

## Racial Equity Promising Practices Profile Form: 9/18/2018



### *Imagine Housing: Cultural Competency*

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**What is cultural competency:** *A set of behaviors, policies, and attitudes which form a system or agency which allows cross-cultural groups to effectively work professionally in situations.*

Read more: <http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/cultural-competency.html>

**Why cultural competency:** “It’s not just about diversity; it’s about diversity and inclusion. And getting a sense of that takes practice. It requires being put in situations that push you outside of your comfort zone.”-Katherine Lampley, Director of Office of Diversity and Inclusion at Bentley University

“When done right, it provides a unique nonjudgmental learning process to illuminate cultural differences and then generate awareness, sensitivity, and useful knowledge.” –Barry Cross Jr. Workforce Diversity Network

#### **Overview of Practice:**

**What is the essence of the promising practice?** Imagine Housing brings together knowledge about cultural competency and transform it into standards, policies and practices so that our organization may become a more effective agent of change in our community.

**Where is it being implemented or considered for implementation?** Imagine Housing is implementing cultural competency awareness and practices for our staff of 23, our board of 20, and our third-party property management team of 20.

#### **History:**

**How did the practice get started?** Imagine Housing has included cultural competency practices for some time, but formalized its commitment to cultural competency in 2013 by forming the Cultural Competency Committee (CCC). The CCC is made up of staff, board, property management, and community members.

**When was it first implemented or when will it be fully implemented?** While the practice of cultural competency was introduced at Imagine Housing some time ago, and fully committed to in 2013 with the formation of the CCC, it is an ongoing and

increasing endeavor. Cultural competence is not achievable, but is aspirational, and something to continually work on.

## **Results:**

**What are the expected results and impacts?** Imagine Housing is working towards having a diverse staff and board that is representative of the populations we serve; a fair and equitable workplace where everyone can be their authentic selves and feel respected and valued; and an organization with policies and practices that enhance diversity, inclusion, and respectful engagement with different groups.

## **What have you achieved so far? What do you plan to achieve?**

*Imagine Housing has made the following accomplishments so far:*

- Improved job description template and language, including input from a disability awareness trainer and others
- Removed the barrier of a college degree from most job descriptions
- Names and addresses are removed from resumes and cover letters before giving them to hiring managers
- Broadened and diversified job posting sites
- Use of King County Anti-Bias training video and handout by interviewers before each round of interviews
- Addition of cultural competency questions to job interviews in every department
- Staff, Board and Property Management team attended RACE Workshops & Exhibit at Pacific Science Center
- Anti-Racism Staff and Board trainings by Cultures Connecting and Robin DiAngelo
- Building Community Through Equity & Inclusion training by Fleur Larsen and Keonna Jackson, HR Equity Training
- Staff training on good interview techniques, especially with respect to cultural competency and disability
- Staff attended trainings on "Hiring and Retaining a Diverse Workforce"
- Regular cultural competency trainings and exercises at staff and Board meetings
- Hosted community film event on Homelessness
- Developed Organizational Diversity Policy
- Committee brings additional resources and articles to staff and Board on racism and equity
- Purchase office supplies from minority and women business owners whenever possible, as identified in Staples Advantage program website

*Imagine Housing plans to do the following:*

- Create organizational values around Racial Equity and Inclusion at Board & Staff Retreat October 20

- Work to ensure that a racial equity lens is being used across all departments and in all parts of our business in policy and practice, not just Human Resources
- Continue to bring race and equity training to staff, board, and property management
- Add more board members to the CCC, especially people of color
- Increase the racial diversity of staff and board

**How could it impact racial equity? Has it affected day-to-day practices in the organization?**

Imagine Housing is reaping many rewards as we become more culturally competent, including:

- A wider pool of diverse job applicants with the barrier of a college degree removed from most jobs, with posting in broader and more diverse places, and with names and addresses removed from resumes and cover letters
- An engaged workforce and greater employee retention because employees feel valued and respected, and know they can show up to work as their authentic selves
- A more culturally aware and less biased staff, board, and property management team that looks through an equity lens as it develops policies and practices across the organization

**Keys to Success**

**List the action steps followed in carrying out the practice.**

- Read the HDC Race and Equity Toolkit; take the Organizational Assessment 20 Questions to see where your organization is in this work. Be honest. Start wherever you need to start.
- Start small, and keep doing the work. Develop your organization's commitment to this work, in a diversity policy, or a set of company values.
- Look at your job descriptions and make sure they are welcoming to everyone, including people different than you. Remove any artificial barriers like college degrees or a set number of years of experience. Use gender neutral language.
- Post in a wide variety of places, including listservs and colleges and universities.
- Remove names and addresses from resumes and cover letters before giving to hiring managers.
- Have regular trainings, a library of relevant books for staff to borrow, cover cultural competency topics at staff and board meetings.
- Review employee handbook, organizational policies, and board policies regularly to ensure they promote racial equity, diversity and inclusion.

**What measures have been taken to make this effort a success?**

- Regular meetings of the CCC to develop goals and necessary steps to achieve those goals. The CCC brings ideas and plans to the staff meetings, and gets buy-in from leadership to bring in trainers, etc.
- Budget for cultural competency trainings twice a year for staff. Staff bring the trainings to the board meetings since board members are often unable to attend trainings during a weekday.

### **What are the important factors of implementation?**

- Get senior level buy-in and support. Make sure senior management understands the business case for cultural competency and how it links to the organization's strategic goals.
- Identify how management will be held accountable for supporting and engaging cultural competency. This could include ongoing dialogue with staff regarding cultural competency, training for staff, and holding direct reports accountable for their individual actions related to fostering a diverse and inclusive workplace.
- Instituting a Cultural Competency/Diversity and Inclusion committee that meets regularly and brings trainings to staff and board, and reviews and develops policies promoting workplace cultural competency.

**What makes this practice attractive and worth trying? How could this work for other member organizations?** This practice is reasonable because it can be done incrementally and much of it at little or no cost. There is wealth of free resources online, on You Tube, etc. The HDC Racial Equity Toolkit is a great starting place, meeting organizations where they are, and outlining what next steps should be.

### **Resources**

**How much? What are the anticipated total resources (people, money, time) necessary for this practice and are there likely sources of external support?** Imagine Housing has been doing this work since 2013 with little budget and resources. A small committee of perhaps 5-7 has done the lion's share of the work. This year our budget was about \$6500 for cultural competency, for a staff of 23, board of 20, and property management staff of 20.

It would be very helpful to get a grant for training, but we have not had time to pursue this. Our grant writer is busy enough getting grants for operations and supportive services, but we should probably look into this.