

Individual Assignment #2

Comprehensive Diversity Plan for the Youth Learning Institute

Toby R. Kirkland

Clemson University

Author Note

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Toby Kirkland,  
Youth Learning Institute, 698 Concord Church Road, Pickens, SC 29671. E-mail:

[tobyk@clemson.edu](mailto:tobyk@clemson.edu)

### **Chosen Topic**

I chose to develop a comprehensive diversity plan for the Youth Learning Institute (YLI) at Clemson University. I chose YLI because I am currently employed as the Associate Executive Director of Administrative Services at YLI and am in a unique position to affect change in the organization.

## **Comprehensive Diversity Plan**

### **The Purpose of a Diversity Plan at YLI**

As the culture in the United States becomes more diverse, the Youth Learning Institute recognizes the value of increasing its intercultural competency to continue to be a leader among youth-serving organizations. According to Kreitz (2007), “Demographic changes in the workforce and customer populations, combined with globalized markets and international competition, are increasing the amount of diversity organizations must manage, both internally and externally.” As the population that we serve changes, we are committed to understanding that population and developing our employees to better serve them. Additionally, as a self-funded youth organization, YLI recognizes the economic impact of a diverse and interculturally competent workforce.

### **A Basis for the Youth Learning Institute Diversity Plan**

As a basis for developing its diversity plan, YLI applied the U.S. Government Accountability Office’s (US GAO) report on “Diversity Management: Expert-identified Leading Practices and Agency Examples.” Using the best practices listed and defined below, YLI has developed a comprehensive diversity plan to improve the overall intercultural competency of the organization.

The GAO cited the following nine best practices in their report:

- 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 measures 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.

### **YLI's Commitment to Diversity**

The Youth Learning Institute and its leadership are committed to the belief that diversity is key to the continued success of the organization. Furthermore, YLI believes that its economic growth is directly tied to its ability to implement a sound diversity strategy. With that in mind, YLI and its leadership have adopted the economic philosophy of the Center for American Progress and its Top 10 Economic Facts of Diversity in the Workplace as listed below.

1. A diverse workforce drives economic growth.
2. A diverse workforce can capture a greater share of the consumer market.
3. Recruiting from a diverse pool of candidates means a more qualified workforce.
4. A diverse and inclusive workforce helps businesses avoid employee turnover costs.
5. Diversity fosters a more creative and innovative workforce.
6. Businesses need to adapt to our changing nation to be competitive in the economic market.
7. Diversity is a key aspect of entrepreneurialism.
8. Diversity in business ownership, particularly among women of color, is key to moving our economy forward.
9. Diversity in the workplace is necessary to create a competitive economy in a globalized world.
10. Diversity in the boardroom is needed to leverage a company's full potential.

*More detailed descriptions of these philosophies can be found at <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/labor/news/2012/07/12/11900/the-top-10-economic-facts-of-diversity-in-the-workplace>.*

### **Diversity is Integral to the Mission and Success of YLI**

YLI has established the mantra that “youth development is the foundation for workforce development.” We are more conscious and committed than ever before to ensuring that every program we develop and operate offers young people a chance to build skills for successful futures. Young people need to be prepared for a more technical and global economy. Based on the economic factors of diversity listed above, YLI believes that this vision cannot be fully realized without a comprehensive diversity plan. Everything we do is in the spirit of serving young people with our best sites, facilities, people and resources. It is our hope that this report reflects our commitment to excellence in youth development.

## Measuring Diversity at YLI

YLI is committed to measuring diversity using research-based methods in such a way that diversity can be evaluated within the institution and improved upon. Additionally, YLI understands the need for adopting a comprehensive tool that has been tested in corporate and educational environments. The method for evaluation of cultural diversity that YLI has chosen is the Development Model of Intercultural Sensitivity or DMIS (Bennett, 1986). The Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) is a six-stage model created by Milton Bennett (1986). The model can be used as a tool for moving one toward greater intercultural sensitivity. The first three stages of the model describe an ethnocentric viewpoint. This means that an individual would consider one's own culture to be the central factor in understanding another's culture. These stages are denial, defense, and minimization. The last three stages are ethnorelative. This perspective is based on the concept that "cultures can only be understood relative to one another and that particular behavior can only be understood within a cultural context" (Bennett, 1993, p. 46). These stages are acceptance, adaptation, and integration. Considering the fact that the populations we work with at YLI are more diverse than ever, the DMIS model can be a highly effective tool for understanding the level of one's intercultural sensitivity. In an effort to effectively measure where one would fall on the DMIS model, YLI has elected to use the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI), developed by Mitchell Hammer as a means to measure the cultural diversity of individual employees and the organization as a whole. The process for implementation of the Intercultural Development Inventory at YLI is listed below.

1. A Diversity Advisor will be appointed whose goal will be to create a more culturally diverse environment at YLI. Using the IDI system by Mitchell Hammer, the Diversity Advisor will attend an IDI qualifying seminar to:
  - a. Receive training and access to use the Intercultural Conflict Style Inventory®
  - b. Gain proficiency in using the IDI for increasing intercultural competence for individuals, teams, and organizations
  - c. Learn how the IDI differs from traditional measures of intercultural competence
  - d. Review the rigorous cross-cultural validity and reliability research protocols used in developing the IDI
  - e. Learn how to interpret individual and group IDI profiles of intercultural competence
  - f. Practice giving IDI feedback in supportive, role-play scenarios
2. At the annual November team meeting, prior to annual staff evaluations, the Diversity Advisor will administer the IDI test to all director-level employees and above. Additionally, the Diversity Advisor will supply the directors with IDI testing materials to be distributed and completed by all YLI staff and submitted to the Diversity Guide before January 1, 2015.
3. After submission of the IDI tests, the Diversity Advisor will compile and review the individual results and prepare the individual reports for distribution.

4. During the February Team meeting, the Diversity Advisor will report the results of the IDI Group Report with director-level staff and instruct directors to return the individual IDI reports to their employees for evaluation.
5. Using the Intercultural Development Plan, instruct employees to review their IDI and set goals for improving their intercultural competency based on their individual assessments. These goals should be discussed and refined with the employee's direct supervisor so that expectations can be clearly agreed upon.
6. Have directors collect the improvement plans and return them to the Diversity Advisor by March 1, 2015. This will become part of the employee's yearly evaluation.

### **Accountability and Diversity**

As part of the commitment to improving attitudes toward diversity, the Youth Learning Institute recognizes that the organization should ensure that leaders are responsible for diversity by linking their performance assessment and compensation to the progress of diversity initiatives as recommended by the U.S. Government Accountability Office's (US GAO) report on "Diversity Management: Expert-identified Leading Practices and Agency Examples." Employees should be aware that one of the factors of successful evaluation and possible increased compensation is the completion of the IDI and the successful implementation of the agreed-upon goals in that are submitted to the Diversity Advisor.

### **Growing a Diverse Workforce**

The Youth Learning Institute recognizes that increasing the diversity and intercultural sensitivity of its staff is a key factor in its future success. YLI wants employees to clearly understand the path to success and promotion. In an effort to improve the diversity and intercultural sensitivity of the staff at YLI, promotional consideration will be given to those employees who, in addition to completing the tasks assigned to them in their Plan of Work, also show the desire to increase their intercultural sensitivity and show leadership and growth in this area. The markers that will be used for employee's intercultural sensitivity will be clearly stated in the employee's yearly evaluation and the individual IDI that will be part of the evaluation process.

### **Recruiting a Diverse and Interculturally Competent Workforce**

As part of a top-ranked University and leader among youth-serving organizations, the Youth Learning Institute recognizes its responsibility to recruit qualified and diverse employees. Therefore, as part of its hiring and recruitment process, YLI has chosen to implement IDI testing to all candidates for employment at director-level and above. Before a position will be offered to a potential employee, the supervisor that will make the hire and the Diversity Advisor will meet to discuss the Intercultural Competency of the potential employee and make sure that they feel the employee is compatible with the diversity goals of the organization.

### **Diversity Training and Professional Development**

The Youth Learning Institute, as part of the quarterly professional development, will include diversity training to its employees. The training will be developed and presented by the Diversity Advisor and will be approved by the Executive Director and the Associate Executive Director team. The diversity training will attempt to move employees toward the ethnorelative stages of the DMIS and improve the overall intercultural competency of the organization.

## References

- Bennett, M. (1986). A developmental approach to training for intercultural sensitivity. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 10 (2), 179-195.
- Hammer, M., (2014). *The Roadmap to Intercultural Competence Using the IDI*. Retrieved from <http://idiinventory.com>
- Hammer, M. R., & Bennett, M. J. (1998). *The Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) manual*. Portland, OR: Intercultural Communication Institute.
- Kerby, S., Burns, C., (2012, July 12). *The Top 10 Economic Facts of Diversity in the Workplace*. Retrieved from <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/labor/news/2012/07/12/11900/the-top-10-economic-facts-of-diversity-in-the-workplace/>
- U.S. Government Accountability Office, *Diversity Management: Expert- Identified Leading Practices and Agency Examples*, GAO-05-90, Washington, DC: GAO, 2005, <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d0590.pdf> (accessed February 13, 2007).