



**Office of Executive Inspector General for
the Agencies of the Illinois Governor**

Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Working Group

A Year in Review

July 2020 – July 2021

INTRODUCTION

In July 2020, the Office of Executive Inspector General (OEIG) formed an internal Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI) Working Group. Our Working Group is comprised of OEIG employee volunteers from each division who work together to brainstorm, research, and implement steps to make the OEIG an inclusive and equitable working environment that celebrates differences. The Working Group currently has over 30 members. The DEI Working Group specifically focuses on three areas: 1) recruitment & hiring; 2) training; and 3) mentorship and development. Each focus area meets approximately once a month.

In July, we began our DEI Working Group with a discussion of what “diversity” and “inclusion” mean to us, our goals, and processes for the group. Although the OEIG has a DEI Coordinator, the structure of the group is open to allow all members to share in the leadership and development of the Working Group. In this collaborative environment we work to ensure that our methods for implementing our goals are thoughtful, grounded in research, and discussed and agreed upon by the group. While we have many goals still in mind, we have accomplished a lot in our inaugural year. This document summarizes these accomplishments from July 2020 through July 2021.

RECRUITMENT AND HIRING

When we started this focus group, one key goal was ensuring we cast a wide net when we posted positions to attract a large, qualified, diverse applicant pool for open positions. As part of achieving this goal, this focus group:

- ◇ Reviewed and assessed all of the current ways the OEIG posted its positions. After learning about the current process, we brainstormed and researched additional places to post positions. As a result, the OEIG now posts with more than double the entities than before. Some of the additional places we post positions include:

Directly at State public universities	Directly at private colleges, such as Loyola University, DePaul University, University of Chicago, and Northwestern University
Directly at Illinois community colleges	Directly to various law schools in the State
Hispanic Lawyers Association of Illinois	Illinois Department of Employment Security
Asian American Bar Association of Greater Chicago	Lesbian and Gay Bar Association of Chicago
South Asian Bar Association of Chicago	Women’s Bar Association of Illinois
Black Women Lawyers Association of Greater Chicago	Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies
Illinois Department of Rehabilitation Services	Cook County Bar Association

- ◇ Updated the OEIG webpage to provide applicants with more information about the OEIG’s work, our commitment to DEI, and commitment to public service. As part of this update we created a graph so visitors could better understand our EEO/AA Report, asked employees for voluntary testimonials about their work experience, and summarized our DEI Working Group. This webpage provides applicants and the public a better understanding of the OEIG’s work culture and our commitment to DEI.
- ◇ Surveyed OEIG employees to determine where they heard about the employment opportunity at the OEIG. We discussed the survey results to assess the methods current employees used to learn about job opportunities. For example, because many employees learned about the opportunity via word-of-mouth, this Focus Group is looking into opportunities to be involved in career fairs and other in-person outreach opportunities.
- ◇ Researching and compiling best practices in interviewing and assessing job candidates, including research regarding bias.

The Recruitment and Hiring Focus Group also wanted to ensure that we were evaluating and benchmarking our work. As part of this effort, we took two main steps. First, we implemented a change to the employment application. The employment application now includes the question: “Where did you hear about this opportunity?” With the addition of this question, the Focus Group can determine the best use of its resources. Second, we analyzed the applicant pools we received after expanding where we posted positions to determine trends. At this time, we feel we do not have enough data to draw firm conclusions, especially because of the COVID-19 pandemic, we want to be thoughtful and not make assumptions about the correlation versus the causation of the data. We will continue to gather this data and incorporate findings into our strategies.

TRAINING

When we started this focus group, key goals were to provide OEIG employees with trainings on diversity, equity, and inclusion topics. We wanted to bring trainings to the Office that would challenge employees and educate our staff on these important issues. We also wanted to make sure that training was not just a one-time experience, but an ongoing journey to a better understanding of these complex topics. One way we did this was to form smaller groups focused on training opportunities for: managers, new employees, and all employees. A large part of the initial Training Focus Group work was striving to educate ourselves. For example, this Focus Group:

- ◇ Researched best practices in training employees;
- ◇ Researched how private companies and the public sector were training on these topics; and
- ◇ Attended multiple free trainings offered by universities, government, and private companies to assess topic areas and potential speakers.



The Training Focus Group worked with the Illinois Department of Human Rights (IDHR), which provided an in-depth three to three-and-a-half-hour training to all OEIG employees. The training entitled, Introduction to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, covered privilege, bias, microaggressions, and more. The IDHR utilized break-out sessions to allow for discussion on these topics throughout the training and provided a detailed handout with additional reading materials. The training sessions for OEIG employees were spread out over a week, and managers received a separate training with a section on inclusive leadership. After the training, the Training Focus Group and the IDHR sent separate surveys to obtain feedback. Almost all of the responses were positive and reflected that the training had a real impact on employees.

The Training Focus Group is currently working on smaller trainings for managers and new employees, as well as another all-employee training for 2021.

MENTORSHIP AND DEVELOPMENT



When the Mentorship & Development Focus Group started we spent a good amount of time discussing our Office's culture, how informal mentorship works, and how a mentorship program would function in an office of our size. We also spent time discussing mentorship relationships (past and present) of our members and their experiences for what works. Additionally, we researched public and private employee mentorship programs, including compiling templates and program guides from various programs. For example, we discussed with the Association of Inspectors General its mentorship program and obtained guidance and templates from its leaders.

Once this Focus Group determined the type of program that would be the most helpful to the OEIG, it moved quickly to develop forms, plan meetings, and draft assessments. For example, we drafted an interest form, a commitment form, and an evaluation form.

In March 2021 the Mentorship & Development Focus Group rolled-out the OEIG Mentorship Pilot Program. This internal mentorship program is a six-month program and both the mentor and the mentee are OEIG employees. This is a voluntary program to provide support, guidance, development, leadership, and community for both mentees and mentors through a program of one-on-one mentorship and group mentorship activities. The mentorship program is mentee driven and designed to allow the mentee to establish their own uniquely tailored developmental goals that can be achieved through one-on-one mentorship. We hosted an information session and an orientation session for employees, and provided guidance on how to get the most out of this program. At the end of the six months, the Focus Group will obtain feedback from participants and use that feedback to plan our next program.

OEIG CONNECT

The OEIG DEI Working Group developed OEIG Connect – an internal voluntary group that meets to discuss issues related to marginalized groups and identities, such as race, gender, and ability. We circulate questions and topics, read articles, books, and/or listen to podcasts together and discuss them as a group. This group was developed to create an open forum for employees to share their identities, hear from others, and be seen as their whole selves. It is part of our work to build a community and a sense of support and belonging by talking openly about our identities and reading and listening to other voices discussing topics related to diversity, equity, and inclusion. All OEIG employees are invited to participate by listening or sharing, and/or coming together with the goal of connecting on a personal level with colleagues.

Since OEIG Connect was developed we have had two meetings. At the first meeting, participants listened to a Harvard Business Review podcast: Has Anything Changed for Black Women at Work?. At the second meeting, participants read an article and watched a video regarding allyship. At each meeting, members of the OEIG DEI Working Group facilitated discussion by sharing additional research and voices, asking questions, and guiding the discussion. At both meetings employees challenged themselves to openly share thoughts, ideas, and experiences. We look forward to many more conversations.



CONCLUSION

The OEIG DEI Working Group is proud of its work over this past year. During this unprecedented time of a global pandemic, we worked to shine a light on the voices and stories of our OEIG community and be our best as an office. Heartbreaking national events demonstrated that we must be diligent in the fight against racism and work harder to build a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive workforce. We still have a lot of work to do, and we are eager to do it – together.

DEI Working Group Members¹

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<i>Christine Benavente</i>	<i>Fallon Opperman</i>
<i>Marina Bergamo</i>	<i>Emily Grace Paymer</i>
<i>Melissa Brandenburg</i>	<i>Tiffany Pryor-Wallace</i>
<i>Adam Bush-Emmart</i>	<i>Katie Ruyle</i>
<i>Lorena Contreras</i>	<i>Melissa Rollins</i>
<i>Michael Cook</i>	<i>Gina Rosas</i>
<i>Natale Fuller</i>	<i>Francine Simmons</i>
<i>Nancy Jack</i>	<i>Janelle Skaloud</i>
<i>Antoinette Kwateng</i>	<i>Reginald Spears</i>
<i>Viktorija Legge</i>	<i>Latoya Stampley</i>
<i>Angela Luning</i>	<i>Colleen Thomas</i>
<i>Lisa McDonald</i>	<i>Amanda Thomet</i>
<i>Edward Mroczkowski</i>	<i>Teresa Tran</i>
<i>Jacqueline Mullings</i>	<i>Jasmine Velazquez</i>
	<i>Alexa Vouros</i>
	<i>Diana Zuver</i>

¹ Former employees Sam Cardick, Steve Hochstetler, Rachael Shapiro, and Denise Vieaux were also members.