

HR Compliance Library, ¶42,517, EEOC's best practices in diversity

Background—task force. As part of its continuing efforts in technical assistance, outreach, and education the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission established a task force to examine private sector best practices in EEO policy, programs and practices. The task force's report, released in December 1997, is intended to facilitate voluntary compliance through the examination of business policies, programs, and practices that will be useful to employers in structuring systems and policies that are consistent with their business priorities as well as with their EEO obligations and diversity objectives.

The task force did not endorse any particular policy, program, or practice. Its goal in identifying practices currently being implemented by employers was to disseminate information about practices that are likely to promote voluntary compliance with the EEO laws.

Companies presented a number of practices for consideration. These included:

- diversity and affirmative action programs in general,
- relationships with minority-and women-owned business activities,
- partnerships with students at educational institutions,
- communications with employees about equal employment opportunity responsibilities across the spectrum, and
- philanthropic activities.

These initiatives do not fit into standard human resources categories such as recruiting or terms and conditions of employment.



EXAMPLE

Doing business with minority and women-owned businesses does not necessarily involve a current employer-employee relationship, but may enhance the company's future recruiting successes.

Likewise, these programs may embrace policies, programs, or practices impacting on two or more of the other generally recognized functions.



EXAMPLE

Diversity initiatives may impact on recruitment and hiring, as well as on promotion and career advancement, in addition to terms and conditions of the workplace.

EEOC's "best" practices in diversity and related community programs

- **Conduct training programs for all employees in EEO rights and responsibilities including, but not limited to:**
 - gender awareness;
 - diversity;
 - disability, pregnancy, and religious accommodation;
 - harassment prevention; and
 - affirmative action.
- **Encourage and support formation of employee groups along diversity lines (e.g., women, men, minorities, persons with disabilities, older persons, religious persons) to actively participate within the company in EEO matters.**
- **Form a Diversity Council with representatives of all interested organizations to discuss matters of equal employment opportunity.**
- **Encourage high-level management participation and interaction with employees and employee groups, and ensure employee access to management.**

- **Consider special emphasis programs and other events recognizing and highlighting the contributions of various cultural and/or social heritages.**
- **Publish a pamphlet or handbook detailing EEO rights and responsibilities, as well as diversity and affirmative action programs.**
- **Conduct assessments and surveys of employees, asking for their views as to what is right and what needs improvement in the company's conduct of its equal employment opportunity programs.** Include in the process:
 - Encourage suggestions for improvements.
 - Be prepared to act on worthy suggestions.
- **Develop business relationships with minority-, disability-, and women-owned businesses.**
- **Participate in the community and show that the company is a good corporate citizen.**
Advantages of these actions may include:
 - Facilitate additional good will with the company's employees, enhancing pride in their employer.
 - Encourage residents of the community to be more interested in working for the company.
- **Partner with other organizations (e.g., educational institutions, professional associations, civic associations, other companies, government agencies, interest/advocacy groups) to facilitate equal employment initiatives generally.** Such partnerships do not have to be narrowly focused on the specific equal employment opportunity interests of the particular participating company, but may be for the good of equal employment opportunity generally.
- **Consider obtaining the assistance of expert consultants.**