

State Council of Higher Education for Virginia



# Diversity, Opportunity & Inclusion

## A Plan to Advance Excellence

May 1, 2024



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## INTRODUCTION

### **The State Council of Higher Education for Virginia strives to do excellent work and to be an excellent place to work.**

Diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) are recognized as key values upheld by the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) that contribute to excellence. We recognize that these values have not been exercised and/or promoted with great intention in the past.

*Since the first settlers arrived little more than 400 years ago, we've been an imperfect people on the course to a more perfect union. At times we've truly failed to live up to our ideals.*

Executive Order 10 (2022)

It is now imperative that plans be developed and implemented to ensure that diversity, opportunity and inclusion are advanced equitably.

SCHEV's 2024 Plan to Advance Excellence through Diversity, Opportunity and Inclusion updates its first DEI Plan of 2020-2026. While SCHEV values and commitments remain the same, the 2024 Plan aligns with the Youngkin administration's goals and mission which include a focus on economic opportunity as well as the promotion of free speech and civil discourse.

Beginning with an Introduction to the agency, we have also compiled and included information to provide context for our current environment and goals. The Background chronicles historical events that directly impact the Commonwealth of Virginia and state government broadly and SCHEV and higher education in Virginia more specifically. This section is followed by a Glossary that defines terms and acronyms that appear throughout the document. The state's Diversity, Opportunity and Inclusion (DOI) goals are noted, before introducing SCHEV's associated values, commitments, strategies and metrics and indicators. The noted strategies and indicators have been tailored to SCHEV's current capacity, planned growth and commitment to address issues related to access and success, culture and infrastructure and training. The result is an DOI plan that is grounded by historical facts, more practical in application and yet still bold in desired outcomes and impact.

## OUR MISSION

To advocate and promote the development of an educationally and economically sound, vigorous, progressive and coordinated system of higher education in Virginia.

### **SCHEV strives to do excellent work.**

We fulfill our mission by:

- Leading state-level strategic planning and policy development that promotes greater access, quality, affordability and accountability.
- Implementing policy and programs based on objective research and analysis.
- Facilitating collaboration among institutions of higher education that enhances quality, advances educational excellence and creates operational efficiencies.
- Recommending higher education policies and funding to the Governor and General Assembly that support our mission.
- Communicating openly, honestly and effectively to the public.

SCHEV is the coordinating board and agency for postsecondary education in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Virginia's system of public higher education includes 15 public four-year colleges and universities, a public two-year junior college and 23 community colleges comprising the Virginia Community College System (VCCS). In addition, more than 350 private postsecondary institutions operate in Virginia, including non-profit, proprietary, degree granting and career-technical schools.

Virginia's system of higher education is the 11th-largest in the nation. Postsecondary education in Virginia serves more than 600,000 traditional and non-traditional students. Public institutions enroll more than 410,000 students annually and private institutions of all types serve approximately 200,000 students.

The Council is a board consisting of 13 members, 12 of which are appointed by the Governor for a four-year term and include an active K12 division superintendent and a former college president. The President of the Virginia Economic Development Partnership (VEDP) serves ex-officio. The Council appoints the agency Director, and the Director leads a staff, currently operating with 72 full and part-time members, that work to fulfill the roles and responsibilities of the following agency team units, reporting to the Director:

- Academic Affairs & Planning
- Board & Executive Operations
- Budget & Finance
- Equity & Engagement
- Finance Policy & Innovation
- Policy Analytics
- Strategic Planning & Policy Studies

## OUR STATEMENT OF VALUES

Values, identified through a collaborative staff process, serve as the principles and ideals that help agency personnel make judgments about what is most important. As leaders and employees of the Commonwealth of Virginia and SCHEV, we abide by the [Commonwealth's Standards of Conduct for Employees](#) and related policies and procedures as a starting place. Beyond that, **SCHEV values honesty, quality, diversity, inclusion, growth-orientation, personal well-being, equity, transparency and accountability.**

### **SCHEV strives to be an excellent place to work.**

To enact these values, we are guided in our actions and decision-making by the following commitments:

- We fulfill all professional duties with honesty and integrity.
- We maintain a high standard of quality in our work and we embrace opportunities to improve.
- **We recruit, hire, support and advance a diverse spectrum of individuals.**
- **We create a welcoming and inclusive environment where we celebrate the value and contributions of each person.**
- **We foster a culture that encourages growth through professional development, career pathways and collaboration.**
- We encourage and support staff in maintaining a healthy and balanced life.
- We act equitably and work to remedy inequitable situations.
- We live and practice these values with transparency and accountability.

## **BACKGROUND: LOOKING BACK, TO MOVE FORWARD**

The evolution of historical events has led the Commonwealth and the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia to where we are today. As we look to promote and expand equal opportunity for all Virginians in 2024 and beyond we must acknowledge the impact of historical events on the staffing, culture, and infrastructure of state government and higher education.

### **The Evolution of Virginia Higher Education and SCHEV through an Equity Lens**

SCHEV was established by the Virginia General Assembly in 1956 to bring coordination to a challenged postsecondary-education landscape in the Commonwealth. Student numbers were growing rapidly (due to the post-WWII economic boom and the GI Bill) and competition between institutions of higher education was increasing both regionally and statewide. However, a 1955 finding notes that Virginia's college-going rate was less than half the national rate. These occurrences, charged by changing industry and workforce demands provided the justification for the creation of SCHEV as a coordinating body for higher education within the state. That same legislative body that established SCHEV during the 1956 regular Session went into a special session months later and passed laws that are now referred to as Massive Resistance or the Stanley Plan. This was Virginia's response to the U.S. Supreme Court's 1954 ruling in *Brown v Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* to desegregate secondary education. Within months, Virginia took a major step to advance and coordinate higher education, while limiting access to it. However, it is important to note, that SCHEV's statutory duties, then and now, prohibit its involvement in student admissions and faculty selection. These matters continue to be responsibilities of the governing boards of the public colleges and universities. The distinction in duties does not absolve SCHEV from using its position of influence and leadership to impact these matters in alignment with its mission.

The following timeline, while not exhaustive, includes major U.S. and Virginia events that birthed higher education in Virginia and shaped its growth over time. These historical events speak for themselves and provide relevant context to SCHEV's Plan to Advance Excellence through diversity, opportunity and inclusion today.

**1607:** Jamestown is established as the first permanent English settlement in Virginia and North America.

**1619:** The first enslaved Africans in the American colonies arrive at Point Comfort, Virginia.

- 1636:** The first college in the U.S. (Harvard) is established.
- 1693:** The first college in Virginia (William & Mary) is established. It is the second institution of higher education in the country.
- 1700:** The Brafferton Indian School is established on the College of William & Mary campus.
- 1742:** The first college for women (Bethlehem Female Seminary) in the U.S. is established.
- 1775:** Revolutionary War begins.
- 1776:** Virginia becomes a commonwealth, where sovereignty is vested in the people.
- 1788:** Virginia, one of the 13 original colonies, becomes a state.
- 1823:** The first African American graduates from a U.S. college (Middlebury) with a Bachelor's degree.
- 1828:** The Yale Report, defending the classical curriculum, is issued.
- 1837:** The first college in the U.S. for African Americans (Cheyney University of Pennsylvania) is established.
- 1861:** United States Civil War begins.
- 1862:** President Lincoln signs the Homestead Act into law, granting land for a small filing fee. This would result in displacing indigenous populations from their ancestral lands onto reservations.
- 1862:** Congress passes the Morrill Land Grant Act which enables each state to sell a portion of its federal land.
- 1865:** The 13th Amendment abolishing slavery is ratified.
- 1870:** The 15th amendment, guaranteeing that the right to vote cannot be denied due to race, color or previous condition of servitude, is ratified.
- 1882:** The nation's first public HBCU, (Virginia Normal and Collegiate Institute, known today as Virginia State University) is established.



**1896:** Plessy v. Ferguson. U.S. Supreme Court ruling upholds the constitutionality of the “separate but equal” doctrine.

**1914:** World War I begins.

**1915:** The American Association of University Professors (AAUP) is founded.

**1918:** Co-education is instituted for the first time at a Virginia public college (The College of William & Mary, for which the state had taken responsibility as a public college in 1906.)

**1920:** The 19th amendment, promising women that their right to vote will not be denied, is ratified.

**1924:** The Virginia General Assembly enacts the Racial Integrity Act which prohibits race mixing and introduces discriminatory racial designation.

**1941:** World War II begins.

**1944:** The Servicemen’s Readjustment Act (G.I. Bill) is passed.

**1945:** Based on assistance from universities and faculty members during WWII, a federal commitment to advanced research and higher-education access follows.

**1947:** The Commission on Higher Education (Truman Commission) creates the blueprint for federal financial aid and the expansion of higher education.

**1954:** The U.S. Supreme Court rules in Brown v. Board of Education that state-sanctioned segregation of public secondary schools is a violation of the 14th Amendment and is unconstitutional.

**1956:** State Council of Higher Education for Virginia is established by the Governor and Virginia General Assembly as the Commonwealth’s coordinating body for postsecondary education.

**1956:** During a special summer session of the Virginia General Assembly, a series of laws are passed referred to as the Stanley Plan (Massive Resistance). These laws support segregation, including preventing any integrated schools from receiving state funding and supporting segregation academies.

**1959:** Desegregation of public schools (K-20) begins and is carried on through the 1970s.

**1964:** The Civil Rights Act is enacted into law. It includes Title VI, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, and national origin in programs and activities receiving federal financial assistance (including federal student financial aid).

**1964-1968:** Federal TRIO educational opportunity outreach grant programs are established.

**1964-1965:** The Virginia Higher Education Study Commission (aka, the Bird Commission) identifies the lack of comprehensive community colleges as the most significant gap in Virginia's higher education system. It also recommends that SCHEV receive additional budgetary-review authority.

**1965:** Higher Education Act creates Pell Grants, need-based student aid.

**1966:** The Virginia Community College System (VCCS) is established and financed by the state's first sales tax, putting a public, open-access postsecondary institution within a 30-minute drive of every resident of the Commonwealth.

**1967:** U.S. Supreme Court rules anti-miscegenation laws unconstitutional in *Loving v. Virginia* and ends the Racial Integrity Act (1924).

**1969:** The United States Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights (OCR), issues a letter to the Commonwealth stating that OCR regards Virginia as operating a public system of higher education segregated by race and that such a system is violative of federal law. In response, the Commonwealth begins to develop a plan for its public institutions of higher education intended to dismantle any such dual system of education and eliminate any vestiges of de jure segregation.

**1971:** Virginia's Constitution is rewritten. The rewrite omits the poll tax and other barriers to voting in Virginia as well as the requirement of racial segregation in public schools. It also prohibits governmental discrimination based on "religious conviction, race, color, sex, or national origin" and in effect grants to every school-age person in the Commonwealth a right to a high-quality education in a public school.

**1972:** Title IX (gender equity) is adopted in the Educational Amendments of 1972.

**1973:** Rehabilitation Act, Section 504. First disability civil rights law is passed in the U.S. prohibiting discrimination against people with disabilities in programs that receive federal financial assistance, including higher education.

**1974:** In response to the 1969 OCR letter, Virginia initiates development of a plan for equal opportunity in higher education.

**1978:** Virginia completes, and the OCR approves, the Virginia Plan for Equal Opportunity in State-Supported Institutions of Higher Education.

**1988:** SCHEV's first (and so far, only) African American agency director is hired by the SCHEV Council. The incumbent had chaired the U.S. Commission of Civil Rights and also had been a critic of race-sensitive policies and programs in college admissions.

**1989:** SCHEV's first (and so far, only) female agency director is hired by the SCHEV Council. The incumbent had worked in the Virginia Department of Planning and Budget.

**1990:** Virginia elects its first African American governor, who is the nation's first Black governor since Reconstruction.

**1990:** Americans with Disabilities Act. Prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities in all areas of public life including school, jobs and public and private places open to the general public.

**1992:** The U.S. Supreme Court rules in *United States v Fordice* that eight universities in Mississippi had not integrated sufficiently and that the state must take affirmative action under the Equal Protection Clause of the U.S. Constitution to address the issue. Following the decision, the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights (OCR) announces its intention to look at the status of minority students in six southern states, one of which is Virginia.

**1994:** The U.S. Fourth Circuit rules in *Podberesky v Kirwan* (a case involving the University of Maryland) that within its jurisdiction, which includes Virginia, financial aid programs cannot be exclusionary by race.

**1996:** The U.S. Supreme Court strikes down the all-male admissions policy at Virginia Military Institute in *United States v Virginia*.

**1996:** The General Assembly establishes the Commission on the Impact of Certain Federal Court Decisions on the Commonwealth's Institutions of Higher Education.

**1998:** Pursuant to the 1992 Fordice case, the OCR notifies several states, including Virginia, that it will conduct civil-rights audits to ascertain whether these states have eliminated all vestiges of their formerly de jure segregated systems of public higher education.

**1998:** The General Assembly continues the 1996 Commission as the Commission on Access and Diversity in Higher Education in Virginia, which it directs to: monitor relevant federal and state legislation and court decisions; continue its collaborations with the OCR to provide legislative representation and oversight during the civil rights audit; conduct a state examination to identify any vestiges of the dual system of higher education; and to review all preferences other than race used in college admissions processes.

**2001:** Following the civil rights audit begun in 1998, the Commonwealth and the OCR enter into an Accord to address specific issues related to public support for Virginia State University and Norfolk State University.

**2001:** Legislation is passed in Virginia outlining a process for state recognition of Native American tribes.

**2005:** SCHEV receives the federal Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) grant from the Department of Education.

**2006:** The Virginia College Access Network (VirginiaCAN) was incorporated, with SCHEV as one of its founding partners. VirginiaCAN's mission is to support and enhance postsecondary education access and attainment for residents of the Commonwealth.

**2008:** The OCR issues the final report on its Accord with Virginia, concluding that the Commonwealth is in compliance with the Fordice case, with Title VI and with all other law and regulation regarding the issues addressed in the 2001 Accord.

**2009:** SCHEV applies for and receives the federal College Access Challenge Grant Program (CACGP) funding.

**2011:** For the first time, more than half of the undergraduate enrollment at four-year institutions in Virginia consists of under-represented populations.

**2019:** Virginia's and the nation's first cabinet-level Chief Diversity Officer and the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion are created by the governor.

**2019:** The Commission to Examine Racial Inequity in Virginia Law is created by the Governor.

**2019:** Virginia receives Talent, Inclusion and Equity (TIE) grant from Lumina Foundation created to increase degree attainment of African American, Hispanic and Native American learners.

**2020:** The Virginia Values Act is signed into law, establishing protections for LGBTQ residents.

**2021:** General Assembly expands access to state financial aid to undocumented students.

**2021:** State requires state agencies to establish and maintain a comprehensive diversity, equity and inclusion strategic plan.

**2022:** Executive Order 10 focuses the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion to include the promotion and expansion of equal “opportunity” for all Virginians and is renamed the Office of Diversity, Opportunity and Inclusion.

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

A shared vocabulary is critically important in efforts that span multiple agencies, cultures and communities. Listed below are common terms and abbreviations used throughout this document, along with definitions drafted by SCHEV.

**BIPOC** - Black, Indigenous and People of Color

**COVA** - Commonwealth of Virginia

**DEI / DE&I** - Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

**DHRM** - Department of Human Resources and Management

**DOI** – Diversity, Opportunity and Inclusion

**HBCU** - Historically Black College and University

**HSI** - Hispanic-serving Institution

**SCHEV** - State Council of Higher Education for Virginia / Council

**Diversity** - The wide variety of differences and characteristics among all students and employees in higher education that may include race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, ethnicity, nationality, socioeconomic status, language, ability and age as well as ideas, personalities, learning styles, perspectives and value.

**Equity** - Maximizing the potential of all students and employees in higher education by targeting resources based on identified needs and circumstances and eliminating barriers that limit opportunities and success.

**Inclusion** - The active and authentic engagement of all students and employees in higher education that fosters empowerment, belonging and respect.

**Marginalized** - relegated to an unimportant or powerless position within a society or group.

**Underrepresented students** - those who are low-income, minority race/ethnicity, over age 25 and from regions of the state with low attainment rates.

## The Commonwealth of Virginia Diversity, Opportunity and Inclusion Plan

The [Commonwealth's Diversity, Opportunity and Inclusion Plan](#) goals and objectives are listed below. The next several pages, demonstrate how SCHEV's commitments and values align with the Commonwealth's DOI Plan and detail the associated strategies and measures/indicators that will be used to assess success. We will work together to achieve the state's goals and objectives, while also advancing the agency's mission, commitments, values and ongoing journey towards excellence.

### 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.

**Objective 2:** Continue to retain and promote a diverse workforce.

### 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.

**Objective 2:** Continue to provide an environment where conflicts, concerns, and complaints are aired and addressed expeditiously.

### GOAL 3

**State Agency DOI Infrastructure & Training: Maintain a plan and infrastructure that continues to provide individualized skills training and career development for state employees. Agencies report annually on DOE goals and accomplishments.**

**Objective 1:** Continue to amplify opportunities to advance the goals outlined in this framework.

**Objective 2:** Continue to create structures and processes of accountability to increase organizational effectiveness with the Department of Human Resource Management.

**Objective 3:** Continue to provide training and educational workshops available to all employees.

**SCHEV values diversity and we commit to recruiting, hiring, supporting and advancing a diverse spectrum of individuals.**

**GOAL 1**

**ACCESS AND SUCCESS:** Recruit and retain a diverse workforce by increasing access to diverse populations for recruiting.

Access refers to the activities an agency or department uses to recruit and hire individuals from a broad range of human experience and ability. Success refers to the investments made in the development of employees and leadership/supervisors. These efforts increase or maintain diversity among the agency's or section's employees and leadership to bring needed perspectives to its operations and increase creativity and productivity.

**Objective 1**

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

**Strategies**

- 1.1.1 Hire staff to support the Human Resource Liaison (Associate Director of Equity & Engagement) and work with DHRM through the agency's shared services contract to update and document agency recruitment, selection and hiring procedures and practices designed to advance diversity, equity, opportunity and inclusion.
- 1.1.2 Train all hiring managers on hiring procedures and practices to create greater consistency in the process, increase diversity within the applicant pool, promote Equal Employment Opportunity, foster cultural competency, identify unconscious bias and other related topics, as identified.
- 1.1.3 Include reference to the agency's commitment to DOI and equity in its shared services contract with the Department of Human Resources Shared Services Unit when updated, to acknowledge SCHEV's priority to increase diversity in the applicant pools from historically underrepresented populations and specifically in searches for leadership roles.
- 1.1.4 Use data to identify gaps in representation and inform succession planning and pipeline development.



- 1.1.5 Utilize varied sources, beyond the VA Jobs site, to reach out to diverse populations in the recruitment process.
- 1.1.6 Promote a culture of transparency and announce vacancies and searches internally and encourage referrals from staff.
- 1.1.7 Include completion of Hiring Manager training in all manager EWP's

## **Metrics and Indicators**

(Whenever possible, SCHEV will disaggregate data by demographics and share, while protecting anonymity and integrity.)

- HR Talent & Engagement Specialist position filled by October 2024
- Active DHRM shared services contract
- Documentation of updated policies, procedures and practices, as identified and posted to SCHEVweb and announced to staff within 5 days of finalizing
- Workforce report data completed by October annually and submitted to DHRM with documentation of distribution and discussion with leadership of report analysis
- Documentation and evaluation of hiring manager trainings (at least 3 annually, rated average or above) and expectation of participation included in EWP's and performance evaluation process, as appropriate
- New Hire manual updated, first revision by August 2024
- Record of new hire agency orientations (preference for completion within 7 working days of new hire's start date)

## **Objective 2**

Continue to retain and promote a diverse workforce.

## **Strategies**

- 1.2.1 Collect data to identify gaps and disparities in staffing, compensation, promotion and management. Design plan with leadership to remedy accordingly.
- 1.2.2 Strengthen and standardize agency new employee onboarding. Update new hire manual and orientation.

- 1.2.3 Compensate employees competitively through salary and benefits. Utilize the varied incentives and options available through DHRM when additional funds are not available/restricted.
- 1.2.4 Create reward and recognition programs to honor the service of all employees and recognize the contributions of staff that support the mission, contribute to the community, and promote values, including commitments to diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- 1.2.5 Measure employee satisfaction and organization climate through surveys, focus groups and informal SCHEV “coffee chats” and “breaks” that promote candor and fairness. Evaluate results and take action for continuous improvement.
- 1.2.6 Continue to host “coffee chats” driven by external environment factors that impact internal climate, well-being and staff morale. Foster a culture of open communication, freedom of speech, transparency, inclusion and compassion.
- 1.2.7 Assess policies and processes for potential bias in development and remove barriers to diversity, opportunity and inclusion. Draft new policies, as needed.
- 1.2.8 Create and seize opportunities to raise SCHEV employer profile within diverse communities, i.e. relationship building and participation in events through HBCU and HSI career centers and professional associations.
- 1.2.9 Review/update and standardize current processes and policies related to performance evaluation, recognition and compensation to ensure equitable practices. Train managers accordingly.
- 1.2.10 Use exit survey and employee experience surveys to inform retention planning.
- 1.2.11 Utilize DHRM Workforce Report to inform leadership of SCHEV’s workforce diversity status, EEO complaint numbers, and Employment Dispute Resolution (EDR) bias incidents.
- 1.2.12 Ensure that subject matter experts/presenters, Council members, technical trainers, partners, vendors include people from diverse backgrounds and perspectives.
- 1.2.13 Assess the feasibility of developing affinity groups or talent management and networking programs, with related professional organizations, state departments and

institutions of higher education to maximize performance and career potential within the agency.

**1.2.14** Create opportunities for cross-collaboration and rotational assignments among employees to enrich the employee experience, foster diversity of thought, and inspire innovative solutions.

**1.2.15** Assess efficiency/feasibility of an onboarding system and recognition and knowledge training platforms.

## **Metrics and Indicators**

(Whenever possible, SCHEV will disaggregate data by demographics and share, while protecting anonymity and integrity.)

- Annual Employee Experience survey responses and documentation of actions taken
- Workforce report data completed by October annually and submitted to DHRM with documentation of distribution and discussion with leadership of report outcomes/analysis
- Annual review of composition of the agency both cross-functionally and vertically
- Maintained or decreased voluntary departure for employees (FY 2022= 0)
- Documentation of exit interviews, as they occur
- Analysis of promotion, recognition and compensation for employees and leaders
- Updated policies and procedures posted on SCHEVweb and announced to staff, within five business days of becoming final
- SWAM subcontractor procurement rate increased (establish baseline)
- New Hire manual updated, first revision by August 2024
- Record of new hire agency orientations (preference for completion within 7 working days of new hire's start date)

**SCHEV values inclusion and we commit to creating a welcoming and inclusive environment where we celebrate the value and contributions of each person.**

**GOAL 2**

**WELCOMING AND RESPECTFUL CULTURE:** Create and sustain an agency culture that welcomes and embraces diverse opinions, independent thinking and respectful interactions to deliver optimal results for the organization and its customers.

To nurture the diversity of perspectives and experiences that lead to inclusive environments, SCHEV must create an office space, physical and psychological, that is culturally affirming and which integrates differing viewpoints and lived experiences. This goal and subsequent objectives focus on building and sustaining an inclusive workplace environment and facilitating outstanding customer service and stakeholder relations by promoting accessibility, cultural competency, accountability, education, and communication while respecting viewpoints outside of the mainstream.

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**Every Virginian deserves  
dignity and respect,  
deserves the opportunity to  
pursue their dreams and  
deserves inclusion in the  
Virginia family.**

*- Executive Order #10  
Governor Youngkin, January 2022*

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**Objective 1**

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

**Strategies**

- 2.1.1 Assess employee experience including culture, climate and belongingness and implement plan to remedy concerns accordingly.
- 2.1.2 Review accommodations policy and forms (include in hiring manager training). Post and announce policy and form on SCHEVweb and support employees in accessing the process and getting the necessary accommodations to be successful in their roles.
- 2.1.3 Provide access and resources for ASL and language differences for websites, documents and in-person services in accordance with state requirements.

- 2.1.4 Continue opportunities, such as SCHEV's coffee chats, SCHEV Talks, What's Up Wednesdays, designed to facilitate civil dialogue between and among groups that increases understanding of varied perspectives, experiences and resources.
- 2.1.5 Offer training and resources that promote productive methods of conflict resolution, facilitation to encourage courageous conversations and address concerns and complaints. (i.e. Constructive Dialogue Institute)
- 2.1.6 Offer and evaluate educational and celebratory events that are designed to recognize, value and honor diversity and promote inclusion.
- 2.1.7 Review, develop and distribute policies and procedures that advance DOEI, such as how to access professional development, telework guidelines, maintaining personal wellbeing, and requesting accommodations.
- 2.1.8 Encourage and normalize the use of flexible work policies and programs such as telework, wellness programs, tuition assistance/forgiveness, community service leave, and professional development to support employees' and agencies' growth and productivity at all levels. Distribute and communicate.
- 2.1.9 Explore opportunities with other small state agencies to establish Employee Affinity and Resource Networks (EARNs), to promote diversity and inclusion across the state workforce and provide support for employees.
- 2.1.10 Intentionally build diverse teams and partnerships, i.e. workgroups, interview panels, vendors, technical assistance providers.
- 2.1.11 Create and add elements to onboarding programs and materials, marketing materials, website, wall coverings, and agency decorations/bulletin boards, etc. that promote SCHEV's values, including diversity, equity and inclusion.

## **Metrics and Indicators**

(Whenever possible, SCHEV will disaggregate data by demographics and share, while protecting anonymity and integrity.)

- Analysis of employee experience survey, requesting employee assessment of:
  - Workplace climate and culture
  - Sense of belonging

- Career growth opportunities and development (2023 baseline 3.9% and 4.19% on a 1–5-point scale)
- Comfort speaking and sharing opinions/thoughts (2023 baseline 16% Very comfortable, 66% somewhat comfortable, 7% somewhat uncomfortable, 7% very uncomfortable, 4% don't know/prefer not to say)
- Awareness and understanding of agency and departmental resources related to harassment, discrimination, accommodations and identity-based violence.
- Maintain website reader/access compliance
- SWAM subcontractor procurement rate increased (establish baseline)
- Engagement activity evaluations, average of satisfactory or above

### **Objective 2**

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

### **Strategies**

- 2.2.1 Assess employee experience including surveying comfort speaking, airing concerns receiving feedback and satisfaction with how the agency addresses employee concerns.
- 2.2.2 Share EEO and grievance process openly, versus as a reaction to a problem.
- 2.2.3 Model transparency through organizational communications, Council relations and reporting and partnership building.
- 2.2.4 Continue opportunities, such as SCHEV's coffee chats, SCHEV Talks to create channels to model civil dialogue and transparency.
- 2.2.5 Offer training and resources that promote productive methods of conflict resolution, facilitation to encourage courageous conversations to address concerns and complaints. (i.e. Constructive Dialogue Institute)
- 2.2.6 Review policies and procedures timelines. Determine if reasonable and adhered to. Revise as needed.

- 2.2.7 Provide manager conflict resolution/communication training to help supervisors navigate difficult conversations and circumstances.
- 2.2.8 Educate employees about their rights as state employees.

## Metrics and Indicators

(Whenever possible, SCHEV will disaggregate data by demographics and share, while protecting anonymity and integrity.)

- Analysis of employee experience survey, requesting employee assessment of:
  - Comfort speaking and sharing opinions/thoughts ((2023 baseline 16% Very comfortable, 66% somewhat comfortable, 7% somewhat uncomfortable, 7% very uncomfortable, 4% don't know/prefer not to say)
  - Agency communications (2023 baseline 4.26% on a 1-5 scale) and transparency
  - Awareness and understanding of agency and departmental resources related to harassment, discrimination, accommodations and identity-based violence.
- Documentation of employee incidents and grievances including process, timeline and resolution
- Perception of how employee relations issues are handled survey rating (2023 baseline 3.08 on a 1-5 scale)
- Documentation of engagement opportunities, such as SCHEV's coffee chats (at least 2 annually, frequency based upon external events), SCHEV Talks (at least 4 annually)
- Updated policies and procedures posted on SCHEVweb and announced to staff, within five business days of becoming final

**SCHEV values growth orientation and we commit to fostering a culture that encourages growth through professional development, career pathways and collaboration.**

### **GOAL 3**

**STATE AGENCY DOI INFRASTRUCTURE & 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.

As an agency that seeks excellence and values diversity, equity and inclusion, SCHEV will work to integrate DOI goals and strategies into its overall operations and services. This will include not only assessing, updating and developing relevant policies and practices, but also providing staff training. Integrating DOI Plan goals and strategies into the routine operations and management of the agency will help engage the full staff and affirm an agency-wide commitment to DOI. Training and professional development opportunities will help staff and leadership refine skills that promote a supportive and equitable agency culture, achieve DOI goals and contribute to both professional and personal staff growth.

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**...continue our focus on creating a culture of inclusion where all Virginia state employees are recognized for their contributions, further provide the opportunity for growth through skills development to achieve both personal and professional goals.**

*- COV DOI Plan, 2023*

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#### **Objective 1**

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

#### **Strategies**

- 3.1.1 Integrate DOI goals into performance appraisals for employees, as appropriate.
- 3.1.2 Assess policies and processes for potential bias in development and remove barriers to diversity, opportunity and inclusion. Draft new policies, as needed.
- 3.1.3 Offer identified educational opportunities, training and resources that enable employees and leadership to achieve DOI goals.



- 3.1.4 Assess feasibility and effectiveness of virtual learning and online onboarding and development systems to better support staff and hybrid work environment.
- 3.1.5 Promote diversity in the use of subject matter experts, technical experts, and vendors.

## **Metrics and Indicators**

(Whenever possible, SCHEV will disaggregate data by demographics and share, while protecting anonymity and integrity.)

- Employee Experience survey and analysis compared to previous year
- HR Talent & Engagement Specialist position filled
- Active DHRM shared services contract
- Updated policies and procedures posted on SCHEVweb and announced to staff, within five business days of becoming final
- Workforce report and documentation of distribution to leadership
- Documentation and evaluation of hiring manager trainings and expectation of participation included in EWP, performance evaluation process, as appropriate

## **Objective 2**

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

## **Strategies**

- 3.2.1 Maintain shared services contract with DHRM. Assess scope and responsibilities routinely to promote accountability and efficiency.
- 3.2.2 Invite SCHEV's Shared Services Team to attend and participate in agency events, including agency-wide staff meetings and trainings.
- 3.2.3 Utilize DHRM policies, templates and forms as the basis and reference for the development and/or revision of agency policies, procedures and practices.
- 3.2.4 Hire staff to support the Human Resource Liaison (Associate Director of Equity & Engagement) and work directly with DHRM through the agency's shared services contract.

- 3.2.5 Engage DHRM resources and talent, specifically through the Shared Services unit and Office on Workforce Engagement OWE to help plan and/or implement training and/or create resources.
- 3.2.6 Assess efficiency/feasibility of an onboarding system and recognition and knowledge training platforms.

### **Metrics and Indicators**

(Whenever possible, SCHEV will disaggregate data by demographics and share, while protecting anonymity and integrity.)

- Active DHRM Shared Services Contract
- Employee perception of increased knowledge related to DEOI
- Number and type of professional development offerings (individual and agency sponsored)
- Participation rates in different types of educational offerings
- Employee satisfaction with quality and quantity of professional development opportunities (2023 baseline 4.19% on a 1–5-point scale)

### **Objective 3**

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

### **Strategies**

- 3.3.1 Coordinate and offer professional development opportunities that enable employees and leadership to help achieve DOI goals and grow personal and professional skills.
- 3.3.2 Coordinate and offer educational resource materials that enable employees and leadership to help achieve DOI goals and grow personal and professional skills.
- 3.3.3 Promote the use of staff performance evaluations to document and support individual staff learning needs and interests.
- 3.3.4 Assess feasibility of purchasing an electronic onboarding and knowledge training system
- 3.3.5 Promote diversity in the use of subject matter experts, technical experts, vendors and trainers for professional development.

**3.3.6** Review and document procedures for accessing education and training resources

**Metrics and Indicators**

(Whenever possible, SCHEV will disaggregate data by demographics and share, while protecting anonymity and integrity.)

- Application of learned concepts and employee perception of increased knowledge related to DOEI
- Number and type of educational resources/trainings (individual and agency-sponsored)
- Participation and usage rates of educational resources
- Employee satisfaction with quality and quantity of educational resources and training, rated average or above
- Increased sense of belonging.
- Maintained or decreased voluntary departure for employees (FY 2022= 0)
- Evaluation of professional development (2023 baseline 4.19% on a 1-5-point scale)

**Through these values and commitments, we create a welcoming work environment that represents the best of who we are as an agency and as individuals.**