

TOWARDS A MORE EQUITABLE, DIVERSE, AND INCLUSIVE WORKFORCE - THE NASA SSERVI EDI FOCUS GROUP. J. Grier¹, G. Schmidt², and the NASA SSERVI EDI Focus Group³ ¹Planetary Science Institute (jgrier@psi.edu), ²NASA AMES, ³Focus Group Member Affiliations

Commitment and Approach: The NASA SSERVI Initiative has expressed a deep commitment to enabling positive change in equity, diversity, and inclusion, as detailed in the statement by SSERVI Director Greg Schmidt.

In response SSERVI has created the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Focus Group to provide a framework to support learning, sharing, support, and change. The EDI Focus Group considers both large, national-scale and small local-scale issues in science and exploration of The Moon and asteroids that are related to equity, ethics, diversity, inclusion, and social justice. Examples of these issues include: diverse workforce development; equitable, beneficial, and just uses of space for all humankind, creating and maintaining a supportive professional culture, and inclusive representation of humans in science and exploration including race, disability, sexual orientation, gender, age, socio-economic status, and geographic distribution.

Our overall goal is to identify and undertake specific actions to manifest immediate positive change within our local work environments and in space science and exploration as a whole.

Organization and Goals: The EDI Focus Group meets every other week. The EDI membership is ~60 people, and continues to grow. Participation in the group is open to all interested members (science, industry, government, university, non-profit, sociology, educators, science communicators, etc.) of the broader lunar, asteroid, and human exploration communities.

Under the guidance of SSERVI Central, the group is led by Dr. JA Grier of the Planetary Science Institute. Grier participates in SSERVI via the TREX node, as a scientist, educator, and EDI specialist.

Goals and Details from Our Survey. The Focus Group's general mandate was given in Dr. Schmidt's statement. The specific details of how the group will achieve that vision are under development. The group is undertaking a self-survey to uncover its members' needs, resources, motivations, desired actions, and definitions of success.

Our initial responses include the following -

When asked "*Why did you join the EDI Focus Group?*" members shared thoughts including: to follow through on personal commitments and dedication to change, to learn the nature and scope of the landscape of EDI work being conducted across the profession

(who is doing what, where), to learn the necessary background (professional development) to do effective work in EDI, to connect/share/support others doing this work, to bring information back to their home institution/ situation, to take action to advance their own goals, the group's goals, and the larger goals in EDI of the profession and the nation.

When asked "*What do you want this group to accomplish?*" members said they wanted to identify and develop: best practices to use and share, tangible solutions to identified issues, specific actions to take at all scales, and momentum and durability to create lasting change. They want empowered to then move forward – using the best practices to take action, and to empower others to take action, so that the result is measurable, robust, authentic change.

When asked "*How will you know if we succeed?*" members said they want to identify and then meet both quantifiable and more qualitative metrics.

Measurable and quantifiable metrics include: funding organizations will fund/increase funding for this and related efforts, representation in our fields/institutions will reflect the demographics of our larger society across all levels, Focus Group members will continue to attend meetings and membership will grow, issues such as harassment will be responded to quickly and with appropriate consequences, specific deliverables (such as a best practices document) will be produced and disseminated, and other issues will see positive change such as more diverse panels, more support for early career scientists, gender neutral bathrooms at conferences and workplaces, etc.

More qualitative metrics include: underrepresented groups experiencing: a sense of inclusion and belonging, perceptions that the field is a healthy and safe place, a feeling that they can be their full and authentic selves within professional spaces, Also included are a desire that: the larger community see this group as important/ leading/effective, and that all members feel positive about their involvement.

Learning and Training: As detailed in the previous section, our group and our leadership share in a consistent and related set of motivations that align with a framework of:

1. Commit
2. Learn and Train
3. Connect and Plan
4. Act and Support
5. Share and Disseminate

One avenue that combines both learning and connecting are short presentations offered at each Focus Group meeting. Presentations can be by Focus Group members, or by specialists invited from within the planetary community, or who are subject experts such as educators, communicators, or social scientists.

Presentations have included: Dr. Abbie Grace discussing the indigenous Maori people of New Zealand, Dr. Beck Strauss sharing the results of their white paper on the Non-Binary fraction in planetary science, Dr. Moses Milazzo discussing the EDI white papers and future direction of the EDI Working Group, and Dr. Ryan Watkins sharing a survey regarding the issues and needs of parents in STEM.

Learning and training are an ongoing process. Each group member is at a different place on their own path to understanding the nature of EDI, and how to make appropriate, long-lasting, and far-reaching change. EDI work requires dedication, emotional investment, and authentic engagement. It is, as they say, not a sprint but a marathon where we will all support and encourage one another to reach our goals.

Connecting and Planning: Our initial steps in connecting with one another, with the larger community, and in planning our activities, include looking at: our survey, work tools, conferences, and partnerships.

Survey Our self-survey offers us an excellent means of establishing natural connections and. Members can see who has similar interests, and also see who has the information or resources necessary to help them meet their goals. We can begin to strategize around common needs, available resources, and targets of change where we can be the most effective.

Tools In addition to our use of Zoom for our virtual meetings, we are considering what tools to use to facilitate communications and as platforms for doing our work. This might include sharing documents on Google, texting via Slack or Discord, creating livestreams on Twitch or YouTube, and interacting on social media platforms such as Twitter or Facebook. We and our audiences make use of different combinations of tools, and we need to be flexible and responsive. Tools must be accessible and effective, and not create further barriers to involvement, especially for disabled people.

Conferences Members of our group are strategizing meeting and conference attendance. Some members will be attending minority society conferences such as SACNAS, or socially relevant conferences such as FiyahCon, while others will attend DPS, AGU, or GSA meetings. In this way the Focus Group serves as a touchstone - ideas/ resources/ needs are taken out to various communities, and new ideas/ resources/ needs

are then brought back to be shared within the Focus Group.

Partnerships We are coordinating with similar groups and initiatives in our community (i.e. the Lunar Exploration Advisory Group LEAG, the Lunar Science Innovation Consortium LSIC, and the EDI Working Group) to maximize our combined effectiveness and impact. We will be reaching out to professional societies such as the AAS, DPS, AGU, Society for Black Physicists, and SACNAS to exchange information, resources, and opportunities. We will also be reaching out to other aspects of the space exploration community such as industry and policy organizations. These aspects of our community are key to addressing systemic workforce issues and EDI policy regarding societies, employment, and the larger sphere of space exploration policy.

Moving Forward: As we solidify plans both large and small, our group will begin to move forward on actionable items. We expect the following:

- The development of a best practices document leveraging existing recommendations made by social scientists and minority organizations.
- Defining the scope of our needs for evaluation, including a plan to correct our course as we progress, and ensure we reach pre-defined goals.
- Completing our self-survey and identifying resources and needs within the group. Implementing the tools necessary for members to connect and support each other to take action in their local environments.
- Taking on a specific, large scale project or endeavor that will both meet smaller-scale goals, while creating dramatic positive change in one or more aspects of diversity, inclusion, and equity.
- We will position ourselves as a leader within the community, empowering ourselves and each other to meet our EDI goals. This may include organizing/hosting a joint meeting of partners to catalyze collaborations and jump-start initiatives.

Acknowledgments and Links: The group meets every other week via Zoom, and conducts interim business via email. To request to be added, visit –

<https://groups.google.com/u/0/a/psi.edu/g/edi-focus?pli=1>

The meeting Zoom link and EDI meeting calendar can be found on our focus group website –

<https://sservi.nasa.gov/focus-groups/>

The statement from Dir. Greg Schmidt –

<https://sservi.nasa.gov/articles/15083/>

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