

A photograph of several hands of different skin tones stacked together in a supportive gesture, serving as the background for the report cover.

**PREPARED FOR THE
LAX COASTAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

DIVERSITY EQUITY & INCLUSION TASKFORCE REPORT

PREPARED BY
CHAMBER STAFF

APPROVED BY
DIVERSITY EQUITY & INCLUSION
AD HOC COMMITTEE

OCTOBER 2020

BACKGROUND

Following a statement released by the Chamber on June 4, 2020, members of our leadership team wanted to address a countrywide and worldwide issue revolving around Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI) and its role in the business-community and specifically within the LAX Coastal Chamber of Commerce.

In order to analyze, in a thoughtful, sustainable and meaningful way, Chairman Jon Lonner called for the formation of a Ad Hoc Taskforce to formulate potential programming within the Chamber or through collaborations and strategic partnerships in our community.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Rashmi Menon, Parsons, Committee Co-Chair
Ryan Gales, JGM - Committee Co-Chair

Kayla Friedman-Barb, Tannic and Lovely
Mike Harriel, SoCalGas
Jonathan Lonner, Burns & Bouchard
Stephanie Sampson, LAWA
Ravi Singh, Burns Engineering
Mary Taylor, PV Jobs
Dr. Kevin Walsh, Global Community Enrichment
Laura Ware, LINXS





PURPOSE

Inspired by the spotlight on issues of systemic racism and racial injustice taking place across the United States, the LAX Coastal Chamber formed the Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion (DEI) Ad Hoc Task Force to examine whether or not this organization should take an active role in this conversation.

This group was also tasked with analyzing current trends in business, gathering information, and exploring opportunities to create programming to support the business community through the lens of DEI.

All efforts needed to be meaningful, manageable, and sustainable with an explicit commitment to the DEI effort.

DEFINING DEI

Diversity includes all the ways in which people differ, encompassing the different characteristics that make one individual or group different from another.

Equity is the fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement for all people, while at the same time striving to identify and eliminate barriers that have prevented the full participation of some groups.

Inclusion is the act of creating environments in which any individual or group can be and feel welcomed, respected, supported, and valued to fully participate.

(source: www.independentsector.org)

FINDINGS

included in this report are the findings from the DEI Ad Hoc Taskforce. It was clear from the beginning of the conversations, that many of the corporate partners within the LAX Coastal Chamber of Commerce had DEI emphasized in their core values. It was also uncovered that there is a natural synergy with the Chamber and its business community large and small to provide a bridge between these sectors. The findings below will address some of the information uncovered in our meetings.



Finding #1: The committee was initially formed as the Diversity & Inclusion Taskforce, however, the committee felt that our effort should include Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion. The committee's conclusion is that diversity and inclusion cannot be fully achieved unless an emphasis is placed on providing equity as well. A way to play a role in helping provide equity could include providing access to both education and training.

Finding #2: Chambers and other business associations have made statements or declarations about racial injustice, but at this point have not gone beyond words to create programming to address these issues. The LAX Coastal Chamber could establish a framework and programming and help set the stage for other organizations which would make the Chamber stand out as a business leader in this space and on this issue.

Finding #3: The LAX Coastal Chamber already has programs that could support and champion DEI. There might be an opportunity to be more intentional within these existing programs. These programs include the Education Committee, Lifestyles Group, Young Professionals and Leadership Academy, as well as new programs like the SBE Certification Program and Leadership Academy 2.0. This might include reframing the programs, highlighting events, and creating an emphasis on issues that promote DEI education.

Finding #4: The Chamber has an opportunity to create an even more inclusive organization through constant evaluation of its volunteer opportunities and membership to ensure a diverse population is represented. A more diverse Chamber across all cultural competencies (age, gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, physical abilities, business industries, etc.) builds a stronger community.

Finding #5: The Chamber has an opportunity to be a "safe space" for small businesses to gain education and training on DEI. The Chamber can lead workshops that are an all-inclusive place for judgement free dialogue where business and community leaders can ask the "tough questions" on these topics.

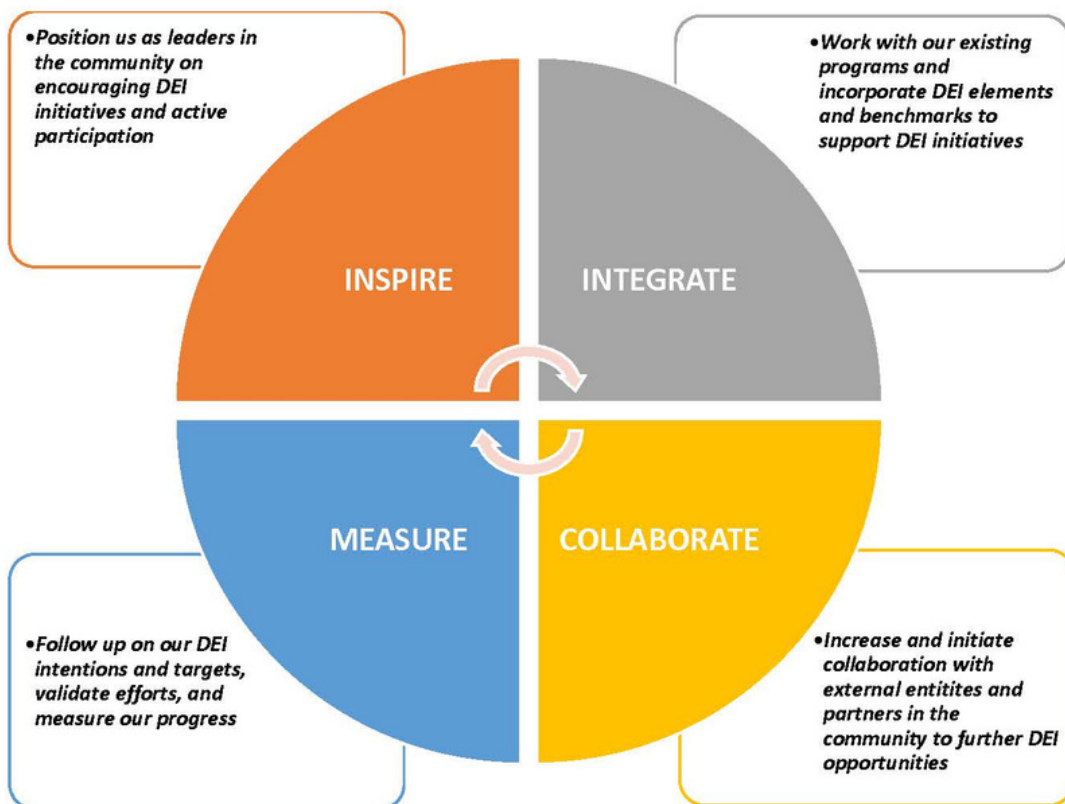
Finding #6: The Chamber is uniquely positioned to play a role in supporting a diverse workforce development program. This could include programming in the areas of STEM/STEAM for youth. The Chamber could use its partnerships with businesses and schools to connect the two groups.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

NEXT STEPS

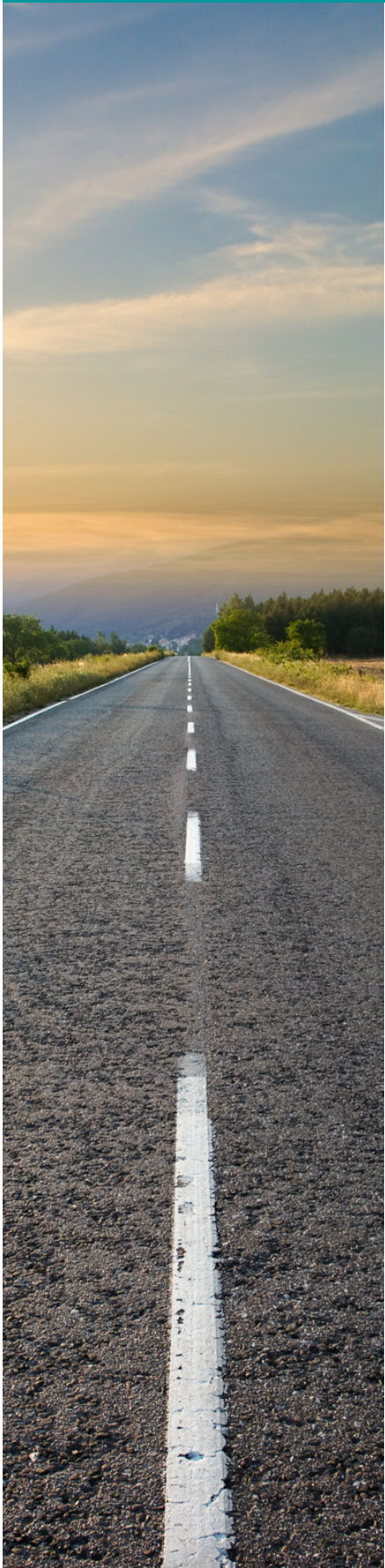
Following our discussions and compiling of findings, the committee developed the following actions detailed below.

These actions will result in creating a solid foundation and approach to support DEI across the community with the theme of Inspire, Integrate, Collaborate, and Measure. These steps and theme, will assist the Chamber in effectively implementing a DEI program as well as ensure an effective rollout throughout the community.



STEPS FORWARD

ACTION STEPS



Action Step #1: Create and Solidify A Foundation – The Chamber will need to ensure that our core values, One-Year Strategic Vision and Long-Range Plan include a focus on DEI within the organization. The efforts around DEI must be ingrained in the Chamber's DNA and must be part of the fabric of our organization.

Action Step #2: Maintain Diversity in Leadership – Ensuring that the leadership of the Chamber represents a diverse group of business leaders from different walks of life and varied industries is key to the success of the Chamber's DEI efforts. Continual focus on diversity in leadership is key to attracting a diverse business community. Encouraging our leadership to mentor our members is an important part of creating a strong succession of diverse emerging leaders.

Action Step #3: Appoint a Permanent Committee Focused on DEI Efforts – We can continue to activate the DEI Committee to continually monitor and track the progress in this effort. They can assist in prioritizing our efforts as well as assist in developing a 1, 3, and 5-year plan with qualitative and quantitative goals to measure our success.

Action Step #4: Activate Current Programs - With the Chamber already doing a great deal in the space of DEI, one key actionable strategy is to better market and incorporate key DEI benchmarks in existing programs to show necessary progress. (Example: Within our SBE Certification Program, measure how many Minority & Women Owned Businesses have completed the program. Potential Metric – 20% growth YOY of MBE's/WBE's that complete the program and move forward with certification.

Action Step #5: Leverage Strategic Collaborations - The LAX Coastal Chamber will continue to listen and seek out opportunities to collaborate with diverse organizations. This could include collaborations with entities such as the Greater Los Angeles African American Chamber of Commerce (GLAAC) or the LGBTQ Chamber of Commerce, etc. It could also include partners like the LAX Coastal Education Foundation, Otis College of Art and Design and Loyola Marymount University to create educational opportunities for our younger students to develop pathways for entering the workforce.

Action Step #6: Develop New and Sustainable Funding Stream – In order to develop any type of ongoing and sustainable program, the Chamber will have to establish a funding mechanism to help fund staffing and materials. In the short-term, sponsorships can be solicited to support DEI efforts. A long-term strategy could include forming a Community Development Corporation 501C3 that would focus on community benefit, education, and workforce development efforts. This would also open up our ability to apply for grants and increase staffing to develop ongoing programming.

DIVERSITY EQUITY & INCLUSION TASKFORCE REPORT

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the DEI Committee felt that the Chamber was on the right path for making meaningful strides in this space. Establishing a strong foundation, leveraging existing relationships, building on meaningful collaborations, continuing to focus on a diverse leadership pipeline and strategic programming is key to our success.

A short-term goal for this effort would be to weave DEI into the Chamber's one-year vision, long range plan, and CORE values. These efforts would be put forth by the Chamber's leadership and confirmed by the Board of Directors.

Lastly, the ability to integrate a DEI focus into current programming is not only current and timely; it also allows the Chamber to educate and elevate the business community. With an effort by local and state government, as well as private corporations to focus on DEI in the workplace and beyond, the Chamber is poised to act as a meaningful conduit between small and large business. By creating programming to support this cause, it is not only the right thing to do, but it also allows the Chamber to support our members, the business community, and the neighborhoods we serve.

OCTOBER 2020