



# Diversity & Inclusion Strategic Plan

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## INTRODUCTION

### PURPOSE AND CONTEXT

Traditionally, Diversity and Inclusion (D & I) was viewed as an end in itself – our moral duty of doing social justice to the protected groups. As a result, D & I was added to the list of legal programs along with equal opportunity, affirmative action, and various civil rights programs.

This has changed rapidly: globalization gathered incredible momentum during the last decade. Despite the great political debate over merits of globalization, the world has moved from isolation and protectionism toward free flow of goods and people across borders. With the enactment of the Americans with Disabilities Act that complimented the Civil Rights Act, more disabled individuals have entered the workforce. 120 years of Women's Rights Movement brought more women to the workforce. Today's workforce consists of more people of color, age groups, women, and disabled individuals than ever before. To succeed as a state agency, a servant of the public, Mn/DOT must keep up with this change.

Differences do matter. And today, D & I is a business necessity.

Mn/DOT has recognized the need for D & I, developed a vision and a mission; identified D & I as a business need, and listed goals and objectives that will help its march to that end. This plan presents all of the above.

### WHO WROTE THIS PLAN?

This plan was written after a 4-month process of deliberation that Mn/DOT's Diversity Council (Council) undertook in January 2009. With the expert advice and counsel of Sentient Consultants, the Council examined where Mn/DOT stands in the continuum of transition in D & I, from mere legal compliance, to leveraging D & I throughout the organization to meet Minnesota's transportation needs most effectively.

## **PLAN'S VALIDITY AND VIABILITY**

With the approval of Mn/DOT's management, this plan replaces the current Diversity Strategic Plan. The D & I is presented as a business necessity and not merely benefiting a few members of the workforce, it will therefore have a high rate of acceptance, making it easier to implement. The D & I Strategic Plan will benefit the entire workforce irrespective of rank, race and other difference.

## **VISION**

The Minnesota Department of Transportation is recognized as a global industry leader, an employer of choice, and a high performing organization that is vested in mobilizing the workforce to sustain an inclusive, innovative and collaborative workplace.

## **MISSION**

The Minnesota Department of Transportation will serve the people of Minnesota through our commitment to building a diverse workforce and an inclusive workplace. Our mission is to progress to the next level of diversity and inclusion management. In so doing, we will foster an environment that enables and encourages a multicultural workforce to contribute their full potential to help us achieve our strategic vision and to deliver a high level of service to our customers.

### **We will be known for...**

- Achieving excellence through diversity and inclusion
- Being a leading/cutting edge employer in the transportation industry
- Genuine and visible commitment to strategic diversity and inclusion management practices
- Leveraging diversity and inclusion in every decision
- High quality, sustainable, comprehensive approach to diversity and inclusion
- Cultural competence in an increasingly multicultural world
- Creating an inclusive culture in which the public, employees and stakeholders are welcomed and are able to fully engage
- Driving accountability at every level in the department

## **Our actions will result in...**

- Attracting and retaining a highly skilled workforce
- Trust
- Transparency
- Pride in working for Mn/DOT
- Continuing to be recognized as a leader in innovation
- Collaboration will result in strong partnerships
- Cultural change
- Increased productivity
- Better services
- Innovative solutions

# The Case for Diversity & Inclusion

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## *Success and Excellence through Return on Cultural Capital*

*Imagine our work environment where we value differences or where differences matter so that we improve our morale, improve our productivity and create more innovation.*

### IMAGINE

- A global reputation for innovation and excellence achieved by people who see things from different perspectives willing to engage in dialogue
- Being trusted from within the department and by the public and being proud to be a public servant
- Being efficient through collaboration and true team work
- Being appreciated for the quality of work you provide as well as for who you are

### THE NEED

- We need to recognize that we are a changing society which should impact our business decisions, processes and needs.
- We are in a competitive market and we need to build an environment so that our resources are utilized to their highest potential. We don't have the resources we had in the past so we need to have **everyone** fully engaged to assist us with innovation for the future. Having differences will help Mn/DOT to deliver better transportation solutions and services.
- We can no longer afford to rely solely on funding as the main thrust of our vision and mission to serve an increasingly diverse public. We need to be innovative and leverage all of our resources, especially our workforce through multiculturalism, alliance, and accountability.
- Diversity and inclusion, when used as a business tool, increases productivity. Different cultural and individual differences make it possible to have diverse and novel approaches to problem solving, which can help Mn/DOT to be more creative. Acceptance of diversity and inclusion as a business need reduces tension and promotes harmony in the workforce. When the workforce moves harmoniously in one direction, work becomes fun and productive.

- Mn/DOT's goal is to be a global transportation leader in creating future solutions reflecting the communities in which our products and services are delivered.
- In order to become the transportation leader and employer of choice we must use diversity and inclusion as the building blocks to create a culture of collaboration and trust where our employees feel valued and empowered to contribute fully to the betterment of Minnesota.
- We need to protect and leverage all of our resources, especially our workforce because we are in global competition for talented and skilled employees that can help solve future transportation problems and address future opportunities to optimize the movement of goods and services for the economic well-being of our state. To provide a higher quality, dependable transportation system through multiculturalism, alliance, and accountability, we must protect, nurture and leverage our greatest resource: our workforce. Mn/DOT's goal is to be a global leader in transportation. We need broader perspectives in project development that better reflects needs of transportation users.
- We need to spend the tax dollars in ways that will benefit the public and the transportation stakeholders. Different perspectives will produce better and creative solutions.
- It is not just about the "money." It is more about the "right solutions" to reflect the needs of the traveling public and the community in which our products and services are delivered. In other words a "context sensitive solution" is more compelling than the funds management alone.

## **DRIVERS**

- Public image of Mn/DOT has not always been favorable. Mn/DOT must not only prevent history from repeating itself but also envision and work toward a future that will build public trust and earn itself the reputation of being a creative and efficient public servant.

- According to findings released by Minnesota Budget Trends Study Commission<sup>1</sup> in January 2009:
  - Minnesota has become more diverse in recent years, a trend that will continue to increase as economic growth depends on drawing new workers to the state.
  - Minnesota is currently experiencing a major, long-range demographic shift.
  - Public spending priorities will need to shift as Minnesota's economically dependent population grows larger and relies more heavily on fewer workers.
- For the first time in history, Mn/DOT has four generations of workers in the workforce at one time. As the current workforce retires, Mn/DOT needs to retain expertise to maintain our leadership role in technical knowledge and continue to add the modern technological changes to provide better transportation solutions.

## **BARRIERS**

- We are an organization that is in minimization. Our current culture ignores or minimizes differences rather than recognizing and honoring the value added by our differences. We continue to reward sameness and act burdened by having to be compliant with laws. The impact of this mindset is a decrease in people sharing their best thinking, problem solving skills, creativity and productivity. People do not bring their whole self to work. Added to this are some contractual requirements which mandate certain ways of doing work which may not provide opportunities for all.

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<sup>1</sup> The Legislature established the commission in 2007 to study the impact of Minnesota's changing demographic trends on the long-term stability of state budget conditions. It released its findings in January 2009.

## THE IMPACT

- People choose not to work for Mn/DOT
- Once here, people choose not to stay because they do not feel valued or do not have enough opportunities for advancement
- There is a decrease in people sharing their best thinking, problem solving skills, and creativity
- Productivity decreases
- When crews are short staffed, safety is compromised
- MN/Dot's reputation is tarnished and public trust in various communities decreases
- When there is a lack of public trust, projects and costs can be held up until all stakeholders are on board (i.e., can trust Mn/DOT to go ahead)

## THE CALL TO ACTION

To become the transportation leader we envision.

### **Mn/DOT's Diversity & Inclusion efforts will:**

- Rebuild public trust
  - Legislature is willing to give Mn/DOT the needed funds to carry out identified needs
  - Projects are developed with collaboration with stakeholders resulting in acceptance and good will
  - Mn/DOT is seen as a good place to work – therefore we attract and retain the best employees
  - Public service is valued
- Result in innovative / creative transportation
  - Employees feel empowered to put forth their best thinking
  - Projects and /or issues to be solved are approached from pluralistic perspectives including multi-modalism
  - There are great, rather than just adequate, designs and delivery
- Increase inclusiveness, effectiveness and efficiency
  - Enhanced internal and external relationships accelerate implementation and viability
  - Allows Mn/DOT to provide a safe environment for our workers and the traveling public

- Resulting in a more engaged workforce – Mn/DOT attracts the best and the brightest
- Less employee turnover means less money spent on training and transactions
- We can do this by:
  - Implementing recruitment and retention strategies that embrace multiculturalism
  - Moving our work culture from minimization to one of inclusiveness and trust
  - Providing opportunities for professional growth for all levels of employees

To start this process, we need leadership support and approval of our diversity charter as well as our diversity strategic plan. To this end we request that leadership:

1. Provide the resources to support multiculturalism, diversity and inclusion initiatives at Mn/DOT.
2. Hold Mn/DOT accountable for a work culture where everyone is valued, appreciated and able to contribute their best.
3. Demonstrate by “walking the talk,” how diversity and inclusion is important to the success of Mn/DOT.



# GOALS & OBJECTIVES

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## ► Overall Goal

Move Mn/DOT to the next level of diversity and inclusion practice.



## ► Strategic Areas of Focus

- Leadership Commitment & Involvement
- Inclusive Culture & Values
- Education & Training
- Employee Involvement & Communication
- Community Involvement

## ► Goals & Objectives

### • Leadership Commitment & Involvement

**Goal:** Mn/DOT managers and supervisors insure support for an inclusive organization.

**Objectives:**

1. Communicate clear vision of diversity and inclusive goals to workforce
2. Hold all employees accountable for their workplace behavior
3. Build teams and partnerships that foster diversity and inclusion practices
4. Promote/encourage openness with tolerance for respectful debate and constructive conflict on work related matters

5. Evaluate managers and supervisors on this goal during their performance reviews

- **Inclusive Culture & Values**

**Goal:** 80% of external stakeholders, when surveyed, would agree with this statement:  
“Mn/DOT listens to stakeholders’ ideas and needs and incorporates them into the products and services Mn/DOT delivers.”

**Objectives:**

1. Communicate diversity values to stakeholders
2. Provide forums for stakeholders to express ideas and needs to Mn/DOT
3. Develop a method to assess external partner’s perception of where Mn/DOT is at meeting this goal

- **Education & Training**

**Goal:** Instill diversity values in the workforce and workplace.

**Objectives:**

1. Promote a common definition and understanding of diversity
2. Identify learning opportunities relating to diversity
3. Develop a means to assess employee engagement
4. Develop a system that recognizes employees for leadership in diversity and inclusion
5. Modify performance evaluation forms/process to assess performance in support of this goal
6. Live diversity at the workplace – it is a natural part of our environment

- **Employee Involvement & Communication**

**Goal:** 100% of Mn/DOT employees are involved in diversity and inclusion activities/initiatives.

**Objectives:**

1. Develop and deliver (in a variety of ways) clear communication on Mn/DOT's position on diversity and inclusion
2. Develop a diversity communications plan that focuses on all levels and functions within the department so everyone can relate to diversity and inclusion
3. Provide training opportunities based on feedback from employees
4. Engage employees through district and office participation in the Diversity Council

- **Community Involvement**

**Goal:** Build relationships with diverse communities that lead to inclusiveness, involvement and trust.

**Objectives:**

1. Implement alternative communication methods for Minnesota's diverse populations (continue to carry out recommendations from "Hear Every Voice")
2. Develop and implement marketing methods to promote Mn/DOT as a diverse employer
3. Designate a liaison person to coordinate and collaborate with diverse communities
4. Promote and enhance community outreach programs and events