

2021 NASCIO State IT Award Submission

State CIO Office – Special Recognition

The Music that Gets Everyone on the Dance Floor

Submitted on May 28th, on behalf of the State of Tennessee

by Strategic Technology Solutions, Department of Finance and Administration



NASCIO Award Category: State CIO Office Special Recognition

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Executive Summary

A conversation between two employees discussing the tragic murder of George Floyd highlighted the need to provide support and something tangible for diversity and inclusion to STS employees. This tragic event brought hurt, anger, and fear for many in the STS Family. As a start, the STS Executive Team worked with two employees to form the STS Diversity and Inclusion Council. It started from a conversation between two employees and grew to a council of 14 STS staff who volunteer their time in support of progressing diversity and inclusion within STS. The council's main goals are to focus on diversity and inclusion of all STS employees.

The newly formed council was, and is, decidedly focused on having a significant and positive impact within STS, and as such, cast a broad net for their charter. The areas covered include Communications and Analytics, Recruitment and Retention, as well as Inclusion and Outreach.

While the council is still relatively new, they have achieved much and created significant partnerships within state government, as well as within the Nashville community at large. Some examples of progress include identifying and providing diversity and inclusion training for staff, plans for a Diversity & Inclusion month in October of this year, the recording of the first in a series of staff/Executive Team videos, and Tableau Diversity & Inclusion Dashboard.

STS is more than excited at the prospect of broadening its horizon's in the area of Diversity and Inclusion.

The Idea

Two STS employees were discussing how the George Floyd situation made them feel and how it was impacting many at STS. As a result of their conversation, they researched the best practices followed by technology companies and organizations in the area of diversity and inclusion. The diversity issue was already on the minds of STS leadership, so when they were approached about starting the council, leadership was thrilled. It was an opportunity to not only address the concerns of the minority community, but also improve the overall employee engagement within STS. The council developed two overarching goals of diversity and inclusion.



Diversity

Achieve and sustain a workforce composed of qualified people who proportionally represent the diverse populations that contribute to the advancement of technology.

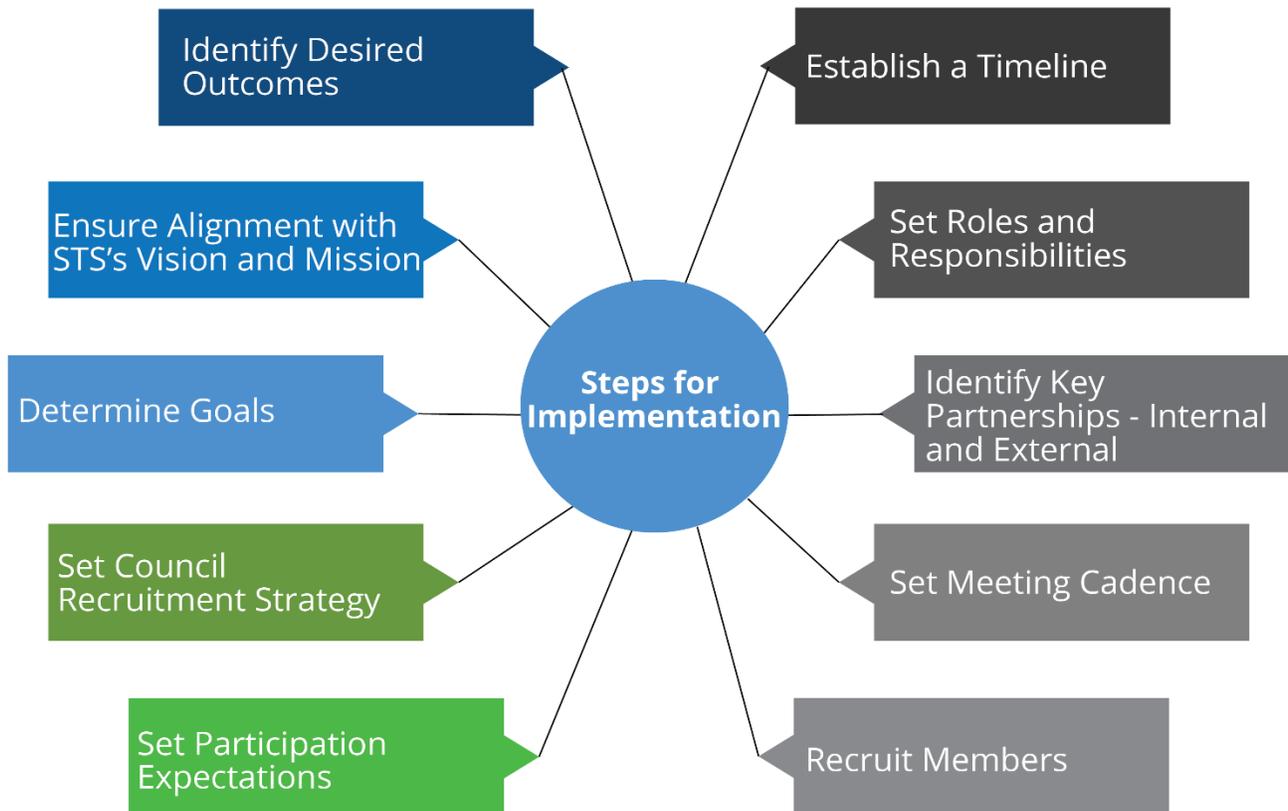


Inclusion

Achieve and maintain a professional, ethical, tolerant, and respectful work environment in which everyone can contribute to the mission according to his or her talents.

The Implementation

The idea of a Diversity and Inclusion Council was presented to the STS Executive Leadership team. As a next step, a “to do list” was developed outlining the implementation steps to bring the council to life. As a result of the meeting, a charter was developed, and implementation steps were outlined. The charter was reviewed with STS leadership, the Department of Finance and Administration and the Department of Human Resources.



After approval of the charter, work began to recruit council members. A survey was developed and circulated to all STS employees to ensure a fair, equitable and anonymous process was in place to choose council members. Once the council was formed, a kick-off meeting was held, and members were placed on the four teams based upon interest.

The Diversity and Inclusion Council teams focused on four distinct areas and tasks.



Communications and Analytics

- Perform Employee D&I Survey
- Create Monthly Newsletter
- Collect and Analyze Agency Data
- Publish Reports, Training, Highlights, Goals



Recruitment

- Research and Provide Recommendations for Eliminating Bias in:
 - Promotions, Discipline, IPP, Recruiting, Application, and Interview Processes
 - Provide Pipelines for Recruiting Minority Candidates
 - Participate in Recruiting Events
 - Provide Metrics for Measuring Success



Inclusion

- Establish Internal Training and Workshops
- Establish Diversity and Inclusion Awareness Month
- Foster the Creation of Resource Groups
- Promote Supplier Diversity



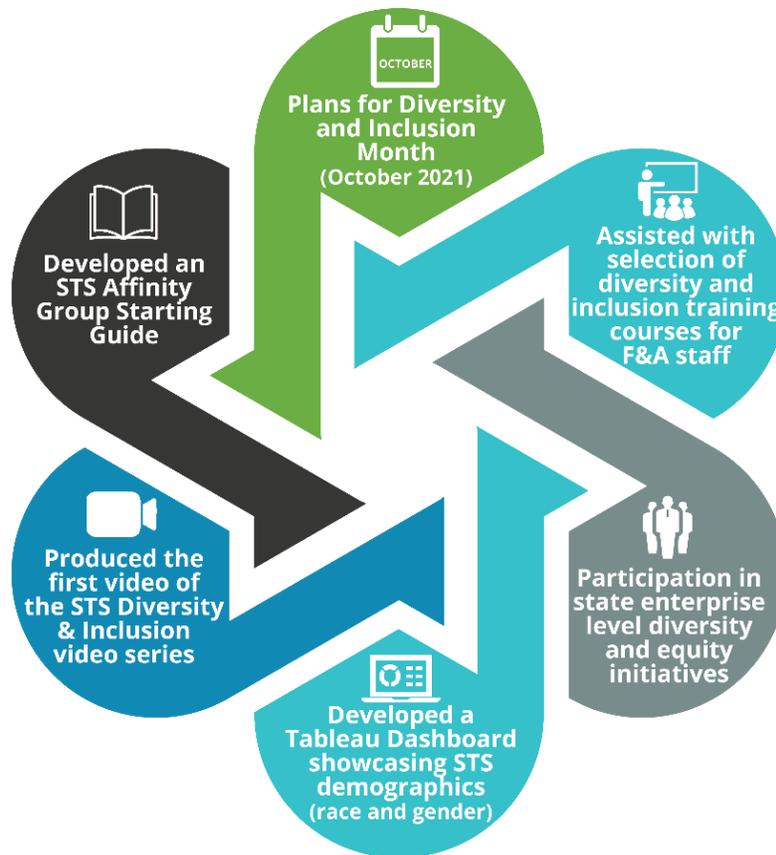
Outreach

- Create Partnerships with Community Groups with Shared Missions for the Purpose of:
 - Information sharing
 - Shared Events
 - Workshops
 - Recruitment Pipelines
 - Community Service

Each team is in constant communication with appropriate parties within state government to ensure alignment with policies, procedures, and practices. This includes enterprise initiatives such as the State of Tennessee Workforce and Equity Framework developed by the Department of Human Resources.

The Impact

The council is in the early stages of implementation. However, much work has been completed, several partnerships have been formed, and future objectives have been identified.



Partnerships

The council has formed partnerships within and outside of state government. This ensures alignment of the council's mission with all partners.

- **STS Executive Leadership Team**
The council was established by the STS Executive Leadership team. The council will continue to work closely with STS leadership.
- **STS Employee Engagement**
The relationship and communication between the council and Employee Engagement are essential towards meeting both groups objectives regarding diversity and inclusion.
- **F&A Diversity & Inclusion Team**
- **Nashville Technology Council**
- **Minority Colleges**
- **Governor's Minority Vendor Team**
- **State Contract Services Vendors**
- **Nashville Community Minority Groups**

The council has been focused on planning and is in the process of executing several tasks. The future objectives are listed below.

- Conduct a study to identify best practices supported by research.
- Create opportunities for employees to provide feedback to leadership about organizational climate and culture.
- Provide feedback and reflection to STS leadership on issues of culture, climate, equity, inclusion, and diversity in the workplace.
- Formulate recommendations for the development of policies to support diversity, inclusivity, and equity efforts and/or the modification of policies and practices that may be negatively impacting those efforts.
- Create internal organizational learning opportunities.
- Identify opportunities for the organization to engage with its broader communities.
- Serve as a communications vehicle to senior management as well as across the organization.
- Conduct the first annual self-assessment of council effectiveness.



Diversity is being
invited to the party.

Inclusion is being
asked to dance.

-Verna Myers,
diversity advocate