



## **DE&I Roadmap for Change Meeting Summary**

Now, more than ever, the energy sector is facing huge challenges to attract and retain diverse talent. The Center for Energy Workforce Development, representatives from its partner associations, and DE&I professionals from energy companies across the country convened on June 30 at the American Gas Association offices in D.C. to explore solutions to these challenges that can be adopted by individual companies and what organized industry action may be warranted. The innovative ideas will be shared through the DE&I Roadmap for Change that is scheduled for publication this fall.

The meeting was designed to provide participants a structured, solutions-based approach to tackling current obstacles that prevent the creation of truly diverse, equitable, and inclusive workplaces that meet industry needs. “In the world of DE&I, transparency is a growing priority,” said Baird McKeivitt, Director of Inclusion and Diversity at Xcel Energy. “This Roadmap can help us develop an industry standard of transparency both internally and externally.”

Guided by facilitation from Lillie Leaf, attendees tackled key topic areas of importance, ranging from leadership responsibility and accountability to career awareness initiatives in under-represented communities to recruiting and equity initiatives. In small groups, participants brainstormed challenges and solutions to a number of different prompts, utilizing attendees’ experience in their own workplaces to develop creative, effective action-focused solutions.

Throughout the day, everyone joined in to share take-aways from their small groups and best practices from their own experiences implementing DE&I strategies within their respective organizations.

Joyce Cooper, Director of Diversity and Inclusion, of Omaha Public Power District, suggested creating programs to help leaders understand and utilize their privilege to create opportunities for underrepresented members of their communities. “Historically, the energy industry has been and, in many instances, still is predominantly white and male. In creating the DE&I Roadmap for Change, white males will be instrumental in the execution and sustainability of the work. So, it will be important to engage and equip white males in the generation of solutions and to be advocates for people of color, women and members of the LGBTQIA+ community,” says Cooper.

Attendees acknowledged that one of the barriers to industry-wide DE&I practices is that not every company is at the same stage of their DE&I journey – some have just begun to explore, while others have long incorporated diversity practices into their workplace. Some companies don’t have the resources to dedicate funds and employees to flush out a thorough DE&I plan.

One way to help all companies, large and small, is for the industry to join together and combine resources to ensure the ability to affect positive change and deliver the message that the energy sector wants to be recognized as an industry proactive and progressive in the DE&I space. Or, according to Sheryl Riggs, President and CEO of the Utilities Technology Council, there is power in the industry working together at the national level to advantage work at the local level for all companies. Those companies that are further along in their DE&I journey should provide guides on where to start and where to go, in a way that is approachable for companies at all stages in the DE&I journey, while companies that have made great



strides in the DE&I space benefit from greater learning from their peers, as well as businesses outside the energy sector.

Throughout the afternoon, attendees brainstormed ways to ensure that everyone's voices are heard, and make sure the future DE&I Roadmap represents the industry as a whole, especially in ways that will resonate with our future workforce. For instance, the group addressed consideration of gender-neutral position terminology – the same way other industries have updated their terminology. They discussed the importance that diversity doesn't just mean race or gender, spotlighted by a program PSEG operates that offers a buddy program for the neurodiverse community, born out of a company-wide disability campaign, which increased disability recognition by 200%.

This event was one of many intended to shape the structure of the DE&I Roadmap for Change. “We have a starting format; the listening doesn't stop here today – you just need to speak up to be heard,” said McKeivitt. More conversations need to be had to build workplaces and an industry at large that prioritizes diversity, equity and inclusion.

The final Roadmap is currently set for release in late 2022, at CEWD's annual Workforce Development Summit.

If you are interested in learning more or getting involved in the development of the Roadmap, please contact [staff@cewd.org](mailto:staff@cewd.org).