *LGBTQ Best Practices* and *Diversity Foundation Training* for all new employees within 90 days of hire. Also, there is the *HHSA in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* series consisting of three half-day trainings; Implicit Bias, Cultural Intelligence, and Emotional Intelligence and Teams.

The objective of these trainings is not to have staff that is culturally competent, but instead to provide a basic foundation that focuses on acquiring an understanding and tools to work in a diverse environment. Trainings are not full of information on various cultures, but focus on the worker's internal motivation. The three trainings in the *HHSA in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* series strive for

a mutual learning environment. The objective is to gain awareness of a person's own biases so that he/she can assist a diverse population in a place-based service model. The participant must first be mindful of his/her biases and be able to talk about them to minimize the negative impact when interacting with a diverse population.

Furthermore, *Cultural Intelligence* analyzes the concept of culture and how one symbol can be represented in different ways depending on the culture perceiving it. Once again it allows the participant to analyze his/her own culture to compare and contrast it to another person's culture. A tool shared during the training was to focus on the similarities in other cultures and to use that to build rapport.

Participants also explore concepts of core versus flex values as well as "knots," or assumptions and beliefs one holds so deeply that it affects how he/she decides and interacts with others. Core values are those that one is not willing to compromise, while flexible values are compromised when it conflicts with another's values. The ideal is to have a balance between the two, since those with high core values are intolerable to others while those that are too flexible are considered untrustworthy since they change too easily.

## **Results**

One of the performance measures from the action plan is the percentage of employees attending racial equality training. The entire agency staff completed its training this year and will have quarterly trainings for new employees. A second measure of performance is to determine the percent of employees who feel comfortable talking about racial equity. In the trainings early this year, many participants shared their experiences dealing with their biases and learning



opportunities in an open manner. They received support not only from the trainers but also from the rest of the participants.

On-boarding for new hires now includes the agency director coming to talk about DI and place-based services on the second day. Members of the steering committee also come to talk about different aspects of diversity. This serves a dual purpose: the agency's stance on the importance of DI is made clear and allows the committee to meet new hires and recruit new members to join subcommittees based on their interest in diversity or specific skillsets to move DI forward.

Howard Himes, Director of Napa County HHSA, best sums up the purpose of the program in that it is striving to create transformational change and not transactional change by giving workers the building blocks they need to be successful working with diversity. The program requires a great deal of planning for everything so that nothing is done in a reactionary manner and the agency knows where it wants to be or at least the direction it has to be headed.

HHSA will be launching the second phase of its training in Winter 2017. It will focus on Race and Equity throughout the agency.

### **Recommendations for Alameda County**

There are those that feel Alameda County already has staff almost as culturally diverse as the population it serves so there is no need to focus on diversity and inclusion. The opposite could not be more true. The focus, like at Napa County's HHSA, should not be on cultural competence, but instead on cultural intelligence so workers are equipped with tools to be successful while dealing with any culture, whether it is known or new to the person.

First Step: Establish a Steering Committee (two months)

The steering committee should be modeled after Napa County's HHSA where members are selected based on their dedication to diversity and inclusion and not for external factors, such as their position or visibility in the agency. An executive member in the agency should be a member of the steering committee so it shows that this program is valued by the agency. Also, the executive has access to resources and knowledge that others may not have. The remaining committee members should also represent other departments and classifications across the agency. The majority of these committee members will also serve as trainers or backups.

Alameda County Social Services has a robust training department, the Training And Consulting Team (TACT), which consists of a Staff Development Manager, three Staff Development Supervisors, and three units of Staff Development Specialists. At least one of the Staff Development Supervisors should serve as a committee member. The training department has the resources to print course materials, reserve training rooms, create presentation materials, and gather community partners that can assist in research and curriculum design.

#### Second Step: Assessment (three months)

Alameda County shall partner with Napa County HHSA to create surveys given internally to assess staff and diversity, then to partner agencies, and finally to the community. Like Napa, these surveys must be published to demonstrate transparency, and action must be taken on any top priority items. These surveys will help to determine how much training is needed and the curriculum design.

#### Third Step: Training Development (four months)

TACT should lead curriculum design of the three-month assessment with in-house subject matter experts to develop training specific to the agency. It should work with the committee trainers to provide on-the-job training on facilitation skills.

#### Fourth Step: Training the Agency (four months)

Trainings will be rolled out to each department until the majority of the employees have completed the trainings. After each department is trained, the committee must reassess and make any necessary modifications to the training specifically for that department while maintaining the core objectives of the program. A post-assessment will be conducted to measure the outcome of the program. It will be at this point that the agency will require a budget to support the trainings. Napa County HHSA has a budget of \$50,000 yearly, but it is rarely fully utilized. With over 2,000 employees, it will be likely that the Alameda County SSA will require the full amount for resources, such as copies, training supplies, and possible outside providers

#### **Acknowledgements**

From Napa County HHSA, I am most grateful to Jennifer Swift for taking the time out from her busy schedule to ensure that I received all the resources I needed to write this paper. I am also grateful to the rest of the committee members and trainers: Andi Banks, Kristin James-Bowe, Andy Segura, Gianna Thompson; to the members of the LGBTQ Connection: Ian Stanley, Eliseo Rivas, and their guest speakers for creating a mutual learning environment that was as enjoyable as it was informational. I am thankful to Howard Himes for taking the time to meet with me to share his inspirational vision. From Alameda County SSA, I would like to thank Division Director, Amada Robles, Department Director, Andrea Ford, Director, Lori Cox, for giving me this opportunity to grow professionally, and Sal Morales for his time and knowledge.

I would also like to thank all the staff from BASSC Executive Development Program who provided their hard work and commitment for our learning and development.