

HR Compliance Library, ¶42,405, What are some best practices in diversity?

EEOC task force report

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.

The EEOC has identified the following "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.

GAO identifies leading diversity practices

In *Diversity Management: Expert Identified Leading Practices and Agency Examples*, the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) identified leading diversity management practices and reviewed how ten agencies with the highest summary rankings from a 1999 government-wide survey of federal agencies' diversity management programs implemented those practices.

Diversity management was defined by the GAO as a process intended to create and maintain a positive work environment where the similarities and differences of individuals are valued, so that all can reach their potential and maximize their contributions to an organization's strategic goals and objectives. The GAO reports that experts agree the following nine practices are leading.

- **Top leadership commitment:** a vision of diversity demonstrated and communicated throughout an organization by top-level management.
- **Diversity as part of an organization's strategic plan:** a diversity strategy and plan that are developed and aligned with the organization's strategic plan.
- **Diversity linked to performance:** the understanding that a more diverse and inclusive work environment can yield greater productivity and help improve individual and organizational performance.
- **Measurement:** a set of quantitative and qualitative measure of the impact of various aspects of an overall diversity program.
- **Accountability:** the means to ensure that leaders are responsible for diversity by linking their performance assessment and compensation to the progress of diversity initiatives.
- **Succession planning:** an ongoing strategic process for identifying and developing a diverse pool of talent for an organization's potential future leaders.
- **Recruitment:** the process of attracting a supply of qualified, diverse applicants for employment.
- **Employee involvement:** the contribution of employees in driving diversity throughout an organization.
- **Diversity training:** organizational efforts to inform and educate management and staff about diversity.

The text of GAO-05-90 (Jan. 14, 2005), *Diversity Management: Expert Identified Leading Practices and Agency Examples*, is available on the Internet at <http://www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-05-90>. The report contains numerous examples of how federal agencies have implemented these leading practices.