

CHAPTER 2

DIVERSITY OVERVIEW

Why Diversity is important

“The armed forces pride themselves on being leaders in diversity. In addition to providing equality, diversity gives the military more strength by ensuring that it reflects the very same American population it’s called to defend.”

-Dr. David S. C. Chu, former Undersecretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness

The Army is the Strength of the Nation and historically a leader in opportunities for diverse people. The Army is a vast organization with a global presence. Our Army’s status as an employer of choice in a diverse labor market will provide a competitive advantage in recruiting talent across ethnicity, gender, culture, generations, and other attributes, experiences, and backgrounds. While the Army draws its people from the most diverse nation on earth, further progress must be made as predicted demographic shifts and the shrinking pool of available talent can have consequences for sustaining our All-Volunteer Force.

We know that the Army has maintained a long and proud tradition of diversity since the Presidential Executive Order of 1948 on Equality of Treatment and Opportunity in the Armed Services. While we are justifiably proud of the diversity we have achieved through equal opportunity and equal employment opportunity, our focus on the future must go beyond these efforts. Leaders must emphasize that our diversity is a natural element of our culture, and when acknowledged and respected, forms the underpinnings of an inclusive environment unique to the Army. This is an ingredient of developing agile and adaptive leaders who can operate effectively in any environment. It is an essential part of the leadership that sustains high performance through the Army Imperatives: Sustain, Prepare, Reset, and Transform.

We must continue to improve our understanding of America’s diverse population—how to attract our young people to the Army, how to include their knowledge and abilities in mission accomplishment, how to retain them, and how to inspire them to be champions of military service in the Army. Our implementation of a diversity initiative will provide strategic direction and align our efforts with a single strategy supported by the knowledge and resources necessary to be successful. Our intent is reflected in our vision for the Army to be the national leader in enhancing the strengths of diverse people in an inclusive environment...investing in and managing talent, valuing individuals, and developing culturally astute Soldiers and Civilians who enhance our communities and are prepared for the human dimension of leadership and global engagements.

Potential Army Diversity Outcomes

Many of the current practices that drive successful diversity initiatives originate from the need to continuously improve business outcomes and better perform the organizational mission. Diversity initiatives affect the availability of highly capable personnel and the ability of an organization to get the most out of those capabilities. Inclusive environments, where employees feel valued, can lead to reduced personnel costs, higher quality products, increased innovation, and enhanced marketing of products and services. Drivers behind the Army's diversity initiative include mission accomplishment, readiness of the present workforce, future human resource requirements, national imperatives, and the necessity of preparing Soldiers and Civilians for the human dimension of leadership and global engagements. For an expanded case for Army Diversity, see Appendix N. Significant considerations include:

- **Accessions.** Talent is a distinguishing factor in organizational performance. As America becomes more diverse, our talent is increasingly distributed across that same diversity. The Army must understand America's diverse citizenry and be able to recruit across that diversity to bring in the talented people we need. Valued, inspired employees working in an inclusive environment will help deliver a positive message to prospective Soldiers, Civilians, and their influencers.
- **Retention.** From a diversity perspective, recruiting and retention prosper from the same inclusive environment. Valued employees who are inspired, fully engaged, and developing professionally in an environment of opportunity tend to stay and encourage others to stay.
- **Performance.** High performing organizations are made up of high performing people. After we recruit America's talent, we can sustain high performing organizations by understanding the people we are leading and taking advantage of the diverse talents, skills, and attributes that derive from their backgrounds and experiences. Integration of individual talents into mission accomplishment in one area can lead to motivated personnel who perform better in other areas.
- **Personnel Processes.** Attention to organizational diversity principles and practices creates in leaders an appreciation of the power of diverse contributions from inspired employees. This appreciation leads to personnel systems and processes for managing talent that ensure balanced opportunities and contribute to a high performance climate by enhancing individual capabilities.
- **National Implications.** The Army draws its people from a diverse America – a nation that continues to evolve demographically. The Army defends and serves that same diverse population. Our understanding of America's diversity will create new opportunities to influence diverse communities, support challenges related to youth preparation, and establish a brand that positively impacts the Army's human capital strategy. As our Nation evolves demographically, the Army must be able to attract and retain highly capable people from diverse backgrounds.
- **Education and Training.** The Army has a strong incentive for rank and file diversity education and training—most of our employees are likely to face cultural challenges through conflict or a multitude of other missions abroad. However, cultural understanding begins at home. The Army's future demographics will bring new language and cultural challenges within our own ranks. Understanding of our own cultural, personal, and other differences through training, education, and similar development opportunities will create in us a proclivity for understanding others, whether it be for a deployment mission or for recruiting a future generation.
- **Global Engagement.** The anticipated nature of future global engagements calls for a diverse Army prepared for the human dimension of conflict. Due to current and future security environments, there

is a need for a culturally astute and adaptive Army, capable of responding to American interests within any environment. A highly successful, long-term organizational diversity effort will give the Army an opportunity to become a national leader in diversity. Accomplishing this task will make a powerful statement to our workforce and the Nation. Success in understanding our internal cultural and other differences will create a predisposition for respecting differences that extends to preparation for global operations. Developing an appreciation for foreign cultures before appreciating our own cultures is inherently difficult. However, our internal success will enhance our ability to go beyond our own differences, and become more receptive to cultures of others with whom we may interact.

Diversity Best Practices

Many of the current practices that drive successful organizational diversity initiatives originated in the late 1980s when businesses began to focus on changing workforce demographics.¹ The link between successful human resource practices and desired business outcomes led to changes in workforce management practices that continue to evolve today. Diversity best practices represent the key actions taken by corporations, government, military, higher education, and other organizations to create and maintain an environment for recruiting and retaining the best available talent, while optimizing performance to best accomplish the organizational mission. These outcomes apply to organizations that provide a service as well as those that deliver a product. Best practices are the subject of many books, reports, and pamphlets, including some published by government organizations such as the Government Accountability Office.² Diversity and inclusion practices exist in different forms; however, the following practices are relevant to the Army.

- **Commitment of Organizational Leader and Top Executives.**³ Diversity initiatives are about organizational transformation and frequently require a cultural change. Normally, such change cannot occur without visible leadership support.
- **Diversity Efforts Linked to Mission.**⁴ Employees, especially leaders, are focused on mission accomplishment. Alignment of diversity objectives with organizational goals integrates diversity into leader priorities.
- **Diversity Framework.**⁵ Success in diversity and inclusion derives from deliberate planning and execution of a strategy supported by a strategic plan⁶ and appropriate assessment tools designed to achieve a stated vision.
- **Diversity Communications.**⁷ Planned internal and external communications are critical to success since diversity applies to every employee and affects the external recruiting pool and customer base.
- **Directing Reporting.**⁸ For the most successful diversity and inclusion initiatives, the senior diversity professional reports to or has direct access to the organizational leader. This aligns diversity with mission accomplishment and signals that importance to all employees.
- **Talent Management⁹ and Succession Planning.**¹⁰ Talent management processes include attracting, developing, and retaining the individuals who have potential for success in organizations. It includes actions taken to manage the development of those individuals to ensure their competitiveness for future opportunities. An organization's ability to attract, develop, promote, and retain diverse talent happens through proactive measures. Succession planning includes managing the development of employees to enhance skill levels and support continued preparation for advancement to key positions.¹¹

- **Diversity Training and Education.**¹² Training and education provide an understanding of diversity principles and individual differences, which are important in creating an inclusive environment. Competency requirements and training packages are aligned with the different levels of responsibility. In many organizations, training and education consist of mandatory and voluntary components that are delivered by a combination of internal and external practitioners.
- **Employee Involvement.**¹³ Employee involvement promotes the concept of employee ownership. Employees may provide advice, assist with recruiting and retention, and contribute to professional development and organization success.
- **Advisory Groups.**¹⁴ Success in diversity is enhanced by a variety of internal and external advisory committees that contribute to awareness of trends and issues.
- **Accountability, Measurement, and Reporting.**¹⁵ Leaders at all levels are frequently held accountable for diversity initiative outcomes. Results are often tied to leader or manager performance reviews, bonuses, or future opportunities within the organization. Diversity outcomes are tied to other mission-related measures of success.

End Notes (Chapter 2)

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- ¹ Judy, Richard W. and D'Amico, Carol D. *Workforce 2020*, Hudson Institute, 1999.
- ² Government Accountability Office, *Diversity Management: Expert-Identified Leading Practices and Agency Examples*, GAO-05-90, January 2005.
- ³ Leadership commitment is considered by many experts to be crucial to a successful diversity initiative. For example, see: Buttner, E. Holly, Lowe, Kevin B., and Billings-Harris, Lenora. "The Influence of Organizational Diversity Orientation and Leader Attitude on Diversity Activities," *Journal of Managerial Issues*, September 22, 2006.
- ⁴ Government Accountability Office. p.4 & p.9.
- ⁵ For example, see: Office of the Secretary of Defense. *DoD Diversity Strategic Planning Framework (Draft)*, October 2008.
- ⁶ Lim, Nelson, Cho, Michelle, and Curry, Kimberly. *Planning for Diversity*, National Defense Research Institute, 2008, p. xiv.
- ⁷ Kotter, John P. and Cohn, Dan S. *The Heart of Change*, Boston, Massachusetts. Harvard Business School Press, 2002.
- ⁸ Based on a DiversityInc presentation on June 24, 2008, the head of diversity reporting directly to the CEO is a trend in best practices among the top 50 companies. Overall, the chief diversity officer in 30% of companies report to the CEO. This is up from 5% approximately five years earlier.
- ⁹ Institute for Corporate Productivity. *2007 Talent Management Survey Findings*, St. Petersburg, FL, September 2007, p.4.
- The Institute for Corporate Productivity nine key components to talent management:
1. Leadership development
 2. Career planning
 3. High-potential employee development
 4. Performance management
 5. Succession planning
 6. Learning and training
 7. Competency management
 8. Retention
 9. Professional development
- ¹⁰ Government Accountability Office. *Succession Planning and Management Is Critical Driver of Organizational Change*, Washington, DC, 1 October 2003.
- The GAO reported on succession planning practices in other countries:
1. Receive active support of top leadership
 2. Link to strategic planning
 3. Identify talent from multiple organizational levels, early in careers, or with critical skills
 4. Emphasize developmental assignments in addition to formal training
 5. Address specific human capital challenges, such as diversity, leadership capacity, and retention
 6. Facilitate broader transformation efforts
- ¹¹ Gentile, Mary C. Editor. *Differences That Work: Organizational Excellence Through Diversity*, Waveland Press, Inc., Prospect Heights, Illinois, 2000.
- ¹² Ban, Carol and Riccucci, Norma M. *Public Personnel Management: Current Concerns, Future Challenges*, Longman Publishers, White Plains, New York, 1997, pp. 73-90.
- ¹³ Kotter, John P. *Leading Change*, Boston, Massachusetts, Harvard Business School Press, 1996.
- ¹⁴ Ibid. pp. 33-145.
- ¹⁵ Jayne, Michele E.A. and Dipboye, Robert L. "Leveraging Diversity to Improve Business Performance: Research Findings and Recommendations for Organizations," *Human Resource Management*, Vol. 43, No. 4., Winter 2004.