

PNNL Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and the Power of We



How PNNL includes all voices to achieve our mission and profoundly influence our professional disciplines.

At PNNL, we are committed to fostering a work environment that fully embraces and values diversity and inclusion. By doing so, we benefit from a breadth of perspectives, insights, and experiences that enables the innovation and creativity one expects of a DOE national laboratory.

– *Steven Ashby, Laboratory Director*

PNNL is a Lab with a big mission powered by bold ideas. Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) are advantages that enable PNNL to solve big problems, find better solutions, and fuel innovation. Beyond the demographic numbers related to diversity, the Lab creates an inclusive culture by drawing on the power of “We.” The We approach means PNNL builds a culture of understanding, inclusion, and collaboration so that all voices can be heard and included in creating the best scientific discourse. The three-fold engagement of our leadership, staff, and community is the cornerstone of PNNL’s DEI approach.

LEADERSHIP LEADING THE WAY IN DEI

Laboratory senior leadership, which has evolved over the past five years to reflect the diversity of the Laboratory more closely, understands that DEI starts at the top of the organization. Each member of the leadership team sponsors a DEI group or activity at the Lab and works together to instill an inclusive culture aligned with the science and research mission. For example, in 2020 all members of the leadership team, including the Lab Director, facilitated approximately 20 open listening sessions after the death of George Floyd. These sessions allowed staff to share thoughts, concerns, and recommendations related to how PNNL addresses DEI. In addition, the Lab trained its most senior managers in how to have conversations about race so they can facilitate discussions within their divisions. The outcome of these sessions shaped the Laboratory’s DEI strategy.

INVOLVING STAFF AT ALL LEVELS OF THE DEI IMPERATIVE

Staff can engage in the DEI imperative through Employee Resource Groups (ERGs), Diversity and Inclusion Councils, and educational opportunities. The Lab has eight robust ERGs organized around racial/ethnic affinities, LGBTQ+, diverse abilities, gender, and veterans. The ERGs host speakers, lead important discussions, create resource guides, and advise leadership about important DEI issues. While the ERGs have individual memberships, ERG leadership comes together through the Laboratory Diversity and Inclusion Council to implement the Lab DEI strategy. PNNL formed Diversity and Inclusion Councils in each directorate. These staff-run councils work to implement the Lab DEI strategy at a local level with greater staff participation. Many of the local DEI programs focus on dialog and increased cultural awareness and understanding.

Increased cultural understanding is important to PNNL's We culture. To this end, the Lab continues to invest in education and resources to support staff learning. The Lab offers ongoing active bystander workshops to help staff create inclusive and psychologically safe work environments. The workshops use real-life examples through tabletop exercises and equip employees to take a stand against harassment, discrimination, and non-inclusive behavior. In addition to workshops, one of the ERGs published comprehensive guides to support transgender staff and their managers. The Laboratory recently implemented an online learning platform with hundreds of DEI resources made readily available to all staff.

ENGAGING THE COMMUNITY AS THE LARGEST AREA EMPLOYER

Community engagement is important to creating an inclusive Laboratory. As the largest employer in the area, PNNL engages the external communities in various ways. The Office of STEM Education works to build a diversity pipeline by creating local high school internships, hosting programs at high school sites, and supporting staff participation in underserved areas both locally and across the states of Washington and Oregon. PNNL fosters relationships with diversity-rich colleges and universities throughout the area via joint partnerships and professional society memberships.

Lab leadership participates in local and state groups that support DEI. The Lab Director works with a group of Washington-based CEOs proactively focused on increasing equity and inclusion for African Americans. Senior leaders engage with the Tri-Cities Diversity and Inclusion Council and local Boys and Girls Club. In addition, the Lab co-sponsors the annual Tri-City Regional Chamber of Commerce Diversity Summit, which features keynote addresses, panels, and dialog related to increasing diversity and inclusion in the Tri-Cities. The Lab plays an integral role in shaping the diversity of the community.

Diversity and inclusion of people and thought is part of our unique social fabric, and a key to our research success. It is also a daily personal commitment and expectation of all our employees. PNNL delivers on the mission for our sponsors and the nation because leaders and staff collectively value diversity, maintain equity, model inclusion, and engage community. The We approach allows all voices to be heard and ensures the Lab benefits from a breadth of perspectives and solutions. PNNL strives to integrate and sustain a diverse, equitable, and inclusive workplace so that all staff can do their best work and produce the very best results.

ABOUT PNNL

Pacific Northwest National Laboratory advances the frontiers of knowledge, taking on some of the world's greatest science and technology challenges. Distinctive strengths in chemistry, Earth sciences, biology, and data science are central to our scientific discovery mission. PNNL's research lays a foundation for innovations that advance sustainable energy through decarbonization and energy storage and enhance national security through nuclear materials and threat analyses.

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