

We began the meeting with a quick review of the purpose of the meeting and some of the questions we need to answer going forward. Then we broke into small groups to work on the answers:

Mike is retiring on December 31, 2021, and we need to plan for the future of WDN.

Some questions/topics we need to address over the coming months:

- What is the need for WDN? Now and emerging
- Plusses and minuses of the current operating model
- Future role, restructuring, resources, scope
- How to move ahead

Question 1:

- How did you get involved with WDN?
- What has been your personal experience?
- What has been the biggest benefit of WDN membership for you?

Deanna (YMCA) (involved about 2 years) – said it is the best group she has been a part of; thought provoking and one where people are willing to have difficult conversations.

Mary (Wegmans) – has enjoyed her participation; appreciates the ability to work through difficult conversations; the structure, stability, honesty and commitment.

Other comments:

- Noted that at times put in uncomfortable situations, but it has promoted growth.
- Good to have a place to go to deal with difficult issues, share thoughts, where can be honest and supported and not judged
- Sometimes when in respective workplaces, do not have this opportunity or freedom to do so
- Helpful in our careers as receive information to use in workplaces
- Would like the group to stay together- same goals - don't change
- Appreciate Mike and the way he makes the meetings thought provoking and takes group through a process
- Will need a talented person to replace him

Jasmine (RTS) – With the idea of inclusion there's multiple age groups that are happening. What is important to one might be different from another. What's important for me is diversity networking. Being able to meet people interested in the work and ability to learn from them. I like the way we have difficult conversations here. Hard to say because of COVID what the future will be. Don't care for virtual. Learning to feel through a screen is different. Fearful that small group might not allow for the "uncomfortable" spaces where learning really happens.

How got involved:

- **Rose** (City of Rochester) 2019 when got involved with the city of Rochester as the Affirmative Action Officer, was asked to join group
- **Carol** (FAEF): 2018-2019
- **Adrienne** (ESL) : Working at Brockport in 2003-2004 I joined WDN. It was beneficial in allowing me to meet and network with others doing DEI in the field. When I moved to Geneseo I was involved. ESL in 2017 wasn't members, came back in 2020. Known Mike a long time. Had several conversations in 2017. Depending on where we are in our career and your organization is in their journey the WDN ebbs and flows. Once you have a network you don't need the group as much but the collaboration and open dialog, best practices are most valuable.
- **Terrell** (CCSI): I got involved after getting hired at CCSI. I was in a month there when I came to my first meeting in February/March. Networking and dialog to problem solve and discuss hard things to discuss. Transparency amongst the groups involved is a benefit. Enjoy the conversation.
- **Rhonda** (Paychex): I got involved in 2018. I appreciate the networking and learning time to talk on topics that we wouldn't typically get to discuss. Appreciated the in-person sessions for networking. Also that each organization hosted and planned the agenda. Hope this continues, know it's a lot for one person! Thank you, Mike!

Considerations:

- Group production of a calendar. All orgs have input in putting together a week?
- Central and WNY Industry Liaison Group has a format that works. (Adrienne)
- Focused communities of practice (small interest groups) – racial equity, disability, etc.

Personal experience:

Rose Nichols:

- Very positive – gave access to other D&I practitioners from other industries
- Honest conversation around the state of the work, what the future looks like, what other orgs are doing
- Can share experiences as a staff member trying to lift the goals and objectives during everything going on locally and nationally around a myriad of topics (real talk was super important)
- Opportunity to learn, grow, and share

Carol Roselle:

- Got a feel for what everyone was doing and learning
- Opportunity to get to know other people in the area, which was helpful

Biggest benefit:

Rose Nichols:

- Take tidbits of what I learned and was able to implement (as allowed to) in the city
- Great to meet everyone in the room, and be able to connect at other events, too
- Hope it continues on and evolves because of opportunities it provided
- Small town vibe, very supportive

Carol Roselle:

- Recruiting challenges – something would like to work on, learn more about, how to recruit diverse candidates
- Really looking to connect for ideas and other

Question 2: How is it working for you?

- Examine the current WDN model and processes to evaluate their value and effectiveness.
- Detail the plusses and minuses of the current WDN.
- Look at what the WDN is doing, has accomplished, should or could be doing.

Adrienne:

- The model of the meeting structure works well
- There are so many different objectives that the orgs that join have, that it would help to have them share what their most pressing DEI challenges are as an individual and organization so we can better shape what the group can do to organize that
- Isn't a one-size-fits-all – some topics don't appeal to everyone, and people show up depending on the topic that's being discussed
- Depending on what your role is in the organization, you might be looking for different types of content (are you HR/ERG member/on DEI committee/full-time DEI person)
- How to meet the needs of the WDN constituency is an open question
- Difficult question gave good practice to discuss different topics within DEI, and gave room for folks to hear different perspectives, be challenged in your viewpoint, and be more equipped to talk through in a real situation in your org/with your employees
- How do we shape our DEI efforts in light of different perspectives that people share throughout an org – having conversations in WDN group gives opportunity to flesh that out
- Likes format, transparency, would like that to continue, and also add option to dig into specific topics in a different meeting
- Depending on who is coming to meeting from org, some people don't want to engage in those deeper conversations (especially ones about self) – there's a self-awareness piece that's needed to help understand how you take on this work, versus just a template to implement. Understanding how you relate to/engage with these topics is important to understand. What is your role in upholding or dismantling the status quo is helpful in understanding how to transform systems – might be a good starting point for folks as we engage with deeper conversations/tackling questions

Susanne (Wegmans):

- Enjoy getting together with people from different orgs
- Like discussing the different questions, but don't always get to finish the conversation
- Sometimes will carry over to next meeting if needs to, but feels like never finishes a full conversation

- Used to have a major conference – had speaker come in to speak on a topic, which was enjoyed
- Like the idea of smaller groups coming together and presenting possibly at a larger meeting

We did not have enough time in the meeting to address the third question and the additional questions listed below. We will take them up at a future meeting

Question 3: If you could plan the vision and future of WDN:

- How could it be restructured to add more value?
- What resources would be required?
- Who else should be invited to the table?

Additional Questions (If time permits)

- How do we attract younger people to create a stronger future?
- What are the elements of the strategy we need to put in place to achieve the vision?
- Develop an action plan with near term next steps
- Identify who in the meeting will commit to being part of a working team to implement the action plan over the next several months.
- Ask for a specific commitment from the working team, e.g., one year of support or a set number of meetings. Need to respect busy schedules.

At the end of the meeting, we agreed to form a team to begin the planning of the next chapter of WDN. Pat Willis, Terrell Smith, Sandra Katz, Adrienne Collier, Deanna Rose, Jasmine Barksdale and Kevin Beckford volunteered to participate.

Our next meeting is scheduled for **September 23** and will be presented in partnership with GVCSHRM. Details to follow.