ENHANCING DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION IN MEMBERSHIP ASSOCIATIONS
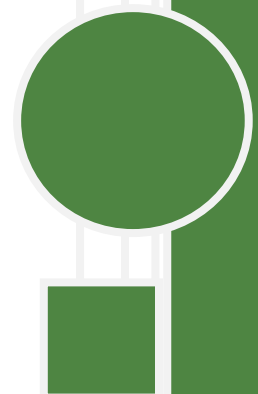
A WHITE PAPER BASED ON AN INTERVIEW STUDY
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Research funded by a generous grant from the Hyatt Corporation

Full research report available at www.asaecenter.org/foundation

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SECTION 1: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the findings from the third phase of a research project looking at diversity and inclusion in trade and professional associations. The qualitative study reported here offers insights from the field on practices and perspectives. Earlier phases provided a comprehensive literature review on the business case for diversity and an empirical examination of existing data related to diversity and inclusion.

This research project was made possible through financial support and other assistance from the ASAE Foundation through a generous grant from the Hyatt Corporation. The goal of this research project is to suggest reasons why diversity and inclusion efforts in membership associations sometimes work and sometimes do not. Enhancing diversity and inclusion in membership associations is a central part of ASAE's work, but interest and outcomes within the association world have been uneven. This research uses interviews and a focus group with staff leaders in twenty-nine associations to learn about efforts in their organizations to increase diversity and enhance inclusion.

ASAE's commitment to diversity and inclusion is reflected in part by its ongoing research program, of which this study is the most recent component. With the generous support of Hyatt Corporation, ASAE has commissioned a review of research on diversity and inclusion in associations and a compilation of findings available from its own surveys. In addition, last spring, ASAE mounted a survey devoted primarily to diversity and inclusion in its member associations. The study reported here adds a qualitative component to this ongoing research program in the diversity and inclusion area. It complements the statistical findings of earlier studies with insights and ideas learned from interviews and a focus group with staff leaders about their experiences, intentions, and reflections.

Respondents to the web-based survey on diversity and inclusion who agreed to be interviewed formed the pool from which we selected staff leaders to interview for this study. Interviews of about an hour in length were conducted in person and by phone with association leaders from twenty-three associations in six geographic areas. A six-person focus group at the 2010 ASAE Annual Meeting followed the interviews. Some staff leaders provided documents about their associations. Transcripts of the interviews and focus group were analyzed as the basis for this report. More details on the methods can be found in the Appendix. A copy of the full report upon which this white paper is based is available on the ASAE Foundation web page at www.asaecenter.org/foundation.

This white paper begins with the research literature that helped orient our study and the methods we used in selecting respondents, conducting the interviews, and analyzing the data. The results of our analysis form the center of the report. In turn, we describe how the associations in which we interviewed differ, examine staff leaders' explanations for the degree of emphasis on diversity and inclusion in their organizations, discuss programs that succeed and do not succeed in enhancing diversity and inclusion, and, finally, provide brief case studies of four associations that strongly emphasize diversity and inclusion. Results are followed by suggestions for next steps in supporting membership associations' needs for information on diversity and inclusion practices and outcomes.

The study revealed a wealth of ideas from association leaders on what can be done to support diversity and inclusion initiatives. Key ideas are emphasized using text boxes and lists. While each association operates in a unique context, there are some common themes and lessons from association leaders' perceptions of their experiences that can inform general practice. Highlights of key findings include:

- Associations in our study with a significant emphasis on diversity and inclusion share a high level of comfort with change, conflict, and empowerment of others.

- Some association leaders use "diversity" and "inclusion" interchangeably.

- There is no one right way or one-size-fits-all method for diversity and inclusion. Formalization of diversity and inclusion policies and practices varies across associations.

- Real inclusion requires more than extending an invitation.

- There is a difference between monitoring, measuring, and meeting diversity goals.

- Without a long-term view, scarce organizational resources can exacerbate the ends-means rationality and commitment to diversity and inclusion.

- Increasing diversity may be as simple as reducing resistance to change.

- Attracting diverse constituencies requires catering to a diverse set of needs.

- Even with a champion, powerful individuals and groups can make or break a diversity and inclusion initiative through their control over decisions about resources and association direction.

- Focusing on one particular group can be seen as favoritism. Alleviate tensions by communicating to members why a program is focused in a certain way.

Overall, we find that associations that are explicit in their reasons for pursuing diversity and inclusion are also more likely to be proactive in their efforts to identify and address challenges to diversity and inclusion. Our respondents' discussions of these reasons, and the outcomes of their associations' efforts, may not reveal all that

is under the surface. In addition, it is important to note that all our respondents were concerned about creating positive experiences for their members, board, and staff, though not all framed these experiences as affected by diversity and inclusion.

In this report, the researchers present the ideas, opinions, and explanations of the association leaders they interviewed, understanding that they are shaped by the interviewees' personal values, biases, and experiences. To emphasize this, when the respondents' own words are used, we italicize quotes. Interpretation of what they heard is the researcher's. The views expressed by the researchers and may differ from those of ASAE, the ASAE Foundation or the Hyatt Corporation.

SECTION 2: ACADEMIC BACKGROUND FOR THE STUDY

Diversity and inclusion continue to be important topics in the ever-shifting social and cultural landscapes produced by globalization, new legislation, and demographic changes (Tschirhart 2008). Throughout the last forty years, the challenges of catering to and utilizing a diverse workforce have remained salient topics both in academia and in practice (Williams and O'Reilly 1998). Recently, research on diversity in associations has focused on defining diversity and inclusion, the initiatives organizations implement to increase diversity and inclusion, and the differences between the business case and social justice case for diversity and inclusion (Kalev, Dobbin, and Kelly 2006; Pitts and Wise 2010).

The study reported here is informed by past research, both from academic scholars and from previous studies conducted by ASAE. We focus on nonprofit membership associations and draw heavily from research that uses the organization as the unit of analysis. Specifically, we draw from research on organizational attempts to, and reasons for, implementing diversity and inclusion initiatives. We seek to understand why associations choose to invest in diversity and inclusion and why they do not, and if they do invest, how they do so, and with what results.

As sociologists point out (for example, Bielby 2008), biases in hiring, compensation, job assignment, and assessment still represent widespread problems in everyday organizational life. Many of these problems carry over into the membership association world. We cannot overstate the value of research on diversity and inclusion, especially to help association leaders address these problems. Factors like organization size, lack of incentives, geographic location, available prospect pools, economic climate and the history of the association may seriously affect an association's capacity to enhance diversity (Bond 2007; Marquis et al. 2008). Individual-level factors, such as members' beliefs in fairness and equality and management support for various diversity initiatives, may also affect organizational attempts (Bond 2007). All of these factors and more represent possible catalysts and challenges to diversity and inclusion efforts.

In spite of serious barriers, many organizations do attempt to foster a diverse and inclusive workplace. Past research suggests that organizations may have one of four orientations towards diversity (Ely and Thomas 2001):

- Discrimination and fairness
- Access and legitimacy
- Learning and effectiveness
- Valuing and integrating

Each orientation has its own set of consequences, at both the organizational and individual levels. For instance, the *access and legitimacy* orientation characterizes an organization that seeks to match its customer base with a diverse staff and membership base so that the organization can optimally respond to each individual customer's varying needs. However, an organization with this orientation may emphasize certain types of diversity to the exclusion of others. In contrast, organizations with a *valuing and integrating* orientation seek to establish a well-connected and inclusive workforce where individual differences are valued and conflict is minimized through open communication and support networks. Yet, these organizations may have difficulty initially creating such an inclusive environment without establishing a connection between diversity and inclusion achievements and the financial or economic goals of the association.

As many studies show, diversity often represents something that needs to be rationally justified and pushed past resistance and, thus, associations may have more success implementing diversity initiatives with the business case for diversity than with social justice arguments. These two approaches to diversity, however, need not be mutually exclusive (Tomlinson and Schwabenland 2010). Indeed, increasing diversity and inclusion can enhance the organization outright, even without immediate financial benefit, through new ideas, legitimacy, and ultimately competitive advantage.

While individual studies show that diversity in work group composition may have both short-term and long-term positive effects for group functioning and productivity (Williams and O'Reilly 1998), past research, as a whole, provides inconclusive evidence as to whether diversity alone leads to positive strategic business outcomes (Ely and Thomas 2001). However, researchers are fairly adamant that "Diversity *can* lead to better organizational performance…but only if it is effectively managed" (Kulik and Roberson 2008:266). For example, increasing diversity may cause conflict, but organizations that address this conflict may reap positive results (Bond 2007; Kalev et al. 2006; Tschirhart 2008).

Past research on diversity and inclusion in associations shows substantial variation in the efficacy of various diversity initiatives. As Kulik and Roberson (2008: 266) point out, sound advice and best practices do not necessarily tell us "*which* diversity interventions will lead to *which* desired diversity outcomes." There is no one best approach to diversity enhancement (Roberson, Kulik, and Pepper 2003; Wise and Tschirhart, 2000). Furthermore, diversity programs may have different effects across various underrepresented groups (Kalev et al. 2006; Tschirhart 2008; Wise

> Diversity can lead to better organizational performance but only if it is effectively managed.

and Tschirhart, 2000), suggesting that broad programs and/or a large number of programs designed to target every minority group may be ineffective. Some consensus does exist, however. For instance, Kalev et al. (2006: 602) show that "The most effective practices are those that establish organizational responsibility:

affirmative action plans, diversity staff, and diversity task forces." Organizations with responsibility structures also see more positive results from programs that include diversity training and mentoring (Bielby 2008; Kalev et al. 2006).

> The most effective programs establish responsibility through plans, staff assignments, and diversity task forces.

Most recent reviews of the literature find little research that should be used with complete confidence to design useful diversity management strategies (Pitts and Wise 2010). While diversity issues remain compelling for academics and organization leaders, research has not adequately advanced our understanding of the complex relationships between diversity, diversity management, and organizational outcomes. Thus, the field needs more research on diversity and inclusion in organizations, especially research that may contribute to understanding diversity efforts in voluntary associations (Knoke 1986; Tschirhart 2006).

One promising way to add to the current literature on diversity and inclusion in organizations is to focus more on qualitative research. As Pitts and Wise (2010: 62) argue in their review of the literature, "All of the articles included in this analysis used quantitative methods, which limits our ability to understand…the] nuanced relationships at work." Similarly, Tschirhart (2008: 28) argues that qualitative research, like interviews in a small set of organizations, "can be helpful in providing more in-depth exploration of common issues, approaches, and challenges as well as surfacing innovative ideas to guide association leaders." While we underscore the importance of quantitative data on diversity initiatives and management for creating results that can be generalized, qualitative research can provide a much needed view of the struggles, successes, and complexities of implementing diversity and inclusion programs. The qualitative research reported here extends the existing literature, providing detailed examples of what works, what does not, and why.

SECTION 3: RESULTS

This section presents the findings of our research. The section has five subsections.

A. The first describes variation across the interviews with regard to diversity and inclusion.
B. The second subsection discusses why diversity and inclusion are not generally emphasized in the thinking and programs of the associations whose staff leaders we interviewed and lays out the main reasons for this lack of emphasis.
C. The third subsection draws out lessons and is organized around diversity and inclusion activities, some of which have worked well and others that have not succeeded.
D. The fourth results subsection focuses on reasons for pursuing diversity and inclusion initiatives.
E. The fifth subsection offers brief case studies of four associations that, in contrast to most we studied, have strongly emphasized diversity.

Throughout the results section, we use quotations and paraphrases to allow the staff leaders we interviewed to explain how they look at diversity and inclusion enhancement efforts. It is their perceptions and expressions that we report here. We did not impose definitions of diversity and inclusion. Some respondents used the terms interchangeably. Others distinguished between diversity as capturing the numbers of different types of individuals while inclusion was how different types of individuals were involved in the organization. In other words, they looked at the composition of their membership, board, committee leadership, or staff to judge its diversity, and looked at the culture, processes, and practices to judge inclusion.

> Some association leaders use "diversity" and "inclusion" interchangeably.

Our interviewees did respond to our questions about diversity **and** inclusion, but their answers were mostly about diversity, that is about the composition of their memberships, leadership, and staff. We heard much less about inclusion in its cultural, structural, and interpersonal aspects. Some comments showed the value placed on inclusion, but danced up to and around it, rather than explaining how they were pursuing it or why they weren't: *"Well, the million dollar question is how do you break down those walls." "It's …real engagement not representation." "It isn't always just about getting numbers in the door; it's about creating that inclusive environment." "An environment that…thrives on difference and welcomes difference,*

builds on difference -- that's the ideal." *"We do want inclusion."* We heard only a little about the why or purpose for a focus on diversity and inclusion. Asked for their association's philosophy or orientation to diversity and inclusion, we tended to hear simply increasing representation of underrepresented groups, but little about reasons for doing so. Only a few respondents mentioned that it's the right thing to do, or noted legal compliance, improved access in minority communities, or the chance to gain more diverse ideas.

3A: The Diversity and Inclusion Landscape

We begin by describing the variety of diversity and inclusion approaches we found in our interviews. We comment on how association leaders describe their efforts and results; their diversity and inclusion focus; who or what takes responsibility for diversity and inclusion; and, finally, the level of formalization they have reached with regard to diversity and inclusion.

Efforts and Results

Responses varied to our questions about diversity and inclusion efforts and the results. Some interviewees are not concerned with diversity and inclusion; one stated: *"this is not a specific goal."* From some respondents we heard that they are thinking about diversity, but haven't done much about it. For example, one respondent explained: *"We are interested in diversity, but…we don't want to artificially increase a certain population just for the sake of increasing it because society says that's what we're supposed to do. We kind of let it happen naturally that people come in."* From some respondents we heard that they have tried, but largely failed: *"We have tried but haven't put many resources behind it."* Some have put substantial effort into diversity and inclusion with the desired results: *"I think a lot of organizations might have a program…and maybe it doesn't last that long or maybe it changes into something else, [but]…ours is still focused on serving…persons of color. And so that is a very distinct and intentional success of this organization."* Finally, some have enhanced diversity without much effort: *"…not much effort; we've worked on it on a board level but…they've been there. It isn't like we've had to worry about not getting the pool to choose from."*

Associations differ on where they focus their diversity and inclusion efforts. Some focus on their staffs: *"We have a number of staff who are from Hispanic or Asian communities and [people who] were born in their [other] countries…from Vietnamese to Chinese to…Pacific Islander, Latin Americans or Central Americans and also from Russia. So, we've got a number of people who have accents when they're speaking [in English]…I would say seven or eight people out of seventeen. But I am the only person of color in a leadership position and then there's my colleague in the LGBT*

community. From our executive staff, they'd like to see that we promote the right people to those positions, looking at a person from an ethnic background would be preferable but not always achievable."

Other associations focus their diversity and inclusion efforts more on their memberships: "*…the first thing that comes to mind is diversity within the membership vis-à-vis the fact that we're a membership association and I think that assuring that there is diversity broadly defined within the membership…It's absolutely important."*

Still others focus on their volunteer and elected leaderships: "*…We haven't done a great job with participation among Latinos and Asians in leadership positions on the board. On staff we're fine, but on the board and committees we haven't done a great job so we need help there. So that's something that we're focusing on now."* The pattern revealed by our interviews is that there is a tendency to focus effort on one target—the board, staff or membership—rather than take a holistic approach. No respondent discussed a planned strategy to start with one target and expand the targets sequentially and systematically over time.

> There is a tendency to focus more on diversity than inclusion and to use a more targeted approach than a holistic strategy.

Assignment of Responsibility for Diversity and Inclusion

The leadership or responsibility for enhancing diversity and inclusion is taken up or assigned to different types of people or groups. In some associations, the CEO or executive director takes the lead: "*…this is one of our values…so if there were a growing area of violation or if I observed something that contradicted those values…, yes I would definitely speak up…"* Others have another staff person with this responsibility: "*We promoted a director of diversity about two years ago…What she's really brought to the table is opening the eyes of our organization as well as how we message things to our members and how to have that inclusion across all the materials we're producing."* Still other associations focus their diversity and inclusion efforts in one or more committees: "*I am liaison to something called the Status Committee for Racial and Ethnic Minorities in the Discipline…We actually have four status committees all of which deal with…how are people of this category doing in the profession and each of those committees takes on a little different project every five years or so."* And some associations are less focused, either defusing the responsibility to everyone: "*It is a primary issue at every level for every person;"* or not succeeding in assigning it to anyone: "*…not anyone in specific. I would say our board of directors as a whole would have that responsibility, but I'm not sure they*

would necessarily say they play a big part in that… Sometimes I'm not real sure if they completely get it."

Formalization of Policies and Procedures

There is also variation in the extent to which associations have formalized their policies and procedures related to diversity and inclusion. Some respondents are clear about their emphasis on formalization: "*I would say we're more formalized than less…We've got employee policy manuals; we've got a lot of definition around what we do. There are areas that are part of the compliance committee as well and areas on the business side where we could do better in terms of documenting our policies and procedures. But I would say from an HR standpoint, we're very well documented and from an organization standpoint I think where we really need to have the I's dotted and the T's crossed are documented.*"

Some respondents suggested that formalization was a defensive strategy: "*…they're written, 'cause that's the first thing somebody says if they contest something, it's, 'well, where is it in writing?' We have our by-laws, and we have our standard operating procedures, SOPs, and we add to the SOPs and we update and modify [them] continually.*" Other associations are not at all formalized: "*I would not characterize [our] efforts as formal in terms of [our] principles…We always try to have an eye out for that, that balance. But no, nothing formal.*"

We encountered several associations that do not have written diversity policies, though they usually endorse diversity principles: "*I don't know that we have it in writing for hiring…it's the overarching lens that we view everything that we do;*" "*…nothing formal, we haven't talked about…strategies to formalize anything at this point. And…maybe it is just by nature of what our industry is, I'm not sure when or if that would come about.*" In contrast, other associations put great stock in their written diversity policies: "*Yes,…this was hammered out with…lot of work by our board and staff…It's in our personnel policies, it's in our practices in terms of selection of board members.*"

> Formalization of diversity and inclusion policies and practices varies across associations. Some associations put no explicit attention on diversity but leaders may endorse diversity principles.

3B: Explanations for Degree and Nature of Emphasis on Diversity and Inclusion

A main conclusion from our study is that only a few of the associations we studied emphasize diversity and inclusion, and when they do diversity is the focus, rather than inclusion. The rest of this subsection shares respondents' comments showing how they understand the lack of centrality given to diversity and inclusion in their association. First, we look at what respondents told us about different groups in and out of their association and how that explains their association's level of emphasis on diversity and inclusion. We then turn to other explanations for lack of emphasis. We then present a discussion of respondents' thoughts concerning types of diversity to emphasize and inclusion as separate from diversity considerations.

Constituencies Affecting Degree of Emphasis on Diversity and Inclusion

The Population. The population from which the membership is drawn is understood by some association leaders to account for the presence or absence of diversity or programs to enhance it. Some respondents told us that their association's field is easy to get into, rather than being exclusive, or that it attracts a diverse set of people. Others pointed to their geographic location as the reason for their diversity: "*...we don't have a diversity program, but, because of where we are, our demographic is naturally diverse.*" The field may also be an obstacle to diversity in the membership: "*...it's really that we represent 80% of what's out there...The industry itself is not very diverse.*" In fact, some industries are dominated by family firms and most families are in one ethnic group. The trade association ends up largely as a closed circle: "*If you had 200 of our members in a room, I'd be willing to bet that easily over 100 have family connections in the business.*" Note that the association is passive in these accounts about the populations from which the membership is drawn. In a few interviews, however, we did hear about association efforts to shape the population from which the members are drawn, often through schools that train people for the field or profession.

Members. Respondents also told us that association members, themselves, can be responsible for the lack of emphasis on diversity and inclusion. One respondent stated "*...why do they [the members] want to go listen to the sales pitch about joining the diversity committee...many people in organizations often assume that their diversity efforts are just fine...sometimes they think...attending the session you're sort of admitting you've got challenges or issues.*" Also, newer members may learn the preferences of the older members, which may not be for diversity. Inertia sets in. In some cases, older

> Members themselves may close doors to diverse others.

members may resist suggestions from new recruits because of a "*this is the way it has always been*" mindset. Finally, long time members may value the association for a resource the association controls that gives them a competitive edge in their business. This can lead them to try to keep the association's doors largely closed to "*outsiders*" whom they see as potential competitors.

Leadership. As one might expect, the association's elected and volunteer leaders influence the effort put into diversity and inclusion. We heard of leadership that had become satisfied with the level of diversity and inclusion in the association or seemed to think that diversity and inclusion are not that important. Several of our interviews emphasized the key leadership role played by diversity champions: "*I do find committees, boards, and other volunteer leaders much more effective when there is a very strong champion.*" Board-level champions for diversity and inclusion can face severe obstacles, including isolation and arguments that resources are scarce and should be expended on programs of value to everyone in the association, not just for an underrepresented group. We heard the argument that diversity and inclusion efforts are not valuable for the entire

> Committees, boards and other volunteer leaders can be more effective when there is a very strong diversity champion.

membership and the association. Also, we heard that champions of diversity and inclusion may get burned out in their efforts and/or be diverted into other causes and programs.

Staff. Our interviews also identified and demonstrated ways in which the staff, including the CEO or Executive Director can influence the level of diversity and inclusion enhancement effort. A CEO can have a strong agenda-promoting role, either retarding or developing diversity and inclusion programs: "*He was very old school…. When he was executive director everything happened in a particular way. …the person who came in to replace him had actually started a lot of minority programs and was very receptive to those kinds of things. That's why a lot of these programs (in our association) started off the ground in 1990, '91, '92.*"

Underrepresented Demographic Constituents. According to our respondents, underrepresented groups may play a part in de-emphasizing diversity and inclusion. We heard about the problem of association members from underrepresented groups being pulled in many directions, becoming over-extended and burnt out. Special affinity or interest groups, established especially for these members, were pointed to as one of the tugs on these members. We also heard beliefs about various groups' tendencies and preferences, for example, the familiar account that this or that group

prefers to associate with people of their own kind: "*at a lot of our events, the minority members, they just stick together*" and form organizations of their own "*they believe in building up their capacity within their communities.*" The twist here is that some staff leaders told us about their own efforts to help individuals and groups that were underrepresented in the association—but not too much for fear of seeming to intrude. Here we see hints of worries that inclusion efforts will be taken as domination, leading our respondents to rein in their offers of assistance.

Affinity Groups. Some respondents reported establishing or working with affinity groups inside and outside their own association, with varying levels of success. By affinity groups, we mean groups established for

> Associations may miss opportunities to create lasting and beneficial connections with formal and informal groups of individuals that are underrepresented in the association.

individuals sharing a particular characteristic such as race or gender. In one particularly successful case, an association provided the financial backing for an affinity group until it was able to get itself off the ground. More often, respondents reported not doing as much as they would like with affinity groups and emphasized future plans or intentions to start making connections. *"We would probably do more joint events with sister associations in the area that support different demographic groups"; "we've done some partnerships with them but not as much as we possibly could"; "they are a much smaller association, but we would like to do more work with them."* When asked why partnerships with affinity groups stagnate, this response was typical in not giving a clear explanation: *"we've done some happy hours with that association [affinity group]…but we haven't really put a focus on it."* Similar to other barriers to diversity and inclusion practices, organizations may lack clear goals for their interactions with affinity groups. One respondent emphasized that the lack of interest of members discouraged the creation of affinity groups: *"some organizations will have an African American section or a Hispanic section. We just don't do that…because there hasn't really been a call for it."* While this respondent reported a lack of membership interest, he also made no mention of an actual organizational attempt to elicit interest or find out if an affinity group might be welcomed or helpful. Thus, overall we see that through a lack of focus or a lack of perceived need, associations may miss opportunities to create lasting and beneficial connections with affinity groups.

Diversity Committees. Standing committees and ad hoc task forces on diversity can show an association's intention to address diversity and inclusion issues. They

may make far-reaching decisions and have the authority to implement these decisions. Effective diversity and inclusion programming may be, but is not always, the result of the efforts of diversity committees. These groups may become forums for *"whining and complaining"* or *"to challenge the organization, but not in a positive way."* Their memberships may stagnate with the association failing to apply its own term limits; without new members, the committee can fail to generate new ideas. A diversity committee's charge may be so general that it never pursues more focused or attainable goals. Conversely, a diversity committee may work only on one under-represented group and never attend to others.

Other Perceived Barriers to Actively Pursuing Diversity and Inclusion

Merit. Our respondents offered a range of explanations for the state of diversity or diversity management in their association. First, we heard a reliance on standard commitments to merit influencing how much diversity could be achieved *"…our staff is all women. I was looking to hire an education manager and I was told that this was going to be a man … It didn't happen…I needed to pick the best fit."*

Competing Goals/Mission: More common were statements about the association's goal or mission. Some of our respondents presented diversity and inclusion as worthy but losing out in a conflict of multiple association goals: *"we have more pressing challenges," "we have to weigh the costs of various programs"; "the tough economy has made us focus elsewhere"; "we put a lot of effort into diversity in the past, but this has tailed off."*

Disagreements. Some respondents had serious worries about diversity and inclusion. One worry was about disagreements: *"When you get a group of people together talking about it [diversity],… it really is an intense conversation because we all have different interpretations of what diversity and inclusion is all about or should be about… People have really strong feelings about it."*

Cliques. Another worry was about competition among different diversity claims: *"I think for us to do a lot of special things for these specific groups would be a disservice to the other groups."* And, the more diverse we become, the more we have cliques and conflict among groups.

A final kind of explanation pictures other organizations as the problem or the solution with regard to diversity and inclusion. Staff at an association that is downstream of another, membership-wise, may picture their association as having to take whomever they are sent. Professional associations may look to schools that train professionals to diversify the pool from which the association draws its members. In other words, some of our respondents diffused responsibility for diversity to other organizations.

Diversity Dimensions

Our respondents talked less about race, ethnicity, and gender than about age, both at the membership and the leadership levels. However, their stories and comments demonstrated that there are numerous diversity dimensions that are relevant to associations. Race and gender, in particular, were the focus of a variety of initiatives and respondents expressed tensions and successes in attempting to address challenges related to them. As appropriate in this form of qualitative research, we let the interviewees emphasize what they wished, and the lack of age diversity was what most wanted to talk about in depth.

The reasons for our respondents' emphasis on the lack of age diversity are many. For example, they noted that patriarchs or matriarchs of family businesses may not encourage or even allow the younger generations to represent the business in its trade association. They explained that younger professionals don't join the professional association in part because they don't yet see the point and in part because the leadership of the association holds on to power. The association also may not reach out to younger professionals with programs tailored to them or facilitate their entry into leadership positions.

> Some associations do not seek information on the diversity of their membership.

Staff leaders also told us repeatedly that they don't have good information about the diversity of their membership. Some worried that it's hard to get members to report their demographics, and that there is reluctance to ask.

3C: What Works and What Doesn't

In this section, we describe what our respondents told us about their associations' diversity and inclusion initiatives. While most reported only modest effort in this regard, the examples and anecdotes they provide are informative. Examples from associations rich in diversity and those without shed light on what has and what has not worked, and why. From registration and conference waivers to scholarships, setting up affinity groups, or awards, our respondents provided us with a broad landscape of potential ideas and programs—each with its own set of unique problems and a core set of similarities that most associations include within the scope of work of their diversity and inclusion activities. The lessons learned from these successes and failures should be worth considering by any association attempting to focus on diversity and inclusion.

Balancing Participant Benefit with Level of Effort

Associations need to ask whether the time, effort, and financial requirements match the expected rewards. The following description of one D&I program offered by an association illustrates a mismatch between participants' expected reward and required effort: "*So we have a program…where we…basically invite students of color and students who wish to work cross-culturally to come to the conference for free. They have free registration, free workshop, specialized luncheon, and then…they're paired up with somebody in the association who…meets with them [at] intervals throughout the conference…[This approach] has not worked…The planners [think] that this is a great value, which it is, but…[participants]had to agree to attend so many hours of the event. [They] had to go to this luncheon, …to an afternoon orientation session, which all of these were great things in and of themselves, but these students were not fond of that level of … required structure. Like the payoff for that was not what they were seeking.*"

> Programs need to be perceived to be worthwhile to those they are intended to serve.

To this association and others, overcoming this initial hurdle was very difficult. In this particular case, the organization provided valuable mentoring opportunities, free food, and free conference entry, but the time and effort requirements outweighed benefits. Ultimately, this program was too time intensive.

Fixing a program like this can prove difficult. This respondent reported having tweaked this initiative over and over again at each new conference with little success. They have yet to find the balance between payoff and time needed.

Another respondent told us of their leadership program in which the association provides training and development for people of color. Each year a new group was assembled. The respondent described struggling through the years to provide content that would make the participants feel like their time was well spent. After a series of bad reviews and feedback, they finally figured out what members were looking for. *"The program … didn't give this particular class…what they needed…and that was specific training. The program that we put on [the following year got] a lot more positive…feedback. [The training] was … one of the best things that we could have ever done. It was behavioral style training; it was…similar to a Myers-Briggs-type questionnaire that provided insight for each person on what their particular style is and how they…interact with people…treat people the way they want to be treated…lead people the way they need to be led, manage people the way they need to be managed…So things like that where…they learn how to navigate their own organization and also to apply that to their constituents…Also cultural competency, because you discover how a particular community might want to receive information …"*

In some cases, associations create effective diversity and inclusion initiatives (both in time required and reward received) and still struggle to continue the program due to extraneous circumstances. For example, one respondent described a program for younger members where they held brown bag lunches once a month with professionals in the field to have an open question and answer session about issues pertinent to their jobs and futures: *"It probably lasted the bigger part of a year…They finally realized that, just getting [credentials] doesn't mean you know it all. And that there's other things that you have to learn, and it depends on who your teacher was in school, in classes, as to whether you really got all that you needed…But…as the market started going down, they had to work harder. They weren't as willing to give up their time then. And so [the program] just kind of went."*

Limited Pool of Prospects to Draw Upon

Another issue related to balancing time and effort that association leaders described centered on the difficulties finding people from underrepresented groups to serve in volunteer leadership positions. As one respondent told us, it can be difficult to convince people of color to participate: *"Each year when we seek candidates…, we try to identify several people of color and encourage them to run. More often than not they don't…Well, it's not just them. It's everybody. Serving on a board is a big responsibility, and I think a lot of people aren't willing to make that commitment or don't know that it's not as big as a commitment as they might think it is."*

While any member may hesitate to join a committee and accept a board nomination because of the time commitment, some respondents told us that it is more difficult to get members from underrepresented groups into leadership positions due to increased competition for their time: *"I've tried to get Latinos involved with positions*

and they're like, I'm too busy, I have too much going on, I'm in too many groups. And I'm like, you can be on a state board on this and that and they turn me down…" Similarly, another respondent provided this anecdote about their attempts to hire a highly qualified minority for one of their top positions: *"Generally a [person of color] with a lot of experience in nonprofits is very sought after so we're asked to get in bidding wars with other organizations. I went into a bidding war one time with government, and state government actually figured out how to…outbid us, and that person went to state government and I was devastated."*

One-Size Doesn't Fit All

While recognizing the costs and benefits of various programs is important, some associations voiced a related concern: attracting a diverse set of underrepresented groups meant catering to a diverse set of needs. These associations did not have any one program or initiative that fulfilled the needs of every underrepresented group— each group had to be focused upon separately. Indeed, when it comes time to determine the balance between time, effort, money, and reward received, associations may

> Attracting diverse underrepresented groups requires catering to a diverse set of needs.

find that this balance varies from group to group: *"It's difficult to reach out to some of them because they feel like they don't belong or they don't feel the association addresses their needs…In the past we've had special membership categories for members who worked [in different subfields and settings]. We've had task forces to try to…understand [how their needs could be met by] the association."*

Echoing this sentiment, another association leader told us: *"A few years ago…we weren't doing much for our larger firms and…they were going to be leaving us because we just didn't have anything for them and this was a big diverse part of our membership, so we [created] a taskforce,…went to some of our conferences, had some focus groups…What is it we could offer or provide for them? And they came up with some really interesting ideas and…we were able to take those things…and run with them."*

These examples showcase how diversity and inclusion programs cannot be one-size-fits-all undertakings. If your association has a variety of membership levels, professional types, or underrepresented groups, then these groups are likely to be looking for different benefits.

One respondent described this difficulty as follows: *"We have some challenges…with working across [member institutions that serve underrepresented groups] because we*

try to be as openly representative as possible but they don't all have the same needs…What the people at a research institution were looking for in terms of resources for teaching their students were not the same resources necessarily that students at tribal institutions would find valuable. So...there is a challenge in working across different groups. I mean in some ways, when you talk about diversity it's tempting to sort of lump people together and say…if you're not in the majority then you have this set of needs. And the reality is that the set of needs varies hugely, and we need to be more targeted and more thoughtful in terms of how we reach out to different groups…Also we need to realize that it's ok…for some programs not to serve every non-majority group." As this respondent tells us, focusing on diversity and inclusion requires not only a focus on what each individual group needs but to be okay with varied approaches.

But, focusing on one particular group over another can be seen as favoritism, making other groups feel unimportant or deemphasized and creating problems for the association. Designing diversity and inclusion programs means having to make some tough choices—but part of any resulting tensions may be alleviated with formal communication to other members that explains why certain programs focus solely on one particular group.

> Focusing on one particular group can be seen as favoritism.

The form a D&I policy takes could also affect the association's desired outcomes: *"[Our] diversity statement [is] very vague…[Originally it said our association] promotes involvement in leadership opportunities regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, religion, age, sexual orientation, nationality, disability, appearance, geographic location, or professional level. The board debated that statement and there was one particular board member that was against this statement mostly because of the sexual orientation piece in there and wanted that wording pulled out but the rest of the board thought…that by listing all the other areas specifically, pulling that area out would be detrimental to the organization to have that as a statement. And so they opted to pull that whole sentence out and just leave it a more broad diversity statement -- just saying that we seek diversity and inclusiveness."*

On the one hand, as the respondent illustrates, having a more general diversity and inclusion statement would cover all of the association's bases by not leaving anyone out. On the other hand, it may leave the door open for ignoring specific groups and ultimately represent a very thin form of diversity and inclusion statement. By not listing each group, an association may fall into the trap of treating each underrepresented group like they are the same instead of unique groups with

varying interests and needs.

Real Inclusion Not a One-Time Invitation

To tackle the diverse needs of each group in an association, some respondents told us that the best programs include underrepresented groups at the planning and implementation stages. For example, one focus group participant, whose membership association focuses on youth programming, said: *"We have a 16-member board, [with] four slots [for] youth members, with full voting rights…We rely heavily on [their] input, because we have a lot of peer-to-peer programming so we want to make sure that whatever it is we're talking about, you know these kids [aren't] saying "well, that ain't going to work."*

Another interviewee told of their association's efforts to make younger members feel empowered by encouraging them to build programs of their own: *"[For] the young members…we formed a new…committee a couple of years ago and we've really tried to empower them to come up with ideas…So we began building programs and building things…and making sure that we don't have the older members just assuming what they think they want. We have that particular group telling us what they feel like they need. And so I think that is a very good thing."*

> Established systems can produce desired results. It is not a one-time deal if you have them in place.

In both of these examples we see associations actively attempting to create effective programs with input from the intended beneficiaries from the beginning. By not assuming what underrepresented groups want and/or need, they ultimately save the time and effort that might come from having to fix the program in the future.

Once a program is up and running, associations can encourage graduates or participants targeted by the initiative to give feedback. This can be especially important if an association's leadership is considering ending one or more programs. For example, discussing an attempt by the board and finance committee to stop their mentoring program, one respondent described how graduates of the program were given an opportunity to voice their opposition to the resolution and ultimately save the program: *"So…it was a proposed resolution [to end the program] that went to the house of delegates…And all the society delegates…have the opportunity to come to the microphone and address that issue…[so] all of the delegates would just need to [do is] go to the appropriate hearing…to provide testimony on that issue. So yes, many people came and spoke on behalf of [our mentoring program]."*

Leaders and Champions are Important

As the last example implies, powerful groups in an association can make or break programs through their control over decisions about resources and association direction. Indeed, the respondents with successful diversity and inclusion programs often emphasized the role that leadership plays in getting D&I initiatives started and off the ground, as well as providing ongoing support as the initiative matures.

> Powerful individuals and groups can make or break a diversity initiative through their control over decisions about resources and association direction.

As one respondent in the focus group told us, "*It's all about leadership. Ultimately in any organization, it is about leadership as to what's going to happen. What are the dynamics? Who's going to be involved? How are they going to be involved? And that's a critical factor I think.*" Echoing the importance of leadership commitment, one respondent, said that while the economic downturn was partly to blame, the president who created a program "*lost interest fairly fast [and] it just kind of dwindled.*"

While some respondents' insisted on the importance of leadership support, many of our respondents suggested that diversity and inclusion programs fail because they lack champions—individuals who passionately advocate for the cause. Statements like this one were typical, "*there has to be a real champion, somebody who's really willing to take the lead, take ownership and provide direction and guidance. And I think it's fair to say for our diversity initiatives, we haven't had that focus, that direction.*"

Champions may need leadership and institutional support to make their programs really stick. Lack of leadership support can derail diversity and inclusion programs before they start, even with a champion to advocate its cause. Ultimately, as one respondent told us, "*You can't advocate diversity and inclusion to the minority to make it happen. [they] can't solve it…We're [only] successful, [if everyone] embraces it.*"

How does one go about getting everyone to embrace the need and utility of diversity and inclusion programs? Making the connection between champions and leadership support is certainly crucial. Yet, as one respondent suggests, the composition of the leadership could be the way out of the problem: "*Well, [if] you diversify the board, the push back on the diversity programs becomes less…because…while it is certainly not absolute, our non-majority board members are more likely to vote in favor of diversity*
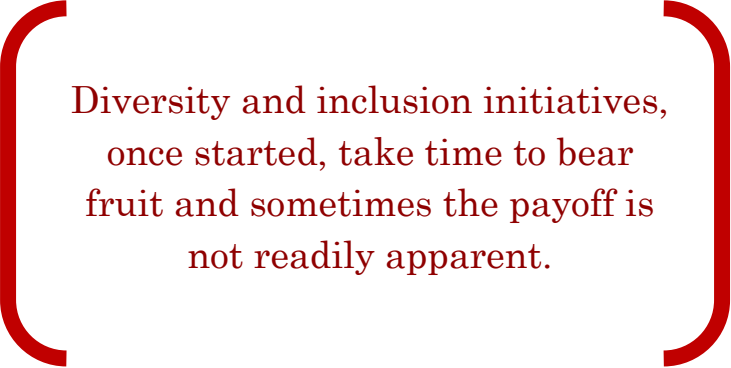
programs. [This will help] break down the barriers to success in the area of diversity and enhancing cultural competence across the field."

A Long-Term Perspective is Needed

Thus far, we have described how important it is to match perceived benefits with level of effort required, realize that each group may have specific needs, understand that utilizing members in the creation process could be effective, and accept that one individual alone likely cannot make diversity and inclusion programs happen. Yet the success of diversity and inclusion is still more complex, depending on a variety of other factors like the structure of the association and whether or not association leaders are willing to give the time to allow the program to succeed.

Some of our respondents with more successful programs told us that institutionalization (building diversity and inclusion into the organizational structure) helps set the groundwork for future programs. As one said: "*I think some of the things [others] can probably learn from us is the structure, putting systems in place. I think that produces…the results that you're looking for. It's just not going to be a one-time deal if you have these systems in place.*"

Just as important, however, is the realization that diversity and inclusion initiatives, once started, take time to bear fruit and sometimes the payoff is not readily apparent.

> Diversity and inclusion initiatives, once started, take time to bear fruit and sometimes the payoff is not readily apparent.

Giving programs the time for learning and improvement goes a long way towards eventual success and continued implementation: "*I think the minority scholarships were a little touch and go at times. We were still having so many students that were not completing degrees…in the earlier years. There was some real concern among a lot of the leadership that maybe this program just wasn't working. And thankfully they thought well, we'll just keep doing it and see how it goes and it's gotten [to where]… now you have to say that it's a success…I think the bigger issue is that we do some of these things and we think that there's payback and we think there's success in them, but it's a bit difficult to measure frequently…But a lot of the stuff you just sort of figure it has to be doing something good. If you're increasing the visibility of our field with minorities and if you're increasing the sensitivity of minority issues within the field, how can that not contribute to success? But I can't put a number to them.*"

Another respondent, in describing their internship/fellowship program for underrepresented groups, outlines the importance of allowing diversity and inclusion initiatives to continue despite concerns about costs and funding: *"We're a nonprofit and we're small, and we keep all of our funding streams very low…So the board passed it as a trial run. And…then every year they would come back because they had to get refunded each year, and part of it was just getting it into the routine, honestly. So, you know, once you get over the hurdle of funding for one year then the next year you can say well you funded it, we managed to account for it within the budget...there isn't suddenly this uproar. We can fund it for a second year. We can fund it for a third year…[By] then you rotated the entire board…so by the end of that time everybody who has come on has seen it as a part of what we do because they've had it since the beginning. Know what I mean? It's been in there and it's been routinized, so the funding becomes part of the process…It's no longer the hurdle.*

Another respondent told us that a focus on diversity and inclusion, especially when it involves training younger members for leadership positions, can be difficult to continue without patience: *"One of the wonderful things about [our association] is you get leadership opportunities really young. [But] one of [our] real problems…is we have very young leaders. So…you can safely make your mistakes in [our association], but you've still got a lot of people making mistakes…As one of the professors that works with one of our college sections says, "They're learning leadership and we're learning patience."*

> Helping younger members learn leadership may require association leaders to learn patience.

In these examples, simply giving programs designed to support diversity and inclusion time to develop goes a long way toward institutionalizing it.

The Need for Follow-Through

Many programs, however, need more than just a long enough time. Indeed, these programs require a concerted effort from the association to follow through and cultivate a programs' potential throughout its life cycle—or else good ideas may result in ineffective execution.

One respondent told us of an attempt to partner with a Latino affinity group to work with them on future diversity and inclusion projects: *"What we did was we…would put one of our members on their board as an ex-officio and they would put one of their members on our board…to show inclusion and, you know, working together. And that really hasn't worked out that well, on both sides. The guy that's supposed to be*

on our board, that's supposed to come to our meetings, doesn't hardly ever come and vice-versa." Here we see a good idea—a partnership between two associations that could potentially lead to important programs, ideas, and events in the future—that never makes it past the surface stage of development. Without adequate controls and follow through between the associations and their representatives, having this exchange of board members achieved little. Other associations had similar problems—as one respondent shared: *"We're taking steps but we're not connecting that final piece—we're not finishing it."*

Similarly, another respondent describes the problems with one of their current diversity programs—a scholarship program designed to bring historically underrepresented groups into the field: *"The challenge with it is that the program has changed, it's never been really documented in terms of why it was changed or what different things were tried, and so now we're at the point where there's no consistency between classes; there might be a few classes where they have the same sort of training and then the three or four classes behind them have something totally different."*

Taken together, these examples show the need for concerted effort and follow-through to make diversity and inclusion work. To paraphrase one of our respondents, diversity and inclusion is not a one-time deal and it is done. Associations would do well to keep a long-term attitude towards diversity and inclusion because these programs may take time to develop. Both patience and follow-through are needed.

> Lack of leadership support can derail diversity and inclusion programs, even with a champion to advocate for it. Everyone needs to embrace it.

Diversity and Inclusion is an Orientation, Not a Program

Diversity and inclusion effort are most successful when policies in place helped ensure that it is on everyone's mind and in everything they did. As one respondent told us, the policies really come to life *"[in] our whole board, our nominating community, our everything. And then within the staff [it becomes] such an inherent deep value that it's not like I have to remind people all the time. I mean it's in our hiring, in everything, even staff committees we put together."*

Similarly, another respondent described what their association does: *"We have a couple of different policies in place. We have a diversity statement we've adopted that basically just states we value and seek diverse and inclusive participation within the organization. And then…when we put out a request for nominations for our*

board…we list…qualifications that we'd like people to consider when they're making their nominations and one of them is that this candidate…would support a diverse board." By having diversity and inclusion not only as the guiding principle of the association, but also as a requirement of the nominating processes, associations may be better able to create new diversity and inclusion programs in the future.

Some association leaders told us they have a diversity committee tasked with creating and garnering support for diversity and inclusion programs in the organization. For example, one respondent told us, *"[We engage] the diversity committee in the nomination process…It really has been a terrific way for us to feel really good about the perspective and the culture that is represented at [the organizational level]."*

Diversity committees can be more or less effective based on how the association develops, supports, and implements them.

Yet, sometimes associations establish diversity committees, but they do not do so in productive ways (e.g. by withholding support, direction, or power to really make an impact). One respondent described how their association created a diversity committee: *"It was just they were sort of there to—we need this committee because we need to be focused on diversity, but they didn't really…know how to implement a strategy within the organization. And it was, more or less, we're here because we're from these communities not because we are effective or that we can produce a strategy in a grant…that a board could agree on or could support."* As a result, in this respondent's association, the diversity committee had historically been unable to help the association focus on diversity and inclusion in productive ways.

However, in recent years, this interviewee describes how the association has stepped in to not only figure out the problem, but make effective changes: *"…In the last couple of years we've really refined it and made some changes [in the Diversity Committee]. So…we've been able now to…get some new, more progressive thinking individuals onto [it]."* Thus, we see how an association that critically analyzes its diversity committee's composition, resources, policies and procedures can implement changes to create a more effective diversity and inclusion program.

The lessons learned from the examples of policies and diversity committees can also be applied to the actual implementation of programs that support diversity and inclusion. As many of our respondents told us, diversity and inclusion efforts have not been their main focus organizationally. Even when they are, or have been in the past, comments like these were typical: *"we have tried [pushing diversity and*

inclusion], but haven't put many resources behind it" or *"We've done some happy hours with [local affinity groups], but we haven't really put a focus on it."*

Similarly, as one respondent described, their association made sure to have a diverse set of entertainment at their conferences but, for a long time, some arrangements received more attention than others: *"…a Mexican-American, [said], 'Why do we do these things on the side, why is diversity something on the side, why is this entertainment on the side?' That statement hit me like a ton of bricks. And, it's like, yeah, why? And from that moment on our marketing firm is off on the mission, getting reasonably priced entertainment, but high quality that actually brings some different culture into the center. It's been really pretty effective, because it's like all of a sudden you're in a different culture without realizing it. It's been fun watching some of our older, more inflexible members, you know, moving to the music.* As this respondent describes, the ultimate challenge is to make sure diversity and inclusion efforts are a centerpiece for the association, not something *"on the side."*

> The ultimate challenge is to make sure diversity and inclusion efforts are a centerpiece of the association, not something on the side.

The next example illustrates just how big of an impact a focus on diversity can have: *"About ten years ago, we instituted a new award within the society…that goes specifically to people who work with diversity issues—who try to increase the diversity within the field. And I think that makes a difference—for when a society recognizes professionally people who are doing things to improve diversity then that shows other people that that's an important thing to be doing. And often the recipient has a chance to say a few words to the crowd and kind of talk about…why they're doing these things and…how important it's been to them. So I think in terms of raising people's awareness and sensitivity to diversity issues it's been really good. And I think that has helped raise visibility of diversity issues in the profession by having this become one of our major awards…and it's become a major piece of our work."*

In brief, as these examples show, devising policies, procedures, and programs effectively can lay the ground work for propelling efforts to increase diversity and inclusion in the future.

3D: Justifications for Focus on Diversity and Inclusion

While the previous section dealt with devising and implementing diversity and inclusion programs, the next section offers reasons why some of our respondents' associations take the diversity and inclusion challenge head-on. The reasons may be used to justify the need for a focus on diversity and inclusion. This may help prevent avoidance of thinking about what the association can do to address diversity and inclusion.

> Diversity and inclusion efforts not only help individuals, but associations as well.

Diversity and Inclusion as the "Right Thing to Do"

A few respondents told us their associations create and sustain diversity and inclusion efforts because they feel it is the right thing to do. They see their programs as cultivating and developing a diverse set of people from historically underrepresented groups who faced, and continue to face, structural and individual discrimination in their fields. For example, some associations have created fellowship or internship programs for historically underrepresented groups that offer mentoring, job training, and opportunities for volunteering or leadership.

Programs as simple as scholarships may go a long way to increase diversity in the field. One respondent, whose field has historically been a white and male profession, describes their program: *"The scholarships…have been around since I've been here. [They] were actually started…[in the] mid-nineties…[at] the recommendation by the board of women and minorities. [We could] draw more minorities into the profession…if we had scholarships that were targeted specifically to them and we had a really extensive scholarship program. A lot of scholarships every year, not huge…amounts…but closer to two to three thousand dollars a year kind of range…"*

Some underrepresented groups may not have faced historical segregation but still may be forgotten in important ways. As one respondent told us: *"Some groups are so hidden that just acknowledging their existence and [giving] a little bit of an opportunity to network is huge. For people with disabilities…it's probably the group we've put the least focus on although… certainly one that we're very conscious of in our language and our diversity principles…So we've been very conscious and actually doing some interesting things like close captioning major sessions at our events…and one of those great side benefits is that it helps some of our members who may not be*

considered a person with disabilities but may still have trouble hearing in a large hall."

Both implicit and explicit in these examples is the belief that these programs need to be implemented—that it is a social justice issue. As an added benefit, however, everyone can feel the positive effects of these initiatives, especially the closed-captioned conferences sessions. Indeed, as the next section illustrates, though some respondents support targeting diversity and inclusion programs to specific groups, they recognize that the positive consequences are not always limited to them. Other members and the association as a whole may benefit from some of the most narrowly targeted efforts like fellowships and scholarship programs.

Diversity and Inclusion as a Business Imperative

While we were surprised that so few of our respondents reported active diversity and inclusion programs, it was an even bigger surprise to see so few recognize how diversity and inclusion programs can be of benefit to an association in a variety of ways. For the most part, they did not focus on changes in the population that may make greater diversity in their association inevitable. A few saw that population changes had diversity implications for their memberships or that they were diverse because their population was diverse. There was little to no discussion of efforts to implement strategies to leverage population changes.

> Some may think diversity and inclusion programs are unfair and that limited resources could be better dedicated elsewhere.

Our respondents rarely advocated a business case for diversity. Some of the respondents, instead, seemed to suggest that diversity and inclusion programs are unfair and that the organization's limited resources could be better dedicated elsewhere. Yet, as one respondent mused on an idea that never got any traction: *"[A lot of people ask] 'does it impact our bottom line?' I wanted to do a program on…how it does impact their bottom line. Have some diversity experts come in and talk about what it means to a firm, to an industry to be all white..."*

As a few of our respondents pointed out, associations can achieve real and significant benefits from creating and implementing diversity and inclusion programs. For instance, some respondents advocated diversity and inclusion efforts in order to build a stronger membership with better ideas and plans for the future. As one respondent said, *"We look at the composition of every committee, every task force, every group that is helping to make decisions about the association. And in so*

doing…we're like setting a table that brings together the people that we want to see helping us make decisions." Another respondent echoed this notion: *"as we add more, add different perspectives and different cultures, different perspectives around culture… we're seeing even more quality in terms of our outcomes and decisions."*

Like diversity and inclusion programs more generally, sometimes creating a diverse board or increasing diversity in the membership requires association leaders to take a chance on someone who has potential but may not have all of the required credentials yet: *"This is back 25 years ago when I was a membership director and I was hiring a coordinator-level person and I had narrowed the search down to an African American woman and a Caucasian woman and the Caucasian woman had references up the wazzoo [but] they were…pretty equal…at least in my perception at the time and the African American woman had no references. And I was talking to*

the recruiter and, you know, she couldn't get them [the references] for me so I hired the Caucasian woman instead of the African American woman. And the Caucasian woman didn't work out and looking back I thought I should've taken that chance and I am still upset with myself on that…"

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Increasing diversity may be as simple as reducing resistance to change.

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At times, increasing diversity on boards and in leadership can be as simple as breaking down resistance toward change: *"There were several proposals to nominate this person to be on our board of trustees. But he's a very unconventional person (laughs) to put it mildly…he just says what he would like to say. He pulls no punches and his language can be somewhat colorful. Because of that there are certain people who are currently on the board that would, that will and have completely nixed his participation at a board level. So it really kind of hurts our opportunities to leverage this guy's talent because we're only looking at whether or not he fits the mold of a traditional HR person.*

"There was a lot of resistance to allowing younger board members into leadership positions. A lot of folks thought it wasn't right because they hadn't paid their dues yet. Gone through the system. These older members would try and tell the younger members 'this isn't how we do things here'."

Ultimately, these examples show us that doing things the conventional way may not lead to the best outcomes for an association and may even block associations from fostering new talent and creating new ideas to propel them into the future. As some respondents told us, diversity and inclusion programs bring new talent and ideas to the fore, while increasing the diversity of the association overall.

Respondents voiced examples of problems their association and their members' organizations face regarding a stagnant or declining new membership rate. Some association leaders told us that finding new members to join poses a real difficulty, especially in these tough economic times. Yet, one way to attract new membership, and thus, stem dropout rates or slow growth, may be to make underrepresented groups the targets of an association's efforts.

Diversity and inclusion efforts can serve as effective recruitment mechanisms: *"[A few of our members] were having some problems with members [in their own organizations] dropping out, and I was encouraging them to…get a more diverse board and think about…looking a little differently…They had a lot of older white males on their board—and I said, you know you might want to look at [younger professionals], the female [professionals], look at a little more diversity and that might help you with then bringing in other members in those same types of groups."*

Some organizations, like one of the trade associations in which we interviewed, have a committee with a goal is to help industry members develop future leaders in their associations: *"[The committee plans] an actual conference that they hold [where] the idea of it is…to have the senior leadership come with the …the rising stars, the up and coming, and have them attend together to go through …different sessions… it's helped a lot of companies in recognizing that they need to also identify who their …future leaders are going to be for their company."*

But where do you find these future leaders? Or, how do you attract these new members? What types of diversity and inclusion programs are effective? Our respondents provided us with many possibilities. For instance, though costly, one respondent reported that their association recently translated their entire website into Spanish. Now children from Hispanic and Latino communities may see this and know that there are associations geared towards their groups.

An association in the health sector, is making concerted efforts to make ensure presentations at their conferences included information on as many racial/ethnic groups as possible: *"[At] our conference now…we've instituted intentional requests for people to include information about…communities of color in…presentations…It's not that we need them to be culturally competent themselves - it helps of course, and ultimately that's our goal - but it's to provide information on other populations so the communication that they're doing shows what they're doing isn't fully focused on a Caucasian community but that it's inclusive of other communities so that even if they are serving a primarily Caucasian community, [they can show] some examples of other communities that have had success… So it's just doing a little more research and including that in their overall project description or program description or in the content itself. And if they can't, that's ok. It's not that the programs have to be rejected necessarily, but we just want them to be aware and to give as much information as they can to give a whole picture."*

While this effort's main purpose may be to attract potential clients, members who belong to these different groups may also feel like the association is sensitive to their needs and life experiences.

Other associations take a marketing-level approach to attracting a diverse set of members and clients. As one interviewee reported, "*In the past four or five years we have used an outside service to use pictures for marketing materials and those pictures, if you look at them, it's every nationality, it's every age group…*" Echoing this idea, another respondent when showing us their marketing materials, told us that "*we chose her [for a marketing brochure] because it was very ambiguous as to what race she was…[but] it's really hard to find good people that look like real people and do have the diverse races and still professional…*" This respondent cautioned about the use of diversity in marketing material, however, if the association could not back up its appearance of diversity.

Other initiatives, however, like the scholarships we mentioned previously, offer a diverse set of students a chance to build a career in an association's field. Indeed, scholarships for underrepresented groups can be valuable for recruiting new and diverse members: "*We have a set of minority scholarships that we offer…[and] we actually try to capture people when they're still in high school and get them to consider [our field] as a career path…[It's] not a huge amount of money but a lot of times it does make a difference between someone who can go to college [and] perhaps choosing [our field] as a degree path.*"

A bigger problem for some associations is keeping track of members once they finish school. As one interviewee told us: "*Some of the schools… have student chapters of our larger national association…so we try to…invite them to come to some of our meetings and luncheons for free. But we don't typically do a whole lot of work in keeping them engaged once they graduate. And that really would be the key.*" Other associations echoed the importance of keeping track of students and how this would ultimately help their efforts towards building a diverse workforce. Some associations actively intervene in the education system anywhere from kindergarten to high school. They make sure students know about their discipline and seriously contemplate a career in their field. In high school, especially, respondents told us that keeping in contact with each student goes a long way toward eventual

> Actively recruiting students from a younger generation doesn't necessarily increase racial diversity.

recruitment into the profession or association. As one respondent summed it up: "*[If you catch] them at their early careers…then you'd have their membership dues for the entire length of their career.*"

While all of these examples could potentially be good ideas for associations trying to increase their diversity, this next respondent provides a cautionary example: "*The developing leaders. That's the group for 35 and under, which is one of our diversity initiatives because you know it's very easy to look at our leadership and say 'wow this is a group [of] old white men…' [So we] started the developing leader committee. We were hoping, going on this theory, that young people are so much more diverse than we are—we thought that would bring in more racial diversity, and it did not. Turns out the developing leaders in [our field] are just as white as the rest of us. [But] still, we do now have the developing leaders involved. We have 200 members 35 and younger. Fifty of them are very active on the committee, so that has definitely added some energy to the chapter, but no color. More women though, more women have come in through developing leaders, I believe.*"

Diversity and Inclusion for Legitimacy

While our respondents often couched their use of diversity and inclusion programs in either terms of affirmative action or strategic opportunities, occasionally they emphasized a third benefit—that of association legitimacy. Not only can diversity and inclusion efforts bring in a fresh and diverse batch of new members (and membership dues), but actually following through with the efforts shows prospective members and the general public that an association's commitment to diversity goes well beyond its policies.

The following is an example of an association in which diversity efforts helped establish an affinity group for a specific demographic group in their field. While this was important in and of itself, the interviewee tells us how this initiative actually benefits the association directly: "*I think our partnership with [a group for individuals that are under-represented in the profession]…was amazing. It didn't exist before and I don't know that they would have been able to start without the material support we gave them…We provided that kind of support and took care of their money. They were able to collect dues way before they would have been able to otherwise. And, I think we…helped them become legitimate in the eyes of the industry, you know….We got the associated sheen…I mean, for us it's proof of the words we say. We say we support diversity; well, by supporting [the affinity group], we proved it. And we put our values into action.*"

Indeed, the "*associated sheen*" shows outsiders and other future members that this association cares about diversity and, thus, would be a safe space for a diverse set of people. It also builds up a strong reputation for the association.

An individual at another association that provides its diversity committee with the power and resources necessary to be more than just a soapbox observed that the committee has done tremendous things, including important things for the association: *"The conference that [our diversity committee has] put together is just going to be outstanding. They've got three different panels. One focusing on generational diversity, one focused on women and leadership, and the other one focused on religion in the work place. And then they have two great keynote speakers. Again they're going to honor someone in our community that has the reputation for sponsoring diversity and inclusion. And so they are developing a very good reputation for our association…"*

> **Putting values into action attracts attention and demonstrates legitimacy for the issue and commitment to addressing it.**

If the organization values diversity and inclusion in some way, then there needs to be proof—and what better way to prove it then by putting those values into action: *"I'm a watchdog…almost in everything we do that we're reflecting those values. For example, in collaboration with a national organization…to create the program [for a conference]…[the] other organization recommended dozens of people all of whom were white…I and our staff person who was the liaison…just said, 'Well we can't do that,' and they said 'Well, these are the people that we know,' and we said 'We…will not do a conference with all white people speaking, we just won't do it…' We almost backed out of the whole thing because they were offended that we were implying…that they were not diverse or aware of that...It's just a basic value for us. We either stand for it or we don't."*

A solid and successful program can attract attention from multiple directions in the association's field. As one respondent told us regarding their scholarship program: *"I think it's been very successful, but I think …it's been successful in some poignant ways…You can talk about achievements and things like that, but I think…the executive officer, is most proud of is [how] both internally to the association and then externally, the program is seen as a highly competitive and prestigious one…And it's…not necessarily perceived as one of those diversity programs that kind of lowers the bar or…sets different standards for students of color or things like that. And in [the executive director's] eyes, it's very much the opposite. It's just been held in such high regard, not just from within the association but actually because of our federal funding ties and other things outside."*

Not only did this scholarship program provide external legitimacy in the form of following through on the association's beliefs, it has become a "highly competitive and prestigious" program linked to outside funding. This scholarship program draws some of the top talent in the field away from other associations and toward their own—a result that not only benefits the individual recipients but the organization as a whole.

In sum, on both a structural and individual level, making diversity and inclusion programs work is complex and takes time, resources, and determination. As we have previously discussed, there are many barriers that stand in the way of addressing diversity and inclusion associations. With these examples, however, we hope to have demonstrated that, while difficult, thinking about and implementing programs for diversity and inclusion are not impossible and can be beneficial for organizations.

At a very basic level, thinking about diversity and inclusion means association leaders and members may need to have some difficult conversations. One of our respondents described an interaction at a

> Don't avoid difficult conversations about diversity and inclusion.

lunch meeting: "... *Fran said to Amanda, she's like, 'What can I call you …am I supposed to say black or African American?' So we had to have that conversation, and that's a good conversation to have. And Amanda just laughed and was like 'I'm black, you can call me black.' … I just wish more of our members had been involved in that conversation because those are good conversations to have and they're dorky and they can be painful. We had some awkward moments there, but you have to have those conversations. So I think in terms of what's teachable to other organizations is… knowing you're gonna have some awkward moments [and] being willing to have those awkward moments.*"

Ultimately, the rewards diversity and inclusion programs provide build outward from the individual member to the larger society —an outcome that is better for everyone: "*Where we seem to have the most success is when we bring it down to a personal level and we get the relationships going. … you might have…some kind of preconceived notion going into it about another race … another country, culture, whatever. [But] working [together] more often than not at the end of it they say… 'he is a good person, she is a good person.' …I don't know that there's any…quick way around life experiences, and the more we can bring different cultures together and have open dialogue, I think that's what's going to tear down the preconceived notions.*"

3E: Case Studies: Associations with Strong Diversity Emphasis

The previous section of this report examines specific diversity and inclusion activities, some successful, others less successful. In this section, we examine four associations in which increasing diversity and inclusion is critical to the organization's identity and activities. From these short case studies, we derive additional lessons to complement those offered in the previous section.

Case 1: Association with Historical Focus on Board Diversity

One of the associations we studied works with nonprofit leaders statewide. The association's executive director (ED) is motivated and motivates others to work hard on diversity and inclusion. While she commented on successes and challenges in increasing member and staff diversity, she described in much greater detail her efforts regarding her board. Her reason for emphasizing board diversity is that other associations watch hers as a model; as she put it, "*We are in a fishbowl.*" She wants representation and engagement on the board across racial and ethnic groups, from both women and men, and across the geographic regions of the state. She mentioned the special importance of guiding other associations towards replenishing their nonprofit boards with younger leaders as more senior leaders retire.

> **Continual talent scouting and a system for keeping track of potential candidates can help in finding diverse individuals for leadership positions.**

The ED presented what we characterize as a diversity-first approach to board openings. She charts race, ethnicity, gender, and age of the remaining board members on a grid. This grid maps out the demographic characteristics of current board members and allows participants in the nomination process to pay special attention to diversity considerations. Having met diversity requirements, the nominating committee can then proceed to other variables of interest to the board, such as knowledge, contacts, and skills. In this way, the whole board orients itself to enhancing board diversity, but especially the nominating committee and the staff who help the nominating committee perform its responsibilities. Knowing that board diversity is such a high priority, the people involved have come to see themselves as talent scouts, looking across the various regions of the state for people who have "*the experience to be really good on our board and also [fit] some of these other characteristics that we're happening to be looking for this year.*"

The continual talent scouting has led to an ongoing accumulation of possibilities. As the ED explained: "*A week doesn't go by that I don't get an email from a current or former board member that says, 'I met so and so today, [who] might be [a] good future board member' and we keep a file that's huge about those and we also ask them (i.e., the recommender) whatever they know about the person so, …if we're particularly looking for a male from the West, we can go back [and find] that pretty easily.*"

The strong emphasis on board diversity in this association brings about an occasional collision with requirements for board member performance. The ED emphasized the commitment her board members make and offered these examples to show that diversity in her association's board is not just about numbers. She recalled three difficult decisions not to renew an African American or a Latino board member who was underperforming, for example, by missing more meetings than allowed. Similarly, she described the difficult decision not to entrust the important nominating committee chairpersonship to a Latino board member who was not well engaged in the board's work but nonetheless requested the appointment. The ED clearly experienced the tension in these examples as emotionally trying and used the word "*hard*" several times in characterizing the resolutions.

The uncompromising focus on board diversity stems from the history of the association. The present ED founded the association eighteen years ago after three years of grant-supported inquiry into the needs of the nonprofit sector. The founding board adopted a statement of the association's core values, which has continued to include diversity. The board is the guardian of the core values. The ED develops strategies and budgets to pursue these values, then seeks board approval. The board holds her accountable for the organization's progress toward its core values. She is evaluated explicitly on the enhancement of diversity and inclusion. Funders reward the association for being diverse with funding commitments. Created with a well-thought-out purpose that included an emphasis on diversity, the association was designed and has since developed with that purpose clearly in mind.

A key lesson from this association is that core values related to diversity and inclusion can be maintained with explicit and consistent attention to and evaluation of them as a first priority. In this association, both the board and executive director have accepted responsibility and developed tools such as talent scouts and a board nomination grid to work toward a diverse board as a model for other organizations. Use of scouts and a grid to evaluate existing and desired board diversity are economical and easy tools for fostering diversity. Not only are they practical, but they can be used symbolically to remind staff and board members that diversity is a core value.

Case 2: Association with Mission to Support a Specific Diversity Focus

In our study, we looked at some associations in which the name suggested a focus on a particular type of diversity. One of these associations stands out for its ability to expand the conception of diversity and inclusion beyond the focus suggested by its name. Similar associations might have names such as the Association of Black Economists or the Society of Women County Executives, explicitly noting the primary market for its members.

The professional association we are highlighting here pursues its mission in four ways. First, it encourages members of the named group to enter a profession in which they used to be very rare and are still far from being well-represented. The association does this primarily through its college and university chapters. Second, it supports members as they face the career challenges of an underrepresented group. The executive irector specified this part of its work as helping its members "*contribute authentically as a (group) and as a (profession).*" She worries that professionals from underrepresented groups may deemphasize either their group or professional identity. Third, the association recognizes the achievements of members in their profession, in the association, and in their communities. The ED sees this third strand of its program as important to the first two strands for its motivational value in the face of what she perceives as this group's tendencies to leave the profession or to hide their professional capabilities. And fourth, the association vigorously pushes an advocacy role in the formulation of public policy. With the backing of the current federal administration, the scope of US anti-discrimination law is being expanded into the realm of education relevant to this association. The association seeks to be the "[*group] diversity power broker*" in the professional domain of which its profession is a key part.

Beyond the clear and systematic focus on the group around which the mission is formed, this association is distinguished by its much broader diversity and inclusion efforts. The ED admits up front, "*we tend to be very white, we tend to be straight, there's not a lot of...disabilities amongst our membership.*" She leads the effort to enhance diversity on many dimensions, including race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, language, and disability status. The reason to seek greater diversity in her membership is in part her desire to walk the talk—to follow what her association is arguing: "'*Profession, you will be better if you are inclusive,' so then we take that to heart and say...we will be better if we are inclusive.*"

She thinks beyond numbers to focus on authenticity. As she puts it: "*If a woman becomes "a white man in high heels," the value of diversity is lost...The value of diversity to the organization is when you can authentically bring valid business differences that make you look at information a different way or approach things a different way...[Moreover,] if you start to act and think and behave like the*

majority,…you don't feel authentic to yourself at which point your career isn't as fulfilling…"

She goes on to argue that the ultimate result of such loss of authenticity can be exit from the profession. Thus, her emphasis on inclusion, which she calls authenticity here, is for the sake of her members, their professional work, and their employers.

The ED reports that she struggles against inertia in order to broaden the conception of diversity and inclusion in her association and related associations. Presidents serve only briefly, so one with a commitment to diversity may quickly be succeeded by one without it. The board tends to be more focused in their evaluations of the ED on financials than diversity and inclusion which are harder to quantify. Other associations with which she cooperates often are content with "*outreach*" programs. While she knows these are important to increase the numbers of those in under-represented groups, they may not alter the unacknowledged privileges of long-standing majorities. As she puts it, "*It isn't always just…about getting numbers in the door; it's about creating that inclusive environment.*"

One of the concrete steps her association has taken to prioritize diversity and inclusion is to switch away from an association management company that worked well when the association's needs fit the AMC's routine practices, but as the association increasingly catered to the needs of its diverse membership, this company no longer fit within that routine. "*One size does not fit all,*" the ED put it. Now the association handles its own membership services, tailoring them to the needs and preferences of the various segments it tries to attract.

The ED's prioritization of diversity and inclusion has raised her consciousness about cultural differences. In conflict situations, for example, her own white cultural group, which is the majority, puts "*peace before truth*" as she explained it, but a significant black minority group in the association puts "*truth before peace.*" She explains, "*White women. Oh, put it behind you; don't worry about it; …we're just going to forget it. But black women, it's like (pounds desk three times in succession), we're not settled here; what do you mean put it behind us? I want to get to the bottom of this.*" Her

Prioritizing diversity and inclusion can lead to being purposeful in bringing cultural expressions of under-represented groups into the center of association conferences.

own awareness has allowed her to help her association's leaders and members deal more successfully with conflict. Prioritizing diversity and inclusion has also led her

to recognize and draw in LGBT members, who have their own small association, but, because LGBT status is often hidden, they and their association are typically ignored. Finally, prioritizing diversity and inclusion has led her to purposefully bring the cultural expressions of underrepresented groups to the center of association activities, for example, by making Latino musical performances the main entertainment of one of the annual conferences, rather than entertainment held on the margin of the conference and, by implication, for a minority audience.

The association faces organizational dilemmas that affect its efforts to enhance diversity and inclusion. It is quite decentralized, operating hundreds of geographic and university chapters. The chapters have plenty of autonomy; indeed, the ED identified one as being a "*renegade.*" On the one hand, this autonomy makes possible an upward percolating of good ideas and programs, including some about diversity and inclusion, which the headquarters can then attempt to diffuse widely in the association. On the other hand, the headquarters can have considerable trouble in these diffusion efforts because of limits on its control of the chapters. For example, the ED described an effort to push a carefully developed curriculum on good program evaluation practices out to chapters. Its "*train the trainers*" approach led to distortion of the curriculum by the time it was put into practice at the chapter level. The ED explained this risk as akin to the distortion in the old game of telephone. One solution is to use web seminar technology to shorten the instructional chain. The ED worries, however, that the association is not really big enough to afford very high quality webinars and archiving. In effect, the association is too big to operate without a headquarters, but too small for the headquarters to be really effective in leading the local chapters. These problems of organizational structure and size are not easily solved short of wholesale restructuring that few would be willing to undertake. In her opinion, it is better to become aware of the problems and deal with them as an ongoing tension and balancing act.

Diversity and inclusion initiatives require comfort with change, conflict, and empowering others.

A key lesson of this association is to use an explicit diversity mission as a launching pad for expanding attention to diversity and inclusion beyond that in the association's name. The tendency may be to pursue diversity narrowly, but there is opportunity to pursue diversity more broadly. In pursuing a broad understanding of diversity, key strategies are to avoid focusing on numbers versus true authenticity in recognizing, responding to, and celebrating diversity. Associations need to be ready, as this one was, to change management systems when they no longer can address specialized needs and interests. They also need to be comfortable with

conflict and potential diffusion of authority leading to program variations when groups within an association are empowered to express and pursue their needs.

Case 3: Association With Full-Scale Diversity and Inclusion Orientation

One of the associations we studied had an interesting history that shows how a diversity and inclusion program can grow over time. As this professional association grew, it expanded its attention to diversity—from paying little attention to a full-scale diversity orientation. In its earlier phase, it oriented itself entirely around providing an annual conference and two journals to its members. Today, both volunteer leaders and paid staff are asked to view every decision about every program through a diversity lens. The executive director explained, "*We look at the composition of every committee, every task force, every group that is helping to make decisions about the association. And we ask whether or not we have the breadth of representation there…Our current board is…six or seven of thirteen [that represent a] racial or ethnic minority or international…I think four of the six [nominees for the board] are racial [or] ethnic minorities…And, then, one of our two nominees for president is a racial minority for the coming year.*"

The association's emphasis on diversity is not just a question of numeric representation. Diversity and inclusion have become integral to the association's culture. For example, "*today we see less of [special workshops on cultural competence]…you'd see more basically interweaving issues of cultural competence, cultural relevance, diversity…throughout multiple topics within our workshops…it's much less siloed…we're getting to the point where it's interwoven into the culture.*" The ED gave us an example of these deep values in action; she checks possible hotel sites for the annual meeting, walking the floors herself with a stroller to look for wheel chair accessibility beyond ADA requirement and gender-neutral restrooms for any LGBT members who prefer them.

Fellowship programs for minority college students may require a long-term commitment; it may take years to tell whether the students will enter and succeed in the profession.

This far-reaching change in the association began in 2001 with an extensive report, generated with foundation support, which assessed the need for enhancing diversity in the association. The report generated various recommendations, ranging from graduate fellowships, to small business development training, to public education campaigns. Most of the recommendations focused on people of color. The ED's comments to us about diversity echoed that focus on race and ethnicity, while also prominently

mentioning gender, sexual orientation, disability, geography, and professional methodology.

The ED spoke at length about several of the recommendations the association has taken up in the subsequent years, especially ten graduate fellowships the association makes available each year to minority applicants, efforts to entice college students in the profession to join the association through exposure to the annual meeting, and outreach to "*minority serving institutions*" of higher education. All of these involve substantial expense and over the years have come under scrutiny because of it, especially since the services are offered only to part of the membership. However, the graduate fellowship program is now particularly well institutionalized—once three years of funding had been secured, the entire board had turned over, and the program was accepted as simply something the association did. This acceptance is especially notable because it is still too early to tell whether the early cohorts of students of color supported by the fellowship program will actually enter and succeed in the profession.

The strong and pervasive commitment to diversity and inclusion in the association arises in part from the desire to influence practice in the profession from which the members are drawn. According to the ED, the original report writers "*identified diversity as being something that was essential to good conduct as an association but also good conduct as (professionals).*"

Put more formally in the language of the report, their purpose was: "*To address the complexity of needs and expectations concerning (professionals) working across cultures and in diverse communities. The purpose of the Initiative is (1) to improve the quality and effectiveness of (profession) by increasing the number of racially and ethnically diverse (professionals) in the…profession, and (2) to improve the capacity of all (professionals) to work across cultures.*"

The association's dedication to improving professional practice by enhancing diversity and cultural awareness can be seen as a continuation of an earlier dedication to improving professional practice via the professionalizing

Standard program development and evaluation practices can be used to measure the effects of diversity and inclusion initiatives.

impact of the journals and annual meetings. Pursuing these recommendations has also served the association's purposes by pulling in a

diverse range of ideas and allowing the organization to expand into previously uncharted territory by working cross-culturally.

The specific profession organized in the association shapes its approach to diversity and inclusion. This is a profession closely involved in making programmatic efforts work better. Not surprisingly, then, the association has applied the professional approach of its members to its own efforts to enhance diversity and inclusion. It contracts with its members, through an open bidding process, to bring their professional practices to bear on these efforts and on all its programs. In 2007, it did so with regard to the programmatic recommendations in the 2001 report that initiated the association's diversity and inclusion efforts. The 2007 report noted accomplishments and limits to what has been done and took account of quite varied experiences with the diversity and inclusion enhancement efforts. Some experiences have not been positive: some champions have walked away while, short of that, other champions believe accomplishments are not what they could have been; and some who were opposed to the initiative feel open dialog in the association has been hampered. Still, the overall conclusion, shared by the majority of members, is that much has been accomplished. The ED agrees that, on balance, programmatic efforts to enhance diversity and inclusion in the association have succeeded. The ED noted that other associations will bring their own unique strengths to diversity and inclusion enhancement. Many will not have the systematic management approach this association draws from its particular profession.

A key lesson here recalls the very purposeful approach of the association featured in our first case. There, the straightforward history of the association gave the association its unyielding dedication to diversity enhancement. Here, the professional processes of needs assessment, programmatic innovation, and program assessment are responsible for a similar result. Other associations could adopt a similar approach, using standard methods for program development, implementation, and evaluation to encourage diversity and inclusion.

Case 4: Association Focused on Bottom Line Case for Diversity and Inclusion

We turn now to a regional chapter of a national sport association with both individual and organizational members. The organizational members of the association include schools, parks and recreation departments, club owners, and equipment manufacturers and vendors. In the past, the sport has been played largely by Caucasians and those with high incomes. The executive director pointed out that the number of players in the sport has been declining slowly and with it individual membership in the association, in part because leisure and entertainment options have been expanding. The association has been successful in drawing attention to this issue and treating it as a diversity and inclusion challenge.

The association made its argument for diversity and inclusion directly to organizational members. Once the association showed them the demographics of declining participation in the sport and the spending power of diverse groups, these organizational members were convinced that their own bottom-line numbers, in participation and revenues, could be improved by attempting to attract more diverse participants to the sport. As the ED told us, "*I think that was the tipping point for us…it's not [that] you want to do it because it's the right thing to do, but in order to participate in this marketplace competitively, you have to do it.*"

Given that, in this association, the organizational members (not the individual members) vote, convincing the organizational members to focus on diversity and inclusion has resulted in a dramatic change in governance and programs in the association. For instance, the immediate past president is an African American and the vice president (and likely next president) is an openly gay man. Additionally, now the association uses images in its marketing that display diverse groups participating, and the association reaches out to, and spends money with, minority-owned businesses.

The transition has not been completely smooth or as successful as hoped. Latino and Asian participation in the sport, and in the association, has not grown very fast, but it has grown. Longtime volunteers, largely white, have not always been pleased that people of color have been fast tracked into leadership positions and have argued that the newcomers, even those with "*the business background and all the credentials,*" should do "*all the stuff that everybody else did.*" Yet, the leadership training the association provides seems, by the ED's standards, to be robust. Indeed, a multi-cultural participation committee provides opportunities for potential leaders from underrepresented groups to "*learn the ropes*" and to demonstrate their skills and promise to longtime volunteers. From this committee, "*they start to branch out to other committees,*" and then to leadership positions throughout the association.

> Make a case for diversity and inclusion to those with the most power in the association.

A key lesson from this association is to work with the most powerful members of the association and make the case for diversity and inclusion in terms of their own interests. Understanding of the bottom lines of this association's voting members drove this association's diversity and inclusion initiative and continues to support it. Though some members were uncomfortable with the association's fast-tracking of members fitting minority classifications, the association provided leadership

training so that the fast-tracked members were well prepared for their responsibilities. Some associations may wish to adopt this association's practice of using a multi-cultural or diversity committee as a leadership training ground for members from minority groups. There is a general understanding in the association that the new fast-tracked leaders are helping to increase the number of members from under-represented groups and that this growth is desirable.

SECTION 4: SUMMARY AND NEXT STEPS

The interviews and focus group revealed many factors that could influence whether or not these ideas are tried and their outcomes if they are tried. These factors include:

- General diversity and inclusion orientation
- Specific target of initiative(s)
- Leadership interest and power
- Structural and programmatic support for activity
- Champion(s)
- Demographic characteristics of the profession or industry
- Expected bottom-line impact
- Time, effort, and financial resources required
- Fear of being intrusive or domineering
- Fear of excluding some while helping others
- Competing priorities
- Discomfort with conflict
- Majority interests
- Willingness to take ownership of issue
- Data on existing diversity and inclusion
- Lack of patience and need for long term investment
- Habit and inertia

Bringing members of underrepresented groups into leadership positions requires proactive methods to overcome fears, habit, inertia, and resistance. There are multiple tools for supporting these efforts. Talent scouts can be used to identify candidates for special attention and involvement. Diversity committees can be launching pads for service on other committees. Training can be used to prepare minority members for leadership roles. Diversity and inclusion can easily be squeezed out as priorities, so explicit and sustained focus is needed.

Continuing focus on diversity and inclusion often requires staff leadership and institutionalization because champions drawn from the membership usually have shorter times in positions of leadership. Staff leaders, however, are under pressures for performance in other domains, so clarity about expectations and accountability for diversity enhancement is very important. Institutionalized methods for evaluating status and progress on diversity and inclusion can be helpful in sustaining commitment to diversity as a core value.

All associations have particular strengths and weaknesses in addressing diversity and inclusion. Unique organizational histories, structures, and cultures can

influence interest and efforts in enhancing diversity and inclusion. Finding leverage for diversity can be critical. For example, diversity and inclusion champions could call upon a founding vision, bottom line impact, or practice common to the profession or trade. They can find important constituent groups and make customized arguments for diversity and inclusion to them. They may be able to use term limits to wait out detractors and institutionalize activities through recurring budget allocations. They may find innovative ideas emerging from autonomous groups within their association while struggling with efforts to diffuse good practices from the top-down. Alternatively, they may be able to be highly centralized but need to be sensitive to resistance and work harder to gain acceptance for their top-down efforts.

As our four cases illustrate, diversity and inclusion are unlikely to happen without proactive attention. Though the paths may vary across associations, what is critical is an explicit effort, backed by organizational resources. Convincing members that diversity and inclusion enhancement will improve professional practice or financial outcomes can be a productive strategy, as can appeals to core values. Capacity to build a diverse and inclusive association can be strategically drawn from staff, board, the membership as a whole, and partners. Focusing in on one target for diversity, such as the board or a named minority group, can be a springboard for other targets.

Next Steps

This study demonstrates the value of qualitative research, as well as its limitations. We have been able to delve into the thinking and experiences of staff leaders in membership association. Their reflections on the approach to diversity and inclusion in their associations help us understand a good deal about what they mean, what they intend, how they explain, and what they feel about diversity and inclusion. In addition, we have learned that change with regard to diversity and inclusion usually unfolds incrementally and often starts with a focus on members or boards, but rarely on staff.

Despite our inability to generalize to the association population as a whole, we have learned that diversity and inclusion efforts in the associations we studied vary substantially. We have seen that diversity and inclusion, while widely valued, are much less widely pursued as a focus of association effort. We have heard about many different programmatic efforts to enhance diversity and inclusion; even associations that place little emphasis on diversity and inclusion report some programmatic activity. We have learned, further, that programmatic efforts sometimes have the desired impact but often do not. The reasons are sensitive to the association context in many cases; basically the same program may work in one association and not in another. But one thing is clear, diversity and inclusion can be a central focus of association management, but this usually requires very conscious

and long-term effort by the leadership. Finally, our study allows us to underscore the value of efforts to enhance diversity and inclusion for underrepresented groups and for membership associations.

ASAE's diversity and inclusion research has already accomplished a good deal. Important next steps should focus both on making what we already know available to various audiences and on building new research elements upon the foundation of the work already in place.

Dissemination to Various Audiences

Findings of this report are likely to be of interest to ASAE members, particularly those that are seeking guidance for diversity and inclusion initiatives.   The upcoming Diversity Summit will be one occasion to combine all stages of the ASAE diversity and inclusion research program to date, including: (1) review of literature titled "Diversity and Inclusion in Associations" (July 2008); (2) review of research titled "Review of Past Research Studies: Diversity and Inclusion in Associations" (July 2009); (3) summary of findings from the Workforce and Membership 2020 survey conducted spring 2010 included as an Appendix; and (4) this report on interview-based research. The materials presented at the Diversity Summit may be useful as a white paper publication targeted at ASAE's membership. This publication could showcase the payoffs of multi-method research for advancing association practices regarding diversity and inclusion.

We intend to share findings of this project with scholarly audiences interested in membership associations. The ASAE membership may also be interested in this more academic form of presentation. Jeffrey Leiter and Nick Solebello have already presented "Diversity and Inclusion Programs in Membership Associations" at the November 18-20, 2010 annual meeting of the Association for Research on Nonprofit Organizations and Voluntary Action (ARNOVA). This presentation derives directly from the ASAE-sponsored research reported here, especially Section 4B. They plan to reformulate this presentation as an article suitable for journal publication. The topic is why diversity and inclusion efforts are not generally central in these associations. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* (NVSQ), one of the leading journals in the nonprofit studies field, may be an appropriate journal outlet. Other analyses and journal articles based on the interview data may include: (1) the rhetoric of diversity and inclusion in membership associations; (2) champions, internal pressure, external models, external pressure—focusing on whether the impetus for change makes a difference in diversity and inclusion programs, and (3) increasing the success of diversity and inclusion programs: lessons from interviews in membership associations.

Future Research Agenda

The current interview-based research could be used as a model for a new set of interviews with a less varied set of association respondents. Possible criteria for reducing the heterogeneity of the interviews include restricting selection to associations: (1) with medium-sized staffs; (2) whose names indicate a diversity and inclusion mission (as a fictitious example, the Association for Latino Sculptors); (3) which have hired a Diversity Executive Leadership Program (DELP) graduate; and (4) which have a staff member with a title indicating diversity job responsibilities.

 As diversity and inclusion efforts and orientation are likely perceived differently by people in different positions, even within the same association, a new study could pose the same questions to a number of people in each association, including the CEO, the membership director (if there is one), the board chair, the newest board member, a DELP graduate (if there is one), the chair of the diversity committee or close equivalent (if there is one); and a non-board member who joined the organization within the last year. This would allow differences in perception and intention by position to be explored systematically. This study could take either a survey or a depth-interview form, depending on the questions to be asked.

Both written surveys and interviews have their strengths. Both, however, filter information through respondents. An in-depth case study could better capture the actual processes of diversity and inclusion enhancement. In such a study, the researcher would become part of the "scene" over many months. As he or she became an unremarkable part of the day-to-day work and interaction of the association, systematic observation and informal conversation would provide the potential for new insights into changes in the association. Properly trained and supervised, such a case study could be carried out by a social science graduate student.

ASAE's long tradition of survey research could be augmented in two ways for further focus on diversity and inclusion: (1) drawing a representative sample of associations would allow intensive efforts to secure participation from a substantial proportion (50% would be a good target), building confidence that the findings of the survey could be generalized to the association population from which the sample was drawn; and (2) surveying the same association respondents several times over a number of years would allow the tracking of key changes and the understanding of cause and effect, neither of which can be achieved without longitudinal data.

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Appendix: Choice of Associations for Interviews

All stages and methods of data collection were approved by the Institutional Review Board at NC State University as involving minimal risk for participants.

We had several goals in selecting associations to interview. We sought contrasts on formalization of personnel and diversity policies and procedures and on association size because previous research has identified these factors as important for success in diversity enhancement efforts. We wanted the associations to be geographically clustered both to limit travel time and expenses for in-person interviews and because we thought a metropolitan area or region might have characteristics that would shape diversity and inclusion efforts by associations in it. We sought mostly professional associations and combination professional/trade associations, but also a small representation of trade associations. We excluded philanthropic/charitable/ foundation type associations. Finally, we wanted to include both associations that described their diversity and inclusion efforts as successful and those that described their efforts as unsuccessful and even a few associations that said they had not tried to enhance diversity and inclusion. We aimed for a total of 20-25 interviews.

We based our selection of associations primarily on data gathered through a survey conducted in March, 2010: The Workforce and Membership 2020. We also used general information from ASAE's member database. ASAE estimates that about one ninth of all U.S. membership associations belonged to ASAE at the time the survey was distributed. About 22,000 staff in these associations belonged to ASAE. The survey was distributed to 5602 of these staff according to the following selection method: all member classes except consultant and suppliers who work for an association management company (AMC). Individuals targeted for the survey were those with a position level of mid-level management and above, who have a job title with the words diversity or inclusion or CEO or have a primary or secondary function of HR or membership. One person per organization was selected using the following priority: 1) diversity job titles; 2) HR primary or secondary function; 3) membership primary or secondary function; 4) CEO position level.

Of the 5602 surveys distributed, 614 qualifying associations did not have an email in ASAE's records, 233 emails requesting a survey response bounced, and 11 were deleted by ASAE because of their "do not e-mail" designation for a total of 858 undelivered surveys. This left 4744 surveys that were successfully delivered. After repeated contacts, 352 associations returned the survey, for a response rate of 7.4%. Because of this low response rate, the survey results cannot be used to generalize to the population of associations to which the survey was distributed. Please see Appendix II for an overview of survey results. Of the 352 survey respondents, 153 agreed to be contacted for follow up. These 153 were our initial pool for selecting interviewees.

Of these 153, we identified geographic clusters with at least four associations in close proximity. The clusters for our interviews are: Texas, northern California, the Chicago area, eastern Massachusetts, the Washington D.C. area, and North Carolina. We selected associations to include both larger and smaller associations (based on membership, staff, and income) and both more and less formalized associations (based on responses to the survey on the existence of written diversity goals for members and staff, a written harassment policy, a diversity segment of the mission statement, and a written policy on reviewing publications and communications for potentially offensive language or images).

This selection process yielded 26 interview targets. Initial email contact with telephone follow up yielded 23 interviews.