

La Crosse County

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, & INCLUSION (DEI) LEADERSHIP INSIGHTS REPORT

LA CROSSE COUNTY BOARD MEETING - MAY 18, 2023

CHANIN KELLY-RAE CONSULTING LLC



LA CROSSE COUNTY

The image shows the exterior of the La Crosse County Administrative Center, a multi-story building with a mix of brick and light-colored panels. The text "LA CROSSE COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE CENTER" is visible on the brick section. In the foreground, there is a parking lot with several cars, including a red SUV and a dark sedan. A large, leafless tree stands in the middle ground. An American flag is flying on a tall pole to the right. The sky is clear and blue. A semi-transparent black box with white and yellow text is overlaid on the lower half of the image.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

A La Crosse County in which all community members can **fully and effectively access** county services, **influence county policy and direction**, and feel a **sense of belonging and safety**.

Organizational Review: Objectives & Outcomes

- As a component of the DEI visioning process alignment, Chanin Kelly-Rae Consulting LLC collated feedback from 47 out of 49* leaders in La Crosse County government. The objective of this presentation is to apprise the La Crosse County Community, County Board, and County Administrator of the opinions and observations gathered during those interviews.
- Acquire a more comprehensive understanding of La Crosse County's objectives, preferences, and tactics.
- Take into account the observations and viewpoints of leaderships in La Crosse County government concerning the existing condition, the intended condition, the action plan, the workforce, and the community's strengths, opportunities, and perspectives.

**La Crosse County Board Supervisors Mike Baroni and David Hundt declined to participate in the Leadership Insight interview process.*

Contents

The conclusions drawn from the organizational review will aid in proposing a plan for progress with DEI, which will also include identifying vital concerns to be examined as part of the comprehensive evaluation.

- Key Organizational Objectives: Examined from a DEI perspective
- Leadership Perspectives: Collected through DEI interviews
- Future Course of Action: Identifying the Path Forward

Terminology

Diversity refers to the presence of differences and variations among individuals or groups of people in terms of their cultural backgrounds, experiences, characteristics, identities, beliefs, values, and perspectives. These differences can encompass a wide range of dimensions, such as race, ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, religion, physical abilities, socioeconomic status, and more. Diversity recognizes and acknowledges the uniqueness of each individual, and promotes inclusivity and equality, while embracing and celebrating differences.

Equity refers to fairness, impartiality, and justice in the treatment of individuals or groups of people, with the goal of ensuring that everyone has access to the same opportunities, resources, and outcomes. It recognizes that different individuals and groups face different barriers and challenges, and seeks to eliminate those barriers and provide support to those who need it most. Equity also acknowledges historical and systemic inequalities that have created disparities in access and outcomes, and aims to address those disparities by providing targeted and intentional interventions. In essence, equity strives to create a level playing field where everyone has an equal chance to succeed.

Inclusion refers to the act of creating an environment where all individuals feel welcomed, valued, and respected, regardless of their differences. It involves actively promoting and embracing diversity and equity, and ensuring that everyone has an equal opportunity to participate, contribute, and be heard. Inclusion requires a deliberate effort to recognize and address the barriers and challenges that may prevent individuals from feeling fully included, and to create a sense of belonging for all. It also involves promoting open communication, collaboration, and mutual understanding among diverse individuals and groups, with the goal of creating a supportive and empowering community. In essence, inclusion aims to create a culture of acceptance and appreciation, where everyone can thrive and succeed.

Organizational Priorities: Interpreted through the Lens of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

Participants:

As part of the DEI visioning process, Chanin Kelly-Rae Consulting sought input from the La Crosse County Board, La Crosse County Management Team, and the Workforce DEI Committee through one-on-one 60-minute interviews.

Purpose:

The interviews aimed to gather perceptions from the leaders and key stakeholders on the following aspects:

- The significance of DEI for the County
- Workplace conditions for employees
- Community conditions for residents and guests
- Desired state for DEI
- DEI current state-readiness
- DEI conditions and how they manifest for La Crosse County

La Crosse County Leaders – Perceived Threats to DEI Future Success

- Lack of leadership buy-in and support for DEI initiatives
- Resistance to change and discomfort with discussing sensitive topics such as race and discrimination
- Insufficient resources and funding for DEI strategies and programs
- Limited accountability, rare use of data to inform decision-making, and follow-through on DEI objectives and goals
- Lack of diversity in leadership and decision-making roles within the organization
- Insufficient education and training on DEI topics for staff and leadership
- Limited community engagement and input on DEI initiatives and strategies.
- Lack of process to assess impact of programs, policies, processes.

La Crosse County Leaders Perceived Value-Add of DEI to the Community

- A more inclusive and equitable community where everyone has a fair chance to succeed."
- "A community where diversity is celebrated, and differences are not just tolerated but appreciated."
- "Improved relationships and trust between different groups in the community."
- "A safer community where everyone feels valued and respected."
- "An environment that is welcoming to all, including marginalized and underrepresented groups."
- "Increased economic growth and prosperity by leveraging the talents and perspectives of a diverse workforce."
- "A community that serves as a model for others in how to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion."

La Crosse County Leaders Perceived Value-Add of DEI to the County Workforce

- Increased collaboration and communication among staff and leadership from diverse backgrounds.
- Improved retention of diverse talent through supportive and inclusive workplace policies and practices.
- Enhanced innovation and creativity resulting from diverse perspectives and ideas.
- Improved service delivery to a diverse community through a better understanding of their needs and perspectives.
- Increased employee satisfaction and engagement due to a sense of belonging and inclusion in the workplace.
- Improved reputation of the county as an employer of choice that values and supports diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- Increased opportunities for professional growth and development for staff from diverse backgrounds.
- Reduced bias and discrimination in the workplace through awareness and education programs.

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- "When you have more diversity and people from different backgrounds and experiences, it makes for a more creative and innovative work environment. It allows for more perspectives to be shared and considered, leading to better outcomes."
- "The DEI initiative will help us better understand and meet the needs of our diverse community, and this can only happen when we have a workforce that is reflective of that diversity."
- "If we can create a more inclusive and welcoming workplace culture, it will help us retain our diverse talent and prevent turnover. This is crucial for our long-term success."
- "Having diverse perspectives at the table leads to better decision-making and problem-solving. We need to ensure that we have diverse representation at all levels of leadership."
- "We need to create a culture where everyone feels like they belong and are valued for their unique contributions. This will increase employee satisfaction and engagement, which in turn will benefit our community and customers."
- "There is a lot of work that needs to be done to address bias and discrimination in the workplace. The DEI initiative is an opportunity for us to be proactive and create a more fair and equitable workplace for all employees."
- "By prioritizing DEI in our hiring and promotional practices, we can create opportunities for professional growth and development for staff from diverse backgrounds. This will help us build a more inclusive and diverse leadership pipeline."
- "It's important that we not only focus on hiring diverse candidates, but also provide support and resources to help them succeed once they are part of the workforce."
- "The DEI initiative will help us build a more positive reputation as an employer of choice that values diversity, equity, and inclusion. This will help us attract and retain top talent from diverse backgrounds."



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- "I think sometimes people might feel like they're being judged unfairly or that they're going to lose something if they have to change how they've been doing things."
- "I'm not sure if some of the leaders are fully on board with this initiative. I think some may see it as just checking off a box, rather than a real commitment to change."
- "I'm afraid that some people might be resistant to change or might not want to put in the work that is necessary for real progress to be made."
- "I think some people might feel uncomfortable or defensive when we start talking about issues of diversity and inclusion. They might see it as a threat to their way of life."
- "I've heard some people express concern that focusing too much on DEI might distract from other important issues that the county is facing."
- "I think there are some people who might be worried about the costs of implementing DEI initiatives, or who might not see it as a priority."
- "There might be some leaders who are worried about potential pushback from certain parts of the community and might be hesitant to take bold action on DEI issues."

La Crosse County Leader Insights [Geographic]

Based on the interviews conducted, there does appear to be a difference in perspective between leaders in the city and leaders representing rural communities. While both groups express support for diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives, leaders from rural communities tended to express concerns about the challenges of implementing DEI in smaller communities with fewer resources and a more homogeneous population. They also emphasized the importance of building relationships and trust within their communities to effectively address DEI issues.

On the other hand, leaders from more urban areas tended to focus more on the need for systemic change and structural barriers that perpetuate inequality. They highlighted the need for intentional efforts to increase diversity in leadership positions, as well as the importance of holding individuals and organizations accountable for promoting DEI.

County Leaders from smaller communities:

"It's harder to implement [DEI initiatives] in small communities because of the lack of resources."

"We have to build trust and relationships with people in our community before we can even begin to address DEI."

"In smaller communities, everyone knows everyone else's business, and that can make it harder to have difficult conversations about DEI."

"It's important to recognize that we all come from different backgrounds and have different experiences, but we all have something to offer."

County Leaders from larger communities:

"We need to address the structural barriers that prevent underrepresented groups from succeeding."

"We need to be intentional about increasing diversity in leadership positions."

"We need to hold individuals and organizations accountable for promoting DEI."

"We need to create a culture where people feel comfortable speaking up about DEI issues."

La Crosse County Leaders Vision of Future Success – Verbatims (direct quotes)

From the perspective of the interviewees, the future success of DEI for La Crosse County would involve a culture where diversity, equity, and inclusion are not only embraced but integrated into all aspects of the organization. It would involve a diverse workforce where individuals from all backgrounds feel valued and respected, and where there are opportunities for growth and development regardless of one's race, ethnicity, gender, or other identities.

Success would also mean that the community is actively engaged in conversations about DEI and that there is a shared understanding of the importance of creating a more equitable and inclusive society. Finally, success would involve measurable progress towards reducing disparities and increasing equity in areas such as healthcare, housing, education, and employment, among others.

La Crosse County Leaders Vision of Future Success – Verbatims

- "The future success of DEI in La Crosse County would look like a community that is inclusive, welcoming, and celebrates diversity."
- "Success would be a government that is representative of the community it serves, with leaders from diverse backgrounds who understand the unique challenges and opportunities of all community members."
- "In the future, we would see more equitable outcomes in terms of access to resources, opportunities, and services for all members of the community."
- "Success would mean that individuals from underrepresented groups are able to thrive in their careers, feel valued and supported in the workplace, and have equal opportunities for advancement."
- "We would see a significant reduction in discriminatory practices and attitudes, and a culture of respect and appreciation for diversity would be the norm."
- "Success would also mean that the community is actively engaged in DEI efforts, with partnerships and collaborations among government, businesses, and community organizations."
- "Ultimately, the future success of DEI in La Crosse County would mean a more just, equitable, and inclusive community for all."

What is needed to move the DEI Initiative Forward?

Based on the interviewee statements, to move the DEI initiative forward, there needs to be open communication about the significance and value-add of DEI, along with increased accountability among leaders and staff for DEI objectives and key results.

There should be increased efforts to source, support, and retain mid-career leaders to diversify senior and executive level opportunities, and adequately resource DEI strategies for long-term sustainable success.

Additionally, there needs to be a deeper understanding of the experiences and outcomes of underrepresented groups in the community and county workforce. Building partnerships, supporting and retaining local businesses and organizations, and reaching individuals and institutions is also crucial for success.

Finally, leaders need to work more effectively together, by establishing trust and transparency, building relationships, and aligning their efforts towards common goals.



Needed to move the DEI Initiative Forward – Verbatims

- "We need to have real conversations about the problems and biases that exist in our organization and the community. Only then can we start making real progress towards DEI."
- "Leaders need to be held accountable for creating and implementing DEI strategies. It can't just be a buzzword that we talk about, but something that we actively work towards."
- "We need to actively seek out and retain diverse talent and provide them with the necessary support and resources to succeed within our organization."
- "Education and training on DEI topics should be mandatory for all staff, not just those in leadership positions."
- "It's important to partner with community organizations and individuals who have expertise in DEI to help guide our efforts."
- "We need to listen to the experiences and perspectives of underrepresented groups within our organization and community and take action to address their concerns."
- "Resources and funding need to be allocated specifically towards DEI initiatives to ensure that they are adequately supported and have a chance to succeed."
- "DEI should be integrated into all aspects of our operations, from hiring and promotion to policy-making and community engagement."

What do you see as challenges that may affect the DEI initiative? –Verbatims

1. Resistance to change: "There will be some resistance to change, but that's okay. We just need to keep moving forward," said one interviewee.
2. Lack of resources: "We need to make sure that the initiative is adequately funded and resourced to ensure its success," said another interviewee.
3. Lack of understanding: "There is still a lack of understanding about what DEI means and why it is important," said a third interviewee.
4. Fear of discomfort: "Some people may be afraid of discomfort and having difficult conversations about DEI, but we need to create a safe space for these conversations to take place," said a fourth interviewee.
5. Inadequate training: "There may be a lack of training for staff and leaders on how to effectively implement DEI initiatives," said a fifth interviewee.
6. Resistance from community members: "We may face resistance from some members of the community who do not understand or agree with DEI initiatives," said a sixth interviewee.
7. Limited perspectives: "We need to make sure we are considering a variety of perspectives and experiences to ensure the DEI initiative is inclusive," said a seventh interviewee.
8. Short-term focus: "We need to make sure we are focusing on long-term solutions rather than just short-term fixes," said an eighth interviewee.

Based on the interviewee statements, there are mixed opinions about whether the leadership is fully committed to DEI. Some interviewees believe that there is a genuine commitment to DEI, while others feel that the leadership's commitment is not strong enough. Some interviewees also expressed concerns that there may be resistance to change from some leaders. Here are a few verbatim statements to illustrate these perspectives:

- "I do think there's a lot of support, but it's just not translating all the way down the line to the people who are in the trenches."
- "I think there is a lot of willingness, but the system is so large and so difficult to navigate that it's hard to really affect change."
- "I think there's a good faith effort, but I also think there are a lot of competing priorities."
- "I think there are some people who are genuinely committed to DEI, but I also think there are others who are just paying lip service to it."
- "I think there is some commitment to DEI, but it's not always consistent across the board."
- "I think some leaders are really on board with DEI, but there are others who are resistant to change."
- "I think there is a willingness to talk about DEI, but when it comes to actually implementing changes, there is resistance."
- "I think there is a lot of talk about DEI, but not enough action."

Based on interviewee insights, a successful DEI community environment is one where individuals from diverse backgrounds are welcomed and included in all aspects of community life. It is a place where there is a sense of belonging for all individuals, regardless of their race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, or socioeconomic status. Some key characteristics of a successful DEI community environment include:

1. A community where all members feel safe and respected: This includes creating a culture where individuals feel safe to speak up when they experience discrimination or bias.
2. A community that actively seeks out and values diverse perspectives: This involves engaging and valuing all members of the community, and creating spaces where individuals from different backgrounds feel comfortable sharing their unique perspectives and experiences.
3. A community that supports and promotes equity: This means creating policies and programs that address historical and current inequities, and actively working to close the gaps that exist between different groups.
4. A community that is inclusive and welcoming to all: This involves creating an environment where individuals from diverse backgrounds feel welcome and included in all aspects of community life, and where barriers to participation are removed.
5. A community that values and celebrates diversity: This includes recognizing and celebrating the unique contributions that individuals from different backgrounds bring to the community, and actively working to create a culture of inclusion and belonging.

Based on the interviewee statements, there are several outcomes that they would like to see as a result of this experience, including:

1. Increased awareness and education around DEI issues: "I hope that through this process, people will become more aware of the diversity around them and gain a better understanding of different cultures and experiences."
2. Tangible action and change: "It's not enough to just talk about DEI, we need to see real action and change happening in our workplaces and communities."
3. Increased accountability: "Leaders need to be held accountable for their actions and the impact they have on marginalized communities."
4. Inclusive decision-making processes: "We need to ensure that diverse perspectives are included in decision-making processes to create more equitable outcomes."
5. Greater representation of underrepresented groups: "We need to see more people from underrepresented groups in leadership positions and represented in our communities."
6. A sense of belonging: "Everyone should feel like they belong in their workplace and community, regardless of their background or identity."
7. A more equitable and just society: "Ultimately, the goal of DEI is to create a more equitable and just society where everyone has equal access to opportunities and experiences."

La Crosse County Leader Recommendations

- "We need to have more open communication, share feedback and take action on that feedback."
- "Leaders need to be more transparent and lead by example in terms of modeling behaviors that promote diversity and inclusion."
- "We need to create more opportunities for collaboration and brainstorming to identify innovative solutions."
- "Leaders should be more intentional about seeking out diverse perspectives and experiences to inform decision-making."
- "We need to invest in training and development programs that build leadership skills and promote diversity, equity, and inclusion."
- "I think leaders need to start being more vocal about the importance of diversity, equity, and inclusion, and not just pay lip service to it."
- "It would be helpful if leaders were more transparent about the challenges they're facing and what they're doing to address them."
- "I think leaders need to do a better job of listening to diverse perspectives and creating a culture of collaboration."
- "We need to be intentional about building relationships and understanding the experiences of people who are different from us."
- "Leaders need to be willing to take risks and try new approaches to promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion."



Consultant Recommendations



La Crosse County Leadership Insight Themes



Communication & Education

Leaders must effectively communicate the significance and value-add of DEI to staff, community members, and other stakeholders. This includes providing education and training on DEI topics and ensuring that all leaders are held accountable for DEI objectives and results.

Collaboration & Leadership Effectiveness

Leaders must work more effectively together, with a shared vision and clear priorities, to successfully implement DEI initiatives. This requires fostering a culture of collaboration and accountability and ensuring that all leaders are aligned and working toward the same goals.

Understanding

Leaders must have a deeper understanding of the experiences and outcomes of underrepresented groups, particularly women, homeless, low-income, rural residents, and racial minorities, is needed to inform DEI strategies and ensure that they are effective.

Resource Allocation

Adequate resources, including funding and personnel, must be allocated to DEI strategies in order to ensure long-term sustainable success.

Partnerships & Retention

Efforts must be made to build partnerships with local businesses and organizations, and to support and retain mid-career leaders to diversify senior and executive level opportunities. This includes reaching out to underrepresented groups and contract or term-limited staff.



Communication & Education

To effectively communicate the significance and value-add of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) to staff, community members, and other stakeholders, leaders can take the following action steps:

1. **Develop a clear DEI vision and strategy:** Formulate a well-defined DEI vision and strategic plan that outlines the organization's goals and objectives. This will provide a roadmap for achieving desired outcomes.
2. **Lead by example:** Demonstrate commitment to DEI by actively participating in relevant initiatives, making it a top priority, and integrating it into the organizational culture.
3. **Establish a DEI task force:** Create a dedicated team responsible for the implementation and monitoring of DEI initiatives. This group should include representation from various organizational levels and backgrounds.
4. **Conduct regular DEI training:** Offer training sessions and workshops to educate employees, community members, and other stakeholders on key DEI topics, such as unconscious bias, microaggressions, and cultural competence.
5. **Communicate transparently:** Share updates on DEI progress, challenges, and successes with all stakeholders through regular meetings, newsletters, social media, or other channels.
6. **Hold leaders accountable:** Set performance metrics for leaders related to DEI goals and review their progress regularly. Incorporate DEI objectives into performance evaluations and promotion decisions.
7. **Engage with the community:** Collaborate with local community organizations, schools, and businesses to promote DEI initiatives and foster a sense of belonging for all stakeholders.
8. **Establish feedback mechanisms:** Implement channels for employees and stakeholders to voice their concerns, ideas, or experiences related to DEI. This feedback can inform future strategies and actions.
9. **Celebrate successes and recognize contributions:** Acknowledge and reward the efforts of individuals and teams that contribute to DEI objectives. Publicly celebrate successes to reinforce the importance of DEI.
10. **Review and revise:** Periodically evaluate the effectiveness of DEI initiatives and make any necessary adjustments to ensure that the organization is on track to achieve its goals. Continuously learn and adapt to create a more inclusive and equitable environment.

Collaboration & Leadership Effectiveness

To foster a culture of collaboration and accountability among leaders and ensure alignment in implementing DEI initiatives, the following action steps can be taken:

1. **Develop a shared DEI vision and strategy:** Collaboratively create a clear and compelling DEI vision that all leaders can commit to. Develop a shared strategic plan with specific goals, objectives, and timelines to guide the implementation of DEI initiatives.
2. **Establish clear roles and responsibilities:** Define the roles and responsibilities of each leader in the implementation of DEI initiatives. This helps to create a sense of ownership and accountability.
3. **Create a DEI leadership team:** Form a cross-functional team of leaders who represent different departments or units within the organization. This team should be responsible for driving and coordinating DEI efforts across the organization.
4. **Conduct regular progress meetings:** Hold frequent meetings to review the status of DEI initiatives, share best practices, discuss challenges, and celebrate successes. These meetings will help maintain momentum and keep everyone aligned.
5. **Provide training and support:** Offer professional development opportunities, such as workshops and coaching, to help leaders enhance their skills in collaborating, problem-solving, and promoting DEI.
6. **Establish performance metrics:** Set measurable objectives related to DEI goals for leaders and track progress regularly. Incorporate these metrics into performance evaluations and promotion decisions.
7. **Encourage open communication and feedback:** Create a safe space for leaders to express their opinions, share ideas, and provide feedback on DEI initiatives. This can help foster a culture of trust and collaboration.
8. **Recognize and reward collaboration:** Acknowledge and celebrate instances of effective collaboration and teamwork among leaders in achieving DEI goals. This can help reinforce the value of working together.
9. **Leverage technology:** Utilize digital tools and platforms to facilitate communication, collaboration, and information sharing among leaders, ensuring that everyone is working from the same playbook.
10. **Continuously improve and adapt:** Regularly assess the effectiveness of collaborative efforts and make necessary adjustments to strengthen alignment and teamwork. Encourage a growth mindset and a culture of continuous learning and improvement among leaders.

Understanding

To gain a deeper understanding of the experiences and outcomes of underrepresented groups and inform effective DEI strategies, leaders can take the following action steps:

1. **Conduct research and gather data:** Collect qualitative and quantitative data on the experiences, needs, and outcomes of underrepresented groups. This can include conducting surveys, focus groups, interviews, and analyzing existing data sets.
2. **Partner with experts and organizations:** Collaborate with experts, researchers, and organizations that specialize in working with underrepresented groups. These partnerships can provide valuable insights and guidance on DEI strategies.
3. **Establish listening sessions:** Organize regular listening sessions where members of underrepresented groups can share their experiences, challenges, and aspirations. This direct engagement can provide valuable insights for DEI initiatives.
4. **Encourage diversity in leadership:** Promote diverse representation in leadership positions, ensuring that underrepresented groups have a voice in decision-making processes.
5. **Develop targeted DEI initiatives:** Based on the insights gained, create tailored DEI initiatives that address the specific needs and challenges faced by underrepresented groups.
6. **Provide cultural competence training:** Offer training to leaders on cultural competence, empathy, and understanding the unique experiences and challenges faced by underrepresented groups.
7. **Foster a culture of inclusion:** Encourage leaders to create an inclusive environment where all individuals feel valued and respected, regardless of their background or circumstances.
8. **Monitor progress and outcomes:** Regularly track the impact of DEI initiatives on the experiences and outcomes of underrepresented groups, and adjust strategies as needed to ensure effectiveness.
9. **Share success stories:** Publicize stories of success and achievement among underrepresented groups to raise awareness of their contributions and the value of diversity and inclusion.
10. **Promote continuous learning:** Encourage leaders to stay informed about issues affecting underrepresented groups and to actively seek out opportunities for learning and growth. This can include attending conferences, reading publications, and participating in training or workshops.

Resource Allocation

To allocate adequate resources, including funding and personnel, for long-term sustainable success of DEI strategies, leaders can take the following action steps:

1. Conduct a needs assessment: Evaluate the current state of DEI within the organization, identifying gaps and areas that require additional resources, and determine the specific needs in terms of funding, personnel, and other resources.
2. Develop a resource allocation plan: Create a comprehensive plan outlining the resources required for each DEI initiative, including personnel, financial investments, technology, and training.
3. Secure leadership commitment: Obtain commitment and support from top leadership for allocating the necessary resources to DEI initiatives. This will help ensure that DEI remains a priority within the organization.
4. Establish a dedicated DEI budget: Set aside a specific budget for DEI initiatives and ensure that it is protected and used solely for the purpose of advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion.
5. Hire or designate DEI personnel: Appoint a DEI officer or team responsible for overseeing and implementing DEI initiatives, providing guidance and support to the organization.
6. Leverage external funding opportunities: Explore grants, partnerships, and sponsorships that can provide additional financial support for DEI initiatives.
7. Integrate DEI into strategic planning: Incorporate DEI objectives and resource allocation into the organization's overall strategic plan to ensure long-term sustainability and commitment.
8. Advocate for resources: Build a compelling business case for investing in DEI by highlighting the benefits, such as increased innovation, improved employee satisfaction, and enhanced organizational reputation.
9. Monitor and evaluate resource usage: Regularly assess the efficiency and effectiveness of resource allocation for DEI initiatives. Make adjustments as needed to ensure resources are being used optimally.
10. Share successes and challenges: Communicate the impact of DEI initiatives, including the positive outcomes and challenges faced, to maintain support for continued resource allocation.

Partnerships & Retention

To build partnerships, support mid-career leaders, and diversify senior and executive level opportunities, leaders can take the following action steps:

1. Identify potential partners: Research local businesses and organizations that share a commitment to DEI and have the potential for collaboration. Consider the unique strengths and resources each potential partner brings to the table.
2. Develop mutually beneficial partnerships: Establish partnerships with local businesses and organizations that create shared value and support the common goal of enhancing diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workplace.
3. Offer professional development opportunities: Provide training, mentorship, and networking opportunities to mid-career leaders, particularly those from underrepresented groups, to help them advance in their careers.
4. Establish mentorship and sponsorship programs: Pair mid-career leaders with senior or executive-level mentors who can offer guidance, support, and sponsorship for career growth.
5. Create a pipeline for leadership opportunities: Implement a structured talent development program to identify and prepare high-potential mid-career leaders for senior and executive level positions, with a focus on underrepresented groups.
6. Engage contract or term-limited staff: Actively reach out to contract or term-limited staff from underrepresented groups and provide them with opportunities for professional growth, networking, and potential transition to permanent roles.
7. Encourage diverse recruitment: Partner with local businesses and organizations to share job opportunities, collaborate on recruitment efforts, and create a more diverse talent pool for senior and executive level positions.
8. Foster an inclusive work environment: Cultivate a supportive and inclusive workplace culture that encourages collaboration, open communication, and respect for all employees, regardless of their background or employment status.
9. Monitor progress and evaluate success: Regularly track the success of partnerships, professional development programs, and leadership diversity efforts. Use this data to inform adjustments and improvements as needed.
10. Share success stories: Highlight the achievements and accomplishments of mid-career leaders from underrepresented groups, as well as the positive outcomes of partnerships with local businesses and organizations, to inspire and motivate others.



LA CROSSE COUNTY

Chanin Kelly-Rae, President/CEO
Chanin Kelly-Rae Consulting LLC
grow@chaninkellyrae.com
(425) 321-1001

Jane Klekamp
La Crosse County Administrator
La Crosse County Administrative Center
212 6th Street N
Room 2400
La Crosse, WI 54601
(608) 785-9700

