



*VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE AND
CONSUMER SERVICES*

**DIVERSITY, OPPORTUNITY, AND
INCLUSION 2023 ANNUAL REPORT**

By:

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Diversity, Opportunity, and Inclusion

2023 Annual Report

Goal 1: Access and Success

Recruit and retain a diverse workforce by increasing access to diverse populations for recruiting.

Objective 1:

Continue to improve hiring processes and increase access to potential applicants from diverse populations.

- Utilized diverse avenues to publicize employment opportunities and promote the agency as an employer of choice. Avenues included print-media, social media, networking with relevant associations, and posting job flyers in various locations. Social media tags included the National Society for Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources and Related Sciences; a wide range of colleges and universities with diverse populations; disability organizations; and veteran organizations.
- Compiled the Virginia Employment Opportunities Plan for people with disabilities in accordance with Va. Code § 2.2-203.2:3 and monitored those statistics.
- Implemented targeted Facebook campaigns to attract diverse talent.
- Participated in various career fairs.
- Utilized the “Alternative Hiring Process” and ensured this process was visible to potential applicants, and trained agency hiring managers in this process.
- Interview panels were diverse and consisted of three panel members. A structured process included selection of panel members prior to initiating recruitment to ensure there was diversity in the selection process. Additionally, the agency requires all panel members be trained in the lawful employee selection procedures prior to serving on a panel and signing off on tips for panel members at the onset of interviews to ensure fairness and consistency.

Objective 2:

Continue to retain and promote a diverse workforce.

- Included the Agency Code of Ethics in employment offer letters and communicated the agency commitment to an inclusive work environment during onboarding. This included

providing various policies relating to civility in the workplace and avenues for reporting any behavior that violated these guiding principles.

- Promoted and encouraged training opportunities throughout the agency. Opportunities include training to maintain certifications as well as increase knowledge, skills, and abilities for promotional and growth opportunities.
- Applicants needing accommodations are encouraged to notify the agency of those needs. Employees are also encouraged to provide notification of any accessibility or accommodations needed. The agency employs an interactive approach to ensure accessibility for all individuals.
- The agency culture supports an open-door approach. Stay interviews are conducted, as well as exit interviews. Feedback from these surveys is reviewed and explored for improvements. Information gleaned through grievances, EEO investigations, or other employee relation situations is reviewed to determine if improvements or changes are needed.

Goal 2: Welcoming and Respectful Culture

Create and sustain a culture that welcomes and embraces diverse opinions, independent thinking, and respectful interactions to deliver optimal results for the organization and its customers.

Objective 1:

Persist in creating and maintaining a climate that is supportive and respectful and that values and integrates differing perspectives and experiences.

- Employees are offered the option to voluntarily disclose disabilities and are also notified of the process to request reasonable accommodations. An interactive approach is applied in determining reasonable accommodations.
- The Agency Code of Ethics and Civility in the Workplace policies are communicated and strictly enforced. Any behavior that violates these expectations is addressed.
- Throughout the agency, employees are provided with on-the-job training and formal training to increase knowledge, skills, and abilities. There are numerous career development programs within the agency.
- Employees are recognized annually with service and merit award recognitions. Additionally, the agency supports a “SPOT” program, Superb Performance on Time, which acknowledges various contributions. Many program areas also have periodic meetings in which employees can offer feedback and opinions relative to their work areas.

Objective 2:

Continue to provide an environment where conflicts, concerns, and complaints are aired and addressed expeditiously.

- Employee relation issues are addressed promptly. Employees and managers work collaboratively with their chain of command and human resource staff in discussing workplace concerns and developing solutions. Mediation is offered when applicable. Respectful communication is expected while expressing concerns. Ongoing education is required to ensure employees understand managers are responsible for communicating work expectations and assignments.
- Violations were promptly addressed, with formal discipline being issued in one instance during this reporting period.
- A structured and consistent process is followed for reporting concerns as well as investigating those concerns. Throughout investigations, agency leadership is kept informed of the issue, investigation status, and conclusion, including any corrective actions implemented.

Goal 3: State Agency DOI Infrastructure and Training

Maintain a plan and infrastructure that continues to provide individualized skills training and career development for state employees. Agencies report annually on DOI goals and accomplishments.

Objective 1:

Continue to amplify opportunities to advance the goals outlined in this framework.

- The DOI plan was developed by volunteer representatives from across the agency. This opportunity was offered to any employee who wanted to participate. The plan was communicated to the agency and is accessible to all employees.

Objective 2:

Continue to create structures and processes of accountability to increase organizational effectiveness with the Department of Human Resource Management.

- Statistics and results are routinely monitored to ensure DOI success. This includes hiring data, retention data, equitable compensation, access to training, and other relevant benefits.
- The senior management team is engaged in DOI efforts and models this behavior as well as communicates expectations throughout its operational areas. Leadership manages with respect and accountability and leads by example.
- Open communication is valued at the agency in discussions regarding operational excellence in all facets to ensure a “best in class” agency.
- Routine reviews of policies, processes, laws, and regulations are ongoing to ensure the agency is operating and performing in a superior manner. Varying perspectives and backgrounds ensure this review is productive.

Objective 3:

Continue to provide training and educational workshops available to all employees.

- Commonwealth of Virginia and agency required training was communicated to all employees and completion verified. Required supervisory training was presented to supervisors, which included various topics on leadership, recruitment and retention, how to recognize and avoid bias, civility in the workplace, recognizing and addressing accessibility issues, addressing performance deficiencies, and steps for handling employee relation issues. Training was offered to agency employees who aspire to be a supervisor and included information on what to expect when serving in that role. Training was also offered on how to apply and compete for a position.
- The agency completed the annual succession plan and evaluated that data to identify gaps and make improvements. Internships were developed and were offered competitively.
- Employees are offered training opportunities through the Virginia Commonwealth University Performance Management Group, the Virginia Learning Center, and other relevant organizations. A specific funding source for agency training could reduce those barriers to training accessibility caused by needing to rely on diverse funding sources.
- A survey was distributed to agency employees regarding areas of training they would like to attend. The results from this survey were used to develop in-house training. Employees also had the opportunity to provide other comments on areas that needed clarity, which were incorporated into the developed training. A post-training survey was also distributed that provided feedback on the training offered and suggestions for improvements.





Diversity, Opportunity, and Inclusion 2024 Agency Goals

Goal 1: Access and Success

Recruit, develop, and retain a diverse and highly skilled workforce while ensuring a respectful and inclusive workplace.

Objective 1:

Continue to evaluate hiring processes and target resources to increase visibility and opportunity for potential applicants from diverse populations.

- Utilize a variety of channels to promote the agency as an employer of choice, with an additional focus on intentional outreach and recruitment strategies to increase applicants and hire from historically underrepresented populations, including outreach to organizations that provide work opportunities to veterans and people with disabilities.
- Ensure that interview panels are appropriately diverse and that ongoing training is provided to panelists to ensure that lawful employment selection procedures are followed.

Objective 2:

Continue to retain and promote a diverse workforce.

- Provide informational and training sessions to employees on recruitment and other topics, such as civility in the workplace and cultural competence, to enhance and prepare a diverse applicant pool for internal advancement opportunities.
- Ensure equitable compensation by ongoing compensation studies and addressing inequities discovered.
- Actively promote and ensure stay interviews are conducted to receive ongoing feedback on the workplace environment and culture.

Goal 2: Welcoming and Respectful Culture

Create and sustain a culture that respects and celebrates diversity and that employs inclusive practices throughout daily operations.

Objective 1:

Persist in creating and maintaining a climate that is supportive and respectful and that values and integrates differing perspectives and experiences.

- Onboarding materials will include the agency's DOI commitment.
- Ensure required training relative to DOI is provided and completed by employees.
- Maintain a culture that improves employee comfort level related to reporting discrimination and language or behavior that is inappropriate or offensive.

Objective 2:

Continue to provide an environment where conflicts, concerns, and complaints are aired and addressed expeditiously.

- Investigate claims of discrimination or offensive or inappropriate language or behavior while ensuring the complainant is not subject to retaliation and that confidentiality is maintained as feasible.
- Ongoing education and training on reporting DOI violations and other inappropriate behavior.

Goal 3: State Agency DOI Infrastructure and Training

Maintain a plan and infrastructure that continues to provide individualized skills training and career development for state employees.

Objective 1:

Continue to amplify opportunities to advance the goals outlined in this framework.

- Explore development of various educational or informational training sessions that will develop, enhance, or increase DOI goals.
- Explore mentoring opportunities that will develop, enhance, or increase DOI goals.

Objective 2:

Continue to provide training and educational workshops available to all employees.

- Ensure all statewide required relevant training is communicated and completed.
- Maintain equity and fairness in training offered to the entire workforce.
- Evaluate stay and exit interview surveys to determine gaps and develop steps to address any identified gaps.
- Distribute a survey to ascertain interest and areas of training employees would like to attend. Distribute post-surveys following any training offered to determine effectiveness and whether the goals were met.

