

Local Governments Hiring Chief Diversity Officers to Lead Equity and Inclusion Work

BY CARLA KIMBROUGH

In Buffalo, New York, leaders from all sectors had a revelation: While the city was experiencing an economic renaissance, all people weren't benefiting from the resurgence. That meant prosperity would eventually fade away.

Unless, they decided, everyone—regardless of race—moves forward. The “they” are the 30-plus members of the Greater Buffalo Racial Equity Roundtable, which has representatives from private, nonprofit, faith and public organizations, and institutions, including city government.

Alphonso O'Neil-White, who is the Roundtable's chair and retired CEO of BlueCross BlueShield of Western New York, said the Roundtable's work didn't happen overnight; it began about three years ago with the Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo's board of directors, which he chaired at the time. After reading and discussing books that dealt with race, the foundation's board members decided they needed to do something to change the disparities they saw in their own community. One of the results was the establishment of the Roundtable.

Eventually, the Roundtable focused on two areas: achieving racial equity, which focuses on situational fairness, and changing systems and policies that create barriers. O'Neil-White often explains the idea of racial equity using the image of two people—one 6-foot-5, the other 5-foot-9—going to a baseball game, but the fence blocks the view. Each person is given a crate to stand on; that's equality. Equity means that the shorter person gets two crates so that the view is just as clear.

“It reflects the evolution of equality,” O'Neil-White said of equity.

Buffalo is among the cities that are paying attention to equity in a way uncommon for local

government—adding chief diversity officers or people with similar titles or focus. Some want to make sure the government workforce reflects the community, that government employees can respectfully interact and equitably serve an increasingly diverse community, and that women and people of color have access to contracting opportunities with the city. Over the last two years, Columbus, Ohio; Philadelphia; San Antonio, and Austin, Texas; Cedar Rapids, Iowa; Somerville, Worcester, and Boston, Massachusetts; and Nashville, Tennessee, are among the cities that have added these positions.

In Buffalo, the Roundtable helped spur the need for such a role. The group wasn't out to change hearts; it wanted to change minds. Therefore, the Roundtable commissioned and carefully designed a research study with the University of Buffalo. The study, “The Racial Equity Dividend: Buffalo's Great Opportunity,” also known as the RED Report, revealed “a racial equity gap that creates a divide within our community—a divide that prevents all of us from moving forward” and committed to achieving racial equity, which the report defined as “situational fairness that eliminates the outcome differentials that are too often predicted by race.”¹

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“We decided to have a data-driven approach,” O'Neil-White said of the strategy. “We wouldn't sit around and speculate.”

Closing the racial equity gap would mean that Buffalo, the RED report says, would result in over \$1 billion in increased regional GDP annually through education and job readiness; 36,000 more families purchasing a home; and additional \$12 billion in wealth for area families.

O’Neil-White said the equity focus requires making “high impact systemic changes,” which was the Roundtable’s other goal. The Roundtable’s members had reach; for example, the Catholic bishop could influence 600,000 people in the Buffalo diocese, and the city’s mayor was on board too. Buffalo Mayor Byron Brown, who was one of the Roundtable’s founding members, was way ahead in seeing—and articulating—that becoming a city of opportunity for everyone benefits the entire city for the long haul, O’Neil-White said.

City officials help make—and maintain—policies and systems that contribute to inequities. The Roundtable also provided a forum for Brown and others to discuss ideas, O’Neil-White said. One of the ideas to institutionalize equity in city government policies and services was the creation of a chief diversity officer position.

“We helped the mayor to think about that role,” O’Neil-White said of discussions.

Brown, who O’Neil-White described as “action-oriented,” created that position, put it in the mayor’s cabinet and, in February 2016, hired Crystal Rodriguez as the City of Buffalo’s first chief diversity officer. Rodriguez had been the executive director of Buffalo’s Commission on Citizens’ Rights and Community Relations.

Rodriguez is one of a growing number of chief diversity officers working for city government who are calling people into the work of diversity, equity, and inclusion. While they have a variety of titles—chief equity officer or chief diversity and inclusion officer—these positions are charged with leading diversity, inclusion, and equity efforts on several fronts, internally and externally. Their duties and priorities vary.

In Buffalo, Rodriguez sees part of her new job as incorporating the RED report’s recommendations

into city government. The task of achieving racial equity in the city is daunting.

“Government isn’t going to be able to do it alone,” said Rodriguez, who helps represent Buffalo’s city government in the roundtable’s efforts.

Part of the work Rodriguez has done is to research and help craft executive orders that communicate the city’s values. The mayor issued six executive orders—the first of his administration—that adopted the term “returning citizen,” ending the use of “ex-offender,” to encourage employment prospects and community participation of those returning from incarceration; established a contract compliance committee to increase participation of minority- and women-owned businesses; required new rules related to adding or substituting subcontractors; gave higher consideration to contract bidders with robust workforce development policies for women and minorities; emphasized the need to hire city residents as part of city projects and contracts of \$250,000 or more; and formalized city efforts to ensure diverse applicant pools, including formalizing a program influenced by the NFL’s Rooney Rule, which requires including minorities in the interview process.

These executive orders were part of the mayor’s “OpportUNITY Agenda.” Another part of that agenda that Rodriguez has been charged with is spreading the city’s message of opportunity for all with individuals and businesses. An example of that work was a spring job fair, at which 52 people were hired on the spot to work for companies doing business with the city. That’s one way she is expanding on The Opportunity Pledge, a 12-point statement that highlights the importance of cultivating diversity and inclusion as values that can accelerate the city’s growth. So far, the pledge has attracted more than 6,500 individuals and more than 500 businesses. To begin to stack up those numbers, Rodriguez said she knocked on doors, introducing herself and the new office.

“My job is not call people out; it’s to call people in,” Rodriguez said of her work.

Julie Nelson is director of the Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE), a national organization

that focuses on normalizing conversations about race, operationalizing new behaviors and policies, and organizing to achieve racial equity. Nelson said GARE is seeing more and more jurisdictions establish new offices of racial equity or appointing chief equity officers.

“We know, however, that a single person or office will not be enough; it is critical that these new positions and offices work to build commitment across the breadth of government functions and work in partnership across sectors and with the community,” Nelson said. “We are organizing in government with the belief that the transformation of government is essential for us to advance racial equity and is critical to our success as a nation.”

Rita Soler Ossolinski, affiliate relations/northeast team leader at International City/County Management Association (ICMA), said she noticed several governments had recently added or are planning to add positions that focus on managing equity and inclusion efforts. The increase in such roles became evident as ICMA was coordinating panel discussions on equity and inclusiveness at each of ICMA’s five regional summits throughout the United States. She included among those cities: Edmond, Oklahoma, where the city clerk also holds the title of chief diversity and equity officer, and Asheville, North Carolina, which opened its search in February 2017 for a senior level manager working in the city’s manager’s office and reporting to an assistant city manager. Another was Tacoma, Washington, where an office of equity and human rights was formed in 2015 and is led by a director. The Tacoma office, on its website, identifies Portland, Oregon, and Seattle, Washington, as “partners in equity.”

While neither city has a chief equity or diversity officer, both Portland and Seattle have tackled diversity, inclusion, and/or equity. In Portland, a 2011 ordinance established an office of equity and human rights. Seattle has been a national forerunner in focusing on racial equity, launching its Race and Social Justice Initiative in 2004. The city’s Office for Civil Rights manages the efforts related to the initiative, which was expanded in recent years.

Larger cities also are among those hiring chief diversity officers. New York City added its first chief

diversity officer in 2014 and recently promoted the deputy to this position. This position worked in the comptroller’s office, focusing on increasing the number of contracts awarded to certified minority- and women-owned businesses. Like New York, Boston is on its second CDO, hiring its first in December 2014 when Mayor Martin Walsh created the city’s Office of Diversity; the second CDO was named in March 2016, after the first was promoted to another role. In March 2017, Chicago launched its effort to find a chief diversity officer. Chicago’s CDO will operate from the human resources department with responsibilities for recruiting and maintaining a workforce that reflects the city’s diversity.

Both higher education and private industry started adding such roles some years ago. For example, the National Association of Diversity Officers in Higher Education held its first annual conference in 2007, which followed earlier meetings beginning in 2003. National Association of Diversity Officers in Higher Education, which created its own professional practices standards, has more than 600 individual and institutional members.

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About 60 percent of Fortune 500 companies had chief diversity officers in 2012. While these corporations have had people working on diversity issues previously, the role had been elevated to the C-Suite to highlight its importance.²

Similarly, many of the chief diversity officers in local government are a part of the mayor’s cabinet or work closely with the city manager’s office. Mayors in Boston, Columbus, Philadelphia, and Nashville made diversity and inclusion part of their election campaigns. Hiring people to fill these roles begins the fulfillment of those campaign promises. In Cedar Rapids, the city manager saw the need to bring a sharper focus on diversity and inclusion. In Worcester, the city manager told a local media outlet that Worcester City Council asked him “to look at the

ways city government is dealing with an increasingly diverse community” and hiring a chief diversity officer position was among his recommendations. The position was filled in February 2016 and vacated in July 2017. In Somerville, added a manager of diversity, equity, and inclusion in July 2017 after residents participating in a Community Conversation on Race and Racism indicated they wanted a dedicated staff person to work on these issues. Similarly, residents—not elected officials or city managers—asked for similar roles to address concerns related to equity and inclusion in Austin and San Antonio.

Texans Call for Oversight of Diversity, Equity Issues

In San Antonio, the position has evolved since Kiran Bains was hired in August 2015. Originally, the role was diversity and inclusion officer, reporting to an assistant city manager, but the title was changed in December 2016 to chief equity officer to reflect a shift in her work.

Bains launched a racial equity initiative within the city. As part of the new focus, Bains organized a retreat for department directors and assistant directors in 37 city departments. The city leaders learned how to normalize the discussion about racial equity and how to embed—or operationalize—racial equity in operations and services. In March 2017, six city departments—Human Services, Government and Public Affairs, Human Resources, Metropolitan Health District, Solid Waste Management, and the San Antonio Public Library—began working on how to apply a racial equity lens to their work. The reaction from top leaders has been positive, Bains said, noting “an excitement for a solution.”

Bains points to two examples of how the conversation about racial equity is changing the work. At the San Antonio Public Library, employees are exploring what barriers to borrowing exist and how to address those barriers. At the health department, an infant mortality reduction program for fathers had a request from a lesbian who wanted to join the group, Bains said. Instead of simply saying no because the group focuses on fathers, department employees discussed the request and then welcomed the woman to the group, Bains said. Moments like these signal that the San Antonio’s Diversity and

Inclusion office is succeeding in giving employees the abilities needed to advance equity.

“This is a language for us to talk about how to do our work,” Bains said.

This position came about in San Antonio because of a change in language. In 2013, the city council voted to expand the city’s non-discrimination ordinance to include veteran status, sexual orientation, and gender identity. The city’s diversity and inclusion office has centralized work related to the non-discrimination ordinance, Bains said. Her duties include organizing community outreach, accepting discrimination complaints, and offering training about the ordinance to nonprofit organizations, small businesses, neighborhood associations, and other interested groups.

In Austin, a chief equity officer was hired in October 2016 after residents raised concerns that people of color were leaving the city because of increasing costs of living and concerns about police-community tensions. There, the office was charged with identifying disparities in and ensuring equal access to city programs and services. The addition of a chief equity officer wasn’t the only recent effort regarding racial equity. In April 2017, the Mayor’s Task Force on Institutional Racism and Systemic Inequities released a final report in which it offered recommendations related to five areas—real estate and housing; health; education; civil and criminal justice; and finance, banking and industry—aimed at dismantling persistent disparities.

Philadelphia Begins with Its Workforce

In Philadelphia, the appointment of Nolan Atkinson, Jr. as the city’s first chief diversity and inclusion officer reflected a campaign promise. Atkinson, who joined the mayor’s cabinet in January 2016, transitioned from a legal career that stretched over four decades. In 2007, Atkinson was appointed as the chief diversity and inclusion officer at Duane Morris LLP, a global law firm with more than 750 attorneys in offices in the United States and internationally. Over the years, Atkinson said diversity at the firm increased from three people to 100 people, who brought diversity of race, ability, and sexual orientation. Atkinson also was the former chair and

a founder of the Philadelphia Diversity Law Group, Inc., a group of law firms and corporations committed to increasing ethnic and racial diversity in compel Philadelphia’s larger law firms.

Atkinson said moving to this local government role provided a “phenomenal opportunity” to incorporate diversity and inclusion. Atkinson also noted the “freedom to look at disparities wherever they exist” in the broader city. Although he had lived and worked in Philadelphia for some time, he spent first three or four months listening and talking to people inside and outside of government who shared their concerns, one of which was the city workforce.

Those conversations helped Atkinson shape the city’s first workforce report, which gave an overview of the overall city workforce but concentrated on exempt positions—positions that do not require passing the civil service exam—under the mayor’s authority. The city was awaiting a report on its hiring and promotional practices from Pew Charitable Trusts. Atkinson said the Pew report would likely address city charter and civil service rules that limit opportunities. An example was the Rule of Two that mandates that only the top two-scoring candidates can be considered in hiring decisions for openings, which Atkinson called a “fairly restrictive rule.”

Even without that Pew report, the initial workforce report showed that the city’s overall workforce of 26,510 did not reflect the city’s demographics. For example, in the city’s overall workforce, whites and African Americans/blacks had percentages higher than the city’s demographics, while women, Hispanics, and Asians had lower percentages in comparison to the city’s population. By digging deeper, the data revealed that women—who made up only 38 percent of the overall city workforce—fared better when looking at exempt employees (55 percent) and department heads (57 percent of 79 department heads). Meanwhile, blacks—who made up 44 percent of the city’s population—were only 28 percent of the department heads and had average salaries roughly \$10,000 less than whites. Whites, who make up only 35 percent of the city’s population, held 61 percent of positions earning \$90,000 or more.³

Although this first report doesn’t include metrics for disabilities, sexual identity, or sexual

orientation, Atkinson’s office is exploring ways to gather data about all aspects of diversity in the city workforce. In that same workforce report, Mayor James Kenney wrote: “As far as I’m concerned, there is no longer a question that everyone in government at the executive level, including myself, must commit themselves to a comprehensive, systemic plan to hire and promote talented diverse Philadelphians.”⁴

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Atkinson said Kenney, like any good manager or leader, wanted city government to reflect the city’s diverse population. Diversity and inclusion have been a pillar both in Kenney’s campaign and his administration so far. Kenney answered a “crying need” that had been unaddressed by previous administrations, Atkinson said. Part of the groundwork of Atkinson’s work is getting city executives on board. Atkinson discussed what leaders must do to build an inclusive, culturally competent organization, which includes embedding inclusion in operations. The exempt workforce also participated in basic training on diversity and inclusion and graded their departments on inclusiveness, with scores becoming a benchmark for future discussions.

“Nobody gets a perfect score,” Atkinson said of the city departments’ diversity and inclusion.

Therefore, Atkinson said his office will be in constant contact with leaders and keep talking about inclusion as he works with human resources to improve recruitment tactics. Atkinson’s office also reviewed procurement data, which—along with employment figures—will be tracked over time and used to develop best practices. Atkinson’s office works closely with the city’s economic opportunity office to increase procurement and contracting with diverse business owners.

“Getting to inclusion is a timeless effort,” he said.

When Atkinson thinks about his first year in office, he points to hiring an executive director for the Office of LGBT Affairs and its 23-member advisory commission. In May, the office released documents discussing protections and resources for the LGBTQ community. Most of all, Atkinson said he is pleased that so many are talking about diversity, inclusion, and other issues in a way that has never occurred.

Columbus Tackles Diversity on Numerous Fronts

In Columbus, Ohio, the city's first diversity and inclusion director also brought significant experience from outside government. Stephen Francis, who also is an attorney, was the manager of diversity relations at Honda of America from 2004 to 2013 before becoming manager of corporate affairs. He joined the mayor's team in January 2016 after Mayor Andrew Ginther told Francis—who thought he was only sharing thoughts about such a role—to write his own job description.

Having worked in both city government and the corporate world, Francis points to an important difference—how things happen. In corporate America, the C-Suite dictated changes. In city government, residents make the demands on what the city leaders should focus on, Francis said. Columbus residents—who bring great diversity in language, race, national origin—present the most irrefutable business case for diversity and inclusion, he said.

“You have to have a culturally competent staff,” Francis said of city employees who must serve a diverse constituency.

In the inaugural year of the office, Francis pointed to several accomplishments: revising the statute to reflect the scope of the office's work; commissioning a disparity study on suppliers; hiring two managers to oversee efforts; and creating a new program focused on supplier diversity.

“We were building the airplane as we were flying it,” Francis said of the work in his first year.

Francis also established a diversity committee that includes directors from each city department and subject matter experts. This committee is charged

with several responsibilities, including developing metric scorecards on which to measure progress in annual reports.

“You can't do it with your office alone...it's cross-functional,” Francis said. “Everyone has a stake in it.”

Like Atkinson, Francis pointed to the importance of having a mayor who is strongly committed to diversity and is willing to have difficult conversations with city employees. In fact, Francis said the mayor shared with him the first question in the mayor's evaluation discussions with department directors: How have you progressed in leading our diversity and inclusion goals?

Such discussions must occur throughout all levels of an organization and must come with consequences if progress is not made, Francis said. In his experience, Francis said middle managers, who may view diversity as a threat, can block diversity and inclusion efforts. In these cases, leaders must be prepared to give those people different assignments or help them move on if they disagree with the initiatives, Francis said. This type of influence is one reason diversity efforts cannot “be buried two or three levels down,” Francis, who reports directly to the mayor, said of the need to meet higher expectations related to diversity.

Communication also is important in efforts to create a diverse and inclusive culture, Francis said. He first makes clear that diversity is much more than race; it's “who we are and where we come from and who raised us.” Inclusion is using, valuing and incorporating the best of all that diversity brings.

“Diversity is the value. Inclusion is the success,” Francis said. “It's important to make those (definitions) very simple”

Nashville Gains Insights from Consultants, Residents

In Nashville, employment data from the metro government—encompassing both the city of Nashville and Davidson County—during the previous mayor's term triggered a harder look at diversity and inclusion. The newly elected Nashville Mayor Megan Barry tapped Michelle Hernandez-Lane in

April 2016 to lead the city's diversity efforts, which includes serving as liaison to the city's expanded diversity committee. Hernandez-Lane, who was hired initially by the metro government as a budget analyst in 2001, also served as the government's director of the Office of Minority and Women Business Assistance before stepping into the role as Nashville's first chief diversity officer.

Hernandez-Lane has used her analytical skills to create a framework for where the government can have the greatest impact. Although she is currently an office of one, the city has hired consultants to examine and assist with workforce and workplace diversity as well as address disparities in supplier diversity and economic development. The consultant firms' work has helped her create a "strategic agenda" for diversity and inclusion that she planned to deliver in July 2017.

"There's a lot of foundational work," Hernandez-Lane said of her first year on the job. "It's been a lot of heavy lifting."

In Nashville, that means: (1) workforce diversity (hiring procedures and interviewing processes); (2) business diversity (supplier and economic development); (3) civic leadership (representation on boards and commissions); and (4) racial equity in city operations. In city operations, that means employees have a "resident focus," she said. While work on creating a diverse and inclusive metro government was occurring in different areas, Hernandez-Lane said the government lacked the "connective tissues" to bring the work together and to identify best practices. That has been where she has been investing some of her time.

"(To have a roadmap) has empowered me," she said of developing a "living document" to guide diversity and inclusion work.

Additionally, Hernandez-Lane has collaborated with the mayor's Office of Neighborhoods and Community Engagement and the mayor's Office of New Americans to learn from residents. In July 2016, people from about 100 community organizations discussed their life experiences, race relations, and social equity, among other topics. Those conversations helped to inform a larger conversation a few

months later: a call to discuss race and issues such as housing, public safety/policing, jobs, health disparities, youth/education, immigration, and more.

Hernandez-Lane points to several changes occurring within metro government. One is the addition of paid family leave benefits for metro employees, which she believes will help the government compete with other employers. Another is solidifying an access plan that assists people who are deaf or have hearing loss, as well as those who do not have strong English language skills, understand and secure city services. Hernandez-Lane also points to outreach programs such as Nashville Shop Talks, which gathers thoughts from residents in beauty, barber and coffee shops, and a series of Minority Civic Development workshops that develop civic leaders and encourage government participation. Hernandez-Lane also is investigating ways to build stronger and mutually beneficial connections to Nashville's higher education institutions, especially Tennessee State University, Fisk University and Meharry Medical College, three historically black universities.

Equality Index Score for Cedar Rapids Challenges Experience

The Human Rights Campaign, the Washington, D.C.-based civil rights organization that works to achieve equality for LGBTQ Americans, uses its Municipal Equality Index to examine how inclusive municipal laws, policies, and services are of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer residents and workers. When HRC returned an index score in the 60s for Cedar Rapids in 2014, LaSheila Yates didn't think the score reflected what she had learned about the city since moving there in 2007. Her husband had accepted a position as a software engineer in Cedar Rapids. Because she didn't know anyone in town, she decided to respond to a request for people to facilitate diversity dialogues in nearby Iowa City. She was trained and then organized a dialogue group in Cedar Rapids.

"It helped me understand the community," Yates said.

After the dialogue experience, Yates was hired as a civil rights investigator in 2008. By August 2014, Yates had been hired as executive director of the

city's Civil Rights Commission. That initial index score drove Yates to begin working with other city departments to raise it. The next year it rose to 99, a result that caught the eye of the city manager, who appointed Yates as the city's first chief diversity officer in August 2015 through a three-year agreement. In 2016, the Municipal Equality Index score reached 100. Cities are rated on a scale of 0 to 100, using 100 standard points and 20 bonus points, which are awarded for items that occur in some but not all cities. In her dual role of executive director and chief diversity officer, Yates stays busy.

Yates, in collaboration with human resources, has conducted a diversity climate survey that explored employees' thoughts about opportunities and interactions, started a diversity spotlight in the city newsletter to highlight employees and efforts, and organized several events open to the community. Internally, the city also has a 22-member employee committee working on diversity, inclusion, and equity issues related to communication, data and research, internal education, and external outreach and recruitment.

"It has an employee-first focus," Yates said of the committee. "We wanted to make sure we were doing the right thing."

In terms of outreach, Yates described an event at the public library focused on public sector job opportunities that attracted about sixty people who could engage with several employers. Another ongoing event features residents from different backgrounds in TED Talks-like presentations to "create good will and understanding in the community."

"I want folks to have the opportunity to be seen differently," Yates said of the impact of sharing and hearing others' stories.

Cedar Rapids City Manager Jeff Pomeranz, who created the chief diversity officer role, points to the committee's work as an example of how Yates has helped the city focus on diversity and inclusion. He noted that having a chief diversity officer for the size of the city—about 130,000 residents, 88 percent of them white—may seem unusual. However, Yates has brought extra emphasis and invested more time in diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts

within the 1,400-employee government workforce, Pomeranz said. Adding the role hasn't cost the city more because Yates is basically on loan to the city manager's office from the civil rights commission, he said.

"We needed to pay even more attention to this goal," Pomeranz said.

While the city's demographics make recruiting and employing individuals from diverse backgrounds challenging, the city must improve its efforts for multiple reasons, Pomeranz said. First, having all kinds of people "helps you make better decisions," he said. Second, major employers such as Rockwell Collins—one of the city's Fortune 500 companies—bring people from all over the world to work in Cedar Rapids, he said. Once people move to the city, they must find an environment that welcomes everyone.

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Pomeranz, who meets with Yates about twice each month to discuss diversity and inclusion, said the goal is to create a "diverse and welcoming community and city." Judging from his experience as a city manager in Texas, Washington, and Iowa, Pomeranz said an organization is stronger and more effective when it has all kinds of employees and leaders. He challenges employees from diverse backgrounds to "help us learn" and seeks outside opportunities to expand his knowledge. For example, Pomeranz said he attends the annual Iowa Women Lead Change conference, where he can hear about women's experiences—a recent event featured Gretchen Carlson, formerly of Fox News—and learn how to promote and support women in the workforce. That's why the city has accepted the organization's challenge to monitor pay equity, he said. The city has had its share of internal training related to diversity and inclusion matters, but Pomeranz said it's not a matter of holding a diversity workshop.

“It really needs to become a part of the culture,” Pomeranz said.

Diversity Leaders Share Lessons from Their Experiences

The CDOs interviewed for this article agreed unanimously on one point: leadership’s commitment is essential; without it, diversity and inclusion efforts will fail.

Philadelphia’s Atkinson said a mayor or city manager must be committed to diversity every day, and the commitment must go beyond talk; the executive must be willing and able to back up the work. Next, he points to the importance of having a plan that evolves so that the city can address issues.

Columbus’ Francis, who made a similar point about executive commitment, also said cities must be willing to leverage resources to fund diversity efforts. “It’s not free and it’s not cheap,” said Francis, whose office has 12 employees, including himself.

Like Francis, Nashville’s Hernandez-Lane said the CDOs must focus on the strategy of how to create a diverse and inclusive organization. “It can’t be the CDO only. It has to be ingrained in how you do business. It has to be shared throughout the organization.”

Bains said while diversity, inclusion and equity is relatively new field for government, cities can look at how other cities are implementing new policies. Specifically, she pointed to resources available by GARE.

In Buffalo, Rodriguez said the role of the CDO “has to be genuine” and “can’t be just a figurehead.”

Furthermore, the work of a chief diversity officer—someone who is truly passionate—must be tailored to address the city’s problems.

Like others in similar roles, Yates noted the importance of getting leaders on board and having tough discussions. Yates also said using facts and statistics to develop policies or make changes is essential. From there, Yates said she leaves room for the city executives—who are committed to public service or they wouldn’t be in these roles—to use their imagination and share their ideas about what an equitable, diverse and inclusive city would be. She invites them, “What could something great look like? Imagine with me.”

Notes

- 1 University at Buffalo Regional Institute, State University of New York at Buffalo, School of Architecture and Planning, and Make Communities, *The Racial Equity Dividend: Buffalo’s Great Opportunity* (Buffalo: Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo, 2016), <http://makecommunities.com/the-racial-equity-dividend-buffalos-great-opportunity/>.
- 2 Leslie Kwoh, “Firms Hail New Chiefs (of Diversity),” *Wall Street Journal*, January 25, 2012, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052970203899504577129261732884578>.
- 3 Mayor’s Office of Diversity and Inclusion. (2016). *Philadelphia Workforce Profile Report* (Philadelphia: Office of the Mayor, 2016), <https://beta.phila.gov/media/20161230112530/2016WorkforceReport.pdf>.
- 4 Michael D. Kane, “Diversity officer among Worcester city manager’s top recommendations for a diverse city government,” *masslive.com*, April 25, 2015, http://www.masslive.com/news/worcester/index.ssf/2015/04/diversity_officer_among_worces.html

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