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**OFFICE OF THE ILLINOIS STATE FIRE MARSHAL
DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION
EXTERNAL PARTNER OUTREACH**

(Winter/Spring 2022 Edition)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. Introduction Page 4

II. OSFM DEI History.....Page 4

III. Establishing DEI InfrastructurePage 5

IV. Events/PlansPage 6

V. ResourcesPage 7

VI. Appendices Page 9

Disclaimer. This document is intended to serve as a helpful guide for our external Illinois fire service partners as they consider forming their own diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) programs. This guidance is not intended to be utilized for commercial purposes or for private financial gain. We are not subject matter experts and accordingly make no representations, warranties, or guarantees (express or implied) about the information shared or the resources identified in this document. Our information was obtained from public and private sources. We offer this information as informational reference material only. The OSFM DEI logo is an official registered service mark of the Office of the Illinois State Fire Marshal. Any unauthorized use of that logo is strictly prohibited.

I. Introduction

This *Winter/Spring 2022 edition of the Office of the State Fire Marshal Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) External Partner Outreach* is our latest installment of information for Illinois fire departments and our industry partners. The fire service is a great and noble profession. It is rooted in tradition and history. Notwithstanding the inherent dangers and challenges that it can bring, being a firefighter is a personally satisfying endeavor. It can provide both professional and financial security. Our employing departments/organizations invest in us and reward us for our service. It's a wonderful lifestyle and privilege. That being said, we must also acknowledge that not all of our fire service brothers and sisters or public stakeholders have achieved the benefits of wealth, opportunity, and privilege due to their race, ethnicity, or gender. Discrimination remains a persistent loose thread in our societal fabric. We at the OSFM recognize the strength that DEI brings to an organization. Accordingly, we as an agency embrace diversity by accepting individuals and groups from all races, ethnicities, religions, cultures, genders, and orientations. We strive to achieve equal access for all of our employees and external stakeholders. We're leveraging the talents of our diverse staff by including them at critical junctures during agency tasks. In the coming years, the OSFM will advance this important issue with our external fire service partners while simultaneously conducting our vital public safety mission.

II. OSFM DEI History

In the summer of 2020, we developed formal agency DEI policy. (See: Appendix B). The State Fire Marshal designated the Deputy Director to oversee all DEI planning and implementation efforts. The OSFM executive team then received preliminary DEI training from both public and private sector sources. In October we created a comprehensive agency DEI Action Plan that is vertically aligned with the expectations and policies of the Governor. The plan addresses both internal and external objectives. The plan includes additional focus and more resources for the recruitment, hiring, professional development, and retention of agency employees from historically marginalized and underrepresented groups (internal focus). The DEI Action Plan is also horizontally aligned with our agency Affirmative Action Plan (AAP). We also created an employee DEI working/peer group to discuss DEI centric issues during monthly meetings. That group can also make policy recommendations to the State Fire Marshal, and was instrumental in the design of our agency DEI logo which has been registered with the Illinois Secretary of State as an official agency service mark. We also began DEI discussions with our fire service partners (IFCA, IFSA, IFSI to name a few) to assist with their awareness and recruiting efforts so that Illinois fire departments personnel rosters reflect the demographics of the communities that they serve and are properly equipped to address this very important subject matter within their respective organizations (external focus). In June of

2021, select members of our executive team completed a newly established DEI “Train the Trainer” T3 course provided by the Illinois Department of Human Rights (IDHR). Our Deputy Director also began regularly scheduled status meetings with the State’s Chief Equity Officer and her staff. During the summer of 2021, we incorporated DEI messaging on our social media platforms, agency outreach communications, and in our agency hiring documents. Our DEI efforts continue to educate and inspire staff and our external stakeholder/industry partners.

III. Establishing DEI Infrastructure

In order to achieve diversity, equity, and inclusion within your fire service organization we suggest that you consider establishing supportive DEI infrastructure. Here are some of the things that you might consider:

- 1) Assess your organization from a DEI perspective and utilize employee *pulse* surveys (example – *Survey Monkey*) to gain valuable insight and feedback (See: sample survey questions in Appendix A);
- 2) Assess your organization’s *access to resources* from a DEI perspective (examples – access to services, hiring, membership, training, and certification);
- 3) Assess your leadership team and ensure that they have received some form of formal DEI training;
- 4) Prepare your own DEI policy (See: our DEI policy in Appendix B);
- 5) Create your own DEI Action Plan and ensure that it is vertically aligned with your local authority or organization’s policy, and that it is horizontally aligned with your Affirmative Action Plan (AAP). (See: Sample DEI action plan in Appendix C);
- 6) Implement your plan, maintain accountability of those responsible for plan objectives, and conduct periodic assessments to measure your performance;
- 7) Share your plan objectives/or experiences with other external partners (examples – include DEI in your public meetings/conference agendas, or share your DEI achievements on your organizations’ website); and

8) Consider establishing an employee peer group where firefighters can freely discuss DEI centric subject matter without fear of retaliation or retribution (a safe zone for everyone no matter what their opinions or beliefs may be regarding race, ethnicity, or identity).

IV. Events/Plans

1. Our agency DEI Employee Working Group (*employee peer group*) meetings have proven to be a very successful way of discussing DEI centric subject matter in a safe and judgment free forum. These monthly meetings provide valuable insight and unique perspectives that will greatly assist our agency as we develop additional DEI policies moving forward.

2. In February, we completed our internal delivery of DEI orientation to all agency personnel. The feedback from our staff regarding this training has been extremely positive.

3. We have also initiated discussions with some of our industry partners for the purposes of jointly hosting a DEI symposium for fire officials in 2022. We held our first planning group meeting in February. We truly appreciate this genuine support from our fire service partners. This proposed virtual event will be the first of many opportunities for the Illinois fire service to openly discuss DEI centric subject matter in a collaborative way. Future events will be hosted by other fire service organizations within the planning group. In this way, we continue the diversity conversation and advance DEI for the betterment of our industry.

V. Resources

1. Link to DEI Calendar: <https://www.diversityresources.com/2022-diversity-calendar/>
2. Video link about privilege and advantage: <https://youtu.be/4K5fbQ1-zps>
3. Link to an article about tolerance and white privilege: <https://www.tolerance.org/magazine/fall-2018/what-is-white-privilege-really>
4. Link to DEI concept of *intersectionality*: <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/07/diversity-inclusion-equality-intersectionality/>
5. Link to racial-inequity within the fire service: <https://info.lexipol.com/racial-inequity-in-the-fire-service>
6. Link to the benefits of bringing diversity into the fire service: <https://www.columbiasouthern.edu/blog/april-2021/diversity-in-the-fire-service>
7. Link to understanding transgender: <https://transequality.org/about-transgender>
8. Link to a recent transgender bathroom case: [Illinois court sides with transgender woman in her 10-year battle with Hobby Lobby over the right to use the women's restroom at work](#)
9. Link to a DEI Glossary of terms: https://www.diversitybestpractices.com/sites/diversitybestpractices.com/files/attachments/2020/10/dei_glossary_of_inclusive_terms_updated_for_2020_1.pdf
10. Link to a study about bullying in the firehouse based on race, gender, and sexual identity: <https://commons.erau.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=https://scholar.google.com/&httpsredir=1&article=1435&context=publication>

11. Link to article about Asian American history law signed by Governor Pritzker: [Asian American history law aims 'to continue to tell those stories and keep them alive'](#)
12. Suggested reading: Airton, L. (2018). *Gender: Your guide: A gender-friendly primer on what to know, what to say, and what to do in the new gender culture.* Simon and Schuster.
13. Suggested reading: McIntosh, P. (1988). *White privilege: Unpacking the invisible knapsack.*
14. Suggested reading: Stone, D., Heen, S., & Patton, B. (2010). *Difficult conversations: How to discuss what matters most.* Penguin.
15. Suggested reading: Nikole Hannah-Jones & New York Times Magazine (2021). *The 1619 Project.*
16. Link to the Office of the State Fire Marshal DEI Glossary: <https://www2.illinois.gov/sites/sfm/SFMDocuments/Documents/DEI%20Glossary.pdf>
17. Link to the Office of the State Fire Marshal DEI webpage: <https://www2.illinois.gov/sites/sfm/About/Pages/OSFM-DEI.aspx>

The above resources reflect a sample of DEI information that is available through various open sources. We urge you to conduct your own additional research in this regard. The OSFM will continue to provide DEI information to the Illinois fire service as it becomes available to us. You may also want to consider obtaining formal DEI centric training from the private sector.

VI. Appendices

Appendix A – Sample DEI *pulse* Survey Questions

DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION QUESTIONNAIRE/SURVEY

1. What does workplace diversity mean to you?
2. What does workplace equity mean to you?
3. What does workplace inclusion mean to you?
4. Do you understand that discussing diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) can be uncomfortable, but that that the goal is to get *comfortable with the uncomfortable*?
5. On a scale of 1 to 5 (one being *needs substantial improvement* and five being the *very good*), how are we as an organization doing with *Diversity* (acceptance of all identifiable groups)?
6. On a scale of 1 to 5 (one being *needs substantial improvement* and five being the *very good*), how are we as an organization doing with *Equity* (access for all identifiable groups)?
7. On a scale of 1 to 5 (one being *needs substantial improvement* and five being the *very good*), how are we as an organization doing with *Inclusion* (meaningful participation by all identifiable groups)?
8. What specific DEI goals should we as an organization be pursuing?

9. Do you have an interest in serving on our DEI committee?

10. Do you have an interest in participating in our employee DEI peer discussion group?

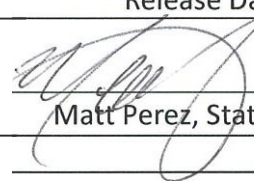
Appendix B – OSFM DEI Policy, dated 7/23/2020 (edited for formatting)

State of Illinois
Office of the State Fire Marshal Administration
Policy



Release Date: 7/23/2020

Subject: OSFM Affirmation of Diversity and
Commitment to Inclusion Policy


Matt Perez, State Fire Marshal

I. PURPOSE:

To clearly establish the commitment of the Office of the State Fire Marshal to value and pursue diversity among our Agency staff. The outward manifestation of this pursuit will be an Agency Working Group within which a spirit of inclusion will be cultivated, and differences will be seen as strengths.

II. GENERAL:

Diversity refers to the specific traits and characteristics that make people unique, such as race, ethnicity, gender or sexual orientation. Inclusion involves empowering and encouraging those people to work together in a collaborative way in furtherance of the organization's mission. When diversity and inclusion are truly embraced, organizational success is inevitable.

The Office of the State Fire Marshal recognizes diversity as a strength, and sees inclusion as a way to leverage that strength into action. In furtherance of that goal, a Diversity and Inclusion Working Group will be established within the OSFM to recognize the differences that the Agency's staff brings to our mission, and to exercise inclusion of all our separate and disparate elements as a means by which to tap the potential value inherent in that diversity.

III. POLICY:

1. An OSFM Diversity and Inclusion Working Group {DIWG} will be established to specifically address issues associated with diversity, including issues rooted in race, culture, gender or gender identity. This working group will be open to all OSFM employees, but shall at its core be made up of these individuals:

- A. OSFM Deputy Director Alix Armstead, Chairperson;
 - B. Special Projects/EEO/Human Resources Manager Jodi Schrage;
 - C. Senior Policy Advisor Fred Schneller;
 - D. Agency Collective Bargaining Representative Ronny Wickenhauser;
 - E. One Union Steward each from the AFSCME, IFPE, and IBBM collective bargaining units;
 - F. One minority collective bargaining unit employee from each OSFM division ("Minority" for DIWG membership purposes includes racial/ethnic minorities and representatives of gender and transgender OSFM employees. Additional members can be added in the future as circumstances warrant);
 - G. One minority merit compensation employee from each OSFM division, and
 - H. One minority OSFM division manager/supervisor representative.
- 2. This forum will provide a safe haven for frank and authentic discussion without fear of reprisal or retribution and will be a vehicle for our Agency to acknowledge and address the systemic inequalities that are not just an artifact of the past, but in some forms still permeate the present. The work of this group will assist the Agency in identifying biases that often undermine diversity and inclusion, and will further normalize the practice of discussing such issues openly to ensure that all voices within the OSFM are heard.
 - 3. The DIWG will serve exclusively in an advisory capacity, and neither employee disciplinary-related actions nor matters subject to collective bargaining discussions will be appropriate meeting agenda items.
 - 4. D[]WG meetings will be open to any OSFM employees who wish to attend.

-End of Policy-

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Appendix C – Sample DEI Action Plan

DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION AGENCY ACTION PLAN

Goal 1: All organization members and external partners understand and co-exist in a culture that embraces the principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion.					
OBJECTIVES	OUTCOMES AND ACTIONS (STRATEGIES/TASKS)	TIMELINE	INDIVIDUAL / GROUP ACCOUNTABILITY	PERFORMANCE MEASURE	PROGRESS REPORT*
Develop agency DEI policy.	DEI Policy: -Draft DEI agency policy and conduct <i>pulse</i> survey for agency staff feedback.	September 2021 – December 2021	Chief/Assistant Chief/Secretary	-% of members/staff who have received the memorialized DEI policy.	-Policy completed xx, December 2021; survey completed October 2021
Develop DEI Action Plan	DEI Plan: -Draft DEI Action Plan.	January 2022 – March 2022	Assistant Chief/Secretary	-% of members/staff who have received the memorialized DEI Action Plan.	Drafting plan text. Project completion February 2022.
Incorporate DEI into organization’s strategic plan	-Memorialize DEI into agency’s strategic plan.	April 2022– June 2022	Chief/Assistant Chief/Secretary	-% of members/staff who have received the revised plan.	No progress at this time.
Ensure DEI policies remain relevant and responsive	-Conduct annual assessment of all internally focused agency DEI policies and procedures.	Summer 2022	-Chief/Assistant Chief	-%of completed reviews/feedback from respective members or staff.	-TBD

***Progress Key:** Blue = Neutral – Placeholder to confirm progress later; Red = No progress yet made (What do we need to start?); Yellow = some progress but changes may be necessary (What do we need to revise?); Green = Already operational component of shift towards diversity, equity, and inclusion (What do we need to do to maintain?)



-End of Document-

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